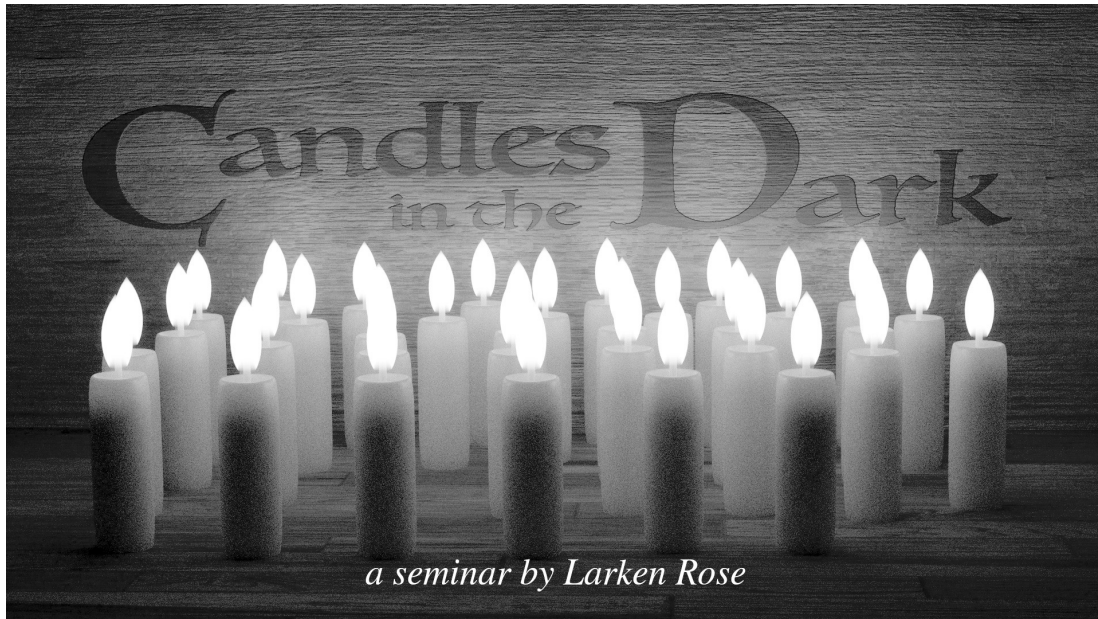




NOTES and REMINDERS

from

**a “*Candles in the Dark*” Seminar
by Larken Rose**

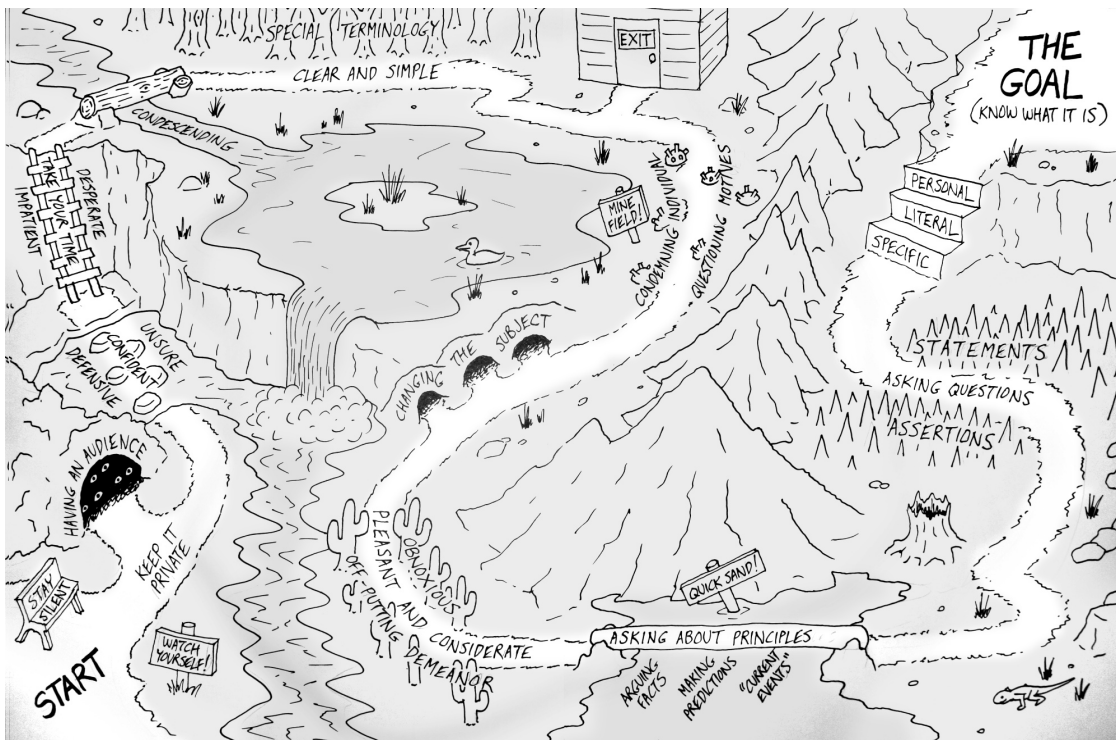
INTRODUCTION

This notebook is a supplement to the “*Candles in the Dark*” seminars created and given by Larken Rose to help voluntaryists and anarchists communicate more efficiently and effectively with friends, family members, and others. The term “statist” is used here for anyone who advocates the existence of a political state, or anyone who is not an anarchist. This notebook is a handy collection of notes and reminders for those who have attended a “Candles in the Dark” seminar with Larken Rose, where these ideas and topics were discussed in more detail.

The seminar, and these notes, give a set of suggestions and instructions for any voluntaryist (who in these notes is often just referred to as “you”) who wishes to convince others to give up their belief in political “authority.” The following suggestions are not about whether a voluntaryist’s tactics are understandable, or moral, or justified; only about whether they are *effective*. And the methods that are most effective are often counterintuitive and do not come naturally or easily to most people, but require a level of focus and self-awareness as well as practice. However, with some time and effort, they can become almost second nature. Attending a “Candles in the Dark” seminar, and then studying and reviewing this notebook—especially right before and after having discussions with statists—can help make that happen.

THE MIRROR

- 1) It is advisable that you study yourself before you seek to change the minds of others. Observe your own thought and speech patterns, your own mannerisms, how you come across to others, and so on. In other words, before trying to spread the ideas, you should take a look in the mirror.
- 2) What you say can matter less than how you say it. Getting ideas into a person's brain is not just "data entry." If your approach is off-putting, and they're not really hearing what you're saying, it doesn't matter whether what you're saying is true or not.
- 3) First and foremost, you must be clear in your own head about your own goals and motives. Why are you talking to the statist at all? What exactly do you hope to accomplish? Are you talking to him for your own benefit, or for his? What is your motivation? Is your goal to defeat him in verbal combat, or to help him? Do you view him as an opponent, or as a decent human being who was taught a lie?
- 4) Control your own thought and speech patterns. Don't haphazardly hurl ideas out there, but carefully keep track of approaches that actually work, and those that make statist get angry or run away. Trying to have a worthwhile, substantive discussion with a statist can be akin to trying to navigate a treacherous obstacle course where one wrong step can end in disaster.



