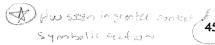# Terministic Screens

I

Directing the Attention

We might begin by stressing the distinction between a "scientistic" and a "dramatistic" approach to the nature of language. A "scientistic" approach begins with questions of *naming*, or *definition*. Or the power of language to define and describe may be viewed as derivative; and its essential function may be treated as attitudinal or hortatory: attitudinal as with expressions of complaint, fear, gratitude, and such; hortatory as with commands or requests, or, in general, an instrument developed through its use in the social processes of cooperation and competition. I say "developed"; I do *not* say "originating." The ultimate *origins* of language seem to me as mysterious as the origins of the universe itself. One must view it, I feel, simply as the "given." But once an animal comes into being that does happen to have this particular aptitude, the various tribal idioms are unquestionably *developed* by their use as instruments in the tribe's way of living (the practical role of symbolism in what the anthropologist, Malinowski, has called "context of situation"). Such considerations are involved in what I mean by the "dramatistic," stressing language as an aspect of "action," that is, as "symbolic action."

The two approaches, the "scientistic" and the "dramatistic" (language as definition, and language as act) are by no means mutually exclusive. Since both approaches have their proper uses, the distinction is not being introduced invidiously. Definition itself is a symbolic act, just as my proposing of this very distinction is a symbolic act. But though at this moment of beginning, the overlap is considerable, later the two roads diverge considerably, and direct our attention to quite different kinds of observation. The quickest way to indicate the differences of direction might be by this formula: The "scientistic" approach builds the edifice of language with primary stress upon a proposition such as "It *is*, or it *is not*." The "dramatistic" approach puts the primary stress upon such hortatory expressions as "thou *shalt*, or thou *shalt not*." And at the other extreme the distinction be-

comes quite obvious, since the scientistic approach culminates in the kinds of speculation we associate with symbolic logic, while the dramatistic culminates in the kinds of speculation that find their handiest material in stories, plays, poems, the rhetoric of oratory and advertising, mythologies, theologies, and philosophies after the classic model.

The dramatistic view of language, in terms of "symbolic action," is exercised about the necessarily *suasive* nature of even the most unemotional scientific nomenclatures. And we shall proceed along those lines; thus:

Even if any given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality.

In his seventh *Provincial Letter*, Pascal satirizes a device which the Jesuits of his day called "directing the intention." For instance, to illustrate satirically how one should "direct the intention," he used a burlesque example of this sort: Dueling was forbidden by the Church. Yet it was still a prevalent practice. Pascal satirically demonstrated how, by "directing the intention," one could both take part in a duel and not violate the Church injunctions against it. Thus, instead of intentionally going to take part in a duel, the duelists would merely go for a walk to the place where the duel was to be held. And they would carry guns merely as a precautionary means of self-protection in case they happened to meet an armed enemy. By so "directing the intention," they could have their duel without having transgressed the Church's thou-shalt-not's against dueling. For it was perfectly proper to go for a walk; and in case one encountered an enemy bent on murder, it was perfectly proper to protect oneself by shooting in self-defense.

I bring up this satirically excessive account of directing the *intention*, in the hopes that I can thereby settle for less when discussing the ways in which "terministic screens" direct the *attention*. Here the kind of deflection I have in mind concerns simply the fact that any nomenclature necessarily directs the attention into some channels rather than others. In one sense, this likelihood is painfully obvious. A textbook on physics, for instance, turns the *attention* in a different direction from a textbook on law or psychology. But some implications of this terministic incentive are not so obvious.

When I speak of "terministic screens," I have particularly in mind some photographs I once saw. They were *different* photographs of the *same* objects, the difference being that they were made with different color filters. Here something so "factual" as a photograph revealed notable distinctions in texture, and even in form, depending upon which color filter was used for the documentary description of the event being recorded.

Similarly, a man has a dream. He reports his dream to a Freudian analyst, or a Jungian, or an Adlerian, or to a practitioner of some other

Terms →

school. In each case, we might say, the "same" dream will be subjected to a different color filter, with corresponding differences in the nature of the event as perceived, recorded, and interpreted. (It is a commonplace that patients soon learn to have the kind of dreams best suited to the terms favored by their analysts.)

II

Observations Implicit in Terms

We have now moved things one step further along. Not only does the nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations, in the sense that the terms direct the *attention* to one field rather than to another. Also, *many of the "observations" are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made*. In brief, much that we take as observations about "reality" may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms.

Perhaps the simplest illustration of this point is to be got by contrasting secular and theological terminologies of motives. If you want to operate, like a theologian, with a terminology that includes "God" as its key term, the only sure way to do so is to put in the term, and that's that. The Bible solves the problem by putting "God" into the first sentence—and from this initial move, many implications "necessarily" follow. A naturalistic, Darwinian terminology flatly omits the term, with a corresponding set of implications— and that's that. I have called metaphysics "coy theology" because the metaphysician often introduces the term "God" not outright, as with the Bible, but by beginning with a term that *ambiguously* contains such implications; then he gradually makes these implications explicit. If the term is not introduced thus ambiguously, it can be introduced only by fiat, either outright at the beginning (like the Bible) or as a *non sequitur* (a break in the argument somewhere along the way). In Platonic dialogues, myth sometimes serves this purpose of a leap en route, a step prepared for by the fact that, in the Platonic dialectic, the methodic progress towards *higher levels of generalization* was in itself thought of as progress towards *the divine*.

