

Ripping Asunder and Incinerating Children

Wading through the hideous comments posted on others' Facebook pages about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I am struck once again by the reality that I live in a world with a lot of individuals whom I cannot regard as anything but moral monsters, people who not only consider the bombings as not especially regrettable, but actually take great pleasure in their having been made. How does one have a civilized conversation with people who see nothing wrong with ripping asunder or incinerating tens of thousands of children who happened to be living in those cities?

The monsters have many things in common. One is complete assurance that they know more about the historical circumstances and likelihoods than historians who have studied the matter closely and carefully for decades. Suddenly countless people are World War II experts. Amazing!

Another, worse aspect is moral collectivism. They reason that "the Japs" had it coming because "the Japs" had done X, Y, and Z, when in reality certain Japanese soldiers had done X, Y, and Z, and the civilians, especially the children, in the targeted cities cannot conceivably be held responsible for these actions except by lumping all Japanese into a single moral entity. Such lumping, however, is indefensible. All morality pertains to individual conduct; only individuals make moral judgments and choices, and only individuals act. Nothing brings people to make the errors of moral collectivism as quickly and fully as war. To this day, many Americans regard the enemies that U.S. politicians have made in the world as fair game for annihilation — men, women, and children alike.

Collectivism is not only the greatest enemy of sound economic reasoning. It is even more so the greatest enemy of sound moral reasoning. Sad to say, I am trapped in a world in which such unsound — indeed, often monstrous — argumentation is more the rule than the exception. May God have mercy.