

SOME COMMENTS ON THE TWELFTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GENERAL SEMANTICS

BY STEVE STOCKDALE

The Spring 2004 issue of *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* contained a section dedicated to the proceedings from the Oct 31-Nov 2 conference in Las Vegas, "Confronting the Challenges of Conflicting World Views." This special issue and the commemorative CD that contains all of the papers in full are available for purchase from the Institute.

I offer a few comments from my perspective as an organizer, reviewer, administrator, and participant of this conference.

I was amazed at how differently I 'saw-and-heard' the papers as they were presented by their authors, as opposed to how I 'read' them as a member of the conference committee. In almost every case, the impact of the paper as presented in person greatly exceeded the effectiveness of the written paper. I suspect I will read, and listen differently, to future papers and presentations because of this experience.

Several years ago, Charlotte Read noted that conferences like this ought to convey a "feeling of community." In my experience of meeting and corresponding with students of GS, this notion of "community" is often overlooked, if not disregarded altogether. We can't live in a vacuum, so it seems obvious to me that we cannot "time-bind" in a vacuum. Reading books, journals, newsletters, and websites only goes so far. Meeting, conversing, and socializing with others who are interested in learning and applying general semantics cannot be replicated in writing.

Bob Eddy from Pennsylvania put it this way: "I have [been a 'lurker']... reading all kinds of books & materials but having no fellow enthusiasts with whom I could discuss them. For me, the Las Vegas Conference was like finding a desert oasis after a long, parched intellectual trek." Edryce Reynolds from Washington State wrote afterwards, "This gathering ... satisfied my years-old urge to meet people whose work I had long admired! Since the Institute ... will soon move ... half a continent closer to me, I hope to attend more GS offerings in the future. To those who did not attend this 12th international gathering, you missed a special time."

Some of the attendees expressed disappointment in what was, for them, missing from the conference ... some expected more contentious debate, some wanted more workshop-like demonstrations and experiential activities, some stated concerns for the discipline because we didn't have any (or enough) physicists, biologists, neuroscientists, and some had hoped to spend more time discussing how to get GS introduced in elementary schools.

From my viewpoint, I think it says something about the robust 'generality' of our discipline that such broadly disparate opinions could emerge from a conference ostensibly focused on one subject—"general semantics."

**Presentations to the
Twelfth International Conference on General Semantics
“Confronting the Challenges of Conflicting World Views”
Oct 31 – Nov 2, 2003
Las Vegas, Nevada**

October 31

Welcome	Steve Stockdale, Jeff Mordkowitz
Comments on the 1st General Semantics Conference (1935)	Lloyd Morain
The Conundrum of Knowing What I Didn't Know	Karen Van Hoof
On Time-Binding as an Instrument of Peace	Nan Bialek
From the Unconscious to the Conscious	Kelly Duggan
<i>Discussion:</i> Education as Non-Aristotelian Activity	Andrea Johnson
On Belief Systems	Bob Eddy
Conspiracy Theory and Sound Argumentation	Jon Bouknight
Beliefs Affecting Handwriting Communications	Kate Gladstone
Dreams, Nightmares and Non-Violence	Allen Flagg
<i>Workshop:</i> Toward a Civil Society	Katherine Liepe-Levinson
A GS Approach to Reducing Student Alienation	Martin Levinson
<i>Discussion:</i> Challenging Culturally-Expected Ways of Thinking	Milton Dawes

November 1

Seeking Unmediated Truths	Gregg Hoffmann
Religion as a Belief System	Dr. Abdul Salaam
Ramifications of Julian Jaynes's Theory of Consciousness for Traditional General Semantics	Phil Ardery
<i>Panel:</i> A General-Semantics View of the Changing Perceptions of Christ	Rae AnnBurton, Beth Maryott and Megan O'Byrne
Media Ethics: Between Iraq and a Hard Place France - USA	Jay Black
The Argentine Case	Vanessa Biard-Schaeffer
<i>Workshop:</i> Rhythms	Laura Bertone Milton Dawes

November 2

The Language of Change: General Semantics and Malcolm Gladwell's <i>The Tipping Point</i>	Chip Stewart
Replacing Our Patterns of Universal Discord	Andy Hilgartner
<i>Discussion:</i> Intrapersonal Evolution	Maurine Eckloff
Changing Reputations: De-marginalizing General Semantics	Bruce Kodish
<i>Discussion:</i> The Future of General Semantics	All