

RISKING AGGRESSION: REPLY TO BLOCK

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WALTER BLOCK IS A RADICAL anarchist. He is a libertarian extremist. The government probably spends oodles of fiat currency investigating, monitoring and keeping detailed records of Block's activities. More is undoubtedly spent each year in order to produce propaganda to counter his promotion of Austrian economics. A "narrow"¹ interpretation of the non-aggression principle (NAP) might lead libertarians to think that there is no reason for them to physically attack Block. However, not only could there be a reason, it might be a good thing to do. Heroic even. For Block's activities provoke the State into a frenzy of taxation and oppression. If someone were to bully Block into retirement, all of that might be eliminated. It might also prevent a doomsday scenario in which the State becomes so desperate for legitimacy that it starts a war in which everyone dies.

In a recent article, Walter Block extols the virtues of violating the non-aggression principle.² He describes several situations in which it appears that a libertarian should violate property rights. To resolve Block's dilemma, we must see how the NAP relates to the entrepreneurial component of human action. We must also examine how the NAP applies when an individual influences government policy. Then, examining these situations more closely, we shall see that they do not describe any convincing exceptions to the

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¹Block uses "narrow" to describe an oversimplified interpretation of the NAP where any action that risks violating property rights is forbidden. Here I simply mean a careful interpretation of the NAP as described in this paper. Block contends that his "narrow" view of the NAP is what libertarians traditionally think. While it is true that libertarians think that taxes are always wrong, it does not follow that libertarians must oppose any situation that includes an increase in taxes. It is doubtful that most libertarians are so naive.

²Walter E. Block, "Is There an 'Anomalous' Section of the Laffer Curve?," *Libertarian Papers* 2, 8 (2010).

optimality of the deontological libertarianism with respect to utilitarianism. Furthermore, we shall see that the closer approximation of libertarianism that Block is searching for is merely a more careful application of the NAP itself.³

I. Non-Aggression Principle

First it must be clarified what the NAP is and implies. The NAP states that property should be used in accordance with the owner's preferences.⁴ The NAP is mute on how it is used and who uses it. Therefore, on choices between any two voluntary⁵ human associations, a libertarian may choose either. The better choice is determined solely by the preferences of the property owners.⁶ The NAP only implies that in a choice between voluntary and non-voluntary interaction, a libertarian must choose the former.⁷ What

³Walter E. Block, "Toward a Libertarian Theory of Guilt and Punishment for the Crime of Statism," in Guido Hülsmann & Stephan Kinsella, eds., *Property, Freedom, and Society: Essays in Honor of Hans-Hermann Hoppe* (2009), p. 143:

It is of the utmost importance that we act consistently with the basic building block of this philosophy, since the distractions will be numerous and powerful; allowing them to deter us from an accurate analysis will almost guarantee erroneous conclusions.

⁴Walter E. Block, *Defending the Undefendable: The Pimp, Prostitute, Scab, Slumlord, Libeler, Moneylender, and Other Scapegoats in the Rogue's Gallery of American Society* (1991), p. 140:

Now if private property means anything, it means that owners have the right to make decisions with regard to the use of their property, as long as this use does not interfere with other property owners and their rights to the use of their property.

⁵Voluntary association can be defined as an interaction between property in which each property is affected according to the preferences of its the owner.

⁶Block, *Defending the Undefendable*, p. 35:

It does not constitute a valid criticism or justify prohibition because it is up to the individual to determine the kind of life he will lead—a short one, including what he considers to be pleasurable activities, or a longer one, without such enjoyment. Since there is no objective criterion for such choices, there is nothing irrational or even suspect about any choice on the spectrum. One may choose to maximize the possibility of longevity [or not].

⁷Block, "Toward a Libertarian Theory of Guilt and Punishment for the Crime of Statism," p. 139 ("Libertarianism is the philosophy that maintains it is illicit to threaten or initiate violence against a person or his legitimately owned property"); Stephan Kinsella, "What Libertarianism Is," in *Property, Freedom, and Society*, p. 194:

...libertarians are consistently opposed to aggression, defined in terms of invasion of property borders, where property rights are understood to be assigned on the basis of self ownership, in the case of bodies; and on the basis of prior possession or homesteading and contractual transfer of title, in the case of other things.

