

Polite Pirates

A: "Greetings. How are you this fine evening?"

B: "Well, I was good. Who are you, and why are you pointing a gun at me?"

A: "I'm your friendly neighborhood car-jacker, and I will be robbing you tonight."

B: "Is this a joke?"

A: "Oh, I assure you this is no joke. I'm a respectable and proper car-jacker, and my goal here is to make the experience as pleasant for you as possible."

B: "Then I'd like to keep my car, and be on my way."

A: "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid that's not possible. If you'll just cooperate, we can get this over with as quickly and as easily as possible. Please give me your car keys."

B: "No! Why would you do such a thing? This is wrong!"

A: "Now, now, there's no need to get insulting or combative. I'm just doing my job, and doing it in a courteous and professional manner. Now stop resisting."

B: "Calling car-jacking a 'job' doesn't make it okay! You crook!"

A: "You're only making trouble for yourself if you don't cooperate. I'm being perfectly civil and reasonable. You're the one making a big deal out of this. Now calm down and follow my orders, and you'll be just fine."

It never ceases to amaze me how many people think that as long as badge-wearing road pirates extort people "by the book," and with a calm and "professional" demeanor, that makes it all okay. What cops do, day in and day out, is look for excuses to issue "citations"—which are demands for money backed by a threat of violence—mostly for technical, victimless "offenses." As long as the highway robber has a neat and clean uniform, and uses overly formal language, and calls the extortion "law," most people think that it's all perfectly fine. In fact, if the robbers are polite and respectable-looking, most people will eagerly condemn any who even verbally object to being the victims of that racket. (I bet the Mafia wishes they received such consideration. *"Well, normally I wouldn't like my shop being subjected to this shakedown, but just look how dapper and well-kept these kneecap-smashers are!"*)

Committing armed extortion is wrong, even if you do it formally, politely and "professionally." The job of a "law enforcer" is inherently immoral, because most of the "laws" they are required to enforce are about victimless "crimes." If, for example, you forcibly kidnap people for possessing a plant that politicians don't like, you're a bad person. Using different words to describe what you are doing doesn't make it okay. Saying that you're "just doing your job" doesn't make it okay. Expressing sympathy for your victim, and being almost apologetic while you commit physical aggression against non-violent people, doesn't make it okay. (If anything, it just makes it extra creepy.)

As I've explained before, from the moment a cop puts on those red and blue flashing lights, he is absolutely threatening you with violence. He is not politely asking you to stop and have a chat. He is conveying the message—a message everyone recognizes—*"You will stop, and you will stop now, or I and more of my gang members will make you stop, by any means necessary."* Everyone knows what happens if they ignore those lights and keep on driving: violence. And everyone knows what happens if they decide to calmly drive away while the road pirate is swaggering up to their window. Violence.

And that is true, even if the encounter ends with just a "warning," or the guy telling you that your taillight doesn't work. By comparison, do you think it would be okay for *you* to forcibly detain a complete stranger, under threat of bodily harm and kidnapping, just to tell him that his taillight is busted? If you coercive detained him "politely" and with a smile, would that make it okay? Of course not. And yet, to most people, having been subjected to authoritarian indoctrination their entire lives, the measure of whether a badge-wearer is a good guy or not depends only upon: 1) whether he committed extortion, assault and/or other violent aggression "by the book," and; 2) whether he was calm and formal in his demeanor and language while committing such thuggery.

And it doesn't seem to matter to most people how utterly ridiculous, intrusive, obnoxious or oppressive so-called "laws" get; as long as the politicians' hired goons enforce them with a smile, most people are okay with it. This now includes random, warrantless, suspicionless detainment and interrogation of individuals and searches of their vehicles. But hey, as long as those Gestapo fellows at the Nazi checkpoints have a pleasant countenance and start with a friendly greeting, all is well!

Well no, it isn't.

And then there is the classic Stockholm Syndrome response: "If you have nothing to hide and aren't doing anything wrong, then just cooperate with searches and answer questions!" The implication is that good people shouldn't mind being treated like criminals. Or cattle. And that there must be something wrong with anyone who thinks that, if he isn't doing anything wrong, then he shouldn't have to answer to random strangers with guns and badges.

And you can see how hostile or downright violent many of the badge-wearers get the moment someone doesn't immediately and happily grovel before them, or doesn't meekly obey their every arbitrary command. Because the cops believe the bullshit too: they think that everyone else has an obligation to bow to their supposed "authority" and do whatever they say, and that if you don't—if, for example, you talk and act like a free adult human being who isn't beholden to some god-complex jackass on a power-trip intruding into your life for no good reason—then you must be a criminal in need of a beating. Or a shooting.