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The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity

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Most of us in speaking and writing English use only one pronoun of address; we say 'you' to many persons and 'you' to one person. The pronoun 'thou' is reserved, nowadays, to prayer and naive poetry, but in the past it was the form of familiar address to a single person. At that time 'you' was the singular of reverence and of polite distance and, also, the invariable plural. In French, German, Italian, Spanish and the other languages most nearly related to English there are still active two singular pronouns of address. The interesting thing about such pronouns is their close association with two dimensions fundamental to the analysis of all social life - the dimensions of power and solidarity. Semantic and stylistic analysis of these forms takes us well into psychology and sociology as well as into linguistics and the study of literature.

This paper is divided into five major sections.¹ The first three of these are concerned with the semantics of the pronouns of address. By semantics we mean covariation between the pronoun used and the objective relationship existing between speaker and addressee. The first section offers a general description of the semantic evolution of the pronouns of address in certain European languages. The second section describes semantic differences existing today among the pronouns of French, German and Italian. The third section proposes a connection between social structure, group ideology, and the semantics of the pronoun. The final two sections of the paper are concerned with expressive style by which we mean covariation between the pronoun used

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and characteristics of the person speaking. The first of these sections shows that a man's consistent pronoun style gives away his class status and his political views. The last section describes the ways in which a man may vary his pronoun style from time to time so as to express transient moods and attitudes. In this section it is also proposed that the major expressive meanings are derived from the major semantic rules.

In each section the evidence most important to the thesis of that section is described in detail. However, the various generalizations we shall offer have developed as an interdependent set from continuing study of our whole assemblage of facts, and so it may be well to indicate here the sort of motley assemblage this is. Among secondary sources the general language histories (Baugh, 1935; Brunot, 1937; Diez, 1876; Grimm, 1898; Jespersen, 1905; Meyer-Lübke, 1900) have been of little use because their central concern is always phonetic rather than semantic change. However, there are a small number of monographs and doctoral dissertations describing the detailed pronoun semantics for one or another language - sometimes throughout its history (Gedike, 1794; Grand, 1930; Johnston, 1904; Schliebitz, 1886), sometimes for only a century or so (Kennedy, 1915; Stidston, 1917), and sometimes for the works of a particular author (Byrne, 1936; Fay, 1920). As primary evidence for the usage of the past we have drawn on plays, on legal proceedings (Jardine, 1832-5), and on letters (Devereux, 1853; Harrison, 1935). We have also learned about contemporary usage from literature but, more importantly, from long conversations with native speakers of French, Italian, German and Spanish both here and in Europe. Our best information about the pronouns of today comes from a questionnaire concerning usage which is described in the second section of this paper. The questionnaire has thus far been answered by the following numbers of students from abroad who were visiting in Boston in 1957-8: 50 Frenchmen, 20 Germans, 11 Italians and two informants, each, from Spain, Argentina, Chile, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Israel, South Africa, India, Switzerland, Holland, Austria and Yugoslavia.

We have far more information concerning English, French, Italian, Spanish and German than for any other languages. Informants and documents concerning the other Indo-European

languages are not easily accessible to us. What we have to say is then largely founded on information about these five closely related languages. These first conclusions will eventually be tested by us against other Indo-European languages and, in a more generalized form, against unrelated languages.

The European development of two singular pronouns of address begins with the Latin *tu* and *vos*. In Italian they became *tu* and *voi* (with *Lei* eventually largely displacing *voi*); in French *tu* and *vous*; in Spanish *tu* and *vos* (later *usted*). In German the distinction began with *du* and *Ihr* but *Ihr* gave way to *er* and later to *Sie*. English speakers first used 'thou' and 'ye' and later replaced 'ye' with 'you'. As a convenience we propose to use the symbols *T* and *V* (from the Latin *tu* and *vos*) as generic designators for a familiar and a polite pronoun in any language.

The general semantic evolution of *T* and *V*

In the Latin of antiquity there was only *tu* in the singular. The plural *vos* as a form of address to one person was first directed to the emperor and there are several theories (Byrne, 1936; Châte-lain, 1880) about how this may have come about. The use of the plural to the emperor began in the fourth century. By that time there were actually two emperors; the ruler of the eastern empire had his seat in Constantinople and the ruler of the west sat in Rome. Because of Diocletian's reforms the imperial office, although vested in two men, was administratively unified. Words addressed to one man were, by implication, addressed to both. The choice of *vos* as a form of address may have been in response to this implicit plurality. An emperor is also plural in another sense; he is the summation of his people and can speak as their representative. Royal persons sometimes say 'we' where an ordinary man would say 'I'. The Roman emperor sometimes spoke of himself as *nos*, and the reverential *vos* is the simple reciprocal of this.

The usage need not have been mediated by a prosaic association with actual plurality, for plurality is a very old and ubiquitous metaphor for power. Consider only the several senses of such English words as 'great' and 'grand'. The reverential *vos* could have been directly inspired by the power of an emperor.

Eventually the Latin plural was extended from the emperor to

other power figures. However, this semantic pattern was not unequivocally established for many centuries. There was much inexplicable fluctuation between *T* and *V* in Old French, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese (Schliebitz, 1886), and in Middle English (Kennedy, 1915; Stidston, 1917). In verse, at least, the choice seems often to have depended on assonance, rhyme, or syllable count. However, some time between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries (Gedike, 1794; Grand, 1930; Kennedy, 1915; Schliebitz, 1886), varying with the language, a set of norms crystallized which we call the nonreciprocal power semantic.

The power semantic

One person may be said to have power over another in the degree that he is able to control the behavior of the other. Power is a relationship between at least two persons, and it is nonreciprocal in the sense that both cannot have power in the same area of behavior. The power semantic is similarly nonreciprocal; the superior says *T* and receives *V*.

There are many bases of power – physical strength, wealth, age, sex, institutionalized role in the church, the state, the army or within the family. The character of the power semantic can be made clear with a set of examples from various languages. In his letters, Pope Gregory I (590–604) used *T* to his subordinates in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and they invariably said *V* to him (Muller, 1914). In medieval Europe, generally, the nobility said *T* to the common people and received *V*; the master of a household said *T* to his slave, his servant, his squire, and received *V*. Within the family, of whatever social level, parents gave *T* to children and were given *V*. In Italy in the fifteenth century penitents said *V* to the priest and were told *T* (Grand, 1930). In Froissart (late fourteenth century) God says *T* to His angels and they say *V*; all celestial beings say *T* to man and receive *V*. In French of the twelfth and thirteenth century man says *T* to the animals (Schliebitz, 1886). In fifteenth century Italian literature Christians say *T* to Turks and Jews and receive *V* (Grand, 1930). In the plays of Corneille and Racine (Schliebitz, 1886) and Shakespeare (Byrne, 1936), the noble principals say *T* to their subordinates and are given *V* in return.

