

Matt Yglesias

Jul 21st, 2009 at 6:14 pm

Endgame

Forgot to do one of these yesterday:

- Libertarians respond to progressive government by touting nutty alarmist books then cite [“soaring sales” for nutty alarmist books](#) to vindicate alarmism.
- Today in [stilt analogies](#).
- Roundabout fever [keeps on spreading](#).
- Crippling recession in Spain leads to [surge of bank robberies](#).
- Greg Mankiw’s political commentary [is deplorable](#).
- Why do doctors [keep using Body Mass Index](#) when it doesn’t measure anything useful?

Song of the day is the mashup the internet’s been waiting for, Nirvana vs Rick Astley [“Never Gonna Give Your Teen Spirit Up”](#).

- [Comments](#)
- [31](#)

31 Responses to “Endgame”

1. *Donald A. Coffin* Says:

[July 21st, 2009 at 6:26 pm](#)

My primary concern about roundabouts in urban areas (and one that I note is not mentioned in the Slate essay) is that pedestrians now face faster-moving traffic and no well-defined traffic stops/crosswalks at least in some places. And for a pedestrian to get around a roundabout requires crossing a minimum of two traffic corridors instead of a minimum of one. At the very least, roundabouts will require pedestrians to make detours to safer places to cross.

So what do the data show about pedestrian, rather than vehicular, safety?

2. *Song of the Day* Says:

[July 21st, 2009 at 6:32 pm](#)

Where’s that [stupid birfer asshole](#)

Stupid birfer asshole, we hate you!
 You're a stupid birfer asshole,
 Stupid birfer asshole, so: fuck you.

3. *Al* Says:

[July 21st, 2009 at 6:40 pm](#)

— *Greg Mankiw's political commentary is deplorable.*

Mankiw links to the Glittering Eye, which notes that Ezra Klein is a [moron](#).

But I, like Mankiw, enjoy the response to Ezra in comments on Ezra's site: "Your argument is basically, 'But he didn't even address the salient impact of unicorn dust and pixie wings'."

Let's remember that the left-wing believes that health care costs will be contained chiefly through unicorn dust and pixie wings. Because that's how the "reality-based community" rolls.

4. *TRIATHLON* Says:

[July 21st, 2009 at 6:46 pm](#)

(ODS VS OCD)

((ODS) Obama Derangement Syndrome)

Now, this is not a personal attack per say, but more of an attack upon the position held by one John P. Avlon the author of the Independent Nation: How Centrists Can Change American Politics. Which must be some book as his views do not support an Independent Nation, based upon Freedom of Speech, the concept that I may disagree with every word that you speak, but will defend to the death your right to say them. The author does little to give any real arguments put forth by others beyond name calling, anyone who is not in line with the Sermon's from the mount, Washington, D. C. (District of Clowns), is given a label and in his article, The Obama Haters' Next Move, published by the Daily Beast, for which John writes a weekly column at ([WWW.TheDailyBeast.Com.](#)), protected from any real counter-arguments, by the Drudge Legal Beagle System, YOUR BANNED FOR LIVE AND ETERNITY, but considering that both John and Drudge have the same political points of view that anyone who does not seek the wisdom of the Media Messiah Political Rock Star, must then be a Joe McCarthy, suffering from (ODS) Obama Derangement Syndrome, now we will admit to (OCD) Old, Cantankerous, and Deranged, an have a Tee-Shirt to prove it, and a Mohawk better half to attest to it, but (ODS),

Now, John is concerned that being (ODS) is very DANGEROUS, its viral, a sickness or The Far Right Wing Conspiracy Group, an one could take that personal if you were a Republican, but being a Wing-Nut Independent, like Will Rogers, said (They thought that as long as they paid their taxes, tended to their own business, went to their own churches, kept kinder within the law, that that was all they was supposed to do. You, see, we was backward nation and didnt know it.) We Independents are sort of backwards and now John let us know it

(Ask but Don't Tell, Listen but Don't Think)

Now, according to Drudge, John and the Daily Beast, we who are accused of being (ODS) are so dangerous we should not be allowed to Proliferate, suggesting birth control, and the fringe-festival Internet-.sites, are the playground of the devil, its sort of like Rock and Roll, you can't have Elvis seen moving his hips, and the seven dirty words of George Carlin, reaching into talk radio, cable news, the armed services,(Ask but Don't Tell), more like (Listen but don't Think), and even the halls of Congress, first you would have to wake them up or locate them on a junket and you better have cash in hand, or

lobbyist in tow, or they can see or hear you anyway. But, being a backward Independent and not knowing better it had always seemed that if your going to call a group (ODS) you should at least provide a venue for the fool to respond, even Douglas let the fool Lincoln, a piece of wood stage and time to give a defense. But, according to John the Inter-net fringe is too DANGEROUS, to have a say, it would have a corrupting influence on our youth.