But such a terministic situation is not by any means confined to matters of theology or metaphysics. As Jeremy Bentham aptly pointed out, all terms for mental states, sociopolitical relationships, and the like are necessarily "fictions," in the sense that we must express such concepts by the use of terms borrowed from the realm of the physical. Thus, what Emerson said in the accents of transcendental enthusiasm, Bentham said in the accents of "tough-mindedness." In Emerson's "tender-minded" scheme, "nature" exists to provide us with terms for the physical realm that are transferable to the moral realm, as the sight of a straight line gives us our word for "right," and of a crooked or twisted line our word for "wrong"; or as we derived our word

for "spirit" from a word for "breath," or as "superciliousness" means literally a raising of the eyebrow. But Bentham would state the same relationship "tough-mindedly" by noting that our words for "right," "wrong," "spirit," etc. are "fictions" carried over from their strictly literal use in the realm of physical sensation. Bentham does not hope that such "fictions" can be avoided. He but asks that we recognize their nature as fictions. So he worked out a technique for helping to disclose the imagery in such ideas, and to discount accordingly. (See C. K. Ogden's book, *Bentham's Theory of Fictions*.)

But though this situation is by no means confined to the terminologies of theology and metaphysics, or even to such sciences as psychology (with terms for the out-going as vs. the in-turning, for dispositions, tendencies, drives, for the workings of the "it" in the Unconscious, and so on), by its very thoroughness theology does have a formula that we can adapt, for purely secular purposes of analysis. I have in mind the injunction, at once pious and methodological, "Believe, that you may understand (*crede, ut intelligas*)." In its theological application, this formula served to define the relation between faith and reason. That is, if one begins with "faith," which must be taken on authority, one can work out a rationale based on this faith. But the faith must "precede" the rationale. (We here impinge upon considerations of logical and temporal priority that were approached from another angle in the previous chapter.)

In my book, *The Rhetoric of Religion*, I have proposed that the word "logology" might be applied in a special way to this issue. By "logology," as so conceived, I would mean the systematic study of theological terms, not from the standpoint of their truth or falsity as statements about the supernatural, but purely for the light they might throw upon the *forms* of language. That is, the tactics involved in the theologian's "words about God" might be studied as "words about words" (by using as a methodological bridge the opening sentence in the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God").

"Logology" would be a purely empirical study of symbolic action. Not being a theologian, I would have no grounds to discuss the truth or falsity of theological doctrines as such. But I do feel entitled to discuss them with regard to their nature merely as language. And it is my claim that the injunction, "Believe, that you may understand," has a fundamental application to the purely secular problem of "terministic screens."

The "logological," or "terministic" counterpart of "Believe" in the formula would be: *Pick some particular nomenclature, some one terministic screen.* And for "That you may understand," the counterpart would be: *"That you may proceed to track down the kinds of observation implicit in the terminology you have chosen, whether your choice of terms was deliberate or spontaneous."*

III

Examples

I can best state the case by giving some illustrations. But first let me ask you to reconsider a passage from Chapter One which presents the matter in the most general sense:[1]

> . . . can we bring ourselves to realize just how overwhelmingly much of what we mean by "reality" has been built up for us through nothing but our symbol systems? Take away our books, and what little do we know about history, biography, even something so "down to earth" as the relative position of seas and continents? What is our "reality" for today (beyond the paper-thin line of our own particular lives) but all this clutter of symbols about the past, combined with whatever things we know mainly through maps, magazines, newspapers, and the like about the present? In school, as they go from class to class, students turn from one idiom to another. The various courses in the curriculum are in effect but so many different terminologies. And however important to us is the tiny sliver of reality each of us has experienced firsthand, the whole overall "picture" is but a construct of our symbol systems. To meditate on this fact until one sees its full implications is much like peering over the edge of things into an ultimate abyss. And doubtless that's one reason why, though man is typically the symbol-using animal, he clings to a kind of naïve verbal realism that refuses to let him realize the full extent of the role played by symbolicity in his notions of reality.

I hope the passage can serve at least somewhat to suggest how fantastically much of our "Reality" could not exist for us, were it not for our profound and inveterate involvement in symbol systems. Our presence in a room is immediate, but the room's relation to our country as a nation, and beyond is immediate, but the room's relation to our country as a nation, and beyond to international relations and cosmic relations, dissolves into a web of ideas and images that reach through our senses only insofar as the symbol systems that report on them are heard or seen. To mistake this vast tangle of ideas for immediate experience is much more fallacious than to accept a dream as an immediate experience. For a dream really is an immediate experience, but the information that we receive about today's events throughout the world most decidedly is *not*.

But let us consider some examples of terministic screens, in a more specific sense. The child psychologist, John Bowlby, writes a subtle and perceptive paper on "The Nature of the Child's Ties to Its Mother." He observes what he calls "five instinctual responses" of infants, which he lists as: crying, smiling, sucking, clinging, following. Surely no one would deny that

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[1] See p. 5.

such responses are there to see. But at the same time, we might recall the observations of the behaviorist, John B. Watson. He, too, found things that were there to see. For instance, by careful scientific study, he discovered sure ways to make babies cry in fright or shriek with rage.

In contrast with Watson's terminology of observation regarding the nature of infantile reflexes, note that Bowlby adopted a much more *social* point of view. His terms were explicitly designed to study infantile responses that involved the mother in a reciprocal relationship to the child.

