

## The Fallibility of Authority

*Many in authority try to intimidate their victims by projecting the belief that they have some kind of psychological 6th sense that can see into their victims' minds. They invariably come unstuck once their intuitions reveal what the victim factually knows to be completely false.*

In modern society, the word **authority** is miss-applied. Etymologically, it should signify the attribute or quality that defines an **author**. It signifies the creator or original source of an idea, philosophy or truth. Most people's understanding of the word nowadays is that it signifies the power, given to an individual by the State, to interpret rules, to dictate behaviour, to command obedience and to administer correction and punishment upon those who are subject to the State. Authority is invariably structured as a pyramidal hierarchy from a king, president or prime-minister down to the lowliest DSS counter clerk or traffic warden. But it is not only the State that incorporates a hierarchy of authority. Corporations and other institutes also control their workers or members this way.

My earliest experience of (or brush with) authority was at school. In 1954 I was a pupil at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Blackburn, Lancs. UK. It was the given duty of boys in my year to set the school's dining tables in the main hall for the midday meal. Once all the tables had been set, a prefect from the final school year would tick off our names as having done our duty. And all would be well.

One day, when we were setting the tables, the prefect came early to tick off our names. His name was Hurst. Seeing him there with his list of names, most boys ran to form a queue to be ticked off, leaving a lot of tables yet unset. I and one other boy set to rapidly to finish setting all the tables. While rushing to finish, I looked up and caught Hurst's eye observing us. Finally, when we had finished, we found that Hurst had gone. We were not worried because I had seen that Hurst had seen what we were doing and so would have ticked us off.

Later that day, a classmate told me that I and the other boy had been entered for punishment. We had no right of recourse. We had to do our punishment. Hurst would not talk to us, so I mentioned the matter to a boy in my class who was a neighbour of Hurst's. The boy spoke to Hurst. Hurst simply told the boy that it was our own stupid fault for continuing to finish setting the tables instead of getting ticked off. The conception of justice seated within my own conscience told me that this bloody-minded action by Hurst, as an instrument of authority, was unjust. Consequently, this formative incident significantly altered my conception of authority.

### A Far More Serious Incident

It happened in July 1959. It was ten-to-two in the morning at a YMCA camp just north of Lakeside, Cumbria in the United Kingdom at 54° 17' 58.23" N, 002° 57' 43.35" W. The forest was dark. The camp was quiet. All were in bed asleep. Except for a somewhat naïve 16 year old boy and a large strong fully-bearded man named Ted Curtis. The 16 year old boy was me. We were in Curtis's office. Curtis was the camp chief. Curtis was seethingly angry.

Practically the whole camp had been watching a film in the main assembly hall across the driveway. This was a treat for the campers usually given once or twice during a camping week. I had been sitting near to the projector. When the film had finished, everybody just simply dispersed to their tents and billets and went to bed. It was the way of the camp. Everybody rose early in the morning, took breakfast and commenced a rigorous day's activity such as hiking or orienteering in the mountains.

I was about to leave the assembly hall and go to my billet when Curtis called me over to the projector where he was putting the film back in its can. "I want to see you in my office **now!**" he bawled at me. I was certainly taken aback and indeed rather perplexed. He told me very forcefully to go to his office and wait for him. So I went there and waited. Quite some time passed. I don't know how much. I didn't look at his wall clock when I arrived in his office. The time it indicated somehow registered with me as he entered the office.

### **In The Chief's Office**

"You know why you're here!" he rasped at me, obviously beside himself with anger. "No sir", I replied. I called him "sir" as I had been taught by my father to respect people in authority. And the camp chief was the authority within the camp. Notwithstanding, in retrospect I think it convinced him that I was trying to play up to him in an attempt to assuage his anger. Then he said, "Oh yes you do! For two pins I'd knock your \*\*\*\*\* head off!" It is at this point I became very frightened. It was almost 2am. The camp was asleep. I really thought he was on the point of giving me a thorough working over. The problem was that I hadn't a clue as to what I was supposed to have done (or perhaps failed to do).