must not be overlooked is that the NAP is also mute on choices between any two involuntary interactions. Both are forbidden to the perpetrator, but both are also equally available options to the victim. No involuntary association is necessarily better or worse than another. That can only be decided by the victim.⁸

Consider the example where an individual must choose between shooting a Coke machine and saving the world. The NAP implies that shooting the Coke machine is appropriate only if that is what the owner wants. If the owner wants to save the world, then he will also want his Coke machine to be shot. Shooting the Coke machine then is not a violation of the NAP⁹ and maximizes utility.¹⁰ However, if the owner prefers not having his Coke machine shot over saving the world, then shooting the Coke machine violates the NAP and does not maximize utility.¹¹

Carl Watner, "The Proprietary Theory of Justice in the Libertarian Tradition," *J. Libertarian Stud.*, VI, nos. 3–4 (Summer/Fall 1982), p. 289:

The central thrust of libertarian thinking... is to oppose any and all forms of invasion against the just property titles of individuals in their own persons and in the material objects they have homesteaded or voluntarily acquired from other homesteaders.

⁸It cannot even be said that a 50% income tax is better than a 100% income tax from the perspective of the NAP. An individual might prefer to lose all of his money to better illustrate that the State is an evil institution.

⁹Stephan Kinsella, "Punishment and Proportionality: The Estoppel Approach," *J. Libertarian Stud.* 12 no. 1 (1996), p. 52:

If wrongdoers always consented to the infliction of punishment once they were convicted of a crime, we would not need to justify punishment—it would be justified by the very consent of the purported wrongdoer. As the great Roman Jurist Ulpian hundreds of years ago summarized this common-sense insight, "there is no affront [or injustice] where the victim consents." It is only when a person resists us, and refuses to consent to being punished, that the need to justify punishment arises.

¹⁰Hans-Hermann Hoppe, "The Ethics and Economics of Private Property," *Mises Daily* (Oct. 15, 2004):

An act of original appropriation ... enhances the welfare of one person, the appropriator, without diminishing anyone else's physical wealth Any further action with originally appropriated goods and territories enhances social welfare, for no matter what a person does with his property, it is done to increase his welfare.... Finally, every voluntary exchange (transfer) of appropriated or produced property from one owner to another increases social welfare In distinct contrast, any deviation from the institution of private property must lead to social welfare loses.

¹¹Consider the parallels between the Coke machine owner and the curmudgeon in Block, *Defending the Undefendable*, p. 145:

Is it actually good to shoot the Coke machine in the latter situation?¹² If it is, and the owner is present to enforce his property rights, it might be necessary to push him out of the way. This is to save the world, after all. If the owner resists sufficiently, it might be necessary to kill him and all of those “narrow” minded libertarians who are wont to say, ‘I disagree with your decision, but I defend to the death your right to make it.’ Sadly, it might be necessary to kill every other individual in order to save the world. Better that one person live than for everyone to perish (or something like that).¹³

II. Entrepreneurship in Human Action

A libertarian strives to follow the NAP and will not perform an action if he believes that it will violate property rights. On the other hand, he feels free to take any action that will not violate property rights. This would be an easy distinction if the preferences of property owners were always clear and present. Unfortunately, the world is not so simple. Every action involves uncertainty and, therefore, some risk of violating the NAP.¹⁴ If an individual wishes to follow the NAP, he must be an entrepreneur. In cases where the risk is low, such as picking up something that someone drops for them, the entrepreneurial component is relatively small. An individual rarely needs to

If the curmudgeon refuses to trade, no negative evaluation is possible. All that can be said is that the curmudgeon values his property at more than the developer was willing or able to pay. Since no interpersonal comparison of utility or welfare have scientific foundation (there is no unit by which such things can be measured, let alone compared between different people), there is no legitimate basis on which to say that the curmudgeon’s refusal to sell his property is harmful or causes problems. True, the curmudgeon’s choice serves to obstruct the real estate developer’s goal. But then, the goals of the real estate developer are just as obstructive of the goals of the old curmudgeon. Clearly, the curmudgeon is under no obligation to frustrate his own desires in order to satisfy another’s.”

¹²Hazlitt reminds us how easily collectivists sacrifice the “Forgotten Man” for some greater good. See Henry Hazlitt, *Economics in One Lesson* (1979), p. 185.

