

TRUST

Last night I was driving from Harrisburg to Lewisburg, Pa., a distance of about eighty miles. It was late. I was late and if anyone asked me how fast I was driving, I'd have to plead¹⁾ the Fifth Amendment²⁾ to avoid self-incrimination³⁾. Several times I got stuck behind a slow-moving truck on a narrow road with a solid white line on my left, and I was clinching my fists with impatience.

At one point along an open highway, I came to a crossroads with a traffic light. I was alone on the road by now, but as I approached the light, it turned red and I braked to a halt. I looked left, right and behind me. Nothing. Not a car, no suggestion of headlights, but there I sat, waiting for the light to change, the only human being for at least a mile in any direction.

I started wondering why I refused to run the light⁴⁾. I was not afraid of being arrested, because there was obviously no cop around, and there certainly would have been no danger in going through it.

Much later that night, after I'd met with a group in Lewisburg and had climbed into bed near midnight, the question of why I'd stopped for that light came back to me. I think I stopped because it's part of a contract⁵⁾ we all have with each other. It's not only the law, but it's an arrangement we have, and we trust each other to honor it: we don't go through red lights. Like most of us, I'm more apt to⁶⁾ be restrained from doing something bad by the social convention that disapproves of it than by any law against it.

It's amazing that we ever trust each other to do the right thing, isn't it? And we do, too. Trust is our first inclination⁷⁾. We have to make a deliberate⁸⁾ decision to mistrust someone or to be suspicious or skeptical⁹⁾. Those attitudes don't come naturally to us.

It's a damn good thing too, because the whole structure of our society depends on mutual trust, not distrust. This whole thing we have going for us would fall apart if we didn't trust each other most of the time. We do what we say we'll do; we show up when we say we'll show up; we deliver when we say we'll deliver; and we pay when we say we'll pay. We trust each other in these matters, and when we don't do what we've promised, it's a deviation¹⁰⁾ from the normal. It happens often that we don't act in good faith and in a trustworthy manner, but we still consider it unusual, and we're angry or disappointed with the person or organization that violates¹¹⁾ the trust we have in them.

I was so proud of myself for stopping for the red light that night.

by Andy Rooney

信任

昨天晚上我驾车从哈里斯堡驶往宾西法尼亚州的刘易斯堡，路程约为80英里。天色已晚。我迟到了，如果有人问我行驶速度有多快，我得求助于美国宪法的第五条修正案，不要自证有罪。我好几次被堵在一辆开得缓慢的卡车后面，路面很窄，而且我左边是不可超越的白线，于是我捏紧双拳，有点按捺不住了。

在公路的某一处，我行驶到了有交通灯的一个十字路口。这时路上只剩下我一个了，但当我快到路口时，交通灯变成了红灯，于是我刹了车。我左看右看，又向后面望了望。毫无动静。没有车子，也没有车灯的影儿，但我就那么坐在那儿，等着红灯变绿，方圆一英里内就我一个人。

我开始想，为什么我不闯红灯呢？我不怕被抓着，因为很明显周围并没有警察，闯红灯肯定也不会有什么危险。

那天夜里，我在刘易斯堡会见了一些朋友，接近午夜时上床后，我又回想起了我为什么要停下来而不闯过去呢。我想，我停了下来，是因为它是我们相互间的一种公约。这不仅是法律，而且也是我们共有的一个协议；我们互相信任，都要遵守：我们不能闯红灯。像我们大多数人一样，我要善于克制自己，不做社会行为准则不许做的坏事，而不仅是因为有法律禁止它。

我们从来都是彼此信任会做正确的事，这难道不令人惊奇吗？我们也是这样的。信任是我们的第一本能。要让我们不信任某人，猜疑，不相信，那是非常不容易的，因为这种态度对我们很不自然。

这也是一件很好的事情，因为我们整个社会结构是靠互相信任而不是猜疑来维系的。如果我们大部分时间互不信任，那么整个社会秩序将崩溃。我们说到做到；我们说什么时候到场，就什么时候到场；我们说什么时候交货，就什么时候交货；我们说什么时候付款，就什么时候付款。在这些问题上，我们互相信任，要是我们违约的话，那是不正常的。虽然我们常发生不守信用事，但我们仍认为这是不正常的；对有负我们对其信任的个人或组织，我们感到生气或失望。

我为那天晚上没有闯红灯而感到骄傲。

NOTE 注释：

1. plead [pli:d] vt. [律] 作为答辩提出，为（案件等）辩护
2. Fifth Amendment 《美国宪法修正案》第五条（主要规定在刑事案中任何人不得被迫自证其罪）
3. self-incrimination 自证其罪（指刑事案件中的作不利于自己或者有可能使自己受到刑事起诉的证言，美国宪法认定此种证言不合法）
4. run the light [主美] 闯过（红色交通信号灯）
5. contract ['kɒntrækt] n. 合同，契约，婚约
6. apt to do sth. (习性) 易于...的，有... 倾向的
7. inclination [ˌɪnklɪ'neɪʃən] n. (性格上的) 倾向，意向
8. deliberate [dɪ'libəreɪt] adj. 慎重的，深思熟虑的
9. skeptical ['skeptɪkəl] adj. 怀疑的
10. deviation [di:vi'eɪʃən] n. 背离
11. violate ['vaɪəleɪt] vt. 违反，违背