



The Problems  
of  
Separation

essays  
& diatribes

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## **An Excuse for All Time.**

It appears we're all happy to have excuses but not so happy to receive, or to have to give, explanations for these excuses.

Why is this so? Why indeed ... Here I'd like to say that it appears to me that an excuse is not, and cannot be, the same thing as an explanation. It appears to me, in fact, that an excuse requires an explanation. If it's to be an adequate and dignified response, then an excuse should never be given without an explanation. And this says to me, that we should avoid the use of an excuse altogether and instead, just give an explanation.

Excuse is a negative and explain is a positive. The explanation may not be quite correct, or in fact, it may be an outright fallacy or a fantasy, it may be given in ignorance but it is still a positive in that it allows the dignity of an answer to the person that the explanation is being given to. An excuse is self justifying and self serving, it's like a slap in the face to those that have asked for, and therefore deserve an explanation.

To be asked to explain is to be treated with respect. To be asked for an excuse is automatically a put down, as if the individual asking for said excuse has already decided that one will have no adequate explanation for their question. That's not to say that an explanation won't be considered to be an adequate excuse, but it should be seen as a positive answer and not as a justification.

We live in an age where excuses are rife. Everyone has an excuse .. not to do things so much, as an excuse *for not doing things*. This NeoLiberal society, in this age without passion, has embraced so called reasons not to do things. It's the age of passing the buck. It's the age of butt covering. Always somebody else's fault or somebody else's responsibility. Excuses are given where explanation is required. In fact, in this new world, more often than not it is an excuse that is desired - something with which to cover one's butt, something that can be passed on. It appears that as long as your butt is covered then all is well .. and it's now left to, or passed on to, the next human as a cover for theirs. The problem with this however is that it's a nasty game of deceit, self deceit and moral

vagrancy. Sooner or later that ole buck has to stop somewhere and it has a high propensity to boomerang.

Once again, I see it as being about value. Integrity is a positive value and there should be no place where the positive value of integrity can, or should, be downgraded by a self justifying excuse. Any excuse given in lieu of an explanation is automatically weak and makes a fine target for that unleashed boomerang. While the excuse may be accepted, it doesn't have the power of an explanation, excuses are temporary flighty things which dissolve in examination. Put to the test an excuse is very rarely worth the effort it takes to use it.

It's true that many times an explanation is considered to be an unsatisfactory answer to the query and much of the time an explanation is the last thing that the questioner would like to hear, but it does allow both parties the opening to begin their interregations through mutual trust, rather than deceit. An explanation can fit the bill as an excuse whereas an excuse can never suffice as an explanation.

So before I ramble on further I think I'd better give the definitions, of course as I see them, of these words as ideas. They are from dictionaries, assorted dictionaries, so perhaps a discerning reader may find that my boiled down definitions contain within them an excuse for my interpretations ...

Excuse.

- to pardon or overlook a fault or offence. To attempt to free from blame; to seek to remove blame from. As a reason or apology for error, or to minimise error or justify error. To release or dismiss from obligation .. to refrain from exacting or enforcing, to justify offence, neglect, failure.

Explain.

- to make plain or clear, understandable. To give meaning, reason for the cause or purpose of.

So, some wonderful excuses much loved in this Brave New World? One of my favourites, "it depends on from where you view the world". One look at this popular phrase and one should see that it's designed not to provide an explanation for anything, or rather, it's designed to provide

an excuse for everything. It's much favoured by politicians, petty law officers and would be kings ... It's as though, when used upon you, that you must have had some failure to get the view of their world from the place that they maintain you should view their world from .. and that therefore, there must be something wrong with you.

It's an interesting excuse, as it's never quite appreciated in return to the same extent as when it is given. It doesn't matter that the last thing in the world you would want to do is to view the world from such a position, or that it is impossible to get to the place from where this wonderful view is obtained ... It says that something about your view is wrong and that if you can't see that, then there is no point offering a dignified explanation and that this fob off is all you really deserve. It's our fault - the questioners fault - as we have not asked a question which deserves anything other than this broad nonsensical statement. It's a light slap in the face for our impertinence and it shows contempt for the explanation requested, as though its beneath requirement. Perhaps this statement should really be about the benefits of being able to view the world from such and such a place - but that may lead to further discussion and debate.

