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A Christmas Retrospective

Writing in *The Criterion* of January, 1935, T. S. Eliot observed that there are two kinds of "good revolutionists": "There are those who are impatient with human stupidity; these begin by wanting some kind of monetary reform; their imagination is haunted by the spectre of coffee burnt, wheat dumped into the sea, herrings ploughed into the soil, etc. And there are those who begin from the other end, who talk, in France, of *le spirituel*, or with us (I am sorry to say) of 'change of heart'". Each type of revolutionism, he says, carries with it a corresponding "danger": "Utopianism" ("settle the problem of distribution — of wheat, coffee, aspirin or wireless sets — and all the problems of evil will disappear") and "Indifferentism" ("neglect the affairs of the world and save as many souls out of the wreckage as possible"), respectively.

This raises the question of the relationship of "faith" and "works" or (to use Eliot's terms) of the relationship between the "spiritual" and the "temporal". Arguably, any attempt to separate or dissociate these is in fact one-sidedness, disproportion, distortion. Just as, for example, a sacrament is "an outward and visible sign of an inward, invisible grace", so are works the visible realizations of faith, so is the temporal the point of expression of the spiritual (or eternal). Not only, therefore, can there not be faith without some kind of works (including abstention from "activity"), there cannot be works without some kind of "faith" (including the denial of any "belief").

Faith, presumably, is some sort of belief or conviction about the nature, ultimately, of reality. A faith, therefore, that acquiesces in temporal evil, or tries to abstract itself from confrontation with that evil, is implicitly denying the sacramental validity of the temporal. Conversely, a faith that perceives eternal authority, spiritual rectitude or rightness, will strive to express that authority in the temporal. To use Eliot's words, in a specific instance, "no spiritual revolution (is) of any use unless you (have) a practical economic scheme", or, in a more comprehensive statement, "to apprehend/The point of intersection of the timeless/With time, is an occupation for the saint—".

This, of course, is one issue posed in the doctrine of the Incarnation: the "Word" (the abstraction, the spiritual truth, the "law"?) was made "Flesh"; the eternal became temporal, participated in the temporal, even "redeemed" the temporal. If this doctrine is valid, then any attempt to dissociate the spiritual from the temporal (at least absolutely) can only be described as heresy: dualism. On the other hand, the veneration of the temporal without regard to the immanence of the eternal is the blasphemy of materialism.

Faith, doubtless, must precede works. Nevertheless, sacramental expression of faith in works can be a means of arousing faith in others (this is the method implied in the Incarnation, which, in one sense, is the "type" of sacramental activity). Conversely, acquiescence in sacramental distortions of reality (false works, inaccurate art, faulty economics) is an expression of faithlessness (itself a kind of "conviction") that can only contribute to others' despair.

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SEED aspires to fulfil a unique role transcending the functions of other magazines and journals.

Our purpose is neither to propagandize in the sense of promoting some fixed point of view or body of thought nor merely to comment on current events.

Our partisanship does not extend beyond two considerations. Firstly, we believe that reality does exist: it is not a matter of opinion and will assert its authority over all opinions that contradict it. All sanctions reside in reality; opinion has none. Secondly, we believe in the desirability of extending human freedom. Genuine freedom is contingent upon our comprehension of reality, since to the extent that men disregard reality, they court personal and social disaster.

In other words, far from conforming to the modern

In other words, far from conforming to the modernview that value judgments are to be avoided, SEED will
intentionally consist of a succession of value judgments,
which will constitute the principal criterion of its success.

Man cannot approach truth without rigorous formation of
value judgments and perfecting of definitions. Discovery and
refinement of the correct principles for human action and
association will be the focus of our attention within the field
of reality. If we carry our investigation of the nature of
reality far enough, we shall illuminate the way to the formulation of sound policy.

We have no delusions about the facility of the course on which we are embarking. It is possibly the most difficult course open to us. However, its value should be proportional to the efforts it requires. If the distractions to intelligence and will which characterize contemporary society are, as we believe them to be, fundamentally unsatisfying, we are confident that some seekers of truth will involve themselves in the experiment that SEED represents. Such persons are the only ones capable of responding to such an experiment.

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If our project is conducted correctly, it will at the least generate a new conceptual vigour among a segment of the community — and perhaps even result in the formation of new men.

