

Fallacy Again, The Constitution, The State and War



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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](#).

In this column, we will continue to examine logic fallacies. It may take a multitude of columns to explore this topic well. We will also look at the thing that may make us or break us as a nation, the notion that our Constitution serves us well — and we will focus on the man who, in my opinion, has the most perceptive view of the Constitution and its consequences. And finally we will explore the palindrome of war and state — state and war.

Continuing with Logic Fallacies

Fallacies — let's do an oldie (but a baddie) this time, one with which we have all suffered many moments of frustration. The Straw Man — and its scurrilous little cousin of "when did you stop beating your spouse?"

A straw man is fashioned by one participant in a debate, mostly because they know they can knock it over. For instance, a person may present an issue that is blatantly a negative — with this issue in place, he can easily and conclusively attack it, but he may also create in the minds of others that someone else is actually a proponent of this negative idea.

An example might be that a public school official blurs the question of government monopoly by only arguing that education should not be terminated. All of the people in the discussion agree that education is a laudable goal, but each time they offer an alternative to government education, the government educator treats it as an attack on education itself — not as a suggestion for other constructive methods. In the same event, he is avoiding the central question and he is creating a false impression that the other participants are out to destroy education.

Related to the Straw Man is the Leading Question, which creates a false set of options for the discussion. "When did you stop abusing your spouse?" There are negative effects for any answer to this question. The aggressor has taken the moral high ground, implying that

she is in a superior position, making other positions adversarial, on lower ground, and on the defensive. A respondent is expected to confess or to recover her credibility instead of discussing the original issue.

Any of us can spot the most egregious straw men, like only government can do roads or that soldiers fighting half a world away are protecting those of us back home. But some straw men can be extremely subtle, confusing, and emotionally charged. We can defeat the obvious straw men by withholding our time and patience, but we must stay alert, and more acutely discerning, for the more subtle, cunning, clever, and engineered straw men.

Check back to the last FTC to think about how the Straw Man may also be an example of impairing the stasis point. For all of the fallacies we will cover, one or two at a time, it will be useful to see their connectedness. A logic fallacy may be disguised by layering it with other fallacies.

The straw man, along with the *ad hominem*, are extremely insidious because they hide in plain sight. People use them as knee-jerk reaction so often that our culture is accustomed falsely to perceiving them as true argumentation. Most people use them honestly as defense or avoidance mechanisms. The trouble is that there is no true discussion taking place while these fallacies are being considered. As bad money drives good money out of a market, illogic drives logic out of discourse. A voluntarist seeks to resist any purposeful or unconscious use of these gambits.

The US Constitution

"If you're still wondering if the US Constitution of 1787 failed to protect liberty, then just look around you. That scrap of parchment is an obvious failure. The US government is the hugest government in the world and meddles in the lives of its citizens (and people worldwide) in every way imaginable. The government accepts no limits on its power whatsoever. The president rules by decree." – Ryan McMaken

Would you buy a new car with the foreknowledge that you would never be able to get rid of it? How would you view an agreement on the use of that vehicle that, regardless of any change in conditions, prevented you from making any voluntary choice about the disposition of that transportation? What if you were bound by a pact that was made for you, not by you, but disallowed you from ever replacing that auto or augmenting its use by alternatives and mandated that you endure all costs consequential to its rule? And then,

surprisingly because this lump of synthetics has no innate intelligence, it begins to make its own choices and drags you along for the ride!

While Americans of today would obviously leap at the chance to re-establish the Constitution, we are prevented from such intervention by bureaucratic hoops of fire. The process for re-establishing the Constitution as a meaningful protection of the people from the abuse of government power is an unknown process, and the barriers to a dialog on how to go about reform are profuse and mysterious as well.

So we did buy a vehicle back in the 18th century, a purported vehicle for self-rule. But what we got was worse than a lemon, it is a load of manure. The constitution is a checklist of ways in which the oligarchy can manipulate us.

I have often wondered why Lysander Spooner is so little known among contemporary citizens. His writings in the mid-19th century were as cogent an exposition of the switcheroo that had been pulled on Americans as it is possible to explain. But, thinking about it, where is the big surprise? That a man who was stripping the sham that is the oligarchy was suppressed should be no revelation. Have you read Spooner? Have you shared Spooner with your acquaintances? What do you believe that Spooner has left out? Most of Spooner's writings are available, often free. His writing is crystal clear, logical, and lean. To my knowledge, no one has gainsaid his principles. In short, there is no reasonable reason not to know Lysander Spooner.

There are many great champions of liberty, before and after Spooner, but the fact is that he ably consolidated the wisdom of his predecessors and established the scope for his successors. I cannot imagine an intellectual life without Jefferson, Paine, Bastiat, Twain, Mencken, Rothbard, and Higgs, but reading them without an understanding of Spooner would leave one less than half enlightened.

The State and War

We have a chicken and egg problem. What would be the most effective way to end the death grip that states have on the society of humans? End war. What would be a highly efficient means to stop war? End the states. This is the fatal combine.

We know what causes our despair, but we shrink from acknowledging it. No matter what your system of beliefs or the extent of your knowledge and wisdom, you must regard the fact that humans alone have the power of reason as miraculous. But how, using the power of reason, could we look at war as anything but the failure of our species? Aren't we, so far, a failed experiment in a genus endowed with problem-solving capabilities and a vast memory? And is not the presence of war a total condemnation of our human race, unless and until we ourselves can bring war to an end?

All of the marvelous accomplishments of mankind do not make us anything in the face of our failure to solve the problem of war.

In closing, we can reflect on these three topics above — are we blessed with the power of logic or not? Why are we so distracted by appearances and pomp and circumstance? Can't we see through these mirages? Must our deliberations always be fogged with fallacies. Why do we allow others to dictate to us what our traditions should be? And why can't we solve the single most devastating social problem that we have, war, and why can't we recognize that the state perpetuates and thrives upon war, and the dead, and the yet-to-die.

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