

REPLACING OUR PATTERN OF UNIVERSAL DISCORD

C. A. Hilgartner
Hilgartner & Associates
2413 North East Street
Kirksville Missouri 63501 USA

The only legitimate conflict amongst humans is the conflict of ideas.

(Attributed to Alfred Korzybski)

Abstract

Despite the best efforts of dedicated people, the condition of our world seems to deteriorate daily. Not only do we endure warfare on various levels, both military and economic, but we also endure conflict among our cultures and within ourselves. It seems as though we humans cannot get along with ourselves, other humans or our environment. This discord prevents us from taking positive steps to improve our chances for long-term survival as a species.

In this paper, I examine the embedded errors that underlie our conflict and discord, and suggest remedies—drastic ones, that require us completely to revise our understanding of ourselves, our culture, and our place within the cosmos.

Keywords: cooperation, conflict, linguistics, non-identity, psychology, survival-crisis

Preview

In this paper I discuss a little-noticed **lethal assumption** which we, as members of the **currently dominant world culture** (Quinn, 1992), have inflicted on ourselves, on humans of other cultures, and on all of the other kinds of organisms which Planet Earth harbors. I focus in particular on how, and how come, that which we commonly call “civilization” **courts species suicide and extinction**, and perhaps, **pan-biocide** (Hilgartner, 1965). I focus on how to stop our mad plunge towards self-annihilation—how to shift instead toward finding ways to generate **viable, sustainable, life-affirming ways for humans to live** (Hilgartner, et al, 1984, 1986).

I find this lethal assumption **encoded** in the **generalized grammar** common to the **discursive** and **notational languages** of the **western Indo-European (WIE) family** and common also to our technical sub-languages: the WIE logics and mathematics, sciences, philosophies, jurisprudences, religions, etc. (Hilgartner, 1977/78, 1978).

The grammar of the WIE languages does not provide a built-in means for distinguishing between the ‘**maps**’ an organism generates and the ‘**territory**’ such maps supposedly represent or refer to. “Not to distinguish” serves as a synonym for “**to treat as ‘identical with’**”. Anyone who treats her/his “map” as identical with the “territory” tacitly pretends to possess **absolute certainty**—claims to have **omniscience** and **omnipotence**—perhaps the most dangerous pretense a human can make. (Hilgartner, et al, 2002).

I regard the assumption of *identity* as **untenable**, which means that anyone who **subscribes** to it, even **unawarely**, thereby commits her/himself to enact **fundamental**

theoretical errors—many of which qualify as **survival-errors**.

Since so few people have even NOTICED this assumption, much less studied how it affects the **behaving-and-experiencing** of those who subscribe to it, I designate it as **hidden**.

Since this hidden untenable assumption forms an intrinsic part of the WIE grammar, the errors to which it leads **pervade** the ways in which we **language** (e.g., **speak-and-listen**, and **write-and-read**, and **sign-and-‘receive’-signing**, etc.), and the ways we then use our languaging to guide our further “**doings**” or “**choosings**”. That raises a critical question: As we consider the range of human activities, non-verbal and verbal—which ones, if any, may we regard as free of these pervasive survival-errors?

Let me make that more explicit. When I language in English or in one of the WIE technical sub-languages, the built-in, hidden, untenable assumption manifests itself by introducing fundamental error into every word I use, every sentence or larger locution that I construct, every equation or other **well-formed formulation (WFF)** I generate, etc. In particular, I often find that what I have just said or written has the effect of begging the questions I would raise, justifying the presuppositions I would reject. In general, my own locutions make it difficult for me to say what I believe needs saying, and even more difficult NOT to say or imply exactly that which I most passionately reject. When I language using the WIE grammar, I can at best occasionally avoid its linguistic traps and delusions. To manage even that, I sometimes find it necessary to resort to what might seem like odd circumlocutions.

Cluster of 5 Inter-defined Terms: Organism, Environment (or ‘territory’), **Abstracting** (or ‘map’-making), **Abstraction** (or ‘map’), and **An ordering on abstracting** (or “logical levels”). According to my chosen assumptions, whenever a human **abstracts** and so produces an **abstraction** (or in other words, whenever a human organism generates a ‘map’ of some ‘territory’ or environment)—even a mere laundry-list—the abstraction includes an intrinsic self-reflexive component, some kind of representation or other indication of the *organism which did the abstracting*. Furthermore, any abstracting generates at least two “logical levels” (or generates an ordering on abstracting).

