

DGB NFP: Essay 1: General Semantics Theory: The Challenge of Newly Theorized Psycho-Dynamics, Language, Meaning, and Communication

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Received: July 28, 2017; **Published:** October 04, 2017

July 23rd, 2017,

Good day ladies and gentlemen,

In this session, I am going to reach back into my personal history -- back to between 1972 and 1979 -- and what I learned from studying General Semantics (Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity*, 1933; S.I. Hayakawa, *Language in Thought and Action*, 1939, 1949, 1991, 2001).

Back in 1972, while I was still in high school, my grade 12 English teacher introduced me to Hayakawa's book listed above, *LTA*, which in turn, led me to the founder of GS, Alfred Korzybski. I was 'hooked' by what I was reading; it ignited my missing intellectual passion in high school, led me to the study of psychology at university, and ultimately to the type of essays that I am writing now -- even though I may be writing this essay now as kind of a reminder to myself on how not to make language so technical and abstract as to defy proper communication. (Even some of Korzybski's detractors have pointed to the irony, if you will, of Korzybski's 'Science and Sanity' being so dense and technical as to defy much of the clarity of communication that Korzybski was ideally aspiring for.

Authors like S.I. Hayakawa and Stuart Chase spent much time trying to make Korzybski's ideas more accessible and easy to understand for the general public. From the 1991 edition of Hayakawa's famous book, and co-written and updated by S.I. Hayakawa's son, Alan Hayakawa, the following paragraph from the introduction was written by Robert MacNeil.

Insight into human symbolic behavior and into human interaction through symbolic mechanisms comes from all sorts of disciplines: not only from linguistics, philosophy, psychology, and cultural anthropology, but from attitude research and public opinion study, from new techniques in psychotherapy, from physiology and neurology, from mathematical biology and cybernetics. How are all these separate insights to be brought together? ...I have examined the problem long enough to believe that it cannot be done without some set of broad and informing principles such as is to be found in the General Semantics of Alfred Korzybski.

And this from myself...Right now, I am sitting down to write an essay on General Semantics on Korzybski's brand of 'Non-Aristotelean-Neo-Kantianism' -- we can't 'know' anything without what we profess to 'know and communicate' having to pass through our own nervous system and language habits, patterns which are fraught with metaphorical and metaphysical minefields. Korzybski's most famous dictum: 'The map is not the territory.' (I have used that 'kant pun' before and couldn't resist using it again).

It is my work on Freud's concept of 'the id' that spawned this essay as I know that many psychoanalytic and non-psychoanalytic theorists and therapists have 'abandoned' this concept -- one of Freud's most famous -- probably mainly because it is not 'empirical' or 'observable' except in terms of the types of 'internal and external' behaviors that are professed to 'describe' and 'define' its 'territory'. And here, there is the further complication that no two authors or readers are likely to ascribe exactly the same 'conceptual-theoretical representation (ctr)' to the alleged 'phenomenal territory (pt)' that the id is 'supposed to represent'.

Still, there is probably not a reader reading this essay that doesn't have a pretty good idea what Freud meant by it -- 'the id' was actually literally translated to mean in English 'the it' (sounds like the basis of a good horror movie -- which the id sometimes is!) and can apply it pretty easily to certain types of human behavior -- most notably, their (our) own in areas that may be perceived as sexual, destructive, 'irrational', and/or outside of the 'boundaries of what we would call -- in the Freudian sense of 'reality-thinking' -- 'ego-behavior' (as well as 'super-ego behavior')...

To be continued...

July 24th, 2017,

So let us delve a little deeper into General Semantics Theory -- and of course -- my own mutations of it. The first rule of thumb is that 'the meaning' of an alleged phenomenon -- and by 'phenomenon' I mean a 'thing', 'object', 'process', 'activity', 'structure' -- a 'physical' object or process if it is 'empirically observable' and a 'metaphysical object or process if it is not empirically observable. That puts the 'id' into the camp of an 'alleged metaphysical object and/or process'. The 'alleged phenomenon or object-process of 'mind' and 'self' fit into the same category, the same classification compartment. It starts to become clear at this point that we are 'organizing' real or allegedly real phenomena inside our heads (brains, minds, 'mind-brains') in order to give these alleged phenomena 'subjective meaning within ourselves'.