Then he said something to the effect "You don't pull the wool over **my** eyes! I **know** what's been going on." Now completely confused, I said that I didn't know what he was talking about. This augmented his rage by what seemed to be an order of magnitude. By now he was shouting and prancing around the room in an extremely agitated manner. I thought he was going to launch into me any second. He railed, "It is no use you lying! A most reliable member of staff has heard everything through the wall of your billet!". I was still none the wiser. His rage rose higher and higher until finally he spat it all out with a vengeance.

*"You and your friend have been giving cheap thrills to the little boys in your billet! I know your type. I can see you a mile off. Tomorrow, at first light, take your kit and leave this camp and never return! I shall consider whether or not to report you to the police! You are lucky there are laws in this country, otherwise I'd tear you apart right here and now! **Get out!** And take your precious friend with you!"*

I was given no chance to answer. Curtis was in no mood to listen to any attempt by me to refute the report of his "most reliable member of staff". I left the office trembling. I felt sick. I picked my way in the pitch blackness to my billet. Then something instantly dawned on me. It was the identity of this "most reliable member of staff". His name was Norman Watson.

### **From The Beginning**

I did not meet my father until I was 4 years old. He had been fighting in the Second World War since I had been born. At the end of the War he had attained the rank of major and his last term of duty was as an acting lieutenant-colonel. His mind by then had become completely attuned to commanding a company. When he returned to civilian life, the only company he had left to command was me. His military conditioning had made him rather aloof. He threw himself into study to gain a diploma in town planning in order to build a career. He had no time for a child. I had to keep quiet while he studied.

In the summer of 1956, when I was 13 years old, my father began to realise that he and I did not know each other very well. I think my mother had rather firmly brought this fact to his attention. He therefore signed us up for what was called a "father and son week" at the YMCA camp just north of Lakeside. I remember we were billeted with two other fathers-and-sons. The six of us shared a small

chalet unit. Each father-and-son had a two storey bunk. We dined in a central refectory. We were given a programme of activities like camping, trekking in the mountains, orienteering and games. It was an excellent week.

The next summer, when I was 14, my father sent me back to this camp by myself on what was called a "venturer's course". This involved similar activities, in addition to which were camping and orienteering treks that taught navigation and out-door survival. A little bit of rock climbing was also included. It was then that I met Norman Watson. He was the chief instructor. It appeared that he was a volunteer at the camp. He told everybody that he was a teacher and an ex-marine. He was a very muscular man. He was blond with somewhat Germanic features. He spoke with a slight lisp. During the mountain treks, we camped overnight at a place called High Tarn, a desolate place in the mountains near a little lake (tarn). Norman had a modern A-pole tent, while the rest of us had old-style bivouacs. I remember that people were envious of Norman in his modern tent and he used to joke with them "You can come and sleep in my tent if you like. You'll enjoy it!". I put his comments down to harmless banter.

I forget how it was arranged. I think my father had telephoned Reg Wake, the then camp chief. Anyway, after the venturer's week had finished, it had somehow been arranged that I stay on at the camp working as a kitchen hand. At first I was billeted in the old boat house with the cook and two older kitchen hands. However, there I picked up a skin disease called impetigo. So I was re-billeted in the first aid room. There at least it was clean. My first night there was memorable. I discovered that the first aid room was also where Norman Watson was billeted. Work in the kitchen started very early to prepare breakfast for the camp, so at about 9pm I went to bed.

I was dozing off when Norman Watson came in. He sat on my bunk and started talking to me about adolescent body changes. He said, "Are you old enough to be a father?". Naïvely, I said "Yes." "How do you know?", he continued. I didn't reply. Then he said, "Do you have hair round your willy and under your arms?" "Yes" I replied. Then he reached in my bed under the covers and grabbed my penis. He started playing with it. I did not like this. I writhed and struggled. Then I was shown just how invincibly strong he was. It is only when I started screaming very loudly that he stopped. He was afraid somebody in the chief's house might hear. He scowled at me. He never spoke to me again.