When a human organism generates a **higher-ordered** abstraction (one made up of other (lower-ordered) abstractions, each with its own self-reflexive component)—e.g., generates a theory, cultural frame of reference, World-View, etc.—the higher-ordered abstraction includes these intrinsic self-reflexive components. Further, the abstracting organism does not and cannot keep these self-reflexive components isolated from one another. Instead, as s/he generates the higher-ordered abstraction, s/he also combines these components into what I might call a **normative “Theory of ‘Human Nature’”** (Hilgartner et al, 1989).

However, any higher-ordered abstraction which includes this hidden untenable assumption among its premises has the likely effect of hiding its own “Theory of ‘Human Nature’” from the view of the person(s) who generated the abstraction.

Below, I shall discuss some of the social effects—survival-errors—which this hidden untenable assumption produces in the behaving-and-experiencing of those who subscribe

to it. These survival-errors include living by what I call a **pattern of universal discord**.

Introduction

By using the word *discord*, I mean to point to the kinds of human “doings” or “choosings” which we might conventionally designate with English terms such as *dissent*, *argument*, *quarrel*, *conflict*, *armed hostilities*, etc. In listing these terms in this way, I seek to order them to show increasing INTENSITY and/or DURATION of the disharmony.

In our culture, we seem to EXPECT discord. Our progenitors appear to have done so also, over periods of thousands of years. Not only do the literatures of each of the various branches of our mega-culture show pervasive discord, but so do the various ancient sacred texts. Within each of the earliest systems of writing, the stories show varying combinations of *animosity*, *deceit*, *treachery*, *betrayal*, *enslavement*, *rape*, *murder*, *war*, *genocide*, *deicide*, etc., as occurring between the gods, or between God and some of His Angels; between God and Humans; between one Society and another; between Humans and their Society; between one Human and others, including between Man and Woman and between Parents and Children; and within each human—the kind of relation between a person and her/himself that we sometimes call **self-hatred**. These many areas of conflict highlight the pervasiveness of the discord.

When someone generalizes from the ancient writings and declares that humankind ‘IS’ **somehow flawed**—that ‘all humans’ behave in *degraded*, *evil*, *fallen*, *violent*, etc., ways, regardless of the circumstances and regardless of whether they want to or not—this person generates two incomplete **Gestalten**, different and distinct from one another, and carefully kept separated (Perls et al, 1951). (a) One Gestalt consists of a **figure** with no (back) **ground**. That configuration answers fairly well to the Freudian construct of **fixation**. The figure on which this person fixates consists of the delusion (a view held regardless of evidence) that holds humans as somehow flawed, capable only of discord. The “refused” background consists of failing, or refusing, to notice that even the cruelest and most degraded-seeming person can, and sometimes does, behave-and-experience in supportive, compassionate ways, and most of us do so rather often. (b) The other incomplete Gestalt consists of a ground with no figure, a configuration which answers fairly well to the Freudian construct of **repression**. Here, the “refused” figure consists of failing, or refusing, to generate an awareness that the ancient stories function socially as self-fulfilling prophecies; that the characters, human or divine, depicted in the tales provide the shared role-models for the culture; and that the writers of the tales wrote them to support the *status quo* of that culture and to put into writing and so immortalize the models, standards, criteria, etc., which, as they expected and believed, would enable that culture to continue. The “content” of the background-with-no-figure consists of denying responsibility: “I (and my ancestors) had nothing to do with creating such conditions—God wrote, or dictated, the stories”; or more briefly, “That’s just the way things ‘ARE’.”

An Alternative Frame of Reference: A Cosmos That Has Humans In It

Little of what I have said so far follows from the assumptions that underlie the currently dominant world culture. Instead, what I’ve said so far makes our “familiar” surroundings appear somewhat alien. And that seems to suggest that I speak from a

standpoint somehow “external” to our usual received wisdom.

