

The Road to Hell, and How We Got There by Dave Pollard

Keith Farnish tells us we need to get angry before we will be moved to act to undermine the Industrial Civilization that is killing our planet². Then, he says, we need to focus our attention on the “Tools of Disconnection” – the means by which the perpetrators of our disconnection from our intuition, our positive emotions, our senses, each other, and all-life-on-Earth keep us disorganized, confused, fearful and dependent. Our undermining actions, he asserts, should be aimed at accelerating the inevitable demise of industrial civilization with minimal suffering, balancing the risks to ensure we don’t get caught, and acting strategically to get maximum impact from our actions. The sooner we precipitate civilization’s fall, Keith says, the sooner its damage can be minimized, the sooner nature can begin to restore balance to our world, and the sooner the survivors of collapse can begin creating a better, sustainable way to live.

So who are these “perpetrators”? They are the private and public corporations that depend on endless accelerating use of resources, production, consumption and waste, and which, as the book *The Corporation* explains, they pursue with pathological and amoral single-mindedness.

They are the politicians, judges, lawyers, police and military forces that, working hand-in-hand with these wealthy corporations, create and enforce laws and wage wars in their own self-interest, not ours. They are the media, the shills, the advertisers and PR firms, the education system and the bought economists and junk scientists who perpetrate the propaganda that everything is fine and there is no other, better way to live than industrial civilization.

And they are the religions, the therapists, and the techno-salvationists (“human ingenuity and invention will solve all our problems”) who are complicit in reinforcing the propaganda by telling us that it is our fault as individuals when things are bad, and that with necessary struggle, industrial civilization will prevail and make things better for all of us despite our personal weaknesses and sins.

The combined economic, political, media and psychological power and hegemony of these four groups of perpetrators constitute the self-reinforcing and completely uncritical and totalitarian system that Mussolini dreamed of – it was labelled Fascism but he called it Corporatism. Its task is to completely subjugate and control the populace, to brainwash them so completely that there is no opposition, no dissent, just a perpetual machine of unthinking monolithic human production and consumption.

Through its political messages, its advertising, its scare tactics, its lies, its withholding of information, its theft and violence, its indoctrination, its creation of false choices and false rewards, it keeps us in its thrall, disconnected. Each of us an obedient part of the system.

But what is this “system”? Can it really control us that effectively in this world where often-conflicting information and ideas are ubiquitous and free? And why would so many people – not just psychopaths like Mussolini – willingly become perpetrators of such a system?

The progressive-liberal worldview holds that we are all, at heart, innocent and good. Surely, then, the perpetrators of this terrible, unsustainable, teetering system had the best of intentions? They must have meant well, didn’t they?

This worldview also holds that getting angry isn’t the answer; that we need to appeal to people rationally, with the facts. The truth, we believe, cannot long be suppressed, and when people learn it, they will, if this system is so bad and brutal, instinctively work to dismantle it and replace it with one in the common good, a truly democratic system.

Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert, author of the book *Stumbling on Happiness*, provides some clues on why this doesn’t happen. Our large brains, he argues, have made us too smart for our own good. Our brains can now construct their own reality, completely disconnected from ‘real’ reality, and live happily in that illusory place, in effect mistaking it for ‘real’ reality. And, as Eckhart Tolle has explained, an unintended consequence of the evolution of our complex brains is that we now have an ego, capable of inventing and believing stories that provoke negative emotional responses which in turn produce in our heads other stories. This vicious cycle of negative intellectual and emotional activity in our brains, disconnected from what is really happening here, now, has made us all mentally ill.

So two paradoxical consequences of our large brains are that (i) we can be fooled and

emotionally manipulated by misinformation in a way no other creature can, and (ii) even if we are one of the perpetrators of this misinformation, we can fool ourselves into believing it, especially if that belief is reinforced by others who credulously accept the same beliefs.

Despite all of this, despite the fact that we are all in a sense perpetrators, all so disconnected and confounded by our egos and the imaginary realities our brains have invented that we don't 'really' know what is real or what we are doing, Keith is correct about what must be done: We must act to dismantle industrial civilization. But how can we do that when we are so hobbled, so handicapped, so caught up in this vicious system of our own making?

