

Dialogues with a “Real American” (Uncut)

As some of my friends and family already know, one of my New Year’s resolutions has been to point out the BS peddled by our “real American” friends anytime I’m given an actual opportunity to do so. I fully realize that this probably won’t make much difference to them, other than maybe confirm that I’m some kind of evil, liberal meanie, but it’s not primarily meant for their benefit. It’s not meant primarily to benefit my left leaning acquaintances. It’s not even meant for my actual benefit (although I do admit to some amusement in the endeavor). It’s more to remind the rational, moderate minded people in the room that it is indeed okay to tell a person when their position is uninformed, or that it is not impolite to inquire as to how they came to hold such a viewpoint and whether they can provide credible informational sources that support the bullshit they’re spouting off. There’s also the small hope that the younger children and more impressionable minds in the immediate vicinity realize it’s okay to use a little critical thinking now and then, and that they don’t have to just blindly accept the nonsense they hear when one of adults in the room tunes into FOX News, or the batshit crazy that spews forth from their malcontent uncle at Thanksgiving dinner.

In part, this is also meant to demonstrate just how difficult it can be to have a meaningful, constructive conversation (if not polite and respectful one) with those who hold oppositional views to our own. In recent years, too many individuals (on both sides of the sociopolitical spectrum) have made it seem, and even insisted that there is no way they could have any sort of intelligent debate or compromise of any sort with anyone who doesn’t agree with absolutely every belief and position they hold. We could blame this on the Balkanization of the traditional news cycle, the tribalization of various social groups and factions The Great American Experiment has devolved into, and the fact that we now have a President who encourages (and directly benefits from) such discourse, but realistically this is hardly a new thing. I can remember issues from ten years ago that people in the room would refuse to talk about with one another if they knew there wasn’t an immediate and absolute understanding between them.

I’ve admitted to holding little hope in regard to changing too many minds or viewpoints, but there is something else to consider, which is the tone and civility one broaches such subjects with. I confess that I haven’t always been the best at being as polite as I could be toward individuals with differing views from my own (especially if I thought they were just off the wall crazy or stupid), although I’m hardly the only person guilty of this and I have tried to improve in recent years. I’ve tried to keep an open mind and show enough patience for people to present the facts that they claim will support their arguments.

What follows is a recent set of dialogues between myself and one of our “real American” friends. Without being too judgmental or giving away his identity, let’s just say this individual is a pissed off white guy from the Midwest, and perhaps someone our Dear Leader (and a great many others) would describe as “poorly educated.” To the liberal readers, it should be pointed out that no matter how difficult it may seem, it is possible to maintain a certain sense of civility and patience when speaking to such individuals, and they should be approached with such patience until they’ve proven they are no longer worthy of it. Understand the facts that support your side of the argument and insist as politely as possible to see the facts they say supports theirs. And give them more than just one quick opportunity to do so, rather than create some sort of “gotcha” moment because they can’t remember the exact source they’re trying to refer to. Also (and I know how hard this is for some of us), keep in mind that not every person who votes Republican, or holds conservative views, is crazy and/or stupid.

To my friends on the right, every one of whom is smarter than the individual I recently crossed paths with, you need to understand that this guy, and others like him think they’re on your team. Therefore, it’s up to you guys to control your side of the discussion by making sure such individuals are not the loudest voice in the room, and not the first thing one envisions when they picture a republican/conservative. It may be difficult to believe, but you’re not going to get a rational defense of your positions from irrational individuals who at times seem gravely allergic to facts, logic, and reason. And yes, I put the responsibility of dealing with these individuals on you guys, seeing as you’ve only spent the last fifty or sixty years cultivating the idea that there’s plenty of room for them under the big GOP

tent, along with the southern Dixiecrats, libertarians, Reagan Democrats, religious right, chickenhawks, FOX News, Breitbart, Infowars, weekend militias, and the alt-right.

Out of respect for the privacy of the individual mentioned, I've concealed his actual name, as well as that of the individual whose Facebook posts generated these discussions.

Presented here is the dialogue that began with a comment made on a couple of Facebook posts discussing the National Anthem protests in the fall of 2017, and the launch of the SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket on February 6, 2018, as well as the private chat that this individual initiated a day later.

