Seminar: December 2, 2013

Schlueter: Central claims tie together…

Verrilli: Overarching thing—Government

 (Mark: What is “expedient?” Others answered)

Verrilli continued… Duty of a moral person to reject that government that is immoral in order to make the government work more effectively.

Zimmerman: Two things that struck him:

* Line about people putting themselves into something
* What is beyond democracy? Americans are convinced that we’ve done the best… quote on 1018 about “He who gives himself entirely to his fellow-men appears to them useless and selfish; but he who gives himself partially to them is pronounced a benefactor and philanthropist.”

Bruns: Gov’t as expedient… but protection…

Verrilli: Agrees

Eble: Look at 1025… risks of civil disobedience…

Bruns: I’ll look…

Schlueter: Family, large estate… tons of responsibility. Can’t forfeit that… *don’t want* to forfeit that…

Verrilli: If the government favors you… anyone can do this, but we have to measure the costs…

Himes:

Zimmerman (before leaving): I like this quote…. “concerned to trace the effects of my allegiance”

Eble: Why like this point?

Zimmerman: Awesome, but somewhat selfish…

Tory: Yes, selfishness abounds here…

Eble: How so?

Tory: Work with others for other people…

Nick: Definitely main things in there… definitely parts of the writing that are pertinent to us…

Eble: Tory… what do you mean about selfishness?

Tory: This could be a slippery slope towards anarchy…

Eble: Yes!

Schlueter: Aren’t we called the “Me” generation… we focus on ourselves…

Cookies came… Eble brought it back…

Schlueter: Individualism = good moral compass… overestimated moral compass. Didn’t have backing…

Verrilli: Pissed him off… always on Twitter. I’m not completely narcissistic.

Schlueter: Very in-tuned with what we want. Morally messed-up…

Himes: Many would say this…

Bugada: Thoreau / religion?

Eble: Read from paragraph 25. But why you?

Bugada: Confidence in individual / decision making. Always expects people to make the right decisions… we don’t, though. Moral development…

Eble: Where would you place Thoreau in the Moral Development stages…? (Review of stages)

Bruns: 5 / 6?

Verrilli: Transcendentalists… clarified…

Eble: So… universal moral code. To Mark’s point—is religion the best way to form this conscience that Thoreau celebrates?

Verrilli: Thoreau tried to live based upon Emerson’s theories…

Eble: Thoreau said “What are you doing out there?” to Emerson.

Verrilli: Recounted this…

Eble: So… back to Mark’s point about religion?

Schlueter: Transcendentalism goes against overbearing truth… religion would restrict that…

Bruns: He would hate organized religion—would see it as the State, similar patterns of corruption.

Himes: Would see religion as spiritual / mental imprisonment.

Eble: Anyone else?

Himes: I didn’t think about religion…

Eble: Does Thoreau give too much credit to the individual?

* Verrilli: Ghandi proved this individual action…
* Schlueter: Thoreau = selfish, caught up in himself.
* Fritz:
* Verrilli: Jail = symbolic… wanted to get people to think… flimsy / stupid for one night—but he wanted to get people to think that they should resist government. An example…
* Schlueter: Expected too much out of government… corporations versus governments, having a moral compass. Trying to have a way to make laws…
* Eble
* Fritz: Nothing would work under government
* Verrilli: Thoreau wants government to help people become better versions of themselves…
* Bugada: Governments ceasing to exist…?
* Verrilli: Not anarchist..
* Eble: Clarified via reading…
* Fritz: Different ideas about morality… could change between generations…
* Verrilli: That’s the point… wants the world to raise to a higher level of consciousness. Optimistic view of rising to a level of seeing a promised land.
* Fritz: Government as a pool of many ideas put into one… doesn’t support all of them, but supports many of them (?). Would rather have government as a…
* Tory: Government has no specific conscience… majority…
* Eble: Challenged that via paragraph two…
* Tory: Legal is not necessarily moral…
* Schlueter: Every individual has a high moral development…wouldn’t society move forward?
* Tory: Yes.
* Fritz: Like walking on thin ice… impossible…
* Verrilli: This is a goal, not necessarily a reality. Idea can work… we should try to reach this point.
* Fritz: Is it still relevant today? Slavery = gone, Mexican American war = done.

Questions Considered:

1. What is Thoreau’s central claim?
2. Is it still relevant today? (Was it ever?)
3. Is civil disobedience truly a duty?