

CHAPTER VIII

THE POWER OF THE WORD

The corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language.—EMERSON.

AFTER securing a place in the world from which to fight, we should turn our attention first to the matter of language. The impulse to dissolve everything into sensation has made powerful assaults against the forms which enable discourse, because these institute a discipline and operate through predications which are themselves fixities. We have sought an ultimate sanction for man's substance in metaphysics, and we must do the same for his language if we are to save it from a similar prostitution. All metaphysical community depends on the ability of men to understand one another.

At the beginning I should urge examining in all seriousness that ancient belief that a divine element is present in language. The feeling that to have power of language is to have control over things is deeply imbedded in the human mind. We see this in the way men gifted in speech are feared or admired; we see it in the potency ascribed to incantations, interdictions, and curses. We see it in the legal force given to oath or word. A man can bind himself in the face of contingencies by saying Yea or Nay, which can only mean that words in common human practice express something transcending the moment. Speech is, moreover, the vehicle of order, and those who command it are regarded as having superior insight, which must be into the necessary relationship of things. Such is the philosophic meaning of great myths. "And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them,

The Power of the Word

and whatever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." This story symbolizes the fact that man's overlordship begins with the naming of the world. Having named the animals, he has in a sense ordered them, and what other than a classified catalogue of names is a large part of natural science? To discover what a thing is "called" according to some system is the essential step in knowing, and to say that all education is learning to name rightly, as Adam named the animals, would assert an underlying truth. The sentence passed upon Babel confounded the learning of its builders.

As myth gives way to philosophy in the normal sequence we have noted, the tendency to see a principle of divinity in language endures. Thus we learn that in the late ancient world the Hebrew *memra* and the Greek *logos* merged, and in the Gospel of John we find an explicit identification:

In the beginning was the Word, and
the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
The same was in the beginning with God.

A following verse declares that *logos* as god lies behind the design of the cosmos, for "without him was not anything made that was made." Speech begins to appear the principle of intelligibility. So when wisdom came to man in Christ, in continuation of this story, "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The allegory need give no difficulty; knowledge of the prime reality comes to man through the word; the word is a sort of deliverance from the shifting world of appearances. The central teaching of the New Testament is that those who accept the word acquire wisdom and at the same time some identification with the eternal, usually figured as everlasting life.

It seems that man, except in periods of loss of confidence, when skepticism impugns the very possibility of knowl-

edge, shows thus an incurable disposition to look upon the word as a means of insight into the noumenal world. The fact that language is suprapersonal, uniting countless minds which somehow stand in relationship to an overruling divinity, lies at the root of this concept. If, as Karl Vossler has observed, "Everything that is spoken on this globe in the course of ages must be thought of as a vast soliloquy spoken by the human mind, which unfolds itself in millions of persons and characters, and comes to itself again in their reunion," language must somehow express the enduring part. Certainly one of the most important revelations about a period comes in its theory of language, for that informs us whether language is viewed as a bridge to the noumenal or as a body of fictions convenient for grappling with transitory phenomena. Not without point is the cynical observation of Hobbes that "words are wise men's counters—they do but reckon by them—but they are the money of fools." Doctrines thus sharply defined can tell us whether a period is idealistic or pragmatic. Because this circumstance concerns the problem of restoration at a critical point, it becomes necessary to say something about contemporary theories of language.

The most notable development of our time in the province of language study is the heightened interest in semantics, which seems to stem from a realization that words, after all, have done things on their own, so to express it. I shall review briefly the state of the question. The problem of the word was argued with great acuteness by the Middle Ages, and one of the first major steps in the direction of modern skepticism came through the victory of Occam over Aquinas in a controversy about language. The statement that *modi essendi et subsistendi* were replaced by *modi significandi et intelligendi*, or that ontological referents were abandoned in favor of pragmatic significations, describes broadly the

change in philosophy which continues to our time. From Occam to Bacon, from Bacon to Hobbes, and from Hobbes to contemporary semanticists, the progression is clear: ideas become psychological figments, and words become useful signs.

Semantics, which I shall treat as an extreme outgrowth of nominalism, seems inspired by two things: a feeling that language does not take into account the infinite particularity of the world and a phobia in the face of the autonomous power of words.

