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# The Voluntaryist

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Whole Number 186 “If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself.” 3rd Quarter 2020

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## The Creed of All Freedom-Loving Men: The Voluntaryist Spirit & Stoicism [1]

By Carl Watner

As readers of THE VOLUNTARYIST know, I have helped popularize the word “voluntaryist” among libertarians. But what they probably don't know is that, if there is one other label that I would identify with my philosophy, it would be the term “stoic.” Now, why would that be? What is the relationship between the 2000+ year old philosophy of Stoicism and that of voluntaryism? Is every Stoic necessarily a voluntaryist? Is every voluntaryist necessarily a Stoic? Certainly not in either case. For example, many current day advocates of Stoicism, such as Ryan Holiday of THE DAILY STOIC, disagree with the basic conclusions of voluntaryism. “Pay your taxes; vote; be a good, obedient citizen!” he says. What is the relationship between these two philosophies? [2]

The purpose of this article is to describe the Stoic philosophy of life, outline the relationship between voluntaryism and Stoicism, and to show how the later dovetails with my voluntaryist outlook on life. In researching this article, I have come to the conclusion that both voluntaryism and Stoicism are two philosophies which, while running on different tracks and dealing with different facets of life, can be, and in fact are, embraced by people such as myself, and may be worthy of consideration by others.

Zeno of Citium (c. 334 – c. 262 BC), a merchant of Phoenician descent, is the acknowledged founder of the Stoic school of philosophy which he began teaching in Athens around 300 BC. Since then it has had many adherents and advocates, and among them we can find many differences and disagreements. Nevertheless, over the centuries there has been a core of ideas shared by people who call themselves 'Stoics,' “irrespective of the differences of opinions that have existed among them.” [3] A fair but simplistic summary of the key elements of Stoicism was offered in The Daily Stoic of January 9, 2019: “Focus on what you can control. Be a good person. Manage your emotions.”

Other commentators have focused on the Stoic perception of reality. As Ludwig Edelstein put it, to the Stoics “the world is a brute fact.” [4] A is A. What does this conception of reality mean to the Stoic? It means the Stoic must recognize what is in his control and what is not. The Stoic is not insulted or disturbed by the facts. Stoics have always recognized that what

is, is. Describing a fact of nature as evil does nothing to change its impact upon us. The law of gravity is not evil because it does not allow men to fly. It is simply an inherent part of the world. The Stoic “must endure whatever comes,” good or bad, pain or joy, suffering or happiness. [5] The Stoic is an individual whose uncompromising acceptance of reality allows that person to remain undisturbed and unperturbed by even the most tumultuous or life-threatening events.

The Stoic recognizes that most things are beyond his control. The Stoic loves whatever happens “and faces it with unfailing cheerfulness. He tells himself: this is what I have got to do or put up with. I might as well be happy about it – I can't change it. ... Cheerfulness in all situations, especially the bad ones.” [6] As Epictetus, one of the early Stoics put it, “Bear and forbear!” [7] According to Epictetus, the real Stoic was “one 'who is sick, yet happy; in danger, and yet happy; exiled, and yet happy; disgraced, and yet happy'.” [8] Based on this description of Stoicism, it is certainly correct to identify one of its most important features as “the conception of the free individual as a thinking, responsible, and courageous being.” Stoics have always had the courage to face the facts and act accordingly. The power and attractiveness of Stoicism lies in “the internalization of the basic truth that each individual controls his or her own behavior but not the outcome.” The Stoic realizes that he can neither control how other people behave or what their behavior brings about. The Stoic can only control him or her self and calmly accept the consequences. [9]

One might define the goal of Stoic philosophy as living a life shaped by excellence and wisdom. [10] According to Epictetus, it is human excellence that makes a human being beautiful. [11] With other ancient philosophers, the Stoics believed in the importance of integrity, of demonstrating the harmony between their words and deeds, as illustrated by the manner in which they lived. Thus, Stoics place great emphasis on the crucial tasks of improving their character and maintaining their own integrity, regardless of the circumstances in which they find themselves. The Stoics would argue that if you want a better world, then improve yourself, for this is entirely within your control. To paraphrase Marcus Aurelius: Don't talk about what a good person should be like. Be that person - because this is in your control. Or as Epictetus put it, action speaks louder than words.