First, we have to inform ourselves about what is really happening (by reading and studying thoroughly and by thinking critically and challenging everything) and what our 'real' options are (by studying history and reading both fiction and radical non-fiction). Second, we have to get angry enough at the system that is killing us all (it doesn't much matter who the perpetrators are, or if we are ourselves perpetrators or complicit) to shake ourselves out of our passivity and unawareness and act. Third, we need to influence and educate others. Fourth, we need to become models, finding radically alternative ways to live and modelling those behaviours. And fifth, we need to reskill ourselves to facilitate both the work we must do to dismantle industrial civilization, and the capacity to live good lives during and after civilization's collapse.

This is a tall order. The first step towards well-being is to appreciate the challenge we face, and the first step to doing that is to understand the Tools of Disconnection and how they keep us cowed, and dependent.

1) Reward Us for Being Good Consumers

Description:

It is fairly easy to make civilized people happy, or at least give people the sense they are happy; they just have to be primed in the right way. What is key to creating this malleable state of mind is making people believe from a very early age that "happiness" is something far more superficial than having a deep and genuine state of contentment and well-being. The marketing of consumer goods and services ("experiences") taps into the desire for happiness through colourful and positive images reflecting enjoyment of whatever is being marketed; this is compounded by continual messaging through the mass media that consumption in general is a "good thing", and the consumption of anything new and fashionable is likely to lead to improvement in our quality of life. This powerful message is easily transferred to the next generation via parents and peers who are already primed.

Identification:

At a personal level, this can be recognised through being aware of anything that makes you feel better, yet is clearly a product of the consumer culture: so, for instance, if you are watching or listening to an advertisement and begin to feel happy, regardless of the source of the advertisement then that Tool is in operation. The same can be observed on other people who are showing signs of happiness where no source beyond that which has been manufactured is evident. The popularity of shopping malls, cinemas, amusement parks and package holidays are further evidence that the genuine need for happiness has been subsumed into industrial-scale consumption: we go shopping to "feel good" now.

Consequences:

The two main consequences of consumption happiness are, first, we become less inclined to seek deeper, more satisfying forms of happiness from the real world – such as the enjoyment of dipping our toes into cool water on a hot day – instead seeking out disconnected sources of "happiness" through material consumption. The second, less direct, consequence is that increased consumption through our desire to be happy, leads to environmental and social degradation, particularly where the things we consume are produced, powered from and disposed of.

Perpetrators:

A plethora of parties directly involved in commerce, including consumer journalists, advertising executives, marketing professionals, salespeople, travel agents and product developers are all ensuring we feel good about our consumer habits.

2) Make Us Feel Good for doing Trivial Things

Description:

In order to distract from the important it is necessary to emphasise the trivial. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in the way environmentalism (or rather, its featherlight alter-ego) is imposed upon civilized people. I say “imposed” because in the absence of the prevalent faux-environmental message it is all too easy to see the bigger picture; and that is dangerous to the system. For example, if I approach a local authority with a desire to live in a more sustainable manner, the chances of being told to go off-grid (self sufficient in energy and other services), grow and forage my own food, and stop buying consumer goods are slim to none (and Slim just left town). On the other hand I will happily be exhorted to recycle and change my light bulbs. In the case of a motor company, I will not be told to stop driving, I will be advised to pump my tyres up or buy a more economical (new) car. A supermarket would never recommend buying local produce and scrapping processed food, but will have an ample supply of branded “bags for life” because we all know carrier bags are the greatest threat to life on Earth. A mainstream environmental group, such as the Sierra Club or Friends of the Earth, will say that real change can be achieved through political lobbying rather than undermining the political system itself. Follow the advice of the system and you will never have to worry about the big things, for the small things are what we are told really matter.

Identification:

The most obvious clue to this Tool’s usage is the source of information: in conversation even an oil executive will admit we are screwed if we keep using oil; but on a much less personal level every single instrument of Industrial Civilization has its own set of pro-forma “environmental” messages that are designed to ensure our behaviour remains just the same as always. No advice that emanates from the mouthpiece of a government, a corporation, mass-market media or even a mainstream environmental NGO³ is going to adversely affect the industrial system. You can also use your instincts: if it feels too easy or trivial, or “against nature” then you are probably on the right track.

