

Words Poorly Used #116 — Right

A way of achieving lawlessness is to have too many laws. A way of gaining inarticulation is to overload words with too many meanings. The word, “right,” is overloaded beyond recognition. The word, “right,” might be the most poorly used of all. It was misused in Athens and Rome, among other places, to designate licenses to certain members of aristocratic classes.

As an example, here is a current usage of the word, “right:” an American has a “right” to self-defense. The meaning of the word, “right,” needs to be considerably more precise for this idea to be concise. The Second Amendment of the ten amendments comprising the Bill of Rights only bars finagling with a thing called the right to keep and bear arms, a begging of the question since the provenance of such a right is not addressed.

The right exists by decree (of whom?) The Second Amendment limps along only because the sole legislative body in its purview is told, “hands off!” (not very effectively, I might add. Congress itself harbors a great deal of confusion about the definition of “infringement.”)

— Kilgore Forelle