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# The Voluntaryist

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## Subscription Information

Published quarterly by The Voluntaryists, P.O. Box 275, Gramling, SC 29348. A six-issue subscription is \$25. For overseas postage, please add \$5. Single back issues are \$5. Gold, silver, and bitcoin readily accepted. Please check the number on your mailing label to see when you should renew. Carl Watner grants permission to reprint his own articles without special request. THE VOLUNTARYIST is online at [www.voluntaryist.com](http://www.voluntaryist.com).

## Potpourri from the Editor's Desk

### No. 1 "You Always Have A Choice"

No matter what happens, you have a choice. Someone insults you, you choose whether you're going to be offended, whether you're going to respond, whether you're going to let it go. You roll your ankle in a game, you decide whether you're going to tough it out or rest. You knock over a cherished family heirloom and it shatters on the floor, you choose whether to be devastated and for how long. You are clapped in handcuffs and thrown in jail unjustly, you choose what you will do with that time, what it will mean for you. Even if events put you at a complete loss and leave you just sitting there, that's a choice. As the Rush lyrics go,

If you choose not to decide

You still have made a choice

That's the essence of Stoicism right there. We always have a choice. In any and every situation, even if only in our attitude and our orientation, we still have a choice. It's an incredible power. Relinquishing that power? Being upset that it can't magically solve everything or turn back time? That's a choice too. Because you always have one.

- THE DAILY STOIC, August 18, 2017.

### No. 2 "Creativity Against the Machine"

Information is surprise. Creativity always comes as a surprise to us. If it wasn't surprising, we wouldn't need it. However useful they may be, machines are not capable of creativity. Human minds can generate counterfactuals, imaginative flights, dreams. By contrast, a surprise in a machine is a breakdown. You don't want your machines to have surprising outcomes!

- The Weekend Interview with George Gilder, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, September 1-2, 2018, page A11.

### No. 3 "You Are In Charge of You!"

Epictetus emphasizes time and again the fact that a man who lays the causes of his actions onto third parties or forces is not leveling with himself. He must live with his own judgments if he is to be honest with himself. "But if a person subjects me to fear of death,

he compels me," says a student. "No," says Epictetus, "It is neither death, nor exile, nor toil, nor any such things that is the cause of your doing, or not doing, anything, but only your opinions and the decisions of your Will."

"What is the fruit of your doctrines?" someone asked Epictetus. "Tranquility, fearlessness, and freedom," he answered. You can have these only if you are honest and take responsibility for your own actions. You've got to get it straight! You are in charge of you.

- James Stockdale, "Master of My Fate: A Stoic Philosopher in a Hanoi Prison," THE WORLD AND I, May 1995.

### No. 4 "It remains to be seen whether or not things will get better."

That will depend not on me, but on other people. They need to do what's right, instead of what's easy. That doesn't mean that we need groups of activists trying to regulate the behavior of everybody but themselves. Such evangelism is part of the problem, not part of the solution. What we need is for each individual to educate himself, to stop being brainwashed and mentally conditioned, to start thinking for himself, to stop whining to [the] government to coddle him, to govern his own behavior with an understanding of its consequences, and to be considerate of the effect that he has on others.

- Sam Aurelius Milam, III in the September 2018 FRONTIERSMAN.

### No. 5 "Doug Casey on The State"

A key takeaway, and I emphasize that because I expect it to otherwise bounce off the programmed psyches of most people, is that the very idea of the State itself is poisonous, evil, and intrinsically destructive. But, like so many bad ideas, people have come to assume it's part of the cosmic firmament, when it's really just a monstrous scam. It's a fraud, like your belief that you have a right to free speech because of the First Amendment, or a right to be armed because of the Second Amendment. No, you don't. The U.S. Constitution is just an arbitrary piece of paper...entirely apart from the fact the whole thing is now just a dead letter. You have a right to free speech and to be armed because they're necessary parts of being a free person, not because of what a political document says.

Even though the essence of the State is coercion, people have been taught to love and respect it. Most people think of the State in the quaint light of a grade school civics book. They think it has something to do with "We the People" electing a Jimmy Stewart character to represent them. That ideal has always been a pernicious fiction, because it idealizes, sanitizes, and legitimizes an intrinsically evil and destructive institution, which is based on force.

