Forms of Reduced English

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By

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To my beloved Father

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FOREWORD

The purpose of this work is to illustrate the objectives and assumptions as well as the construction techniques and the structure of some of the most interesting forms of reduced English, ranging from Basic English to Special English, Plain English, Simplified English, Easy English, Specialized English, Nuclear English, Globish, and Basic Global English.

Although they have different cultural approaches and are aimed at communication purposes which are not always homogeneous and are sometimes divergent, all the studies underpinning these projects—and similar ones—share the idea of using English as a starting and reference point to build a language tool to be used as a *lingua franca* for effective and adequate international communication in the economic, scientific, and cultural fields, also in consideration of the globalization processes of contemporary world.

The present work collects three essays which had been first published in an Italian journal and are here presented in a revised version.[1]

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[1] See Massimo Laganà, "La riforma grammaticale e il 'Basic English'. Considerazioni teoriche," Illuminazioni, No. 37 (July–September 2016): 161–239; Massimo Laganà, "Forme dell'inglese semplificato. Il 'Globish' di Jean–Paul Nerrière," Illuminazioni, No. 41 (July–September 2017): 275–376; Massimo Laganà, "Il 'Basic Global English' come lingua di comunicazione internazionale," Quaderno No. 16, Supplement to AGON, No. 27 (October–December 2020): 68–99.

CHAPTER 1

BASIC ENGLISH

Preface

Charles Kay Ogden (1889–1957), the creator of Basic English, was a scholar of vast knowledge, with skills and interests in many domains, including philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, linguistics, translation, sociology, politics, bibliophily, communication theory, and more.[2] His focus on the problems of international communication, at least since the early 1930s,[3] tuned these interests and competence towards a specific

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[2] See W. Terrence Gordon, C. K. Ogden: A Bio–Bibliographic Study (Metuchen, New Jersey and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1990).

[3] "In 1923, after *The Meaning of Meaning* was completed, it was possible to go back to the special field of grammar with some new light on the ways in which words do their work, and from that time to 1927 Basic was in the making. Early in 1928 it became clear that 850 words, put into operation by the Basic system, would give us something which was supported by science while offering to teachers and businessmen what they had been looking for" (Charles Kay Ogden, Basic English: International Second Language. A revised and expanded version of 'The System of Basic English,' authorized by the Orthological Institute and prepared by E. G. Graham, with a Foreword by L. W. Lockart (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 87–88. In her Foreword, Leonora Wilhelmina Lockart (Foreword, v) wrote: "The present volume differs from its predecessor in two respects. The general account of Basic, which formed Section One of book in previous editions, has been replaced by an adapted version of *Basic English*, Ogden's original introduction to the system, and Section Two has been expanded by the inclusion of *The Basic Words*, a comprehensive guide to the permitted senses and uses of the Basic Vocabulary. It is a fitting tribute to Ogden that *Basic English*, *The ABC of Basic English*, and *The Basic Words*, the classical trilogy with which he laid the foundations of his system, should now be presented for the first time in a single volume." See also Charles Kay Ogden, Basic English: A General Introduction with Rules and Grammar (London: Paul Treber, 1930).

project—Basic English[4]—in which they had the opportunity to show and find their place.[5]

Objectives and assumptions of Basic English

On several occasions, Ogden explicitly assigned to Basic English—since its official presentation in 1929[6]—the functions of an international auxiliary language and of a simplification of English. He intended it to be used as both an essential preparatory step towards a deeper and wider English language learning and "as the universal language of the world."[7]

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[4] It is generally known that **BASIC** is an acronym. "Many special captions or trademarks for the system were suggested, but **B A S I C**—**B**ritish, **A**merican **S**cientific **I**nternational **C**ommercial (English)—has been finally adopted" (Ogden, Basic English: International Second Language, 2).

[5] The present paper is not intended to address Ogden's thoughts as a whole, but to highlight some linguistic issues related to the wording of his Basic English, while including, when necessary, references to more general questions which are assumed or explicitly referred to by the author himself. In Ogden's words, "The three key volumes, on which all other teaching material is based, are (1) *The ABC of Basic English* [...] (2) *Basic Step by Step* [...] (3) *The Basic Words* [...]" (Ogden, Basic English: International Second Language, 39). There are Italian versions of the first and second book, although they have not been satisfactorily translated (Charles Kay Ogden, ABC del Basic English. Trans. R. Bernardi (Cambridge: R. I. Severs, 1945) and Charles Kay Ogden, Il Basic English in 30 lezioni graduate. Trans. R. Bernardi (Cambridge: R. I. Severs, 1943)). Obviously, the author also wrote other books which are relevant to outlining a linguistic framework and structural analysis of Basic English. In 1994, Ogden's linguistic writings were collected and published in London by Routledge/Thoemmes Press. They were edited by W. Terrence Gordon, who also authored the foreword. See W. Terrence Gordon, ed., C. K. Ogden and Linguistics (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1994). The work consists of five volumes (1. *From Significs to Orthology*; 2. *From Bentham to Basic English*; 3. *The Meaning of Meaning*; 4. *Counter–offensive*; 5. *From Russell to Russo*), the last of which containing other authors' "reviews and commentaries."

[6] "In January 1929, the 850 words were printed. [...] In 1930 *Basic English* was put in book form with less than 15 percent of the list in doubt; and after another year's experience, getting the views of representative of all countries, 50 international words were fixed, and the Basic list was printed in its present form" (Ogden, Basic English: International Second Language, 56).