The semanticists are impressed with the world as process, and, feeling with Heraclitus that no man can step in the same river twice, they question how the fixities of language can represent a changeful reality. S. I. Hayakawa, one of the best-known popularizers of the subject, tells us that "the universe is in a perpetual state of flux."¹ Alfred Korzybski has declared that the use of the word "is," in the sense condemned in his system of semantics, so falsifies the world that it could endanger our sanity. Such men work laboriously to show by categories of referents all the things a single term can mean, and, at the same time, they take into account the circumstances of the user, apparently in an effort to correlate him with the world of becoming. (This should recall the earlier tendency of Romanticism to regard a work of art as expressive of the artist's emotional condition at the moment of its execution.) They desire language to reflect not conceptions of verities but qualities of perceptions, so that man may, by the pragmatic theory of success, live more successfully. To one completely committed to this realm of becoming, as are the empiricists, the claim to apprehend verities is a sign of psychopathology. Probably we have here but a highly sophisticated expression of the doctrine that ideals are hallucinations and that the only nor-

1. *Language in Action*, p. 121.

mal, sane person is the healthy extrovert, making instant, instinctive adjustments to the stimuli of the material world. To such people as these, Christ as preacher of the Word, is a "homosexual paranoiac." In effect, their doctrine seems part of the general impulse to remove all barriers to immediate apprehension of the sensory world, and so one must again call attention to a willingness to make the physical the sole determinant of what is.

In recognizing that words have power to define and to compel, the semanticists are actually testifying to the philosophic quality of language which is the source of their vexation. In an attempt to get rid of that quality, they are looking for some neutral means which will be a nonconductor of the current called "emotion" and its concomitant of evaluation. They are introducing into language, in the course of their prescriptions, exactly the same atomization which we have deplored in other fields. They are trying to strip words of all meaning that shows tendency, or they are trying to isolate language from the noumenal world by ridding speech of tropes.

Let us consider an illustration from Hayakawa's *Language in Action*, a work which has done much to put the new science before the public. It is easy to visualize a social situation, the author tells us, in which payment to unemployed persons will be termed by one group of citizens "relief" and by another "social insurance." One can admit the possibility, but what lies behind the difference in terminology? The answer is: a conception of ends which evaluates the tendency of the action named. The same sort of thing is encountered when one has to decide whether the struggle of the American colonists against Great Britain should be termed a "rebellion" or a "war for independence." In the first case, the bare existential thing, the payment of money to needy persons (and it will be noted that this translation

does not purify the expression of tendency) is like anything else neutral as long as we consider it solely with reference to material and efficient causes. But, when we begin to think about what it represents in the totality, it takes on new attributes (emotional loading, these may be called) causing people to divide according to their sentiments or their metaphysical dream.

It is in such instances that the semanticists seem to react hysterically to the fear of words. Realizing that today human beings are in disagreement as never before and that words serve to polarize the conflicting positions, they propose an ending of polarity. I have mentioned, earlier, people who are so frightened over the existence of prejudice that they are at war with simple predication. The semanticists see in every epithet a prejudice.

The point at issue is explained by a fundamental proposition of Aquinas: "Every form is accompanied by an inclination." Now language is a system of forms, which both singly and collectively have this inclination or intention. The aim of semantics is to dissolve form and thereby destroy inclination in the belief that the result will enable a scientific manipulation. Our argument is that the removal of inclination destroys the essence of language.

Let us look more closely at the consequence of taking all tendentious meaning from speech. It is usually supposed that we would then have a scientific, objective vocabulary, which would square with the "real" world and so keep us from walking into stone walls or from fighting one another over things that have no existence. Actually the result would be to remove all teleology, for language would no longer have *nisus*, and payment to the needy would be neither "relief" nor "social insurance" but something without character, which we would not know how to place in our scheme of values. (The fact that equalitarian

democracy, to the extent that it makes leadership superfluous or impossible, is repudiating teleology must not be overlooked here. Teleology enjoins from above; equalitarian democracy takes its counsel without point of reference. The advantage of semantics to equalitarian democracy is pointed out by some semanticists.)