¹³Once it is conceded that it is acceptable to violate the NAP, there is no logical limit to the violence that can be justified. The libertarian position is indefensible without it. Hence the failure of minarchists to put intellectual and practical restraints on the “limited” governments that they advocate.

¹⁴Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action* (Scholar’s Edition, 1998), p. 253:

[Entrepreneurship] is inherent in every action and burdens every actor... The term entrepreneur as used by catallactic theory means: acting man exclusively seen from the aspect of the uncertainty inherent in every action. In using this term one must never forget that every action is embedded in the flux of time and therefore involves a speculation. The capitalists, the landowners, and the laborers are by necessity speculators. So is the consumer in providing for anticipated future needs.

spend time considering whether eating an apple that he grew on his own land will violate the NAP. Yet, in certain cases, the entrepreneurial component is large and a libertarian must take it into consideration. He may risk violating the NAP, but must be subject to punishment if it is violated.¹⁵ Murray Rothbard explains how a libertarian justice system would deal with this uncertainty:

How, then, would the courts operate in the libertarian society? In particular, how could they *enforce* their decisions? In all their operations, furthermore, they must observe the critical libertarian rule that no physical force may be used against anyone who has not been convicted as a criminal—otherwise, the users of such force, whether police or courts, would be themselves liable to be convicted as aggressors if it turned out that the person they had used force against was innocent of crime.¹⁶

The same applies for any action. For example, say a man is talking to an attractive woman who he would like to kiss. Suddenly the perfect opportunity arrives. There is no time to ask permission and he goes for it. Has he violated the NAP? It depends entirely upon whether the woman wanted to be kissed. She owns her body and gets to determine how it is used. There are four possible cases. First, say the man kisses the woman. If that is what she wanted, then the NAP approves of the consensual activity. If the woman disapproves, then the kiss was a violation of the NAP and she deserves relief,

¹⁵Murray N. Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty* (1998), p. 82:

... police may use such coercive methods *provided* that the suspect turns out to be guilty, *and* provided that the police are treated as themselves criminal if the suspect is not proven guilty. For, in that case, the rule of no force against non-criminals would still apply. Suppose, for example, that police beat and torture a suspected murderer to find information (*not* to wring a confession, since obviously a coerced confession could never be considered valid). If the suspect turns out to be guilty, then the police should be exonerated, for then they have only ladled out to the murderer a parcel of what he deserves in return; his rights had already been forfeited by more than that extent. *But* if the suspect is not convicted, then that means that the police have beaten and tortured an innocent man, and that they in turn must be put into the dock for criminal assault.

Ibid., p. 83:

... police, in a libertarian society, must take their chances like anyone else; if they commit an act of invasion against someone, that someone had better turn out to deserve it, otherwise *they* are the criminals.

Ibid., p. 84:

... a defendant could not be kept in jail before his conviction, unless, as in the case of police coercion, the jailer is prepared to face a kidnapping conviction if the defendant turns out to be innocent.

¹⁶Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty* (rev'd ed., 1978), p. 229.

perhaps with a slap. The third case is that the man does not kiss and the woman did not want to be kissed. This, of course, is NAP approved. Finally, what if the man does not kiss, but the woman wanted to be kissed? Well, the man has not violated her property rights, so she has no recourse to violence.

As we have seen, there is no reason to believe that the NAP precludes an individual from exercising his right to use property just because he does not have knowledge of that right. Say an amnesiac sees a car that he likes and makes off with it. He does not know if the owner approves of his use of the car. Indeed, he may *think* that he is violating the NAP by stealing it. But the situation might be that he has unknowingly broken into his own car, and is perfectly within his right to smash the window and drive it away.

Another example would be the following. Suppose a man contracts to become the owner of a house at noon. He arrives at the house, but does not know what time it is. As he waits outside he feels more and more confident that the agreed upon time has passed. Even as the shadows grow long, he could not enter the house and be certain to follow the NAP. Yet the NAP would be patently absurd if it precluded taking any action that merely risked violating property rights. Every human action necessarily risks the violation of property rights. This fact remains whether that entrepreneurial aspect of an action is large or small.

So in the Coke machine example, suppose that the owner is not in the room. The owner may prefer to save the world, or he may prefer not to have is Coke machine shot. In the first case, shooting the Coke machine would not violate the NAP, even though it *risks* violating it. There is nothing special about the risk involved in this example except that it is more readily apparent than in more mundane situations.