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Conflict of Interest

The recent falderal in the House of Commons concerning conflicts of interest might cause one to believe that the issue is somehow a new one. Yet the Standing Orders which regulate the conduct of the business of the House are already unequivocal on the matter: "No Member is entitled to vote upon any question in which he has a direct pecuniary interest, and the vote of any Member so interested will be disallowed." We may wonder at the process whereby M.P.s' voting themselves salary increases has escaped categorization as a "direct pecuniary interest". It seems that we stand less in need of new rules than means of making the old ones effective.

The House's pre-Christmas maneuvre has provided an opportunity to awaken the people of Canada to the critical importance of conflict of interest involving the salaries of their elected representatives. The size of the increase sought is simply a red herring. What matters is the M.P.s' attitude, which implies a flat denial of their having any special responsibility with respect to the economic problems they are using to justify their prospective raises. They represent themselves as mere victims of inflation, like everybody else. In effect, they are trying to have things both ways—accepting the prestige that goes with the power to set policy, while immunizing themselves against the effects of policy gone awry.

The principle underlying their planned salary increase is that mismanagement should be rewarded. Yet no improvement in general conditions can possibly result from such an approach. Who can believe that M.P.s will be keenly concerned about inflation (except, perhaps, at election time), when they are automatically protected from it? So long as 'the pinch' is something they hear about, but never directly experience, we can expect that they will be content to occupy their time with the ineffectual theatrics for which they are already notorious.

If the people of this country really want such brains as their elected representatives possess or can command to be seriously applied to the question of inflation, they would tie the M.P.s' remuneration to the cost of living, all right—but in inverse rather than direct proportion.

The New Illiteracy

Attributes such as discipline and responsibility are apparently in disrepute today; traits like "spontaneity" and "self-expression" are in the ascendant. The tendency to displace the former by the latter is particularly evident in "language", which appears to be in a universally-acknowledged decline. This article maintains that the fostering of discipline, discrimination, and responsibility in the use of language — far from being an aspect of the suppression of "awareness" or "sensitivity" — is in fact central to sustaining a high level of consciousness. Moreover, in so far as language allows the expression of personality within the discipline of "rightness", it incorporates an important principle: the reconciliation of the unity of "authority" with the diversity of "power".

Once asked by Tze-Lu what he would do first if he were invited to govern a country, Confucius is supposed to have replied, "It would certainly be to correct language", and to have elaborated: "If language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant; if what is said is not what is meant; if what is said is not what is meant, then what ought to be done remains undone; if morals and arts deteriorate, justice will go astray; if justice goes astray the people will stand about in helpless confusion. Hence there must be no arbitrariness in what is said. This matters above everything."

Decline of Language

Similarly, George Orwell, in his essay "Politics and the English Language"2, observes a close relationship between cultural integrity and precision of language: he sees, the correction of language as a prerequisite to "political regeneration", for example. And C.G. Dobbs, in an article entitled "On the Corruption of Words"3. describes what he calls the "technique of the essential adjective", a process by which internally-contradictory slogans become political commonplaces embodying the inversion of the original meanings of the component words. Not only does such a process render language imprecise, but it implies the philosophical notion that reality consists in contradictions. Elsewhere 4, Dr. Dobbs has demonstrated how the opposite process, discrimination. the faculty of making fine distinctions, has fallen into disrepute-again as a result of the perversion of an aspect of language. . .

It has perhaps become a truism that the English language is deteriorating; nevertheless, it is true. One need only, as I have done, read the "compositions" of university undergraduates to appreciate just how parlous is the state of contemporary "literacy". Ignoring "mechanical" errors, one detects more fundamental faults: gross misuse of words, construction of self-contradic-

tory sentences, illogical transition and conjunction, and, often, the stringing together of "big" words into utterly meaningless "assertions" (although, in an age of the jargon of Watergate, there is something about the rhythm and polysyllabic camouflage of these aggregations of words that makes them *sound* meaningful). One gets the impression not that people are becoming incapable of verbalization but that they are losing the ability to relate words to an ordered reality.

