

Urth Digest, Vol 57, Issue 31

The Urth list — 16 messages, 8 voices, 19 May 2009

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5439>

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Robin Dunn — 19 May 2009, 22:14

Into the streets with your Robin Hood hats!

Tear down the SUVs! tear down the McDonalds! Unite as Brothers! ;) Burn the neocons at the stake like Giordano Bruno! Instatiate the Group of Seventeen for all time!

On Tue, May 19, 2009 at 3:11 PM, <urth-request at lists.urth.net> wrote:
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? ? ? ?urth at lists.urth.net

To subscribe or unsubscribe via the World Wide Web, visit
? ? ? ?<http://lists.urth.net/listinfo.cgi/urth-urth.net>
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You can reach the person managing the list at
? ? ? ?urth-owner at lists.urth.net

When replying, please edit your Subject line so it is more specific
than "Re: Contents of Urth digest..."

Today's Topics:

- ? 1. Re: ?Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again) (Adam Thornton)
- ? 2. Re: ?Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again) (brunians at brunians.org)
- ? 3. Re: ?Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again) (brunians at brunians.org)
- ? 4. Re: ?Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again) (James Wynn)
- ? 5. Re: ?Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again) (David Stockhoff)
- ? 6. Re: ?Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again) (David Stockhoff)
- ? 7. Re: ?Urth Digest, Vol 57, Issue 30 (David Stockhoff)
- ? 8. Re: ?Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again) (David Stockhoff)

Message: 1

Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 17:00:17 -0500
From: Adam Thornton <adam at io.com>
Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)
To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>
Message-ID: <7128DCCE-0E7C-4291-A0FA-D5855BC96A02 at io.com>
Content-Type: text/plain; charset=US-ASCII; format=flowed; delp=yes

On May 19, 2009, at 4:56 PM, brunians at brunians.org wrote:

I call them like I see them. I prefer to look straight at things and name them plainly, rather than search for more comforting, euphemistic ways to express plain reality.

Ah, but here is our fundamental disagreement: I don't think "extortion" is any closer to "plain reality" than "dues."

I am, in fact, arguing that the reverse is true. "But then I believe we probably, at heart, disagree on "plain reality."

Adam

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Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 18:03:48 -0400 (EDT)

From: brunians at brunians.org

Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <14123.67.142.130.18.1242770628.squirrel at brunians.org>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=iso-8859-1

You're familiar with Thomas Jefferson, right Lane? They taught you about him in law school or college or something, I am sure, and you are just pretending to be ignorant for rhetorical effect.

Go on with you: I am feeling favorably disposed towards you now and have no real desire to explain Jeffersonianism to you, almost certainly falling into one or more of your lawyerly traps along the way. I argue for fun, not blood and would prefer not to engage with a professional unless you tie one lobe of your brain behind your back or something.

...[W]hat country can preserve its liberties, if its rulers are not warned from time to time, that this people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms. The remedy is to set them right as to the facts, pardon and pacify them. What signify a few lives lost in a century or two? The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time, with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure.

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So your democratically-elected government gets to serve at the pleasure of a small but violent minority? I understand frustration with graft and waste, but calling for rebellion against a lawfully-seated state for carrying out the will of society?

At some point, you realize the value in cooperation, community and shared society. All civilization is based on this premise, that together a people can accomplish what one alone cannot.

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market removes this universally-agreed as beneficial goal of cooperation and replaced it with a unilateral goal of profit. As wealth cannot be created ex nihilo, profit must arise from a producer taking more than a product is worth. This is only possible on a market where supply and demand are manipulated against the interest of the consumer.

Thus, the market is merely the latest iteration of the master-slave relation. It is the battlefield of class conflict. How does calling taxes imposed by a lawful sovereign equal theft, but the creation of profit not equal extortion by a self-selected, undemocratic oligarchy?

Individuals and individual liberty are only meaningful insofar as a civil legal system ensures they are protected. Authoritarian abuses by right and left ignore this. Free markets actively suppress it by economic manipulation.

Tell me again why I should kill lawfully-seated ministers of the civil government to preserve the rights of the people exploiting me?

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From: brunians at brunians.org

Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <2352.67.142.130.18.1242770756.squirrel at brunians.org>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=iso-8859-1

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Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <BD4FACD5AAA943568DAC238C1E3F3911 at eMachinePC>

Content-Type: text/plain; format=flowed; charset="iso-8859-1";

? ? ? ?reply-type=response

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One way of "funding it to the same degree" would be to demand a flat amount from each citizen.

This is actually is the most fair way. But, that's asking way too much fairness from a society of Fallen human beings. On the other hand, if the poor don't like it, I suppose they could move to Mogadishu.