Keep in mind, I'm not presenting these conversations just to win in the court of public opinion. I'm not looking for any judgement as to who was ultimately right or wrong. And I'm damn sure not trying to convince anyone of how smart I am and how dumb the other guy is. I'm not looking for the liberals in the audience to tell me the other guy is just a heartland rube who I made look stupid, nor am I just trying to get the conservatives out there to say that I'm just some sort of elitist snob who looks down on the guy and others like him.

If you decide to read the entire back and forth between myself and this individual, you can decide for yourself how to feel and judge how patient and polite I may or may not have been toward him. You can tell me I'm wrong, smug, or cruel. You can call me the arrogant asshole (although he has quite the head start on anyone in that category). You can call the other guy a beautiful mind (or a simple one, although I'll cop to being a few steps ahead of the rest of you on that one). You can be as critical as you possibly want. The point here is to show that it is possible to attempt these types of contentious conversation with people who are clearly on the other side of the social/political spectrum as yourself, and just how and why such dialogues are as difficult as they are. Yes, these conversations are difficult. But that is exactly why they need to be sought out and engaged in more often, rather than less.

The initial post by a mutual friend on September 1, 2017

Crazy thought: I've a solution to the stand/kneel during the anthem controversy. Have the announcer say, "Please stand for the anthem, or kneel or sit in prayer."

Ryan: You're nicer than I am. The simplest solution is to just stop playing the anthem.¹

#####: ryan..... thats simply not the answer... come on now²

Ryan: Of course, it's an answer. What purpose does it serve? It doesn't affect the outcome of the game, nor does it have any bearing on the standings afterward.

¹ This wouldn't be the most unusual solution at all actually. Many college football games already play the anthem *before* players from either team take the field, and even Lou Holtz suggested that the NFL adopt a similar policy in a couple of interviews he gave around this time.

² "come on now" Quite the solution being offered up as an alternative to my original position. Let's see if he has any better ideas to offer up.

And, not that I place myself in this category, but from a fan's perspective, if your typical diehard had to choose between playing the anthem beforehand, or their team getting a W, it'd be goodbye anthem, go insert sports allegiance here.

#####: yes, its AN answer..... but not THE answer...³

#####: its a tradition... and honestly... myself and millions of others are tiured of the constant crying about everything... the "i dont like it, it needs to change" approach from people these days is ignorant... you dont like the anthem, dont go to the game⁴, or wait in the concourse until its over.... not change everything because of some idiots who think protesting the anthem somehow helps the struggle... its garbage and so are they⁵

Ryan: The whole reason this becomes a spectacle is because you're giving a guy like Kaepernick something to make a spectacle with. No anthem, and Kaepernick has nothing to draw attention to himself by protesting. (If he mouths off at the press conference after the game that's different, but at that point he has an even weaker leg to stand on.)

As for tradition... Well, it's tradition that we only play the first verse, which I guess is a good thing, because we certainly don't want to get to verse three of the thing. Although, I'm reluctant to give Colin the benefit of the doubt and suggest he ever heard of the part of the song we "traditionally" leave out before he started drawing attention to himself.⁶ The point is, just saying something is tradition is a lazy way (no offense) of saying we don't want to talk about or think about something. It's tradition- it's the way we've always done it, so please don't disrupt the status quo.

I suppose another tradition that we have is the one called free speech and expression, but we also call that one a right, so that puts a crimp in things. It's funny how everyone is for free speech, right up until someone uses it in a way that upsets them. The problem is, if you're only going to allow a person to say and do things that make you happy, or at least don't challenge your "traditional" views, that's not really free speech.

The unemployed QB has every right to make his protest in the way he's doing so, but on the other hand he also has to accept the consequences of that decision, which is something his supporters have a hard time getting their heads around. Traditionally, free speech leads to disagreements. It leads to people being disappointed by and offended by each other, but that's the tradeoff.

#####: Well. We disagree. And according to today's standards. One of us has to scream loudly, stomp feet and cry foul until we get our way. And since libertarians don't do that.....it won't be me.⁷

³ Which begs the question, exactly what is THE answer? Maybe the Mensa member is getting ready to fill us in on this one.

