GENERAL SEMANTICS 1952

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THE FIRST BOOK on general semantics came in 1933, the First Congress in 1935, the first public effort to teach the subject and the first popularization in 1938, the first outline of a course in 1939, the first textbook in 1940, and the first journal in 1943.

Today, there are two organizations with 4,000 paying members, two journals, a "must" reading list of 25 items, a basic bibliography of 300 items, articles in three encyclopedias, courses listed in the catalogues of some 25 colleges and universities, about 100 teachers incorporating materials in other courses.

In what follows I shall try to summarize some of the developments.

I ONCE had some lessons with a golf pro. He watched me swing. He took some pictures. He explained that I was more interested in seeing where the ball went than in hitting it off the tee, that I was stiff in the wrong places. He held my arms and moved me around. He demonstrated. He told me what I did when the ball was topped, hooked, or sliced. He watched me hit dozens of balls. He was doing three things: diagnosing my inept behavior, prescribing new practices, and testing my learning.

I heard Alfred Korzybski's lectures on general semantics in 1938 and wrote an introduction to the subject in 1941. But it was not until those sessions with the golf pro that I realized the strength *and* weakness of the enterprise.

The metaphor is vulnerable, but let me risk it. Korzybski was a pro, too. He was not looking at a man's stance, grip, swing, but at the way a man perceived-assumed-thought-felt-talked about anything. It was the adequacy of a man's evaluating and talking that was Korzybski's focus.

He had found a way of diagnosing and cataloguing those human actions and assertions that led to human trouble—conflict, confusion, wasted energy, mis-understanding—no matter where it happened. He evolved an analytical schema by which he could point to the over-simplifications, distortions, and maladaptive modes of talking about things, along with some devices and practices by which to overcome them.

Students who took the 36-hour seminar at the Institute of General Semantics in Chicago learned about the theory and the advice. They were urged to do

with them what they could. There was no clinic where one could practice the elimination of, say, any particular misevaluation under the guidance of a semantic pro. There were no situations where the learning could be tested, no way of focusing the analysis on the needs of the individual students. This is why the students were like golfers who attended lectures and then went to the links to put the content of the lectures to work. Occasionally they did, frequently they didn't. There were exceptions. Korzybski did find time to work directly in sustained fashion with a number of students about problems they brought to him. Some corresponded with him afterward. For the rest, however, there were only the lectures and the books.[1] Gilbert Ryle said that "A soldier does not become a shrewd general merely by endorsing the strategic principles of Clausewitz; he must also be competent to apply them." Alfred Korzybski died in March, 1950. He had devised and explained the principles. He had not established a *training-testing* program with equal thoroughness.

The Point of View

THERE ARE many reasons why it is difficult to give a capsule answer to the question, "What is general semantics?" What Highet said of William James gives just one:

> He found it impossible to make a long, sustained, orderly, authoritative speech and to unfold, stage by stage, argument by argument, proof by irresistible proof, a philosophical theory. He felt that any such speech would stiffen and cripple the essential flexibility of thought, and that any such theory must misrepresent the infinite complexities and novelties and inconsistencies of reality.[2]

Nevertheless, I have found it convenient to approach the subject in three ways.

1. As a description of a methodology of statement analysis and performance, as a set of things to do if one wished any or all of the following:

a. The recognition and achievement of the varying degrees of specificity, precision, and accuracy in assertion;

b. The distinction between the bewildering variety of statements which take the declarative mode since any one may be mistaken for another: verifiable and non-verifiable, factual and inferential, lie, fiction, fantasy, error, those which do and do not involve variable terms, those which label or define and those which describe, etc.

c. The recognition of the forms of oversimplification which tend to accompany talking (1) in terms of causal rather than functional relationships, (2) in additive terms about non-additive relationships, (3) in terms of symmetrical

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[1] The workshops of the Institute in Lakeville, Conn., are now organized to do something more.

[2] Gilbert Highet, *The Art of Teaching* (New York, 1950), p. 233.

relationships to the neglect of the assymetrical, (4) in terms which split and separate what is to be found whole or inter-related, (5) in subject-predicate forms which obliterate relational factors.

2. As a description of a person's orientation, the general and specific tendencies, perspectives, attitudes a person may take in his adjustment to situations and people and in his definition of himself. These become *types of reaction* found in all degrees, variations, and combinations. If they are phrased in oppositional terms, it is for brevity only. Here the concern is with how much and under what circumstances a person reveals the following:

a. Does he ever go beyond his present premises and knowledge to face facts and theories which are different?

b. Is he disposed to listen to others to discover what "they have in mind" instead of arrogantly assuming that he knows without the investigation?

c. Does he respond in trigger-fashion without analysis of situations, or does he exhibit the control which accompanies delay-of-reaction?

d. Does he expect to find things and people alike, unchanging, or are his expectancies attuned to the possibilities of difference and process? Is his thinking in terms of fixed types, kinds, categories, or does he take account of graded variations?

e. In his moments of painful "emotion," anger, hatred, fear, shame, indignation, or envy is he aware of the object of his feeling? Does he respond to the object in its setting or is he responding to some associated label or verbal definition of the situation? Do his feelings of being afraid, hurt, insulted (which may be justified in any one situation) freeze into chronic resentments and fears as if the stimulus continued, or does he seek to fix the feelings in space-time, thus forcing re-examination and attack on the chronicity?

f. When faced with the necessity of making decisions, is he willing to experiment and act in terms of what is known, or does he take refuge in postponing action until "all the data are in"?

g. When faced with problems requiring solution does he tend to *think by verbalization,* projecting ready-made linguistic schemes onto the facts under consideration, or does he *think by visualization,* directing his attention to pictures and situations *without words,* thus involving the structural aspects unrestricted by the verbally-defined categories?

