

CARRYING A GUN

BUILD A **SAFER WORLD**
THROUGH
CONCEALED CARRY
& **SELF-DEFENSE**

BY

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WITH

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Carlile Originals

**Carrying a Gun
Build A Safer World Through Concealed Carry & Self-Defense**

By Nick Dahlberg, Chris Schutrop and Tom Dahlberg

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Nick Dahlberg is a co-founder of Midwest Carry Academy, National Carry Academy, and the Stock and Barrel Gun Club. As operations manager he specializes in firearms training programs. Nick is a top-ranked competitive shooter and NRA-certified trainer. He is the lead instructor of the MCA, NCA, and Stock and Barrel self-defense curriculum. Having acquired his own knowledge and skills under and alongside Special Forces instructors, he has trained every level of shooter from neophyte to law enforcement specialist, gaining recognition as a welcoming, engaging, and effective coach and mentor. Nick created the Safety Operations Procedures and protocols for MCA, NCA, and Stock and Barrel, while overseeing the layouts and techniques for building and sustaining a safe and attractive indoor gun range. He has spent years developing the concealed carry permit and advanced gun training content used in all of the course work at MCA, NCA and Stock and Barrel.

Tom Dahlberg is a firearms enthusiast, recreational shooter, hunter, and freelance writer. He has had his concealed carry permit for fifteen years, relying on the training he has received from MCA and the Stock and Barrel Gun Club where he is an active Caliber Club member. He credits the instruction he has received under Nick and Chris with taking him from a complete novice to a new competitive shooter.

Nick Dahlberg



The Stock & Barrel Gun Club.



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PART 1

**THE PHILOSOPHY
OF SELF-
DEFENSE**

CHAPTER 1

IS SELF-DEFENSE REALLY A RIGHT?

If you do not know why your right to self-defense is really a right, it will undermine your confidence. Philosophical clarity is the most important aspect of your readiness and confidence in the face of a threat. If you cannot defend yourself with *conviction*, you may make things worse than they would be if you threw yourself on the mercy of the aggressor.

If you cannot be sure of the morality of self-defense, you may as well forget the whole idea of defending yourself with deadly force. You will not do so effectively. You will make a mess of it, perhaps injuring yourself or another in a fashion which will prove you never should have tried in the first place. You cannot defend yourself effectively and responsibly without confidence. You have to be decisive. You cannot possibly be confident and decisive without a firm belief in the right and responsibility to defend yourself.

“Nothing could be more natural than fighting for one’s life.”

Moral doubt, as the most fundamental form of self-doubt, is the most comprehensive attack on your confidence, making all other preparation pointless. Self-defense starts with a confident conviction that you have the right to fight and even kill someone else whenever and wherever they are threatening you with injury or death.

Of course, most people believe that they, and everyone else, have a ‘right’ to self-defense. This is often anchored in the notion that nothing could be more natural than fighting for one’s life. In the wild, we can see that self-defense is overwhelmingly natural, not that it is consistently successful. Death removes our opportunity to be what we are by nature, to exercise *the rest* of our nature.

To put it another way, our life is our natural property, and no one has the right to take it away from us unless we have taken it away from someone else without cause. The right to our property, our lives, is reflected in our duty to respect the lives, the property, of others. This, of course, is an entirely different account of our right to life than any purely natural account.

When we begin to think carefully about it, we soon realize that our right to self-defense is not revealed, not rationally justified, by nature alone. Animals have a survival instinct but no related duties. We do not take predators out of the wild and put them on trial for murder. They do not have a duty to preserve the lives of other animals. In that case they do not have a right to their own life. Animals live in a moral and material ecosystem where every rational human being admits that justice is in the interest of the stronger. Human moral categories do not apply. If animals do not have duties, they do not have rights. Predation is not a right, and the prey does not have the duty to submit. It is all just a power struggle without moral questions. Animals, we usually agree, are designed this way.

By contrast, most of us believe that human beings are *not* designed this way.

“Justice must be a notion that transcends nature.”

Our traditional belief in the right to life is an assertion of a whole world-view in which

man *transcends nature*. In both the human or animal arena self-defense is natural, predictable, consistent with natural law. In the meantime nature alone does not announce anyone’s *right* to kill, even when it gives them the opportunity and the power to do so. It is just a brute fact. If we take the position that nature makes the right of the stronger clear, then the government, being stronger, will not hesitate to eliminate the right to life. This punishment is popular when someone, a murderer, has adopted exactly the same position and acted on it. But in this case we have rejected the idea that the human and animal arenas are different, that human beings are supposed to be more than natural, that they are supposed to be just. Justice must be a notion that transcends nature.