⁴ Yes, this is exactly why people go to sporting events. Not for the actual game, but for the rockets and bombs song that they get to listen to right before it starts. Mike Pence is the only human that comes to mind, as to who this theory has ever applied to, and he still owes the taxpayers a refund for that political publicity stunt.

⁵ This viewpoint is going to become even more humorous in short order. Just wait...

⁶ I'm still unsure as to whether Kaepernick was actually familiar to the verse I'm referring to here. If there is a source that says definitively one way or another I'd appreciate if someone could pass it along.

⁷ Yes, being a libertarian prevents one from offering up any sort of intelligent reason as to why they think or feel the way they do, or what they might propose as a reasonable compromise in addressing the issue they feel so strongly about. On the other hand, at least he was able to spell such a big word like libertarian correctly.

Ryan: Yes, it seems we do disagree, but I think you're confused about which one of us is stomping our feet and crying foul. My point is everyone has a right (in this country) to freedom of speech and expression. With such freedom comes the risk of disappointments, disagreements, and arguments. That's the price. The problem comes when individuals who suppose they agree with such an idea begin to cry foul as soon as that idea is used to say something they don't like. Your position (assuming you value free speech) is let people say whatever they want, express themselves however they want, just as long as they don't say or do anything that might upset you. That's not free speech. If someone says or does something that you dislike, you have just as much right as they do to put forward a reasoned argument of the opposite persuasion. But claiming you won't do such a thing because "you're a libertarian" is pretty much akin to taking your ball and going home and does nothing to put forward any sort of informed or reasoned counterpoint. It is however useful in convincing one's self that they possess some sort of manufactured moral high ground.

But since you've mentioned libertarianism, as the basis of your view opposite of mine, and its root of your inability to put forward a rational argument, let's see how that applies to the case against protesting NFL players. Libertarianism emphasizes freedoms of choice (all choices) and autonomy from social and political restraints (government, church, mob rule, etc.). I think Kaepernick's decisions to this point have illustrated those principles. (Although, I do appreciate the humor found in the idea of a libertarian insisting that an individual toe the line of tradition merely for the sake of honoring tradition and not disrupting the popular norms of a larger society.) Of course, one of the other key principles libertarians claim to emphasize (although modern followers of the philosophy often seem to have a dubious grasp on the concept) is a responsibility for one's own actions and acceptance of the consequences they bring. I'd say that whether Kaepernick intended to or not, he is certainly taking ownership for what he set in motion and living with the consequences of that decision. But then of course, the concept that most modern libertarians seem to fetishize the most is that of laissez-faire capitalism, which is in no small way affecting the whole Kaepernick situation. Because of his stance, his would be employers have decided against keeping him on an NFL roster because they figure (and probably correctly) that the majority of their customers don't want to see him on the field, or even the sidelines (especially if he's taking a knee during the national anthem) and aren't willing to risk their bottom line because of it.

So, I have to ask, based on the three biggest tenets of your libertarian philosophy; freedom of choice, personal responsibility, and financial decisions and outcomes based on the public majority's preferences, how does the Kaepernick situation really look? Or do you have a different understanding of the root principles and values of libertarianism?⁸

#####: Perfect

Ryan: ##### yep, I always do a perfect job of explaining other people's life philosophies and world views to them. Especially, when those philosophies are as overly simplistic as modern libertarianism.

#####: We are all so fortunate to have an infallible person guiding us. Good day Ryan. I'm not engaging you anymore on +++++s post.⁹

Ryan: Infallible? No, just informed, thoughtful, educated...

⁸ I'm going to go out on a limb here and say this is about as much of an explanation anyone has ever given this guy regarding the tenets of libertarianism. Most would be libertarians would at least claim some sort of misguided CliffsNotes familiarity to *Atlas Shrugged*. This individual isn't even smart enough to do that. No, I'm pretty sure up to this point, the only thing he's known about libertarianism is his white trash heroes, Kid Rock and Ted Nugent, call themselves libertarians, so he decided he wants to be one too.

⁹ Translation: I'm tired of you making me look like an idiot.

Truth is, libertarianism is an overly simplistic (almost juvenile) way of looking at things that appeals to simplistic people. Hence, it's general menace to civil discourse.

