

Chapter 2: A Point Of View

Society promotes - often enforces - a so-called collective point of view. But a point of view is, by definition, a view from one point: a single position in time and space, a unique place in the social order. The only valid point of view is therefore that of the individual. [Footnotes] [PDF]

Whose Point of View?

Most writers want their books published. So they write what publishers will accept. Publishers want profit. So they accept what will sell best. The best sellers are those that have the widest public appeal. What appeals most to the public is what reflects majority opinion. Majority opinion is the collective view of society. It is the world's vision of itself.

But the world has no consciousness. Society has no id. It is not an integrated system that can be centrally controlled. It is not like a human being whose brain can more than master the full complexity of its bodily functions as well as interpret and react to its environment. On the contrary, society is a complex dynamical fluid made up of separate individuals who interact according to natural rules of engagement. Any universal structure or character, which society may appear to project, is merely one individual's perception of, and reaction to, the workings of these simple rules.

A family appears different from the point of view of each member. The father's view is different from the mother's. The parent's is different from the child's. The brother's is different from the sister's. The eldest's is different from the youngest's. To the middle child it is different again. A family has no one absolute structure. Its structure depends on who is looking at it. So too, society [appears different to each of us](#) according to each one's unique position within it. It has a different appearance, a different structure, a different character and indeed projects a different behaviour towards each of us.

Most views of society are researched. They bring together the opinions of many. They embrace the views of history. They are collective views, fuzzy amalgams that no one person actually holds. I did not research this book. I did not seek the opinions of others. This book is exclusively my direct and personal view of the world from where I stand within it.

What is My Motive?

Why should I want to express a point of view. What was my motive for writing this book? Throughout my life I have had a growing awareness that all is not well with the human race. I became ever more sensitive to the prejudice, economic disparity and social injustice I saw around me. But it was a passive concern. Until, that is, the recession of the nineties. My business waned, then collapsed. For the first time in my life I was baptised into the world of unemployment and life on [welfare](#).

We could no longer go out. We could no longer travel. We could not eat as well. We could no longer replace old clothes. I no longer had a presentable suit. We could not buy the children those extras they ought to have for school. We could not afford their subscriptions for scouts. We had to terminate the insurance on our home and its contents. And so it continues to this day. We now have to rely on the charity of others to be able to get away from home for a week during the summer. We have to keep ourselves and our home, as well as bring up two teenage boys, on what amounts to a standard married couple's state pension.

Yet I have [skills](#) that are purportedly in demand. I have vast experience in my field. I have an intense personal drive. I am willing to work. But nobody wants me to work. Not at any price. Potential

clients and employers alike decide without exception that they have no need of me. I have no income. So my family has to do without.

Can this be right? Is it justifiable? If they do not need me, why should they employ me? But if I am skilled, willing and able, why should I be denied the opportunity to work? Even if I were not able, should I be denied social and economic dignity? What should I do about it? What *can* I do about it? How must I change? Must society change? It was to find the answers to these questions that I wrote this book.

Point of Observation

To answer these questions I must first observe and measure society. I must discover how it works. I must unearth both the natural and the artificial forces that have entrapped me in the position I now endure. But where should I stand to gain a true and balanced view of society that will reveal the answers I seek?

Must I, through imagination, transport myself to some grandiose vantage point? Should I commandeer the desk of a corporate chairman or step into the shoes of a Prime Minister? Should I usurp the Royal Throne or peer from the clerical pulpit? Should I subvert the guarded sources of a journalist or listen behind the microphone of a seasoned broadcaster?

From a Corporate Chair?

The corporate chairman sees his company, and the economy beyond it, primarily, if not exclusively, as a machine for generating profit for himself and his shareholders. His relentless quest is to maximise this profit by maximising revenue and minimising costs. To achieve this, he must maximise market share and eliminate competition. He must promote his fast-moving product lines, prune out slow movers, banish waste and externalize, as much as possible, the destructive collateral consequences of his endeavours.

So how does he see me from his seat of power? He sees an obsolete resource that he can justifiably discard, but which then reappears as an unwelcome extra burden on his corporate and personal tax bills.

I see myself as much more than this. This view is far too narrow to encompass even part of what I am, what society is, and the complex relationship between us. It cannot contain the answers to my questions.

From Government Office?

Capital is the dominant class. The dominant class influences the majority to believe in what supports the capital interests. Government is elected by majority vote. Government therefore serves Capital - its ultimate paymaster. Policy and law are therefore directed to preserve and further the ends of the corporate objective. Government is charged with the task of restricting the unbridled scramble for corporate profit by no more than is necessary to avert violent revolution by the dispossessed.

