

# Spooner Quote #7, Logic Fallacy #14, The Most Important Issue



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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.*

This column will feature “ambiguity.” Let me be perfectly clear on that. As a pundit once said, I paraphrase, protestations of clarity are a tacit acknowledgement that some things are not perfectly clear. This is part of the human comedy, but we must be aware that there are many who would take advantage of our mirth.

I will use a Lysander Spooner quote to illustrate how responsibility to self, not reliance on others, is a way to fend off ambiguity as regards our needs for security. Then I will launch a head-on attack on the logic fallacy based on ambiguity. I would think it likely that you, the readers, when you have finished my third topic, push polling, will conclude that ambiguity is both a feature and a bug in human communication.

## **Spooner Quote #7**

*If a man wants “protection,” he is competent to make his own bargains for it; and nobody has any occasion to rob him, in order to “protect” him against his will.*

But the political establishment insists that only they can protect. The state insists on a monopoly for the use of violence, it is arbitrary in its use of violence and its selection of where protection will be afforded, it insists on defining what will be perceived as its purposes, and it arbitrarily favors those whom it sees as its allies.

My take on what Lysander Spooner wrote is a paraphrase of what a former basketball scorekeeper for the Western Kentucky Hilltoppers once allowed, “There’s no reason to lose,

if you're the one keeping score." Can you rely on the state to keep score regarding your wants and needs? No! Anyone who buys the promise of protection from one who does not share your interests does not understand that "protection" has a million meanings.

### **Logic Fallacy #14 — Ambiguity**

Whenever we use deliberate or predetermined obscurity for the purpose of concealing relevant issues in the discussion at hand, we are committing aggression through ambiguity. Ambiguity is the acknowledgement that things can have two or more meanings. Richard Nixon was famous for saying, "Let me be perfectly clear." This was always a sign that he was pulling the wool over our eyes. In a larger sense, this is true of all politicians, whenever, and in each specific case when they claim to be shedding light on any topic.

An everyday example of the illogical use of ambiguity is the use of catch phrases, acronyms, abbreviations, and inside baseball. A catch phrase is such as "defending the homeland," wherein that phrase may mean something different to each person who perceives it — an unlimited number of meanings. An acronym is such as FBI or OSHA, where there is zero explicit meaning — in fact it is a cloak hiding whatever specific behaviors actually occur inside the perimeter of the shortened phrase. All of these ambiguities are intended to imply emotional content which it is the duty of hearers to provide. Abbreviations essentially are a class of buzzwords — buzzwords to create buzz not clarity. I use the term "inside baseball" to raise in your mind the helplessness that one suffers when others are trying to shut them out with specialized language; the denizens of the legal system are particularly good at this kind of manipulation.

The logic fallacy of ambiguity, in fact, is a superset of logic fallacies *in toto*. Every logic fallacy has the consequence of creating ambiguity, substituting illogic for logic.

### **What is the Most Important Issue to You**

One of our local semi-pro political pundits, an excellent restaurateur, was holding forth yesterday about what politicians should do — they should go to peoples' houses and ask them what matters to them (the people person). That immediately caused me to flash back to a telephone survey that I had been the victim of the previous evening. Ambiguity was lathered on with relish by the engineers of the survey as well as the surveyor himself.

First, let's dispel the notion that any politician gives a damn about what concerns a people person. They care only for hot-button and wedge issues. These issues are not naturally arising concerns of the people. These *h-b & w* issues are manipulators that have been cultivated by the backoffice politicians — distractions. They are issues for which the politicians know that there is no practical accountability. Education is a great example; at any point in

time the vast majority of the people persons feel that public education can be improved, therefore any politician can promise change, implement any kind of change, claim that the change is working, then ride it out until the next politician comes along. It is the same for reducing taxes, slimming down government, fighting the wars on drugs, poverty, and terror, and securing our borders. These are not genuine issues, they are phobias in incubation.

Now let's talk about the telephone survey. This invaded my tranquility Monday night, courtesy of the skulking spalpeen who has masqueraded as one of our state's senators for 30 years. You know who I mean, the winner of the *Yertle the Turtle* look-a-like contest who is not named Rand Paul (OK, OK, I apologize for this mean-spiritedness — I know the opposition is just as evil). I got the usual question about who I was going to vote for, the republican, the democrat, the libertarian. I answered "none of the above," but the surveyor selected "undecided" for me. This alone should have sparked my indignation. Then he asked me if I were going to vote actually, and when I said "no," he voiced satisfaction. Since I wasn't going to vote for his man, at least he didn't have to count me as a likely voter. Now, here is the kicker: he says "good, which of the following is the issue most important to you?" And he ticked off four wedge issues, none of which I could have cared less about. I would have loved to say, "Get the hell out of Iraq, and stay the hell out of Iraq," but that wasn't a choice. So, without serious thought I selected "protecting my second amendment rights" as the least poorly worded choice.

I am repenting at my leisure today — whether or not I have a weapon is a matter of a solely voluntary nature. I have a natural right to protect myself and my associations and the time and space in which I live. There is nothing a politician can do to alter that fundamental reality. Even if I have a gun askew of current bureaucratic control, it is a matter of my choice not his. I will do what I do regardless of what may be the temporary legislative and regulatory fashions in the District of Columbia — if that imperils me, I will address the risk voluntarily.

Be that as it may, what really ticked me off was that the "issues" listed were all gray areas about which the senator could take any position. He could say, for instance, "among Kentuckians X % were concerned about protecting their second amendment rights, an issue upon which my stance has been crystal clear for 3 decades (as in, he has joined the NRA in compromising away our natural rights while claiming to champion our rights). Likewise, he could amplify his non-accountable position on any of the "issues" among the closed (incomplete) set presented by the telephone surveyors. I was duped, but I won't be duped again. That is, however, like a sigh in a tempest. There is no outcome of that survey that could not be used as a distortion in the campaign.

The question, seriously, is why are politicians so cynical, so calloused, that they don't care about the human heartbreak caused by their stupid manipulations? Why is it that they are

at the opposite pole of forthrightness when it comes to being straight with us, much less becoming a reliable representative for us?

In my last column, I wrote on the logic fallacy known as *Special Pleading*, or moving the goal posts. The kind of “push polling” that I complain of here is exactly that. The politician and his henchmen declare, in effect, “we are unconcerned with what your agenda may be, we will give you an agenda. The agenda will be so nondescript that we cannot possibly be held accountable to it. Because the agenda contains only apparent goals, these goals can be moved in any way at any time to avoid actual reporting of consequences.”

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We don't have to look far when it comes to *finding the challenges* of communication, particularly when they relate to the noise in the channel (noise is the result of inefficiency in the process). We can lump the challenges into one, the determination of true clarity — there is a perfect transfer of relevant information, with no excise for the process. In a practical sense, we can use this view to be aware of when politicians are offering us nothing for something (they play, you pay). It is structurally impossible for one person to represent many, the fundamental ruse of government, therefore all political promises must be lies. The liars will beat you with delusion, forked meaning, and a steadfast refusal to be steadfast.

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