3. As a set of premises, assumptions and claims, based on data available in 1933 which must be modified if new data are found:

a. That it is possible to create a general theory of sanity and human evaluation based on physico-mathematical methods which is not only internally consistent but usable and teachable;

b. That only the human class of life by virtue of its capacity to use symbols can begin where others leave off, and that upon this physical fact of inter-

dependence can be established a rationale for a system of ethics, human relations, and feelings of social responsibility;

    c. That any point of view about the behavior of human beings must start by considering them organisms-as-a-whole-in-an-environment, and that any analysis which implies a splitting must end in blind-alley over-generalizations;

    d. That meanings of words or things are not merely matters of verbal definition, but are inseparably connected with "intellectual" and "emotional" states and colored by past experiences; that what something means is a composite of, at least, the cultural-psychological-logical-neurological-physiological-factors all interrelated;

    e. Though a language may be used for many purposes, persuasion, poetry, polemics, etc., whenever it is used, it functions as a form of representation, a map which stands for territory inside and/or outside the person;

    f. That the linguistic forms used by a people are involved in the formation of their attitudes; that a man who uses a structurally correct language will be moved to evaluations which are more appropriate than if he uses one which is structurally distorting;

    g. That the creative achievements of man throughout history is evidence of human potentialities; that though we may live in a time of war and anxiety there is reason for despair only if men do not recognize the part their evaluation-talking processes play in the preservation of defeatist and destructive dogmas.

Two Points of Confusion

THOSE WHO came to the subject did not always take it in the terms intended. There were over-emphases, errors in translation, and some misconceptions. From the list I choose two.

The first has to do with the belief that in *Science and Sanity* [3] there is a delimiting, positivistic bent in favor of particular linguistic forms to the exclusion or denigration of others. The reader may test his own view. Which of the following is encouraged and which discouraged?

    A. The use of ambiguous, abstract, vague, generalized, imprecise, inaccurate, fanciful, imaginative statements.
    B. The use of concrete, specific, precise, definite, accurate, realistic statements.

As I understand the book, especially Chapter XVII on "Higher Order Abstractions," the answer is neither. The attitude, instead, is something like this. Each of these forms serves certain purposes. With general statements, for example, it is possible to make quick summaries, write a constitution and by-laws, describe

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    [3] Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics* (Lakeville, Conn., Third Edition, 1948).

what is widely true, provide instructions to administrators who need broad guidance as well as freedom of action, formulate over-all policies and plans of action. Similarly, fanciful and imaginative writings are useful when men have needs and purposes that go beyond the immediate, or when they would make blueprints of things that are not which they might try to approximate.

Korzybski never (to my knowledge [4]) urged that men speak in terms of B to the exclusion of A. What he did say was this: Men must know what and whereof they speak. They must know the difference between the A and B forms. They must not commit identification, i.e., speak in one mode as if they were speaking in another. They must be protected from the malaise of false knowledge which comes when a man speaks inaccurately, fancifully, as if he were speaking accurately, realistically. He wanted a consciousness of the character of a man's abstracting. I have not been able to find a single place where Korzybski wrote that the A forms are valueless, that men ought to give them up. I have often, however, heard him thunder away at those who analyzed problems in the A form even as they gave them the status that properly belongs to B. Indeed, one of Korzybski's proudest boasts was that in *general* semantics he was able to give broad formulation to the principles of good sense which were stated in various parts of the curriculum. His approach again paralleled that of the golf pro. To avoid certain obstacles a golfer might *want* to hook or slice. It is the task of the teacher to help the student realize when he is doing what.

A SECOND point of confusion has to do with Korzybski's attitude toward "the Laws of Thought," Identity (A is A), Contradiction (Nothing can be A and non-A), and Excluded Middle (A is either B or non-B).

