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Understanding, Interpreting and Answering the Question of What Is Being Properly

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Abstract

We have to master six propositions and judges, which are connected each other tightly, in the process of understanding, interpreting and answering the question of what is being properly. They are :1) Being is the representative of all converted forms of the verb of be, and further the representative of all English words; 2) words are the representative of languages; 3) languages are one of the main ways in materializing the human thinking and its results, that is, languages are one of the main ways of expressing the processes of human thinking and its results; 4) the processes of human thinking is the process of subjective disposition on objects, the results of human thinking are the results of human subjective dispositions on objects; 5) subjective dispositions are the processes of humans dispositions on objects, which include the results of human subjective dispositions previously, from multi-aspects, multi-strata, multi-disciplines, in human minds, and the subjective dispositions are the contents of the activities of human minds; 6) the true function and aim of raising the question of what is being continually from ancient Greece to now by Occidental scholars is that they want to know what is subjective dispositions and the relationship between subjective dispositions and their linguistic expressions.

Key words: Being, Ontology, Subjectivity.

Introduction

Almost everyone, who works in the discipline of metaphysics, knows that the question of what is being, which was raised explicitly first by ancient Greek philosophers about 25 hundred years ago, has not been answered, interpreted or disposed properly. We think that we have to undergo six logical changes in the process of understanding, interpreting and answering the question of Being properly. They are :1) Being is the representative of all converted forms of the verb of be, and further the representative of all English words; 2) words are the representative of languages; 3) languages are one of the main ways in materializing the human thinking and its results, that is, languages are one of the main ways

of expressing the processes of human thinking and its results; 4) the processes of human thinking is the process of subjective disposition on objects, the results of human thinking are the results of human subjective dispositions on objects; 5) subjective dispositions are the processes of humans dispositions on objects, which include the results of human subjective dispositions previously, from multi-aspects, multi-strata, multi-disciplines, in human minds; 6) the true function and aim of raising the question of what is being continually from ancient Greece to now by relevant scholars is that they want to know what is subjective dispositions and the relationship between subjective dispositions and their linguistic expressions.

Subjective Disposition

One necessary factor which has to be mentioned first is the definition of the term subjectivity. It is clear known from each big English dictionary that the term subjectivity is the noun form or abstract of the processes of subjective dispositions. However, we believe that the circle of philosophy has not made a proper description of what are the processes of subjective dispositions. Therefore we think the key factor in understanding, interpreting and resolving the question of what is being is to explain clearly what the processes of subjective disposition is. We think that the processes of subjective dispositions are the processes of human dispositions on objects from multi-aspects, multi-strata, multi-disciplines, and etc., in human minds. For instance, we can call the same cat at the same time and same place as a carnivore, a mammal, a vertebrate, a chordate, a living thing, a being, etc. All these forms of address to the same cat are right, so long as we do not arrange any defining condition or context in our thinking or expressing, because each of these addresses of the cat points out an attribute of the cat, reflecting some sorts of relationship or similarity with the other things, which have been known to us, in the world.

The reason for us to summarize or describe the same being at the same time and same place in different degrees of abstraction, or different aspects is that it might be often necessary to for us to observe, think, study, summarize, generalize, or describe it from different degrees of abstraction, or different aspects, according our different needs in different context, circumstance or environment. For instance, when we say that the above cat as a mammal, we pay attention to see if it is necessary to be nursed to live by milk when it is young. If so, we may nurse it with milk when it needs. When we say the above cat as a living being, we pay attention or observe it from the aspect of seeing if it can undergo a process of metabolism. If so, we have to ensure that it can have enough fresh air, food, etc. so long as we want that it can live normally. Another typical form for humans to dispose objects from multi-aspects, multi-strata, multi-disciplines, and etc. in human minds is to make up, or fabricate, the state or attributes of affairs of any real thing or any fabrication. For instance, we can fabricate that there is a point without area, a line without width, a surface without bulk, and carry the relative calculations in geometry. The Chinese made up a myth in ancient China. It was said that a female celestial, who is called Chang Er, together with a rabbit, who is called Yu Tu, had been living on the surface of the moon together for millions of years. Billions of fabrications and fairy tales have been made up in each community, each nation since ancient time. They are still been made up every day today, and can be found everywhere in the world.