The *V* of reverence entered European speech as a form of

address to the principal power in the state and eventually generalized to the powers within that microcosm of the state – the nuclear family. In the history of language, then, parents are emperor figures. It is interesting to note in passing that Freud reversed this terminology and spoke of kings, as well as generals, employers and priests, as father figures. The propriety of Freud's designation for his psychological purposes derives from the fact that an individual learning a European language reverses the historical order of semantic generalization. The individual's first experience of subordination to power and of the reverential *V* comes in his relation to his parents. In later years similar asymmetrical power relations and similar norms of address develop between employer and employee, soldier and officer, subject and monarch. We can see how it might happen, as Freud believed, that the later social relationships would remind the individual of the familial prototype and would revive emotions and responses from childhood. In a man's personal history recipients of the nonreciprocal *V* are parent figures.

Since the nonreciprocal power semantic only prescribes usage between superior and inferior, it calls for a social structure in which there are unique power ranks for every individual. Medieval European societies were not so finely structured as that, and so the power semantic was never the only rule for the use of *T* and *V*. There were also norms of address for persons of roughly equivalent power, that is, for members of a common class. Between equals, pronominal address was reciprocal; an individual gave and received the same form. During the medieval period, and for varying times beyond, equals of the upper classes exchanged the mutual *V* and equals of the lower classes exchanged *T*.

The difference in class practice derives from the fact that the reverential *V* was always introduced into a society at the top. In the Roman Empire only the highest ranking persons had any occasion to address the emperor, and so at first only they made use of *V* in the singular. In its later history in other parts of Europe the reverential *V* was usually adopted by one court in imitation of another. The practice slowly disseminated downward in a society. In this way the use of *V* in the singular incidentally came to connote a speaker of high status. In later centuries Europeans became very conscious of the extensive use of *V* as a mark of

elegance. In the drama of seventeenth century France the nobility and bourgeoisie almost always address one another as *V*. This is true even of husband and wife, of lovers, and of parent and child if the child is adult. Mme de Sévigné in her correspondence never uses *T*, not even to her daughter the Comtesse de Grignan (Schliebitz, 1886). Servants and peasantry, however, regularly used *T* among themselves.

For many centuries French, English, Italian, Spanish, and German pronoun usage followed the rule of nonreciprocal *T-V* between persons of unequal power and the rule of mutual *V* or *T* (according to social-class membership) between persons of roughly equivalent power. There was at first no rule differentiating address among equals but, very gradually, a distinction developed which is sometimes called the *T* of intimacy and the *V* of formality. We name this second dimension *solidarity*, and here is our guess as to how it developed.

The solidarity semantic

The original singular pronoun was *T*. The use of *V* in the singular developed as a form of address to a person of superior power. There are many personal attributes that convey power. The recipient of *V* may differ from the recipient of *T* in strength, age, wealth, birth, sex or profession. As two people move apart on these power-laden dimensions, one of them begins to say *V*. In general terms, the *V* form is linked with differences between persons. Not all differences between persons imply a difference of power. Men are born in different cities, belong to different families of the same status, may attend different but equally prominent schools, may practice different but equally respected professions. A rule for making distinctive use of *T* and *V* among equals can be formulated by generalizing the power semantic. Differences of power cause *V* to emerge in one direction of address; differences not concerned with power cause *V* to emerge in both directions.

The relations called *older than*, *parent of*, *employer of*, *richer than*, *stronger than*, and *nobler than* are all asymmetrical. If *A* is older than *B*, *B* is not older than *A*. The relation called 'more powerful than', which is abstracted from these more specific relations, is also conceived to be asymmetrical. The pronoun usage expressing this power relation is also asymmetrical or non-

reciprocal, with the greater receiving *V* and the lesser *T*. Now we are concerned with a new set of relations which are symmetrical; for example, *attended the same school* or *have the same parents* or *practice the same profession*. If *A* has the same parents as *B*, *B* has the same parents as *A*. Solidarity is the name we give to the general relationship and solidarity is symmetrical. The corresponding norms of address are symmetrical or reciprocal with *V* becoming more probable as solidarity declines. The solidary *T* reaches a peak of probability in address between twin brothers or in a man's soliloquizing address to himself.

Not every personal attribute counts in determining whether two people are solidary enough to use the mutual *T*. Eye color does not ordinarily matter nor does shoe size. The similarities that matter seem to be those that make for like-mindedness or similar behavior dispositions. These will ordinarily be such things as political membership, family, religion, profession, sex, and birthplace. However, extreme distinctive values on almost any dimension may become significant. Height ought to make for solidarity among giants and midgets. The *T* of solidarity can be produced by frequency of contact as well as by objective similarities. However, frequent contact does not necessarily lead to the mutual *T*. It depends on whether contact results in the discovery or creation of the like-mindedness that seems to be the core of the solidarity semantic.

Solidarity comes into the European pronouns as a means of differentiating address among power equals. It introduces a second dimension into the semantic system on the level of power equivalents. So long as solidarity was confined to this level, the two-dimensional system was in equilibrium (see Figure 1a), and it seems to have remained here for a considerable time in all our languages. It is from the long reign of the two-dimensional semantic that *T* derives its common definition as the pronoun of either condescension or intimacy and *V* its definition as the pronoun of reverence or formality. These definitions are still current but usage has, in fact, gone somewhat beyond them.

The dimension of solidarity is potentially applicable to all persons addressed. Power superiors may be solidary (parents, elder siblings) or not solidary (officials whom one seldom sees). Power inferiors, similarly, may be as solidary as the old family

retainer and as remote as the waiter in a strange restaurant. Extension of the solidarity dimension along the dotted lines of Figure 1b creates six categories of persons defined by their relations to a speaker. Rules of address are in conflict for persons in the upper left and lower right categories. For the upper left, power indicates *V* and solidarity *T*. For the lower right, power indicates *T* and solidarity *V*.

The abstract conflict described in Figure 1b is particularized in Figure 2a with a sample of the social dyads in which the conflict would be felt. In each case usage in one direction is unequivocal but, in the other direction, the two semantic forces are opposed. The first three dyads in Figure 2a involve conflict in address to inferiors who are not solidary (the lower right category of Figure 1b), and the second three dyads involve conflict in address to superiors who are solidary (the upper left category in Figure 1b).

