

My Journey to Voluntarism



Send him mail.

"Food for Thought" is an original column appearing every other Tuesday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Norman Imberman. Norman is a retired podiatrist who loves playing piano, writing music, lawn bowling, bridge, reading, classical music, going to movies, plays, concerts and traveling. He is not a member of any social network, nor does he plan on becoming one. Archived columns can be found [here](#). FFT-only RSS feed available [here](#).

To me, a mentor is a person whose opinions I respect. Some of these opinions at first blush may seem totally puzzling but at the same time, are worth considering because of the person expressing them. I consider such unusual opinions as possibly valid and worth considering because of my respect for the mentor through his/her writings, speeches, recordings, predictions or personal contacts.

Fortunately, as a very young child I was enamored with the study of math and science, and with that interest I had a logical and inquisitive mind—a mind that sought out clarity. My quest for clarity extended to attempting to understand the political arguments that my parents had with friends and family, but to no avail. As a result, from my childhood through my teenage years and until I reached the age of thirty I thought that there was something wrong with me because I could never grasp politics. When politics was discussed among my friends I would sit in the background, never offering my opinion because I had none. I might say something that was absorbed from my parent's beliefs but nothing came from me personally.

Both grandparents were escapees to America from the Russian pogroms or the German anti-semitism of the late eighteen hundreds. As such, both my parents grew up with a hate for fascism and a love for what they believed to be its opposite, socialism, which rubbed off on me. They were registered Democrats and proud of it. I recall how much my mother cried when Franklin Delano Roosevelt died and how much she revered Adlai Stevenson. She believed that he was destined to be another FDR. She was under the spell of his message and eloquent oratory.

Almost all of my friend's families believed as my parents did. So I grew up in a socialist atmosphere. I recall how appalled I was when I discovered that two of my friends and their families were registered Republicans and we had many scraps over who was right. The first

time I was eligible to vote in a presidential election I voted for John F. Kennedy and was devastated when he was assassinated in 1963. It was the last time I voted.

I read *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand as a teenager and loved it but thought of it as just another great story. I also loved the movie. I first read *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand when I was twenty-four and also loved it and thought of it as just another great novel and forgot about it. Ayn Rand called her philosophy Objectivism.

I moved from New York City to Southern California in 1966 when I was thirty years of age. In 1967 I became acquainted with a person who seemed to have a thorough grasp of things political and philosophical. Our discussions created great frustration for her, because she could make no headway with me. No matter what socialist position I took, she had a response that made only slight sense to me, but I wouldn't budge. She then suggested that I re-read *Atlas Shrugged* and *For the New Intellectual*. After I re-read both, our discussions took a startling turn. I found myself integrating the lessons found within the pages of both tomes, with her Randian arguments favoring the Objectivist position. When I expressed some of my socialist positions and she responded with arguments that I understood and with which I could no longer disagree, I realized after many discussions, that almost everything in which I believed was out of touch with reality and was wrong. Thus my education into politics and my conversion out of socialism began. I finally realized that the reason why I could make no sense out of politics in the past was because *politics made no sense—it was nonsense*. Subsequently I joined an Objectivist discussion group and subscribed to the Objectivist Newsletter. Thus I became a student of Objectivism and fortunately became exposed not only to the ideas of Ayn Rand but also to the ideas of Nathaniel Branden, an extremely brilliant psychologist who was associated with Ayn Rand at the time. At that time those ideas were conservative ideas, thus still political.

In 1969 one of my fellow students of Objectivism invited a group of us to a lecture in his home to be given by Jay S. Snelson. The topic was about how to establish a free society. It was a motivational speech to get the listener to register in a complete course on the topic, and I registered. The course was called V-50. Its innovator was an astrophysicist, Dr. Andrew J. Galambos. The course was given live by both Mr. Snelson and Dr. Galambos over many weekends and was also presented as taped recordings given at the home of past graduates. There were about 33 hours of lecture material plus additional hours of questions and answers. My intellectual curiosity was thoroughly aroused to the point where I discovered other authors to educate me. Thus I was introduced to such authors as Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, Frederic Bastiat, Milton Friedman, Henry Hazlitt, Robert Ringer, Morris and Linda Tannehill, Murray Rothbard, Lysander Spooner, Frank Chodorov, Isabel Paterson, F.A. Harper and Thomas Paine. The school was called LIONS TECH, which was an acronym for the Liberal Institute of Natural Science and Technology. It had another more popular name—the Free Enterprise Institute (FEI).

