

## The Overuse and Misuse of 'Appeal to Authority'

The author of this article is the winner of the 1977-north Jaffa gas station human poetry award. In 1848, the author received the Archie Bunker prestigious and noble prize for engineering. Finally, in 140,000,000 BC, the author received the Tyrannosaurus Rex award for surviving the greatest amount of dinosaur attacks with limbs intact. That is why you should accept and believe every word that the author writes in this article, about the social-psychological phenomenon of Appeal to Authority.<sup>1</sup>

Let us start again. Logic supported by evidence, should be our number one tool in reaching an acceptable version of the objective [factual] Truth. Objective Truth does not rely on human interpretation or interference; it is absolute in its nature, everlasting, and forms the very basis of existence<sup>2</sup>. If a tree falls in the forest with no human around as a witness, it still fell. We can come to such a conclusion based on physical evidence on the tree and its surroundings and based on other trees' position and what we know [our experience] about the behavior of trees, gravity, the ground, the earth etc.

So when trying to get to the Truth of the matter should we rely on the physics professor, who knows more than most about gravity, electro-magnetic forces and can explain how and why the tree fell, or on the agriculture or tree expert that knows a lot about plant life and trees? What if the prime minister himself is of the definite opinion that the tree fell- should we listen to him or should we believe a farmer that claims he heard the tree fall

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<sup>1</sup> These statements have not been authorized by the FDA, CIA or FBI, FYI. I can tell you with authority that this paragraph was written cynically, and is not historically accurate.

<sup>2</sup> While it is true that quantum physics has shown that observation itself can change reality -these changes are at the very small levels of micro-particles and do not yet disprove the idea that our perceived reality exists independently of our consciousness. Likewise- the fact that some object's electromagnetic field changes if we touch it, does not prove that it is dependent on us to exist or is a figment of our imagination. Moreover, whether we live in a simulation, a holographic universe or some other 'non-source' reality, this is still what we are experiencing and we should be able to agree on basic-practical Truths.

from a mile away instead? Opinions are nice; everyone has them, but objective Truth 'bows' to no-one, be he the greatest so called expert or a the 'highest member of society'. Let us not rely on opinions, but on evidence, and when evidence is absent or unreachable, let us rely on logic. Finally, when all else fails [when evidence is unclear or unavailable and there is no direct witness testimony], we can ask others [so called 'experts'] for help in deciphering reality, but let us do it wisely, all the while not leaving our critical thinking skills behind.

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## 1.Misuse: Appeal to Authority as a Logical Fallacy

“There’s a mighty big difference between good, sound reasons and reasons that sound good.”

**William E. Vaughan [aka. Burton Hillis]**

Fallacies are arguments that can seem to make sense on the surface level, but are not actually based on solid logic<sup>3</sup>. The Latin name for the appeal to authority fallacy is “Argumentum ad Verecundiam”, meaning ‘an argument that appeals to the sense of modesty’. It was coined by John Locke to illustrate people who accept arguments by “higher-ups” [authority] because they are too modest to challenge these arguments based

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<sup>3</sup> “Appeal to Authority”, Philosophy Terms, <https://philosophyterms.com/appeal-to-authority/>

on their own knowledge<sup>4</sup>. Modesty is an important quality to have, while arrogance can be harmful. However, we should distinguish between arrogance and self-belief. We must believe in our inherent rights and great potentials, and thus in our ability know the Truth. In the words of Musashi- "All men are the same except for their belief in their own selves, regardless what others may think of them."

There are a few variations of the appeal to authority logical fallacy, which can be grouped into two categories. The first category of fallacies [We will call it "Appeal to Quantitative Generalization: No One or Everyone"] presents a vague, unclear picture of who exactly are the 'experts' [Appeal to Anonymous Authority], appeals to the authority of the majority [Appeal to Consensus], and presents a conceived consensus of experts that supposedly agree on the matter [False Consensus]. The second category consists of the logical fallacy ["Appeal to Irrelevant Authority"] that has three different types, and which people often use unknowingly, unaware of their faulty reasoning.

## Different 'Variants'<sup>5</sup> of the Appeal to Authority Fallacy

### Category 1 [Appeal to Quantitative Generalization: No One or Everyone]

#### A. Appeal to Consensus Authority: Social and Scientific

#### Consensus used as an appeal to authority logical fallacy

"Tell me Johnny, if all of your classmates would jump from the rooftop, would you jump too??"

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<sup>4</sup> Austin Cline, "Fallacies of Relevance: Appeal to Authority", ThoughtCo., April 01,2021, <https://www.thoughtco.com/logical-fallacies-appeal-to-authority-250336>

<sup>5</sup> The virus of lies, falsehood and the plague of corruption has many so-called 'variants'. Likewise, logical fallacies and other methods of falsehood come with different mutation or 'variants'.

Many of us live in democratic systems, where one of the underlying premises is that there is an advantage in relying on the majority opinion. While the majority opinion isn't always right, relying on it has a balancing affect, smoothing the extreme opinions at each end of the spectrum, as well as supposedly giving most people a better chance at happiness.

These are good ideas and history shows that other more extreme and less inclusive ideas often lead to much suffering and disaster. Nevertheless, world history and the history of science also shows that the consensus is often wrong and that relying too heavily on the rule and hegemony of the majority can also lead to dark places. Thus, a balanced and delicate approach is needed- the majority will naturally lead the way, but the opinions of minorities must be heard and valued and each case in study should be critically analyzed on its own merit first and foremost. A scientific or social consensus does not guarantee it being the objective Truth. The objective Truth is not chosen democratically or by the rule of the majority, it exists with or without human interruption; eternal, not bound by human interpretation of time.

The appeal to majority/consensus authority fallacy is committed when it is used to circumvent, overpower or avoid a logical discussion and objective analysis of an argument or opinion. It is often used with a bit of Ad-Hominem, 'sprinkled' on top, to add some flavor:

Moses: "I think that it is not a good idea to change our state laws in a way that would discriminate the X people, because A... B... C..."

Miriam:" The majority of legislators think otherwise and polls show that most [intelligent/patriotic etc.] people think the opposite of you. Who do you think you are, [Moses]?"

The argument itself was not addressed in any critical or logical way, it has been totally circumvented by the 'power of the majority' and the supposed inferiority [forced modesty] of the minority.

The argument of many minds ['processing power'] vs few [appeal to consensus authority] can be used [gently] without committing a logical fallacy if it is not used as a tool for suppression of critical thought, but as a separate argument. Nonetheless, it is best to keep its use to a minimum, because it carries with it the added subjective and anti-logical forces of cognitive biases derived from human beings' social nature-social psychology [the desire for conformity (and harmony)]<sup>6</sup>. Social cognitive biases such as groupthink, the halo effect, herd instinct and projection bias<sup>7</sup>, come into play when appealing to the power of the many [the herd], and diminish our own powers of critical, objective reasoning, and thus our ability and chance of reaching or knowing the objective Truth.

## B. Appeal to False Consensus

We have seen that appealing to the authority of the consensus involves committing a logical fallacy. While some use the 'power of majority' opinion as a fallacious way to overpower or avoid discussing logical arguments, others go further and use a manufactured or made up consensus to further their own arguments. The fallacy consists of an unsubstantiated claim that all [or most] experts in a field have reached a unified opinion [consensus], which corresponds with the opinion of the one making the claim. It often includes exaggerated and generalizing phrases such as: "All doctors agree that...", "All of the experts in the field say that...", "Scientists believe that..." etc.

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<sup>6</sup> " List of cognitive biases", Wikipedia contributors, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=List\\_of\\_cognitive\\_biases&oldid=1017957950](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=List_of_cognitive_biases&oldid=1017957950)

<sup>7</sup> Eric Fernandez, "Cognitive biases- a visual study guide", slideshare, [https://www.slideshare.net/efern211/cognitive-biases-a-visual-study-guide-by-the-royal-society-of-account-planning/9-19\\_social\\_biases\\_19\\_social](https://www.slideshare.net/efern211/cognitive-biases-a-visual-study-guide-by-the-royal-society-of-account-planning/9-19_social_biases_19_social)

## C. Appeal to Anonymous Authority

When trying to legitimize a point or an opinion, sometimes people use vague and unsubstantiated claims about unknown, anonymous 'authority figures' that endorse or support the opinion. These claims are often accompanied by so-called 'weasel words'<sup>8</sup>- impressive and authoritative phrases that lack actual content and have a vague meaning. Some of these include, "Government experts agree that...", "I know a doctor who is an expert in her field, and she says that research shows ...", and appeal to rumor- "They say that..." etc.

Sometimes the appeal to consensus authority is combined with an implied insult or threat of an insult, as a weapon of normative compliance: "Every rational, science-based doctor knows that vaccines are safe and effective"<sup>9</sup>. This implies that if you are a doctor who has a different opinion, you are not rational and not 'science-based' [maybe you are even an 'anti-science', dangerous 'anti-vaxxer', and you wouldn't want to be labeled as such, would you?].

These fallacies can be avoided by sticking to known, verified sources of authority and knowing their exact area of expertise and their relevance to the subject at hand. If the speaker has forgotten the details of her supposed quoted expert, it is expected that she make efforts to restore the information and bring about evidence regarding their expertise.

## Category 2 [Appeal to Irrelevant Authority]

This variant of the appeal to authority fallacy can be categorized into three sub-types:

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<sup>8</sup> John, Spacey. "9 Examples of an Appeal to Authority." Simplicable, May 22 2020, <https://simplicable.com/en/appeal-to-authority>.

<sup>9</sup> Austin Cline, "Fallacies of Relevance: Appeal to Authority", ThoughtCo., April 01,2021, <https://www.thoughtco.com/logical-fallacies-appeal-to-authority-250336>

## A. Failure to distinguish between close areas of expertise

Some professions derive from the same basic category of knowledge but then go on to specialize in different areas of expertise and acquire a depth of knowledge in that area. Just because an expert is smart and knowledgeable in her field, does not mean she is bright in other close fields. Intelligence and experience are domain specific<sup>10</sup>.

Avoiding this variant of the fallacy requires knowledge of the nuance and differences between professions<sup>11</sup>. For instance, while medical doctors learn much about health and diseases, they do not reach the depth of knowledge that a virologist does concerning viruses and viral diseases. Furthermore, both of them do not usually reach the depth of knowledge that an epidemiologist acquires concerning the outbreak and transmission of diseases in populations, and other subjects relating to diseases in a social context.

Therefore, your MD is not the end-all authority on how to stop a worldwide disease from spreading. Likewise, if in order to prove your point in an argument about the effectiveness of a self-defense technique you want to cite an authority's statement, it is probably better to cite a self-defense professional, rather than a martial arts movie actor.

## B. Appeal to Fame

Another form of this fallacy constitutes an appeal to social credit or respect and veneration to a (famous) public figure. This can be an actor or performer, a sportsman or other famous person who is used as a reference on a topic that is not directly related to his/her job or expertise<sup>12</sup>. This fallacy is often used in advertisements, where a sports figure recommends a shampoo or deodorant, although they have no expertise on the subject of shampoos or deodorants [Are they healthy for you? Ask a certain doctor. Are they affective? Ask an

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<sup>10</sup> Levitin, Daniel J. *Weaponized Lies : How to Think Critically in the Post-Truth Era* New York, New York: Dutton, 2017

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> "Appeal to Authority-Examples and Definition", Logical Fallacy, 18.9.2020, <https://www.logical-fallacy.com/articles/appeal-to-authority/>

industry expert. Do they smell good? Ask yourself- your favorite sportsperson could have a very different taste than you].