Linguistic Stimuli

This tendency- the dissociation of mechanical verbalization from meaning-may be an aspect of philosophical relativism; that is, if "reality" is purely a matter of subjective interpretation, then the notion of meaning is perhaps logically untenable. Words are important, in that case, not as means of conveying notions about any objective order, but as emotional "stimuli" only. Thus, for example, the emphasis in education is no longer upon intellectual discipline, with developing the faculties of discrimination and criticism, but with cultivating "sensitivity" or "awareness" (or some other vague quality). Children (and adolescents) whose emotional and intellectual world already consists in little more than the outpourings of the electronic media are subjected to 'education' which turns them into sensory blotters, absorbing stimuli and squeezing out responses. Among these stimuli are words-no longer tools for the clarifying and communicating of thought, but sounds or "ideograms" designed to evoke a "reaction".

The result is that a critical approach to language is no longer considered relevant. While such out-moded disciplines as logic and grammar have been progressively purged from schools, students have been encouraged to "express themselves". Nourished by "English" courses that may consist only in identifying patterns of sexual symbolism in novels like *The Grapes of Wrath*, they come

tacitly to accept the notion that man's spiritual life is made up of sentimentality and concupiscence. Asked to "express themselves" upon the subject of their Rorschach-blot world, they come up with some phrase of current "sophisticated" (journalistic) opinion, or, more likely, an inarticulate emotional response. Thus, the reaction of a "sensitized" adolescent to King Lear, a revolution, a snowstorm, and a hero sandwich alike may be expressed in some emotion-charged phrase such as "Heavy, very heavy". It is characteristic of 'gut reactions', one supposes, that they do often lie too deep for words.

Language and Reality

This is the *reductio ad absurdum* of language, but it is the direction in which we are—consciously—heading. The point is that, if language has meaning, it must relate to some objective reality, as John B. Williams argues, to "some sort of order". Sir Francis Bacon made a similar observation three and a half centuries ago:

The syllogism consists of propositions, propositions of words; words are the signs of notions. If, therefore, the notions (which form the basis of the whole) be confused and carelessly abstracted from things, there is no solidity in the superstructure.

The ordering of language—grammar, logic, semantics—is not an arbitrary exercise; it represents, or should represent, the order in the way things are. The breakdown of order in language implies the breakdown of order (or absence of order) in reality; it certainly destroys our ability to think about reality in a coherent manner. On the other hand, increasing precision of language allows us (or forces us) to know reality with increasing precision.

If disciplined use of language implies the reality of an objective order, then it also implies responsibility within that order. If "reality" is purely subjective, then no one is accountable to anything outside himself for his responses or his expressions. "Heavy, very heavy" is as valid a response to *King Lear* as the most astute critical evaluation: the "thing" itself has no objective value. If, however, *King Lear* is esthetically valuable in a way that a soap opera (to which one might also react, "Heavy, very heavy") is not, and that value is expressible other than as a subjective 'gut reaction', then the consistency of language becomes important. And this consistency—the "responsibility"

between elements in assertions—implies in fact a similar coherence in the referents of language. What I assert must make sense; if it does not, the whole notion of language is rendered absurd. As grammatical structures should correspond or answer to one another, so elements in reality are related: actions, for example, have consequences. The decline of the sense of linguistic responsibility (epitomized, perhaps, in the idea of "standing by one's word") is accompanied by a general decline in the sense of responsibility.

Thus, one aspect of the use of language is discipline, conformability to law, not arbitrary law, but law reflecting underlying order. This element reinforces the philosophical notions of "correctness" (that is, of objective value or rectitude) and responsibility (the mutual dependence of elements in reality). Deviations from this principle of rightness or of unity result in chaos—the isolation of the individual in his own mode of expression, his dissociation from the world and from other people. Thus, far from linguistic subjectivism being an aspect of self-realization, it is a policy of self-limitation: one's sphere of association is restricted and distorted.

