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GUNS ARE INNOCENT OF THEIR USE IN HUMAN HANDS

BY EDWIN KAGIN

*The slaughter of the innocents in schools has revived once again the argument that guns are responsible for these pathetic deaths.*

*If, it is argued, the firearms so basely used has magazines holding less ammunition, then the killings would have produced a lower body count. Such reasoning is obscene and demeans the memory of those so tragically slain.*

Ed, whether the reasoning is obscene or demeaning is irrelevant to the issue of whether or not it is true. Many true things are obscene and demeaning ... deal with it.

You are attempting an argument by appealing to emotion.

*For the pedantic, such an argument is known as the post hoc ergo propter hoc logical fallacy.*

Ed, it isn't pedantic to refer to the Latin ... only pompous.

*We can see its use by others but not by ourselves,*

Ed, I believe that's what I just pointed out ... to you.

*It is a fallacy of causation, like “Because firearms with large ammunition magazine capacity were used to kill the children, the guns, and their magazines, were the cause of the deaths of the children.”*

Ed, you are committing a straw man fallacy by attributing that position to your opponents. A gun cannot kill anyone by itself; and a magazine cannot cause the deaths of anyone by itself. Your opponents are not making that claim.

*This fallacy of reasoning promises to once again infect the American debate on the issue of guns and on the ownership thereof.*

Ed, that's true. But the fallacy isn't the one you're referring to; it's the one you just committed.

*If, it is argued, guns of certain types (or all guns), and magazines of certain types (or all magazines), and certain types of ammunition (or all ammunition) were to be banned, then there would be no more school murders by maniacs.*

Ed, another straw man. No rational person would be naive enough to believe that these disasters would no longer occur. What they argue, is that there would be fewer and less severe disasters.

*If, it is falsely reasoned, such weapons had been banned before the horror, the children would not have been murdered.*

Ed, at the rate you are creating straw man arguments, you'll soon be able to open your own cornfield.

*The argument is hydra-headed and should be rejected by rational people.*

Ed, they can't be rejected by rational people because they were straw man arguments, and therefore, only existed in the mind of the person creating them ... you.

*The availability of the firearm, the magazines, and the ammunition used have absolutely nothing to do with the perceived notions of some that such availability caused, or permitted, the insane actions of the killer.*

Ed, you left out the word that your opponents would have used, "facilitate." The availability facilitated the actions of the killers.

*And the corollary belief that, without such availability, so many would not now mourn the irreparable loss caused, they believe, by the gun, the magazine, and the ammunition, is dangerous defective. Some of this fallacious argument is grounded in lack of knowledge and some in just plain lies.*

Ed, so far, all the fallacies ... have been yours.

*One such assertion is that no one “needs” a weapon of the sort used. The need for such is irrelevant. It is lawful to own one, or several, such. And this right is firmly grounded in the Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.*

Ed, perhaps you would be so kind as to quote that part of the 2nd Amendment which supports your assertion that it is lawful to own "such a weapon?"

*One could perhaps argue incorrectly that this guarantee is a bad idea.*

Ed, inserting the word "incorrectly" is called "poisoning the well"; and yes, that was another logical fallacy.

*But it is a guarantee nevertheless.*

Ed, it IS a guarantee; but it doesn't guarantee what you are claiming it guarantees. The right to bear a musket is not the same as the right to bear an automatic weapon.

*The way to abolish it is not to argue that the 2nd Amendment is something that it is not, but rather to repeal the amendment.*

So far Ed, you're the one who seems to be arguing that it is something that it is not.

*And, in so doing, to lay down a welcome mat for tyrants.*

Ed, that's called the "Slippery Slope" logical fallacy. Ed, by the time we get to the end of this essay, is it your intention to demonstrate the use of every logical fallacy?

*The weapon involved in the recent school carnage has been incorrectly called an “assault rifle.” Decisions of the magnitude urged should not stand on the incorrect use of this emotionally weighted term.*

Ed, I just looked up the "emotionally weighted term" and guess what? "Assault rifle" is not an emotionally weighted term but a word defined in the dictionary. And guess what else? It also accurately described the weapon used in the massacre we are discussing.

That means you're the one who is trying to avoid the correct use of the word by referring to it as an "emotionally weighted term."

Ed, that wasn't so much a logical fallacy, as it was, just plain old dishonesty.

*An assault rifle has, by its most basic definition, the ability to fire, and to keep firing, bullets so long as the trigger is depressed.*

Ed, your statement would be true if you had added "as long as ammunition is supplied."

*The trigger can be pulled once, and held back until three, or whatever, shots have been fired. When the trigger is released, the gun quits firing. This is not the weapon under attack, for such assault rifles have been unlawful for most private ownership for many years—ever since it was concluded by the ancestors of today’s gun-banners that banning such firearms would prevent mass killings.*

Ed, no one is naive enough to expect that we can prevent mass killings. The best we can hope for is to make them less frequent and hurt fewer people.

*The firearm used was not an assault rifle, but was rather a “semi-automatic rifle.” This also has a precise meaning. A semi-automatic rifle, or handgun, is one that can fire once each time the trigger is depressed and can continue to fire a shot with each trigger pull until the “magazine” holding the cartridges is empty. To fire three shots the trigger would have to be pulled three times.*

*Some semi-automatic rifles have been made to look like true assault rifles. But they are not assault rifles because they are not capable of full automatic fire. They are no more assault rifles than a cap gun is a Colt .45.*

*The debate to come will also feature various statistics designed to show that the post hoc logical fallacy of the gun-banners’ argument is not a logical fallacy. All such attempts will fail, because the gun has nothing to do with the way in which it is used.*

Ed, didn't we already ride this pony? You know, the horse named "Straw Man."

