

Words Poorly Used #73 — Debate and Argument

Somebody wake me up when there is a true debate, not some tricked-up reality show imposter. Of course, presidential debates have never been — either presidential or debate. But I have listened to some more formal debates recently. Tom Woods debated Michael Malice on whether Alexander Hamilton was a hero of liberty. And Anthony Gregory has debated MP John Browne on whether Winston Churchill was a warmonger. If I look at the Etymology Online web site, I find that “debate” actually comes from “beat down.” In other words, it is not a constructive activity to participate in or to observe. It is fight club for tongue lashers. As you may know from reading my alter ego, Verbal Vol, I am pursuing a newly arisen interest in nonviolent communication, or NVC. The whole idea of debating seems counter to NVC. For awhile I had toyed with the idea that a debate was a mutual pursuit of truth, a seeking of accord. But I stand corrected — it is distinctly adversarial. I will cling, however, to the idea that argument is “the bringing forth of a proof” but not necessarily through debate.

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