No one can see, or otherwise **sense**, anything at all—not a lion, nor a longing, nor a language—in the absence of a suitable contrast. In order clearly to show the WIE patterns which I criticize, I have to contrast them to some other patterns. That means, I must present at least a thumbnail sketch of the **alternative frame of reference** which I have generated—one which allows such constructs as **living organisms, human and non-human**. Korzybski’s postulates utilize the construct of ‘maps’ which supposedly ‘represent’ some ‘territory’ more or less accurately. I hold that ‘maps’ come from living organisms—to say that an organism **lives** means that it *abstracts*—by which I mean, it generates survival-oriented ‘maps’ of that ‘territory’ composed of “what goes on in and around the organism under scrutiny”.

Moreover, no one can see or otherwise sense any non-verbal *thing* at all in the absence of that *thing*. We can learn about *it* at a distance – by gossip, or television, etc.; but this, like “thinking about” *it*, or “remembering” *it*, etc.—I regard as differing in kind from the kinds of behaving-and-experiencing that I call *non-verbal-organism-DIRECTLY-CONTACTING-non-verbal-environment*.

In contrast, WIE frames of reference do not explicitly distinguish between *non-verbal* and *verbal*. Instead, they posit a **dualistic** cosmos: an unbridgeable gulf or chasm, with, on one side, something **FIXED** (non-living), which gets called “matter” or “the body”, etc.; and on the other, something **TRANSIENT** (“non-material”), which gets called “spirit” or “mind”, etc. To “explain” the construct of *living [organism]* requires positing “magic” or “divine intervention”, which allows “spirit” or “mind” at least temporarily to cross the unbridgeable gulf, and “animate” the non-living “matter” which makes up “the body” of the *living organism*.

In order to summarize my alternative frame of reference. I’ll need to get you to **distinguish** or **discriminate**—to “make some **distinctions**” of a kind that you may not have made before. I must manage to show-and-tell you some little-known aspects of how we humans **structure** our **symbolizing**. In so doing, I make explicit a kind of **expecting** which underlies all human languaging. Without this kind of expecting, we humans would not have human languaging available to us. Several comments made by the anthropological linguist, Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941) point to this kind of expecting. In one of his late papers, Whorf writes

Languages differ not only in how they build their sentences but also in how they break down nature to secure the elements to put in those sentences (Whorf, 1956, p. 240).

Whorf also asserts that “We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages” (Whorf, 1956, p. 213). Please notice the metaphors here: “break down”, “dissect”. In order to perform such actions, a human has to **DO** something—make sequences of *small bodily movements*.

A word about small bodily movements: Heartbeat and pulse sometimes produce visible bodily movements. Breathing, and the concerted movements involved in speaking, consistently do. But besides these activities, we humans wiggle—we increase/decrease the tonus of our skeletal muscles, together or sequentially, producing just-barely-visible

movements at our various joints, changes in facial expression, direction of gaze, etc.

Meanwhile, we live under conditions of radical uncertainty—no organism knows “for sure” just what will happen next. So we each have the continuous job of figuring out how to survive under the developing conditions—how to get what we really need, and how to avoid getting injured or killed. I couple these two classes of observations: I hold that the small bodily movements we make represent the outward and visible sign of the processes of abstracting we do, figuring out how best to go on from here-now (Hilgartner, 1965; Hilgartner & Randolph, 1969b). My neologism, *to language*, refers to what we DO, using the biochemical-cellular-physiologic-anatomic-psycho-socio-culturo-linguistic-etc. resources we already have. *To language* does not make muster as some ‘mental’ (‘not-physical’) “thing” *sui generis*, in principle incapable of becoming manifest on the ‘physical’ plane.

When a person speaks, whatever bodily movements s/he makes follow the rhythmic patterning (syllabic structuring) of the locution s/he generates. As Condon & Ogston put it, “The body dances in time with speech.” And when one person listens to another person speak, the listener’s body dances in time with the syllabic structuring of the speaker’s speaking (Condon & Ogston, 1967, pp. 225-9).

Whorf’s comments concerning “break[ing] down nature to secure the elements to put in [our] sentences” suggest to me that prior to learning her/his first tongue, a child first learns how to “break down nature” in the ways her/his role-models do, so that the “elements” s/he creates will fit into the sentences s/he has begun to learn to understand, but does not yet quite know how to generate.

I have characterized the non-verbal patterning of expectations, non-verbal distinctions, and associated small bodily movements which underlie the languaging of WIE speakers-and-listeners, writers-and-readers, etc. I describe these below.