Differentiation

At the same time, however, language sustains a principle of individuation. As we have seen, the objection commonly raised against the discipline of language is that it binds people to "rules", that it inhibits sensitivity, awareness, creativity, or personality. fact, of course, the discipline does no such thingany more than a ballerina's technical training inhibits her esthetic expression. Discipline in language merely provides the "law", the rightness, within which individual linguistic realization becomes possible. Thus, besides the principle of order, of unity, there is in language a principle of diversity, generally referred to as "style". And, the important point is that style need not violate the order; the law (principle of rightness) can accommodate variety. Within the discipline of grammar (analogous to the authority of, say, natural law) there is the possibility of freedom of choice (analogous to individuation of personality). the unity of language and the unity of reality, and the diversity of language and of reality, are probably more than analogically related. The principle of diversity

(continued p. 7)

The Numbers of Man

Contrary to the impression conveyed by much contemporary propaganda, the assumptions underlying the proposition that human population in the absence of intentional contraception tends automatically to outstrip resources have proven to be radically unsatisfactory. This conclusion of an article begun in the November edition deals with some of the unique factors bearing on the matter of human increase.

Group Life Cycle?

The very reasonable question as to whether not only individuals, but also entire peoples, have life cycles has not been answered. It seems that certain unicellular organisms do exhibit such group life cycles. Historical evidence can be adduced both for and against the concept as applied to human populations. From time to time studies have been made of peoples not practicing effective contraception and elaborate charts and mathematical curves published to demonstrate the progression from population increase to population decline with a view to establishing some universal rules. However, the comments about the difficulties involved in such a task in a critique half a century old are valid yet:—

...as between the physical sciences and the biological and social sciences there is a vast difference in degree of probability, not only because of the practical impossibility, in the social sciences, of using the method of experimentation and because of the greater difficulty of observation, but because of the greater multiplicity and variety of the phenomena involved. A law of physics, or chemistry, or even of genetics, may be stated with the proviso, "conditions remaining the same," and the probability that the law will "work" in the next case to which it is applied may remain very close to certainty. any law expressing human behavior, either individual. or in the statistical aggregate, has a much lower degree of probability, simply because the things" assumed to remain constant may include a number of important influences which do not remain constant.

Common sense seems to indicate that, where there are so many unknown and unpredictable variables, mathematical prediction of population growth is at best only an indoor sport. 16

The sport still has its devotees. But, unfortunately, many of them are determined that everyone else should be forced to join in the game—in the role of pawns rather than of players.

Malthus and the Local Scene

The crude birth rate in Canada last year-15.5 per 1,000 population-was the lowest recorded since the establishment of the national system of vital statistics in 1921. The rate in Quebec has recently been below the national average - a particularly remarkable fact considering that French-Canadians formerly had probably the highest fertility rate of all White peoples. its peak, during the decade 1760 to 1770, this rate was 65.3 per 1,000 population. It has declined fairly steadily since 1921, when it stood at 37.6 per 1,000 population. How can such extreme variations and longterm trends be accounted for? As we have seen, the answer may lie beyond human ken. There is abundant reason to suspect that simplistic arguments about more generalized use of contraceptives actually mask subtler processes.

In any case, in Quebec the Malthusian doctrine has, as usual, collapsed in the face of the facts: the birth rate of French-Canadians was highest when the people were most ignorant and poor, and, as their affluence has grown, their reproduction has fallen off.

Thus, we can conclude that the assumption that an inherent tendency exists for populations to become too large for their means of sustenance is not only not proven, but in many instances seems definitely to be in error. Nevertheless, this assumption is being used to justify policies which are either offensive to human freedom or biologically hazardous. Social planners (those superior intellects to whom any soul which can not be absorbed by the labour market is superfluous) are largely to blame. However, the numbers of other people resorting to the assumption as an alibi for dubious actions are increasing.

Blind Following Blind

For instance, to avert pregnancy millions of women are now voluntarily dosing their reproductive systems daily with hormones whose effects are, at best, sketchily

¹⁶A.B. Wolfe, "Is There a Biological Law of Human Population Growth?" *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, XLI (August 1927), 574.

comprehended. Some years ago a medical researcher observed that the administration of such hormones prevents ovulation. As a result, birth control pills were developed—and praised as a tremendous boon to mankind. However, evidence is accumulating that prevention of conception is only one of their effects. Over 50 side effects have been attributed to their use; and, contrary to the belief that one bodily function can be modified in perfect isolation from others, it is becoming generally acknowledged that such extraordinary doses of hormones affect virtually every system in the body. Children born to women who have taken these pills are presently classified as 'biologically normal'; but whether these children are the same in all respects as they would have been had they developed in 'untreated' reproductive systems is not known. It will, possibly, never be known.