One way would be to impose the same percentage fee on each citizen, regardless of income. "This is usually what Libertarians claim to like. However, such a plan ignores the (I think fairly important) observation that the marginal value of money decreases the more of it you have.

Marginal value decreases for whom" Not to the people who work to earn it. You're argument divorces the amount of money made from the people who created it. It assumes that a guy making \$25K a year is exactly like the guy making \$250K a year except that one happens to make less. It ignores the risks the second guy took in capital, time, and effort in order to create that wealth. It also ignores the fact that the first guy gets far more BENEFIT from non-essential government services that the second guy. Some would say the differences therefore balance out so that both should pay the same rate.

The real reason has nothing to do with marginal values of money. It has to do with practicality. These services are proposed to get a majority of the voting public to like them. So you give out benefits to a larger number and have a smaller number pay the freight. No majority will not vote for 95% of government services if they are seen as fee-for-service. "You probably wouldn't. David Stackhoff implied that he found the idea increased taxes appealing because he didn't think he'd pay the bulk of them (or any of them").

Hence a third way would be to impose a tax that causes the same amount "of inconvenience at all levels of income. This is approximately what progressive income taxes attempt to do.

How does a progressive tax provide "the same amount of inconvenience at all levels of income"? Or do you mean "we'll tax you more if you have more and we'll do the same to other guy who has more too"? What if we taxed every one making \$35K-\$50K at 95% and everyone else at 15%. Is that equally logical" But we don't just tax based on income either, do we? Because this is democracy in action. The law-makers cut breaks for certain voting blocks (home-owners, parents, college students, and retirees) while busting others (cigarette smokers and people who drive for a living).

"Robbing from the rich to give to the poor," is simply the same "argument stood on its head, of course. Does taxation go from "legitimate" to "robbery" at a value derived from the absolute dollar value of the tax, from a percentage of income across all income ranges, or to a degree of inconvenience across all income ranges"

How can I describe a progressive tax? Say five citizens get together to fund a new well. Hmmm...they could all pay the same amount to dig it, or they could all pay the same percentage of their wealth, OR....they could vote that Moe here--who also has a lake on his property so he doesn't need the well---will pay for half of it because, after all, he can "afford it". How

is that different from a two foxes and a hen voting on what to have for supper?

J.

Message: 5
Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 18:06:46 -0400
From: David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net>
Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)
To: urth at lists.urth.net
Message-ID: <4A132D76.3090700 at verizon.net>
Content-Type: text/plain; charset=ISO-8859-1; format=flowed

Yeah, Mao and Washington would have found much in common.

--- On Tue, 5/19/09, brunians at brunians.org <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

From: brunians at brunians.org <brunians at brunians.org>
Mao was a perceptive guy about some things. Power and how to use it, for instance. Decent poet also, I'm told.

Not a very nice man, but pretty smart.

If three people as different as Mao, Washington and Geller agree about something, I'd say it's time to sit up and take notice.

.
If Mao said it, it must be true.

avast! Antivirus: Outbound message clean.
Virus Database (VPS): 090519-0, 05/19/2009
Tested on: 5/19/2009 6:06:48 PM
avast! - copyright (c) 1988-2009 ALWIL Software.
<http://www.avast.com>

Message: 6
Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 18:08:42 -0400

From: David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net>
Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)
To: urth at lists.urth.net
Message-ID: <4A132DEA.20907 at verizon.net>
Content-Type: text/plain; charset=ISO-8859-1; format=flowed

Of course you have.

Message: 5
Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 17:44:27 -0400 (EDT)
From: brunians at brunians.org
Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)

David Stockhoff — 19 May 2009, 22:20 · follows Robin Dunn

Below

Message: 4
Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 17:06:05 -0500
From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>
Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)
To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
Message-ID: <BD4FACD5AAA943568DAC238C1E3F3911 at eMachinePC>
Content-Type: text/plain; format=flowed; charset="iso-8859-1";
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Okay. Here are your three options:

----If you keep thinking in terms of your individual, personal, exclusive benefit, you will never grasp the concept of the public good.

Adam sez:
Of course, "fund it to the same degree," and "robbing from the rich to give to the poor," each themselves admit multiple interpretations. One way of "funding it to the same degree" would be to demand a flat amount from each citizen.

This is actually is the most fair way. But, that's asking way too much fairness from a society of Fallen human beings. On the other hand, if the poor don't like it, I suppose they could move to Mogadishu.

----Yes, in their yachts.

One way would be to impose the same percentage fee on each citizen, regardless of income. This is usually what Libertarians claim to like. However, such a plan ignores the (I think fairly important) observation that the marginal value of money decreases the more of it you have.