- From Doug Casey's "The Deep State," INTERNATIONAL MAN, October 5, 2018. 

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## The Voluntaryist Spirit & Stoicism

*(Continued from page 1)*

Their philosophy was no intellectual hobby, “but rather a way of life that transformed one's character and soul” that would show in how one lived, day to day. [12]

Historically, there have been four related character traits associated with the Stoic way of life. The four cardinal virtues of the Stoic are:

Practical wisdom or Prudence which allows them to make decisions that improve their ethically good life. This includes exercising excellent deliberation, good judgment, perspective, and common sense.

Courage or Fortitude can be physical, but more broadly refers to the moral aspect of acting well under challenging circumstances. This includes perseverance, honesty and confidence.

Self-Discipline or Temperance makes it possible for them to control their desires and actions so that they don't yield to excess. This includes orderliness, self-control, forgiveness, and humility.

Justice or Fairness refers to the practice of treating other human beings with dignity, benevolence, fair dealing, and according to the Golden Rule. [13]

So to summarize and condense what has been said about Stoicism, here are nine statements, that in the eyes of Jonas Salzgeber, author of *THE LITTLE BOOK OF STOICISM*, describe the Stoic personality.

1. The Stoic is serene and confident no matter what you throw at him.

2. The Stoic acts out of reason, not emotion.

3. The Stoic focuses on what he can control and does not worry about what he cannot control.

4. The Stoic accepts fate graciously and tries to make the best of it.

5. The Stoic appreciates what he has and never complains.

6. The Stoic is kind, generous, and forgiving towards others.

7. The Stoic's actions are prudent and the Stoic takes full responsibility for his behavior.

8. The Stoic is calm and is not attached to external things.

9. The Stoic possesses practical wisdom, courage, and practices self-discipline, benevolence, and justice. [14]

So much for Stoicism, but what about voluntaryism? Most readers of this article will already be familiar with the basic tenets of voluntaryism, but for those who might need a refresher, let me quote from my article, “The Voluntaryist Spirit.” This article was originally written in 1983, but not published until 2004. It can be found in Issue 124 of *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, and unfortunately was not included in my anthology, *I MUST SPEAK OUT*. I mention these facts because I will be extensively

quoting from this essay as the article you are now reading progresses. In that essay of 1983, I wrote:

Voluntaryism is a dual doctrine, having both a positive and a negative side. As a brand of anarchism it is the doctrine that all coercive government (what most people would refer to as “the State”) should be voluntarily abandoned; that all invasions of individual self-ownership rights should cease. This is its negative side. Its positive side is that all the affairs of people should be conducted on a voluntary basis. It does not argue for the specific form that voluntary arrangements will take; only that the sovereignty of the individual must remain intact, except where the individual coerced has already aggressed upon the sovereignty of another non-aggressive individual.

To voluntaryists, this dual doctrine represents a means, an end, and an insight. The end, predicated upon a theory of self-ownership and just property titles, is a peaceful anarchy, an all voluntary society. All the affairs of people, both public and private, should be carried out by individuals or their voluntary associations. The means to reach such an end state must be consistent with the goal sought. As shall be demonstrated, it is in fact the means that determine the end. So only voluntary methods of persuasion, education, and nonviolent resistance to State criminality may be used to bring about voluntaryist goals. People cannot be coerced into freedom. Finally, voluntaryism is a realization about the nature of political society, viz., that all States are grounded upon popular acceptance and require the cooperation of their victims.

These three aspects of voluntaryism mutually reinforce each other. The very goal of an all-voluntary society suggests its own means. The attempt to use governmental or political processes to reform or abolish the evils of coercion is not a voluntaryist means because they rest on coercion. The distinguishing marks of voluntaryism - that it is at once both nonviolent and non-electoral in its efforts to convince people to voluntarily abandon the State - set it apart from all other methods of social change. The voluntaryist insight into the nature of political power does not permit people to violently overthrow their government or even use the electoral process to change it, but rather points out that if they shall withdraw their cooperation from the system, it will no longer be able to function or enforce its will.

