

Down Among the Non Sequiturs

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There is a rule in respectable writing, particularly academic: don't quote "down."

This means that academics don't cite newsletter writers as authorities, scientists don't consult table-rappers as purveyors of relevant data, politicians don't quote tweets.

But of course that's all changed now, thanks to Trump.

Which perhaps excuses me to deal with a simple Facebook "meme" that I've seen shared around among progressives. It's a deceptively

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simple question; the point in criticizing it is not to castigate the person who first posed it.

Here it is: "Why is murder an appropriate response to property damage, but property damage isn't an appropriate response to murder?"

I confess: this really startled me. Not because



it is hard to answer, but because what it says about discourse in our time.

Note what is obviously wrong with it:

1. Murder is *not* an apt response to *anything*, for murder is unlawful and/or immoral killing. The premise is absurd.
2. Some people do indeed kill rioters and others who are attacking them or their property. This can be justified because self-defense is the basis of all our rights, and a violent attack doesn't just fit into neat little "I'm only destroying your property" box.
3. The proper response to murder, after the fact of some violent moment, is lawful arrest and trial, not killing. Self-defense is for moments of conflict. Some time after an illegal act? Then we proceed by the rule of law.

Of course, this little thought experiment was designed to justify riots.

It does not.

It justifies, really, only this episode of

Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.