5) Unfortunately, people who think “outside the box” can come across as overbearing, condescending, or offensive. The point here is not whether it is *good* to be that way, but whether you can communicate effectively when you are perceived that way by others.

6) When you’re excited and enthusiastic about an idea, it’s easy to become “evangelical”—overly desperate and anxious to convince others. But such aggressive tactics almost always make the other person shut down or want to escape. Ironically, if the speaker talks as if it matters *less* to him, casually bringing it up and talking as if he doesn’t particularly care whether or not he convinces anyone else, it’s *more* likely that others will listen. When people feel threatened or pressured they are less likely to listen.

It’s difficult to not become anxious and infuriated about authoritarianism. The issue *does* matter, a *lot*. Many millions of people are suffering from it and being oppressed by it on a daily basis. So holding back can take a lot of self control. But again, the issue here is not whether outrage is justified—it absolutely is. The issue is that people tend to shut down and stop listening when you come across as overly zealous and anxious.

7) Don’t be overly *defensive*. Entering a conversation expecting to be attacked and ridiculed can have similar negative results. It’s important to be confident and have your ideas clear in your own head. If you’re insecure about your position or argument, you may trigger a combative exchange. Try not to be overly sensitive or easily annoyed or angered by disagreement.

8) Don’t argue so aggressively that the statist becomes defensive, and don’t let their attacks or arguments make *you* defensive. If you’re knowledgeable and confident about your subject, it’s much easier to ignore any emotional, or even openly hostile comments, and just stick to principles, logic, and clear, specific questions.

9) Don’t be condescending, even if you *do* know better than the statist, even if his position *is* stupid. In fact, it’s especially important to not be condescending or insulting when the statist is feeling insecure and embarrassed at how his own argument came out. In other words, when his argument really is completely idiotic, to the point where he probably knows it himself, back off and be gentle. “Going in for the kill” may win the argument, but it won’t make it any easier for him to *change his mind*.

THE GOAL

1) Make sure you are clear, not just about your own motivations, but about what your *specific* goal is in talking to the statist. What do you expect to happen during the conversation? What do you want to have happen? What is the *measure of success* for a worthwhile conversation?