#####: we disagree on "simple solutions".....and im sure on many other things.... your arrogance towards me, and dismissive attitude only proves that you are not willing to have a realistic compromise... taking a stand against me as though you are somehow above me is in no way a strength, its weakness..... hence why i said 3 times now im not interested in continuing this debate
on +++++s post.. also, "Hi +++++",,,,¹⁰

Ryan: Arrogant and dismissive are fair, although you do make it easy to come across as such. But you seem to have missed that I've only been dismissive toward your ideas and complete inability to defend them with a rational thought, not your actual person.¹¹ That's why I'm the one still giving you every opportunity to put forward an intelligent thought in defense of your original position, and you're the one running away from the guy who reads books and paid attention in civics class. Yeah, we certainly disagree with definitions of strength and weakness as well. I don't consider it a strength to embrace ignorance, find security within it, or kick and scream when someone tries to point out just how weak and narrow my worldview is because of it, but I guess in your mind that just makes you more of a "real" American than I am.

Now you can get all red in the face and type out another quick (misspelled, inaccurately punctuated, half thought) response that shows me how serious you are about no longer continuing this debate.

#####: Good times¹²

The initial commentary on a post and shared article regarding the SpaceX launch on February 6, 2018 from the same mutual friend. We don't coddle billionaires so they can pollute, buy out competition, buy politicians, or build ugly towers to compensate for tiny hands. We let people be uber rich so they can build hospitals, pay workers fairly, invent better ways to grow food, or... to let the real visionaries do AMAZING things... like this: (SpaceX Launch article)

#####: Oh look. Useless rocket!!!¹³

¹⁰ So much for no longer engaging me. Apparently, his conviction to that statement lasted all of one comment. Oh, the irony.

¹¹ A reality that, to this day, continues to fly right over his head.

¹² Well, at least we can once again give him credit for getting the spelling right. Although, the punctuation is once again suspect.

¹³ This pristine gem of remarkable insight was the *first* comment added to the original post. Unfortunately, this poor soul likely fell into the trap of thinking the first one to speak on a subject obviously makes what he's saying intelligent and worth being said. Or, as the great sage, Qui-Gon Jinn once pointed out to Jar Jar Binks, "The ability to speak does not make you intelligent." I can't believe I'm saying this, but I think the galaxy has actually stumbled upon an individual even dumber than Jar Jar Binks.

Ryan: How is this a waste of money, #####? It's not the government wasting money; it's a private citizen spending his own fortune. I'd likely agree with you that if the government (NASA) were doing this, there'd likely be more spending waste and bureaucratic nonsense to keep the thing from getting off the ground for another ten years. But this is a private citizen using his own money to do something now, that the government has no real interest in doing at this time, and likely doing it cheaper and better than they likely would anyway.

To look at the actual numbers, Musk is worth approximately \$21 billion (nine 0's), and it cost him around \$96 million (only six 0's) to launch his rocket, which comes out to around .004% of his net worth.¹⁴ To compare, over the course of the 30-year shuttle program, it cost NASA somewhere between \$450 to \$500 million per mission (when adjusted for inflation). So how is this a waste, and what should Musk be pinching pennies for?

The last time we had one of these discussions you pointed out that you're a "libertarian" ... and then promptly set to insisting that individual citizens be made to adhere to and participate in a uniformed fashion in various social norms and rituals (how very libertarian of you). And now you're asserting that you know how to spend an individual's private fortune better than they do and judging them negatively because you disapprove of his astronomical (that's a pun) spending habits (even more libertarian of you). #####'s original point was that private citizens, when given the opportunity, can do the big things that the government cannot if you give them the opportunity to do so, which is about as libertarian as one can get when it comes to societal goals and achievements.¹⁵

#####: Ok. Let me land this for you since you want to stand atop the mountain and make sure everyone sees your virtue.....

Read #####'s opening paragraph.
Then look for my comments where I make nonsense claims.¹⁶

You're welcome.
Ryan, you're a smart guy.¹⁷
You missed my point the last time also. You proceeded to go on a tirade about it.
So, just like last time. I won't respond to you after this.
(However, I stick by my claims of pollution from the Tesla battery making)¹⁸

Ryan: #####, at least I'll give you credit for the strides you've made in grammar and spelling. Or did you just remember the sage advice offered the last time we spoke- spellcheck is our friend.