Hayakawa has said further that "arguments over intensional meaning can result only in irreconcilable conflict."² With the proper qualifications, this observation is true. Since language expresses tendency, and tendency has direction, those who differ over tendency can remain at harmony only in two ways: (1) by developing a complacency which makes possible the ignoring of contradictions and (2) by referring to first principles, which will finally remove the difference at the expense of one side. If truth exists and is attainable by man, it is not to be expected that there will be unison among those who have different degrees of it. This is one of the painful conditions of existence which the bourgeoisie like to shut from their sight. I see no reason to doubt that here is the meaning of the verses in Scripture: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division" and "I bring not peace, but a sword." It was the mission of the prophet to bring a metaphysical sword among men which has been dividing them ever since, with a division that affirms value. But amid this division there can be charity, and charity is more to be relied on to prevent violence than are the political neo-fanaticisms of which our age is signally productive. Positivism cannot grant theology's basis of distinction, but neither can it provide a ground for charity.

When we look more narrowly at the epistemological problem raised by the semanticists, we conclude that they wish to accept patterns only from external reality. With

2. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

many of them the notion seems implicit that language is an illusion or a barrier between us and what we must cope with. "Somewhere bedrock beneath words must be reached," is a common theme. Some talk about achieving an infinite-valued orientation (this last would of course leave both certitude and the idea of the good impossible). Mr. Thurman Arnold, who seems to have assimilated most of the superficial doctrines of the day, takes a stand in the *Folklore of Capitalism* even against definition. He argues that every writer on social institutions "should try to choose words and illustrations which will arouse the proper mental associations with his readers. If he doesn't succeed with them, he should try others. If he is ever led into an attempt at definition, he is lost." On the same footing of ingenuousness is another observation in this work: "When men begin to examine philosophies and principles as they examine atoms and electrons, the road to the discovery of the means of social control is open." The author of *Political Semantics*, fearful of the intervention of abstractions, suggests that the reader, too, add something to the definition given, a notion savoring strongly of progressive education. "Possibly the reader himself should participate in the process of building up a definition. Instead of being presented with finished summary definitions he might first be introduced to an array of examples arranged in such a way as to suggest the 'mental picture' in terms of which the examples were chosen."³ There is just enough here to suggest the Socratic method; but the true implication is that there are no real definitions; there are only the general pictures one arrives at after more or less induction. The entire process is but a climbing-down of the ladder of abstraction.

Now whether it is profitable to descend that ladder is certainly not a question to be begged. Semanticists imagine,

3. Norman H. Hinton, *Political Semantics*, p. 68.

apparently, that the descent is a way out of that falsity which universality imposes on all language. Do we know more definitely what a horse is when we are in a position to point to one than when we merely use the name "horse" in its generic significance? This concerns one of the most fundamental problems of philosophy—one on which we must take a stand; and I am ready to assert that we can never break out of the circle of language and seize the object bare-handed, as it were, or without some ideational operation.

It must surely be granted that whatever is unique defies definition. Definition then must depend on some kind of analogical relationship of a thing with other things, and this can mean only that definition is ultimately circular. That is to say, if one begins defining a word with synonyms, he will, if he continues, eventually complete a circuit and arrive at the very terms with which he started. Suppose we allow Korzybski, who has been especially restive in what appears to him the imprisoning net of language, to testify from his experiments: "We begin by asking the 'meaning' of every word uttered, being satisfied for this purpose with the roughest definition; then we ask the 'meaning' of the words used in the definition, and this process is continued for no more than ten to fifteen minutes, until the victim begins to speak in circles as, for instance, defining 'space' by 'length' and 'length' by 'space.' When this stage is reached, we have usually come to the *undefined* terms of the given individual. If we still press, no matter how gently, for definitions, a most interesting fact occurs. Sooner or later, signs of affective disturbance appear. Often the face reddens; there is body restlessness—symptoms quite similar to those seen in a schoolboy who has forgotten his lessons, which he 'knows' but cannot tell. . . . Here we have reached the bottom and the foundation of all *non-elementalistic* meanings, the meanings of *undefined* terms, which we 'know' somehow but cannot tell."

Taking the experiment as Korzybski recounts it, I would wish to ask whether this schoolboy who has forgotten his lessons is not every man, whose knowledge comes by a process of recalling and who is embarrassed as by ignorance when he can no longer recall? He is here frustrated because he cannot find any further analogues to illustrate what he knows. Any person, it seems, can be driven back to that knowledge which comes to him by immediate apprehension, but the very fact of his possessing such knowledge makes him a participant in the communal mind. I do not desire to press the issue here, but I suspect that this is evidence supporting the doctrine of knowledge by recollection taught by Plato and the philosophers of the East. If we can never succeed in getting out of the circle of definition, is it not true that all conventional definitions are but reminders of what we already, in a way, possess? The thing we have never heard of is defined for us by the things we know; putting these together, we discover, or unbury, the concept which was there all the while. If, for example, a class in science is being informed that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny," it is only being asked to synthesize concepts already more or less familiar. Finding the meaning of the *definiendum* is finding what emerges naturally if our present concepts are put together in the right relation. Even empirical investigations of the learning process bear this out. Such conclusions lead to the threshold of a significant commitment: ultimate definition is, as Aristotle affirmed, a matter of intuition. Primordial conception is somehow in us; from this we proceed as already noted by analogy, or the process of finding resemblance to one thing in another.⁴

