The Holy War: Mac vs. DOS
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Friends, Italians, countrymen, I ask that a Committee for Public Health be set up, whose task would be to censor (by violent means, if necessary) discussion of the following topics in the Italian press. Each censored topic is followed by an alternative in brackets which is just as futile, but rich with the potential for polemic. Whether Joyce is boring (whether reading Thomas Mann gives one erections). Whether Heidegger is responsible for the crisis of the Left (whether Ariosto provoked the revocation of the Edict of Nantes). Whether semiotics has blurred the difference between Walt Disney and Dante (whether De Agostini does the right thing in putting Vimercate and the Sahara in the same atlas). Whether Italy boycotted quantum physics (whether France plots against the subjunctive). Whether new technologies kill books and cinemas (whether zeppelins made bicycles redundant). Whether computers kill inspiration (whether fountain pens are Protestant).

One can continue with: whether Moses was anti-semitic; whether Leon Bloy liked Calasso; whether Rousseau was responsible for the atomic bomb; whether Homer approved of investments in Treasury stocks; whether the Sacred Heart is monarchist or republican.

I asked above whether fountain pens were Protestant. Insufficient consideration has been given to the new underground religious war which is modifying the modern world. It's an old idea of mine, but I find that whenever I tell people about it they immediately agree with me.

The fact is that the world is divided between users of the Macintosh computer and users of MS-DOS compatible computers. I am firmly of the opinion that the Macintosh is Catholic and that DOS is Protestant. Indeed, the Macintosh is counter-reformist and has been influenced by the ratio studiorum of the Jesuits. It is cheerful, friendly, conciliatory; it tells the faithful how they must proceed step by step to reach -- if not the kingdom of Heaven -- the moment in which their document is printed. It is catechistic: The essence of revelation is dealt with via simple formulae and sumptuous icons. Everyone has a right to salvation.

DOS is Protestant, or even Calvinistic. It allows free interpretation of scripture, demands difficult personal decisions, imposes a subtle hermeneutics upon the user, and takes for granted the idea that not all can achieve salvation. To make the system work you need to interpret the program yourself: Far away from the baroque community of revelers, the user is closed within the loneliness of his own inner torment.

You may object that, with the passage to Windows, the DOS universe has come to resemble more closely the counter-reformist tolerance of the Macintosh. It's true: Windows represents an Anglican-style schism, big ceremonies in the cathedral, but there is always the possibility of a return to DOS to change things in accordance with bizarre decisions: When it comes down to it, you can decide to ordain women and gays if you want to.

Naturally, the Catholicism and Protestantism of the two systems have nothing to do with the cultural and religious positions of their users. One may wonder whether, as time goes by, the use of one system rather than another leads to profound inner changes. Can you use DOS and be a Vande supporter? And more: Would Celine have written using Word, WordPerfect, or Wordstar? Would Descartes have programmed in Pascal?

And machine code, which lies beneath and decides the destiny of both systems (or environments, if you prefer)? Ah, that belongs to the Old Testament, and is talmudic and cabalistic. The Jewish lobby, as always....