Communication (3) Language
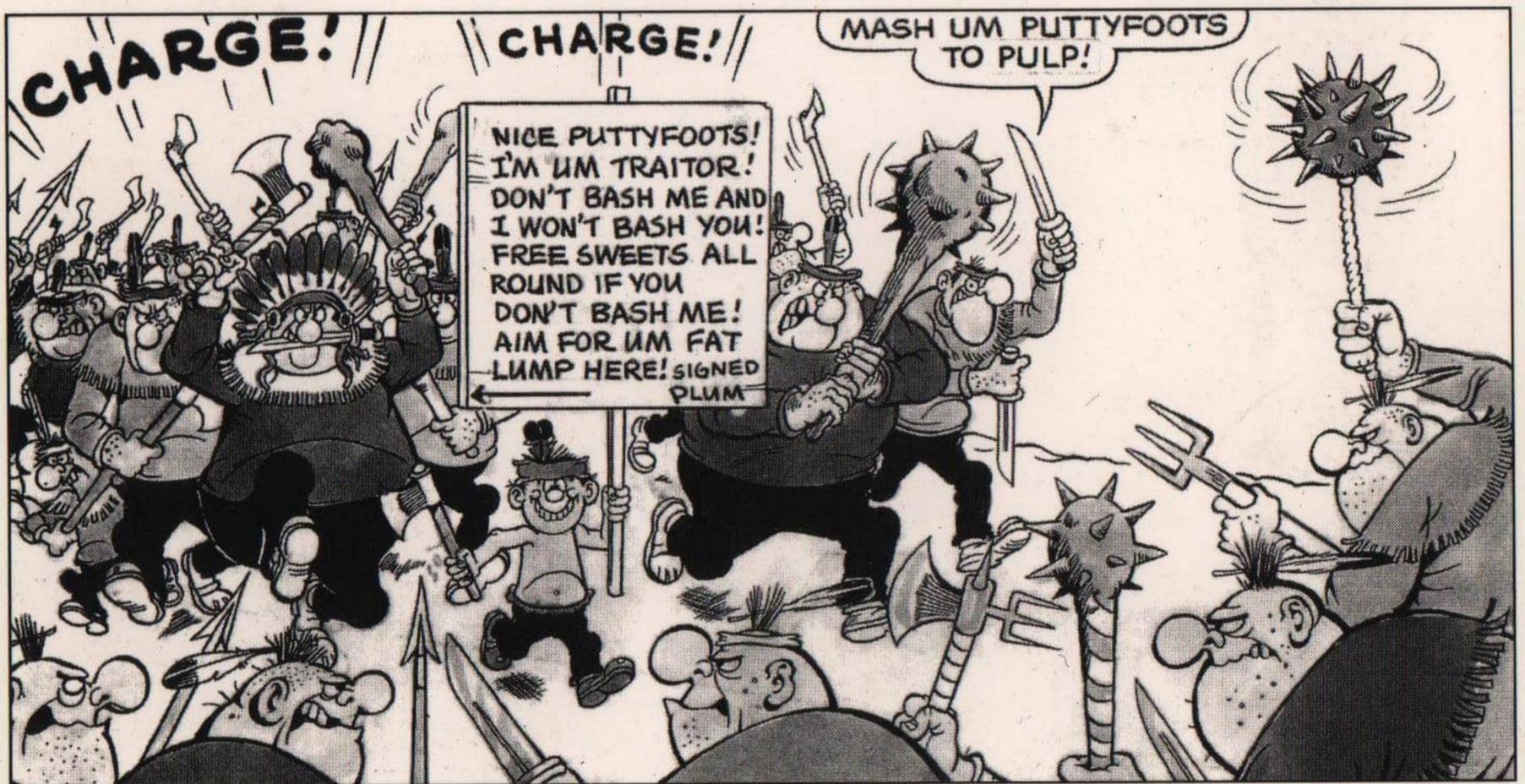
Little Plum communicating (see page 166)

This issue of The Raven was edited by Neil Birrell

Editorial

The first edition of *The Raven* which dealt with the question of Communication (No. 12) was published in the last quarter of 1990. We would recommend a re-reading of the editorial which it carried in order to put this editorial into context but we will start by quoting its final paragraph:

If we are serious about wanting to communicate anarchism and see the task as world-wide, then the sooner we establish an international anarchist information network the more effective our propaganda will be.

Six years have passed since then and they are six years during which Freedom Press has put much effort into making such a vision a reality. We have succeeded to a fair degree. And we have succeeded by working closely with other anarchists around the world – all active in a wide variety of media. Therefore, perhaps now, with this edition of *The Raven* which also speaks to the issue of communication it is time to tell the story from where that last paragraph left off.

As a starting point we set up the Freedom International Section four years ago, although it had existed in embryonic form for two years more. The first task seemed to be simply to establish, or in some cases renew, contact with other anarchist groups around the world (we had one letter from a group in Australia saying they had had no contact with us in twenty years and were pleased to hear that we still existed).

However, we tried first of all to concentrate efforts on Europe. Despite the fact that we were able to operate in three and sometimes four languages we were – we felt surprisingly – somewhat unsuccessful. We were, at this stage, simply trying to establish contact and dialogue but although we used an established network (a-infos) we received few replies. Notable exceptions were France and Sweden.

The demands of operating in several languages were high and did not seem to be worth the effort – although we did persevere – so we decided to concentrate on the Anglo-Saxon and Hispanic worlds. This proved more successful.

Soon we were working productively with people throughout the Americas and Australasia. A colleague agreed to co-ordinate matters relating to Canada and we discovered individuals with similar aims in Australia, Brazil, Venezuela, Holland and Germany.

This was all very loose and there was no plan to co-ordinate activities in any way. However, a useful flow of information was established.

From the point of view of Freedom Press apart from anything else there grew a healthy page of international news in every edition of *Freedom* which drew favourable reaction.

We soon realised that by working in three languages we were in many ways well placed to try to co-ordinate this flow of information. Freedom Press is well known in the anarchist world and a lot of information comes to us on a regular basis. We began reproducing a selection of this in three languages (generally English, French and Spanish but also other languages) every three months and forwarding it to individuals and (mainly) other journals in the hope that it would circulate further.

Its success was more in the doing than in the achievement. We successfully published nine editions over more than two years and each one was trilingual. However, we found few instances where it was reproduced. This had notable exceptions. Australia, Canada, France and to a lesser extent Italy and Japan reproduced material but few others.

A new phase had been entered shortly after the Ten Days that Shook the World conference. Freedom Press was approached by Spunk Press with a request for contributions.

Up until then we were almost unaware of Spunk Press and to a lesser degree the newer electronic forms of communication. Spunk was doing what we were doing albeit dealing almost exclusively in English and having no focus on 'news' but it was far more advanced and reaching far more people due to the nature of the medium they were using. We decided to participate.

Soon we were putting back issues of Freedom International News into their electronic archive along with some other texts and this was again being done multi-lingually.

Spunk Press however, was not and is not a news service. To update its now very substantial archive is a long job and therefore is not done regularly enough for it to be a news service even on a weekly basis. In terms of the internet this is largely to do with the fact that Spunk Press operates on the World Wide Web. Putting aside the technicalities this means that it is accessed by the optimum number of people but that it responds more slowly to events as they develop. One of the other main tools of the internet is e-mail which reaches fewer people but updates itself instantaneously as it is used. We wanted to combine the two systems.

The a-infos internet project

As we have already mentioned, there existed (mainly in Europe) a paper network called a-infos whose declared intent was to produce information in brief translatable form for further circulation among anarchist groups. Although we had tried, unsuccessfully, to become a part of this network we decided along with other comrades (notably in Canada) to bring the a-infos idea to the internet by using a combination of mailing lists and the World Wide Web. At the same time we established the Freedom Press Web site, more about which later.

The a-infos project is *two* mailings lists.* Firstly there is a-infos and then there is a-infos-d. The first of these – a-infos – is a news service. People who subscribe to this list are asked to recognise this and not to reply to messages. The overall effect is one of a library. Our second list (a-infos-d) is for everything else: discussing translation work, commenting on appropriateness of material etc.

What we seemingly have ended up with goes much further than the idea envisaged by the editor of *The Raven* No. 12. We have now an instantaneous, multi-lingual anarchist electronic news service which automatically archives the information for research purposes. We are not satisfied for several reasons.

A trivial point first. Our archive is somewhat a Tower of Babel. So far all we have succeeded in doing is, as it were, pile up the information as it comes in. To get computers to reclassify it by say language or geographical location is possible but to do so in programming terms is something we have not yet tackled. However, we have begun to impose some anarchy on the disorder and have interesting sections on events in France and Nicaragua and at the same time the 1995 section has been largely sorted into the various languages. More work needs doing.

Secondly a mixed success. In the eighteen months we have been active we have successfully followed a number of international issues of direct interest to anarchists – indeed almost all submissions are of a high quality – perhaps rare on the internet. However, we could not possibly claim to be – as yet – an alternative to the established media. We do not yet act in a responsive way as they do.

Far more importantly again is the question nagging at the back of *your* mind (probably) which is that this information is, in some ways,

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* The current situation regarding numbers of mailing lists is currently under discussion

only accessible to those who have the electronic means to get at it. We have to say that we take this most seriously. Firstly here we must state that the information we produce is directly received by about 550 individuals in thirty different countries and that each piece of information goes to all recipients for the cost of a cheap local phone call – a bit like *Freedom* being sent to all subscribers with one stamp. We could not achieve this in postal terms. More importantly however is that a figure approaching 10% of those 550 are individuals who can pass the information on to others both in electronic and other ways. To state the obvious some of the information appears in *Freedom* and so is read by *Freedom*'s readers (a-infos probably carries an average of about 3,000 words of information a day in various languages and the volume is steadily increasing). It is impossible to say ultimately how many it reaches but we are certainly dealing with a four figure number.

The Freedom Press World Wide Web site
A web site is a collection of digitised computer files which, because they are written using a very simple mark up coding called html, can be cross referenced and indexed to a virtually limitless degree. In turn a web site – which is held on one computer – can be linked in the same way to other computer files held on another computer. This is what is known as the World Wide Web. It is not the same as the Internet although the two are often referred to as though they were synonymous.

Such a definition can show how similar the system is to, on the one hand, a library and, on the other, a supermarket thus encapsulating in one way the two different perceptions that many have of it. Both perceptions are justified. The WWW, like a library, carries information and indeed vast amounts of it and at the same time it carries a lot of commercial material which people are invited to buy. Both sides of the web are growing although given the money which supports it it is probably the commercial side which is growing fastest.

From the point of view of Freedom Press there are a number of advantages to be gained from having a web site. Firstly, it is the nature of the web that insofar as it is not hierarchically structured each web site can be accessed by users just as easily as any other. This allows smaller political groupings (anarchists, fascists) to make their voices heard on the same footing as larger national political parties.

Secondly, it allows people to read the views that are expressed in our publications as a kind of sampler. Selections from every edition of *Freedom* are published on the site and we are currently working

towards a position where we can say the same about *The Raven* and indeed books which we publish. All this material is drawn together by the process of linkage as described above. Thus, for example, in the paragraph I am writing where <u>*The Raven*</u> is underlined this would indicate to the visitor that if they 'clicked' (chose) that word or phrase they would see on their screen either an extract from an edition of *The Raven* or (more likely) an index of such extracts.

Clearly we also want people to buy our publications and a web site is a useful way of encouraging them to do so. People want to know what they are getting when they buy literature and this is one reason why presenting them with an extract allows them to know exactly what is available.

Also by linking to other groups with similar aims to ourselves and, indeed, working with them more widely on the Internet through projects like a-infos, we are actively putting into practice our principles of solidarity, mutual aid and realising the truth of how there is strength in numbers. Anarchists will know that the history of organising has often proved to be one of infighting and splits. Perhaps surprisingly anarchists work very well on the Internet with many people from different groups and backgrounds working together in a productive fashion. The web site is one aspect of this.

Probably the most common way of visiting a web site is to access what is known as its homepage. This ideally will tell the visitor about the organisation that the site belongs to and also give a number of links either to all the information held at the site or, if it is a large one, to some parts of it for example indexes of the files of information that are held there.

The Freedom Press site falls into the second category. There are now some 200 files of information grouped into four main groups each with their own index, all four of which can be accessed from the homepage. The first one mentioned on the homepage is the International News Section. This is relatively new and contains articles from back editions of *Freedom* going back over a period of some twelve months with an emphasis on what is new. The files are (in the main) classified by country in three further sections: the good (reports of constructive actions carried out by anarchists around the world) the bad (essentially news from the liberal democracies) and the ugly (reports of massacres or indeed any report of a death caused by state activity). The second section features extracts from the current edition of *Freedom* (on average perhaps two or three items often indexed to the International News Section) along with an

archive of articles from back issues. This also is a new section and the ambitious aim is to provide a complete history of the 20th Century as covered by *Freedom*. The files held here are also classified in two different ways: chronologically and by subject. Thirdly is *The Raven* index. This lists the titles of all the editions published so far and allows visitors to retrieve one article from a particular edition. More work needs doing here given that no more than about half of the editions printed have been processed in this way. The index also gives full subscription details. Lastly (but not leastly) is the booklist. Here visitors access a list of Freedom Press publications again, in many instances, with extracts available for them to read. An order form is provided which they can print out (if their computer is linked to a printer) and post off payment to London.

All the pages at the site are set up to allow people to post an e-mail message to Freedom Press. The number of communications we receive in this way is small but growing and ranges from requests for subscription details for those not dealing in pounds sterling to bookshops making enquiries as to whether something is still available at our bookshop in London. All pages at the site which contain extracts from *Freedom* invite the visitor to write to London for a free sample copy of the journal.

We pointed out earlier that it is the nature of the web that the Freedom Press site is as accessible to anyone with access to the WWW as, say, the Labour Party's web site. This is true but it does require ensuring that people know you are there. There are different ways this can be done. Firstly, and in many ways most importantly, publicise your WWW address. This has been on the back page of *Freedom* now for over a year. It has, however, recently changed and we are now at:

http://www.tao.ca/~freedom

People can now (for the first time) send e-mail directly to Freedom Press by writing to:

freedom@tao.ca

Another way to promote your site is to request of other groups that they provide you with a link from their site. This is commonly done reciprocally on a you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours basis. As one might imagine this has led to the situation where the anarchist sites on the web have come together into one continuous network.

Thus the reader can see some of the different ways in which we can alert other anarchists or sympathisers to our presence. Perhaps there

lies the familiar problem: preaching to the converted. Fortunately Freedom Press are not alone in wanting people to know where we are. Everybody has an interest here and for this reason the WWW has evolved its own indexing system which users can access at sites known as web searchers. Simply by typing in a word or phrase the user can search huge databases carrying information about files of information which exist in the WWW. These databases are being constantly updated by an automated process. Computer programmes called robots travel around the WWW collecting data about what is there before returning to base and recording it. This is potentially a very powerful way of bringing people to your site. Programmes held at the web site allow the owners (in our case Freedom Press) to monitor how many times in a given period (in our case every week) any particular file is accessed. This can return surprising results. For example one file of information which was an article written in 1995 about Vietnam was, during a one month period, being accessed about 100 times a week (simply double figures is pretty good going). Presumably this was because the subject: Vietnam is one of interest to many in North America and whilst they may not have been aiming to access our site, since we carried information they were potentially interested in, they arrived at that file of information. In turn the file in question carries links elsewhere encouraging the visitor to travel deeper into the site.

So what is popular? An article from *Freedom* by Colin Jackson on drugs from about 1995 is often read as is another on TV sitcoms written by Steven Booth. Anything by Kropotkin gets a steady flow of 'hits' as does Emma Goldman. Zapatistas and Chomsky are also words that seem to draw people to them. I was surprised to discover also how frequently the booklist is accessed, suggesting that many visitors are still interested in books in this supposedly digital age.

One of my favourites of this kind actually comes from the a-infos archive. There was one file there which was consistently being hit more than 100 times a week. It turned out to be the only file in the whole site written in Swedish and its subject matter was pornography. If the combination Swedish pornography was being sought the visitor would have been disappointed!

All in all about 100 files are accessed at the Freedom Press site every 24 hours and this 'traffic' is steadily increasing. Although we are still a drop in a big ocean we are reaching people who otherwise would not have heard of us.

The immediate future of a-infos and the Freedom Press web site is

clear. We have hit a winning formula and will continue to pursue it whilst at the same time making more concerted efforts to pursue the original idea of a paper issue of a-infos for further circulation and moving into the area of radio. We are convinced that this can be done in the medium term.

The longer term depends on several factors among which we would mention the following. Firstly the people involved. Such a large and ambitious project has demands for skills and resources which not everyone has. Secondly our reliance on the electronic medium is just as likely to be the cause of our demise as our evolution. The future here is we feel quite unclear but we have a hunch that small fry – including anarchists – will be commercially eliminated in the fullness of time. Even if that pessimistic forecast proves to be with foundation, contacts now between certain individuals are strong enough to ensure that the network will develop elsewhere if this medium is denied to us. For sure we have it now and can use it but also we must not forget that there are many ways to communicate and that this *Raven* seeks to celebrate them all.

Neil Birrell

Reprieve for Babel

The question of whether there ever was one language from which all others came has fascinated people from the occultists, with their quest for the Ur-Sprache, which preceded the collapse of Nimrod's ziggurat, up to today's researchers into generative grammar – much influenced by the widely accepted theories of Noam Chomsky. In different ways their quests all echo George Steiner's question when he asks:

Why does *Homo sapiens*, whose digestive tract has evolved and functions in precisely the same complicated ways the world over, whose biochemical fabric and genetic potential are, orthodox science assures us, essentially common, the delicate runnels of whose cortex are wholly akin in all peoples and at every stage of social evolution - why does this unified, though individually unique mammalian species not use *one* common language?

The problem is indeed acute. On the islands of New Guinea, where some fifty languages of the Papuan family are spoken in an area about the size of Wales, a couple of villagers separated by a well eroded hill may, if they meet, find that they are speaking two mutually incomprehensible morphologically unrelated languages. The punishment of Babel is well felt here and indeed other linguistically rich regions like Africa or Mexico also attest to the Babel phenomenon.

Karl Young has pointed out to me that simply "The Valley of Mexico with Mexico City as cultural if not geographical centre, [by Valley is meant an area of drainage larger than some European and central American states] was home to literally hundreds of indigenous languages most of them not related in any way to the Mayan family and often not to each other".

Were we to use Karl Young's definition that languages be defined simply on the basis of whether people can understand each other we get a shifting picture. Two traders in a market can understand each other perhaps for a basic transaction and can, at this point, be said to speak the same idiom. Babel might return if they turned to, say, discussing Flaubert. But this in turn moves towards the view of

humankind as a multi-lingual animal almost by the very nature of his sociability – another Chomskyan idea:

... the idea that there is anything like a pure speaker of a language. That's certainly untrue. Everyone of us is a multi-lingual speaker. Every one of us has grown up in some strange mixture of dialects. Our parents spoke one way and our friends spoke a different way, and they spoke a different way on the radio. The whole idea of one state of mind is already a high level of idealisation... In the real world, everyone grows up in a complex multi-lingual situation.

This comes back to my first point: that the notion 'English' really has no clear meaning. What we call English is something that includes the way you speak and I speak and the way they speak in England and the way they speak in the Ozark Mountains. If there were different political boundaries we might call some of these different languages. The fact of the matter is that all of us are multi-lingual speakers in the sense that we have some complex of grammars in our heads.

This kaleidoscopic regress need not stop there. Each one of us evolves and creates his or her language afresh with age. Babel becomes infinite. Surely we can clamber back a little whilst still accepting the premise of multi-lingualism. The linguist Edward Sapir suggests we might by pointing out that there are important differences between individual and dialectic variations, "The individual variations are swamped in or absorbed by certain major agreements". In this respect though it may perhaps be unwise to speak of languages – associated with cultural heritage and in most instances with nationalism – we could certainly talk of stable dialects where such 'major agreements' give a sense of unity to individual variations – a discussion in a market is communication; it is not art.

If we go along with this idea of stable dialects perhaps the figure of 5,000 will seem a fair one. Such a figure need not astonish although it may well be conservative. What is more likely to surprise is the almost total dominance of a very small percentage of these 5,000. By listing a mere five (English, Chinese, Spanish, Russian and Hindi) we can account for the home language – and here we start to use the term as we wish to use it – of nearly half the world's population. By doubling the number we can account for 60% and about 2% of the total number of languages account for 95% of the world's population.

Even here, amongst the leaders, the fortunes are very varied as they swim around in some kind of linguistic meme pool. And as the meme theorists (Dawkins, etc.) suggest external factors change and allow for different fortunes. People are of course familiar with a view of

history which sees colonialism as a driving force. We are used to speaking of the Greek, Roman and British empires even if the American one sticks more in the throat. The influences of their languages always leave an indelible mark on the areas they visit. We will return to this matter.

Another significant factor in language survival – although less so today – is colonialism's opposite: isolation. Basque might be seen as an example. Its fortunes now are waning. Even though it is one of only a handful of non Indo-European languages in Europe it also is giving way to the influence of the linguistic tides around it.

Parentage and the education system would seem to be of far more significance in more recent times and the latter is often linked closely with colonialism and state power. The education system is used in two essential ways here. Firstly, to establish linguistic standards thus helping to preserve the 'purity' of the language and, secondly, to establish an elite who in turn become the bastion of the language. Clearly this is one level of what we might call horizontal exclusion – an identifying factor of social class.

These factors however only account for how such stable dialects survive rather than the more dynamic notion of language spread. Here the determining factor is the willingness of users of other languages to use the language in question as an auxiliary.

Spread and Rebellion

For a language to spread it must have its initial base, the vitality of which will depend largely on what it is used for – commerce, culture, technology, media. These usages must be essentially cross-cultural. Using language for mono-cultural reasons – literature, folksongs – is another instance of the isolationist drive. For it is to the extent that a language be used in the former way that its influence can grow and spread. Indeed it can grow exponentially (population growth in certain areas of Latin America and Asia safely entrench the influence of, for example Chinese, Portuguese and Spanish) within the meme pool of the modern world.

The technological changes of the last thirty years, perhaps dating to the launch of Sputnik one, propelled the two super powers and their languages to the fore in world developments. We can get a feel for this secondary, auxiliary usage of the two languages by looking at the international world of scientific research. In 1980 – well in the middle of the cold war era – 72.6% of the articles published in *Index Medicus* were in English and Russian came in second place with 6.3%.

German came third. The same year a figure of 64.7% of the articles in *Chemical Extracts* were in English. As Wardhaugh was able to comment, "it is difficult to understand how a scientist who cannot read English or who does not have immediate access to good translations from English can hope to keep up with current scientific activity".