Marginal value decreases for whom? Not to the people who work to earn it. You're argument divorces the amount of money made from the people who created it. It assumes that a guy making \$25K a year is exactly like the guy making \$250K a year except that one happens to make less. It ignores the risks the second guy took in capital, time, and effort in order to create that wealth. It also ignores the fact that the first guy gets far more BENEFIT from non-essential government services than the second guy. Some would say the differences therefore balance out so that both should pay the same rate.

-----You're ignoring the fact that most personal wealth in the US is inherited. You're also ignoring racism and classism. And your assumption that the first guy gets more benefit from services is unfounded and unproven. _

_The real reason has nothing to do with marginal values of money. It has to do with practicality. These services are proposed to get a majority of the voting public to like them. So you give out benefits to a larger number and have a smaller number pay the freight. No majority will not vote for 95% of government services if they are seen as fee-for-service. You probably wouldn't. David Stackhoff implied that he found the idea increased taxes appealing because he didn't think he'd pay the bulk of them (or any of them?).

-----I said nothing like that. I said I WANT TO PAY MORE TAXES. I want a bigger, better public "space."

brunians at brunians.org — 19 May 2009, 22:20 · in reply to Robin Dunn

Actually, the way you tell that it's getting close to shoot-the-bastards time is that **everyone**, including the cops, is talking about it getting close to shoot-the-bastards time, on one side of the argument or another, depending on the loyalties of the region that you are in. Anyone disagrees they keep quiet. That's how it was before the American Revolution and that is how it was before the War Between The States.

.

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Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 18:08:42 -0400
From: David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net>
Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)
To: urth at lists.urth.net
Message-ID: <4A132DEA.20907 at verizon.net>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=ISO-8859-1; format=flowed

Of course you have.

Message: 5

Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 17:44:27 -0400 (EDT)

From: brunians at brunians.org

Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)

John Watkins — 19 May 2009, 22:25 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

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1. Re: Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again) (Adam Thornton)
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Message: 1

Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 17:00:17 -0500

From: Adam Thornton <adam at io.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)

To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <7128DCCE-0E7C-4291-A0FA-D5855BC96A02 at io.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=US-ASCII; format=flowed; delp=yes

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Adam

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From: brunians at brunians.org

Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <14123.67.142.130.18.1242770628.squirrel at brunians.org>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=iso-8859-1

You're familiar with Thomas Jefferson, right Lane? They taught you about him in law school or college or something, I am sure, and you are just pretending to be ignorant for rhetorical effect.

Go on with you: I am feeling favorably disposed towards you now and have no real desire to explain Jeffersonianism to you, almost certainly falling

into one or more of your lawyerly traps along the way. I argue for fun, not blood and would prefer not to engage with a professional unless you tie one lobe of your brain behind your back or something.

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Thus, the market is merely the latest iteration of the master-slave relation. It is the battlefield of class conflict. How does calling taxes imposed by a lawful sovereign equal theft, but the creation of profit not equal extortion by a self-selected, undemocratic oligarchy?

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Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth@lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <2352.67.142.130.18.1242770756.squirrel at brunians.org>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=iso-8859-1

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Message: 4

Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 17:06:05 -0500

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <BD4FACD5AAA943568DAC238C1E3F3911 at eMachinePC>

Content-Type: text/plain; format=flowed; charset="iso-8859-1";
reply-type=response

Adam, in "The Devil in a Forest", Wolfe presents the issue moral terms.
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for that service than my neighbor, why is that less shameful than just
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Okay. Here are your three options:

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This is actually is the most fair way. But, that's asking way too much
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One way would be to impose the same percentage fee on each citizen,
regardless of income. This is usually what Libertarians claim to like.

However, such a plan ignores the (I think fairly important) observation
that the marginal value of money decreases the more of it you have.

Marginal value decreases for whom? Not to the people who work to earn
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You're argument divorces the amount of money made from the people who
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that wealth. It also ignores the fact that the first guy gets far more
BENEFIT from non-essential government services that the second guy. Some
would say the differences therefore balance out so that both should pay
the
same rate.

The real reason has nothing to do with marginal values of money. It has to do with practicality. These services are proposed to get a majority of the voting public to like them. So you give out benefits to a larger number and have a smaller number pay the freight. No majority will not vote for 95% of government services if they are seen as fee-for-service. You probably wouldn't. David Stackhoff implied that he found the idea increased taxes appealing because he didn't think he'd pay the bulk of them (or any of them?).

Hence a third way would be to impose a tax that causes the same amount of inconvenience at all levels of income. This is approximately what progressive income taxes attempt to do.

How does a progressive tax provide "the same amount of inconvenience at all levels of income"? Or do you mean "we'll tax you more if you have more and we'll do the same to other guy who has more too"? What if we taxed every one making \$35K-\$50K at 95% and everyone else at 15%. Is that equally logical?

But we don't just tax based on income either, do we? Because this is democracy in action. The law-makers cut breaks for certain voting blocks (home-owners, parents, college students, and retirees) while busting others (cigarette smokers and people who drive for a living).

