Seventh Day

WORDS ABOUT THEORIES

INTELLIGENT dinner-table conversation will help to give your new words a good tryout. But when you invite people in for dinner do you always limit your party to your old friends and neighbors? We are all apt to do this, simply because we tend to be lazy. There is little conversational challenge, however, to old friends. Everyone puts on a pair of comfortable slippers and settles down to an evening of gossip. If, however, you mix a new couple with the old crowd, watch how your friends will get on their toes then and try to sell themselves! You will find this tremendously stimulating and the conversation will begin to sparkle.

At such a time the table-talk may easily swing to politics, or to personal theories on philosophy and religion. Here we come into one of those higher uses of thought that make severe demands on our knowledge of English. The mentally alert person is not content to live merely from day to day, completely circumscribed by such things as food, money, clothing and entertainment. Occasion-

ally he is tempted to speculate on *why* he is living and on what the controlling forces of his life are. This chapter deals with a few of the names or word symbols that are applied to these motivating forces by different people who have varying points of view.

1. Is there a God? Nothing so closely approaches the outer limits of abstraction as theorizing about a supernatural and supreme being. Many of us worship, most of us at least accept, some form of deity. Do you belong to the minority who insist, often belligerently, that man makes God in his own image, that God is a figment of the imagination and hence completely, irrevocably non-existent? Then you are an *atheist* (ay′-thee-ist, *th* as in *think*) and your philosophy is called *atheism* (ay′-thee-izm). The word is from the Greek *a,* "without" and *theos,* "god."

2. To many other thinkers it seems more reasonable to say that the existence or non-existence of a supreme being is one mystery the human mind will never fathom. How did the world come into being? How did life begin? Is there a Father who looks after his children, or are we the products of purposeless chance? Do you answer these questions by saying that no one knows and no one can ever hope to know? Then you are an *agnostic* (ag-noss′-tik) and your doctrine is called *agnosticism* (ag-noss′-ti-sizm). Again this is from the Greek *agnostos* which means "not knowing."

3. Why did that young child dart across the roadway just as a huge truck rounded the bend? How do you explain the needless snuffing out of an innocent life? Is it due to blind chance? To cause and effect? Why should some great benefactor of humanity be cut off in his prime? Are such events controlled by accident? By fate? This

word *fate* is derived from the Latin *fatus,* which means "spoken" or "predicted."

Do you believe that everything that happens is predetermined, foreordained, written down, as it were, on the far-off pages of some mighty volume? Then you are a *fatalist* (fay'tal-ist) and your theory is called *fatalism* (fay'-tal-izm).

4. In this world of ours you will find many people who think only of themselves and of their own selfish advantage, and who actually believe that all virtue consists in the pursuit of self-interest. They make this their religion. Do you think continually of yourself? Are you completely indifferent to the feelings and wishes of others? You are an *egoist* (egg'-o-ist) and your creed is called *egoism* (egg'-o-izm). Characteristically this word is from the Latin *ego* meaning "I."

5. If, however, your characteristics are opposite to those of an egoist, and if you have an unselfish regard for and devotion to the interests of others, you are an *altruist* (al'-troo-ist) and you practice *altruism* (al'-troo-izm). The relationship of this word to the Latin *alter* meaning "other" is plainly understandable.

6. Can you rise above petty considerations of pleasure and pain, joy and grief? Can you meet adversity with indifference, and submit to the arrows and slings of misfortune with a dignified resignation? Can you put away envy, greed, jealousy and hatred and the appetites and passions of the world? Can you suffer mental and physical pain without complaint? If you can honestly do such things as these and if you sincerely believe that this is the better scheme of living you will be named a *stoic* (sto'-ik) and are a practitioner of *stoicism* (sto'-i-sizm). The founder of

stoicism was the Greek philosopher Zeno who lived about 300 years before Christ. "Stoic" is from the Greek word *stoikos,* which, in turn, is from *stoa,* meaning "porch." Zeno taught in the *Stoa Poikile* or "Painted Porch" situated in Athens.

7. Are you apt to say: "No other nation can hold a candle to my country. We are the supermen, the chosen people. Every other race is inferior to mine and they are all destined to be our slaves when the day comes"? This is not patriotism. Or, rather, it is patriotism carried to an illogical and ludicrous extreme. Do you happen to talk this way? Then you are a *chauvinist* (sho′-vin-ist) and you are a follower of *chauvinism* (sho′-vin-izm). This word is based on the name of a real man, Nicolas Chauvin of Rochefort, who was so demonstrative in his devotion to Napoleon and the imperial cause that he was ridiculed on the French stage at the time.

