

Movie View #6, Spooner #14, False Process



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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](#).

The more I cover logic fallacies, the more examples that raise their ugly heads. Skyler wrote an outstanding piece this week on labels. How many times will we have to repeat that the labels, no matter how ingenious, are not the things labeled. Each of the topics I cover this week are in part made more profound phenomena because of labeling problems.

Voluntaryist Movie View #6 — "Lonely Are the Brave"

I don't know how they came up with the title of this movie. I would call it "Steadfast Are the True." But apparently loneliness and faux courage resonates with the Saturday matinee crowd. We have seen that reaffirmed with "American Sniper".

This is a cult movie that has flown under the radar for over half a century. I believe Kirk Douglas has called it his favorite. Many people today do not even know of the existence of this motion picture. It didn't even come out on DVD until a few years ago, and it remains scarce today. Rotten Tomatoes describes the work as "a hymn to rugged individualism and freedom slowly being strangled to death by voracious urban development." Viewing it philosophically, I would say every word in this blurb is a masterpiece of understatement.

The plot concerns an anachronistic cowboy, Jack Burns, played impeccably by Douglas, who with his horse is out-of-place in the modern (60s) world. The other main character is Walter Matthau as Morey Johnson, an old-time sheriff in the vein of Walt Longmire or Ed Tom Bell ("No Country for Old Men"). Morey is not without a somewhat heroic aspect himself, a law man with an individualists' code of behavior.

Was there a label for these heroes? Not really, they were too complex for simplistic labels. Whenever I see someone trying to reduce another human to a tidy character in a play, I rejoice in the words of Walt Whitman, "Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes."

I will not belabor the plot here nor deliver any spoilers. I can, however, recommend this film wholeheartedly for any voluntaryist. I was 19 years old when I saw it for the first time. It hit me like a freight train. I was going to be on Jack Burns' side from there on out. I would always thereafter respect individual human beings, and be intensely skeptical of institutions.

Spooner Quote #14

A government that can at pleasure accuse, shoot, and hang men, as traitors, for the one general offence of refusing to surrender themselves and their property unreservedly to its arbitrary will, can practice any and all special and particular oppressions it pleases. The result — and a natural one — has been that we have had governments, State and national, devoted to nearly every grade and species of crime that governments have ever practised upon their victims; and these crimes have culminated in a war that has cost a million of lives; a war carried on, upon one side, for chattel slavery, and on the other for political slavery; upon neither for liberty, justice, or truth. And these crimes have been committed, and this war waged, by men, and the descendants of men, who, less than a hundred years ago, said that all men were equal, and could owe neither service to individuals, nor allegiance to governments, except with their own consent.

Lysander Spooner and Jack Burns have much in common, principally the ability and the will to think for themselves, and then the sense of self-worth that it takes to speak out for the individual.

In this passage, Spooner speaks out against the crime of slavery, the crime of war, and how the two compound to historic heights of evil. He cites the overwhelming irony of these unparalleled crimes being committed by men and their descendents who had labeled themselves as guardians of the idea that all men are created equal.

Logic Fallacy #23 — False Process

This logic fallacy arises through the confusion of intent with causes and effects. The difference is the same as that between "I wish" and "I act." Politics provides overflowing

sources of examples. Spooner calls out an example where the process was called republicanism, representative government with founding principles, but the acts and results were slavery and war.

Sometimes, politicians really do “intend” to follow through on campaign promises, but the record indicates that they very seldom “act” in a way to achieve the promised result. If they act at all, they usually initiate some sort of process composed of shiny objects and spinning wheels. In the best cases they “intend” that the process will eventuate to the goal, but in the political case the process is there to look like something is being done — it is intended to take longer than the memory of 50% of the voters will last.

Here are some more good examples: the Doomsday Device and Immigration Control programs.

- *The Doomsday Device* that led to World War I was an interlocking set of alliances among the monarchies of Europe, promoted by their military masterminds, said to guarantee peace. The relationships were so arranged that the presumption was that if any element of the imperialistic monarchical world, that covered Europe, Asia, and Africa at the time misbehaved then an unimaginable war would be unleashed. The royalists who ran the world in those days felt that none but a madman would pull the lynchpin that held the Doomsday Device in check. It was sort of like the Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) idea found later in the Cold War. Of course, the war was ignited by a lone assassin who was not part of the Royal Military brain trusts of the day. Since most of those who put forth the Doomsday Device were sabre-rattlers of the first order, I doubt the sincerity and real intent of the plan.
- *Immigration Control Programs* may have control in the title but the only control intended is of the voters. Neither of the major parties or their politicians give a fig whether immigration is controlled. They just want the small but vocal voting blocs that cling to one side or the other of the question. They don't care how much their dog and pony shows cost the taxpayer, either. I mean seriously, a fence on the Mexican border? They might as well put stacks of FRNs 22 feet high as a barrier. I don't know what galls more, the cost or how stupid they think we are.

All of these con games have labeling problems. In fact, the labels themselves are meant to obscure either the intent, the results, or both.

My next column will mark two years that I have shared more-or-less bi-weekly voluntaryist ideas with you. I am grateful beyond words for this opportunity, and I am indebted to every reader at EVC. And I will not be guilty of mislabeling when I say that Skyler Collins is an incredibly important person in the bringing of the light of voluntaryism to all of us.

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