

## On Redundancy

CAUTION: You may be wasting your time by reading this piece, in the same sense that Webmaster may be wasting his time writing such pieces.

*An essay on redundancy, in this section, seems - well - redundant. When Webmaster began the piece (on 1/19/15), it was not clear to him why it had sprung into his consciousness. Its arrival there seemed to have occurred much as was the case with the essay entitled "On Living in the Moment". So Webmaster began to write, again driven by his muse, analyzing - as he wrote - for connections and relevance. He had been inconvenienced that day because the propane tank in his house (named Beside the Point) in the Tanner Creek community had run out. After a series of calls it was determined that the house really needed to have TWO holding tanks and - according to the propane supplier - Webmaster and his wife had simply been 'lucky' that they had not had this problem before. Now the propane was used up because the weather had been cold and Webmaster had been away for some time and etc. In any case, the entire propane heating system was in a sense redundant (the house also has some capacity for heating with 'splits' powered by electricity). But Webmaster has come to value multiple levels of redundancy, even though in most cases they are simply serving as 'back-up' in case something goes wrong. And usually it does not actually matter (to Webmaster) if the thing goes wrong, i.e. it does not really matter if ALL the redundant backups fail and things go totally 'south'. But Webmaster feels the need to have several levels of redundancy and, in many cases it has turned out that the cost of the redundancy can be amortized over a few years and thus, far from being an inconvenience, the act of buying the redundancy turns out to be very cost effective - presuming that Webmaster lives long enough. In this case Webmaster examined the facts at hand and decided that, for various reasons, the extra propane tank would be amortized over 4-5 years. Making the provisional assumption that he was likely to live that long, he recognized that, in addition to the 'value' of not having the inconvenience (running out of propane) recur (or at least the 'peace of mind' of having reduced the probability of such a recurrence), he would actually begin SAVING money after 4-5 years. So he authorized installation of the second tank. Having thus decided, he wanted the job done ASAP and stayed an extra day at Beside the Point - and began to think about his websites (actually he is almost always thinking about his websites). And that is when the topic of redundancy came to mind.*

Webmaster has already stated that there is a great deal of overlap between/ among the various essays in this section; so it follows that there will be some redundancy. But we use the term ""redundancy" many ways and, in this essay, Webmaster is addressing a meaning/usage that may seem odd to some people. The term redundancy, at its root implies that something is duplicated when duplication is not necessary. But hidden in that definition is an inherent conundrum, namely the question of need, i.e. what if the duplication is needed? Put another way, at what point is duplication wasteful and at what point is it useful and thus NOT wasteful? This question is not an abstract one; it has definite

practical implications that Webmaster finds himself repeatedly (redundantly) considering as he prepares this section of essays. And he considers it when he prepares the content pages of his other websites, because he is actually trying to do distinct, but overlapping things with the various websites. And, since he does not know what 'portal' a given visitor used to access a given one of his websites, he cannot know whether that visitor sees the linkages between those websites. So he has put many cross-links in the various websites, referring to the other websites, so that the visitor can see the connections Webmaster sees, in case those connections have not yet become obvious to the visitor.

But that is not the complete story, because Webmaster finds that - as he continues the process of becoming Webmaster - he is in fact building increasing levels of redundancy into his life - both inside the WWW and in the 'real world' that he inhabits during those times (which are increasingly rare) when he is not Webmaster. Here he is using the term redundancy in the sense of 'protection' - for example the sense in which it is used when one speaks of complex machinery (e.g. rockets used in extraterrestrial missions - or other systems controlled by computers) that are doing a job which is complicated, subject to risk and unexpected failure, and whose component parts should therefore have back-up parts - or systems. In this sense redundancy is not simply a necessary waste to be tolerated, but rather an absolute necessity and thus the term redundancy seems inherently inappropriate - almost internally contradictory.

Taking this even further, Webmaster has come to realize that many of the pieces he has written for his various websites have in fact become, in essence, descriptions of how he has come to live his life. And in fact he has incorporated redundancy into his life, to an astonishing (to him) degree. To give an extremely simple, but clear example consider the following:

Webmaster is, as he writes this passage (on 1/20/15), sitting in the very same chair, beside the very same window as he was when he wrote "Marshall's Way" (on the Webmaster Says website). It is a cold January morning. He was just staring out the window at his dock. His boats - Serendipity and Sunbird - have of course been pulled out of the water for winter storage under the house (Beside the Point). All of the above of course is beside the point, except that it establishes the context. Under these conditions he was able to see his oyster float with unusual clarity and he could see that, although the tide is very low, the float is rather far from the dock. This started him thinking about the possibility that the single rope which ties the float to the dock could break. That would be very close to a "Black Swan" effect (see the MORE section of this website; most oyster growers use just one rope on their floats). Webmaster is a recent convert to the practice of growing oysters. He discusses how to grow oysters in a piece on the Adult Learner website. And he has urged members of the Tanner Creek community to grow oysters as an environmentally-sound practice (see the Tanner Creek CA website). In fact he uses the manner in which he came to grow oysters as an exemplar of how important serendipity (the process, not his boat) is to the resolution - as Webmaster sees it - of many problems, including the Costco gas station matter discussed on the Stop Costco Gas website.

Now having said all of this, Webmaster notes that (a) all of these websites

have been mentioned elsewhere on this website (hence their mention here is, albeit in a different context, redundant), (b) almost all of his websites are at least partially about solving problems (again redundancy), and Webmaster - in the sense discussed on The David Coalition website, does not care if any of the problems he is trying to help solve actually get solved. Actually, Webmaster finds himself in a situation where, having built so much redundancy into his life, he very rarely worries about things going south, not just because it does not matter, but because it rarely happens - which gives Webmaster a sort of generalized good feeling. Which, again, is an example of redundancy having a useful effect and thus not really being redundant. So this piece about redundancy, albeit internally logical, is itself largely redundant. But Webmaster has had fun writing it and it seems a shame to waste it so he will post it on this page - while fully understanding that some readers may object to having wasted their time reading a piece on redundancy which began by pointing out that redundancy is often used in the sense of wasteful duplication.