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NOTES ON BASIC ENGLISH

NUMBER ONE

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE SYSTEM

THE ORTHOLOGICAL COMMITTEE
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OCTOBER 1940

BASIC ENGLISH

OPERATIONS 100 ETC.

COME
GET
GIVE
GO
KEEP
LET
MAKE
PUT
SEEM
TAKE
BE
DO
HAVE
SAY
SEE
SEND
MAY
WILL
ABOUT
ACROSS
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AGAINST
AMONG
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BEFORE
BETWEEN
BY
DOWN
FROM
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THROUGH
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EVERY
NO
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SOME
SUCH
THAT
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YOU
WHO
AND
BECAUSE
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OR
THOUGH
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HOW
WHEN
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WHY
AGAIN
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TOGETHER
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MUCH
NOT
ONLY
QUITE
SO
VERY
TOMORROW
YESTERDAY
NORTH
SOUTH
EAST
WEST
PLEASE
YES

THINGS

400 GENERAL

ACCOUNT
ACT
ADDITION
ADJUSTMENT
ADVERTISEMENT
AGREEMENT
AIR
AMOUNT
AMUSEMENT
ANIMAL
ANSWER
APPARATUS
APPROVAL
ARGUMENT
ART
ATTACK
ATTEMPT
ATTENTION
ATTRACTION
AUTHORITY
BACK
BALANCE
BASE
BEHAVIOUR
BELIEF
BIRTH
BIT
BITE
BLOOD
BLOW
BODY
BRASS
BREAD
BREATH
BROTHER
BUILDING
BURN
BURST
BUSINESS
BUTTER
CANVAS
CARE
CAUSE
CHALK
CHANCE
CHANGE
CLOTH
COAL
COLOUR
COMFORT
COMMITTEE
COMPANY
COMPARISON
COMPETITION
CONDITION
CONNECTION
CONTROL
COOK
COPPER
COPY
CORK
COTTON
COUGH
COUNTRY
COVER
CRACK
CREDIT
CRIME
CRUSH
CRY
CURRENT
CURVE
DAMAGE
DANGER
DAUGHTER
DAY
DEATH
DEBT
DECISION
DEGREE
DESIGN
DESIRE
DESTRUCTION
DETAIL
DEVELOPMENT
DIGESTION
DIRECTION
DISCOVERY
DISCUSSION
DISEASE
DISGUST
DISTANCE
DISTRIBUTION
DIVISION
DOUBT
DRINK
DRIVING
DUST
EARTH
EDGE
EDUCATION
EFFECT
END
ERROR
EVENT
EXAMPLE
EXCHANGE
EXISTENCE
EXPANSION
EXPERIENCE
EXPERT
FACT
FALL
FAMILY
FATHER
FEAR
FEELING
FICTION
FIELD
FIGHT
FIRE
FLAME
FLIGHT
FLOWER
FOLD
FOOD
FORCE
FORM
FRIEND
FRONT
FRUIT
GLASS
GOLD
GOVERNMENT
GRAIN
GRASS
GRIP
GROUP
GROWTH
GUIDE
HARBOUR
HARMONY
HATE
HEARING
HEAT
HELP
HISTORY
HOLE
HOPE
HOUR
HOUMOUR
ICE
IDEA
IMPULSE
INCREASE
INDUSTRY
INK
INSECT
INSTRUMENT
INSURANCE
INTEREST
INVENTION
IRON
JELLY
JOIN
JOURNEY
JUDGE
JUMP
KICK
KISS
KNOWLEDGE
LAND
LANGUAGE
LAUGH
LAW
LEAD
LEARNING
LEATHER
LETTER
LEVEL
LIFT
LIGHT
LIMIT
LINEN
LIQUID
LIST
LOOK
LOSS
LOVE
MACHINE
MAN
MANAGER
MARK
MARKET
MASS
MEAL
MEASURE
MEAT
MEETING
MEMORY

METAL
MIDDLE
MILK
MIND
MINE
MINUTE
MIST
MONEY
MONTH
MORNING
MOTHER
MOTION
MOUNTAIN
MOVE
MUSIC
NAME
NATION
NEED
NEWS
NIGHT
NOISE
NOTE
NUMBER
OBSERVATION
OFFER
OIL
OPERATION
OPINION
ORDER
ORGANIZATION
ORNAMENT
OWNER
PAGE
PAIN
PAINT
PAPER
PART
PASTE
PAYMENT
PEACE
PERSON
PLACE
PLANT
PLAY
PLEASURE
POINT
POISON
POLISH
PORTER
POSITION
POWDER
POWER
PRICE
PRINT
PROCESS
PRODUCE
PROFIT
PROPERTY
PROSE
PROTEST
PULL
PUNISHMENT
PURPOSE
PUSH
QUALITY
QUESTION
RAIN
RANGE
RATE
RAY
REACTION
READING
REASON
RECORD
REGRET
RELATION
RELIGION
REPRESENTATIVE
REQUEST
RESPECT
REST
REWARD
RHYTHM
RICE
RIVER
ROAD
ROLL
ROOM
RUB
RULE
RUN
SALT
SAND
SCALE
SCIENCE
SEA
SEAT
SECRETARY
SELECTION
SELF

