

Words Poorly Used #75 — Problem

“ ... there is always a well-known solution to every human problem — neat, plausible, and wrong.” — H. L. Mencken

Why is this true? Firstly, we have to recognize that this may not be true in all cases. After all, it is a simple solution for explaining human error — a persistent problem underlying other problems. So, Mencken’s observation may not be absolute, but it is a powerful demonstration of what is practically true. Any one of us may live a lifetime without seeing a “neat, plausible, and correct” solution. We also may never see a neat (standalone, uninvolved) problem. Problems come in squadrons entangled in wires, webs, nets, tendrils, embedding goo. A simple solution tends to render the rest of the mess more impenetrable. Humans, particularly politicians, exploit problems — even making them up when no real difficulty is at hand. More on this elsewhere at EVC.

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