"Robbing from the rich to give to the poor," is simply the same argument stood on its head, of course. Does taxation go from "legitimate" to "robbery" at a value derived from the absolute dollar value of the tax, from a percentage of income across all income ranges, or to a degree of inconvenience across all income ranges?

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Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 18:06:46 -0400

From: David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net>

Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)

To: urth at lists.urth.net

Message-ID: <4A132D76.3090700 at verizon.net>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=ISO-8859-1; format=flowed

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Mao was a perceptive guy about some things. Power and how to use it, for instance. Decent poet also, I'm told.

Not a very nice man, but pretty smart.

If three people as different as Mao, Washington and Geller agree about something, I'd say it's time to sit up and take notice.

.

If Mao said it, it must be true.

avast! Antivirus: Outbound message clean.

Virus Database (VPS): 090519-0, 05/19/2009

Tested on: 5/19/2009 6:06:48 PM

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<http://www.avast.com>

Message: 6

Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 18:08:42 -0400

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Content-Type: text/plain; charset=ISO-8859-1; format=flowed

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Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 18:05:56 -0400 (EDT)
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Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)
To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
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avast! - copyright (c) 1988-2009 ALWIL Software.
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I take it, then, that although you believe that war can be justified, you don't believe that the American Civil War (from the Yankee side, anyway) was such an instance. Is that fair?

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.

Into the streets with your Robin Hood hats!

Tear down the SUVs! tear down the McDonalds! Unite as Brothers! ;)
Burn the neocons at the stake like Giordano Bruno! Instatiate the Group of Seventeen for all time!

On Tue, May 19, 2009 at 3:11 PM, <urth-request at lists.urth.net> wrote:

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or, via email, send a message with subject or body 'help' to
urth-request at lists.urth.net

You can reach the person managing the list at
urth-owner at lists.urth.net

When replying, please edit your Subject line so it is more specific
than "Re: Contents of Urth digest..."

Today's Topics:

1. Re: Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again) (Adam Thornton)
2. Re: Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)
- (brunians at brunians.org)
3. Re: Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)
- (brunians at brunians.org)
4. Re: Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again) (James Wynn)
5. Re: Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again) (David Stockhoff)
6. Re: Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again) (David Stockhoff)
7. Re: Urth Digest, Vol 57, Issue 30 (David Stockhoff)
8. Re: Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again) (David Stockhoff)

Message: 1

Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 17:00:17 -0500

From: Adam Thornton <adam at io.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)

To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <7128DCCE-0E7C-4291-A0FA-D5855BC96A02 at io.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=US-ASCII; format=flowed; delp=

On May 19, 2009, at 4:56 PM, brunians at brunians.org wrote:

I calls them like I sees them. I prefer to look straight at things
and

name them plainly, rather than search for more comforting,
euphemistic

ways to express plain reality.

Ah, but here is our fundamental disagreement: I don't think
"extortion" is any closer to "plain reality" than "dues."

I am, in fact, arguing that the reverse is true. But then I believe
we probably, at heart, disagree on "plain reality."

Adam

Message: 2

Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 18:03:48 -0400 (EDT)

From: brunians at brunians.org

Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
Message-ID: <14123.67.142.130.18.1242770628.squirrel at brunians.org>
Content-Type: text/plain; charset=iso-8859-1

You're familiar with Thomas Jefferson, right Lane? They taught you about him in law school or college or something, I am sure, and you are just pretending to be ignorant for rhetorical effect.

Go on with you: I am feeling favorably disposed towards you now and have no real desire to explain Jeffersonianism to you, almost certainly falling into one or more of your lawyerly traps along the way. I argue for fun, not blood and would prefer not to engage with a professional unless you tie one lobe of your brain behind your back or something.

...[W]hat country can preserve its liberties, if it's rulers are not warned from time to time, that this people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms. The remedy is to set them right as to the facts, pardon and pacify them. What signify a few lives lost in a century or two? The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time, with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure.

-- Thomas Jefferson

.

So your democratically-elected government gets to serve at the pleasure of a small but violent minority? I understand frustration with graft and waste, but calling for rebellion against a lawfully-seated state for carrying out the will of society?

At some point, you realize the value in cooperation, community and shared society. All civilization is based on this premise, that together a people can accomplish what one alone cannot.

The substitution of civil government/society with a profit driven market removes this universally-agreed as beneficial goal of cooperation and replaced it with a unilateral goal of profit. As wealth cannot be created ex nihilo, profit must arise from a producer taking more than a product is worth. This is only possible on a market where supply and demand are manipulated against the interest of the consumer.

Thus, the market is merely the latest iteration of the master-slave relation. It is the battlefield of class conflict. How does calling taxes imposed by a lawful sovereign equal theft, but the creation of

profit not equal extortion by a self-selected, undemocratic oligarchy?

