

Accord, Living For The Present, and Recalibrating



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"Finding the Challenges" is an original bi-weekly column appearing every other Wednesday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Verbal Vol. Verbal is a software engineer, college professor, corporate information officer, life long student, farmer, libertarian, literarian, student of computer science and self-ordering phenomena. Archived columns can be found here. FTC-only RSS feed available here.

What a week last week was, and where does one start? Two kids apparently made utter fools of law enforcement in one of our major cities, while blighting one of our most famous cultural events, the Boston Marathon. And in the process, it was demonstrated clearly what a bunch of clowns our so-called free media have become. And then, the United States government admitted that it had tortured, and tortured again, viciously, callously and often. One of the effects was that it was now beyond the shadow of a doubt that our highest leaders had lied, and compounded lies, to us as though we were not capable of being dealt with truthfully. You will often hear the worthwhile admonition to speak truth to power, but I think it is also time to demand that those in power begin to speak truth to us, or step aside.

How shall we continue? It will not be through knee jerk response, hand wringing, and breast beating. Being a loosely defined mob of consumers of snake oil is not working out so well for us. There is the greatest strength in the human individual, but it is a strength that will not emerge while we are content to be lied to by those who would sap it.

Let us continue to try to understand the machinery of our lives, to diagnose where the frictions create so much heat but no light, to understand what it means to be efficient, and better, to be effective, to see the larger problems and to make opportunities of them. Let us examine how crowds work versus how voluntary associations work. Then we will look at ways not to deal with the anticipation of the future. And we will finish this column by trying to deal with the greatest burden yet placed on the backs of human beings: taxation.

Accord Rather Than Unity

In a recent week, Skyler Collins wrote a beautiful column on how, if we all gave voluntaryism a chance, it would give a means of supporting a very wide stripe of dreams,

goals, hopes, and accomplishments. I fully agree. The banner of voluntarism can fly over virtually all human endeavor that rejects the futility of initiated aggression and coercion.

But the verb “unite” is problematic for me. It is clear that a voluntary unity would be far superior to a coerced one. I think there may be a finer definition, however, of the behavior for which we hope. That the state should stay out of any form of voluntary agreement among two or more individuals is agreed. Furthermore, voluntary associations should stay out of voluntary external agreements between two or more of its associates. This should apply to all voluntary behavior. That generally would be better than just dealing with the cause of the moment. Wouldn't it be better, for instance, to have a separation of state and matters of personal responsibility, rather than waiting for the government to get out of specific areas such as the marriage definition and licensing business. Must we go through the squeaky wheel paradigm, one problem at a time?

The point I am after here, though, is: what is the optimum plurality of multiple associations? I will flesh this out. It is far less reasonable to expect unity for all than to make allowances for a vast range of individual differences. The broader the principle, with a lesser number of specifics elaborated in advance, the more individuals will know what to expect from other individuals. If all associations are voluntary and under simple accords, like the non-aggression principle, there is a greater probability of desirable outcomes.

But keeping agreements within workable bounds is important also. The channels of communication used to maintain accord are extremely sensitive to overload. If you have an accord between two, there are two channels. Among three participants there are six channels, while among four there are twelve. The number of channels mount at a dizzying pace after that. If you have a few two-party accords, like me, man-woman, parent-child, editor-writer, reader-writer, you know how daunting just handling one two-party relationship can be.

In the past two days, I have listened to a few freedom-oriented podcasts that were about infighting among freedom-oriented advocates and groups. On the one hand, these disagreements appeared to weaken a sense of accord, but then the necessity of dealing with differences appeared to offset that, and sometimes eggs get cracked. Sometimes differences are what produce new accords.

However we function, though, there must be rational individualism. Uniting with irrational collectivists or irrational individualists will not work. So I am hoping for a larger encompassing phenomenon, that through natural selection rational individualism will rise, producing accord rather than unity. And, voluntarism is foremost as an excellent form of rational individualism.