Living now in the post cold war period and given the seemingly unchallenged global policy coming from the liberal democracies Anglo-American is triumphant on the linguistic battlefield. One estimate now puts the number of English speakers at some 350,000,000 more than half of whom live in North America. It is an immense power base from which today powerful media events are emanating.

In addition to this figure there are probably an equal number of second language speakers and a third group, the area which is perhaps now seeing the fastest growth because of technological developments in the sphere of telecommunications, of those who use it in a casual, raw manner to understand the flow of information that is going past them.

For those who believe there might be something wrong with the American Dream this may come as alarming – equally alarming is the possibly greater likelihood that it will not be noticed. With international news services, subsidised books and cinema goes a particular world viewpoint as seen from a Western 'developed' perspective.

There is no sign of its spread decreasing. On the contrary, no realistic competitor is in sight. French is being squeezed by the tide. As Wardhaugh points out, "That tide may someday change and come to favour some other language than English but only in a very different world from the one that currently exists and one that those who presently speak the language would likely view as catastrophically different".

Perhaps. But there will also be those who will realise the appeal of Babel. They will point to such estimates as that which tells us that about 80% of the existing North American languages are moribund. The figure for Alaska has been put at 90%. Here we are right at the core of linguistic power. But as we move out the picture is also bleak. 23% in Central and South America, 70% in Russia – whose influence has not decreased within her borders – 90% in Australia. Simply by going on a head count of the number of speakers (say 100,000) perhaps only 600 languages are safe within the climate of our times. We could, during the next century, see the extinction of as many as 90% of the world's languages.

Talk in these terms will of course bring to mind evolutionary themes

and from there to ecological ones. All this is reminiscent of what is happening as technology sweeps through other kingdoms. The causes are sometimes similar with the habitats (this time cultural) being destroyed by what has been called the 'cultural nerve gas' of the electronic media.

One can argue, strongly, that the technologies at humanity's disposal should be made widespread yet we know that the planet can't take the strain of the uniformity of the petrol economy – a uniformity which needs to be challenged.

Anglo-American has a fashionable, coca cola appeal. At any given time 100,000,000 mainly young people are studying it. For them it represents a certain kind of economic and cultural freedom that they value. By putting the issue thus we are, however, not facing up to the danger we have already alluded to. To the degree that language is a nationalist and cultural cement, the coming linguistic hegemony of Anglo-American represents the next stage in empire: the voice of Anglo-American is the voice of Bretton Woods and Western neo-liberalism. Language itself can be a highway laid down to allow power and wealth to seep up from the periphery and back to the imperial core. In an age of information this link is perhaps stronger than it has ever been before.

As the dominance of Anglo-American goes forward unchecked, other languages die off. This should worry us all in the same way that the burning of a library would. As Krauss writes, "Any language is a supreme achievement of a uniquely human collective genius, as divine and endless a mystery as a living organism".

To lose the diversity of language within the world would be a tragedy. Some will inevitably disappear. But another viewpoint allows us to see how the modern forms of communication can help rather than hinder diversity. In the same way that English has spread from the core to the periphery so the Internet with its notion of networking and isolated groupings – mailing lists for example – may offer a reprieve for Babel. It was the fall of Babel that was represented as humanity's punishment for rebellion. Here the communicative side of language is the source of punishment. This in itself conceals the other side of language, buried in the diversity that grew out of Babel, which is its ability to hide. The real fear of power is a fear that it cannot survey. CompuServe recently banned the use of Welsh on its server as it would not be able to monitor the traffic. Encryption whether it be into PGP, or Welsh is in itself a challenge to authority.

Max Nettlau

Esperanto from an Anarchist's Point of View

In a revue of the year's events now acted in Paris, the Chicago meat packers are represented coming to Paris to contract for the refuse of that city to use it for making 'jungle'. This crude satire pictures in a nutshell the state of things brought about by the never-ending extension of capitalist industrialism. The last vestiges of nature disappear and our food, housing, reading, amusements – *all* are made for us by large combines, who plant on us at 'popular prices' jungle goods. Public opinion, criticism, art, everything is being brought under their control, and the intellectual level that had hardly begun to rise in the later nineteenth century is rapidly lowered again; for brains are only wanted for a small caste of cunning schemers and an overseer and manager class – the rest need to be mere brainless, ignorant, jungle-fed 'men in the street', on the look-out for betting news, gullible to an ever-increasing extent.

When municipalities and public bodies try to save some useful services from capitalist domination, competition forces them to establish these on similar lines – all artificial, wholesale made, calculated only to supply in the quickest way the average needs of average people, and the growing tide of uniformity is only hastened by such efforts.

There are, however, groups of people who resent this destruction of all individual features of life, and endeavour to return to nature, to a real, full and healthy life which breeds individualities, not machine-made people. Back to the land, co-operative fellowships, garden cities, the revival of handicrafts, the claims of free womanhood, art for art's sake and social art, anti-militarism, decentralisation – these and similar causes are dear to those who wish for human, not for industrial development. Anarchism, whilst not over-rating the importance of these special movements, is in sympathy with all of them, but recognises that the whole present system, based on political and economic authority and monopoly, must be overthrown before any good cause whatever can have fair play and free scope. Anarchism is thus the fullest and truest representative of all efforts towards free

life in nature's free surroundings. State Socialism merges more and more with the general state and capitalist efforts to provide some dull state of a semblance of well-being to the average people ground down to be mere figures or tools – 'benevolent capitalism', the counterpart to the 'enlightened despotism' of the eighteenth century, a fiction which the French Revolution exploded as thoroughly as the Social Revolution will that of capitalism-*cum*-state socialism of our days. This system will break down by overdoing it: people will remember some day that they are men. Until then let us help to construct as far as possible organisms which show the working of freedom, and also save what we can of primitive beautiful nature – this will preserve some of us from slipping under the grindstone of uniformising industrialism, and will some day help larger masses to find their way back to nature and happiness.

Besides these great currents of human development, the roads to authority and to freedom, there existed always some inventions set on foot by simple-minded people who knew the short-cut to human perfection. They were mostly to such a degree ignorant of real life and indifferent about it, that some vague uniformity of general bliss would be the thing they aimed at. The millennium dreamers are one of their purest expressions, and to their ranks belong the inventors of universal this, universal that – of *universal languages*, for example. Only collectors of eccentricities noticed them thus far, and I am greatly surprised to see the anarchist press of most countries containing notes showing that a number of comrades are interested in some lately invented artificial languages – Esperanto and Neutral – which seems to me to involve a loss of valuable energy on a side-track which leads far away from our ideas.

If they only intended to make propaganda among those interested in Esperanto, I should say nothing further, though people absorbed by a fad are usually, for the time being, least accessible to serious reflection on another subject. But some comrades seem to hold strong ideas on the importance and usefulness of Esperanto, etc., in general, and about this I should like to argue with them. I am quite aware that Esperanto is not to supplant nor destroy existing languages, but only to serve as a convenient means of communication; still I maintain that it does more harm than it can possibly do good.

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Language to me is a beautiful product of nature, and an illustration of that real anarchy of nature which we see in all nature's

manifestations around us, and to which man alone, that super-wise poor victim of the authority fetish, still objects. Those who study the past of a group of kindred languages, and observe how by association and mutual attraction by-and-by more settled groups of sounds or forms are formed whilst each member of these groups may either follow voluntarily the so-called law which governs them or may be more attracted by another group and join that group, etc. – those, then, who follow these phenomena, too long to describe here, see in reality a reign of peaceful anarchy where there is continuous life and development on the lines of unfettered attraction and free conviction. Dialects in their endless variety, preserving so many valuable relics of the past, make each language resemble the picturesque scenery of a mountainous country with its pleasant change of hills and valleys, forests and meadows, with rare flowers preserved in out-of-the-way spots. Modern book language is a half natural, half artificial product (influenced by historic events, the boundaries of states, the predominance of a capital, etc.); it represents just the limits within which it is feasible to make people speaking kindred dialects accept a common literary language. Thus the many French dialects are just sufficiently near to each other that literary French is an accessible and welcome means of communication to all; in the same way Italians and Spaniards accept the Tuscan and Castilian as their literary language. But this imposes too great a sacrifice on the dialects of the South of France and the East of Spain, and we see two new literary languages struggle to the front in these territories: the Provençal and the Catalonian languages – time will show with what success. This is the *natural* way of development, and, as always, it is towards local autonomy and decentralisation. Small languages come more and more to the front, and the treasures hidden in dialects are carefully collected and preserved. Here, again, nature puts a limit to the state, and everyone knows on which side our sympathies as anarchists are.

These small nationalities are, it is true, like the country people who hardly know the literary language, often very much behind in political and religious matters: a reason for this is that it is their way of defending themselves against the encroachments of the state, which strives to abolish them entirely. Once this continuous dread is removed, they will become useful aids to progress and the reserves of strength which they keep will relieve the task of the townspeople, who are nervous and energetic but physically degenerated. This quite modern race of men, the town dwellers, may be the first who will fight for freedom, but they have already become unable, I fear, to reap the

fruits of the fight. For this, reserves of strong and healthy people only will be apt, I believe; and these are those who still are in contact with nature, enjoy its beauties, their local life, their local language, etc.

Present day industrialism is making havoc among the natural riches accumulated by ages, never to grow again. All that is beautiful or useful is made money of as quickly as profitable. We become poorer each year. Forests are preserved here and there only, as specimens, as reservations, or are reduced to the form of parks; of parks, again, part is given to the builder and some enclosed pleasure grounds only remain. These commercial habits, everything being mercenary, and the increase of population hold out sad perspectives of the future and this alone ought to make us anxious for the coming change.

Local life means not giving up of international feelings. Only a man who himself has some originality and individuality left can feel the right interest in the different ways and manners of other nations; the average town-bred people who, having seen some natives in a circus and some poor 'aliens' in the streets, fancy they know everything and need no further instruction – it is those who are brainless enough to sip the national hatred which the capitalist press find it profitable to instil into them. The best means towards fraternal international feelings, besides the propaganda of ideas and staying abroad, is to learn foreign languages, and thus to get real access to the intellectual life of other nations. This could easily be done if the pedagogic fraternity did not make the thing look so extremely difficult, these people who live by making other people lose their time, true to their principle that you must waste years to learn what you could learn in months! The principal languages are, indeed, so very near to each other: an Englishman knows already half of the French and most of the German words; an Italian knows beforehand most of the French and part of the English words. All Russians are eager to learn French; those of small nationalities mostly learn one of the principal languages from childhood, etc. The difficulties are greatly overrated because it is to the interest of governments and capitalists to keep the nations separated and in the state of mutual distrust created by mutual ignorance.

Here, then, popular movements set in – from university extension, French People's Universities, German evening classes for workers, etc., to schoolboys' international letter-writing, even to the exchange of postcards; and instead of helping these movements, which require some serious work after all, the spirit of nervous superficiality, incapable of strenuous efforts, cries for a short cut, a universal language. 'Have

your boots soled while you wait!' 'Learn a universal language while you wait!' – that all comes from the same source: some people are already beyond being capable of serious efforts. Poor victims of our system – but it is not for us to be weak because they are weak.

Modern industrial life must have ground them down to the aesthetic level of people to whom the music of the barrel-organ, that musical Esperanto, combining so many instruments, is equal to the music of a fine instrument. Looking at Esperanto one sees a mixture of French, English, Russian and other words, distorted as passing through the lips of dozens of illiterate persons and the spelling books of an equal number of schoolboys could not distort them more – all this written in a clumsy orthography with three kinds of c (c, ç and circumflex c), two kinds of g and h (g, circumflex g, h, circumflex h), etc. If an Australian native would begin to talk French offhand, he would underlay the characters of his own language, and the product, if not very well sounding, but rather the contrary, would at any rate have some idiomatic charm of its own. But in Esperanto all that is absent; it is the most ugly thing on earth – other artificial languages excepted – and if it does not make dogs howl when spoken, I do not know what will or what dogs have come to! The Neutral is said to sound like ancient French spoken by a nigger.

Artificial universal languages, like discoveries of the philosopher's stone, are never met with alone; there are always two or three of them about. Esperanto claims to be more simple than Volapük, and Neutral claims to be more simple than Esperanto. There are two developments possible: either further languages are invented, more simple than Neutral, until we arrive at no language at all, namely, that old language of monks centuries ago, found in old books – a few hundred words expressed by gestures of hands and fingers – and with that a corresponding reduction of brainwork must come. Or Esperanto may predominate, and then it will be perfected by the introduction of an infinite number of words which the original inventors could not think of; these words are likely to be supplied in different countries in a different way, maybe at the same time, and this would end in English, Spanish, Russian, Esperanto, etc; in short, in the absence of a real universal language. Of these possibilities the former is more likely to happen. All such innovations are short-lived, and those who are under their spell often drift from one to another. I have no doubt that there are some who learned Volapük and Esperanto, and are now studying Neutral, and there is no question that somewhere somebody is already pondering over a *fourth* idiom, and so on.

If the fraternal interest which men of various countries begin to feel for each other had been purposely misled by their enemies, a better way could not have been chosen than to divert it to the barren desert of an artificial language, which leaves them in ignorance about each other, and only unites them in stammering an idiom created from the broken remnants of half-a-dozen languages – gives them 'jungle' for meat indeed. If state socialists did this as a step towards the unique centralised state, which even they no longer believe in, I think we should just laugh at them. But to see anarchists, of all people, interested in spreading ugliness and deformity, and defiling a beautiful product of nature, content to play with the broken remnants brought under artificial rules, this is something to feel sorry for.

The final reason given is, of course, the apparent immediate usefulness of the thing. We have not always been opportunists! Moreover this is an illusion. Suppose anarchists are persuaded to adopt it; then they accept it as anarchists, and as such they had no need for it, for *our ideas* have all along been our international language, and anything else could only be lower, not higher, than these. Thanks to these ideas, there is no country where an anarchist would not find comrades who would soon find means to communicate with him. This true solidarity that is found everywhere needs not the plaything of ugly fads which, if they infest so many other movements, were always kept away from ours. To handle Esperanto would be a sure symptom that our movement was declining too!

MN
(published in *Freedom*, December 1906)

Dear Comrade,
Will you allow me to treat Esperanto from another anarchist's point of view? Here we have a language that is not being imposed by any state force, but which is being adopted simply as expressing the people's desire for knowledge of one another, thus constituting ideal co-operation. The study of French and German which your correspondent recommends would necessitate four or five times the leisure that Esperanto needs. Our modern society has translated time by money, and the class which the anarchist wishes to see take up internationalism is scarcely burdened with that article.

No one denies the beauty of natural languages, but they are beautiful because they express the desires of the people to communicate

impressions. Esperanto expresses the desires of nations to communicate, and is beautiful in the logical and fair manner in which it fulfils this desire. There is no danger of the language degenerating into dialects. Is it an anarchist who adduces this argument? Esperanto is the creation of people who *desire* international communication. Its quality of being universally understood is its chief one, and is scarcely likely to be lost sight of. Idiom Neutral is not simpler than Esperanto, but is only understood by those acquainted with Latin and French. If ever a simpler language was invented (and I honestly doubt whether this is possible) we will calmly consider whether its superior facility of acquisition is sufficient to induce us to reject a language already international, and act accordingly. But oh! the last argument – that the anarchist's international language is his ideas. I was in Germany a short time ago. I come of German parents, and have lately endeavoured to polish up a childhood knowledge of the language by two years study, but my greatest sorrow was to stand in front of men in Germany with whom I was in sympathy and find myself unable to follow up any idea of the least depth. I came back a more zealous Esperantist than ever.

H. Meulen
(published in *Freedom*, January 1907)

A REPLY

Voluntary acceptation of something does not by itself constitute ideal co-operation, nor is it a standard of the value of a thing. Religion, for example, was voluntarily accepted at first, and ended by becoming an all-dominating prejudice which is not yet entirely uprooted. It is necessary to enter into the merits of each case. Now the writer says that the study of one of the most widely spoken living languages would take four or five times the leisure that Esperanto needs. But to have access, by spending some months over this instead of spending some weeks over Esperanto, to millions of volumes of literature, to be able to communicate with any number of people living in our immediate neighbourhood and yet be separated from us by so many state-cultivated patriotic prejudices – this seems to me, at any rate, more interesting and worthy of all possible effort, far more than saving some months' time by learning Esperanto and being able to exchange direct letters in this way with *some* people scattered here and there whose real qualities would be hidden by a conventional language, equally

unfamiliar to all; in one word, I have more to learn from fifty million French-speaking people than from stray Eskimos and other out-of-the-way people with whom I might correspond in Esperanto; for all others would more or less go to the trouble of learning one or the other of the four or five really important languages. I ask this question: if I know one or two of the widely spoken languages, what is the use of Esperanto to me? And if I know none of these languages ought I to limit myself to learning Esperanto and nothing else? Thus Esperanto is either useless or an utterly inadequate substitute.

The beauty of natural languages consists for me in the very appearance, the particular features of most words. This aesthetic view may have been developed in my particular case because I had leisure to study the growth and history of several languages. But I have noted a similar feeling in people who are otherwise quite uneducated. They like and cherish their dialect, their native talk, and if it is not properly spoken it jars to their ears like a false note to a musician. To them as to me Esperanto appears either comical or too sad for this, simply distasteful. If people do not feel this, that is their own affair. I only maintain that such people, by the unhappy surroundings which the capitalist system forces upon them, are to a regrettable extent alienated from real nature, and if they feel as anarchists they ought to endeavour rather to bring themselves and others nearer to nature again than to deaden another of their senses, the love for the beautiful and the natural.

As to dialects, my whole article shows that I say nothing against them; but what would be the good of an international language if it fell to pieces again, dividing into dialects which often have a tendency to become separate languages? I understand that groups of competent scholars will elaborate by and by the Esperantist dictionary for all divisions of science, etc. This looks very plausible, but somehow as an anarchist I do not much care about all these good people making my words for me; if this is the right system, why should we object to paternal legislation in general? I shall be told that Esperanto is not compulsory, but still if I object to these word-making committees I should have to create a schism or leave the church altogether – thus indirect compulsion is in full vigour. Submission is the first rule, or the *universal* character of the thing is gone, and I prefer my freedom to that abstract universality.

I have not examined Neutral, but have read that the Esperantist vocabulary is mainly based on the Latin languages also, because the inventor considered the Latin and Southern populations the slowest to learn other languages, and went farthest to meet their particularities.

This shows what an illusion Esperanto really is; the Latin peoples, who are most lacking the knowledge of other languages, practically only learn their own language over again, and then imagine they have done some intellectual work!

When the writer of the letter was hindered in his conversations with Germans by his imperfect knowledge of that language, at any rate those with whom he spoke could express properly all they had to say. If both had spoken Esperanto, probably neither of them could have deeply entered into the subject, as an artificial language cannot in a few years' time acquire that real aptness to express every *nuance* of thought which real languages after their secular evolution can. Thus superficiality would in instances take the place of serious effort. As shallowness is not exactly the thing of which there is a great scarcity in our modern life, there is no need to encourage it by pseudo-learning, by encroaching dilettantism.

MN
(published in *Freedom*, January 1907)

Dear Sir,
Before 'MN' attacked Esperanto in your issue of December, it was his duty to have studied the subject. Instead of so doing, however, it is clear that he had not carefully examined even the alphabet, else he would not have gravely informed readers that the auxiliary international language of the future possessed "three kinds of c", a statement which, of course, is quite contrary to fact. A Brussels journal (*idei international*) suggests that the critic is a distinguished German literary man. Now this I doubt, because it seems to me improbable that such a well-known writer would descend to such intemperate language as the following: "If it [Esperanto] does not make dogs howl when spoken I do not know what will, or what dogs have come to!" Sneers in this country, at least, are not recognised as arguments, and wherever used are despicable weapons.

Let us next pass to consider the plain facts.

By the frequent recurrence of the long Italian vowels – the clearest and the most decided that the human vocal organs can produce – Esperanto is extremely euphonious, and resembles when spoken Italian or Spanish. Not only do I write for the immediate readers of this journal, but for the wider circle of progressives who still feel the thrill of spiritual aspiration. 'MN' writes about dogs. Well, in the city

of Geneva – whose very atmosphere is a benediction – the stately public prayers of pious Romans have recently ascended to the saints of God in musical Esperanto; while my own brethren of the Calvinistic cultus, concurrently assembled in the adjacent chapel of Knox, have in the same sonorous tongue joyfully proclaimed anew the good news of the White Christ.

We are further told that "Neutral Idiom is said to sound like ancient French spoken by a nigger". Confessedly – and this is a grave fault in a public teacher – 'MN' has not investigated for himself; and, by the way, in a professedly 'Communist' journal it is a painful surprise to find a term of opprobrium loosely applied to a large and long-suffering branch of the human family. Are anarchists about to become accomplices of Leopold of Belgium? Neutral Idiomists certainly claim that their tongue is simpler than the one I defend, but owing to the regular construction of the Esperanto grammar, and for other reasons of a purely technical character, I am unable to agree with them.

It is also true that another new language, namely 'Universal', professes to be simpler than either of those just named, and undoubtedly Dr H. Molenaar (Munich) is a very capable man; but for various reasons in which the general reader is not interested that language, too, has little chance in competition with Zamenhof's. Volapük is dead, adherents of the neo-Latin group of languages are very few, and practically the question is this: *Aut Esperanto aut nullus*.

'MN' says, moreover, that Esperanto (may) "be perfected by the introduction of an infinite number of words; [and] these words are likely to be supplied in different countries in different ways". The critic again builds upon a sandy foundation. Every tyro in Esperanto knows that the fundamentals of the language are forever fixed and inviolable, and that all new words must inevitably be formed in only one way – it matters not what may happen to be the nationality of the developer. Let me illustrate. Your correspondent's chaotic and most misleading article, occupying one-fourth of your entire issue, uses roughly 2,500 words. Now that is approximately the total number of radicals in Esperanto, most of them being – and the fact is of high importance – recognisable at sight by educated Europeans. In this basal vocabulary, dispersed over some twenty-five nations, there are many radicals which give birth to as many as thirty derivates, thus making Esperanto one of the richest of the rich among modern languages.

When one considers that from 3,000 to 5,000 words meet the needs of familiar intercourse, the value of Esperanto as a precise logical and

copious vehicle for human thought becomes self-evident; and I repeat that its words can only be expanded in one way. There is no room in the system for private judgement; hence the confusion which your ill-informed correspondent suggests is absurdly chimerical.