Consequences:

Sweating the small stuff is akin to putting a Band Aid on an amputation stump. Not only is it too little, it is almost certainly too late, because it is in the interest of vested corporate interests to keep us totally ignorant until they really have no choice but to provide some relevant information which, as shown, is of no substance anyway. By exploiting our civilized aversion to conscious effort and major change, we are made impotent – and content with it. Meanwhile, Industrial Civilization continues to destroy the global ecosystem.

Perpetrators:

Almost everyone is party to this by virtue of passing on the advice given by authority – it feels good to; however, we can single out politicians at all levels, corporate public relations and mainstream environmental journalists and NGOs as some of the worst offenders.

3) Give Us Selected Freedom

Description:

At a psychological level, freedom is always relative: a tiger brought up in a cage will see the cage as its domain and feel as comfortable as any half-tonne feline can in that situation; but a tiger captured and forced to live in a cage will be deeply troubled, driven insane by the limitations of the enclosure. Thus, brought up in a “democracy” where freedom equates to voting for one or other variety of entirely similar political parties, we express that “freedom” by voting – abstention is seen as an act of rebellion and a failure to utilise the freedom to vote. Similarly, we are free to protest, as long as that march or rally falls between the lines set by the police and the rules which they enforce⁴: the level of “freedom” varies depending on where that protest is executed, which in some parts of the world, notably China, may well be the punishment for such illegality. But as a writer, a former protestor and a former voter, my freedoms only stretch to the point where the system perceives a threat. I may have more leeway in how I can express myself than the equivalent person in China, but within the confines of the society’s rules I am no nearer to creating change.

Identification:

The truest test of freedom is to try and break the rules. Assuming one abides by Common Law (a simple protection of individual and collective liberty) and Natural Law (within which the natural world operates) the limits of “freedom” will quickly become apparent the moment your actions

impede the ability of the industrial system to control people and upend the natural ecological balance. Brought up in the same version of civilization for life, it is often difficult to recognise where the boundaries lie, especially when we are constantly told that people from Nation X have to be “freed from tyranny”, or rules exist to “protect us from those who would remove our freedoms”. Those phrases alone should start alarm bells ringing.

Consequences:

If we already feel free then we have no desire to extend our freedoms; we remain within the legal confines of the system we occupy, and thus do not threaten the system. Disconnected from any genuine opportunity to choose the outcome of our lives we are never likely to challenge that which, in reality, keeps us chained to the Culture of Maximum Harm.

Perpetrators:

Anyone involved in the establishment or enforcement of legislation is responsible for setting the boundaries of freedom. Most civil rights groups operate within these boundaries, and exacerbate the problem by calling for incremental freedoms rather than absolute ones.

4) Pretend We Have A Choice

Description:

The buzzword of politicians who subscribe to the philosophy of free-market capitalism (and very few don’t) is “choice”; but as per the trivial advice we are offered by representatives of the system, that choice only lies within a very narrow band occupied by the existing options the system offers us. Thus, we have a “choice” of television channels, a “choice” of washing liquids, a “choice” of cars and a “choice” of oil companies from which to buy our fuel. Notice that the moment any radical (or rather, less narrow) choice is offered – such as private healthcare becoming optional – then the system closes ranks, ensuring such choice is curtailed to the degree the system will tolerate. Should we, for instance, choose to educate our children in a way the system doesn’t approve of, then the definition of choice becomes rapidly evident – as we will see later in this chapter.

Identification:

Most people or institutions offering real choice, i.e. between things that are significantly different, do not use the word “choice”; fewer still harp on about how much choice is being offered. This verbosity is synonymous with the nature of those offering the “choice” – in other words those that would gain most from our choice being strictly limited are going to be those that pretend what they are offering is real choice. If this sounds confusing, it is: you are meant to be confused; otherwise you might recognise that what you are being offered isn’t a choice at all.

Consequences:

As with faux-freedom, a continual lack of choice pretending to be genuine choice conditions humans to readily accept this pretence. Thus, we end up content with the few options on offer to us. Such conditioning is commonplace throughout the Tools of Disconnection; it breaks down our ability to resist, leaving a compliant populace who readily become excited by a new games console, but failing to recognise a life beyond just playing games. A very powerful and subtle tool indeed.

