

Traveling II, Time, Risk Taking



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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. Archived columns can be found [here](#). FTC-only RSS feed available [here](#).

As time goes by, with the inevitable display and interaction among persons, places, things, and events, you must incorporate the lessons into a voluntary framework of philosophy. Today I will discuss this idea in connection with high intensity personal events — travel, time perception, and risk taking.

Traveling Again

Block Island is lovely in the Spring. In fact, Spring is lovely, and we got to experience it three times this year. We were in South Carolina in the low country in March. Then we had Spring on the farm here in Kentucky in April. And we finished with Spring on Block Island, Rhode Island in May.

I'm never sure that I am leading a perfect text book voluntary life, but whatever, I am enjoying it immensely. And with each voluntaryist principle I absorb, that is to allow it to seek its organic place in my life, I find it becomes more easy to live a naturally fulfilled life.

Mark Twain wrote that "travel is fatal to prejudice," but that's just the tip of it — travel purges all sorts of unsupportable fallacies. While traveling, you are deluged with new facts and conundrums by the minute. The responsibility for navigation is all on you. The immutable thing is that everybody has to be in a place and a time always. If you're traveling, you must negotiate and renegotiate a place for your being continually. You cannot cheat. You must share. You must avoid events (such as disagreements over time and space with others) that will impede your peaceful transit.

This trip has been a time in which I developed a new take on freedom and planning. I learned that planning is not the enemy of volition. Rather it is authoritarian, mandatory, centralized planning that is to be avoided. I had to invest a great deal of planning in this trip, and I had to accommodate a large number of external hardwired facts. Lin and I

wanted to experience this general agenda:

- Two days travel northeasterly
- Visit the Breakers in Newport
- Spend a week on Block Island
- See both lighthouses on the island
- Visit Mark Twain's House in Hartford, Connecticut
- Two days travel southwesterly to home

And we did accomplish all of it and more. We started with a plan, but then we had to flex it around all of the earthbound facts such as travel routes, lodging, eating, ferry schedules, terrain, time, and space. Ferry schedules and reservations, for instance, must be dealt with in terms of body, baggage, and vehicle. The privately owned and operated year-round ferry from Point Judith was the only option this early in the year. These people must run this ferry with a great deal of exactitude to optimize their place in the scheme of things. They have many rules. They are authoritarians in the field of ferrying from Point Judith to Block Island. But all of their clientele has to agree to do business with them voluntarily. Consequently they were very efficient and effective at arranging events that moved people and things between places — and to a person, they were likeable and pleasant. I had no philosophical problems in observing their clear cut rules.

This was in sharp contrast to the way that statisticians handled surface travel, where absurdities would crop up unexpectedly. The biggest mystery was, why was the West Virginia Highway Department filling in holes, that they had created, in the main Interstate passage through their fair capital, Charleston, reducing 4 eastbound lanes to one, in the middle of a Thursday?

On the good side, we saw hardly any smokies. I would guess they were otherwise engaged in pressing the federal government's promotion of seat-belt pre-crime intervention for rewards and prizes. Others might have been assigned to SWAT teams enforcing the repayment of student loans.

Twain Quote #2 — Time

A round man cannot be expected to fit in a square hole right away. He must have time to modify his shape.— Mark Twain

Everything takes time.

If you want to spend your time well in Hartford, Connecticut, you might consider visiting Mark Twain's House, as I and my lovely bride did last Friday. The actual spirit of Twain has

nearly been driven away by the organization that keeps the house open — trade-offs. But if you are as huge a Twain fan as I (and why wouldn't you be?), take your time to modify the shape of your mind to share this unique hole in space and time.

But the reason I have really called on the spirit of Mr. Clemons is to discuss the unswerving necessity of thinking about time in your voluntary life. I have written about time bandits before, but this is a complex topic, so it won't hurt us to look again. By using our present time to look at time itself, we may gain some lost time in the future.