What superficial and slovenly critics like 'MN' write about Esperanto matters little. In the ultimate analysis Esperantism is a great fact, and it has never receded. In the city where I pen these lines (one of the world's great gates) some twenty propaganda lectures have been delivered on Esperanto since September; and in the *Liverpool Daily Courier* alone over sixty letters have recently appeared calling public attention to its claims. In addition to this work performed by the Liverpool Esperanto Club (of which I am vice-president), a socialistic lady has been delivering a series of lectures to socialists on the international value of the language to their movement; and during the past weeks she has eloquently addressed her comrades at Wallasey, Moss Side, Gorton, Eccles, Openshaw, Central Manchester, Miles Platting, West Toxteth and at the 'Clarion' Club, Liverpool. Moreover – and this point I wish in closing to drive home to readers – sectional meetings of socialists and progressives have been held during the Esperanto Congresses at Boulogne, last year at Geneva, and arrangements are being made for a similar international gathering during the Cambridge Congress of next autumn. 'MN' says, and rightly, that *ideas* form an international language. I put, however, this practical question. Of what value are ideas unless they are conveyed to the minds of others? Esperanto alone, by reason of its simplicity, precision and by the multiplicity of its adherents, solves *das Weltsprache-problem*, and therefore '*Fine ghi venkos*'.

Jas. M. Dow
(published in *Freedom*, April 1907)

Dear Sir,
I have been much interested in the correspondence in your journal on Esperanto, but it seems to me that none of your correspondents deals sufficiently with the main question, which is: Would it be an advantage for those who are trying to bring about a peaceful social revolution to have the means of freely communicating with each other, and by becoming mutually better known to be able to do away with some of those causes of friction which now keep us apart? The 'confusion of tongues' in the old story of the Tower of Babel had for

its avowed object to weaken the people by preventing them from taking counsel with each other, and well has it fulfilled its object; and the 'ruling classes' with money and leisure to learn foreign languages, to visit other countries, with a common 'diplomatic' language, have profited by the people's weakness and want of unity. Would not a common language for the people do away with some of this evil, and strengthen the international movement? And when such a language is put within our reach, clear, simple and easily learned, shall we reject it because we see flaws in it? Do we refuse to live in a house because it is not a palace? Or, if we love the violin, do we refuse to learn music because we cannot afford a Stradivarius? Of course the natural languages, or at least the chief of them, have the great advantage that there is a literature written in them; but those actively engaged in the social revolution have little time to study the thoughts and doings of even the great men of past generations; their interest lies in the present, in the struggle against capitalism and militarism now going on; they want to know what their comrades in other lands are feeling and *doing*, and to help, and encourage, and warn them by telling of their own successes and failures. And they cannot do this through the capitalist press – that only gives what it deems suitable for the people to know – but it is done by an Esperantist journal, the *Internacia Socia Revuo*, as yet only three months old, described by a non-socialist Esperantist as "not a socialist, but an anarchist journal".

I might enter into the defence of Esperanto and show that as it is necessary to know exactly what one wishes to say in order to say it correctly in Esperanto, it is a capital training in clearness and definiteness of thought; but I would rather close by urging your readers to examine it for themselves, to weigh the reasons for what they at first think to be flaws, and to learn from Dr Zamenhof that the end for which he laboured, and the spirit which underlies his language, is that of 'brotherhood and justice among all nations'.

Helen Fryer
(published in *Freedom*, May 1907)

Dear Sir,
My recent article on Esperanto has brought me several letters from the Continent, where your journal appears to have a wide circulation. One of my new correspondents wishes me to point out in your columns that at the Parisian Bourse du Travail a great many workers

and trade unionists have learned to speak and write the language, have thus been promptly put into direct touch with comrades in other lands, and that Monsieur Mittey, 5 Rue Labat, Paris, would be happy to supply any details to readers.

Another Continental friend thinks that British progressives are not fully alive to the potentialities of the help-speech in the cause of internationalism. He is evidently unaware that articles in Esperanto regularly appear in the *Clarion* (Manchester), *Forward* (Glasgow) and in less advanced English journals. Fortunately, the language is not bound up with such accidents as religious or political parties, and illustrative of this fact I wish to add that during my recent propagandism I have addressed audiences in a Conservative club, in Unitarian, Presbyterian and Congregational churches, in a Masonic hall, and in a mosque.

Jas. M. Dow
(published in *Freedom*, June 1907)

Brian Lesley

Newspeak

When George Orwell invented Newspeak, in his famous novel *1984*, in 1948, he was commenting on an existing tool of the ruling Establishment, the hidden 'power behind the throne'; but this power continues its barrage of Newspeak, so successfully that few people are aware of its insidious extent.

It is especially prevalent in the subject of economics, that collection of fantasies by which the 'economy' is guided.

'The economy' is itself a prime example. Economy: frugality; frugal use. But the modern 'economy' is hell-bent on waste and destruction of the World's resources.

My next example is 'disposable': All human-made products are disposable, and always have been. Some present greater problems than others to achieve this; but disposal has always been something to be done when the article has passed its useful life; something to be regretted, to be delayed as long as possible, except for items which by their nature are needed only briefly, perhaps for a specific event – a theatre ticket, for example.

Now, however, increasing numbers of things are being promoted as being 'disposable'. The word has acquired a totally new meaning. It has become a desirable quality: 'We can throw this away soon; hooray!'

Disposable pens, torches, lighters, nappies, cameras, etc., etc. What next? Cars? Houses? Certainly, industrial premises.

And cars and domestic appliances are already in this category, with parts essential for maintenance deliberately over-priced, and withdrawn after a set time, to force the scrapping of the appliance.

And the reason? Modern industry could easily meet everyone's material needs, given a sane method of distributing equitable entitlement to claim its produce, and of rewarding its producers. But finance-capitalism depends on continuing scarcity to keep on selling ('maintain markets') and avoid collapse.

To maintain demand for its goods, ever since the last world war industry has been developing and perfecting its strategy of planned obsolescence as it squanders resources and pollutes the planet. An

essential part of this strategy is to persuade, if not to force people to throw away what they have, and buy new – in fact, to regard buying new as a prime objective in life! Massive resources are devoted to this campaign of persuasion, and the giving of new meanings to such words as 'disposable' is an essential part of this effort.

A more widely recognised, more obviously murderous aspect of this plan is the build-up of the arms industry, supported by the military build-up. This was ably summarised by Philip Agee:*

Bush is trying to use the Gulf crisis, as Truman used the Korean war, to justify enormous military expenditures in reaction to economic slump and recession, while reducing as much as possible spending on civilian and social Programs. Exactly what Reagan and Bush did, for example, in the early and mid 1980's with the 'evil empire' scenario as justification.

In early 1950 the Truman Administration adopted a program to vastly expand the US and West European military services under a National Security Council document called NSC-68. This document was Top Secret for 25 years, and only by error was it released in 1975 and published. The purpose of military expansion under NSC-68 was to reverse the economic slide that began with the end of World War Two wherein the US GNP had declined 20% and unemployment had risen from 700,000 to 4.7 million. US exports, *despite* the subsidy program known as the Marshall Plan, were inadequate to sustain the economy, [my italics] and re-militarisation of Western Europe would allow transfer of dollars, under so-called defense grants, that would in turn generate European imports from the US.

As NSC-68 put the situation in early 1950: 'the United States and other free nations will within a period of a few years at most experience a decline in economic activity of serious proportions unless more positive governmental programs are developed...'

The solution adopted, the 'more positive governmental programs,' was expansion of the military. But support in Congress and the public at large was lacking, for a variety of reasons, not least the increased taxes the program would require. So Truman's State Department, under Dean Acheson, set out to sell the so-called Communist Threat as justification, through a fear campaign in the media that would create a permanent crisis atmosphere.

The whole of Agee's article is well worth reading, but he omits consideration not only of the other strategy to stave off the threat of impending plenty, but also any consideration of just why we 'need' to maintain economic activity and 'full employment', instead of freely and equitably distributing the benefits of modern productive power, and producing only for genuine need.

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* In 'Gulf War Launches New World Order', see *Open Eye* issue 1, 1991 (£1.70 from BM Open Eye, London WC1N 3XX).

The struggle for firms' survival is inevitably getting fiercer, and the workforce is now disposable.

Why is this? Without fundamental change, finance-capitalism is doomed to eventual collapse, but it is capable of inflicting disastrous further damage to society and the environment first, in its efforts to stave off this collapse.

By its nature, it is incapable of distributing incomes in sufficient volume to meet industry's costs and people's need (real or artificially created) for its products. The ever-growing debts it creates are the driving force compelling the deadly competition for markets.

Our debt-money system began with the medieval goldsmiths lending out, at interest, false receipts for the gold on deposit in their strong-rooms, which receipts were then used as money. The goldsmiths were the forerunners of the banks, and their false receipts became banknotes, exchangeable on demand for gold.

The Bank of England was founded – as a private institution – just over three hundred years ago (1694) when it lent £1.2m in gold to the King at an interest rate of 8% per annum, and on the back of that, was allowed to issue banknotes to the same value, which it loaned out also at 8%.

This was the start of the National Debt, which has been growing ever since.

Just £1 at 8% compound over three hundred years becomes £10.6 billion.

When 'runs on the banks' and bank collapses became too frequent, banks were prohibited by law from issuing their own notes, so cheques were introduced instead. Our money system is based on fraud – the greatest and most disastrous fraud in history.

Our money supply now consists almost entirely of bank loans ('credit', i.e. debt – more Newspeak) all bearing interest charges. Not just governments – and certainly not just third world countries – are saddled with these growing debts: industry and individuals are in the same boat, and the banks, despite the enormous power they wield by their control of the criteria for their loans – who to, what size, for what purpose, on what 'security' – are desperate to find new ways of justifying further loans to keep the system from total collapse; hence the growth of hire purchase, mortgage lending, credit cards, 'plastic money', etc. The system absolutely depends on their success in this – and must be challenged if we are ever to get off this path to destruction.

Too much money?

'Inflation is caused by too much money chasing too few goods' – this myth is used to justify efforts to cut the money supply. 'Too much money' is and always has been Newspeak; apart from the banknotes and coins, all the money you earn and spend is debt. For it to exist, someone, somewhere, has had to borrow it from a bank; and someone, somewhere, is now trying to earn the money to repay that loan and the hire-charge on it – the interest the bank demands for its existence – and someone else, somewhere, has borrowed the money the first someone needs to pay that interest. This way, debts can only grow; and the total of debts in the world is now far greater than the total of assets.

The favourite way to attempt to cut the money supply is by raising interest rates; but it is these interest charges which are the prime cause of inflation. The higher the rate, the greater the pressure to increase profits to repay loans. High rates of interest only cut prices when the reluctance to take on loans has brought on recession and bankruptcies; and the higher the interest rates, the faster wealth is transferred from the poor to the rich – and to the banks, the ultimate 'owners' of our money.

Our debt-money system ensures that there is never enough money in the pockets of those who need it, to buy the products and services they need – despite the World Bank's recent estimate that about ninety-times that amount is being transferred around the world at the speed of light, in speculative currency dealing, creaming-off, in the profits from it, the wealth created by the efforts of the workforce.

All this money is debt, brought into existence as a bank loan, and cancelled out of existence again as it is repaid. And while it is in existence, interest debt is being added to it.

Compound interest grows on an exponential curve – the curve of cancer growth. All growth of this sort must inevitably end in 'death'; it cannot go on indefinitely.

The banks have been only too happy to have 'credit-worthy' clients remain 'in debt to them', as long as they received the interest payments on them; and have used the excuse of risk to justify higher interest charges to the poor – including, in recent history, third world governments – while they have also used their financial power to persuade the law-makers to favour them by giving priority to their claims over those with more ethically justifiable claims, in cases of 'bankruptcy', the incidence of which transfers yet more ownership of wealth to them.

Though the interest rates have not always been the 8% that Patterson demanded – for much of the subsequent 302 years they have been much lower – at other times, including recently, they have been much higher – and the inflation resulting from the system has reduced the value of money, helping to make the debts bearable as they grew, in the earlier years; on the other hand, the debt-money supply has been growing, also exponentially, and with it, inevitably, the interest-debt on it. We are now on the steep, terminal part of the debt-growth curve, and the eventual collapse cannot be avoided for much longer, unless we change the system. In place of ephemeral, debt-money, until we can mature enough to dispense with money we need permanent, debt-free, credit-money, created for us by our government acting for us, and spent into existence, then to remain in circulation, 'oiling the wheels of commerce' without building unrepayable debts.

Interest charged on other loans helps to make the rich richer at the expense of the poor; but interest charged on the money supply creates growing debts which can only grow ever-larger!

Job Creation

Even the Green Party's literature is crowded with phrases such as 'far more jobs would be created', '60 per cent more work would be created', 'Hundreds of thousands of new jobs could be created', 'Huge new areas of work will open up...', etc., etc.

These are prime examples of the Newspeak which has been distorting the thought processes of the vast majority of *Homo sapiens* all this century and longer.

Yes, there is a great deal of work which needs to be done to put right all the faults of the way our 'economy' operates, to make it meet the needs of people and planet; but no, this is not in itself something to be welcomed, as all these phrases imply. Organic farming, for instance, will produce healthier food and preserve and even enhance soil fertility, but at the cost of greater human effort.

Over the millennia people have applied their ingenuity to the task of making their burden of work lighter, to free themselves and their fellows for a better life. The toiling classes have envied the rich, not just their luxuries, but their leisure.

The height of civilisation is said to have been reached in ancient Greece among the leisured, free citizens – on the backs of their slaves. Now we have the chance to emulate them, on the backs, instead, of our machines – yet we shy away from the prospect in horror, and seek instead to 'create jobs'!

The 'jobs' sought, of course, are all examples of wage-slavery, and Newspeak is blinding us (nearly all of us) to this fact. Challenging it involves calling into question the basic tenets of finance-capitalism – something the Socialists and Communists have attempted and failed, by their acceptance of this Newspeak.

Let us start by noting the distinction: Capitalism is the domination and exploitation of the economy by the owners of the means of production. This has long since been superseded by finance-capitalism: the domination and exploitation of the economy by the usurpers of the privilege of the right to create our money supply – the banks – and by its manipulators. All others are in their power, by virtue of the crushing burden of debt they have piled onto the rest of us, and conflict of interests between other groups conveniently diverts attention, and even awareness, from this overriding fact.

A challenge to this system of income distribution started in the years between the two world wars, when the idea of Basic Incomes, or Citizens' Incomes (then called National Dividends) was first put forward as a means of equitable distribution of 'the wages of the machine' to allow everyone to benefit from 'the common cultural inheritance' of the knowledge, skills, machines and inventions from the past and to end the conflict between the masses and the rich and powerful elite.

Debate was also widespread on the now-taboo subject of how our money supply was and should be created and controlled.

By the time of the First World War mechanisation had already progressed to the point where it was estimated that all needed goods could be produced and distributed with a four-hour day, despite the unions' fierce opposition to the introduction of labour-saving machinery 'to preserve jobs', and both wars were fought over 'the struggle for markets' to off-load surpluses and maintain profits. 'We must export or die'; i.e. to live, we must get rid of our goods onto foreigners!

Basic Incomes – 'universal benefits' paid unconditionally to citizens of all ages, at a rate dependent only on age, and at a level sufficient to meet basic needs of housing, food, clothing and heating – would have allowed industry to meet the needs of the population efficiently – 'economically'! – without the drastic reduction of working hours being seen as a 'problem', provided only that the false debts to the money-creators (the banks) were eliminated, and money supply was thereafter matched to social needs.

Introduced now, they would:

1) remove the need for (nearly) all conditional welfare payments (which are often unclaimed despite need, because of ignorance, confusion, bureaucracy and the stigma involved);

2) benefit the unemployed, removing all the poverty traps and government harassment to find a non-existent 'job';

3) by supplementing wages, allow the gap between 'minimum wages' and unpaid 'voluntary' work to be closed without loss of an adequate income (this, of course, is incompatible with the concept of a 'minimum wage' imposed by law);

4) in that way, make many more socially needed jobs 'affordable' by society;

5) end wage slavery. People with independent incomes don't need to accept the unacceptable in pay, working conditions or type or purpose of the employment. The rich have never been expected to be wage-slaves! People will not need to prostitute themselves to the arms industry, advertising, or any of the con tricks now so prevalent in industry and commerce;

6) make the distinction between 'full-time' and 'part-time' meaningless – most 'full-timers' would opt for shorter hours, and voluntary breaks in employment could become common for both sexes, for instance for child rearing; and many more could choose not to work for an employer; cooperatives and self-employment would be much more likely to succeed;

7) give 'wages for housework/childcare', and so economic independence for the 'housewife' (male or female) from the 'breadwinner';

8) allow the economy to shift from dependence on 'growth' in the vain attempt to 'maintain jobs' (in reality, to maintain profits for the rich controllers; and to postpone the collapse of finance-capitalism) to production for need, by removing the need to seek 'full employment'.

Other changes, too, especially those to our money supply, suggested above, would be needed to achieve this; but Basic Incomes are a necessary step; and this is an obvious reason for the Establishment to resist their introduction but equally, for the rest of us to demand them!

The big problem with finance-capitalism is that it depends on continued scarcity to keep it going, and when markets become saturated, it collapses under the burden of debt. Goods have widely

been destroyed to avoid this including vast stores of food, while people without money starve.

To avoid this 'catastrophe' of abundance, after the Second World War 'planned obsolescence' was dreamed up, along with the cynical promotion of the arms industry and the promotion of third world conflicts to provide markets for it, and for the next couple of decades it was very successful, from a finance-capitalist perspective.

From then on, however, the problems started to build up: the accelerating rate of destruction and pollution of natural resources, as well as the success of invention of new ways of saving labour.

In the '60s there was widespread discussion of the rosy prospects for a future of leisure through automation. The physical possibilities were clear. Where we have failed, however, is in demanding the changes needed to make proper use of these advances to free people from wage-slavery, and so allow them to tackle the restructuring needed to achieve sustainable well-being.

Many advocates of 'job creation' argue that all we need is a change of heart among the bosses: swords into ploughshares, organic agriculture instead of agribusiness, etc. But the manipulators are well aware that any such extension of wage-slavery would be only short-lived, given the power of modern technology. They cannot afford to let their Newspeak be called into question as a result.

It is up to all of us, working for change through a multitude of pressure groups, to re-educate ourselves, recapture our language(s) and spread enlightenment to challenge this fundamental common cause of all our problems. Demand the distribution of the wages of the machine!

John Zerzan

Language and its Origins

Fairly recent anthropology (e.g. Sahlins, R.B. Lee) has virtually obliterated the long-dominant conception which defined prehistoric humanity in terms of scarcity and brutalisation. As if the implications of this are already becoming widely understood, there seems to be a growing sense of that vast epoch as one of wholeness and grace. Our time on earth, characterised by the very opposite of those qualities, is in the deepest need of a reversal of the dialectic that stripped that wholeness from our life as a species.

Being alive in nature, before our abstraction from it, must have involved a perception and contact that we can scarcely comprehend from our levels of anguish and alienation. The communication with all of existence must have been an exquisite play of all the senses, reflecting the numberless, nameless varieties of pleasure and emotion once accessible within us.

To Levy, Bruhl, Durkheim and others, the cardinal and qualitative difference between the 'primitive mind' and ours is the primitive's lack of detachment in the moment of experience; "the savage mind totalises", as Lévi-Strauss put it. Of course we have long been instructed that this original unity was destined to crumble, that alienation is the province of being human: consciousness depends on it.

In much the same sense as objectified time has been held to be essential to consciousness – Hegel called it "the necessary alienation" – so has language, and equally falsely. Language may be properly considered the fundamental ideology, perhaps as deep a separation from the natural world as self-existent time. And if timelessness resolves the split between spontaneity and consciousness, languagelessness may be equally necessary.

Adorno, in *Minima Moralia*, wrote:

To happiness the same applies as to truth: one does not have it, but is in it.

This could stand as an excellent description of humankind as we existed before the emergence of time and language, before the division and distancing that exhausted authenticity.

Language is the subject of this exploration, understood in its virulent sense. A fragment from Nietzsche introduces its central perspective: words dilute and brutalise; words depersonalise words make the uncommon common.

Although language can still be described by scholars in such phrases as "the most significant and colossal work that the human spirit has evolved", this characterisation occurs now in a context of extremity in which we are forced to call the aggregate of the work of the 'human spirit' into question. Similarly, if in Coward and Ellis's estimation, the "most significant feature of twentieth century intellectual development" has been the light shed by linguistics upon social reality, this focus hints at how fundamental our scrutiny must yet become in order to comprehend maimed modern life. It may sound positivist to assert that language must somehow embody all the 'advances' of society, but in civilisation it seems that all meaning is ultimately linguistic; the question of the meaning of language, considered in its totality, has become the unavoidable next step.

Earlier writers could define consciousness in a facile way as that which can be verbalised, or even argue that wordless thought is impossible (despite the counter-examples of chess playing or composing music). But in our present straits, we have to consider anew the meaning of the birth and character of language rather than assume it to be merely a neutral, if not benign, inevitable presence. The philosophers are now forced to recognise the question with intensified interest; Gadamer, for example:

Admittedly, the nature of language is one of the most mysterious questions that exists for man to ponder on.

Because language is the symbolisation of thought, and symbols are the basic units of culture, speech is a cultural phenomenon fundamental to what civilisation is. And because at the level of symbols and structure there are neither primitive nor developed languages, it may be justifiable to begin by locating the basic qualities of language, specifically to consider the congruence of language and ideology, in a basic sense.

Ideology, alienation's armoured way of seeing, is a domination embedded in systematic false consciousness. It is easier still to begin to locate language in these terms if one takes up another definition common to both ideology and language: namely, that each is a system of distorted communication between two poles and predicated upon symbolisation.

Like ideology, language creates false separations and objectifications through its symbolising power. This falsification is made possible by concealing, and ultimately vitiating, the participation of the subject in the physical world. Modern languages, for example, employ the word 'mind' to describe a thing dwelling independently in our bodies, as compared with the Sanskrit word, which means 'working within', involving an active embrace of sensation, perception and cognition. The logic of ideology, from active to passive, from unity to separation, is similarly reflected in the decay of the verb form in general. It is noteworthy that the much freer and sensuous hunter-gatherer cultures gave way to the Neolithic imposition of civilisation, work and property at the same time that verbs declined to approximately half of all words of a language; in modern English, verbs account for less than 1,000 of words.

Though language, in its definitive features, seems to be complete from its inception, its progress is marked by a steadily debasing process. The carving up of nature, its reduction into concepts and equivalences, occurs along lines laid down by the patterns of language. And the more the machinery of language, again paralleling ideology, subjects existence to itself, the more blind its role in reproducing a society of subjugation.

Navajo has been termed an "excessively literal" language, from the characteristic bias of our time for the more general and abstract. In a much earlier time, we are reminded, the direct and concrete held sway; there existed a "plethora of terms for the touched and seen". Toynbee noted the "amazing wealth of inflexions" in early languages and the later tendency toward simplification of language through the abandonment of inflexions. Cassirer saw the "astounding variety of terms for a particular action" among American Indian tribes and understood that such terms bear to each other a relation of juxtaposition rather than of subordination. But it is worth repeating once more that while very early on a sumptuous prodigality of symbols obtained, it was a closure of symbols, of abstract conventions, even at that stage, which might be thought of as adolescent ideology.