(Monsieur Hercule-Savinien De Cyrano de Bergerac)

Now, John is a solid Empire Citizen, a true groupie Rock-Star Media Messiah Groupie and there are a lot out there, and they have their right to their opinions, and the right to express them without fear of ending up like Patrick Henry or Banned for life and all the rest of us Independent Wing-Nut Fringe-Festival, Inter-Net, Wing-nuts want is the same courtesy. John if your knocking together coke bottles and screaming Warriors Come Out An Play, will were ready, and since you won't play on your turf meet us on ours, (<http://WWW.RussiaToday.Com>.) Forums, Features, Take off the Gloves with in Context, or (WWW.BBC.Co.UK.), Peter Marshall After the (100) day storm, Obama's Disunited States, and no you will not be BANNED FOR LIFE, the pen is mightier than the sword, the truth will make you free, like Monsieur Hercule-Savinien De Cyrano de Bergerac, we will meet swords in hand men do not fight merely to win! No-No-better to know one fights in vain, against the ancient enemies of Falsehood, Prejudice, Compromise and Cowardice and never Surrender. And John the Seven Dirty Words won't hurt you, Sticks and Stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me, and you we don't burn books, break recordings or not allow the filming of Elvis wiggling his hips. But we will attack your arguments even if we are (ODS) Wing-nut, Internet-site, dangerous followers of other than the Media Messiah Rock-Star Politician.

(RECOMMENDED READING)

(WWW.RussiaToday.Com), "Obama is pure, unadulterated Evil" (16 July, 2009, 11:34) and Forums-Features-Take off the Gloves with in Context.

(WWW.InfoWars.Com.) Town Hall Confronts Congressman Over Obama Birth Certificate, (20 July, 2009)

(WWW.FreedoMedium.Com.) Obama Signs Executive Order Barring Release of His Birth Certificate.

(WWW.TheDailyBeast.Com.) The Obama Haters' Next Move, John P. Avlon is the author of Independent Nation: How Centrists Can Change American Politics. He writes a weekly column for The Daily Beast. Previously, he served as chief speechwriter for New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani and was a columnist and associate editor for The New York Sun.

(www.NewWestNotes.Com.) Very Best in Empire Propaganda, & Crude Oil Price Reports, Bill Bradley Chief Propagandist.

(WWW.BBC.Co.UK.) Peter Marshall After the (100) day storm, Obama's Disunited States,

5. *live* Says:

[July 21st, 2009 at 6:49 pm](#)

Luckily, I was prompted to quit at "per say."

6. *Anon* Says:

[July 21st, 2009 at 7:07 pm](#)

I have to say, guy, that was one terrible, terrible mashup.

7. *pseudonymous in nc* Says:

[July 21st, 2009 at 7:08 pm](#)

My primary concern about roundabouts in urban areas (and one that I note is not mentioned in the Slate essay) is that pedestrians now face faster-moving traffic and no well-defined traffic stops/crosswalks at least in some places.

A standard setup for roundabouts is to have splitter islands separating the lanes, slowing down entry traffic, signalling to drivers their exit lane, and providing a place to cross, with a “refuge” at half-way. The DOT’s [geometrical guidelines](#) show how it works in a lot of detail.

As I mentioned in the previous thread, I’ve dashed across far too many eight-lane crossroads with no pedestrian phase in the signal sequence. And one point that Vanderbilt makes is that roundabouts usually remove the need for a separate left-turn-only lane at a four-way junction, thus narrowing the road.

8. *Will Allen* Says:

[July 21st, 2009 at 7:42 pm](#)

Yeah, Ezra Klein speculates in a manner which ignores all evidence regarding how political actors and factions actually behave, and what the outcomes are from such behavior, and it is Mankiw’s political commentary which is deplorable. Got it.

9. *areader* Says:

[July 21st, 2009 at 7:45 pm](#)

I just realized that at the Politico, if you write “think piece” in the first sentence, they will publish any bs you can think of.

10. *rea* Says:

[July 21st, 2009 at 8:02 pm](#)

Monsieur Hercule-Savinien De Cyrano de Bergerac)

These, my dear sir, are things you might have said had you some tinge of letters, or of wit to color your discourse. But wit — not so, you never had an atom — and of letters, you need but three to write you down — an Ass.

11. *Hobbes* Says:

[July 21st, 2009 at 9:13 pm](#)

Regarding BMI ...