4. It may be objected at this point that I have chosen to deal only with the popularizers of semantics, with men who have cheapened or distorted the science. Because this work is a study in social consequences, it is necessary to look at the form in which these doctrines reach the public. There is, of course, a group of serious philosophers who are working at language with caution and a sense of responsibility and who believe that they are erecting for us important safeguards against error. But, when I look into the writings of these men, I find, alas, that

All this has bearing on our issue with semantics because words, each containing its universal, are our reminders of knowledge. For this reason it seems to me that semanticists are exactly wrong in regarding language as an obstruction or a series of pitfalls. Language, on the contrary, appears as a great storehouse of universal memory, or it may be said to serve as a net, not imprisoning us but supporting us and aiding us to get at a meaning beyond present meaning through the very fact that it embodies others' experiences. Words, because of their common currency, acquire a significance greater than can be imparted to them by a single user and greater than can be applied to a single situation. In this way the word is evocative of ideal aspects, which by our premises are the only aspects constituting knowledge. On this point I shall call as my witnesses two men as far apart as Shelley and a contemporary psychologist. The poet writes in *Prometheus Unbound*:

Language is a perpetual Orphic song,
Which rules with Daedal harmony the throng
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were.

Wilbur Marshall Urban declares in *Language and Reality*:
"It is part of my general thesis that all meaning is ultimately linguistic and that although science, in the interests

their conclusions march in the same direction as those of the popularizers. The Darwinian link is acknowledged, and semantics resembles, as much as before, behaviorism imported into language. Thus Charles W. Morris in *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* stresses the importance of semantics because "it has directed attention more closely to the relation of signs to their users than had previously been done and has assessed more profoundly than ever before the relevance of this relation in understanding intellectual activities." Language is spoken of as if it were some curious development of sense which enables an organism to take into account objects not perceptually present. The determination of the scientist to see all reality as process appears later in the same work when Morris collapses the notion of "meaning" by making it purely a function of relationships. That is to say, nothing is, intrinsically, but each thing is, in terms of the process as a whole. The significant implication follows that concepts are not entities but are, rather, highly selective processes "in which the organism gets indications as to how to act with reference to the world in order to satisfy its needs or interests."

of purer notation and manipulation, may break through the husk of language, its nonlinguistic symbols must again be translated back into natural language if intelligibility is to be possible."⁵

The community of language gives one access to significances at which he cannot otherwise arrive. To find a word is to find a meaning; to create a word is to find a single term for a meaning partially distributed in other words. Whoever may doubt that language has this power to evoke should try the experiment of thinking without words.

It has been necessary to make these observations because our subject is the restoration of language, and semantics has appeared to some a promising departure toward scientific reconstruction. In its seeking of objective determination, however, it turns out to represent a further flight from center. It endeavors to find the truth about reality in an agglomeration of peripheral meanings, as can be seen when its proponents insist on lowering the level of abstraction. This is only an attempt to substitute things for words, and, if words stand, in fact, for ideas, here is but the broadest aspect of our entire social disintegration. Here would be a vivid example of things in the saddle riding mankind. For the sake of memory, for the sake of logic—above all, for the sake of the unsentimental sentiment without which communities do not endure—this is a trend to be reversed. Those who regard the synthesizing power of language with horror are the atomists.

The opposition here indicated brings us necessarily to the important topic of symbolism. The attack upon the symbolic operations of language by positivists is only part of the general attack upon symbolism under way ever since it was widely agreed that there is but one world and that it is the world which is apparent to the senses. The logic is

5. *Language and Reality*, p. 241. By permission of the Macmillan Company, publishers.

