

Fallacy #9, Thought-Word-Deed, Spooner Quote #2



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"Finding the Challenges" is an original column appearing every other Wednesday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Verbal Vol. Verbal is a software engineer, college professor, corporate information officer, life long student, farmer, libertarian, literarian, student of computer science and self-ordering phenomena. Archived columns can be found here. FTC-only RSS feed available here.

My father, 93 and 1/2 years old on this past Monday, has hovered at the edge of life for the past ten days. But today, he shaved and brushed his hair, and explained to me in some detail how to find a bridge that my grandfather had built in 1927, which bridge is now rusting away on an abandoned Casey County, Kentucky road to nowhere. But he seems to be doing much better now. He will live to curmudge anew. Then last Thursday I had my left big toe broken, nay, mashed, in three places by our second-most mammoth quarter horse, who decided that his hoof would occupy the same time and space as my foot. I have told you before that no two different things can be in the same space at the same time — and now I have demonstrated it. Add to that the chance affliction of my beautiful bride's large horticultural collection with scale, and the breakdown of our Kawasaki Mule farm vehicle. You might see that this past week has not been among my favorites.

This litany of frustrations is provided as part of an apology if you do not find this column's efforts to be up to par. The writing of today's column has been one of my few joys as of late.

I have still tried to bring you some matters worth your time — there is another discussion of a logic fallacy, I have juxtaposed an eloquent quote from Lysander Spooner with the impending 4th of July observances, and I have expanded on my ideas on how thoughts, words, and deeds interrelate.

Fallacy #9 - Texas Sharpshooter

If you want to start a war, this is an industrial strength logic fallacy, the Texas Sharpshooter. The name comes from the idea that someone can shoot three or so bullets into the side of a barn, then go and paint a bull's-eye to contain the bullet holes. When I was younger, in art class and faced with the blank page yips, I used to just do a non-

descript doodle, then I would dress it up with a face, body, and appendages. Sometimes it looked OK.

Two notable, historically significant instances come to mind. Virtually everything that FDR said and did, no matter how oddball or self-serving, had had an ever widening bull's-eye. A specific case, for example, was when he encircled two bullet holes, the one where he told American mothers that he would never send their sons to war, unless it was the last resort, and his announcement of the Pearl Harbor attack, characterizing it as the goad to calling the last resort. Then he neatly included the Japanese-American concentration camps, the promotion of the United Nations, the buddying up to Stalin, and the betrayal of Eastern Europe within the scope of his marksmanship.

The second case involved the entire drumbeat for war against Saddam Hussein and Iraq; WMD, hoax evidence, the deck of cards, the aluminum tubes, *ad infinitum*. In my view, this case arose from an ideological oligarchy who took pages from the books of neo-cons throughout history — the Judases, the lagos, the Alexander Hamiltons, all the evil whisperers in the ears of kings.

I also have four cats, who will always act, no matter how ridiculous their behavior, as though the stupid thing they did was exactly what they meant to do. They bear a strong resemblance, in that regard, to Dick Cheney and/or Joe Biden — neither would retract a lie for love nor money.

The fish tale is another, more human and usually far less damaging version of this fallacy. The size of the fish that got away is whatever will fill the bull's eye. Actually, the artful collection of unrelated facts into a grand lie is the very essence of politicking.

Sometimes this looks OK. It is not until blood and treasure has been spilled in copious amounts that a few critical thinkers begin to see the scam.

When you doubt that this outrageous fogging of good people's minds runs long and deep, think about almost any "New Deal" initiative. Ask yourself, when will the United Nations become obsolete?

Thought, Word, Deed

Over in the blog recently, Kilgore Forelle observed that the speed of thought beggars the speed of words. And we may extend this further to observe that it takes uncountable words, thought, spoken, written, read, heard, and understood to translate into a deed (of course we are confining ourselves to contemplated deeds, not the mindless actions of a fight-or-flight reaction to immediate threats). Although, this is not a strictly linear process. Every thought does not result in a word, nor does every word create an impact within a deed. In fact, most deeds are exceedingly meager when seen against the thoughts and

words that led up to the deed. And certainly the mind considers choices at a far greater clip than that at which the mouth or pen formulates a single choice.

I feel sure of the concept that the great deeds of humanity come from a very careful or very fortunate navigation of these waters. And, on the other hand, the great debacles, the failures, the catastrophes come from hasty shortcuts, unpredicted acts of nature, and poor helmsmanship. For example, ...

Lysander Spooner Quote #2

If our fathers, in 1776, had acknowledged the principle that a majority had the right to rule the minority, we should never have become a nation; for they were in a small minority, as compared with those who claimed the right to rule over them.

I have chosen this specific quote to acknowledge that the day we call “Independence” Day occurs this week, but also to take a fresh look at the ideas surrounding that day.

Spoooner makes a number of points in a short space here. In my view, Spooner at least implies these notions:

- Popular acceptance is a far cry from a sign of what is the right thing to do.
- There is most surely a shadow of doubt whether they had in mind to form a nation.
- Majority rule is tragically impractical if applied to an arbitrary, unbounded set of people.
- Parliamentary procedures are not extensible beyond a well defined set of parameters.
- There is no indication in the Declaration that a resulting government would be **by** the people or **of** the people, and there is only the merest hint that it would be **for** the people.

And he implies, to me, that one really has to unpack the notion that our founders had a highly detailed idea of how their view of life would translate into the future. If I hadn't already picked another logic fallacy for this week's column, I might as well have done this one — the incorrect presumption by statistis that since the current state is amenable to their authoritarian principles, then the founders must have intended its current authoritarian form.

I will return to some of these points in further columns for more analysis, but my point here in this “Independence” week is to plant the question in your minds of what is it that we are celebrating with our fireworks and picnics?

May life present us all with voluntary choices in the weeks to come. While we await whatever events are in store, let us take care to remember that we cannot take a great deal of credit or blame for the world that whirls about us. We might have seen that horse's hoof coming, but then again, we didn't. We may get to spend more time with our loved ones, and perhaps we can help them with a personal challenge. Just don't spend too much time drawing bulls-eyes around the adventures.

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