At the time I read Bowlby's paper, I happened to be doing a monograph on "Verbal Action in St. Augustine's *Confessions*." I was struck by the fact that Augustine's terms for the behavior of infants closely paralleled Bowlby's. Three were definitely the same: crying, smiling, sucking. Although he doesn't mention clinging as a particularly notable term with regard to infancy, as the result of Bowlby's list I noticed, as I might otherwise not have, that he frequently used the corresponding Latin term (*inhaerere*) regarding his attachment to the Lord. "Following" was not explicitly worked out, as an infantile response, though Augustine does refer to God as his leader. And I began wondering what might be done with Spinoza's *Ethics* in this connection, whether his persistent concern with what necessarily "follows" what in Nature could have been in part a metaphysician's transformation of a personal motive strong in childhood. Be that as it may, I was struck by the fact that Augustine made one strategically important addition to Bowlby's list: rest. Once you mention it, you realize that it is very definitely an instinctual response of the sort that Bowlby was concerned with, since it involves a social relation between mother and child. In Augustine's scheme, of course, it also allowed for a transformation from resting as an infant to hopes of ultimately "resting in God."

Our point is: All three terminologies (Watson's, Bowlby's, Augustine's) directed the attention differently, and thus led to a correspondingly different quality of observations. In brief, "behavior" isn't something that you need but observe; even something so "objectively there" as behavior must be observed through one or another kind of *terministic screen*, that directs the attention in keeping with its nature.

Basically, there are two kinds of terms: terms that put things together, and terms that take things apart. Otherwise put, A can feel himself identified with B, or he can think of himself as disassociated from B. Carried into mathematics, some systems stress the principle of continuity, some the principle of discontinuity, or particles. And since all laboratory instruments of measurement and observation are devices invented by the symbol-using animal, they too necessarily give interpretations in terms of either continuity or discontinuity. Hence, physicists forever keep finding that some sub-sub-sub-sub-aspect of nature can be again subdivided; whereupon it's only a question of time until they discover that some new cut merges moments previously considered distinct—and so on. Knowing nothing much about physics ex-

cept the terministic fact that any observation of a physicist must necessarily be stated within the resources and embarrassments of man-made terminologies, I would still dare risk the proposition that Socrates' basic point about dialectic will continue to prevail; namely, there is composition, and there is division.

Often this shows up as a distinction between terministic screens positing differences of *degree* and those based on differences of *kind*. For instance, Darwin sees only a difference of degree between man and other animals. But the theologian sees a difference in kind. That is, where Darwin views man as *continuous* with other animals, the theologian would stress the principle of *discontinuity* in this regard. But the theologian's screen also posits a certain kind of *continuity* between man and God that is not ascribed to the relation between God and other animals.

The logological screen finds itself in a peculiar position here. It holds that, even on the purely secular level, Darwin overstated his case. And as a consequence, in his stress upon the principle of *continuity* between man and the other animals, he unduly slighted the evidence for *discontinuity* here. For he assumed that the principle of discontinuity between man and other animals was necessarily identical with a theological view of man.

Such need not be the case at all. Darwin says astonishingly little about man's special aptitudes as a symbol-user. His terministic screen so stressed the principle of continuity here that he could view the principle of discontinuity only as a case of human self-flattery. Yet, logology would point out: We can distinguish man from other animals without necessarily being overhaughty. For what other animals have yellow journalism, corrupt politics, pornography, stock market manipulators, plans for waging thermonuclear, chemical, and bacteriological war? I think we can consider ourselves different in kind from the other animals, without necessarily being overproud of our distinction. We don't need theology, but merely the evidence of our characteristic sociopolitical disorders, to make it apparent that man, the typically symbol-using animal, is alas! something special.

IV

Further Examples

Where are we, then?

We *must* use terministic screens, since we can't say anything without the use of terms; whatever terms we use, they necessarily constitute a corresponding kind of screen; and any such screen necessarily directs the attention to one field rather than another. Within that field there can be different screens, each with its ways of directing the attention and shaping the range of observations implicit in the given terminology. All terminologies must implicitly or explicitly embody choices between the principle of continuity and the principle of discontinuity.

Two other variants of this point about continuity and discontinuity should be mentioned. First, note how it operates in political affairs: During a national election, the situation places great stress upon a *division* between the citizens. But often such divisiveness (or discontinuity) can be healed when the warring factions join in a common cause against an alien enemy (the division elsewhere thus serving to reestablish the principle of continuity at home). It should be apparent how either situation sets up the conditions for its particular kind of scapegoat, as a device that unifies all those who share the same enemy.

For a subtler variant (and here I am somewhat anticipating the specific subject matter of the next chapter) we might cite an observation by D. W. Harding, printed in *Metaphor and Symbol*, a collection of essays by various writers on literary and psychological symbolism. The author concedes that the Freudian terminology is highly serviceable in calling attention to ideas that are not given full conscious recognition because they are *repressed*. But he asks: Why can there not also be ideas that are unclear simply because we have not yet become familiar enough with a situation to take them adequately into account? Thus, when we see an object at a distance, we do not ordinarily "repress" the knowledge of its identity. We don't recognize it simply because we must come closer, or use an instrument, before we can see it clearly enough to know precisely what it is. Would not a terminology that features the unconscious *repression* of ideas automatically deflect our attention from symbols that are not *repressed* but merely *remote*? (At this point, of course, a Jungian terministic screen would ascribe the remoteness of many dream-symbols to their misty survival from an earlier stage in man's development—a terministic device that I have called the "temporizing of essence," since the nature of conditions *now* is stated quasi-narratively in terms of *temporal priority*, a vestigial derivation from "prehistory.")