### C. Appeal to deontic authority/Blind Obedience or Blind Loyalty

A deontic figure is a person that has to do with obligation, be it moral, normative (social) or that of one's duty. It could be someone's parents, teacher or commanding officer<sup>13</sup>. This fallacy uses morality and normative expectations to bypass 'the need' to present a logical argument. This can be in the form of blind loyalty and obedience to a formal "higher level" figure of authority, such as a commander in the army or some other authority figure in a tightly structured hierarchical organization. Another example could be a mother that tells her son that "Those people are bad and you are not to talk to them." When the son asks for an explanation, the mother responds: "Because I said so!" While most of us would agree that it is necessary for a parent to have certain power or control over their child for the child's own safety and wellbeing, this authoritative oversight can be misused- maybe 'those people' aren't bad at all, and this is just the mother's prejudice [not to mention racism] talking. A similar situation can occur when a teacher thinks she knows something, but cannot remember the source of her knowledge [cannot explain the logic of the matter], and instead of recognizing this lapse, uses her deontic authority to avoid a discussion of the issue<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Donald Sanchez, "Logical Fallacies 101: Appeal to Authority| Ad Verecundiam", SES, 3.5, <https://ses.edu/logical-fallacies-101-appeal-to-authority-ad-verecundiam/>

<sup>14</sup> A much better approach would usually be to admit the lack of knowledge (nobody is perfect) and to promise to get back to the student about the matter (or look it up on the spot, or even give the student the assignment of researching the issue).

\* Ad Hominem Imperitum<sup>15</sup>

[Appeal] to the ignorant/unqualified person

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

— United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The opposite of an appeal to authority is a ‘rejection of the unauthorized’, or in other words- not wanting to hear the other’s point of view because he is allegedly unqualified or too ignorant on the subject matter to have one.

Argumentum Ad Hominem Imperitum-Appeal to the ignorant/unqualified person is in essence a variant of the Ad Hominem logical fallacy, where the person committing the fallacy attempts to attack/discredit the person making the statement, based on his ignorance or lack of qualification [authority] on the subject matter, rather than referring to the statement itself. It is basically an ad hominem attack using authority bias. The person making the fallacy avoids the actual argument by claiming the other person is too ignorant, or lacks the specific qualification in order to make a claim or even hold a personal opinion on the matter.

While it can be helpful to receive an opinion by a so-called “expert”, which has credentials on a certain subject, it is not a prerequisite for you to have a social title [dr.] or authoritarian status in order to present an argument on any subject. Your argument should

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<sup>15</sup> My suggested definition.

be weighed on its own merit, regardless of your social status or title, using the tools of logic and critical thinking.

A person using this fallacy attempts to deflect/avoid an argument on the actual logical propositions by invalidating the person making the claim as one that lacks expertise or authority. It is often presented in an accusatory fashion, while the actual depth of knowledge and formal degrees of the other person are unknown, and are not the real point of the accusation. The fallacious argument is that the person's opinion should not be valued [or should not be heard at all] because he lacks formal education and expertise in the matter. The person committing the fallacy uses phrases such as: "How many books and articles have you read and written on the subject?", "You're not a doctor [are you]?", "I didn't know you are an expert in epidemiology.", "Do you have a degree from MIT/Harvard??", often in a cynical manner and by the use of rhetorical questions. This fallacy is used to deflect, devalue and de-legitimize the other person's opinions and claims.

The answer to such faulty deflections is to resist addressing your capabilities or knowledge and insist on focusing on the evidence and logical claims that you present. An extension of this correction can be to remind the other person that while you are not a doctor in that field, you still have the ability to quote doctors and figures of authority and integrate their professional opinions into your argument. Some suggested answers: "Let's not make this personal, we don't really matter regarding this issue, what matters is getting to the objective Truth thru logic and evidence." , "Do you want to focus on evidence and logic or on me?". "If we are to have a fruitful conversation, please refer to my arguments rather than try to deflect by discrediting me."

The exception to this being a fallacy is in situations and times of emergency, where there is no time to have a free, intellectual debate, listening and weighing everyone's opinions. For instance, in an operating room during a surgery, if the cleaning attendant tries to give

his/her opinion on the desired surgical technique to be used, or during a battle, where a regular soldier tries to give his opinion on how to dismantle a land mine. In these [non-intellectual] cases, a bewildered "Are you a doctor/neurosurgeon??" , or "Are you a land mine specialist?" , are logical and legitimate. Nevertheless, one must be careful of manufactured states of emergency that allow authority figures or institutions to stifle people's opinions [view section 3.B.3.].

Notice I am not suggesting that the source of information or of an argument is completely unimportant, but that it is much less important than the argument itself. Likewise referring to some websites as "fake news" sites, and totally unreliable, is an authoritarian way of silencing opposition or "unwanted information". There is a distinction between trying to discredit the source of information by claiming they are incompetent, which is the logical fallacy, and claiming the source is unreliable because of previous lies/inaccuracies or their inherent strong bias because of their subjective position. Outlining the bias of the source/speaker can be done, but should be stated only after attempting to exchange arguments in a logical and straightforward manner. If the counterpart obfuscates, repeatedly trying to redirect the conversation from the main logical arguments to other claims, which could also include logical fallacies such as ad hominem, then an attempt to uncover his/her bias is warranted.

We should always be vigilant and remain doubtful about those authoritarian "fact checkers" , or any organization that claims to be an objective authority on all Truth. While some sources can be more reliable than others, that should not stop us from trying to evaluate a piece of information or claim from a "non-mainstream" source. A "non-mainstream" "non-authoritative" source can bring to light information that the "mainstream" sources would not and cannot bring, due to them being beholden to certain paradigms [not to say sources of influence, power and monetary incentives].

## 2. The Legitimate Use of Appeal to Authority -

### How to distinguish between a balanced approach and the unbalanced misuse of this argument.

Some people know some things about certain subjects more than others do. Some people have acquired information from more reliable sources [and had the wisdom to discard irrelevant, unusable or false information] and have spent a lot of time and effort in organizing this information into a system of knowledge, which contains theoretical and practical ideas. While this process of obtaining knowledge is still no guarantee of knowing the objective-factual Truth, it can grant an advantage [in some ways] to those that have gone thru it, over those that have not.

In order for an appeal to authority to be justified [“legitimate”], the people whose authority we appeal to need to meet certain standard or criteria. If these criteria are met, the appeal is legitimate and not fallacious, but that still does not mean the person of authority is right. Critical thinking, which includes the use of logic and research, still need to be exercised.

The three criteria are:

1. The person of authority is an expert in the area of knowledge under consideration [If you have a skin problem you ask the opinion of a skin specialist (dermatologist) and not the orthopedist].
2. The statement of the person of authority concerns their area of mastery [A dermatologist makes a recommendation regarding a skin problem and not your spine issue]<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Austin Cline, “Fallacies of Relevance: Appeal to Authority”, ThoughtCo., April 01,2021, <https://www.thoughtco.com/logical-fallacies-appeal-to-authority-250336>

3. The expert is recognized and generally accepted in his/her field. In addition, it is better that the expert is independent and not under the same organization as the person making the appeal to his/her authority<sup>17</sup>. If the expert is regularly being paid by the organization or if his job and advancement is dependent on that organization, there is a clear conflict of interest. For example, the minister of health or the head of the health department should not reference an expert under his own supervision. The testimony given by an expert, while his finance, career and public name are at stake, is generally less reliable [view the section on Interests and Conflicts of Interests (3A)].

Some would add a fourth criterion- that there is agreement among experts in the area of knowledge [If your doctor is the only one that believes/recommends this treatment- the appeal to his/her authority is not valid]. The logic being that human beings are social creatures and experts received their knowledge, title and 'stamp of approval' from a social system [some would argue that science itself is a social ("Communal") system<sup>18</sup>], so if they go against or outside of the paradigms of this system, their 'stamp of approval' [and authority] is void/removed. While this is generally correct, I do not think this is a valid criterion for a legitimate appeal to authority, because this is actually an appeal to consensus, and thus a step further away from facts and logic, and closer to authoritarianism.

\* There is another variant of a legitimate appeal to authority, where the person of authority is considered as such because of their<sup>19</sup> inherent intimate experience or their inherent inalienable rights. For instance, a mentally intact person is the sole authority over his/her inner consciousness and experience, which include their feelings, thoughts and the way

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<sup>17</sup> "Appeal to Authority-Examples and Definition", Logical Fallacy, 18.9.2020, <https://www.logical-fallacy.com/articles/appeal-to-authority/>

<sup>18</sup> Robert K. Merton, "Science and Technology in a Democratic Order", Journal of Legal and Political Sociology, 1 (1942): 115-26

<sup>19</sup> My use of the plural form "their" is sometimes as a means to avoid the use of a specific sex [his/her], but relates to the singular form, and should be understood in this modern grammatical context.

they experience life. An independent, free, adult human being should be the highest authority over his/her body and personal possessions. If I own a magic clock and I choose to gift that clock to my son Cain, I am the authority figure as to who is the new owner of the clock and Cain will be the new authority figure on his new possession hereafter [unless there is a dispute and this becomes a legal (social) matter].

### 3. The overuse of Appeal to Authority

“He who argues, referring to authority, is not using his own mind, but rather his memory.”

Leonardo da Vinci

We have seen that there are instances when it is legitimate to appeal to a specific authority for added guidance. However, we must strive to use this tool only when absolutely necessary. Moreover, the use of the appeal to authority argument must never bring about the suspension of independent critical thinking, or come in place of the main tools of logic and evidence. Just because a specific health official [a MD or an immunologist] recommends a certain drug or injection, does not automatically mean that it is safe and effective and that the argument is over. Facts and evidence should be studied [drug trials, scientific studies] and logic should be used in order to assess the situation. It is also important to avoid sinking into the social-psychological phenomena of groupthink- 'tribalism' [fueled by appeal to consensus] and authoritarianism.

#### A. The disadvantages of professional specificity

“One of the great commandments of science is, ‘Mistrust arguments from authority.’ (Scientists, being primates,

and thus given to dominance hierarchies, of course do not always follow this commandment.) Too many such arguments have proved too painfully wrong. Authorities must prove their contentions like everybody else. This independence of science, its occasional unwillingness to accept conventional wisdom, makes it dangerous to doctrines less self-critical, or with pretensions to certitude.” -Carl Sagan<sup>20</sup>

A defined system of knowledge comes with basic assumptions and dogmas. A closed system of professional specificity works within the confines of a paradigm, which contains a set of basic assumption, and rules of operation that operate as boarders of a closed system. While this has some advantages, such as the redundancy of having to prove basic concepts- being able to begin each iteration of empirical study at an advanced point, and having clear guidance and paths in the field, there are also some major disadvantages. A closed system of knowledge creates a narrow point of view, with difficulty seeing things from new perspectives and expanding beyond the rules of the paradigm. As the saying goes, ‘If you’re a hammer, everything seems like a nail.’, so if for instance you are a doctor that operates within a paradigm of modern medicine, controlled, regulated, and guided [or misguided] by Big Pharma, you will be quick to prescribe medication [the ‘hammer’] for most of your patients’ symptoms [‘nails’]. You will probably tend to under-emphasize the causes of the issues, to put a greater emphasis on symptomatic care and not focus enough on a total system-organism-lifestyle approach of healthy living and disease

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<sup>20</sup> Carl Sagan, “The demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark”, Random House Publishing Group, 2011, p. 28

prevention. The closed, specific system of the 'expert' thus creates systemic blind spots, which limit the professional [person of authority] and can hinder them gaining wider knowledge of the objective Truth<sup>21</sup>.

