

Whataboutism, Stay-in-your-lane-ism, and Laughing Emoticons

Shôn Ellerton, April 29, 2023

A quick description of three tools used by those who want to shut down a perfectly good debate because they don't like what they're listening to.



It's been long overdue to write about three incredibly annoying and overly abused tools specifically designed for weak-minded, blue-pilled snowflakes to shut down or dismiss what could be a perfectly good debate or conversation. It's not difficult to understand *why* someone would want to shut down a conversation, of course. The reason is simple. Those who want to silence a debate or conversation don't want to hear it, but more to the point, they don't want *others* to hear it.

So, what are these three tools?

Let's start with the simplest of them.

The so-called '*laughing emoticon or laughing emoji*' used on social media posts.

You know what I'm talking about. This is *not* to be confused with those who use them on posts which are meant to be funny. They are those laughing 'ha-ha' faces people post on *serious* and non-funny posts to indicate, what they purport to be, BS, or of a subject they will dismiss but refuse to indicate why. Mostly because they don't have the knowledge or, perhaps even the mental capacity, to explain why. It's not really laziness because if it was, why even respond? But again, maybe it is, because it is often a sure-fire method of eliciting a response or picking a fight with someone simply by clicking a button. With little in the way of any

real consequences, like getting your head kicked in, it's fair game for weak-minded trolls, who often hide in anonymity on the Internet.

Let's move on to the second tool.

'Whataboutism'.

This is the extremely annoying rebuke to someone making a comparison to something else, which, for that individual making the rebuke, wishes to stop any further discussion on the matter. For example, one could make the proviso that sending in troops into Taiwan to stop China taking over may not be entirely dissimilar to sending in troops to Vietnam to stop the spread of communism. This can turn into a heated debate, of course. Many of those very same Americans who were vehemently antiwar during the 60s may have turned pro-war through a combination of social and political propaganda emphasising the notion that China, at all costs, must never take over Taiwan, or more recently, that they must continually prop up Ukraine with more weapons rather than look for alternative peaceful solutions. Yet, if one took the logical approach that, perhaps, there is a similar connection between the two acts and the other person violently disagrees, one of the tactics is to throw in the 'whataboutism' accusation. This is an absolute absurdity, and it is also lazy, ignorant, and cowardly.

The origin of the term apparently stems from a letter sent by a Lionel Bloch during 1978 regarding East and West relationships during the Cold War, and it seems that the term has made a big revival during the last ten years or so, made popular, of course, by the rise of social media. What many may not realise that much of case law is based on a kind of 'whataboutism' in its own way. We learn from our mistakes but if we cannot or are not allowed to compare to other mistakes on the basis that it amounts to so-called 'whataboutism', how can we ever learn?

Finally moving on to the third tool. A personally annoying one for me as it simply amounts to pigeonholing assuming that one cannot be an expert in something unless you officially qualified for it, usually with a bunch of letters after your name.

It is called 'stay-in-your-lane-ism'.

The reason this was so personally annoying is because there were several points in my career in which any advice I gave on technical matters relating to information technology was dismissed based on the fact that I was a qualified

civil engineer rather than someone with an IT degree. I've written about this in more detail in another piece titled [*Pigeonholing and Little Bits of Paper*](#) back during 2020.

'Stay-in-your-lane-ism' is exceptionally insulting, condescending, and demeaning. Anyone who accuses someone of being 'outside their lane' and yet not paying any credence to their viewpoint or ignoring what they have to say is a most narrowminded individual indeed. 'Stay-in-your-lane-ism' had been especially virulent during the pandemic, a prime example of which many experienced medical professionals around the world had conducted research using alternative therapeutics instead of or in conjunction with the use of official sanctioned vaccines made by big pharma and approved by our political leaders, who most certainly, took advantage of the profits made. Some research had proved success; however, this research was dismissed by the mainstream who were blue-pilled into thinking that the only lot they should be listening to were those approved vaccine specialists, and only those, who conformed with the government narrative. Another analogy, although somewhat looser, could be that of the advice of a young newly made doctor fresh out of college with letters after his or her name against the advice of a registered nurse with many years of experience. I'm not suggesting that advice given by someone who knows very little or nothing about a particular subject should be taken seriously. However, one should be careful not to *assume* that advice given by a person who doesn't hold the correct qualifications nor has the right letters after his name will be incorrect.

To finish off, I can't think of any occasion in which using any of these three insulting tools can lead to a constructive debate. In essence, such tools are really only used by those who often fail to offer a logical explanation for their convictions in a debate or argument. It is their 'Get Out of Jail' card and once they play it, their minds have already been made up making it ineffectual to continue on with the debate.