I told my father what had happened. He just said "It's a good job I wasn't there" but took no action. I did not go to the camp the following year. Up to then we had lived in various towns within Lancashire. But we now moved south to Braintree in Essex. I went to a new school in Colchester. I acquired about 6 close friends there, one of whom shared my interests in both amateur radio and outdoor survival. His name was Doug. He was the only one of my friends who was not in my school year. He was two years younger. He had latched onto us somehow when I had brought an ex-government 38-set to school to show my amateur radio friends.

## **Back to The Summer of '59**

Doug shared our interest in radio and also my interest in travel and outdoors survival. We decided we would like to do some outdoor trekking during the summer holidays and the idea came to me about the YMCA camp near Lakeside. We booked in there for two weeks thinking to use the camp as a base from which to embark on our own trekking excursions into the mountains.

A couple of weeks or so after our school closed for the summer, we hitch-hiked north and arrived at the camp with all our kit. We also brought some radio equipment with which we hoped to experiment in the mountains. We were billeted in a large hut that had a separate small room walled off and accessible only from the outside via a door on the opposite wall to the billet's main entrance. We had expected to be in one of the normal small chalets like my father and I had shared during the

father-and-son week. But to our somewhat dismay we were billeted with two 14 year olds, who obviously knew each other and about half a dozen 10 year olds. We got on all right with them all but our activities were entirely separate, since Doug and I had planned from the outset that the camp would only be a base for our trekking excursions.

We returned quite late to the billet after our first day-hike. The lads were playing about singing silly songs that were a bit rude to say the least. I think the two 14 year olds were the originators. However, it was only a bit of harmless banter. It was what boys of that age would normally giggle about. Doug and I pointedly suggested that it would be a good idea to go to bed as breakfast was very early in the morning and we were sure that none of them would want to miss breakfast.

In the morning, we got up early and went to the main refectory for breakfast. On the way out, I caught sight of Norman Watson. I was dumbfounded. I could not imagine how he could not have been found out for what he was. He was a homosexual molester of young boys. I had had first hand experience of that - *hand* being the operative word! But there he was. Still, it seemed, as a "reliable member of staff". He saw and recognised me. He scowled and slinked away.

Putting two and two together, it seems that Norman Watson had heard the dubious songs the young lads had been singing and decided to construct in his imagination what he would like to be doing with them in there. Then he decided to pin it on me by way of revenge for my not submitting to him in the summer of 1957 in the first aid room. I discovered indeed that Hell hath no fury like a *bitch* scorned. He had obviously told Curtis his warped story some time that day. And in the late evening, after the film, Curtis decided to have it out with me in his office at 2 o'clock in the morning.

## Unceremonious Exit

I told Doug what had happened. He was incensed. He was all for going straight to the police in Lakeside. But I was seriously unhinged. Besides, I hardly think the police were likely to have believed me against the word of the YMCA camp chief. I just wanted to get far away from the place.

We had only spent two days at the camp but had paid for a two-week stay with money we had saved from casual jobs earlier in the summer holidays. We asked for a refund for the time remaining. The woman in the accounts office said she would not make any refund because we had been kicked out of the camp for serious disciplinary reasons. It was normal procedure for somebody to drive people in the camp Landrover to the railway station in Lakeside. However, the chief had obviously ordered that nobody take us and we had to walk with full kit along the road all the way to Lakeside.

Both Doug's and my parents were away on holiday. We could not therefore return south for another 12 days. We roughed it for 4 days and then decided to go to my grandfather's house in Manchester. There we rested up for another 4 days suffering from exposure. We spent the remaining time with my grandfather. He was a radio enthusiast too and had a well-equipped radio shack.

