

**General Semantics and Media Ecology  
A Brief Overview.**

The media environment can be thought of in terms of a field. Field theory ‘studies’ the phenomena of the physical world as due to interactions which propagate through space.

**Field theory:** Every 'body'--humans, objects, events, happenings, things, etc., modify the 'space' in which they operate, geometrically, energetically, mechanically, electrically, magnetically, electro-magnetically, chemically, and so on. An important characteristic of fields has to do with the factor that the effects of a field can persist long after the source of the field has disappeared or ceased to exist.

From a general semantics perspective, generalizing the notion of field: We humans additionally modify our internal structures and surrounding space "symbolically", and “intersubjectively”. We modify ourselves,, each other, and our environment through our continuous interacting, interrelating, including the meanings we give and values we hold. We create neurolinguistic and neurosemantic fields (cultures, societies, nations, organizations, institutions, libraries, buildings, bridges, roads, philosophical, and belief systems, laws, regulations, and so on). We create our human fields; and being embedded in these fields they in turn contribute in ‘creating’ us.

Media ecology (as I presently understand the study) similar to general semantics, can be thought of in terms of “anthropology”—not study of particular groups of humans, but a self-reflexive study of the species: how its technology, its expressions and activities (language, books, radio, TV, films, computer, Internet, machines, tools, etc.) modify our neurolinguistic and neurosemantic environment; and how they modify each other, and influence us as individuals, our societies, our cultures, our organizations, and our institutions: This modification includes organizations like The Institute of General Semantics, and The Media Ecology Association which were established by their founders to alert us to the presence of these modifiers.

We are embedded in a media environment-field. The media environment is a field embedded and interdependently enmeshed with the other human created fields--social, political, economic, religious, scientific, symbolic, and so on--a self-reflexive conundrum of enormous proportions. The field of media is worldwide and pervasive. Functional structures in the field of media involves among other variables: symbols, words, pictures, photographs, TV sounds and images, films, books, plays, advertisements--and let’s not elementalistically leave ourselves out as producers, designers, clients, actors, audience, critics, etc. of, and in the field. We (as individuals) constitute psycho-biological fields in the field of media. The media field influences us, and we have some ability to influence how it influences us. Unavoidably we maintain its existence and contribute to ways it benefits us and ways it harms us. With an awareness of our involvement; and with psychological tools such as those offered by general semantics, we can determine to some degree, how we as individuals will be influence--and to a lesser degree how the society will be influenced.

Fields interact and influence each other. Fields also influence themselves. Self-reflexive interactivities are unavoidable. There are discussions on TV criticizing the influence of TV shows on the society. There are TV shows about the presentation of news on radio; news items and commentaries on the radio about TV programs and TV as medium. Many books, articles, plays, etc., have been produced commenting on the danger of too much TV watching, and so on. These interactions provide time-binding opportunities for diverse media activities to improve...But human-fields like other fields operate to maintain their integrity and their survival: And the media field, like any other field, will ‘self-preservingly’ resist change.

Systems (fields) maintain their structural integrity or they disintegrate. Non-living systems (matter-energy fields) maintain their integrity and resist disintegration through electronic, chemical, mechanical, physical,

and other forces. Human systems and human-fields in addition, maintain their integrity not only through dynamic resistance (operation of a system to minimize for its internal structures the effects of changes in the external environment); but also through anticipating threats, learning and improving their resisting capabilities from experience, expanding and developing financial, political, economic, power and influence. And especially through the power of neurolinguistic fields (symbols, language, media, propaganda, advertisement, and so on.

The human-media-field will operate in ways that preserve its structural and functional integrity. Without ignoring the diversity of activities that constitute this field, human welfare and progress is not evident as motivating forces. One can reasonably assume, human welfare and progress is not the main concern, drive, thrust, motivation, direction, and goal of the field. By default, this human-field-activity we label “media-environment” will strive to follow its own agendas. It will operate to make itself stronger, more powerful, and more influential. In terms of structural similarity and fractals, we can expect that in the human-media-field we will find processes similar to an “immune system” in the human organism. These processes will operate to maintain resistance to interference from individuals, groups, rules, laws, regulations etc., that is seen as threatening to the structural integrity and usual operations of the field.