SENSE
SERVANT
SEX
SHADE
SHAKE
SHAME
SHOCK
SIDE
SIGN
SILK
SILVER
SISTER
SIZE
SKY
SLEEP
SLIP
SLOPE
SMASH
SMELL
SMILE
SMOKE
SNEEZE
SNOW
SOAP
SOCIETY
SON
SONG
SORT
SOUND
SOUP
SPACE
STAGE
START
STATEMENT
STEAM
STEEL
STEP
STITCH
STONE
STOP
STORY
STRETCH
STRUCTURE
SUBSTANCE
SUGAR
SUGGESTION
SUMMER
SUPPORT
SURPRISE
SWIM
SYSTEM
TALK
TASTE
TAX
TEACHING
TENDENCY
TEST
THEORY
THING
THOUGHT
THUNDER
TIME
TIN
TOP
TOUCH
TRADE
TRANSPORT
TRICK
TROUBLE
TURN
TWIST
UNIT
USE
VALUE
VERSE
VESSEL
VIEW
VOICE
WALK
WAR
WASH
WASTE
WATER
WAVE
WAX
WAY
WEATHER
WEEK
WEIGHT
WIND
WINE
WINTER
WOMAN
WOOD
WOOL
WORD
WORK
WOUND
WRITING
YEAR

300 Picturable

ANGLE
ANT
APPLE
ARCH
ARM
ARMY
BABY
BAG
BALL
BAND
BASIN
BASKET
BATH
BED
BEE
BELL
BERRY
BIRD
BLADE
BOARD
BOAT
BONE
BOOK
BOOT
BOTTLE
BOX
BOY
BRAIN
BRAKE
BRANCH
BRICK
BRIDGE
BRUSH
BUCKET
BULB
BUTTON
CAKE
CAMERA
CARD
CART
CARRIAGE
CAT
CHAIN
CHEESE
CHEST
CHIN
CHURCH
CIRCLE
CLOCK
CLOUD
COAT
COLLAR
COMB
CORD
COW
CUP
CURTAIN
CUSHION
DOG
DOOR
DRAIN
DRAWER
DRESS
DROP
EAR
EGG
ENGINE
EYE
FACE
FARM
FEATHER
FINGER
FISH
FLAG
FLOOR
FLY
FOOT
FORK
FOWL
FRAME
GARDEN
GIRL
GLOVE
GOAT
GUN
HAIR
HAMMER
HAND
HAT
HEAD
HEART
HOOK
HORN
HORSE
HOSPITAL
HOUSE
ISLAND
JEWEL
KETTLE
KEY

QUALITIES

100 General

ABLE
ACID
ANGRY
AUTOMATIC
BEAUTIFUL
BLACK
ROLLING
BRIGHT
BROKEN
BROWN
CHEAP
CHEMICAL
CHIEF
CLEAN
CLEAR
COMMON
COMPLEX
CONSCIOUS
CUT
DEEP
DEPENDENT
EARLY
ELASTIC
ELECTRIC
EQUAL
FAT
FERTILE
FIRST
FIXED
FLAT
FREE
FREQUENT
FULL
GENERAL
GOOD
GREAT
GREY
HANGING
HAPPY
HARD
HEALTHY
HIGH
HOLLOW
IMPORTANT
KIND
LIKE
LIVING
LONG
MALE
MARRIED
MATERIAL
MEDICAL
MILITARY
NATURAL
NECESSARY
NEW
NORMAL
OPEN
PARALLEL
PAST
PHYSICAL
POLITICAL
POOR
POSSIBLE
PRESENT
PRIVATE
PROBABLE
QUICK
QUIET
READY
RED
REGULAR
RESPONSIBLE
RIGHT
ROUND
SAME
SECOND
SEPARATE
SERIOUS
SHARP
SMOOTH
STICKY
STIFF
STRAIGHT
STRONG
SUDDEN
SWEET
TALL
THICK
TIGHT
TIRED
TRUE
VIOLENT
WAITING
WARM
WET
WIDE
WISE
YELLOW
YOUNG

50 Opposites

AWAKE
BAD
BENT
BITTER
BLUE
CERTAIN
COLD
COMPLETE
CRUEL
DARK
DEAD
DEAR
DELICATE
DIFFERENT
DIRTY
DRY
FALSE
FEEBLE
FEMALE
FOOLISH
FUTURE
GREEN
ILL
LAST
LATE
LEFT
LOOSE
LOUD
LOW
MIXED
NARROW
OLD
OPPOSITE
PUBLIC
ROUGH
SAD
SAFE
SECRET
SHORT
SHUT
SIMPLE
SLOW
SMALL
SOFT
SOLID
SPECIAL
STRANGE
THIN
WHITE
WRONG

RULES

ADDITION OF 'S'
TO THINGS WHEN
THERE IS
MORE THAN ONE

ENDINGS
IN 'ER', 'ING', 'ED'
FROM 300 NAMES
OF THINGS

'LY' FORMS
FROM
QUALITIES

DEGREE
WITH
'MORE' AND 'MOST'

QUESTIONS
BY CHANGE OF
ORDER,
AND 'DO'.

FORM-CHANGES IN
NAMES OF ACTS,
AND 'THAT', 'THIS',
'I', 'HE', 'YOU',
'WHO', AS IN
NORMAL ENGLISH

MEASURES
NUMBERS
DAYS, MONTHS
AND THE
INTERNATIONAL
WORDS
IN ENGLISH
FORM.

