

## Jim's Journey, Spooner Quote #1, Fallacy #8



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*"Finding the Challenges" is an original 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.*

Since we last met on these pages, I had the distinct pleasure of being a guest of Skyler and Phil on the EVC Podcast, in an episode titled "Jim's Journey" ( I appeared under my alternate ego's real name, Jim Carigan. So I will be expanding today on a couple of items that came up on that episode.

And it was at least 6 columns ago wherein I told you I was going to devote myself to a bigger discussion on the very important world view of Lysander Spooner. Now I am delinquent in that project. So I will begin today with a more or less regular examination of what I consider Spooner's bigger ideas.

To finish this installment, I will discuss another logic fallacy — those tools through which both the intense plutocrat and the happy-go-lucky sheeple put major tempests in the teapot of a voluntaryist's intellectual life.

### **EVC Podcast #23 — Jim's Journey**

The weekly podcasts here at EVC have become a major component of Skyler Collins' vision, and that is why I was thrilled to be a guest of him and his co-host, Phil Eger. The topic was on how I become a voluntaryist, and they very much let me have the floor. After listening to the podcast, there are a few things that need a little expansion.

Although I did conclude that I had been mostly a lifelong voluntaryist, but without assuming the label until a few years ago, there are some stops along my jagged *curriculum vita* that I feel now need to be discussed. The first is my name. I write FTC under the pen name, Verbal Vol. That is a pen name that I created over a year ago, and I have written every FTC column under that name. I also have two blogs, "Nobody Asked But ..." and "Words Poorly Used," which I write under the *nom du rant* of Kilgore Forelle. The Kilgore appellation goes back a long way and it's dedicated to Kurt Vonnegut's alter ego, Kilgore Trout (forelle being

the German word for trout).

Those are minor confessions, but there is one that seems like the 800-pound gorilla in the elephant's room. I kind of tossed out the revelation that I have been, for the most part of my life, a government employee, an agent of the state. Not wanting to lose my entire readership in one fell swoop, I am now hastening to do some explaining. Where to start?

How about I am loyal to you, dear readers, not to the government, not to the state, but to you and myself. I was born to be a functionary of the bureaucracy but I was also born to be an burr under the establishment's saddle. Down here in Kentucky, ravaged as it frequently is whenever the "economy" takes a dip, we have a folk saying, "there ain't nothing that beats a salary." So, from early childhood on, I saw myself as an educated salary earner. Government work goes 4 generations deep in my family. My paternal grandfather was an engineer and army man on the Panama Canal. My maternal grandfather was an electrician in the navy and in the Boston city school system.

While I was what Skyler calls a "free range" kid, everyday of my life was filled with G-men and -women — father, mother, sisters, uncles, aunts, and grandfathers. Since these were all very bright people, I never associated government work with faceless bureaucrats. My people were all solid contributors, often prominent in their fields, not hod carriers, not political toadies. These people were iconoclasts who thrived in the niches of state service. That was what I aspired to as a young man — to work from within to tame Leviathan. It has only been in the last few years of my life that I have been the opposite, an anarcho-free market individualist.

Gary Larsen once captioned a cartoon, "Robin Hood, before his life's goals had been further clarified, once stole from the rich and gave to the *porcupines*." That was I, always knowing that robbing the rich was the deal, just not knowing who was going to be the benefactor.

For what it is worth, most Kentuckians are not effective as minions of the state and we take to individualism more readily than most. And my jobs with the state involved repeal of laws and implementation of non-interventionist unprograms. Specifically, in both Illinois and Kentucky, I was part of moves toward deregulation.

In my passage through this worldly vale, I have become somewhat of an expert in various forms of scoundrels' behaviors. You must know the beast before you can skewer it. I am now a fully regaled Don Quixote, going after those windmills that you and I see everywhere.

### **Spooner Quote #1**

*A man's natural rights are his own, against the whole world; and any*

*infringement of them is equally a crime, whether committed by one man, or by millions; whether committed by one man, calling himself a robber, (or by any other name indicating his true character,) or by millions, calling themselves a government.*

The first admission that a voluntarist might consider is that there will only be one person who was and will be there on both the day you were born and the day you will die — you. There are minor possibilities for gainsaying this rule, but they really don't deserve comment. But more importantly, and pragmatically, to your own self be true. And beware! All sorts of snake oil salespersons will try to get you to buy into a club, to get you to shoulder someone else's burden.

This is impossible. You can only be in one place, doing one thing, at any particular point in time. And you don't have enough time to surrender on someone else's behalf. You only have exactly as much time as you will be here. If you spend a single moment of that time on another person's business, you will be that person, and that person will be nobody. Existence is about being a unique individual with unique space and time coordinates, and a unique experience set.

Everything Spooner says comes back to this natural and universal law — you are you. And if anybody else tries to reconstruct reality to say differently, they are lying. You are a monopoly of one, only the degree to which you associate with others is within the scope of your voluntarism. No other can place a claim on you, unless he or she is willing to surrender self-ownership to become your keeper. And in no circumstances are you obliged to make yourself the subject of that surrender.

We'll talk a lot more about this should I be privileged to continue these columns.

### **Fallacy #8 — Answering Criticism with Criticism**

This is often the result of a foregoing fallacy. Whether true or not, an attack based on particulars seldom has much to do with the issue at hand. So the first person says you are spoiling the dog, and since there is no way to argue such a formless contention, the second person counters with you are spoiling the cat. And this can go on forever.

What makes this a fallacy is not the truth of an attack or its counter, it is that all problems are issue-based, result-oriented. Problems may, incidentally, have minor aspects that relate to personal failings among the participants, but problems tend to manifest themselves as fact-based situations. The personalities are interchangeable. For example, I find no succor at all in comparing presidents of the United States — it's a stupid job for stupid people. It's even stupid when brilliant people may accidentally fall into the position

(see Thomas Jefferson).

The familiar appearance of this fallacy is due to the fact that it appears in every childhood squabble, adolescent contention, and sadly in every adult political contest. And these squabbles, contentions and contests are continuous in human society.

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In conclusion, this time, let me say — everyone's life path is jagged, and we may find ourselves on a barren spur of that path, from time to time. But one's life is not monolithic. You never start where you will end. Take whatever your path has been and bend it toward what you are now. Lysander Spooner will tell you that only you can do this, and no one else can do it for you. Make the next thing you do be the most consistent thing ever in the path your life is taking now. And while you are at it, maybe you can think about stopping behaviors that you always assumed were given. For instance, stop answering criticism with criticism. That is only slightly more useful than a ping pong game.

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