The narrow point of view and systemic blind spots that come with a field of expertise are created by the defined borders and limits of the field. These limits are set by the field's establishment and are passed on to new 'experts' by a process of indoctrination. In this way, large groups of experts are guided and controlled by the 'higher up' figures of authority. Thus, new generations of experts in the field do not venture to ask certain question that remain outside the realm of the field, or to conduct experiments that are outside the closed system and the conventional paradigm<sup>22</sup>. Furthermore, each field's establishment limit the academic freedom by enacting sanctions and censorship against non-conformists, thence shutting up the necessary open-academic scientific debate. For example, medical professionals that oppose or even just question the safety of vaccines are routinely ridiculed, threatened and shut down by the establishment. An example of this silencing censorship is the recent claim by the chairman of Israel's medical association tribunal, that it was necessary to restrict the freedom of speech of 'vaccine opponents' for the sake of 'public health'<sup>23</sup>.

This authoritarian, closed system approach, which claims to have ownership of all facts and of Truth itself, is taking a static, unscientific approach. Some of the basic tools of science [that have distinguished it as a system of knowledge and discovery] are criticism, skepticism, peer review, revealing errors in logic, experiments [and the ability to

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<sup>21</sup> Levitin, Daniel J. " *Weaponized Lies : How to Think Critically in the Post-Truth Era*" New York, New York: Dutton, 2017

<sup>22</sup> Mishori Daniel, "The Rule of Experts: Academic Freedom, Professional/Academic Ethics & Disciplinary Science", *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Volume 5, no. 2 (October 2015): pp.23-62

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

reproduce them] and methodology. This is the exact opposite of the dogmatic method of ruling by authority and power, without the freedom to question authorities or to hold and defend a variety of different views and opinions. The true scientific method is the opposite of the method of religious dogmatism and oppression [the Church (and its inquisition)] and of absolute dictatorship [fascism, Nazism, communism]. Sadly, there is an erosion of the true scientific method and a push to “believe the science” and the closed group of authoritarians, which have a similar status as the religious authoritarian establishment once had. The very heart and core of the true scientific method is the ability to criticize and try to disprove an assumption or belief. Debates and controversies in science are very important, since they are both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary, thus open to a variety of fields and ideas<sup>24</sup>. Without freedom to hold opinions and freedom of expression, the ability to refute theories is greatly diminished. Refutation is a basic scientific tool and principal<sup>25</sup>, and without it, scientific development and the ability to know the objective Truth is greatly diminished. Instead of ‘Believe the science/the scientists’, it should be ‘believe in the scientific process and method.’ ‘Believe in the logical method’, and ultimately ‘do not generally believe, but evaluate every claim and experiment on its own merit’.

## Interests and conflicts of interests

“ Scientists tend to agree 100% with the people who are funding them. ”

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<sup>24</sup> Dascla M., “The Study of Controversies and the Theory and History of Science”, Science in Context 11 (2), 1998.

<sup>25</sup> Saul McLeod, “Karl Popper- Theory of Falsification”, Simply Psychology, 2020, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/Karl-Popper.html>

I argue that the most important factor in relying on people's opinions or advice is their intent. The intent to help other people vs the intent to further one's own egoistical interests and the intent and respect for the objective Truth vs the willingness to manipulate and lie for various interests. I would rather heed the advice of a non-educated merchant in the marketplace that is honest, caring and intent upon telling the Truth, rather than a professor and renowned authority figure, who is willing to lie and manipulate in order to get his point and interests across. When an expert's mind is defiled by outside interests and objectives, her 'vase of knowledge' is corrupted; his tool for carrying the holy water of healing is broken, leaking and can no longer be trusted.

We must 'follow the money' and ask ourselves who is paying [directly or indirectly] this expert's bills. There is a close and corrupt relationship between 'experts', politicians, and mass media. Everyone is replaceable [in financial terms], so an expert that refuses to be a pawn in the big game can usually be pushed aside if not overboard. The 'fat puppeteers' move their puppet politicians around. The politicians move bureaucrats, public figures and the authoritarian experts into desired positions, while the mass media, which is paid for by giant conglomerates and rich individuals, promotes the "correct" experts. Sadly, the experts that 'play ball', conform and are good at following orders, are more likely to reach higher positions and to reach the public's eyes and ears. There are many conspiracies going on, even more than the so-called 'conspiracy theories'.

*The self-interests of money and career development are the materialistic 'golden calf' that seduces too many professionals away from the path of Truth, values and meaning.* Most professional institutions have power hierarchies and structures [politics] that define rules that benefit the people at the top of these structures, while limiting the freedoms and expression of those at the bottom, and those 'new experts' that emerge from these institutions. For example, in academic politics non-tenured faculty must be cautious in expressing unorthodox views if they wish to remain in the academy and advance in their careers. Academic freedom is sacrificed, while the academy becomes a money and power

[authority, influence] making factory<sup>26</sup>. This 'monetizing of knowledge' means that objective Truth is pushed down the priority ladder, and thus there is less and less of a reason to put our trust in the 'people of authority' that graduate from such institutions.

Another example of the corruption of 'experts' and conflict of interest, is the close, 'symbiotic' relationship between health experts [doctors] and drug companies [Big Pharma]<sup>27</sup>. Most medical systems by themselves are built in a strict, somewhat military, authoritarian and hierarchical way, where young doctors have to align themselves, their interests and loyalty to the powerful senior doctors<sup>28</sup>. Apart from that, drug companies have their influence and money in most aspects of healthcare and even in medical doctor's educational process<sup>29</sup>. From sponsoring medical seminars and events, to dinners in expensive restaurants and vacations around the globe. It is really astonishing that these clear acts of bribery are permitted to continue, while human beings' health and lives are at stake<sup>30 31</sup>. A simple example is of a dentist that has a choice between a few tooth fillings to

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<sup>26</sup> Mishori Daniel, "The Rule of Experts: Academic Freedom, Professional/Academic Ethics & Disciplinary Science", Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy, Volume 5, no. 2 (October 2015): pp.23-62

<sup>27</sup> Marcia Angell, "Big Pharma, Bad Medicine", Boston Review, <https://bostonreview.net/angell-big-pharma-bad-medicine>

<sup>28</sup> רוני לינדר, "זה לא היה מקרה קיצוני. ככה הדברים מתנהלים", The Marker, 11.6.21, <https://www.themarker.com/news/health/premium-MAGAZINE-1.9893122?mid5054=open>

<sup>29</sup> Kelly Grant, "The pressure of Big Pharma", The Globe And Mail, 19.6.2017, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/the-pressure-of-big-pharma-financial-conflicts-of-interest-common-on-medical-guidelinepanels/article35389639/>

<sup>30</sup> Rodwin, Marc A., Conflicts of Interest, Institutional Corruption, and Pharma: An Agenda for Reform (October 16, 2012). Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics, Vol. 40, p. 511, 2012, Suffolk University Law School Research Paper No. 12-40, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2162597>

<sup>31</sup> Center for Ethics, "The Pharmaceutical Industry, Institutional Corruption, and Public Health", Harvard University, <https://ethics.harvard.edu/pharmaceutical-industry-institutional-corruption-and-public-health>

Rodwin, Marc A., Conflicts of Interest, Institutional Corruption, and Pharma: An Agenda for Reform (October 16, 2012). Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics, Vol. 40, p. 511, 2012, Suffolk University Law School Research Paper No. 12-40, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2162597>

use on his patients<sup>32</sup>. Maybe the one that contains metals that are more dangerous is made by a company that sponsors his research or his expensive conferences abroad. The dentist will convince himself it is 'safe and effective' and 'there are no large studies that prove these metals cause significant damage' or some other rationalization to 'curb his conscience' and cognitive dissonance<sup>33</sup>. Maybe at the beginning of his career, he was still conflicted about it, but as time goes by, and the years of burying his conscience stack up, he doesn't even give it a second thought, and would probably react with outrage if [gently] asked or confronted about the issue. The outrage, more than anything else, would be a warning signal and defense mechanism against the possible cognitive dissonance that could occur if a whole career of his [buried] immoral behavior would surface from his subconsciousness into his conscious awareness.

Public health officials [authorities] are not bereft of interests either. They are often tied and invested in various Pharmaceutical companies, and lead, hand in hand, by the power-hungry rich influencers, which in turn are operated by large companies and conglomerates. Their careers, public-social ranking, and finances are on the line, so most of them will generally follow and recite any script, which is given to them from 'higher up', regardless of the real science or health benefits or lack thereof. An interesting rationalization for such crimes [and they are absolutely criminal activities, being at the expense of innocent peoples' health and lives], can be found in a statement by Gostin, the director of the WHO collaborating center on national and global health law, regarding public health and ethics. In order to prevent health risk behaviors or to encourage health-promoting behaviors, "public health professional may exaggerate the risks or benefits or

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<sup>32</sup> Elaine K. Howley, "Do Drug Company Payments to Doctors Influence Which Drugs They Prescribe?", Usnews, 31.8.2018, <https://health.usnews.com/health-care/patient-advice/articles/2018-08-31/do-drug-company-payments-to-doctors-influence-which-drugs-they-prescribe>

<sup>33</sup> Faye Flam, "Doctors Like to Think Big Pharms Doesn't Sway Them. It Does.", Bloomberg, 4.10.2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2018-10-04/doctors-often-don-t-see-conflict-of-interest-in-drug-company-cash>

make claims that are insufficiently grounded in science.<sup>34</sup> In other words, if a public health official believes some behavior would be better for the public [or maybe for whoever is paying the official (?)] he can “ethically” lie to the public and distort the science. I believe that such corrupt and dishonest behavior of public officials broke some historical world records in the year 2020<sup>35 36 37 38</sup>.

## B. Appeal to Authority as a Tool for Power and Control

“There are invisible rulers who control the destinies of millions. It is not generally realized to what extent the words and actions of our most influential public men are dictated by shrewd persons operating behind the scenes. Nor, what is still more

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<sup>34</sup> Gostin, L. O. “Mapping the issues: public health, law and ethics.” PUBLIC HEALTH LAW AND ETHICS: A READER, Milbank Memorial Fund and the University of California Press, (2010), pp. 10-36

<sup>35</sup> Emily Mangiaracina, “Alarming conflicts of interests, other big red, flags taint COVID vaccine approval process”, Lifesite, 17.3.2021, <https://www.lifesitenews.com/blogs/alarming-conflicts-of-interest-other-big-red-flags-taint-covid-vaccine-approval-process>

<sup>36</sup> “NIH Officials Stand to Earn Millions from Moderna Vaccine”, ICAN, [https://www.icandecide.org/ican\\_foia/nih-officials-stand-to-earn-millions-from-moderna-vaccine/](https://www.icandecide.org/ican_foia/nih-officials-stand-to-earn-millions-from-moderna-vaccine/)

<sup>37</sup> Charles Piller & Jia You, “Hidden conflicts? Pharma payments to FDA advisers after drug approvals spark ethical concerns”, Sciencemag, 5.7.2018, <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2018/07/hidden-conflicts-pharma-payments-fda-advisers-after-drug-approvals-spark-ethical>

<sup>38</sup> Paul Craig Roberts, “America’s Public Health System Is Utterly Corrupt”, IPE, 24.5.21, <https://www.paulcraigroberts.org/2021/05/24/americas-public-health-system-is-utterly-corrupt/>

important, the extent to which our thoughts and habits are modified by authorities. In some department of our daily life, in which we imagine ourselves free agents, we are ruled by dictators exercising great power." -Edward Bernays<sup>39</sup>

The roots of the overuse of Appeal to Authority can be traced to human psychology and our emotional needs as social creatures. All people want to be respected and appreciated. Our psychological dire need for acceptance from others and the wish of the ego to receive respect and recognition for 'accomplishments' are very strong fundamental forces that drive and motivate a vast number of people. Nietzsche referred to some aspects of this as "the will to power", while Adler talked about the struggle for superiority that has its roots in childhood, both of which can lead to pathological and immoral behavior if not kept in balance.