III. Government Policy

Government tends to compensate for its incompetence by applying the same policy to groups of individuals. Therefore, if you affect a government policy, the government will then change the way in which it coerces other individuals. How can you determine when such efforts violate the NAP? This is the same as trying to discern when you share responsibility for the criminal act of another individual. Since human interaction is a complex phenomenon, it can be difficult to determine whether your influence on the policy was a proximate or ultimate cause of any victim's misfortune.

For example, if you put a sign on your house that reads, "This home protected by Smith and Wesson", it might divert a burglar to your neighbor's house. It would not make sense to say that you have aggressed against your neighbor. The fact that you affected the burglar's decision on who to aggress

against does mean that you violated the NAP. You did not encourage the aggression against your neighbor; you merely discouraged aggression against yourself. It would, however, be a violation of the NAP if you hired the burglar to rob your neighbor.¹⁷

We can put two conditions on whether influencing a government policy violates the NAP. First, the new policy must lead to greater rights violations for some victim. Second, the association between you and the victim must be voluntary on your part. These conditions are just another way of saying that the NAP has been violated and you are responsible. The following five cases illustrate these conditions. Assume knowledge of each victim's preference to eliminate the need to analyze the entrepreneurial component.

First, if you are the only victim, then whatever policy you support, you cannot violate anyone's rights. You are merely choosing between two types of coercion for yourself, and the NAP leaves that decision up to you. Second, if your neighbor is the only victim, then you can support whatever policy he prefers. This, by definition, would not violate his rights. However, advocating a different policy would force your preference over his on how his property is used. This would violate the NAP.

Third, if there are many victims, but you are not one of them, then, in the same way as the previous case, you could support any policy that all of the victims would prefer. The trouble is that now you are in the position of a bureaucrat. Every victim will likely have a slightly different preference. It will

¹⁷Rothbard, *Ethics of Liberty*, p. 81:

Should it be illegal, we may next inquire, to "incite to riot"? Suppose that Green exhorts a crowd: "Go! Burn! Loot! Kill!" and the mob proceeds to do just that, with Green having nothing further to do with these criminal activities. Since every man is free to adopt or not adopt any course of action he wishes, we cannot say that in some way Green determined the members of the mob to their criminal activities; we cannot make him, because of his exhortation, at all responsible for their crimes. "Inciting to riot," therefore, is a pure exercise of a man's right to speak without being thereby implicated in crime. On the other hand, it is obvious that if Green happened to be involved in a plan or conspiracy with others to commit various crimes, and that then Green told them to proceed, he would then be just as implicated in the crimes as are the others—more so, if he were the mastermind who headed the criminal gang. This is a seemingly subtle distinction which in practice is clear cut—there is a world of difference between the head of a criminal gang and a soap-box orator during a riot; the former is not, properly to be charged simply with "incitement."

be impossible for you to choose a policy for them, even if you know what each one wants.¹⁸

Fourth, suppose that you and your neighbor are the only victims. As before, you can support any policy that your neighbor would prefer. Yet in this case, you can also support certain policies that your neighbor would not prefer. The difference being that in supporting certain policies, you are merely trying to enforce your own property rights.¹⁹ In other words, you are not responsible if the State couples your property rights with those of your neighbor. Supporting policies that merely impose your will on others is still unacceptable. Finally, if you are one of many victims, then this case is essentially the same as the previous case, except that disagreements are virtually assured. There will be no “clearly libertarian” policy with “anti-libertarian results”.²⁰

Does the NAP prohibit you from taking government benefits? Need you resign yourself to death in your apartment for fear that using government roads will bring violence to others? In this case, the State has created the conflict between your rights and those of others, so your association with any tax victims is involuntary. Therefore using roads does not necessarily violate the NAP. The “complex, measured” view of the use of government benefits is described by Rothbard and shows that it can be compatible with the NAP.²¹

¹⁸Of course, outsiders could still come to the aid of victims who wish them to do so, and in that way support a controversial policy without violating the NAP. This case illustrates why libertarians advocate non-intervention.

¹⁹ Block, “Toward a Libertarian Theory of Guilt and Punishment for the Crime of Statism,” p. 148:

No, not all inhabitants of a geographical area are guilty of fomenting state institutions, nor are, even, all those who work for the government... In the libertarian account, the distinction is, as might be imagined, between those who either directly or indirectly engage in violent attacks on innocent people, and those who do not.

