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## **USING GENERAL SEMANTICS**

**G**ENERAL SEMANTICS can be considered a **neuro-semantic, neuro-linguistic** discipline. Therefore, I have found that learning the definitions and descriptions of the formulations presented in *Science and Sanity*, staff lectures, workshops, and other sources provides a necessary but not sufficient condition for developing a general semantics orientation. Using the following material will help you to incorporate general semantics into your everyday habitual reacting, getting it into your nervous system, and thus learning it neuro-semantically.

By using general semantics, we can learn to understand ourselves and others better. We can also learn to re-evaluate differently, if we so desire. In developing a general semantics orientation we thus can improve our functioning.

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In the material on the following pages, I summarize some of my formulating on how to approach these goals. The format of presentation is:

## 1. A GENERAL SEMANTICS FORMULATION

### ○ Some aspects of using this formulation:

- *Some questions to ask yourself, and answer, that will help you to use this formulation in your day-to-day life. These questions can serve as experiments in using general semantics: What results from asking them? What else?*

*Etc.*

**The 15 formulations which follow are:**

1. Evaluational (semantic) reactions
2. Time-binding (personal)
3. Organism-as-a-whole-in-environments
4. Map-territory relations
5. Non-identity
6. Non-absolutism
7. Self-reflexiveness
8. Consciousness of abstracting
9. Multiordinality
10. Question formulating
11. Dating
12. Indexing
13. Quotes
14. Hyphen
15. Etc.

## 1. EVALUATIONAL (SEMANTIC) REACTIONS

- Note total organismic reacting; my and your sensing-thinking-feeling-acting-etc.:
  - *What was going on in and around me as I reacted?*
  - *What was I sensing?*
  - *What was I 'thinking'?*
  - *What was I 'feeling'?*
  - *What was I doing?*
  - *How was I moving?*
  
- Develop an orientation of delaying reactions:
  - *How can I delay my reaction?*
  - *When I wait to react, what happens?*
  
- Increase response options:
  - *How did I choose to react that way?*
  - *Can I make other choices?*
  - *What?*
  - *How?*

## 2. TIME-BINDING (personal)

- Note developmental life processes; changes over time:
  - *How did I get this way?*
  - *What led to my reacting in the ways that I do?*
  - *What kinds of response habits have I learned and developed?*

- *How can I learn to “date” myself? (See “Dating” below)*
- *What habits do I like?*
- *What habits might I like to change?*
- *How will I do this?*
- *What are the first steps to changing?*
- *When will I take them?*

○ **Accept present, including myself:**

- *How can I best build on my personal experiences?*
- *How do I help and hurt myself and others by demanding that events, including myself, should happen differently right at this moment?*
- *When I don’t accept events as they happen at the moment, does that cause them to change?*
- *How does this hinder my growth?*
- *What problems are created?*
- *Should a flower not happen as it does?*
- *Then how come I shouldn’t happen as I do?*
- *How will accepting myself help me to move on?*

### 3. ORGANISM-AS-A-WHOLE-IN-ENVIRONMENTS

○ **Broaden awareness of what is going on, ‘inside’ and ‘out’:**

- *What do I sense ‘inside’ and ‘out’?*
- *What do I smell, hear, see, touch, taste, etc.?*
- *What else can I become aware of?*

○ **Cope with uncertainty:**

- *How will having greater awareness help me to deal with whatever happens?*
- *How can this help me to experience more security, even when I can't feel 'certain' about anything?*
- *How can I learn to "index" better? (See "Indexing" below)*

**4. MAP-TERRITORY RELATIONS**

○ **Assume non-identity of orders of abstraction:**

- *Is the way I evaluate something the way it 'really is'?*
- *Are my words the same as my non-verbal experience?*
- *Am I referring to a 'fact' or an inference?*
- *How can I tell the difference?*
- *What happens when I avoid the word 'same'?*
- *Can I ever know the way something 'really is'?*
- *If not, how might I better evaluate?*