One more point will end this part of our discussion. Recently I read a paper in which one sociologist accused other sociologists of "oversocializing" their terms for the discussion of human motives. (The article, "The Oversocialized Conception of Man in Modern Sociology," by Dennis H. Wrong, appears in the April 1961 issue of the *American Sociological Review*.)

This controversy brings us to a variant of the terministic situation I discussed in distinguishing between terms for Poetics in particular and terms for Language in General. But the author's thesis really has a much wider application than he claims for it. To the extent that all scientific terminologies, by their very role in specialized disciplines, are designed to focus attention upon one or another particular field of observation, would it not be technically impossible for any such specialized terminology to supply an adequate definition for the discussion of *man in general*? Each might serve to throw light upon one or another aspect of human motives. But the definition of man in general would be formally possible only to a *philosophic*

terminology of motives (insofar as philosophy is the proper field for thoughts on man in general). Any definition of man in terms of specialized scientific nomenclatures would necessarily be "over-socialized," or "over-biologized," or "over-psychologized," or "over-physicized," or "over-poetized," and so on, depending upon which specialized terministic screen was being stretched to cover not just its own special field but a more comprehensive area. Or, if we try to correct the excesses of *one terminology*, by borrowing from several, what strictly *scientific* canon (in the modern sense of scientific specialization) could we adduce as sanction? Would not such an eclectic recipe itself involve a generalized philosophy of some sort?

V

Our Attempt to Avoid Mere Relativism

And now where are we? Must we merely resign ourselves to an endless catalogue of terministic screens, each of which can be valued for the light it throws upon the human animal, yet none of which can be considered central? In one sense, yes. For, strictly speaking, there will be as many different world views in human history as there are people. (*Tot homines, tot sententiae.*) We can safely take it for granted that no one's "personal equations" are quite identical with anyone else's. In the unwritten cosmic constitution that lies behind all man-made Constitutions, it is decreed by the nature of things that each man is "necessarily free" to be his own tyrant, inexorably imposing upon himself the peculiar combination of insights associated with his peculiar combination of experiences.

At the other extreme, each of us shares with all other members of our kind (the often-inhuman human species) the fatal fact that, however the situation came to be, all members of our species conceive of reality somewhat roundabout, through various *media* of symbolism. Any such medium will be, as you prefer, either a way of "dividing" us from the "immediate" (thereby setting up a kind of "alienation" at the very start of our emergence from infancy into that state of articulacy somewhat misleadingly called the "age of reason"); or it can be viewed as a paradoxical way of "uniting" us with things on a "higher level of awareness," or some such. (Here again, we encounter our principles of continuity and discontinuity.)

Whether such proneness to symbolic activity be viewed as a privilege or a calamity (or as something of both), it is a distinguishing characteristic of the human animal in general. Hence it can properly serve as the basis of a general, or philosophic definition of this animal. From this terministic beginning, this intuitive grounding of a position, many observations "necessarily follow." But are we not here "necessarily" caught in our own net? Must we not concede that a screen built on this basis is just one more screen;

and that it can at best be permitted to take its place along with all the others? Can we claim for it special favors?

If I, or any one person, or even one particular philosophic school, had invented it, such doubts would be quite justified. But if we pause to look at it quizzically, I think we shall see that it is grounded in a kind of "collective revelation," from away back. This "collective revelation" involves the pragmatic recognition of a distinction between persons and things. I say "pragmatic" recognition, because often the distinction has not been *formally* recognized. And all the more so because, if an object is closely associated with some person whom we know intimately, it can readily become infused with the identity of that person.

Reverting now to our original term, "dramatistic," I would offer this basic proposition for your consideration: Despite the evidences of primitive animism (that endows many sheer things with "souls") and the opposite modes of contemporary behaviorism (designed to study people as mere things), we do make a pragmatic distinction between the "actions" of "persons" and the sheer "motions" of "things." The slashing of the waves against the beach, or the endless cycle of births and deaths in biologic organisms would be examples of sheer motion. Yet we, the typically symbol-using animal, cannot relate to one another sheerly as things in motion. Even the behaviorist, who studies man in terms of his laboratory experiments, must treat his colleagues as *persons*, rather than purely and simply as automata responding to stimuli.

I should make it clear: I am not pronouncing on the metaphysics of this controversy. Maybe we are but things in motion. I don't have to haggle about that possibility. I need but point out that, whether or not we are just things in motion, we think of one another (and especially of those with whom we are intimate) as *persons*. And the difference between a thing and a person is that the one merely *moves* whereas the other *acts*. For the sake of the argument, I'm even willing to grant that the distinction between *things moving* and *persons acting* is but an illusion. All I would claim is that, illusion or not, the human race cannot possibly get along with itself on the basis of any other intuition. The human animal, as we know it, *emerges into personality* by first mastering whatever tribal speech happens to be its particular symbolic environment.

We could not here list even summarily the main aspects of the Dramatistic screen without launching into a whole new project. For present purposes, I must only say enough to indicate my grounds for contending that a Dramatistic screen does possess the philosophic character adapted to the discussion of man in general, as distinct from the kinds of insight afforded by the application of special scientific terminologies.