It’s not primarily doctors.

BMI is entrenched in settings characterized by an institutional need to provide an objective measure of how an individual’s weight relates to “healthiness” and reliance on laypersons to use the measure. In nursing homes, for example, diet techs without any real training/education in nutrition use BMI as a basis for identifying resident’s with weight-related problems and setting goals for weight loss/gain in the resident’s plan of care. This is ostensibly done under the supervision of a dietitian and a nurse but that’s often a rubber stamp applied to cookie-cutter assessment/careplanning.

Physicians, dietitians, and nurses may use BMI of course but when they do so competently, their approach is generally to use it as a screening device or an efficient means of communicating to an individual patient after determining whether or not BMI really applies to them.

12. *The Lorax* Says:

[July 21st, 2009 at 9:43 pm](#)

California got agreement among the ‘Big 5’ on its budget today. It’s all-cuts. The stupid Dems are claiming victory, too (at least *some* of the state remains!). Calitics has good information on it (<http://calitics.com/>).

13. *live* Says:

[July 21st, 2009 at 10:20 pm](#)

The way that melody works over those chords is weird, but I like it.

How do the creators of such things completely isolate the vocals or instrumental parts of the songs they use? I don’t know anything about it.

14. *bbartlog* Says:

[July 21st, 2009 at 10:26 pm](#)

Yeah... singling out these particular items from Mankiw seems really weird. Complaint one, waahh, he didn’t mention these ideas that I think are so great! Well yes, that can happen... but there are a lot of possible reasons, and aren’t there enough sins of commission in the blogosphere that this is a weird thing to complain about? Complaint two, Mankiw is pointing out that Obama is on the verge of doing something he thought was a mistake when others did it; it doesn’t seem particularly mean-spirited to point this out and ask whether he’s just going to let it slide. Really, this is what you call ‘deplorable’? I could only wish that most of the rightwing commentariat rose to this level.

15. *Walt* Says:

[July 21st, 2009 at 11:27 pm](#)

Why would Mankiw address any of Ezra’s substantive points? The Right has ruled that they are all pixie dust. After that, no actual evidence or argument or relationship to the facts are required.

16. *mars* Says:

[July 21st, 2009 at 11:33 pm](#)

OH NO!!!! 0.003667% of the country might start to read *The Road to Serfdom* one day soon!!

(ps: My prediction on those who actually finish: 0.0000%)

17. *Brandon* Says:

[July 22nd, 2009 at 12:05 am](#)

That a progressive would characterize *The Road to Serfdom* as a book of “nutty alarmis[m]” is reason in itself for libertarians, and everyone else, to be alarmed by “progressive government”. Or it’s simply proof this particular progressive jots off blog posts while utterly ignorant. Take your pick.

18. *blah* Says:

[July 22nd, 2009 at 12:34 am](#)

While BMI is not very useful in measuring individual health, except as a crude screening device, it is quite useful in measuring aggregate health of populations and changes over time. It also has the advantage of being a cheap and easy way to measure human body composition on a large scale.

19. *afu* Says:

[July 22nd, 2009 at 2:51 am](#)

BMI is fine for what it is, and it simply is healthier to stay in the middle of the range.

The reason Americans hate BMI is that they hate to admit that obese people are fat because they eat too much. If BMI goes out the window, whatever the next obesity measurement replaces it will be attacked in the same way.

20. *soullite* Says:

[July 22nd, 2009 at 6:04 am](#)

Brandon, it should be noted that Matt is not actually a progressive. He's a neoliberal trying really, really hard to deny the fact that he's a neoliberal.

Afu, people hate the BMI because it's inherently flawed. It doesn't take into account the distribution of weight between fat and muscle. Because of this, body-type alone can make it worthless beyond a very general measurement.

21. *steve duncan* Says:

[July 22nd, 2009 at 8:30 am](#)

We shouldn't stop at casting aside the concept of BMI when it comes to addressing public health. The words or phrases obese, smoking, excess drinking, seat belts, motorcycle helmets, calories, exercise, drug abuse, regular physical exams, medical screening, breast exam, cancer screening, proper sleep and a host of other dangerous and outmoded ideas and technologies should be reexamined for relevancy. Most or all of the above have been foisted upon an unsuspecting public, probably in a secret attempt to destroy their health and welfare. Ignore pleas or advice from anyone you haven't personally known for many decades, unless of course they are part of the medical or public health establishment, in which case they too are merely trying to kill you.