Considered as the paradigm of ideology, language must also be recognised as the determinant organiser of cognition. As the pioneer linguist Sapir noted, humans are very much at the mercy of language concerning what constitutes 'social reality'. Another seminal anthropological linguist, Whorf, took this further to propose that language determines one's entire way of life, including one's thinking and all other forms of mental activity. To use language is to limit

oneself to the modes of perception already inherent in that language. The fact that language is only form and yet moulds everything goes to the core of what ideology is.

It is reality revealed only ideologically, as a stratum separate from us. In this way language creates, and debases the world. "Human speech conceals far more than it confides; it blurs much more than it defines; it distances more than it connects", was George Steiner's conclusion.

More concretely, the essence of learning a language is learning a system, a model, that shapes and controls speaking. It is easier still to see ideology on this level, where due to the essential arbitrariness of the phonological, syntactic, and semantic rules of each, every human language must be learned. The unnatural is imposed, as a necessary moment of reproducing an unnatural world.

Even in the most primitive languages, words rarely bear a recognisable similarity to what they denote – they are purely conventional. Of course this is part of the tendency to see reality symbolically, which Cioran referred to as the "sticky symbolic net" of language, an infinite regression which cuts us off from the world. The arbitrary, self-contained nature of language's symbolic organisation creates growing areas of false certainty where wonder, multiplicity and non-equivalence should prevail. Barthes's depiction of language as "absolutely terrorist" is much to the point here; he saw that its systematic nature "in order to be complete needs only to be valid, and not to be true". Language effects the original split between wisdom and method.

Along these lines, in terms of structure, it is evident that 'freedom of speech' does not exist; grammar is the invisible 'thought control' of our invisible prison. With language we have already accommodated ourselves to a world of unfreedom.

Reification, the tendency to take the conceptual as the perceived and to treat concepts as tangible, is as basic to language as it is to ideology. Language represents the mind's reification of its experience, that is, an analysis into parts which, as concepts, can be manipulated as if they were objects. Horkheimer pointed out that ideology consists more in what people are like – their mental constrictedness, their complete dependence on associations provided for them – than in what they believe. In a statement that seems as pertinent to language as to ideology, he added that people experience everything only within the conventional framework of concepts.

It has been asserted that reification is necessary to mental functioning, that the formation of concepts which can themselves be mistaken for

living properties and relationships does away with the otherwise almost intolerable burden of relating one experience to another.

Cassirer said of this distancing from experience:

Physical reality seems to reduce in proportion as man's symbolic activity advances.

Representation and uniformity begin with language, reminding us of Heidegger's insistence that something extraordinarily important has been forgotten by civilisation

Civilisation is often thought of not as a forgetting but as a remembering, wherein language enables accumulated knowledge to be transmitted forward, allowing us to profit from others' experiences as though they were our own. Perhaps what is forgotten is simply that others' experiences are not our own, that the civilising process is thus a vicarious and inauthentic one. When language, for good reason, is held to be virtually coterminous with life, we are dealing with another way of saying that life has moved progressively farther from directly lived experience.

Language, like ideology, mediates the here and now, attacking direct, spontaneous connections. A descriptive example was provided by a mother objecting to the pressure to learn to read:

Once a child is literate, there is no turning back. Walk through an art museum. Watch the literate adults read the title cards before viewing the paintings to be sure that they know what to see. Or watch them read the cards and ignore the paintings entirely ... As the primers point out, reading opens doors. But once those doors are open it is very difficult to see the world without looking through them.

The process of transforming all direct experience into the supreme symbolic expression, language, monopolises life. Like ideology, language conceals and justifies, compelling us to suspend our doubts about its claim to validity. It is at the root of civilisation, the dynamic code of civilisation's alienated nature. As the paradigm of ideology, language stands behind all of the massive legitimation necessary to hold civilisation together. It remains for us to clarify what forms of nascent domination engendered this justification, made language necessary as a basic means of repression.

It should be clear, first of all, that the arbitrary and decisive association of a particular sound with a particular thing is hardly inevitable or accidental. Language is an invention for the reason that cognitive processes must precede their expression in language. To assert that humanity is only human because of language generally

neglects the corollary that being human is the precondition of inventing language.

The question is how did words first come to be accepted as signs at all? How did the first symbol originate? Contemporary linguists seem to find this "such a serious problem that one may despair of finding a way out of its difficulties". Among the more than ten thousand works on the origin of language, even the most recent admit that the theoretical discrepancies are staggering. The question of when language began has also brought forth extremely diverse opinions. There is no cultural phenomenon that is more momentous, but no other development offers fewer facts as to its beginnings. Not surprisingly, Bernard Campbell is far from alone in his judgement that "we simply do not know, and never will, how or when language began".

Many of the theories that have been put forth as to the origin of language are trivial: they explain nothing about the qualitive, intentional changes introduced by language. The 'ding-dong' theory maintains that there is somehow an innate connection between sound and meaning; the 'pooh-pooh' theory holds that language at first consisted of ejaculations of surprise, fear, pleasure, pain, etc.; the 'ta-ta' theory posits the imitation of bodily movements as the genesis of language, and so on among 'explanations' that only beg the question. The hypothesis that the requirements of hunting made language necessary, on the other hand, is easily refuted; animals hunt together without language, and it is often necessary for humans to remain silent in order to hunt.

Somewhat closer to the mark, I believe, is the approach of contemporary linguist E.H. Sturtevant: since all intentions and emotions are involuntarily expressed by gesture, look, or sound, voluntary communication, such as language, must have been invented for the purpose of lying or deceiving. In a more circumspect vein, the philosopher Caws insisted that:

Truth ... is a comparative latecomer on the linguistic scene, and it is certainly a mistake to suppose that language was invented for the purpose of telling it.

But it is in the specific social context of our exploration, the terms and choices of concrete activities and relationships, that more understanding of the genesis of language must be sought. Olivia Vlahos judged that the 'power of words' must have appeared very early; "Surely . . . not long after man had begun to fashion tools shaped to a special pattern". The flaking or chipping of stone tools, during the million or two years of Palaeolithic life, however, seems

much more apt to have been shared by direct, intimate demonstration than by spoken directions.

Nevertheless, the proposition that language arose with the beginnings of technology – that is, in the sense of division of labour and its concomitants, such as a standardising of things and events and the effective power of specialists over others – is at the heart of the matter, in my view. It would seem very difficult to disengage the division of labour – "the source of civilisation", in Durkheim's phrase – from language at any stage, perhaps least of all the beginning. Division of labour necessitates a relatively complex control of group action; in effect it demands that the whole community be organised and directed. This happens through the breakdown of functions previously performed by everybody, into a progressively greater differentiation of tasks, and hence of roles and distinctions.

Whereas Vlahos felt that speech arose quite early, in relation to simple stone tools and their reproduction, Julian Jaynes has raised perhaps a more interesting question which is assumed in his contrary opinion that language showed up much later. He asks, how it is, if humanity had speech for a couple of million years, that there was virtually no development of technology? Jaynes's question implies a utilitarian value inhering in language, a supposed release of latent potentialities of a positive nature. But given the destructive dynamic of the division of labour, referred to above, it may be that while language and technology are indeed linked, they were both successfully resisted for thousands of generations.

At its origins language had to meet the requirements of a problem that existed outside language. In light of the congruence of language and ideology, it is also evident that as soon as a human spoke, he or she was separated. This rupture is the moment of dissolution of the original unity between humanity and nature; it coincides with the initiation of division of labour. Marx recognised that the rise of ideological consciousness was established by the division of labour; language was for him the primary paradigm of "productive labour". Every step in the advancement of civilisation has meant added labour, however, and the fundamentally alien reality of productive labour/work is realised and advanced via language. Ideology receives its substance from division of labour, and, inseparably, its form from language.

Engels, valorising labour even more explicitly than Marx, explained the origin of language from and with labour, the "mastery of nature". He expressed the essential connection by the phrase, "first labour,

after it and then with it speech". To put it more critically, the artificial communication which is language was and is the voice of the artificial separation which is (division of) labour. (In the usual, repressive parlance, this is phrased positively, of course, in terms of the invaluable nature of language in organising 'individual responsibilities'.)

Language was elaborated for the suppression of feelings; as the code of civilisation it expresses the sublimation of Eros, the repression of instinct, which is the core of civilisation. Freud, in the one paragraph he devoted to the origin of language, connected original speech to sexual bonding as the instrumentality by which work was made acceptable as "an equivalence and substitute for sexual activity". This transference from a free sexuality to work is original sublimation, and Freud saw language constituted in the establishing of the link between mating calls and work processes.

The neo-Freudian Lacan carries this analysis further, asserting that the unconscious is formed by the primary repression of acquisition of language. For Lacan the unconscious is thus "structured like a language" and functions linguistically, not instinctively or symbolically in the traditional Freudian sense.

To look at the problem of origin on a figurative plane, it is interesting to consider the myth of the Tower of Babel. The story of the confounding of language, like that other story in Genesis, the Fall from the grace of the Garden, is an attempt to come to terms with the origin of evil. The splintering of an 'original language' into mutually unintelligible tongues may best be understood as the emergence of symbolic language, the eclipse of an earlier state of more total and authentic communication. In numerous traditions of paradise, for example, animals can talk and humans can understand them.

I have argued elsewhere that the fall can be understood as a fall into time. Likewise, the failure of the Tower of Babel suggests, as Russell Fraser put it, "the isolation of man in historical time". But the Fall also has a meaning in terms of the origin of language. Benjamin found in it the mediation which is language and the "origin of abstraction, too, as a faculty of language mind". "The fall is into language", according to Norman O. Brown.

Another part of Genesis provides Biblical commentary on an essential of language, names, and on the notion that naming is an act of domination. I refer to the creation myth, which includes "and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof". This bears directly on the necessary linguistic component of the domination of nature: man became master of things only because he

first named them, in the formulation of Dufrenne. As Spengler had it, "to name anything by a name is to win power over it".

The beginning of humankind's separation from and conquest of the world is thus located in the naming of the world. Logos itself as god is involved in the first naming, which represents the domination the deity. The well-known passage is contained in the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God".

Returning to the question of the origin of language in real terms, we also come back to the notion that the problem of language is the problem of civilisation. The anthropologist Lizot noted that the hunter-gatherer mode exhibited that lack of technology and division of labour that Jaynes felt must have bespoken an absence of language: Primitive people's "contempt for work and their disinterest in technological progress per se are beyond question". Furthermore, "the bulk of recent studies", in Lee's words of 1981, shows the hunter-gatherers to have been "well nourished and to have [had] abundant leisure time".

Early humanity was not deterred from language by the pressures of constant worries about survival; the time for reflection and linguistic development was available but this path was apparently refused for many thousands of years. Nor did the conclusive victory of agriculture, civilisation's cornerstone, take place (in the form of the Neolithic revolution) because of food shortage or population pressures. In fact, as Lewis Binford has concluded that "the question to be asked is not why agriculture and food storage techniques were not developed everywhere, but why they were developed at all".

The dominance of agriculture, including property ownership, law, cities, mathematics, surplus, permanent hierarchy and specialisation, and writing, to mention a few of its elements, was no inevitable step in human 'progress'; neither was language itself. The reality of pre-Neolithic life demonstrates the degradation or defeat involved in what has been generally seen as an enormous step forward, an admirable transcending of nature, etc. In this light, many of the insights of Horkheimer and Adorno in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (such as the linking of progress in instrumental control with regression in affective experience) are made equivocal by their false conclusion that "Men have always had to choose between their subjugation to nature or the subjugation of nature to the Self".

"Nowhere is civilisation so perfectly mirrored as in speech", as Pei commented, and in some very significant ways language has not only

reflected but determined shifts in human life. The deep, powerful break that was announced by the birth of language prefigured and overshadowed the arrival of civilisation and history, a mere 10,000 years ago. In the reach of language, "the whole of History stands unified and complete in the manner of a Natural Order", says Barthes.

Mythology, which, as Cassirer noted, "is from its very beginning potential religion", can be understood as a function of language, subject to its requirements like any ideological product. The nineteenth century linguist Muller described mythology as a "disease of language" in just this sense; language deforms thought by its inability to describe things directly:

Mythology is inevitable, it is natural, it is an inherent necessity of language ... [It is] the dark shadow which language throws upon thought, and which can never disappear till language becomes entirely commensurate with thought, which it never will.

It is little wonder, then, that the old dream of a lingua Adamica, a 'real' language consisting not of conventional signs but expressing the direct, unmediated meaning of things, has been an integral part of humanity's longing for a lost primeval state. As remarked upon above, the Tower of Babel is one of the enduring significations of this yearning to truly commune with each other and nature.

In that earlier (but long enduring) condition nature and society formed a coherent whole, interconnected by the closest bonds. The step from participation in the totality of nature to religion involved a detaching of forces and beings into outward, inverted existences. This separation took the form of deities, and the religious practitioner, the shaman, was the first specialist.

The decisive mediations of mythology and religion are not, however, the only profound cultural developments underlying our modern estrangement. Also in the Upper Palaeolithic era, as the species Neanderthal gave way to Cro-Magnon (and the brain actually shrank in size), art was born. In the celebrated cave paintings of roughly 30,000 years ago is found a wide assortment of abstract signs; the symbolism of late Palaeolithic art slowly stiffens into the much more stylised forms of the Neolithic agriculturalists. During this period, which is either synonymous with the beginnings of language or registers its first real dominance, a mounting unrest surfaced. John Pfeiffer described this in terms of the erosion of the egalitarian hunter-gather traditions, as Cro-Magnon established its hegemony. Whereas there was "no trace of rank" until the Upper Palaeolithic, the emerging division of labour and its immediate social

consequences demanded a disciplining of those resisting the gradual approach of civilisation. As a formalising, indoctrinating device, the dramatic power of art fulfilled this need for cultural coherence and the continuity of authority. Language, myth, religion and art thus advanced as deeply 'political' conditions of social life, by which the artificial media of symbolic forms replaced the directly lived quality of life before division of labour. From this point on, humanity could no longer see reality face to face; the logic of domination drew a veil over play, freedom, affluence.

At the close of the Palaeolithic Age, as a decreased proportion of verbs in the language reflected the decline of unique and freely chosen acts in consequence of division of labour, language still possessed no tenses. Although the creation of a symbolic world was the condition for the existence of time, no fixed differentiations had developed before hunter-gatherer life was displaced by Neolithic farming. But when every verb form shows a tense, language is "demanding lip service to time even when time is furthest of our thoughts". From this point one can ask whether time exists apart from grammar. Once the structure of speech incorporates time and is thereby animated by it at every expression, division of labour has conclusively destroyed an earlier reality. With Derrida, one can accurately refer to "language as the origin of history". Language itself is a repression, and along its progress repression gathers – as ideology, as work – so as to generate historical time. Without language all of history would disappear. Pre-history is pre-writing; writing of some sort is the signal that civilisation has begun. "One gets the impression", Freud wrote in *The Future of an Illusion*, "that civilisation is something which was imposed on a resisting majority by a minority which understood how to obtain possession of the means of power and coercion". If the matter of time and language can seem problematic, writing as a stage of language makes its appearance contributing to subjugation in rather naked fashion. Freud could have legitimately pointed to written language as the lever by which civilisation was imposed and consolidated.

By about 10,000 BC extensive division of labour had produced the kind of social control reflected by cities and temples. The earliest writings are records of taxes, laws, terms of labour servitude. This objectified domination thus originated from the practical needs of political economy. An increased use of letters and tablets soon enabled those in charge to reach new heights of power and conquest, as exemplified in the new form of government commanded by Hammurabi of Babylon. As Lévi-Strauss put it, writing "seems to

favour rather the exploitation than the enlightenment of mankind ... Writing, on this its first appearance in our midst, had allied itself with falsehood".

Language at this juncture becomes the representation of representation, in hieroglyphic and ideographic writing and then in phonetic alphabetic writing. The progress of symbolisation, from the symbolising of words, to that of syllables, and finally to letters in an alphabet, imposed an increasingly irresistible sense of order and control. And in the reification that writing permits, language is no longer tied to a speaking subject or community of discourse, but creates an autonomous field from which every subject can be absent.

In the contemporary world, the avant-garde of art has, most noticeably, performed at least the gestures of refusal of the prison of language. Since Mallarmé, a good deal of modernist poetry and prose has moved against the takenforgrantedness of normal speech. To the question "Who is speaking?" Mallarmé answered, "Language is speaking". After this reply and especially since the explosive period around World War One when Joyce, Stein and others attempted a new syntax as well as a new vocabulary, the restraints and distortions of language have been assaulted wholesale in literature. Russian futurists, Dada (e.g. Hugo Ball's effort in the 1920s to create "poetry without words"), Artaud, the Surrealists and lettristes were among the more exotic elements of a general resistance to language.

The Symbolist poets, and many who could be called their descendants, held that defiance of society also includes defiance of its language. But inadequacy in the former arena precluded success in the latter, bringing one to ask whether avant-garde strivings can be anything more than abstract, hermetic gestures. Language, which at any given moment embodies the ideology of a particular culture, must be ended in order to abolish both categories of estrangement; a project of some considerable social dimensions, let us say. That literary texts (e.g. *Finnegan's Wake*, the poetry of e.e. cummings) break the rules of language seems mainly to have the paradoxical effect of evoking the rules themselves. By permitting the free play of ideas about language, society treats these ideas as mere play.

The massive amount of lies – official, commercial and otherwise – is perhaps in itself sufficient to explain why Johnny Can't Read or Write, why illiteracy is increasing in the metropole. In any case, it is not only that "the pressure on language has gotten very great", according to Canetti, but that 'unlearning' has come "to be a force in almost every field of thought", in Robert Harbison's estimation.

Today 'incredible' and 'awesome' are applied to the most commonly trivial and boring, and it is no accident that powerful or shocking words barely exist anymore. The deterioration of language mirrors a more general estrangement; it has become almost totally external to us. From Kafka to Pinter silence itself is a fitting voice of our times. "Few books are forgivable. Black on the canvas, silence on the screen, an empty white sheet of paper, are perhaps feasible", as R.D. Laing put it so well. Meanwhile, the structuralists – Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Foucault, Lacan, Derrida – have been almost entirely occupied with the duplicity of language in their endless exegetical burrowings into it. They have virtually renounced the project of extracting meaning from language.

I am writing (obviously) enclosed in language, aware that language reifies the resistance to reification. As T.S. Eliot's Sweeney explains, "I've gotta use words when I talk to you". One can imagine replacing the imprisonment of time with a brilliant present – only by imagining a world without division of labour, without that divorce from nature from which all ideology and authority accrue. We couldn't live in this world without language and that is just how profoundly we must transform this world.

Words bespeak a sadness; they are used to soak up the emptiness of unbridled time. We have all had the desire to go further, deeper than words, the feeling of wanting only to be done with all the talk, knowing that being allowed to live coherently erases the need to formulate coherence.

There is a profound truth to the notion that 'lovers need no words'. The point is that we must have a world of lovers, a world of the face-to-face, in which even names can be forgotten, a world which knows that enchantment is the opposite of ignorance. Only a politics that undoes language and time and is thus visionary to the point of voluptuousness has any meaning.

This article is taken from *Elements of Refusal: essays* by John Zerzan (Left Bank Books, Seattle, 1988).

Denis Pym

Literacy and the Myth of Mutual Aid

Over a hundred years ago Nietzsche (1894) pronounced "we belong to a time in which culture is in danger of being destroyed by the means of culture" (aphorism 520). We no longer require the qualifier 'in danger of'.

This paper addresses a question the intelligentsia of western industrial societies cannot acknowledge: we face fundamental problems with our central artefact in social organisation, namely literacy. It is because literary media, now reinforced by electronics, monopolise *all* intellectual transaction that we are unable to acknowledge the range of difficulties they impose on social organisation. By literacy I refer to those literary technologies underlying the operation of all public and private bureaucracies and including our universal commitment to the three-Rs as the way to high culture and the advancement of civilisation. These techniques cover writing, print and the programmed machine.

The article should not be read as a blanket attack on high-tech but as a criticism of man's use of it or, more pointedly, his misuse of tool and device in the quest of power. Electronics, now massively deployed to bolster the authority of literacy, ultimately offers weapons to combat the havoc that visual/literary media continue to impose on man. It offers to facilitate a more audio-tactile order (McLuhan, 1964) or what Ong (1977) calls secondary orality. But as McLuhan has told us, electronics is a gentle giant and people will have to make it serve humanity rather than the interests of privilege. In this article I shall be drawing particularly on the work of Walter Ong.

I shall take for granted the positive contributions of literacy to civilisation. However, I reject the text-bound view that anything can be 'all good' or 'all bad'. Too much of a good thing has destroyed many of man's best efforts. So I'll go along with the claim: the phonetic alphabet was the greatest invention in western civilisation, more important than the wheel, soap or the wellington boot, *but* I will adopt here the sophist tactic of advancing the weaker cause to maintain the balance of the whole.

The argument as assertions

What we literate people perceive as an unquestionable benefit to civilisation has led over time to excesses and dependencies which are detrimental to living at the end of the twentieth century. The sophisticated public use of literary media in government, education and employment curtails common sense and initiative because it excludes and limits the use of our non-visual senses. Literacy helps us to differentiate the world but not to integrate experience. Literacy, in the hands of unquestioning professionals, trivilialises the role of our non-institutional lives in history and even denies history itself (e.g. the Dark Ages). As the central agent of 'information overload', the print is a causal factor in much social chaos. Our excessive dependence on writing, the print and the programmed machine in social transaction is largely incompatible with an ecological world view and the practice of mutual aid. 'Thinking globally and acting locally' may be a sensible ecological dictum, but overly-literate man has lost the wherewithal to think holistically and co-operate with his neighbour.

Literacy is central to the servile state of modern employment but has less and less to do with work and the creation of wealth. It shapes and absorbs *all* managerial and professional activity. The much-vaunted professionalisation of the workforce adds less to the effectiveness of organised effort and the well-being of people than it does to information overload and organised confusion.

The development of literacy has been linked in western mythology to the emergence of the democratic ideal 'all men are born equal'. In practice we experience a technically driven perversion of this ideal best expressed as 'all men are interchangeable piece-parts and therefore expendable'.

The abuses of literary media bring experiences of personal isolation; feelings of powerlessness and worthlessness and increased confusion and as a result force people into greater dependence on external authority. Thus literacy has become the major instrument in sustaining the abstract powers of state, corporate capitalism and transnational business.