The view from the seat of government is therefore essentially the same as that of the corporate chairman. So it cannot hope to fare much better.

From The Royal Throne?

One thing unemployment has shown me is that wealth separates people. The personal wealth, social status, function and day to day activities of the royals separate them totally from the common man.

From a royal vantage point, society has to appear as a totally different type of object. Its response and behaviour from the point of view of a royal must be unrelated to its response and behaviour towards the common man. The amalgam of basic experiences with which the royal life moulds human perception has no counterpart in the life of a typical commoner. And even less so with the life of one who is long-term unemployed and living on welfare. A view from the royal throne will not therefore contain any answers to my questions.

From the Pulpit?

State religion is an instrument of the state. Its function is to mould the common mind to fear and obey the uncommon will. A strict hierarchy that bends the teachings of God to serve the ends of a favoured few. Ritual repetition dressing allegiance to an earthly crown in the clothing of spiritual salvation. Soothing words, justifying to the rich their wealth and to the undeserving poor their wretchedness. A haven for the weak willed who seek refuge in blind obedience from the tempest of personal responsibility and accountability for their thoughts and actions.

But attendance is falling. Influence is waning. The church's outmoded language of agrarian analogy is meaningless to the landless masses of an industrial economy. Its view is of a collective proletariat who must be kept in the narrow way of unquestioning conformity and obedience through fear of the unseen. It cannot show me why society reacts to me the way it does. Nor can it convince me cogently that this is right and good. The pulpit is therefore not a place from which to gain my view.

Through The Media?

The media's business is to observe. And society is the particular focus of most of its observing. But newspapers are owned by capital. They are run by corporate chairmen. Their prime directive is to maximise profit for their corporate owners. A newspaper therefore tells what sells. It is bought by a majority public whose tastes and opinions it stealthily shapes and hones to fit ever more closely to those of a rich influential elite.

The view of society through the columns of a newspaper is a distorted view that has been sanitised to reinforce the credence of the status quo. It too is therefore unable to give me the unfettered view I need.

The Great Estates of commerce, government, state, religion and media are the means through which the elite try vainly to understand, measure and control society. But society is a complex restless fluid. Its natural structures are small and dynamic, their myriad forms forever crystallise from nowhere then dissolve like a morning mist. These five hierarchies are all too large and inflexible. They are too oversimplistic to resolve the basic fabric of society. They can no more reveal its form than can a weather radar resolve the structure of each snow flake.

None of these seats of power can therefore afford me the clear detailed grass-roots view of society I need in order to answer my questions. So I must reject them all as credible vantage points from which to observe.

Of course, these are merely my [fallible perceptions](#) of how society appears from these seats of power, but since I have no access to them anyway, I must find some other position within society from which to view it.

From the Grass Roots

What I seek is knowledge of why I am in the position in which I now find myself. To do this, I must observe the way in which society seems to behave towards me. I must thereby formulate the fundamental laws that govern the relationship and interactions between me and society.

My obvious best vantage point is therefore one that coincidentally is the one most accessible to me. It is right here. It is wherever I am, or happen to be, in the normal course of my day-to-day life. Naturally it will not be a *typical* grass roots view of society. It is not intended to be. It is simply [my valid view](#) of how society appears, behaves and impinges upon me, my family and my home. If it is helpful to others, I rejoice.

Observation Strategy

To obtain my view of society, I must adopt an observational strategy that can discern its pure nature from its man-made idiosyncrasies.

Absolute Law

To the best endeavours of objective scientific observation, the universe appears to exist and to be sustained by virtue of invariant and inviolable natural laws. We commonly refer to these as the Laws of Physics and we express them in the Language of Mathematics.

For example, many people will have heard of the Law of Mass/Energy Equivalence $E=Mc^2$, which is responsible for the tremendous release of energy in nuclear reactions. A vast array of such laws must all work in perfect harmony in order to sustain and govern the universe, including ourselves and the terrestrial biosphere in which we live.

Relative Observation

In contrast, the best endeavours of objective scientific observation tell us that the process of observation itself is *not* absolute. There is no absolute frame of reference against which we can measure reality. Nor can we devise one. All observation and measurement [is relative](#) to the observer. Everybody's observation and [perception of the universe](#) is therefore necessarily different.

In fact, the *relative* nature of observation is a direct consequence of one of those *absolute* Laws of Physics. It is the rule that asserts that no two observers can occupy exactly the same position in time, space and, by extension, the social order.

