

A Straightforward View of Morality and the Government

If an action is immoral for me and you, it is also immoral for others, including those who constitute the government. Election to public office is not a licence to lie, defraud, extort, rob, kidnap, or murder. Those who believe that government officials, employees, and contractors may morally do what other individuals may not do are morally bankrupt. The government has the power to act immorally—and does so as its standard operating procedure—but power and just right are completely different things. To affirm that might makes right in a moral sense is to affirm that one has simply chosen to abandon all pretense of taking morality seriously.

Gaze upon the members of Congress, the president and his lieutenants, the justices of the Supreme Court, and the leading figures of the government bureaucracies. As I do so, I cannot help but wonder: Who are these people? I am not personally acquainted with a single one of them; they are complete strangers to me. I have not contracted with them for the provision of any services, nor have I agreed to support them financially. Why then do these strangers presume to dictate to me what I must do and not do, and to threaten me with violence if I do not obey? They might as well be alien invaders from outer space.