*If one wants to play with statistics, it can be shown that crime in America has actually gone down since the repeal of the last gun ban.*

Ed, need I remind you "Correlation does not prove Causality?"

There are many reasons that can explain why crime has decreased. What your argument needs to show, is that that decrease was related to repealing this "gun ban" you are referring to. Good luck with that one.

*It can also be shown that violent crime has gone down wherever it has been made lawful for citizens to carry concealed deadly weapons.*

Ed, now you're just quoting Fox News. Worldwide statistics prove that assertion to be false.

*And blaming and banning guns is simply not the solution.*

Excellent point Ed, arming the kids is the obvious solution.

*Such actions obscure the real, and largely unknown, reason or reasons why such killers do as they do.*

Ed, what evidence do you offer to support your assertion that gun bans obscure the reasons why killers "do as they do?"

*President Lincoln was killed by a single shot from a single shot Derringer. No one blamed, or tried to ban, Derringers.*

Ed, that is a false analogy on so many levels.

Ed, what do you have: a list of logical fallacies in front of you that you are trying to go through?

Is this a test?

*Many people, including children, were killed in Oklahoma City by a truck bomb filled with fertilizer. No one blamed, or tried to ban, fertilizer.*

Ed, now you're just making yourself look bad. It's obvious you're getting tired and should have stopped while you were behind.

*We do not blame water for murders by drowning.*

Ed, please. Lie down. You're going beyond silly now. You're not helping your argument by tripling down on your false analogies.

*The act is the problem, not the means of its accomplishment.*

Ed, your view is too simplistic. Both are factors in the disaster. To promote your Fox News agenda, you are ignoring half the problem and pretending that the solution lies only in dealing with the human half.

Unfortunately, humans are a long way from civilization, and it is likely to be a very long time before that half of the problem can be brought under control. Attacking the other half, the half you are pretending doesn't exist, is far easier and more effective.

*We do not blame matches for arson.*

Jesus H. Christ Ed, 4 false analogies?

Oh no. I just looked ahead, and you've got more. If I have to read many more of these analogies, I think I'm going to use my Glock ... on myself.

*We do not blame alcoholism on alcohol.*

Ed, perhaps you would be so kind as to explain how it would be possible to be an alcoholic ... without alcohol?

*And we should not blame insane murders on guns. To do so avoids looking for the true reasons—perhaps reasons we would rather not hear—and puts an ineffective bandage on an open wound that will erupt again with knives, clubs, and rocks.*

Gee Ed, how many of those kids do you figure he would have killed with "knives, clubs, or rocks?"

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THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

Eyes Work Without Connection to Brain

For the first time, scientists have shown that transplanted eyes located far outside the head in a vertebrate animal model can confer vision without a direct neural connection to the brain.

One of the big challenges is to understand how the brain and body adapt to large changes in organization. This research reveals the brain's remarkable plasticity to process visual data coming from misplaced eyes, even when they are located far from the head.

A primary goal in medicine is to one day be able to restore the function of damaged or missing sensory structures through the use of biological or artificial replacement components. There are many implications of this study, but the primary one from a medical standpoint is that we may not need to make specific connections to the brain when treating sensory disorders such as blindness.

In this experiment, the team surgically removed donor embryo eye primordia, marked with fluorescent proteins, and grafted them into the posterior region of recipient embryos. This induced the growth of ectopic eyes. The recipients' natural eyes were removed, leaving only the ectopic eyes.

Fluorescence microscopy revealed various innervation patterns but none of the animals developed nerves that connected the ectopic eyes to the brain or cranial region.

To determine if the ectopic eyes conveyed visual information, the team developed a computer-controlled visual training system in which quadrants of water were illuminated by either red or blue LED lights. The system could administer a mild electric shock to tadpoles swimming in a particular quadrant. A motion tracking system outfitted with a camera and a computer program allowed the scientists to monitor and record the tadpoles' motion and speed.

The team made exciting discoveries: Just over 19 percent of the animals with optic nerves that connected to the spine demonstrated learned responses to the lights. They swam away from the red light while the blue light stimulated natural movement.

Their response to the lights elicited during the experiments was no different from that of a control group of tadpoles with natural eyes intact. Furthermore, this response was not demonstrated by eyeless tadpoles or tadpoles that did not receive any electrical shock.

No one would have guessed that eyes on the flank of a tadpole could see, especially when wired only to the spinal cord and not the brain. The findings suggest a remarkable plasticity in the brain's ability to incorporate signals from various body regions into behavioral programs that had evolved with a specific and different body plan.

Ectopic eyes performed visual function. The brain recognized visual data from eyes that impinged on the spinal cord.

One of the most fascinating areas for future investigation, is the question of exactly how the brain recognizes that the electrical signals coming from tissue near the gut is to be interpreted as visual data.

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FAMOUS QUOTES

THOMAS JEFFERSON (no biography - previously quoted)

"The Christian god can easily be pictured as virtually the same god

as the many ancient gods of past civilizations.

The Christian god is a three headed monster; cruel, vengeful and capricious.

If one wishes to know more of this raging, three headed beast-like god,

one only needs to look at the caliber of people who say they serve him.

They are always of two classes: fools and hypocrites."