Editors' Preface

The problem of jargon, which we discussed in the preface to the fourth number of this journal, remains unresolved.[1] We are more than ever aware of the difficulties posed by the proliferation of technical terms in the communication between specialist and layman and between specialist and specialist. However, a more thorough exposure to social-science literature and a year of editing the *IPC Papers* have also made us realize the folly of trying to excise jargon by editorial surgery.

The behavioral disciplines have fundamentally the same concern as literature and the rest of the humanities: that inexhaustible subject, man. But what communication-concerned critics of scientific writings, particularly the more style-conscious among them, often seem to overlook is that the social sciences *are* sciences. Unlike literature, for instance, which prizes the ability to operate at more than one level of meaning with a line of poetry or a paragraph of prose, science demands accuracy in terminology—that same mathematical precision which it demands from its methods of measurement. The ideal—call it passion—that drives the social scientist to differentiate behavioral phenomena by giving them different and precise labels is the same as that which goads the physicist to calibrate his instruments to the finest conceivable degree.

No, the present proliferation of jargon is not, as historian Barbara Tuchman suspects it to be, a deliberate creation of the social scientists in order to mark them off as possessors of a special expertise.[2] It is the inevitable outcome of that passion ignited by Linnaeus three centuries ago—the scientific zeal for precise classification and definition. And it is ironic that it is precisely this drive for mathematical accuracy which is at the root of the educated public's accusation that the writings of behavioral scientists obfuscate and mystify rather than clarify.

[1] Cf.: Walden F. Bello and Maria Clara Roldan, editors. Editors' preface. *In* Modernization: its impact in the Philippines ("IPC Papers," No. 4). Quezon City, Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1967. Pp. iii–iv.

[2] Barbara Tuchman. The historian's opportunity. Saturday Review 50 (8, February 29, 1967): 29.

But can we leave it at that? Shall we but shrug and say that the demands of universal communication and the demands of scientific precision seem to be fundamentally irreconcilable?

Something tells us we are barking at the wrong tree. When a nonspecialist finds a psychological tract opaque, what he most readily identifies as the culprit is the author's technical terminology. Yet there have been writers who, *in spite of* their use of technical terms, have been able to communicate quite lucidly to nonspecialists. And there are a few who have been able not only to communicate lucidly but grip the reader's imagination as well. One only has to point to the economists Keynes and Galbraith, the anthropologists Mead and Benedict, the sociologists Mills, Myrdal, and Homans to dispel the notion that social-science literature is inevitably uninteresting and unintelligible, and to confirm the suspicion that if he tries hard enough, a specialist can transcend jargon.

An examination of the works of these writers would reveal two crucial qualities: an awareness of a universal audience and a unmistakable effort not only to write clearly but to write well. It is these two qualities that one finds notably absent in the writings of the majority. More and more, it seems to us, specialists are writing only for their narrow company of fellow specialists. And in the process, they are littering social-science literature with the most glaring examples of bad writing in the history of the English language. Not only is there hardly any attempt on the part of most specialists to develop a lucid writing style, there is even a disregard—perhaps ignorance is the better word—of the fundamentals of grammar.

Syntax is taxed with the proliferation of dangling modifiers and haphazard subordinate clauses. The ideal of expository fluidity is dead: there is an increasing confusion over the proper use of punctuation as well as a lack of attention to the role of connectives and transitions. James Joyce, the novelist, would have agreed with the scientist that the best way of achieving maximum objectivity would be to kill all traces of the author's presence in his work. However, despite all his experimentation along this direction, he would never have approved of the social scientist's expedient of substituting the Latin passive for the very life of the English language—the Anglo-Saxon active. A construction like "research was begun in the summer" is no longer rare, it is fast becoming the rule.

What we are suggesting is that the fault lies not in jargon but in bad writing. Technical terminology is neutral, and what distinguishes a writer like Mills from others in his field is not that he avoids jargon. Rather, it is his judicious use of it—a use characterized by a sense of when to introduce a technical term and when not to burden the reader with one, and an enviable ability to make jargon appear so natural that it disappears on the page. Most specialists, on the other hand, either out of neurosis or a lack of a sense of proportion, give

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their specialized terms and concepts too much prominence in the text. Indeed, the less capable the writer, the greater seems to be his need to load his manuscript with arcane terminology. Jargon can be manipulated creatively; it can also be used as a smoke screen for illiteracy.

The fact that specialists are getting to know more and more about less and less does not excuse them from trying to communicate with a universal audience. Man, their object of study, is, after all, still the interest of *all* men. Disciplines which have turned intracommunicative instead of extracommunicative, to engage in jargon a bit, have not had a particularly attractive fate in intellectual history. The medieval scholastic philosophers, for instance, rarefied themselves into irrelevance with their arid Latin disputations on how many angels could stand on the head of a pin. Unless they buckle down to the demands of clear communication and good writing, the frontiersmen of today's intellectual world—the behavioral scientists—may well end up the scholastics of tomorrow. *W.F.B. and A. de G. II*

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