These psychological forces of the ego are a major part of the reason that 'Appeal to Authority' is such a strong and wide spread social phenomena, across different cultures and throughout human history. But [as some philosophies of the far east teach us] the ego is also an illusion, and this illusion must be kept as small as possible if one is to reach spiritual, psychological and social development, and a healthy, righteous and emphatic relationships with others.

The social power hierarchies tend to give the figures of authority psychological 'boosts' in the form of confidence and a feeling of self-worth. However, oftentimes these individual

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<sup>39</sup> Bernays, Edward. " *Propaganda*", Ig Publishing, 2004, p.35

will fail to remain balanced, and exaggerate these feelings, into the realm of overconfidence and arrogance. These states of mind are maladaptive and dangerous because they form a one-sided, narrow point of view with many blind spots, due to the abandonment of self-doubt and self-criticism. As we shall see with a few historical examples, when this will to power, superiority and control over others is left unchecked and is channeled through the overuse of the 'Appeal to Authority' method, the results are tragic and the price society and individual people pay is high.

## 1. How society translates un-elected, power-driven individuals into figures of authority

Ego and power-driven individuals often use power and different forms of violence [including verbal violence and non-direct violence, such as manipulation and informing on others (libel) - essentially stepping on one's neighbor], in order to "advance" or receive some egoistic gains. In a free-market society, the gains are oftentimes accomplished through hard work over a long period of time, while in an authoritarian society [communism] the transfer of power to these individuals is much quicker and more violent [revolution]. The communist/fascist power grab has little to do with effort or technical abilities, and more to do with militaristic abilities of organizing and strategizing of the use of force.

Unfortunately, societies see these [often time psychopathic] egoistic individuals as "winners" and "alphas". They are also more attractive to the opposite sex and receive respect. Their success and high-survivability, plays on the basic Darwinian-primitive psychological 'chords', and bypass moral and ethical considerations.

In turn, society translates a person's financial status and power-influence into the level of their social status and authority. Our society encourages psychopathic and immoral behavior at the expense of hard working people that refuse to hurt and misuse their fellow neighbors for their egotistical gains.

Our society tends to translate 'powerful' people [those with financial abilities and social influence] into figures of authority. The basic reason for this attribution is our reliance, from early childhood, on deontic figures for our survival [see section 1D: Appeal to Irrelevant Authority: 3. Appeal to deontic authority]. Our parents had absolute power over us and thus were the absolute figures of authority. On a social-psychological and evolutionary level, the tendency to translate 'powerful' people into people of authority can be traced back to our basic survival needs and society's reliance on successful, practical individuals in order to survive and prosper. We tend to hold such individuals in higher regard and give them social credit-credibility. However, in our modern complex society, there are various ways of gaining wealth and influence, which are anti-social, counter-productive, deceitful and destructive. Furthermore, it is a logical fallacy [for example] to place more weight and authority on the opinions of Mr. X about climate change, just because he happens to be successful and efficient in trading the stock market. Similarly, it is fallacious to grant a person that was involved in establishing a successful software company, multiple interviews as an authority figure in medicine, epidemiology and world health policies.

Bill Gates is not an epidemiologist. He is not even a MD or a doctor. He runs and invests [conflict of interest] in multiple vaccine companies, but that does not make him a medical expert. Furthermore, he is unelected. A society that deems itself democratic, should not grant so much weight and authority in the media and in actual decision making, to an unelected private individual, just because he is very rich. Klaus Schwab is another example of an unelected figure of authority. He established the 'World Economic Forum', a group consisting of some of the richest men on earth, but this was his private endeavor. No country and no people elected him or asked him to lead humanity into a fourth industrial revolution, which includes trans-humanism, and a Neo-Communist ideology. But he wrote a book, and he whispers into the ears of billionaires, and they in turn dictate policies to different organizations, including the United Nations. The people of this earth

did not vote on these issues, and Schwab being a rich, influential person, should not make him a figure of authority in world-finance, world politics, human rights, ethics, morals and the future of humanity.

## 2. Power-driven authoritarians use the perceived authority of mass media to shape the thoughts, opinions and beliefs of the masses

These rich and influential individuals [and their corporations] use the 21<sup>st</sup> century technology of mass and social media for shaping public opinions and narratives, which aids them in promoting their agendas. Mass media outlets [especially mainstream media] are still seen as sources of authority, although they have been used as propaganda tools from their inception and the people working in these outlets need only have 'screen-ability' and a willingness to obey all orders and repeat all scripts automatically. People's belief that mainstream sources are viewed by the masses [the celebrity status of news anchors], plus the belief that what is being broadcasted has been authorized by some 'higher (governmental?) stamp of approval', and the staged formality and importance of these broadcasts all contribute to canonizing them as authoritative. Since authoritarian acceptable media sources are run and influenced by subjective human beings, which themselves have opinions and interests, choosing sources is a complex and dynamic issue and should be approached using critical thinking skills, rather than relying on the authoritarian rankings, conveyed as consensus [or false consensus].

There is an unholy, corrupt triangle of association between politicians, financially powerful figures and mass/social media. The scale and effects of 21<sup>st</sup> century mass media technology allows for massive, fast and precise [algorithmic] control of the desired narratives by means of censorship and propaganda. Traditional propaganda methods are used, and in addition, more subtle techniques[such as "shadow-banning" and selective (google) search results] are used in order to influence opinions without damaging *the illusion* of a "democratic", balanced, equal society with free speech

and access of information. An example of the manipulation of narratives and censorship is found in the new phenomenon of the so called “fact checkers”. These groups of employees are promoted as our society’s highest authority on deciding and separating fact from fable. It is amazing so many people just accept their authority, no matter who these fact checkers are [anonymous, from behind the screen], what are their levels and areas of education [relevancy], and if they are to be trusted [intentions] etc. While at the beginning it could have seemed like this phenomena is an honest effort at sorting thru news and “fake news”, it quickly became apparent that the “independent” fact checkers are not so independent and those that pay their bills expect some things in return. For example, the former director of the CDC is now CEO of a foundation [the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)] that funds the vaccine fact-checking program of Factcheck.org [a Facebook partnered website]. About 15% of this foundation’s assets consist of J&J stock [one of the Covid-19 vaccine manufacturers]<sup>40</sup>.

When you control the [authoritarian] media, you control the message. When you control the message, you control the narrative. When you control the narrative, you can manipulate and sway people’s opinions and beliefs. Depending on the “string pullers’ agenda, interests and own beliefs, this can be very dangerous for the rights, morals and health [spiritual, mental and physical] of the people. This is a battle over information, and more than that, it is a battle over people’s beliefs.

### 3. How ‘Appeal to Authority’ translates to a society- The dangers of too much power and wealth in the hands of the authoritarian few

We have seen how our tendency to attribute authority to people who are perceived as powerful [financially or otherwise] and influential, and how in turn these power-hungry

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<sup>40</sup> Emily Mangiaracina, “Major vaccine ‘fact-checker’ funded by group headed by former CDC director with 1.9B \$ in J&J stock”, LIFESITE, 27.4.21, <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/major-vaccine-fact-checker-funded-by-group-headed-by-former-cdc-director-with-1.9b-in-jj-stock>

individuals use these tendencies to push their narratives and agendas using the perceived authority of mass media. In previous sections, we have seen that a similar game of power is used in the world of science and in the academy, as a tool of hegemony, while limiting academic and scientific freedoms. We can identify a pattern across many [all] sections of our society, where ego and power-driven individuals use the appeal to authority as a logical fallacy and as an ingrained tool of psychological conditioning, to gain more power in expense of people's critical, independent, free thinking, and human rights, and of our ability to distinguish between propaganda and objective Truth.

In a relatively free [human rights and a free market] and safe society, the appeal to authority fallacy will have less use and less value. Since a free society permits [and encourages] free, independent and critical thinking and a safe society does not need an authoritarian decision making process [following orders]. Furthermore, a free-market, competitive society often has many different and contending authorities<sup>41</sup>.

One of the indicators of an un-free, enslaved, authoritarian society is the reliance and overuse of the appeal to authority fallacy and the suspension of critical thinking that follows authority bias. The more authoritarian a society is, the more the authority figures amass power and control in expense of the people.

In addition, the more a society [country] is unsafe, unstable [in a (constant) state of emergency] and under attack by its neighbors [or other enemies], the greater will the need for strict authoritarian control be [as we will see in the next section about the phenomena of the army]. This equation can also be flipped- the more the authoritarians strive for strict control over a population, the more they are likely do de-stable the country and instill fear by perceived outside [and other] threats [constant state of emergency]. How can we [as average citizens without access to classified info] distinguish between a true state of emergency [caused mainly by outside forces and without the direction of inside political

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<sup>41</sup> "Appeal to Authority-Examples and Definition", Logical Fallacy, 18.9.2020, <https://www.logical-fallacy.com/articles/appeal-to-authority/>

forces] and a contrived one? It is difficult, but if more and more people will do their duty in regards to following and spreading the Truth, there is a greater chance of us knowing when we are being fooled by the government.

After a government successfully uses fear and social-psychological methods of re-education [using 'sticks and carrots'], it can move on to [directly or indirectly] convincing its citizens that maybe human rights are overrated. 'Why do we need privacy, isn't been a 'collective online entity' better and more fun? Why is freedom of speech important? Maybe it is better to punish those rude 'fringe' members of society that keep on criticizing every move that our figures of authority make. Maybe a social credit system is not so bad after all- it brings more law and order and helps prevent crime, and "I" don't mind it, because I am not "problematic". "I" am a good citizen; I pay my taxes with the money I currently have and don't care too much about things that don't directly concern me.'

The younger generation living in democratic countries does not truly know how to value the freedoms that they take for granted. Those versed in history might have an idea, but most people view history as stories told from some faraway place, almost from another world. They read about the events leading to a world war in a few hours, not truly grasping how many steps and years it took to go from a relatively free and peaceful society into a living hell. Many people do not care about "rights", "freedoms", "morals" and "ethics", as long as their small bubble is intact- as long as they are not hurt directly. This is a fallacy. Apart from a fallacious clinging to an optimism bias- the idea that what has happened "down the street" will surely not reach them, there is a deeper issue here. People need to care about their neighbors, the less fortunate, the less rich, the ones that have less means of defending themselves against "authorities". People need to care about the objective Truth, whether knowing the Truth seems to help them right now or not. Truth is a virtue, a basic value that is at the base of everything we are and everything we do. And to those that don't see the direct value in knowing the Truth or fighting for the Truth, I will give a small reminder- Truth does not play humans' superficial, short-lived games. Truth is an

everlasting unstoppable force. Truth cannot, and will not be denied, it is eternal and will outlast every egoistic, power-hungry, manipulative game that people choose to play. Today you can deny the Truth, and your neighbors' suffering. Tomorrow, when the Truth comes knocking on your door, your shout will be stifled by the mask of deceit that you agreed to put on your mouth.