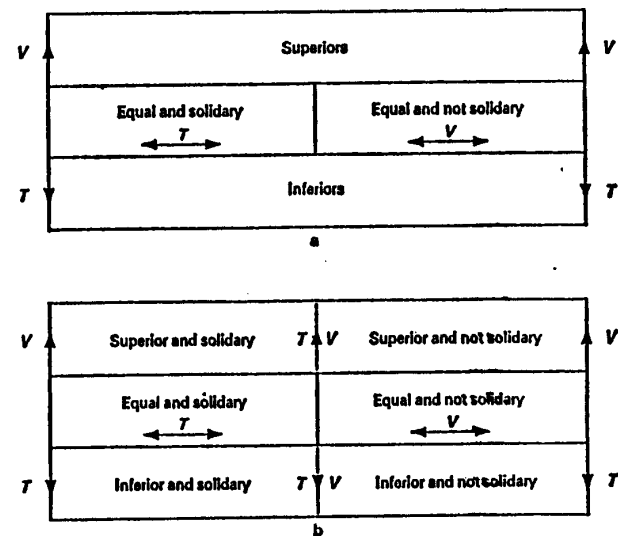


Figure 1 The two-dimensional semantic (a) in equilibrium and (b) under tension

Well into the nineteenth century the power semantic prevailed and waiters, common soldiers and employees were called *T* while parents, masters and elder brothers were called *V*. However, all our evidence consistently indicates that in the past century the solidarity semantic has gained supremacy. Dyads of the type shown in Figure 2a now reciprocate the pronoun of solidarity or the pronoun of nonsolidarity. The conflicted address has been resolved so as to match the unequivocal address. The abstract result is a simple one-dimensional system with the reciprocal *T* for the solidary and the reciprocal *V* for the nonsolidary.

It is the present practice to reinterpret power-laden attributes so as to turn them into symmetrical solidarity attributes. Relationships like *older than*, *father of*, *nobler than*, and *richer than* are now reinterpreted for purposes of *T* and *V* as relations of *the same age as*, *the same family as*, *the same kind of ancestry as*, and *the same income as*. In the degree that these relationships hold, the probability of a mutual *T* increases and, in the degree that they do not hold, the probability of a mutual *V* increases.

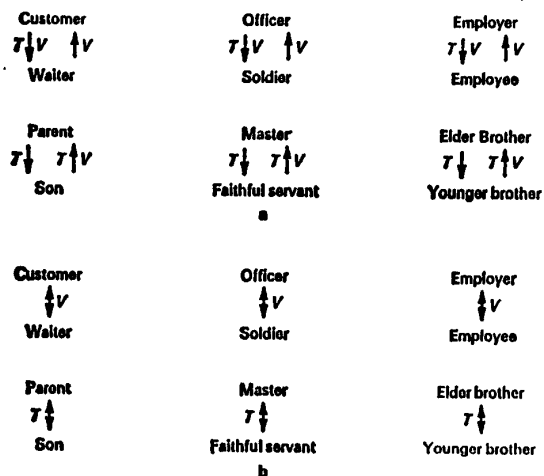


Figure 2 Social dyads involving (a) semantic conflict and (b) their resolution

There is an interesting residual of the power relation in the contemporary notion that the right to initiate the reciprocal *T* belongs to the member of the dyad having the better power-based claim to say *T* without reciprocation. The suggestion that solidarity be recognized comes more gracefully from the elder than from the younger, from the richer than from the poorer, from the employer than from the employee, from the noble than from the commoner, from the female than from the male.

In support of our claim that solidarity has largely won out over power we can offer a few quotations from language scholars. Littré (1882), writing of French usage, says: 'Notre courtoisie est même si grande, que nous ne dédaignons pas de donner du vous et du monsieur à l'homme de la condition la plus vile.' Grand (1930) wrote of the Italian *V*: 'On commence aussi à le donner aux personnes de service, à qui on disait tu autrefois.' We have found no authority who describes the general character of these many specific changes of usage: a shift from power to solidarity as the governing semantic principle.

The best evidence that the change has occurred is in our interviews and notes on contemporary literature and films and, most importantly, the questionnaire results. The six social dyads of Figure 2 were all represented in the questionnaire. In the past these would have been answered in accordance with asymmetrical power. Across all six of these dyads the French results yield only 11 per cent nonreciprocal power answers, the German 12 per cent, the Italian 27 per cent. In all other cases the usage is reciprocal, as indicated in Figure 2b. In all three of the languages, address between master and servant retains the greatest power loading. Some of the changes toward solidarity are very recent. Only since the Second World War, for instance, has the French Army adopted a regulation requiring officers to say *V* to enlisted men.

Finally, it is our opinion that a still newer direction of semantic shift can be discerned in the whole collection of languages studied. Once solidarity has been established as the single dimension distinguishing *T* from *V* the province of *T* proceeds to expand. The direction of change is increased in the number of relations defined as solidary enough to merit a mutual *T* and, in particular, to regard any sort of camaraderie resulting from a common task or a common fate as grounds for *T*. We have a favorite example

of this new trend given us independently by several French informants. It seems that mountaineers above a certain critical altitude shift to the mutual *T*. We like to think that this is the point where their lives hang by a single thread. In general, the mutual *T* is advancing among fellow students, fellow workers, members of the same political group, persons who share a hobby or take a trip together. We believe this is the direction of current change because it summarizes what our informants tell us about the pronoun usage of the 'young people' as opposed to that of older people.

Contemporary differences among French, Italian and German

While *T* and *V* have passed through the same general semantic sequence in these three languages, there are today some differences of detailed usage which were revealed by the questionnaire data. Conversations with native speakers guided us in the writing of questionnaire items, but the conversations themselves did not teach us the characteristic semantic features of the three languages; these did not emerge until we made statistical comparison of answers to the standard items of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire is in English. It opens with a paragraph informing the subject that the items below all have reference to the use of the singular pronouns of address in his native language. There are 28 items in the full questionnaire, and they all have the form of the following example from the questionnaire for French students:

1.(a) Which pronoun would you use in speaking to your mother?

T (definitely) —

T (probably) —

Possibly *T*, possibly *V* —

V (probably) —

V (definitely) —

1.(b) Which would she use in speaking to you?

