A summary of euphemism

Neil Postman, a famous writer, professor of media ecology at New York University, in " Euphemism" discusses the social and cultural significance of euphemism by tackling its aspects. Firstly, Postman begins his expository with a common, dictionary-entry-type definition of euphemism" – an auspicious or exalted term that is used in place of more down- to earth term. Postman reveals that euphemism has got a bad name because it is a way to give pretty names to essentially ugly realities.

And he tells us that what we call things affects how we will perceive them. Then he points out that euphemizing, which is a perfectly intelligent method of generating new and useful ways of perceiving things, is not a contemptible process. According to the author, euphemizing is contemptible only when a name makes us see something that is not true or diverts our attention from something that is. In addition, he also lists three examples to explain euphemizing sometimes does not have the intended effect.

Besides, he also points out that euphemizing may be regarded as one of our more important intellectual resources for creating new perspectives on a subject. Nonetheless, such changes must be supported by some authentic tendency or drift in culture and the power of names is not to be understimated according to him. Finally, Postman concludes the essay with a much extended definition of euphemism- it is a means through which a culture may alter its imagery and by so doing subtly change its style, its priorities, and its values.