I also have generated a non-WIE frame of reference based on Korzybski’s premises. I have derived a “grammar” from those premises, and have built up a notation on that derived grammar. In this paper, I present the contrasting patterning of expectations, non-verbal distinctions, and small bodily movements required for this non-standard notation.

These few comments suggest that my alternative frame of reference directly opposes, and perhaps rejects and replaces, the *identity*-based WIE dualism that has formed the backbone of the Western logics, mathematics, sciences, philosophies, jurisprudences, religions, etc., for several thousand years. My approach does not need “magic” or “divine intervention” to allow living organisms, including humans, into my assumed Cosmos.

Meanwhile, in eliciting these novel non-verbal distinctions and the associated small bodily movements, I must somehow avoid using too many words of my own.

Distinguishing *Non-verbal* from *Verbal*:

Here-now, my teaching must depend on NOT-WORDS. I see no way around this difficulty. In the absence of the few moments of the shared experiencing that I now set out to elicit, the rest of what I intend to say will not, cannot make sense.

To achieve this non-verbally, I’ll put on a little show. I mean non-verbally to teach you the pattern for how to “break down nature to secure ... elements” which would fit into my non-standard notation. This notation belongs to a novel frame of reference—one in which I

have disallowed (rejected and replaced) the untenable assumption of *identity*. Below, I shall present a cognate pattern, the one by which those who language in WIE tongues obtain the “elements” to go into their sentences. These two patterns contrast sharply enough to illuminate both.

For Act 1, Scene 1A of this show, I request my audience to attend, but not to speak. Then I display a gadget—that which I might call “*a cigarette lighter*.” Then I LIGHT it, and briefly let it burn. To designate this sequence without vocalizing, I point to a card marked with two characters: 1A .

For Act 1, Scene 1B, I again request my audience to attend, but not to speak. I ask them to notice some of their own non-verbal “doings” or “happenings”—such as what I might call *posture, breathing, heartbeat*, etc. To designate this sequence without vocalizing, I point to another card marked with two characters: 1B .

For Act 1 Scene 2, I invite the audience to speak out loud—say at most three or four words—ABOUT what they experienced in doing 1A and 1B . To designate this sequence without vocalizing, I point to yet another card, this one marked with a single character: 2 .

By jointly performing these three sequences— 1A , 1B , and 2 —we have already DONE the non-verbal *discriminating* or *distinguishing* required to “break down nature” into “pieces” I and/or you could use in my non-standard notation. To show you what we have done, I resort to the undefined terms of this frame of reference. (See endnote 3.) We have non-verbally distinguished between 1A or 1B and 2 . Or, we have non-verbally *structured* 1A or 1B as *not-identical with* 2 .

I suggest that the audience focus on the term *structured, to structure*, etc. In our behaving-and-experiencing, we STRUCTURE—we structure aspects of ‘ourselves’-and-‘our-environments’.

I further suggest that the audience focus on the construct of *not-identical with*, and its colloquial near-synonyms, **to distinguish between** or **to discriminate between**. Then focus on the non-verbal “doings” or “happenings” which these constructs **designate** or *refer to*—in general terms, those in which someone non-verbally TREATS discernibly different “doings” or “happenings” as if they DIFFERED IN AT LEAST SOME WAYS.

By way of contrast, please focus also on the antonyms of these key constructs: **not to distinguish or discriminate between**. These terms provide colloquial near synonyms for the logical construct of **identical with**. They too designate particular non-verbal “doings” or “happenings”—namely, those in which someone confronts “doings” or “happenings” which at least some other people regard and treat as discernibly different—and treats them as if they DIFFERED IN NO WAY.

Please focus on how easy and natural it seems, experientially speaking, to DISTINGUISH BETWEEN the kinds of activities pointed to by 1A or 1B and by 2 ; and how unfamiliar it seems to decline to verbalize while pointing at these activities, this non-verbal *distinguishing*—whether we point by hand-waving or by card-waving.

The grammar shared by languages of the WIE family provides no built-in way to make this particular distinction. Or otherwise stated, by failing or refusing to make this distinction, the WIE grammar **tacitly assumes** that the “relation” of *identity* holds between

the kinds of “doings” or “happenings” pointed at by 1A or 1B and those pointed at by 2 . As difficult as it may have seemed to make and point at these distinctions without vocalizing, I suggest that we might have encountered even greater, and more perplexing, difficulties if I had set out to discuss these particular kinds of non-verbal *distinguishing* in words, sentences, etc., built according to the rules of the WIE grammar, instead of sticking so stubbornly to NOT-WORDS.