### C. The phenomena of the army [/police] as a test case of extreme authoritarianism

"All Tyrannies rule through fraud and force, but once the fraud is exposed they must rely exclusively on force." -George Orwell

Authoritarian systems are based on the concept of 'follow the leader'. This authority figure is supposed to have an advantage over the people under his/her command. Maybe the leader's ideas are more clear, powerful, thought-out and effective and maybe their analytical abilities are superior, and this explains why it is advantageous to place this figure in a decision-making position and appeal to their authority. The system of the army [or police] is based on following leaders-figures of authority [commanders]. The logical fallacy, which is regularly being used in these systems, is appeal to irrelevant authority, and specifically, appeal to deontic authority or blind obedience and loyalty [section 1.D.3]. This fallacy consists of over-reliance on authority, basing ones decisions on ethos rather than logic, and putting ones loyalty above the objective Truth.

In the army, the commander and the action he commanded to take are "right" just because this figure giving the order is in a position of authority granted to him by the system itself. A Rare exception to this rule occurs when an inherently illegal order is given. This is an order that is blatantly immoral and is not absolutely necessary for defensive reasons, such

as ordering to killing unarmed civilians just because "they are the enemy". Another variant of an inherently illegal order is an order that is somewhat legitimate at the time and place it was given [by officers far away from the actual battle], but becomes illegal due to the circumstances in the field of battle. For example, an order is given to demolish a structure used by terrorists, but when soldiers spots the structure, they spot innocent civilians that would be killed if they destroy the structure. This creates a dilemma [depending on the severity of this structure's threat and importance to the defense and security etc.], which needs to be relayed to commanding officers, although some situations do not allow this and a decision must be made by the soldiers in the field of battle. We have seen the excuses given [Nuremberg trials] by those "just following orders" and their pathetic attempts to justify their criminal actions by appealing to the authoritative, hierarchical structure of the system they were in<sup>42</sup>. Learning from these and other such events, the Israeli legal system, in 1958, established a concept to define when a security-related order should be followed and when it must not be followed. Nevertheless, disobeying an order is not easy, and depends on the moral level and level of independent thought that the soldier possesses, which are generally not the qualities that are valued and cultivated in the average soldier.

### [What is gained and what is lost in these tight, authoritarian systems](#)

When a soldier trains for war, there are usually a few motivational forces that drive him. On the one hand, there is the will for power, for respect and advancing in rank, which are mostly ego-driven and thus mentally [spiritually] limiting mental motivational forces. On the other hand, there is the care for others- brotherhood in arms and the willingness for sacrifice for higher ideals and for the sake of one's friends and family, which are higher motivational forces. The forces that are more dominant in each individual vary, and are

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<sup>42</sup> Wikipedia contributors, "Superior orders," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Superior\\_orders&oldid=1020540573](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Superior_orders&oldid=1020540573)

influenced by his/her social background, upbringing, psychological makeup, and personal development. Hence, it is possible to have a career, and “grow” in the military, gain personal awareness and develop oneself mentally and spiritually [although many take the easier ego-driven path]. However, those that take the ego-path, usually find themselves making [immoral] decisions that hurt others unnecessarily for their own personal gain [mental enjoyment or fortitude/materialistic interests]. Due to the fact that the military and the police hold much physical power over many people, this ego-driven path and subsequent actions, can bring much pain, suffering and tragedy to innocent people.

On a wider-social scale, a society or an organized force, stand to gain some benefits from operating in a tight-authoritarian-hierarchical system. When the system works at its best, you can expect a higher level of overall performance than a system that is not organized in a hierarchal and authoritarian way. Goals and actions will be performed quicker, in an organized manner and more efficiently [as they do in hierarchical ant colonies]. This can be critical in life or death situations. In addition, the system provides negative motivation from fear of punishment, and positive motivation to serve and advance in the hierarchy, in order to receive rewards, benefits and a higher social status, plus respect and all that comes with it.

What is lost in a tight authoritarian system/society? Firstly, there is a loss in the ability and effectiveness of open criticism. Individuals at lower hierarchical levels have difficulty criticizing ones who are( ranked) above them, and their criticism holds only a small weight and thus is easier to ignore. Since freethinking, criticism and debate are basic principals in higher learning [academy] and science, this would greatly hamper the scientific advancement and the ability to know the objective Truth, and would turn many areas of science into pseudo-science thru authoritarian one-sided indoctrination. Furthermore, lack of open and effective criticism affects the ability to correct errors. Consequently, in systems where error correcting is flawed and hard to perform, small errors [in judgment, in decisions or others] can quickly accumulate and lead to large performance issues and to

catastrophic consequences. Secondly, due to the silencing of different opinions and ways of thinking, there is a suppression of varied ways of deeper and wider thinking and understanding, and of experiencing life [consciousness]. This leads to lower levels of innovation, inspiration, creativity and overall cultural variety.

In the end, it all depends on what values are cherished and what parts of life are held most dear by the people that make up a society. If people see life as a materialistic, Darwinian struggle for survival [“of the fittest”] and also think that the main goals of individuals are to accumulate wealth [things] and take care of their wants, then perhaps it makes sense to have a tightly hierarchical society, where people gain things however they can [while climbing and stepping on the backs of the less fortunate]. But if higher values of Truth, justice and compassion are the ones that form the base of a society, then individual freedom, and the ability to express oneself and find one’s own way in life should be of the utmost importance, as well as the need to connect with other people and to help those in need etc.

Furthermore, there is evidence that tightly hierarchical and authoritarian societies reach a much lower level of development in many fields than free and open societies do. The extremist societies also tend to bring much war and suffering and to disintegrate and eventually fail rather quickly, as we have seen in the two large examples of such societies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in Russia and Germany. There is also evidence that shows that happiness is higher or at least suffering of the masses is lower in open societies, while in hierarchical-authoritarian societies, happiness and suffering almost seem to be distributed according to the individual’s hierarchical status, from the hungry and cold peasant to the ‘great’, fat and highly entertained leader.

In order to reach a certain goal- cooperation is needed. People have different skills and abilities, so it is more efficient to organize tasks according to skills. In addition, as the group grows, it has different needs and priorities [financial, security, shelter etc.]. We need

someone who is good at analyzing, organizing and picturing the wider picture in the clearest, most objective and wide-angled view as possible. If we believe this person has a better analysis than most others do, we need to give this person the authority to assign tasks to people. Over that person of authority, there is supposedly a person with better skills and a wider view and analytic ability. This is the basis of the idea of ranks. In areas that society can stand to lose some efficiency, the authority need not be strict and powerful [absolute and violent], but in a life or death situation [so called “state of emergency”], society cannot afford people disobeying the authority. It follows that the level of authoritarianism can also be dependent on the current development level and security status of a nation. If you are a nation that is escaping from slavery and need to traverse the long desert in order to reach the promised land, you had better have a strong leader to look up to, and eventually leaders and authority figures that will help him rule and keep the order, even when the times are harder [and drier]. However, if you are a long-lived nation, with little to no enemies and threats, living in a well-structured and thriving habitat, there is a much lesser need to have strict authoritarian figures and hierarchies.

The basic premise of this whole system is based on the idea that the people who are put in positions of authority really are better at analysis and decision-making etc. We know of course, that promotions both in the corporate world and in politics are not based on that, and it is doubtful that there are objective testing methods to test these abilities in people.

Furthermore, the basic premise is also based on the assumption that once these people of authority are placed in their positions, they will perform their tasks and decisions based on objective analysis and the greater good of the system as a whole. Sadly, this is rarely the case. Even the younger ideologues that start off on a straight path of service, rarely manage to keep themselves from selling out to greed and self-interests [-power corrupts]. In addition, human bias, error and stupidity are added to the equation.

As mentioned, such hierarchical and authoritative systems are flawed in terms of error-correcting, due to the difficulty in communicating criticism and drawing conclusions from criticism across different levels of command [mainly criticism that comes from lower levels of the hierarchy, which can often be more valuable than the other way around, due to the value of direct experiences]. Consequently, the larger the system, the more errors accumulate, the more logic is turned into absurdity. As Helen Keller depicted in brilliant fashion in his book "Catch 22", sometimes 'there is no logic/rationality in the army'. In a system that is based on authoritarianism [including for example the bureaucracy in a communist system], those in places of power and authority are often not required to explain their decisions or prove that they are based on logic [especially to their subordinates]. We can understand how a combination of human errors, human egoism and corrupt interests can quickly turn any positive intentions of authoritarianism into a nightmarish scenario.

Apart from that, there is always the issue of balance. Power-hungry individuals will strive to gain more power and influence in expense of the resources, rights and freedoms of the many. Figures of authority must always only have the minimum power that is needed. Checks and balances need to be put in place and constantly maintained by the people, to see that the system continues to advance in a straight and just path.

### Morale vs Morality

Ego-based psychological incentives, strong social bonds, materialistic rewards, mental fortitude, and a sense of security due to indoctrination of a one-sided, simplistic narrative/world view, can have a strong positive effect on the morale of soldiers. However, this same over-simplistic and superficial way of thinking can have dire circumstances. If people, who hold a great amount of power over others [soldiers], are taught and indoctrinated to follow authoritative orders and forgo independent discretion, they can be used as a tool/weapon by power-hungry and immoral individuals and parties.

What does “a good soldier” [or police officer] do when the orders he has been given are or have become [circumstantially] inherently illegal and immoral? Does he use his brain [logic, independent critical thinking] and heart [compassion, morals], or does he stay cold and calm, carrying out the orders of his authoritarian superiors? Is such a soldier so indoctrinated that he no longer allows doubt and skepticism to enter his mind, when it comes to orders from figures of authority? Even in an extremely authoritarian system [like the army], one must not overuse appeal to authority at the expense of one’s critical thinking. Furthermore, those that aren’t accustomed to use common sense discretion, and those that lack compassion [psychopaths] should not be put in a position of power [physical or political]. History [as we shall see in the next section] shows us the injustice, human suffering and catastrophe that can be brought about by such an abuse and overuse of appeal to authority. Crimes against humanity in world wars, in the Jewish holocaust and other genocides, and in regional wars and uprisings [Vietnam, Communist revolutions], show how easily people become cold, robotic pawns of destruction, while only a selected few resist committing the terrible crimes that were ordered by their authoritarian ‘superiors’.

#### 4. What does history tell us about authority and consensus vs the silent [/silenced-censored] voice of the minority

“Historically, the most terrible things; war, genocide, and slavery, have resulted not from disobedience, but from obedience.” Howard Zinn

### A. Appeal to Authority of the Government- The Dangers of Despotism<sup>43</sup>

“The more power a government has, the more its foreign violence, democide, and famine. The more constrained the power of government, the less its foreign violence, democide, and famine. At the extremes of power, despotisms kill, murder, and starve people by the millions, while many democracies grow surplus food, and refuse to execute even serial murderers.

Power kills.” -Rummel<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> “: oppressive absolute (see ABSOLUTE SENSE 2) power and authority exerted by government : rule by a despot” - Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “despotism,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/despotism>

<sup>44</sup> Rummel, Rudolph J. *Never Again: Ending War, Democide, & Famine through Democratic Freedom*. Llumina Press, 2005.

