PRESS RELEASE

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06 February 2006

Desideratum — 2

What Roget wanted, he said, was to be useful, practical, to provide an implement hitherto unsupplied in any language. His Work was a tool. Tool as in contrivance: plan, scheme, design. And tool as in instrument: apparatus, appliance, utensil, weapon. Weapon against confusion, sloth, ineptitude. A prototype, also, of course, a contrivance as in resource and also as in a card up one’s sleeve. Forgive the vulgarity, Roget, begged his future comrades in synonymity, but things ordinary, not classical, classical as in tasteful, as in prototypal, are common, as in base, but also as in shared. Precision, above all, was his motivation, the desire for perspicuity (567n), clarity, directness, our complicity of meaning, complicity as in: inclusion, association, in the same boat. Again, excuse the common (as in mediocre) metaphor.

I know (understand, recognize) what possessed him, possessed as in devoured by, possessed as in on one’s hand — he would have a hand in classifying, yes, in naming, naming, naming, that great (as in powerful, as in proud) science.

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