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## ESSAY | Just Asking by Henry Nicolle

Do you ever ask yourself "What the hell is going on, anyway?" I ask that. On a very rare occasion, I receive a coherent response. Most often, my question is returned to me without an answer.

Are we each born into this world as free humans, equally independent of obedience to some superior human or group of humans? Does this equality demand that reciprocity of respect for the equal existence among all individuals?

My opinion is that we are individually born free to equally seek self-determination. We have different individual qualities, but none of those qualities instill an individual or group right to rule others. We have no inherent right to exist beyond our own ability to survive. For those who would perish were it not for the aid of their fellow humans, that is a rough row to hoe. It is only for the grace and assistance of our fellow humans that we survive infancy or longer. These realities create no obligation between individuals and their societies.

Society is a process by which individuals voluntarily cooperate for mutual prosperity and security. It is not altruistic to aid offspring or strangers. Such aid has a value for our own prosperity, security and survival when it is provided voluntarily, without coercion. If aid is taken or provided involuntarily, that violence serves to destroy both the giver and the receiver.

Is theft from some to aid others any less a crime than to simply steal for one's personal advantage? If a crime, is the theft a crime if we hire or coerce someone to act for us? Is it no crime to steal from some to give to others if we act as a group and we hire someone to do our thieving? Does the process of employing a thief for our common advantage make theft less of a crime? Is theft less of a crime as an individual or as a group if our ends are charitable or beneficial, having no personal or group gain from the theft?

I believe a theft is a crime regardless of who does the stealing and regardless of who or what may benefit. The group has no privileges which are not held by the individuals of the group. If it is a crime for an individual to steal in order to benefit another, perhaps even one in mortal desperation, it remains a crime for a group to steal, even via a hired thug, in performing the same deed.

Finally, if an individual harms or kills another in order to take what the other has, because the other is unwilling to give up what he has or is unwilling to trade, is the crime any less criminal if it is personally accomplished or if the killer has friends who hire assassins and thugs to murder and bring back the booty?

I believe again that violence and murder are crimes when they are the means by which individuals or groups acquire power or the property, territory and power of other humans.

We are all guilty of countless crimes and murders at home and abroad when we watch silently as our police beat one of us senseless or as our



bombs fall on the children of foreign soil. We are as guilty of the murders of numberless families and children as are our warriors and technicians who raze countries to gain their labor, their resources and their assistance to expand our empire. When we condone crimes of violence and murder by our government, we are as guilty as they.

Are our cars, houses and malls so critical to our existence that we should murder chil-

dren, destroy their hospitals and schools, bomb their water and sewer facilities into stone-age levels of technology? All these crimes against people like us, who have children like ours, who have as little connection with the decisions and triggers whose weapons bloody their kitchens and lawns are ours, done to save a dime at the pump and put a quarter in an executive's bonus package.

The murder and suffering of the innocent of the world are good for our life-style. A million murders each year on the average by our troops and our violent policies of acquisition and influence have made our "poor" among the wealthiest middle-class by wealth of the world.

If we have a soul, (I suspect that our conduct suggests that we have none) I would worry for it.

Just asking. Is it worth it to you that we annihilate an innocent every 30 seconds so that we can sit in traffic jams, watch TV and send a couple bucks to our favorite church or charity every little once in a while?

Just asking, "How many innocents does your life consume and how many are left in your life-tank?"