## 1960, Our Final Trip

The following year (1960), Doug and I decided to make another trip to the Lake District. This time, we would base ourselves in our tents at High Tarn. We would go nowhere near that YMCA camp. Nevertheless, on arriving at Lakeside station, we had to walk along the road that led to the YMCA camp before we could take the mountain track to High Tarn. We heard a vehicle approaching from behind. It was the camp Landrover. Curtis was driving, a sneering smirk emanating from behind his obfuscating bushy black beard as he recognised us. The Landrover passed to the sound of bellicose guffaws from within.

In retrospect, and with the wisdom of age, I cannot see how it could not be blindingly obvious to any grown adult that Norman Watson was a screaming scroocher. So why did Curtis still have him there at the camp as a "reliable member of staff"? How could he not know that it would not be a very expedient decision to keep him as a camp instructor in charge of young adolescent boys on overnight camping trips into the mountains? I had the impression that previous year that Curtis had a wife at the camp. I therefore concluded that he could not have been of a kind with Watson. So what was going on? Was Curtis simply stupid and incompetent? Or was he deliberately turning a blind eye to his "friend's" shenanigans? I just don't know.

Doug and I were simply school friends. The only connections between us were our shared interests in amateur radio and the outdoors. We had absolutely no sexual interest in each other whatsoever. In fact, we didn't even joke about or discuss the dubious topics that most adolescents inevitably broach up on. I suppose the two-year age difference - me being a sixth former and him not - put a certain formality between us in these respects. Neither one of us had any homosexual tendencies or dispositions. The implications within Curtis's filthy mind couldn't have been further off target. Perhaps our slight age difference perturbed him.

After leaving school I only encountered Doug a couple of times and then lost touch. The last I heard he was living with a girlfriend in Sweden where he worked in a broadcasting studio. I married a couple of years after leaving college.

## A Lesson For Life

The abuse I suffered as a 14 year old boy at the *hand* of Norman Watson was a traumatic experience that has stayed with me all my life. It taught me that evil people can perpetrate their acts of dominance and control with impunity. They rarely get found out; at least, not until after they are dead. And the hand of justice can't reach beyond the grave. Even if they do get found out, their punishment - if any - can never repair the damage they cause.

Notwithstanding, the *hand* of Norman Watson was nothing compared with the impact of that encounter with Ted Curtis in the isolated early hours of that fateful morning. I was terrified. I was far more scared than I would have been if I had actually done something bad. At least then I would have known what it was all about. But I knew nothing. I had done absolutely nothing wrong. I was being railingly accused and physically threatened over something I had not done and which nobody had done and which, in fact, had never even taken place.

Notwithstanding, Curtis "knew my type". He could "see me a mile off". I couldn't "pull the wool over *his* eyes". Nothing could shake his indisputable belief in my shameless guilt, which had ignited his arrogant self-righteous rage. But I knew something that Curtis didn't know. I knew that he didn't know my type. I knew that he couldn't see me a mile off. I knew that nobody needed to pull the wool over his eyes because he was far more apt at pulling the wool over his own eyes.

Curtis was merely my most extreme case. In all my 70 years on this planet, I have found the same to be true of all who, for whatever reason, seek to place fear and dread within those over whom they arrogantly wield their power. They have no 6th sense that sees into my mind. They do not have some superior psychological insight into my intentions. They cannot "tell by my face" that I am "lying" to them. They cannot "see me a mile off". They do not "know my type". Be they managers, policemen, DSS counter staff or self-styled situation control freaks: they know nothing.

## Contemptuous Rail Cop

In the spring of 1993 I went by train from Bishops Stortford to London. I went to see my daughter because we had not met for quite some time. I bought my ticket at Bishops Stortford station and went to the appropriate platform to wait for the train. The platform was sparsely populated mainly with men in "city" uniform, that is, the typical pin-stripe suit and bowler hat of workers in the Financial industry.