Individuals and individual liberty are only meaningful insofar as a civil legal system ensures they are protected. Authoritarian abuses by right and left ignore this. Free markets actively suppress it by economic manipulation.

Tell me again why I should kill lawfully-seated ministers of the civil government to preserve the rights of the people exploiting me?

Sent from my iPhone

On May 19, 2009, at 4:36 PM, brunians at brunians.org wrote:

I said this in a recent post. I will expand upon it.

Taxation, the extortion of money from the citizens, is permissible for things that are necessary. My list of necessary things includes the military and things related to the military, infrastructure and certain kinds of research. I insist that the involuntary nature of taxation be explicit and resist the inevitable attempts at expansion of the things-to-be-paid-for-by-taxation.

Of course, as a good Jeffersonian, I believe that from time to time it is necessary to shoot the bastards and start over. We're not quite there yet.

.

On May 19, 2009, at 4:19 PM, brunians at brunians.org wrote:

But we (the people on the other side of the argument) are none of us arguing for a complete lack of functional civil society and a Hobbesian all-against-all. Were you under the impression that we were?

I don't see how you can get from the position that all taxation is theft to the position that some governments are legitimate without giving up on the first one.

Adam

Urth Mailing List

To post, write urth at urth.net

Subscription/information: <http://www.urth.net>

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Urth Mailing List

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Subscription/information: <http://www.urth.net>

Message: 3

Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 18:05:56 -0400 (EDT)
From: brunians at brunians.org
Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)
To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
Message-ID: <2352.67.142.130.18.1242770756.squirrel at brunians.org>
Content-Type: text/plain; charset=iso-8859-1

Reality is what doesn't go away when you stop believing in it.

-- PKD (I think).

.

On May 19, 2009, at 4:56 PM, brunians at brunians.org wrote:

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Adam

Urth Mailing List

To post, write urth at urth.net
Subscription/information: <http://www.urth.net>

Message: 4

Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 17:06:05 -0500
From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>
Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)
To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
Message-ID: <BD4FACD5AAA943568DAC238C1E3F3911 at eMachinePC>
Content-Type: text/plain; format=flowed; charset="iso-8859-1";
reply-type=response

Adam, in "The Devil in a Forest", Wolfe presents the issue moral
terms.

If

I'm benefiting from a service more than my neighbor, and also paying
less
for that service than my neighbor, why is that less shameful than

just
going
to his door and demanding the money?
Okay. Here are your three options:

Adam sez:

Of course, "fund it to the same degree," and "robbing from the rich to give to the poor," each themselves admit multiple interpretations. One way of "funding it to the same degree" would be to demand a flat amount from each citizen.

This is actually is the most fair way. But, that's asking way too much fairness from a society of Fallen human beings. On the other hand, if the poor don't like it, I suppose they could move to Mogadishu.

One way would be to impose the same percentage fee on each citizen, regardless of income. This is usually what Libertarians claim to like.

However, such a plan ignores the (I think fairly important)

observation

that the marginal value of money decreases the more of it you have.

Marginal value decreases for whom? Not to the people who work to earn it.

You're argument divorces the amount of money made from the people who created it. It assumes that a guy making \$25K a year is exactly like

the

guy

making \$250K a year except that one happens to make less. It ignores the

risks the second guy took in capital, time, and effort in order to create

that wealth. It also ignores the fact that the first guy gets far more

BENEFIT from non-essential government services than the second guy.

Some

would say the differences therefore balance out so that both should pay

the

same rate.

The real reason has nothing to do with marginal values of money. It has

to

do with practicality. These services are proposed to get a majority of

the

voting public to like them. So you give out benefits to a larger number

and

have a smaller number pay the freight. No majority will not vote for 95%

of

government services if they are seen as fee-for-service. You probably

wouldn't. David Stackhoff implied that he found the idea increased

taxes

appealing because he didn't think he'd pay the bulk of them (or any of them?).

Hence a third way would be to impose a tax that causes the same amount of inconvenience at all levels of income. This is approximately what progressive income taxes attempt to do.

How does a progressive tax provide "the same amount of inconvenience at all

levels of income"? Or do you mean "we'll tax you more if you have more

and

we'll do the same to other guy who has more too"? What if we taxed every

one

making \$35K-\$50K at 95% and everyone else at 15%. Is that equally logical?

But we don't just tax based on income either, do we? Because this is democracy in action. The law-makers cut breaks for certain voting blocks

(home-owners, parents, college students, and retirees) while busting others

(cigarette smokers and people who drive for a living).