○ **Assume non-allness of abstracting:**

- *What might I have left out?*
- *What else?*
- *What effects does this have? (See "Etc." below)*

○ **Recognize that evaluational reactions refer to the particular person reacting:**

- *What about me contributes to my reacting in a certain way?*

- *What about 'I' gets in my 'eyes' as I develop my view of events?*
- *What effects does this have?*

## 5. NON-IDENTITY

○ Remember that my conclusions are not the same as my inferences are not the same as 'facts' are not the same as non-verbal experiences are not the same as "what-is-inferred-to-be-going-on":

- *Can I ever know what some event 'is', apart from even my non-verbal evaluating?*
- *What happens when I don't use the "is of identity"?*
- *Does what I do equal what I 'am', as a totality?*
- *Does what others do equal what they 'are', as totalities?*
- *How could I ever know what I and others 'are', as totalities?*
- *What differences will I experience when I focus on what I do rather than on what I 'am'?*
- *What differences will I experience when I focus on what others do rather than on what they 'are'?*
- *What happens when I don't put over-generalized, over-restrictive labels, like good/bad and smart/stupid, on myself and others?*
- *Can I ever describe anything apart from my evaluating?*
- *What happens when I don't use the "is of predication"?*
- *Can I ever know that something 'is' pretty in and of itself?*

- *Where are the sights I see, the sounds I hear, the aromas I smell, the flavors I taste, the sensations I experience located?*
- *What happens when I say that something looks pretty to me?*

## 6. NON-ABSOLUTISM

- **View formulations as hypotheses to be tested:**
  - *How can I test this out?*
  - *How will I know to what extent I've evaluated this accurately?*
  - *Can I ever feel absolutely 'sure' of my evaluations?*
  - *What does this suggest?*
  
- **Use quantifiers and qualifiers to express tentativeness:**
  - *How does this seem to me?*
  - *What happens when I use the word "perhaps"?*
  - *To what degree does this apply?*
  - *What happens when I avoid the word "same"?*
  - *What happens when I use "a" or "an" instead of "the"?*
  - *What happens when I use plurals in place of singular forms?*

## 7. SELF-REFLEXIVENESS

- **Take responsibility for my own reactions:**
  - *What happens when I say "I" instead of the rhetorical "you"?*

- *When I say "you" is it you I'm talking about or myself?*
  - *How can I rephrase this using "I"?*
  - *How can I acknowledge the "to-me-ness" of my evaluations?*
- **Recognize multi-meanings:**
- *How did I develop my idiosyncratic definitions?*
  - *Can there be other ways of defining/describing events?*
  - *How can I remember that we all have personal meanings for words and non-verbal experiences?*

## 8. CONSCIOUSNESS OF ABSTRACTING

- **Separate 'facts' from inferences, uncover assumptions, etc.:**
- *What do I 'mean'?*
  - *How do I know?*
  - *Can I sense what I'm talking about?*
  - *What observations support or negate my inferences?*
- **Note assumption-conclusion-behavior links:**
- *What assumptions do I make about this happening?*
  - *What conclusions am I reaching?*
  - *How am I behaving?*
  - *What changes in my assumptions and conclusions will be needed in order to behave differently?*



- **Become aware of different levels of internal processes:**
  - *What's going on in me now?*
  - *What am I 'thinking'?*
  - *What memories are triggered?*
  - *What assumptions am I making?*
  - *What do I believe?*
  - *What images do I have?*
  - *What rules for living do I follow?*
  
- **Note dead-level abstracting:**
  - *Am I getting stuck on either higher-order or lower-order abstractions?*
  - *What kinds of inferences and conclusions can I draw from what I observe?*
  - *What do I need to observe to test my inferences and conclusions?*
  - *What happens when I alternate among these levels?*