I matriculated in the course many times while introducing many new students to V-50. In addition, I took most of the other courses taught by FEI, including a physics course, the history of the American Revolution, the history of science and even a course about insurance and investing. It's my opinion that the V-50 course is a rational stepping-stone towards the final destination of Voluntarism. It makes the transition to Voluntarism more likely. If all voluntarists promoted V-50 they would find that some of their friends previously resistant to the philosophy of voluntarism might actually get there. It seems to me that it is irrational to expect a political animal to make the gigantic leap from politics to voluntarism without going through the intermediate step of V-50. In reality, V-50 is a course in Voluntarism. (The V-50 course is available through Amazon or [here](#).)

In the early seventies, Dr. Andrew J. Galambos and Jay Snelson had a falling out, so they went their separate ways. During their tenure together I became a friend of Jay's but lost contact with him after the split. A few years later I bumped into him at a hotel in Redondo Beach and found out that he was looking for a venue to start his own course about the establishment of freedom in America. I took the course, entitled Human Action Seminars, which he named after von Mises' brilliant book of the same name, *Human Action*. Although it was about the same topic as V-50, Human Action Seminars approached it from a different perspective, which I found illuminating. Once again I was instrumental in convincing many others to take the course and sat through the course 4 or 5 times. One semester it was presented in my own home. Jay and I subsequently became good friends. Unfortunately he passed away in 2011. I miss him very much.

Both V-50 and Human Action Seminars basically taught the principles of voluntarism but I wasn't all the way there yet. Somewhere within me resided some of the old values of Nationalism while I secretly harbored a desire to see the "lesser of the evils" become elected to office.

It wasn't until 2010 that I became motivated to delve further into the idea of freedom. Thus I discovered the ideas of Bill Buppert, Thomas DiLorenzo, Skyler Collins, Llewellyn Rockwell and Stefan Molyneux, which sealed my fate as a voluntarist. Skyler Collins subsequently invited me to write this column on his website, to which I have been submitting an article every other Tuesday since March 12, 2013. Some of those articles were written before I was a total voluntarist so they reflect some of my pre-voluntarist beliefs.

The full journey took my entire life to arrive at Voluntarism, from age 10, when I rejected all forms of mysticism, to now when I am almost 78 years of age. Since John Fitzgerald Kennedy was assassinated, there were four Democratic administrations and five Republican administrations. We can all agree that things have become worse. All through the years I observed the failure of the various government programs, no matter which party was in power. I noticed the hardships placed upon the victims of the government's plunder and the unintended consequences of the slavery foisted upon us. Politics of the

status quo has created a severe state of serious and hateful class warfare, which I maintain, is one of the ploys preferred by those in power because with class warfare, each class vies for special favors from the authorities, thus making the masses more dependent upon the State. I realized that there is no difference between Democrats, Republicans, Teapartyists, Socialists, Communists, Fascists, Welfare Statists, limited government Libertarians, Plutocrats, Theocrats, Monarchs, Kings, Czars and the Mafia. As long as any person or groups of persons wish to coerce me, and my loved ones, they are in reality, my enemies, since they wish to harm us. That's what an enemy is—one who wishes to get what they want by doing harm to others. Their good intentions are no excuse. I will have none of it. It's only through the Science of Voluntarism that solutions can be forthcoming. I realize now that voluntarists who teach the philosophy should refer to voluntarism as a science. I like the sound of it—The Science of Voluntarism.

I mentioned my need for clarity early in this discussion. I found more and more clarity as I traveled along my journey—from socialist politics to Objectivism to Libertarianism to Voluntarism. Clarity is the condition that exists when the premises are true and the conclusions naturally follow—when the syllogism prevails. Perhaps there is more clarity coming, which I will welcome, since clarity has no limits. We can all use greater clarity in our thinking, our writings and our discussions with others. Better yet, we can all use clarity from others, which is not what we get from politicians, theologians, news reporters, talk show hosts, teachers, professors, or even our friends and parents.

My primary mentor in this long process is Nathaniel Branden, even though I may disagree with some of his ideas and conclusions. I experience a special intellectual and spiritual charge when I hear him speak and answer questions. The clarity of his presentations and answering of questions gives me pure joy, in spite of positions in which we differ. There is an air of excitement about it. I recall, when I first attended a speech he was presenting, that my entire body was actually shivering with excitement as his clarity sparkled through my mind. Ayn Rand, Jay Snelson and Andrew J. Galambos are next, not necessarily in that order. Thank you all for the great gift you have given me. The other authors mentioned earlier are also great men of the mind to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. All of them have helped me to get past the abominable hurdle of Statism.