

Jazz, Intensification, Prisoner's Dilemma



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"Finding the Challenges" is an original column appearing every other Thursday 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](#).

Stress overcame me this morning. Maybe it was outrage over the killings in San Bernardino, or maybe it was that something (again!!!) that Donald Trump said was the top "Trending" story on Facebook, just the morning after San Bernardino. Or maybe it was incredulity that the story about Trump was NOT about what he said about San Bernardino, which was, of course, stupid, but not as stupid as what he said so as to be zooming up the charts. I am not even going to grace the content of his utterances by detailing it in this column. Don't worry, the hits will keep on coming, courtesy of Trump and the MSM, later today or first thing on the morning news.

I am experiencing outrage burn-out, even though I normally thrive on adversity. I usually spring into output mode when the going gets tough. I usually see stress as motivation. But, today, if I launch into a rant about the two topics above, or the 3-week old story of Paris, I might just lose it.

So I am going to write first about something that brings me joy. Then I will ease back into white water by visiting with Murray Rothbard again — Murray will not be addressing pleasantries nor sugar-coating adversity. But Rothbard is the strongest of rudders in rough seas. And last, I will remind myself that there is much to do, with the machete of logic in the jungle of fallacies.

Jazz

This morning, I wondered what could bring me personal peace, as the world burned. I

would get back to the world after I recovered a bit of coolness, a shred of objectivity, a few clear thoughts. My iPod, with its shuffle play feature, did the deed. As I stepped into the shower, the room filled with intelligent but emotional, muscular jazz. The music began slow and bluesy but soon began to soar into great, free expressions of joy.

Yes, I know that jazz grew up in America in association with slavery, but that is not its story. Jazz was always a testament to the freedom of humans, to their ways of expression no matter how narrow the confines of civil manners. Jazz in America arose through the importation of African rhythms and sonic invention, but here it became the very voice by which the downtrodden express their indestructible individualism and self-ownership. You can chain me but you cannot take me unless I give myself to you. There is no way you can drive away that song, that shout, that trumpet blast of joy.

Jazz is also notably free from strictures. Most of the great jazz performers had no concrete idea of what they were going to do when they sat before their instrument. But they had a profound feel for what they were going to do. They had a feel for what they themselves, as individuals were going to do, but they also had a high expectation that the unplanned collaborations with other band members were going to produce one-of-a-kind musical events. They knew how to deal with unforeseen consequences

I'm sure that Louis Armstrong was not always as happy as he seemed, making jokes about being black with Ed Sullivan. But when the show got down to that music, it was sheer joy. Blues don't you bother me. Just listen to "My Walking Stick" with Louis and the Mills Brothers.

Listen to Wynton Marsalis talk about the music. Joy.

Listen to Billie Holiday sing "Gee, Baby, Ain't I good to You?" Sheer, unending joy.

Rothbard Quote #12 — Intensification

In the history of the United States, war has generally been the main occasion for the often permanent intensification of the power of the State over society.

— Murray N. Rothbard

It is still unclear what happens when violence swamps our lives, but one thing we can be clear about is that self-serving politicians will use the fear to advance the agenda of the oligarchy.

But war is not the only wedge between us and freedom. Think about how domestic killings are added to the drumbeat for destroying the Second Amendment. In 1913, we were told that the *ad hoc* personal income tax was just temporary (even though a constitutional amendment was required) to get us out of some emergency, real or feigned. As an afterthought, I don't think they worry much about the Constitution anymore. The housing bubble came along at a convenient time to justify unceremoniously giving away the treasury to the bankers.

Politicians observed long ago that their authoritarian side flourishes when the constituency has their hackles up. FDR responded to the Great Depression by corralling us into ministries, those who worshiped Mammon, those who worshiped War, those who worshiped Myth. Then FDR built a vast priesthood of those who would protect each of those specialty groups from the fear of fear itself, as it appeared to them through the filters of their groups.

Franklin Roosevelt was a superstar, a megalomaniac, with the device addressed above by Murray Rothbard. FDR's palette was comprised of the two most widespread global disasters in the history of humans, the Great Depression and Empire. In his 3+ terms, he painted, intensified, his horrible masterpiece on the canvas of socialism. His painting, a godlike version of himself, looks out over us like Big Brother from Orwell's classic, 1984. Popular wisdom is that Orwell set his date too early, but I would say it was too late.

Rothbard shows us the tip of the iceberg, but the physics are the same for all fears sown by statism. You cannot put toothpaste back in a tube. You cannot un-ratchet the ruling class. I wrote, elsewhere, this past week:

I can imagine it would be a life's work to ascertain which of the bureaucracies of FDR's reign have truly been terminated, or whether they have just turned up elsewhere in the sprawl ("homeland security," most likely).

Logic Fallacy #41 — The Prisoner's Dilemma

I am suspicious that there may be a proper context for the Prisoner's Dilemma (PD). We all face choices for which we have incomplete information. But the PD cannot be a proof of principle. But this does not stop people from using it to bolster a pet theory.

In the past two weeks I have been involved in the age old argument of "let's intervene" vs "let's abide by the natural flow" (the course I favor). My interlocutor insisted that the PD proved that government was needed to add objectivity to the dilemma. But, the most formidable problem for that position is that the government caused the dilemma. They have failed to make the case for the crime they wish to prosecute, so now they will try tricking the prisoners (presuming guilt) by exploiting non-information. This is initiated

violence! But this thought experiment is also an accurate approximation of the process by which the USA has become the Number One Jailer *per capita* in the world. We see how it works on nearly every episode of televised cop adventure. The dilemma is created by government process. My interlocutor even suggests that it is necessary for the state to have a monopoly on the use of force.

I find it amusing that the TV writers use the same trope to fool us into believing, incorrectly, that the right (wrong) person has been nabbed, so they can put “To Be Continued” across the bottom of the screen.

In future, I have learned, I will just plead ignorance of the Prisoner’s Dilemma when someone offers it as evidence of a statist belief.

After having calmed a bit, it seems I am still distressed about the turbulence in the world. I need to listen to some good jazz. But it is stabilizing, if not reassuring, to see that those who would tighten their grips on our freedoms to intensify their evil ambitions, have not devised any new tricks. The Kabuki is repetitive.

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