Anyone who intends to make use of the alternative frame of reference I have generated MUST become willing to make this distinction—to treat the kinds of “doings” or “happenings” pointed at by 1A or 1B as DISTINGUISHABLY DIFFERENT from those pointed at by 2 .

For Act 2, Scene 1, I point out that I arranged for 1A or 1B to occur BEFORE 2 . Again, I invite you to focus on how easy and natural it seems for us to ORDER our experiencing.

I suggest that the audience focus on the term *ordered, to order*, etc. In our behaving-and-experiencing, we ORDER—we order aspects of ‘ourselves’-and-‘our-environments’.

For Act 2, Scene 2, I point out that I also DID 1A BEFORE I did 1B . I assert, however, that any interval of what I might call *human behaving-and-experiencing* INCLUDES BOTH. I assert that YOU CANNOT HAVE ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER. I suggest that we HOLD 1A and 1B as fundamentally *inseparable*

I notice that, in planning my show, I made a fundamental error: I started out by making separate cards, “1A” and “1B”.. Upon reflecting a bit, however, I saw that, by following first impulse, I had EXPRESSED a fundamental theoretical-and-practical error: I non-verbally SEPARATED that which verbally, I claim to regard as *inseparable*.

In other words, I non-verbally RELATED 1A and 1B **inaccurately**. Operationally speaking, by making one card inscribed with “1A” front-and-back, and another with “1B” front-and-back, I generated a non-verbal ‘map’ NOT SIMILAR IN STRUCTURING to the ‘territory’ it supposedly ‘represents’.

For Act 2, Scene 3, I ask-and-answer this question: How might we RELATION 1A and 1B so as to minimize the fundamental errors? How might I generate—structure—a non-verbal ‘map’ so as to make it more nearly *similar in structuring* to the relevant ‘territory’?

In the symbolism of these cards, to relation 1A and 1B as *inseparable* might mean finding a way to inscribe both “1A” and “1B” on a single card, in a way that will not permit us physically to separate them. For a card posted on the wall, that might mean inscribing both “1A” and “1B” on a single sheet of paper—adjacent but not touching. For a hand-held card, that might mean inscribing “1A” on one side of the card, and “1B” on the other. In this text, I could indicate such a card as 1A/1B .

I further suggest that the audience focus on the term *relationed, to relation*. In our behaving-and-experiencing, we RELATION—we relation aspects of ‘ourselves’-and-‘our-environments’.

For Act 2, Scene 4, I ask: What does the above way of symbolizing the relationing

between 1A and 1B ACCOMPLISH, as a way of ‘mapping’ human non-verbal behaving-and-experiencing?

Do you remember just how, in Act 1 of this little show, I made the transition from Scene 1A to Scene 1B? I said: “Now I ask you to try something else, similar but with a different FOCUS.”

Assume that, over a given short interval, you SEE something—you have FOCUSED on some “doings” or “happenings” occurring “out there”, outside of your skin; or otherwise stated, outside of the dynamic **boundary** between ‘you’ and ‘your-environment’.

For example, consider that “doings” or “happenings” similar to 1A and 1B occur concurrently. Then we have a choice as to which we wish to focus on first.

In order to start with 1A, to FOCUS on 1A, I must concurrently DO 1B, somehow without focusing on it. I shall use the term **subsidiary** to signify the non-verbal process of “DOING” something—doing 1B—without focusing on it (Polanyi, 1964, pp. 55-66).

I could symbolize this process by holding up the card 1A/1B so the “1A” showed to the audience, and then turning it over so the “1B” showed.

Conversely, in order to show that I start by treating 1B as focal and 1A as subsidiary, I could hold up the card 1A/1B so the “1B” showed, and then turn it over so the “1A” showed.

Thus ends my little show.

In the course of this show, I have carefully provided a terminology in which to represent or express the non-verbal *distinctions* we have made. I have elicited non-verbal “doings” or “happenings” from the audience, and have elicited at least one brief interval of VERBAL “doings” or “happenings”, explicitly ABOUT the non-verbal “doings” or “happenings”. These non-verbal and verbal “doings” or “happenings” do not occur ‘IN ISOLATION’. By waving these cards, I have shown these non-verbal and verbal “doings” or “happenings”, as **CONNECTED** in various ways.

