

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION 1948

If thinkers will only be persuaded to lay aside their prejudices and apply themselves to studying the evidences . . . I shall be fully content to await the final decision.

(402)

CHARLES S. PEIRCE

For the mass of mankind . . . if it is their highest impulse to be intellectual slaves, then slaves they ought to remain. (402)

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In spite of the fact that since 1933 a great many new discoveries in sciences have been made, to be analysed in a separate publication, the fundamental *methodological* issues which led even to the release of nuclear energy remain unaltered, and so this third edition requires no revision of the text.

Soon after the publication of the second edition in 1941, the Second American Congress on General Semantics was held at the University of Denver. The papers presented there have been compiled and edited by M. Kendig¹ and show applications in a wide variety of fields. A third congress, international in scope, is being planned for 1948. Students of our work who have made applications in their fields of interest are invited to submit papers to the Institute. The rapid spread of interest, by now on all continents, has indicated the need for the new methods set forth here, and many study groups have been formed here and abroad.

As the center for training in these non-aristotelian methods, the Institute of General Semantics was incorporated in Chicago in 1938. In the summer of 1946 the Institute moved to Lakeville, Connecticut, where its original program is being carried on.

I must stress that I give no panaceas, but experience shows that when the methods of general semantics are *applied*, the results are usually beneficial, whether in law, medicine, business, etc., education on all levels, or personal inter-relationships, be they in family, national, or international fields. If they are not applied, but merely talked about, no results can be expected. Perhaps the most telling applications were those on the battlefields of World War II, as reported by members of the armed forces, including psychiatrists on all fronts, and especially by Dr. Douglas M. Kelley,* formerly Lieutenant Colonel in the Medical Corps, who reports in part as follows:

General semantics, as a modern scientific method, offers techniques which are of extreme value both in the prevention and cure of such [pathological] reactive patterns. In my experience with over seven thousand cases in the European Theater of Operations, these basic principles

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were daily employed as methods of group psychotherapy and as methods of psychiatric prevention. It is obvious that the earlier the case is treated the better the prognosis, and consequently hundreds of battalion-aid surgeons were trained in principles of general semantics. These principles were applied (as individual therapies and as group therapies) at every treatment level from the forward area to the rear-most echelon, in front-line aid stations, in exhaustion centers and in general hospitals. That they were employed with success is demonstrated by the fact that psychiatric evacuations from the European Theater were held to a minimum.²

The origin of this work was a new functional definition of 'man', as formulated in 1921,³ based on an analysis of uniquely human *potentialities*; namely, that each generation may begin where the former left off. This characteristic I called the 'time-binding' capacity. Here the reactions of humans are not split verbally and elementalistically into separate 'body', 'mind', 'emotions', 'intellect', 'intuitions', etc., but are treated from an organism-as-a-whole-in-an-environment (external and *internal*) point of view. This parallels the Einstein-Minkowski space-time integration in physics, and both are necessitated by the modern evolution of sciences.

This new definition of 'man', which is neither zoological nor mythological, but functional and extensional (factual), requires a complete revision of what we know about humans. If we would judge human reactions by statistical data of psychiatric patients, or many other special groups, our understanding of 'human nature' must be completely twisted. Both the zoological and mythological assumptions must limit human society to animalistic biological, instead of time-binding psycho-biological, evaluations, which involve socio-cultural responsibilities and thus may mark a new period of human development.*

In *Manhood of Humanity* I stressed the *general* human unique characteristic of time-binding, which potentially applies to all humans, leaving no place for race prejudices. The structure of science is interwoven with Asiatic influences, which through Africa and Spain spread over the continent of Europe, where it was further developed. Through the discovery of factors of sanity in physico-mathematical *methods*, science

* Some readers do not like what I said about Spengler. It is perhaps because they did not read carefully. Spengler, the mathematician and historian, dealt with the spasms of periods of human evolution which paralleled the development of science and mathematics, and his erudition must be acknowledged. In my honest judgment, he gave 'a great description of the *childhood of humanity*', which he himself did not outgrow. In 1920 Sir Auckland Geddes said, 'In Europe, we know that an age is dying.' And in 1941 I wrote, 'The terrors and horrors we are witnessing in the East and the West are the deathbed agonies of that passing epoch.' With Spengler's limitations, no wonder the Nazis joined hands with him. They made good death-bedfellows, demonstrating empirically the 'Decline of the West',

and sanity became linked in a structurally non-aristotelian methodology, which became the foundation of a *science of man*.

We learned from anthropology that the degrees of socio-cultural developments of different civilizations depend on their capacity to produce higher and higher abstractions, which eventually culminate in a *general consciousness of abstracting*, the very key to further human evolution, and the thesis of this book. As Whitehead justly said, 'A civilization which cannot burst through its current abstractions is doomed to sterility after a very limited period of progress.'

