

# What Virtues Do People Need in Order to Be Free?

*Guest post by Ben Speers.*

When attempting to form a free society, the absence of the state is only one piece of the puzzle. People must possess certain attributes if they are to take advantage of the potential benefits of voluntaryism. I have outlined six principles below that I believe to be necessary to the formation of a peaceful, prosperous society.

## **1. Love**

People must be moral enough to obey the Golden Rule. The most basic guiding principle of all social interaction is this: No individual or group of individuals may use force or fraud (e.g., breach of legitimate contract) to harm any other person or any other person's property or to impede any other person's freedoms except to defend himself against the use of force. An important corollary to this is that no individual or individuals may authorize any agent to use force or fraud to harm any other person or any other person's property or to impede any other person's freedoms except to defend himself against the use of force. The above concept is sometimes referred to as the non-aggression principle. Stated simply, people may not engage in offensive violence or breach of contract.

Therefore, all of the requirements for a virtuous society listed below must be brought about through non-forceful means. In other words, only peaceful, non-violent, persuasive, loving means may be used. For example, open communication and leading by example are acceptable means, but government-enforced laws forcing people to behave in a certain way or redistributing wealth are NOT acceptable.

People must live by the simple principle of loving one another, but they must realize that the first step to loving their fellow man is to "first do no harm." People have to learn that force and love are as diametrically opposed as light and darkness. People must exercise restraint and know when to mind their own business. And in order for any society to prosper, people must have good will toward one another and must be able to trust most of the people around them. People must behave honorably and give others the respect they deserve.

People must also express their love of their fellow human beings by being honest with them. They must also respect the property of others. Finally, people must treat legitimate contracts as the sacred pillars of commerce that they are. This is one manifestation of a man's word being his bond.

## **2. Reason**

People should be rational, logical, and well-versed in the importance of the scientific method. It is imperative that people be open-minded enough to examine any idea yet skeptical enough to question any idea rigorously, especially their own ideas and long-held beliefs. Passion, emotion, and selfishness should never override objective truth.

Also, people should be curious about the world around them and should use their powers of reason to discover how things work. Ideally, rational, open dialogue will cause superstition and falsehood to give way to truth and enlightenment. People must not only learn to think for themselves, they must learn to think *well* for themselves. The current dark age of intellectual enslavement to authority and popular opinion must be overthrown.

### **3. Knowledge**

People must be aware of the world around them. People cannot be ignorant of human nature, true science, or—in general terms, at least—the current events, both economical and political, going on around them. People must keep themselves informed. In order to be well-informed, people must be open-minded enough to examine any idea yet skeptical enough to question any idea rigorously, especially their own ideas and long-held beliefs. People should not be afraid to question authority and should be wary of trusting any source of information that is not objective.

Neither government nor a small collection of pro-government corporations should be entrusted with a monopoly of information or education. Public schools (or heavily regulated ‘private’ schools) and statist news media tend to keep people ignorant in a systematic fashion.

Finally, people must not be ignorant of the true principles of liberty, such as “power tends to corrupt” and “all men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights,” etc. Educating people about freedom is absolutely vital. It is, of course, for this purpose that Everything-Voluntary exists.

### **4. Industry**

It is also necessary for people to have a strong work ethic and be willing to provide for themselves. People must take responsibility for their own material well-being and that of their family. People must search out efficient, peaceful means of providing a valuable service to society. People should not be afraid of civil, yet robust competition. And people must adapt, invent, and innovate. Everyone should respect everyone else’s right to make an honest living, and employment should be a private contract between the employer and the employee.

All people need to develop their job skills beginning at a young age. People should study

and practice that which will give them practical experience in the real job market. Instead of being locked in intellectual prisons (schools), many youths would be better off in apprenticeship programs or helping their parents at work.

## **5. Strength**

Even the most enlightened people will soon be destroyed if they are not able to protect themselves. Every individual has the right to protect himself, his family, his friends, and anyone at all who requests his aid. No individual or group of individuals has the right to forbid anyone from bearing arms or to compel men to bear arms.

But it is not enough to simply own weapons. People must know how to use their weapons both as individuals and as groups; hence the need for regular militia training. Militias should operate locally and independently and should be consensual, private entities. Militia regulations (self-imposed, not government-imposed) should encourage a practical degree of uniformity of weaponry and other gear for battlefield convenience.

## **6. Unity**

A free people must have some degree of cultural identity and sense of community. This is not to say that culture must be legislated or forced on anyone, but if a group of people cannot bring themselves to voluntarily build a common culture together, then it will be difficult for them to form the social and commercial bonds that are conducive to prosperity and security. Furthermore, this is not to say that every individual or every community must have an identical culture, but there must be at least some significant common ground shared between them. Otherwise they will be slow to unite during a crisis and quick to find fault with one another. If two groups of people belong to cultures so different that they cannot cooperate with each other on a regular basis, then they are better off separating and forming distinct communities.

Why is it so important for a free people to be unified? There are many reasons, but perhaps the most important is a safeguard against banditry—both the public and private types. If a neighborhood is attacked by brigands or if an individual is oppressed by tyrannical police actions, the neighborhood should immediately come together to support one another. A community that is quick to defend itself will be feared by both tyrants and common robbers.

## **Conclusion**

With these six virtues written on the hearts of mankind, society will be able to enter a new era of peace and prosperity, unmolested by bandits, slavemasters, and murderers of either the private or public variety. In reference to the latter, the power of tax collectors, police

officers, soldiers, judges, legislators, and tyrants of every color will fade away in the face of a free, virtuous people.