

Are We Entitled To Our Opinions?

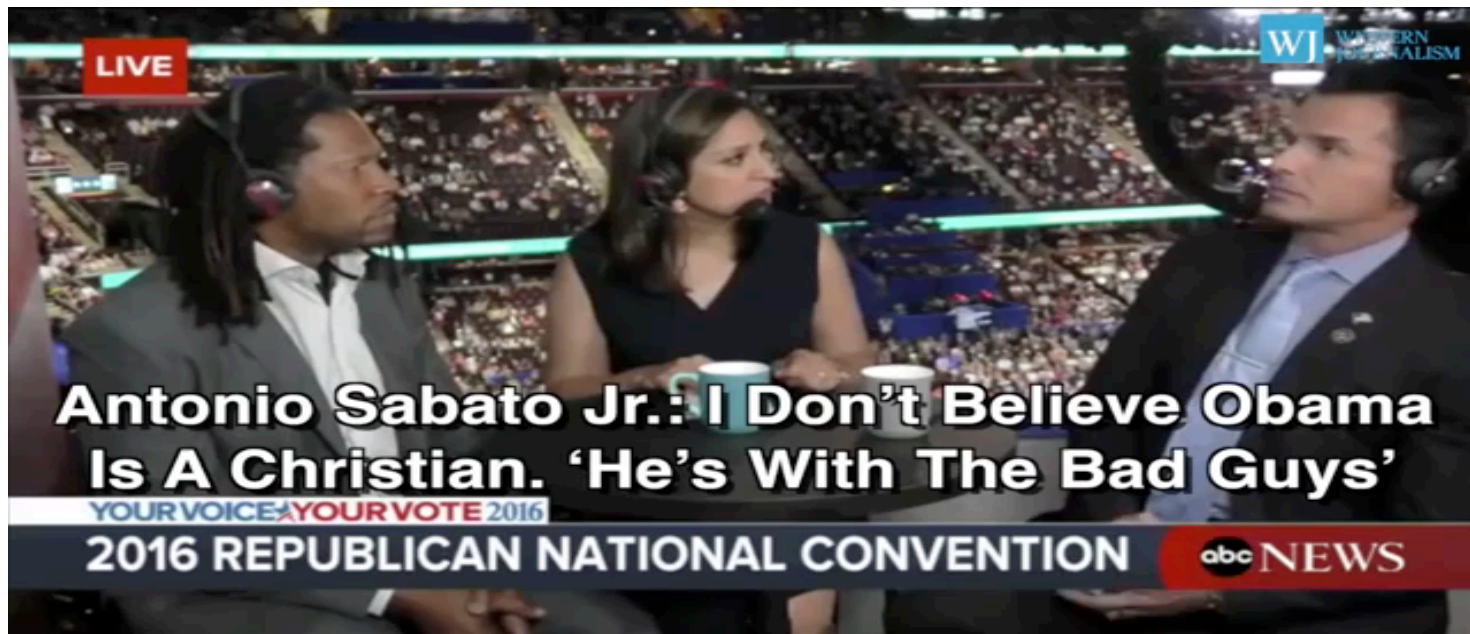
Issue Number One

Entitlement = Right

An Example of the Issue ...

- Example:

- <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/video/actor-antonio-sabato-jr-trump-40686053>
- How is he using the term right here? Is he using it in the legal sense or the epistemic sense? How does he think he is using it?



Fallacy

- An error in logical reasoning
- Two Types (More on this later on)
 - 1) Formal – Argument contains a **structural error**
 - 2) Informal – Argument contains a **content error**

Situation #1

- Chris
 - Holds and argues the view that President Trump is not concerned with his campaign promises and that his failure to immediately get rid of Obama Care is an example of that.
- John
 - Holds the view that President Trump does care about his campaign promises and that he has shown that he wants to implement the best health care plan that will benefit the most amount of people
 - Important point: John also provides solid evidence to support his position.
- Note: Not saying that any of this IS true ...

To note:

- Chris' Response:
 - "Well, I guess that you have a right to your opinion and I have a right to mine."
 - "We are both entitles to our opinions."
 - Have we ever heard a statement like this
- The use of such a statement is a fallacy
 - Fallacy is the idea that this is actually a logical / legitimate response to the evidence that John provides

To note:

- Chris' Response:
 - "Well, I guess that you have a right to your opinion and I have a right to mine."
 - "We are both entitles to our opinions."
 - Have we ever heard a statement like this
- The use of such a statement is a fallacy
 - Fallacy is the idea that this is actually a logical / legitimate response to the evidence that John provides
 - **This only changes the subject of the original debate**

General Rule to Keep In Mind ...