If these laws are considered as statements about statements in reasoned discourse, then they must be rigorously observed if speakers are to "avoid evident self-contradiction." [5] If I say that ice is at the same time and in the same place cold and not-cold to the touch, I may be writing poetry, indulging in fantasy, telling a lie, or contradicting myself. Qualities may, of course, be present and absent at different times. It is hard to see how one can quarrel with these assertions. And I cannot find that Korzybski ever did. He did believe that the use of the contradictory and identity forms helped to shape a man's outlook. A man who habitually talked in this mode ("Democracy is either efficient or not-efficient") might not be readily disposed to consider the degree of efficiency in some individual situation. A man oriented so broadly to the notion that things are or are not might well be unwilling to consider when and to what extent the things are or are not. In short, what is necessary for the avoidance of contradiction, may be profoundly exaggerating or restricting once the contradiction has been avoided. In Korzybski's words "The law of excluded middle . . . which gives

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[4] This phrase is to be understood whenever I make such conclusion-statements.
[5] W. Stanley Jevons, *Logic* (London, 1934), pp. 117-120.

the two-valued character to aristotelian 'logic,' establishes, as a general principle, what represents only a limiting case and so, as a general principle, must be unsatisfactory." [6]

An Inventory

A CONCEPTUAL scheme [7] is a way of ordering and determining what you see and what you look for in a situation. It consists of a set of terms which represent certain assumptions, details, or relationships not abstracted by another. Imagine a speech, say, Lincoln's Second Inaugural, which should be analyzed by these men in terms of the views in the book indicated: Aristotle, *Rhetoric;* Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis;* I. A. Richards, *Interpretation in Teaching;* and Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives.* In all likelihood each would make a very different sort of critique, pointing to quite different aspects and putting the elements in a different order of significance. One set of terms yields insights denied to another.

Korzybski did not say that the relationships in the human dimension he was pointing to were new or unique with him. Indeed, in 1924 he wrote:

> All human achievements are cumulative; no one of us can claim any achievement exclusively as his own; we all must use consciously or unconsciously the achievements of others, some of them living but most of them dead.
>
> Much of what I will say has been said before by many others.
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> It will be impossible to give a full list of authors but the names of a few stand prominent . . . Alfred Whitehead and Bertrand Russell . . . Henri Poincaré . . . Cassius J. Keyser . . . Albert Einstein. I will largely use here their ideas, methods and language, as my main concern is the practical application of some of their great ideas. [8]

He did claim that he had brought together much that was disparate, that he had focused on what had hitherto seemed inchoate, and systematically formulated it all into "a useful way of thinking and talking" about human thinking and talking.

But was his conceptual scheme methodologically useful? Could people take it and see or do with it anything which was at least clarifying and at most heuristic?

I here acknowledge the danger of bias. Since I cannot describe all the uses, I must make a sampling. I cannot list these without implying that they are accomplishments of some worth. I must leave the assessment of the worth to

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[6] Alfred Korzybski, *op. cit.,* p. 405.

[7] Cf. L. J. Henderson, "Science, Logic and Human Intercourse," *Harvard Business Review,* XII (1934), p. 317.

[8] Alfred Korzybski, "Fate and Freedom," *The Mathematics Teacher,* XVI (May, 1923), pp. 274-275; also in I. J. Lee, ed., *The Language of Wisdom and Folly* (New York, 1949), p. 342.

specialists capable of making it. In each instance, however, this much can be said: the formulations of general semantics play a role. The person mentioned was able to use them.

COMMUNICATION. The relations of general semantics to the teaching of English and the content of English courses are variously indicated, defined, and developed by Hayakawa,[9] LaBrant, [10] Leary and Smith,[11] McCrimmon.[12] Related considerations of basic communication are similarly described in Chisholm [13] and Murray.[14] Johnson [15] has given a searching and revealing statement of the communication process. Bontrager [16] and Chisholm [17] are concerned with the improvement of reading. Hayakawa [18] and Johnson [19] consider what is involved in more effective listening. Sondel [20]uses some of the formulations in an analysis of conversation and public speaking. The materials served as a reference point in a study of communication breakdowns in committees.[21]

COUNSELING. Lindgren [22] recommends general semantics "as a counseling tool because it enables the counselor to become a more effective agent to help

[9] S. I. Hayakawa, *Language in Thought and Action* (New York, 1949).

[10] Lou LaBrant, *We Teach English* (New York, 1950). See also her *A Genetic Approach to Language* (Lakeville, Conn., 1949).

[11] William G. Leary and James Steel Smith, *Think Before You Write* (New York, 1951).

[12] James McCrimmon, *Writing With a Purpose* (New York, 1950).

[13] Francis P. Chisholm, *et al., Student Syllabus and Handbook in Basic Communications* (River Falls, Wis., n. d.). See also his *Introductory Lectures in General Semantics* (3rd printing, Lakeville, Conn., 1947).

[14] Elwood Murray, *Integrative Speech: Speech Communication in Human Management* (Denver, 1950). See also his *The Speech Personality* (New York, 1944) and Wilson B. Paul, Frederick Sorenson, and Elwood Murray, "A Functional Core for the Basic Communications Course, *Quarterly Journal of Speech,* XXXII (1946), pp. 232-244; also *ETC.,* IV (1947), pp. 112-125.

[15] Wendell Johnson, "Speech and Personality," in *The Communication of Ideas,* ed. by Lyman Bryson (New York, 1948), pp. 53-78.

[16] O. R. Bontrager, "Reading Clinics Anatomized," *ETC.,* II (1945), pp. 193-202; "Some Neglected Considerations of *Order* in Current Reading Methodologies," *General Semantics Bulletin,* Numbers Four and Five (1950-1951), pp. 28-35.