T (definitely) —

T (probably) —

Possibly *T*, possibly *V* —

V (probably) —

V (definitely) —

The questionnaire asks about usage between the subject and his mother, his father, his grandfather, his wife, a younger brother who is a child, a married elder brother, that brother's wife, a remote male cousin, and an elderly female servant whom he has known from childhood. It asks about usage between the subject and fellow students at the university at home, usage to a student from home visiting in America, and usage to someone with whom the subject had been at school some years previously. It asks about usage to a waiter in a restaurant, between clerks in an office, fellow soldiers in the army, between boss and employee, army private and general. In addition, there are some rather elaborate items which ask the subject to imagine himself in some carefully detailed social situation and then to say what pronoun he would use. A copy of the full questionnaire may be had on application to the authors.

The most accessible informants were students from abroad resident in Boston in the fall of 1957. Listings of such students were obtained from Harvard, Boston University, MIT, and the Office of the French Consul in New England. Although we have data from a small sample of female respondents, the present analysis is limited to the males. All the men in the sample have been in the United States for one year or less; they come from cities of over 300,000 inhabitants, and these cities are well scattered across the country in question. In addition, all members of the sample are from upper-middle-class, professional families. This homogeneity of class membership was enforced by the factors determining selection of students who go abroad. The occasional informant from a working-class family is deliberately excluded from these comparisons. The class from which we draw shows less regional variation in speech than does the working class and, especially, farmers. At the present time we have complete responses from 50 Frenchmen, 20 Germans and 11 Italians; many of these men also sent us letters describing their understanding of the pronouns and offering numerous valuable anecdotes of usage. The varying numbers of subjects belonging to the three nationalities result from the unequal representation of these nationalities among Boston students rather than from national characterological differences in willingness to answer a question-

naire. Almost every person on our lists agreed to serve as an informant.

In analyzing the results we assigned the numbers 0-4 to the five response alternatives to each question, beginning with 'Definitely *V*' as 0. A rough test was made of the significance of the differences among the three languages on each question. We dichotomized the replies to each question into : (a) all replies of either 'Definitely *T*' or 'Probably *T*'; (b) all replies of 'Definitely *V*' or 'Probably *V*' or 'Possibly *V*, possibly *T*'. Using the chi-squared test with Yates's correction for small frequencies we determined, for each comparison, the probability of obtaining by chance a difference as large or larger than that actually obtained. Even with such small samples, there were quite a few differences significantly unlikely to occur by chance ($P = .05$ or less). Germans were more prone than the French to say *T* to their grandfathers, to an elder brother's wife, and to an old family servant. The French were more prone than the Germans to say *T* to a male fellow student, to a student from home visiting in America, to a fellow clerk in an office, and to someone known previously as a fellow student. Italians were more prone than the French to say *T* to a female fellow student and also to an attractive girl to whom they had recently been introduced. Italians were more prone than the Germans to say *T* to the persons just described and, in addition, to a male fellow student and to a student from home visiting in America. On no question did either the French or the Germans show a significantly greater tendency to say *T* than did the Italians.

The many particular differences among the three languages are susceptible of a general characterization. Let us first contrast German and French. The German *T* is more reliably applied within the family than is the French *T*; in addition to the significantly higher *T* scores for grandfather and elder brother's wife there are smaller differences showing a higher score for the German *T* on father, mother, wife, married elder brother, and remote male cousin. The French *T* is not automatically applied to remote relatives, but it is more likely than the German pronoun to be used to express the camaraderie of fellow students, fellow clerks, fellow countrymen abroad, and fellow soldiers. In general it may be said that the solidarity coded by the German *T* is an ascribed

solidarity of family relationships. The French *T*, in greater degree, codes an acquired solidarity, not founded on family relationship but developing out of some sort of shared fate. As for the Italian *T*, it very nearly equals the German in family solidarity and it surpasses the French in camaraderie. The camaraderie of the Italian male, incidentally, is extended to the Italian female; unlike the French or German student the Italian says *T* to the co-ed almost as readily as to the male fellow student.

There is a very abstract semantic rule governing *T* and *V* which is the same for French, German, and Italian and for many other languages we have studied. The rule is that usage is reciprocal, *T* becoming increasingly probable and *V* less probable as the number of solidarity-producing attributes shared by two people increases. The respect in which French, German, and Italian differ from one another is in the relative weight given to various attributes of persons which can serve to generate solidarity. For German, ascribed family membership is the important attribute; French and Italian give more weight to acquired characteristics.

Semantics, social structure and ideology

A historical study of the pronouns of address reveals a set of semantic and social psychological correspondence. The non-reciprocal power semantic is associated with a relatively static society in which power is distributed by birthright and is not subject to much redistribution. The power semantic was closely tied with the feudal and manorial systems. In Italy the reverential pronoun *Lei* which has largely displaced the older *voi* was originally an abbreviation for *la vostra Signoria* 'your lordship' and in Spanish *vuestra Merced* 'your grace' became the reverential *usted*. The static social structure was accompanied by the Church's teaching that each man had his properly appointed place and ought not to wish to rise above it. The reciprocal solidarity semantic has grown with social mobility and an equalitarian ideology. The towns and cities have led the way in the semantic change as they led the way in opening society to vertical movement. In addition to these rough historical correspondences we have made a collection of lesser items of evidence favoring the thesis.

In France the nonreciprocal power semantic was dominant

until the Revolution when the Committee for the Public Safety condemned the use of *V* as a feudal remnant and ordered a universal reciprocal *T*. On 31 October, 1793, Malbec made a Parliamentary speech against *V*: 'Nous distinguons trois personnes pour le singulier et trois pour le pluriel, et, au mépris de cette règle, l'esprit de fanatisme, d'orgueil et de féodalité, nous a fait contracter l'habitude de nous servir de la seconde personne du pluriel lorsque nous parlons à un seul' (quoted in Brunot, 1927). For a time revolutionary 'fraternité' transformed all address into the mutual *Citoyen* and the mutual *tu*. Robespierre even addressed the president of the Assembly as *tu*. In later years solidarity declined and the differences of power which always exist everywhere were expressed once more.

It must be asked why the equalitarian ideal was expressed in a universal *T* rather than a universal *V* or, as a third alternative, why there was not a shift of semantic from power to solidarity with both pronouns being retained. The answer lies with the ancient upper-class preference for the use of *V*. There was animus against the pronoun itself. The pronoun of the '*sans-culottes*' was *T* (Gedike, 1794), and so this had to be the pronoun of the Revolution.