## 9. MULTIORDINALITY

- **Recognize evaluational reactions to evaluational reactions:**
  - *How am I reacting?*
  - *How am I reacting to these reactions?*
  - *What happens as this process continues?*
  - *What happens when I get upset about my evaluational reactions?*

- *What happens when I accept my evaluational reactions?*
- *What happens when I focus on my current experience, rather than my past experience or anticipated future?*

## 10. QUESTION FORMULATING

### ○ **Note answerability of questions asked and usefulness of answers:**

- *What kind of answers do I expect when I ask this question?*
- *To what extent can I feel satisfied with any answer?*
- *How can I rephrase this to find out more of what I want to know?*

### ○ **Shift from "why" to "how" questions:**

- *How can I know "why" something happened?*
- *How far back do I have to go?*
- *What will happen when I ask "how" something happened instead of "why"?*

### ○ **Avoid complex questions:**

- *Does my question include an opinion in disguise?*
- *What do I 'mean', e.g., when I ask, "How could I have done that?"*
- *What happens when I separate this into three questions:*
  - *1. What did I do?*
  - *2. How did I come to do that?*
  - *3. How do I evaluate what I did?*

## 11. DATING

- Use dates to show how things change over time:
  - $I_{1998}$  am not  $I_{1984}$ .
- Separate past from present, look for changes over time:
  - *When did something like this happen before?*
  - *How did I react then?*
  - *How old was I?*
  - *How have I changed since then?*
  - *How have other happenings changed since then?*
  - *How can these changes influence how I react now?*

## 12. INDEXING

- Use indexes to show differences within classifications:
  - $Seminar_1$  is not  $seminar_2$ .
- Look for differences:
  - *How does this situation seem different from similar ones?*
  - *Do these differences make a difference?*
  - *How?*
- Develop specific, detailed descriptions:
  - *What do I see, hear, smell, taste, touch?*
  - *What happened?*
  - *And then?*

- *And then?*
- *How many evaluational reactions can I list?*
- *What physiological sensations occur?*
- **Develop a multi-valued orientation:**
  - *What happens when I give up a two-valued orientation and look for continuums instead? For example, what happens if, instead of labeling my reaction as anxious or calm, I rate the degree of anxiety or calm I experience on a scale of 1-10?*
  - *How can I describe this?*
- **Focus on moment-to-moment experiencing:**
  - *What do I notice?*
  - *What is going on 'inside' of me?*
  - *How are others reacting?*
- **Label what is going on as accurately as possible:**
  - *How do I react to "whatever"?*
  - *How can I best describe my reaction?*
  - *How can I differentiate my reactions, e.g., distinguish anxiety from excitement?*
  - *How do I know what my reactions 'mean'?*
- **Develop an orientation of minimum expectations:**
  - *Can I expect with certainty that someone will behave differently than usual?*

- *How does having more-than-minimum expectations lead me to react?*
  - *What will happen when I have minimum expectations?*
- **Watch for overgeneralizations:**
- *Does that apply all of the time?*
  - *When and when not?*

### 13. QUOTES

- **Use single quotes to note words that you consider elementalistic or otherwise questionable:**
- *What happens to my reacting when I note 'think', 'feel', 'mind', 'body', etc., instead of think, feel, mind, body, etc.?*
  - *How does this alert me to possible problems in evaluating?*

### 14. HYPHEN

- **Connect with a hyphen words that suggest separation of what we best understand as unified processes:**
- *What happens when I note my thinking-feeling instead of 'thinking' separate from 'feeling'? How about mind-body instead of my 'mind' separate from my 'body'?*
  - *Can these ever be separated other than verbally?*

### 15. ETC.

- **Use "etc." to note non-allness:**
- *Is that all?*

- *What else?*
- *What else?*
- *Do I have it 'all' now?*
- *What happens when I add "etc." to the end of my communications?*

*ETC. ETC. ETC. ETC. ETC. ETC. ETC.*

*Etc*