We are taught to pay our taxes, obey the law and trust the government. The state or the government is the ultimate figure of ["trusted"] authority, but the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century alone [over the period of 1900-1987], shows us that about 262,000,000 people were murdered by democide [murder by government]<sup>45</sup>[- revised upward on Rummel's website]<sup>46</sup>. Millions of people were killed by intentional famine, sickness derived from poverty and living conditions- ghettos, and by mass murder in concentration camps. This is about 6 times as much as people killed by wars during the same period [about 44,000,000]<sup>47</sup>. The more a culture is authoritarian in nature [Germany, Japan], the easier it is for the government to control the people in such a culture/country. 20<sup>th</sup> century wars and genocides have shown us many dark ways in which this authoritarian control over peoples can be put to use.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century, at first could seem to be heading in the direction of freedom of information and of growing technological opportunities. Alas, where there is opportunity, some people are quick to exploit it to their own selfish wants. The social media companies that for a while seemed to be timid new frontiers that enable social connectivity, have now grown into giant monopolies that control and manipulate information. These technocratic companies have become self-appointed authorities in deciding which information is true and which is fake [fake news], using their biased and paid-for "fact checkers" like "officer of Truth" in a dystopian simulated reality. Companies such as Google and Facebook now have the power to sway presidential elections and manipulate public opinions and narratives. Their cooperation with some world governments and other "elites" is a growing threat to freedom of information, speech and human rights.

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<sup>45</sup> Wikipedia contributors, "Democide", Wikipedia, 3.1.21, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Democide&oldid=998121235>

<sup>46</sup> 20th Century Democide, Hawaii.edu, <https://hawaii.edu/powerkills/20TH.HTM>

<sup>47</sup> Rummel, R.J., "Death by Government", Transaction Publishers, 31.12.2011

Using the amplified fear of the Covid-19 world crisis of 2020, governments across the globe have taken more authoritarian power and enacted draconian rules. A fully functional technocratic social credit system is currently operating over large parts of neo-communist China. The government continuously ranks citizens based upon their conformity and their obeying of authoritative rules and regulations. Points are subtracted for infractions such as bad driving, criticizing the government, buying too many video games and posting “fake news” online<sup>48</sup>. But who is the authority that determines what is fake? The same one that punishes its citizens and strives for total authoritarian control- the government tells you what is considered true and what you can or cannot say or believe in. The government takes away basic rights, such as use of transportation and ability to buy at certain stores or establishments, from people who do not obey completely. This system is on its way to your current democratic government. Do not expect this authoritarian revolution, and do not let despotic authoritarians’ use of fear and manipulation weaken your resolve to stay truthful and free.

Absolute authority= absolute power

“Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts  
absolutely” - Lord Acton

## B. Overuse/Over-reliance on authority has led to historical disasters

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<sup>48</sup> Durden, Tyler. “A Society Based On The Social Credit System Is Closer Than You Think.” ZeroHedge, <https://www.zerohedge.com/political/society-based-social-credit-system-closer-you-think>

## 1. South Korean Ferry Disaster

In 2014, 2 kilometers away from beautiful islands, in calm, warm waters, a large South Korean ferry began to sink. The crew ordered the passengers to stay put inside their cabins, and kept repeating the order even while the ship was leaning on its side and the cabins were filling with water. Most passengers, who were mainly young students, continued to obey the order even when the ship was completely on its side and more than half the cabins were under water. Almost all of the passengers who obeyed the senseless orders by the authorities died [304], while 171 people [including the captain] that disobeyed, survived.<sup>49</sup> Although it is generally advisable to follow the instructions from authorities during emergencies [even some of the times when they do not make immediate sense from an individual perspective], we should never abandon our awareness, independent judgment and intuition.

## 2. The swine flu debacle and other false scares

In the winter of 1976, at a US Army training base in New Jersey, a soldier died of a flu variant, and the virus spread to more than 200 recruits. Fear quickly spread and US

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<sup>49</sup> Dobler, S. (2021, May 26). *South Korean Ferry Disaster (2014). A grim reminder of the dangers of blind obedience to authorities.* Abrupt Earth Changes. <https://abruptearthchanges.com/2021/05/26/south-korean-ferry-disaster-2014-a-grim-reminder-of-the-dangers-of-blind-obedience-to-authorities/>

officials warned that the upcoming outbreak would kill a million Americans<sup>50</sup>. A hasty vaccination campaign led to the unnecessary vaccination of 45 million citizens [for a relatively mild disease], although the pandemic failed to materialize. The vaccination campaign finally stopped after hundreds of people [~ 450] came down with Guillain-Barre syndrome in the US and some 60 others with incurable, lifelong conditions of narcolepsy and cataplexy in the UK<sup>51</sup>.

The swine flu outbreak was a false pandemic driven by drug companies and their public representatives-authority figures who were in clear conflicts of interests. One such figure of authority was Sir Roy Anderson who advised the UK government on the swine flu, while holding a 116,000 pound-a-year post on the board of GlaxoSmithKline, which made anti-flu drugs and vaccines and was predicted to be one of the major beneficiaries of the pandemic. Wolfgang Wodarg, head of health at the council of Europe, blamed the pharmaceutical companies of being promoters and profiteers of fear. In an effort to promote their patented drugs and flu vaccines, Wodarg stated that these companies "have influenced scientists and official agencies, responsible for public health standards, to alarm governments worldwide."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Eschner, Kat. "The Long Shadow of the 1976 Swine Flu Vaccine 'Fiasco'." Smithsonian.com. Smithsonian Institution, February 6, 2017. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/long-shadow-1976-swine-flu-vaccine-fiasco-180961994/>

<sup>51</sup> Porter, Tom. "Brain-Damaged UK Victims of Swine Flu Vaccine to Get £60 Million Compensation." International Business Times UK, March 2, 2014. <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/brain-damaged-uk-victims-swine-flu-vaccine-get-60-million-compensation-1438572>

<sup>52</sup> Fiona Macrae for the Daily Mail. "The 'False' Pandemic: Drug Firms Cashed in on Scare over Swine Flu, Claims Euro Health Chief." Daily Mail Online. Associated Newspapers, January 18, 2010. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1242147/The-false-pandemic-Drug-firms-cashed-scare-swine-flu-claims-Euro-health-chief.html>

Another issue with the decision making process of the scientific authorities was that they put too much confidence in a theory that was spun from meagre [or false] evidence. Furthermore, the fear of a disaster also created a psychological 'hero effect' that caused authorities to move forward with emotional zeal<sup>53</sup>. Scientists made conclusions influenced by belief, instinct and fear, reminiscent of 2020's decision making process and the "Trust the science" and "Trust the experts" slogans, as if the evidence was settled, and as if science is a static-authoritarian belief system.

It is very probable that history will show similar health debacles as attempts to 'gain function' [money and control] from health issues that could have been handled much differently. The 2020 crisis, with its wide spread lies and manipulations, seems like a natural [or un-natural] candidate.

### 3. 2021 Meron Crowd Crush Disaster

During a heavily packed [100,000 people] religious event in mount Meron, April 2020, 45 men and boys were killed and about 150 injured in the deadliest civil disaster in Israel's history. The disaster is still under investigation, but it is already clear there were various factors that lead to the crowd crush disaster, such as the authorities that allowed the inordinate amount of people to attend, despite prior near disasters and warnings, and an increase in unrecognized choke-points due to covid-19 precautions<sup>54</sup>.

Another, less recognized factor was the failure of the 'on the ground' -field police officers to exercise personal diligence, due to over-reliance on commands given by their

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<sup>53</sup> "The Fiasco of the 1976 'Swine Flu Affair'." BBC Future. BBC, September, 22, 2020,

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200918-the-fiasco-of-the-us-swine-flu-affair-of-1976>

<sup>54</sup> Wikipedia contributors, "2021 Meron crowd crush," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2021\\_Meron\\_crowd\\_crush&oldid=1026999791](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2021_Meron_crowd_crush&oldid=1026999791)

authoritative superiors. The disaster came after an entire year of pressure and clashes between civilians [especially orthodox Jews] and police officers, and an overall increase in the authoritative power of the police over law-abiding citizens. Viral videos showing police violence against citizens who were not wearing surgical masks or not abiding to quarantines and other rules and regulations spread across media outlets. Police officers were trained and instructed to view citizens, which were considered law-abiding, tax paying citizens up until the "great pandemic", as "public health threats", "spreaders of disease", and a step away from "enemies of the people". It was this growing authoritative tension that led up to the Meron disaster.

In the passageway that became the main death trap in the complex, police officers blocked off the exit, following the planned orders they were given in advance. As the event came to a close and more people tried to exit thru the passageway, not knowing the exit was closed off by a police barricade, the pressure and congestion grew and people began to suffocate. At the police barricade, people [including children] were being crushed and begging police officers to let them pass, but the police officers stuck to their orders for a long time and barricaded the exit. This was the moment their independent judgment should of kicked-in, and the orders from their authoritarian superiors recognized as wrong and illegal at the time. Citizens as well as police officers and soldiers should never abandon independent judgment. Finally, the police officers cleared the exit and helped the people, but this was too late for the 45 citizens that lost their lives. In this tragedy, the overuse and exaggerated authoritarian attitude of the time probably cost the lives of innocent civilians, which could have been saved if wrong orders would have been abandoned sooner.

-What we can learn from these disasters about authority

1. Authorities are often wrong. Keep an open eye and an independent mind. Always preserve a healthy amount of doubt and make use of independent critical thinking.
2. We should not assume the authority figures [and health authority figures] are objective and have our best interests in mind. Remain skeptic and research each relevant issue.
3. The higher ranked authorities are also often wrong. Officers in the field should operate with discretion and be ready to disobey ['inherently illegal'] orders if needed.

## C. Intellectual Authoritarianism: Consensus, be it Social or Scientific, does not necessarily coincide with or equal to Objective Truth

As we have seen [1A], Appeal to Consensus is a variant of the appeal to authority logical fallacy. It is based on the faulty reasoning that if most people believe in something or hold something to be true or factual, then that idea holds more weight and is probably closer to the Truth than a 'random' minority opinion. While some ideas and beliefs held by the consensus are objectively Truthful sometimes, history shows that they are definitely not True all of the time, thus we cannot use consensus as a reliable-authoritative indicator of objective Truth.

### 1. Historical Examples of Social Consensus

Consensus is more a sign of culture, politics and fashion than of objective Truth [logic and evidence]. Consensus is a dynamic thing- changing with the times, the politics and the culture. It can sometimes be close to the objective Truth, and other times very far from it. The obvious examples are totalitarian/authoritarian regimes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as the Fascists, Nazis, and Communists. Astonishingly, the rise of these regimes and their dictators was accepted and even praised by some mainstream [consensus] news sources.

For example, The New York Times credited the rise of Fascism with the so-called return to “normalcy”<sup>55</sup>, and Hitler’s rise to power leading to “a new moderation” in the political atmosphere<sup>56</sup>. Meanwhile, these dictatorial-authoritarian regimes formed many social norms and consensuses as well as [pseudo-] scientific consensuses that were very distorted, perverse and far from the objective Truth [as can be demonstrated by what came before and after these regimes, and countless refutations since then]. The actual violent demise of these regimes can be seen as additional evidence that they were not on a path that is harmonious and corresponds with a naturalistic Truth.

In this section however, I would like to focus less on politics [which seem to be more and more divisive these days, and being used and accentuated by those that crave more power, according to the ancient method of divide and conquer] and more on social-normative examples. Today’s mostly electrical tools of normative pressure [mass and social media ‘virtue signaling’ and social shaming] were once effected by the paper press, public displays, and word of mouth. People who were “caught” engaging in activities that didn’t fit the social consensus of the time were shamed in local newspapers and ostracized. On the other end of the equation, [the “carrot”] - the positive affirmation to people who act according to the accepted current consensus, can come in the form of public praise and fame and of giving out financial incentives, grants and prizes. Historically, some prizes were given to very corrupt and even murderous individuals [including the ‘Nobel peace prize’ and a 1 million dollar prize given by a university to a well-known public health official in 2021].

