LANGUAGE ADJUSTMENT

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Deaberrating the Language

The subject of language adjustment is difficult at this stage of the development of the human race since one is talking, of course, in a language which is about as aberrative as one could possibly invent. There is a general law which could be advanced on the subject of language adjustment, and that is that language is aberrative in direct proportion to poor definition and homonymy.

Let's say that we call something a "wook," and something else a Cook," and something else a Cook." That would be homonymy. So that when we say "wook," we could mean any one of those three things and this could become very confusing. Somebody could run in and say, "I left it right on the Cook,"' and it could be here or it could be over there, or it could be on a "wook" outside.

The subject of definition should be very simple but in this society it is not. For instance, the political field is probably the most mixed up. Even a government bureau head could not dream up as bad a mess-up as this situation with regard to ideologies. We are dealing with definitions. Voltaire once said, "If you would argue with me, define your terms." One can go further than that and say, "If you would keep me sane, for heaven's sake define your terms!" because definition is extremely important.

People rant about communism; they go around talking about socialism, democracy, this and that, and every time we try to find out what one of these things is, we find out that it could probably be stated in a book of five million, eight hundred and sixty-five thousand words, the Srst eight or nine thousand words of which would have to do with explaining why there was no definition possible, with the remaining wordage explaining how that definition was modified. This would be a succinct statement of almost any ideology in the world today. Yet men are going out and getting shot over these things. Incredible, but true.

Definitions are extremely important in a language. The whole field of perceptics is included here. Take, for instance, the definition of color. A color definition of danger is red, this signifies blood. A person ought to worry when he sees himself bleeding. But it is not a very broad definition because, after all, you shoot game and game is very good to eat, and game bleeds red, yet that is pleasure!

Within any field of ideology, there are a number of good things. This is inevitable. Even a totalitarian state, even a welfare state, even a corn and games state, even a Truman administration has something good in it. And mainly what is bad about these things is that nobody has stated a definition of what is happening.

So there is definition on a broad scale, and one can see the resultant aberration. Bad definition practically all by itself is responsible for the possible precipitation of an international conflagration.

Men gyrate around engineering, many times out of a complete impatience for the lack of definition which used to exist in the fields of the humanities. They want definitions. When somebody says "work," they want foot-pounds sensed, measured or experienced, which would make up a definition. They shudder away from a lack of exactness.

The military man who has spent the better part of his life in a military service comes out into civil life and is appalled at the apparent looseness of organization, since he has lived along the lines of very precise definition of function.

We find in civil life that a lawyer is very often doing a lot of accounting when he isn't buying something for somebody, and these functions become mixed up. So we could never say the word lawyer and then be sure that we know exactly what this person is going to do, because there is the corporation lawyer and the criminal lawyer and so forth.

The way one would straighten out language would be to redefine all the terms in it. But it isn't good enough just to redefine all the terms; one would have to make each term possess a precise meaning. One would probably swell up the English vocabulary to a couple of hundred thousand words in doing so, and the individual wouldn't be able to converse at all unless he had a vocabulary of fifty or sixty thousand words. For a human mind to hold fifty or sixty thousand precisely defined words is no great problem; it is merely a problem of education.

The adjustment of language, then, would be the adjustment of terms. But before we could do this we would have to have a precision knowledge of the humanities. Sloppy definition today exists because a sloppy knowledge of the humanities is in existence. A person cannot define things precisely if he has no precise definitions. We are in a better position, we can define most of the humanities with some precision and accuracy. This makes language adjustment possible from that quarter. It has not been possible in the past.

Furthermore, they didn't know what the aberrative phrases and actions of language were with any great precision, so they couldn't, of course, remove those aberrative things. The adjustment of language would mean the deaberrating of it.

Where we have definition of terms, we must also have definition of things, including human beings which happen to be one of the things that have to be redefined under language adjustment.

The big aberrator in the English language right now is the failure to define the individual precisely. If one adjusted language just to this degree, he would have a successful action. You would probably snuff 80 to 90 percent of the aberration out of the language just by doing the one action of knocking out all pronouns, so that every human being had a precision definition which made them an easily identifiable entity.

The most flagrant violation of this is, of course, naming people Junior. That is a little off to the side, but it is an example of how criminal can you get. It would seem to me that any race that knew anything at all would know better than to name somebody somebody else. That is a surrender to the thirst for immortality by progeny carried to an incredible extent and is very harmful. People could have observed this without even knowing about engrams. It is easy to observe, but it was just one of those data that was floating around and nobody paid much attention to it. There must have been a very lackadaisical atmosphere around this whole problem otherwise somebody would have gotten up and done something about it.

Take these beautiful pronouns like I, you, we, they, him, her. Where could you find a higher generality than in a word like I or you? They are a class of words which permit the widest possible misdefinition. They're homonyms. For instance, one can say "I," "I," "I," "I," "I"; only each "I" is a different entity. So, we have the problem of using the word I all by itself referring to oneself.

It is possible to lay down a blanket aberration in a society which says "Don't use this word I so much. It's bad." However, this negates people.

We have then the situation in an engram bank whereby the person can take up practically all of the valences present and apply them to himself, and where comments of engrams ad infinitum can be applied to anyone with whom a person is associated.

