The Good Place

Nobody asked but …

This morning I was listening to an older but still excellent iTunes University segment from Robert Higgs. It got me to think about markets *versus* government. Perhaps we think too often of these as mutually exclusive spheres. But what if Murphy's Law is true — that if things can go wrong, they will? Isn't there a counter law to the effect that, if things can go right, they occasionally do? Through observance of the world, we see that most things obey Murphy's Law, and an overwhelming proportion of these things involve government. In truth, sometimes it seems that the sole purpose of government is to carry out elaborate case studies in the inevitability of Murphy's Law. The market, at the same time, initiates evasive action to compensate for the laws of Murphy's government.

This all reminds me of The Good Place, a television dramedy about a perfect place. It also causes me to remember, Candide, Voltaire's novella which satirizes Leibniz's theory that everything is as it should be, in this best of all possible worlds. The catch-22 of The Good Place is that in its detail, it is not perfect. There is an external mysterious government that intends to do the right thing, reward exceptionally good humans with an afterlife that is perfect. Some other mysterious force (could it be the Devil?), however, shows up in the detail.

But … no matter how wrong things go in the Good Place, it persists. Its identification as a Good Place somehow tunnels through or bridges over all the chaos. Could it be that the world today is the Good Place. Despite all the glitches, evolution shambles its way toward an acceptably mediocre reality in which things go wrong, usually, and sometimes a thing may go right. Mises's Human Action produces it all — the government and the market, the ant and the grasshopper. I am implying that the ant presides over mediocre, fallible plans, while the grasshopper does whatever feels good, fails, but survives.

— Kilgore Forelle