Perpetrators:

Whilst ably assisted by the usual crew of marketers and salespeople, the mindset of accepting pseudo-choice derives from elite members of civilized society who want to ensure compliance with normal civilized behaviour – specifically, the consumption of material goods. This is channelled through politicians of all types via the mass media (“You’ve never had it so good!”) and corporate executives via the advertising machine (“The greenest SUV yet!”)

5) Turn Us Against One Another

Description:

How do you get two good friends to argue? In a disconnected world it’s not that difficult: bring up which football team is better, or ask how bad you think climate change will get. If you want a real scrap then try abortion rights or religion. Bestriding all of these in the divisiveness stakes is politics which, certainly in the USA and Latin America, encompass all of the above except perhaps football teams (although spend a few hours in Glasgow and you might think again). It is in the best interests of the system to divide us along grounds that in sober discourse would seem spurious at best, dangerous at worst. Take the so-called difference between the “left” and the “right” in the party

politics of any industrialised nation. There is barely any difference between the various mainstream parties when it comes down to brass tacks – they all support large-scale commerce, top-down authoritarian power and the continuation of the destructive industrial system. But here's the trick: in order to ensure we don't reconnect with the real world – that which lies outside socio-political triviality – we are divided into artificial “parties”, “sects”, “factions” and “fanbases” that seem to give us individuality, but actually just keep us fascinated by our day-to-day squabbles.

Identification:

Wherever you see division of ideas, and that division on closer inspection appears to be just different shades of the same paradigm then you have observed disconnection through division. The idea of Divide and Rule is ancient in civilized terms, but it is only fairly recently, in the age of information overload, that politicians have been able to squeeze differences out of common ground. A recent “consultation” on airport expansion in the UK brilliantly exploited our civilized NIMBY attitude by focusing on which location would be best for new runways, rather than whether expansion was a good thing in itself. Looking at the bigger picture it was easy to spot the tactics going on; but unless you do look at the big picture it is hard to see you are being turned against someone you would otherwise share common ground with.

Consequences:

Localism and community are, as we will see, vital components in reconnecting humanity with the real world; but in this case if we fail to see the bigger picture and recognise how much we are being divided on spurious grounds then we will fail to see how much we have in common. We will remain disconnected from each other – be wedged further apart in many cases – and thus our only common ground will be with the authoritarian figures and institutions that pretend to speak for us. They speak for no one but themselves.

Perpetrators:

In the short to medium term, the leading perpetrators of Divide and Rule are the leaders and enthusiastic supporters of the various cultural divisions. Too many to list here, but as examples we could use Catholics vs Anglicans, Republicans vs Democrats, Sunnis vs Shi'ites, Barcelona supporters vs Real Madrid supporters, Barbie consumers vs Bratz/Moxie consumers; the list is morphing constantly as people's loyalties and beliefs shift. The real perpetrators, though, are the commercial powerhouses of the industrial world who use our natural tribal instincts for their long-term financial gain.

6) Sell Us A Dream

Description:

This is, along with Abuse Us, perhaps the most superficial of all the Tools, yet the simple mechanics of advertising continue to maintain a powerful hold over people in all walks of civilized life. More savvy Consumers (I use the word “savvy” with some irony) are learning to see through mass advertising, particularly television, radio, newspaper and billboard forms, which has brought forth two interesting effects. First, in more mature industrial economies advertising to create consumer demand, and thus keep people dependent upon the industrial economy, is becoming more technologically advanced and individually tailored. Second, the more traditional forms of advertising are finding their niche in burgeoning industrial economies, such as India, China and the Middle East. This two-pronged attack on our natural reticence to waste our assets on things we don't need is working wonders, with markets continuing to grow in all parts of the industrial economy as we eagerly swallow the dream of mass consumption.

Identification:

It's advertising – easy to spot, sometimes tricky to recognise as pure marketing, but ubiquitous in almost every facet of civilized life. If someone is encouraging you to buy something you would not otherwise buy then that is the system selling you a dream.