Personal Independence

These two contrasting attributes of creation together provide humanity with an invaluable facility. They empower each of us *independently* to interact with nature and observe the operation of the absolute laws that govern it. Our physiological need for food, clothing and shelter requires us to exploit our natural environment. To do this we are forced to learn how it works; to discover those absolute laws that govern its operation.

We learn how nature works by discovering the effect corresponding to each action. We act. The natural environment responds. The particular response to a given action - the relationship between cause and effect - is determined by those absolute Laws of Physics. We observe - and more often experience - that some responses are beneficial, some are neutral and some are harmful.

Rules of Engagement

We thereby learn to classify our actions. Those that invoke beneficial responses from nature, we classify as *good*. Those that invoke harmful responses we classify as *bad*. Therefore, we endeavour to restrict ourselves to doing good actions and avoid doing bad ones. In other words, we learn that *as we sow, so also shall we reap*. To help us remember what we should and should not do, in order that only good will befall us, we codify this knowledge into a set of general rules that everybody can follow.

However, we must beware of partial knowledge. We may understand the most dominant, obvious and immediate effect of an action. But we may be unaware of less obvious but harmful side-effects or long-term phenomena that could prove fatal. We therefore need to know more than just the immediate effect of an action. We need to understand the full mechanism through which nature produces the effect. We need to know the Physical Laws that govern that mechanism. Then we can predict possible harmful secondary and long-term effects. That is one endeavour of science.

Incomplete knowledge of the Physical Laws results in the enactment of bad rules. Following bad rules may produce good short-term benefit, but destruction is waiting in the distance.

Relationship With Nature

The fundamental needs of human physiology and psychology must come from the earth. A [unit measure of land](#) was used in ancient times. It was the amount of land required to support a family. Its actual area varied according to the potential productivity of the land. Each family could use the land according to an appropriate set of rules to produce a basic living. They were largely self-sufficient. They had no need to trade or otherwise interact with anybody else.

Not everybody is endowed with the best talents for exploiting the land. Most human talent is better suited to other kinds of work. We thus have an innate tendency to specialise. We focus talent on what it does best. We become specialised producers yet remain generalised consumers. The result is that collectively we exploit our natural environment more efficiently. We thereby gain from it a much higher quality of life. But this requires us to share resources and to exchange what we make for what we need. It forces us to interact, to trade, to become a society.

The raw nature of man drives him to take and not give. Both from his environment and from his fellows. This is destructive. A self-sustained beneficial relationship with the land is possible only if, after reaping, he sows again. And a self-sustained beneficial relationship with his peers is possible only if he gives as well as receives. Man's in-built bias towards taking must therefore be selectively curbed. Society must therefore maintain rules governing not only man's dealings with nature, but also his dealings with his fellows.

The Nature of Society

Man is a part of nature. Society is his collective form. Society is therefore a natural phenomenon. It is not excused from obedience to the Laws of Physics. It is governed, with or without the permission of man, by the mathematical laws of chaos, statistics and chance. Man-made rules, on the other hand,

define actions that are mandatory and actions that are forbidden. The rule-makers expect actions they permit always to invoke beneficial consequences, and those they forbid always to invoke harm.

But like any natural system, society responds to any action according the workings of the absolute Laws of Physics that govern it. If the rule-makers do not understand fully the workings of these laws, they will be unaware of possible less obvious but harmful side effects and potentially fatal long-term phenomena. So whereas most would benefit from following those rules in the short-term, many could suffer undeserved ruin in the long-term.

Natural Law cannot be violated. It is the very essence of the universe. Man made rules can be violated. But the *sufferer* of the resulting harmful effect may not be the *doer* of the bad action. Society therefore extends its rules into artificial cause-and-effect laws. The cause is a violating action: the imposed effect is a penalty or punishment. Natural Law responds to both good and bad actions. Man-made law only responds to bad actions: it does not reward good ones. However, bad rules translate into bad laws. So while most will be punished only for wrongdoing, many can, though faithfully following the proper rules, suffer undeserved penalties and permanent discriminations.

My Strategy

I shall therefore observe society as a natural phenomenon of which I am a part. I shall view it from my own position in time, space and the social order. I shall monitor its responses to my existence and actions. I shall thereby try to discover the *cause and effect* laws that govern it, separating the natural and absolute from the artificial and fallible. I will then, from this, endeavour to answer the questions I have posed. To maximise its authenticity, I have determined that my observation of society shall be first-hand, using the four modes of direct observation:

1) Involuntary Observation

Society is not passive. If I just sit here and do nothing, society does not simply leave me alone. It unilaterally reacts to my presence. The Inland Revenue and the Local Authority send me unsolicited letters demanding money. If I do not pay, demand turns to enforcement. I must pay or justify my reason for not paying.

