

side and mirrors on the other. The entire thing had been done in gold. The floor was done in gold colored cement. The elaborate carvings around the mirrors and windows were gold. The candelabra which stood in front of each mirror were gold. Even the door at the end of the corridor was of solid gold. At one time Versailles might have been considered magnificent and beautiful, but as I looked around I saw only the tarnished color, the too elaborate statues, and the general ostentation. The King's Council Room was done entirely in blue and gold. The blue curtains were embroidered in gold. The blue chair and table coverings were embroidered with gold. Even the wall which was painted blue had been outlined with gold. I visited the War Drawing-room, the Opera of Louis XV, the Room of Hercules, the Room of Diane, the Queen's Room, and the Room of Peace with increasing disappointment.

When the tour was finally over, I followed the others down the drab, brick path to the waiting bus. There was still only a light rain, but to me each drop seemed to weigh a year and I'm certain I grew older with each step I took. When I heard the heavy, iron gates closed behind me, I turned to look once more at a dream; a dream, a miniature Fantasyland, which became a reality after years of hope and in less than a minute turned into a lost wonderland.

## Abstractions: The Deceptive Words

Rick Stanton

“WORDS are but the signs of ideas,” wrote Samuel Johnson, the great English author and lexicographer. And like signs, which can only point the way toward something in the distance, words can often merely point in a general direction. I am not speaking of words like “inch” and “ounce” and “year,” which have obtained very specialized meanings. I am not even speaking of the more generalized terms like “house” and “tree” and “ground,” which, although they do not represent standardized quantities or qualities, do at least impart some sort of visual image to the listener's mind. Rather, I am speaking of abstractions—those words which have no concrete referent. These are the words which have turned brother against brother and father against son merely because both persons had a different referent in mind. For instance, let us explore a few of the possible meanings of the word *freedom*.

*Freedom* is a word which usually gives us a pleasant feeling or a feeling of justice (there is another word of which we should be careful!) having been accomplished; but if we examine some of its dictionary meanings, I think we shall see that freedom is not always desirable. We see that freedom can mean anything from (1) “liberation from slavery, imprisonment, [or] restraint” to (2) “exemption; immunity; as the freedom from care” to (3) “exemption from necessity, in choice and action; as, the *freedom* of the will” all the way to (4) “improper familiarity.” We can see quite readily that

freedom in the sense of the fourth meaning would never be desirable. In the first sense of the word, freedom from slavery, imprisonment, or restraint may be quite desirable—in some instances. As the result of our Civil War, the American Negro was freed from the chains of slavery. There is currently a movement under way to free him from the chains of those who would make him inferior because of his color, and this is rightly so. But, on the other hand, who among us would liberate the convicted murderer from his prison cell? Or who among us would free from restraint the man who is mentally ill? In both cases we can see that freedom is undesirable, because the protection of society is necessary. In addition, the insane man must be protected from himself. Again we see that freedom is not always desirable. Thus, before we can say whether freedom is desirable or not, we must first say which definition we are using and, secondly, state the circumstances involved. In other words, we must take an abstract word and give it a concrete meaning for the case at hand.

The second and third definitions I have saved until last because they present an interesting contradiction—the story of how one word can be its own antonym! Definition number two is perhaps the broadest definition that could be given to the word *freedom*, “exemption; immunity; as the freedom from care.” If we had only this definition to go by, we would be led to believe that true freedom is achieved when one is exempt from all outside forces, when there is an “unawareness of being hampered in any way.” This is the type of childish reasoning that we all have to overcome; for if we believe this way, we will never be able to achieve any sort of freedom for ourselves. For instance, there was the small boy who complained because he could not stay up until ten o’clock to watch television. What he actually wanted was the freedom to stay up as late as he wished. When he was old enough to stay up as late as he wished, he decided that he couldn’t be free to live his own life until he could get a driver’s license. When he had obtained his license, he found that he could not always get the car when he wanted it; and so he decided that what he really needed to make him free was his own car. But when he had obtained his own car, he decided that the way to freedom was to get married; and so he did. Now he finds that he has less freedom than ever!

Actually, what he failed to realize was that as he gained more freedoms, he was forced to take on more responsibilities. In other words, as a young boy he possessed the freedom described in definition two—the “freedom from care.” As he grew older, he traded this freedom in for the freedom in definition three—the “freedom of the will.” His definition of freedom should not have been “total absence of restraint”; for this would imply a lack of both outside controls and internal restraint—a situation which is impossible. Rather, his definition should have been more like that of the word *liberty*, which, according to Webster, implies “a power to say [and] do what one wishes, as distinguished from being uninhibited in doing,



thinking, etc.”

It is quite significant to note that our Constitution, the document which is the very basis for our political and civil liberties, does not once use the word *freedom*. The men who wrote our Constitution and those who have written the twenty-four Amendments added since have known the dangers inherent in abstract words. Instead of vaguely discussing “freedom,” they have used specifics: “no law respecting an establishment of religion,” “the right of the people peaceably to assemble,” “nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted,” and “the right . . . to vote shall not be denied . . . on account of sex.” These are some of the specifics They tell us what these men have meant by *freedom*.

Likewise, Socrates, Buddha, Locke, Bacon, and all great philosophers, scientists, and thinkers have realized that words are signposts which can merely point the way in a general direction. They have realized the importance of definition. If these brilliant men have had to use careful definition, is it not even more important that we should? Voltaire put it quite bluntly when he said, “If you wish to converse with me, define your terms.”

## The Sad Saga of Joe Man

Joan O'Sullivan

MR. JOE MAN rises every weekday morning at 7:30, shaves, eats, and drives to work. Work is an accounting firm where from 9:00 to 5:30 every weekday Joe sits in a tiny cubicle adding and checking columns of figures. Every weekday afternoon Joe leaves his desk, drives home, has a beer, eats, watches television, and goes to bed. On weekends Mr. Man sleeps late, eats, watches television, reads the sports news, and goes to bed. Although Mr. Man may not know it, he is a slave. Despite the fact that he may do as he pleases when, where and how he pleases, he is very much a slave. He is a slave to the vicious tyrants known as routine, habit and ordinariness. Mr. Man's mind has been placed in shackles by these masters, and under the weight of the chains—has gradually fallen completely dormant and useless.

Mr. Man, unfortunately, is typical of many in this country today. There is something in our society which encourages man's mind to accept the ordinary, the mundane, the mediocre in life and not to seek that which is extraordinary, stimulating, challenging. The chief factor in leading the Joe Mans of today to this acceptance of mediocrity is our society's emphasis on comfort. Joe Man would never think of walking the ten blocks to his office—why should he when he has a nice, cushioned, comfortable car to ride in? Nor could he conceive of getting up early on a Saturday morning to see the sunrise, for his bed is soft and warm, and what possible good would he gain from arising? Joe is concerned to a great extent with his comfort—with his air-conditioner, his electric blanket, his remote