

A Manifesto 2006

My present viewing of my role as a member of the Board of Trustees of The Institute of General Semantics.

Some Abstractions 2006

Trustee : one to whom something is entrusted

*Trust: relying on someone's character, ability, strength, and sense of responsibility--
to place in their care, something to be used, and kept in the interest of another*

Care: Watchful attention

What constitutes this 'something' that as a member of a Board of Trustees I am entrusted with?

activity, society, etc., we create -- and which, to some degree, creates us.

a system-discipline with principles we can apply to improve the clarity, and quality

General Semantics: a non-aristotelian system-discipline created by Alfred Korzybski,

emphasizing that "human beings constitute an interdependent time-binding class of life, involving feelings of responsibility, duty towards others, and the future" As such, general semantics is concerned with the quality of human relationships - intra-personal, social, professional, interpersonal, national, international, environmental, etc.

It constitutes: a system-discipline concerned with the "sanity of the human species -leading to a general theory of psychotherapy".

a system-discipline based on principles of non-identity, non-allness, non-elementalism,

a general principle of uncertainty, infinite valued maximum, probability, etc.

a system-discipline based on a "general theory of time-binding".

*a system-discipline showing how we can develop time-binding intelligence,
become conscious time-binders ...toward time-binding excellence.*

a system-discipline offering “a general theory of values”.

a system-discipline offering a “non-elementalistic theory of meanings”.

a system-discipline proposing “a time-binding foundation” for human ethics.

a system-discipline formulated as “a general theory of evaluation” – with principles we can apply to help us use our intelligences more intelligently.

a system-discipline showing how “in modern scientific methods there are factors of sanity to be tested empirically”. As such, general semantics can be considered as “generalized science and mathematics”.

a system-discipline based on a proposition that “science, and mathematics (especially the calculus) show the ‘human mind’ working at it best “(in terms of predictability); and that “we can learn from science and mathematics how this ‘human mind’ should work, to be at its best”.

a system-discipline proposing that “structure is the only content of knowledge”.

a system proposing a foundation for an “up-to-date epistemology”.

a system-discipline offering a theoretical foundation for critical thinking, based on principles including “non-identity, non-allness, non-elementalism, and consciousness of abstracting”.

a system-discipline offering principles and procedures as psychological tools we can use to help us use our nervous systems more efficiently...a way of minimizing ‘stress’, and enhancing our ‘spiritual’ and psycho-physiological wellbeing.

a system-discipline with principles and procedures – tools we can use to make improvements and progress in any field of activity, not a haphazard affair, not depending solely on guess work, intuition, and gut feelings, but based on time-binding, heuristic, (general semantics) methods of approach -- involving, creativity, co-operativeness, and interdependence.

a system-discipline which emphasizes the importance of recognizing “powerful relationships between language, thinking, attitude, and behavior” - determinants of the kinds of organizations, institutions, fields of

of our thinking, and communication with ourselves and with others.

a system-discipline with principles we can apply to help us become more imaginative individuals, and thinking about how we think about things, become better planners, problem-resolvers, decision makers, etc.

a system-discipline with principles we can apply to help us improve levels of consciousness, labeled "empirical, intelligent, rational, rational self-consciousness, and appropriation of rational self-consciousness". These involve sensing-experiencing, inquiry, understanding, reflection, judgment, decision, responsibility, morality, and recognition of these levels. (I top this off with consciousness of abstracting.) (See Bernard Lonergan's "Insight ... A Study of Human Understanding")

an extensional system-discipline offering principles and procedures we can use to become conscious of our abstracting, and better time-binding human 'beings'.

In honoring my role as a Trustee of The Institute of General Semantics, and in terms of "care" and "trust", I consider ignoring or diminishing the importance of the above abstracted fundamentals a "dumbing down" (a lowering of the degree of difficulty and intellectual content) of the system. I feel a responsibility as a Trustee to play a part in maintaining the integrity of the system -- as I presently understand it -- until its fundamentals are negated and outdated. While active in this role, I consider that I have - with others - been entrusted to work to promote, and advance the vision, goal, and intent, as stated by Alfred Korzybski, the founder of the discipline of General Semantics.

As a Trustee, I respect and abide by whatever By-Laws we agree on, as communication and operational reference points. I will offer what I can to support the purposes of the corporation as outlined in the By-Laws dated 1998, and amendments of this By Law accepted by the Board of Trustees.

As a Trustee, I am particularly aware that general semantics, a non-aristotelian system embedded in a mainly 'aristotelian human world', has very low survival value, if those entrusted with its advancement are not constantly vigilant to what I label "forces of entropization" ('dumbing down' being an element of this set). With that in mind, I do my part in keeping alert to what I consider misinterpretations of goals, and principles of the system. And while active, I intend to continue alerting fellow Trustees to what I evaluate as potential misunderstanding and misinterpretations of the goals and principles of the system...as I presently understand them. As Trustees, I feel we should discuss issues when raised - following the system - based on their merits...not discussed or ignored depending on who raised them. And when internal problems inevitably arise, I think as "Trustees" we should be competent and confident enough to be able to address them using the system we are entrusted with?