Living For The Present

“To live” is a verb form in the present tense. It is the only option we have that has existential meaning. Nevertheless, here’s a huge misstep, usually taken by statist, but too often with the tacit approval of the masses: micromanaging the future. Intricate arguments about how will we do X when there is no way of knowing the full circumstances are so wrongheaded it is difficult to get people to even grasp.

Yes, we can and must make near term guesses, such as predicting what may happen if we run a red light. But that is only gauging probability and risk with the fewest variables in play. But for a nation state to embark on something like social security or austerity measures or war or mandatory education, or even compulsory citizenship, is the most arrogant discounting of reality.

One of the downside effects of the collective obsession with central planning is that everything soon evolves to serve the plan, not the goal. Soon the planners can just forget goals altogether. The plans never get us to a goal anyhow.

Another effect is that the plans evolve to serve the servers, not the purported beneficiaries. Processes nearly always take on a life of their own. “We have always done it this way.”

Taxing Away to Neverland

Speaking of a process that has far outgrown its reason for being, this country did rather well for 125+ years without an income tax. Then we were duped into a tax to pay for World War I (we were promised it was temporary for that purpose, a pitiful purpose, only). Thirty years later income tax was being slithered out of our paychecks to pay for the second chapter of that war, World War II. Seventy more years and we are still paying income tax, still having it confiscated from our income, still greater amounts confiscated, during the endless chapters of permanent war on everything.

And not only are we paying taxes, we are running up huge mountains of debt against the taxes foreseen for our descendents. Have we been watching long enough to see that this is not a reversible process? Haven’t we kicked enough cans down the road?

If there were a voluntary way to derail the runaway train of taxation, I would be the first to proclaim it. But we have been cajoled through gentle but insistent tugs on the rings through our noses into riding on that train. Self destruction is an out, but self destruction is the outcome for denial as well. The answer is not in tax reform, it is not in tinkering with the bases for the taxes; it is in abolishing taxation and redefining what government is. Are we being protected by government? Do we have peace of mind from government? Is our property being defended by government, or stolen?

What things are our government doing for us now, with taxes, that they didn’t do for us, 100 years ago, without income taxes? Are these things necessary? Why weren’t they

necessary before 1913? Why do these things cost such a greater portion of the personal properties of American individuals as each day goes by. What will happen when the amount of revenue required to fund this non-stop growth of government reaches and exceeds the capacity of Americans to produce income?

The good voluntaryist must now take the opportunity to recognize the inevitable. There is no combination of collective, mandatory behavior that will feed the beast forever. We must recalibrate our dreams. We must expect nothing from government, and we must ask for nothing from government. We must understand that freedom comes from within, from the strengths of our individual wills. We must set the example by not voting for people who promise and pander to voters. Today that is tantamount to not voting at all. We must quit asking politicians to make life easy for us. They don't have the power, and what's more, they don't care. In fact, they quit caring long ago about what we think. They can get elected without us. They can be in office without delivering on a single campaign promise. They can cloak it all in deceit and official secrets. They will lie to you. They must lie to you, because they have no honorable intentions toward you.

So don't lie to yourself, there are already too many liars taking care of that task. We, as voluntaryists, must see, acting commensurately, that total reliance must be placed upon ourselves and only those others with whom we voluntarily associate.

Let's reject a world where we just let atrocities like the Boston Marathon bombing wash over us, where we let our leaders lie to us about how it will all be made OK, they promise. We don't have to wait a decade before our government tells us it has told us a lie, as in the torture regime that has arisen under the mendacious "War on Terror." If we will just proceed on the given that governments and statists and collectivists have no clue of what truth is nor what role it should play in a meaningful life, we can put decision making where it needs to be, with ourselves.

Seek accord with your fellow man; you don't need any official license. Keep your agreements and your relationships lean and well-maintained. Do not bite off more than you can chew, since nobody else wants to chew it for you. And keep your view of the future sparse; you can't control it nor can anyone else, but be sure to build a good set of principles with which to persevere against the unknown. And lastly, forget the idea that government is anything but an unbearable burden for you, turning away from the primrose path of the collective.