Setting the scene

Writing, the print, the computer and programmed television dominate the way we depict our problems and what we deem to be solutions – the way we construct reality. Even when we find ourselves stuck with assumptions, strategies and solutions that clearly don't

work to our satisfaction, we remain unprepared to examine the way we think. So in the face of a barrage of contrary signals, we persist in attributing a monopoly to: employment over the creation of wealth; school over learning; the police over law and order; legislation over social control; agribusiness, food processor and supermarket over what we eat, etc. In the circumstances we can easily sympathise with Nietzsche's cry "in our belief in language we propagate a monstrous error" (aphorism 11).

Nevertheless we can inform ourselves on the impact of writing, the print and programmed machine by recourse to oral or pre-literate traditions, even if our sources are literate anthropologists. Arguably Walter Ong's most important contribution to such insights comes from his focus on transition, the orality literacy shift and the present transition from literacy to secondary orality.

Luria's (1976) researches among Uzbekistan peasants in the early 1930s represents one of the first explorations of the differing ways people living in the oral tradition and those in industrial literate cultures construct reality. Luria's peasants were being subjected to a Soviet educational programme to make them literate. One unique aspect of this study was the researcher's sympathy with the oral perspective. In informal interviews the peasants willingly contrasted what they deemed the 'classroom' approaches and answers of literates with the real life orientations of oral folk.

Briefly, Luria found that unlike literates, oral people don't think in terms of abstract categories. Their categories are more rudimentary and figures are identified in terms of everyday objects. They think situationally rather that categorically. Unlike literates, oral folk resist definition. They refused to define a phenomenon in its presence seeing such definition as deceptive rather than constructive. Pre-literates do not follow formal deductive logic in problem-solving. Logic is always mitigated by experience, so, unlike literates, oral folk run no risk of perceiving logic as a closed system. Without the aid of literacy the peasants were unable to engage in self-analysis; externals commanded their attentions and explanations. Luria's contrasting of literate and oral ways of thinking was helped by the survival of many of the peasants' oral predispositions even in the context of their 'enlightenment'.

The key features of technique are artificiality and rationality. Since our adherence to rational problem-solving is rooted in those very artefacts western man hails as the hallmark of his culture, it may help us to perceive our cognitive processes as part of a system of beliefs.

This is contrary to our text-bound view on the separate functioning of thought and belief. It may help us to understand our reluctance to examine the way we think if we were to acknowledge its 'religious' origins.

In government, education and employment, and indeed all affairs public, our organising strategies remain based on the old literacy-driven assumptions of empiricism. Every genuine question has but one answer. This answer is found by one method, the rational. The answer is immutable and eternal. In this way of thinking phenomena of nature or culture, once identified and abstracted from the whole, can be assigned to mutually exclusive categories. Though such assumptions are frequently challenged (particularly when applied to values) and undermined by developments in electronics, nevertheless when the formalities of public action are invoked so too are these assumptions. It is as though there was no choice. In the identification of and solution to problems reason, experience, intuition, guesswork, trial and error and the like give way publicly to rational determinism in the guise of quantification, scientific method, clock time, legislation, legal procedure, agenda, curriculum and the rest.

When the chips are down the empiricism which derives its authority from writing and the print remains solidly in place. It resides at the core of *all* industrial corporate ritual. As with all organised religion, the purpose of the proliferation of print and paper is social control.

On kicking literacy about

Some men of letters like Plato and Nietzsche, and certainly poets galore, have acknowledged the constraints the format of literary technologies imposes on human perception. However, as with most serious matters, it is the jokers who do it best. Readers are familiar with Lewis Carroll's (1965) adventures of Victorian middle-class literate Alice, so I'll illustrate from his writings.

It has been said that whereas Einstein discovered relativity and, fearing its implications, spent much of his life thereafter trying to discount its effects, the other mathematician Dodgson took relativity for granted and relished its possibilities. The adventures of Alice are peppered with the irrational interjections of the creatures who people Dodgson's make-believe world. Every page proclaims the absurdities of the written language of words and numbers while offering suggestions to the oral guerrilla on how to by-pass the constraints of industrial structures.

At the Tea Party there's the Hatter's advice on the first steps to liberating ourselves from machine-dominated time: "Just set the clock at the hour you want it to be". Throughout the text the meanings of words are invented and switched to confuse Alice and amuse the reader. There's the Mock Turtle's different branches of arithmetic, not entirely randomly chosen – ambition, distraction, uglification and derision – and the White King's pencil that writes all manner of things he doesn't intend. "When I use a word it means just what I wants it to mean", says Humpty Dumpty. When curriculum-bound Alice invokes that external authority the dictionary, he replies: "It's a question of who is in charge". A reminder of how we deploy writing to transfer the locus of authority from the brain to the page. 'Don't ask me', says the Professor rounding on his questioning student, 'Read my book'.

In *Through the Looking Glass* Alice, appropriately represented as a pawn, is faced with the Gnat's question: "What's the use of having names if creatures won't answer to them?" But Alice has already explained how it helps with her fear of them. "Classify something and you kill it" goes the McLuhan aphorism. How much of our mania for labelling and classifying everything owes its origins to an inability to live with the unknown and unknowable and how much to our enlightenment?

Alice's experiences in the 'Woods of No Name' offer further opportunity to consider differences between oral and literary cultures. In these woods everything is an interconnected whole and Alice finds herself intertwined with a fawn. Beyond the wood's boundaries the normal labelled world is resumed and everything springs apart. So we are reminded of the differentiating power of words and how writing enables us to abstract phenomena from their context. The print and mass production brought with them the possibility of reading alone and the properties for adding to social distance, isolation and loneliness.

Let's stay in the woods. People living in the oral tradition often hold an intimate relationship with woods and forests. Their survival may depend on them but with a vocabulary limited to, say, seven thousand words only the most significant insects, foods, materials can be specifically named. The rest must remain as bugs, scrub, birds, animals and the like. With a vocabulary twenty times his oral equivalent and the tools to build an even bigger repertoire, the industrial expert recognises no limit to sub-division, definition and description. He doesn't need to keep the names in his head. He can

write them down or punch them into his PC. Whereas a word spoken is going out of existence as soon as it is uttered, a word written is potentially forever.

In engaging in activities he legitimises as 'furthering knowledge and understanding', literate man can easily cast judgement aside as his game turns into a defence against the unknown and a quest for immortality. Everything, even the insignificant – particularly the insignificant – must be identified and classified. So the berries and nuts for food are discarded, the materials for construction, tool and fire abandoned, and the sheer joy of being in the woods – the smell of rotting leaves, cool breezes, rustling leaves, the pleasures of seeing, smelling and hearing the wood's inhabitants and a thousand such sensations – give way to the mania for identifying and abstracting.

Ultimately a triumphant bevy of experts can claim to be able to list every species of tree, grass, flower, bird, animal and bug in our wood and, as an extra, assess their potential usefulness to man. However, what we have as record of this achievement are not memorable experiences or the use of things relevant to our survival, but lifeless pieces of paper or discs with thousands of marks on them. So it is when we strive to reduce experience to one sense abstracted. Being the great conquerors of nature and culture, industrial folk cannot perceive the sensory colonialism they inflict upon themselves. From such 'achievements' nonsenses like 'artificial intelligence', 'virtual reality' and 'the real world' are born. When industrial literate man dares to venture into the woods, which is an increasingly rare event, he takes with him as weapons, to secure the illusion of knowing, the worthless promise of lists of abstract words imprinted on his brain.

The mania for differentiating, splitting and specialising has its origins, my friend Burkard Sievers reminds us, in the Greek word 'diabellein'. In extreme this process is indeed diabolical in its effects. Hence E.M. Forster's imperative 'only connect'. The word 'symballein' refers to the unifying processes and activities we call symbolic. The practice of mutual aid has the same effect. Both emphasise the quest for common ground and endeavour and for what we share before we turn to difference. Myth and ritual have a part to play in this search too.

Thinking and practice
Let's get closer to experience by introducing the subject of values into the way we think. People attribute value to significant artefacts like cars, computers and handguns. Among literates these are typically

expressed in binary form – con *or* pro, good *or* bad, etc. Right away we're up against the rigidities of literate thinking – either/ors rather than and/ands, reinforced by permanence and fixed position. So when I criticise our use of literacy and of electronics to extend rational thinking into absurdities, literary men (and it is usually men) insist on carrying this position to its logical conclusion as though logic is a closed system. Pym is critical of our use of literacy. Therefore he is against reading and writing. Why does he bother to write this article? Why have *The Raven*?

We acknowledge man's difficulties when facing too much reality. Fixed positions and closed systems therefore have their emotional uses. However, this disability also diminishes our scope for exercising sound personal judgement over our use of car, computer and handgun. Fixed categorisation and our emotional need for certainty also prevent us breaking through the barriers between categories which is essential to solving so many of our 'intractable' problems. I am against the increasing use of cars in transport – too many cars, too much movement. However, by maintaining the illusion that transport, informing device and weapon are mutually exclusive categories (nothing beats the car for killing and maiming) I resist the acknowledgement and use of informing devices that approximate the experience of life from the seat of a car and could reduce the need and desire to travel by car. An enormous amount of duplicated activity and unnecessary movement has such origins.

My own way of thinking has always been to take fixed positions seriously. To hell with denial, let's get our prejudices out at the off where they may just prove useful. This is putting rhetoric before dialogue. The excesses of literacy are kind to neither. Rhetoric was an early victim of the print. In format they're rivals. Both invest authority in the message sender and invent the message receiver. Writers and teachers successfully pushed the objectivity, rationality and efficiency of the print against the orator's subjectivity and limited audience. The war against dialogue has been a touch more subtle. Notice how the owners of print media, television, etc., and their henchmen cleverly use the words 'information' and 'communication' as though these were interchangeable. So we have the mass media of communication (rather than information). But, as Ong reminds us, human communication (dialogue) is a two-way, intersubjective process which daily newspapers, television programmes, etc., are not. We are left with the impression that human dialogue is not only declining but is made superfluous by the mass media.

My own particular prejudice in the matter of values is to favour the cons over the pros. I'll explore this bias in a couple of illustrations that are close to the subject of this article.

Take a key social phenomenon like role, a concept important to any deliberations among highly literate people on why they're lousy at mutual aid. To the extent that we are of society, we cannot avoid taking on roles. They link the person to social organisation. So father, mother, teacher, boss and student are roles and these are attributed with value. Some people are of the opinion that it is our aversion to some of these roles (e.g. father) and preference for more dependent roles (e.g. student, employee) that lie at the heart of a growing social dislocation.

I wish to draw attention to elements of choice and compulsion in the matter of roles so I'll set a test for the reader which is a trifle disconcerting. I want you to adopt and explore, even write about, one of two possible value assumptions to do with the role. Either 'role is liberating' or 'role is a trap'. Reflect on this choice, chose your preferred assumption and read on.

As you'd expect, literates don't fancy the rhetorical bit. They want to list the pros and cons about role, not take sides. When forced to a position, participants are evenly divided. Those for whom security is paramount are likely to be pro. Reluctant fathers may be con. My own researches suggest that those who prefer to represent role as liberating are, over time, the more likely to experience role as a trap. Our desire to recognise only the best, even in what is obligatory, time and time again sets us up for a fall. Better often to accept our fate, expect little and then get on and make the best of a situation in our own terms. There are, I believe, advantages in being able to entertain in one's mind and at the same time both fate and choice.

Similarly this 'information society' conceals at least two conflicting assumptions. Professionals, those who gain their bread from processing information and handling its devices, mostly operate on the assumption that *information clarifies*. In a society which holds the myth of knowing dear, associated attitudes are unlikely to be exposed to much questioning. However, in the context of acknowledged information overload, those who manipulate evidence on the basis that *information confuses*, whatever their purposes, are more likely to be navigating with greater confidence. Their judgements are going to be sounder and nearer experience than all those teachers and experts who believe in the wonders of information, and precipitate every fool who takes their outpourings seriously, into a chaotic mess. The

professional disabler always operates on the basis that more of his diagnosis and treatment is best. You can't get enough of a good thing again. All training schemes seem to get this nonsense treatment.

So I prefer to hear criticism of literacy from those who write and use computers, parenting from those who are raising kids, handguns from those who've used them and know about the people who do, etc. In short, when it comes to dealing with seemingly intractable problems, let's follow our oral past (and future) and put experience first and guard against literates who write about 'the real world'. We must begin to move against that grain which elevates knowing in the abstract but doesn't go much on experience.

Mutual aid as sacred story and fairy tale

Anarchists, or people who describe themselves as such, are typically strong on the idea of liberty and weak in the practice of mutual aid. Calling ourselves and others by names or words that are neither given nor derive from occupation is a distinguishing feature of literate folk. It is an indulgence most noticeable among the intelligentsia. Like the animals in *Through the Looking Glass*, practising anarchists (mostly women) don't usually use or answer to the label 'anarchist'. They don't have many problems with mutual aid either. Perhaps it comes naturally to them.

Within the oral tradition what literates describe as myths are sacred stories. Believers make use of such stories, told over and over, as weapons against life's absurdities and contradictions, as instruments for the suppression of time and space. These stories are symbolic – they may be fun to tell and listen to and they help us to cope with life's harsh realities. For anarchists 'mutual aid' is the basis of social organisation, so from an oral perspective, along with liberty, it might be deemed a central myth. Certainly some anarchist writers report on examples of mutual aid in everyday life as though there was something sacred about the activity, but we are concerned about the practice itself among ourselves.

The mutual aid that Kropotkin (1987) writes about lends itself to mythical treatment. My literate mind is sensitive to his omissions. Kropotkin offers no analysis of the concept and its meaning. Nothing on a related notion like reciprocity. Nothing on giving and receiving roles. Nothing on how kids might learn it. Writing at the end of the nineteenth century and with more direct experience of the oral tradition than you or me, Kropotkin takes mutual aid as a given. His stories and illustrations of its central place in the social evolution of

many animal societies is enough, as it would be for any practising anarchist. So what's my problem with Kropotkin's lack of sophistication?

Unlike our 'primitive' counterparts, text-bound thinkers adopt a diabolic approach to problems. In identifying, defining, prescribing and separating we also distance the subject from its context and ourselves from the subject. This strategy offers a sense of order but it is not an effective way to handle relational issues, except to end them. It is not an effective way because relationships are invisible and yet we prefer to examine them through technologies of the eye.

Using writing, the print, official statistics, computer memory as determinants of reality is called chirographic conditioning. It is *the* disease of our time. From a not too distant vantage point in the twenty-first century it will leave cancer, AIDS and BSE for dead as *our* problem. Have we forgotten Chamberlain brandishing Hitler's promise *in writing* as a guarantee of 'peace in our time'? Have we forgotten Nixon lost his job after events in which he directed Ellsberg to examine the Pentagon files to ascertain what went wrong in Vietnam?

The condition of formal 'ejukation' says is all. Text-bound we hold desperately to subject teaching, curricula, puny written assessments, hollow standards conducted in an institution barely distinguishable from prison, while all those elements most meaningful to an education for life – like adult example, spontaneous play among kids, drama, music and song, arts and crafts – are squeezed to the margins. Meanwhile we continue to look to the universities, those bastions of text-bound thinking, for intellectual leadership in all matters, including social relations.

It ought to be obvious with the crisis in education, the growing disaffection of young people with the society they have to live in, the stressful chaos of employment, and so on, that the difficulty of adopting a technically-driven, rational approach to the problems of human relationships lies in the very nature of such relationships. Apart from their invisibility (i.e., they have to be inferred) relations are too fluid and unpredictable, often too fragile and tenuous, too influenced by moment, mood and context to be arranged in fixed, linear, sequential orders. So it should not surprise us if sophisticates in the literary tradition – experts, civil servants, scientists, academics, managers and professionals – often find themselves ill at ease in relating to others. Furthermore, our text-bound thinking recommends as solution withdrawal and regression (i.e., distancing

ourselves from the problem) which serves only to exacerbate our difficulties in relating.

Of course we stand a better chance of righting the situation by acknowledging our prejudices and predispositions, shifting our exchanges to a different plane by getting physically closer, looking for common ground and being more prepared to put up with the uncertainties and unpredictability of relationships. One of the most serious sources of deception engaged in by advanced literate man is our exaggeration of the known and knowable and our lack of attention to what is not. In doing this, western intellectuals deny the essence of Socratic teaching.

A rational, print-driven view of conflict inevitably promotes the legalistic approach – defining territories and procedures, appointing arbiters and ultimately terminating relationships. Relationships are not the stuff of a production ethos nor of the advertiser's psychological obsolescence. They need a maintenance outlook if they are to transcend time and space. The increasing precariousness of the whole gamut of relationships in modern life we too readily deem a factor of chance or fashion. In fact the powerful chirographic bias we adopt in handling our social problems is itself a major cause of the growing social disorder. You and I may have to change our attitudes to myth and ritual if mutual aid is not to remain a fairy tale.

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Jesse Hirsh

The Mythology of Technology: The Internet as Utopia

If we do not act, we will relinquish the responsibility to rule, and transfer our decision-making capabilities to a machine named 'The Global Market'. With the decline of the printed word and the rise of the digital word, the nature of our literacy is changing. The state itself is being redefined: the author becomes corporate, and the narrative becomes non-linear. The world is transformed as the planet plugs into itself. A unified mediated environment emerges which presents an epic struggle of change. The media, after successfully consuming the masses, reverses and implodes into a universal black hole. We are caught collectively staring into a narcissistic pool of distorted self-reflection and self-absorption, desperately wondering where it all leads.

The term 'media' refers to neither institution nor artefact, but rather to an environment. The environment in which we all live. Media are the methods in which we communicate with ourselves, each other, and the world at large, and as we communicate, we forge the material reality in which we exist. The medium is the message. Linguistic hacking is an attempt to find the message in the medium. We need to crack the code that distorts language and mind created through media, examining the culmination of time and space, the basis of our living reality, hacking through to the meaning embedded in the medium.

In a society dominated by technology, media manifests the mythology that consumes and immerses the masses into the growing global market. We are entering an existence in which total inclusion will be the constant, and exclusion a technical impossibility. One operative, the politics of exclusion, has been the basis of power and empire throughout history. Now information management and the mythology of technology becomes the method of maintaining a grip upon the minds of the mass. In its wake most are excluded from the process of self governance. Technological mythology is the medium by which information warfare is waged.

The information economy, the crisis economy, the global economy, are all pseudonyms for an economy based on perpetual war. Capital centralises into the hands of conglomerates, originally the global military industrial complex: AT&T, General Electric, Westinghouse, Disney. A melee of media mergers make the way for corporate giants to wage information war in the battle for your mind.

The linguistic hacker exposes myths by examining the context by which the word receives meaning. 'Figures' are defined by the ground which surrounds it. The figures themselves however can also be reflected through the media, itself a mirror of ground, clouding our language and warping our words. In the struggle for the free mind we try and identify truth and dissolve myth. As an act of self-defence, linguistic hacking disarms the imperial assault on the mind, by examining each figure naked unto itself, in direct immediate relation to its actual ground. The most dominant myth of our time is the Internet.

The mythological meaning of the Internet: 'Utopia'. It has become the technological metaphor large enough to absorb all the hopes, dreams, and desires of a civilisation. Millions have rushed on-line in search of a meaning, a harmonious narrative that describes change. Billions are sunk into the Internet to feed the hunger to be the future: we become Spaceship Earth via the Starship Enterprise, 'Free Enterprise'.

The US Telecom Act that was passed in February of 1996 was the bottle of champagne broken upon the vessel's hull. Bon voyage, screamed the most far sweeping and corrupt bill in US legislative history. Written by and for big business, the bill unilaterally raised concentration and cross-ownership limits on media. Within days and weeks there were a flurry of media mega-mergers, in which the military establishment (General Electric, Westinghouse) and their propaganda arm (Disney) bought the major networks, cable tsar Ted Turner took over the Time Warner empire, the regional phone companies all jumped into bed together and reduced in number by almost half, radio and newspapers fled beneath various umbrellas, and most recently British Telecom made the largest foreign take-over in US history by increasing their stake in MCI (the largest shareholder of which is News Corp.). The Internet is the black hole at the centre of our universe: it is the negation of time and space. Comparable to gravity, the Internet is an imploding force that draws everything into it.

The Internet by definition, does not exist. It is an abstraction that nobody has seen, smelled, or touched. It is a myth used to shift our belief systems and dramatically alter our behaviour. It transforms our

linguistic framework by changing the context in which language interacts with mind. It is a redefinition of literacy as the linguistic system itself becomes simultaneously individual and collective.

What is the effect of the Internet myth? What is the basis of its meaning? The Internet is the virus from West Virginia that will consume all media until it becomes the information superhighway media monopoly brought to you by AT&T.

The Internet is the ultimate red herring, the dazzling distraction that abducts our attention while power plays with totality. Instead of addressing the decline of democracy in the real world, Internet consumers discuss and debate the democratisation of the Internet. The US Telecom Act was able to be passed so easily for two reasons: O.J. Simpson, and the strategic placement of the Communications Decency Act within the Telecom Bill. The CDA was a purposefully useless attack on free speech on the Internet, that within only a few months was overturned by the Supreme Court. The CDA was another red herring, a distraction for the liberal media outlets and civil liberty groups to rally around, as the rest of the communications system was hoarded into the hands of the very few.

Through the virtualisation of our culture, the medium of mythology reconstructs reality to manufacture consent. Growth and development are guided and directed by the few at the expense of the many. The technological mythology is reality in the virtual world, and our consuming desires drive us to live virtually perfect. In the process we have negated our sovereignty and secured the Platonic chains around our neck as we stare at the shadows on the cave wall.

The Internet is the post-modern gold rush, a mass anxiety to get 'plugged in'. People ask themselves, 'why fight gravity?', and our mother responds: 'If all your friends (or co-workers) jumped off the CN Tower would you?' We are entering a new regime of market regulation. 'Usage sensitive pricing' as introduced through both the US Telecom Act and the CRTC in Canada, is designed to allow the 'market', and the mechanisms of supply and demand, to determine the development of communications. This structure replaces existing democratic rights with consumer rights.

Democratic rights are inherent and unlimited. You always have them, and you can always exercise them, at least in a democracy. Consumer rights on the other hand are not inherent and they are limited. They are based on the pay-per-use model, as your rights are determined in relation to your participation in the economic market-place. Thus the more you pay the more you play. The concept of one

person one vote is replaced with one dollar one vote. Consumer rights subvert democratic rights by introducing a quantitative factor, achieving a finite definition of our entitled rights, and limiting the extent to which we may exercise them.

Universal access to the technology will exist, but the use of the technology will be limited. Democracy depends upon free and open access to information, which becomes severely limited, if not negated by proposed pay-per-use pricing structures. Your right to speak still exists, but how much you get to say is determined by your economic standing.

During a CRTC hearing in Canada that discussed this change in regulation, I and I challenged the actions of Stentor, the consortium of Canadian phone companies, and asked why they were dismantling democracy by introducing 'usage sensitive pricing'. Stentor responded by charging that I and I were protecting the status quo and that these changes were like the future: inevitable.