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NOTES ON BASIC ENGLISH, No. 1.

A Short Account of the System of Basic English

I. What Basic English Is.

Basic English is a form of English in which 850 words, with certain additions for special purposes, will do the work of 20,000. It is possible in Basic English to give an account of the senses of any other word in the language. That is *not* to say that this small number of words will for all purposes take the place of all other words in the language.

The system has three chief uses:

1. It was designed to give everyone a second, or international, language which takes as little of the learner's time as possible, and which gives him all the necessary apparatus of language for everyday purposes. The addition of small lists of 50 words take it to the level of the expert, who will then make use of Basic as the framework into which he puts the necessary special words of his field.
2. It is a quick and smooth first step in learning normal English by which control of English senses and English structure may be given in the shortest possible time with the greatest possible reward for work done. It gives the key to normal English, because the senses of all other English words may be given in the Basic words, and because the structure of all other English statements may be made clear by comparison with the simplest statements in Basic.
3. For anyone whose natural language is English it may be used as training in the use of full English. The process of working in and out of Basic and of making comparisons between Basic and complete English has a number of special values. In the light of Basic, the range and the power of English become clearer. One becomes more conscious not only of the structure of the language but of shades of sense and feeling within it.

For one or another of these three reasons, thirty countries are teaching Basic English in the schools, from Denmark to China to the United States. It is being used by international organizations, by business men, and for international radio. It is being used for teaching reading to the very young, and later for helping boys and girls who have trouble with their use of language. Experience with it in high schools and colleges in this country is increasing. In a day when "the classics" and "grammar" are no longer part of a normal education, Basic may to some degree take their place as training in the control and ordered use of language.

These three uses are not so separate as they may seem. All three are stems of the same plant, whose root is the relation of this small part of English to the full language. An international language has to be simple and clear, and to have a wide range so that discussion of complex ideas may be as possible as making statements of fact. The secret of the three-in-one power of Basic English is the way in which the selection of words was made. A small number of words would do the necessary amount of work only if they were able to give full accounts of the senses of all other words in English (that is, of the signs for all our other sorts of thoughts.)

Before we go on to the story of the growth of Basic, there is one thing to be noted. In Use 3, it is the process of using Basic English and not the outcome which is important. A bit of "Moby Dick" or of Adam Smith in Basic would have no value in itself for this purpose, but the process of putting it into Basic, and of comparison between the Basic and Adam Smith himself may be of the greatest value. In Use 2, the process of learning Basic may have this same sort of value at a late stage, but in the early stages, any material in Basic is good for the learner as taking him up to the point where he is ready for a wider English. In Use 1, however, it is the material in Basic which is chiefly important, and the values of the process of using it only come in by the way. This is possibly the clearest way of keeping the three purposes separately in mind.

II. How Basic English Came To Be.

When C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards were writing *The Meaning of Meaning* in 1920, a book about the processes by which words come to have different senses in our minds, they made maps of the full range of senses of a great number of key words. That is, they were giving these words "definitions". In doing this, they were interested to see that the same words kept coming into the definitions of every sort of word from "mouse" to "beauty". Mr. Ogden saw that the way in which the language was able to give accounts of itself might make possible a form of English with a small enough number of words covering a wide enough field to become a working international language. It seemed that only two or three hundred words had, in theory, the seeds of all ideas talked about in English, but a language of that size would not have been simple or smooth or of much use for any of the normal purposes of language. To have working value, it would have to be under a top limit of 1000 words, and yet have a range which would make it equally good for everyday living and for the business of the experts; it would have to have rules, as simple and regular as possible, and at the same time be good English.

Suggestions about language made all through the history of English thought from Bacon to Jeremy Bentham went into the making of Basic. It was an observation of Bentham's about English verbs which gave Ogden the idea that most of them might be cut out without loss to the sense. This was the key not only to the wide covering power of this small number of words, but to an organization of those words in such a way that the structure is more regular and simpler for a learner than any other system so far worked out.

The selection of words was based on a number of different sorts of tests of their value for the purposes in hand. The first question was not: "How frequently is this word used?", but "In what ways will this word take the place of what other words?" The end was to be a working language covering all the necessary senses, but which would make no attempt at producing all the color and feeling of the full language. Naturally that would not be possible, and as Basic was not designed to take the place of English, the loss would not be important. It was to be a language for talking about things and talking about feelings, not one for producing feelings and reactions. So it was formed by cutting out everything not necessary to the sense. This is the secret of one of its chief values in education.

The first line of attack was on "verbs". Almost all English verbs may be broken down into the operations and directions they are in fact talking about. For example, to *immerse* your hands in water is to put them under water; to *emerge* from a room is to come out of it; to *illustrate* your arguments is to give examples, while to *illustrate* a story is to put pictures in it, or make pictures of it; to *climb*, *mount*, or *ascend* a mountain you go up it (on foot, in a railway or in an automobile as the fact may be); if you *dust* the table, you take dust off it, and if you dust the baby with powder you put the dust (or powder) on the baby (maybe put it on with a light touch). This makes it possible for Basic to have only 18 verbs (the words for these necessary physical motions and *have* and *be*), in addition to the names of the directions (*to*, *from*, *on*, *in*, *under*, and so on), and the names of the things to which or with which the act is done.