In mankind's cultural evolution its current abstractions became codified here and there into systems, for instance the aristotelian system, our main concern here. Such systematizations are important, for, as the *Talmud* says, 'Teaching without a system makes learning difficult.' In analysing the aristotelian codifications, I had to deal with the two-valued, 'either-or' type of orientations. I admit it baffled me for many years, that practically all humans, the lowest primitives not excluded, who never heard of Greek philosophers, have some sort of 'either-or' type of evaluations. Then I made the obvious 'discovery' that our relations to the world outside and inside our skins often happen to be, *on the gross level*, two-valued. For instance, we deal with day *or* night, land *or* water, etc. On the living level we have life *or* death, our heart beats *or* not, we breathe *or* suffocate, are hot *or* cold, etc. Similar relations occur on higher levels. Thus, we have induction *or* deduction, materialism *or* idealism, capitalism *or* communism, democrat *or* republican, etc. And so on endlessly on all levels.

In living, many issues are not so sharp, and therefore a *system which posits the general sharpness of 'either-or'*, and *so objectifies 'kind'*, is unduly limited; it must be revised and made more flexible in terms of 'degree'. This requires a physico-mathematical 'way of thinking', which a non-aristotelian system supplies.

Lately the words 'semantics' and 'semantic' have become widely used, and generally misused, even by important writers, thus leading to hopeless confusion. 'Semantics' is a name for an important branch of philology, as complex as life itself, couched in appropriate philological terms, and as such has no direct application to life problems. The 'significs' of Lady Welby was closer to life, but gave no techniques for application, and so did not relate linguistic structures to the structures of non-verbal levels by which we actually live. In modern times, with their growing complexities, a theory of *values*, with extensional tech-

niques for educational guidance and self-guidance, became imperative. Such a theory, the first to my knowledge, required a modern scientific approach, and this was found in physico-mathematical methods (space-time) and the foundations of mathematics. It originated in 1921 in *Manhood of Humanity*, was formulated in a methodological outline in my papers in 1924, 1925, and 1926, and in 1933 it culminated in the present volume.

My work was developed entirely independently of ‘semantics’, ‘significs’, ‘semiotic’, ‘semasiology’, etc., although I know today and respect the works of the corresponding investigators in those fields, who explicitly state they do not deal with a general theory of values. Those works do not touch my field, and as my work progressed it has become obvious that a theory of ‘meaning’ is impossible (page xv ff.), and ‘significs’, etc., are unworkable. Had I not become acquainted with those accomplishments shortly before publication of this book, I would have labelled my work by another name, but the system would have remained fundamentally unaltered. The original manuscript did not contain the word, semantics, or ‘semantic’, but when I had to select some terms, from a time-binding point of view and in consideration of the efforts of others, I introduced the term ‘*General Semantics*’ for the *modus operandi* of this first non-aristotelian system. This seemed appropriate for historical continuity. A theory of evaluation appeared to follow naturally in an evolutionary sense from 1) ‘meaning’ to 2) ‘significance’ to 3) *evaluation*. *General Semantics* turned out to be an empirical natural science of non-elementalistic evaluation, which takes into account the living individual, not divorcing him from his reactions altogether, nor from his neuro-linguistic and neuro-semantic environments, but allocating him in a *plenum* of some values, no matter what.

The present theory of values involves a clear-cut, workable discipline, limited to its premises, a fact which is often disregarded by some readers and writers. They seem also often unaware of the core of the inherent difficulties in these age-old problems, and the solutions available through changing not the language, but the *structure* of language, achieved by the habitual use of the extensional devices in our evaluational reactions.

For instance, in *Ten Eventful Years*, an *Encyclopaedia Britannica* publication, appears an article on ‘Semantics, General Semantics’, which considerably increases the current confusions concerning these subjects. It is not even mentioned that ‘semantics’ is a branch of philology, nor is there any clarifying discrimination made between the noun ‘semantics’ and the adjective ‘semantic’. Moreover it has many misstatements and even falsifications of my work and the work of others, and some statements make no sense.

Fortunately there is another popular publication, the *American People's Encyclopedia*, which is publishing a reliable article on *general semantics*.

It is not generally realized that with human progress, the complexities and difficulties in the world increase following an exponential function of 'time', with indefinitely accelerating accelerations. I am deeply convinced that these problems cannot be solved at all unless we boldly search for and revise our antiquated notions about the 'nature of man' and apply modern extensional methods toward their solution.

Fortunately at present we have an international body, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,⁴ which with its vast funds, has the services of the best men in the world, and a splendid program. It is true that they are very handicapped by dependence on translations, which seldom convey the same implications in different languages. Yet this need not be a handicap, for the methods of exact sciences disregard national boundaries, and so the extensional methods and devices of general semantics can be applied to all existing languages, with deep psycho-logical effects on the participants and through them on their countrymen. Thus the world would gain an international common denominator for inter-communication, mutual understanding, and eventual agreement. I would suggest that students of general semantics write on this subject. The activities of this international body after all affect all of us.

We *need not* blind ourselves with the old dogma that 'human nature cannot be changed', for we find that it *can be changed*. We must begin to realize our potentialities as humans, then we may approach the future with some hope. We may feel with Galileo, as he stamped his foot on the ground after recanting the Copernican theory before the Holy Inquisition, '*Eppur si muove !*' The evolution of our human development may be retarded, but it cannot be stopped.

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Lakeville, Connecticut
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