The dominance of the Internet myth is based on the myth of the future. What we call the future is a means by which we can objectively deal with the present. What we perceive as the present is the past. The future does not really exist. Like the Internet it is also an abstraction of a negation. Have you seen the future? Perhaps you have seen a reflection of the past (maybe in your dreams), that either becomes or resembles a later present, however none us can ever exist in the future. In the past we were, in the present we exist, in the future at some point we are dead. Accept it and transcend it.

Myths themselves are largely reactive rather than pro-active. They are an act of co-optation, a response to either natural or spontaneous actions that might jeopardise the technological system. Both the Internet and the future have origins in positive notions of change and vision. It is the mythological manifestation that distorts the meanings of these metaphors. If we undress the myths surrounding the Internet, and examine the true meaning of the word, we see that it is not a story of technological revolution. Rather it is a narrative of popular revolution. It isn't about technology, it's about people. People coming together and expressing themselves freely. That in itself is a revolution. We are the Internet. We are the revolution. We drive it, we make it, we use it, we are it. This is the return of the subjective experience. I think with my brain, but I act with my heart. I cannot change the world, I can only change myself. If we were all working on healing ourselves we would all be a lot better.

The Internet is not utopia, as it clearly demonstrates that as the medium is the message, there is no end. The living language is all

about process: it matters little where were going. What's important is how we get there. The Internet as global consciousness could be an uprising that achieves human liberation.

When I look into the world that is my own, the planet that reflects me, I see genocide and terror, conquest and colonialisation. I immediately and spontaneously denounce the perpetrators of these crimes. They stand naked before me: Pepsi in Burma, Nike in Indonesia, Northern Telecom in China, McDonalds all over; whoever and wherever.

Yes the emperor is naked. The Internet as open mind exposes this to any one who looks. There are no lies in the environment of infinite comparison. We are exposing the corporate coup of global domination.

In an environment of total visibility, only via mythology and the bending of truth can power maintain control. Media concentration is the knee-jerk reaction of the frontiersmen circling their wagons in fear of the natives getting restless.

The youth are the media aboriginals. Raised and bathed in electronic media, they are the open minded hackers who can traverse and navigate through the complex information systems of the electronic mind.

The youth are ageless as time and space dissolve, and the search for truth becomes a quest for identity. I and I bringing down Babylon. Speak, yell, kick, shout, until they are forced to hear you. You have the truth, and the truth will set you free. The youth know this truth. This can also be called a youth revolution as it is the youth who still remember how to play. If you can't dance don't even bother coming out to the Internet revolution.

We need an active approach to media, a fight for our own awareness, and our own liberation. Nobody can give us freedom, we have to take it.

We need to look at the current media domination, and rise up in media liberation.

We need to come together, and remove the mediation between us. Face to face communication is the best way to convey loving energy.

We must not abandon our bodies in the technological rush to be everyone and everywhere. We come from the earth and to the earth we will return. When our feet are on the ground we are more likely to not only recognise, but make change. Taking care of our bodies is the same as taking care of the land upon which we live. We must reclaim our land in the face of a cataclysmic environmental threat, and we must reclaim our bodies in the face of a cataclysmic nutritional technological threat.

The Internet is a mind, a living global growing mind, that is demonstrating self-awareness in its drive for consciousness. We must engage and reclaim this mind, as it is collectively our own. In reclaiming our bodies, we must also reclaim our mind. It will be our love that will carve the path to reclaiming our mind. However we must be sure that the distortion of our love, as manifest through media mythology does not destroy our mind through its own reversal.

We walk a fine line, in what is an epic struggle of change. What is true now, was true 30 years ago, and has been true forever. If large Banks run Bob Dylan songs as commercials for on-line services, perhaps there's something being said here that nobody has acknowledged? Like the late 1930s and the late 1960s, the late 1990s are themselves defined by dramatic changes in media. From the radio to colour television to the digital network, media revolutions draw on the tensions and energy that exist between people and technology. Popular political upheavals occurred in the first two media revolutions of this century, if we are to engage the runaway train of technology, we desperately need another now in the the third. The youth of the nineties need to reach out to the youth of the sixties and build a creative movement that once again mobilises the masses. Similarly as adults we must all recognise our responsibility to retain and reclaim democracy, and with it a social system that progressively builds equality. Together we can combine experience and energy, to make a final effort to break the bonds that hold us docile, facing the flashing cave wall. The Internet is all about the unknown: living with the unknown. The Internet may be alluring and seductive, but is the Information Superhighway really the way? One hopes that in the middle of this mad search for utopia, we will realise that the earth is the utopia, and we have been living here all along.

The highway is for gamblers better use your head.
Take what you have gathered from coincidence.
The empty handed painter from your streets.
Is drawing crazy patterns on your sheets.
The sky too is folding under you,
It's all over now, Baby Blue.

(Bob Dylan, *It's All Over Now Baby Blue*, 1965)

Jonathan Simcock

Anarchist Impressions

Like so many anarchists who develop printing and related skills as part of their political activities, this was the origin of my own interest in different print media and especially in letterpress printing. Over nearly twenty years I have used silk-screen printing, Gestetner stencil cutters and duplicating machines, 'cut and paste' layout for lithographic printing, 'table-top' lithographic presses, desk top publishing (DTP), photocopying and letterpress for the production of local and small print runs of anarchist papers, pamphlets, stickers and posters.

Currently the East Midlands Anarchist Network (EMAN), the small group in which I am active, have the use of a couple of DTP machines, a DTP scanner, a letterpress and a photocopier. Two active members of EMAN take turns to produce a monthly newsletter using DTP and a photocopier. The size of the newsletter alternates between two and four pages of A4, the print run being 120 to 140 copies, and is distributed free to local alternative bookshops and to a small subscription list. This is by far the easiest and least messy forms of printing I have ever known. However, despite this, letterpress, with all its mess, inks, rollers, types, quoins, furniture, etc., is my first love. Letterpress with its scores of different printing machines: Heidelberg, Albion, Arab Treadle, Vander Cook Flatbed, Adana Hand Platen. Letterpress with its hundreds of typefaces ranging from the well known Times and Gill to the classics such as Baskerville and Garamond, is simply fascinating. Letterpress used with skill and imagination is an effective and interesting way to produce printed anarchist materials which are eye-catching and different from the norm. A good example of this is the series of magazines entitled *Anarchism Lancastrium* produced by Peter Good using hand-set, movable metal type on an Adana 8x5 inch hand platen from a room in his Lancashire home. These were both good reading and graphically stimulating. Peter included self-adhesive stickers, beermats printed with anarchist messages, even miniature black flags.

Veteran anarchist and poet of Riff Raff Poets, Dennis Gould, continues to use letterpress to produce postcard poems and also posters from a print workshop in Stroud.

Letterpress is the process of printing from a raised relief image of text (usually movable metal type) or a relief graphic image which is covered with ink and applied directly to the paper surface. For the uninitiated it is no different in principle from the John Bull Printing Kits familiar to persons who grew up in the 1940s, '50s and '60s, though letterpress is far more sophisticated in practice.

On a practical level letterpress is 'green' in that it wastes far less paper and uses much less ink than the lithographic printing process. Some letterpress machines, the hand and treadle platens, can operate on hand or foot power alone with no need for an electrical power supply. Advocates of letterpress point to the superior quality of the 'impression', i.e. the printed image on paper, that letterpress creates compared to that produced by lithographic printing.

There are still sources of supply for letterpress machines, equipment and type, both old and new, and a surprising number of people still actively involved in their use.

Letterpress first came to this country five centuries ago through the efforts of William Caxton. The early presses were converted wooden wine presses, the early type-cutters used skills learnt from the goldsmiths' trade. The printers producing the first printed books sought to reproduce the appearance of handwritten books and manuscripts. Most books at this time were religious, but also included reproductions of the Greek and Roman classics and Chaucer, among others.

During the nineteenth century William Morris sought, by the creation of Kelmscott Press, to reproduce the quality and methods of this first era of printing, which he believed had been lost during the period of the industrial revolution.

Following Caxton and his successors in the fifteenth century, early developments and improvements were slow. Despite this the Crown and the powers that be were keen to keep the dissemination of printed works under strict control. Knowledge and learning were not to be for the masses. This control broke down during the English Revolution of 1640 and the period of the commonwealth which saw a veritable outburst of pamphlets and papers discussing religious and political issues from groups such as the Levellers, the Diggers and many others.

In the eighteenth century, with printers such as Caslon and Baskerville, printing reached a standard comparable with that we enjoy today. Baskerville made his own inks, developed 'wove' paper (that is smooth paper), cast his own types and improved printing

machinery. The typeface which he created and which bears his name is still in widespread use today, even on DTP and computerised typesetting machines.

Despite the opinion of Morris, the golden age of letterpress was the nineteenth century. Cast iron presses replaced wood; manufacture of type, rule, spacing and lead lining, all improved quality greatly. Automatic machines and self-inking rollers were invented. The combined effect of such developments produced real improvements in the quality of printed work. The first steam-powered and rotary letterpresses were brought into use. From 1811 *The Times* was printed on a steam-driven press. Later in the century came Linotype and Monotype machine setting, and hot metal plate-making. This as the technology of mass circulation paper and book production right up to the 1970s. Linotype and hot metal was the technology associated with the powerful Fleet Street print unions until they were brought low by the introduction of new print technology, Rupert Murdoch and the Wapping dispute.

The process of change was not instant. Penguin were still producing their books via Monotype in 1978. The Folio Society persist to this day in using letterpress for their beautiful collectors book club editions. Folio continue to state, in the traditional way at the start of each book, the typeface used, the point size of type and leading used in each book. Freedom Press publications (including the entire print run of *Anarchy* series 1) were produced by letterpress, as was *Freedom* until 1972 when Freedom Press ceased using Express Printers and switched to lithographic printing.

Today letterpress is more or less commercially dead. There are still some aspects of 'jobbing' from print work being carried out by letterpress, but these account for as little as 5% of the trade. Despite this there is still a thriving interest in the machines and technology of letterpress. Like steam trains, steam engines and vintage cars, letterpress has that 'transparency of operation' which makes it understandable to 'ordinary' people, and it is this interest together with the loyalty of old letterpress printers which forms the basis of support for the organisation known as the British Printing Society.

The British Printing Society was established in 1944 as the Amateur Printers Association and is the sort of voluntary organisation often given as an example of mutual aid and self organisation by anarchists. It changed its name to International Small Printers Association in 1948 and in 1965 changed name again to the British Printing Society. Its founder William Brace envisaged, to quote the 1990 prospectus,

"an organisation which would enable printers to exchange views and experiences, pass on hints and tips and generally promote a spirit of craftsmanship and friendliness".

The British Printing Society is governed by a council of voluntary unpaid officers elected annually by the BPS Convention. The membership fluctuates, but is usually between 1,800 and 2,000 and there are a number of local branches across the country. The society prints its own monthly magazine, *The Small Printer*, which is a mine of information and includes an advertisements section which is a useful source of second-hand machines, types, inks, paper and equipment. Along with their magazine, members receive a 'bundle' which includes examples of members' own work such as leaflets, private publications and trade literature. Members are encourages to publish booklets and leaflets for distribution via the bundle. No charge is made for the distribution. Cooperative publications, in which a number of members share, have been produced by informal members groups. The society also has a disabled members section to give aid and advice in overcoming disabilities relating to letterpress printing, and there is also a members' advisory bureau to offer general technical advice. In addition the British Printing Society run annual competitions for printed work in a number of categories. The highlight of the BPS year is its annual convention, which also includes the society AGM. The convention is the venue for exhibitions of members' work and of private press printing, practical exhibits, trade exhibits, film shows and visits. The society also maintains a library of several hundred books and publications available to members.

While the major interest of members is letterpress, the spread of lithographic printing, DTP and other innovations is covered in the society magazine and also in the advertisements section.

The membership reflects the composition of British society generally. While I was a member I met a number of people from different background. The one thing they had in common was their interest in printing.

So now, even though I do most of my anarchist work via DTP, I still keep my hand in at letterpress and by Adana 8x5 sits at the other end of my work bench – the old and the new side by side. the Adana is still useful for self-adhesive stickers and A5 leaflets.

The membership secretary of the British Printing Society can be contacted at: BPS, 35 Upper Lambricks, Rayleigh, Essex SS6 8BP.

Dennis Gould

Letterpress Apprentice Blues – 1993

I'm a Letterpress Apprentice in a pretty perfect Printshop
Driven by a Typesetter's curse. I stand all day with my
Compositor's Stick setting up Mad Lines of Verse.
I'm in love with Woodblock Letters
I'm in love with old Faces of Type
With Baskerville, Bembo, Bodoni, Caslon, Figgins, Garamond,
Gill Sans, Goudy, & Headline Bold, Perpetua, Plantin,
Rockwell, Times & Univers. I'm in love with that
Letterpress Impression. I'm in love with Cases of Type.
I'm the Printer's Devil sorting the Printer's Pie.
I'm in love with Flatbed. I'm in love with Platen.
I'm in love with Hand-Operated machines
I like the sound of my silent arm as the Hand-Rolled ink
Meets the metal. I'm a Letterpress Apprentice
I print one by one. I print all day, I print all night
I'm a Letterpress Apprentice in love!
I roll the ink this way & that. I look out for Sample Papers.
I write to the Papermills & Papermakers.
I say send me all your Rejects. Waste & Leftovers.
I'm a Letterpress Apprentice in a pretty perfect Printshop
Reminded of those Giants from Printshops of the past.
Printers & Publishers & Pamphleteers like The Levellers,
The Quakers, The Ranters & The Diggers.
Like John Wade Editor of *The Blackbook* – or
Corruption Unmasked! Being an Account of
Persons, Places & Sinecures. 1820-3. 2-vols.
Lilac Richard Carlile who published Tom Paine's
Rights Of Man.Who edited *Gorgon & Republican*.

Leo Baxendale

The Beano and
'the national consciousness'

In his 'The Slipper and the Rebel: The Beano and Baxendale's Bad-Child Brood' (*The Raven*, no. 33) Gavin Burrows brought into play as concepts 'the national consciousness' and 'the popular consciousness'. For example: "... the *Beano* and its characters have crossed that indefinable line into the national consciousness".

As thus presented, 'the national consciousness' and 'the popular consciousness' appear as mystical concepts: "... that indefinable line".

Contrariwise, I believe that 'the national consciousness' and 'the popular consciousness' are exactly definable: that in the construction and maintenance of a 'national consciousness' powerful structural forces are brought to bear; and, moreover, where Gavin Burrows seems to regard the two phrases as interchangeable, I view them as describing separate states of being.

Burrows writes: "Typically of the period, almost all of Baxendale's work revolves around two of the greatest institutions – school and the family".

Little Plum obviously does not revolve around those two institutions (and, in passing, pedantry demands I mention that the larger number of my creations for D.C. Thomson did *not* revolve around school and the family, i.e. Little Plum, The Three Bears and The Banana Bunch – the Bunch lived without parents in a communal hut in a field, and never went to school).

By late 1955 Bash Street was top of the charts, with Minnie close behind. Then a sizeable gap: Plum and Dennis shared mid-table.

With its expansion to full page in November 1958 (with the crucial extra space allowing me to deploy the smirking army of bears) the Little Plum feature began to creep up the charts nearer to Bash Street and Minnie.

Then at the turn of the year 1969-60, after a period of exhaustion of my working through the night again and again, something happened:

... looking at the *Beano* volume for 1959, there is evidence of the sudden beginning of an effort of will ... Three further weeks of this struggle. Then

when the triumph of will came, it came with abrupt force ... The Little Plum set of 26th December 1959, the Christmas issue, was a vintage page, as intensely charged as any vintage page ... at the peak of 1958. It was the bears that did it ... three more strong, visually funny Plum pages in the first three weeks of 1960 (all featuring the bears); and it was then that the *Beano* editor Harold Cramond asked me to adorn the *Beano* cover mast-head each week with vignettes of bears and/or Plum. Then Harold asked for a double-spread Plum ('Bears' Mechanised Army') for the issue of 12th March 1960; and Plum on the *Beano* mast-head announced its presence within.[1]

From the beginning of 1960 Plum had leaped to the top of the *Beano* charts, overtaking Bash Street, Jonah, Minnie and Dennis.

*   *   *

Towards the end of January that year I had taken the completed 'Bears' Mechanised Army' double-spread drawing into the *Beano* office. It lay on Harold Cramond's desk. Chief sub-editor Bill Swinton came into the office, his eyes rolled toward the ceiling, his hands likewise gesturing upwards in despair at Harold asking me to draw double-spreads, when my weekly production of Bash Street, Minnie, Plum, Banana Bunch, plus annual's work, was already creaking on the hinges. But Harold stabbed with his forefinger at the Plum spread that lay before him: "These are the selling pages".

The fundamentals that underlay all my work for the *Beano* were that disaster and marmalising arrived: a) by random chance (a seemingly medieval concept), or b) as the unforeseen result of the characters' own actions (a seemingly more modern concept of cause and effect – though one to which the characters were permanently oblivious).

A recurring metaphor in the work for the first concept was the 'sudden gust of wind'.

But the world of Plum had, besides, other permanent underlying strata that were particular to the feature:

From the first, there was a miscalculation on the part of Plum and Chiefy about the bears that derived from the ideology of human superiority over other animal species. They thought the bears were mugs ...

Yet Plum and Chiefy never noticed that the bears were more insidious and more

persistent opponents than Pussyfoot ...

The bears went through the classic phases of guerrilla war. They were sneaky and cunning from the start, but had little more than their wits.

Stage by stage, ruse by ruse, they acquired arms and ammunition from the classic source – the enemy (Plum's lot).

Finally, by the beginning of 1960, they had moved into the phase of being able to wage full-scale conventional warfare with jet fighters, tanks, artillery, bazookas, etc ...[2]

There is a twofold feature on these bedrocks: that they came from the attitudes, the world view in my own mind; yet that they were not simply an end in themselves, but that they were the underlying source of rich soil for the intensely daft comedy.

So, in 1960, Plum was top of the *Beano* charts. But then, something happened:

- 15th October 1960: The *Beano* went from 12 to 16 pages, the price from 2d to 3d, enter The Three Bears. Thus my weekly output was now Bash Street, Minnie, Plum, Banana Bunch, Three Bears.

- Early December: fell ill with pneumonia.

- Summer 1961: By effort of will (and with the warm winds of summer at my back) achieved – exceeded – full production.

- With the coming winter and with recurrent coughing bouts, my output fell to bits.

- May 1962: the constant collision between intensity of creation and scale of production became unbearable. Abruptly stopped drawing for the *Beano*.

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At the vanishing of Little Plum from the *Beano* in October 1986, I speculated whether this was a) the continuation of an attempt by D.C. Thomson to reduce the visual dominance of my creations in the *Beano* (The Three Bears had vanished the year before – these vanishings still left double-spreads of The Bash Street Kids and Minnie the Minx) as we were by now (in the sixth year of my High Court action) hurtling towards a three-week hearing 'set down' for June 1987; or b) because Plum for a long time had been a flaccid, babyish strip.

There are a number of factors and forces in play (apart from intrinsic worth, a particular quality) that combine to allow entry into, and ensure a continued place in, the constructed 'national consciousness'.

One factor is longevity: there is a proximity, if not a synonimity, between membership of 'the national consciousness' and the concept of 'brand name' – that instant 'recognition flash' for successive

generations of the population, derived from decades of continuous exposure, that in turn makes possible commercial exploitation (and more enlarged exposure still) via the newer technologies (global television, video, CD-Rom, etc.).

By the usual order of things, the *Beano* would have ceased to be of interest to 'the media' years ago (apart from occasional 'nostalgia' reference) since the *Beano* / *Dandy* are the last remnants of the collapsed 'freestanding' children's comics industry.

But with the *Beano* there is an unusual order of things. The beginning of this unusual order of things can be traced to May 1980 – the start of my High Court action, my attendant press release and the consequent press coverage. During the seven years of the High Court action, the matter of the creation (authorship) of the features was linked to that of ownership of these intellectual properties.

After the settlement the equation changed: the creation of the features was linked to the question of what had 'gone on' in the work.

There are two sites of struggle in history: the struggle at the time to *determine* what will happen; then, at a later time, the struggle to *define* what has happened.

There was my initial struggle with R.D. Low and George Moonie to determine what would happen as I threw grappling irons and clambered aboard the *Beano*. That struggle had effectively been resolved by the end of November 1953.

The second phase of struggle, in the High Court, was resolved by the pre-trial settlement of May 1987.

The protagonists, the 'formation dancers' in the third phase of struggle: myself / D.C. Thomson / 'the media' (print capital and its sibling technologies) / attendant academic commentators and such. There has been the production of texts and the providing series of 'loci' around which 'the media' could build 'good stories':

- 1978: publication by Duckworth of my *A Very Funny Business*.

- 1980-87: High Court.

- 1987: I set up my Reaper imprint for the publishing of necessary texts.

- Exhibitions as 'loci': inter alia, 1989, the Stripped of Illusion tour; 1990, Angouleme;[3] 1993, Treviso; 1993-97, the Bash Street fortieth birthday exhibition.

- PR activities by D.C. Thomson, aimed at 'keeping the *Beano* going', as a base for wider exploitation.

An example of that last: the PR exercise *Modernising of Bash Street School* in February 1994, the fortieth anniversary of Bash Street's first appearance in the *Beano*. The media was still 'warm' from the coverage of the opening of my Bash Street / Minnie / Plum fortieth birthday exhibition just four months earlier (at the Harris Museum, Preston, to celebrate my creating of Plum, Minnie and Bash Street at Preston in 1953).

Thus on one day (1st February 1994) at the start of a three-week 'story', the queuing presence in my house of three television camera crews – BBC, Central and HTV – simultaneous with radio and press telephone interviews and press photographers.

Each morning the telephone starts ringing at 8am. The television news items are passed on to breakfast television, children's programmes, etc. Thousands of children get up petitions. MPs are involved. Another brick in the wall, another bit of cementing, of Bash Street's place in 'the national consciousness'.

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'The national consciousness' and 'the popular consciousness' seemed to be used in Gavin Burrow's text as synonyms, or at least virtual lookalikes. But here for you to consider is a very different 'popular consciousness', one which is invisible to, does not register with, the constructed 'national consciousness':

There were creations that, at the time of their publishing, seemed to possess the necessary intrinsic qualities that evoked passion from the readers to mark them as special, as 'the selling pages'. Take Ken Reid's Jonah or my own Little Plum. But with these, in each case the essential factor of continuing publication, of longevity, is missing. In each case 'something happened: a sudden gust of wind'.