[7] "Basic may meet the universal demand for a compact and efficient technological medium. If so, English will become not only the international auxiliary language, but the universal language of the world" (Ogden, Basic English: International

However, taking a closer look at the reasons leading to the formulation of his language project, the author himself considered Basic English to be "a valuable mental discipline quite apart from the utilitarian function which is normally stressed"[8] and "a technique for achieving control of the language–machine." As such, Ogden believed Basic English should be "an integral part of education at any stage," while also "providing a key to international communication as a valuable by–product."[9] In short, Basic English "was conceived with a dual purpose—as a means of International Communication, and as an aid to the Science of Interpretation."[10]

The main goal of Ogden's linguistic research, of which Basic English is only the final result in terms of communication, didactics, and education, is therefore a "Grammatical Reform" aimed at clarifying the functioning of the human mind and of language. It is regarded as a "symbolic machine" through which human beings communicate with one other and connect with reality.[11]

Ogden deliberately follows the English empiricist tradition, identifying in Thomas Hobbes, John Horne Tooke and, above all, Jeremy Bentham the most significant authors from the point of view of the linguistic research. In addition, John Wilkins and the rationalist Wilhelm

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Second Language, 7–8). On the broad subject of auxiliary, artificial, international languages and the like, the following texts can be usefully consulted: Alessandro Bausani, Geheim– und Universalsprachen: Entwicklung und Typologie (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970); Roberto Pellerey, Le lingue perfette nel secolo dell'utopia (Roma–Bari: Laterza, 1992); Umberto Eco, La ricerca della lingua perfetta nella cultura europea (Roma–Bari: Laterza, 1993); Daniel Russo and Angela Andreani, "Ogden's Basic English and its root in the Early Modern English search for language simplicity," Linguistica e Filologia, No. 40 (2020): 99–128.

[8] "Basic [is] a valuable mental discipline quite apart from the utilitarian function which is normally stressed." See Charles Kay Ogden, "Basic English and Grammatical Reform," Supplement to The Basic News (July 1937): 14.

[9] "It would be possible to use Basic as a technique for achieving control of the language–machine, and so make it an integral part of education at any stage, at the same time providing a key to international communication as a valuable by–product" (Ogden, "Basic English and Grammatical Reform," 15).

[10] Ogden, "Basic English and Grammatical Reform," 14.

[11] "A good language is a machine for thought" (Ogden, Basic English: International Second Language, 59). See also Ogden, "Basic English and Grammatical Reform," 12, where, referring to language, Ogden mentions "our symbolic machinery."

Leibnitz are considered because of their studies on the theme of a universal language.[12]

An important forerunner of the freedom of language and thought from the "Word Magic" [13] is Francis Bacon. In fact, in his *Novum Organum*, Lord Verulam had identified in the "idola fori," that is, in the fallacy and ambiguity which are found in the language used for communication, the source of a specific type of prejudices which hamper understanding by dragging men into innumerable and vain controversies, misleading and finally subjugating the human mind. It is therefore essential to be aware of the nature of these "idols" in order to antagonize their hypostatization and to make knowledge of reality and of human life itself less nebulous and vague.[14]

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[12] "The first systematic formulation of a general theory of symbolic communication was made by Hobbes in *De Corpore*. Wilkins, in his *Essay Towards a Real Character*, Leibnitz, and Horne Tooke each added his quota; but until Bentham charted the field and evolved his Theory of Fictions, nothing of positive nature had been achieved" (Ogden, "Basic English and Grammatical Reform," 3–4).

[13] The theme is covered in the second chapter (*The Power of Words*) by Charles Kay Ogden and Ivor Armstrong Richards, The Meaning of Meaning (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1944), and in more detail in Charles Kay Ogden, "Word Magic," Psyche, Vol. 18 (1938–1952): 19–126. See, on this subject, Hirschkop, Ken. "Moved in Motion: Discourse, Myth, and Public Opinion in the Early Twentieth Century". In Moving Modernisms, ed. David Bradshaw, Laura Marcus, and Rebecca Roach (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 178–179.

[14] Bacon, Francis. "The New Organon". In The Works of Francis Bacon, eds. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, Vol. VIII, 1890), 78–79 and 86–87. *Aphorisms* XLIII and LIX run, respectively, thus: "XLIII. There are also Idols formed by the intercourse and association of men with each other, which I call Idols of the Market–place, on account of the commerce and consort of men there. For it is by discourse that men associate; and words are imposed according to the apprehension of the vulgar. And therefore, the ill and unfit choice of words wonderfully obstructs the understanding. Nor do the definitions or explanations wherewith in some things learned men are wont to guard and defend themselves, by any means set the matter right. But words plainly force and overrule the understanding, and throw all into confusion, and lead men away into numberless empty controversies and idle fancies. ... LIX. But the *Idols of the Market–place* are the most troublesome of all: idols which have crept into the understanding through the alliances of words and names. For men believe that their reason governs words; but it is also true that words react on the understanding; and this it is that has rendered philosophy and the sciences sophistical and inactive. Now words, being

Ogden pointed out that "according to Bacon, 'the first distemper of learning is when men study words and not matter.' The chief task of reformer and scientist alike is to rid the mind of the Illusions of the Market–place, the Idola Fori in which Word Magic is so potently enshrined."[15] It is therefore necessary to understand whence these fixed language forms come, how they are generated, and how to weaken them, since they hinder both thought and communication.

The problem is meaningful also because Ogden acknowledges that, at least from an anthropological point of view,[16] in every language there is

commonly framed and applied according to the capacity of the vulgar, follow those lines of division which are most obvious to the vulgar understanding. And whenever an understanding of greater acuteness or a more diligent observation would alter those lines to suit the true divisions of nature, words stand in the way and resist the change. Whence it comes to pass that the high and formal discussions of learned men end oftentimes in disputes about words and names; with which (according to the use and wisdom of the mathematicians) it would be more prudent to begin, and so by means of definitions reduce them to order. Yet even definitions cannot cure this evil in dealing with natural and material things: since the definitions themselves consist of words, and those words beget others: so that it is necessary to recur to individual instances, and those in due series and order; as I shall say presently when I come to the method and scheme for the formation of notions and axioms."

[15] Ogden, "Basic English and Grammatical Reform," 12.

