

1. Foodgathering and weaving are the primary occupations behind the words of this think-sheet, and the work of the "scribe" [priest-scholar-interpreter] is the secondary occupation--the three occupations together constituting what I shall call "Context A" of the title words. "Context B" is the rest of the think-sheet. "Context C" is the sessions of the course ["The Roots of the Roots"] in which this think-sheet is used.... First, foodgathering. Our hominoid ancestors uprooted plants for food, a life-sustaining activity so common that in language it has many tropes [meaning-"turns"] and is the "root" [source, basis] of many "words" built on its "stems." Note how linguistics uses the plant-picture for some of its basal terms: as a plant has root/stem/flower-fruit, a word has its [W7NCD] "simple element inferred as the basis from which" it "is derived by phonetic change or by extension (as composition or the addition of an affix or inflectional ending)" + its body, what it "stands" on [the source, in OE, of "stem"] + its branches/flowers/fruits [its "affix(ex)," added at the beginning (PREFIX), within (INFIX), or on the end (SUFFIX)]. (NB: Of course not all words are so complex: some are just root, some others are just root + stem.) So the dictionary referred to above defines "stem" as "the part of an inflected word that remains unchanged except by phonetic changes or variations throughout an inflection." To fix this in mind, draw a plant and apply these words from linguistics to its three sections. In your top section is the one word not derived from the plant-picture, viz. "word" itself (which sounds about the same in all the basal languages behind English: Sanskrit, therefore Greek and Latin, and the other Germanic languages). You would profit, right now, from looking up in your dictionary all the quoted ["_____"] words above, especially if your dictionary has "etymologies" [= the word's earliest story, its Context A, its ur- or original-meaning, which is therefore in some sense(es) its "true" (Gk. "etym.") meaning]--so, in your looking-up, include "etymology," and note its "cognates," especially "etymon"...and so of course "cognate" [a blood relative related by derivation, borrowing, or descent]....The first rule of the "etymologist"--that's what you are in this course in the most important roots of the biblical languages--is IGNORANCE. I played dumb in writing the above. As you can see, I looked up all the words in the dictionary. As it happened, I learned nothing: I've been an etymological freak for a half century....but I often check a word to make sure I don't know too much about it, i.e., something not so! And of course, there being more words in English than in an other language--1 1/2 million!--I'll never run out of words I'm ignorant of and can learn from and through and have fun with, for the Word of God is truth and play.
2. So much for that Context-A occupation, foodgathering, in its influence on linguistics. ...Now what about that next ur-occupation, weaving? * From it we get the other words in this think-sheet's title. The Lat. root "tex" gives the weaving sense to all its words--like "textile," "texture," "technical," "text," "textbook," "context." Just look at all the weaving! Cloth and buildings and machines and literature and books and interpretation! In the case of the last three, what is woven is words. [As a mouth-working people-helper, you as a minister are a word-weaver.] And more precisely, the last three words are BOOKISH, therefore SCHOOLISH, standing over against (though also on behalf of, professedly) life. What's left out? First, life's non-verbal dimension. Second, the oral [in contrast to the written/printed, Gutenberg-galaxy] use of language. Third, everybody not into reading, all illiterates and functional illiterates and the multitude of highly intelligent, low-verbal-index folks. Fourth, all who are without specific hermeneutic socially assigned duties (i.e., all non-interpreters, who don't double-context--B & C--for a living).
3. So a "text" is a written/printed piece of literature or portion ["passage"] thereof, and its "contexts" are (a) the words it's "woven together" [Lat. "contextus"] with it ["to context" thus meaning to look at this surround of words for help in ascertaining the text's meaning, thus coherence-meaning--and thus "contexture" = weaving parts into a whole], (b) the life out of which all these words, text/context, came,

*NB: Heb. rt. C^HS^HB = "weave, bind [cf. "religion"!], knot; think; be valued.

AND (c) the life in and for which the hermeneus [Lat. and Eng. "interpreter"] is interpreting the text [e.g., in church, in lawcourt, in school]. I call "(a)," Context B; "(b)," Context C [including, in this case, all my previous ministry]; and "(c)," Context D [including both the future sessions of this course, and all uses to which those of us in the course will put our learnings to]. (Context A, you will remember, is where the words came from in the first place.)....Now let's see what all this might look like in a diagram....

THE CONTEXTS

CONTEXT A	CONTEXT B	CONTEXT C	CONTEXT D
<i>alpha life</i>		<i>beta life</i>	<i>gamma life</i>
the originating <u>life</u> (foodgathering, weav- ing, writing-studying- interpreting, etc.)	the <u>literature</u> in <u>which the</u> text is	the <u>womb-life</u> of the literature --the life the literature sprang from and was for	the here-and- now <u>life</u> the interpreter is living and ministering to

[NB: For a protozoan pictorial of this flow or process, see thinksheet #732: "Diagrammatic Representation of the Nine Stages of Hermeneutics." Also, #402.]

4. Western civilization has been drifting from masculine to feminine, and fascism and communism are attempts to stem the tide. In the main, I'm for the drift-- which psychophysically is from the left (analytic) brain hemisphere to the right (synthetic, relational, contextual). The 2nd ed. of the big Webster (WIU2), emphasizing the analytic-etymological, came out during my last year of highschool (1934); the feminine ed., shifting the emphasis from etymons to contexts, came out 27 years later, at the beginning of the 1960s (1961), that decade of sensitization in the culture [and backlash machismo in "the principalities and powers"]. The shift, to use Gestalt wording, has been from "figure" [words, in this case] to "[back]ground" [the nonverbal-verbal life-contexts of language]. ("CONtext" means something "with" [Lat. "con-"] the text.) This Zeitgeist shift has downgraded etymons-words-texts and upgraded action-motion-grunts-contexts--and made "context" a holy word, with these as some of the implicates....

(a) Word-oriented occupations went into slight decline, but are now once again in the ascendant in all domains except, in part, religion, where immediate experience [E/W ecstasies, charisms, blicks, etc.] is preferred to preaching, witnessing in word, verbal teaching, reading. Some of this has been adventitious surfacing of the American anti-intellectual undertoe. So language, instead of being [as it is in the Bible] a medium of revelation, has become for many (in the West, as it always has been in the East) only a means to intra-skin turn-ons. Scribism [taking the set-down word too seriously] killed Jesus: this anti-language tendenz is crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting mouth-ear to an open shame. [taking the set-down word not seriously enough].

(b) In order, our four contexts relate to (A) linguistics, linguistic analysis, analytic philosophy, (B) lower [textual] criticism, hermeneutics in the narrow sense, (C) higher criticism [including form-, redaction-, etc.], and (D) "doing-theology," action-reflection, hermeneutic [singular], relativity [in the natural and humanistic disciplines], sociology of knowledge, contextualism in philosophy, contextual education, particularism [anti-universalism and anti-generalism], concretion [vs. abstraction in logic and metaphysics], situation ethics, interpersonalism as philosophy [I/Thou, etc.] and pedagogy [group dynamics, encounter, sexual mysticism], the relativism of no absolutes, the fuzzing of the subject/object distinction [an aspect of the scientific mentality, now under pressure from subject/object interpenetration in "meditation" and mysticisms old and new], and epistemological functionalism [meaning as a function of the formally nonconcomitance of utterance and environment, the latter as variables, as grounds to a figure].

Ironically, a recent book on nonbookish theological education uses the bookish word "context" in its title: LEARNING IN CONTEXT: THE SEARCH FOR INNOVATIVE PATTERNS IN TH.ED. (TEF/73).

"Contextualization" has become a politico-theological slogan for what used to be called indigenization. It's OK, but ho-hum.