

Language, Collectivism, and War



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

"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.

Our estimable founder, Skyler Collins, stressed that I should go for positiveness in my debut here at Everything-Voluntary.com. This is quite a challenge for a curmudgeon like me. I have educated myself under the sharpest of tongue, wit, and pen. My heroes are Mark Twain, H. L. Mencken, Kurt Vonnegut, Dorothy Parker, George Carlin, and most currently, Fred Reed, Penn Jillette, and P. J. O'Rourke.

But I have found a little wiggle room in a positive alcove of my psyche. In fact, I believe that the troubadours of scorn, whom I have listed above, are each in his or her individual way actually guides to windows that face the Sun. After all, what is the purpose of a rant if not in hope of seeing things change for the better, of going toward the light. Otherwise, one's grumbling is just a self-service for one's inward entertainment. Just remember that Thomas Paine did not get to his current station in our esteem by telling us what a cool dude George III was.

Let's try in this column, and in future efforts (I am hopeful, dear reader), to see if we can tease out what some of the challenges are in today's world to the stalwart voluntaryist. But more importantly, let's try to find the window that faces the Sun.

Here's a challenge for us all: our language is undergoing huge attacks, at every moment, at every angle. I read yesterday that several dictionaries were now including a definition of the word, "literally," which is exactly the opposite of the original meaning of the word (not to mention perversely free of meaning). But it is even more daunting outside the pages of the lexicons, where "dog-eat-dog" becomes "doggy-dog" and "voila!" is transuglified into "walla," in the parlors of pop discourse. Now, please be sure that I am not a fussy grammarian, and my intent is not to correct. I am far more concerned at a deeper level. Words and sentences and reason are the only positive tools that we have against the Universe, they are the only levers for navigating the madding crowd.

What shall we do to save language? First, we must recognize that for every degradation and *non sequitur*, there is an exponential uptick in information, clarity, communication, rationality, spirituality, wit, humor, collegiality, knowledge, and wisdom. If we watch too much reality TV and/or cable news, or listen to too many politicians, it may be more difficult to see. But, in a day's time, any one of us can download more of the wisdom of our forebears than could be learned in an entire 12-year public, government school career. Now the trick is to apply this in the most voluntary way to achieve the most effective outcome - learn it, use it to add to what you may already have learned, use it to refine your view of the past, use it going forward into your future. Don't use it to instruct someone else. In the next section we will talk about multiplying yourself.

Here's another big challenge: is collectivism really the only way to optimize human potential? So many folks cannot see past the fatal fallacy that the only way you can achieve behavior is through mandatory dictation of behavior. I know that my problem is not found in the behavior of others. Collectivism is based on the idea that others, left alone, will eventually do something to your detriment. If you are doing homeschooling, I know you do not believe the above sentence. You most likely believe in multiplying yourself through voluntaryism. A parent who is a good parent multiplies by sharing the spirit of discovery, by setting an example of life-long learning. A set curriculum, and a planned schedule, in a government school limits discovery - often drastically.

So what can we do? The first is to come to a realization that statist schooling, or homeschooling that complies with statist standards, is not a waiver of your responsibility to yourself to learn, every day. Learn every day and those who know you will likewise learn every day. If one relies on credentials or a diploma to signal one's worth to oneself or to the world, then it is highly likely that that person has learned very little and has even less wisdom. The measure of an individual is that he or she can keep on learning, and scoring high marks in his or her spiritual grade book. AND, this is the best thing that you can do for your loved ones, friends, and colleagues - and for your way of voluntary living. Two last observations on learning; simple things like producing a sweet smelling lavender plant are the ultimate in manifesting wisdom, and showing the content of your learning is good but showing the consequences is better.

I'm going for three challenges today, so here is the third: Since humans are just animals, is war among ourselves inevitable? There cannot be any idea that offends my sensibility more than this. At the very least the idea of war is incompatible with the non-aggression principle. Humans understand the non-aggression principle as a positive principle. I ask you to name any other species past or present that can grasp this principle. You cannot. Why do we have the ability to conceptualize principle, if we are not to use it? The other hand of the fallacy is that while animals may act brutishly to one another from time to time, there is no behavior that comes within a galaxy of human war. The one is an isolated drop of

rain, the other is a worldwide tsunami. The one is a flicker of summer lightning, the other is a collision with the Sun.

So what do we do? I cannot speak for you, but I will live every moment of my days within the idea of the non-aggression principle. I will always choose the opposite of initiated force, with my family, my friends, those who would be my enemies, my students, my mentors, and the parts of nature in which I have chosen to live.

In summary, I say to myself 1) speak, write, read, listen, and think well; 2) always be learning; and 3) I ain't gonna study war no more. And in an overarching resolution, I will not offend the rest of the animals by blaming human behavior on them, nor will I excuse humans who wish to apologize away our gifts.

I really would appreciate your responses to these ideas, even up to disagreement, but more so I will cherish your additional ways of making these challenges positive.

Furthermore I look forward to bringing other challenges to the good voluntaryists who follow this website. Thank you to Skyler Collins and all who made it possible for me to participate. And thank you, dear reader for your time and energy.