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Hamilton and Madison Deploy ‘Necessary’ In Works Dated to 1787/88, 1790/91 and 1817-1836 Semantic Values Surveyed

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abstract.
In the second of three articles, word counts are supplied for competing values of ‘necessary,’ highlighting the divergent ‘necessary’ = consequence and ‘necessary’ = text crafting. The survey covers 151 works (essays, speeches and letters) over 49 years [consisting of 265,859 words] from The Federalist Papers through the bank bill debate and continuing with Madison’s post-1817 works. The results count 487 uses of ‘necessary’ (and its affiliates) in these works.

key words: quantum values, ‘nature of government’ reasoning

A. INTRODUCTION. The reader may profitably read Hamilton and Madison Deploy ‘Necessary’ In Works Dated to 1787/88, 1790/91 and 1817-36 Semantic Values Surveyed Through Quotations, 2 OCL 360. In addition, the project is generally introduced in Our Constitutional Logic Roadmaps Single Word Searches Across Single or Multiple Works, 2 OCL 811.

B. A DEBATE DEFERRED. Both Madison and Hamilton pass on their chances to make an issue of their differences by teasing apart the ‘kinetic’ from the ‘logical’ values embraced by ‘necessary.’ Hamilton and Madison’s 77 TFP essays (laying Jay’s five and the disputed authorship [as between AH and JM] three to one side) deploy ‘necessary’ = text-has-consequences-in-the-real-world with a score of 98.31% (233 / 237) for Hamilton and 94.29% (132 / 140) for Madison.

In other words: of the 237 times Hamilton deploys ‘necessary’ AH is speaking of the quantum value ‘has consequences in the real world’ in 233 of these passages. Ditto 132 of 140 for Madison.

Scoring ‘necessary’ = text-crafting returns scores of 1.69% (4 / 237) for Hamilton and 5.71% (8 / 140) for Madison. The approximately equal level of attention to physical and logical necessity establishes a baseline between the two writers. Neither seems particularly interested in what constrains text writers, but they are certainly aware of the iron jaws of ‘necessity’ compelling this or that wordsmithery on occasions cited by them.

C. TURNING TO THE BANK BILL DEBATE [1790/91]. Here, Hamilton’s raw 72/79 score in 31,696 words swamps, in raw volume, Madison’s attentions at 17/19 in 5,818 words. We can now draw on quotations to expose Hamilton’s eagerness to discuss text-crafting issues involved in creating constitutional text.

In TFP No. 23 Hamilton had staked out his position on textual analysis inside the word ‘necessary’: “This inquiry will naturally divide itself into three branches – the objects to be provided for by a federal government, the quantity of power necessary to the accomplishment of those objects, the persons upon whom that power ought to operate.”

Hamilton takes a more aggressive position in the debate: “It is essential to the being of the national government that so erroneous a conception of the meaning of the word necessary should be exploded.” In Hamilton’s opinion sorting out the ‘logical’ from the ‘kinetic’ values of ‘necessary’ – or any other quanta – is not a step toward resolving constitutional issues. And to level semantics Madisonian at one blow, Hamilton blasts the “erroneous idea that the quantum of necessity or utility is the test of a constitutional exercise of power.”

D. TABLE ANNEXED. Table 331 is annexed hereto. works.bepress.com/peter_aschenbrenner

E. WHAT ARE WORDS WORTH? The reader may already have guessed that an individual word, that is, one grapheme, cannot be relied upon to
freight text-crafters’ aspirations for the future. Depending on how you like your ox gored, the reader might (a) embrace her smooth-bore musket as the signifier for ‘arms’ which constitutional text protects or (b) thank heaven for the constitutional text which protects a man’s right to run anti-government broadsheets from his flat-bed press.

If words are reliable, signifying quantum values with bull’s-eye accuracy – and this is at the time ink-on-parchment is drying – why is it so hard to get speakers to take responsibility for them? OCL has noted that on only a few occasions was the ‘self-credentialling’ evidenced in the ordered discourse of the 1790’s: ‘Trust me, I was there.’

When today’s speakers [yesterday’s text writers] are shouted down (as Madison was on February 8, 1791) or ignored (as he was on February 2, 1791), then the experience of writing text does not remedy – by credentials – what quantum value lacks in persuasive force.

F. TRANSLATIONS IN EVIDENCE. This was not a new problem to the Eighteenth Century. Translations had been debated, one against another, since the Thirteenth Century: competing translations of Plato and Aristotle touched off serious scholarly disagreement as to how passages were best rendered into Latin. Jerome himself, growing up in a bilingual world that today’s scholars can only dream of inhabiting, armed himself with a working of Hebrew via an extended habitation in Jerusalem. (c. 385 – 420 AD) Jerome’s trilingual talents and resources are/were certainly unsurpassed and will never be equaled. But passages of the Old Testament remain obscure and this is because the quantum value of certain words cannot reliably be freighted into a modern reader’s consciousness. And this was the case with Jerome’s translations themselves. The very existence of metatext, typically printed apparatus or the earnest offerings of a friendly author/commentator group, prove this point.

If you need more words to explain The Word, then The Word can’t or won’t do the job it was supposed to do. It would come as no surprise to a resident of America or Britain in the Eighteenth Century that there were readers who preferred to read German, French, Italian or Spanish works in the original language. It would not come as a surprise to any reader attaining reading fluency in a neighboring Indo-European language that quantum values of English words do not reliably invoke the same quality of reading experience as that afforded through the author’s native language. It’s a source for bragging, then and now and surely an opportunity to hide the content of what one is reading from one’s nosy (and not so literate) seatmate.

G. TOO MUCH, OR TOO LITTLE. The battle that Hamilton and Madison fought in the bank bill debate was nothing new in European culture. Take the notion that the non-existence of ‘bank’ – that is, a word not included in one of the 4,321 words penned at Philadelphia – attained the status of speech event. This was a very troubling approach, to say the least. How do you relate the effort to determine quantum values for a word to the effort involved in doing something with text that did not deploy the word in question. Something and nothing seem to be, on first blush, different breeds of cat.

However one pursues textual analysis, the search will not end with a single word or within a word. Words may contain too much information; that is, they may contain divergent and (frequently) irreconcilable quantum values. In the case of constitutional text crafted on the eve of the Industrial Revolution, on the other hand, the public vocabulary may not have formed words for situations, concepts and opportunities. If words are lacking in public discourse because ideas and objects do not yet exist, it is hard to say that such non-existent words are unreliable. Or, will be reliable.

H. SEARCHING ENUMERATIONS FOR TARGET WORDS. This became a road taken as the Industrial Revolution flooded everyday language with words un-enumerable at the Founding. Within Madison’s lifetime, the neologisms of the Industrial Revolution rendered the politics of semantics an antiquarian enterprise. While ‘railroad’/’railway’ are recorded usages in the English language before 1788-1791, on OED’s account, ‘telegraph’ and ‘nuclear arsenal’ are not.

The power to fund a transcontinental telegraph line or the power to launch the Manhattan Project could neither be “delegated” nor “not delegated” with the semantic operation entailed thereby reserving powers to the states or the people.
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J. **CITATION FORMAT.** Please cite as 2 Our Constitutional Logic 356 or 2 OCL 356.

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