[16] It is not by chance that *The Meaning of Meaning* hosts a contribution by Bronislaw Malinowski. The paper, referred to as a "Supplement," is entitled *The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages* and runs thus: "Language in its structure mirrors the real categories derived from practical attitudes of the child and of primitive or natural man to the surrounding world. The grammatical categories with all their peculiarities, exceptions, and refractory insubordination to rule, are the reflection of the makeshift, unsystematic, practical outlook imposed by man's struggle for existence in the widest sense of this word. It would be futile to hope that we might be able to reconstruct exactly this pragmatic world vision of the primitive, the savage or the child, or to trace in detail its correlation to grammar. But a broad outline and a general correspondence can be found; and the realization of this frees us anyhow from logical shackles and grammatical barrenness. [...] If our theory is right, the fundamental outlines of grammar are due mainly to the most primitive uses of language. For these preside over the birth and over the most plastic stages of linguistic development and leave the strongest mark. The categories derived from the primitive use will also be identical for all human languages, in spite of the many superficial diversities. For man's essential nature is identical and the primitive uses of language are the same" (Malinowski, Bronislaw. "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages". In Charles Kay

a latent primitive "magic" layer, which, thanks to its social pervasiveness and the creation of stereotypical forms of behavior, influences the human mind through the "linguistic machine" it uses to communicate.

Insofar as this conditioning is successful, not only does the human mind lose its control of language, but, "by degrees," allows the latter to become "the manager of the man." [17] Furthermore, the lack of understanding of the phenomenon leads to its strengthening through the generation of methods such as the "school–machine" and the "Echo method," which urgently need to be reformed.[18]

As already mentioned, it is not a question of eliminating the magic property of words, which cannot be eradicated, but of understanding its origin and maintaining a "critical linguistic consciousness" in order not to be dominated by it. In fact, it is possible to demystify the "magic" of words within a more general "Science of Interpretation," that is within a framework able to accurately study the system of language signs and symbols and the ways in which they are used.[19]

Ogden and Ivor Armstrong Richards, The Meaning of Meaning (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1944), 328–329. Malinowski's essay, in its entirety, is fundamental to understand the "magic" function of words and the "magic" residue which cannot be parted from them.

[17] Ogden, "Basic English and Grammatical Reform," 2. According to Ogden, the thought conditioning operated by language does not involve the acceptance of the linguistic relativity principle, better known as the Sapir–Whorf's hypothesis. In his opinion, it rather arises from the close correlation between language and thought, which, if not well understood and consciously managed, can in fact result in the dominance of the "linguistic machine" over mental processes.

[18] Ogden, "Basic English and Grammatical Reform," 16, 17, and 20. Since "school–machine"—that is, school education—, does not stem from a proper understanding of language functioning, it employs inadequate teaching methods defined as the "Echo method." They are nothing but "the dogmas of correct usage" of the language and their use result in strengthening the "magic power of words" and in fostering and consolidating "the processes by which our ideas become fixed forms of behaviour before we ourselves are conscious of what history and society are making us say."

[19] Ogden, "Basic English and Grammatical Reform," 3: "Language must be treated as part of a wider system of signs and symbols. In this wider system, Grammar becomes a branch of a more general Science of Interpretation." Ogden draws the theme of "linguistic consciousness," as well as many others, from the thought and work of Lady Victoria Welby, with whom he had come into contact when he was young and from whom he learned and took over much. Lady Welby authored two works which are still praiseworthy: Victoria Welby, What is meaning? Studies in the Development of Significance (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1903),

It is here necessary to refer to the semiotic triangle and to the interpretation given to it by Ogden and Richards in *The Meaning of Meaning*.
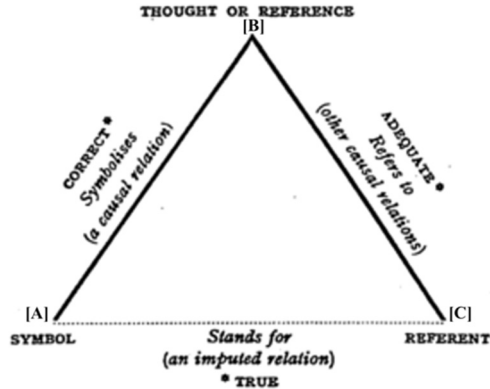

Fig. 1 – 1. The Semiotic Triangle.

Commenting on the diagram, the authors make a few observations which help us understand the relationship existing—in their opinion—between the symbol (language sign), the reference (thought) and the referent (reference object or entity).

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and Victoria Welby, Significs and Language: The Articulate Form of Our Expressive and Interpretative Resources (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1911). See Susan Petrilli's numerous essays (among which Susan Petrilli, "Senso e analogia nel metalinguaggio di Victoria Welby," Idee, Vol. 13/15 (1990): 71–78; Susan Petrilli, "Between Semiotics and Significs. C. K. Ogden and V. Welby," Semiotica, No. 105–3/4 (1995): 277–309; Susan Petrilli, Su Victoria Welby. Significs e filosofia del linguaggio (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1998); Susan Petrilli, Signifying and Understanding. Reading the Works of Victoria Welby and the Signific Movement (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2009); Susan Petrilli, "Sign, Meaning, and Understanding in Victoria Welby and Charles S. Peirce," Signs and Society, Vol. 3, No. 1, (Spring 2015): 71–102; Susan Petrilli, Victoria Welby and the Science of Signs. Significs, Semiotics, Philosophy of Language (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2015). Professor Petrilli has also edited the Italian translation of a number of collected works authored by Lady Welby (Susan Petrilli, ed., Significato, metafora, interpretazione (Bari: Adriatica, 1985); Susan Petrilli, ed., Senso, significato, significatività (Bari: Graphis, 2007); Susan Petrilli, ed., Interpretare, comprendere, comunicare (Roma: Carocci, 2010)).

"Between a thought and a symbol causal relations hold. When we speak, the symbolism we employ is caused partly by the reference we are making and partly by social and psychological factors—the purpose for which we are making the reference, the proposed effect of our symbols on other persons, and our own attitude. When we hear what is said, the symbols both cause us to perform an act of reference and to assume an attitude which will, according to circumstances, be more or less similar to the act and the attitude of the speaker.

Between the Thought and the Referent there is also a relation; more or less direct (as when we think about or attend to a colored surface we see), or indirect (as when we 'think of' or 'refer to' Napoleon), in which case there may be a very long chain of sign–situations intervening between the act and its referent: word–historian–contemporary record–eye–witness–referent (Napoleon).