2) If you're hoping or expecting that a conversation or two will completely change the statist's mind on everything, that he'll totally give up his former view of reality and become a self-confessed anarchist, you will be disappointed.

3) Not only can it take a lot of time for a person to fundamentally change his view of reality, but it's important to realize that *you won't be there* when this change occurs. Minds change very slowly, when people are alone with their thoughts, pondering what made them feel uncertain about their beliefs. And *that* is the best measure of success: whether you can, by asking them questions, make them uncertain about their authoritarian beliefs by bringing them face-to-face with the *contradictions* in their own thinking. Doing that, and then letting them mull things over on their own, at their own pace, is all you can do.

4) You cannot force a person to change his mind. You can *invite* people to change their minds, and give them reasons to change their minds, but you can't force them to; only they can do the actual changing. Understanding this will make you less anxious and aggressive (and probably less frustrated and annoyed), and that will in turn make the statist less defensive.

5) Do what you can do, and then be at peace. Don't be emotionally invested in what they choose to do with what you gave them. They have free will. You can't *make* them think or understanding anything.

6) The measure of success, the indications that the statist has seen the contradictions inside his own head, can come in very different forms: everything from the statist calmly saying, "I'm not sure; I will have to think more about that," to the statist getting emotional and angry in response to your calm, polite questions. Both of those reactions—and a lot of in between responses—are signs that the statist feels cognitive dissonance, where his own internal contradictions are making him feel uncomfortable. Regardless of *how* such cognitive dissonance manifests, it is always a good sign.

7) *Making the statist see his own contradictions* is about all you can do, and all you need to do. If you accomplish that, regardless of how he chose to react when it happened, then the discussion was a success.

8) Once a person has seen his own contradictions, getting angry at you or running away won't fix his problem. He'll be taking the contradictions with him when he goes. And in many cases, they'll keep nagging at him until he *thinks* about them and tries to sort them out in his own mind. Again, that is where most of the progress will occur; *not* when he is talking to you.

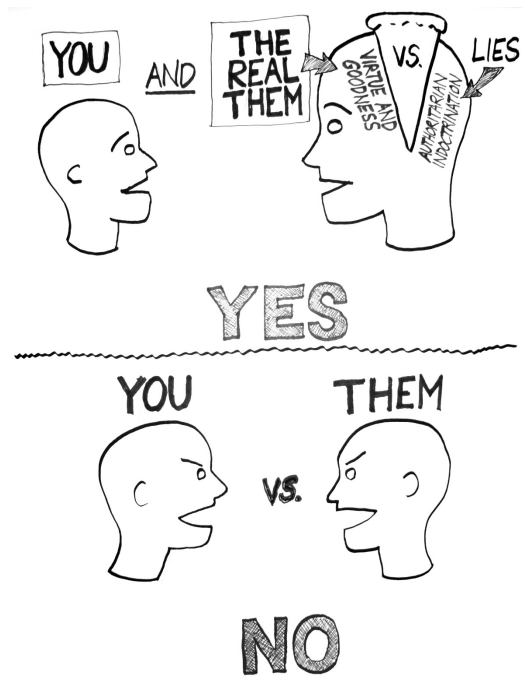
9) Once the statist indicates that he has seen a contradiction in his own mind—whether he shows that in a calm, rational manner, or by getting downright irrational and hostile—it is usually best to back off and leave him to deal with it himself. If he clearly wants the conversation to continue, then go ahead. But do not push harder after he sees the conflict inside his own head, or he will likely just get defensive and combative, and “double down” on his unreasonable, self-contradictory position.

10) Do not be surprised if you need to gently guide the statist to seeing the same contradiction more than once, or even several times, before he fixes it. When a lie has had decades to sink in, it can take time and effort to thoroughly root it out.

THE WEDGE

1) How the statist perceives the conversation depends mostly upon how the voluntaryist sees the conversation. If you are in the mode of demonstrating your own “goodness and rightness” while condemning his “badness and wrongness,” the statist will become defensive and argumentative, which will most likely shut out any chance of him even hearing what you're saying.

2) You should not view the discussion with the statist as “you versus them,” because you don't want them viewing it that way. Instead, you should view it (and so have *them* view it) as you and them on one “side” versus inaccurate things they learned from others (i.e., their authoritarian indoctrination) on the other “side.” To do this, you must continually think and talk in sympathy with the real person inside—his inner virtue and good intentions—while driving a wedge between this “real” self and the statist beliefs he has been taught.



If you can't do this because you believe the statist to be fundamentally and irredeemably evil, then the chances of you winning him over are essentially zero anyway. You cannot talk an evil person into being good. However, you may be able to talk a *good* person out of believing a bad *idea* that he was taught.

