

Behind. This is the use of language to mollify people who have nurturant values, while the real policies are strict father policies. This can even attract the people in the middle who might have qualms about you. This is the use of Orwellian language—language that means the opposite of what it says—to appease people in the middle at the same time as you pump up the base. That is part of the conservative strategy.

Liberals and progressives typically react to this strategy in a self-defeating way. The usual reaction is, “Those conservatives are bad people; they are using Orwellian language. They are saying the opposite of what they mean. They are deceivers. Bad. Bad.”

All true. But we should recognize that they use Orwellian language precisely when they have to: when they are weak, when they cannot just come out and say what they mean. Imagine if they came out supporting a “Dirty Skies Bill” or a “Forest Destruction Bill” or a “Kill Public Education” bill. They would lose. They are aware people do not support what they are really trying to do.

Orwellian language points to weakness—Orwellian weakness. When you hear Orwellian language, note where it is, because it is a guide to where they are vulnerable. They do not use it everywhere. It is very important to notice this and use their weakness to your advantage.

A very good example relates to the environment. The right’s language man is Frank Luntz, who puts out books of language guidelines, which are used as training manuals for conservative candidates, as well as lawyers, judges, and other public speakers—even high school students who want to be conservative public figures. In these books, Luntz tells you what language to use for a conservative advantage.

It was Luntz who persuaded conservatives to stop talking about “global warming” because it sounded too scary and suggested human agency. Instead, he brought “climate change” into our public discourse on the grounds that “climate” sounded kind of nice (think palm trees) and change just happens, with no human agency. By 2003, with the scientific consensus going against conservatives, Luntz suggested Orwellian language. He suggested using words like *healthy*, *clean*, and *safe* even when talking about