- Rule: If the opinions to which we are “entitled” have any chance of falsehood, then they cannot be used to end a debate
 - However – they can be used as points to investigate in a debate → as long as we then investigate them

Revised Situation #1

- Okay ... How about this then → *Should we (can we) instead understand the claim that we have a right to our opinions to mean that we have a right for our opinions to be true?*

Revised Situation #1

- *Should we (can we) instead understand the claim that we have a right to our opinions to mean that we have a right for our opinions to be true?*
- Two Problems:
 - 1) It is ridiculous!
 - 2) Bigger Problem: **Results in a contradiction to the very right itself** → making the right itself irrelevant
 - → Why?
 - If we ever have an opinion that turns out to be false, that right would be violated.
 - To find out if our right is being violated, we would have to solve the original issue

Okay... then why do people still believe that they have a right to their opinions?

- Easy Answer: **Equivocation**
 - Slipping between multiple meanings of a term – in this case the term right

Okay... then why do people still believe that they have a right to their opinions?

- Easy Answer: **Equivocation**
 - Slipping between multiple meanings of a term – in this case the term right
- **Right** can be understood in two key ways
 - 1) **Legal Right** (in terms of law)
 - 2) **Epistemic Right** (Epistemology: the study of knowledge and truth) - so right in this sense = in terms of truth)

Issue:

- Just because you are in a legal sense entitled to your opinion, does not mean that in an epistemic sense your opinion is well supported by evidence
- It is to make the following argument:
 - **P1) If an opinion is supported by evidence, then an individual is entitled to that opinion.**
 - **P2) I am entitled to my opinion (as is everyone else)**
 - **C) Therefore, my opinion is well supported by evidence.**

Two Fold Problem

- Fallacies
 - 1) Fallacy of Equivocation (informal fallacy) → In this case slipping between the meaning of the word right and then drawing a single conclusion from those different meanings
 - 2) Affirming the Consequent (Formal Fallacy) → *next slide*

Two Fold Problem

- Fallacies

Original Argument:

P1) If an opinion is supported by evidence, then an individual is entitled to that opinion.

P2) I am entitled to my opinion (as is everyone else)

C) Therefore, my opinion is well supported by evidence.

- 2) Affirming the Consequent (Formal Fallacy)

- Conditional Claim and Conditional Argument

- If “p” then “q” → Conditional Claim Form ($p \rightarrow q$) – *remember this from Monday ...*
 - $p \rightarrow q$ - This argument form as represented by the variables is
 - q **invalid** – the conclusion does not necessarily follow from
 - Therefore p the truth of the premises
 - Even IF both premises are true, the conclusion COULD still be false = invalid
 - So any argument that has this form would also be invalid/bad

How can we test it?

- One way to test the form:
 - *Analogy Test – simply replace the variables with different terms and see if the conclusion is one that must be true if the premises are true*
 - *For example:*
 - *P1: If John is running, then John is moving* $p \rightarrow q$
 - *P2: John is moving* q
 - *THEREFORE: John is running* $\text{TH: } p$
 - ISSUES?

Is the notion of “right” itself a fallacy?

- Easy answer → NO

The notion of right...

- **Right** is defined by the duties that the right entails or demands of others
- For example: Right to Life --- think about the duty that this right demands of someone else
 - Meaning: if you did have that right, what would it mean others could not do?
 - Now ask how possible it is (or would be) for another to abide by that duty
 - I.E., Does the right entail or result in a contradiction
 - If possible = a right that we could actually argue you have (or at least discuss more) -- if impossible ... sorry, not a right

Test: I Have A Right to My Opinions Epistemically

- Duties....
 - 1) Would I have a duty to agree with you?
 - 2) Would I have a duty to listen to your opinions?

Test: Right to My Opinions

- Duties....
 - 1) Would I have a duty to agree with you?
 - 2) Would I have a duty to listen to your opinions?
 - 3) Am I obligated to let you keep it? What about if I know its wrong?

KEY POINT:

- Anyone interested in truth would never take offense (serious offense at least) when his or her opinion is legitimately questioned
- Thus to say “I have a right to my opinions” in terms of epistemology is to actually say ... what?
- See the example below (from earlier):
 - <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/video/actor-antonio-sabato-jr-trump-40686053>
 - What is the issue with what he says around minute 5:00? How is he using the term right here? Is he using it in the legal sense or the epistemic sense?