

Meat Puppets

"Finding the Challenges" is an original column appearing sporadically, by Verbal Vol.

Recently, I listened to the podcast of Skyler Collins' interview with Aaron White. Since they both have daughters, Skyler asked whether Aaron agreed that girls need to be toughened to deal with life. Aaron's response was, to my way of thinking, that there are a lot of jerks in the world so we all need to be prepared — no need to toughen particular people beyond that which they would normally develop in their own passage through life.

This got me to thinking about a long-held theory that I have had. The facts are that there are way too many damaged people. How does a voluntaryist navigate the minefield? I propose the meat puppet theory as a way to quantify the existence of jerks, warmongers, and other broken people.

The fundamental assumption is that we are very close to the Pareto Principle when dealing with statistical groups. The Pareto Principle, stated generally, says that phenomena divide themselves at an 80-20 distribution. For instance, 80% of effects come from 20% of causes. For another instance, if a bus fleet is 20% new, you might expect 80% of buses to be from older model years, and of the older ones, 80% of the older ones are more than two years old. And so forth. You can see this formulation has a recursive element too. Each 80% segment is divisible into 80-20, as is each 20% segment. But this is practically finite, if we just stick with whole numbers.

My thesis is that out of any statistical group of people, relative to the nature of the group, there are 80% below a marker, and only 20% above. I'm saying that Skyler, Aaron, and myself, who all have daughters, have a prospect that 80%-96% of the people our daughters will encounter will be jerks, or other types of broken people. These people are results of their genetic and memetic environments. Looking at the ascending 20%, we can also see that 80% (or 16 in a group of 100) may be impaired relatively by bad luck, substances, and/or relationships. That leaves 4% unimpaired, but 3% will be unfortunate compared to the 1% at the top of the heap.

A practical effect is that of all the babies born in a time period, 20% will be born into optimum circumstances, and of that 20%, only 20% will take advantage of the situation.

So the odds will be high that there will be many jerks or other broken people — 96 out of 100. Of the original number 80% will stay as they are because of accident of birth, while they will be joined by another 16% who dropped the ball on winning the cosmic birth lottery, failing to take advantage of being born in better circumstances. The *quid pro quo*, however, is that approximately 20% of the lower 80% will, one way or another, overcome their original disadvantage to become reasonably functioning members of the whole. If

you remember *Hitchhiker's Guide*, you may equate the upper 20% of the lower 80% with the Golgafrinchan colonists who originally inhabited Earth.

So, attempting to summarize, any group is made up of 80% meat puppets, of the remaining 20%, 80% (16% of the original group) has become the equivalent of a meat puppet through misadventure. That leaves 4%. What are the odds that they will function together at all well? 20% in favor and 80% against. There is also only a 20% chance that there are leadership traits among the top 4, there being an 80% chance that quasi-leaders will emerge from the meat puppet regions. By the way, there is nearly a 100% chance that no one in the top 4% will want to become a leader.

So tread lightly out there young ladies, and young gentlemen as well. The path is tortuous and steep.