The second great group of words, the nouns, were tested by Mr. Ogden's system of "panoptic definition". The noun in question would be put in the middle of a circle with rays going out from the middle. The rays were signs of all the relations in which the word being tested might be said to be with other things. This is clearer with examples. We will say that *man* (that is, the general name of man as one of the animals) is the word whose range of relations is being tested. One of the rays would be headed *time*, with divisions for time in history and age. On this ray would be such words as *Elizabethan*, and *octogenarian*, and all other words which say anything about man's relation to time. Another group of rays would be headed *behavior*. The heading of one of these would be *sex*, on which *man* (in the less general sense) and *woman*, *lady* and *gentleman* and so on would be put. As every such word went on the map, it was possible to see how necessary it was by seeing how accounts might be given of it in other words. An *Elizabethan* may clearly be someone living in England in the time of Queen Elizabeth, or between the years 1558 and 1603; an *octogenarian* may be a man eighty years old or over, or simply a very old man; *man* and *woman* will be necessary, though if we take *man* in the general sense of a *higher animal*, we might say *male* and *female man*, as we do say *male* and *female monkey*. But *lady* and *gentleman* would go out, being covered in all important ways by *man* and *woman*. We will come back later to other words like those, which are cut out for somewhat the same reasons. Man has such complex relations with other things that the map of this word is naturally the greatest of all. Other sorts of words are simpler. If we put *house* in the middle of the circle, there would be a ray for *size*, on which words like *cottage* and *mansion* might become *very small* and *very*

great houses; one for *number* which would have *settlement*, *village*, and *city*, which might be said to be a *small group of houses*, a *group of houses on one or two streets*, or a *very small town*, and a *very great town*. *Town* is kept as the only general word of that group which is of value in giving accounts of the others. And so the process went till every sort of name in English had been gone over with care.

With this system for seeing that there would be no holes in the word list, the selection went on, and every word was put to the test of four questions:

1. May a clear account be given of this word in not more than ten other words?
If so, and if the word is not the name of some very common thing needed in everyday talk, then that word is probably not necessary. A *quadruped* is any animal with four legs, but a *cat* and a *horse* are special sorts of quadrupeds which are so common that any detailed account of them would not take the place of their names, or give a clear enough idea of the animal in question in less than ten words. So Basic keeps *cat* and *horse* and does without *quadruped*.
2. Is this word necessary to the sense or is it chiefly important in full English for the feeling, the point of view and the judging of value which are, as it were, rolled in with the sense? Take *lady* and *gentleman* for example. There are a number of different facts about a woman or about her behavior, or who her family is or how much money she has or the quality of her inner self which may be the reasons why we say she is a lady. But very frequently we give her the name because we have some sort of feelings about her which may or may not have anything to do with the facts. It is possible in Basic to give an account of what those feelings are, and what that woman has which other women have not. These delicate shades of feeling may be talked about, but words producing those feelings automatically are not for the most part needed for these purposes. In fact, they would make such discussion harder. Basic has no *sin* or *guilt*, but *doing wrong*, *wrong-doing*, *sense of shame* and *error* are some ways of talking about the same ideas with a little less feeling. There is no *meaning*, but *sense*; no *ambition*, but a *desire to do something*; no *it is imperative to*, but *it is necessary*, or *important*, or *right, to*; no *faith*, but *belief*. (Note: there are no fixed Basic "equivalents" for any English words. For example, *guilt* would have a sense in the statement of a judge quite different from its sense in the writings of Freud. The Basic for any English word may only be given when the special use of that word in any given group of statements is taken into account.)
3. Is this word necessary to the sense or is it important chiefly for its sound or color in great writing?
Basic would keep *red*, and this may be dark red, or blood red, or bright red, but not *incarnadine* or *scarlet* or *roseate*. Basic would not keep *fragrant*, but flowers may have a sweet smell.
4. Is this word such a special or "low-level" word, or such a general or "high-level" one that it has little use for normal purposes? At one end of the scale, *molecule* and *cortex* are examples of the sort of word which will not be needed for other than special purposes in special fields; at the other, *relativity* and *transcendentalism* are examples of words which are so deeply rooted in complex theory that for normal purposes they are unnecessary. So such words are not kept in the Basic list. (But see later, on rules for general use, what an expert may do in talking about special details of general theories.)

A number of interesting points come up in connection with this suggestion that words do their work at different "levels", ranging from the very special to the very general. The fact that there is this sort of system of division and relation between groups of words gives a necessary organization to the language, and is most important in the selection of a limited number of words. For example, we may at different times, pointing at the same thing, say *this thing*, *this substance*, *this solid*, *this wood*, *this mahogany*, and so on. *Liquid* and *gas* are talking about different substances at the same general level, but *water*, *liquid* and *fluid* may all be talking about the same substance at different levels, ranging in this example from "low" to "high". Two or more lower level words may make one higher unnecessary, as *fluid* is not needed if *air*, *liquid* and *gas* are present. And in an example given earlier, a middle-level word like *quadruped* may be covered by the high-level word *animal* together with the two lower level words *four* and *leg*.