Besides, different subject, that is, different individuals and different communities, can make out totally contrary answers, conclusions to the same thing or the same being in their minds, that is, in their subjective dispositions. For instance, the consumers and the seller might make totally contrary subjective dispositions to the selling price of the same commodity. The consumers might think that the selling price of the commodity was too high, and the seller wanted to make too much money from the commodity. The seller might think that the selling price of the commodity was too low, because quality of the commodity was very good. Even the same seller might think that the selling price of the commodity is too low to make money today, and he might think that the price of the same commodity is too high to make money the other day, because he might think that it might make much more money by lower the price of the commodity and increase the sales volume of the same commodity. These instances indicate clearly that subject is really different from subjective dispositions. The subject refers the person or a group of persons who make subjective dispositions. The subjective disposition refers to the processes for humans to dispose objects from multi-aspects, multi-strata, multi-disciplines, and etc. in human minds.

Another view which should be pointed out is that people often use the method of subjective negation in the processes of their thinking in order to master some attributes of some objects quickly and explicitly. For instance, we have to suppose that the consultation as a motionless or static being if we want to get to know the speed of a being. If we want to get to know the speed of a car on the earth, we have to suppose that the road, on which the car is traveling, is motionless or static, negating the fact that the road is moving together with the rotation of the earth, even as fast as more than one thousand kilometers per hour in some places on the earth. When we call a cat as a living being, we actually need negating the other attributes of the cat, such as it has a spine and is a vertebrate, etc. It is also an existent form of subjective negation when we fabricate that there is a point without area, a line without width, a surface without bulk, and carry the relative calculate in geometry.

The process of subjective disposition is also a process which the subject does not move its body transiently, and separate his spiritual activities from his bodily activities temporally. This process has been called by human beings ourselves as thinking, reduction, planning, cognition, etc. For instance, we are planning how to publish this paper in a few months now. Many international conventions and treaties, which are about how to distribute and make use of Antarctic Continent, the outer space of the earth, the deposits of the oceans, etc., have been sighed in the past decades. These are the examples for peoples to consider how their future generations should to practice in Antarctic Continent, the deep oceans, the outer space of the earth, etc., before hand, or in hundreds of coming years. The reason to make subjective disposition, that is, the human beings have to make observations and analyses on objects from multi-aspects, multi-strata, multi-disciplines, and etc. in their minds beforehand, is that, the human beings want to get to know more about the objects, in order to make use of the objects better, that is, to make better practice of human beings themselves. For instance, before the craftsman made the wood desk I am using, he must have observed and got to know the quality and quantity of the materials, such as if the material was wood, if the size, the

hardness, the degree of the arid of it were enough to make a desk. Otherwise, he could not have made out the qualified desk I am using.

In the circumstance that human beings can not make direct exchanges of ideas with other species of animals, that is, in the circumstance that there is no direct consultation with other species of animals, we can objectively sense by human beings ourselves that human beings can dispose on objects from multi-aspects, multi-strata, multi-disciplines, and etc., in human minds before we undertake any activities, as what has been showed in the above paragraphs about the making of a wood desk, and in the examples of the making of the tools in getting their living materials, such as sharp sticks, various stone tools, rifles, guns, etc., which make human beings surpass the other animals for ever. Besides, the complex processes of human subjective disposition can also be showed by complex oral expressions, and further by thousands of kind of written languages. These complex oral expressions and written languages can be sensed by human listeners and readers with their sense organs, such as ears, eyes, and fingers, etc., and be further understood and mastered by the listeners and readers. The other animals can also send messages and express their morale and feeling by making sounds, but their abilities of transmitting messages, morale and feeling are much weaker and simpler than that of human beings. The complex written languages, which made out and used by human being can prove this viewpoint very clearly, for no other species of animal has made out any written language, except human beings. The oral languages of human beings are also much more complex than the systems of the sounds which are made out by the other animals. The difference in quality comes from the difference in quantity. The change in quality comes from the change in quantity. These two ideas created by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel are quite useful in our cognition.