²⁰Ibid., p. 146: “If this complex act, consisting of two separate parts, was a righteous one, then each and every part of it, too, had to be licit; there cannot be a totally legitimate act one part of which is improper.”

²¹Murray N. Rothbard, “Living in a State-Run World”, *Liberty* 1, no. 3 (Dec. 1987), p. 23–25:

Nozick’s moral error [let’s call it “sin” to provoke the Waters of this world] was to go much further than simply living under rent control. His immoral action was to pursue the landlord actively, to go to the State to agitate, time and again, to get the State to force his rent even lower. It seems to me that there is a world of difference between these actions. One is living your life within a State-created matrix, while trying to work against the system; the other is actively using the

IV. Block's Examples

If a man must choose between a higher tax rate and greater oppression from increased tax revenue, it is a choice between two types of coercion. The NAP implies that taxes and State funding are bad per se. However, the NAP does not imply that any particular combination of the two is better or worse. Individuals must decide on their own which choice they prefer. Libertarians who will be victimized by a government policy may oppose it without violating the NAP. Libertarians who exist outside the State matrix can only support victim-unanimous policies and policies of non-aggression.

So, if an individual blocks a desired tax reduction but is also a tax victim, then he has not violated the NAP. He may get a parade from those who agreed with him, but no libertarians will seek to punish him. If he is not a tax victim, and there is only one tax victim, then he will get a parade if the victim agrees with his decision, or punishment if the victim disagrees, not both. If there are many taxes victims, but he is not among them, then he will likely help to impose a policy that some victims will agree with and other victims will disagree with.²² Then he will get approbation from those victims who preferred his choice and indictment from the other victims. This is the way in which he can be both paraded and punished. If he is a libertarian, he will welcome his punishment, but curse his foolish hubris. Such is the risk of attempting to direct the affairs of others.

If instead of taxes the policy is drug prohibition or a draft, then the type of State intervention changes, but the choice remains between two types of coercion. While a libertarian can always oppose coercion per se, the options available when choosing between two types of coercion depend on the circumstances. A victim of government would have the most options, while an outside observer would have more restricted options based on the preferences of the victims.

Can coercion drive a wedge between libertarianism and utilitarianism? Suppose "Martians" offer a man the choice between violating the NAP and some unpleasant alternative. If the man chooses the alternative, then he has demonstrated that following the NAP maximizes utility. If, however, he succumbs to temptation and chooses to violate the NAP, it cannot be claimed that utilitarianism and libertarian deontology have diverged. Now another individual is involved. If that individual approves of the man's attempted violation of the NAP, then the NAP has not been violated and

State to benefit yourself and screw your fellow man, which means initiating and abetting aggression and theft.

²²See also Rothbard's discussion on this dilemma with regards to government schools. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, p. 127.

utility is maximized. However, if the individual disapproves, then the NAP has been violated and his utility has been reduced. It is then impossible to claim that utility is maximized as one individual's has gone up, the other's has gone down, and interpersonal comparison is impossible.²³ Aggressors cannot win if their goal is to separate deontological libertarianism and utilitarianism. A libertarian will never see a situation where violating the NAP will necessarily lead to a more utilitarian outcome.

From the perspective of the NAP, no voluntary interaction is necessarily better or worse, and the same is true when comparing two interactions that violate rights. The NAP only distinguishes between cooperation and coercion. From the perspective of the NAP, the choice between shooting a Coke machine and the end of the world is equivalent to a choice between torturing an innocent person or having your flower garden trampled.²⁴ Most libertarians would probably agree that a 1% sales tax is a preferable crime to a 50% income tax. However, the NAP does not prescribe supporting one or the other. It leaves that choice up to the individual.

Could someone who pushes another individual out of the path of an onrushing truck be both a hero and a criminal? Does the NAP prohibit this behavior? The answer to both of these questions is negative. If B pushes A, there is not enough information to determine if the NAP has been violated. If the push was consensual, then there is no NAP violation. If the push was non-consensual, say A was filming a movie stunt, then B has violated the NAP. It can never be determined with perfect certainty whether any action will or will not result in liability. Yet, it is precisely this entrepreneurial risk assumed by B that might make his act heroic.²⁵ It is the possibility of harm to oneself, including punishment for violating the NAP, which others recognize and exult. If B knew *ex ante* that A wanted to be pushed, then B would be acting charitably, but not heroically.