[17] Francis P. Chisholm, "General Semantics in Reading Instruction," in *Twentieth Century English,* ed. by William S. Knickerbocker (New York, 1946), pp. 171-185.

[18] S. I. Hayakawa, "The Task of the Listener," *ETC.,* VII (1949), pp. 9-17.

[19] Wendell Johnson, "Do You Know How to Listen?" *ETC.,* VII (1949), pp. 3-9; "Being Understanding and Understood, or How to Find a Wandering Horse," *ETC.,* VIII (1951), pp. 171-179.

[20] Bess Sondel, *Are You Telling Them?* (New York, 1947).

[21] Irving J. Lee, *How to Talk with People* (New York, 1952).

[22] H. C. Lindgren, *Occupations* 27 (1949), pp. 229-233; reprinted in *ETC.,* VI (1949), pp. 238-244.

the client to use his own resources in achieving adjustment." Camp [23] and Smithies [24] see the possibilities of programs of preventive guidance. Camp [25] concludes that "it is possible to train children in the premises and principles of general semantics and to retrain adolescents and adults once they have developed faulty language attitudes and habits." Murray,[26] Spriestersbach [27] and Yorke [28] develop these themes.

HUMAN RELATIONS. MacGowan [29] teaches a year's course in human relations in a senior high school built around "experiences selected to assist in fulfilling . . . human needs" in which "the inaccuracies and pitfalls in our . . . traditional thinking" are systematically attacked. Berrien [30] finds that misunderstandings and socially intelligent behavior lend themselves to semantic analysis. In "diagnosing human situations" Roethlisberger [31] points to the necessity of noting "(1) the danger of treating alike by words things that are different and unique, and (2) the danger of separating by words things that are inseparable in fact." The authors [32] of *Naval Leadership* say in their opening paragraph "The naval officer, if he will invest the effort necessary to understand scientific principles and to learn a few of the scientists' skills, can become a more effective handler of men." In teaching courses in human relations Cabot and Kahl [33] note occasions when "one confuses the past situation, the words, and the feelings within one. A study of elementary semantics helps to overcome this tendency and aids in viewing the world more clearly." My own [34] explorations in classes with policemen, foremen, and grade school teachers suggest that didactic instruction in the principles has some observable (but not dramatic) effects in their evaluations of their work and other people.

[23] N. Harry Camp, "How Language Affects Behavior," *Education,* 70 (1950), pp. 471-491.

[24] Elsie Smithies, "An Experiment in Preventive Guidance," *Journal of the National Association of Deans of Women,* 6 (1942), pp. 3-10.

[25] From the printed abstract of N. Harry Camp, *A Semantic Approach to Guidance,* unpublished doctorate dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1948.

[26, 27, 28] Elwood Murray, "Self-Guidance Through Group Approaches and General Semantics," Duane C. Spriestersbach, "The Role of General Semantics in Counseling," Gertrude Cushing Yorke, "Preventive Group Counseling — A New Technique," *Education,* 70 (1950), pp. 501-505, 515-518, 523-534.

[29] W. Leroy MacGowan, "A High School Course in Human Relations," *General Semantics Bulletin,* Numbers Four and Five (1950-1951), pp. 56-58.

[30] F. K. Berrien, *Cases and Comments on Human Relations* (New York, 1951), Chs. II and III.

[31] F. J. Roethlisberger, *Management and Morale* (Cambridge, 1950), pp. 96-101.

[32] Prepared at the United States Naval Academy (Annapolis, 1945), p. 3.

[33] Hugh Cabot and Joseph A. Kahl, "Teaching Human Relations," *Journal of General Education,* V (1951), p. 306.

[34] Irving J. Lee, "The Assumptions of the Arrogant," *Education* 70 (1950), pp. 509-511, and *How Do You Talk About People?* Freedom Pamphlets (New York, 1950).

LAW. Mermin [35] considers the formulations in a discussion of matters of definition, truth and ethics in jurisprudence. Burrell [36] argues for "a new approach to the problem of wilful and wanton misconduct." Loevinger [37] notes that "a long line of distinguished writers from Arnold to Bentham, have pointed out the need for a discipline of legal semantics. . . . It is time to insist that the garrulous goddess begin to talk sense." Pearson [38] says, ". . . it seems to me fair to hold out general semantics as a useful means of orientation in the law, a means calculated to dissipate verbalistic pitfalls and furnish a technique of analysis and solution of legal problems generally."

PSYCHOTHERAPY. Frohman [39] sees "general semantics utilized as an auxiliary to psychotherapy." Campbell [40] believes "these methods do not replace other psychotherapeutic procedures so much as they supplement or sharpen them." He has also said, "As an educational technique, this prevents the unconscious assumption of false-to-fact notions of 'life,' which would lead to later maladjustments. As a therapeutic technique, even in schizophrenics, it materially shortens the length of treatment, and, to judge from several years experience, produces more lasting results in terms of independence, plasticity, etc." [41] The formulations have been used in direct treatment of two cases of psychopathic personality with chronic alcoholism,[42] of 100 cases of "verbal obsessionism," [43] in group psychotherapy in traumatic neuroses with 7,000 soldiers in hospitals in the

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[35] Samuel Mermin, "The Study of Jurisprudence — A Letter to a Hostile Student," *Michigan Law Review*, 49 (1950), pp. 39-72.