As I walked onto the platform, I heard somebody shout extremely loudly, "Oi! Where're you going!" It was shouted in a most uncouth manner that I would think most attributable to a drunken Millwall supporter. I looked round. I discovered that indeed the shout was addressing me. The shouter appeared to be some kind of station porter. Eyeing him more closely, I deduced that he must have been Transport Police, although he had no identifying brightwork on his cape.

Not wishing to provoke the pathetic ass, I replied factually, "Liverpool Street". His answer was simply a disbelieving and disapproving authoritarian look of contempt. He did nothing more.

Thinking about the possible reasons for his question, I asked him if there were a problem with the train. He replied in an abrupt and rasping manner, "Not that I'm aware of!". It remains a mystery to me as to why this 40-something authoritarian imbecile should put this question, in such an offensive and contemptuous manner, to an arbitrary 60 year old "citizen" arriving on the rail platform. I suppose he "knew my type". Perhaps some people are simply much too far above themselves. I never knew what authority he had, if any, to demand to know my destination.

## "Over-zealous" Traffic Wardens

In 1964, when I was 22, I parked at a parking meter in the City of Westminster. I did this only once. It was a long time ago. I have never used a parking meter since.

I had a little green minivan. I went there for a specific purpose. It was to carry home something I had bought which was far too large to carry on public transport. I bought the maximum allowed amount of time at the meter. At that time and in that place it was 30 minutes. As I understood the law (I could be wrong) it was an offence to 'feed' a meter. This meant you could not put another coin in when your time had run out. You had to move on. I put my coin in the meter at the same instant as starting a 30 minute timer on my watch.

I arrived back at my van and put my purchase in the back. I got in with just over 2 minutes to spare. I started the engine. I saw a big yellow parking ticket in a plastic bag stuck to the windscreen. I got out and looked at the parking meter. It clearly showed I had two more minutes. I looked for the traffic warden. I ran to one street corner and looked. I ran the other way and looked. There was no traffic warden in sight. I still drove away before the 'Penalty' sign showed in the meter window. I was livid. I refused to pay the fine.

To be able to write out a parking ticket and walk out of sight must have taken a good 5 minutes. The traffic warden must have written out the ticket at least 7 minutes before the meter expired. That Westminster City traffic warden was a liar. He wrote the time of booking on the ticket as 5:30pm - the time the meter *would* run out: not the time he wrote the ticket.

By so doing, he made Westminster City Council liars. He made the local police, who eventually enforced the fine upon me, perpetrators of injustice. Westminster City Council is not without blame. They employed him. He was acting for them. Therefore they also, by default, lied about my having committed a parking offence. The plain fact remains that I did not commit the offence for which I was fined.

Most people would think that in any case it was not very much. But it was. I was a student at the time. I had very little money. That fine was something I could really have done without. However, from the traffic warden's point of view, somebody with a second hand minivan was unlikely to have the means to do anything about it. He was right. The police did not believe me. They believed their lying traffic warden.

I do not know whether traffic wardens received commission on the number of parking tickets they wrote or not. I would not put it past a capitalist State to effect such an incentive. Perhaps the traffic warden had not found any offences that day and was desperate to justify his existence. I do not know. But I do know he was a liar, and a teller of lies which inflicted financial harm on the innocent.

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My only other brush with traffic law was in 2003. I was by now approaching 61. I was unemployed and had been for the preceding 12 years. I struck up a friendship with another unemployed jobseeker during a jobseeker's course. He had been a professional singer. He had become very well known for singing songs in the style of Elvis Presley.

My friend eventually managed to get a show on the road and was thereby able to come off unemployment. He needed a large number of CDs of his music. He commissioned a firm in a small town near Milton Keynes to produce them for him. He asked me if I would like a little relief from the futility of jobseeking for a day to go and collect them. He would pay for my petrol. I accepted.