Although the power semantic has largely gone out of pronoun use in France today native speakers are nevertheless aware of it. In part they are aware of it because it prevails in so much of the greatest French literature. Awareness of power as a potential factor in pronoun usage was revealed by our respondents' special attitude toward the saying of *T* to a waiter. Most of them felt that this would be shockingly bad taste in a way that other norm violations would not be, apparently because there is a kind of seignorial right to say *T* to a waiter, an actual power asymmetry, which the modern man's ideology requires him to deny. In French Africa, on the other hand, it is considered proper to recognize a caste difference between the African and the European, and the nonreciprocal address is used to express it. The European says *T* and requires *V* from the African. This is a galling custom to the African, and in 1957 Robert Lacoste, the French Minister residing in Algeria, urged his countrymen to eschew the practice.

In England, before the Norman Conquest, 'ye' was the second person plural and 'thou' the singular. 'You' was originally the

accusative of 'ye', but in time it also became the nominative plural and ultimately ousted 'thou' as the usual singular. The first uses of 'ye' as a reverential singular occur in the thirteenth century (Kennedy, 1915), and seem to have been copied from the French nobility. The semantic progression corresponds roughly to the general stages described in the first section of this paper, except that the English seem always to have moved more freely from one form to another than did the continental Europeans (Jespersen, 1905).

In the seventeenth century 'thou' and 'you' became explicitly involved in social controversy. The Religious Society of Friends (or Quakers) was founded in the middle of this century by George Fox. One of the practices setting off this rebellious group from the larger society was the use of Plain Speech, and this entailed saying 'thou' to everyone. George Fox explained the practice in these words:

'Moreover, when the Lord sent me forth into the world, He forbade me to put off my hat to any, high or low; and I was required to Thee and Thou all men and women, without any respect to rich or poor, great or small' (quoted in Estrich and Sperber, 1946).

Fox wrote a fascinating pamphlet (Fox, 1660), arguing that *T* to one and *V* to many is the natural and logical form of address in all languages. Among others he cites Latin, Hebrew, Greek, Arabick, Syriack, Aethiopic, Egyptian, French, and Italian. Fox suggests that the Pope, in his vanity, introduced the corrupt and illogical practice of saying *V* to one person. Farnsworth, another early Friend, wrote a somewhat similar pamphlet (Farnsworth, 1655), in which he argued that the Scriptures show that God and Adam and God and Moses were not too proud to say and receive the singular *T*.

For the new convert to the Society of Friends the universal *T* was an especially difficult commandment. Thomas Ellwood has described (1714) the trouble that developed between himself and his father:

But whenever I had occasion to speak to my Father, though I had no Hat now to offend him; yet my language did as much: for I durst not say YOU to him, but THOU or THEE, as the Occasion required, and then would he be sure to fall on me with his Fists.

The Friends' reasons for using the mutual *T* were much the same as those of the French revolutionaries, but the Friends were always a minority and the larger society was antagonized by their violations of decorum.

Some Friends use 'thee' today; the nominative 'thou' has been dropped and 'thee' is used as both the nominative and (as formerly) the accusative. Interestingly many Friends also use 'you'. 'Thee' is likely to be reserved for Friends among themselves and 'you' said to outsiders. This seems to be a survival of the solidarity semantic. In English at large, of course, 'thou' is no longer used. The explanation of its disappearance is by no means certain; however, the forces at work seem to have included a popular reaction against the radicalism of Quakers and Levelers and also a general trend in English toward simplified verbal inflection.

In the world today there are numerous examples of the association proposed between ideology and pronoun semantics. In Yugoslavia, our informants tell us, there was, for a short time following the establishment of Communism, a universal mutual *T* of solidarity. Today revolutionary *esprit* has declined and *V* has returned for much the same set of circumstances as in Italy, France, or Spain. There is also some power asymmetry in Yugoslavia's 'Socialist manners'. A soldier says *V* and *Comrade General*, but the general addresses the soldier with *T* and surname.

It is interesting in our materials to contrast usage in the Afrikaans language of South Africa and in the Gujarati and Hindi languages of India with the rest of the collection. On the questionnaire, Afrikaans speakers made eight nonreciprocal power distinctions; especially notable are distinctions within the family and the distinctions between customer and waiter and between boss and clerk, since these are almost never power-coded in French, Italian, German, etc., although they once were. The Afrikaans pattern generally preserves the asymmetry of the dyads described in Figure 2, and that suggests a more static society and a less developed equalitarian ethic. The forms of address used between Afrikaans-speaking whites and the groups of 'coloreds' and 'blacks' are especially interesting. The Afrikaaner uses *T*, but the two lower castes use neither *T* nor *V*. The intermediate caste of 'coloreds' says *Meneer* to the white and the

'blacks' say *Baas*. It is as if these social distances transcend anything that can be found within the white group and so require their peculiar linguistic expressions.

The Gujarati and Hindi languages of India have about the same pronoun semantic, and it is heavily loaded with power. These languages have all the asymmetrical usage of Afrikaans and, in addition, use the nonreciprocal *T* and *V* between elder brother and younger brother and between husband and wife. This truly feudal pronominal pattern is consistent with the static Indian society. However, that society is now changing rapidly and, consistent with that change, the norms of pronoun usage are also changing. The progressive young Indian exchanges the mutual *T* with his wife.

In our account of the general semantic evolution of the pronouns, we have identified a stage in which the solidarity rule was limited to address between persons of equal power. This seemed to yield a two-dimensional system in equilibrium (see Figure 1a), and we have wondered why address did not permanently stabilize there. It is possible, of course, that human cognition favors the binary choice without contingencies and so found its way to the suppression of one dimension. However, this theory does not account for the fact that it was the rule of solidarity that triumphed. We believe, therefore, that the development of open societies with an equalitarian ideology acted against the nonreciprocal power semantic and in favor of solidarity. It is our suggestion that the larger social changes created a distaste for the face-to-face expression of differential power.

What of the many actions other than nonreciprocal *T* and *V* which express power asymmetry? A vassal not only says *V* but also bows, lifts his cap, touches his forelock, keeps silent, leaps to obey. There are a large number of expressions of subordination which are patterned isomorphically with *T* and *V*. Nor are the pronouns the only forms of nonreciprocal address. There are, in addition, proper names and titles, and many of these operate today on a nonreciprocal power pattern in America and in Europe, in open and equalitarian societies.

In the American family there are no discriminating pronouns, but there are nonreciprocal norms of address. A father says 'Jim' to his son but, unless he is extraordinarily 'advanced', he

does not anticipate being called 'Jack' in reply. In the American South there are no pronouns to mark the caste separation of Negro and white, but there are nonreciprocal norms of address. The white man is accustomed to call the Negro by his first name, but he expects to be called 'Mr Legree'. In America and in Europe there are forms of nonreciprocal address for all the dyads of asymmetrical power; customer and waiter, teacher and student, father and son, employer and employee.