Between the symbol and the referent there is no relevant relation other than the indirect one, which consists in its being used by someone to stand for a referent. Symbol and Referent, that is to say, are not connected directly (and when, for grammatical reasons, we imply such a relation, it will merely be an imputed, as opposed to a real relation) but only indirectly round the two sides of the triangle."[20]

The belief that there is a "direct" and "real" relationship—and not an "indirect" and "imputed," and thus "arbitrary" one—between the terms placed at the base of the triangle (symbol and referent) is in fact at the

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[20] Ogden and Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, 10–12. The asterisk placed along the three sides of the triangle next to the words CORRECT, ADEQUATE and TRUE refers to the clarifications given on pages 101–102, where the text runs thus: "It will be convenient here to define a true Symbol as distinguished from a true Reference. The definition is as follows:—A true symbol = one which correctly records an adequate reference. It is usually a set of words in the form of a proposition or sentence. It correctly records an adequate reference when it will cause a similar reference to occur in a suitable interpreter. It is false when it records an inadequate reference.

It is often of great importance to distinguish between false and incorrect propositions. An incorrect symbol is one which in a given universe of discourse causes in a suitable interpreter a reference different from that symbolized in the speaker."

As to the "imputed relation" linking the vertices at the base of the triangle, on page 116, the authors give the following explanation: "At the beginning of our inquiry we described the relation which could be said to hold between symbol and referent as an imputed relation. To have described it simply as an indirect relation would have omitted the important difference between indirect relations recognized as such, and those wrongly treated as direct."

origin of the illusion that the word (symbol) identifies with the thing (the referent) or with a part of it. Such an assumption "derives from the magical theory of the name as part of the thing, the theory of an inherent connection between symbols and referents. This legacy leads in practice to the search for *the* meaning of words. The eradication of this habit can only be achieved by a study of Signs in general, leading up to a referential theory of Definition by which the phantom problems resulting from such superstitions may be avoided. When these have been disposed of, all subjects become more accessible and more interesting."[21]

According to Hirschkop, besides mistaking the name for what it refers to, as if the name contained the referent or a part of it and allowed the speaker to master it, the "magic of words" also uses contracted symbols and abstractions of various kinds, among which are the names of "fictitious entities,"[22] which will be discussed later on.

However, according to otherwise oriented theories of language and communication, other interpretations of the semiotic triangle are possible. "Una prima lettura dello schema potrebbe essere: un'espressione linguistica (il simbolo A) [left vertex at the base of the triangle] si riferisce a un'entità extralinguistica (il referente C) [right vertex at the base of the triangle] tramite la mediazione di un concetto (B) [vertex opposed to the base of the triangle]. Questa lettura assegna un ruolo essenziale al pensiero come intermediario tra linguaggio e realtà. Tuttavia secondo un'altra interpretazione c'è una relazione diretta tra A e C [the symbol and the referent] e dunque non occorre postulare l'esistenza di un elemento concettuale che faccia da 'ponte' fra linguaggio e realtà. Secondo altri, invece, l'elemento C [the referent] è irrilevante e il pensiero non esiste come entità autonoma al di fuori della sua espressione linguistica, poiché i concetti prendono forma solo tramite il linguaggio." These three interpretations of the semiotic

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[21] Ogden and Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, 244–245.

[22] "For abstractions arose, according to Ogden and Richards, as convenient abbreviations of syntactic chains, built from names, operators and directives, which then, because they occupied the same grammatical space as simple nouns and simple verbs, were hypostasized, mistaken for immediate, simple symbols with immediate referents. [...] For bear in mind that these abstractions were not just hypostasized, but glorified, too. Word magic meant not just signs with fictional referents, but the confusion of the name with the thing referred to, the conviction that the name somehow contained its referent or was part of it, so that the use of the name endowed the speaker with power over its object" (Ken Hirschkop, "Why Rhetoric is Magic to Modernism," Affirmations: of the Modern, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2015): 121).

triangle lead, or would lead,[23] respectively, to the "tre principali approcci contemporanei alla semantica: l'approccio **cognitivista**, secondo cui il significato è il concetto al quale un'espressione linguistica è legata nella nostra mente; l'approccio **referenzialista**, secondo cui il significato scaturisce dalla relazione fra le espressioni linguistiche e la realtà extralinguistica cui si riferiscono; l'approccio **strutturalista**, secondo cui il significato è un'entità linguistica che si crea nel momento in cui la lingua dà forma a un pensiero di per sé amorfo."[24]

Without broaching the thorny, though fundamental, problem of "meaning"—of which, it must be remembered, Ogden and Richards draw up a good list of sixteen not quite converging definitions[25]—it is possible to note that Ogden's exclusion of a "direct" and "real" relationship between the symbol and the referent is expressly intended to point out that language and the real world should be considered as distinct dimensions and, as such, they are neither overlapping nor coinciding. Naturally, Ogden does not deny that language can have a referential function capable of describing the universe of the daily life and communicating the knowledge of scientific research, objectives that are certainly present in the wording of Basic English.[26]

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[23] In passing, it's noteworthy to mention that, not only does there not yet exist a shared theory of meaning, but the ones so far advanced are sometimes radically irreconcilable with one another so that it can be supposed that it is extremely difficult to achieve such a goal.

[24] Grazia Basile, Federica Casadei, Luca Lorenzetti, Giancarlo Schirru, and Anna Maria Thornton, Linguistica generale (Roma: Carocci, 2010), 310. The chapter on semantics (pp. 309–363) is authored by Federica Casadei. Of course, it is also possible to propose other cataloguing of the theories of meaning and further interpretations of the semiotic triangle, whose origins go back at least to the reflection of ancient stoicism.

[25] Ogden and Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, 186–187.

[26] As to linguistics, Ogden is familiar with Bertrand Russell's and Ludwig Wittgenstein's logical atomism and it is noteworthy to remember that he has contributed to the English translation of the *Tractatus Logico–Philosophicus*. Nonetheless, he is closer to Lady Victoria Welby's and Charles Sanders Peirce's sign–semantics research, and it must not be overlooked that Ogden had a significant correspondence with her (James McElvenny, "Meaning in the Age of Modernism: C. K. Ogden and his Contemporaries" (PhD Thesis: University of Sydney, 2013), 1–71). Saussurian linguistics does not belong to the Ogden's cultural tradition, without ruling out any similarities which might be found among the different research orientations.

On the other hand, if reality—that is, the referent, in its broadest sense—were to be part of the study of language, linguistics would be the most complete and the most complex of sciences, since it would have to deal with everything that has any form of existence.