I drove there and found the street where the small firm was located. It had double yellow lines along all its length on both sides, except for a small stretch that was marked out for car parking by dotted white lines. There was nothing indicating that I shouldn't park there so I parked there to collect the CDs. I noticed that there were many other cars parked in the street on the double yellow lines.

I went into the shop where I was told to collect the CDs. I think it was probably the only business premises in the street. The person there offered me a cup of coffee. A little later I emerged from the premises carrying a very large box of CDs. Another person was carrying the other box. We put the boxes into my car. The other person went back to the shop. Then I noticed the familiar plastic bag, with a yellow ticket in it, taped to my car's windscreen.

I looked around completely mystified as to why I should have a parking ticket while parked in a place specially marked out for parking. I ran up and down the street looking at the other cars. Not one of them had a parking ticket and they were all there before I came. I drove home. I can't help but wonder why. Could it have been because my car was much older than all the others and that the traffic warden consequently thought its owner would therefore be less likely to have the social influence necessary to be able to cause trouble for him? Who knows?

Later, I rang the shop asking why I should have received a parking ticket. The person said that the area was marked out for parking for people calling at the library. This was a building recessed from the road but had a notice on the wall specifying the parking restrictions. The person at the shop agreed that the sign was nowhere near the road and was inadequately positioned and understood perfectly why I would not have seen it.

That evening, the person from the shop rang again and said that she had discovered that the sign forbidding general parking was not there that day. Apparently it had been taken down for cleaning. It seems that a stranger, arriving there for the first time in his life, is supposed to know this. You can just imagine how far I got with the traffic authority using that excuse. The incident cost me £60. At the time, I personally was restricted to a budget of £9.90 per week for all my personal needs - mainly food. It caused me oppressive hardship.

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In both the above cases, I was punished for offences I had not committed. I have therefore been punished wrongly in 100% of the traffic offences for which I have been convicted. This clearly illustrates to me the dysfunctionality of authority. This, however, is not the only upshot of these cases. Both these false convictions caused me much hardship. I was punished exceedingly harshly, given my circumstances on both occasions. I was punished more because I was poor.

## **The Good Cop**

One evening in the winter of 2003-04, I was returning in my car from a visit to my mother. I was almost home. I saw the blue flashing lights of a police car behind me and then I heard its siren. I stopped. A policeman got out of the police car and came over to mine. His first words were, "Nothing to worry about, sir". Then he said, "You probably weren't to know this, but one of your tail lights is out". I knew it was working when I set off because I always look at the reflection of the tail and brake lights in the window of my house when I set off in the dark.

I got out of the car and looked. Sure enough, the off-side tail light was out. The policeman tapped the light slightly and it lit up. "Well, it's on now, sir". He said he was obliged by law to take my name and address but that I would be hearing nothing more. I never heard anything more. Since I had a spare bulb, I changed the bulb there and then. The old bulb re-lit because the jolt caused by tapping the light made the broken filament reconnect temporarily. But the bulb would rapidly become permanently inoperative.

Strictly, the law says that I have committed an offence if a tail light is not lit. A bloody-minded authoritarian could have booked me and had me pay a painful fine. This policeman, however, knew that since a car has no mechanism for continually monitoring the state of a tail light, the driver cannot possibly know when a light has ceased to operate. He acted practically and correctly. He used judgement.

In this case, justice was done. I did not deliberately drive with a faulty tail light. Notwithstanding, in all my other encounters with authority, injustice was done. Sometimes by negligence, other times by bloody-mindedness, on the part of the person in authority. Thus it would seem that whether, in any given situation, it is justice or injustice that prevails depends entirely on the character of the individual in authority.

Nonetheless, my experience shows clearly that in the majority of my interactions with authority, the outcome has been both wrong and unjust. This has two compounding causes:

1. The Law does not take into account the logical impracticalities of the generic obligations it imposes.
2. Those who take authoritarian jobs tend to be inflexible rule-followers who are either incapable of applying judgement or choose not to.