While the process of selection was going on, it became clear that with a limited list of words which were to do so much work, there would have to be some control of the changes of sense of the words in use. All but the lowest level very special words in English have from two to any number of different possible senses when used in different sorts of statements. Mr. Ogden went about mapping these changes of sense in a way which has not been done before, on the theory that every word has what may be said to be a "root" sense, that is, one sense which is more important than any other in making clear what the relations between the different senses are. The other senses are for the most part expansions from that root, or special uses taken from it. For example, starting from a man's *foot*, the word *foot* becomes a general name for the base of anything, (*the foot of a mountain*); and *mountain* may be used for anything of great size, or for a *mountain of work*. The chain of connection is longer, but still clear, between the *crime* for which a man is sent to prison, and the *crime* of society in putting the very young to work. To go a step farther, "fictions" are formed by these comparisons; that is to say, things which have no true existence are talked of *as if* they were like what we see round us. We go for a walk in a *field* of flowers, but not in a *field* of interest, though there is clearly something in common between the *range* of our thoughts and a limited space. Cakes have a strong *attraction* for a small boy, but he is not physically pulled to them as the needle is to the north.

When there is no clear connection between two senses of a word, Basic keeps only the one which has the more general value. As between *bit* of cake and a horse's *bit*, only the first may be used in Basic. There is no important connection between the *respect* which we have for someone and the *respects* in which Basic is different from English, so the second sense of *respect* may not be used. More suggestions about expansions of sense and special word uses are in Parts II and III of *The ABC of Basic English*, and the complete list of senses which may be used, stemming from the root sense, is in the little book *The Basic Words*.

At the same time Mr. Ogden was working on ways of giving accounts of word order and the different sorts of English words which would be clearer and simpler than the accounts given normally in English "grammar". The fruits of this work are in *The ABC of Basic English*, a little book which is full of important and sometimes new ideas.

After some ten years of work on such lines as these, the system was tested in every sort of material. The range covered may best be seen by a look at the list of Basic books, a number of which were put out chiefly as examples of how Basic might be used in different fields. And the last step was to do a number of books on which teaching books in different countries might be based. (*The ABC of Basic English, The Basic Words, Basic Step by Step, The Basic Way to English.*)*

III. Some General Rules for the Use of Basic English.

There is no point here in going into details of the rules for using Basic. The chief rules are outlined on the right side of the list of words printed in the front of this paper. The details of these, and of one or two others, are all in *The ABC of Basic English*.

The rules of the system are naturally important to anyone who is using it for any purpose. Here are in addition one or two special notes about its use, to anyone writing in it or putting bits of English prose or verse into Basic for whatever reason. In the first place, there is bad Basic and good Basic, and one of the most important general rules is this: If it is bad English, it is bad Basic. Even within these small limits there are a number of ways of saying almost anything, some good in some places, some in others, and some clear enough but good only for a morning's laugh. Common sense is as important in the use of Basic as it is in the business of the day. *The Basic Dictionary* makes suggestions of ways of putting the 7500 commonest English words into Basic. This book is a great help, sometimes giving an account of the word's chief senses, sometimes giving a higher or lower level word which may for some purposes take the place of the word in question. But, like any other Dictionary, it may not be used for word by word "translation". Word by word translation from full English to Basic is more clearly wrong in Basic than in most languages. It is possible to make good sense and smooth reading only by taking the full sense of the English statement into account.

*For more details on the growth of Basic English from the theory of signs, see *The Meaning of Meaning, Word Economy, Basic English: An Introduction and Rules, The Basic Vocabulary* (out of print), and papers in *Psyche* from 1928 to 1939.

There are one or two general rules for the addition of words outside the Basic limits which may be needed for special purposes. An expert in any one branch of science, writing for other experts, will make use of Basic chiefly as the framework for the special names necessary in his field. To make this writing smoother, Basic gives lists of 100 words for general science and 50 for every special branch, so that the number comes up to 1000 for expert use. In addition, if any other new words are needed, they may be made clear by an account in Basic words, or by a picture. To some degree, the same thing may be done in any sort of writing where a word is important or will have to be frequently used, as in a story about *pirates* and *diamonds* an account would be given of the two words, possibly in a footnote, when they first come in, and they would then be used freely. This process, if not overdone, may be a help. Special care is needed when the use in this way of some more complex word seems necessary. For example, in a long discussion of feudalism, it may be important for the reader not only to have a knowledge of the form of society being talked about, but of its name as well. The general word may be used, if a clear account of it is given when it is first used, and if the writer takes care to see that any change of sense in his use of that word in the rest of the discussion is pointed out to the reader. This sometimes makes things hard for the writer, but it may be that a reader has a right to something of the sort even if he is not reading in Basic.

Fuller directions for the writing of Basic are given in *Notes on Basic English*, No. 2, on how Basic may be learned, for those interested chiefly in the third use outlined earlier.

IV. Some Examples of Basic English.

This account of the system is itself an example of it, but for those who are interested in making a comparison between Basic and regular English, and in seeing Basic at work for different purposes, here are a number of parallel bits of prose, and one bit of poetry. It is important to be clear that the Basic is, in all the prose examples, said to be "better" than the regular English *only for certain purposes*. It is not put forward as something which might for all purposes take the place of any statement in full English. All of the prose examples are taken from current papers, all are representative of certain common sorts of prose, none of them is an attempt at writing "art prose", all are putting forward ideas or talking about facts. So the important thing is the sense of the writer's words. In poetry naturally all the other forces of language and of the writer's and reader's thoughts and feelings come into play. So the use of Basic in reading poetry becomes simply one important stage of reading the poetry, and the Basic in no sense takes the place of the writer's verse.

