

Traffic Control, Beyond Control, On FTC



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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](#).

I reached 73 years old Friday, and there is only one thing that I have seen stay the same throughout each of those years — nothing stays the same. In none of those years, did I ever have a clue in any reliable way what the following year would bring. I have to observe now, looking back, that voluntarism beats the tunket out of trying to stay in control.

Before I launch into this weeks oracular wisdom, let me give you a book recommendation — *The Politically Incorrect Guide to the Constitution*, by Kevin Gutzman. It covers perhaps the grandest experiment in bending Nature to the wills of collections of humans — a failed experiment. I don’t know how I have gone so long without the book. My version is an audiobook from Audible.com.

Roads Have Intersections

All right, I make people uncomfortable at times. I have two very talented English friends to whom I cannot resist speaking with disdain about Winston Churchill, cases in point. A few days ago, I ruffled some feathers in my weekly meeting with my fellow writers at Lifelong Learning. I insisted that natural law can stand up just fine to the rigors of reality without constant clarification (obfuscation?) by the legislators and other legal lunks in our midst.

It actually seemed as though nearly half of the room saw my point (borrowed from my alter ego, Kilgore Forelle in his recent blog, “A Secret Statist Decoder Ring”). My point was that Natural Law is quite exact, hardly ever needing further analysis from the way it applies in the real world. Then one of my colleagues made the last statement by saying something

like, “without artificial law, intersections would be catastrophic!” This is like saying that the entire history of the world has been catastrophic until traffic signals came into general use. The natural law that shines over intersections is that no two things can occupy the same space at the same time. No illogic or fiction can unseat that truth.

I have thought about that quite a bit since yesterday: a sophisticated (fairly lightweighted) version of “Who will build the roads.” Statists can really hang you up the most with that clichéd question — there is usually no answer that they will admit to accepting. I think the answer is very simple — that users will build roads, as they have since the dawn of time. It is a natural animal action. Animals are defined by movement (*anim-*). All animals build paths that are suitable for the uses to which they must put them.

But the question about intersections at least shows slightly more profound thinking. I have a few thoughts on intersections. If intersections were lethal, we would change them physically to lessen the chance of death. At some point the cost in blood overcomes the cost in coin, and you cannot but foolishly pass a law that will make an intersection fatality-free. Enter tunnels and bridges. Or people will take other paths to avoid the carnage.

Traffic lights, and other signals, are not meant actually to control human action, but to give a political appearance that things are in control. Really it is spreading the inconvenience in an egalitarian fashion. It is interesting of late, here in my environs, that people are beginning to experiment with traffic circles. I have heard not too long ago of European innovations where the engineers have eliminated traffic controls, urging instead that drivers proceed with intelligence, caution, and knowledge of consequences. The last I heard is that it was working, improving the movement of people. I have now driven through many overseas roundabouts, clockwise in Brit-world and the opposite elsewhere, and I have never yet had to consult any law book or local wizard to figure out how to succeed. I have also seen web cam views of third world scenes where they either don't believe in traffic signals, or they believe in the goal oriented behavior of human beings. Furthermore, I have driven live through Boston, MA where nobody has formed an opinion one way or the other about traffic control.

When I cited a Web cam that showed a busy market place in an urban district in India, when I said everyone got where they appeared to be going with no traffic control at all, I got a bunch of eyerolls. As if everyone acknowledged that India was a third world country precisely because they had no controls.

To repeat, what are the natural laws that apply in this case? The first is that no two physical objects can be in the same place at the same time. The second is that there can be no reasonable person who has an incentive to destroy themselves and their resources by testing that law. Passing and imposing fictional legislation can change neither of those.

Rothbard Quote #18 — Beyond Control

“With reference to any given act, the environment external to the individual may be divided into two parts: those elements which he believes he cannot control and must leave unchanged, and those which he can alter (or rather, thinks he can alter) to arrive at his ends.” – Murray Rothbard, from Man, Economy, and State

This is complemented by the individual’s internal environment, where she either has the strength and training to do a thing, or she does not. It also must necessarily include recognizing consequences, both those affecting the actor directly and those radiating out to others who may have taken no action which may justify the consequences.

I have a quibble with this phrase, “... cannot control and must leave unchanged ...” It is only a grammatical complaint for I expect that Rothbard and I are on the same page (my default expectation with Rothbard). Most of the problems in the world are caused by the slip between A and B, where A is the mature recognition of limitations and B is in the confines of the mature decision not to go beyond A. Rothbard uses “and” which infers that B follows A, then he uses “must” to infer that no other choice is possible. I quibble with the phrase but I never quibble with Rothbard. Rothbard is a man who has left the world a permanently better place for his having been in it. And I hasten to add that he was never selfish in sharing his wisdom. That he may have penned a sentence, among his millions of shining sentences, that could perhaps have been written to better effect, is an inevitability not a defect. I would change the phrase in a *de minimus* way, to “... cannot control and must **ethically** leave unchanged ... ” It is a matter of choosing between an ethical or unethical course.

This is the inner sanctum of making choices. A great deal of risk management by the ethical voluntarist must go on from here.

Finding the Challenges

It occurred to me this week that I may never have explained the continuing title of this column, *Finding the Challenges*, to you. It’s probably a good thing. Even though I understood the title in a non-verbal way, I was a pretty green newcomer to voluntarism 3 years ago. Again, multifold thanks to Skyler for giving me the chance, then sticking with the experiment for this long.

I was kind of navel-gazing back in the day that Column #1 came out. I had first become a self-id’ed libertarian during the Bush the Younger regime. I learned quickly that it was far

better to argue positively about libertarian principles than it was to explain to wannabee neo-cons why the Bush-Cheney-Rove-Rumsfeld dumvirate was inimical to civilization. So I was still just doing early learning in 2013. I regarded my own continuing education as the challenge.

Since then I have learned that voluntaryism is a dynamic place to be, where everything must be considered *voluntarily*, with *voluntary* principles applied *voluntarily* to circumstances you take on through reasoned *volition*. In every moment of your life, you are challenged to think, to reason, and to act in the most voluntaryist way. An adjunct to this idea is that you, as a voluntaryist, need to unclutter your progress to simplify (not oversimplify) all of your associations. You can only pursue one association at a time. Which would you choose, voluntary associations or coerced associations?

Let's all thank our lucky stars that natural law is even consistent when not revealed to this humble species, humans. Natural law just works, and it manifests itself in simple ways. It does not concern itself with temporal questions such as "who will build the roads?" All things are causally linked to who wants what? Things are not causally linked to how will it happen? Process influences outcomes but there are no products which can survive beyond a non-answer to who will use it.

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