In short, the subjective dispositions are the contents of the activities of human minds. As for why and how the human beings can make subjective dispositions, the answers should come from the disciplines of biology, such as biochemistry, etc.

language is one of main ways in materialization of human thinking and its results

The reason for human beings to make subjective disposition is that the human beings want to get to know more about the objects, in order to make use of the objects better or more efficient, that is, to make their practice better or more efficient, further to make their living conditions better. Human beings have always carried out their practice collectively through the forms of co-operation and division of labour since the emerge of the human beings, because the capacity of each individual human being to produce and supply living materials and living circumstances is quite finite and weak, in relation to the natural environment in which each individual human being has to survive. A single person has far less physical strength than a large carnivore, such as a tiger, a bear or a lion. An individual person is quite liable to be seriously hurt if he fought single-handedly against a large carnivore or a group of large carnivores, even if he were to equip himself with stone weapons and sharp sticks. In the more recent epochs of human history, a single person could successfully engage with metal weapons or firearms against a large carnivore or a group of large carnivores. But the

production of the metal weapons or firearms cannot be achieved by any single person. Even the mere smelting of iron ore for the production of metal weapons or firearms cannot be carried out by any single person, to say nothing of the other relevant concrete labours, such as mining exploration and ore retrieval. It is obvious that without the co- operation with other persons in various forms, either in the form of direct co-operation, or in the form of providing the necessary metal weapons or firearms, it would be difficult for a single person to survive in an environment where he or she is confronted by the menace of being pursued by a large carnivore or a group of large carnivores. And an individual human always needs the protection of the community as a whole in which he lives against the threat of potential injury or murder by any of the other individuals in the same community, or by the individuals in a nearby community (whether friendly or hostile), or even by a nearby hostile community as a whole. Many kinds of injuries and murders have been happening every day from the most primitive stage of human history until the present time, even in the most developed societies such as the United States of America, Great Britain, France, etc. One of the essential reasons why citizens in the most developed countries pay taxes to support financially the continuous existence of policemen and soldiers is that they need them to prevent or at least reduce these sorts of injuries and murders.

Human beings have to carry out idea intercourse or idea exchange in order to make co-operation and division of labour better and more efficient. However, the thinking process and thinking results can only be known directly by the thinker himself individually. No other person, other species of animal, any machine or any instrument can get to know explicitly or accurately it directly. Language is one of the main tools or main ways for people to carry out idea intercourse or idea exchange, as language is one of the main forms for people to materialize their thinking process and thinking results explicitly or accurately. The other main forms for people to materialize their thinking process and thinking results explicitly or accurately are carrying out productions, i.g. carrying out the the production of grain, providing services, i.g. providing medical or transportation services, and playing games, i.g. playing snooker or basketball, along with the making use of languages.

Making use of languages is one of the natural abilities with social characteristic, which human beings have got through millions of years of evolution. The thinking process and thinking results of an individual can only be perceived directly by the other people through the thinker's language, including oral languages, written languages, body languages, and the pictures painted by the thinkers. The other individuals can sense and understand through their subjective disposition if they make agreement before hand, or accepted through common practice. That is, our thinking and cognitions on subjective disposition can be expressed out by our oral language and written language, and then to be perceived directly by the other individuals through their sensory organs, such as ears, eyes, etc., and further to be understood and mastered by them. Only through this process, can the relative individuals be able to organize the efficient co-operation and division of collective activities. For instance, the English spoken people can make sure and master the content and definition of the concept of subjective disposition, which uses the English as one of their material carrier, and on the foundation of it further to develop the relevant systems of philosophical theories and

hypotheses, and further more for the English spoken people to carry out the collective practice at a higher degree.

The second reason for human beings to have to express their subjective processes with languages, especially with written languages and pictures, is that the capacity of the memories of each individual or community which exists in real history is limited. For instance, each author of us of this paper can not memorize all of the concrete words, which have been written by ourselves in the former parts of this paper. In the circumstances that we can not complete the whole thinking of all of the ideas, which have to be expressed by this paper, we have to write down the ideas which have been thought out for us to get to know them precisely in our later writings, in order to express out all of our ideas completely, integrally, without any internal contradiction or repetition in logic. It is the same to any community, because each community is composed or formed by some individual persons, and the number of the individual persons is always limited. Therefore, the memory of each community in real history is limited, because the number of its members is always limited, and consequently the ability to remember directly by the brains of all members of it is always limited.