3) When the disagreement is between a person and himself (their moral conscience versus their authoritarian indoctrination), instead of between you and them, you can be “on their side” in a way that they don't feel the need to defend against you or argue with you.

4) In order to bring them to where they can see their own contradictions, *ask* them what they believe; don't *tell* them. Almost all of your side of the discussion should be in the form of *questions*, not assertions. Not only does that keep them engaged—more so than you “preaching” at them—but when the entire discussion is about what *they* believe, they have no reason to get defensive at *you*.

5) Do not assume their beliefs are the result of bad intentions, and do not view them as “the enemy,” since doing so will make your communications and their responses combative and counter-productive.

6) Talk to them the way you would talk to another you. If you were once a statist, talk to them as if they are the old statist you—misguided but not malicious.

7) An argument which is about your fundamental moral beliefs versus their fundamental moral beliefs will probably get nowhere. The aim should be to show them, via questions, how *their own* fundamental moral beliefs (not yours) conflict with their beliefs about “government” and political “authority.” The only thing capable of “over-ruling” their statism is *their* conscience, not yours.

8) No matter how zealously the statist advocates authoritarian injustice, even against you personally, you must keep viewing them as a *victim* of authoritarian propaganda. Your ultimate goal in talking to them must therefore be to *free* them, not to *defeat* them.

9) However, while trying to free them and “unplug them from the Matrix,” do not be surprised if they get hostile and attack you when they feel their comfortable paradigm threatened. But that is when it is most important to stay “on their side,” sympathizing with their goodness, and keep driving the wedge between that and their statist indoctrination. As hard as this may be to do, keep being a “cheerleader” for their goodness, even when they attack you.

10) Do everything you can to avoid sending them into combat mode. And if they get into that mode, do whatever it takes to get them back out of it (which sometimes requires not talking to them for a while). Also, if you have had confrontational arguments with them before, it will likely take an extra effort to not fall back into the rut of doing that again.

11) Keep emphasizing that you don’t expect or demand that their actions and beliefs match *your* moral code, and that the question is only whether their actions and political beliefs match *their own* moral code. (They aren’t beholden to you, and have no particular reason to care whether they meet with *your* approval.)

12) Don’t get bogged down in bickering over differences in priorities and values. They don’t have to agree with you on everything. Focus on the one goal of getting them to give up the superstition of “authority.” If they come from a different background than you, with different perspectives and biases, avoid arguing about conflicting values; use only *their own* values to go against the authoritarianism they were taught.

13) Do not complicate things. Don’t have a laundry list of different things you want the statist to believe and agree with you about. Accomplish the *one* thing of helping him give up the belief in “authority,” and over time he will extrapolate most of the other things that matter.

14) When bringing out his contradictions through questioning, don't *tell* the statist that he is a hypocrite, but do *show* him that he is, by asking questions that make him contradict himself. And do gently "rub it in," using clear and specific questions to highlight and emphasize how what he says he really believes in—his true values—don't match his political positions. Because he is the one holding two *conflicting* beliefs, he is the one who has to decide what to do about that.

15) Remember, when the statist becomes uncomfortable with his own position, you have succeeded. Once they see the conflict *inside their own head*—instead of just viewing it as a disagreement between him and you—be sure to sympathize, give him time and room to think and ponder, and only continue the discussion if he wants you to. The *worst* thing you can possibly do, when someone finally sees his own contradictions, is to make him feel attacked. And if someone says, "I will have to think about that," usually the best thing you can do is *shut up* and let him think! (Unless the person asks you to keep discussing it.)

THE VOID

1) Most voluntaryists and anarchists have spent a considerable amount of time pondering ideas and principles. You can be frustrated and dumbfounded when you try to talk to statist about ideas and principles, only to find that most statist literally think *nothing* about authoritarianism. Most of them have no logical foundation at all for their beliefs, and can't justify or explain much of anything. They accepted on faith the commonly accepted political mythology, without ever questioning it or thinking about it.

2) As a result, instead of having built up any foundational philosophy or logical arguments in favor of authority, most statist's political beliefs sit atop a giant void of nothingness. They can repeat terms and phrases they've heard before (e.g., "consent of the governed," "representative republic"), but when challenged to form a coherent argument for their position, or even to explain exactly what those terms mean, they fall flat. They simply don't know, because they've never actually *thought* about any of it.

3) This makes it difficult to have any sort of substantive philosophical discussion with a statist, and makes it all too easy for voluntaryists to get impatient and frustrated, forever arguing against positions which consist of parroted words and

catch phrases, without real understanding beneath them. When voluntaryists get impatient and frustrated, statist tend to become uncomfortable and defensive, and rational discussion quickly breaks down.