You do not not travel in close proximity to New York City on a Friday afternoon without having a lot of your time being borrowed by many takers. I read a marvelous book a few years back, titled *Faster* and written by James Gleick. The thing that captured my speeding attention was his well presented idea that everyone tries to steal your time in one way or another. They each want you to prioritize building a world according to their blueprint. In the Twain quote above, there is the implication that the round man is being forced to spend his time adapting to someone else's idea of a square portal. He either sacrifices the time, or, if not allowed his own good time, he must give of his roundness, perhaps painfully. And this all begs the question of which hole the man volunteers to occupy.

By the way, if you must be in a Friday afternoon traffic snarl, in the Boswash megalopolis, the Merritt Parkway has an I'll-try-anything-once appeal. It is a lovely ride, and aesthetically it is better at a slow pace. Also, the Merritt, discussed at some length at the above link, is an interesting case in the statist takeover of the road complex. It represents an early step from the only constitutionally prescribed federal roads (the post roads) to the expansion of the monopolization of roads.

Back to specifics, here is what the problem boils down to — every time a bureaucrat builds a public facility for the average, not the peak use, he or she is deciding that your total wait time over all time is less important than his or her short-term budget short fall. And the problem is quite a bit deeper than just bureaucratic pettiness. Beyond the deadly triad — cost, time, quality — of which two deliverables are possible, but at the same time making the third impossible, politicians have no interest in quality. Quality chickens only come to roost long after the election day at hand. Crumbling infrastructure is always the payoff. To the time you had to sit waiting, in underdesigned facilities during peak periods, you must now add waits during average demand times due to obsolescence (averages have changed due to utilization) and unforeseen consequences, and further you must endure more waits for underdesigned repairs to inadequate infrastructure. Bureaucrats have no mechanisms for avoiding these problems, but even if they could there are no mechanisms for holding them accountable. Remember Hazlitt's Lesson — economic successes must succeed for all affected parties in both the long and short terms.

"Fast food" used to mean maybe fast, maybe cheap, but not good quality — now the

emphasis is even more on fast, for the time being. But TANSTAAFL. Time in medical facilities is likely the long term price tag.

Logic Fallacy #27 — Misconception of Risk

It may come as no surprise that I got into a Facebook squabble with someone who claimed that revenue based traffic busts were justified due to their being intended for the pre-crime of increasing risk to others. As the largest part of my professional career was spent in the property and casualty insurance trade, I took away two main ideas — it took me awhile to understand the subtleties of the abstraction called risk, and most people do not understand these ever.

I will most likely give further consideration to the mutating idea of pre-crime in future columns, but here I mention it to add to the context of the misconception of risk. Specifically, there is no rational means of valuing damages as a function of risk. Risk can only be measured in terms of potential damage, but it can only become a crime when it has been validated by damage — when it has ceased to be a risk. Risk is the uncertainty of the likelihood of damage.

My interlocuter was insisting that drivers not wearing seat belts or ignoring rules were increasing risks for innocent people. There is absolutely no precedent for the state guaranteeing anyone a risk-free environment. Every user of any set of facts assumes all of the risk thereof, regardless of who else may be a user. Risk accrues to each individual in every situation. It is only incidental that risk is qualitatively affected by reckless behavior. The important nexus is that damages arise, sometimes, from reckless behavior. Citations for reckless driving usually come from evidence such as death, injury, and/or property damage. Citations for speeding or not wearing seat belts are for pre-crime or pre-negligence. The risk of damages is not an equivalent to actual damages. The risk of victimization is not the same, to either the victim or the culprit, as actual victimization.

Only the person at risk can gauge and manage his or her risktaking. There are limited things that can be done in contemplation of risk. Avoid risk, for instance don't drive in public. Mitigate risk, as in buying insurance. Ignore risk, hoping to defer the consequences. Or understand the risk and accept it as a less costly proactive stance. None of those is a function of anticipatory law enforcement. The pre-crime citation is irrelevant.

Misconstruing the essence of risk garbles one's weighing of the reasonable choices. Delegating risk reduction to a poorly organized constabulary, with their unrelated, peculiar agenda, is a reliance on the impossible.

Yes, it does take time for a round man to fit himself into a square hole. The voluntary decision to pursue such behavior involves time, space, and facts. This is your time. It is your intended space-to-be. These are your facts, both the expected and the unexpected, that you have chosen to impinge on your voluntary life. No one else can navigate these nearly as efficiently and effectively for you as you yourself.

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