[36] David M. Burrell, "A New Approach to the Problem of Wilful and Wanton Misconduct," *Insurance Law Journal*, Number 321 (1949), pp. 716-726; also in *ETC.*, VII (1950), pp. 253-269.

[37] Lee Loevinger, "The Garrulous Goddess," *ETC.*, VII (1949), p. 51. See also his "The Semantics of Justice," *ETC.*, VIII (1950), pp. 34-43.

[38] George Burton Pearson, Jr., "General Semantics and the Law," *General Semantics Bulletin*, Numbers Four and Five (1950-1951), p. 19.

[39] Bertrand S. Frohman, M.D., *Brief Psychotherapy* (Philadelphia, 1948), pp. 206-217.

[40] Douglas G. Campbell, M.D., "Neuropsychiatric Foundations and Clinical Applications of General Semantics," *Papers from the Second American Congress on General Semantics*, ed. by M. Kendig (Chicago, 1943), p. 129.

[41] Douglas Gordon Campbell, M.D., *General Semantics and Schizophrenic Reactions* (Chicago, n.d.), p. 17.

[42] John G. Lynn, M.D., "Report of Two Cases of Psychopathic Personality with Chronic Alcoholism Treated by The Korzybskian Method," *General Semantics*, Papers from the First American Congress for General Semantics, collected by Hansell Baugh (New York, 1938), pp. 90-100.

[43] Douglas Gordon Campbell, M.D., and Charles B. Congdon, M.D., "A Report on the Psychotherapeutic Application of General Semantics," *ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

European Theater between 1943 and 1945,[44] and in description and diagnosis of the "psychopathic personality." [45] Thorne [46] takes a broad position:

> From our viewpoint, it is possible to regard the whole process of case handling as an exercise in general semantics. This concept is particularly applicable to all the methods which seek to improve *intellectual* resources. . . . It cannot be assumed that the client unaided can learn semantic methods automatically after emotional blockages have been removed. On the contrary a person may be emotionally healthy in the beginning and still become involved in semantic maladjustments through failure in training. One of the functions of personality counseling is to give the client a semantic "overhauling."

SPEECH CORRECTION. Johnson [47] views stuttering "as a semantogenic disorder of a diagnosogenic type." Brown [48] presents some of the identifications which occur in the neuro-semantic processes of stutterers and "how they operate to influence those evaluations of which stuttering may be the observable manifestation." Spriestersbach [49] continues this study of the role of semantogenic problems. Backus [50] has experimented in intensive group therapy with some 300 clients presenting widely varied speech symptoms.

TEACHING. Newton [51] found in Korzybski's material "a solid basis for a twentieth century attitude toward the creative arts" and utilized it in his lectures and discussions in the "common program of unified first year work," for "students in architecture, landscape architecture, and city planning at the Harvard Graduate School of Design." Loomis [52] built a course in embryology at MIT

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[44] Douglas M. Kelley, M.D., *The Use of General Semantics and Korzybskian Principles as an Extensional Method of Group Therapy in Traumatic Neuroses* (Lakeville, Conn., 1948).

[45] Hervey Cleckley, M.D., *The Mask of Sanity: An Attempt to Clarify Some Issues About the So-Called Psychopathic Personality* (St. Louis, 1950).

[46] Frederick C. Thorne, M.D., *Principles of Personality Counseling* (Brandon, Vt., 1950), p. 388.

[47] Wendell Johnson, "The Problem of Stuttering from the Point of View of General Semantics," Kendig, *op. cit.*, p. 193. See also his *People in Quandaries* (New York, 1946), Ch. XVII.

[48] Spencer F. Brown, "An Analysis of Certain Data Concerning Loci of 'Stutterings' from the Viewpoint of General Semantics," Kendig, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-199.

[49] Duane C. Spriestersbach, *A Study of the Evaluative Behavior of Male Stutterers*, unpublished doctorate dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1948.

[50] Ollie Backus, "The Principle of Non-Identity Applied to Speech Therapy," *General Semantics Bulletin*, Numbers Four and Five (1950-1951), pp. 20-27.

[51] Norman T. Newton, *An Approach to Design* (Cambridge, 1951), pp. vii-xi.

[52] William Farnsworth Loomis, M.D., "A Non-Aristotelian Presentation of Embryology," a paper presented at the Third Congress on General Semantics, 1949. See also his "On Korzybski and the Teaching of Science," *General Semantics Bulletin*, Numbers Four and Five (1950-1951), pp. 59-60.