In behalf of my claim that the "dramatistic screen" is sanctioned by

a "collective revelation" of long standing, suffice it to recall such key terms as *tao, karma, dike, energeia, hodos, actus*—all of them words for *action* (to which we might well add *Islam*, as the name for a submissive *attitude* with its obviously active possibilities). The Bible starts with God's act, by creative fiat. Contemporary sociological theories of "role-taking" fit into the same general scheme. Terms like "transactions," "exchange," "competition," "cooperation," are but more specific terms for "action." And there are countless words for specific acts: give, take, run, think, etc. The contemporary concern with "game theories" is obviously a subdivision of the same term. Add the gloomy thought that such speculative playfulness now is usually concerned with "war games." But in any case, the concept of such games must involve, in however fragmentary a fashion, the picture of persons acting under stress. And even when the "game" hypothetically reduces most of the players to terms of mere pawns, we can feel sure in advance that, if the "game" does not make proper allowance for the "human equation," the conclusions when tested will prove wrong.

But the thought should admonish us. Often it is true that people can be feasibly reduced to terms of sheer motion. About fifty years ago, I was suddenly *startled* into thinking when (encountering experience purely "symbolwise," purely via the news) I read of the first German attacks against a Belgian fortress in World War I. The point was simply this: The approach to the fortress was known to be mined. And the mines had to be exploded. So wave after wave of human flesh was sent forward, as conditioned cattle, to get blown up, until all the mines had been touched off. Then the next wave, or the next two or three waves thereafter, could take the fort. Granted, that comes pretty close to sheer motion, doubtless conceived in the best war-game tradition.

Basically, the Dramatistic screen involves a methodic tracking down of the implications in the idea of symbolic action, and of man as the kind of being that is particularly distinguished by an aptitude for such action. To quote from Webster's *Third New International Dictionary*, which has officially recognized "Dramatism" in my sense of the term, as treated schematically in my *Grammar of Motives*, it is "A technique of analysis of language and thought as basically modes of action rather than as means of conveying information." I would but note that such an "Ism" can also function as a philosophy of human relations. The main consideration to keep in mind, for present purposes, is that two quite different but equally justifiable positions are implicit in this approach to specifically human motivation.

There is a gloomy route, of this sort: If *action* is to be our key term, then *drama*; for drama is the culminative form of action (this is a variant of the "perfection" principle discussed in the previous chapter). But if

drama, then *conflict*. And if *conflict*, then *victimage*. Dramatism is always on the edge of this vexing problem, that comes to a culmination in tragedy, the song of the scapegoat.

There is also a happy route, along the lines of a Platonic dialectic. For the present, I would close on some lines that proclaim this happier route, in a style that, I must admit, states the *problem* in the accents of an *ideal solution*.

This "idealization" ends on two weighty words. One, "synecdoche," is used in the sense of "part for the whole." The other, "tautology," refers to the fact that, insofar as an entire structure is infused by a single generating principle, this principle will be tautologically or repetitively implicit in all the parts. The lines are meant to suggest that, insofar as man is the symbol-using animal, his world is necessarily inspirited with the quality of the Symbol, the Word, the Logos, through which he conceives it. (The lines are from my volume of poems, *Book of Moments*.)

Dialectician's Hymn

Hail to Thee, Logos,
Thou Vast Almighty Title,
In Whose name we conjure—
Our acts the partial representatives
Of Thy whole act.

May we be Thy delegates
In parliament assembled,
Parts of Thy wholeness.
And in our conflicts
Correcting one another.
By study of our errors
Gaining Revelation.

May we give true voice
To the statements of Thy creatures.
May our spoken words speak for them,
With accuracy,
That we know precisely their rejoinders
To our utterances,
And so may correct our utterances
In the light of those rejoinders.

Thus may we help Thine objects
To say their say—
Not suppressing by dictatorial lie,
Not giving false reports
That misrepresent their saying.

If the soil is carried off by flood,
May we help the soil to say so.
If our ways of living
Violate the needs of nerve and muscle,
May we find speech for nerve and muscle,
To frame objections
Whereat we, listening,
Can remake our habits.
May we not bear false witness to ourselves
About our neighbors,
Prophesying falsely
Why they did as they did.

May we compete with one another,
To speak for Thy Creation with more justice—
Cooperating in this competition
Until our naming
Gives voice correctly,
And how things are
And how we say things are
Are one.

Let the Word be dialectic with the Way—
Whichever the print
The other the imprint.

Above the single speeches
Of things,
Of animals,
Of people
Erecting a speech-of-speeches—
And above this
A Speech-of-speech-of-speeches,
And so on,
Comprehensively,
Until all is headed
In Thy Vast Almighty Title,
Containing implicitly
What in Thy work is drawn out explicitly—
In its plentitude.

And may we have neither the mania of the One
Nor the delirium of the Many—
But both the Union and the Diversity—
The Title and the manifold details that arise
As that Title is restated
In the narrative of History.

Not forgetting that the Title represents the story's Sequence,
And that the Sequence represents the Power entitled.

For us
Thy name a Great Synecdoche
Thy works a Grand Tautology.

Comments

As regards philosophic formulas defining the nature of man in general, poems symbolically acting or "attitudinizing," and scientific tracts: Whatever their differences they all are classifiable together in one critical respect: They all operate by the use of symbol systems; thus all in their various ways manifest the resources and limitations of symbol systems.

