

Second to None

a catechistic dialogue

by Kem Regik

All Rights Reversed



MMXXVI

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Socrates Nostris Temporis: So, you don't believe in the Second Amendment.

Euthyphro Nostris Temporis: I don't subscribe to the interpretation that the Second Amendment, as written, identifies and exempts from government regulatory authority an individual right to own and carry firearms specifically.

SNT: Okay. How about we leave it behind?

ENT: What?

SNT: I want to talk about the ethical alignment informing this position. I think conversations about ethics are more important than conversations about legal interpretations and statecraft.

ENT: Okay.

SNT: Would you care to go on a walk with me?

ENT: Sure.

SNT: Is it ethically permissible, in your mind, for an individual to defend themselves from a threat?

ENT: Can you define "threat"?

SNT: An entity hostile to you, intending to commit an ethically dispermitted act upon you that will cause you harm.

ENT: Can you define "harm"?

SNT: Physical damage to the body you possess or injury to your natural rights.

ENT: ...natural rights?

SNT: Unconsensual restraint of your physical body would injure your right to move freely. Things of this nature.

ENT: It depends on the severity of the threat.

SNT: Fair enough. I'll amend the question. Is it ethically permissible, in your mind, for an individual to defend themselves from a threat with force proportional to the severity of the threat?

ENT: Can you define "proportional"?

SNT: The minimum and most humane amount of force necessary to safely terminate the threat.

ENT: ...safely terminate?

SNT: Whatever measure and delivery of force is most likely to stop the threat and least likely to cause additional unnecessary harm to the individual or uninvolved third parties.

ENT: Yes.

SNT: Suppose an individual, X, subject to your chosen ethical construction.

ENT: Go on.

SNT: Suppose X speaks fighting words to you. What is the proportional force?

ENT: Nothing. Fighting words are no threat and returning with more fighting words is likely to escalate the interaction.

SNT: Correct. Suppose X raises a closed fist and lunges to strike you. What is the proportional force?

ENT: Striking defensively, bare-handed, until they cease to strike me.

SNT: Correct. Suppose X is not discouraged by your defense and continues to strike. What is the proportional force?

ENT: Striking to disable them, preferably to render them unconscious.

SNT: Correct. Suppose that the threat becomes lethal, X has drawn a blade and

intends to kill you. What is the proportional force?

ENT: I *suppose* you want me to say a blade of my own.

SNT: You could attempt to disarm them bare-handed.

ENT: ...which is likely to cause me harm.

SNT: I think that's reasonable to assume.

ENT: Fine. Lethal force would be proportionate. It would be ethically permissible for me to draw a blade of my own.

SNT: Correct. Suppose rather than a blade, X wields a club of some sort. Is your blade still proportional?

ENT: If they intend to kill me with it, yes.

SNT: So you would agree that the lethality of a threat is not constrained by the vehicle the threat uses?

ENT: I would.

SNT: Wonderful. Suppose rather than a club, X drives their car towards you. Is your blade still proportional?

ENT: Ah. The *vehicle* the threat uses.

SNT: Yes, but it's a serious question.

ENT: No, attempting to use it against X in this scenario is likely to cause me harm. Force isn't necessary here if I can avoid the car before it closes the distance.

SNT: Correct. Suppose rather than their car, X has drawn a handgun. Is your blade still proportional?

ENT: No, attempting to use it against X in this scenario is likely to cause me harm. Force isn't executable here if they can shoot me before I close the distance.

SNT: Correct. Would it be ethically permissible for you to draw a handgun of your own?

ENT: Maybe, my defensive use of the handgun could cause unnecessary harm to uninvolved third parties.

SNT: To what degree are you ethically bound to act with preference to the lives of others rather than your own?

ENT: ...the degree to which I can help it.

SNT: Suppose you can't.

ENT: I *suppose* you want me to say it would be ethically permissible to use the handgun lethally.

SNT: You could shoot to maim.

ENT: ...which is less humane.

SNT: I think that's reasonable to assume.

ENT: Fine. Shooting to kill is proportional. It would be ethically permissible for me to draw and use a handgun of my own.

SNT: Wonderful. Suppose rather than drawing the handgun on you, X draws the handgun on someone else, and you are an uninvolved third party. Is your shooting to kill still proportional?

ENT: If they intend to kill someone with it, yes.

SNT: So you would agree that the lethality of a threat is not constrained by the target the threat chooses?

ENT: I would.

SNT: Wonderful. Suppose X lives in your local area and is known to carry a handgun. Would it be ethically permissible to carry a handgun of your own?

ENT: I suppose you want me to say they're a potential threat.

SNT: You could gamble with the interiority of a person you don't know.

ENT: ...which is irresponsible.

SNT: I think that's reasonable to assume.

ENT: Fine. Carrying a handgun is ethically permissible.

SNT: Wonderful. Take it back one step. Suppose that rather than X drawing a handgun on you, an Agent of the State draws a handgun on you. Is your shooting to kill still proportional?

ENT: An Agent of the State?

SNT: Any holder of civic office whose directives are backed by the State's monopoly on violence.

ENT: The Agent could have legal cause.

SNT: Before the substitution, we understood that X was a threat to you, meaning that whatever actions he intended to commit against you were ethically dispermitted. In substituting the Agent for X, this understanding remains; the Agent is a legitimate ethical threat to you, regardless of cause under any legal system.

ENT: Fine. Shooting to kill is proportional.

SNT: Wonderful. Suppose this Agent is wearing armor and wielding a machine gun. Is your handgun still proportional?

ENT: No, attempting to use it here would not be effective. Force is not executable here if they can survive my defense and overwhelm me.

SNT: Correct. Would it be ethically permissible for you to wear body armor and wield a machine gun of your own?

ENT: I don't want to answer this question.

SNT: Why not?

ENT: Because if I continue to apply this standard consistently, I will be forced to affirm the ethical permissibility of any other weapon, including implements of war.

SNT: Correct. Why is this a problem?

ENT: It injures other priorities I have, like the public safety.

SNT: Who is the guarantor of the public safety?

ENT: Guarantor?

SNT: An entity providing recourse for violations.

ENT: The State and its Agents.

SNT: Wonderful. Suppose the violator is the guarantor. What is your recourse?

ENT: I have none.

SNT: Why not?

ENT: I have to trust the State and its Agents.

SNT: Why?

ENT: Without trust in the State and its Agents, it is impossible to have an organized society.

SNT: Suppose a society, Landia, wherein the State has violated the public safety and therefore no longer has the public trust. What recourse do Landians have?

ENT: ...revolution. An appeal to Columbia.

SNT: Wonderful. Suppose the Landian State previously rendered Landians legally incapable of accessing the tools necessary to revolt. Is this ethically permissible?

ENT: I *suppose* you want me to say the State is ethically obligated to guarantee a right of revolt.

SNT: You could say no such right exists.

ENT: ...which would be tyrannical.

SNT: I think that's reasonable to assume.

ENT: Fine. It is not ethically permissible for the State to regulate the tools necessary for revolt.

SNT: Wonderful. Has the State you live under ever violated the public safety and therefore your trust?

ENT: I don't want to answer that question.

SNT: Why not?

ENT: Because if I continue to apply this standard consistently, I will be forced to

affirm that I currently live under tyranny, and have no recourse other than armed revolution.

SNT: Correct. Why is this a problem?

ENT: It injures other priorities I have, like commitment to the peaceful democratic process.

SNT: Despite the fact that the State you live under has maintained no such commitments?

ENT: ...correct.

SNT: We have a term for that in the industry.

ENT: Pray tell, what is it?

SNT: Cognitive Dissonance.

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