

## Nabobs of Positivity

I recently came across the meme “I wish I lived inprecedented times”, which is funny because it incongruently upends our expectations. We are quite used to negatives that, when removed from their negating particles, result in used positives, such as with “insane” and “sane”, “disinformation” and “information”. or “unusual” and “usual”. And, as we are now living in an age of political turmoil and environmental crisis that is almost always called “unprecedented”, to wish to live in a “precedented” time is reasonable, albeit also funny.

So this got me thinking about other “nabobs of positivity”—a term I’ve adapted from Spiro Agnew’s famous phrase “nattering nabobs of negativism” that he gave in a speech written for him by William Safire in 1970 to decry the critics of US President Richard Nixon. [My younger readers may not have heard of this, but those of us who lived through the Vietnam War remember it well.]

So what are some other negatives that have no equivalent positives?

(In my household, we will sometimes say, when faced with a particularly messy house after a party, “I will combobulate this later”, fully aware that we are using a nonsensical neologism from “discombobulated”).)



So . . . . .

- Many might say that this silly essay is “inine”, but few would claim that it is “nane” or “ane”!
- You might “disparage” or “disdain” my writing, but I would prefer if you “parage” or “dain”it!
- I’ll admit, my writing is often “ungainly” and not “gainly”.
- I am rarely “discreet” and often “creet”, often “disgusting” and rarely “gusting”, and often “dissipated” and rarely “sipated”.
- We live in a time when it is easy to be “disillusioned” or “dismayed” and hard to be “illusioned” or “mayed”.
- (I hope you find all this “turbing” and not “disturbing”. “sipid” and not “insipid”, “toward” and not “untoward”, “sightly” and not “unsightly”, “nerving” and not “unnerving”).)

- Well, I’ve gone on “unduly”—and not “duly”—long!



As with so many of my other silly scribblings, I invite my readers to come up with their own examples. Enjoy being a “nabob of positivity”!