As already mentioned, Ogden's position is within the English empirical tradition, a perspective that is confirmed by what can be referred to as his psychology of perception. The latter, in fact, expects a "reaction" of the organism to the "stimuli" provided by experience, since they, besides producing an immediate effect, leave a "residual trace." Ogden names these residues "engrams," using a term coined by Richard Semon, a word which has a similar meaning to the term "neurograms" used by Morton Prince.[27]

"Engrams" are persistent "mnemic traces" that survive the stimulus which has generated them and are kept in the body's "nervous substance" at a subconscious level, only to be reactivated when a stimulus in part similar to the one that originally triggered them reoccurs.[28]

Ogden and Richards, in borrowing this thesis, after having stated that "a sign is always a stimulus similar to some part of an original stimulus and sufficient to call up the engram formed by that stimulus,"

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[27] Charles Kay Ogden, The Meaning of Psychology (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1926), 68, note 1. The reference is to Richard Semon, Mnemic Psychology. Trans. Bella Duffy (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1923), 153–157 (Chapter VII: *Mnemic sensations. Extinction of Original Excitations and Survival of the Engram*), and to Morton Prince, The Unconscious. The Fundamentals of Human Personality Normal and Abnormal. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1914), 131 (*Neurograms* is the title of Lecture V, pp. 109–146).

[28] It is also worth noting that there is a certain similarity in considering stimuli and perceptual processes between Ogden's view and the theorization on the same topic developed, within the framework of General Semantics, by Alfred Korzybski, who, in his fundamental work, wrote about international languages and Basic English: "The need of International Languages, or a *Universal Language* besides mathematics is becoming increasingly urgent. At present there are several such languages [...]. In my opinion, the possibility of Basic for a scientific civilization are unlimited, *provided* the Basic is *revised* from a non–Aristotelian, non–identity, point of view. The general and serious defect of all of these languages is, that their authors have, as yet, entirely disregarded the non–Aristotelian problems of non–identity, and so of *structure*, without which *general sanity*, or the elimination of *delusional worlds* is *entirely impossible*" (Alfred Korzybski. Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non–Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics (Brooklyn, New York: Institute of General Semantics, 1994 (1933), 763).

clarify that: "An engram is the residual trace of an adaptation made by the organism to a stimulus. The mental process due to the calling up of an engram is a similar adaptation: so far as it is cognitive, what it is adapted to is its referent, and is what the sign which excites it stands for or signifies."[29]

However, this approach, according to which the sign stimulates the reactivation of the "mnemic trace" and the "adaptation" of the "mental process"—be it either image or thought—to the referent, should not lead to the belief that the final word for "meaning" has been found.

Since our sign interpretation depends both on our psychological reaction to them and on its contextualization,[30] it must be recognized that there is no fixed meaning which is unambiguously linked to a language sign—that is, a "plain meaning"—,[31] for the twofold convergent reason that when we think, we are merely interpreting signs and that there is a meaning only within a proposition. Ogden borrows the latter argument from Jeremy Bentham, who used the term "phraseoplerosis" to refer to the principle according to which "no meaning was to be found outside a

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[29] Ogden and Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, 53.

[30] Ogden and Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, 244: "Our Interpretation of any sign is our psychological reaction to it, as determined by our past experience in similar situations, and by our present experience." In the tenth chapter of the text, devoted to the analysis of "Symbol Situations," Ogden and Richards, after stating that "sign–situations are always linked in chains and the simplest case of such a sign–chain is best studied in Perception," clarify their thoughts as follows: "What we 'see' when we look at a table is, first, modifications of our retinae. These are our initial signs. We interpret them and arrive at fields of vision, bounded by surfaces of tables and the like. By taking beliefs in these as second order signs and so on, we can proceed with our interpretation, reaching as results tables, wood, fibres, cells, molecules, atoms, electrons, etc. The later stages of this interpretative effort are physics" (Ogden and Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, 245).

[31] A. Bosco reminds that "many scholars argue that for every word, there is a single, correct meaning associated with it (Craig Online, 2002). Ogden and Richards counter this claim with their theory of 'Proper Meaning Superstition,' which states that there is not a single 'correct' meaning associated with each and every word because each word means something different to each person, or more simply, meanings don't reside in words, they reside in people (Erickstad, 1998)" (A. Bosco, What do you mean: A Brief Look at Ogden and Richards' Theory of Meaning, Spring 2002). The expression "plain meaning" was coined by Lady Victoria Welby (Welby, What is meaning?, xxii ("There is no such thing as 'plain' meaning, the same at all times, in all place and to all") and 143).

proposition."[32] Besides considering "language and thought as inseparable"[33] Ogden also shares Bentham's "archetypation" principle,—that is, "correspondence between abstract words and words that have a meaning that can be directly understood in term of sense–perception"—,[34] which is in turn closely related to "theory of fictions."

Ogden draws the "theory of fictions" almost entirely from Bentham, although some inspiration comes from "The philosophy of 'As if'" by

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[32] Emmanuelle De Champs, "The Place of Jeremy Bentham's Theory of Fictions in Eighteenth–century Linguistic Thought," UCL Bentham Project Journal of Bentham Studies, Vol. 2 (1999): 20. "Phraseoplerosis" is conceived by Bentham as "the filling up of the phrase," as one of the "operations connected with, and subservient to, the main or principal operation, paraphrasis" and "by the word paraphrasis may be designated that sort of exposition which may be afforded by transmuting into a proposition, having for its subject some real entity, a proposition which has not for its subject any other than a fictitious entity" (Jeremy Bentham, The Works, published under the superintendence of his executor John Bowring, Vol. 8, (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1841), 246 (*Essay on Logic*, Chapter VII, Section VII, *Bisection* 1)).

[33] De Champs, "The Place of Jeremy Bentham's Theory of Fictions in Eighteenth–century Linguistic Thought," 10–11: "Bentham's ideas on language and thought as inseparable were the expression of an ongoing trend in English philosophy. The conditions for the 'Universal Grammar' rest on a conception of thought and language as the two sides of the same coin: Bentham opened his treaty on 'Universal Grammar' with the statement that 'the connection between the demand and the supply, between thought and the signs employed for the communication of thought [were] points of necessary and universal agreement'." The reference is to Bentham's *Introduction* to *Fragments on Universal Grammar* (Bentham, The Works, Vol. 8, 341–343).

