

Political words become code words, slogans, are front-end loaded with virtues and values and rear-end loaded with arrogance and blindness. As political *rhetoric* is the manipulation of these phonemes in the interest of persuasion, political *semanitics* is the examination of their sememes in the interest of truth. Accordingly, rhetoricians and semasiologists are natural enemies; and, as I am, more in religion than in politics, both, this battle is fought primarily within me. But my mission, now, is more toward truth than toward persuasion; thus, many thinksheets are attacks on un/consciously fraudulent language-use. Instance this here effort to be honest to "pro-life" (3Feb85 CCT).

1. Some words are "hallowed" by tradition, as is God's "Name" in the KJV Lord's Prayer. Others are deliberately "haloed," have halos put on them for rhetorical effect. My concern here is with the use of both types of word as "holophrasms" (Web.: "expressing a complex of ideas by a single word")....In the current abortion-controversy, "pro-life" is a haloed holophrasm threatening truth and the public tranquility. Since today is Lincoln's Birthday 1985, let's have a look at "freedom," of which he's some sort of symbol.

2. M.L.King, Jr. haloed, by holophrasm, the hallowed word "freedom"-- as in his Lincoln Memorial repetition "Let freedom ring!" That is the verbal fact that made that speech nation-class and world-class. His political reference was to the drive for all citizens' equal access to the American society politically, economically, socially. So Tutu is now using the word for S.Africa, where the racial majority is the reverse of ours. (Moving from Anglo-Saxon "freedom" to Latin "liberty" and thus "liberation"--the effecting of liberty--we should note the now-little-used Greek word "eleuterism," Web. "zeal for freedom." English is three-level, and looking at all three levels often clarifies what's going on in language-use. A solid principle: movement toward Greek-English improves clarity, movement toward A-S improves richness--as

"freedom" means more than "liberty." Beware of the illusion that A-S riches can be had by coming in on the Latin or Greek: "freedom" is not to be had simply by successful "liberation.")

3. Lincoln stood against two freedoms: (1) for slaves in their 1860 locations, and (2) for states, from the federal government. He was against the abolitionists and the secessionists, who claimed the right of self-determination (a right haloed by Wilson for the world long after Wash. succeeded in crushing the South's claim for it). AL started a war against minority rights.

Sneaky tactics against abortion

It's hypocritical to use sneaky tactics to support a moral cause, but the anti-abortionists do just that.

There they go again in a Times letter today that implies that "all denominations" are anti-abortion. My denomination -- the United Church of Christ (on Cape Cod, "Congregational") -- has been strongly anti-anti-abortion longer than we've had the Supreme Court (1973) decision legalizing abortion. We have a long record of "pro-choice" fighting, including leading the fight against slavery.

Now notice the sneakiness of "pro-life":

1. It makes us pro-choicers "pro-death," which is the antonym of "pro-life." We are as much pro-life as they are. The question is not whether one is for life, but how one is for life.

2. What, then, is this "life" the pro-lifers are for?

Is it God's life, against the death of God? Obviously not, though anti-abortionists sprinkle religious words throughout their rhetoric.

It is cosmic life, all life derivative from God? Clearly, no.

It is planetary life, earth-life, the life of the biosphere? Definitely not:

quite the opposite! Anyone truly concerned about our thin earth-sky layer of life-support groans with the groaning earth over the imbalances, wastes, and pollutions caused by the super-success of our species in comparison with the other species. "Reverence for life" should not be shrunk down to reverence for human life, certainly not to reverence for fetal life. Japan and China are leading the way in using government persuasion (not coercion) against excessive births -- a position morally higher than pro-lifers, who want to use law to coerce against abortion.

Is it human life, then, that the pro-lifers are for? No, they show no evidence of looking at the whole picture of human beings in society -- what happened before Roe vs. Wade (e.g., 99% of abortions were without medical safeguards; and the quality of life for unwanted children was dismal to the point of hopelessness).

Is it maternal life, the life of pregnant women, that pro-lifers are for? Hardly -- that's what pro-choicers are for.

So it's fetal life the pro-lifers are for. Why are they not honest enough, then, to call themselves "pro-fetus"?

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4. All the facts in paragraph #3 are accurate. Why, then, does it seem skewed? Because I'm not using the words with their usual rhetorical slanting "up North" and now almost everywhere in the country. As a Northerner living in the pre-WWII "Great Southland," I became familiar with the South's rhetorical slanting of words describing the Civil War (excuse me: "The War Between the States": the war was "civil" only in Wash. perspective: from the viewpoint of the governments of the seceding states, it was a states'-rights war, as are many of the little wars now going on in 1985). When Hitler hit, he replaced Lincoln as hate-target in many Southern hearts.

5. For Lincoln, "the rights of the minority" was a dangerous, subversive notion rendering democracy (as he understood it) impossible. "The peace movement" (arguing for gradualism in human relations--immigrant labor in the North, slave labor in the South--, and for noninterference from Wash. vis-a-vis states choosing peaceful separation from Wash.) was against Lincoln, who perceived the situation as win/lose on the secession issue. Anti-Lincoln preachers said (1) that Lincoln's war, in addition to being devastating to each side, would leave a century-long legacy of bitterness, and (2) peaceful secession would lead soon to reconciliation with Wash. as slavery abated (conscience moving the nation, as it'd earlier moved Britain, in that direction). To the peace movement, Lincoln was a hothead; to the secession movement, he was a tyrant (with which word Booth assassinated him). Are you sure that in being "pro-war," he was right? Should he have turned over US mil. installations (beginning with Ft. Sumter) to the seceding states?

6. Look what's happened to "the rights of the minority"! Think of its twists and turns at home, abroad, and in the UN since WWII! Sometimes it means the minority who are ecopolitically powerless; sometimes the minority who are temporarily out of office; sometimes it means the minority who have the power (e.g., "capitalists," "the multinational corporations," the Politburo, the Afrikaaners). Let's look at that last one: how secure the rights of the Afrikaaners? They already have "the right of self-determination": do they have the right to preserve their way of life (Dutch-English European Calvinist)? If so, what political arrangement with the black majority could guarantee that right? If not, should minorities have the right to preserve their way of life? (Again, 1860-65: The minority South, fearing the rising abolitionist tide, sought by secession to preserve its way of life. Today, by comparison, how much more complex is the Afrikaaners' situation! Wash. took from the South the right of self-determination: should the world take that right from the Afrikaans government? It's only specious to claim that the Afrikaans way of life could be maintained if the black 80% were given "one-man-one-vote": that way of life would be as swamped as was the South's way of life by abolitionism.)

7. To liberal America, "discrimination" is a dirty, even demonic, word: everybody's to be "liberated" for everything, including bisexuals for pastoring. All are to have equal-power suffrage (rather than, e.g., proportionate power: e.g., in S. Africa, 1 nonblack vote = 5 black votes). The pressures of constituencies seem the chief factor in liberal opinion. And slogan-driven "principles" serve in place of vision--as this to me from a national church office desk: "you neither seem to understand the Christian principles...nor the realities of the situation in South Africa." From the gospel it's legitimate to derive inferences (humbly) but not principles (arrogantly, as that snippy letter). Liberal ideologues are unable to "discriminate" the one from the other.