²³Murray N. Rothbard, *Man, Economy, and State with Power and Market* (Scholar's edition, 2nd ed., 2009), p. 258:

Value scales of each individual a *purely ordinal*, and there is no way whatever of measuring the distance between the rankings; indeed, any concept of such distance is a fallacious one. Consequently, there is no way of making interpersonal comparisons and measurements, and no basis for saying that one person subjectively benefits more than another.

²⁴This is not to say that justice would not see a difference. Furthermore, successful entrepreneurs will intuitively recognize which options will generally be considered better or worse.

²⁵Block, *Defending the Undefendable*, p. 109: "... three criteria for heroic actions must be applied. The act must not violate the rights of innocent people; the act must be of great benefit to large numbers of people; and it must be performed at great personal risk."

Similarly, say A is drowning. As a libertarian, B may or may not choose to attempt to remove A from the water. If he does not, he cannot violate the NAP. If he does remove A from the water and A wanted to be removed, then he has not violated the NAP and is not liable. If, however, A did not want to be removed from the water, then B has violated the NAP and is punishable. The fact that B does not know *ex ante* if he will violate the NAP does not change this. It merely exposes the entrepreneurial aspect of such choices.

Suppose C is about to jump off of a bridge, but D grabs him and imprisons him. It is risky to intervene, since C seems to be demonstrating his preference for jumping off the bridge by attempting to do so. Only if the attempted jump is merely a cry for help, and C actually wants to be saved at the last moment, is D is acting heroically. Otherwise D is simply a criminal aggressor.²⁶

If Nazis demand a volunteer from a village to be killed and an individual decides to volunteer, then fine. If there is no volunteer, can the villagers vote or use a lottery to force some unwilling individual to the Nazis? The NAP forbids this. Block's punishment theory would allow it, so long as the remaining villagers punish themselves for their vile act.²⁷ Though, with so many parades on the schedule, they may never get around to it.

If E gives F a gun for safekeeping, but demands it back in a drunken rage, while sleepwalking, while depressed, or without any symptoms of altered mental status, F must speculate on whether he should return the gun.

Suppose E does not threaten violence. If F does not return the gun and this is what E would have wanted, then F has not violated the NAP. If F does not return the gun and this is not what E would have wanted, then F has violated the NAP. Perhaps F prevented E from shooting himself.

²⁶The NAP does not imply any ultimate ends, including keeping individuals alive, saving the world, etc. "Saving" someone against his will would violate the NAP and leave the path of greatest utility, the Pareto optimal free market.

²⁷Block says that a libertarian should not care if the NAP is violated, but just punish violations reflexively. Yet how could he not care? Caring is the whole point. One option must always be ranked higher on his value scale. If he prefers you to come onto his land, then you are not a trespasser. If he prefers you to stay off, then you are violating his rights. It is nonsensical for him to say "I don't care if you come onto my land or not, but if you do I will punish you if the NAP allows it." If you get punished for going on the land, then you must have violated his rights, *viz.*, he did care. If you do not get punished then he preferred you to come on to his land, *viz.*, you did not violate the NAP. If the landowner stipulates that you will or will not be punished then he is demonstrating his preference, *i.e.*, he cares. Merely saying that you will be punished if coming onto his land violates the NAP does not convey his preference, only that he is not a pacifist.

Perhaps F left E defenseless against muggers, which led to E's untimely death. If F returns the weapon and this is what E would have wanted, then there is no problem. Lastly, if F returns the weapon and this is not what E would have wanted, then this does not violate the NAP. F has no obligation to hold onto E's property after the agreed upon duration is over.

Say, on the other hand, that there is a threat of violence from E towards F. Now F may refuse to return the gun, regardless of E's preference. If the threat is instead against G, then F must speculate on the preferences of G if he wishes to retain the weapon against the will of E.

Conclusion

The NAP is a libertarian's compass. It separates moral actions from immoral actions without making distinctions within those two sets. The dividing line is composed of the value scales of each property owner. Successful libertarians will determine in which set any particular action lies, even when the government obfuscates property boundaries. Though libertarians live in an unfree world, the NAP still provides guidance on how to pursue liberty in a principled way. Indeed, that is the only way. Yet even in a free society libertarians would continue to deal with uncertainty, for every human action risks violation of the NAP.