4) To solve this, a voluntaryist needs to start from scratch, patiently building up simple concepts and a logical structure to fill the “void” in the statist’s mind. In a sense, you need to talk to the statist like you would talk to an ignorant child, because when it comes to philosophy, almost everyone *is* an ignorant child. At the same time, you need to avoid sounding impatient or condescending. (It can help to imagine something you know nothing about, and how you would want it explained to you.)

5) Statists routinely use words and phrases that they’ve never really thought about and can’t explain. Terms like “the law,” and “crime,” and “taxes,” and “authority,” and “government,” are just blurry concepts to them, with vague connotations. It’s important to understand that political mythology has trained them to *not understand* what those words literally mean. For example, “the law” and “legislation” refer to formal written commands, backed by threats of force, issued by a political ruling class. But to a statist, the term “law” represents some nebulous, super-human imperative that everyone is morally obligated to obey... for some inexplicable reason.

6) An important part of deprogramming statist is to use questions to *show* them the voids in their thinking, and to show them the literal reality of what is happening, and what they are condoning or voting for. For example, to most statist the term “taxes” is a mushy notion of some magical debt that each individual owes to “society” for the privilege of being allowed to live among other people. In reality, the term refers to politicians demanding money from everyone else, while threatening to punish any who don’t pay up. In one sense, every statist knows this, and can be brought to admit it just by using simple questions (“Who imposes taxes?” “What happens to people who don’t pay?” etc.).

7) Voluntaryists must be careful not to unnecessarily confuse statist with their own unusual terminology. For example, talking about “voluntaryism,” or “self-ownership,” or “the non-aggression principle,” without first defining those terms, will further confuse the statist, and just add to the cloudy void in his mind. Instead, you should explain the same concepts using terms the statist is already familiar with and understands.

8) There is a difference between ignorance and stupidity. Even if they understand all of the words, if they've never thought about the *concepts* before, they will need some time and exercise just to *think* about them at all. Most people have never had any reason or opportunity to really think about the political mythology they were taught. (If they had actually thought about it, they would already be anarchists.)

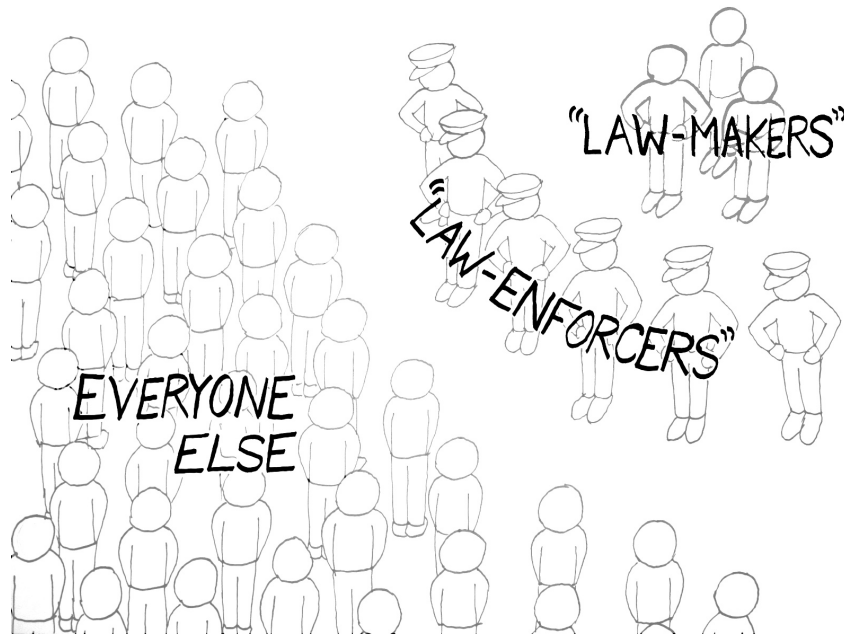
9) There are two main reasons why you need to be aware of this “void” in statist’s thinking. The first reason is that you might otherwise conclude, based on a person’s responses, that he is simply too stupid to understand voluntaryism. But this is *not the case*. Voluntaryism and non-aggression are simple concepts that even a moron (literally) can fundamentally understand. (At its most basic, it boils down to, “Don’t rob or attack anyone, and use force only to defend against aggressors.”) But if someone has never given a thought to those concepts, it can take time to wrap their brain around even something that simple.