In consequence, I fear and obey authority because of the evil it can do to me and its other innocent victims. But respect it? No. If authority wants respect, it should take more trouble vetting those whom it employs to represent it. A written inanimate code of law, blindly applied by a human robot, cannot expedite justice.

## **In Awe of Authority**

Despite its proven fallibility, the vast majority of people seem to me to have an unshakable blind faith in authority. They regard it with the highest awe.



The case, which I related above, about the school prefect is very illustrative here. He perpetrated an obvious injustice. Yet my friend agreed with what he [the prefect] had told him: that it was my own stupid fault and not a result of his inexcusable bloody-mindedness. Why? Was my friend *unable* to reason out the obvious? I think that, even at the age of 13 [as we were at the time] his sense of morality should have been sufficiently mature to lead him to a just answer. Was he then *unwilling* to admit to the obvious? I think that this is far more likely. However, I think that, if the truth were known, he simply didn't bother to consider it one way or the other. He automatically, by default, sided with authority.

But why would my friend do this? What was his motive? To side with me, and admit that the highest authority we were directly under at the time could commit such an act of injustice, would have put him in a difficult position. He would have been throwing in his lot with the far weaker party, namely me, against the invincible superior side, namely the school. He would have been making himself visible as a rebel when he had no need to do so. He preferred not to rock the boat. His preference for *personal* peace and comfort took precedence over the dictates of his *social* conscience.

Regrettably, from my observations, the majority of people are cowards. They do not have the courage to stand up and be counted in support of a wronged loner against the overwhelming power of the State. Also regrettably, they are sluggards. They are simply too lazy to think for themselves about the rights and wrongs of what those in authority do. They prefer the easy option, keeping their heads well below any line of fire. Blindly submitting to authority is far easier than criticising and challenging its injustices. It absolves the cowardly majority of any moral obligation to protect the individual against injustice perpetrated upon him by authority.

This was evinced by the episode on the station at Bishops Stortford when I was unceremoniously and wholly inappropriately railed at by what I presume was a member of the British Transport police. The reaction from the pin-striped bowler-hatted gentlemen standing with me on the platform waiting for the train was devastating by its absence. I looked up and down the platform attentively observing them. As conscious sentient beings, they must have known what was taking place, unless they were all stone deaf. But not a twitch or a flinch. Not one of them voiced up and challenged the foul-mannered officer's unprovoked and highly disrespectful behaviour towards a senior citizen. It was as if they were in a different dimension.

This well illustrates the character of a modern population. It isn't a society. It is merely a contained mass of juxtaposed individuals, the only links between them being those imposed by the transactions of commerce and enforced by the laws of government. And these links are essentially controlled and managed by government and commerce; not by the individuals involved.

The majority stands in awe of its ruling authority, cringing before its power. The majority also has an incongruous blind faith in this authority; what any process of cogent reason must surely reveal to be a misplaced trust. After all, the rules enacted and applied by the government are not for the benefit of the majority but for that of the small elite minority who, through the media, influence the majority to vote for what is in the elite's best interests. And the best interests of the elite are to contain and exploit the majority, which is obviously not in the majority's best interests. This shows the majority not only to be cowardly and lazy but also stupid.

Being held in awe, and blindly trusted, by a slothful stupid fearful majority is what I would call a reasonable definition of *worship*. Thus I would say that the majority of people worship the authorities they are under, irrespective of whether those authorities be benign or oppressive.

## Professional & Corporate

This mentality of authority-worship is not limited to authorities that govern but broadens to include all composite entities with power. It includes those who have the power of money and market share. People worship the corporate image, with the blind misplaced faith that its products and services are better value for money and of better quality than anything produced by an individual artisan. Hence the demise of the artisan. They worship the recognised custodians of knowledge, with unshakable faith that an academically qualified person knows better than a self-educated thinker. They worship professional institutions, with the blind faith that a registered professional will always do a better job than an amateur.