Society's fundamental response to the individual is to demand something from him. It never seems to be to enquire after his well being or to ask if and how it can be of service. By actively responding to my existence within it, society makes me an involuntary observer of certain key aspects of its character.

2) Passive Observation

My neighbour, an accountant, zooming off to work in his shining BMW 520. The young no-hoper staggering along Borough High Street with a bottle wrapped in newspaper. The dolled-up yuppie housewife in a big Volvo, dropping off her immaculately polished children at their high-in-the-league-table private school. The unemployed graduate crouched in the tube station tunnel with his impressive CV displayed on a large flip chart sheet.

These things speak loudly to me about the society in which I live. Yet they themselves do not actively demand a response from me. I am not threatened with litigation or enforcement if I do nothing. They are not preaching at me: I see them because I happen to be there at the time. I am simply observing a passively illuminated scene.

3) Active Observation

I need to find work. I compile a list of companies. I find out what they do. I research each company's history and perhaps learn something of its leaders. I assess the probability of their need for my skills. I build a database where I can compare and classify potential employers [†]. I now have a picture of my potential job market.

This time, I took the initiative: the knowledge did not come simply by passive observation. Furthermore, I did it covertly: the observed were unaware of me or what I was doing. In effect, I sent out radar signals whose passive echoes bore considerably more information about my socio-economic environment than I could gain just by being there.

4) Interactive Observation

I decide to make an unsolicited approach to prospective employers. I decide on the type of job to try for. I create an appropriately tuned abstract of [my CV](#). I specify the profile of the ideal type of company. I extract a target list of such companies from my database [†]. I write a covering letter and generate the mailshot. I send the mailshot, enclosing my CV. A week later, I follow up each letter with a telephone call and document the response on my database [†].

The essence of this mode of observation is that I took the initiative as before. But, the way I did it this time, achieved two extra things. Firstly, it made the targets aware of my existence. Secondly, it provoked them into responding specifically to my approach. I suppose an appropriate technical analogy for this mode of observation is that of secondary radar where, in response to a signal from a ground station, an airborne transponder transmits the identification and flight data of an aircraft. By interactive observation, therefore, I gain information I could not have acquired by ordinary active observation: namely, their reaction to *me*.

Basis Of My Perception

Whatever mode of observation I use, how do I interpret what I see? My perception of the world - like everyone else's - was fashioned by my formative experiences. My childhood and early life. The triumphs and misfortunes of my career. The struggles and rewards of my family and home. Relationships with friends and colleagues.

These experiences collectively created the mechanism through which I perceive, interpret, evaluate, classify and understand what I observe. There are four things in particular that have given shape to this mental lens through which I bring into focus my observations of the social and economic environment in which I live.

1) An Affinity for Nature

I have always had a natural curiosity. A need to know about the world around me. As a young child, my world was my grandparents' garden with its lawn, sweet peas and tomatoes in the greenhouse. Later, the city with its carts and heavy horses unloading down back alleys. My father returned from the war and we moved several times to different parts of the North Country. I went to school. I made friends. I made enemies. I liked the wide open. The woods with wild crocuses. Hill pastures with sheep. Mountain streams. Freedom.

We moved south. I was excited. I thought it would be the same only warmer and sunnier. I was disappointed when I saw the flat landscape with all the land fenced in with no place to roam. But I got to like it. I walked with a school friend through the endless countryside, the miles

unnoticed by youthful legs. Standing wheat and barley. Hedgerows and the occasional tree. Experimental radar domes miles from anywhere. A NATO air base with Supersabres silently tree-hopping ahead of their ear-splitting sound. Hitch-hikes to the Lake District. Camping out in open bedrolls like cowboys. Getting totally drenched. Recovering from exposure at my grandfather's house on our way back south.

This was the environment that fired my curiosity. I wanted more than to see it. I needed more than merely to appreciate it. I had to understand it. I wanted to understand the weather. I loved all aspects of the natural environment. I desperately wanted to know how it all worked.

2) An Abhorrence of Suburbia

In contrast, suburbia did not inspire me. Nor did its inhabitants. When embarking on my long walks I would escape from it with all haste and avoid it whenever it reappeared on the horizon. It was unnatural and inhospitable, a barrier to the free open space beyond. I was surrounded by this suburbia, this civilisation. I had to escape to a wider world.