10) The second reason to be aware of the “voids” is so you know why statist’s often try to change the subject, and often respond to your questions by saying things that are completely irrelevant, or that make no sense. In short, their brains are desperately trying to move the conversation to something familiar, something they understand and feel comfortable talking about. And this usually happens subconsciously. They aren’t consciously changing the subject to trip you up or distract you; their brains are doing it automatically because it’s unpleasant and uncomfortable to talk about something they know nothing about, and have never thought about before.

11) Because of this, expect statist’s to change the subject, over and over again, whenever you ask a question that takes their mind to a new and unfamiliar area. You: “Can people delegate rights they don’t have?” Statist: “But what about the roads?” If you let them change the subject, you let their mind escape the discomfort of having to consider something new, which isn’t helpful to either one of you. For example, if you get dragged off into theorizing about how roads will function in a stateless society, then the statist’s mind escapes having to think about any moral and philosophical concepts, which are infinitely more important.

THE PUNCHLINE

- 1) The ultimate “punchline” that voluntaryists should be trying to communicate is that political “authority” is never legitimate or real. All of the different explanations and lines of questioning should lead there.
- 2) In order to effectively communicate this “punchline,” voluntaryists must first thoroughly *understand* it, understand how to prove it, and understand what all it logically implies (which is explained below).
- 3) As a voluntaryist, you should also understand why anyone who believes in political “authority” *necessarily* has contradictions inside his own head. You should also understand that, because every statist disagrees with himself, his contradictions can be exposed and proven just by asking him the right *questions*, without you ever having to actually argue anything.
- 4) Believing in political “authority” necessarily requires believing that certain people have special rights, that the rules of morality (right and wrong) apply differently to different people, and that those who wield political “authority,” and those who impose it upon others, have the right to do things which no one else has the right to do.



5) In short, authoritarianism and statism rest entirely upon the premise that some people have the moral right to rule (which is what “authority” means), and that everyone else therefore has a moral *obligation to obey*. Because the word “government” means the exercise of political “authority” over a people or place, to believe in “government” at all is to believe in the Divine Right of Politicians.

6) Likewise, to destroy the notion of legitimate “government,” one need only to prove that it is impossible for anyone to have the right to rule, and impossible for anyone to have acquired such a right. And without the right to rule, *all* of mainstream political thought logically falls apart and evaporates. Elections, constitutions, legislation, taxation, “law” enforcement, representative republics, etc.—all of it becomes meaningless mythology, and what is left is an understanding that people are people, that right and wrong apply the same to everyone, and that no amount of rituals and rhetoric can change that.

7) There are several different ways, using several different lines of questioning, to prove that political “authority” is inherently illegitimate and fake, and that “government” has no special rights, and therefore is not even real, but is simply a gang of thieves and thugs *pretending* to have the right to forcibly dominate others.

8) While your *punchline* should be that “government” is never legitimate—which you’re leading the statist to—that should *not* be your opening line. Instead, you should ask the statist questions, starting with basic principles and concepts, which eventually show him that his *own* beliefs and moral code logically rule out any possibility of legitimate political “authority” existing. In other words, use the Socratic method (asking questions) to help him find the punchline, instead of trying to use your beliefs to drag him to it. (Several specific lines of questioning which do this are covered below.)

9) Several disproofs of “authority” are explained in detail in “*The Most Dangerous Superstition*,” by Larken Rose. For example, there is no ritual or document through which any human being, or any number of human beings, can make an inherently *immoral* act into a *moral* act. To put it another way, no election, or legislation, or anything else, can make something evil into something good. That being the case, politicians enacting “laws” has no impact on which behaviors are right and which are wrong, which means their “laws” (and their “government”) have no “authority” and no legitimacy.

10) A second way to disprove the possibility of “authority” is to show that it is impossible for human beings to delegate rights that they never had to begin with.

For example, if no individual has the right to commit murder, then there is no ritual or document whereby people can bestow upon someone else the right to commit murder. And that logically implies that “law-makers” and “law-enforcers” have no right to do anything which anyone else does not have the right to do (since no one could have given them such a right).

11) A third way to disprove the possibility of “authority” is to show that it is insane for any human being to feel a moral obligation to obey a perceived “authority” when that “authority” issues a command that conflicts with that person’s own moral conscience. In other words, it is completely irrational for a human being to think, “I believe that doing ‘X’ is morally wrong, but I also believe that if authority tells me to do ‘X,’ it is morally wrong for me not to do ‘X.’” But that schizophrenic contradiction is absolutely essential to any belief in an external “authority.” To believe in “authority” necessarily means believing in a moral obligation to do immoral things, if and when one’s own conscience clashes with the “laws” of that “authority.”

12) The specific lines of questioning below demonstrate how any statist’s *own* beliefs and values can be used to expose the inherent contradictions of statism and authoritarianism.