Consequences:

As with Reward Us for Being Good Consumers, the consequences are a combination of living the life the industrial system approves of, rather than the life we would live in the absence of ubiquitous and – let's be honest here – very clever advertising, and the continual degradation of the global ecology as a direct result of this consumption.

Perpetrators:

Anyone who makes money out of our buying things we would otherwise not buy, or encourages us to do the same is a perpetrator of this highly destructive and blunt Tool. Thus, everyone in the advertising and marketing industry; anyone involved in corporate-funded media, including “liberal” publications that carry advertising; anyone who provides us with the means to make such unnecessary purchases, thus the entire retail banking and loans industry, along with those that enforce the recollection of the resulting debt.

7) Exploit Our Trust

Description:

This Tool is more accurately (and verbosely) described as “Exploit Our Trust in Authority through Imposed Hierarchy”, for the genuine trust one may have for a close friend or relative, or a legitimate leader is something we would not want to subvert. Unfortunately that level of genuine trust is rare in the atomised, divisive societies that are part of Industrial Civilization. What we have instead are figures of “authority” we are trained, from our very first exposure to hierarchy, to trust implicitly. Thus, we trust police officers, teachers, managers, some politicians (those that have the same colour rosettes as us) and the people who operate in the rarefied levels way above our daily awareness – the political and corporate elites.

Public trust in authority is well documented, such as in the experiments of Stanley Milgram, but is not actually an evolved part of human behaviour: we *learn* to trust authority through the presence of imposed hierarchy, which makes us more willing to carry out activities – such as operating highly destructive commercial machinery, aiming and firing missiles at non-combatants, or “merely” taking our part in the industrial machine as an enthusiastic worker – that would otherwise be considered inhuman.

Identification:

Wherever there is an imposed authority structure in place – rather than the kind of authority that has been earned by mutual understanding – then it is almost certain that trust is being exploited. It is important to always be aware of the difference between earned and imposed trust and while it may be disingenuous to distrust someone simply because you have no personal experience of their attaining a particular status, it is thoroughly sensible to question all forms of authority. In the Culture of Maximum Harm, the vast majority of authority is unearned, and exists to maintain that culture.

Consequences:

The personal consequences of trust exploitation are complex: not only are we highly likely to accept the words and deeds of a far wider range of individuals and institutions than without this Tool in place, we are less able to build close trust relationships of the sort that are essential for maintaining self-sufficient communities – our “trust radar” is all out of kilter. The net effect of this is we willingly work as part of the most voracious entity on Earth, effectively contributing to its destructive potential. The perhaps more tragic side-effect of this (although possibly intentional) is our inability to build communities that depend on genuine trust.

Perpetrators:

We all take part in this exploitation if we are part of any hierarchical system: be that within a corporation or even just a small company that has a management structure; a political and judicial system that assumes authority through application of legislation; or a family that imposes authority simply by virtue of physical size and strength.

8) Lie to Us

Description:

We could describe everything promulgated by a system that seeks to disconnect us from the real world as a lie. There are big lies and there are small lies, and often it is impossible to tell the difference between them unless you know the endgame. Perhaps among the smaller lies – albeit having an impact far beyond its stature – is the act of Greenwashing. Essentially, when something is actually more harmful to the natural environment than it is claimed to be then greenwashing is taking place. This activity is so common as to be routine in corporate advertising and promotion, not least because superficial acts of “greenness” are commercially beneficial. It is not just corporations that lie about their ecological credentials.

Passing upwards (or perhaps downwards) through an enormous slough of state and industry sponsored lies, we arrive at a lie that underpins the commercial behaviour of Industrial Civilization; the lie that has driven public opinion for at least the last 100 years, and has contributed to virtually every state-sponsored war not attributable to religion, prior to that. This is The Big Lie:

Economic Growth is a Good Thing.