[34] "In insisting on the correspondence between abstract words and words that have a meaning that can be directly understood in terms of sense–perception, Bentham remained in the line of thought opened by Locke. Indeed, though Locke himself had given few example, he had stated that it was possible to find 'in all languages, the names, which stand for things that fall not under our senses, to have their first rise from sensible ideas'" (De Champs, "The Place of Jeremy Bentham's Theory of Fictions in Eighteenth–century Linguistic Thought," 18). "*Archetypation* (a word employed, for shortness, rather than *archetypophantia*, i. e. indication of the archetype or pattern) consists in indicating the *material image*, of which the word, taken in its primæval sense, contains the expression" (Bentham, The Works, Vol. 8, 121–126 (*Chrestomathic Instruction Tables. Table II. Appendix.—No. IV. Essay On Nomenclature and Classification*. Section XIX. Concluding Note)).

Hans Vaihinger, whose volume *Die Philosophie des Als Ob* [35] was translated by Ogden in 1924. In fact, in Bentham's language and thought conception, great attention is paid to "fictional institutions," and Ogden extensively draws on it, as he himself acknowledges,[36] even though, as it has been noted, "the specificity of Bentham's theory of fictions is that it was elaborated as part of a wider plan for political, legal and social reform."[37]

To Bentham, "a fictitious entity is an object, the existence of which is feigned by the imagination, feigned for the purpose of discourse, and which, when formed, is spoken of as a real one."[38] Bentham distinguishes "real entities" from "non–existent entities" and from "fictional entities." He further classifies the last ones into "fictional entities" of the first degree and "fictional entities" of the second degree, advancing a series of analytical clarifications and historical references, which, while interesting, it is not appropriate to examine in detail for the purposes of this study.[39]

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[35] Hans Vaihinger, Die Philosophie der Als Ob. System der theoretischen, praktischen und religiösen Fiktionen der Menschheit auf Grund eines idealistischen Positivismus. (1911), siebente und achte Auflage (Leipzig: Verlag von Felix Meyer, 1922) (Hans Vaihinger, The Philosophy of 'As if': A System of the Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind. Trans. C. K. Ogden (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1924 (Abridged edition, 1935)). Vaihinger worked on his book for a long time before publishing it. The basic idea of his work is that all human knowledge, with the exception of sensory knowledge, is based on "fictions," which are however useful from a pragmatic point of view. That does not exactly correspond to Ogden's opinion.

[36] Bentham's most significant writings on the subject are collected in Bentham, The Works, Vol. 8, 193–338 (*A Fragment on Ontology*, *Essay on Logic* ed *Essay on Language*, *Fragments on Universal Grammar*). See also Jeremy Bentham, Bentham's *Theory of Fictions*, Introduction by C. K. Ogden (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1932); De Champs, "The Place of Jeremy Bentham's Theory of Fictions in Eighteenth–century Linguistic Thought" and the studies therein mentioned.

[37] De Champs, "The Place of Jeremy Bentham's Theory of Fictions in Eighteenth–century Linguistic Thought," 25.

[38] Bentham, The Works, Vol. 8, 323–327 (*Essay on Language*, Chapter VI, *Analytical View of the Matter of Thought and Internal Action; Correspondent View of the Matter of Language*, Section II, *Of Conjugates*).

[39] It is enough to point out that Bentham considers Aristotle's "categories" to be "fictional bodies," with the only exception of the first one. The reference is to Aristotle's *Categories*, in which the Greek philosopher mentions ten "categories;" that is, in addition to the "substance"—the first of them—*quality*, *quantity*, *relation*, *places*, *time*, *situation*, *possession*, *action*, *suffering* ("1. Substance. 2.

It's useful to note that, while a "real entity" is one to which, "on occasion and for the purpose of discourse, existence is really meant to be ascribed,"[40] "a fictitious entity is an entity to which, though by grammatical form of the discourse employed in speaking of its existence is ascribed, yet in truth and in reality, existence is not meant to be ascribed."[41] It follows that "to language, then—to language alone—it is, that fictitious entities owe their existence—their impossible, yet indispensable, existence" and that "the division of entities into real and fictitious, is more properly the division of names into names of real and names of fictitious entities."[42]

In its referential function—which must be carefully distinguished from the emotional one,[43] even if it is not always easy to

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Quantity. 3. Quality. 4. Relation. 5. Places. 6. Time. 7. Situation. 8. Possession. 9. Action. 10. Passion or suffering," in the terminology used by Bentham). For the classification of "fictional entities," see Bentham, The Works, Vol. 8, 199–211 (*A Fragment on Ontology*, Chapter II, *Fictitious Entities classified*).

[40] "Under the head of perceptible real entities may be placed, without difficulty, individual perceptions of all sorts: the impressions produced in groups by the application of sensible objects to the organs of sense: the ideas brought to view by the recollection of those same objects; the new ideas produced under the influence of the imagination, by the decomposition and recomposition of those groups;—to none of these can the character, the denomination, of real entities be refused," Bentham, The Works, Vol. 8, 196–197 (*A Fragment on Ontology*, Chapter I, *Classification of Entities*, Section IV, *Of Real Entities*). This statement follows a more general division of institutions which is worded as follows: "An entity is a denomination in the import of which every subject matter of discourse, for the designation of which the grammatical part of speech called a noun–substantive is employed, may be comprised.

Entities may be distinguished into perceptible and inferential.

An entity, whether perceptible or inferential, is either real or fictitious" (Bentham, The Works, Vol. 8, 195 (*A Fragment on Ontology*, Chapter I, *Classification of Entities*, Section I, *Division of Entities*).

[41] Bentham, The Works, Vol. 8, 197–198 (*A Fragment on Ontology*, Chapter II, *Fictitious Entities classified*, Section V, *Of Fictitious Entities*).

[42] Bentham, The Works, Vol. 8, 198–199 (*A Fragment on Ontology*, Chapter II, *Fictitious Entities classified*, Section VI, *Uses of this Distinction between Names of Real and Names of Fictitious Entities*).