OBSTACLE COURSE

1) In addition to various issues mentioned above, there are a number of others “do’s and don’ts” when it comes to talking to statist.

2) The first “don’t” is, don’t remain silent. While you need to “choose your battles,” and decide when it is worth the trouble of bringing up political (or anti-political) philosophy, it is obviously true that in every situation in which you don’t say anything, you are not going to change anyone’s mind. Sometimes it makes sense to refrain from bringing it up if you’re sure it wouldn’t do any good, or if you expect it to cause more harm than good. But if, due to being shy, or scared of conflict, you remain silent in situations where it *could* have made a positive difference, you’re not doing yourself or the statist any favors. Remember, the goal in talking to statist should be to help *them* escape a lie, so even if bringing things up makes them temporarily uncomfortable, or even angry, it is still nicer to both of you to try.

3) The setting in which a discussion happens also has a huge impact on how the other person will respond. When possible, have one-on-one, personal, private discussions, rather than discussions in front of an audience (whether in person or online), since the presence of an audience will automatically make the statist tend to be more nervous, defensive, and argumentative when he starts to contradict himself.

4) Do keep your explanations and questions specific and literal. Don't use the vague euphemisms that statist use. Describe things as they literally are. For example, instead of asking, "Do you think tax evaders should be imprisoned?" ask, "Do you think it's moral to forcibly capture people and put them in cages because they didn't give their money to politicians?"

5) Focus on what the statist personally advocates, instead of settling for vague, impersonal opinions or predictions. For example, a statist may say, "I think what's best for society is for marijuana to remain illegal." In that case, make it specific and personal by asking, "Do you want another human being to be captured and put in cages for possessing a certain plant?"

6) Use specific hypotheticals to test what the statist is comfortable condoning. For example, instead of asking someone if they support "gun control," use a specific example, such as: "Do you think that an elderly woman who lives in a dangerous neighborhood should be forcibly captured and caged by the police if she decides to own a gun for self defense?"

7) If you're talking to someone who knows you, and who cares about you, use *yourself* as the potential victim of state aggression in such hypotheticals. For example, "So if I decided to smoke a joint to relax, do you want agents of the state to come and capture *me*, and put me in a cage?"

8) Whenever possible, use hypotheticals where the statist himself is the potential victim of the authoritarian aggression that he condones. For example, "So if at some point you have a specific reason to fear for your safety, and so you get a gun for protection, do you think that *you* should be captured and caged by agents of the state?"

9) Be on the lookout for arguments that amount to, "Well this is just how things are." Don't let the statist escape talking about what he *personally* advocates, by instead talking about predictions, or what other people want or believe. You will often hear things like, "You're never gonna get enough people to agree with you on

this.” Emphasize that you’re not asking what the statist thinks *other* people believe, or will do; you’re asking what *he himself* personally condones and advocates.

10) As mentioned above, a statist’s mind will often automatically try to change the subject, in order to avoid having to think about unfamiliar and uncomfortable concepts and ideas. *Do not let them change the subject.* Be polite and calm, but keep asking the basic questions about principles until the statist answers. Letting them drag you off on tangents such as predicting what would happen, or addressing how things would work without a ruling class, amounts to letting them escape thinking about the principles that really matter.

11) Likewise, don’t get trapped arguing over facts or predictions, or “current events.” A statist can remain perfectly comfortable asserting one set of “facts,” and disbelieving your set of “facts” (regardless of who is actually correct), without ever having to face his own internal contradictions.

12) Do not get stuck theorizing about which would work better: a society with a “government,” or without a “government.” Even if at some point you get a statist to concede that a stateless solution might work better, if he doesn’t understand the underlying *principles*, and why political “authority” *cannot* ever be legitimate (regardless of what “works”), there will be nothing to stop him from sliding back into statism if he gets scared or uncertain about how different approaches would turn out.

13) Know when to *temporarily* bail out of a conversation. When a statist gets very agitated and combative, pushing harder—even if you do it calmly and politely—will often make him more defensive and less capable of thinking about what you’re saying or asking. (It has been proven that challenging a person’s *incorrect* belief in the wrong way can often make that person become even *more* attached to their mistake.) Sometimes the best move is to walk away, let him calm down, and bring it up again at a different time.

14) Know when to *permanently* bail out of a conversation. Keep in mind that getting a “critical mass” of people to abandon statism does not require changing the minds of everyone, or even the minds of most people. So if your time and effort with one statist seems to be accomplishing nothing, move on and try someone else.

