

“Social Justice”



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“Food for Thought” is an original column appearing every other Tuesday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Norman Imberman. Norman is a retired podiatrist who loves playing piano, writing music, lawn bowling, bridge, reading, classical music, going to movies, plays, concerts and traveling. He is not a member of any social network, nor does he plan on becoming one. Archived columns can be found [here](#). FFT-only RSS feed available [here](#).

One of the most difficult and elusive words to define in the English language is the word “justice.” Dictionary definitions offer ambiguous choices because they depend upon the use of words like “moral,” “right,” and “fair.” Unfortunately that doesn’t cut it, since one then needs to go back to the dictionary to discover the definitions of those words, which are also ambiguous. So, what is one to do in order to clarify the situation?

Without going into the long and intricate method of arriving at a proper definition, I submit that the most basic idea behind the concept called “justice” is that it has a single, all encompassing definition. It cannot be divided into classifications because classifying it would make the entire concept worthless. The idea of American, Chinese, Socialist, Communist, Fascist, Liberal, Conservative, Progressive or “Social Justice” is sophistry.

We have all heard the expression that “life is not fair or just.” Such an expression is simply a convenient way of expressing dissatisfaction with a particular situation. However, placing the tag of unfair or unjust on life in general is not epistemologically sound. There is no such thing as an unfair or unjust natural phenomenon. The metaphor, “the tyranny of nature” is just that—a metaphor. The terms fair, just, unfair or unjust can only be applied to actions perpetrated by individuals or groups of individuals. To say that a destructive tornado is unfair or unjust is unsound. To say that it is unfair or unjust when a thief has burglarized one’s house is to use the terms properly.

What is the common denominator binding together all unfair or unjust actions? It’s the concept of property. What I mean by property is not just the material things of life, like cars, chairs, tables, shoes and money, but it also includes one’s life and body, ideas and innovations*. In other words, it includes all derivatives of one’s life except one’s offspring. To own means to own some thing and that thing is one’s life and all non-procreative derivatives of one’s life. Government does not bestow ownership. The government’s job is

to protect ownership, which comes into existence before the concept of government.

When one acts to gain or keep something he is acting to gain or keep a “value.” The fact that he is acting to gain or keep it demonstrates that it is a value. When we act not to gain or keep something or even avoid it, we show that it is a disvalue or at least a non-value. (The act of suicide shows that life has become a disvalue to that individual). Generally, we all value our lives and bodies and the lives of our loved one’s. We also generally value the lives of others. We also value those material things that are derivatives of our lives. When we work for a salary we are trading our efforts for a material thing owned by others, which is their money, which we value more than the effort we relinquish. When we make a direct trade of one material thing for another material thing we are trading a derivative of our lives, which we value more than the item we relinquish. When we innovate a new idea or create a new product, those ideas and products are derivatives of our lives. In all cases, that is what makes them “ours.” There is no such thing as conservative, liberal, socialist, French or American ownership. A thing is either owned or it is not owned.

We all “value” our property to the extent that we wish to gain or keep it and justice involves the idea that property, as I have described it, is sacrosanct. When it remains sacrosanct there is order, contentment, and prosperity in a society. When it is no longer sacrosanct, disorder, dissatisfaction, turmoil, unhappiness, poverty and dependence reign and personal dignity will vanish over a period of time. Today, we are seeing it happening right before our eyes. It used to be shameful to be on welfare. Today welfare recipients are proud of their dependency and the State issues them credit cards with which they can go shopping. Where is the dignity in that?

In order for a just society to exist its first order of business must be to establish the consensus that property is sacrosanct. This country started out that way but it lost it very quickly. Today we are witnessing the beginning of the road to dissatisfaction, unhappiness, turmoil and poverty for the masses as the result of the loss of the sanctity of property.

An action is either just or unjust or possibly neutral. When all property in a society is freely (voluntarily) traded we have justice. When the exchange of property is involuntary, injustice reigns. Slavery involves the involuntary transfer of property, since the person who lost the property has involuntarily served the person who gained the property, thus the term involuntary servitude or slavery. The reason why it is unjust when one’s home is burglarized is not because it is a crime, but because the act involves the involuntary transfer of values from the owner to the thief. Then, if the burglar is caught and released without having to make restitution for his crime, another injustice is perpetrated.

Voters, by favoring the redistribution of wealth from those who have it to those who don’t have it, are expressing their desire for what they call “social justice.” However, what they fail to see (or don’t want to look at), is the injustice they are perpetrating, in that such

redistribution involves the taking of someone's property and giving it to someone else, under duress—under the force of the gun. They are creating a situation of injustice but at the same time, they call it “social justice” thus maintaining a contradiction and obliterating the entire concept of true justice. (It is similar to maintaining the position of a square triangle). In addition, they don't want to look at the short term unintended harmful consequences, the future harmful unintended consequences and fail to consider the harm done to those who have been deprived of their property. While they define theft as the taking of property without the permission of the owner, they refuse to look at the fact that redistributing wealth from one person to another is also theft. In order to assuage their guilt they give it the softer appellation, “social justice.” It is much easier to go about one's life thinking that the doctrines one espouses are good and humanitarian rather than admit to their unjustness and immorality. The idea of “social justice” is a smokescreen, obscuring the truth of the proper meaning of the term justice. It's a farce.

Every law one favors in the name of “social justice” places another nail in the coffin of America since it creates a legal system where, as Frederic Bastiat wrote, “plunder (by the State) becomes a way of life that authorizes the plunder and a moral code that glorifies it. Woe to the people that cannot limit the sphere of action of the state! Freedom, private enterprise, wealth, happiness, independence, personal dignity, all vanish.”

Just as there is no such thing as a free lunch, there is no such thing as “social justice”—there is only justice or injustice and the ideology of “social justice” that is being spread around the globe is, in reality, injustice.

** Editor's Note: While Mr. Imberman believes that ideas are a form of property, he also believes that the market will find ways to protect them, as opposed to using the state.*