Experience of my local countryside evoked an interest in the geography of the world. I wanted to travel to America and Australia. I dreamed of an island base in the Pacific like Captain Nemo from where I would sail and explore the globe. But these were impractical childhood fantasies. I did not have the means. I had to find another way to escape suburbia.

3) An Interest in Science

School science had made me aware that my human senses could not pick up all the signals that Nature was giving. I noted in particular that our eyes were privy to only one octave of nature's vast electromagnetic spectrum. I consequently developed an interest in [short-wave radio](#) and in natural radio phenomena like the low frequency whistlers produced by lightning storms all over the world echoing around the ionosphere. I was fascinated by the [ionospheric layers](#), the solar cycles and other natural phenomena that affected the propagation of radio broadcasts.

Short wave radio gave me a feeling of space. From the confines of my parents' home in suburbia I could reach out to the whole world. Their garden was big enough, and had trees suitably placed, to accommodate my long aerials. I had some friends at school who were interested in amateur radio. They were allowed to use transmitters and talk to each other by radio. I took and passed the Radio Amateurs examination, but I never took out a licence. I found the conversations between radio amateurs boring. I do not think it was their fault: I think it was because of the Draconian restrictions imposed by the authorities regarding what they could and could not talk about over the air.

4) A Curiosity for Culture

My interest was in foreign short wave broadcasts. I wanted to know about life in other parts of the world. I wanted to hear the world news from other countries' points of view. What was Moscow's view of American policy? What was China's view of life in Europe? What was Germany's view of events in Britain? Was what the BBC broadcast to us different from what it broadcast to the world? Foreign broadcasts were often difficult to receive. Ionospheric conditions were not always favourable. The Soviet Union jammed Voice of America broadcasts in Russian, Lithuanian or the language of any Soviet Socialist Republic. It was exciting. It was the stuff of intrigue.

Short wave radio taught me about other nations and cultures. In their own words. The way they saw themselves. I was getting cultural and social knowledge straight from each horse's mouth. I realised that what I heard had been [sanitised](#) to portray each broadcaster's nation in its best light. Nevertheless, I quickly became aware that from the point of view of an alien culture, Mother Earth is really a different planet.

As well as geographical, cultural and political topics, I also listened to many kinds of religious broadcasts. I even joined one of the [world-wide church organisations](#) in which I remained for seven years. I studied the socio-economic aspects of religious teachings. I saw different views of right and wrong. I appreciated the merits of different social systems. I gained a more balanced sense of natural justice.

Conclusion

This book documents my direct personal view of society as seen from where I stand within it. Born in the despair of long-term unemployment, it is the embodiment of my life-long abhorrence for social disparity and injustice, and my search for a better way. It is not the opinion of others. I have made no attempt to see through their eyes. It is simply *my* view of how society appears, behaves and impinges upon me, my family and my home. And my contribution to the formulation of a better and more equitable way.

Human society is a natural phenomenon ruled by the Laws of Physics. But its leaders [understand little](#) of those Laws. They seem unaware of their side effects and long-term responses to man's actions. The rules governments enact are therefore imperfect. The ensuing legislation is randomly inappropriate, unfairly penal, unqualified and irresponsible. The disparity, inequity and injustice in society is not the fault of natural laws but of human rules. I shall therefore observe society as a natural phenomenon of which I am a part. I shall, from my own place within it, monitor its responses to my existence and actions. I shall thereby try to discover the cause-and-effect laws that govern it, discerning the natural and absolute from the artificial and fallible. I will, from this, endeavour to answer the questions I have posed and to discover that better way.

I shall endeavour to maximise the authenticity of my view by adhering, as far as my human failings will allow, to the direct objective modes of involuntary, passive, active and interactive observation. However, my perception of the world - the mechanism through which I perceive, interpret, evaluate, classify and understand what I observe - was, like everyone else's, fashioned by my formative experiences. These experiences upon which my perception is built - my childhood and early life, the triumphs and misfortunes of my career, the struggles and rewards of my family and home, relationships with friends together with my specific affinity for nature, abhorrence of suburbia, interest in science and curiosity for culture - form only a limited vista in the full panorama of human experience.

I freely acknowledge therefore that, in common with every individual on this planet, my perception of the world and the society within it is [narrow, limited and fallible](#). This does not mean that my view has no value. It is simply for the reader to be warned, but not to despise.

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† This practice subsequently became illegal under the [Data Protection Act](#).

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