"Robbing from the rich to give to the poor," is simply the same argument

stood on its head, of course. Does taxation go from "legitimate"

to

"robbery" at a value derived from the absolute dollar value of the tax,

from a percentage of income across all income ranges, or to a degree

of

inconvenience across all income ranges?

How can I describe a progressive tax? Say five citizens get together to

fund

a new well. Hmmm...they could all pay the same amount to dig it, or they

could all pay the same percentage of their wealth, OR....they could vote

that Moe here--who also has a lake on his property so he doesn't need the

well---will pay for half of it because, after all, he can "afford it".

How

is that different from a two foxes and a hen voting on what to have for

supper?

J.

Message: 5
Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 18:06:46 -0400
From: David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net>
Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)
To: urth at lists.urth.net
Message-ID: <4A132D76.3090700 at verizon.net>
Content-Type: text/plain; charset=ISO-8859-1; format=flowed

Yeah, Mao and Washington would have found much in common.

--- On Tue, 5/19/09, brunians at brunians.org <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

From: brunians at brunians.org <brunians at brunians.org>
Mao was a perceptive guy about some things. Power and how to use it, for instance. Decent poet also, I'm told.

Not a very nice man, but pretty smart.

If three people as different as Mao, Washington and Geller agree about something, I'd say it's time to sit up and take notice.

.
If Mao said it, it must be true.

avast! Antivirus: Outbound message clean.
Virus Database (VPS): 090519-0, 05/19/2009
Tested on: 5/19/2009 6:06:48 PM
avast! - copyright (c) 1988-2009 ALWIL Software.
<http://www.avast.com>

Message: 6
Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 18:08:42 -0400
From: David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net>
Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)
To: urth at lists.urth.net
Message-ID: <4A132DEA.20907 at verizon.net>
Content-Type: text/plain; charset=ISO-8859-1; format=flowed

Of course you have.

Message: 5
Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 17:44:27 -0400 (EDT)
From: brunians at brunians.org
Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)

Adam Thornton — 19 May 2009, 22:38 · in reply to John Watkins

On May 19, 2009, at 5:25 PM, John Watkins wrote:
brunians, are you a bona fide Southerner, or is your term for the
American Civil War an affectation?

He didn't call it the War of Yankee Aggression, now did he?

Adam

James Wynn — 19 May 2009, 23:43 · in reply to David Stockhoff

I said:
"The Devil in a Forest", Wolfe presents the issue moral terms. If I'm
benefiting from a service more than my neighbor, and also paying less for
that service than my neighbor, why is that less shameful than just going to
his door and demanding the money?
Okay. Here are your three options:

David Stackhoff replied:
If you keep thinking in terms of your individual, personal,
exclusive benefit, you will never grasp the concept of the public good.

I understand public good. I also understand the true meaning of shared responsibility, and that
there is no free lunch. Let me re-iterate the analogy I offered in the post you responded to:

"Say five citizens get together to fund
a new well. Hmmm...they could all pay the same amount to dig it, or they could all pay the
same percentage of their wealth, OR....they could vote that Moe here--who also has a lake on
his property so he doesn't need the well---will pay for half of it because, after all, he can "afford
it". How is that different from a two foxes and a hen voting on what to have for supper?"

Of course, in a community of five this would never happen. The four would be ashamed to force
such an arrangement. But --as with Gloin in tDiaF who agreed to rob Phillip so long as Phillip
would never know it was him--we do this all the time in the privacy of the voting booth.

I said:
This is actually is the most fair way. But, that's asking way too much
fairness from a society of Fallen human beings. On the other hand, if the
poor don't like it, I suppose they could move to Mogadishu.

Yes, in their yachts.

Well, the Boat People of Vietnam were a lot more destitute than the American poor, and
somehow managed to pull off something similar.

You're ignoring the fact that most personal wealth in the US is inherited.
You're also ignoring racism and classism. And your assumption that the first guy gets more benefit from services is unfounded and unproven. _

I do not believe the first statement is true. I'd like to see the numbers to back it up. I've heard just the opposite. Racism is illegal. I'm not sure how you gauge classism, but I'm sure I've been as much a victim of it as anyone. As for my assumption, who gets more benefit from a public transportation? The top 1% who pay 22% of federal income taxes? The top 5% who pay 60%? Who benefits the most from emergency room care? Who benefits the most from education subsidies? Who benefits from public shelters, free public schools, and Earned Income Tax Credits?

I asserted:

David Stackhoff implied that he found the idea increased taxes appealing because he didn't think he'd pay the bulk of them (or any of them?).

I said nothing like that. I said I WANT TO PAY MORE TAXES. I want a bigger, better public "space."

I was drawing from this statement:

"As a result, I will pay more taxes. I want to pay more taxes.

Why? Because it's a deal. Because my city is broke. Because I believe in the public good. Because I'm not rich."

