

IONIA SENTINEL-STANDARD

Bob Ashby: What is said is not what is real

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Propaganda, at least the negative sort, is successful because it uses sleight-of-hand language so that what is said is not the same as what is real. For a country saturated in social media, biased major media and embroiled in seemingly endless ideological conflict.

There are some tools of slick logic that are especially pervasive and therefore especially important. They show up constantly in “news” and “information” platforms. They are employed by politicians and commentators incessantly. Here are eight of them:

1. Distort or misrepresent in order to create an image to attack.

This is usually referred to as building a straw man. The intention is to begin with an accurate image of an idea or person, distort it and then return to the distortion in order to attack it. In the discussion about socialism and capitalism, the left builds its arguments in this way. For them, it is normal to caricature capitalism in its worst condition, generalize that to America’s system, then attack the system. The reality is there does not exist unregulated capitalism, but almost all the arguments of the left use the extremes of abused capitalism as their model.

2. Compare two things equally that are not the same.

A good example of this is the idea of using two generally related kinds of things against each other, despite the fact that the terms in the comparison are not the same. If a person is comparing socialism to capitalism, but uses the caricature from above for capitalism, but neglects to compare it to unregulated socialism (instead of just socialism), then they have committed this fallacy and their comparison should be ignored.

3. Present only half of reality.

Most of the time when you read or listen to a progressive complain about income equality in America, they are using half information for their argument. The **Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank**, has reported that poverty in America is not nearly as severe as popularly claimed. Complete information includes anything that impacts quality of life. The startling results of this more honest approach show a 2 percent poverty rate as opposed to an 11 percent to 15 percent. The result is that vilifying capitalism in order to justify socialism is a false claim.

4. Make sweeping emotional generalities.

It is also not unusual for critics of America’s economic system to claim that it is responsible for egregious levels of suffering and oppression. The fact is 98 percent of Americans live far above any existing true socialist system in the world. Suffering and oppression has been a human

condition throughout history and, therefore, to claim any direct relationship between it and capitalism is wildly overstated.

5. Apply false assumptions.

It has become popular among progressives to equate any type of government regulation or service to its citizens as a socialist principle. The claim is based on the idea that if something is used in a socialist system and then is also applied in a capitalist system that those tools are by default socialist in nature. But such an idea is a false parallel which mislabels methods that have existed throughout civilized societies for all of history as if only a socialist group formulated it or invented it.

6. Exaggerate.

Human beings love to amplify a point by overstating the facts. This device is common to all worldviews and individuals. The most important point is not that everybody uses it, but that when it is used it is honestly confronted and analyzed. To say, for instance, that billionaires control the government has great appeal but demonstrates that they are ignoring the entire structure of American federalism from an elected Congress and executive to our independent judicial system.

7. Use deceptive labels to soften offensive ideas.

Americans have become accustomed in the culture war to giving a pass to euphemisms. We have been trained to accept racism under the guise of affirmative action or an illegal alien as an undocumented immigrant. The net result is that, thanks to an effective campaign from progressives, too many of us have become callous to the harsh realities.

Sit down anytime and watch a politician being interviewed and you will hear probably some of the finest uses of diversion. If you listen carefully, you'll notice that a lot of questions never get answered. How many times have we heard the question, "How will you pay for the Green New Deal?" only to be schooled in the evils of climate change and the uselessness of fossil fuels.

So goes the battle for the culture.