1. From an editorial in the *New York Times*

ENGLISH

It is obvious that a Nazi victory in Europe would enormously increase America's problem of defending itself by defending the western hemisphere.

One aspect of that problem has been brought to light in the last few days in the exposure of Fifth Column Nazi activities conducted among the German residents in several South American countries.

If there is any Nazi move directed against this hemisphere, most military and diplomatic observers believe that it would be directed against one or several Central or South American republics first of all.

It is unlikely that the first overt moves would be directed against the United States itself.

BASIC

It is clear that if the Nazis get control of Europe, it will be far harder for the United States to keep itself safe from attack by keeping the attacker out of all the other countries of the two Americas.

The position has become clear in the last day or two as news has come to light of the planting of secret Nazi representatives among the Germans living in a number of South American countries.

If there is any Nazi move against this side of the Atlantic, it is the belief of most experts on military and political international conditions that it would be against one or more of the countries South of the United States first of all.

It is not probable that the first open moves would be against the United States itself.

This is an example of prose whose sense may be given quite simply to someone whose knowledge of English is limited, at any stage, to Basic. It is possible to say these same things a number of other ways in Basic, but one parallel is enough for present purposes.

It has been said that learning Basic is learning English by well-ordered stages. Here is an example of a bit of school reading in three stages. The first stage would come after about the first twenty steps of learning Basic. The learner will have had only simple word-order, only simple pasts, presents and futures, no joined words (such as *seaman*), no words which take the -er, -ed and -ing endings (such as *worker* and *sailor*, *resting* and *fishing*). The second stage comes later when his word-order has become more elastic and he has gone into the simpler expansions and form changes of the Basic words. The third stage is in the words of the writer himself, Robert Louis Stevenson, from whose story, *The Bottle Imp*, these examples have been made.

Stage 1. Keawe was a man on the island of Hawaii. I will give the name of Keawe to him, because he is living now, and I may not give his true name to you, but the place of his birth was not far from Honaunau, where the bones of Keawe the Great are. This man was poor, he had a love for danger, and for hard work. He was good at reading and writing. He was good at the work of a man at sea, and had a great knowledge of ships. One day he said to himself: "I will go to countries and to towns which are far from here and see what they are like." So he got work on a ship and went to San Francisco.

Stage 2. There was a man on the island of Hawaii, to whom I will give the name of Keawe, because the fact is that he is still living, and it is necessary to keep his name secret, but the place of his birth was not far from Honaunau, where the bones of Keawe the Great have their resting-place in a stone hollow. This man was poor, a lover of danger, and a hard worker; he was as good at reading and writing as a school-teacher. In addition, he was a first-rate seaman, and had been for some time on an island steamer, and had taken a fishing-boat down Hamakua way. At last it came into Keawe's mind to see something of other countries and towns, and he went as a sailor on a vessel going to San Francisco.

Stage 3. (In the words of Stevenson himself)

There was a man of the island of Hawaii, whom I shall call Keawe; for the truth is, he still lives, and his name must be kept secret; but the place of his birth was not far from Honaunau, where the bones of Keawe the Great lie hidden in a cave. This man was poor, brave and active; he could read and write like a schoolmaster; he was a first-rate mariner besides, sailed for some time in the island steamers, and steered a whaleboat on the Hamakua coast. At length it came in Keawe's mind to have a sight of the great world and foreign cities, and he shipped on a vessel bound for San Francisco.

In a little book, *Statement and Suggestion*, about the use of Basic in different sorts of writing, A. P. Rossiter says, "There is certainly one sort of prose whose present condition may be said to be completely healthy, and that is the simplest sort of writing used in science. This is not the language used in giving an account of science to 'the man in the street', which is frequently very bad, with all the marks of the present diseases of words upon it—the use of false or forced comparisons, the taking of a word from one field in which it has a certain fixed sense or range of senses to be used in another completely different, the use of words with almost no statement value, and the tendency to put in feelings about things where only facts are important." A writer of this healthy sort of prose may, for example, be writing about plants. His purpose for the moment is to make clear to other interested persons what the plant is like or what condition it is in. His feelings about the plant are, for the business in hand, quite unimportant. He is not attempting to make his reader interested, or to let it be seen that he is one of those uncommon and "different" persons with a "love of flowers". He is making a simple statement, and the better the writer the less probable it is that he will let such mixed purposes come in at the wrong places. At other times such purposes might be the point of his writing. Here they are out of place. Wherever the purpose of writing is like this purpose of writing in science, it is true that the simpler the statement the better the prose. Much writing in science is done by experts for experts. Sometimes it is very complex. Sometimes it is done for readers whose language is not English, and might well be done in Basic. For such purposes, Basic has a list of 100 words for general science, and naturally the names which are a fixed part of any branch of science are kept in their most used form. In this way, Basic gives the framework of language into which the necessary special words are put.