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Over the decades I have been made aware of the persistence in the minds of individuals of that evoked passion. Consider just one example (there are others) of this persistence of passions in the minds of some child readers of my creation Grimly Feendish for *Wham!* and *Smash* (published by Odhams for a brief span in the mid and late 1960s, before I left, and Odhams, under the gravitational pull of Cecil King and IPC politics, imploded[4, 5]). Twenty years later those child readers, grown up, formed a punk group called The Damned and charted a single *Grimly Feendish* (The Bad Trap Mix, 1985, MCA Ltd).

My Grimly Feendish original drawings were sent by Odhams to trundle round Europe (with French speech balloons affixed) to

appear in the adult magazine *Confidences* in the 1960s and in *Le Journal de Mickey* in the 1970s.

Just weeks ago a man of 27 from Vincennes finally tracked me down, seeking knowledge of his childhood readings in their original English manifestations.

Whatever such byways Grimly Feendish has traversed, they will never lead to 'the national consciousness'.

If such passion persists in individual minds (however great the number) that persistence is 'unstructured' in terms of the constructed 'national consciousness'. They 'do not register'. When eventually each individual dies, the 'pictures in the mind' die too.

<p align="center">*   *   *</p>

In looking at the history of the *Beano* comic works, I should warn against treating D.C. Thomson, in its corporate being, as if it were a great homogeneous lump of pâté. The actuality was more complex, and shifting.

Thus one day in the mid 1950s I had taken a drawing in to the *Beano*, and was in conversation with George Moonie. Suddenly, and with manifest feeling, he said "I believe we should make more of our national heroes". Significantly, by 'we' he didn't mean me and him, that is the *Beano*. By 'we' George meant the nation. He knew better than to ask *me* to produce 'heroes' for the *Beano*.

And again: in one of my earliest Plum sets in 1953 I had drawn something very painful being visited on a grizzly bear. George was disturbed. He wrote, protesting that the bear should have done something to 'deserve' this. And a little later, of another Plum strip, he wrote to me again about 'deserved retribution'. But I carried on regardless – I had to, since in the comic world I was bringing into being the concept of 'deserved retribution' had no meaning. George never raised the matter of 'deserved retribution' again.

I must distinguish between George's strongly-held opinions and deeply held beliefs. An example of the former was George's strong attachment (expressed verbally and in writing) to magic – the efficacy of magic strips, magic text stories. Magic dominated the *Beano* as it was. But shortly after Bash Street had started appearing, I chanced to be talking to George in the *Beano* room when the artist Bill Holroyd walked in with a proposal for George: a new 'magic' strip. George at once, and with finality, said "Our readers aren't interested in magic", to which Bill replied "Oh". Thus George could abandon a strongly-held opinion.

By contrast, George never abandoned his deeply held beliefs (e.g. 'deserved retribution' and 'punishment') – see his *Arena* statement of January 1988 – but he suspended those beliefs for the over-riding sake of the then present task allotted to him by the firm: the success of the *Beano* (George, sardonically, to me one day said "These comics exist to keep the firm's printing machines going").

*   *   *

In dealing with my own *Beano* history, I have had available three main primary sources:

a) The vivid pictures in my own mind. In history myriad vital interchanges and decisions are never written down, never documented.

b) The 'texts' themselves: the bound volumes of the *Beano* of the period in the British Library at Colindale. I researched my own past work, the circa 2,500 pages I drew – 1953-62, first during the middle reaches of my High Court action, and again during my writing of *On Comedy*.

c) Documentation: produced under the High Court mechanism Order 24 Rule 10, and Discovery.

There are limits. In the very early Dennis sets, Dennis was not routinely slippered. But by the time I approached the *Beano* this had changed. Why? The early Dennis 'storylines' had been made for artist David Law by *Beano* sub-editor Iain Chisholm, in the form of rough visuals (years later, Iain said to me "But then Davey spread his wings, and he went beyond me", raising his arms in a soaring motion). But by the time I came along to the *Beano*, Chiz had been away for a long spell in hospital and David Law's 'storylines' were now provided (in written form) by *Beano* chief sub-editor Ken Walmsley.

Did the introduction of routine slippering reflect different personalities? (It was my observation that Ken had an authoritarian mind-set; Chiz was insouciant.) Or, alternatively, did George Moonie suggest the change? I didn't think to ask the various protagonists at the time. Alas too late now – Chiz and Davey are dead. The pictures in their minds died with them.

*   *   *

Artists, just as others, live and work inseparable from the history that surrounds them. But that surrounding history is the vast sea. It is a sea with many currents and undertows, its own rivers and streams that flow in the deeps. And it is an ancient sea. Always attendant on present history is past history. Dear reader, dead men's hands are always on your shoulders.

The structural intellectual forces with which my mind had to engage during the course of the 1930s and 1940s were not predominantly of the twentieth century.

A protracted intellectual struggle over a span of many years, that laid down the sedimentary layers of my world view, had been long resolved by the time I approached the *Beano*.

I have not yet published an account of my 22 pre-*Beano* years, of my surrounding history of that time. In the face of this absence, the text of *The Slipper and the Rebel*, striving to make sense of things by "finding a generation to fit Baxendale into" or re-locating "the early '50s to the post-war period", operates by reference to a 'past' which is itself a construct of 'the national consciousness'.

References

1. Leo Baxendale, *On Comedy: the Beano and ideology* (Reaper Books, 1993) page 51.

2. *Ibid.*, page 52.

3. Leo Baxendale, *I Love You Baby Basil* (Reaper Books, 1991) prologue.

4. Leo Baxendale, *A Very Funny Business* (Duckworth, 1978) pages 77 to 86.

5. Steve Holland, *The Power Pack* (A&B Whitworth, 17 Hill Street, Colne BB8 0DH, 1993).
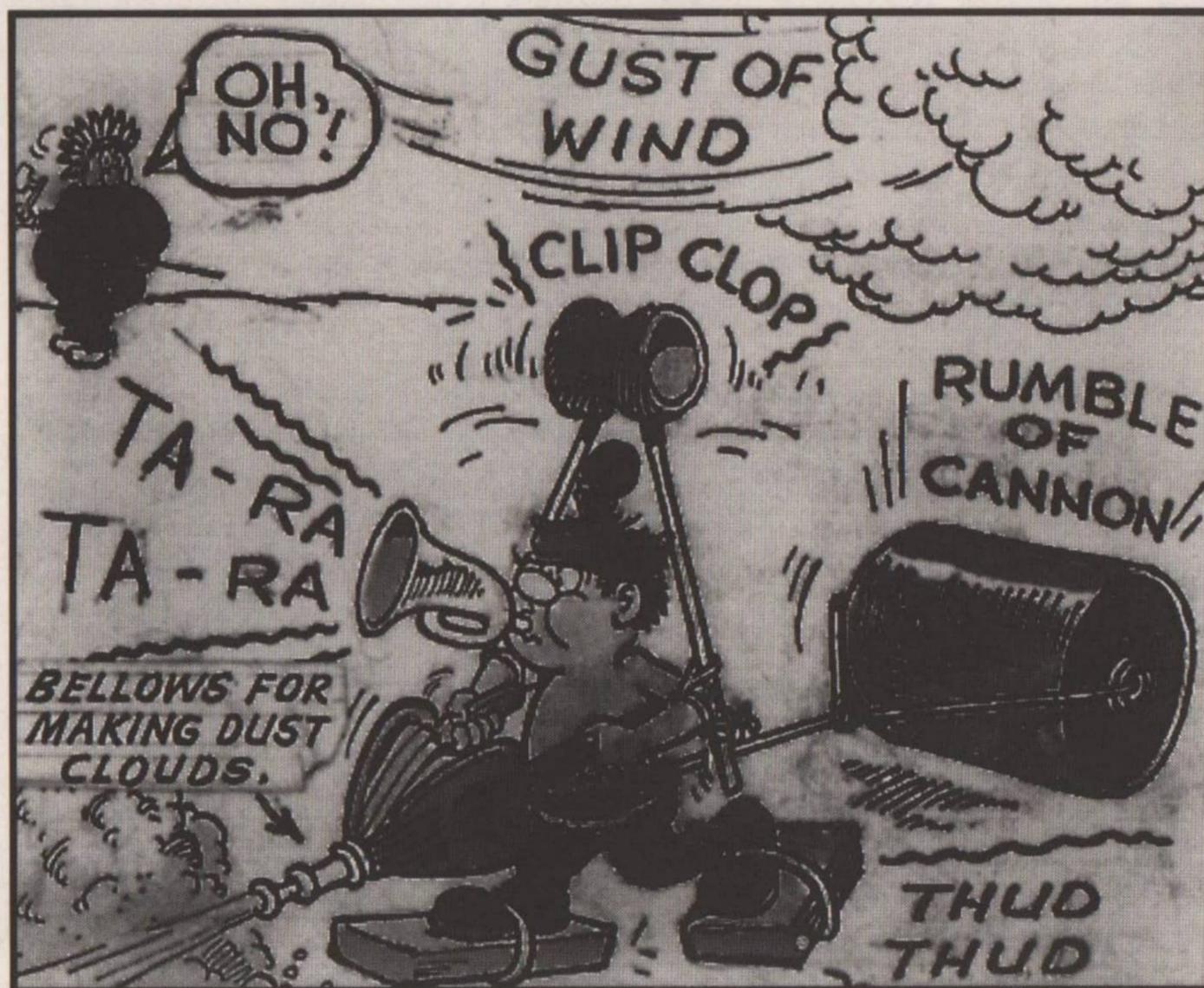
Donald Rooum

Fictitious anarchists in
The Man Who Was Thursday

G.K. Chesterton, author of *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908)[1] was
a famous wit (see under 'Chesterton' in any book of quotations). A
High Church Anglican in 1908, he was to convert to Roman
Catholicism in 1922. A well-read man, he was probably acquainted
with anarchist writings (and probably also with Conrad's *The Secret
Agent*, published about the time *The Man Who Was Thursday* was
taking shape in his mind). But the anarchist contention, that
reasonable social order is possible without hierarchical authority,
seems almost to frighten him.

The outer ring – the main mass ... – are merely anarchists; that is, men who
believe that rules and formulas have destroyed human happiness. They
believe that all the results of human crime are the results of the system that
has called it crime. They do not believe that the crime creates the punishment.
They believe that the punishment creates crime. They believe that if a man
seduced seven women he would naturally walk away as blameless as the
flowers of spring. These I call the innocent section.
  Naturally, therefore, these people talk about 'a happy time coming'; 'the
paradise of the future'; 'mankind freed from the bondage of vice and the
bondage of virtue'; and so on. And so also the men of the inner circle speak
– the sacred priesthood. But in their mouths these happy phrases have a
horrible meaning. They are under no illusions; they are too intellectual to
think that man upon this earth can ever be free of original sin and the struggle.
And they mean death. They have but two objects, to destroy first humanity
and then themselves. The innocent rank and file are disappointed because
the bomb has not killed the king; but the high-priesthood are happy because
it has killed somebody.

The anarchists in the novel are a highly centralised secret society,
ruled by an autocratic President codenamed 'Sunday', and the
Central Anarchist Council of seven men whose codenames are the
days of the week.
  A police detective, infiltrating the anarchist movement, contrives to
get himself elected to the Central Council as Thursday. Then one by
one, each member of the Central Council turns out to be a police spy.

Many people seem to know that much of the plot, but not so many know what the book is really about. Chesterton was later to be famous for his whodunits (the Father Brown stories), and presages this by leaving the explanation of *The Man Who Was Thursday* to the last chapter. Evidently many people, including the anonymous writer of the Introduction to the Wordsworth edition,[2] stop reading before the end.

The reason for this is that the book becomes boring. Before Chapter 14, it sustains interest largely by means of jokes:

Yet these new women would always pay to a man the extravagant compliment which no ordinary woman ever pays to him, that of listening while he is talking ...

'The board schools came after my time. What education I had was very tough and old-fashioned, I am afraid.' 'Where did you have it?' asked Syme, wondering. 'Oh, at Harrow'.

But at Chapter 14, Chesterton's famous wit deserts him. Six of the Central Anarchist Council, now aware that they are all policemen, are pursuing Sunday who throws scraps of paper to his pursuers, bearing messages which are merely inconsequential. Chesterton may have thought them funny at the time, or they may have some private meaning for some of Chesterton's friends, or they may be in a code which is never revealed. Whatever the explanation, they are tedious.

Furthermore, it is now boringly obvious to readers, though not to the six pursuers, that Sunday will turn out to be the mysterious man at Scotland Yard, who recruited them all into the New Detective Force. So it is very understandable if many readers decide not to bother reading any further, and miss the point of the book.

In the last chapter, the six pursue Sunday's balloon into the grounds of a mansion. Here they are welcomed by mysterious servants of Sunday, who dress them in costumes representing the first six days of Creation, and take them to a fancy dress ball where they sit with Sunday on seven great thrones. Sunday identifies himself, at last, as "the peace of God".

The anarchist who first introduced Thursday into an anarchist group ("Yes, that's the real anarchist"), turns up at the party and makes a feeble speech against God, ending with a complaint about how he has suffered.

At this Thursday springs to his feet:

'I see everything', he cried, 'everything there is. Why does each thing on the earth war against each other thing? ... For the same reason that I had to be alone in the dreadful Council of the Days so that each man fighting for order may be as brave and good as the dynamiter. So that the real lie of Satan may

be flung back in the face of this blasphemer ... No agonies can be too great to buy the right to say to this accuser, "We also have suffered".'

Thursday then asks whether Sunday suffers, and Sunday replies, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?"

The whole story has been a mystic allegory. Whodunit solved. Or is it?

During his last illness in 1936, Chesterton wrote an article (published in the *Illustrated London News* on the day before he died)[3] in which he said people were wrong to deduce that "the mysterious master of both anarchy and order" was "meant for a serious description of the Deity". The error, he wrote, was due to reading the book without reading the title page, and so failing to notice the subtitle: *A Nightmare*. The book "was intended to describe the world of doubt and despair which the pessimists were generally describing at that date".

Make what you can of that. Chesterton wrote somewhere,[4] "As long as you have mystery you have health; when you destroy mystery you create morbidity". It may have been concern for his health, even on his deathbed, which induced Chesterton to make his mystery insoluble.

Notes

1. G.K. Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare* with an introduction by Kingsley Amis (Penguin, 1986). The late Kingsley Amis writes about anarchism from the standpoint of profound and genuine ignorance.

2. G.K. Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday* (Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1995). The writer of the Introduction also thinks the men who assassinated Archduke Ferdinand in 1914, and so "started the First World War", were anarchists. As school history books tell us, they were panslavists. The writer does well to remain anonymous.

3. Extract reprinted as an addendum to the Penguin edition.

4. G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, quoted in the *Dictionary of Catholic Quotations*.

Amorey Gethin

Language, thought, and communicating rebellious ideas

1

Understanding the nature of language and thought, or at least what they are not, is just about as important as any understanding can be. Both are at the basis of our lives; in a sense they are our lives. Is language a distinct faculty? Is it controlled by parts of the brain dedicated to language alone? Is human thought language? If it is, are we intellectual prisoners limited to thinking what language can describe, and allows us to think? Or is language a human invention, a purely cultural phenomenon? Is thought essentially independent of language, but in practice critically influenced by it? Much, politically and socially, depends indirectly on which is the correct view, and much depends on the view of linguisticians,[1] neuro-scientists and philosophers, correct or not.

The opinion of most writers on the subject seems to be that language is basic to our nature, whether it is our minds that shape language, or language that shapes our minds. Language is seen as the fascinating key to human thought and the whole human personality. The philosopher Karl Popper went so far in his reverence for language that he appeared to confuse it with reality. He thought, for instance, that small children only become aware that they are separate from others through language, at the time they begin to say 'I'.

Noam Chomsky, the most famous living linguistician and perhaps the most famous linguistician ever, thinks that the form of language is determined inescapably by the form of the mind. Most of his academic colleagues seem to do little but devise or develop barren systems of linguistic analysis merely for the sake of analysis. Chomsky at least aspires to contribute to the understanding of human psychology. I want to discuss in some detail a few of the key elements in Chomskyan linguistic theory and point out a number of what I think are basic flaws. I want to do this because Chomsky's ideas have strongly influenced people's views on the 'authority' of language in our lives, and also because discussion of those ideas raises important

issues of intellectual authority, in both principle and practice. And it is not just of coincidental interest that Chomsky, as most readers of this journal and of *Freedom* probably know, is an ardent libertarian.

2

The American philosopher John Searle explains Chomsky's argument for the existence of his well-known 'universal grammar' as follows:

But, more importantly, the syntax he came up with was extremely abstract and complicated, and that raised the question: 'How can little kids learn that?' You cannot teach a small child axiomatic set theory, and Chomsky showed that English is much more complicated than axiomatic set theory. How is it that little kids can learn that? What he said was: 'In a sense, they already know it. It is a mistake to suppose that the mind is a blank tablet. What happens is that the form of all natural languages is programmed into the child's mind at birth'.[2]

This circular argument is an example of the false assumptions on which the Chomskyan theory to a large extent rests. Chomsky erects a frighteningly complicated and abstract system of syntax, without evidence that it exists as a psychological reality, and instead of conceding that he has perhaps created something artificial, he uses its very difficulty to suggest that therefore its mastery must be inborn.

So the forms human language can take, Chomsky maintains, are biologically determined. Yet his argument sometimes depends on plain and simple falsehoods. At least two are repeated in a recent much-heralded book by Steven Pinker.[3] Pinker argues that to form questions one could "just as effectively ... flip the first and last words, or utter the entire sentence in mirror-reversed order", but languages don't use these forms for questions, and this suggests "a commonality in the brains of speakers". But what Pinker – following Chomsky – claims here is untrue. Take the sentence 'Cats chase mice', and apply to it what is both a first and last word flip and a mirror reversal, and of course you will get 'Mice chase cats', which cannot be used as a question, since it is already a different statement with a meaning the reverse of 'Cats chase mice'. So there is a good practical reason why no language uses first and last flip or mirror reversal for question forming.

Pinker also asserts that "if a language has the verb before the object, as in English, it will also have prepositions; if it has the verb after the object, as in Japanese, it will have post-positions. This is a remarkable discovery. It means that the super-rules suffice not only for all phrases

in English but for all phrases in all languages ... when children learn a particular language, they do not have to learn a long list of rules. All they have to learn is whether their particular language has the parameter value head-first, as in English, or head-last, as in Japanese ... Huge chunks of grammar are then available to the child, all at once, as if the child were merely flipping a switch to one of two possible positions." Again the whole hypothesis is based on a falsehood. *Not* all verb-object languages have prepositions. For example, Finnish 'Mies/(The) man pani/put pullon/(the) bottle pöydän/(the) table's alle/under'. Finnish is not the only language with the verb-object pattern together with postpositions. But it is obvious that even just one language that does not obey the Chomskyan-Pinker super-rule wrecks the entire rule, and a child can certainly not master the grammar of her language by 'merely flipping a switch'.

Chomsky believes we are born with powers of abstract grammatical analysis, the ability to analyse sentences into their abstract 'phrase structure' quite independently of any meaning, even, indeed, if the sentences are meaningless. But this is not how either children or adults really experience language. For instance, if we consciously examine the sentence 'The man the man the man knew knew knew', it is comparatively simple to analyse it into an abstract 'phrase structure' – $(x(x(xy)y)y)$ – but it is almost impossible to work out its meaning. This is because there are no clear images to fasten on to, to give us our bearings. It is, by Chomsky's criteria, a 'well-formed' sentence, but because it is, effectively, just an abstraction, it leaves us mystified. Yet, although in formal abstract terms the following sentence is far more complicated, it is comprehensible precisely because it consists of *recognisable meanings*: 'Did you realise that bomb a radical immigrant the finance minister that idiotic president appointed last year employs in his own private bank managed to make in the small amount of spare time the minister allows him, and put under the self-important fool's chair yesterday, was a toy?'

The linguistic ideology of Chomsky and his followers leads sometimes to grotesque mistakes. Two champions of his theories, for instance, explain that what determines whether is can be contracted to 's is a system of syntactic rules that move *wh-* words (*where, when,* etc.) from certain positions in one sort of hypothetical sentence to other positions in another sort of hypothetical sentence. (Moving constituents of sentences about, 'performing operations' on sentences, is a basic part of Chomskyan linguistics.) The rules they propose are in fact rubbish, and it is very easy to demonstrate that

they are so, but that is really all one can expect from such an approach. (As most unbiased people would probably imagine, the real determining factor for the contraction of *is* is whether emphasis is led away from it to some other part of the sentence.)[4]

Chomsky's system is in more than one way incoherent. He maintains that human 'performance' of language, what people actually say, is too full of mistakes, slips, and stumblings for children to be able to learn the rules of grammar accurately from observing it. Yet, he says, children do rapidly master language, so they cannot be getting its principles from outside data, but must be born already programmed with the principles of universal grammar, so that they are not misled by and can sort out the insufficient and imperfect examples of language they hear. But it would be just as reasonable to argue that children's mastery of language shows the evidence cannot be 'degenerate', as he calls it.

Chomsky contradicts himself. He has continually emphasised that children always get it right.[5] He cannot have it both ways. He claims that children get the word order right in structures such as 'Is the man who is tall in the room?' *despite* the mistakes their elders make. Yet this means he is claiming adults make mistakes but children don't. The truth is that adults never make the sort of mistake Chomsky is referring to, or, if they do very occasionally, certainly no more than children do. So children in fact have perfectly good data to go on.

The objections to the proposal that grammar is innate and cannot be learned from 'outside' data are elementary but fundamental.

The language we know children actually get right is not, in Chomsky's system, the Chomskyan 'deep structure', but language that has gone through Chomskyan 'transformations'. But the 'transformations' must be different in each language. Yet the children learn them very efficiently and can only learn them from the data provided about their own particular language by their elders. Chomskyans argue that children are born with the knowledge of which transformations, among the many theoretically possible, human language actually permits. There are, they say, *constraints* that apply to all languages.

This is irrelevant. The fact remains that children have to learn to use certain modes of expression and not others, even though those others exist in other languages, and they can only learn which expressions are permitted in *their* language from experience, by observation. No pre-programmed universal grammar or transformational restrictions can help them there. For instance, English does not normally invert main clause verb and subject after an adverbial

phrase: 'Then the cat went to sleep'. But other Germanic languages do: 'Then went the cat to sleep' ('Dann ist die Katze eingeschlafen'), etc. And the English-learning child cannot do any simple 'switch flipping' to one of two possibles, *à la* Pinker, because it is only normally that English doesn't invert. Sometimes English does invert – after negatives, quasi negatives like 'only', and 'so', 'such' (e.g. 'Never had I heard anything so beautiful').

