

Control and Rebellion



Send him mail. [f](#) [t](#)

"One Voluntarist's Perspective" is an original column appearing most Mondays at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found [here](#). OVP-only RSS feed available [here](#).

"Teenage rebellion" is a seemingly natural phase of a young human's life. But is it really? What about political rebellion? Is that also a natural phase of, I guess you could say, the life of society? Let's dissect rebellion, and perhaps that will lead us toward answering these questions.

Rebellion

First, let us consult etymology. Rebellion is from the Latin *rebellio*, which means, "war waged against a government by some portion of its subjects." Interesting. Let's look at rebel. It comes from the Latin *rebellare*, "to revolt." And revolt comes from the Latin *revolitare*, meaning, "to overthrow, overturn." Okay, then. Rebellion, etymologically, is "a war waged to overthrow or overturn a ruling body by some portion of its subjects" (subjects implies rulership).

Second, let us consult a modern definition. Google gives us two: 1) "an act of violent or open resistance to an established government or ruler," and 2) "the action or process of resisting authority, control, or convention." There it is again, "ruler," and with it "authority, control" It would seem, then, that you can't have rebellion without control by a ruler, and an authority who controls is a *de facto* ruler. Right then, moving along.

Teenage Rebellion

If teenage rebellion is a natural phase of a young human's life, then it would follow that the control that they are rebelling from is also a natural thing. What sorts of control may they be rebelling from? While I doubt this list is exhaustive, I can think of parents prescribing all sorts of things for their children like acceptable behaviors, religious instruction, eating and exercising practices, and let's not forget, education. Society, through convention, and reinforced by parents, also prescribes things like gender roles and fashion trends. Are these prescriptions, these acts of control, a natural thing? Is their occurrence based on natural law, like the times and seasons? Or are they the result of human action, of people

purposefully utilizing means over a period of time in order to achieve desired ends? I'm less convinced of the former because my own actions are very much under my control and not dictated by nature.

Societal Rebellion

If actions are a purposeful rather than a natural occurrence, then rebellion in society is likewise a consequence of control by one group of people over another. State actors control the actions of non-state actors through monopolizing the provision of law and order.

Unprincipled entrepreneurs and capitalists use state actors, at the expense of others, to protect their capital and either prohibit or erect barriers to would-be competitors. As I wrote previously, control is war. When governments control society they plant the seeds of rebellion which sooner or later bloom. History bears this out repeatedly.

Final Thoughts

If rebellion can only result after an act of control, then preventing rebellion, teenage or in society, is as simple as preventing or mitigating control. In parenting, respecting the choices, all choices that do not interfere with the choices of others, of our children, thereby abolishing control, and helping children cope with the various controls from society, has shown repeatedly among radical unschoolers to make teenage rebellion, at least from parents, a nonexistent so-called phase of a young human's life. Likewise, the more free a society is from control by would-be dictators, the more peaceful and prosperous it is. If you want to avoid rebellion, then relinquish control. I have, and you should, too.

Read more from "One Voluntaryist's Perspective":