Besides, each community has to pass on the useful knowledge, which the members of the community have gained, such as the skills in production, good ideas, good thinking methods, the rules of linguistic expression, etc., to the next generation, in order to make the community to be able to exist and develop continually. Therefore, each community has to materialize the results of the thinking of their members, through the objective forms of using relevant words, pictures, oral languages, etc., to pass on the useful ideas to the next generation.

People, vice versa often study the processes, results and levels of people's thinking through studying the phenomena of languages for the reason that languages are one of the main forms of materialization of the processes, results of human thinking, that is, the human subjective dispositions. For instance, Yang Shi, a contemporary Chinese scholar, tells some characteristics of primitive thinking of the human beings in his book *the Childhood of Philosophy*. He reports in the book that he got to know, through reading some philosophical books, that the people, who were called Ewes, in a primitive tribe in Africa, always expressed the different forms of walking with dozens of different words, e.g., walk firmly, walk with a limp, walk with the head tilted to one side, walk tranquilly, walk leisurely and carefree, walk with throwing out one's belly, pace to and fro, walk hardly because of his fatness, walk with the four limbs shaking strenuously, etc. However, there is no the word of walk in their language, because they had not abstracted such a more abstract concept. The relevant philosophers concluded that the degree of abstract thinking of the Ewes is lower than the contemporary advanced communities.

Being is the representative of all the English words

Some lexicologists believe that word is the smallest unit with meaning or sense, and word also is the smallest unit to be used in languages.^{iv} Vocabulary is an integral part of any language the same as grammar and pronunciation. But lexicology is much more complex than

syntax and phonetics/phonics. Besides, many languages have very big vocabularies. For instance, English has got nearly one hundred thousand common words. It is known that Winston Churchill (1874-1965) got his Nobel laureate in literature because he mastered and used a very big vocabulary of common words, nearly eighty or more thousand English common words in his works. Moreover, the number of proper names, such as Winston Churchill, Mao Ze Dong, the Yellow River, etc., which can be billions, is much bigger than that of common words. Common experience tells us that a child with ordinary intelligence can master the pronunciation of his mother tongue. He can express correctly with his mother tongue before 12 years old usually. These facts indicate that a human being with ordinary intelligence can master the pronunciation and grammar of his mother tongue around the age of 12. However, many countries, such as China, U.K., regulate that only over the age of 18 can a person have the right to vote. This fact indicates that a human being with ordinary intelligence can master the basic knowledge of all his social life only around the age of 18. The basic knowledge of all his social life is expressed by the relevant words. This fact indicates that it needs more than at least six years to learn the words about all his social life than to learn the pronunciation and grammar of his mother tongue. On the foundation, we can conclude that words are the representative of language. It is because that it is much difficult and takes much longer time only to learn the words about all the social life in a community in which a person lives than to learn pronunciation and grammar of his mother tongue. In addition, it takes much longer time to learn the meanings of the specialized vocabulary both in his mother tongue and foreign languages, if a person wants to undertake some difficult professions, such as to be a medicine doctor or to work at the forward position in the natural or social sciences either nationally or internationally. Usually it is hardly for a person to master the specialized vocabulary before the age of 22. A common social fact can prove this point clearly. The fact is that a person can only get his bachelor degree or diploma, and be allowed to undertake a professional job around the age of 22 almost in each country all over the world at present.

Each person who knows some English knows that each big contemporary dictionary of English show clearly that all the senses and usages of the word 'be'. These senses and usages of the word 'be' is the root of the gerund of being. Everyone can get the correct answers from these dictionaries, if he does not know any sense of the word 'be'. Then why so many philosophers have being studied the gerund of being as the aggregation of the word 'be' since the ancient Greek? And there are thousands of common words in English, why so many philosophers only show appreciation for the word 'be' and have undertaken the gerund of being as the aggregation of the word 'be' as one of their focal points and emphases in their studying. One of the typical examples, which shows that contemporary philosophers have undertaken the gerund of being as the aggregation of the word be as one of their focal points and emphases in their studying, is that the reason for Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre, two of the most famous philosophers in contemporary circle of philosophy, have been acknowledged as philosophers and have been praised highly, is that they studied the gerund of being, and published the two books BEING AND TIME v and BEING AND NOTHING vi respectively.

