

THE SACRED NONAGGRESSION PRINCIPLE: CUTTING THE GORDIAN KNOT OF POLITICS

BY BRIAN WRIGHT

Many of us have heard the term “meme,” which was created and popularized by Richard Dawkins in several books, particularly [The Selfish Gene](#) (1976). A meme is a replicating piece of information. In culture, a meme can represent a behavior pattern that people come to adopt, sometimes without even being aware of it.

Just as genes become successful through a natural selection process, it is sometimes useful to think of memes becoming successful through first becoming fashionable then almost universal. A good example of a successful meme is “we don’t smoke indoors at the office anymore.” That’s why we see all these people smoking cigarettes around business doorways nowadays.

I propose we self-consciously make a meme of the Sacred Nonaggression Principle (SNaP). What will it take to make such a meme successful?

Well, most of the people we know in RealWorld aren’t inclined to see abstract ideas as compelling. Americans, in particular, have a well-deserved reputation of being anti- or at least *non*-intellectual and sentimentally religious. So to spread the meme quickly in the States we’re going to have to tug on people’s heartstrings, while minimizing abstract reasoning.

The good news is the ideals of reason and liberty seem to be rapidly occupying the intellectual vacuum that underlies mass culture. Given time, the average Joe Bob on the street will be in our corner. But the problems from previous aggressions are so advanced, we need to accelerate the normal process of ideological change.

That’s why I began exploring the whole notion of the SNaP as a killer meme.

Let’s take a short cut to the hearts of real people with an essential, urgent appeal for their *salvation*. The word salvation—meaning survival in this context—even has an opportune religious connotation.

It won’t seem a big leap of faith for most people to see salvation (survival) as a Holy Grail, outweighing other ideals. Then we package freedom—the nonaggression principle in practice—with salvation and make the whole thing sacred, i.e. “worthy of the highest respect and veneration.”

The SNaP Defined

The simple nonaggression principle holds nobody (or groups of bodies) initiates force against another for any purpose. The simple NaP becomes sacred as we collectively assert of it, "There is none higher."

May sound extreme on the surface, but on a person-to-person level, people have a biological aversion to stealing or to hitting someone over the head with a club. As street libertarians show to RealWorld people that such behavior is *aggression*, which of course it *is*, we’re off to the races.

The simple nonaggression principle is built into every moral code ever conceived, e.g., “Thou shalt not steal.” That’s our leg up on the competition:

“Look, Joe Bob, you know faith and force are destroying the planet—like junk food leading us to an early grave. We gotta lay down the guns, man, like *now*. Quit stealing and beating people up. *SNaP out of it, man!*”

“Dunno, dude, I’m a school administrator, and look at that Taj Mahal High School they just built for me down the road with all that money taken from the tax slaves. I hate to let go.”

“But Joe, you know what Jesus and the SNaP teach, those who take the gun get wasted by the gun. If you want freedom you have to *share* it. Besides, you’re the biggest dooper I know; it’s just a matter of time before the popos pay you a house call, send you up to the motel with bars on the windows. You want that?”

“Nope, guess not. I’ll go with the SNaP, then, make an honest living.”

“Right arm, dude. That’s why they call it sacred.”

As the SNaP meme threads its way into general awareness, expect literally millions of such conversations to occur.

Some Technical Issues

By making the simple nonaggression principle *sacred* we make that idea far more acceptable to large numbers of real, nonideological people. Most people, especially in the USA today, are inclined to go along with your claim of sacredness, or at least let you be.

For example, a friend of mine, when they ask for his Social Security number, says “My religion doesn’t use Social Security numbers.” I.e. “my sacred belief system—protected by the First Amendment—doesn’t accept *whatever*.”

The government doesn’t like to mess with people’s sacred belief systems, no matter what the beliefs. The Amish today are exempt from Social Security¹. If we can wrap secular holy cloth around the nonaggression principle, we will see a sea change in world politics.

In order for the SNaP to carry the day, large numbers of regular individuals must:

- 1) Overcome inertia
- 2) Grasp and agree with the NaP
- 3) Imagine a future w/o coercion

Expanding on each of the above assertions:

¹ After years of fighting the federates, the Amish and “other religious sects established before 1950,” are not compelled to pay social security taxes, nor do they receive social security benefits.

<http://www.amishnews.com/amisharticles/amishss.htm>

- 1) **Overcome inertia**—Say you draw government welfare payments—either in the form of individual checks or corporate subsidies—that exceed what the government takes from you. Then as a net beneficiary you will have trouble letting go of your favored status. To change requires personal courage and sacrifice; I believe human beings are ready to step up to this level of spiritual achievement.
- 2) **Grasp and agree with the NaP**—The nonaggression principle (NaP) simply states that nobody is allowed to *initiate* force against anyone else. Whatever you do that requires others, you must get the everyone’s voluntary consent. Government overriding that consent by law is the worst violation of all. The NaP is becoming clearer with every new act of government coercion on behalf of rich or poor.
- 3) **Imagine a future w/o legal coercion**—Think of it: no taxes withheld from your paycheck; when you pay off the mortgage your home is yours free and clear; no one impresses your children into state indoctrination centers; you may inhale or ingest any substance you want; nobody may foul your air, land, or water...

