

Information, Non-intervention, Hindsight



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“Finding the Challenges” is an original column appearing every other Wednesday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Verbal Vol. Verbal is a software engineer, college professor, corporate information officer, life long student, farmer, libertarian, literarian, student of computer science and self-ordering phenomena, pre-TSA world traveler, domestic traveler. Archived columns can be found [here](#). FTC-only RSS feed available [here](#).

Life is a positive feedback loop. But we must understand that the “positive” refers to a gain in information. This gain may lead to an awareness of negative truths, these truths may be for the short run or the long. I have been watching a video debate, “Be it resolved humankind’s best days lie ahead,” and before the debate I voted, “agree.” Afterwards I still agreed but perhaps for more enlightened reasons. Whether we learn good or ill, intelligent consideration can lead us to a higher state of wisdom, for which there is a ratchet effect. Wisdom is a bell you cannot unring.

Voluntaryist Book View — Information

If you are, as I am, an autodidact, you are a natural sponge for information, and you are a natural candidate for having your life changed by a book, ie. synthesizing data toward information, information toward knowledge, knowledge toward wisdom, and wisdom toward truth, which is more data in the never-ending cycle of synthesis. My life has recently been changed by the book, *The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood*, by James Gleick. Here are some of the life-changing information packets I have now assimilated:

- None of the phases of information (data, information, knowledge, wisdom, truth, concrete fact, abstract fact, concrete fiction, abstract fiction) die; they ripple through the ether forever, awaiting rediscovery.
- The gigantic intellects addressed in this book — Newton, Babbage, Lovelace, Shannon, Turing, and Wiener, among others — although justly famous for original ideas, and

astounding thoughts, all died with far more unresolved than completed puzzles on their tables.

- Every literate person alive today had the most significant information event in their lives to occur long before they were born, the invention of the Gutenberg press. The knowledge explosion, if not a wisdom explosion, since that time has been immeasurable.
- A much clearer understanding of the import of the Turing Machine.
- Harkening back to Socrates' advice, information transmitted to us only through the fortuitous existence of Plato in a place and time wherein he could hear and appreciate and interpret Socrates (as far as we know), the wisest human is the one who understands that he knows nothing.

Rothbard Quote #11 — Antiwar

... what [the antiwar side] have generally favored is political nonintervention in the affairs of other countries, coupled with economic and cultural internationalism in the sense of peaceful freedom of trade, investment, and interchange between the citizens of all countries. And this is the essence of the libertarian position as well. — Murray Rothbard

The position articulated by Rothbard above is an important, immortal abstraction, but it is on its deathbed today. A week ago tomorrow, nearly 200 mostly innocent human beings in Paris were sacrificed on the altar of the war gods. This event followed by a day the killing of a mad man in the middle east. American technocrats boasted that they had vaporized a scoundrel known as Jihadi John — the objective of a drone strike. Whether Paris happened as a reverberation of the assassination of Jihadi John or not is a mystery — the mysteries of discord between east and west have beggared explanation for a thousand years.

But one thing is clear, we in the west have been unable, as well as unwilling to avoid entanglements for the last decade and a half, if not the last millennium. Entanglements are the sustenance of our economic life. Socially, we have fashioned our day-to-day economic fabric on the loom of war. This goes back to the colonial period in North America, and has continued practically unabated in the ensuing quarter millenium.

We are blind when it comes to even recognizing what an entanglement might be. Our politicians preach hideous one-size-fits-all remedies for the aggressions around the world. Let's just hit them so hard that they will cease to be, scream the sword rattlers among us. Then they roll their eyes and whistle as the tsunamis of death roll to every corner of the

Earth. Their cowardly goading does not work (never will), but it seems admirable to those who do not see consequences. The politicians do these things because they suspect that the mob will never appreciate consequences. So, how much more cowardly, to recommend the suicidal just because you have taken precautions for yourself, and you know that the chickens will not likely return to the roost before you have left it far behind.

As much as I revere Rothbard, I must say that the vision of avoiding entanglements is 20/20 hindsight (and tunnel-vision). We are not at the place where we can do that without many negative consequences. What is the prescription? Not the “we told you so?” Rothbard’s *For a New Liberty* seems a bit long in the tooth, a bit World War-ish, as regards remedy, which remedy is in a word disarmament.

My heroes are Twain, Mencken, Camus, and Vonnegut — all thinkers who wore the mask of misanthropy. But if you dig deeper in the mines they left for us, you will see optimism for the human race or that race or those races which may succeed us.

There may be much pain, however, before we succeed.

Logic Fallacy #40 — Hindsight Looks to Be 20/20

Hindsight is fallacious when it stands on the two legs of other more well-known fallacies — the fallacy of confusing the long term with the instant and the fallacy of assuming that an isolated event confirms misconception of the past. “Hindsight is 20/20,” is often stated as a precaution against oversimplifying matters, but too many of us see it as a truth.

Hindsight really is no less obscure than is the past or the future. Just because we grasp induction does not mean that we use it well. If each of us asked ourselves, “What do we truly know to be the facts of Friday the 13th, November 2015, in Paris, France?” we would have to admit that we know nothing first-hand, and the information that has been relayed to us came from people who had no way of learning anything first-hand.

Some may say that the recent tragedy in Paris tells us certain things we need to know. These are things we want to believe because they confirm fears we have previously dwelt upon. A fear we claim to understand becomes perversely a fear with which we are more comfortable. Fear drives us to be in a constant process of pigeonholing supposed events, so we can make order of them, even if the order itself is false.

Why do we long to see the meaningless faces of state leaders on television, telling us that we will be avenged in a swift, no nonsense, unambiguous, and perfect manner? Because we want to believe it. In likely fact, however, the current pain will subside into the dull pain of incompetence and know-nothingness long before we will realize that the misleaders have lied to us, that they too are incompetent and they know nothing.

The fallacy of trying to make anything of hindsight attests to our inability to see ahead as

well. It verifies that we know next to nothing about the present too.

I restate the the theme of ignorance again and again. We are knowing animals who do not know. All information has noise, the pseudo-information that destroys true information in whole or in part. We are still not in sight of the frontier. We still have not realized that our need to nail things down, to confirm prematurely, may be a form of genetic, memetic self-destruction.

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