Differences of power exist in a democracy as in all societies. What is the difference between expressing power asymmetry in pronouns and expressing it by choice of title and proper name? It seems to be primarily a question of the degree of linguistic compulsion. In face-to-face address we can usually avoid the use of any name or title but not so easily the use of a pronoun. Even if the pronoun can be avoided, it will be implicit in the inflection of the verb. 'Dites quelque chose' clearly says *vous* to the Frenchman. A norm for the pronominal and verbal expression of power compels a continuing coding of power, whereas a norm for titles and names permits power to go uncoded in most discourse. Is there any reason why the pronominal coding should be more congenial to a static society than to an open society?

We have noticed that mode of address intrudes into consciousness as a problem at times of status change. Award of the doctoral degree, for instance, transforms a student into a colleague and, among American academics, the familiar first name is normal. The fledgling academic may find it difficult to call his former teachers by their first names. Although these teachers may be young and affable, they have had a very real power over him for several years and it will feel presumptuous to deny this all at once with a new mode of address. However, the 'tyranny of democratic manners' (Cronin, 1958) does not allow him to continue comfortably with the polite 'Professor X'. He would not like to be thought unduly conscious of status, unprepared for faculty rank, a born lickspittle. Happily, English allows him a respite. He can avoid any term of address, staying with the uncommitted 'you', until he and his addressees have got used to the new state of things. This linguistic *rite de passage* has, for English speakers, a waiting room in which to screw up courage.

In a fluid society crises of address will occur more frequently

than in a static society, and so the pronominal coding of power differences is more likely to be felt as onerous. Coding by title and name would be more tolerable because less compulsory. Where status is fixed by birth and does not change each man has enduring rights and obligations of address.

A strong equalitarian ideology of the sort dominant in America works to suppress every conventional expression of power asymmetry. If the worker becomes conscious of his unreciprocated polite address to the boss, he may feel that his human dignity requires him to change. However, we do not feel the full power of the ideology until we are in a situation that gives us some claim to receive deferential address. The American professor often feels foolish being given his title, he almost certainly will not claim it as a prerogative; he may take pride in being on a first-name basis with his students. Very 'palsy' parents may invite their children to call them by first name. The very President of the Republic invites us all to call him 'Ike'. Nevertheless, the differences of power are real and are experienced. Cronin has suggested in an amusing piece (Cronin, 1958) that subordination is expressed by Americans in a subtle, and generally unwitting, body language. 'The repertoire includes the boyish grin, the deprecatory cough, the unfinished sentence, the appreciative giggle, the drooping shoulders, the head-scratch and the bottom-waggle.'

Group style with the pronouns of address

The identification of style is relative to the identification of some constancy. When we have marked out the essentials of some action – it might be walking or speaking a language or driving a car – we can identify the residual variation as stylistic. Different styles are different ways of 'doing the same thing', and so their identification waits on some designation of the range of performances to be regarded as 'the same thing'.

Linguistic science finds enough that is constant in English and French and Latin to put all these and many more into one family – the Indo-European. It is possible with reference to this constancy to think of Italian and Spanish and English and the others as so many styles of Indo-European. They all have, for instance, two singular pronouns of address, but each language has an

individual phonetic and semantic style in pronoun usage. We are ignoring phonetic style (through the use of the generic *T* and *V*), but in the second section of the paper we have described differences in the semantic styles of French, German and Italian.

Linguistic styles are potentially expressive when there is covariation between characteristics of language performance and characteristics of the performers. When styles are 'interpreted', language behavior is functionally expressive. On that abstract level where the constancy is Indo-European and the styles are French, German, English and Italian, interpretations of style must be statements about communities of speakers, statements of national character, social structure, or group ideology. In the last section we have hazarded a few propositions on this level.

It is usual, in discussion of linguistic style, to set constancy at the level of a language like French or English rather than at the level of a language family. In the languages we have studied there are variations in pronoun style that are associated with the social status of the speaker. We have seen that the use of *V* because of its entry at the top of a society and its diffusion downward was always interpreted as a mark of good breeding. It is interesting to find an organization of French journeymen in the generation after the Revolution adopting a set of rules of propriety cautioning members against going without tie or shoes at home on Sunday and also against the use of the mutual *T* among themselves (Perdiguier, 1914). Our informants assure us that *V* and *T* still function as indications of class membership. The Yugoslavians have a saying that a peasant would say *T* to a king. By contrast, a French nobleman who turned up in our net told us that he had said *T* to no one in the world except the old woman who was his nurse in childhood. He is prevented by the dominant democratic ideology from saying *T* to subordinates and by his own royalist ideology from saying it to equals.

In literature, pronoun style has often been used to expose the pretensions of social climbers and the would-be elegant. Persons aping the manners of the class above them usually do not get the imitation exactly right. They are likely to notice some point of difference between their own class and the next higher and then extend the difference too widely, as in the use of the 'elegant' broad [a] in 'can' and 'bad'. Molière gives us his '*précieuses*

ridicules' saying *V* to servants whom a refined person would call *T*. In Ben Jonson's *Everyman in his Humour* and *Epicoene* such true gallants as Wellbred and Knowell usually say 'you' to one another but they make frequent expressive shifts between this form and 'thou', whereas such fops as John Daw and Amorous-La-Foole make unvarying use of 'you'.

Our sample of visiting French students was roughly homogeneous in social status as judged by the single criterion of paternal occupation. Therefore, we could not make any systematic study of differences in class style, but we thought it possible that, even within this select group, there might be interpretable differences of style. It was our guess that the tendency to make wide or narrow use of the solidary *T* would be related to general radicalism or conservatism of ideology. As a measure of this latter dimension we used Eysenck's Social Attitude Inventory (1957). This is a collection of statements to be accepted or rejected concerning a variety of matters – religion, economics, racial relations, sexual behavior, etc. Eysenck has validated the scale in England and in France on members of Socialist, Communist, Fascist, Conservative and Liberal party members. In general, to be radical on this scale is to favor change and to be conservative is to wish to maintain the status quo or turn back to some earlier condition. We undertook to relate scores on this inventory to an index of pronoun style.

As yet we have reported no evidence demonstrating that there exists such a thing as a personal style in pronoun usage in the sense of a tendency to make wide or narrow use of *T*. It may be that each item in the questionnaire, each sort of person addressed, is an independent personal norm not predictable from any other. A child learns what to say to each kind of person. What he learns in each case depends on the groups in which he has membership. Perhaps his usage is a bundle of unrelated habits.