The Power of the Word

unexceptionable; since the symbol is a bridge to the other, the "ideational" world, those who wish to confine themselves to experience must oppose symbolism. In fact, the whole tendency of empiricism and democracy in speech, dress, and manners has been toward a plainness which is without symbolic significance. The power of symbolism is greatly feared by those who wish to expel from life all that is nonrational in the sense of being nonutilitarian, as witness the attack of Jacobins upon crowns, cassocks, and flags. As semanticists wish to plane the tropes off language, so do reformers of this persuasion wish to remove the superfluous from dress. It is worth recalling how the French Revolution simplified the dress of the Western world. At the time of this writing there appeared a report that during a leftist revolution in Bolivia the necktie was discarded as "a symbol of servility and conformity." The most tenacious in clinging to symbolic apparel have been the clerical and military callings, which we have already characterized as metaphysical; and now even the military service is under pressure to abandon its symbolic distinction in dress.

The same tendency is manifesting itself in the decay of honorifics. To the modern mind there is something so artificial and so offensive in titles of any kind that even "doctor" and "professor" are being dropped, though the military services cling grimly to their titles of rank. (There is a further lesson to be drawn from the fact that practitioners of the applied science of medicine have been allowed to keep theirs.) Honorifics are often mere flummery, to be sure, but one must not overlook the truth that they represent an effort to distinguish between men and men of parts. When not abused, they are an explicit recognition of distinction and hierarchy, a recognition that cannot be dispensed with where highly organized effort is required. The impulse to disorganize succeeds where it makes dress and

The Power of the Word

language stand for just what is before us and not for transcendental attributes or past attainments—makes us see people in an instant of time, as does the camera.⁶

The well-known fondness of the Japanese for honorific expression is but an aspect of the highly symbolic character of their culture. Naturally this symbolism becomes a target for those who imagine they should re-educate the Japanese. Nothing would give the West a more complete sense of victory over the East than the abolishment of its taboos and ritualistic behavior. In this light I think we are to understand a curious press dispatch of March, 1946, which declared that MacArthur's headquarters "had suggested to the Japanese motion picture industry that kissing scenes in the movies would be a step toward democratization." We may expect many other attacks, inspired by good will and ignorance, upon the symbolic world picture of the Japanese, especially with reference to their religion and their emperor.

We return now to consider what is indicated by command over the symbolic power of language. It is, as even primitives know, a wonderful thing to have the gift of speech. For it is true historically that those who have shown the greatest subtlety with language have shown the greatest power to understand (this does not exclude Sophists, for Plato made the point that one must be able to see the truth accurately in order to judge one's distance from it if he is practicing deception). To take a contemporary example which has statistical support: American universities have found that with few exceptions students who display the greatest mastery of words, as evidenced by vocabulary tests and exercises in writing, make the best scholastic records

6. I feel certain that the Reverend John Robinson had a similar thought in mind when he enjoined the Plymouth Pilgrims to look upon their civil leaders "not beholding in them the ordinariness of their persons, but God's ordinance for your own good."

regardless of the department of study they enter. For physics, for chemistry, for engineering—it matters not how superficially unrelated to language the branch of study may be—command of language will prognosticate aptitude. Facility with words bespeaks a capacity to learn relations and grasp concepts; it is a means of access to the complex reality.

Evidently it is the poet's unique command of language which gives him his ability to see the potencies in circumstances. He is the greatest teacher of cause and effect in human affairs; when Shelley declared that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of mankind, he merely signified that poets are the quickest to apprehend necessary truth. One cannot help thinking here of the peculiar fulness with which Yeats and Eliot—and, before them, Charles Péguy—foretold the present generation's leap into the abyss, and this while the falsehoods of optimism were being dinned into all ears. A poem of Eliot, "difficult" or "meaningless" in 1927, becomes today almost pat in its applications. The discourse of poetry is winged; the nominal legislators plod along empirically on foot. What can this mean except that the poet communes with the mind of the superperson? At the other extreme, those who confine their attention to the analysis of matter prove singularly inept when called upon to deal with social and political situations. If we should compile a list of those who have taught us most of what we ultimately need to know, I imagine that the scientists, for all the fanfare given them today, would occupy a rather humble place and that the dramatic poets would stand near the top.

