

Become a slogan, a word parasitizes on society. The sloganeers seize upon the word to serve their own interests, but the word's true cause is itself: its denotatum is its cellular nucleus, and its conotata are feeding-and-propelling arms. We political linguists (who are concerned both for the humaner use of all powers accessible to humanity and for the potency-purity-pollutibility of language) are seldom thanked by our fellow-revolutionaries for pointing out this fact of parasitism, for it deflates the inflated revolutionary ego, which imagines that the slogan is doing only the business--the power-expanding business--of the revolution; it punctures the illusion that language is a pure servant of humanity and suggest that the opposite can be true: political rhetoric can be counter-weaponry, destroying the cause it's meant to serve or at least polluting the "good" cause into something evil. Clear enough why this news is seldom heard: its primary audience denies its truth and dis-rewards the news-bearer as a counter-revolutionary, who is interested in liberating the liberators from a new, Trojan-horse-like enslavement....This thinksheet attacks the uncritical use of "equality" as the slogan and heart of movements aiming at more than legislative-executive-judicial indiscriminateness (i.e., nondiscrimination). Because I'm for "liberation" movements, I must give one cheer for "equality" --but because I'm against being gulled, used, coopted to an alien vision and process, I give the other two cheers for "mutuality."

1. For a long time during the Black movement I wore an "=" button in the interest of using abstraction and power as two weapons against the "human" "values" countervailing, viz., JimCrowism (which was human though more inhuman, and valuable though more disvaluable). The word was cold, mathematical, abstract (and so actively disinterested in ad-hominem arguments for traditional discriminations); it was also political in the narrow sense, viz., interested in only one aspect of human relations, viz., power (and so sought antiheroes, e.g., Bull Connor, for any "peace-keeper" who wouldn't use firehoses and police dogs would have an insufficient bad-guy image for the movement's media-purposes).
2. Nothing succeeds and sells like success, so "equality" began to be applied to other movements, esp. feminism (antisexism). "Sin is anything extended far enough in a straight line": that, an old definition of mine, is vertical; and the horizontal is "folly." The man/woman relationship is the MOST concrete, LEAST abstract social reality; and it's the WORST one to apply power to, for it is the MOST mutual. The mathematical and political intrusions into mutuality have destroyed millions of marriages and robbed of intimacy and joy millions more. More widely, "equality" as numbers-and-power parasite (1) fights for androgyny, which is a colorless enemy of female/male mutuality, and (2) parades itself as "the heart of democracy" ("d." used elatively to mean the ideal sociopolitical arrangement) and therefore worthy of full support by all right-minded persons and religions.
3. From the standpoint of biblical faith-and-life, "equality" (1) is flatland, with no reference to the divine; (2) tends, by a sort of Gresham's Law, to drive out the richer concept of mutuality; (3) promotes, Procrusteanly, injustice in every situation where justice calls for unequal treatment, i.e., for equity rather than equality; (4) fosters a ensoriousness of style as opposed to a community of substance; (5) alienates its devotees (the victims of its slogan-use) from (a) all who don't buy into worshiping this idol-word (with its own internal logic and theology), and (b) from the human tradition, particular and general, which "equality" sees as a history-long oppression of the girls by the boys (an impoverishing one-issue hermeneutic, parallel to the equally false Marxian economic determinism). The rest of this think-sheet spells out these sad, underspoken costs of "equality" hybris:

(1, on which see (1) above, and so throughout the numeration)...Bonhoeffer's "world without God" is flatland, with horizontal thinking: the biblical world is theocentric, with God both "in here" and, vertical as both above and beneath us, "out there" --Tillich's "Ground of Being" being as vertical as the constructs he sought to transcend. In my mind, the instant antonym of "man" is "God" (both being anarthrous, without article); somewhat less so in the case of "mankind," but even there the God-