The voluntaryist spirit is thus an attitude of mind or a sense of life, if you will, which animates those engaged in the struggle for the recognition of self-ownership rights and the

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demise of the State. It is the passionate, disinterested love of justice for its own sake, regardless of the consequences that the struggle brings to one personally. It is a knowledge that if one takes care of the means the end will take care of itself. It is an understanding that the morality and principles of voluntary interaction with other self-owners is the only practical manner of living life upon this earth. It is an epistemological rejection of violence, a knowledge that coercion can never rationally convince. Come what will, wherever the chips may fall, voluntaryism seeks the perfect way but it differs from other philosophies of life in seeking it with utter disinterestedness. Right means are an end in themselves, their own reward.

How does this relate to Stoicism? In answering this question, I should like to refer to another essay that I wrote in 1995, titled "Vice Are Not Crimes," which was published in Issue 77. That particular article dealt with Walter Block's differentiation between 'libertarianism' and 'libertinism.' Libertarianism, says Walter, is the advocacy that "all non-aggressive behavior should be legal; people and their legitimately held private property should be sacrosanct." Proponents of libertinism, on the other hand, advocate "the morality of all sorts of perverse acts. This does not mean that non-aggressive acts such as drug selling, prostitution, etc., are good, nice or moral activities. In [Walter's] view, they are not. It means only that the forces of law and order should not incarcerate people for indulging in them." [15] In my commentary on Walter's article, I explained why it is necessary to formulate and elaborate a personal code of ethics to explain why these perverted activities are vicious and morally wrong.

We need to be able to explain to our children why they should refrain from these pernicious activities, yet at the same time we defend the right of these people to be "the scum of the earth." Everyone needs to understand why these perverts have rights, and why they are not admirable or to be emulated.

Walter has made a good beginning in this direction. Any successful ethical code has to be life-oriented, and focused upon personal and family survival. None of these perverted activities build strong character, independence, self-control, or teach moderation. Intemperance, promiscuous sex and taking drugs lead to self-destruction of both the mind and body, and hence are to be avoided and shunned. These vices will undoubtedly exist in a stateless world, as they do in a statist environment. Thus, we must teach our children that it takes morally strong individuals to resist both the lure of the State and the seemingly attractive snares of libertinism. They must learn that if they cannot govern themselves then

someone else will try to rule them. Only self-controlled individuals can earn freedom and liberty. People must be good and virtuous to be free in mind, body, and spirit.

Proper discipline of a child teaches him how to be a self-governor. This in turn leads to success in the disciplines of life. Self-discipline is critical to success in every realm of life. If you can teach him correct principles, ultimately you'll be teaching him to govern himself. This in turn leads to a freer society. This recalls the words of Albert Jay Nock, who wrote that the only thing that the individual can do "is to present society with 'one improved unit.'" A person who practices all sorts of vices is not an "improved" or improving person. "It is easy to prescribe improvement of others,... to pass laws, ... ." But the voluntaryist method is "the method of each 'one' doing his best to improve" himself. This is the "quiet" or "patient" way of changing society because it concentrates upon bettering the character of men and women as individuals. As the individual units change, the improvement of society will take care of itself. In other words, "If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself." [16]

As I mentioned, these words were written in 1995, and obviously Stoicism is not mentioned even once. Yet as you can see, the whole message is imbued with the Stoic outlook on the world, namely that each person is ultimately responsible for his own life and his own decisions. A person must always take responsibility for him or her self, and can never blame external circumstances for the choices that person makes. Even when the voluntaryist or Stoic is threatened with violence or death, that person is still responsible for how he or she acts in the face of coercion. Will there be resistance, forgiveness, or acquiescence? This question was discussed in my "Fundamentals of Voluntaryism," which was written in the early 1980s. "It is a fact of human nature that the only person who can think with your brain is you. Neither can a person be compelled to do anything against his or her will, for each person is ultimately responsible for his or her own actions. Governments try to terrorize individuals into submitting to tyranny by grabbing their bodies as hostages and trying to destroy their spirits. This strategy is not successful against the person who harbors the Stoic attitude toward life, and who refuses to allow pain to disturb the equanimity of his or her own mind, and the exercise of reason." [17]

Stoics believe they don't control the world around them, only how they respond – and that they must always respond with courage, temperance, wisdom, and justice.

