August 29, 2016

Dear T,

You are so kind! Don't underestimate your ability! Your third-grade teacher was wrong. I love to talk to you! You know that my mouth can get me into trouble. Would you bail me out of jail? Remember the judge who decided a ticket you got, I think that it was a traffic ticket, and you asked, so innocently, "Your honor, is the process of assigning fines a way of deterring non-compliance, or is it a way of raising revenue for the county?" The judge glared at you and banged his gavel down. "Thirty dollars!", he thundered!

Got to ask a question: about, "War is bad for people." Only true if the alternative is better. Was the American Revolution bad for people? Bernie Sanders is too simplistic, I think. The American Revolution was better than unending British rule. Could a good ending have been negotiated? Well, do people like giving up money and power? CAN they be dislodged, in all cases, without force? How 'bout the Civil War, that ended slavery? How adequate is Bernie Sanders' thinking on this issue, his contention that war is bad for people? Which people? Was the Civil War good for black people? Was ending slavery good for black people? Would it have been better for "everyone", if we had waited the 100 or 200 years necessary to convince slave-owners that it would be in their best interest, really, to end their way of life and accept payment for their slaves, from the government? Have you asked any black people if they would have preferred to be enslaved an extra 100 or 200 years, so as to avoid war? Is slavery better than war? What do you think that a black person would say? If you were to ask one, what would his response be? DARE you ask that? I wouldn't! How 'bout WWII? Is extermination better than war? Is death from torture and sadism better than death from shrapnel? Which way would you rather go?

The idea that war is "bad for people" is comforting, it's so religious. You have a rule of thumb that serves as a ping-pong paddle, every time someone lobs a hard question at you, you can whack it back with your rule of thumb: "war is bad for people". To my mind, this approach means that people have decided not to think anymore. Thinking leaves a person too muddled! If you ponder some scenarios, you can come up with the conclusion that there are no pat answers! How frightening! If you say, what I often say, that all you have to do in life is ask yourself, "What would Jesus do?", then alas! This answer only "answers" about 90% of dilemmas! That is, if you're an atheist existensialist it only answers about 90% of dilemmas! If you're a dedicated, fundamentalist Christian, that answer means that, if Jesus would sacrifice himself for someone else, you should, too! So, your ass if grass! I'm not so sure that Bernie Sanders would really be willing to give his life for any stranger. I would not! Only certain strangers! And loved ones! But this admission means that I have no rule of thumb to guide me through life. Only a rule of thumb that answers about 90% of dilemmas. That

last 10% is uncertain, unanswerable until I confront it and make a decision. I think that rules of thumb are comforting to people. But I would rather be uncomforted and be realistic. Socrates said,"The unexamined life is not worth living." Of course, what did he know, he died for his principles?!

Love,

Cindy