Guttman (Stouffer, Guttman, *et al.*, 1950) has developed the technique of Scalogram Analysis for determining whether or not a collection of statements taps a common dimension. A perfect Guttman scale can be made of the statements: (a) I am at least 5' tall; (b) I am at least 5' 4" tall; (c) I am at least 5' 7" tall; (d) I am at least 6' 1" tall; (e) I am at least 6' 2" tall. Endorsement of a more extreme statement will always be associated with en-

dorsement of all less extreme statements. A person can be assigned a single score – a, b, c, d, or e – which represents the most extreme statement he has endorsed, and from this single score all his individual answers can be reproduced. If he scores c he has also endorsed a and b but not d or e. The general criterion for scalability is the reproducibility of individual responses from a single score, and this depends on the items being interrelated so that endorsement of one is reliably associated with endorsement or rejection of the others.

The Guttman method was developed during World War II for the measurement of social attitudes, and it has been widely used. Perfect reproducibility is not likely to be found for all the statements which an investigator guesses to be concerned with some single attitude. The usual thing is to accept a set of statements as scalable when they are 90 per cent reproducible and also satisfy certain other requirements; for example, there must be some statements that are not given a very one-sided response but are accepted and rejected with nearly equal frequency.

The responses to the pronoun questionnaire are not varying degrees of agreement (as in an attitude questionnaire) but are rather varying probabilities of saying *T* or *V*. There seems to be no reason why these bipolar responses cannot be treated like yes or no responses on an attitude scale. The difference is that the scale, if there is one, will be the semantic dimension governing the pronouns, and the scale score of each respondent will represent his personal semantic style.

It is customary to have 100 subjects for a Scalogram Analysis, but we could find only 50 French students. We tested all 28 items for scalability and found that a subset of them made a fairly good scale. It was necessary to combine response categories so as to dichotomize them in order to obtain an average reproducibility of 85 per cent. This coefficient was computed for the five intermediate items having the more-balanced marginal frequencies. A large number of items fell at or very near the two extremes. The solidarity or *T*-most end of the scale could be defined by father, mother, elder brother, young boys, wife or lover quite as well as by younger brother. The remote or *V*-most end could be defined by 'wajjer' or 'top boss' as well as by 'army general'. The intervening positions, from the *T*-end to the *V*-end are:

the elderly female servant known since childhood, grandfather, a male fellow student, a female fellow student and an elder brother's wife.

For each item on the scale a *T* answer scores one point and a *V* answer no points. The individual total scores range from 1 to 7, which means the scale can differentiate only seven semantic styles. We divided the subjects into the resultant seven stylistically homogeneous groups and, for each group, determined the average scores on radicalism-conservatism. There was a set of almost perfectly consistent differences.

In Table 1 appear the mean radicalism scores for each pronoun style. The individual radicalism scores range between 2 and 13; the higher the score the more radical the person's ideology. The very striking result is that the group radicalism scores duplicate the order of the group pronoun scores with only a single reversal. The rank-difference correlation between the two sets of scores is .96, and even with only seven paired scores this is a very significant relationship.

There is enough consistency of address to justify speaking of a personal-pronoun style which involves a more or less wide use of the solitary *T*. Even among students of the same socioeconomic level there are differences of style, and these are potentially expressive of radicalism and conservatism in ideology. A Frenchman could, with some confidence, infer that a male university student who regularly said *T* to female fellow students would favor the nationalization of industry, free love, trial marriage, the abolition of capital punishment, and the weakening of nationalistic and religious loyalties.

What shall we make of the association between a wide use of *T* and a cluster of radical sentiments? There may be no 'sense' to it at all, that is, no logical connection between the linguistic practice and the attitudes, but simply a general tendency to go along with the newest thing. We know that left-wing attitudes are more likely to be found in the laboring class than in the professional classes. Perhaps those offspring of the professional class who sympathize with proletariat politics also, incidentally, pick up the working man's wide use of *T* without feeling that there is anything in the linguistic practice that is congruent with the ideology.

On the other hand perhaps there is something appropriate in

the association. The ideology is consistent in its disapproval of barriers between people: race, religion, nationality, property, marriage, even criminality. All these barriers have the effect of separating the solidary, the 'in-group', from the nonsolidary, the 'out-group'. The radical says the criminal is not far enough 'out' to be killed; he should be re-educated. He says that a nationality ought not to be so solidary that it prevents world organization from succeeding. Private property ought to be abolished, industry should be nationalized. There are to be no more out-groups and in-groups but rather one group, undifferentiated by nationality, religion, or pronoun of address. The fact that the pronoun which is being extended to all men alike is *T*, the mark of solidarity, the pronoun of the nuclear family, expresses the radical's intention to extend his sense of brotherhood. But we notice that

Table 1 Scores on the Pronoun Scale in Relation to Scores on the Radicalism Scale

Group pronoun score	Group mean radicalism score
1	5.50
2	6.66
3	6.82
4	7.83
5	6.83
6	8.83
7	9.75

the universal application of the pronoun eliminates the discrimination that gave it a meaning and that gives particular point to an old problem. Can the solidarity of the family be extended so widely? Is there enough libido to stretch so far? Will there perhaps be a thin solidarity the same everywhere but nowhere so strong as in the past?

The pronouns of address as expressions of transient attitudes

Behavior norms are practices consistent within a group. So long as the choice of a pronoun is recognized as normal for a group, its interpretation is simply the membership of the speaker in that

group. However, the implications of group membership are often very important; social class, for instance, suggests a kind of family life, a level of education, a set of political views and much besides. These facts about a person belong to his character. They are enduring features which help to determine actions over many years. Consistent personal style in the use of the pronouns of address does not reveal enough to establish the speaker's unique character, but it can help to place him in one or another large category.

Sometimes the choice of a pronoun clearly violates a group norm and perhaps also the customary practice of the speaker. Then the meaning of the act will be sought in some attitude or emotion of the speaker. It is as if the interpreter reasoned that variations of address between the same two persons must be caused by variations in their attitudes toward one another. If two men of seventeenth century France properly exchange the *V* of upper-class equals and one of them gives the other *T*, he suggests that the other is his inferior since it is to his inferiors that a man says *T*. The general meaning of an unexpected pronoun choice is simply that the speaker, for the moment, views his relationship as one that calls for the pronoun used. This kind of variation in language behavior expresses a contemporaneous feeling or attitude. These variations are not consistent personal styles but departures from one's own custom and the customs of a group in response to a mood.