There is not space to unravel the reasons this is a lie, except to say – wars aside – that all systematic environmental harm along with uncountable human atrocities have been committed in the embrace of this lie. It is seen as normal to accumulate wealth, as an individual, as a city, as a nation, as an entire species: though quite how *all* of humanity can become richer on a finite Earth is never addressed. Simply, economic growth is a fundamental part of the civilized package, and Moloch help us if we fail to appreciate that!⁵

The lie of Economic Growth is personified in a raft of institutional messages: from the positive note given to rises in corporate profits by the mass media, to the negative PR that emerges from business in relation to any social measure that might threaten growth. The lie of Economic Growth is justified with reference to all sorts of things *not* having economic growth would impact, such as our Standard of Living and the level of consumer choice offered by modern society (note the irony here). Subtlety is rarely the order of the day, but subtlety is unnecessary when the lie has been swallowed so completely by a population.

Identification:

Putting aside the sheer tackiness of greenwashing – if something appears too good to be true then it is – the underlying lie of Economic Growth is clear, and its identification is equally so. Getting into the mindset from which such an integral part of our daily lives is recognised to be pure corporate propaganda is another matter entirely: that requires a level of de-programming that can only be achieved by undermining the message itself. As an exercise, watch and listen out for the Big Lie in everything you do for one day: it will come as a shock. Regular, eyes-open exposure to the Big Lie is not particularly cathartic, but as a way of getting angry it certainly helps!

Consequences:

In contrast to the Tool of Disconnection, “Make Us Feel Good for Doing Trivial Things”, institutional lies exploit our natural receptiveness to large scale human issues such as security and good health, presented in the context of *only* being possible in a healthy economy (more irony). In doing so the real big ticket items – the ones that are the result of the industrial economy – like the wholesale poisoning of watercourses, the systematic removal of natural forests and the destruction of indigenous, non-civilized cultures, are perceived to be less important. As our priorities change, so does our behaviour – we become slaves to a message. The outcome is that we only find ourselves able to respond to what the system tells us is important, and neatly ignore what the system has wrought upon the wider world.

Perpetrators:

The main perpetrators of institutional lies, from the smallest act of greenwashing to the monumental mind meld required to embrace infinite economic growth are the great institutional orifices: the political system in its entirety, the corporate PR and marketing industries, and the mass media – both state and corporate controlled (although there is little to distinguish the two). Conspiracy is intrinsic to lying, and the acceptance of such lies on such a grand scale; but the effort of maintaining the conspiracy between these bodies is well worth it. Once we have been sold the lies convincingly then keeping everyone “on message” is relatively simple: just keep lying.

9) Scare Us

Description:

Lies and fear intertwine deeply in the civilized world. The Big Lie described earlier utilises a range of tactics and allies to maintain and, in newly industrialised nations, strengthen its grip on our psyche – and to a certain extent, fear comes into this. The mere act of threatening economic collapse or even just stagnation is enough to pack us all off to the shops in obedient traffic queues. Turns out that most of the more persuasive forms of lie utilise fear.

It is no surprise civilized humans have, throughout history, fallen foul to such monumental

scaremongering tactics as referring to native African people as nothing more than Savages who must be educated in the ways of the Civilized Man; justifying the exploitation of vast areas of land by imperial powers through a fear of other nations' "greed"; the demonisation of everyone with left-leaning politics as Communists, Socialists and (yes, this strikes fear into people) Liberals; and not forgetting the mass hysteria whereby anyone who is less than sympathetic to the industrial West is labelled a Terrorist. It is through the application of scare tactics that people who might not be so vulnerable to simple persuasion are brought "on side". Given the effectiveness of this Tool one is led to wonder why it is not used more widely: I can only suppose that at the heart of most of the other Tools also lies an element of fear, whether of not being seen as a success or of being accused of abnormal behaviour. We are social animals and we do like to conform to whatever is normal: it takes a brave person to step out of their comfort zone.

Identification:

By their nature, scare tactics appear as the truth, albeit wrapped around a grenade with the pin just hanging in place. It is important to recognise that such imposed fears have a downward trajectory. True, once an institutional lie based on fear becomes embedded in the culture then you are far more likely to hear it from your peers than figures or instruments of authority; but certainly at their early stages these ideas emerge from the usual institutional mouthpieces: politicians, the mass media, Business Leaders⁶ and those who use fear to promulgate belief in something that is supposed to be all loving and all caring:

However, if you do not listen to me or obey all these commands, and if you break my covenant by rejecting my decrees, treating my regulations with contempt, and refusing to obey my commands, I will punish you. I will bring sudden terrors upon you—wasting diseases and burning fevers that will cause your eyes to fail and your life to ebb away.