We think that the reason for so many philosophers only show appreciation for the word 'be' and have undertaken the gerund of being as the aggregation of the word 'be' as one of their focal points and emphases in their studying is that the root of verb 'be' is the most useful root among all the English verbs, including all branches of verbs, such as substantive verb, linking verb, modal verb and auxiliary verb, etc., because it has got the highest rate of usage and the most powerful function among all the English verbs. The fact that it has got the highest rate of usage can be proved by some text of lessons in a set of English text books, New Concept English, which are very popular in China in the past 30 years. For instance, A private Conversation, Lesson One of The Book Two of New Concept English, has 100 words in all. 24 verbal words are used in the lesson. Among them, there are 5 converted forms of verb be, and the root of verb be has got the highest rate of usage among all the verbal words in this text.vii Breakfast or Lunch, Lesson Two of the same textbook, has 100 words in all, too. 28 verbal words are used in the lesson. There are 9 converted forms of verb be, and the root of verb be has got the highest rate of usage among all the verbal words in this lesson, too.viii In the other lessons of the textbook, the circumstances are almost the same.

As a linking verb, be is the most useful word root, because it is the most expressing linking verb. It can even express the meaning and function of the other linking verbs. For instance, we can say 'the word "seem" is a linking verb. It is difficult for the other linking verb to play the same function.

As an auxiliary verb, the word root of be can use its converted forms, such as be, been, being, am, are, is, was, were, etc., to make up passive voice, e.g. the book is being read by someone. The other auxiliary verbs, such as shall, will, have, and etc., can not play the function at all in contemporary English. The word root of be can be used with its converted forms to make up all the tenses of almost all verbs together with the present and past participles of the relevant verbs, the same as the other auxiliary verbs, such as shall, will, have, etc., do. Besides, in contemporary English, being, which is originally the gerund of the linking verb 'be', has been converted into a noun to express something which has been mentioned formerly or before, and something which is known almost to everybody, e.g. we can say 'those beings', or 'human beings', etc. In these cases, being is used as a pure noun, has almost lost its original meaning or sense totally. The verb 'be' is also the verb which is kept the most irregular forms among all the irregular verbs, that is, be, being, been, am, is, are, was, were. The other English irregular verbs are at most kept five converted forms, e.g. For verb 'give', give, gives, giving, gave, given.

We can conclude that being, as the gerund of verb 'be', can be treated as the representative of all the English words, as the previous philosophers have done in fact, because the gerund of verb 'be' has got the most sememe/semanteme and the highest rate of usage, and has been kept the most converted forms among all the English verbs, and English verbs themselves are the most converted words or most changeable words among all the English words, and consequently have become the most complex word class.

The reason why the question of what is being has puzzled the philosophers for about 25 hundred years

We mentioned above that the question of what is being has puzzled the philosophers for about 25 hundred years since ancient Greek. We think that the first reason for them not to have answered or interpreted question is that they did not make it clear what is subjective disposition, that is, the content of the concept of subjectivity in the sense of the logic or dialectic logic. In other words, they did not know that the content of the concept of subjectivity in the sense of the logic or dialectic logic is that the subjective dispositions are the processes of humans dispositions on objects, which include the results of human subjective dispositions previously, from multi-aspects, multi-strata, multi-disciplines, and etc., in human minds. Consequently they did not make it clear what is the difference between subject and subjective disposition or subjectivity.

The second reason is that the methods they used have some defects. The most important one among them is that they often paid much attention to analyze deeply the sememe/semanteme of being as the gerund of verb 'be', and some of them wanted to choose one of the most important one or most influential one as the main sememe/semanteme of being as the gerund of verb 'be' or as the representative of the main sememe/semanteme of being as the gerund of verb 'be'. However, they did not think clearly the actual reasons or aims of why so many generations of philosophers raised the question of what is being again and again, when each sememe/semanteme, usages, converted form of verb 'be' has been showed clearly in each big dictionary and each encyclopedia in each time from the ancient Greek to contemporary time.

