

NONAGGRESSION 101: AN ANALYSIS

Arguments for the simple nonaggression principle, some counterarguments, and their resolution

Note: Much of the following appears in Chapter 4 of my upcoming book, The Sacred Nonaggression Principle, and in its advance "field manual."

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Two columns previously, I laid out the planned architecture of the descriptive and prescriptive book, The Sacred Nonaggression Principle. Then in my immediately previous column, I commented on the spiritual dimension of moving toward a society in which the nonaggression principle is faithfully observed.

Also that what we learn in kindergarten—don't hit, don't steal, keep promises—suggests that an adult society without coercion should be a straightforward achievement, the rule rather than the exception. Alas, we see this isn't true, that humans indeed seem to be losing out in a world of the 3 Fs: faith[1], force, and fear.

Why, if our ideal society is something a five-year-old child can understand and believe in, do we as a species remain so stuck in the 3-F world? My column today starts as if the answer to this question has been provided (SNaP Book Chapter 3, mainly)—hint: the reason for failure to ban aggression from society lies in some defective psychology and secretive, deceptive machinations of a centralized (and rich) group of humans that pulls the strings of those in apparent authority. Ref. The Kleptocons.

My objective today is simply to prove my point to the 'common man' that the nonaggression principle is valid without exception[2]... and further that the nonaggression principle is "sacred."

First Principles

As I set forth in the first column I wrote on the SNaP in these pages:

The simple nonaggression principle holds nobody (or groups of bodies) shall initiate force against another for any purpose [this means especially governments]. The simple NaP becomes sacred as we collectively assert of it, "There is none higher."

I'm going to take without need for argument that everyone knows that routine criminal acts of violence and fraud[3] by individuals are aggression: e.g. robbery, assault, rape, murder. Further, civil societies need reasonable, competent systems to a) prevent aggression from occurring—i.e. protect people from it—and b) to apprehend, isolate, neutralize, and/or get justice from those who have committed real crimes.

Note: in the previous sentence I use the adjective "real" for the noun "crime." Crime technically is any action a government regards as seriously illegal: it could be anything from murder-one to saying the king is naked. So when we talk about real crime or valid crime, we're insisting that in a rational, humane society the legal definition of crime must have a rational, moral justification. Indeed, proper definition of crime lies at the core of my proposal of the SNaP.[4]

In a rational universe, in a moral society, the only recognized serious (felony) crimes are those that violate the nonaggression principle. If you think about this proposition for a minute, I think you'll agree it's relatively bulletproof. Anything that is a felony crime has to entail a) a breach in the social fabric involving the initiation of force by X on Y and b) the existence of a Y, i.e. a victim. No victim, no crime.

Note that nothing I've stated precludes a reasonable social setting from having enforceable rules of conduct—which have at their root everyone's common interest in enjoyment (via protection) of their person/property, as a community—such as traffic signs, noise ordinances, water privileges, waste disposal and what have you.

We can further buttress the proposal that in a moral society only aggression can constitute crime by referring to the common injunction against stealing in every major religion and belief system in history. It's been my experience that a revulsion toward thievery is nearly universal from high society to the dregs... probably with an edge to the dregs, because they more routinely run into the brute reality of their stuff

being ripped off by the bad dregs—and they have less stuff. Let me repeat the appearance of the SNaPStrip Diagram here to show some key features:

At a biological, gut level of understanding, humans oppose stealing... i.e. violence that results in transfer of wealth to the stealer from the stealee. Referring to the diagram, everyone to the left of the symbol N1 has this biological repugnance for theft. Just exactly where that boundary exists I'll let the scholars delve into. But it's a large bunch, and as you can see, I've defined my "Reachable We's" (WeR)—i.e. those with the potential to understand that the nonaggression principle is valid without exception—as coincident with the N1 boundary.

Getting from "Don't steal." to "Don't hit."

If you look at the Old Testament in the Bible—and other Jealous-God religions—just because you weren't to steal anyone's stuff did not mean you weren't to stone him for adultery... or idolatry. [And if you're dealing with the tribe of nonbelievers on the other side of your tribe's dirt pit, anything goes.] But aside from satisfying God's harsh behavioral codes, you weren't supposed to kill or, by implication, harm anyone.

That's how the rules developed, the codes that became common law. I'm pretty sure the anthropologists will tell us that virtually every sustained grouping of homo sapiens observed the simple nonaggression principle as a practical necessity of survival. Social groupings based on wholesale internal coercion or rival warfare had an ephemeral existence—even more "nasty, brutish, and short" than the norm for those days.

Civilization advances... via the SNaP

The progress of humanity bears a direct relationship with the decline of aggression in society. As humans developed self-awareness and mindfulness, as they discarded Jealous Gods—who, let's face it, were contrived in the image of witch doctors having serious emotional issues of their own—and superstitions in general, their natural reason further spread the ideas of civility, tolerance, individualism, creativity, and the nonaggression principle.