Here are the first lines of a paper in the field of botany, as printed in a record of an International Congress of experts in this field. Its readers are botanists from all countries. The example is short, but it gives an idea of how a somewhat complex bit of prose goes when put into Basic.

ENGLISH

In the main the taxonomy of the Phycomycetes compares favorably with that of other classes of fungi, the arrangement in orders, families and genera here corresponding for the most part, to significant trends in development and morphology, rather than, as often in the Ascomycetes, to specious resemblances in outward design. This fortunate condition has been furthered by several favorable circumstances:

BASIC

In general the division of Phycomycetes into orders, families (and genera) is as good an arrangement as that of most other groups of fungi. It is based for the most part on important tendencies of growth of form and structure, and not, as frequently in the arrangement of Ascomycetes, on a comparison of unimportant outward design. A number of conditions have made this well-ordered arrangement possible:

N.B. *Arrangement* and *genus* are in the list of general Science words. *Fungus* is kept as a necessary name in the field of botany. In some sorts of writing it would be well to give an account of what a fungus is in Basic, before using the word freely.

The Bible has been done in Basic English, printed in England by the Cambridge University Press, and in this country by E. P. Dutton. A special list for the purpose makes the number of words used 1000. Here is a bit from St. Mark, Chapter 10, 17-25.

KING JAMES VERSION

17. And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

18. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest me good? there is none good but one that is God.

19. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

20. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

21. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross and follow me.

22. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

23. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.

24. And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answered again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God.

25. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

BASIC

17. And while he was going out into the way, a man came running to him, and went down on his knees saying, Good Master, what have I to do so that I may have eternal life?

18. And Jesus said to him, Why do you say that I am good? no one is good but one, and that is God.

19. You have knowledge of what is said in the law, Do not put anyone to death, Do not be untrue to your wife, Do not be a thief, Do not give false witness, Do not get money by deceit, Give honour to your father and mother.

20. And he said to him, Master, all those laws I have kept from the time when I was young.

21. And Jesus, looking on him and loving him, said, There is one thing needed: go, get money for your goods, and give it to the poor and you will have wealth in heaven: and come with me.

22. But his face became sad at the saying, and he went away sorrowing: for he was one who had much property.

23. And Jesus looking round about, said to his disciples, How hard it is for those who have wealth to come into the kingdom of God.

24. And the disciples were full of wonder at his words. But Jesus made answer again and said to them, Children, how hard it is for those who put faith in wealth to come into the kingdom of God.

25. It is simpler for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a man of wealth to come into the kingdom of God.

Here we have a bit of prose from a paper for teachers. It is an example of writing which is attempting to say in a small number of words something which is complex and possibly very important. Among a group of five persons who put this into Basic English, five different ways of saying it came out. No two went at it in the same way, but all came out in general agreement about what the writer was talking about. The process of putting it into Basic was of value in seeing what was being said, and that is the important thing here, more important to the person doing it than the Basic statement of it is in itself. Here are examples of two ways of attacking this sort of thing. One goes almost parallel. The other is a new statement of what is taken to be the writer's substance.

ENGLISH

Particularly the student must be taught to understand the workings of those two great modes of imaginative expression—*figurative* would here be a misleading term—analogy and metaphor.

In teaching metaphor it is of the utmost importance to rid the pupil's mind of the superstition that this mode of language is simply poetic ornament and firmly to implant the realization that metaphor is one of the essential methods of expressing meanings, in prose as well as in poetry, and that ability to use and interpret metaphor is essential to clear and logical thinking and writing, and to reading with full comprehension.

BASIC (2)

It is important for boys and girls to be made to see how ideas may be put into words which make the sense of a thought specially clear by giving something other than a simple statement of it. Writing may get its effect sometimes by stretching the sense of words, that is, by using the name of one thing for the name of another which is, or seems to be, like it. This use of language is named "metaphor". Another use (which is frequently a sign of great power of thought) makes one idea clear by making clear another which is seen to be in some way parallel to it. To this we give the name "analogy". A mind which sees relations between things which seem from the outside to be quite different will make use of these two sorts of writing with the greatest effect.

It is important to give a learner help in seeing that metaphor is not an ornament put on to the sense of language, or hanging from the language, but is the sense itself, made bright and clear and strong, and that it is as necessary in prose as in verse. We all make use of metaphor in talking or writing, and are to some degree conscious of its power of suggestion in the language of others. The more expert the use we make of it, and the more we see the way of its working in the words of good writers, the clearer our thought will be.

BASIC (1)

It is specially important for the learner to be clear about the working of those two great ways of putting the feelings and pictures in the mind into words—"analogy" and "metaphor". "Analogy" is a way of making a feeling or an idea clear, or underlining its sense, by saying what it is *like* (when saying what it *is* is impossible, or not enough). An example is "He goes like the wind." "Metaphor" is like analogy, only more so. A word is said to be a metaphor when it is stretched from its simple sense to be used for something which is like it in important ways. "Stretch" here is a metaphor because making a word do more than its normal work and giving it a wider sense is like physical stretching in enough ways so that its use here is natural and clear.

In teaching about metaphor, it is most important to get it out of the boy's or girl's mind that this way of using language is simply an ornament in poetry, and to get it fixed in his mind that most of what we say may best be said and sometimes only said through metaphor, in prose quite as much as in poetry. Power to make use of and to see the reasons for and the force of metaphor is necessary to clear and ordered thought and writing, and to reading with full effect.