THE DAILY STOIC, February 4, 2019

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As I wrote in "The Voluntaryist Spirit," voluntaryists have a clear understanding of the nature of power (what they call "the voluntaryist insight") - that all governments and human institutions depend on the consent and cooperation of its participants. A person who harbors the voluntaryist spirit understands that he or she cannot be compelled to do anything against his or her will. Such a person may suffer the consequences of holding to his or her belief, but as Corbett Bishop, a World War II conscientious objector who fasted for over 400 days in government prisons and hospitals, pointed out: Governments know that they can terrorize individuals into submitting to tyranny by grabbing the body as hostage and thus hoping to destroy the spirit (of conscience and resistance within the individual). But if one repudiates the body and will have nothing to do with it, the spirit remains free. This is the essence of total non-cooperation with one's oppressors. The voluntaryist spirit also reminds us of the Stoics "who were different from others" in refusing to allow pain to disturb the equanimity of their minds and the exercise of their reason. As William Grampp relates in Volume I of *ECONOMIC LIBERALISM* (1965):

There is the story of a Stoic who was captured and told to renounce his beliefs. He refused and was tortured. Still unable to make him recant, his captors told him he would be put to death. He answered they could do whatever they wanted with his body but whatever they did could not injure his philosophy. That was in his mind and their authority, in its physical and moral aspect, did not extend [that far].

Grampp concludes this story by pointing out that "Stoicism was unique in that its martyrs did not go to death believing their ideas would change the world." [18] They went to death because their integrity was worth more to them than their existence. For life, if the courage to die be lacking, is slavery. The man who is afraid to die cannot possibly live up to his vision of the truth because he fears for both his person and property. Thus the only favorable course to those who uphold voluntaryism is "to remain loyal to one's own integrity. For man, as a moral agent, has an obligation to value truth for its own sake, not for any supposed benefits it might bring as a by-product." [19]

This story is particularly graphic because it exemplifies the importance that the Stoic places on integrity and conscience. "In the centuries after Stoicism [took root in Western civilization] men sought to apply the test of reason to their conduct and their institutions . . . . As they did this they were following a course laid out by the [early] Stoics. One may conjecture that the idea of intellectual integrity [and behavior consistent with one's principles] came from Stoicism." [20] The Stoics recognized that the

soul of man was beyond the reach of tyrants and jailers. Of death, the Stoic had no fear because it was recognized as part of the course of nature. [21]

In his discussion of the Stoics, Grampp also pointed out that according to the Stoic view of reality nothing could be right by legislative enactment if it was not already right by nature. A coercive government can not change the laws of nature. As Grampp concluded, Epictetus, the Stoic, urged men to defy tyrants in such a way as to cast doubt on the necessity of government itself. "If the government directed them to do something that their reason opposed, they were to defy the government. If it told them to do what their reason would have told them to do anyway, they did not need a government." [22] Although not all contemporary Stoics would agree, voluntaryists assert that just as we do not require the government to dictate what is right or wrong in growing food, manufacturing textiles, or in steel-making, we do not need a government to dictate standards and procedures in any field of endeavor. [23]

Stoicism has had a major impact on the western world because its ideas about human nature are so true and powerful. Perhaps, then, it is not so remarkable that many of their early works have survived and are still in print today. To the Stoics all men were brothers. They were true cosmopolitans and would never have said, "My country right or wrong." They always believed that there were things so terrible and shameful that the wise man would not do them, even to save his country. Stoics have often been accused "of not participating in politics and of withdrawing from the pressing duties of the day." But, "these critics forget that for the Stoics political life was not the only life in which morality realizes itself. . . . [T]hey did not regard citizenship as the highest obligation of man." [24] The Stoics have always acted upon the belief that "the first step in transforming society into one in which people live a good life is to teach people how to make their happiness depend as little as possible upon external circumstances. The Stoics understood that if we fail to transform ourselves, then no matter how much we [attempt to] transform the society in which we live, we are unlikely to have a good life." [25]

To the Stoics, the sage was the wise man who was able to remain completely calm in the face of adversity. The image of such a person served as a definitive ideal, but whether there ever really was such a sage is beside the point. For the Stoics, the reason for developing the concept of the sage was to point to the sage as a way for us to become better human beings ourselves. [26] The kernel of Stoic living was to be found in "the self-sufficiency of the virtuous man. The wise man alone was free of the domination of his passions; free because he did right voluntarily, and because he could not be compelled to

do wrong against his conscience. [27] Seneca pointed out the importance of integrity to the sage:

