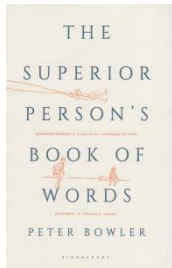


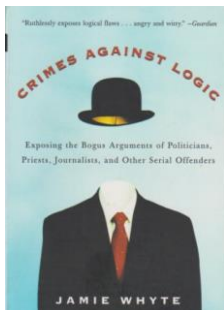


Contact Email for October 2017

My thoughts this month turn to what we write, the language we use and what we try to sell in our reports, or the questionnaires we write. To "sell" doesn't necessarily mean a cash transaction; it can also mean to get over a different idea. One book where you can find words that can both make reports that read knowledgeable, when they really aren't; or find words that seem to be praise but certainly do not. One such word is "*fabulist*" which looks to the ignorant to mean something like fabulous. Whereas it is actually a fancy way of saying you're a "*liar*". On the other hand it is worth remembering the word "*battology*" when you are writing in response to someone else's report, or having to reply to a speech or a paper. The word refers to the continual reiteration of the same word or phrases in speech or writing which politicians always use.



The second book I want to draw to your attention is one that that ought to be compulsory reading for Applied Sociologists, Academics, Consultants and all those listed on the front of this book. As the 'Times' reviewer puts it:



"The author (a New Zealander and former Cambridge lecturer), whets a long knife of ultra-rationalism on the cold stone of logic, and death by a thousand cuts is inflicted on prejudice, statistics, morality, religion, weasel words, and seductive sirens such as politicians, New Agers, advertising executives, and, of course, journalists who expect you to be persuaded by anything other than facts."

The author's brief go at Sociologists is: "It is a strength, not a weakness, of an attempted refutation that it draws on the mundanely familiar. Yet in the academic humanities (literary studies, sociology, and the like), where being sexy is the fashion, refutations are often dismissed on precisely this ground. For example, most humanities students and many academics claim that truth is culturally relative, so that what is true depends on what is the generally held view in the culture concerned. This relativism about truth is inconsistent with some very well known facts, such as the fact that the earth orbited the sun in A.D. 900. Cultural relativism entails, on the contrary, that in A.D. 900 the sun orbited the earth. This is what people then believed, so it was then true." If this is true about sociology, then I don't know about it. However, if it is true, then I am with the author. However, I don't always agree with the author, but that is a good thing because above all else he makes you think about what you say and write and draws to your attention to the way other people misuse language to convince you about the right of their dominant theory.

I have commented on the language used in questionnaires before, but here is a book that goes much further. The applied Sociologist must be a report writer; this is not the same as being an essay writer. Reports must be in the simplest form possible, with no use of jargon words from sociology or any other discipline, except they can be used if necessary, only if they are commonplace in the world of the report recipients.

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