-Slavery: Much of human history contains different forms of slavery, which were widely accepted and considered as a valid social norm. From the Middle East, thru Africa, Europe

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<sup>55</sup> John Broich, “How Journalists Covered the Rise of Mussolini and Hitler”, Smithsonian Magazine, 13.12.2013, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-journalists-covered-rise-mussolini-hitler-180961407/>

<sup>56</sup> Rafael Medoff, “The American Papers that Praised Hitler”, The Daily Beast, 20.12.2015, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-american-papers-that-praised-hitler> [Also on <https://www.motl.org/the-american-papers-that-praised-hitler/>]

and to “the new world” [US], slavery was an accepted social consensus. In fact, those few who stood against this norm, and against the authority of those that profited from it, were shunned and silenced [at first], until they could be silenced no more.

-Homosexuality: Historically, some cultures outlawed homosexuality, while others viewed it as normal. Until this day, there are some places on earth where being identified as a homosexual could get you killed. Thence, the consensus varies wildly from place to place and from time to time. If you happen to be born in a certain place or time, is it smart to simply accept the authoritarian consensus as the objective Truth? No. Retain a level of skepticism, research and think for yourself.

-Pedophilia: Modern western culture views pedophilia as an abhorrent crime, but in some ancient cultures [Rome, Japan] this was socially accepted. Some modern religions still allow marriage to minors (although this is not exactly morally equivalent to having sex for the sake of (one-sided) pleasure with no intent to build and provide for a family). Again, consensus varies greatly, but we do have logical, analytic tools that allow us to decide whether this activity is moral or not. There is no room here to analyze this thoroughly, but suffice to mention that it is widely recognized that children do not possess the mental, psychological maturity to understand, deal with and thus consent to such things.

-Other examples: Consensus on the existence of magic, witches [witch-hunts], rules about abortions etc.

## 2. Historical Examples of Scientific Consensus

Science usually operates from the basis of [socially] accepted scientific paradigms. These offer the benefit of an advanced starting point for any research that follows. Ergo, scientific knowledge is based on consensus. Nevertheless, scientific consensus, as well as scientific paradigms have continually shown to be incorrect. The greatest advances is

science, occur during stages of scientific revolutions, where an old paradigm [consensus] is questioned and proven wrong, and a new one is being discovered and built<sup>57</sup>. Newton broke the scientific consensus of his time and Einstein broke the consensus and paradigm that was based by Newton. This process goes on, and shows us that the probability of the current scientific consensus being exactly correct, is extremely low. Science is not a static thing, thence the phrase "The science is settled" does not represent the true scientific process and spirit. Scientific consensus should not be viewed as an authoritative measure of the objective scientific Truth.

There are various individuals and organizations that profit and gain power from the current scientifically consensus. Such organizations exert pressure on others whenever they threaten the consensus with their ["heretical"] theories and ideas. An example of this is the Catholic Church and its persecution of Galileo and Bruno, who threatened the Church's hegemony, during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. Galileo's main "sin" was purporting the heliocentric idea that the sun, rather than the earth [geocentric], is the center of the [/our] world. In 1616, an inquisitorial commission declared that heliocentrism is foolish, absurd and heretical. Galileo was put on trial and suffered from persecution that affected his health, social standing and finances<sup>58</sup>. Giordano Bruno's views were even farther away from the authoritative consensus at the time, being a great intellectual, scientist, hermetic occultist and free thinker. Bruno was the first person to grasp that the stars we see in the sky are mostly other stars with their own planets. He viewed the universe as infinite, and also went against the geocentric theory, like Galileo. Bruno went so far as to claim that other worlds also contain life, and that these worlds have no less virtue than our Earth. This did not go well with the narrow views of the time and with the interests of the

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<sup>57</sup> Kuhn, Thomas S. 2012. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 50th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press

<sup>58</sup> Wikipedia contributors, "Galileo Galilei," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Galileo\\_Galilei&oldid=1025303389](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Galileo_Galilei&oldid=1025303389)

Church, and for his views and search of Truth, Bruno paid with his life. At last, it was the “duty” of secular authorities to hang him upside down naked and then murder him by burning him alive<sup>59</sup>.

### 3. Historical Examples of Medical Consensus

When people see a person in a lab coat or doctor’s attire, they usually automatically feel reverence, respect and view this person as a person with a higher level of authority than other “regular” people. The strong social-psychological authoritative effect that scientific or medical formal standing has on us was demonstrated in the infamous Milgram experiment on obedience. Participants were told to administer electric shocks [which unbeknownst to them- were fake] to a person [who was actually an actor]. They were told to do this by the “experimenter” who they believed to be an established scientist and viewed him as a figure of authority. Although the electric shocks as well as the screams of the [actor] person who supposedly received them increased in intensity, two-thirds of all participants continued to the highest level [450 v] of shocks. Milgram later wrote about the experiment in a 1974 article titled “The Perils of Obedience” - “Stark authority was pitted against the subjects’ [participants’] strongest moral imperatives against hurting others, and, with the subjects’ [participants’] ears ringing with the screams of the victims, authority won more often than not.”<sup>60</sup> Why then, should we be surprised that people over the ages, obey doctors’ orders and medical consensus with an almost religious zeal.

- Bloodletting and leaches:

Bloodletting, cutting the skin to let blood flow out from veins, is an ancient medical practice dating back to ancient Greece and based on the theory of the four humors- human liquids, practiced by Hypocrites. It was used to treat a variety of illnesses and prevailed

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<sup>59</sup> Wikipedia contributors, "Giordano Bruno," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Giordano\\_Bruno&oldid=1027762461](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Giordano_Bruno&oldid=1027762461)

<sup>60</sup> McLeod, S. A. (2017, February 05). *The Milgram shock experiment*. Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/milgram.html>

until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>61</sup>. Modern conventional medicine does not view this as a valid treatment; moreover, the procedure holds an added danger of infection and further weakening of an already ailing body.

A form of bloodletting still practiced today is that done using leaches. One of the advantages in using leaches is the ability to direct blood flow from and to certain areas. Another supposed advantage is in the vast amounts of chemicals found in leeches' saliva, which contain about 60 distinct proteins. There are a few studies that show health benefits from leech treatment, such as relief from eczema symptoms and cancer related pain, prevention of cancer metastasis by leech saliva and the possible treatment of arthritis using the leeches' anticoagulant agent 'hirudin'. Despite these studies, the scientific consensus today is skeptical about most of these medicinal claims.<sup>62</sup>

- Lobotomy and chemotherapy:

Lobotomy is a surgical procedure, which involves drilling holes thru a patient's skull and into the brain, and then cutting random nerves inside the brain. The procedure, which was invented in 1935, is intended to treat mental health issues [by eliminating "excess emotion" and stabilizing a personality]. Lobotomies became popular in the US, and about 45,000 procedures were performed in the middle of the century [although they were outlawed in some nations, including Germany, Japan and the USSR]. After patients underwent the procedure, they usually seemed calmer, but this just masks the serious and irreversible damage done to their brain. Years later, many patients developed chronic schizophrenia, and were often the most apathetic, slow and turned-off patients. In 1949, Egas Moniz, the inventor of the lobotomy procedure, won the Nobel Prize for his invention, while its

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<sup>61</sup> Maria Cohut, "Bloodletting: Why doctors used to bleed their patients for health", Medical News Today, 16.11.2020, <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/bloodletting-why-doctors-used-to-bleed-their-patients-for-health>

<sup>62</sup> Tim Newman, "I tried leech therapy, and it was unpleasant", Medical News Today, 29.3.2018, <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/321336>

popularity peaked around the world<sup>63</sup>. In 1967, the most prominent American lobotomy surgeon was banned from operating, after performing his last operation on a longtime patient, who developed a brain hemorrhage and died<sup>64</sup>.

Chemotherapy was discovered during World War II, when the US army was studying a number of chemicals related to mustard gas. In the course of that work, a compound named Nitrogen Mustard was studied and found to work against lymphoma, which is a cancer of the lymph nodes. Following this discovery, a Boston researcher named Sidney Farber demonstrated that a compound named aminopterin produced remissions in children with acute leukemia, and later, researchers discovered different drugs that block various functions in cell growth and replication<sup>65</sup>. While Chemotherapy is a mainstream and widely used treatment today, its side effects are extreme. Chemotherapy kills healthy cells as well as cancer cells and can have a devastating effect on a patient's immune system and overall health. Success rates of this treatment vary according to different parameters such as cancer type and stage, but according to US data, Chemotherapy alone [without additional surgery] usually has a very low success rate in the single digit percentage [1-3%], in early stages of cancer<sup>66</sup>. Chemotherapy is a very aggressive form of treatment, effectively poisoning the patient as a last resort. One can wonder if in the future, people will view this as a primitive treatment, not unlike the way we view treatments such as bloodletting today.

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<sup>63</sup> Hugh Levinson, "The strange and curious history of lobotomy", BBC, 8.11.2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-15629160>

<sup>64</sup> Margarita Tartakovsky, "The surprising History of the Lobotomy", PsychCentral, 21.3.2011, <https://psychcentral.com/blog/the-surprising-history-of-the-lobotomy#1>

<sup>65</sup> The American Cancer Society medical and editorial content team, "Evolution of Cancer Treatments: Chemotherapy", American Cancer Society, 12.6.2014, <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-basics/history-of-cancer/cancer-treatment-chemo.html>

<sup>66</sup> Charlotte Lillis, "Survival and chemotherapy success rates for various cancers", Medical News Today, 13.8.2019, <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/326031#lung-cancer>

- Tobacco, Alcohol and Cannabis:

During the 1980's and 1990's, the USA Tabaco industry fought hard to suppress and discredit evidence that shows smoking is responsible for many health problems including lethal lung cancers. Their method was cherry-picking data and focusing on unexplained or anomalous details in order to keep the controversy alive. Their logic was that as long as there was doubt and controversy about the link between smoking Tabaco and health problems, the industry would be safe from litigation and regulation<sup>67</sup>. Correlation does not equal causation, and as long as there are other possibilities and contributing factors to an illness, there is 'reasonable doubt'. As long as there is reasonable doubt, the industry representatives can claim that there is no proof that the illness is caused by their product [this is very reminiscent of the way that Big Pharma and vaccine manufacturers (and others) escape responsibility and promote their product as "safe and effective"].

The Tabaco Industry preferred to look after their profits rather than the health and lives of the public. For example, from 1979 to 1985 a program funded by industry giants distributed 45 million dollars to scientists around the country for biomedical research that could produce evidence and raise authoritative experts that could mount court defenses of Tabaco<sup>68</sup>. The industry also produced media campaigns and lobbied doctors, all while knowing about the harms of smoking Tabaco. Authoritative experts [scientists and medical doctors] performed scientific and medical fraud during a period close to half a century, in return for large sums of money paid by the tobacco industry, while endangering public health and violating the ethical codes of their professions. Scientific and public consensuses were being swayed-manipulated at the expense of people's health and lives, for financial gains- egoistic human greed. It took about half a century to get to

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<sup>67</sup> Oreskes, Naomi, and Erik M. Conway. *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Climate Change*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

the Truth. Documents would show that the Tobacco industry knew about the dangers of smoking as early as 1953 and conspired to suppress this knowledge. The Tobacco industry was found guilty under the RICO statute, and finally in 2009 the U.S. congress authorized the FDA to regulate tobacco as an addictive drug<sup>69</sup>.