These two examples are not given as the "last word" in Basic parallels, but as the first words in a discussion for which there is no room here. The questions which come up first have to do with the writer's purpose, and his point of view about the readers to whom he was writing; then what his idea of "metaphor" was, how and why it is different and more important in this place than "analogy", and so on. As Basic English, these two give an example of the way in which a word which is not Basic may be used when its sense has been given, and when care is taken not to let a widely different sense of it come in without note. This may be done whenever the word in question is one which is to come up over and over again, and when it is a name which is itself important for the purposes in hand.

The use of Basic with poetry is, in a sense, for the education of the reader of poetry. The sort of way in which Basic gets a complex idea broken up into its parts, may be a help even to a good reader. It lets him get more grip on what he is reading.

The great trick of poetry, the reason, you might say, for writing in verse at all, is that it lets the writer get his thought crushed into a small space. Then it is like gunpowder, if the trick is done well: the thought comes bursting into the reader's mind. But this is not the only way of writing poetry, or if it is, then the trick may be done with very simple words. You might get an idea that the Basic words are dead and uninteresting, because they are so simple; that all the bright and living English words are outside the list. Or you might say that it is not possible to have poetry without verbs. That is, complex verbs, not like the Basic *put* and *take* and so on. Because full verbs give force, and color, and song, and the taste of the living minute, and all that sort of thing. Well, it is true that the thought is less crushed together in Basic, and being crushed together is a help for poetry, so no doubt it is true that poetry has a need for complex verbs. What is not true is that there is anything feeble or dead about *put* and *take*. Here is Swinburne writing about the place where dead men go to, and about Persephone, the great woman, or being under whose authority they go. She is Death, and she is the daughter of the earth, because though the summer is fertile (and the earth is fertile) still the winter comes after it (and the winter is death).

"She waits for each and other,
She waits for all men born,
Forgets the earth her mother,
The life of fruits and corn,
And spring and seeds and swallow
Take wing for her and follow,
Where summer song rings hollow
And flowers are put to scorn."

Now one thing is quite clear. It is no use your saying that *take wing for her* and *put to scorn*, in this verse, have only got the feeble little verbs *put* and *take*, so they are feeble. They are very strong, they come out of the lines like the right arm. In fact, they are kept back for the places where most force is needed. It is they who make the smash at the end. That does not say that the Basic verbs are the best ones for poetry *all the time*. But it is sometimes said that there is necessarily a dead feeling about the verbs in Basic, and it seems a good thing to give an answer.

Still, our use of Basic here is not for writing poetry, but for getting the effect of normal poetry clear. So let us take a look at the effect of putting the lines into Basic. I will give the rough sense of the lines in Basic first.

She is waiting for everyone. She is waiting for every man from his birth on. She has let out of her memory the earth who was her mother, and the way of living when fruit and grain are coming to their growth. And the spring, and the seeds, and the birds who go away in winter, all take wing for her, and go one after another to this place where the sound of the songs that were made in summer becomes hollow, and the flowers are laughed at because they were beautiful.

There are two points of interest. *Life* seems quite clear at first—"the life of fruits and corn"—but putting this into Basic has a strange effect. The word is not in the Basic list, and you have to say to yourself, What life? What sort of life of a fruit is in question here? And then it becomes clear that Swinburne has in mind summer, as the time of growth of the fruit, and the feelings that we have in

summer as the opposite to winter and death. In fact, without this connection the lines have no sense. The swallow is not going to its death when it goes south from England at the start of the Winter. It only comes into the verse as one of the signs that winter is coming, and because winter is used in the verse as a sign of death. The swallow goes with desire and hope to a warmer country. But men in the end, so the later verses say, get a desire for death and go to it quickly, as the swallow goes south away from winter. Now this is a simple enough bit of poetry, as poetry goes. But it is quite possible for a reader not to get all this system of comparisons that are working at the back of it. And then turning the poetry into Basic is a help, because it makes you put the right questions.

The other point is maybe of more interest to writers in Basic than to poetry readers. *Scorn* is not in the list, and to give the sense of this verse in Basic you have to get round 'put to scorn'. But it is not possible to give the 'sense' without giving the right suggestion, because the connections of thought, in this sort of poetry, are in the suggestions, and seem to be only feelings. It is no good saying that the flowers are made to seem feeble and unwise, though that is the simplest answer. Or even that they are laughed at cruelly, though that is much better, because it puts our attention onto Persephone, who is cruel. The idea, or so it seems to me, is that the flowers are laughed at *wrongly*. The more beautiful they were the more pain there would be in death. So the way Persephone is judging them is the opposite to the way they were judged in the summer, by living men and by the fertile earth. What is better up here on earth seems worse to her. So the best way to say 'put to scorn', it seemed to me, was to put 'laughed at because they were beautiful'. Well, this may be wrong, but you see the line of thought that is needed. When you make this attempt at turning the sense of a bit of poetry into Basic you will get a feeling that your answer is wrong, at some points. This feeling is a sort of pointer. It is only through our taste about the effects of language that we get our knowledge about its working. In looking for the reason why your first answer was wrong, you are sent on to the important questions about the poetry. So this process makes the structure of the poetry much clearer.