THE QUESTIONS

1) Again, the one main idea that voluntaryists should seek to share with statist, and the one conclusion which all of the following lines of questioning lead to, is that political “authority” is never legitimate, and never real. To put it another way, neither political rituals, nor using special terminology, can give anyone the right to rule over others, or can give those others an obligation to obey the arbitrary commands of politicians. Those in power often have the *ability* to forcibly dominate and control others, but they do not have the moral *right* to do so. And since “authority” means the *right* to rule, that means that “governments” have no authority, but are simply violent gangs that have tricked their victims into viewing their own subjugation and oppression as necessary and legitimate.

2) When choosing which line of questioning to try on a particular statist, you should consider what you already know about the beliefs and attitudes of the person. Find a way to approach the issue from an angle that’s in line with what they care about and value. Almost everyone has a laundry list of things the government does that they don’t like. Start there. Find common ground, and then apply it to more general principles and concepts.

3) Always start your questions in areas of agreement, even if it seems silly to do so. Start with very basic, obvious ideas which put you and the statist on the same “side,” and then slowly inch towards the contradictions inside his head. Make it a point to say, “I agree,” whenever you actually agree with him.

4) When discussing moral principles, use questions that start with the person you’re talking to as the potential victim. For example, before you get to, “Do you think it’s okay that other people be forced, by way of taxes, to fund the things *you* think are important,” ask, “Do you think it’s okay for other people to force *you* to fund things that they want, but you oppose?” Once they object to that in principle when *they* are the victim, then ask about it when *others* are the victims.

5) When asking about the supposed right of “governments” to rule, and the supposed obligation of others to obey, start with hypotheticals about other times and other places, where the average statist is perfectly eager and willing to concede that in *those* instances, the authoritarian commands were illegitimate, and the people who disobeyed and resisted them were the “good guys.” Then gradually apply those principles to the here and now.

6) Below are a few lines of questioning (although more could be added) which use simple concepts and principles to completely rule out any possibility of political “authority” or legitimate “government.” Each includes an opening question, and a description of where the questioning can go from there.

Specific Lines of Questioning

A) *“Should you disobey a law that conflicts with your own moral conscience?”*

Follow-up questions should deal with when disobedience is morally justified, and with *who* decides when it is morally justified. If the statist admits that *he* decides, ask if he believes that his own judgment “outranks” the law. If so—if there is *any* situation in which he would put his own conscience above “the law”—ask if that means that he has the right to pick and choose which laws he is obligated to obey. And how can he believe in political “authority” at all, if he personally has the right to decide when he is obligated to obey, and when he isn’t?

B) *“If it’s bad for you to do a certain thing, is it okay for you to try to get someone else to do the same thing for you?”*

It can be good to start with an example, such as, “If you don’t have the right to murder your neighbor, is it okay for you to hire someone else to do so?” Ask if it can *ever* be justified to ask someone else to do something for you that you have no right to do. Then tie that into the fact that everyone who votes for “government” to do anything is voting for it to do things that the voter himself has no right to do. Ask the statist for examples of what he does want “government” to do—and make sure his answers stay literal and specific—and then ask if he personally has the right to do such things.

C) *“Can people, by voting, give to politicians the right to do things which none of the voters have the right to do themselves?”*

If he says no, ask how those in “government” acquired the right to do anything which normal people have no right to do. If he says voters *can* delegate rights they don’t have, ask if there are any limits. And if so, what are they? For example, would it be righteous and legitimate for the state to commit violent oppression, as long as the people voted for that to happen?

D) *“Do you believe that right and wrong apply the same to everyone?”*

Ask how mere mortals could have *altered* morality, so that “law-makers” and “law-enforcers” are justified in doing things that would be wrong if done by anyone else. And ask if there are any limits on that, or if any action that has been “legislated” is automatically righteous.

E) *“Is there any way in which people can change an immoral act into a moral act, without changing the act itself?”*

There are different ways this can be phrased. Another way would be, “If something bad is legalized, does it become good?” And you could also add, “If something good is outlawed, does it become bad?”

F) *“Is it ever good to break the law?”*

It is good to start with examples from other times and other places, since almost everyone can think of some “laws” that should have been disobeyed and resisted. But then the questions should move to here and now. Again, the follow-ups should address the question of when it is good to break the law, and who decides that?

G) *“Does the majority have the right to do whatever it wants to a minority, as long as it uses voting and the political process?”*

If not, what are the limits? In what cases does the majority have the right to use “government” to force its will on the minority? And if the majority doesn’t always have that right, does that mean that democracy isn’t always—or isn’t ever—legitimate?

H) *“Do you believe that it’s okay for government to force you to fund things that you’re opposed to?”*

If so, are there any limits? Or do the politicians have the right to make you fund whatever they want, including things you find offensive and immoral? If you do *not* think you should be forced to fund things you oppose, do you think it’s okay for you to vote for government to force others to fund things that they oppose?