I have used the terms *to structure*, *to order*, and *to relation*—Korzybski’s chosen *undefined terms*, transformed into verb-forms—to express HOW I connect these non-verbal and verbal “doings” or “happenings”. In my opinion, undefined terms serve **to bridge** between the *non-verbal* and the *verbal*. I have used the terms *to structure*, *to order* and *to relation* to connect our non-verbal “doings” with more extensive verbal locutions.

In brief, I have shown you how, in Whorf’s words, to “break down nature to secure the elements to put in” the locutions of this non-WIE, alternative frame of reference. This frame of reference includes specific ways for its users to seek to make it as nearly similar in structure to the world we observe around us as they can. Not to seek to do so leads to error—and to a general pattern of discord.

Making the ‘Map’ Similar in Structuring to the ‘Territory’:

1. We live in a world of ceaseless changing. It has many “logical levels”; and the changing occurs at many rates, including rates greater than any **sensing** (measuring) we could do.

2. (a) I assume that humans **assume (abstract)—indeed, we **cannot not-assume**.**

We can assume THIS, or THAT, or *SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY*—but we **cannot assume NOTHING AT ALL**.

(b) I further assume that what we humans then DO follows strictly from what we ASSUME.

3. Transacting (general sense). (a) Any languaging comes from a definite point of view, that of a human, a person. By Korzybski's and my premises, that means a point of view intrinsically **inaccurate, incomplete, and self-referential**, and explicitly acknowledged as such.

(b) Non-living “things” (if any) may **interact** physically. Living organisms **transact** with their environments, which means that from their encounter, both organism and environment end up altered. An organism in contact with its environment changes—and so does the environment.

4. Observing (general sense). (a) To form a complete **expressing** (“sentence”) in the alternative frame of reference, and to generate the points of view which this requires, I posit—distinguish between—a *person doing the observing and reporting*, and a *person (or “thing”) under observation*. (b) To make these distinctions (non-identities) clearer, I distinguish between two logical “roles”: To *the-person-observing-and-reporting*, I assign the role of **designated observer** (“she”, where I appropriate the pronoun without implying feminine gender), whose point of view—explicitly specified as that of someone adept in the alternative frame of reference—directs and orders the observing-and-reporting. To *the-person-observed-dealing-with-her/his-environment*, I assign the role of **specified organism** (“he”, pronoun again used without implying masculine gender).

Then to report, our designated observer uses a term-cluster with five inter-defined members (which I listed on page 2)—namely, **organism, environment, abstracting, abstraction**, and an **ordering on abstracting**.

By convention: we do not discuss the behaving-and-experiencing of the designated observer—unless we first shift “logical levels” ‘up’ by one, in which case we posit a new, ‘higher-ordered’ designated observer, who observes-and-reports-on the new specified organism (who formerly occupied the role of “(lower-ordered) designated observer”).

5. Self-Correcting. Our specified organism (“he”) functions in ways analogous to the ways a “formal deductive system” works. (a) Since he does NOT know exactly what will happen next, he lives under conditions which I could characterize as **radical uncertainty**. (b) He uses his sensory receptors, proprioceptors, interoceptors, etc., to GENERATE ‘MAPS’ of *what goes on in and around him* (namely, GUESSES concerning how to get what he needs, and how to avoid getting damaged or killed). (c) By ACTING on these guesses, he **puts them to test**. (d) At OUTCOME: Our organism, if surviving, has opportunities to JUDGE his starting-guesses against “how things turned out” (and classify them as DISCONFIRMED ... NOT-DISCONFIRMED). (e) At need, he has opportunities to reject-and-replace the guesses that “didn’t work”; and to guess again and try again.

I summarize these considerations by saying that the activities of our specified organism amount to **self-correcting**. And if I generalize so as to make it explicit that the term *to guess* includes non-verbal as well as verbal “doings” or “happenings”, I generalize this model so that it spells out how any organism (non-human as well as human) manages

to survive in the biosphere. Indeed, it gives a model for how the biosphere-as-a-whole works—manages to persist. In other words, this work generates a **general theory of biology**.

But the discussion of self-correcting tells ONLY HALF THE STORY of human behaving-and-experiencing. To bring out the other half of the story, I must show how I relation the logical construct of *assumings* or *presuppositions* to that of *the grammar of a (family of) language(s)*.