But though any symbol system explicitly and implicitly turns our attention in one direction rather than in other directions, there is a striking difference within symbol systems. True, poets feud with philosophers, and many modern philosophers except the rare ones like Santayana feud with poets. But we are here concerned with a distinction that puts poetry quite close to philosophy (as in Aristotle, though his statement of the case did not concern precisely the issue now being considered).

No matter how limited any particular philosopher's definition of man may be (owing to his limitations as a person), if he speaks as a philosopher he necessarily speaks "in terms of" the *whole* man. For his statement is philosophically complete only insofar as it involves a concept of *man in general*. In contrast, a specialized scientific nomenclature (no matter how comprehensive it may be) necessarily involves *fragmentation*. For no special discipline could be special except insofar as it defined man in terms of its specialty.

Let us now turn to the *poet's* limitations. (And by "poet" I here refer broadly to all symbolizers who attitudinize not only in poems, but also in stories and plays, along with the many tentative alembications, deviations, perversions now often encountered.)

The poet may happen to be an extremely "odd" creature, quite limited as an artist. And even if he isn't very inventive, any unusual modes of experience, in deviating from the average, can in effect endow him with the equivalent of exceptional inventiveness. In such cases, accidents of history become attributes of the poem's very essence.

But no matter how limited a poetic production may be, it is *not* reducible to terms of any specialized scientific nomenclature (such as the terms of physics, chemistry, economics, politics, and so on). Nor can it even be adequately described as a combination of the lot. And though any specialized nomenclature may throw light upon the work, there is an obvious sense in which the work necessarily contains elements not only beyond the limits of *each* specialty but also beyond the aggregate of them *all*.

Sometimes, apologists of literature have grown challenging and edified when they touch upon this state of affairs. So far as universities are concerned, it involves such brutal extra-aesthetic considerations as interdepartmental rivalries.

But for present purposes, I would propose to consider it simply as a fact about the nature of terminologies.

A poet's language need not confront the problem of specialized scientific nomenclature. That is to say: The poet's language does not subject Humpty Dumpty to the great fall whereby he can't be put together again. For poetic Dumpty is saved by the technical fact that it never quite confronted this problem language in the first place. Terministically tied to its uterine beginnings, no poet's termi- nology need "resynthesize" its picture of man; however limited may be a poet's terms for man's actions, passions, agencies, scenes, purposes, and attitudes, they never quite take Humpty Dumpty, that fatal cultural egg, apart. For even as the poet works with *particulars,* he brings to them the *unification* of an attitude. Otherwise, his work itself would fall apart. And quite as Aristotle, when dis- cussing the principle of poetic consistency, admonished that even an inconsistent character must be consistently so, I would dare contend: Any poetic attitude (like being jaunty today, as distinct from being dismal tomorrow) has a kind of summarizing wholeness that is technically alien to the specialized terminologies of our essentially technology-tinged sciences.

Approaching the question from another angle, but having in mind the pre- vious chapter on Poetics in Particular, as we proceed we should keep asking whether the test for poetry might be "verisimilitude" rather than "truth." And though truth is often the best grounding for verisimilitude, it is not always so.

Viewing the situation in terms of "symbolic action," we might stress a dis- tinction between the "statistically" or "factually" true and a marksman's "true" aim.

In the *Journal of Social Issues* for October 1962 there is an article which, by its very shortcomings, helps illustrate the resources and obligations of a Dra- matistic nomenclature. Essentially, this article ("The Image of Man," by Isidor Chein) contends that the story of Creation in the book of Genesis provides a bet- ter model, even for a purely secular terminology of human motives, than is to be found in much contemporary psychology. For, according to Dr. Chein, the Biblical model presents "Man" as an "active" being, whereas many current views (in line with behaviorist theories of conditioning) falsely "presuppose a passive image of Man."

I have discussed Dr. Chein's essay at some length in a paper, "Order, Ac- tion, Victimage," presented at Grinnell College in January 1964, and to be pub- lished with papers by other participants in a series of articles on the general sub- ject of "Order." Here I want to stress only a few of the major dialectical principles considered in that article. Above all, I would point out that Spinoza's *Ethics* (particularly Book IV) clearly indicates why Dr. Chein's statement of the case would not be adequate. A grammatical stress upon the "active" involves a reciprocal stress upon the "passive." And in systematically considering *both* active and passive sides of the human motivational ledger, Spinoza makes it clear how prone man is to the temptations of *passivity.* (Surely, for instance, he would consider as a drastic instance of human bondage our susceptibility to "inadequate ideas" whereby propaganda mills can condition us to acquiesce in the cause of militaristic adventures abroad.) But Dr. Chein maneuvers himself into a position whereby, to glorify the "active" nature of "Man," he must present his cause *antithetically* to deterministic theories that, even if they are not

the whole story, could well serve *at least as admonitions* and that are needed to help complete a grammar of "action."

I here omit the third function, the "reflexive," in current cant "feedback." But it will turn up in many forms throughout these pieces. Its "symbolicity" centers in the "second-level" situation whereby there can be words-about-words. But I do want to make it clear that not only Spinoza, but also the Biblical account of Adam's "fall," directly treats of the "passive" element as inherent in the grammar of human action.

