Just War II, Skeptical Spooner, Buzzwords

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"Finding the Challenges" is an original column appearing every other Wednesday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Verbal Vol. Verbal is a software engineer, college professor, corporate information officer, life long student, farmer, libertarian, literarian, student of computer science and self-ordering phenomena. Archived columns can be found here. FTC-only RSS feed available here.

In the past week I have intermixed reading passages from several books on philosophy with a few debates online. It is nearly always disappointing to expect an online dialog that produces light rather than heat. But if you can leave the melee, retreating to Platonic meditation, at least the premises of some of the online silliness can be a starting point for personal illumination.

Just War, a *Non Sequitur*

I have written about the oxymoron, "just war," previously. But previously, I was objecting to an attempt to define the idea. This time I object to *all* attempts, claiming it is futile to define that which cannot exist.

Take a look at any of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, per Bible scholars, Conquest, War, Famine, and Death. Some folk versions may substitute pestilence and/or plague. My point in citing these commodities is that none of these have the attribute with the value of "just." These are afflictions. These are inevitabilities in accord with the nature of human fallibility and mortality in the universal scheme.

There was an online debate this week about whether war could be "just." I say "debate" because it was mostly a quarrel without even reaching consensus on what the word "just" means in the context of war. It was a pissing contest (pardon my Old French). It had not the least trappings of formal argumentation, which is not a contest between signifying dolts. True argumentation is seen where all parties seek true information, where there is no winner, where the full or partial achievement of a conceptual goal is the reward, for all participants.

The only thing that had been written in the thread that even had a prayer of making a philosophical statement about "just war" was the idea of applying Skyler Collins' ethic. Why

was that given such short shrift? A paraphrased query based on Skyler's ethic would have asked, in my view, *[Is war] behavior ... which maintains or strengthens the society between individuals; [is war] behavior ... which diminishes or destroys the society between individuals?* The answers for just behavior in war would have to be "yes" and "no," respectively. I challenge anybody to cite a statist war which strengthened the society among individuals or which did not diminish society between individuals.

We could also use Hazlitt's *Economics in One Lesson*. To wit,

> *The art of economics consists in looking not merely at the immediate but at the longer effects of any act or policy; it consists in tracing the consequences of that policy not merely for one group but for all groups.*

Has any war ever been waged for the economic benefit of all affected interests in both the short term and the long term? England's problems in WWII were direct consequences of several centuries of history of European society's failure to attain cooperation. Western cultures have been trapped on a moebius strip of trying to build economies through war (a *non sequitur*), since Alexander the (not so) Great, at a minimum.

Inside the loop, the quest to define war as just or justified makes limited sense — if we can't justify war then life is absurd. But if we can escape the loop, no longer trapped by the temporal rationalizations of the loop, we can perhaps see that even if life may not be absurd that war offers no salve for absurdity. In any conjecture on what would be a non-absurd life, war would not be a feature of the model.

Looking for just wars in the past is the logic fallacy of trying to make ought from is. It is absurd because we ask questions such as "are there just wars," then expect for there to be rational answers. After exhaustive commentary we haven't even agreed on a definition of "just."

If England's actions were "just" in light of the bombing of London, then whose actions were justified by the fire bombings of Hamburg (a strategic target but with huge civilian casualty) or Dresden (a tragically non-strategic target)?

Spooner Quote #18

> *[A]ll human legislation is simply and always an assumption of authority and dominion, where no right of authority or dominion exists. It is, therefore, simply and always an intrusion, an absurdity,*

> *an usurpation, and a crime.*

One of the most absurd arguments is that war is justified based on law, aka human legislation, or by what a constitution allows a state to do on behalf of its constituency. On which set(s) of mumbo-jumbo shall we base our judgments of the quality of the justice? Everything Hitler did was based upon human legislation; same for Stalin, Churchill, Mussolini, and Roosevelt (the internment of Japanese-Americans in detention camps was based on some interpretation of human legislation.)

Logic Fallacy #28 — Buzzwords

I was reading a Justin Raimondo piece, at AntiWar.com, about historic revisionism and how it afflicts both ends of the political spectrum, specifically regarding a debate between Jeb Bush and a war protester. My takeaway was that we are all victims of the lies we spread, left and right, pro and con, war or peace.

Raimondo gave a litany of many of the official lies from both political parties that have perpetrated the state role throughout the Iraq-Syria-ISIS fiasco. Many of those lies were couched in tempests of buzzwords. Even more were couched in pretenses of expertise supported by buzzwords.

I began to think about how media reports are peppered with authentic sounding pseudo-arabic names for people, place, things, and events. The most telling example to me was the coinage of a label, to deepen the fog of war, the "Khorasan Group." A geographic region name and a collective term were jammed together to make a monster. This is the principle on which a buzz phrase generator works; take one word that means nothing and add it to another word that has no context, so that an unknown region has an indefinite structure in it. *Voila!* We have a mysterious organization (maybe) in a mysterious place (maybe) that is doing mysterious behavior (maybe). The smoke and mirrors were introduced in preparation for putting American young men and women on the ground in combat again in the Middle East. Fortunately, some alternative media type exposed the term for the hot air balloon that it was.

I saw that the media thrives on this kind of babble (media sez "I know exotic stuff and you don't." media sez "I'm Chevy Chase and you're not.")

I saw the the statist policymakers rely on the fog created thereby to monger fear fueled by an excess of the unknown.

Both the media and the state thrive on the illusion that they have something that you do not, that you are dependent on them for that something. The important difference is that the media will always be entrepreneurial, they will have to satisfy the final customers,

while the state, according to Lysander Spooner " … is, therefore, simply and always an intrusion, an absurdity, an usurpation, and a crime."

I will conclude today with an *appropos* quote:

> *"Let the greatest part of the news thou hearest be the least part of what thou believest, lest the greater part of what thou believest be the least part of what is true." – Francis Quarles*

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