It is difficult, therefore, to overrate the importance of skill in language. But for us there is the prior problem of preserving language itself; for, as the psyche deteriorates, language shows symptoms of malady, and today relativism,

with its disbelief in truth, has made the inroads we have just surveyed upon communication. We live in an age that is frightened by the very idea of certitude, and one of its really disturbing outgrowths is the easy divorce between words and the conceptual realities which our right minds know they must stand for. This takes the form especially of looseness and exaggeration. Now exaggeration, it should be realized, is essentially a form of ignorance, one that allows and seems to justify distortion. And the psychopathic mind of war has greatly increased our addiction to this vice; indeed, during the struggle distortion became virtually the technique of reporting. A course of action, when taken by our side, was "courageous"; when taken by the enemy, "desperate"; a policy instituted by our command was "stern," or in a delectable euphemism which became popular, "rugged"; the same thing instituted by the enemy was "brutal." Seizure by military might when committed by the enemy was "conquest"; but, if committed by our side, it was "occupation" or even "liberation," so transposed did the poles become. Unity of spirit among our people was a sign of virtue; among the enemy it was a proof of incorrigible devotion to crime. The list could be prolonged indefinitely. And such always happens when men surrender to irrationality. It fell upon the Hellenic cities during the Peloponnesian War. Thucydides tells us in a vivid sentence that "the ordinary acceptance of words in their relation to things was changed as men thought fit."

Our situation would be sufficiently deplorable if such deterioration were confined to times of military conflict; but evidence piles up that fundamental intellectual integrity, once compromised, is slow and difficult of restoration. If one examines the strikingly different significations given to "democracy" and "freedom," he is forced to realize how far we are from that basis of understanding which is pre-

requisite to the healing of the world. To one group "democracy" means access to the franchise; to another it means economic equality administered by a dictatorship. Or consider the number of contradictory things which have been denominated Fascist. What has happened to the one world of meaning? It has been lost for want of definers. Teachers of the present order have not enough courage to be definers; lawmakers have not enough insight.

The truth is, as we have already seen, that our surrender to irrationality has been in progress for a long time, and we witness today a breakdown of communication not only between nations and groups within nations but also between successive generations. Sir Richard Livingstone has pointed out that the people of the Western world "do not know the meaning of certain words, which had been assumed to belong to the permanent vocabulary of mankind, certain ideals which, if ignored in practice under pressure, were accepted in theory. The least important of these words is Freedom. The most important are Justice, Mercy, and Truth. In the past we have slurred this revolution over as a difference in 'ideology.' In fact it is the greatest transformation that the world has undergone, since, in Palestine or Greece, these ideals came into being or at least were recognized as principles of conduct." "Drift and circumstance have been permitted to change language so that the father has difficulty in speaking to the son; he endeavors to speak, but he cannot make the realness of his experience evident to the child. This circumstance, as much as any other, lies behind the defeat of tradition. Progress makes father and child live in different worlds, and speech fails to provide a means to bridge them. The word is almost in limbo, where the positivists have wished to consign it.

7. *The Future in Education* (Cambridge University Press, England), pp. 109-10. By permission of the Macmillan Company, publishers.

Finally, we come to our practical undertaking. If empirical community avails nothing without the metaphysical community of language, the next step obviously is a rehabilitation of the word. That is a task for education, and the remainder of this chapter will discuss a program by which we can, I venture to hope, restore power and stability to language.

Since man necessarily uses both the poetical and the logical resources of speech, he needs a twofold training. The first part must be devoted to literature and rhetoric, the second to logic and dialectic.

The order parallels our projected scheme of things. We have shown that sentiment is the ultimate bond of community, and this we wish to secure first of all. The young come to us creatures of imagination and strong affection; they want to feel, but they do not know how—that is to say, they do not know the right objects and the right measures. And it is entirely certain that if we leave them to the sort of education obtainable today from extra-scholastic sources, the great majority will be schooled in the two vices of sentimentality and brutality. Now great poetry, rightly interpreted, is the surest antidote to both of these. In contrast with journalists and others, the great poets relate the events of history to a pure or noble metaphysical dream, which our students will have all their lives as a protecting arch over their system of values. Of course, a great deal will depend on the character and quality of the instruction. At this point I would say emphatically that we do not propose to make students chant in unison, "Life is real, life is earnest, and the grave is not its goal," though it would not be unfortunate if many emerged with that feeling. There is a sentimental poetry, and it will have to be exposed (not censored, certainly; for to omit criticism of it would deprive us of our fairest chance to combat the

The Power of the Word

sentimental rhetoric of the student's environment). There may be poetry vicious in nature, and that, too, will have to be taught for what it is. But opportunity to show the affective power of words and the profound illumination which may occur through metaphor is limitless.