8. Are you a braggart about your country's power? Do you always want your nation to use force? Do you want to call out the fleet, the air armada and the army, on the slightest provocation, and send our soldiers and sailors round the world to show those "damn foreigners" who's the boss? Do the other nations want war? We'll give it to them. And if they don't want it we'll give it to them anyway. If this should be a description of your philosophy, then you are a *jingoist* (jing′-go-ist) and your heart beats in tune with the martial music of *jingoism* (jing′-go-izm). The "Jingoes" were originally a section of the Conservative party in England in 1877 who were eager to have their nation support the Turks in the Russo-Turkish war.

9. Is it best that our government should follow the political faith, methods and tenets of our fathers and

grandfathers, or shall we move rapidly ahead, change constantly, explore and experiment? Those who believe in *liberalism* follow the latter philosophy. They owe allegiance to no party, are independent in thought and action and are always anathema to those who wish the government to pursue the well-trod paths. *Liberals* prefer a changing, dynamic, experimenting government. They vote for progress, sometimes in the sense that anything new and different and previously untried is progressive. The Romans gave us the word *liber,* meaning "free."

10. The *conservative,* on the other hand, is opposed to change. He believes that what is, is best. He prefers that his government follow the familiar, tried, tested, safe, and supposedly sane, policies. "We're content with what we have. Why take the risk of sailing into uncharted waters?" Here we can go back again to the Latin, this time to *conservare* meaning "to preserve."

Liberalism is dynamic. *Conservatism* is static. In politics these two wings of the government are to the left and right, respectively. Extreme liberals, still further to the left, are called *radicals.* Extreme conservatives, who are far to the right, are called *reactionaries.* Conservatives want to keep things as they are. Reactionaries wish to turn the clock back to "the good old days." "Radical" is from the Latin *radicalis* meaning "pertaining to roots" or "thoroughgoing" and "reactionary" goes back to the Latin *re* (back) and *agere* (to lead).

11. What type of life is the best? To one group of thinkers that question has a simple answer. That life is the most successful, says the *epicurean* (ep-i-kyoo-ree′-an), which brings to each person the maximum of pleasure and the minimum of pain. The doctrine of *epicureanism* (ep-i-

kyoo-ree′-an-izm) teaches that pleasure is the chief good. In these modern days the meaning of the word has changed somewhat, and an epicurean is thought of more particularly as one who enjoys the delights of the table and who is expert and fastidious in his choice of food. This philosophy was founded by Epicurus, the Greek scholar who lived about three centuries before Christ.

At this point you had better review the words that you have studied in this chapter. You are going to be asked some questions about them.

Which one of the people whose philosophies have been described in the preceding paragraphs would be most apt to make each of the following statements?

1. "I'm interested in the welfare of the other fellow, not in my own." .....
2. "Let the other fellow take care of himself. My interests come first, last and always." .....
3. "My nation is the only one in the world that has any good points." .....
4. "Let's not stand still in politics. Progress, change, experimentation,—that's what we need!" .....
5. "Happiness, pleasure, fun, good eating: these are the most important things in life." .....
6. "There's a God? Don't be silly. Only stupid people believe in God." .....
7. "Maybe there is a God. Maybe there isn't. I don't know, and I don't believe anybody else does or ever will know." .....

8. "The wise and brave man is indifferent to pain and pleasure." .....
9. "We'll build up our troops and our navy, we'll arm to the hilt. Then we'll dare any nation in the world to knock the chip off our shoulder!" .....
10. "You can't change the future. It's all planned and written down." .....
11. "Let's keep things just as they are. We're getting along all right, so why fool around with any dangerous, half-baked, new-fangled theories." .....

Adjectives can, of course, be made of all the nouns that have appeared in this chapter. Here are the forms that they take.

1. altruism—altruistic
2. atheism—atheistic
3. agnosticism—agnostic
4. fatalism—fatalistic
5. egoism—egoistic
6. stoicism—stoical
7. chauvinism—chauvinistic
8. jingoism—jingoistic
9. liberalism—liberal
10. conservatism—conservative
11. epicureanism—epicurean

Now, referring to the above list, try to fit the correct adjective in each of the following phrases.

1. The ..... attitude of the ungodly.
2. The ..... doubts of the skeptical.
3. Age tends to bring a ..... tinge to one's politics.
4. Politically, youth is inclined to be .....
5. The ..... flavor of oriental religions.

6. The narrow ..... desires of the conceited.
7. The ..... resignation of those who have suffered much.
8. The ..... blatancy of professional "flag-wavers."
9. The ..... desires of the self-indulgent.
10. The ..... diplomacy of the munitions-makers.
11. The ..... work of Marie and Pierre Curie.

Unless you have met these words before you will find their definitions hard to keep in mind. But they are words of power, and a powerful vocabulary is one that can put into effective words the thoughts and feelings you have in your mind. More than that, new words will actually give you *new* and *deeper* thoughts and feelings and will strengthen and enrich your thinking.