We think the fact that the philosophers have chosen being as the gerund of verb 'be' as their object of study might have given us some inspirations. One of the inspirations is that the relevant philosophers in the past might actually want to get to know what is the subjective disposition and the relationship between subjective disposition and their linguistic expressions as a whole. The gerund being is all the converted forms of verb 'be', and gerund being does not only make the verb 'be' become an linguistic object of the studies of philosophers, but also make being as the representative of all of English verbs, consequently the representative of all the English words because the gerund being is the most complex words among all English words, of English language, of all the languages with Latin tradition in proper order.

As we mentioned briefly above, languages are one of the main ways in materialization of human thinking and its results. As the gerund of verb 'be', which has got shown clearly the complication and diversity of human subjectivity or subjective disposition of human languages, as we showed relatively clear above, consequently the gerund being can show clearly the complication and diversity of human subjectivity or subjective disposition. It is much easier for people to raise a question on a phenomenon, which can be seen directly than to raise a question on chasing the essence, or genus, or differentia of the phenomenon of languages, which is usually hidden behind the phenomenon of languages. It is necessary to think much more difficult to chase the essence, or genus, or differentia of the phenomenon as the aim of thinking than only to chase the phenomenon itself as the aim of thinking.

Therefore now we may say with faith that the actual reasons or aims of why so many generations of philosophers raised the question of what is being again and again continually from ancient Greece to now by Occidental philosophers, is that the true function and aim of raising the question of what is being is that they want to know what is subjective dispositions, or subjectivity, and the relationship between subjective dispositions, or subjectivity, and their linguistic expressions.

Actually some previous scholars have felt that the true function and aim of raising the question of what is being is not to chase the sememe of the gerund of being or to choose a convincing sememe of the gerund of being as the best answer to the question. For instance, Arthur O. Lovejoy published his book *The Great Chain of Being* in the year of 1964 to try to resolve the issue.^{ix} But we think that he did not resolve the issue or question, well, because he did not explain clearly that what is the content of the concept of subjectivity from the perspective of logic or dialectic logic, that is, when the word subject refers to ‘the mind regarded as the thinking power (opp. to the object about which it thinks); that of which something is predicated or the term denoting to it’,^x better than the other scholars, such as the linguisticians. At the end of the paper, we put forward two suggestions to the editors and writers of dictionaries and encyclopedias. The first is that it is better to add a sense or expression, that is, ‘on subjective proposition’, to the word ‘ontology’. The second is to add a sense or expression to the word ‘subjectivity’. This addition is that ‘subjectivity “refers to the process of subjective disposition on objects, and subjective disposition refers to the processes of humans dispositions on objects, which include the results of human subjective dispositions previously, from multi-aspects, multi-strata, multi-disciplines, and etc., in human minds”’.

We believe that the philosophers can do much better work and make much faster progress in the discipline of logic, especially in the dialectical logic, and promote the development of culture in general, in the same time in the future, if the editors and writers of dictionaries and encyclopedias would accept the above suggestions. It is much easier for people to understand the expression of ‘on subjective proposition’ than to understand the expression of ‘on being’, because the former is the explanation after philosophers have got to know the meaning of the phrase ‘on being’, the latter is the explanation when philosophers had not got to know clearly the meaning of the phrase ‘on being’ or ‘subjectivity’ from the perspective of logic or dialectic logic.

i Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being And Time*, Translated by John Macquarrie & Edwaard Robinson, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1962, p. 21.

ii Cf. Yang Shi, *The Childhood of Philosophy*, Peking: China Social Sciences Press, 2011, p.12.

iii Cf. Patrick J. Hurley, *A Concise Introduction to Logic*, 10th edition, Singapore: Cengage Learning, p. 44.

iv Cf. Xu Weihai, *An Introduction to Lexics*, revised edition, Peking: Peking University Press, p. 26.

v Cf. Martin Heidegger, *BEING AND TIME*, translated by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, Oxford : Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1962.

vi Cf. Jean-Paul Sartre, *BEING AND NOTHING*, translated by Hazel E. Barnes, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1993.

vii L. G. Alexander & He Qixin, *New Concept English*, Compiled by published jointly by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press and Longman Asia Ltd., Peking, 1997, p. 12.

viii Ibit, p. 16.

ix Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, Harvard University Press, 1964

x Chamber English Dictionary, 7th ed., Edinburgh: W & R Chambers Ltd., 1990, p.1463.