However, despite my objections to Dr. Chein's oversimplified use of the Dramatistic grammar, I found myself (uneasily) on his side when Richard E. Carney, of Indiana University, grew wrathful at the thought of Dr. Chein's monograph proclaiming the glory of "Man" as an "active" being. I was uneasy because I consider it a drastic kind of vandalism when one maneuvers oneself into a state of mind whereby one must slight any admonition as regards human susceptibility to the passivities of conditioning. Though Book V of Spinoza's *Ethics* makes it clear enough why any reduction to terms of conditioning alone would be an "inadequate idea," we must not let Dr. Chein's sales talk on "Man" make us forget Book IV and its talk of "human bondage."

Dr. Carney's attack was based on the principle of continuity (between man and other animals) that has been questioned in my foregoing article. His state- ment could have appropriately quoted Darwin's shrewd remark, "If man had not been his own classifier, he would never have thought of founding a separate order for his own reception." And it could wholly subscribe to Darwin's ap- proval of Huxley's statement that there "is no justification for placing man in a distinct order." Thus, Dr. Carney sloganizes his position visually by opting for a model of "man" rather than an image of "Man." My position would necessarily be that, in the very act of developing a structure of classifications, the human classifier (be he "man" or "Man"!) by the same token does estab- lish his nature as a special class of being. For one cannot be the kind of animal that can study biology except by having a distinctive way with symbol systems. Hence, to that extent we should be on Dr. Chein's side (in his decision to prefer a secular analogue of "Man's" image as presented in the Biblical story of Creation and Ordination). But, once that choice is made, the example of Spinoza reminds us that, even if Dr. Carney's view of "man" does make us out to be as "passive" as Dr. Chein says he does, even so, the most limited studies of Stimulus and Response, involving the narrowest of experiments with animals weak in the ways of human symbolic action, can serve to admonish us: We are constantly beset by *temptation* to become sheer automata.

But there's one further step. It involves an article on "The Personality and Career of Satan," by Henry A. Murray. This appeared appropriately as a com- panion piece in the same journal with Dr. Chein on "The Image of Man." Possibly because Satan can be such a charmer, it is charming, a much better- natured statement than the one on the grandeur of Man as active being. In any case, our present concerns with a Dramatistic grammar indicate why the two papers so neatly complement each other. For whereas the story in Genesis gives an account of *both the Creation and the Fall* (the *active* and the *passive*), here we find a division of labor. Dr. Chein builds his model by specializing in motives associated solely with the Creation; and Dr. Murray (in his mono- graph on the Tempter) specializes in motives associated with the Fall.

Neither is concerned explicitly with the ways in which the "mythic" account of motives in Genesis *unites* these motivational lines, a problem I have tried to

resolve (cf. *The Rhetoric of Religion*) in terms of Order and the disobeying of orders. And a Dramatistic grammar of motives also makes us aware of a notable lacuna in Dr. Murray's delightful survey concerned with the *personalizing* of problematical inducements that got slighted in Dr. Chein's truncated and overly honorific terminology of "action." When listing the functions of religious myths, Dr. Murray says that "they should comfort the distressed, and, by presenting visions of a realizable future, engender hope, and encourage effort to achieve this." But surely, religion has functioned not only as a means of *solace* or *encouragement*, but also as a system of *controls*. The slighting of *controls* in his list is all the more surprising since he is specializing in Satan, whose Hell was surely designed to scare the devil out of us.

At one point Dr. Chein observes, "Grammar is, of course, indifferent to truth." And there certainly is a sense in which this statement is irrefutable. Yet, Dramatism would contend: Whatever the complications and paradoxes, we must keep asking always about actives, passives, and middles (reflexives)—or, if you will, effectors, receptors, and feedback (for argument's sake, I here concede to the lowest kind of reduction). So I have sought to describe at least enough of the Chein-Carney-Murray papers to indicate why (when we think of symbolicity as existing in its own right though variously modified by animality) the Dramatistic grammar possesses at least a kind of *moral* absolute (and precisely the kind that would admonish us against Dr. Chein's o'ersimplified version of "Man" simply as "active"). "Man" is "active" except when he is "passive" (suffering, in bondage even to his own stupidities). And the more I puzzle over the reflexive, the more convinced I become that all of us, in pious terror, should be on guard regarding the role of the reflexive in our ideas of identity.

We might sum up our point here by saying that the emphasis upon Creation necessarily overstresses "action," the emphasis upon the Fall necessarily overstresses "passion," and the methodic attempt to avoid a Dramatistic grammar as far as possible reaches its fulfillment in a terminology of sheer "motion." However, where the discussion of human motives is at all comprehensive, no statement of the case can exemplify any one of these emphases with complete consistency. Man's involvement in the natural order makes him in many respects analyzable in terms of sheer motion; but his powers of symbolicity give rise to kinds of symbolic action that, by the same token, make him susceptible to corresponding kinds of servitude. (My *Grammar of Motives, Rhetoric of Motives*, and *Rhetoric of Religion* seek, in "Neo-Stoic resignation," to chart a course through this motivational tangle and its terministic paradoxes.)

A few parting remarks about man (or Man!) and symbol systems in general:

In Santayana's *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (Chapter X, second paragraph), we are told that the realm of essence is "the sum of mentionable objects, of terms about which, or in which, something might be said." That one word, "mentionable," has kept vibrating in me incessantly ever since the first time I encountered it (or explicitly recognized that I had encountered it, some two decades or so ago). The word seemed to spin itself along these lines:

The world is doubtless infinitely full of entities, relationships and developments, actual or potential, for which we do not have names, and never shall. Yet for the human animal the nameless is always at least in principle the nameable (or, "mentionable"). "Mentionable" has the advantage that even with persons who would postulate an essential distinction between words and other kinds

of symbolic action (such as dance, sculpture, painting, or music) all such modalities could at least be thought of as ways of "mentioning" aspects of experience. And in this sense, the human animal confronts even the nameless and unnameable within the perspective or "psychosis" of symbolicity.