[43] Ogden and Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, 149: "In ordinary everyday speech each phrase has not one but a number of functions. We shall in our final chapter classify these under five headings; but here a twofold division is more convenient, the division between the *symbolic* use of words and the *emotive* use. The symbolic use of words is *statement*; the recording, the support, the organization and the communication of references. The emotive use of words is a more simple

do so—[44] language serves to give a symbolic form to our interpretation and description of the objects of the physical world around us, because of both their mutual relationship and their relation to our body reality.

According to Ogden "Language is first and foremost an apparatus for dealing with things in space. What is 'there' to be talked about is primarily a nexus of individual bodies; and only through metaphor do we seem to be talking about other sorts of entities [...] and if we define Grammar, with the late Professor Sayce, as 'the mode in which words are connected in order to express a complete thought' then Grammar is the science which should provide the technique for such a translation."[45]

Since language, thanks to its symbolism, has to allow us the possibility to discuss both of physical objects—that is, of "real entities" in whose representation the perceptive process is finalized—and of other entities that cannot and should not be confused with them, Ogden asserts that it is necessary to use "fictional entities" and, therefore, to recur to a figurative or analogical use of the same referential language,[46] on the

matter, it is the use of words to express or excite feelings and attitudes. [...] Under the emotive function are included both the expression of emotions, attitudes, moods, intentions, etc., in the speaker, and their communication, i.e., their evocation in the listener." See also Ogden, "Basic English and Grammatical Reform," 3: "Science of Interpretation [...] has to inquire into the sorts of references we make by means of our symbols and the sorts of things which it is possible to symbolize; so that, by separating the referential from the emotive elements, we may have some criterion by which we can judge how well the language we actually use is doing its."

[44] While Ogden and Richards were convinced that "failure to distinguish between the symbolic and emotive uses is the source of much confusion in discussion and research," they admit that "it is often, indeed, impossible to decide, whether a particular use of symbols is primarily symbolic or emotive" and, in the *Preface* to the second edition of their work (1926), they refer to a text by Richards, believing that "*Principles of Literary Criticism* (I. A. R.) endeavors to provide for the emotive function of language the same critical foundation as is here attempted for the symbolic" (Ogden and Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, 247, 124 and xi, respectively).

[45] Ogden, "Basic English and Grammatical Reform," 4.

[46] It is therefore possible that there may be expressions according to which "the behaviour of the universe is not sufficiently elastic to provide a referent," as well as differing views on the status of non–real entities. For example, "in the works of Meinong, *round squares* are solemnly given an ontological status in a realm of subsistence inhabited by universals and other logical entities," while "in the second volume of Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen* we find a distinction between the nonsensical and the contradictory, and round squares, though a contradiction in

understanding that "if a fiction is taken for what it is not, we cannot avoid confusion by thought".[47] To avoid the "magic of words," we must bear in mind the principle according to which "the map is not the territory"[48] and, above all, we must be aware of the appropriateness (or otherwise) of the "map" of the language—through which the "territory"—that is, the "referent"—is represented.[49]

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terms, are admitted to be above the level of nonsense." As already mentioned, Bentham distinguishes between "real entities," "unreal entities," and "fictional entities," but, according to Ogden, "only an analysis of their meanings as defined in a particular context will decide whether a referent can be found for such contradictory pairs of words." In fact, "we are concerned with substitution or translation on the one hand, and, on the other, with the semantic influence of varying contexts which decide whether a given juxtaposition of symbols is or is not legitimate" (Ogden, "Basic English and Grammatical Reform," 9–10).

[47] Ogden, "Basic English and Grammatical Reform," 11.

[48] Korzybski, Science and Sanity, 53, 60–61, 750 and ff. In one of his last writings, Korzybski thus summarizes the premises of his "General Semantics" (and of his coupled "Non–Aristotelian Language System"):

"The premises are very simple and may be stated by means of an analogy:

1. A map *is not* the territory. (Words *are not* the things they represent.)

2. A map covers *not all* the territory. (Words cannot cover all they represent.)

3. A map is self–reflexive. (In language we can speak *about* language.)

We notice that the old prescientific assumptions violate the first two premises and disregard the third."

See Korzybski, Alfred. "The Role of Language in the Perceptual Processes". In Perception: An Approach to Personality, eds. Robert R. Blake and Glenn V. Ramsey (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1951), 170–205.

[49] "If words *are not* things, or maps *are not* the actual territory, then, obviously, the only possible link between the objective world and the linguistic world is found in *structure*, and *structure alone*. The only usefulness of a map or a language depends on the *similarity of structure* between the empirical world and the map–languages. If the structure is not similar, then the traveler or speaker is led astray, which, in serious human life–problems, must become always eminently harmful. If the structures *are similar*, then the empirical world become 'rational' to a potential rational being, which means no more than that verbal, or map–predicted characteristics, which follow up the linguistic or map–structure, are applicable to the empirical world" (Korzybski, Science and Sanity, 61). See also Emory A. Griffin, A First Look at Communication Theory (New York: McGraw–Hill, 1997), 63 and 66 (Chapter 5: *The Meaning of Meaning of I. A. Richards*): "Definitions are like maps. They can guide us where we want to go only if we know where we are. We need a starting point—a place on the map where we can point and state with confidence, 'I am here.' [...] Since *The Meaning of Meaning* first appeared in 1923,

There is a "causal relationship" between the "symbol" and the "thought" as they both make use of a certain linguistic symbolism, and we are motivated by or reacting to the thoughts that it arouses in us and of the "psychological and social factors" of our experiential context. Nonetheless, it must be mentioned that such causality does not affect the relationship of arbitrariness between the "symbol" and the "thought," but it does prevent the possibility of a direct and immediate link between the "symbol" and the "referent." The linguistic approach to the real world occurs through a psychological mapping of the territory. Nonetheless, though the latter can never be fully depicted, if this mapping must be as faithful as possible to the territory it represents, the complex of linguistic symbols must also be returned to its essentiality of a "linguistic machine." Such an essentiality is functional to the expression of the scientific thought and of the denotative–connotative—referential and emotional—representation of the world of daily experience and of its needs, being aware of the possible interpretative errors resulting from an inappropriate use.