I took that to mean you expected to receive more from "the public space" than the value of the taxes you were paying. Somebody would have to make up that per-person difference. Sorry if I took that wrong.

But, you don't need to pass laws to pay more taxes. Just figure a what percentage of your income you are paying now and add 10%. I've never known a government to turn down money.

J.

brunians at brunians.org — 20 May 2009, 00:05 · in reply to John Watkins

I take it, then, that although you believe that war can be justified, you don't believe that the American Civil War (from the Yankee side, anyway) was such an instance.

I don't know if saying that 'war is sometimes necessary' is the same thing as saying that 'war can be justified'.

It would take a page and a half for me to explain my views on the 1860's conflict.

Is that fair?

Lincoln's idea was, let's have one war now instead of a war every thirty to fifty years forever. That's pretty sensible.

My position is that it is that people should be secure in the possession of their property, and if you are going to change the definition of property you need to compensate those who will lose by it.

I am probably not far from some of your views, but you don't do yourself much of a favor by taking such out-of-the-mainstream positions and defending them so aggressively.

Everyone's got to have a hobby.

If too many people start agreeing with me I have to stop and look carefully at myself to see what I am doing wrong.

.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 20 May 2009, 00:07 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

On Tue, May 19, 2009 at 5:05 PM, <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:
My position is that it is that people should be secure in the possession of their property, and if you are going to change the definition of property you need to compensate those who will lose by it.

Perhaps you can bolster this by

A) defining "property," and

B) explaining whence the right to have and be secure in it derives, particularly if you can do so without reference to any government or contrait sociale.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Adam Thornton — 20 May 2009, 00:08 · in reply to James Wynn

On May 19, 2009, at 6:43 PM, James Wynn wrote:

But, you don't need to pass laws to pay more taxes. Just figure a what percentage of your income you are paying now and add 10%. I've never known a government to turn down money.

Oh, actually, the IRS will refund you money if they audit you and they think you overpaid.

I've only ever had it in the context of an audit where I *did* owe them money, but while they were pointing out that I didn't pay sufficient taxes over on Subpart A, they found out that I overpaid on Subpart B and gave me that amount back. And, to be fair, they were right about Subpart A.

Of course, the fact that someone who is highly numerate and well- educated is routinely reduced to a gibbering wreck by tax forms, and can't get them right, is evidence that something is rotten in the state of Tax Codes. There's no good reason for it to be that difficult.

Adam

brunians at brunians.org — 20 May 2009, 00:17 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Tell us about the money, Dan'l.

Where does money come from again?

.

On Tue, May 19, 2009 at 5:05 PM, <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

My position is that it is that people should be secure in the possession of their property, and if you are going to change the definition of property you need to compensate those who will lose by it.

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contrait sociale.

--

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Adam Thornton — 20 May 2009, 00:35 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

On May 19, 2009, at 7:17 PM, brunians at brunians.org wrote:
Tell us about the money, Dan'l.

Where does money come from again?

Hey, I'll take a crack at this one. The short answer is, "Money comes from trust."

Money initially comes about because direct barter is *really damn inconvenient*, and things like cows aren't particularly fungible and tend to lose a lot of their value when divided.

The first thing to try is that you trade a big, heavy, hairy, smelly cow for a few ounces of something that is portable, doesn't spoil, and is in short supply, like gold. Which is great, as long as someone else wants gold about as bad as you wanted gold for your cow.

But then you have the problem that unscrupulous bastards will start adulterating the rare, precious commodity with something more plentiful, so your two ounces of gold turn out to be gold mixed with some amount of lead or something.

Now, it's tough to detect debased currency. Ways to assay it turn out to be inconvenient, expensive, and/or processes that require specific, skilled knowledge. And obviously you can't just trust that the thing someone just handed you is in fact the proper amount of the precious commodity he says it is, because there's a huge incentive for him to cheat.

So then states get into the act. They declare that they have a monopoly on money, and they make coinage, and they do so using tools that are fairly expensive and inconvenient to duplicate, and they do things like mill the edges so it's pretty evident if a coin has been shaved. And then they back up their monopoly on the monetary supply with the threat of awful things happening to you if you try to compete, either by starting your own competing currency or adulterating their currency. What do the people using the currency get out of this? Why, they get the state's assurance that the money has however much precious material in it, and that it is therefore guaranteed to be good for something.

Of course, governments being what they are, THOSE fuckers debase the currency and cut it with nickel or whatever. But the funny thing is, it turns out that if everyone just keeps on acting as if the money

were worth what it's supposed to be worth, things continue running OK. This is crucial.