In T. S. Eliot's doctoral thesis, *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley* (completed in 1916, but not published until 1964), there is one astonishing puzzle. I quote a passage that got omitted from a review I did of the book:

> I refer to a sudden flurry on pages 132-135, proclaiming the all-importance of *words* or *names* in shaping the objects of attention. "Without words, no objects," he asseverates. Thus he questions whether "the explicit recognition of an object as such" can occur "without the beginnings of speech." The bundle of things that we call an object "would not be a bundle unless it were held together by the moment of objectivity which is realized in the name." After three pages that develop this line of thought vigorously, he breaks off: "This, however, is a digression." And the subject, which had thus of a sudden flared up, is dropped, except for this one later sentence that seems like a sort of retraction: "We may easily be overawed by language, and attribute to it more philosophic prestige than it deserves." Yet what is a philosophy if not the systematic development of such *attention* as depends at every step upon language? What is a philosopher necessarily doing if not attempting to translate the more-than-linguistic, less-than-linguistic, and other-than-linguistic into terms of the linguistic? So I was struck by that sudden "breakthrough," and puzzled by its disappearance promptly thereafter.

Other relevant sentences in the thesis are: "In any knowledge prior to speech the object is not so much an identity recognized as such as it is a similar way of acting; the identity is rather lived out than known. What we are here concerned with is the explicit recognition of an object as such, and I do not believe that this occurs without the beginnings of speech. . . . Our only way of showing that we are attending to an object is to show that it and ourself are independent entities, and to do this we must have names. . . . We have no objects without language."

These remarks could also have been cited when, in "Definition of Man," I was discussing the relationship between symbolism and the kind of attention needed for the development and transmitting of techniques and inventions.

In any case, we must posit a sheerly physiological set of "terms," the mere *motions* of sensation, as the body translates certain kinds of event "into terms of" sight, sound, taste, etc., while the experiencing of pleasure and pain constitutes a rudimentary physiological analogue of the Yes-No pair. Behaviorist experiments help us see how even these primary conditions of awareness can become infused with the rudiments of learning (which, so far as tests of symbolicity are concerned, attains its completion in the "reflexive" or "self-conscious" or "second-level" possibilities of symbol systems that can reflect on the problems and principles of symbol systems).

Insofar as there can be cycles of terms that imply one another, and all such terms can be variously translated into terms of either images or ideas, and any such image or idea can serve as a point of departure, providing a perspective

peculiar to its particular point of view, the sheer range of such possibilities sets up the conditions for an ingredient of improvisational "freedom" in men's powers of symbolic action.

The slant of our articles on the "Definition of Man" and "Terministic Screens" might well suggest, to some readers, questions concerning the related but quite different views put forward by Marshall McLuhan, particularly in his volume *Understanding Media*. (He works in an area indeterminately midway between the *homo faber* of Technologism and the concepts of symbolic action inherent in the explicit, systematic application of a Dramatistic perspective.)

Whatever the readers sympathies with regard to McLuhan's thesis, there is the formal fact that the stating of his position necessarily involves the manipulation of his particular terminology. Hence, a Dramatistic analysis of that terminology might help clarify the nature of such projects in general. To this end we have included (pp. 410–418) a discussion of his terms, as viewed in terms of our terms.

Mind, Body, and the Unconscious

I

The issue: If man is the symbol-using animal, some motives must derive from his animality, some from his symbolicity, and some from mixtures of the two. The computer can't serve as our model (or "terministic screen"). For it is not an animal, but an artifact. And it can't truly be said to "act." Its operations are but a complex set of sheerly physical *motions*. Thus, we must if possible distinguish between the symbolic action of a *person* and the behavior of such a mere *thing*.

On the other hand, psychoanalysis has a concept of "symbolic action" that does distinctly apply to *persons*. But it is not identical with such eventfulness in the sheerly "Dramatistic" sense. By "symbolic action" in the Dramatistic sense is meant any use of symbol systems in general; I am acting symbolically, in the Dramatistic sense, when I speak these sentences to you, and you are acting symbolically insofar as you "follow" them, and thus size up their "drift" or "meaning." True, there are some "Unconscious" processes involved in my speaking and your interpreting what I say. But as we shall see, this is not what Freud had in mind with *his* concept of the "Unconscious" and its relation to what *he* calls "symbolic action." For he specifically says that the "concept of unconscious psychic activity which is peculiar to psychoanalysis" is to be sharply distinguished "from philosophical speculations about the unconscious." (The point is made near the beginning of his essay "History of the Psychoanalytic Movement.")

In the discussion of "terministic screens" we offered reasons why a definition of man must be a general "philosophic" problem rather than a specifically "scientific" one. Each specific science could not be its characteristic self except insofar as it abided by its particular terminology. And each such terminology is designed for a specific set of observations rather than for meditations on the nature of man in general.

A Dramatistic terminology (built around a definition of man as the symbol-using, symbol-misusing, symbol-making, and symbol-made animal) must steer midway between the computer on one side (when taken as a model of the mind) and the neurotic on the other. For instance, while