This is a gunshot type of language organization second only to the aberrative characteristics in the Japanese language. Japanese knocks the pronouns out, it defines so poorly and it has so

many homonyms that when two Japanese meet and start discussing some subject, they very often have to take a pencil out of the pocket and make a notation on a little slip of paper and show it to the other one to get across the meaning! It has to do with the inflection in the speech. It has to do with the raise of the eyebrows or whether or not one is frowning at the moment. It has to do with all of these things, and that's part of the communication.

An engram doesn't define in tones. Somebody can say in a ridiculous tone of voice, "Oh, that feels so bad," meaning it feels wonderful, but in the engram it says flatly, "That feels so bad." Engrams are tone-deaf. As a result, the inflections never carry the meanings. Furthermore, the expressions on the faces of the people uttering the speech are not recorded in prenatal engrams. The words and phrases which lie in these engrams are very unselective.

Now, if we have in existence in our language and in our culture mechanisms which are superunselective, such as I, you, him, her, we are just asking for it. We can get a country so crazy that it will commit suicide. Japan tried. Japan didn't really have any idea she was going to be able to whip the United States. All of her attacks were on a we-know-we're-going-to-fail basis. There was no follow-up on Pearl Harbor, simply a "We're just going to fight to the death. We know we're going to lose anyhow." There was terrific verve in the process of committing hara-kiri, characteristic of that war. It was gruesome, with valiant charges and attacks and plans and so forth, but the overall strategy of the whole thing spelt failure; yet in failing, they were willing to die to a man.

The Japanese are very nice people. I have a lot of respect for them. I spoke Japanese when I was a kid so I know what I'm talking about. But when it comes down to aberrative language, I look at that language and I look at other languages, and I find that English is not the most aberrative by a long way, but it is a long way from the bottom of the list as far as being the least aberrative is concerned.

It is tough because one would have to take pronouns in this fashion. This is a suggested line-up which is very crude, but it will have to be done sooner or later, and it will be done more or less like this. Let's just say one's name is George. George could say, "George, Georgee," which would mean "I am George and I am speaking"; and then he could say the other person's name when he said "You." And you could alter these names just a shade, somewhere in the midst of them, which would indicate whether or not it was subject or object, or whether or not it was possessive.

The biggest job, from the standpoint of a compiler, would be to originate an entirely new language. It would probably be much easier to reform and modify the language in front of you than it would be to invent a new language. However, the target would be the redefinition of individuals by name in such a way as to make the language smooth to speak without stopping it too much, and make it very precisely definitive of everything of which one spoke. That was the mission of General Semantics.

Children start to lose their own identity, little by little, as more and more engrams get restimulated by life, until finally by the time a person has gotten up into adulthood he has lost about 90 percent of his own identity. Then he runs into a sheep psychology from the hands of a welfare state and there goes the remaining part of it. Then when he has lost all of his own identity, believe me, he's dead.

The reason children are more acute and alive to life is a very simple problem in valences.

When we have looked over the field of language adjustment, we find out that it would not be a very tough job because you could throw in behind it the fact that a person is not quite nice who uses this aberrative language, on the order of "Do you want to drive me crazy?" A person would have the feeling toward somebody using it of "He's not well educated, you know," only it would not be "He's not well educated, you know," it would be "Bill not educated, Joe knows." It would cause people to be far more alert as to who was talking about what. You would really have to track a conversation. And that beautiful, horrible, sweeping

"they" that people use, the mysterious "they" that gets blamed for everything, would no longer exist.

The written part of language adjustment is a much simpler affair. A Stenotype tape, for instance, is a lot better than anything we have in our printed books, as far as a written language is concerned, because it is very condensed material. We have got all the symbols, there is no doubt as to the definitions, there is nothing left to be understood and the whole thing can be hung together very swiftly.

Or, there could be something like Speedwriting where you just condense two or three letters and they represent a big polysyllabic word. Words are symbols anyway, and English as it exists today is the most incredibly spelled language a foreigner ever met. So there is where we could just take the whole applecart and dump it. Going down to Speedwriting, however, doesn't completely dump it because it uses the same letters and sounds. Written language would gradually contract. A person would still be able to trace, fairly well, what he was reading, but people would have to be taught.

If you started teaching children in school, you would have a new written language in another 10 to 12 years in very broad use and it would be very economically sound in the society to do this.

Written words are normally not as aberrative as spoken words because there are perceptics missing. When a person is listening to words, he sees a picture and he hears simultaneously; but when he is reading a word, he is merely seeing it, so it isn't recorded over in the sonic bank.

A language adjustment program has already been initiated, and when we get some slack time we can pay a little more attention to that program. It is actually a section of Preventive Dianetics. No amount of care around operations or around pregnant mothers would assist to the degree that deaberrating English would. Both would have to be used of course, because words are still going to get into engrams, no matter how careful people are.

The matter of putting cancelers into babies has been brought up several times, but I have never found an engramic phrase that was a real assisted Once in a while you will find a phrase which says "Let's go back over that again" in some prenatal engram, and the person will get up to that phrase and run it again and again and again. That is an auditor assist but not a very good one. All the rest of them are auditor liabilities. So, the installation of these cancelers prenatally would not be very good.

All we can do is to avoid forming engrams and deaberrate the language that goes into them, and then, for the benefit of a sane social order, define everything in it well enough so that nothing is left hanging.

I can guarantee that where you have a violent argument, if that argument were dissected, you would find out that it was being waged on a subject where one person understood that the subject was one thing and the other person understood something else, but neither one of them had precisely defined his terms. And so, Voltaire was quite right.