

Imagination, Rothbard on Rulers, False Imagination



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

“Finding the Challenges” is an original column appearing every other week, usually on 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, pre-TSA world traveler, domestic traveler. Archived columns can be found [here](#). FTC-only RSS feed available [here](#).

This March is the month in which I observe the completion of my third year of writing *Finding the Challenges (FTC)*. It is nearly incomprehensible to me the journey that I and those I love have taken in that time. And I’m sure that each of you readers have had an equally astounding set of times and places — some of them, as Mark Twain might have said, actually true.

The reason for that odd statement at the end of the above paragraph is that I will be covering imagination, awareness, philosophy, expansion of the consciousness, and adaptability in this column.

Imagination — The Life of the Mind

I’m thinking of the life of Robert Penn Warren, whose mind roamed the Universe. Wonderfully for us, he brought much of that expansive view back to his nest and condensed it so artfully. I see Mark Twain, Kurt Vonnegut, and Jack London in much the same way.

Warren found a workshop for his art, wherever he hung his writer’s hat. He could look out his window, seeing what there was to behold in the physical world, but he could look far beyond in the imaginary world where he saw a life and career of Huey P. Long and a fatal crisis for Floyd Collins and the Black Patch Wars of his birthplace.

Although I do not claim the ability of Robert Penn Warren, I at least have vision into the imaginary world. Imaginary and fictional are not synonyms. All fictions are imaginary, but all imaginations are not fictions. I can sit in my nest, looking at the woods going down the hill and through the wintry trees to the snow covered hill beyond. But I can also see the ponga forest near Whangerei Falls on the North Island of New Zealand, where we trod the boardwalks among the tops of the tree ferns. I can see the sea cliffs of Molokai from a helicopter. I can see the tomb of Charles Darwin in Westminster Abbey. I can see what that hillside at home will look like when the dogwoods will bloom.

Last spring, we visited Mark Twain's estate in Hartford, Connecticut. It was grand, sitting on a hill looking across the countryside, but it was meager compared to that which Samuel Langhorne Clemens saw from that apex. His mind would impoverish any nesting place. If he were resting on the shore of Marin, west of Tamalpais, overlooking the Farallons, he could, and would, see much farther than that.

The mind never rests, but as the body rests, the mind expands throughout the foreign and domestic, the true and the could be true, the near and far lands.

Whatever happens during the rest of this National Election year, we will have to adapt, calling upon our imaginations to re-establish our voluntaryist outlook. Our imaginations must uncover new truths, must recognize again what phenomena that are outside our natural control. In short, we must exclude Trump, Clinton, or Sanders as bearing importance in our lives. Wishing that X, Y, or Z were or were not POTUS is an exercise in non-voluntaryism — it is wishing that a "leader" demands our following. To the extent that "our" is not "your," is a non-voluntary expectation that others should be led.

The country's imagination is once again wandering down the garden path, and the garden looks more and more shabby every election cycle.

Rothbard Quote #15

The worshipful and fawning attitude of intellectuals toward their rulers has been illustrated many times throughout history. A contemporary American counterpart to the "intellectual bodyguard of the House of Hohenzollern" is the attitude of so many liberal intellectuals toward the office and person of the President. Thus, to political scientist Professor Richard Neustadt, the President is the "sole crown-like symbol of the Union." And policy manager Townsend Hoopes, in the winter of 1960, wrote that "under our system the people can look only to the President to define the nature of our foreign policy problem and

the national programs and sacrifices required to meet it with effectiveness.” After generations of such rhetoric, it is no wonder that Richard Nixon, on the eve of his election as President, should thus describe his role: “He [the President] must articulate the nation’s values, define its goals and marshal its will.” Nixon’s conception of his role is hauntingly similar to Ernst Huber’s articulation, in the Germany of the 1930s, of the Constitutional Law of the Greater German Reich. Huber wrote that the head of State “sets up the great ends which are to be attained and draws up the plans for the utilization of all national powers in the achievement of the common goals . . . he gives the national life its true purpose and value.”

Here Murray Rothbard writes in *For A New Liberty*, of a “worshipful and fawning attitude ... toward ... rulers.” What is this attitude other than a jelling of the imagination around static (statist) perceptions? Speaking of imagination, had yours previously seen the above cited parallel between Nixonian America and Nazi Germany?

What Rothbard suggests, and I hope to imply, is what if we regarded these ideas as the unnecessary things that they are? What if we pretend for the next 8 years that there is no one fit by Natural Law to lead? Would such an imagination be true? Would we, the voluntaryists, perish?

Logic Fallacy #45 – False Imagination

This type of fallacy is akin to the **Amazing Familiarity** fallacy we addressed a few columns back. That fallacy occurs when someone insists they know something that he or she has no means to know. An example would be nearly anyone claiming to know what is going on in Iraq. Often a purveyor of this fallacy believes in the honesty of the assertion because they heard it from someone who was generally trustworthy — the relay storyteller can think that the baton was passed, at some point, from a possessor of first-hand knowledge. Imagination can be good.

The fallacy becomes a false imagination fallacy when the teller and relayer has every intelligent reason to disbelieve the story. Often the fallacy is based on a rationalization of the second order (a first order rationalization, tested against Occam’s Razor, is the most likely to happen and very well could come true). For example, wouldn’t it be grand if Saddam still had weapons of mass destruction? Another example, how compelling would it be if we heard from an unverifiable source that an agent of Saddam met with an agent of

Al Qaeda to conspire to fly planes into the World Trade Center?

By the way, the Italian spy agency is a great unverifiable source. Just think (using your imagination) how great a need does the country of Italy have for truly competent spies, and how would one ever extract meaningful (much less verifiable) information from them?

Remember when Rod Serling would say, "Imagine, if you will, that ..."

I'm not sure Serling meant it this way, but imagining is an entirely voluntary behavior. You can choose what to construct or what reality to illuminate. Why not use the imagination, first, to live in a world of likelihood. Secondly, you can consider a world which requires risk management. Some probabilities are small, but have enough likelihood that you may want to prepare for them. Thirdly, why not do a little Spring cleaning, getting rid of those imaginary dust bunnies and cobwebs that may never arrive, and may be inconsequential if they do.

Read more from "Finding the Challenges":