So, after a while, there becomes a need for a couple more refinements:

1) it's really tough to carry around six thousand pounds of gold coin-- if you could even find it--if you want to build a new castle, or put together an army, or something. So then you get state-issued banknotes, which you CAN redeem for some amount of precious-metal (or agreed-upon-it's-just-as-good-as-silver-no-really) coin. You also get merchants agreeing to

extend each other credit, which doesn't cut into the state currency monopoly, because the credit isn't actually converted to coin until it's redeemed.

And things go on in this way for a while, until governments realize, "well, crap, there's practically nothing of value in this coinage anyway...let's just go off the gold standard, shall we?" And at that point, money is money *BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT SAYS SO*, and secondarily (but still importantly) because the government has the implicit threat of violence to back it up if you say, "no, that's not really 1/200th of a cow, that's just a piece of paper with some green ink on it."

And even this works OK for a while, until so much money has been made up in notional trades and the extension of notional credit that when someone tries to call in a debt everyone stands around looking embarrassed and then eventually admits that there isn't any real value underpinning anything. And of course then no one trusts anyone anymore, money isn't worth anything, and those people who have fertile land and weapons to defend it look pretty smart.

And then you have:

<http://www.dilbert.com/2009-05-10/>

And that, boys and girls, is how we got here today.

More questions?

Adam

David Stockhoff — 20 May 2009, 00:42 · follows Adam Thornton

Yes, I saw that one. Ah, the eternal wisdom of Dilbert.

Message: 5

Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 19:35:38 -0500

From: Adam Thornton <adam at io.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Urth Digest, Vol 57, Issue 31

To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <91EBA8C7-A669-4EE5-BF9E-97AF709FD086 at io.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=US-ASCII; format=flowed; delp=yes

And then you have:

<http://www.dilbert.com/2009-05-10/>

And that, boys and girls, is how we got here today.

More questions?

Adam

brunians at brunians.org — 20 May 2009, 00:44 · in reply to Adam Thornton

Sorry, this is just not as amusing as Dan'l's version.

It's only somewhat inaccurate instead of where-the-hell-did-that-come-from batshit wrongo-wrong.

On May 19, 2009, at 7:17 PM, brunians at brunians.org wrote:

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And then you have:

<http://www.dilbert.com/2009-05-10/>

And that, boys and girls, is how we got here today.

More questions?

Adam

Steven Hall — 20 May 2009, 01:20 · in reply to Adam Thornton

Thank you, I enjoyed that.

Adam Thornton wrote:

On May 19, 2009, at 7:17 PM, brunians at brunians.org wrote:

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so your two ounces of gold turn out to be gold mixed with some amount of lead or something.

Now, it's tough to detect debased currency. Ways to assay it turn out to be inconvenient, expensive, and/or processes that require specific, skilled knowledge. And obviously you can't just trust that the thing someone just handed you is in fact the proper amount of the precious commodity he says it is, because there's a huge incentive for him to cheat.

So then states get into the act. They declare that they have a monopoly on money, and they make coinage, and they do so using tools that are fairly expensive and inconvenient to duplicate, and they do things like mill the edges so it's pretty evident if a coin has been shaved. And then they back up their monopoly on the monetary supply with the threat of awful things happening to you if you try to compete, either by starting your own competing currency or adulterating their currency. What do the people using the currency get out of this? Why, they get the state's assurance that the money has however much precious material in it, and that it is therefore guaranteed to be good for something.

Of course, governments being what they are, THOSE fuckers debase the currency and cut it with nickel or whatever. But the funny thing is, it turns out that if everyone just keeps on acting as if the money **were** worth what it's supposed to be worth, things continue running OK. This is crucial.

So, after a while, there becomes a need for a couple more refinements: 1) it's really tough to carry around six thousand pounds of gold coin--if you could even find it--if you want to build a new castle, or put together an army, or something. So then you get state-issued banknotes, which you CAN redeem for some amount of precious-metal (or agreed-upon-it's-just-as-good-as-silver-no-really) coin. You also get merchants agreeing to extend each other credit, which doesn't cut into the state currency monopoly, because the credit isn't actually converted to coin until it's redeemed.

And things go on in this way for a while, until governments realize, "well, crap, there's practically nothing of value in this coinage anyway...let's just go off the gold standard, shall we?" And at that point, money is money **BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT SAYS SO**, and secondarily (but still importantly) because the government has the implicit threat of violence to back it up if you say, "no, that's not really 1/200th of a cow, that's just a piece of paper with some green ink on it."

And even this works OK for a while, until so much money has been made up in notional trades and the extension of notional credit that when someone tries to call in a debt everyone stands around looking embarrassed and then eventually admits that there isn't any real value underpinning anything. And of course then no one trusts anyone anymore, money isn't worth anything, and those people who have fertile land and weapons to defend it look pretty smart.

And then you have:

<http://www.dilbert.com/2009-05-10/>

And that, boys and girls, is how we got here today.

More questions?

Adam