Alcohol is a legal and widely available drug around the world [‘Safe and Effective’??]. It has many detrimental physical and mental health risks, it is physically and psychologically addictive, and is partially responsible for many instances of violence and deadly car accidents. So why is it legal and other, more calming, suppressing drugs such as Opium and Cannabis [which has many health benefits] are still not legal in most places? The medical consensus about alcohol was and still is deeply affected by the huge industry behind it, which contributed more than 400 Billion dollars to the U.S. economy in 2010.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, the fashionable and widely accepted use of alcohol brings in a lot of revenue in taxes for governments around the world. It was this reason that ended prohibition in the US [which lasted for 14 years during the 1920’s]. Bringing back legal alcohol meant a lot of tax revenue, tax dollars that were gravely needed during the time of the great depression<sup>71</sup>.

In contrast with the physical addictive qualities of alcohol, its contribution to violence and car accidents, and its deadly health effects, Cannabis is a miracle [and natural] plant. It is not physically addictive, promotes psychological openness and social communication, often improves mental health and wellbeing, and is used to alleviate pain and as a cure for different ailments and diseases. Still, it is mostly illegal in most countries across the globe. Cannabis is a powerful weed that has a spiritual, medicinal and recreational role for the masses, including the middle classes and lower poor classes. This stokes apprehension among the elite, that their control over the masses and the political, religious or

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Tom Head, “Why Is Alcohol Legal?”, ThoughtCo, 12.8.2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/why-is-alcohol-legal-721153>

<sup>71</sup> Evan Andrews, “10 Things You Should Know About Prohibition”, History, 16.1.2015, <https://www.history.com/news/10-things-you-should-know-about-prohibition>

economical order that has served them well might be disrupted. This is one of the reasons that the elite has fought against this medicinal, cheap and easy growing weed across the ages. In British ruled India, where Cannabis was an ancient and well-known plant, the Indian ruling class and the British governor-general pushed for a total ban, from fear that cannabis would weaken their hold on the people. The British government however, being short on cash, decided to tax the cultivation and trade of Cannabis in 1790. The controversy surrounding Cannabis caused the British parliament to conduct the most comprehensive government study of Cannabis in human history during the years 1894-1895. "Report of the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission" called over a thousand witnesses from around the world, and concluded that Cannabis cultivation produces no "evil results", rejecting the alleged grounds for prohibition<sup>72</sup>.

In the United States, three large-scaled, historical reports on Cannabis showed similar results. The La Guardia report, issued by the New York Academy of Medicine in 1944 declared that Cannabis use did not induce violence, insanity or sex crimes, or lead to addiction or other drug use. During the 1960's, President Kennedy and vice President Johnson commissioned reports that found that Cannabis use did not induce violence or lead to use of heavier drugs. In 1972, President Nixon appointed the Shafer Commission at the direction of the Congress. The Shafer Commission determined that personal use of Cannabis should be decriminalized, but Nixon rejected the recommendation, although during the 70's, eleven states decriminalized Cannabis and others reduced their penalties<sup>73</sup>.

A large part of the anti-Cannabis sentiment was initially based on racism and prejudice. After the Mexican revolution of 1910, the US was flooded by Mexican immigrants, which introduced Americans to recreational Cannabis use. Fear and prejudice regarding the

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<sup>72</sup> Ryan Stoa, "A Brief Global History of the War on Cannabis", The MIT Press Reader, <https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/a-brief-global-history-of-the-war-on-cannabis/>

<sup>73</sup> "Marijuana Timeline", PBS-Frontline, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/dope/etc/cron.html>

immigrants became associated with Marijuana. During the great depression of the 1930's, massive unemployment increased public resentment of Mexican immigrants. This instigated [fake] research and propaganda claiming that Marijuana is linked to violence, crime and other socially deviant behaviors<sup>74</sup>.

During this time, the government created The Federal Bureau of Narcotics, which was led by a racist, narcissistic individual name Harry Anslinger, who chased power, fame and a larger departmental budget. Since prohibition ended in 1933, he directed his efforts to put an end to all drugs, using anti-marijuana propaganda to spearhead this campaign. His propaganda had strong racial undertones, claiming black jazz musicians created "devil's music" as a result of marijuana use. He also said- "There are 100,000 total marijuana smokers in the US, and most are Negroes, Hispanics, Filipinos, and entertainers.", and that marijuana "causes white women to seek sexual relations with Negroes, entertainers, and any others."<sup>75</sup> To support his claims, he solicited and received dubious accounts of marijuana-induced violence that later turned out to be unrelated to marijuana use. This was the kind of racist, false propoganda used to sway public opinion against Cannabis. Meanwhile, most doctors remained steadfast in their beliefs that Cannabis was safe to use. Anslinger contacted 30 doctors and pharmacists in order to receive an expert opinion that would influence the public. Although 29 out of the 30 doctors he contacted told him the drug posed no serious danger to the public, he used the testimony of the single professional that gave an opposite statement<sup>76</sup>.

These were the types of people and means used to sway public opinion about a medical-health related issue. However, when the interests of the government changed, so did the

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Jessica McKeil, "Why Marijuana Is Illegal- The Real Reasons", 26.11.2017, <https://internationalhighlife.com/why-is-marijuana-illegal/>

<sup>76</sup> "33 Examples of Ridiculous 20<sup>th</sup> Century Anti-Marijuana Propaganda", 16.10.2013, <https://allthatsinteresting.com/20th-century-anti-marijuana-propaganda>

narrative of the propaganda. During the 1940's, imports of hemp were crucial for producing military necessities for the war effort. In response, the U.S. Department of Agriculture launched the "Hemp for Victory" program, giving out hemp seeds to farmers and even granting draft deferment to those who would stay home and grow hemp<sup>77</sup>. Thus, a plant that was demonized 'a minute ago' became a prized goal 'a minute later'; and so the ball rolls on.

-Other examples: Medical consensus concerning DDT and asbestos, Dental mercury [amalgam] fillings, sugar, artificial sweeteners and high fructose corn syrup etc.

## -Consensus vs the silent voice of the minority

These examples should be given to people who still ridicule others when they propose unpopular ideas. They should be reminded of these well-known historical examples while adding a plea for them to 'Curb your authoritarianism'.

Those in power or those that benefit from the current consensus [if their moral level in the area of Truth-seeking is not high enough] usually do not [choose to] see that authority and appeal to it is being misused. As long as their situation is relatively positive-as long as they are profiting or at least not being harmed by the misuse of authority, they remain indifferent to the misuse of logic, manipulations and the further separation from objective Truth. This should not be the case. People should care more and uphold the stand for the sacred values that form the basis of our society and humanity.

*There is a person, a quiet and somewhat reclusive person. This person has knowledge and foresight that most others lack. He speaks the Truth and has a way of reaching some parts of profound Truth. This person speaks but his voice is unheard. Some of the things he says are unpopular, unfashionable. He is the anti-authority figure, because society will not*

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<sup>77</sup> "Marijuana Timeline", PBS-Frontline,  
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/dope/etc/cron.html>

*grant his voice and existence much weight. He is capable of listening to his own sub-conscience and to the "collective sub-conscience" or "super-conscience" [Jung], and possesses the analytic abilities to make sense of the gathered information and deduce possible future implications for humankind. He warns of upcoming dangers and ongoing debacles, lies and manipulation by the corrupt. He is the silent voice of the minority, the unheard, the anti-authoritarian, the forgotten prophet, and society must pay dearly for his exclusion from it. Listen to the silent voice; of the few; of the one.*

## 5. Summary

"Authority that does not exist for Liberty is not authority but force." Lord Acton

### Main point summary

- 1. Misuse- Different variants of the appeal to authority fallacy: Category 1: Appeal to Quantitative Generalization: No one and everyone: A. Appeal to consensus authority. B. Appeal to false consensus. C. Appeal to anonymous authority.  
Category 2: Appeal to irrelevant authority: A. Confusion between close areas of expertise. B. Appeal to fame. C. Appeal to deontic authority/ blind obedience or loyalty. \* Ad Hominem Imperitum: Appeal to the ignorant/unqualified person. This is an ad hominem attack in an authoritative way. Avoiding the actual argument by claiming the person does not have a right to hold an opinion relating to the matter.

- 2. Legitimate appeal to authority: Three criteria: 1. Authority figure is an expert in the specific area. 2. Authority figure refers to a matter that relates to his/her area of mastery. 3. Authority figure is accepted in her/his field.  
\* Legitimate appeal due to individual authority over one's body/possessions.
- 3. Overuse of appeal to authority: A. The disadvantages of professional specificity: Closed system- narrow point of view and systemic blind spots, dogmatic, lack of criticism- diminished ability to refute theories. Conflict of interests: Experts that are educated in the [corrupt] system need to "play the game" and align with the interests and politics of their superiors as well as their own.  
B. Appeal to Authority as a Tool for Power and Control: 1. Un-elected authoritarians. 2. Authoritative mass media as a tool used by 'elites'. 3. The dangers of overuse- too much authority and power in the hands of the few.  
C. The army as a test case of extreme authoritarianism: Short-term performance gains vs loss of individual freedoms, expression and moral conscience.
- 4. What history tells us about authorities vs minorities: 1. The dangers of despotism. 2. Historical disasters caused by over-reliance on authority: 1. South Korean Ferry Disaster. 2. The swine flu debacle and other false scares. 3. The 2021 Meron Crowd Crush Disaster. - What we can learn from these disasters.  
C. Intellectual Authoritarianism: Consensus does not equal objective Truth: 1. Historical examples of social consensus. 2. Historical examples of scientific consensus. 3. Historical examples of medical consensus. -Consensus vs the silent voice of the minority.

## Conclusion

“Blind belief in authority is the greatest enemy of the Truth.” - Albert Einstein<sup>78</sup>

We have delved into the idea of authority and its variants, from a description of its misuse by logical fallacies to clarifying the correct way of appealing to authority. From explaining the various ways authority and appeal to authority is overused, to highlighting the dangers and [historical] consequences that derive from its overuse. If you take one point from this article, I would like it to be this: Each of us has the responsibility to search, research and distinguish right from wrong, news from fake news and Truth from falsehood. Relying on others, whether they be ‘authority figures’ or not, should be done sparingly, with care, and not at the expense of our own independent, critical thinking.

“And they said let us build a city, and a tower with its head in the sky, and make us a name:” Genesis 11:4

We have seen that even when we appeal to legitimate authorities, that does not necessarily mean that they have our best interests at heart, or that they are not biased or do not possess a narrow- closed system point of view. Hold on to a healthy amount of doubt and try to analyze each claim logically and objectively. You can trust a legitimate expert or authority figure, but not at the expense of your own use of logic, research and critical thinking.

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<sup>78</sup> Frank Steiner, “*Albert Einstein: Genie, Visionär und Legende*”, Springer Science & Business Media, 2005, p.65 “Autoritätsdusel ist der größte Feind der Wahrheit.”

“The sheep will spend its entire life fearing the wolf, only to be eaten by the shepherd.” –African Proverb

Are you afraid? Is it hard for you to question your authorities? Does it take you out of your comfort zone?

It is natural to be afraid, but you must be brave and ask yourself:

Is the thing I am afraid off the real threat or just a mask built by authoritarians in order to gain control?

The real danger lies in the darkness of lies and corruption, and this dangerous evil can only be vanquished by the light of Truth.

Schmuel Schperling

13.6.21

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