As there have been two great semantic dimensions governing *T* and *V*, so there have also been two principal kinds of expressive meaning. Breaking the norms of power generally has the meaning that a speaker regards an addressee as his inferior, superior, or equal, although by usual criteria, and according to the speaker's own customary usage, the addressee is not what the pronoun implies. Breaking the norms of solidarity generally means that the speaker temporarily thinks of the other as an outsider or as an intimate; it means that sympathy is extended or withdrawn.

The oldest uses of *T* and *V* to express attitudes seem everywhere to have been the *T* of contempt or anger and the *V* of admiration or respect. In his study of the French pronouns Schliebitz (1886) found the first examples of these expressive uses in literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which is about the time that

the power semantic crystallized in France, and Grand (1930) has found the same thing for Italian. In saying *T*, where *V* is usual, the speaker treats the addressee like a servant or a child, and assumes the right to berate him. The most common use of the expressive *V*, in the early materials, is that of the master who is exceptionally pleased with the work of a servant and elevates him pronominally to match this esteem.

Racine, in his dramas, used the pronouns with perfect semantic consistency. His major figures exchange the *V* of upper-class equals. Lovers, brother and sister, husband and wife – none of them says *T* if he is of high rank, but each person of high rank has a subordinate confidante to whom he says *T* and from whom he receives *V*. It is a perfect nonreciprocal power semantic. This courtly pattern is broken only for the greatest scenes in each play. Racine reserved the expressive pronoun as some composers save the cymbals. In both *Andromaque* and *Phèdre* there are only two expressive departures from the norm, and they mark climaxes of feeling.

Jespersen (1905) believed that English 'thou' and 'ye' (or 'you') were more often shifted to express mood and tone than were the pronouns of the continental languages, and our comparisons strongly support this opinion. The 'thou' of contempt was so very familiar that a verbal form was created to name this expressive use. Shakespeare gives it to Sir Toby Belch (*Twelfth Night*) in the lines urging Andrew Aguecheek to send a challenge to the disguised Viola: 'Taunt him with the license of ink, if thou thou'st him some thrice, it shall not be amiss.' In life the verb turned up in Sir Edward Coke's attack on Raleigh at the latter's trial in 1603 (Jardine, 1832-5): 'All that he did, was at thy instigation, thou viper; for I thou thee, thou traitor.'

The *T* of contempt and anger is usually introduced between persons who normally exchange *V* but it can, of course, also be used by a subordinate to a superior. As the social distance is greater, the overthrow of the norm is more shocking and generally represents a greater extremity of passion. Sejanus, in Ben Jonson's play of that name, feels extreme contempt for the emperor Tiberius but wisely gives him the reverential *V* to his face. However, soliloquizing after the emperor has exited, Sejanus begins: 'Dull, heavy Caesar! Wouldst thou tell me ...' In

Jonson's *Volpone* Mosca invariably says 'you' to his master until the final scene when, as the two villains are about to be carted away, Mosca turns on Volpone with 'Bane to thy wolfish nature.'

Expressive effects of much greater subtlety than those we have described are common in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. The exact interpretation of the speaker's attitude depends not only on the pronoun norm he upsets but also on his attendant words and actions and the total setting. Still simple enough to be unequivocal is the ironic or mocking 'you' said by Tamburlaine to the captive Turkish emperor Bajazeth. This exchange occurs in Act IV of Marlowe's play:

TAMBURLAINE Here Turk, wilt thou have a clean trencher?

BAJAZETH: Ay, tyrant, and more meat.

TAMBURLAINE: Soft, sir, you must be dietee; too much eating will make you surfeit.

'Thou' is to be expected from captor to captive and the norm is upset when Tamburlaine says 'you'. He cannot intend to express admiration or respect since he keeps the Turk captive and starves him. His intention is to mock the captive king with respectful address, implying a power that the king has lost.

The momentary shift of pronoun directly expresses a momentary shift of mood, but that interpretation does not exhaust its meaning. The fact that a man has a particular momentary attitude or emotion may imply a great deal about his characteristic disposition, his readiness for one kind of feeling rather than another. Not every attorney general, for instance, would have used the abusive 'thou' to Raleigh. The fact that Edward Coke did so suggests an arrogant and choleric temperament and, in fact, many made this assessment of him (Jardine, 1832-5). When Volpone spoke to Celia, a lady of Venice, he ought to have said 'you' but he began at once with 'thee'. This violation of decorum, together with the fact that he leaps from his sick bed to attempt rape of the lady, helps to establish Volpone's monstrous character. His abnormal form of address is consistent with the unnatural images in his speech. In any given situation we know the sort of people who would break the norms of address and the sort who would not. From the fact that a man does break the norms we

infer his immediate feelings and, in addition, attribute to him the general character of people who would have such feelings and would give them that kind of expression.

With the establishment of the solidarity semantic a new set of expressive meanings became possible – feelings of sympathy and estrangement. In Shakespeare's plays there are expressive meanings that derive from the solidarity semantic as well as many dependent on power usage and many that rely on both connotations. The play *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is concerned with the Renaissance ideal of friendship and provides especially clear expressions of solidarity. Proteus and Valentine, the two Gentlemen, initially exchange 'thou', but when they touch on the subject of love, on which they disagree, their address changes to the 'you' of estrangement. Molière (Fay, 1920) has shown us that a man may even put himself at a distance as does George Dandin in the soliloquy beginning: 'George Dandin! George Dandin! Vous avez fait une sottise ...'

In both French and English drama of the past, *T* and *V* were marvelously sensitive to feelings of approach and withdrawal. In terms of Freud's striking amocba metaphor the pronouns signal the extension or retraction of libidinal pseudopodia. However, in French, German and Italian today this use seems to be very uncommon. Our informants told us that the *T*, once extended, is almost never taken back for the reason that it would mean the complete withdrawal of esteem. The only modern expressive shift we have found is a rather chilling one. Silverberg (1940) reports that in Germany in 1940 a prostitute and her client said *du* when they met and while they were together but when the libidinal tie (in the narrow sense) had been dissolved they resumed the mutual distant *Sie*.

We have suggested that the modern direction of change in pronoun usage expresses a will to extend the solitary ethic to everyone. The apparent decline of expressive shifts between *T* and *V* is more difficult to interpret. Perhaps it is because Europeans have seen that excluded persons or races or groups can become the target of extreme aggression from groups that are benevolent within themselves. Perhaps Europeans would like to convince themselves that the solitary ethic once extended will not be withdrawn, that there is security in the mutual *T*.

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