 A partial survey of the many languages used in various parts of the world shows that they are both too many and, above all, too grammatically complex and lexically superabundant.

It is therefore necessary to prune grammar of its unnecessary elements and to come back to the simplicity of "representations," which are closer to the world of sensible data and to a lexicon mirroring such simplicity. This is what had been suggested by Bentham and Horne Tooke, whom Ogden considered eminent forerunners. As mentioned above, since Ogden believed that "abstract words" must be traced back to their "archetypes" or "models," that is to words whose meaning can be understood in terms of sensible perceptions, "stated that it was possible to find 'in all languages, the names, which stand for things that fall not under our senses, to have their first rise from sensible ideas'."[50] Previously, Horne Tooke "showed in *The Diversions of Purley* it was possible to propose for every word in the English language an etymology that would

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many scholars have independently reached similar conclusions. For example, the field of general semantics claims that words are attempts to map reality, but that a verbal map is not the territory, nor can it ever depict all of the territory."

[50] Bentham, The Works, Vol. 8, 121–126 (*Chrestomathic Instruction Tables. Table II. Appendix.—No. IV. Essay On Nomenclature and Classification*. Section XIX. Concluding Note). See note 32.

show how its form has been derived directly from words relating directly to sense–impressions."[51]

Generally speaking, these are the goals and the assumptions on which humankind should be provided with a communication tool which is simultaneously simple, intelligible, functional, and effective.

Principles, construction, and structure of Basic English

Therefore, the English scholar's task consists of elaborating an innovative "Science of Interpretation" based on the data of perception psychology and on a proper application of the "fiction theory." Furthermore, in compliance with the canons of the above–mentioned Science, he proposes to carry out a "grammatical reform" able to forge a simplified international language which is easy to learn, fast spreading, and able to meet the needs of the peoples of the earth.

Rather than thinking of artificial languages such as Esperanto, therefore, Ogden opted for a natural language which, thanks to its intrinsic features, would allow the necessary grammar and lexical simplifications to be carried out.

It's the language analysis which allows to neutralize and overcome the unintelligibility and the superabundance of the "winged words."[52] Still,

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[51] De Champs, "The Place of Jeremy Bentham's Theory of Fictions in Eighteenth–century Linguistic Thought," 19. The reference is to John Horne Tooke, Ἔπεα Πτερόεντα. Or The Diversions of Purley, Vols. I–II (London: Richard Taylor, 1829).

[52] The expression "ἔπεα πτερόεντα," which is often mentioned both in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*, is used by Horne Tooke as the main title of his *Diversions of Purley*. In such a work, the author states that "words are the *signs* of *things*" and that "there must therefore be as many sorts of words, or *parts of speech*, as there are sort of *things*." Therefore, since there are only two sorts of things, that is "*res quæ permanent*" and "*res quæ fluunt*," there should be only two sorts of *parts of speech*, that is nouns ("*notæ rerum quæ permanent*") and verbs ("*notæ rerum quæ fluunt*"). Nonetheless, grammarians added many more "inferior parts of speech," which are, in fact, only "*abbreviations*" of the former and, as such, they are "the *wheels* of language, the *wings* of Mercury." Consequently, even though "there is nothing more admirable nor more useful than the inventions of signs," "at the same time there is nothing more productive of errors when we neglect to observe their complication." In fact, "the first aim of Language was to *communicate* our thoughts: the second, to do it with *dispatch*," "whatever additions or alterations have been made for the sake of beauty, or ornament, ease, gracefulness, or pleasure." Therefore, if "words have been called *winged*," it must be admitted that

it must be mentioned that the separation of "contracted" symbols into their elementary units is a relatively simple procedure to carry out in the English language thanks to its natural analytic trend. In fact, English uses the word order as well as auxiliary words as prepositions to obtain the same result of inflected languages and, therefore, it's the most suitable language to defeat the "magic of words" and to serve as a universal language.

Ogden states that "any discussion of the reform of English Grammar is today faced by problems of psychology and interpretation, which seem to call for a new science, wider in scope than that covered by

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"they deserve that name, when their abbreviations are compared with the progress which speech could make without these inventions; but compared with the rapidity of thought, they have not the smallest claim to that title." In short, Horne Tooke believes that "in English, and in all Languages, there are only *two* sorts of words which are *necessary* for the communication of our thoughts," that is, as already mentioned, nouns and verbs to which may be added, "under the title of *Abbreviations*," all other parts of speech "which are not necessary to speech, but merely *substitutes* of the first sort." Horne Tooke adds that "*Abbreviations* are employed in language three ways," that is "in terms," "in sort of words" and "in construction." Therefore, "words" are strictly linked to "things" and "the business of the mind, as far as it concerns Language, appears [...] very simple:" "it extends no further than to receive impressions, that is, to have Sensations or Feelings" and "what are called its operations, are merely the operations of Language" (Horne Tooke, Ἔπεα Πτερόεντα. Or The Diversions of Purley, Vol. I, 18–28, 45–49). "Winged words" are therefore those which are not strictly necessary to communicate thought and which we could and should not use in order to avoid obscurity and misunderstandings stemming from their use, which is nonetheless common and difficult to modify. It is worth noting that the reference of "πτερόεντα" to "birds" might not be correct since such word is more often linked to "arrows" (Patrizia Laspia, "Chi dà le ali alle parole? Il significato articolatorio di ἔπεα πτερόεντα". In Omero tremila anni dopo. Atti del congresso di Genova 6–8 luglio 2000, ed. Franco Montanari and Paola Ascheri (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2002, 471–488)). The Greek expression "ἔπεα πτερόεντα" might therefore mean "to hurl words as if they were arrows" but, in such a case, the meaning would not be that of "*wheels* of language" or "*wings* of Mercury"—that is useless embellishments of language—which Horne Tooke gives it. Be it a metaphorical expression ("lofty words"), as George Calhoun supposes, or a formulaic one (superfluous in itself, but probably needed to rhyme), as Milman Parry proposes, or another possible hermeneutic variant (for instance, according to Laspia, it refers to the words that the phonatory system hurls, as if they were arrows, towards the addressee), the issue is open from a philological and translational point of view.