This leads on to an even more elementary objection. The whole Chomskyan case is self-contradictory. To flip the Pinkerian switch to the right position (for the sake of argument let us assume for a moment the false correlation of object-verb order with postpositions) children have to notice that verbs come after objects. And that's very easy to do. Pinker tacitly affirms it. "They can do that merely by noticing whether a verb comes before or after its object in any sentence in their parents' speech".[6] But in that case, why not reverse the process and notice first that there are postpositions in your parents' speech, not prepositions – or any other of the grammatical patterns that follow from the super rules – and so conclude that verbs come after objects? That's equally easy to do. Chomskyan linguistics demands the absurd. Language is not learned by observation, but you have to start the process by observation.

The truth is that Chomsky's linguistics fail completely to account for the human mastery of language, both in detail and in the broad.

Even if his theory of constraints was wholly true, it is far too negative, 'passive', limited, to account for all that children have to learn about their language, even if we limit the discussion to 'grammar'. A far more positive, active faculty is needed. How else – to take just two of the many thousands of possible examples – can Scandinavian and Romanian children learn that the definite article goes after rather than before the noun, unlike other Germanic and Latin languages? How else can children learn the precise way their language uses the definite article, different in subtle ways according to meaning from other languages belonging even to the same language family?

And, again supposing that Chomskyan theory is wholly true, it can only account for a tiny part of what everybody has to do to master a language. You have to observe, distinguish, and use a great many subtly different sounds. You have to observe, distinguish, and use the particular combinations of sounds we call words, and understand the connection between those and the different parts of reality. Even if you are not particularly sophisticated, you will learn to use 10,000 or more words, and to differentiate precisely between what are often very

subtly varying meanings. You will understand the meaning of many more than that number. You will remember them whether or not you have what is called a 'good memory'. (In addition you will observe and remember hundreds of idiomatic expressions which are often different even between languages closely related to each other, and which often ignore the normal 'grammar' of your language.) If you are bilingual you may learn twice as many words and expressions, again irrespective of how good your memory is. (Foreign-language learners take heart: outstanding memory is irrelevant to your task.) In the 'developed' world what might be termed the general (non-specialist) vocabulary of a language contains at least 200,000 words. And universal grammar will not help you to notice patterns of meaning such as that the past is expressed by *-ed* in English but in other ways in French, etc., etc. You must store all these sound-meanings somewhere inside you in a form which is not the form you heard them in. You must be able to carry out the process of getting any 'sounds' you need out of the memory, arranging them in the right order, and turning them into the right outwardly audible sounds in the mouth, and be able to do all this at great speed in what is a remarkable feat of co-ordination. You can do the same thing in reverse when you listen and understand.

3

But I believe the most serious mistake in Chomsky's linguistics is what seems to be the assumption that thought is some kind of language. I do not know if he has ever stated that it is in so many words. The nearest he gets in what I have read of his work – and I have certainly not read all of it – is where he says "Of course, this deep structure is implicit only; it is not expressed but is only represented in the mind" and "The deep structure that expresses the meaning is common to all languages, so it is claimed, being a simple reflection of the forms of thought".[7] And that he thinks thought is language comes out pretty clearly, for instance, in his treatment of ambiguity. Ambiguity arises – he believes – because two different 'thought-language' sequences (my expression) are transformed into the same surface language.[8]

At this point I have to confess to personal pique. My book *Antilinguistics* was published in 1990. In Chapter 10 (pages 194-219) I demonstrated clearly, I think, that essentially thought can have nothing at all to do with anything that could remotely be called language. The only necessary connections are that language is a translating device for the imperfect *expression* of thought, and that

thinking is necessary for producing language. But in *The Language Instinct* (1994) Pinker continues, regardless, to present thought as a kind of language. He does indeed give some valid reasons for insisting that it is not any of the 'surface' languages that as humans we actually speak; but he says it is likely that thought is a universal 'mentalese' which follows basic principles of language structure.

Here are some of the simple arguments that show we do not think in language:

1. 'I was chased round a pond by a duck last week.' In order to say this:
(a) Something must have been kept in my mind since last week for me now to produce, among others, the word 'duck'. The word 'duck' itself, or any other symbol or representation, is useless for this purpose, since the word 'duck' is stored inside me somewhere, not for this unique last-week-pond occasion, but for any and every 'duck' need that arises. Something that is not words but unique to that occasion must come up inside me to determine the words I use.
(b) There must be something inside me other than words or symbols that makes me choose the particular word 'duck' rather than, say, 'wolf'. If thought depended on language, all thought would be random and arbitrary, because there would be nothing to decide in the first place the specific language to be used. What in fact triggers 'duck' is a mental picture of the unique occasion.[9] (I comment below on the nature of this mental picture.)

2. Language is a one-dimensional 'straight' line, one word after the other. Introspection tells us that thought is many-dimensional; moreover, in thinking, two or more things can be in the same place at the same time. It may be objected that what introspection suggests is an illusion; this cannot be so, even if for no other reason than that no straight-line thinking would be capable of organising the straight line of language in the way we want it.

3. Practically everybody must have had the experience of being aware of an object, an emotion, a concept, etc., without knowing any word for it.

4. No child can understand any language until she recognises inside herself the thing the language refers to. This is particularly obvious in the case of experiences, emotions, ideas that are wholly inside her, not outside her. When, for instance, she hears the words 'know', 'enjoy' or 'decide', she cannot understand them unless she is already

aware *in some other way* of the mental processes they stand for. This process is in fact what all understanding consists of, in children and adults alike. If we cannot convert a piece of language into something that is not language, we say 'I don't understand', even if individually the words are familiar to us.

But the best proof that thought is not language should be the simple awareness that it is not. I *know* that I do not think in language, and I know that a very large part of my thinking is in mental pictures. Pinker believes otherwise. He envisages representations worked on by processors, and sums up by saying: "This, in a nutshell, is the theory of thinking called 'the physical symbol system hypothesis' or the 'computational' or 'representational' theory of mind. It is as fundamental to cognitive science as the cell doctrine is to biology and plate tectonics is to geology. Cognitive psychologists and neuro-scientists are trying to figure out what kinds of representations and processors the brain has".[10]

I think this must be quite wrong. Symbols are in themselves nothing, useless. Symbols have no content, they are not processes. They are merely bridges between the realities – in the context of thought, bridges between your thoughts and my thoughts or vice-versa. I cannot produce the symbols that are 'the duck chased me round the pond' until I summon up a picture of that event in my mind, and equally I do not understand such symbols uttered by someone else until I use them to give me a picture in my mind. My 'thought' must be basically of the same kind as the original experience – even if there are obvious differences – just as a gramophone record is no good to me until it is turned back into sound. There can be no symbol until there is something we experience and are aware of to give a symbol to.

If you doubt this, think of tunes. Practically everyone can have tunes inside them. They are not symbols. They are the actual tunes themselves, but inside instead of outside. And if one can have tunes, sounds, inside one, there is no reason one cannot have pictures too.

It becomes even clearer that thinking has nothing to do with symbols if we consider an idea such as that expressed by 'If I stop running, the duck will catch me'. 'If', 'se', 'wenn', 'om', etc. (or any other sorts of 'representation') cannot in themselves be the thinking *process* of if-ing. The very fact that different languages have different symbols for the same thought should emphasise to us that that is all they are: symbols of, about, something else, the real thing, that exists only inside us and

is exclusively itself. If-ing does not replace anything and is not replaced by anything. If-ing itself is not, of course, a picture; it is something more mysterious and intangible. But it does, in my experience, operate on pictures. (I am not, though, arguing in favour of a distinction between the physical and the abstract.)

4

. If I am right that thought is in essence entirely independent of language, then it is basically an objective[11] awareness, not language, that determines our experience of reality. In practice, however, language corrupts the minds of practically everyone, and corrupts the minds of some people almost constantly. Words – meanings – do not accurately represent or describe things, substitute properly for them, although most people probably believe they do. If language truly reflected reality, which is ever-varied, there would be no limit to the number of words, and people would constantly have to make up new ones on the spur of the moment, which would clearly not work, because they would not understand each other. So pigeon-holing had to be invented instead, an artificial system of stylised symbols – mere tokens, references, associations – that falsify and deceive from the very first, by their very nature. They take on a life of their own, drive out and replace real life. They squeeze the whole world and human experience into a strait-jacket of inflexible, fossilised meanings.

I have explained at some length in *Antilinguistics* how I think language corrupts thought, how people tend to think in terms of words instead of real things and feelings. The literate and articulate are particularly prone to this, and they use words to quickly create myths which most of the rest of their communities accept without question, and which are then almost impossible to destroy: "The will of the people, the sanctity of life, great literature, human rights, equal opportunity, democratic values, law and order, mob rule, sexual equality, national liberation, the dignity of work, traditional values, bourgeois morality, class struggle, people's democracy". These are just a few of the thousands of combinations that millions of people take for granted and use to fool themselves and others about the nature of the world. Perhaps one or two are accepted even by some who call themselves anarchists. And I fear that very often when people reject such phrases as bogus, they do so every bit as much by a knee-jerk reaction as they do when they accept them. In neither case do they try to think, without language, about what is really happening to actual human beings beyond the words.

Very often people associate words even though they are not used together in fixed phrases. The association is no less rigid for that. 'Freedom' and 'democracy', for instance. How many people ever think of the reality beyond that robot-like reflex? And thoughtless combinations are joined in larger combinations: 'Name a feature of free government'; 'The people freely electing their own rulers'. Such a commonplace can only be happily trotted out by those who do not try to turn the words into something closer to reality.

Language corrupts in even more basic ways than this.[12] One result is that it gives birth to ideologies and their hatreds; it gives the ideologies names and so a permanent bogus 'reality', although they exist only in words in human minds. Language gives names and so permanence to the groups – tribal, political, national, philosophical – without which the hate and fanaticism could not commit its savageries. And the cruel absurdities that so often flow from religious belief would have been quite impossible without language.

Simple words like 'good' and 'bad' give humans something to rally round, to egg themselves on with, an excuse for intolerance, control of minds, war, torture, pride and arrogance. They use such words to reassure themselves. The tragic irony is that they would need no reassurance if the words had not been there in the first place to start anxieties and assertions.

In language humans have made themselves a tool, like the motor-car, but even more practical, even more seductive, and even more deadly.

5

The mystique of language has had power over humans for a long time. Language has given them literature and the 'art' of words. These are widely respected, and many believe literature is a better guide to reality than life itself. Vested interests make a vicious circle in defence of language. Even today the expression and dissemination of ideas is done almost entirely by professional writers (including politicians). Nearly all the rest, of course, is done through spoken language. Pride, the way (directly or indirectly) they make their living, and an entrenched attitude passed down through generations make it unlikely that many who write would agree with me in my criticism. Perhaps even the majority of those who read this journal – no strangers, surely, to rebellious thoughts – will automatically react unfavourably.

Now to this old veneration of language has been added the new form of admiration, the science – so-called – of linguistics. This may not

make all the old literature-lovers happy. But most people interested in intellectual matters seem pleased to be told by the experts that the medium they revel in is even more profound than they thought. Language is the foundation of our humanity.

Linguisticians thus do us, I believe, a disservice. They increase the emphasis and attention – worshipping attention – given to language. Chomskyan linguistics is among the most dangerous of all, because it claims to penetrate the innermost parts of our psychology, asserts that 'grammar' is the expression of our being.

Our attitude to language should be the opposite. We should regard it with constant distrust, be ever on the alert against its frauds. It is true that there are practically always writers who emphasise how dangerous language can be, who warn us about its abuses. But there seems to an almost universal view that language is intrinsically sound. If we can avoid abusing it, it will remain the greatest human asset. Western philosophy has been for the greater part about language. The 'linguistic philosophers' of this century appear to have recognised this, but instead of escaping from language they have tried to enslave us to it even more. Yet the defining of words (and almost any other analysis of language, for that matter) is merely words about words.

We are stuck with language, just as we are stuck with human disease – or, for now at least, the wickedness of governments. That is not a good reason for not trying to do something about it. We need constantly, both in our own language and in our assessment of the language of others, to try to get round beyond the words, to try to think wordlessly about what actually *happens*, and about what actual individuals feel, suffer and need. (It is worth noting, perhaps, that the worst offenders among the words we use are often nouns.)

And – though this may seem a contradiction – a helpful, if minor, confirmation of the essentially superficial nature of language can be found in learning foreign languages. Learning a foreign language well is one of the healthiest activities a human being can engage in. It gives a sense of achievement, a pride in mastery, yet involves no domination of others. It is wholly unauthoritarian. Foreign languages need not divide us; rather, they can teach us tolerance and sympathy. To study foreign languages should and can be to understand that while all humans share the same basic experience, the ways they express the details of that experience are fascinatingly varied. We can delight in the diversity of languages within a common humanity. To discover that other people have their own special way of expressing themselves and the world around them, just as we ourselves have, should not and

need not separate us; it should bring us together, diminish our arrogance. But to learn a truly felt sympathy of that kind, most people need to learn one or more foreign languages seriously. And they find then, too, that learning foreign languages can be one of the most outgoing hobbies in the world. Not only in the obvious sense; also because sharing enthusiasm and curiosity about the myriad peculiarities of the world's tongues is a joy open to practically all of us.

Even here, though, Chomskyan linguistics has had a bad influence. All over the world it has diverted a great deal of time and energy, and money too, away from the proper activities of departments of modern languages. It has drawn the attention of would-be language-learners, at least in further education, away from the things they really need to concentrate on if they want to learn a foreign language efficiently and quickly. They have been seduced by profound-sounding theories into neglecting words and idiomatic expressions, the essence of languages, in favour of abstractions of no practical value. It would probably be unfair to suggest that my experience is statistically representative, but I found it ironic when, many years ago, the foreign students of mine who tried to convert me to deep structure, transformations and universal grammar were mostly incapable of getting even fifty per cent of comparatively simple English sentences grammatically correct. They were too busy subjecting them to Chomskyan operations. In Sweden, certainly not known as backward in the matter of studying languages, two of the most experienced professors in the field, Johannes Hedberg and Gustav Korlén, have pointed out publicly on several occasions that there has been no progress in language teaching in their country since the late fifties.

6

It gives me no pleasure to attack what is half of Chomsky's life's work, even if I have enjoyed the intellectual challenge. I wish Chomsky was some other political academic, like Henry Kissinger. I could then have felt much less compunction about assaulting his theories. I find considerable irony in the progress of Noam Chomsky's life. The training in scholarship that he gained in his career as a linguistician did his linguistics no good at all. But it has served him wonderfully in searching out the evil deeds of governments. And, again ironically and by great good fortune, his linguistic work has made him famous, and the world should be grateful that his fame has helped him become such a formidable critic of those with power.

Chomsky strikes me as a person of great intellectual and social boldness and courage, the most important and perhaps rarest sort of courage. He could have sat back and basked in the admiration of academics and intellectuals. Instead he has faced abuse and contempt for his attack on the immorality of political and economic power throughout the world and his demand for decency. He is constantly mis-reported and misinterpreted. He is even accused of denying the Holocaust, although he has written of the killing of the Jews as "the most fantastic outburst of collective insanity in human history".[13] What Chomsky does do, though, in the face of malicious vilification, is defend the right of people to express views he himself despises. He is a worthy successor to Voltaire. An incident I find particularly moving can be seen in the Canadian-made film on Chomsky called *Manufacturing Consent* (1992). Robert Faurisson was convicted by a French court of the crime of arguing that the slaughter of the Jews never took place. Chomsky wrote in defence of Faurisson's right to free speech, and went to Paris to protest. He was abused and heckled both by the French press and in person. But, as Chomsky pointed out, there are only two positions you can take on free speech. You are either for it or you are against it.

I don't know if he gets tired as he goes on, year after year, defending the oppressed and gathering the information that condemns the leaders, the hierarchies, the corporations and the privileged. But he doesn't stop, and his dedication to this task arouses great emotion in me. I have seen criticism of him by some readers of *Freedom*; I think he could sometimes have adopted a better approach. But shouldn't the disagreements be seen as really only about tactics and emphasis?

Here I must come back to my frustration at the fate of my book *Antilinguistics*. Certainly it *is* a matter of personal pique. But I believe something far more important than my feelings is at issue. I anticipated the book's reception in the book itself. Apart from three reviewers, the very existence of the book was ignored by the academic world. The three linguistician critics ridiculed the book and declared I did not know what I was talking about. Because I was an amateur, not a trained professional academic, my views were not to be taken seriously. Within the academic fraternity it is perfectly acceptable, proper indeed, to attack colleagues' ideas. Chomsky must be as used to criticism of his linguistics as he is of his politics, although the tone is quite different. But if an outsider attacks a whole discipline, its practitioners of all schools close ranks and either pretend it hasn't happened or scornfully declare their opponent incompetent.

The contrast with the reaction to my book of people who are interested in language but not academics was revealing. In three reviews[14] it was written that my criticisms were 'very powerfully' or 'clearly' argued and needed to be answered. Yet neither then nor since have any of my critics or any other academics attempted to address any of my arguments. I publicly challenged two of them to public debate, but the response was – unsurprisingly – silence. (I do not name them, since my purpose is not a personal vendetta.)

I may have got it all wrong. But in that case I am no worse than probably the great majority of professional social 'scientists', since they disagree so much with each other, and only one school at the most can be correct. The behaviourist B.F. Skinner was heard and listened to, although clearly wrong, but he was an academic. Chomsky was heard and listened to – and answered – when he showed Skinner was wrong, but he was an academic as well. F.R.H. Englefield[15] wrote about language too, but he was not an academic; he was a schoolteacher, and he was very little heard, very little listened to, and practically not answered at all.

The trouble is that the thousands of people capable of making valuable contributions to human thinking on all imaginable topics are today intimidated and locked out by our intellectual bosses at the universities. It is only naive arrogant crazies like me who ever try, nearly always wholly unsuccessfully, to break their censorship. Englefield was a scholar.[16] I am not even that, partly from laziness, but also from principle. Academics have no right to ignore the opinions of people interested in their subject just because they do not have the time, or the opportunity, or the inclination, or the temperament to read all, or even large amounts of, the 'literature', or to enjoy the privileged life of those at the seats of learning.

Scholarship is the paid job of academics. Academics should be our intellectual servants, not our intellectual masters – honoured and valued servants, certainly, but the community's servants nevertheless. It is unwarranted to dismiss opinions because they are 'old' ones, suggested now only by ignoramuses unaware that they have been shown to be faulty long ago. Knowledge and argument are not the exclusive property of academia, from which the untrained are to be shut out. Any argued idea deserves the courtesy of an argued reply, together with any information the replier thinks relevant. Anybody who thinks that arguments do not need to be repeated and explained endlessly – even, and perhaps particularly, when they seem to be universally understood and accepted – is unjustifiably arrogant.

Noam Chomsky knows what it is like when people try to muzzle you. But I don't think he knows fully what it feels like when it seems impossible to get a hearing anywhere at all. I am not quite in this position either, because I am lucky enough to have a friend who is an unusual person and at the same time an unusual publisher. And I am lucky too because my particular political and social views give me access to publications such as this one or *Freedom*. But it is impossible, it seems, to get a reasoned answer. I should very much welcome a public declaration by Chomsky on this problem, even if any great influence he can have on it is limited, at any rate immediately, to the academic world.

7

Humans' attitude to language may in the end be the basic factor that decides their fate. But today and tomorrow the problems of economics and politics are of course far more important than those of linguistics. Thinking on economics is today almost certainly the single most important factor in deciding political attitudes all over the world. Thinking on economics, too, though, is effectively largely controlled by academic theorists. The academics may not actually control the world's money, but those who do are served by people who have come from the universities; and practically all the economists at the universities embrace one or other of the various schools of economic thought whose principles are applied in the world as it is today. Truly radical ideas on the subject can get virtually no hearing, let alone a response. What would happen, I wonder, if the great majority of academic economists declared that *all* the world's economic doctrines and systems are *unscientific*, irrational and absurd? Perhaps the worst and oldest problem that anarchists face is precisely that of making themselves heard, listened to, and answered. Chomsky has said something (again in *Manufacturing Consent*) that is relevant, and true in two senses. I hope it is not really a paradox that my heart goes out more than ever to Noam Chomsky as a fine, good and exceptional man at the moment I hear him say that he is not really important; it is 'ordinary' people who are important. How do we get our ideas across to millions of 'ordinary' people, how do we persuade them that it is they who are important, and how are they then to translate their impulse towards a more decent life into practical action?

Footnotes

1. I use this term for the academic analysers of language, although they themselves have usurped the name 'linguist', which used to mean somebody good at foreign languages.
2. *The Listener*, 30th March 1978, page 397.

3. S. Pinker, *The Language Instinct: the new science of language and mind* (London, 1994) page 43 and page 111.

4. See A. Gethin, *Antilinguistics: a critical assessment of modern linguistic theory and practice* (Oxford, 1990) for a discussion of this (pages 44-48), and other points in *Modern Linguistics: the results of Chomsky's revolution* by N. Smith and D. Wilson (Harmondsworth, 1979).

5. For instance, in *Reflections on Language* (Fontana/Collins, 1976) page 32: "the child unerringly makes use of the structure-dependent rule ..."

6. *The Language Instinct*, page 112.

7. *Cartesian Linguistics*, New York & London, 1966, pages 33-35.

8. A famous example of Chomsky's is what he says is the transformation of the two different 'deep' structures (or, as he prefers to call them nowadays, initial phrase markers) 'planes which are flying' and 'someone flies planes' into the same 'surface' structure 'Flying planes (can be dangerous)'.

9. I have dealt with Wittgenstein's and Descartes' objections to the idea of thought being mental pictures in *Antilinguistics*, pages 208-09.

10. *The Language Instinct*, pages 77-78.

11. All our experience is subjective, of course, in the sense that we can only experience what is in our nature to experience. We cannot have the same experience as fish.

12. *Antilinguistics*, pages 225-38. The fundamental corruption by language probably lies in single words, but individual words corrupt in various ways. Just one example: If we say 'a great man!', we have with that word 'great' immediately transformed the man out of all recognition; a whole new set of rules and evaluations are applied to him; he has become a man apart. Yet he has not really changed at all.

13. *American power and the New Mandarins* (London, 1969).

14. Silvia Edwards wrote one of them in the *Freedom* of 18th May 1991.

15. Ronald Englefield (1891-1975): *Language: its origin and its relation to thought* (London, 1977); *The Mind at Work and Play* (Buffalo, New York, 1985); *Critique of Pure Verbiage: essays on abuses of language in literary, religious, and philosophical writings* (La Salle, Illinois, 1990).

16. I had not heard of Englefield when I wrote *Antilinguistics*. It was only because of the kindness of G.A. Wells, who together with D.R. Oppenheimer arranged for the posthumous publication of some of his work, that I became familiar with Englefield's ideas. Wells came across *Antilinguistics* and made a gift to me of three of Englefield's books. But I think even if I had had them earlier I would not have read them before I wrote my own book. The best time to read other people's work is often after, not before, one has independently sorted out one's own ideas.

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