The fact is that the processes within the body are so complex as to surpass absolute comprehension by the human mind. Consider, for example, not the body as a whole, but a single cell within it. Scientists have identified more than 100 distinct chemical reactions in the nucleus of such a cell alone. Now, these findings may be wonderful in themselves; but they ought, realistically, to point up the limitations of our knowledge. The potential number of relationships among only these 100 reactions (the only known ones, but not necessarily the only ones that take place) is so large as to make the problem of fully interpreting their significance virtually impossible.

There is, however, a certain type of scientist who assumes that, so long as his criteria for normalcy are satisfied, he can tamper with biological processes as much as he pleases. The type is inferior, if the dictum that the more one knows the more he realizes what he does not know is accurate. It is this sort of scientist who becomes a panderer to politicians, drug manufacturers, and people looking for some magic formula which will release them from responsibility for their actions. He does not stick at waging the 'dirtiest' kinds of war on human reproductive organs-heating them, freezing them, dosing them with potent chemicals. vivisecting them, irradiating them. That this notion that the scientist's basic function is to intrude upon natural processes to the point where these are sensibly damaged must eventuate in biological calamity seems not to enter the thinking of persons who insist on massive

contraceptive programs as the only acceptable means of warding off global overpopulation.

Brains and Births

To what has previously been stated about changing birth patterns implying that the population question tends to resolve itself a final consideration must be added. In a book published in 1921, Charles Edward Pell argued that fertility is related to (among other things) the amount of nervous energy possessed by an organism; and, consequently, that the sort of activities it pursues can affect its fertility. Although his discussion concerned animals primarily, he linked it to man, as well. For example, he quoted an intriguing passage from testimony given by Dean Inge to a National Birthrate Commission in Britain:—

A few years ago very careful statistics were drawn up as to the fertility of women, either both at Oxford and Cambridge or at Oxford alone...arranging them in classes, with the remarkable result that the third-class women had more children than the second-class, and the second-class more children than the first-class. Those who had been through a severe intellectual course were sterile, and those who had obtained, say, a first-class in mathematics were the most barren of all. 17

If true, these observations are highly significant, for they imply that as human beings move from dull, laborious forms of activity onto higher planes of creative culture, their reproduction is automatically inhibited. Unfortunately, the validity of such a thesis cannot really be tested in a world where genuine leisure is virtually unknown and the economic system so contrived as to withhold the greater part of the benefits of technology from the members of the community.

What Men Will

However, one aspect of human fecundity sets it apart from that of animals and the automatic population governors which seem to exist. The latter may be relevant to the lives of unconscious or undisciplined persons; but man is a creature capable of exercising choice, and, while sexual passion is possibly more compelling than other appetites, such as eating or drinking, our relationships to it are primarily determined (whether consciously or not) by ideas.

¹⁷ The Law of Births and Deaths, being a study of the variation of animal fertility under the influence of the environment (London: Fisher Unwin, 1921), 117-8.

We can see proofs of the potency of such ideas everywhere about us. For instance, a large number of people now hold sterility up as a kind of ennobling objective. They organize anti-fertility rites and eulogize the killing of foetuses. They have attacked the traditional concept of the family; and we can see the effects of the erosion of this ideal on reproduction patterns, for the family is virtually the only social institution with the permanence and interest to carry out the rearing of children. (The State can be one other such institution, but the State is concerned less with the development of individuals than with producing some requisite quantity of human factory-fodder.)

This glorification of the principle of sterility is apparently the result of pursuit of a hedonistic ideal; and, if it may be seen as 'solving' the 'problem' of population, does so at the expense of brutalized ethics and social disintegration. Yet there are indications that alternative ideas, with radically different implications for human behaviour, are claiming increasing attention at the present time. The sedulously promoted notion that totally uninhibited indulgence of sexual appetites is at once a panacea and the zenith of human experience has tarnished under trial. Indeed, in a few years current attitudes towards sex might seem as bizarre as do the ancient Romans who vomited up their food in order to make possible a prolongation of the sensual pleasure of eating. A channelling of energies intogenuinely creative fields of endeavour or a recognition of the fact that, far from being merely a Freudian repression or retreat from life, such ideals as chastity contribute to depth of personality and individuationsuch developments could alter population patterns profoundly.