6. The Noun-Verb Distinction

Again, I find myself required to deal with Whorf's notion of "break[ing] down nature to secure the elements to put in [our] sentences"—a matter of the non-verbal *expectings* of speakers/writers, etc., of WIE tongues, and manifested by the small bodily movements, including eye-movements, such speakers/writers, etc., make.

(a) Non-verbal component: As I pointed out above, every language, including notation, has its own version of this kind of expectation. Users of WIE languages non-verbally EXPECT "*something fixed*" paired with "*something transient*"

(b) Mainly verbal-level component: Users of WIE languages treat nouns as FIXED and verbs as NOT-FIXED (somehow transient). Any complete sentence in a WIE language requires at least one *noun* or *noun-phrase* or *noun-surrogate* or *operand* next to at least one *verb* or *verb-phrase* or *verb-surrogate* or *operator*. And we distinguish between the *nouns* (etc.) and the *verbs* (etc.) by considering the *nouns* IDENTICAL WITH THEMSELVES, and the *verbs* NOT-SELF-IDENTICAL.

The cat grinned.

The cat wagged his tail.

Then we feel perfectly comfortable saying "*The cat is the cat.*"—but we never say

* "*Grinned is grinned.*", or

* "*Wagged his tail is wagged his tail.*"

That, of course, hinges on the untenable assumption—the invalid construct of *identity*.

THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH WHETHER, OR WHAT, YOU "BELIEVE". The "TERMS [OF THE AGREEMENT] ARE ABSOLUTELY OBLIGATORY." (See endnote 8.) If you language in a WIE tongue or notation, you rely on *identity* in this sense. To hold the construct of *noun* as IDENTICAL WITH ITSELF—Noun₁ = Noun₁—makes every noun static, distinct from any other noun, separate from its surroundings, existing independent of any observer: the primordial ISOLATED SYSTEM.

This tenet contradicts our accumulated experience. Over the span of some 500 years of scientific investigating, workers have produced evidence only for DYNAMIC non-verbal "doings" or "happenings". We have not found evidence that any static non-verbal THING actually "exists" or "occurs". Our verbal constructs, however, uniformly remain STATIC.

Thus we represent (speak, write, sign, etc.) these dynamic "doings" by means of static constructs. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century logicians showed that NOT to make the distinctions of *Name* vs. *Thing Named*, the *use* vs. the *mention* of a term, 'map' vs. 'territory', even *non-verbal* vs. *verbal*, leads to invalidating logical errors. Otherwise stated, this grammar tacitly requires its users (or at least, makes it inconvenient for them

NOT) to treat the two members of each pair as indistinguishable. We cannot adequately and accurately model a dynamic non-verbal universe in a language which not only provides no way(s) explicitly to make these key distinctions, but also requires its users (well, most of us) to posit a static non-verbal universe.

7. Self-defending. A human can go into a situation convinced that s/he MAKES no guesses, for s/he “knows how things really ‘ARE’.” Having “made” no guesses, s/he will JUDGE no guesses—will not use the paired constructs of DISCONFIRMED vs. NOT-DISCONFIRMED—and so will fail or refuse to revise or reject-and-replace ANY guesses. Instead, no matter how unexpected or undesirable the outcome may seem, s/he will leave the situation still clinging to the tenets s/he entered it with (even though s/he now has evidence that those tenets do not work).

In order to emphasize the contrast between this kind of behavioral sequences and those I designate as *self-correcting*, I designate this kind as **self-defending** (Hilgartner, 1963/67; Hilgartner, et al, 1984). But please notice what does and does not get “defended”: Not the integrity of the organism’s integument or other aspects of anatomy, not the integrity of the interpersonal relations nor of the organism’s ‘feelings’—this pattern “protects” only the GUESSES. By following a self-defending pattern, the organism shields only her/his *tenets*.