"along consciously non-aristotelian lines." "The principles . . . were stressed . . . not only by application but also by direct discussion." Hoskins,[53] seeing music as a language, found it possible to reconcile disagreements concerning musical structure, harmony, etc., and reorganize the teaching of listening and composition at the college level. Semmelmeyer [54] applied extensional methods to the teaching of arithmetic in the eighth grade. "The pupils observed more and verbalized less." McNealy [55] saw general semantics "as an aid in acquiring the inductive approach," in classroom teaching of medical students. "The student must have a reliable method of looking for and dealing with new data." English [56] in describing his course in the University of Missouri School of Journalism says, "The formulations of general semantics . . . can serve as the basic structure for understanding and synthesizing the vast amount of communications data which we already have and which will become increasingly complex as more and more information is derived."

Rapoport [57] described some difficulties in teaching elementary physics to aviation cadets and Weinberg [58] presented a "point of view on the general problem of why physics students 'don't catch on.' "

THEORY AND CRITICISM. Mowrer and Lamoreaux [59] conclude that ". . . many so-called conditioning studies . . . have not dealt with conditioning in pure form but rather in a form which is a complex admixture of conditioning and *discrimination* learning. . . . The fact that Korzybski and Gantt know both Russian and English and that both of them now prefer the terms 'conditional' and 'unconditional' to 'conditioned' and 'unconditioned' raises more than a mere semantic issue: it raises questions regarding the basic nature of the underlying process."

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[53] William Barnes Hoskins, "On General Semantics and Music," a pre-print of a paper to appear in *General Semantics Bulletin*, Numbers 6 and 7 (1951).

[54] Madeline Semmelmeyer, "Use of Extensional Methods in Dealing with Higher Order Abstractions in Reading: An Experiment in Teaching Arithmetic," *General Semantics Bulletin*, Numbers Four and Five (1950-1951), pp. 36-43.

[55] Raymond D. McNealy, M.D., "General Semantics in Medical Education," Kendig, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-138.

[56] Earl English, "A General Semantics Course in the School of Journalism," a paper presented at the Third Congress on General Semantics, 1949.

[57] Anatol Rapoport, "Newtonian Physics and Aviation Cadets," *ETC.*, I (1944), pp. 154-164.

[58] Alvin M. Weinberg, "General Semantics and the Teaching of Physics," *American Physics Teacher*, 7 (1935), pp. 104-108.

[59] O. H. Mowrer and R. R. Lamoreaux, "Conditioning and Conditionality (Discrimination)," *Psychological Review*, 58 (1951), pp. 196, 208.

Meyers [60] utilizes "the differences between fact-finding and hypothesizing" in his analysis of the improbability of Dandy's assertion "that the 'center of consciousness' in the human brain is located within the tissues irrigated by the anterior cerebral artery of the left (presumably dominant) hemisphere." Rosen [61] describes the verbalisms which constitute "one of the important reasons for the failures of many to continue to do fenestration surgery after completing the prescribed course in spite of the financial sacrifice involved in training . . ." Devereux [62] concludes, "We could say with Korzybski that there is no longer a similarity between the structure of the nervous system and the (delusional) structure of the schizophrenic's picture of the world. He still extrapolates from reality, but no longer troubles to *check* the results of his extrapolations against reality." Zipf [63] shows "how semantic problems, in terms of the variable language of culture, may enter into individual and social behavior; and often in ways that are so similar as to arouse the suspicion of an isomorphism between the individual and the social field." Janssen [64] believes it possible to state and apply "specific criteria" for freedom and democratic action within the framework of time-binding techniques to national and international problems." Danz [65] argues that the intrusion of verbal factors affects an observer's awareness of art objects. Pollock [66] describes his study as "a theoretical basis for the investigation of literature as a social phenomenon in terms which are consonant both with our contemporary knowledge of language and with the development of modern science." Arnesen,[67] in the framework of social control, sees "language as an implement of social pressure" and "as instrument of cultural advancement." Read [68] shows by historical and comparative analysis that the word "semantics" often appears in contexts that tend to bolster word magic rather than to combat it.

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[60] Russell Meyers, M.D., "Dandy's Striatal Theory of 'The Center of Consciousness,' Surgical Evidence and Logical Analysis Indicating its Improbability," *Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry*, 65 (1951), pp. 659-671.

[61] Samuel Rosen, M.D., "Teaching Fenestration Surgery," *American Journal of Surgery*, LXXX (1950), pp. 491-492.

[62] George Devereux, "A Sociological Theory of Schizophrenia," *Psychoanalytic Review*, 26 (1939), pp. 315-342.

[63] George K. Zipf, "General Semantics and the Principle of Least Effort: A Synthesis," a paper presented at the Third Congress on General Semantics, 1949.

[64] Guthrie E. Janssen, "A Time-binding Measure for Democratic Action," a paper presented at the Third Congress on General Semantics, 1949.

[65] Louis Danz, *Personal Revolution and Picasso* (New York, 1941).

[66] Thomas Clark Pollock, *The Nature of Literature* (Princeton, 1942).

[67] Elias T. Arnesen, "Language and Semantics," in *Social Control*, ed. by Joseph S. Roucek (New York,1947), Ch. XIV.

[68] Allen Walker Read, "The Background of the Word 'Semantics,' " *trans/formation: arts communication environment*, Vol. I, No. 1 (1950), pp. 24-25; "How Useful is the Word 'Semantics'?" *ibid.*, Vol. I, No. 2 (1951), pp. 78-82.