Let us suppose that we have set our students to studying carefully a great unsentimental poem such as Andrew Marvell's *Ode on the Return of Cromwell from Ireland*. This poem begins in a mood of innocent lyricism and passes finally to a subtle debate over the rival doctrines of revolution and legitimism. The student can be brought to see its great compression of language, achieving intense effects without exaggeration; then, perhaps, the evocation of the character of Cromwell; and, last, an enduring problem of man set in a historical context. All this is said with no implication that the poem has a "message" in the banal sense. But, if we agree that poetry is a form of knowledge, we must conclude that it does teach something, and the foregoing is a catalogue of what a student could conceivably get from one poem. Or consider the richness of Shakespeare's plays and sonnets when they are intensively read or the strange byways of sentiment—not all of them admirable, I will grant—into which the modern poets may lead a sojourner.

In brief, the discipline of poetry may be expected first to teach the evocative power of words, to introduce the student, if we may so put it, to the mighty power of symbolism, and then to show him that there are ways of feeling about things which are not provincial either in space or time. Poetry offers the fairest hope of restoring our lost unity of mind.

This part of his study should include, too, the foreign languages, and, if we really intend business, this will mean Latin and Greek. I will not list here the well-known ad-

The Power of the Word

vantages flowing from such study, but I shall mention a single one which I think has been too little regarded. Nothing so successfully discourages slovenliness in the use of language as the practice of translation. Focusing upon what a word means and then finding its just equivalent in another language compels one to look and to think before he commits himself to any expression. It is a discipline of exactness which used to be reflected in oratory and even in journalism but which is now growing as rare as considerate manners. Drill in exact translation is an excellent way of disposing the mind against that looseness and exaggeration with which the sensationalists have corrupted our world. If schools of journalism knew their business, they would graduate no one who could not render the Greek poets.

In closing, let it be added that there is a close correlation between the growth of materialism and the expulsion of languages from curricula, which is a further demonstration that where things are exalted, words will be depressed.

Our next move toward rehabilitation is the study of Socratic dialectic. I do not place dialectic second on the assumption that it provides access to regions of higher truth; it seems more likely that the symbolism of poetry does this. But, since it is impossible for men to live without reason, we must regard this as their means of coping with the datum of the world after they have established their primary feeling toward it. The laws of reason, as Spinoza said, "do but pursue the true interest and preservation of mankind." We may therefore look upon training in dialectic as our practical regimen.

The most important fact about dialectic is that it involves the science of naming. The good dialectician has come to see the world as one of choices, and he has learned to avoid that trap fatal to so many in our day, the excluded

middle. It is not for him a world of undenominated things which can be combined pragmatically into any pattern. From this failure to insist upon no compromise in definition and elimination come most of our confusions. Our feeling of not understanding the world and our sense of moral helplessness are to be laid directly to an extremely subversive campaign to weaken faith in all predication. Necessity for the logical correctness of names ceases to be recognized. Until the world perceives that "good" cannot be applied to a thing because it is our own, and "bad" to the same thing because it is another's, there is no prospect of realizing community. Dialectic comes to our aid as a method by which, after our assumptions have been made, we can put our house in order. I am certain that this is why Plato in the *Cratylus* calls the giver of names a lawgiver (*νομοθετης*); for a name, to employ his conception, is "an instrument of teaching and of distinguishing natures." But if we are to avoid confusion, the name-maker who is lawgiver cannot proceed without dialectic: "And the work of the legislator is to give names, and the dialectician must be his director if the names are to be rightly given." Plato sees here that name-giving and lawgiving are related means of effecting order. Actually stable laws require a stable vocabulary, for a principal part of every judicial process is definition, or decision about the correct name of an action. Thus the magistrates of a state have a duty to see that names are not irresponsibly changed.

In dialectic the student will get a training in definition which will compel him to see limitation and contradiction, the two things about which the philosophy of progress leaves him most confused. In effect, he will get training in thinking, whereas the best that he gets now is a vague admonition to think for himself.

Here, then, is a call for a fresh appreciation of language—perhaps, indeed, a respect for words as things. Here is an opening for education to do something more than make its customary appeal for "spiritual revival," which is itself an encouragement to diffuseness and aimlessness. If the world is to remain cosmos, we shall have to make some practical application of the law that in the beginning was the word.

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Ideas
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