¹⁴ I took the small liberty here of assuming I'd need to differentiate the number of zeroes in these figures for the individual. His interpretations of his civics lessons left little hope that he earned any higher marks in the *Public School Math for Dummies* courses he took on his way to his GED.

¹⁵ Actually, this is one of the most common and agreed upon beliefs held by our modern libertarians— let government get out of the way and watch what private citizens can do when you allow them to keep their money. Or, as the original poster framed it, "let the real visionaries do AMAZING things."

¹⁶ Exactly where in my response to his remarkable insight and wisdom did I accuse him of making "nonsense claims?" I briefly mentioned "bureaucratic nonsense," but this individual is not, never has been, and never will be confused for any sort of bureaucrat, for which we should all be thankful.

¹⁷ Notice that this is the first time either of us has made an actual comment on the level of the other's intelligence.

¹⁸ This is referring to a brief allusion numbnuts made regarding the full environmental impact of Tesla's electric cars and the eventual disposal of their batteries. Which, it should be noted, none of the other participants in the discussion gave any credence to and had nothing to do with the initial post or comments that followed.

And it's you who has once again missed the point. This is the very sort of thing that should appeal to your libertarian ideals and values, and yet you open the discussion with an uninformed and short-sighted statement of, "Ooh look, big rockets. Meh." Brevity is the soul of wit, but you've missed the mark yet again. I must say, if you're a libertarian, you're not a very good one.¹⁹

But I hope you'll hold to your promise. I made a New Year's resolution of calling out and correcting the issue every time one of you "real Americans" makes some baseless statement or another that's ripe with emotion, but devoid of any fact or reason. Alas, it's going to be a long year for me. Which is why I appreciate the quick conclusion of yet another battle of wits with an unarmed "libertarian."

#####: Not reading it. (a clever thumbs up emoji)²⁰

Ryan: #####, figured as much- too many big words and longer than the back of a cereal box.²¹

And this is what I awoke to the next morning...

#####: Let's not be so combative.²²

I don't engage you because you resort to insults too often if we have differing opinions.²³

That's +++++'s post. I'm not gonna go balls out debate with you.

My point was contrarian. I was poking fun at the opening paragraph where he takes a shot at trump.²⁴

You joined the conversation late. And tried to "teach" me something.²⁵
With all do respect, save it.

¹⁹ One can hardly argue against this observation at this point.

²⁰ Translation: I'm once again tired of you making me feel like an idiot.

²¹ And now, to the objective observer, we can finally say I threw out the first actual insult as it pertains directly to his intelligence.

²² Translation: Please quit pointing out to people that I'm a dumbass.

²³ Translation: By insult, I mean you ask me for answers and reasons for why I think or say the things I do, and then continue to press me for them when it's obvious I have no actual explanation for the stupidity bouncing around inside of my head and spewing out of my mouth.

²⁴ Oh, so this whole thing has to do with one small joke about our Dear Leader that went completely over your head. Of course, that's what the initial post and shared article was referring to all along, Trump's small hands. I take it back, you're not a libertarian. You're something far worse and far more dangerous— an insipid Trump base voter.

²⁵ Yes, I showed up so late that I was only the fourth person in the thread to dismiss his initial limp dick comment. And by this point, it's painfully obvious that no one (myself included) is going to "teach" him anything. One can

It's FB. Lighten up a little bit.
You shouldn't talk down to people that don't share the same views as you.

I'm certain you're intelligent.
You're also an arrogant asshole when you debate. That's easy to do online, and it's also a chicken shit tactic for "winning"²⁶ a FB argument that I made clear I wasn't joining.

So. If you wanna be civil.²⁷ Let's do that. Especially on +++++'s page.
If not. Fuck it. It's ok.
Life won't change if ##### and Ryan don't interact on social media.

Ryan: Thank you for the thoughtful response.²⁸

#####: Good deal. Now let's move forward.²⁹

Ryan: Moving forward in just a moment. Let me offer a civil rebuttal. This'll take a moment.

#####: No problem.
Btw. I use my phone exclusively for social media. So I type less. Paragraph more. And often shorten words for content space, Not because I'm ignorant.³⁰

Ryan: Needed to get the first pot of coffee and attend to actual real world commitments, but here goes. Sorry for the length, but wanted to be as thorough as possible...