reference is stronger than the alternatives. So it is, I believe, with all who "practice the presence of God" (= "pray without ceasing")--for whom every "going out" in conversation with fellow humans begins and ends with a "coming in" in communion with God. (As this is the normal condition of the Christian and Jewish heart, it cannot be properly objected that it is rare: what that's worthwhile isn't rare? And if rare, it is nonetheless the norm and criterion for living in, and judging the mentality of, the "world without God.") A creator-promoter of the INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE LECTIONARY gave a lecture entitled "Inadequate Language," in which he said "The opposite of 'man' is 'animal.'" When I asked why he limited the statement to the horizontal antonym--esp. when addressing a Christian audience, for whom the stronger antonym is the vertical one, viz., "God"--he replied "I was speaking within the realm of creation." But no such limitation was stated in the lecture: the ultimate context had, I fear, been eliminated unconsciously: that theologian, along with "the world," has become amnesiac about God; his consciousness has been swamped by "the world's agenda." How different the consciousness, e.g., of Ab. Heschel, from whose writings Sam.H. Dresner did "A Spiritual Anthology" titled I ASKED FOR WONDER (Crossroad/83)! His English, though acquired late in life, is radiant and profound, with the power of our language's simple, monosyllabic (generic) "man"/"God" at its heart as it's at the heart of virtually all great spiritual writing in English. The attack on generic "man" is pathetic and perverse, and it's sad to think this travesty is being taught to schoolchildren using public taxes. (There's the spiritual crisis of public education: Tax money is used to make flatlanders of the American public, God-references being considered *outré*.) Though biblically it's sinful to do so, everything can be "explained" while leaving God out; and Am. public education uses taxes to commit this sin. This secularism relocates the holy, appropriating it from God and applying it to some sacralized value; e.g., "the sacredness of the individual," an essentially androgynous and blasphemous notion leading to such nuttiness as encouraging churches to hire bisexuals to preach monogamy (done by UCC/MA Annual Conference, 1984.)

(2) Counter-cultural movements such as early Christianity tend to be warm-bodies egalitarian, i.e., (a) disdainful of the Establishment's hierarchy and (b) preaching "We're all equal in the Lord" or the Movement or who/whatever's the Center. To put this another way: They are (a) negatively antihierarchical and (b) positively passionate for mutuality (equality being its negative as law is the negative of custom). Given this sociodynamic, it's illicit to derive a positive ethic of equality vis-a-vis interpersonal relations--a common error of feminist hermeneutics. In Paul's use of the Stoic analogy (1Cor.12), we are "one Body" in mutual membership, and God models for us to "give greater honor to those parts that need it"--a reverse hierarchy, not equality (on which see (3)). Further, mutuality correlates with community, equality correlates with "demo-cracy" (whose second element is Greek for "power": democracy and equality are power words, having to do with social coercion, not love). But Am. affection for "democracy" and "equality" has given them, wrongly, a love connotation. Ergo, anybody against "equality" is unloving, undemocratic, unChristian, etc.: the arrogant taboos of "the Movement" descend upon the objector's pate.

(3) Equality often correlates with injustice--e.g., 1Cor.12(above); = drinking-age for boys/girls (when it's testosterone, not the estrogens, that cause highway deaths when mixed with alcohol); = insurance \$, when women live longer and so should pay less for their life-premiums. Eric Hoffer: "Those who are engrossed in the rapid realization of an extravagant-hope tend to view facts as something base and unclean."

(4) Fanatic feminists of both sexes lean forward to pounce, in public meetings, on hapless speakers who use generic "man" and "he." The argument that this is educational-transitional won't wash: such ensoriousness, diverting attention from substance to style, can't hope to train against "-man" (e.g., "wo-man," our female "post-man"), "man-" (e.g., "man-hole," "man-ly"), "-man-" (e.g., "horse-man-ship"); and Eng. won't tolerate PigLatin-like grafts of neologisms that cripple and bastardize speech.

(5) Radical inclusive language (as in the I.L.LECTIONARY) alienatés with the scandal of a newish particularity. Its practioners demean outsiders. Their English-torturing, fastidious scrupulosity rules against Ann Landers' frequent "Dear Lord,...."