

Orthogonality

Nobody asked but ...

One of my favorite words is orthogonality — perhaps because it is found only rarely. I owe my ownership of the word to my mentor from Kentucky State University, Dr. Terry Magel, formerly head of the Computer Science program. In this particular case, when applied to programming, orthogonality means solving similar problems similarly while solving different problems differently. It also means refraining from reinventing the wheel, if it is unnecessary, but thinking outside the box otherwise.

This government leaves somewhat to be desired in that regard. We continue to solve all problems the same. We act as if history will pave our way into the future. Too many take statism for granted as the problem solver. Some — again far too many — think that casting a vote every 4 years will solve our problems. Others think that threatening people with hurt, fraud, and thievery are the ticket.

We may escape the treadmill by approaching problem solving as that which takes orthogonality: recognizing similarities and differences.

— Kilgore Forelle