Driving Drunk

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caveat lector

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It's well known to statisticians and apparently unknown to most other people that statistical predictions apply to populations, but not to individuals. That is, it's impossible to calculate a prediction that applies to a population of one, an individual. Only populations greater than one are subject to statistical predictions. The failure to understand that principle is of great significance.

Everybody has the perception that a drunk driver is more likely to cause an accident than is a sober driver. Such a perception is intuitively reasonable but defies rigorous proof. That is, it's impossible to prove that an individual drunk driver is more likely to cause an accident than is an individual sober driver. That's true because it's impossible to calculate the probability for either of them. It's possible to predict, using statistical methods, that within a certain population of drunk drivers, there will be some percentage of accidents. The larger the population of drunk drivers, the more confidence we can have in the prediction. The smaller the population, the less confidence we will have in the prediction. For a population of one, the prediction is impossible. It isn't possible to prove, statistically, that a specific drunk driver will ever cause an accident. He might drive drunk for his entire life and never cause an accident.

Furthermore, while it is possible to calculate the probabilities of accidents within two different populations of drivers, the limitation of such calculations to only populations of drunk drivers versus populations of sober drivers is simplistic. Such a limitation ignores many other circumstances besides intoxication that might impair a driver's ability to drive responsibly. So, depending on various other such circumstances, the probability of an accident within a population of sober drivers might even be higher than it is within a population of drunk drivers. For example, each of the drivers within the population of drunk drivers might not be otherwise impaired while each of the drivers within the population of sober drivers might have just engaged in a terrible argument with his wife and then picked up a lovely blonde female hitchhiker who was showing a lot of cleavage. It's an extreme example, maybe even a facetious example, but it makes the point. To claim that the probability of an accident is higher within a population of drunk drivers than it is within a population of sober drivers, without acknowledging the possibility of other relevant variables, is a statistical analysis that suggests the possibility of an unspoken agenda.

Ultimately, while statistical calculations that predict a certain probability of an occurrence within a population might justify some government policy regarding that population, it's utterly impossible to use a statistical analysis to justify the imposition of any requirement whatsoever on an individual. It isn't acceptable to punish an individual based only upon whim or speculation, even if that whim or speculation follows from a flawed understanding of an inapplicable statistical analysis. To treat a drunk driver differently than a sober driver, based only upon such nonsense, is unjustifiable.

Furthermore, a drunk driver, by the simple fact of driving drunk, doesn't harm anyone. Harm doesn't occur until someone is injured. As previously noted, a drunk driver might drive drunk for his entire life and never cause an accident. Proof to the contrary, before the fact, is impossible. People can be injured just as seriously in acci-

dents that don't involve drunk drivers as in accidents that do involve drunk drivers. The fact of being drunk is irrelevant to the extent of injury that is possible in an accident. Yet, such is the brainwashing that, instantly upon discovery that one of the involved drivers is drunk, the police terminate any attempt to logically assign blame. The drunk driver is assumed to have been the cause of the accident, regardless of the facts.

Obviously, if probability is the only available argument to the contrary, and it is, then we ought to leave drunk drivers alone to go about their business. If a driver causes an accident, then he should be equally guilty, whether or not he was drunk at the time. Although a presumption of innocence for drunk drivers contradicts the brainwashing to which we've all been exposed, even the establishment media have reported results that support such a presumption of innocence. On the NBC Nightly News With Tom Brokaw, on Tuesday, January 7, 1997, NBC's Robert Hager reported the results of a study by the Centers For Disease Control. That study reported that there are about 1 1/2 million alcohol-related arrests each year in the USA but a mere 17,000 alcohol-related deaths per year. There were estimated to be more than 123 million **undetected** incidents per year of drunk driving that **do not** result in deaths, accidents, or even arrests. Mr. Hager conceded that the number of undetected incidents of drunk driving is "a huge number compared to those arrested or causing an accident". The report attempted to use the large number of undetected incidents of drunk driving as proof of the seriousness of the alleged drunk driving "problem". Nobody seemed to notice the obvious fallacy in the argument.

There are fewer than .014% as many alcohol-related deaths as there are drunk drivers. Fewer than 1.2% of drunk driving incidents even comes to the notice of the cops. Therefore, the study reveals a far different problem than its authors tried to claim. When you realize that such a tiny fraction of drunk drivers actually causes a problem, then the proper conclusion is that drunk driving isn't really very dangerous. It isn't very likely to cause an accident.

For such a tiny risk, we've given up our right to be presumed innocent, our right to refuse to incriminate ourselves, our right to remain silent, our right to travel, our right to determine our own level of insurance, and even our right to own a car. To solve such a non-problem, we've allowed the creation of an arrogant and repressive police state enforced by strutting gestapo-style thugs who haunt the roads and highways, using a ridiculous lie to impose their bogus authority on people, and to ruin their lives.

I'm tired of having my liberties trampled at the behest of alarmists who want the government to control everybody but themselves. The members of MADD (et al) are far more dangerous than the drunk drivers that they persecute. At least I can try to dodge the drunk drivers. The machinations of the self-righteous, holier-than-thou proponents of the crusade against drunk drivers are more difficult to avoid. If such alarmist reformers really want to address a serious problem, then they should go to Cambodia or Afghanistan and walk around in the mine fields. That would save at least some of the farm animals, the children, and the farmers who would otherwise step on the mines. Also, it would reduce the number of alarmist reformers in the world. Yes, I know that the supply of them is endless, but every little bit helps.