Words Poorly Used #127 — Secrecy, Security, Privacy

- Does secrecy mean security? Does secrecy mean privacy?
- Does security mean secrecy? Does security mean privacy?
- Does privacy mean secrecy? Does privacy mean security?

These three words, secrecy, security, and privacy, are thrown about, often with an intent to imply relationship among them. But none of them actually imply the others or any combination of the others. The critical element for each is whether they are legitimate provinces of the state, and in the hands of the state, are they appropriately administered. Let's look at each as a standalone entity.

Is secrecy a legitimate function of the state? Not in and of itself. There may be some very limited set of state functionality where secrecy is justified. The problem here is finding some set of state functions that are justified. But this is the unsolvable argument between minarchism and anarchism. If cases can be made for the former — very specific cases — then it is permissable to begin a discussion about secrecy. There are no cases for the latter, since anarchism exists.

Is security a legitimate function of the state? But the state cannot possibly have enough functionaries to provide security. We may very well say that everyone needs security, but they can only be guaranteed that which they can provide to themselves, each individually. In the US, we have about 320 million people in need of security. We have, generously speaking, 3 million federal employees. If each of them were 100% responsible for security, that means that each has responsibility for the well-being of 106,666,667 inhabitants, 24/7/365. That is impossible on its face. Any justification of government as a provider of security is a pig in a poke.

Is privacy something that government can guarantee to its constituents? Government would have to quit their wholesale invasions of privacy first, but that is not in the physical makeup of the state.

Government needs all three to survive. We, the people, do not — at least involuntarily via a fictional state.

The government compounds and confounds these three in a mishmash *a trois*, just like steakhouses sell sizzle — smoke and mirrors, pomp and circumstance. Ask yourself, why does a POTUS desperately in need of public approval now insist that the Pentagon put on a parade for him.

— Kilgore Forelle