Let's break down some of what you just said and see where we differ. Do I resort to insults? Yes, a tad bit. However, I only start "speaking down" to you and others like yourself, once I've exhausted all offers of letting you present a reasonable argument. Sorry, you fall into a trap that too many people fall into- wrap yourself up in a blanket of ignorance and then wear your aversion to facts, lack of sophistication, general lack of knowledge, and your own shortsightedness as a badge of honor. You can do better than this. You *are* better than this.³¹

Yes, I've given you a little shit about the spellchecking and grammar, mainly for the simple fact that I know by that point I've gotten you riled up enough that that's the least of your frustrations with me, and each response from you up to that point has been just a little bit more emotional, a little angrier, and a little shorter than the one that preceded

only imagine the mutual frustrations and animosities between him and his grade school teachers right up to the day he decided to drop out.

²⁶ And who up to this point has said anything about "winning?" Only the dumbass who knows he's losing this debate would think to bring up the matter of winning or losing.

²⁷ Translation: By civil I mean start seeing everything by my own small and narrow view.

²⁸ Thoughtful by his standards. Alas, I was probably giving him too much credit.

²⁹ Translation: (And one would assume this was accompanied by a sigh of relief) Good, now you'll start agreeing with me because I wish it so, and you'll quit making me look and feel like a dumbass.

³⁰ Notice the efforts being made to tell me he's "not ignorant."

³¹ This was an attempt to be just a little too diplomatic on my part.

it.³² (In the future, should you decide you'd still like to discuss certain topics with me, I'll refrain from taking such cheap jabs at your expense.) But myself on the other hand, I am always much more composed and measured throughout the conversation than you are able to remain. Why is that? It's because I'm able to set my emotions aside, have an informed reasoning for my chosen positions, and am confident in presenting the sources and data that support my position. And reading through the thread, I realize I'm not the only person you consider rude or refuse to converse with. And like myself, they also are always much more equipped with informed opinions and facts than yourself.

In regard to my being arrogant, I confess that I understand how I can come across as such (as unsurprisingly, you wouldn't be the first to accuse me of such), and more to the point, I plainly am once I realize I'm talking to an individual that isn't going to present an argument that I can take seriously. (I'll also confess to a perverse sense of self amusement and a love of words, hence my long-windedness) But to that end, I have to say, if you think I'm bad, there are people far worse than me in terms of looking down upon you, thinking you should have no say in any matter of importance (or even a right to vote), and in general just feeling as though society would be better off without you. If you feel I have treated you in such a way, I apologize.³³

To that end, I'd also like to apologize if you feel I've ever called you stupid. I've never said those actual words, although I do recall noting to you that libertarianism is "a simple way of thinking for simple minds," which I still hold to.³⁴ That doesn't make you stupid, however. Although, it could be viewed as a sort of laziness. By the way, I've been meaning to ask you where did you come across the idea that you are a libertarian? I'm asking this out of genuine interest and sincerity, as every point you've ever tried to make on the subject is completely counterintuitive to any sort of libertarian principles. If you still have a wish to communicate after this, I really am curious as to what being a libertarian actually means to you.

As far as being contrarian, I had an idea that that was your original intention. However, you *did* miss the point. Yes, +++++ did take a small swipe at Trump, but his main point was that there's a difference between some self-centered, rich asshole who's only doing things to feed his ego (and compensate for his small hands), and a guy who is spending his money to promote future innovations that everyone can one day benefit from and perhaps inspire the generations of today to do something they thought was impossible yesterday. I did read the thread, no one else saw the original point as an all-out attack on Trump- only you did.³⁵ As for the way Musk disposes of his dead Tesla batteries, no one else mentioned this either, and while it probably IS a topic worth discussing, in this instance it's only a very smelly red herring.

Now, I'm not certain if you read my second response to your comment- the one I made note of having the New Year's resolution of calling out the basic shortcomings of "real Americans" rationale when I see them, but that's something else I'll hold onto. Admittedly, it comes across as a joke at your expense and once again gives credence to the thought that I'm an "arrogant asshole" (guilty). But I don't do it to "teach" you. A person like me is most likely not going to change the mind of a person like yourself, and vice versa. However, a random passerby who hasn't made their mind up yet, and whose opinions are still a bit more malleable, might look at my humorous (or

³² Think of it like the old adage of dressing for the job you want, not the one you have. Only in this case, it's more like compose a sentence that convinces me to take you seriously, rather than one that leads me to believe you were twelve when you finally passed the third grade.