The corporate sells products and services for the purpose of maximising the profit it can rip out of the customer. The artisan works because he loves to apply his skills in return for a living.

I had to become an artisan of construction in order to correct the errors made in the construction of my house by the professionals of the construction company who built it. For example, my house had a large heavy beam running the full width of the house. Its function was to support the entire roof. In fact, the relatively slender roof joists were supporting the heavy beam. I had to re-mount the beam and re-secure the roof joists at their appropriate points along the beam. I did not, at first, know how to do this.

When the house was being wired, the registered professional electrician was required to route a cable from the hot water tank cupboard upstairs to the gas boiler in the kitchen downstairs. It was for the boiler's temperature control circuit and was not to be connected to any mains supply. The boiler technician would use this cable to connect the temperature controller upstairs to the boiler's temperature regulator downstairs. Next to the controller upstairs was an earthed [grounded] copper hot water tank. The registered professional electrician did not have quite enough cable to reach the full distance between the temperature controller upstairs and the regulator in the boiler downstairs. He used two shorter lengths, which he had to join at about the half-way point. He joined then using a conveniently-located junction box.

Being electrically paranoid, and out of curiosity, I checked the would-be "floating" cable with my meter. It was live at a solid 240 volts. The boiler technician came the next morning and went to the tank cupboard to connect up the cable. I rushed after him shouting that the boiler controller wire was live. He glanced back at me with a smirk of disbelief. I told him I had checked it with my volt meter. Still disbelieving, he watched me touch the prods of my meter on the wire-pair. A full 240 volts. He went white. He said that he would have gone straight in and touched the wires, probably with one hand on the earthed copper tank. He would have most probably have been electrocuted. He phoned the electrician. A blazing row ensued. The next day the electrician replaced the two pieces of cable with a full uninterrupted length. The electrician apologised.

This is why, despite any law to the contrary, I either *do* - or rigorously inspect - any wiring done in my house. If, as a result of professional negligence, I or any member of my family is electrocuted, a process of law would take place. The professional would be reprimanded in some way. But he would not be put to death. I or my family member would be dead. To make sure nobody dies is, to me, well worth the risk of flouting the law. The best solution nowadays would be to install solar sourced low voltage LED lighting, which would probably not come under any legal restrictions.

Additionally, the registered professional architect involved left one bedroom without any electricity sockets and located a light switch inside a wall cupboard in the kitchen. I had to pay extra for the bedroom sockets to be put in and for the light switch to be re-positioned outside the cupboard. My experience with [medical professionals](#) required a whole series of essays, which even then only covered a part of the story. Other quack institutionally registered professionals I have suffered have

included a large accountancy firm that couldn't add up and financial advisors who locked up my money in products I did not understand.

Understandably, I worship neither corporate power nor formal professionalism. And I think that, people who do, only have themselves to blame for their sorry lives of slavery, exploitation, uncertainty and stress.

## Conclusion

Authority works well within a nuclear family comprising a couple and their children. But on the scale of a modern State, it cannot be other than oppressive. This is because, systemically speaking, *authority* is not a scalable concept.

It is like the proverbial log laid across a small stream. It works well as a small foot bridge. But if you wish to bridge the Firth of Forth, you cannot simply use a scaled-up log. Such a log would break under its own weight because the material characteristics of wood do not scale. It would need to have a different structure formed in a different material, as with the famous Forth Bridge.



Likewise, if you wish to govern a society, you cannot use the hierarchical parental system of the nuclear family. As evinced by the condition of the world today, if you apply a scaled-up version of hierarchical parental control to a large population, it becomes dysfunctional. For the vast majority, it does not promote a just and stimulating state of being. It simply doesn't work.

For a society to be just and stimulating for all its members, it must necessarily be founded upon an entirely different type of human relationship, defined by an *egalitarian protocol* through which peers may peacefully and constructively interact. Such a society would be inherently self-governing. Authority would be unnecessary.

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