Some Omissions

WERE I PROMISING anything more than a hasty overview I should want to report the range of theoretical and practical interests of many other careful students. The following is again a sampling: the instructional program at Coro Foundation in San Francisco; the extension classes of Michigan's Emeritus Professor of General Linguistics, Clarence L. Meader, in Ann Arbor and Detroit; the classes in the Graduate School of the U. S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C., given by Captain J. A. Saunders, USN (Ret.); the work in Criminology of Dr. Douglas M. Kelley at the University of California in Berkeley; the training of business executives by J. S. A. Bois, past president of the Canadian Psychological Association; the orientation work of Warren M. Robbins in the high school social studies classes at Bremen Enclave High School in Germany; Wilbur E. Moore's work with speech students at the Central Michigan College of Education; the 1200 cases recorded in the files of Dr. Charles B. Congdon during his appointment at the University of Chicago Student Health Service; the approach of Harry Holtzman, Editor of *trans/formation: arts-communication-environment,* to the consideration of art and human learning; the consultation work in human communication of William Exton, Jr., in New York City.

That larger statement would include a survey of the courses in philosophy, psychology, sociology, etc. in which aspects of the subject appear. It would say something about the unpublished dissertations from Francis P. Chisholm's *Grammatical Structure in Linguistic Behavior* at Syracuse in 1943 to Philip H. Dutter's *The General Semantics of Job Evaluation and Merit Rating* at New York University's Graduate School of Business Administration in 1951. Approximately twelve studies at Denver, eight at Iowa, eight at Northwestern, three at New York University would then be given more than statistical enumeration. It would, in short, begin with and go on from the bibliography submitted as a University of Kansas M.A. thesis in 1950 by Phillip Persky.

IT WOULD be necessary, too, to indicate that there have been some less than sympathetic responses to the subject. Such a survey might start with H. L. Mencken's dismissal and end with Margaret Schlauch's argument.

> Of late the professors of semantics have divided into two factions. The first, led by metaphysicians, lifts the elemental business of communicating ideas to the level of a baffling and somewhat sinister arcanum standing midway between the geometry of the fourth dimension and Freudian rumble-bumble; the other, led by popularizers, converts it into a club for use upon the skulls of the enemies of the current New Deals.[69]

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[69] H. L. Mencken, *The American Language, Supplement I* (New York, 1945), footnote, p. 102.

The factors omitted by Korzybski cry aloud for recognition. Rarely, and then in a most perfunctory manner, does he indicate the basic importance of class conflicts and the rivalry of empires. Only the vaguest indications are made concerning eradicable concrete maladjustments in the objective world, such as unequal distribution of income, exportation of capital to helpless "backward" countries, international trade competition, and recurring crises and periods of unemployment, which are the causes of insecurity leading to psychological ills. Exorcism seems the easier when these problems are treated as primarily linguistic. We are invited to cure them all by semantic exercises.[70]

In between these, a statement of the critical case against the doctrines would have to consider the frivolous caricature of McCue,[71] the conclusions of Flesch,[72] Goldberg,[73] Masserman [74] and Spigelman [75] on specific issues, the wide-ranging attack of Dunham [76] and the carefully stated doubts of Muller [77] and Black.[78] It would not be enough to counter their reservations with more enthusiastic statements.[79] They deserve serious point by point analysis in a mood unaffected by the requirements of apologetics. The only comment I can justify here is this: They deal, even if acceptable, with but a small portion of the totality that is the discipline. The fragmentary character of the criticism of Korzybski, based on what he (not what others) said, has been taken as a sign of his strength. It has also been interpreted another way: Why bother?

Stimulated by these critiques our survey might point to significant lacunae

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[70] Margaret Schlauch, "Semantics as Social Evasion," *Science and Society,* VI (1942), p. 321.

[71] George S. McCue, "Salvation Through Semantics or Sacred Cow₁ Is Not Sacred Cow₂" in *University of Colorado Studies,* Series B (October, 1945).

[72] Rudolf Flesch, *The Art of Readable Writing* (New York, 1949).

[73] Isaac Goldberg, *The Wonder of Words* (New York, 1938).

[74] Jules H. Masserman, *Principles of Dynamic Psychiatry* (Philadelphia, 1946).

[75] Joseph H. Spigelman, "Can Science Make Sense," *Harper's Magazine* 202 (1951), pp. 54-60.

[76] Barrows, Dunham, *Man Against Myth* (Boston, 1947).

[77] Herbert J. Muller, *Science and Criticism* (New Haven, 1943).

[78] Max Black, *Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, 1949).