The spiritual growth figure from last week is relevant:

Not to retread ground from the previous column, but I do want to show how we arrive at a sociological consensus that the concept of liberty (a more elegant term for the nonaggression principle) is our common spiritual goal and destiny. And I want to get back to the idea where we started, namely that the enlightened good of society is served best by leaving human beings free to live... as they will—and only making crimes of actions that are coercive to or nonconsensual with other people.

Indeed, as the Framers and great thinkers of the Enlightenment asserted, the sole purpose of government was to protect its citizens from criminal violation of their rights (or from external military threats)... with some minimal legal infrastructure to assure that civil disputes were settled peaceably, and some administrative powers regarding common property.

To make other actions crimes—actions that do not entail initiation of force—takes society down a rathole to Hell. If what the government prohibits (makes a punishable crime) is not an act of aggression, then the government is in the position of initiating force, aggressing, that is doing exactly what it is set up solely to prevent. So we can't make exceptions. The simple nonaggression principle must be held absolute and inviolable.

Aggression: "Zero Tolerance"

Let's discuss the concept of government—the "agency of legitimized force"[5] in society—for a minute: We've already established that legitimate government is small government, charged with a relatively simple mission: protect rights, prevent aggression, keep the peace, configure a few infrastructure pegs. We've now determined that nothing in the mission statement grants government the prerogative to interfere with people's lives unless these people are initiating force against others.

No prohibitions

That means a whole host of human behaviors are now outside prohibition. The following is a comfortable list of activities the government has absolutely no business sticking its grimey-gopher-gut nose into:

- consensual sex
- consensual drugs
- consensual rock and roll
- religion
- sports, etc.

... and any of a number of other areas of life. Here's a partial list from libertarian-hero Peter McWilliams book, *Ain't Nobody's Business if You Do*: gambling, drugs, medicines, prostitution, pornography, homosexuality, polygamy, adultery, fornication, oral sex, premarital sex, suicide and assisted suicide, vagrancy, political opinions, helmet laws, seat belt laws, loitering, and so on. Consider now an example of how the SNaP easily defeats the argument for making a consensual activity a crime:

Argument: "We need to prohibit marijuana and other drugs to maintain the public health and assure public morality."

Some former counterarguments (these are still good arguments and shouldn't be discarded): a) prohibition of alcohol didn't work, b) alcohol is a vastly greater public health threat, yet we legalize and regulate it, c) putting addicts in prison is like putting diabetics in prison, d) most drug users are not abusers and the greatest health threat to them is being arrested and jailed, e) who died and made you king? etc.[6]

The SNaP trump card counterargument (TCC): "When you talk about prohibition, that means the initiation of force against people who have used no force. This is aggression, and the aggression inherent in prohibition violates our highest moral principle and most exacting standard of public health (i.e. the SNaP). You are wrong, and we will not prohibit."

Nonaggression Principle = Highest Moral Standard for Public Health.

No compulsions

Not only does the state have no right to tell anyone what not to do (prohibit), it has no right to tell anyone what to do (compulsion). In this area, there are a ton of modern illegal/unconstitutional government favorites... and they've been with us for an exceedingly long time:

- compulsory schools
- compulsory military service
- compulsory national service
- compulsory health care
- taxes

... and the list here is even more extensive than the prohibitions, full of sacred cows and sacred cow wannabes. The sacred cow of government schools stands as perhaps the classic promotion for involving the state into everyone's lives... in this case in a most dangerous fashion because of the mind control effect. Here's the point and counterpoint:

Argument: "The government has an absolute moral responsibility to make affordable education available for everyone."

Typical counterarguments (all good): a) check out how the Detroit Public Schools are doing lately, b) throwing money at centralized political machines—well more than half of funds for government schools go to administrators—only worsens the service they're supposed to provide, c) do we insist on a government agriculture system to feed the hungry?, d) why do hardly any government-school students know "who rules" the world?, e) who died and made you king? etc.

The SNaP TCC: "When you talk about compulsory education, especially compulsory education provided by government employees, you're talking about aggression.[7] Aggression is the height of

moral irresponsibility and inconsistent with acquiring knowledge, especially for the poor. Guns and books don't mix. Violation of the SNaP, not goin' duit."

Nonaggression Principle = Highest Moral Standard for Education.

No privileges

So we come to the less traveled part of our show. And frankly, I'm not going to spend a lot of space here today... though expect a fairly robust analysis in my unabridged version of the SNaP book due out this summer (2009). Privilege, as my Free State spiritual advisor and Guru to the Gurus Jack Shimek (ref. the seekers) points out, means private law. When we as liberty people cast our eyes about the modern state-infested world, what do we see? Privilege. Lots of it. Right here in River City.