As Korzybski used to say, 'The map is not the territory' and by the same standard, 'the concept is not the phenomenon that the concept is supposed to represent'. 'Changes' are being made to the structural and dynamic process of the 'phenomenon' as this phenomenon is 'internalized' or 'introjected' into our mind but being give 'boundary definitions and descriptions and associative and differential classifications as we are 'internally representing the alleged internal or external life process-structure-phenomenon. Accurate representation is usually important -- otherwise, we are 'mystifying' ourselves and/or others...either intentionally for a narcissistic purpose or non-intentionally because we have simply chosen a bad 'representative-word-concept-theory' that we 'purport to be knowledge' but is basically the opposite -- 'bad knowledge' as opposed to 'good knowledge'.

So just as we have 'good cholesterol' and 'bad cholesterol', 'good testosterone' and 'bad testosterone', 'good estrogen' and 'bad estrogen' -- now we have a clear distinction between 'good knowledge' and 'bad knowledge' which all of my readers are undoubtedly aware of but here we are basing this judgment on the sometimes equally difficult problem of assessing the difference between 'good representation' and 'bad representation'. More fuel for the 'either/or' fire of discontent and disagreement...

'Words are but the images of matter; to fall in love with them is to fall in love with a picture.' -- Francis Bacon

'Words are wise men's counters...but they are the money of fools.' -- Thomas Hobbes

DGB AWCTPP (Abbreviations-Acronyms-Words-Concepts-Theories-Paradigms-Phenomenon (Phenomena) Theory.

Hobbes -- the first modern materialist. Hobbes put forward the view that physical matter is all there is, and that everything can be explained in terms of matter in motion. (Bryan Magee, *The Story of Philosophy*, 1998, 2001, p. 78).

Well, Mr. Hobbes and I do have some disagreements although I do plan to connect Hobbes to the pre-Freudian-development of 'id and object relations psychology' at a later point in time.

How do we define 'matter' -- must it be touchable or at least observable? -- and what if we can't touch or observe 'matter' or 'matter in motion'? Do we distinguish between 'metaphysical matter' and 'physical matter' -- or is the first a 'contradiction in terms'?

We have concepts like 'the mind', 'the self', 'the ego', 'the id', 'the super-ego', 'the Oedipal Complex', 'transference', 'projection' -- all metaphysical concepts and/or theories that we 'cannot see' -- do we 'throw them all into the garbage bin because we can't directly see them in motion'? -- or do we accept them as 'metaphysical concepts' meant to 'accurately represent' 'metaphysical phenomena' that we cannot see or touch -- but only 'infer' using associative reasoning on top of behavioral observation?

This is the long time dispute between the strict empiricist-materialist and the more 'flexible, accepting metaphysical rational-empiricist' (for alleged good, bad, or pure nonsense...) which may or may not stretch as far as religion, mythology, mysticism, alchemy, occultism, astrology, etc.

Anyway, in DGB General Semantics which can be viewed as either an extrapolation and/or evolutionary (or de-evolutionary) mutation of GS, an abbreviation and/or acronym is short form for a word, which is a short form for a concept, which is a short form for -- or a 'piece' of -- a theory, which is a short form for -- or a piece of -- a paradigm -- all of which are supposed to accurately represent an alleged phenomenon or phenomena -- unless or until the line of 'accurate representation' is crossed and/or a purposeful language manipulation is used for 'narcissistic gain' (or fear of 'narcissistic loss' -- like POSSIBLY -- Freud's abandonment and/or suppression of the seduction theory).

Using this GS-DGB-AWCTPP 'toolkit', we move back into a discussion of the id as either a 'viable, credible, functionally useful metaphysical concept and theory' -- or as 'anti-empirical-materialist balderdash and nonsense'.

We move back to 'Id-Oedipal Theory' -- the strict materialist-empiricist might have fun with a possible acronym here -- 'IDIOT' (Integrative-Dialectic-Id-Oedipal-Transference) Theory...but to me, as a rational-empirical and guiltless metaphysical philosopher and (neo)-psychoanalytic theorist, the theory -- even with the judgmental, negatively construed acronym which I undoubtedly will not use -- makes perfectly credible, reliable, functional sense to me.

Onward and forward,

Have a great evening,

David Gordon Bain.

Volume SPI Issue 1 October 2017

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