[79] "Despite all the reservations that I have felt constrained to make and of others that might be made, I feel bound to say that this work [*Science and Sanity*], taken as a whole is beyond all comparison the most momentous single contribution that has ever been made to our knowledge and understanding of what is essential and distinctive in the nature of Man." Cassius Jackson Keyser, *Mathematics as a Culture Clue* (New York, 1947), p. 153. "This [*Manhood and Humanity*] is a most refreshingly stimulating work, and I am wondering why, in all these years, someone hasn't told me so. Had I read this book earlier, it would have made a considerable difference to my own intellectual development; now it will very greatly help. I want to begin by urging all readers of this JOURNAL to read this book. . . . It is very strange how little known Korzybski's ideas are to anthropologists. I urge upon them the desirability of familiarizing themselves with these ideas." M. F. Ashley Montague, *Psychiatry,* 14 (1951), pp. 251-252.

in the list of achievements. No department or professorship in general semantics has been established in any college or university. No full-dress autobiography or case-study of the use and effect of the subject on any person or group has yet appeared. Individual or group procedures for the re-education of those who want it have not yet been defined in ways comparable, for example, to those of client-centered therapy. No validated test, pencil and paper, behavioral or clinical, is now available by which to describe the varieties of misevaluation by statistical or other reliable objective means for either diagnostic or prognostic purposes. No course of study with lesson plans and assignments for elementary or high school classes has yet appeared, though Minteer [80] and Moore [81] have taken some first steps. There are no studies as yet which suggest that some ways of teaching the subject have deeper effects than others. I have elsewhere described nine kinds of studies which should be made.[82]

Conclusions and Predictions

I CONCLUDE with some personal observations. When I wrote my first piece on general semantics in 1940 I felt the need of company. To be alone with one's enthusiasms is hardly comforting. Many students in Korzybski's seminars caught a gleam of his selflessness. (I remember the tuition was $30. That was part of the reason he died a poor man. And I know some who were impatient at his refusal to try to exploit his findings.) I believe that the early effort "to spread the word" stemmed from such feelings. But it aroused the resistance that accompanies over-zealousness. Some of us did protest too much. I have no wish to censure those who refused the promise of enlightenment thrust upon them. In retrospect I can only marvel at the inappropriateness of the persuasive efforts.

What does general semantics mean to the teacher of Speech? I do not believe that the rhetorical works of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, *et al.* and the schemes of rhetorical criticism growing therefrom will be displaced. I do believe that some full-dress semantic analyses of great speeches and controversies will supplement and complement what traditional studies reveal. I expect some clarification of the problem of the ethics of persuasion. The methods of teaching public speaking and persuasion now current in texts will be changed only in a different emphasis on matters of content and preparation. I expect increased attention to what speakers can do to prevent the many varieties of misunderstanding. An

[80] Catherine Minteer, *A Teacher's Handbook for Experiment with Basic Lessons in General Semantics at Elementary Level*, mimeographed (Chicago, Nettlehorst School, 1951).

[81] Robert H. Moore, *General Semantics in the High-School English Program* (Columbus, 1945).

[82] Irving J. Lee, "On the Varieties of Research in General Semantics," *ETC.*, VII (1950), pp. 170-179.

approach to stagefright via the student's evaluation of his own evaluations may be helpful. In argumentation and discussion, there may be some modification of the treatments of evidence, definition, generalization and causation. I expect some changes to come from a reexamination of the nature of verbal proof. Existing debate procedure will not be replaced, but I believe additional modes will center on techniques of agreement.[83] Teachers of interpretation may find that students gain insights from a differentiating study of the character of statements, that "emotional" manifestations go with some better than others, that a heightened awareness of the interpretation of human perception-thinking-feeling may make the achievement of depth and spontaneity in reading a bit easier. The clinical areas in speech may get help in the synthesis and reformulation of divergent theories and some refinement in the clinician's tactics of listening and diagnosis. I expect increased concern with listening skills for the prevention of disagreements in discussion. This should carry over to classes in public speaking. And I hope the next generation of apologists will be ready to scrap anything in the discipline which is complicating or over-simplifying in itself or which leads to such.

I AM NOT at all unhappy about the relatively slow spread of interest in general semantics among teachers of Speech in comparison with what is happening, say, among teachers of English. Our established areas have tremendous scope. How can anyone keep up with the output in the history of public address, rhetoric, persuasion, discussion, debate, in my own field, for example? Our Ph.D. candidates are unable to take all that is now available. Why should anyone with an investment in study and research interrupt what he is doing to take on something else? I should not wish to add to anyone's burdens. Nor am I willing to suggest that anyone substitute this subject for any he is now moved to include in his program. I should now want to go only this far: if in your thinking about any of the big ideas in rhetoric, etc. you reach an analytical impasse, you might find an approach via the general semantics scheme suggestive; if in your teaching of any of the skills of speech you find any special resistance or blockage which is not directly amenable to your available means, you might get some clues from this point of view; if you ever feel the need of testing your present views about the nature and purpose of what you are doing, a look via the extensional methodology might conceivably be helpful. This is worthwhile if you agree with Whitehead that ". . . almost any idea which jogs you out of your current abstractions may be better than nothing." And should you reply that you see no need for any of this, I should be quite willing to change the subject.

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[83] Cf. Stuart Chase, *Roads to Agreement* (New York, 1951), Anatol Rapoport, *Science and the Goals of Man* (New York, 1950), and S. I. Hayakawa, "New Techniques of Agreement" in *ETC.*, VIII (1950), pp. 3-12.