

From the confusion of Babel to the possible syntheses of humanity coming of age

Laura Bertone, Ph.D.

Ancient Babel, near Babylonia seems far away from us both in space and time. Yet, present-day Irak where ancient Babel was geographically situated appears to be one of the emerging signs of generalized confusion and war. The myth of the Babel Tower has become the symbol of confusion and disorder imposed on men as punishment for their errors. But confusion today seems no longer to stem from the variety of languages and the difficulty to translate. It is *language* which constitutes the trap, not languages. The problem is not to find bridges between one language and the next; the problem is to find a common ground for understanding *no matter what the language*. The problem is the upheaval, the reversal of the orders of abstraction within any language. Something seems to have got disrupted in the use of language itself. I will take a few cases from the media, politics, international conferences, etc. as examples of disruption and collapse.

How can we *make sense* in the midst of chaos?

Synthesis is a good way to counterbalance and overcome *confusion*. Summing up enables us to abandon Babel in ruins - to abandon confusion, debris and pride - and help build something new. Something new, symbol of what this time? Not of confusion and punishment, certainly! But of mankind's ancient aspiration to evolve and grow up. Whereas *con-fusion* tangles, mixes, dispels, reverts and flattens hierarchies and priorities, *synthesis* helps integration and paves the way for order, hierarchies, priorities and levels.

A few years ago, based on the premises of General Semantics and on my own personal research on simultaneous interpretation, I designed what I called "mental organizers" to help us clean up our perceptions and – our thoughts. A basic kit of "thinking tools" - maps (to represent), scales (to weigh and compare), classifiers (to organize), glue (to blend), etc. - helps us build *understanding* and make sense. The purpose of my intervention is to show how to use them in a dynamic way.