³³ And not to give myself too much credit, but I know several and can think of many more who would never take anything an individual such as this into any consideration at all, let alone allow them to say it.

³⁴ And realistically, actual libertarians should be thanking their lucky stars that he's not actually a member of their ranks. It's not everyday you can say someone is too stupid to even be a libertarian, but as this individual proves, they do exist.

³⁵ It's true, every other participant in the discussion understood that the initial commentary included with the shared article was meant to emphasize the launch of the damn rocket, rather than an allusion to the size of The Donald's dick.

what you call arrogant) rebuttals to your positions and view whatever point you're trying to make far more critically than they might be predisposed of normally doing. (It's similar to the same way humor can be used to make effective arguments against religion and prejudices, and help individuals approach such subjects in ways that they might be reluctant to consider critically and skeptically.) In this instance, I fully admit the rest of the individuals in +++++'s post are already too smart to be swayed much in one direction or another (and they're also much nicer than I am).

But, you do make a fair point about having these discussions on +++++'s posts. I've always been open to letting my different friends battle it out and debate the subjects I post and share different (and often opposing) viewpoints.³⁶ But, out of fairness and courtesy to +++++, it probably would be more polite to have these kinds of discussions through IM than on someone else's post. I'm open to one of us just saying, "Let's continue this conversation elsewhere," the next time one of these debates comes along, and maybe you'd be as well.

To wrap this up, (and again I'll apologize for my wordiness) I realize I've said things in the past that you've taken exception to. I also realize I've probably said things above that you'd initially view as a veiled swipe on your character. Although, I hope I closed those loops adequately enough to convey I'm open to fair and polite conversations on future issues of contention. You and I used to be friends³⁷ (in the real world, not FB), and I'm as open to discussion with you as I am anyone else online or in person. And finally, I hope you can accept while much of what I've said here has been critical toward your ways of thinking, I have not been judgmental of your actual character (or at least I hope you can see it in that light).

So, you began this discussion, and now that I've said my piece, I'll leave it to you if you'd like it to continue.

#####: Wow. I'm 15 lines in and already being insulted.³⁸
Get over yourself Ryan.
Jesus Christ.

You have a problem you should tend to.
You think people need to listen to you, and you only. You believe you are "more right" than others.

You make these comments thru the safety of a keyboard.³⁹
You don't get me angry. You are not as formidable as you think you are. Lol

You closed with the answer to the problem at hand.
We used to get along.
We spoke when we hung out. It was always civil. And you never blatantly called me names or insulted me.
And I believe it's because you are doing it from the safety of a keyboard. It's a real epidemic these days.

³⁶ This is true. I've never had a problem letting others debate on the posts I put up on social media, but I can understand how not everyone may be as appreciative as I am of the discourse.

³⁷ This is another one of those overly diplomatic efforts on my part, and an effort to keep my words simple. In truth, we were more along the lines of passing acquaintances.

³⁸ No, there's a difference between being insulted and just being made to feel that one is inadequate.

³⁹ And now we've resorted to veiled threats. Apparently, feeling he'd laid out a sufficient enough case for viewing him as an idiot, at this point he decides to move on to laying out the one that presents him as a Neanderthal as well.

The internet is an interesting place. Most often there are people like you that know they don't have to face any consequences for the shitty way they treat people.⁴⁰

My character is not in question. And ur right, there's no doubt I'm better than the nonsense you tried to pull me into.⁴¹

We can't have civil conversation⁴²,

You think you are above me.

That's your flaw⁴³

Ryan: #####, I've said specifically that I'm as open to having these discussions as much in person as I am over the Internet. Or did you miss that part? I'm just as bold through the digital world as I am the real one, or are you making some sort of veiled threat that there'd be some repercussion from you to me if we were having this conversation in person? What exactly would it prove for you to take a swing at me? Would it make you feel better? Would it change my mind? Would it show how smart and well informed you are?