Philosophy teaches us to act, not to speak (*facere docet philosophia, non dicere*); it exacts of every man that he should live according to his own standards, that his life should not be out of harmony with his words (*ne orationi vita dissentiat*), and that, further, his inner life should be of one hue and not out of harmony with all his activities. This, I say, is the highest duty and the highest proof of wisdom – that deed and word should be in accord (*ut verbis opera concordent*), that a man should be equal to himself under all conditions, and always the same. [28]

Although voluntaryism and Stoicism seemingly deal with two different realms of life, the political and the social, they are intertwined. Sometimes, because of inherited genes or outside influences or simply their own common sense, there are people whose personalities are uniquely suited to both voluntaryism and Stoicism. Even if no one formally introduces these individuals to these two philosophies they will figure them out on their own. [29] And if they happen to read this article, they will come to realize why Stoicism is the creed of all freedom-loving men.

#### End Notes

[1] The expression “the creed of all freedom-loving men” is attributed to Mathew Arnold (1822-1888), the English poet and cultural critic, by Ludwig Edelstein, *THE MEANING OF STOICISM*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966, p. 98.

[2] On voting, see *THE DAILY STOIC*, November 6, 2018 (“Each of Us Has A Duty”). On taxes, see *THE DAILY STOIC*, April 17, 2018 (“The Taxes of Life”).

[3] Rene Brouwer, *THE STOIC SAGE*, Cambridge: University Press, 2014, p. 4.

[4] Edelstein, op. cit. p. 33.

[5] Whitney J. Oates, “Introduction,” to *THE STOIC AND EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHERS*, New York: The Modern Library, 1940, p. xxi.

[6] Ryan Holiday, *THE OBSTACLE IS THE WAY*, New York: Portfolio/Penguin, December 2, 2013, pp. 152 and 153.

[7] Massimo Pigliucci, *HOW TO BE A STOIC*, New York: Basic Books, 2017, p. 176.

[8] John Sellars, *THE ART OF LIVING*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003, pp. 20-21.

[9] William D. Grampp, Volume I *ECONOMIC LIBERALISM*, New York: Random House, 1965, p. xi. Also see Pigliucci, op. cit., pp. 24 and 39.

[10] Sellars, op. cit. pp. 61 and 63.

[11] See Epictetus, *THE DISCOURSES*, Book Three for a reference to “the excellence of a man.” This was pointed out by Jonas Salzgeber, author of *THE LITTLE BOOK OF STOICISM* (2019). Also see the commentary on the disinterested pursuit of excellence by Hanford Henderson, “The Aristocratic Spirit,” *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*, March 1920 and reprinted at [www.voluntaryist.com](http://www.voluntaryist.com).

[12] These are constant themes embraced in *The Daily Stoic*. Also see John Sellars, op. cit., pp. 15 and 23.

[13] Paraphrased from Pigliucci, op. cit., p. 99.

[14] The original ten-point list has been paraphrased from

[www.njlifehacks.com/what-is-stoicism-overview-definition-10-stoic-principles/#tab-con-15](http://www.njlifehacks.com/what-is-stoicism-overview-definition-10-stoic-principles/#tab-con-15).

[15] Walter Block, “Libertarianism and Libertinism,” Whole Number 77, *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, December 1995, p. 4.

[16] Carl Watner, “Vices Are Not Crimes,” Whole Number 77, *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, December 1995, pp. 1 and 3.

[17] Grampp, op. cit., p. 11. For “The Fundamentals of Voluntaryism” see [www.voluntaryist.com](http://www.voluntaryist.com).

[18] *ibid*.

[19] Carl Watner, “The Voluntaryist Spirit,” Whole Number 124 *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, 1st Quarter 2005, p. 7.

[20] Grampp, op. cit., p. 46.

[21] E. Vernon Arnold, *ROMAN STOICISM*, Cambridge: at the University Press, 1911, p. 308.

[22] Grampp, op. cit., p. 26.

[23] op. cit., “The Fundamentals of Voluntaryism.”

[24] See Oates, op. cit., p. xxiv and Edelstein, op. cit., pp. 85 and 87.

[25] William B. Irvine, *A GUIDE TO THE GOOD LIFE*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 220-221.

