



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on April 29, 2013

Fashioning a Prison of Twisted Words

The very best spiritual and life lesson I taught my three daughters was through a silly game I sometimes played with them while they were toddlers. I'd ask them about a random fact, such as, "What color are your eyes?" They'd reply "hazel" or "brown."

Then I'd tell them, "I think they are blue."

"No," they'd reply laughingly. "They are brown."

Usually we'd go through several back-and-forths in the game, with my twisted logic getting more and more outrageous with each iteration: "How can you tell your eyes are brown? You can't see your own eyes, but I can see your eyes with mine," I would tell them with an obvious smirk. "Shouldn't you take my word for it?"



While my older two would playfully contradict me, my youngest would earnestly employ solid logic, such as "I can see my eyes in the mirror."

Just at the point they showed the slightest irritation at the game (it had to stay fun), I'd appear to agree with them, and then twist it back: "You're right. You're right that you *believe* your eyes are brown. But I now believe they are green. And your opinion is no more valuable than mine, right? Can you agree that my view that they are green is just as important as your belief they are brown?"

By that point, they'd had enough. "No," they'd always reply with a hint of anger, "they're brown!" Kids are unlike adults in that they have a low tolerance for being lied to, even if it's a short, silly game.

"Of course you're right," I replied, finishing the game. "Your eyes are brown. And don't ever let anyone tell you otherwise."

The lesson taught them two essential things: There is an absolute truth, and words have specific, fixed meanings. This isn't to say that words can't acquire new meanings over time. But the whole point of using words is to convey a fixed and unchanging meaning.

Few Americans would deny that speaking the truth is an important virtue. Yet we rarely think about the assumption behind the statement "speak the truth." And that is: In order to be able to even speak of a concept such as "truth," words must have fixed and objective meaning. If words mean only what we want them to mean, or if we can change their meanings at whim through opinion or point of view, then it's impossible to even discuss a phrase such as "speak the truth."

All higher learning is based upon fixed and specific meaning in words. What good would mathematical calculations be if "3" could mean "4" or, for that matter, "orange" or "Thursday"? The redefinition of words is where the dumbing down of our society really begins, and where the most powerful kind of lies are told to the American people.



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American popular culture generates plenty of examples where the meaning of words is changed to make politically favored people comfortable in society:

- Bill Clinton tried to redefine the meaning of “sexual relations” during the Monica Lewinsky scandal.
- The Massachusetts courts claimed they had redefined the meaning of marriage. Now the U.S. Supreme Court is considering doing the same thing nationwide.
- George W. Bush and his handlers claimed the United States was at “war” with a tactic, terrorism, rather than a nation.

War to many people these days simply means “I’m angry.” Bugs Bunny used to say, “Of course, you realize this means war,” whenever he got angry with an adversary, such as Marvin the Martian or Yosemite Sam. And the American citizenry has adopted this comic strip worldview. We now have wars against terrorism, crime, drugs, and poverty. None of these is a real war, of course. Politicians just declare a “war” when they want to appear to be serious about solving a problem without actually doing anything about it.

Likewise, the civil discourse about marriage has taken on a similar comic strip worldview, where many people assert that two very obviously dissimilar things (same-sex couplings and heterosexual couplings) are the same. It’s a bit like the silly childhood game where a person would argue that a window is a door — but without the risible satire.

Only a blockhead can unlearn the dictionary. But this is, increasingly, what many Americans have done on marriage, war, sexual relations — and even what constitutes “human life.” Many scientists in the post-*Roe v. Wade* era — even [accredited ones](#) — [claim](#) with apparent earnestness that there is no definition of life. But if there’s no definition of life, what significance can the science of biology — the study of life — have? If a biology professor cannot distinguish between his college student and the desk he’s sitting in, then biology is worse than useless as a science.

Words liberate, but only if they have fixed meanings. Otherwise, men are doomed to a prison of their own minds. The purpose of having a written Constitution is to bind government down with a fixed meaning, not to have clear English language “re-interpreted” into oblivion by politicians or judges (or do I repeat myself?) who have an ax to grind against a particular clause of the Constitution. Politicians claim that the U.S. Constitution is a “living document.” But when a politician says the Constitution is a “living document,” he invariably means it should be a “dead letter.” If the American people truly need an “interpreter” to read the simple English sentences of the U.S. Constitution, this nation has ceased to be a nation of adults. And the prison of our minds will soon be replaced with a prison of iron bars.



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