

The Nattering Nabobs of Nihilism, Spooner Quote #4, Fallacy #11



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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 week's offering focuses on whether one shall manage her life by listening to her self, or if she will be driven by those who have no legitimate ownership of her.

We will look at those who would convince the mob that violence was in their best interests. Then we will visit with our friend, Lysander Spooner, to see how he would guide us toward inner consideration of choices, rather than choices based on external representations. And at the end, we will look at techniques that beguilers may use to cloud our views of our own choices.

The Nattering Nabobs of Nihilism

Spiro Agnew, in the days before he was run out of the veep's office on a rail, used to be a pit bull for Richard Nixon. He specialized in alliteration, and he referred to Nixon's critics as the **nattering nabobs of negativism**. I'm borrowing two-thirds of that epithet because nothing suits the neo-cons quite so well, the **nattering neo-con nabobs of nihilism**. It is quite clear after the most recent decade and a half that these numbskulls would rather rule a planet destroyed by war than live in a peaceful land that is a potential paradise.

What have we learned from these bellicose boys? What about the WMD in Iraq? What about Afghanistan's harboring of Al Qaeda, which quickly bled into a purge of the very same Taliban whom Uncle Sam had funded in the first place.

Dick Cheney's lies, for instance, have become so blatant that he even got called out by a Fox News pundit, recently. Please note that I am not attacking Cheney's partisan politics, The last 14 years of Barack and Dubya, Hillary and Condoleeza, Kerry, and Powell, Cheney and Biden have shown that the nominal party affiliation doesn't amount to a hill of beans.

Each party must answer for their Wilsons, Roosevelts, Trumans, Johnsons, Nixons, and Bushes.

As voluntaryists, we will frequently encounter Randolph Bourne's observation that, "War is the health of the state," and within this expression of 7 words we will find the simple answer. The state becomes powerful when at war. And those who would vicariously draw personal power from the state therefor lust for the times at which the source of power is strongest.

This bald ambition, however, must be tempered by what appear to be rational supports for war. Warmongers claim such motives as bringing democracy to the tyrannized or wanting to elevate certain ethnic groups or suppressed groups to modernity. But the story changes from case to case. The enduring record, nevertheless, is a bewildering set of excuses for war.

But the hypocrisy becomes clear when these nattering nabobs, these neo-cons, seize on every wrinkle in international calm to begin beating the drums of war again ... Syria, Iran, Iraq again, back to Iran, the Crimea, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Georgia, *ad infinitum*. Every problem is made to look like a nail, and they are selling hammers.

What must we voluntaryists do about this constant din of warmongering? We need to focus. What, in our individual lives, is the goal — peace or war? If you believe in the non-aggression principle, in the Golden Rule, in reason, in self-ownership, the answer to the question is so compelling as to make the question itself absurd. Remember that the nattering nabobs of nihilism are trying to convince you that up is down, that war is peace, that love is hate, that you are not your own, that you are theirs.

Spooner Quote #4

If we have forgotten the import of non-aggression, the Golden Rule, and self-ownership, then we should let Lysander Spooner restate it thus:

These conditions are simply these: viz., first, that each man shall do, towards every other, all that justice requires him to do; as, for example, that he shall pay his debts, that he shall return borrowed or stolen property to its owner, and that he shall make reparation for any injury he may have done to the person or property of another.

The second condition is, that each man shall abstain from doing to another, anything which justice forbids him to do; as, for example,

that he shall abstain from committing theft, robbery, arson, murder, or any other crime against the person or property of another.

So long as these conditions are fulfilled, men are at peace, and ought to remain at peace, with each other. [source]

This is natural law. It is within the rational choice scheme for any human. We do not need solons on the hill handing down pronouncements to let us know how to live. And think, why do we need artificial legislation? We don't. The very existence of artificial legislation is a probable sign that someone is trying to use artificial rules to make us believe that which our natural law would tell us is not true, is not just.

Man-made law is too often an attempt to alter that which is natural, furthermore it can be misused by those of wrong intent to impose unnatural conditions, such as slavery, on others.

Logic Fallacy #11 -The Loaded Question

The classic loaded question is “when did you stop beating your wife?” The intent is to draw you in to a false dichotomy that makes you look guilty, or selfish. Maybe some of you unschoolers have encountered such a tactic — don't you want your children to learn? When did you stop teaching your children?

This is a trick. This is a technique known as framing the debate. It artificially limits the range of the discussion to only those choices which the attacker wants to allow. In the above segment on warmongering, the sabre rattlers always seek to limit the choices to cowardice or a headlong rush to war.

There are always choices outside the loaded question's ambit. The power of the loaded question is, however, that listening third parties cannot “unhear” it. Lawyers often ask such questions in front of juries, so even when the judge has overruled the question, it still cannot be unheard by the jury.

The insidious power of the loaded question is that it establishes also an implied recognition of fact. The fact would be that the respondent had actually beat his wife. The establishment of that idea as a would-be fact, clouds the idea that it is very unlikely to be a fact, that it is a conditional question with an unstated “if.” At the very least it creates uncertainty in both the respondent and the observer.

Outside of the courtroom, the way to deal with the loaded question is to kill it in a way that

leaves a larger effect. Reply with “you must be a wife beater, else you wouldn’t presume that others are.” “When did you stop indoctrinating your children?” “When will you stop the knee-jerk cheerleading for war?” Put the onus on the questioner, and do not redirect the question to yourself — always use only second-person and third-person references in your response.

Being self sufficient, being inner directed, is not easy, but the penalties for failing to do so are hard. You must always consider your own counsel, consider your instincts, respect your inclinations. Listen to those whom you also respect, but never abandon the vessel, your life, that only you can navigate. You will encounter incessant tides of meaningless noise. But seek the simplicity within every complexity. Do not be deterred by misinformation, regardless of whether it appears to be for good or for evil.

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