[26] Pigliucci, op. cit., p. 137.

[27] F. H. Colson, “Introduction,” *Philo of Alexandria, PHILO*, Volume 9 (of 10 volumes), Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941.

[28] Seneca, *EPISTLES*, 20.2 quoted by Sellars, op. cit., p. 30.

[29] Irvine, op. cit., p. 246. V

### How I Became an Anarchist

(Continued from page 8)

what to do as a local campaign manager. I was on a crash course to learn about what it meant to be not just a Republican, but a conservative one.

As a local campaign manager, I had to recruit workers and try to woo voters to our side. Recruiting workers was easy because I only solicited people who already considered themselves conservative Republicans. Most were around my age, and getting together with like-minded people who shared a common agenda - with dinners and cocktail parties thrown in - was a fun and stimulating experience. In the process, I learned from my recruits, who had already read many conservative books and essays, which they either gave me or told me about. After doing some reading and becoming somewhat comfortable with my newly gained knowledge, I was ready to spread the word and persuade voters.

Because the internet and PCs were not yet available, all campaign materials were in print form. We simply delivered the literature door to door. I even commandeered my two sons - ages five and seven at the time - to fill their wagon with literature, which they distributed in the neighborhood. They eventually got to know by precinct number where their friends lived. The campaign went well, with hopes of an upset. However, when the final votes were counted in June 1962, Shell had lost to Nixon, 35 percent to 65 percent. Over the next two years, I became involved in various other conservative Republican campaigns and, in the process, achieved a perfect record of zero to whatever.

At some point while campaigning, someone asked

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me a question that put me on a different course: "If your free enterprise system is so great, then what about schools, roads, laws, and justice?" I don't remember my answer, but that question was just too simple and fundamental for me not to have considered it when I first got involved in politics. I would like to think the question was at the back of my mind from the beginning and that I had just hoped no one would ask. More likely, though, I had feared the answers might cause me to doubt, or even reject, the efficacy of free markets. Nevertheless, there I stood, shifting from where I was a few months earlier when I had wondered, "What is the difference between a Republican and a Democrat?" to now wondering, "Is there a difference?" After all, neither party suggested that markets free of government intervention would be able to provide all goods and services more effectively than politically regulated markets could.

Why would nature's feedback favor the efficacy of free markets for some enterprises and not others? If nature's feedback favored the efficacy of free (politically unrestricted) enterprises A, B, and C, why would it disfavor the efficacy of free enterprises X, Y, and Z, unless there was something peculiar or unique about them? If a free, unrestricted market was capable of delivering fresh milk to my front door, as was the case when I was a kid, it would seem natural that such a market would also be capable of delivering mail to my front door if allowed to do so, which was and is still not the case. But then, maybe both enterprises would fare better as government-regulated markets.

For nature to be inconsistent seemed implausible. Either a free market is a more efficacious social arrangement than a politically restricted market for all enterprises or no enterprises. Double standards seemed unnatural. I simply adopted the free-market alternative as more universally efficacious because my inherent bias drew me there, which was reinforced by the concern that if regulated markets did lead to greater efficiency and productivity, such would hold true for the most minute market exchanges.

In addition to my free-market bias, I regarded my life as my sole responsibility. Partial responsibility in which others become responsible for part of my life, and I responsible for part of theirs, was incomprehensible.

Around 1962, the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) came to my attention with its published collection *CLICHÉS OF SOCIALISM*. The collection consisted of a couple dozen or so essays printed on 8½ x 11 inch sheets, each on a socialist cliché. The essays described the failures of socialist policies and the fallacious reasoning behind the clichés. Although I was excited to find some justification for free markets, the responses to these clichés did not tell me why free markets work better or even why socialism doesn't work. Nonetheless, *CLICHÉS OF SOCIALISM* and other FEE materials led me to books and essays that kept my search alive. Discovering the why obviates the need to analyze

every enterprise by every group of actors in every part of the world at every given time. Scientific truths are universal, necessary, and certain. If applying the free market to food production would lead to better food supplies in Oregon, the same should hold true in Zimbabwe - now, one hundred years from now, or one hundred years ago. There are underlying principles of nature that govern matter in motion, irrespective of the enterprise, actors involved, location of the event, or time of occurrence.