22. *DTM* Says:

[July 22nd, 2009 at 8:59 am](#)

Just to supplement, Chapter 5 of the same document pseudonymous in nc cites includes some British, Dutch, and Norwegian statistics suggesting roundabouts are in fact safer for pedestrians than signalled intersections. Their conclusion is that fewer conflict points, splitter islands, and generally slower speeds explain this effect. Anyway, the full document is here:

[DOT Roundabouts](#)

23. *Bob Roddis* Says:

[July 22nd, 2009 at 9:05 am](#)

So, the tiny flea Yglesias mocks the intellectual giant Friedrich Hayek. Yglesias is completely [unable to articulate](#) even a bare-bones outline of the [Austrian Business Cycle Theory](#), yet he mocks it.

Hayek's thesis in "Road to Serfdom" was that statist economic planning leads to tyranny. The brilliance of Hayek was that he pointed out correctly that the Nazis were Socialists. The implication was that Keynesians were potential Nazis.

In this decade, we have seen the metastasizing of Keynesianism co-extensive with the growth of the national security state, [preventive detention](#) and endless [wars without purpose](#). Hayek sounds right to

me and Yglesias is twice wrong. Again.*

*The only thing Yglesias has ever been right about is that Allen Iverson [just isn't very good](#).

24. *pseudonymous in nc* Says:

[July 22nd, 2009 at 9:14 am](#)

Cultist much, Bobbis?

25. *DTM* Says:

[July 22nd, 2009 at 9:32 am](#)

By the way, I thought the Nirvana/Astley mashup was very smoothly done and yet somehow the whole was less than the sum of the parts for me. But I did like Rick dancing along to the instrumental section.

26. *Bob Roddis* Says:

[July 22nd, 2009 at 9:43 am](#)

To: pseudonymous in nc

Anti-intellectual sycophantic Fascists mock anti-Fascists as cultists?

Rhetorically brilliant.

I love it. Yours might be #3 on the list of all-time top statist comments.

BTW, can we imply that you are calling Glenn Greenwald a cultist too for his criticisms of Obama and preventive detention and endless wars against the Third World?

Gotta love those drone attacks on innocent Pakistani villagers, eh? All paid for by Military Keynesianism.

27. *DTM* Says:

[July 22nd, 2009 at 9:48 am](#)

Also, *The Road to Serfdom* is not a “nutty” book, at least if understood in historical context. Heck, even Keynes gave it a good review, and the better critique is just that subsequent events proved that Hayek was empirically wrong. That can lead to an interesting discussion, just as it is interesting to discuss why Marx was empirically wrong about the inevitable course of capitalism. In other words, it is interesting to ask how “mixed economies” manage to stumble along without actually slipping to either extreme as Marx and Hayek each predicted in part.

In any event, I would much rather people be reading Hayek than Rand. In fact, I think Hayek’s “Why I Am Not a Conservative” should be required reading for anyone claiming to have a libertarian/classic-liberal ideology.

28. *DTM* Says:

[July 22nd, 2009 at 10:18 am](#)

One more random comment: anyone else remember Petey predicting the government was going to take a 100% loss on its guarantees of GE Capital debt offerings through the TLGP? Well, it turns out that GE Capital has prefunded that debt and is exiting from the program ahead of schedule.

29. *joe from Lowell* Says:

[July 22nd, 2009 at 10:41 am](#)

Since Hayek wrote “The Road to Serfdom,” we’ve seen many countries become totalitarian.

Not a single one of them did so via the process described in that book. Not a single country that developed a totalitarian government did so by first adopting economic central planning and then growing that state in response to public demands until it became totalitarian. Every single state that adopted a totalitarian government did so in some other manner. Eastern Europe, China, Southeast Asia, various states in the Greater Middle East, Cuba...you will not find a single example of a totalitarian state that became so in the manner Hayek described.

On the flip side, we’ve seen numerous democratic republics adopt varying degrees of central economic planning. Once again, not a single one of them travelled Hayek’s theorized road. Every single one of them - in Western Europe, in Canada, the Scandinavian states, Israel, various Commonwealth countries - remains a democratic republic.

History FAIL, Mr. Hayek.

Similarly, we’ve seen many democratic republics adopt the sort of central pla

30. *joe from Lowell* Says:

[July 22nd, 2009 at 10:42 am](#)

Special bonus comment for libertarians: Hayek went to great lengths to differentiate between central economic planning, which he disliked and feared would lead to totalitarianism, and the welfare state, which he considered to be the acceptable alternative to central planning.

31. *joe from Lowell* Says:

[July 22nd, 2009 at 10:46 am](#)

The brilliance of Hayek was that he point out correctly that the Nazis were Socialists.

Good night, Gracie.

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