

## Confronting the Challenges of Conflicting World Views

Laura Bertone

**The Argentine case: the counter example in a nutshell. Accepting the "evidence" of our mistakes, learning from them and opening up new ways out of our everyday experiences.**

Confronting the challenges of conflicting world views is, perhaps, one of the challenges many of us had to face as infants: the sometimes conflicting worldviews of mother and father and of their families: different aims and ambitions in life, different ways to conceive progress or face problems, different attitudes towards nature, people, money, different religions, or attitudes towards the same faith, different styles, different rhythms, different tastes. So, I will not take the international approach but the very basic one, most of us underwent  $\text{\$}$  at home. And those who did not feel the conflict at home, must surely have felt it either in the wider circle of family and friends, or in the still wider circle of acquaintances, colleagues at work, or people at large in other regions, other countries, or even their own.

I could take the example of my own family but I will, instead, take the example of my own country, which for reasons we will not explore in detail, represents a unique case of study since it is to the best of our knowledge the only country in the *xxth* century to have gone through a process of development (ranked 7th in 1900) , of having come to a halt and started a deep process of underdevelopment without having been at war. How to explain such a reversal?

Several years ago, and long before the last and most terrible crisis of December 2001 started, I said at the general semantics conference at Hofstra University in New York that Argentina was the best example I knew of non general semantics at work. Events have unfortunately proven me right, and you may have witnessed some scenes of deep poverty and violent riots some time ago in your television screens.

Here I would like to show part of a multimedia to visually offer some data about Argentina and the present crisis with emphasis on some of the "cultural aspects" (or non-gs mechanisms) that might have led to the present terminal crisis, such as the "either-or" mentality, stereotyping, identification; allness, "double binds", etc.

The violence of this crisis, with the abnormal children mortality rate (due to malnutrition) for a country famous for the richness of its soil, made many Argentines finally(!) react. And there began to appear some positive signs: incredible increase in solidarity rates, in people's participation and involvement in community affairs, etc. Some of the good signs, the Argentine society showed in the last twelve months are timidly showing our need to build bridges, to change some of our thinking patterns, to change our maps of the world.

To favour and strengthen these courses of action, we provided from EVOLUCION some seminars along the year 2002 which we called "Tools for a new society " (mostly based on general semantics formulations). It is from these experiences that we will draw the material for a multimedia specially devised for the Las Vegas Conference, which we may call "Basic Kit of Thinking Organizers". (They imply a different view on language skills - different for traditional linguists, not for general semanticists, useful for any language, culture or creed. These tools are based on Gs formulations or are themselves Gs formulations. For pedagogical reasons, options

can be made that might be criticized from a strict gs perspective, but those aspects interesting from the academic or the research viewpoint will be purposefully left aside with the intent of reaching people at large)

We believe that the big challenge how to deal with conflicting worldviews, starting at home can have the beginning of an answer through a more conscious use of everyday language and patterns of thought.

One Bigger Challenge, though, is that it is not only "me" who should become more conscious but also "you" for the positive interaction to take place and make life possible even with opposing worldviews ; it is not only "us" who should become more aware of how human nature can deal with things and with itself but also "the others" who should become aware, so as to reach reasonable and trustworthy types of relationships. So, a giant step should be made by each one of us for very slow collective tiny results at the beginning ... in the hope that eventually, more and more people will get involved in the process...

There are certain traps to avoid here: despair, cynicism or laissez-faire before the disproportion between the amount of necessary efforts and energy and the scarcity and paucity of the first results... The big challenge is to accept to take action - even if the effort seems like a drop in the ocean - and sustain the effort against all odds.

As French crisis management expert, Patrick Lagadec, states after 30 years of action and research: positive upheavals are also possible.

My belief today is that we should start where we can, with those easier to reach because we seem to be running out of time. Ideally, we should act at different levels at the same time, starting with people at the top of public and private functions and roles, but we should simultaneously attempt to reach as many people as possible out of the millions that are out there. We consequently need, from my perspective, both a mix of audio-visual and multimedia techniques, and a mix of genres: education and entertainment, sports and arts.

This is my humble contribution, starting in all modesty from the very narrow and distant space I occupy.