I can go on forever on number 3, because I've been acquiring a lot of imagination since moving to the Free State (New Hampshire). But here is a near-term practical list of things we can do to “SNaP out of it:”

- Withdraw one’s moral sanction. Without our consent, the state is dead in the water. A tax strike would be ideal and timely.
- Restore habeas corpus and the Bill of Rights to everyone. (Make their restoration a condition of ending the tax strike.)
- Legalize all consensual behavior, especially drugs. Wasting half a trillion dollars on the drug laws in a purported age of terrorism is immoral.
- Separate the state from schooling, forever. You want someone to teach your kids, write a check. Leave me (and my kids) out of your grandiose menacing vision.
- Similarly, separate the state from charitable giving. Americans give \$300 billion a year in charity. Stop welfare, they’ll give more.² Needless to say, the state doesn’t belong in retirement or health care either; it’s like inviting Godzilla to dinner.
- Eliminate corporate privileges; end vast political concentrations of wealth in the hands of those who use it to scorch the earth for their own wasteful extravagance.

The list is necessarily brief. But you can see where I’m going with it.

My six-point program sounds fairly radical UNLESS you can let go of any special state bennies, get right with the nonaggression principle, and imagine how wonderful your life can be when you give up the sword. And I think we can.

It has to happen... soon. Then I’m thinking any political figure who wants a chance of gaining office in 2008, 2010 at the latest, will feel compelled to affirm five out of six of

² According to Giving USA (American Association of Fundraising Counsel), Americans gave \$250 billion in charitable, philanthropic funds in 2004.

them. This leads me to identify a form of social protest that can be immediately effective:

The Legacy of Lauren Canario

I want to conclude the discussion of the Sacred Nonaggression Principle by discussing one of the main social justifications used for state aggression: eminent domain, legal government taking of private property... then explaining my SNaP-based tool.

Note: Irreparable damage to real human flesh and blood occurs when one accepts any social justification for aggression.

Lauren Canario is this marvelous woman I know from the Free State who took a stand against property theft by the state of Connecticut (the celebrated [Kelo vs. New London, CT](#) case), and was held for 90 days without trial, often in chains and often in solitary. On December 22 she was suddenly released.

What was her offense?

When the bulldozers came to demolish the home of one of the residents whose property was condemned, Lauren took a seat on the front porch of that residence. That's pretty much it.

The gendarmes proceeded to cart her off and put her where the sun don't shine (9/22/2006). This is the second time she's been kidnapped by the Rogue State of Connecticut—the first was for attempting to attend a New London city council meeting approximately one year earlier.

The judge threatened *not* to put her on trial for months, and he formally endorsed her mistreatment. From the Bill of Rights we know the judge violated the law, namely the 5th Amendment against taking private property and the 6th Amendment requiring a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury.

More vital to my argument, the judge and his surrounding officials violated their own humanity by holding Lauren and mistreating her so for protesting an unconstitutional act. We have to ensure all such public officials are constantly reminded that they're human beings just like the people they're violating.

Would they commit such monstrous acts on their own mothers, sisters, or daughters?!! Ask them to look in the mirror and be honest about what they see; then turn around and open the cell doors for everyone like Lauren, especially anyone they have locked up for sin crimes. Better yet, don't arrest any peaceful, honest people at all.

As a tribute to Lauren in particular and in furtherance of the Sacred Nonaggression Principle in general, I have created a modest tool that I hope will help real people turn off the spigot of legal aggression in communities around the world.

I call it the Public-Official Nonaggression Pledge (PONA^P).

Public-Official Nonaggression Pledge

*As an ethical human person charged with legislating, executing, or judging laws, I uphold the **Bill of Rights** and the **Sacred Nonaggression Principle**. I shall take no part in any act of force upon persons who have not used force, and I shall seek conviction of any public official who does so commit acts of aggression upon peaceful, honest human beings.*

Simple, huh?

As we protest and petition the PONaP to every public official and to every candidate for public office, we will generate a lot of publicity. This can be the shot in the arm the Libertarian Party needs on state and federal levels, because every libertarian will sign the pledge in a heartbeat, while every statist will either hide or try to sign in bad faith.

I believe the pledge can give freedom-loving people the edge we've been looking for.

It turns the moral machinery in our favor with a direct unavoidable imperative. I expect we'll see officials falling all over one another signing the pledge in order to get elected. Soon, we'll all sleep better knowing our public officials are committed to alleviating aggression not implementing it.

After all, these people work for us. It isn't too much to ask them to behave.

What do you think?

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