I've practiced with this excuse, not in real life of course, but as an experiment. A young philosopher I once knew, thought that it was a perfectly reasonable explanation to some of the great questions of life within the World of Man. I saw it was popular but I'd not thought of it as being adequate as either explanation or excuse, and so, one busy Easter weekend I decided I'd give it a go. Now I'm a childless human, for which of course I can give a perfectly good explanation, and my only excuse for being childless is luck but I'm not adverse to kids, I actually like them - I've had some great experience with kids and believe it or not, I too was once one ... And a not terribly well behaved one at that.

Anyway my experiment with this statement, as excuse and explanation, I held at a Lake Camp over a busy long weekend. I arrived early, was first in - so therefore best dressed as my dear old Mum likes to say - and placed my small camping contraption in as out of the way spot as was possible for me to still be able to enjoy the lake and the native birdlife. I must say here that I'd forgotten that it was a long weekend but even

then my little camping contraption takes up no more room than a large coffin, and due to my growing up a century ago, I still clung onto that old value of privacy and to my lifelong guide to "Do unto others as you would they do unto you, and to live & let live." It's not that I didn't know that there were others who didn't view the world from where I view it from, it's just that I thought that it would be obvious to others - particularly those with lots of small children - that my age would preclude me from both seeing the unbounded beauty of unfettered births and the appreciation of the neoliberal lullabies that apparently are so necessary to their nurture.

Within an hour of me setting up the crowds began to roll in - now this wasn't a singular crowd, it was made up of dozens of individuals whose only purpose it seems is to make a crowd - it's a big place the Lake, lots of room for all types of human without any real necessity of having to crowd out someone who, for instance, doesn't appear to be, nor wishes to be part of the crowd. Not so. Because neo-liberalism says that it's not your choice whether you wish to become part of the crowd - we have built a crowd and you will be part of it, like it or not - this appears to be the rule. I think it must be cheaper that way? Obviously the early arrivals all spread themselves out so that their little crowds would not have to offer up explanations for their positioning but after a little while in came those who for some excuse or other hadn't managed to get on the road at the time they knew they'd have to, especially if they intended to claim that great little spot they had last year, or a decade ago with the Grandma's Barron etc. Now these people come loaded with excuses. They have an excuse for every question or suggestion that is made to them by those of us that didn't think it necessary to come on down and enjoy the lake and wildlife loaded with explanations for our enjoyment. That's my spot, we've always been here, they're children etc etc etc. So as my privacy was curtailed, as I withdrew into my coffin, and as my light and dignified music was overwhelmed by their beat boxes, and once I'd finally realised, that neo-liberalism would allow me no reasonable explanation to maintain my privacy and peace, I began to remember some excuses.

To be honest it all started when the young fella with his three wives and forty children asked if I could move my coffin so that he could put his

awning pole guy rope out properly ... Protect his little kiddies from getting sunburn etc. I stupidly made a suggestion; I suggested that before another tribe of teenagers arrived, that perhaps he should move his encampment over a few metres so that not only would his guy rope now play out properly but my old coffin would still give me a little privacy. Wow! Did the shit then hit the fan! Inconsiderate old bastard I am! Who was I to say that he's not allowed to share the quiet spot I had arrived early enough to bury myself in. After all, it is the spot one of the Grandma Barrons always brought him to when he was but a twinkling .. can I not see that he's eschewed the use of contraceptives, that one of his wives can't make it to the toilet without driving there - every 5mins, that this stuff, this noise he calls music, is actually a lot better than that stuff of mine, which no one can hear any longer anyway over the bubbling away of one of the myriad newborn bank accounts he has in tow? Get a life he tells me, and testily knocks in his now shortened guy rope. I'm thinking ... Ah, here a fella that hasn't thought that his world may not look quite so good from the position I'm forced - at this moment - to view it from. Later, while all the babies are either sleeping, or drugged into a stupor by the deafening monotony of his music, I step over and ask him if he'd mind please turning the rubbish down so that some of us old folk, those of us who can still hear, can hear ourselves think. No, it's not 10pm yet he snaps! I then point out, as a way of excuse for my blatant inconsideration of his rights, that almost all of us over here, perhaps view this world from a different place than he does, that not only do we not like what him and his three wives call music but that it is too dammed loud for this place we all are sharing.

I have just made a declaration of war - I know it from experience - and I know it from the look in his eyes - he's not interested in the view of the world from where anyone else may view it, and not only that but I'd have to be a degenerate paedophile for suggesting that he, perhaps, should have paid a bit more attention to contraceptive theory when he was a younger man. (This *is* a suggestion I had made earlier.) My point here of course, was that neither the young fella nor us older folk found the 'alternative view of the world excuse' to be adequate .. in fact it magnified the hostility.

