

At Breakfast for the Hungry Hearted this morning (17 Jan 75), the IBM head for sales projection was badmouthing the legalese in our new church constitution. Said I, "It's a relief to hear you badmouthing lawyer-talk instead of preacher-talk." Then He explained that IBM's own computers have just been educated to "listen" to any talk, and translate into commonese (my word, his point)--factor of 1:99 (meaning you can say something any one of 100 ways, and the computer will translate--"understand" it one way only, fulfilling the philologist's dream of one sememe/morpheme/phoneme (meaning/construct/sound) but by allowing diversity within unity--and thus this computer as a model of pluralism, the global society with tribal variety)...At Trustees/Adm.Faculty (NYTS) retreat last weekend, we used Gabriel Moran and his RELIGIOUS BODY, which badmouths churchy language in the interest of learning-worshipping community (and is almost kenotic enough to put alongside Beckett's 15-second-sigh play)...The third factor behind this thinksheet is that this semester I'm into three things involving language-convergence: a D.Min. "Integration Seminar" (which includes converging one's lexica), "Sociology of Religion" (converging the languages of religion and sociology), and "Pastoral Counseling Integration Seminar" (converging the languages of religion and psychology). Becoming multilingual in the sense of facility with the lexica of religion, psychology, sociology (including politics and economics), and philosophy--some measure of skill in this intertranslation is increasingly necessary to "ministry." Here we need to emulate the computer: the wages of the mechanical model is death, but the gift of the electronic model is life and peace.

1. From whom can we expect this language-sophistication? Certainly not from "science," or even such a brilliant philosopher of science as Ervin Laszlo, whose THE SYSTEMS VIEW OF THE WORLD (Geo.Braziller/72) [subtitle: "The Natural Philosophy of the New Developments in the Sciences"] is innocent of the problematics of linguistic complexity. He badmouths the mythic, then unconsciously mixes old myths with new, as on p.119: "accidentally [sic], we did happen to evolve [sic] a most remarkable property: self[sic]-reflection[sic]"; and (p.120) "the objective norms of existence" (discerned, of course, by scientists) are on the way to becoming a new orthocracy (powered orthodoxy, and therefore tyranny). He replaces the biblical obedience to God's revealed will in history/nature with (p.118) "nature's penchant for order and adjustment," a logos-notion bypassing the chthonic/demonic/chaotic/sinful....in line with the millenia-long efforts to fashion a naturalistic ethic (most recently, Maslow). PROPHECY: Such mentality/language will dominate the "intellectual" ionosphere for a long time to come, and clergy will have to affirm/critique/theologize it.

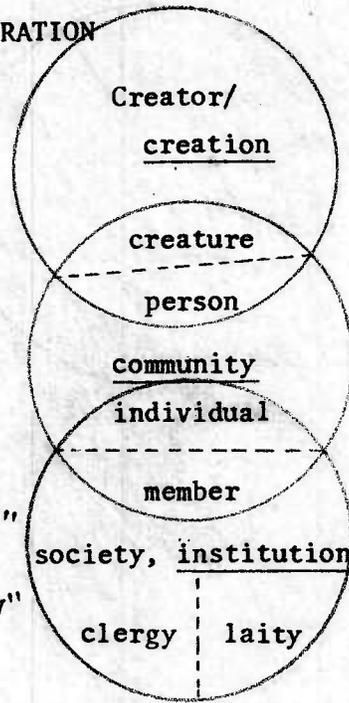
2. I see three BASIC LANGUAGES, nonsequential but situational (i.e., each pertinent to particular situations, contexts):  
 LANGUAGE #1 is undifferentiated, mythic. E.g., biblical, liturgical, poetic.  
 LANGUAGE #2 is communal, personal. I resist the present middle-class tendency to collapse Languages #1 and #3 into it.  
 LANGUAGE #3 is institutional, "technical" (as [a] of tools, [b] of professional guilds, and [c] of "laity" [i.e., guild followers]).

3. CONCLUSION: For the present logomachy (i.e., battle over the "right" language) we should affirm the appropriate loci and intra/extrastensions of each of the three languages. Here, I expect more help from church than from school or from the hard or soft sciences.

AN ILLUSTRATION OF OVERLAPPING

floaters (variant-contexts/meanings/terms):

"church"  
 "mission"  
 "ministry"



LG. #1

LG. #2

LG. #3