And so the fly in the ointment of the notion that self-defense is anchored in natural law alone is that there are plenty of people who are willing to argue that murder, or abuse, is just as natural. If naturality is the standard of a right, then there might be the right to commit what we normally categorize as crimes. It is perfectly natural for people to misbehave. Although this does not lead to the conclusion that self-defense is not a natural right, it leads to the question “How, on a purely natural basis, could we know what a right is? Aggression seems to be just as natural as self-defense.” A philosopher once said “As a result of studying nature

alone one is as likely to become a headhunter as a liberal.”

Yet, in spite of our doubt that nature speaks for itself when it comes to morality and rights, the social contract, generally speaking, is supposed to be arranged to fulfill our nature, not suppress or destroy it. And this is exactly why arguments about what is natural for human beings has always been and always will be the philosophical heart and soul of politics. The proponent of natural rights asks us “What could be more natural than our right to save our own lives in the light of unjustified aggression?” Natural rights depend upon our agreement about what is natural and agreement that that which is natural, at least for the most part, *is good*. It is both natural to fight for our lives and to attack each other as nothing more than a will to power. Both central tendencies are natural. Only one is good. We are moving past nature when we reach for agreement about what ‘justifies’ the kind of aggression which could result in someone else’s death, besides self-defense. The good and the just transcend what we can learn from nature.

Nothing guarantees agreement about what is natural or even that what is natural is good. One of the ironies, or inconsistencies, in the left’s traditional attack on the right of self-defense is that it is actually anchored in the implicit notion that what is natural is not necessarily what is good. In the meantime the left also fancies itself the champion of what is natural as if *everything* that is natural is good.

“We are sovereign individuals limited only by the sovereignty of other individuals.”

In any event, we give the left an opening when we argue that the right to life, to self-defense, has a purely natural foundation. In that case, the left can simply start agreeing with most of us that what is natural is not necessarily what is good.

The religious concept of human rights is actually more consistent and clear than the notion of natural human rights. And this is why most of us are in agreement that the freedom we find in the American tradition, including the right to self-defense, is not actually anchored in any kind of naturalism but, rather, the Judeo-Christian world-view.

In the first place, the notion that self-defense is a God-given right is not at all inconsistent with the notion that self-defense is entirely natural. In effect, self-defense as a God-given right is anchored in the proposition that God designed us this way, and it is normative, good, because God intended it. Nature may not be an authority about what is good, but God is. We are not just natural, we are made in the image of God, and are therefore, like God, sovereign individuals *limited only by the sovereignty of other individuals*. This tradition more clearly and consistently implies that self-defense is a sovereign right while murder clearly is not. Murder, no matter

how natural, is an attack on the sovereignty given to individuals by God. Nature can only make a tyrant sovereign by *force*, not by right.

Clearly, the perpetual battle between left and right is simply a battle between secularists who think we should look only to nature (as diverse and relative as expert views of nature are) and those who insist that we look to our western religious revelation and tradition. It is God who declared that His creation is good, that man is made in His image, and that therefore both man and nature are to be nurtured and protected by stewards, including governments. We doubt that the libertarians, who look only to nature, can defend our right to self-defense as well, as coherently, as Christian traditionalists.

“To exercise the rights is to assert the tradition. To assert the tradition is to preserve the tradition.”

But just as not everyone sees Nature the same way, arguing that it is as natural to kill others as it is to defend oneself, not everyone has the same theology, or any theology at all. The notion of God-given rights may be revealed in history, it may be a fact, captured in the Ten Commandments (thou shalt not murder) but those of us who believe it cannot force others to do so.

And so the right to self-defense must be regarded as a *tradition*, which is absolutely, metaphysically correct in the eyes of God.

Just because this is a tradition does not imply that it is not absolutely true. But it does in imply this practical principle.

Sustaining the tradition of self-defense requires the vigorous exercise of the rights which the *tradition* identifies. To exercise the rights is to assert the tradition. To assert the tradition is to preserve the tradition.

The right of self-defense cannot be separated from a particular way of looking at the world and its human beings. If you believe that self-defense is a right, if you share the traditional basis of this, then you have a duty to yourself and everyone who stands with you to exercise it, otherwise it will disappear precisely because there is no way to force the opponents of self-defense to admit that there is either a God-given basis for the right or a natural basis. Any proposed right is not so overwhelmingly natural that a naturalistic culture will not end up eliminating it. The right is granted by the tradition, and the tradition becomes irrelevant when people do not act on it, when they fail to engage in its rituals. And so we conclude that keeping and bearing arms is more than just a hobby, it is a precious ritual which asserts a precious tradition.