Also around 1962, I learned about the Free Enterprise Institute (FEI), a newly formed, for-profit educational organization headquartered in Los Angeles and directed by Andrew Galambos (1924-97), an astrophysicist. Art Sperry, an anesthesiologist I had met as a Parke Davis representative, organized an FEI course given by Galambos in Long Beach. I signed up for the premier V-100 course, "The Science of Volition," which was conducted in fifteen weekly three-hour sessions. There were about twenty people in attendance, many of whom were physicians. This was exactly what I had been looking for because it offered a scientific approach to markets and society. ...

I escaped the political box in 1964, and the views expressed here come from outside the world of politics and government. I invite you to escape that box as well. If you have already done so, I hope you will find further reinforcement here for having made that decision.

The thrust of this book is not about changing public policies, limiting or abolishing government, "fixing" America, or trying to change the world. Nor is this book about a crisis or the notion that if we don't do something soon, civilization will collapse. I hope to convey an appreciation of liberty as the natural common sense way to view the social world and interact within it. The inherent moral compass that guides our behavior in private matters can serve us just as well in public matters.

While political governments are constructs of disutility that cannot serve a useful social purpose, I consider political intervention to limit or abolish them as counterproductive since such activity endorses the use of dicta and force, which is the very reason political governments are constructs of disutility in the first place. Advancing social ideas that do not demand obedience or compliance requires far more personal patience than simply forcing others to comply via the political ballot box. Nevertheless, by way of volition, the widely held idea that dicta and force can serve a useful purpose will eventually fade into backward thinking in the so-called public sector as it has in the private sector. Time, nature, reason, and the human spirit will see to that. Irrespective of good intentions or the approval by consensus, nature's unrelenting feedback will gradually drive ruling political authorities to extinction. **V**

The test of a man isn't what you think he'll do.  
It's what he actually does.  
- Frank Herbert, *DUNE*

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## How I Became an Anarchist

By Louis E. Carabini

[Editor's Note: This article is a lengthy excerpt from the author's "Introduction" to his LIBERTY, DICTA & FORCE (Auburn: Mises Institute, 2018).]

In the summer of 1961, I was returning from a fishing trip with my friend George Vermillion. We were both in our early thirties. George was a pharmacist and I worked for Parke Davis, a pharmaceutical company. We had been fishing in Mexico, and George was driving us back home to Long Beach, California - a trip that would take about three hours. During the drive, I told him (it was more like a confession) I had never registered to vote and was embarrassed about not knowing the difference between a Democrat and a Republican. I thought it was time I learned about politics and joined the crowd, but most of all I wanted to avoid embarrassment when questioned about my political affiliation.

My main interest outside of family affairs was science; politics and economics were too esoteric for my taste. Other than the required courses, my classes in college were in the biological sciences. George was the perfect person to ask about politics, given that his father, George "Red" Vermillion, a Democrat, had been the mayor of Long Beach from 1954 to 1957 and his mother was the president of the Long Beach Republican Club. Imagine growing up in that household! So, George began explaining things to me. He talked nonstop for well over an hour, and I don't recall asking any questions along the

way. When he finished, I told him I should become a Republican because personal responsibility and free enterprise struck a chord with me. I felt relieved that I could now at least call myself something: a Republican. (I should mention George was a Republican; it seems his mother got the best of him.)

A few weeks later, George invited me to a meeting where Assemblyman Joe Shell was speaking about his campaign against Richard Nixon in the California Republican gubernatorial primary race. I went to the meeting where there were twenty or thirty people in attendance. As Shell spoke about what he would do if he were elected governor, he touched upon some of the same thoughts George had expressed to me during our trip. After he spoke, he took time to meet with each of us. When he got to me, he asked where I lived. When I told him, he asked if I would be willing to run his campaign in that part of Orange County. I gulped and said yes. Within minutes, a newspaper reporter and photographer had me shaking hands with Joe, flanked by the California and US flags. That was my introduction to politics, of which I still knew next to nothing. The following day, the picture was in a local newspaper. How proud could I be? Just a few weeks earlier, I hadn't known the difference between a Democrat and a Republican, and now I was running a local campaign for a conservative Republican. No sooner had I escaped one embarrassment than I found myself right back in another. I didn't have a clue about

*(Continued on page 6)*

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