I noted my flaws in my initial response to you. Many times. Regarding my comments towards you, there's a difference between constructive criticism and an actual insult, which I also made very clear. And while you may think that I've taken the position of being above you, I've never said such a thing, and in fact noted that I'm still the sort of person who *will* give you the actual time of day to try to present a thoughtful and informed viewpoint, whereas so many others would not. But it has become increasingly obvious that you either have no interest in doing so or lack the outright capacity to. *That* is an insult.⁴⁴

Do I think I'm smarter than you? You're damn right I do, but you've lead me to such conclusions on your own. I "believe" I am "more right than you," because I *know* I am more informed than you. With a little effort, you could actually make some strides in closing that gap. Now, I'll make it a bit more personal than I have in the past and say that if you don't like the idea that I'm "smarter than you," then *you* can do something about it. But I'm not just going to sit and wait for you to catch up (and no one else is either, nor should they). *You're* the one who needs to read a book or two. *You're* the one who needs to seek out viewpoints other than just the ones that are the ones that don't disrupt the safe and warm confines of your own little bubble. *You're* the one who needs to bring actual facts to the table to back up your flippant little remarks of, "I don't like that," or "That's stupid," or "I'm a libertarian." If you want me to take you seriously and see you as an individual who has something that's actually constructive in finding any sort of agreement or a solution on an issue, *you* have to do something about it.

The fact that you keep pointing out that, "I think I'm smarter than you," says more about you than it does me.⁴⁵ It shows a lack (and really outright refusal) on your part of trying to better inform yourself, consider opposing points

⁴⁰ He obviously missed the part where I said I'd happily have this discussion in person, which I suppose makes it easier for him to fantasize inflicting bodily harm on me and adding to his criminal record.

⁴¹ Yep, that first attempt at diplomacy (Note 31) came back to bite me in the ass here. He's had a pretty selective interpretation of the conversation to this point, so why wouldn't the idea that I'm possibly raising him a little higher than he deserves in stature be something he'd misinterpret as a simple compliment? And that's what I get for trying to be nice.

⁴² No, we can't have an *intelligent* conversation. I've been nothing but civil up to this point. You're getting your adjectives mixed up again.

⁴³ Interesting that he's made mention of what he perceives to be my flaws (as have I), yet he's never once mentioned (nor likely considered) what his own might be.

⁴⁴ He was so confused as to what a real insult actually was up to this point that I felt it only right to point the real thing out to him.

⁴⁵ Note that up to this point, I've never felt the need to comment on the differences in intelligence between us, but since he kept bringing it up, I figured I might as well address the issue.

of view and reach your own conclusions, and really just displays a type of insecurity that shows that deep down you *know* you're outclassed in these sorts of conversations and are desperate for anyone who you *know* is smarter than you to take anything you have to say, no matter how thoughtless, ill informed, and outright *stupid* it may be seriously.

Up to this point, I have been courteous enough to give you the time of day that so many others wouldn't. But you've outright proven that you no longer deserve any such time, as giving it to you is a complete waste.

Now, you can be insulted, and now you can understand that you've earned the conclusion from myself that you are indeed *stupid*.

#####: Not reading it.
You'll see the error of your ways.
Your belief system right now is flawed.
Most of us are.
Some of us are just more polite when we admit we are wrong.⁴⁶

Ryan: Pathetic.⁴⁷

#####: Yet you still keep trying.
Goodbye Ryan.

Ryan: The only error I seem to have committed is trying to have an intelligent conversation with a moron.

#####: Ryan. I said right away I wasn't interested in being combative.
Yet. You insulted me and proceeded to carry on about how you were right.
Go back and look.
And again with the name calling.

Ryan: No, this is the first actual instance of name calling.⁴⁸

#####: Hilarious.
It's not good practice to act the way you do.
I don't think ur a bad person. But the grandeur approach is a clear sign of weakness.

Ryan: No, a simple mind is a clear sign of weakness, but you've proven that you'd know all about that at this point.

⁴⁶ Obviously, the idea that he could be wrong has never occurred to him. Which must be why he's so polite.

⁴⁷ To be fair, this is probably the cruelest one-word description you could use to label a person with, but it's hard to say he hasn't earned it.

⁴⁸ True. Up to this point, the worst thing I called him was a libertarian, and he's not smart enough to be insulted by that.

#####: (clever smoochy emoji)

And this is why we need to force ourselves to have these sorts of conversations more often.