Many people implicitly know that keeping and bearing arms is a ritual and are accused by the left of making guns a ‘life-style.’ These accusers cannot understand what is happening. Subconsciously many Americans understand the connection between gun ownership and the

preservation of the whole tradition, the whole world-view. Their behavior seems ritualistic and it is quite rightly ritualistic. The left then accuses the traditionalists of turning their gun ownership into a sacrament. But this is not what is happening. What is happening is that people approach their right to keep and bear arms as more than a hobby, more than entertainment, more than hunting – and they must. *It is essential to the whole tradition which raises man above nature and asserts his right to live and defend himself.* It is all about the value of human life. Gun ownership is not a sacrament, but of necessity it is a traditional ritual which needs to be engaged in with widespread regularity. Organizations like the NRA understand this implicitly. The objective is not simply to protect our rights in the abstract, but to promote the exercise of them ritualistically, with regularity, as the most powerful way in which we assert the tradition over and over again. The NRA has good reason, as do we, to promote gun ownership *as a life-style*, the very thing which the left cannot understand in its naiveté about how rights, as traditional artifacts, are proposed and preserved.

“If you lose your right to intimidate criminals, including criminal governments, you will soon find that you have lost everything else you believe in.”

By exercising your right to self-defense, you train and condition society to accept and even embrace the tradition. This is a democratic and traditional process and victory. If you do not participate, while believing in the tradition, you have failed to understand how we sustain such a tradition, how fragile the dominance of the tradition becomes when it is not asserted daily and en masse. And remember, *practically* speaking, we are talking about the most important dimension of the tradition. If you lose your right to intimidate criminals, including criminal governments, you will soon find that you have lost everything else you believe in. Why is gun ownership and self-defense a right? Because the loss of this *life-style*, this tradition, results in the loss of the other values established by the tradition – the right to free speech, the right to property, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, all of which require survival and just government. When one of our rights is violated, they are all violated. The whole tradition which argues that we have rights as human beings, is violated, rejected, by the suppression of one right.

If only a small minority explicitly exercise their right to self-defense, too many voters, and too many politicians, will conclude that traditional or not, the ‘right’ is not important enough, to enough people, to worry about. We must make it an overwhelmingly democratic and true perception that self-defense is an inviolable right (because we believe it really is) and

that any government that would take it away from us, is an illegitimate government.

It is important to remember, that even from a purely naturalistic point of view, those who cannot kill, will inevitably be subjugated and abused by those who can. Every tyrant, every criminal, exploits the incapacity and/or unwillingness of a people to engage in self-defense.

And so we come to the more practical question of whether or not you can exercise your right to self-defense, in a meaningful way, without the great equalizer – the gun. The practical answer to this practical question is “No, you can’t.”

The gun is quite literally the practical fulfillment of the God-given right to self-defense.

Without the gun, the right to self-defense is practically meaningless, and this may be precisely why this right was not vigorously asserted and defended, especially by government itself, until the gun was invented. It was a real right, but could not be applied practically speaking.

Without the gun women, even children, and average men, cannot make their right to self-defense a real threat to those who would harm them, subjugate them, murder them. This leads us to the next very dramatic conclusion.

The gun is quite literally the fulfillment of democracy.

The gun democratizes power. It gives even the common man as much power, in principle, as criminal experts who could otherwise overwhelm him with a sword,

with fists, with a gang. It also gives the common man as much power as the police, who would otherwise be in a position to impose a police state. Finally, in principle, the gun gives the people at large as much power as the military, assuming that any military subjugation of the people would be self-defeating if it required the extermination of the people using weapons of mass destruction. We reject the notion that a militia cannot defeat a standing army. We once thought that the Viet Cong and the vastly inferior North Vietnamese army could not defeat an army with weapons of mass destruction, but they did. Our forefathers beat the most powerful, professional army on earth at that time, with a non-professional force often using inferior arms.

Given the western religious tradition, we do not assert the right to take someone else’s life but, instead, the right to defend our own and that of others. We escape from any naturalistic confusion in which naturalness becomes the standard of a right. Instead our religious tradition coherently suggests that we have the right to defend our lives against those naturalists who think it is perfectly natural to take our substance and/or kill us. Every tyrant, every criminal is a naturalist. They believe that justice is whatever satisfies the stronger. Those of us who believe in civilization cannot afford to be naturalists.

“In defending yourself you are defending the whole community.”

Finally, it is worth noticing that self-defense is not part of some caricature of rugged individualism. In defending yourself you are defending the whole community. Remember, keeping and bearing arms *is* a ritual which asserts a whole tradition, a whole life-style, a form of life. You secure your neighbor by coming directly to his aid and by helping to sustain a tradition of self-defense which makes it very risky for criminals to assume that your neighbor is unarmed and incapacitated. Just as your vote may protect your neighbor's freedom and security, your gun, and your ability to use it as an expression of a national tradition, secures your neighbors right to life, property, and liberty.

The weak are always safer, more secure in their rights, when living among the strong and the just.

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