As a Trustee, and thinking of ways to advance the discipline, I think it regrettable that Korzybski in setting up the Institute did not stipulate something to the effect: "The President, Executive Director, all Officers, Committees, and Trustees, shall endeavor to operate the Institute based on the goals and principles of general semantics so as to provide an example for other organizations -- showing what an organization, run on these principles, might look like." (I would like to take this opportunity to suggest that we discuss and vote on the implementation of the above as a policy statement.) I would also like to propose that in terms of the time-binding principle, we discuss and vote for the implementation of a "Self-reflexive Day"...the frequency to be agreed on.

I think it is of utmost importance that Trustees discuss and determine the skills, qualities, capabilities, responsibilities, etc., they expect from individuals invited to the positions of President, Executive Director, and Trustees of the Institute.

Over the years I have twice suggested ways we might increase interest in, and exposure of the discipline. I take this opportunity to raise this issue once more.

As a Trustee, I am concerned that we work as a team. Unfortunately due to distance separation we do not often meet face to face. We might consider discussing how we might improve this. As member of a team, and in terms of non-allness, and time-binding, I think it reasonable to expect that members of committees evaluate -- not resent, or consider as criticisms, suggestions from other Trustees not on their committee. Trustees should not feel that having appointed a committee, they have nothing more to say.

In honoring my trust, I am constantly on the lookout for potential new teachers. Teachers should be trained, and appointed to the teaching staff ...on a probationary basis. I think it important that we discuss and determine a training regimen. To that effect, I suggest that we re-establish the "Teacher Training", and "Advanced General Semantics Seminars". In terms of the "organism-as-a whole" principle (S & S, page 469) I am especially concerned that the teaching staff includes a mixture of 'academic' and 'experiential' approaches. I am also on the lookout for potential new Trustees. In terms of selecting new Trustees, I think it important that we discuss and determine the selection criteria we think important. I consider this extremely important...important due to the factor that Trustees select Trustees; and

also that the Trustees and Executive Director are responsible for the operation of the Institute.

In terms of maintaining the integrity of the system, I regret to say, I do not like the look of the present message board. I consider it a great idea, but one that might do the Institute more harm than good in its present, what seems to me, "anything goes" approach. I know of no discipline or field of activity where no attempt is made to set some standards. As a Trustee, I suggest the Institute's message board should not look like any other on the Internet. It ought to, in my opinion, to reflect the principles of the discipline. As Trustees, I think it our responsibility to ensure that the Institute be seen as an 'authority' on general semantics. In general, we should strive to ensure that all our publications reflect the principles and goals of the discipline. When we do not make this effort, I think we will eventually lose respect. (We of all people should recognize the importance of the image we might be projecting.)

In advancing the fundamentals and goals of the system-discipline, I propose we have a responsibility to determine a method for selecting the theme of our international conferences. We must keep before us, the goals of the system-discipline...including concern for the sanity of the species, theory of values, etc., among others. We are at what I think an important junction in human affairs, predicted by Korzybski decades ago. 'General Semantics' has much to offer. As Trustees, we should raise ourselves up to the challenge.

Thinking of general semantics as a generalization of the methods and approach of science and mathematics, I have followed closely over the years, developments in science and technology. I am especially intrigued with the semantics of the calculus

which Korzybski referred to as “structurally and semantically, the ‘logic’ of sanity.” I work at applying these methods and principles to some degree, in all areas of my life relationships. This include among others: working at being self-attentive and self-observant; remaining curious and open to new ideas; and constant study of Science And Sanity, and Manhood of Humanity to improve my understanding of the system. I practice taking an experimental, heuristic, theoretical, process, “let’s see” approach. I work at thinking in terms of order, relationships, structure, and function...not what someone is, but what and how they do; how things are related, and how they work. I am especially interested in how human organizations work, how the human world works, and how the Universe works. I am concerned to keep expanding my general knowledge, and awareness of how I make sense of things. (Applying the notions of rhythms, fractals, and the relative invariance principle, make this an interesting adventure.)

Being aware of the importance of language and its powerful influence and control over our lives internally and externally -- internally in terms of the way it can determine thinking-feelings-attitudes-the quality of relationships-behavior, etc.; and externally as a strong determinant in the kind and quality of our organizations, institutions, enterprises, fields of activity, national, and international relationships... And being aware that I am embedded in a mainly ‘aristotelian human world’, I work at being attentive to my thoughts-feelings-behavior, and the words I write or speak. I work at being more and more conscious that I abstract. And the above represents some of my present abstractions.