I admit, I did know that this excuse was not going to cut it - it never has -

I also knew that there was no possible explanation (other than the fact that I was a paedophile who didn't believe in contraception) that would have been sufficient to get this young fella to move his encampment to a more appropriate spot - perhaps to another lake ... Since this lake was a public place to be shared by everyone.

The 'alternative view of the world' as an excuse, or in fact as an explanation, doesn't seem to be a very dignified nor intelligent one. I think that it belongs in the same box as "because I said so." or "it's for your own good." ... And I think that that box should well and truly be kept shut because as an excuse for an explanation they are designed to create conflict where no conflict needs to exist. Old Julius Sumner Miller must be 'a rollin' in his grave'.

Now another one of my favourite new world excuses is 'we're all so busy these days' .. preceded usually, by an 'Oh I'm so sorry .. ' .

Lord how the world has tipped, what with all the labour saving devices and time saving technologies of this modern world, and all us humans with so much less to do - in the grand collective scheme of things - and what's more, its an excuse that's proffered upon the same old timescale as in the days of yore.

Have the principles of progress and humanity changed so much that we have to subject each other to this clap trap.

Thank god we managed to get all the worlds important infrastructure built before this age of Information and High Technology gave us the opportunity for this sort of excuse! It's amazing how, now that all the world happens inside little boxes or bubbles, that reality can even get the acknowledgement of an excuse. Once again, alas, it an excuse for not getting things done and on top of this, it's an excuse that is apparently set to defend our Integrity and Honour for not paying any attention to our Integrity & Honour.

This excuse is commonly given where the user has either plain forgotten or just couldn't have been bothered. They appear to think that there is an inherent nobility involved in busy .. that their busyness is a defence of their Integrity & Honour. It comes with the slap in the face that, 'well, you should have realised that I was going to be just too damned busy' to

care about things like Integrity or Honour - and perhaps it will come down to just that one day. But Integrity & Honour are quite good ideals and they shouldn't be dismissed in such a trifle. Especially when they are exactly the principles which most of us - even today - get our backs up over a challenge to. Most of us fall into an indignant rage and require subsequent scraping off our ceilings when challenged over our Integrity and Honour.

So, before my diatribe becomes an essay on Integrity & Honour, let's assume that I am giving the 'busy excuse' so I can build a couple of examples.

Lets assume a friend had asked me to meet her at some time and place, or that I'd been asked to get something ready - a document, maybe - for them at a particular time. When the time is due and I don't meet them or don't have the document ready and I offer up as an explanation, my excuse .. 'Oh, I'm so sorry, I'm just so busy these days.' Do I expect them to take my excuse as an adequate explanation?

My excuse is no explanation .. so I have already given them a light slap in the face. Yes, that should suffice. I was too busy so I just didn't come and meet you - like I said I would. Yes, I was too busy so I judged that your document wasn't really as important as you felt it was. Yes? Wonderfully impotent as an excuse. Says, well I've made the judgement that your time and your life isn't important enough to effect my opinion of my Integrity and of my Honour. This 'busy excuse' says; my Integrity and my Honour really don't mean anything to me; your petty needs and wants are never as important as mine; you old fool, you just don't understand the world anymore, there is so much more going on in it, and everything is so much more important than in your time.

Perhaps we were a lazy bunch of sods for all those eons, but look what we built - and built to last - with our own hands and minds. And it was our defence, in real terms, of the precious principles of Integrity and Honour that got them built. Not piles of fools gold, wasted time, blinkered rosy view points and proffered excuses.

The busyness excuse says one thing loudly, "I am a world unto myself and I dont require you to operate" - One hopes! One hopes ...



Why is it that we call progress a world of excuses not to do things? Why is social progress measured in rush, in not having adequate time for ourselves let alone for others?

What is it we fear from explanations so much that we offer up excuses in their place?

What we fear, methinks, is justification for petty self-interest .. and an excuse can offer no justification. It can't be challenged. It has no reason to it, no testable fact which could be disputed. An excuse is an empty thing that can neither be filled, nor in fact, emptied further. Excuses are things that wrap up life in meaningless deceit and as our modern life thrives on things both meaningless and deceitful, an excuse is seen as a far more profitable thing than any explanation that could take its place.

Neo-liberalism likes an excuse more than an explanation because an explanation stops the buck. To accept excuses gives the apparent justification that it's okay to proffer one in return. Excuses are dishonest. They should not be asked for and they should not be given.

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