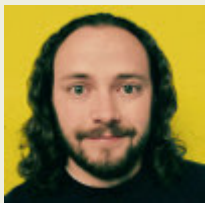


Persuasion, Reason, and Markets



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“One Voluntarist’s Perspective” is an original column appearing sporadically at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found here. OVP-only RSS feed available here.

Those who desire to see the grip of statism released from our world, the abolition of coercive monopoly government, to be replaced by a peaceful and rulerless social and legal order, must decide for themselves how best to achieve it. Unless we are to be discovered as hypocrites, it is my opinion that we anarchists must embrace tools and strategies consistent with our ends, a peaceful and rulerless social and legal order. That is, we must embrace persuasion over force, reason over aggression, and free markets over control.

Persuasion or Force

Should we force others to accept our anarchism? I don’t see how that is even possible. First, anarchism is a philosophy, and like all philosophies, if it will be understood and appreciated, it must be discovered and accepted gradually and voluntarily. You can’t make others accept your ideas, no matter how good they are. All you can do is make them wish they had. If one is truly committed to the ideals of anarchism, then one does not go around acting like a ruler over the minds and actions of others. Rather, they find times peacefully to use the tool of persuasion. They probe into opposing views and find common ground, and then build toward anarchism from there, peacefully, persuasively, voluntarily.

Reason or Aggression

Any argument worth its salt shouldn’t need to be forced through aggressive actions. Those who embrace statism already claim the monopoly on the use of aggression to force others into their fold. Reason is my weapon of choice. I teach my children, my family, my friends, and anyone who cares to listen through the use of reason, not aggression. Admittedly, reason only goes so far. If someone is bent on using aggression toward others, then those who value their lives and property have every incentive to match force with force. At some point, that is the only reasonable thing to do. But it seems to me that this is only true for small time aggressors, not the state. The state always has bigger and better tools of aggression. And these tools are wielded by our fellow human beings, human beings that

can adopt new ideas after hearing them in a peaceful, persuasive, and voluntary way.

Free Markets or Control

Many of the anarchist tradition are more focused on forcing their vision of the free society onto others than in appreciating the fact that the free society can only come about through the peaceful exchange of ideas and things. Free markets, rather than control, are a prerequisite to anarchy. People must be free to negotiate their claims on property, justice, laws, and rights if we are to claim the presence of a peaceful and rulerless social and legal order. Controlling these things via physical or social coercion does not a peaceful and rulerless society make.

Final Thoughts

Persuasion, reason, and free markets are the tools of the voluntaryist, and should be the tools of every anarchist. Too often so-called anarchists are committed to the uses of force, aggression, and control, tools of the state mind you, to bring about their vision of the free society. This seems a fool's errand to me, a contradiction, an hypocrisy, to say the least. No thank you. They can keep their instruments of destruction to themselves.

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