General Semantics as generalized science, through its interrelated principles, provides a theoretical framework we can use as a psychological tool to guide us and help us understand "how" the inescapable media environment contributes to the creation of societies and cultures, and affects all of us as individuals. Applying general semantics principles, we can individually work toward developing higher levels of observational skills and sensitivity to our own behavior in the media environment. We can experience for ourselves aspects of its powerful effects on our individual psychological and cognitive functions. And through application of these principles we will recognize for ourselves the diverse ways the media-filed influences, control and direct our social, national and international political structures.

Through applying general semantics principles including the "organism-as-a whole-in environments", "consciousness of abstracting", “non-allness”, “non-identity”, “non-elementalism”, and others, we can become more conscious of ourselves embedded and functioning in the neuro-linguistic and neuro-semantic field we label “The Media Ecology”.

Though a calculus approach in terms of (functional relationships, micro-mapping, finely tuned awareness, recognizing trends and patterns of change), we can finely tune and expand our attending and understanding of the media field in terms of its structures, operations and influences. We can watch, listen, experience, and watch ourselves watching, listening, and how we are experiencing what we are seeing and hearing. We can catch ourselves in the process of being affected positively and negatively. We can structure-dissect TV programs for instance, and notice topics selected, issues raised, and others frequently ignored. We can notice locations highlighted, who has been interviewed, questions asked, questions not asked, and so on. We can notice the use of lighting, type of music, frequency of image presentation and duration, order of presentation, repeats, focus, long shots, close ups, camera angles, etc.

We can, through applying the principles of non-identity remind ourselves that thing-processes are not what anyone writes or say they are. We can, through using the non-allness principle remind ourselves that we have not heard the whole story--that much has been left out. We can evaluate what is called “news” as a reporter’s story about some of what is going in. Being aware of “consciousness of projection” we can remind ourselves that much has been put in by the story teller. With conscious awareness that “The word is not the thing –process it was used to represent”, we can make distinctions between what has been labeled “news” and our own idea of news. We can make ourselves alert to the personal comments, interpretations, predictions, editorializing, etc., presented to us as “news”. We can use general semantics principles to maintain our own integrity and influence ourselves against undesirable media influences. Developing a ‘general semantics understanding’ of the media ecology and its effects enables us to consciously and

**purposefully participate in our own individual and human evolvment as conscious time-binders. We are part of the media environment. As such it changes us greatly. Presently, although to a lesser degree, we can change the way it changes us.**

**The media environment-field is our own creation. It offers diverse ways for us to communicate with each other, share information and unavoidably, mis-information. It cannot be eliminated. We keep expanding and developing it. As with the broader geographical environment, we use it to our benefit. And through information exchange we flourish and develop in it. But in a Frankensteinian way, if we are not attentive and alert, the media environment with its heightened frequency of interactions, its rapid spread of information and disinformation--and especially its introduction and emphasis on topics supporting its own agendas, etc.—if not restrained, will accelerate and exacerbate international, social, political, economic, moral, and other problems.**

**Developing a ‘general semantics understanding’ of the media ecology and its effects enables us to consciously and purposefully participate in our own individual and human evolvment. With increased ‘general semantics awareness’, we enable ourselves to work effectively to avoid much of, and minimize some of the harmful effects of the influence of the media environment on our thinking, attitudes and behaviors, our politics, socio-economic structures, educational policies, international interactions, etc. With our individual conscious awareness, and through our improved time-binding awareness and understanding as our own force-field, we (as individuals) can self-consciously and self-reflexively resist, to some degree, media conditioning. But not to be ‘allistic’: We mustn’t forget “the field also has much to offer that we can use to our own advantage and advancement”. And we can also use the field to help us restrain the field.**

**P.S. I have not studied Media Ecology in any depth. The thoughts expressed above emerged from my first attendance at a The Media Ecology Association Convention. I invite corrections of any misunderstanding from advanced students and ‘experts’ in the field.**

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