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## John Leo on the Dangers of Doublespeak

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Columnist John Leo of US News and World Report considers contemporary abuses of language in Double Trouble Speak, published in the current edition of the magazine.

“It’s a living language,” Leo reminds us, “but sometimes it’s dead on arrival when people toss around euphemisms and gobbledegook.” Sometimes the doublespeak is basically harmless, but other examples are truly worrisome. When the Church of England redefines cohabitating couples as “covenanted relationships,” something of vital importance is being lost — or disguised.

On the issue of cloning, consider this passage: “In America’s clone wars, politicians have argued for years over the alleged distinction between ‘therapeutic cloning’ and ‘reproductive cloning.’ But the only difference is in the intent of the scientists who manipulate the embryos. The procedures and the biological entities created are the same. The problem for euphemizers is how to get rid of the scary words ‘clone’ and ‘embryo.’ Early efforts to create soothing new terms such as ‘ovasome,’ ‘embryolike entities,’ and ‘activated egg’ failed to catch on. So the International Society for Stem Cell Research opted for jargon. The word ‘cloning’ was dropped in favor of ‘somatic cell nuclear transfer’ to produce ‘human NT blastocysts,’ from which scientists in South Korea, who did not utter the word ‘clone,’ recently extracted ‘hESC.’ Sustainable language added. Linguistic problem solved.”

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