

A PHILOSOPHER'S CONTRIBUTION TO PHILOSOPHICAL LEXICOGRAPHY

by ROLAND HALL

I think that everyone here knows the history of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Publication was finished in 1928, and the first *Supplement* followed in 1933. But in 1957 work began on making a new supplement to replace the old one (i.e. the thirteenth volume of the dictionary). This supplement will be in 3 volumes, and the first one appeared in 1972. This is entirely a commercial operation in the sense that it is not paid for by any academy or national organisation but supported by the Oxford University Press. And in fact, in the year following the publication of the first volume, over 20,000 copies were sold in the world at £ 15 each; over five thousand in Japan alone. This should ensure the continuance of the enterprise, and it is expected that the second and third volumes will be published before 1980.

My connection with this vast undertaking is somewhat indirect as I am a philosopher by profession, and teach in the University of York. I am only a part-time lexicographer but for 15 years I've been sending material to Oxford. Of course, everything there is done by hand-written quotations on slips of paper — there is very little use of electronic techniques in Britain at present — and I have personally supplied the dictionary with more than fourteen thousand of these quotation slips. Mainly from works of philosophy, but also from other sources. This may not seem a very large contribution in terms

of quantity but you will have to allow for the fact that this is for a *Supplement* to the dictionary, and those slips contain only words and senses which are not found in the main body of the dictionary, and which were not previously published in the first *Supplement*. In the last ten years I have been mainly making entries, that is, writing definitions etc. for words chosen by the editor, and trying to find earlier evidence. I did several hundred entries for the published work and I'm working just now at some for the next volume.

I don't want to take up much time to describe my activities. The replies to questionnaires contain the details of these. For the purposes of the dictionary I re-read some of the philosophers who had already been read for the main body of the dictionary, such as John Locke and John Stuart Mill: the whole of their works that could be obtained at the time of the original reading for the *O.E.D.*, and secondly, newspaper and journal articles that had not been covered. I also read the whole of William James, and over twenty volumes of the periodical *Mind*, and I've been thoroughly looking through dozens of books in philosophy for words and senses which have not been recorded. At the same time, if you compare my remarks with those of Mr. Burchfield, the editor, you will see that he describes the *Supplement* as dealing with the language of the XIXth and XXth centuries and this is because the main purpose of the *Supplement* was to bring the dictionary up to date, to catch up with the present state of English. But of course, my particular interest led me to read or re-read philosophers and authors of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries and even to go back to the earliest printed books in English on logic (from 1551 onwards) and to read some 28 of these; in fact I read these early books, and others, in order to try and cover the field of logical terminology, because this was an opportunity to feed into an existing system data which otherwise would not be published, because there does not exist in Britain any project at present for a philosophical

dictionary, or the sort of work other speakers have been describing. As far as I know there is no other philosopher in Britain who is interested in lexicography, and the only way in which the items discovered could be brought to light, apart from publication in journals such as *Notes and Queries*, would be to supply them directly to the dictionary in Oxford. But the consequence of this, unfortunately, is: I have been asked how some of my material could be supplied to the present enterprise (the *Lessico Intellettuale*), and I don't see how this can be done (apart from some collections published in *Notes and Queries*), because my material, when I've finished the reading, is sent to the dictionary house in Oxford, where it becomes absorbed in a vast mass of material from all the different subjects, and it is not recoverable as specifically philosophical material.