What kind of privilege? Almost exclusively corporate privilege. From limited liability, the fiction of legal personhood, immunities from criminal prosecution, special tax and licensing favors, and for the ones who reach the central cartel threshold—access to vast amounts of other people's money (OPM) through the central banks and the security-state secret trade operations (mainly drugs and war machinery). Jefferson and Adams warned us unceasingly, long ago, about the money power. Andrew Jackson tried to stop the juggernaut in the early 19th century:

Corporations have neither bodies to kick nor souls to damn.

...but to little avail. And now we're stuck with these wretched tools of the primitive power engine (defined as the "They1" subdomain on the SNaPStrip above toward the authoritarian-collectivist side of the diagram). A very good preliminary discussion of the requirement for withdrawal or at least reform of the corporate privilege is set forth in Thom Hartmann's masterpiece on the subject, *Unequal Protection: The rise of corporate dominance and the theft of human rights*. I've discussed the subject, especially as it relates to crimes of the corporate-state, such as 9/11 and the unending wars for the benefit of international banksters.

Let's just state that in "Freetopia," privilege is not going to be available except as slipping through the cracks somehow. I don't expect we'll get rid of corporations, but we'll "redefine" them to conform to the Sacred Nonaggression Principle. These ideas for disposition of state-privileged entities frames a substantial area of discussion among leaders in the freedom community; I'm sure we will come to a satisfactory resolution.

No exceptions

As the simple nonaggression principle was being worked out in primitive cultures among the Thors and Hagars of the world, you can be sure the tribal chief and his witch-doctor retinue were working overtime to convince the average cave man that their leaders had to be exempt. "It's all right for you peons not to initiate force, but we chosen ones need to wield the clubs in our toolbox 'for the good of the tribe.'" Updated, a sample argument might go:

Argument: "The government needs to take this property via eminent domain for the good of the community."

Typical counterarguments (all good): a) sure, and qui bono from *Kelo vs. New London, CT?*, b) tell that to the people of Poletown, in Hamtramck, Michigan, who were bulldozed for GM, c) eminent domain THIS!, d) how does a public "taking" avoid being for private benefit?, e) who died and made you king? etc.

The SNaP TCC: "When you talk about eminent domain, you're saying the government has a special exemption from the simple aggression principle... i.e. the good of the people. But we know that the highest good of the people is the SNaP, which outranks your assertion that aggression is good for them. So, no dice."

Nonaggression Principle = Highest Moral Standard for Everyone.

Nonaggression: "Sacred"

When you get right down to it, the success of the SNaP as a meme—a meme is a replicating piece of information (or belief) in a social context— depends on how readily the "Reachable We" can look into their hearts and say, "Yes, what you're sounding out rings true. We've been too casual about the value of our kindergarten lessons. Abandoning "the way of the gun," the notion that we can derive any lasting benefit from coercion, needs to be moved to the front of the line of WHO WE ARE. Sacred. There is none higher."

And as Tucker said, "It's the idea that counts, the rest is just machinery."

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[1] In this context, I mean faith as a belief system based on superstition, that is on matters or entities for which no rational argument or evidence exists. I do not mean "having confidence," as in having the conviction that one is going to pull through an emergency.

[2] Kind of my point: Most people agree with the NaP in their personal lives, but believe it's all right for government to aggress for certain purposes. The SNaP holds aggression is sacrilege, especially when government does it.

[3] Fraud is a special category of aggression in that it deals with a deception that results in physical violation of a person by causing the victim to suffer loss/damage of person or property. Fraud is indirect aggression by way of lying.

[4] The SNaP is the basis of constitutional liberty, which in turn is the legal basis for the American criminal justice system. The Enlightenment, combined with the war for American independence and establishment of a social system based explicitly on the nonaggression principle (esp. via the Bill of Rights), remains the pinnacle of human progress.

[5] A phrase I picked up from David Friedman; I believe it was in a discussion group in the rarefied atmosphere of the "greatest Libertarian convention of all time," the 1979 Presidential Nominating Convention in LA.

[6] Between you, me, and the poppy fields, the days of the national nightmare of drug prohibition are drawing to a close. "... the sun, the moon, and the truth cannot be long [as in seemingly forever] hidden."
—Buddha

[7] An area that will be dealt with more in the book: some people don't believe it's aggression, for example, a) if a political majority votes for it, b) some sort of 'social contract' is assumed to be in place, or c) the force is only implied, such as, "You aren't really forced to do this, it's your free choice, but if you choose not to, armed thugs with badges will come to your door, seize your assets, beat up your wife and rape your farm animals, then escort you to a place of confinement." So that's not aggression, see?

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