In any case, there is little doubt that the only worthwhile form of action in respect of population and other matters affecting our lives must promote accurate comprehension and the self-discipline to give it practical effect. The idea that the interests of man can be served by anaesthetizing will and spirit is utter madness.

R.E.K.

There may be suspected as running through [black magic] everywhere ... a mystical hatred of the idea of childhood. People would understand better the popular fury against the witches, if they remembered that the malice most commonly attributed to them was preventing the birth of children.

—G.K. Chesteron, The Everlasting Man, 122

("Illiteracy", continued from p. 4)

in unity manifest in language may be a reflection of a more fundamental principle running through the very nature of things.

Arguing that the distinction of language is crucial to the differentiation of persons, Owen Barfield in his book *Poetic Diction* says:

Of all devices for dragooning the human spirit, the least clumsy is to procure its abortion in the womb of language. Language is the storehouse of the imagination; it cannot continue to be itself without performing its function. But its function is, to mediate transition from the unindividualized, dreaming spirit that carried the infancy of the world to the individualized human spirit....

The terms in which he describes language are significant: it is "the storehouse of the imagination"; moreover, it is closely linked to the process of individuation. Thus, far from "language" (even as a discipline) being inimical to the realization of personality, it is a means by which a person comes to consciousness and communicates that consciousness.

Any degeneration of language, therefore, involves the opposite process—a lowering of consciousness, a (continued p. 8)

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"Illiteracy", continued from p. 7)

degeneration of the individual imagination. A diminution in vocabulary, for example, has a two-fold dele-First, it attenuates the mind's abiterious effect. lity to discriminate, to make fine distinctions. "Cutting down the number of words" is a process analogous to making rulers graduated in centimetres instead of millimetres. The tools for describing reality are rendered crude. Second, the process limits the individual's sphere of linguistic choice: his options for self-expression, and therefore the individuality of that expression, are restricted. What we say is a kind of sacramental sign of what we are; if our vocabulary is whittled down the possibility of our distinctive self-realization will be reduced. "Equality" - sameness - will prevail, we will move back towards the undifferentiated mass.8

Unity and Diversity

Again, the resolution of "the problem of language" involves a fundamental principle—that is, the reconciliation of "law" with differentiation. Grammar, the

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logic of language, corresponds to "law" in the sense of correctness; this correctness has a kind of authority, which cannot be distributed. The attempt to distribute authority is characteristic of the subjectivist school of thought and is nonsensical: if logic is merely a matter of individual preference, then all attempts to communicate (the ostensible purpose of language) must be abandoned as untenable. On the other hand, language does permit individual preference within the authority of "rightness". To the individual is distributed the power to choose his words and combinations of words. to convey his meaning without violating the logic of The attempt to reduce the number of words, to limit vocabulary, to "standardize" the language, is therefore a technique of the policy of the centralization of power. As we have seen, an aspect-the important aspect- of this process is the submersion of the individual consciousness and imagination in the undifferentiated "group".

Thus, correctly viewed, language incorporates the two mutually-dependent principles of responsibility and freedom. At the moment, both these principles are under assault: responsibility from the proponents of subjectivism/relativism; freedom, from the simplifiers, verbicides, and newspeakers. Again, the enemies of both responsibility and freedom have taken what appears to be a paradox and made of it a dualism of antagonistic opposites. Again, an explanation of the true relationship of the aspects of the paradox makes the dualism an illusion.

D.R.K.

Quoted in The Social Crediter, March 16, 1953.

What can one do about those who bend the Way in order to please others? ... There has never been a man who could straighten others by bending himself.

-Mencius, Book III, Part B

Reprinted in *A Book of Essays*, ed. Robert Chambers and Carlyle King (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971).

 $^{^3}$ The Social Crediter, August 29, 1942.

^{4&}quot;Discrimination and Equality: An Essay on the Misuse of Words" (Bangor, N. Wales, n.d.).

⁵Style and Grammar: A Writer's Handbook of Transformations (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1973), 1.

 $^{^6}$ Novum Organum, Great Books of the Western World, XXX, $107.\,$

 $^{^{7}\!\}text{A}$ Study in Meaning, 2nd ed. (London: Faber, 1951).

⁸For an explanation of the process involved, see George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Penguin), especially the appendix entitled "The Principles of Newspeak".