...If in spite of all this you still refuse to listen and still remain hostile toward me, then I will give full vent to my hostility. I myself will punish you seven times over for your sins. Then you will eat the flesh of your own sons and daughters. I will destroy your pagan shrines and knock down your places of worship. I will leave your lifeless corpses piled on top of your lifeless idols, and I will despise you.⁷

Let's face it, if an idea has genuine credibility then why would it need to be pronounced in such a frightening way?

Consequences:

The natural response to fear is not the same as the response to aggression (see "Abuse Us"), for in the face of fear there is little to fight except our own state of mind. In the event of a genuine, tangible threat greater than us the evolved response is to escape; which is why the instigators of this Tool of Disconnection create let-outs: we don't need to run because they will keep us safe from whatever is the threat *de jour*. Consequently, we stagnate – fall into a behavioural pattern we feel will keep us safe, not realising that all we are really keeping safe is the success of the industrial machine.

Perpetrators:

Among the vast supporting cast available to the civilized elite for promulgating fear are newspaper journalists, television pundits and a host of lowly politicians on the greasy pole to power. However, a culturally-embedded fear, such as the need for a "War Against Terror" is just as likely to be propagated by people you have day-to-day contact with; including yourself, if you are party to such scaremongering.

10) Abuse Us

Description:

If you aren't scared enough then you have to be hurt. This is not just an unfortunate side-effect of your failure to follow the rules of civilization; it is a fundamental part of the nature of civilization. Abuse is endemic across every social class, every political colour, every institution and cultural subdivision of the world we recognise as normal. Yet, despite its intrinsic nature it only truly rears its head when we threaten to upset one of the numerous flows of money and power that keep it functioning. At that point, if you have not been scared off first, then violence – real violence, rather than "violence" as defined by those in power, and reported by the mass media – follows. This is

deemed acceptable. As Derrick Jensen puts it:

*Civilization is based upon a clearly defined and widely accepted yet often unarticulated hierarchy. Violence done by those higher on the hierarchy to those lower down is nearly always invisible, that is, unnoticed. When it is noticed, it is fully rationalized. Violence done by those lower on the hierarchy to those higher is unthinkable, and when it does occur it is regarded with shock, horror, and the fetishization of the victims.*⁸

When a member of the public, taking part in a protest is beaten by a police officer with a side-arm baton, then that act is protected by the hierarchy in which the police officer operates: context dictates the beating was a rational act of self defence. When a similar, or lesser, act is carried out by a member of the public upon a police officer then that act defies hierarchy: thus it is condemned loudly and continually by all who have a voice, even the majority of those involved in the protest itself.

Identification:

Such have civilized humans become conditioned to accept this casual application of violence in the face of opposition – in the face of attempts to gain liberty, to connect once again with something that is not imposed by a hierarchy – that identification of violence as a Tool of Disconnection has, perversely, become simple. An act of aggression that is not categorised as “violent” by the mass media is most likely to be an oppressive action; something designed to keep people in their place. We can thus recognise systemic abuse by the fact that it is not regarded as abusive!

Consequences:

If we are able to accept abuse as part of a just society⁹ then what is clearly an ethically unsustainable act becomes normalised. Part and parcel of life in a family dominated by one or more abusive parents or partners is the normalisation of abuse: it is no longer reported; it is tolerated, even welcomed in the most extreme cases. The abused become incapable of fighting back. The ripple of abuse spreads out to all parts of society: we, the abused, may become the abusers. In effect, we become disconnected from our ethical selves and no longer see people and the wider natural world as victims: abuse is just business as usual, so we stop fighting back.

Perpetrators:

Primary among the institutional abusers are those that directly inflict “security” on behalf of the corporate and political elite: military personnel, police officers, private security guards and other related enforcers. However, this is not enough to create the conscious acceptance of abuse; that requires a more subtle imposition of hierarchy, particularly patriarchal hierarchy. Thus, it is those that teach the rules of civilized society – the schoolteachers, the clergy, historians, and yet again the mass media, among others – who help make all of us abusers by proxy, and willing to assist with the disconnection process.