How the Pattern of Universal Discord Works:

The self-defending organism believes, “I know how things really ‘are’.” Thus “he” FAILS TO DISTINGUISH between ‘map’ and ‘territory’ (perhaps unwaresly), thus pretending to “absolute certainty”, and so (unwaresly) pretending omnipotence and omniscience. As long as what you say to him MATCHES his “what I already know,” relations between the two of you remain friendly. But if what you say does not match his “what I know”, then “he” has NO CHOICE but to DEFEND “his” TRUTHS against your ERRORS. Such “defending” can range from verbal put-downs, to fisticuffs, to using murder-weapons, to assault weapons, to “weapons of mass destruction”, etc. It can entail genocide, species suicide and pan-biocide (Hilgartner, et al, 1984). No one can sensibly evaluate assumptions they do not know that they hold. SELF-DEFENDING PUTS SELF-CORRECTING OUT OF OPERATION, and leads to systematic patterns of discord.

Replacing Our Pattern of Universal Discord

To switch from behaving-and-experiencing as a member of the currently dominant world culture to behaving-and-experiencing as a member of this alternative culture, LEARN HOW TO MAKE THESE KEY DISTINCTIONS, and then DO so.

On personal levels: When transacting with yourself, with significant others, with family and friends, etc., begin learning how NOT to “Play God”.

If you have the great good fortune to keep company with other humans who have begun learning now to make these key distinctions, begin learning how to HEAR them when they catch you “Playing God”, and tell you so. (I call this **support**—they support you. Receiving support often seems an uncomfortable experience, but if correctly done, it usually proves SALUTARY.)

On professional levels: The key distinctions needed on professional levels will probably appear somewhat different from those required on personal levels. As a competent professional, make, and apply, them in your field of study.

Decline to put up with sub-languages that lead to further degradation of the planet's life-support.

Learn how to tell when your discipline (or notation, or whatever) leads (allows) you to "Play God". Learn how to drop that pretense (make and apply the distinctions). Etc.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Grant, provisionally, that what I say does not look entirely wrong. Then we humans have built a lethal error, in the form of a hidden untenable assumption, into the grammar of the WIE languages in particular, and into the assumptions underlying the currently dominant world culture in general.

Therefore, even those who have noticed the current, self-generated survival-crisis incorporate into their diagnosis of the problem, into their proposed solutions for it, and into the ways they execute these solutions, the lethal error which led to the survival-crisis in the first place.

Given aim: To avert self-inflicted species-suicide, extinction, and possible pan-biocide.

Initial criterion of a satisfactory solution to the problem: That the current youngest generation of humans—today's grandchildren—survive, as a generation, long enough to get to see, and hold, their own grandchildren; and that they do so in a rich, sustainable world.

Longer-term criterion: That that generation—today's as yet unborn great-great-grandchildren—survive, as a generation, long enough to see, and hold, THEIR grandchildren.

Our opportunity, here-now: We need for ENOUGH people—a quorum of humanity, or at least, a small group (6 to 25 persons) to assimilate this work to date, freeing ourselves of this lethal assumption. Then we need to put our heads together, and figure out what next step(s) to take to achieve our aim.

What We Still Need: A discursive language on a derived grammar.

We need to rework the WIE tools, including our sciences, so as to eliminate the hidden untenable assumption and the errors it leads to. From such a start, we can perhaps build up viable, sustainable, life-affirming ways for humans to live.

References

Bullock, A. and O. Stallybrass (1967); *The Harper Dictionary of Modern Thought*; Harper & Row

Hilgartner, C. A. (1963); *General Semantics, Psychotherapy, and the Logic of Science* Unpublished ms, revised 1967; Truncated version, ETC.: *A Review of General Semantics* **25**:315-324 (1968)

Hilgartner, C. A. (1965); *Feelings, Orientation, and Survival: The Psychological Dimension of the Current Human Crisis*. Presented at the Ninth International Conference on General Semantics, San Francisco State College, August 1965

Hilgartner, C. A. (1977/78); *Some Traditional Assumings Underlying Indo-European Languages: Unstated, Unexamined, and Untenable*; *General Semantics Bulletin* Nos. 44/45,

pp. 132-154

Hilgartner, C. A. (1978); *The Method in the Madness of Western Man*; *Communication* **3**:143-242

Hilgartner, C. A., W. S. Carter, Jr., and M. A. Bartter (2002); *Language for Survival*; *Advances in Sociocybernetics and Human Development*, Vol. X, 21-34

Hilgartner, C. A., R. V. Harrington, and M. A. Bartter (1984); *A Stably Unstable System with 4.5 Billion Participants*; *Supplemental Ways of Increasing International Stability*; Oxford

Hilgartner, C. A., R. V. Harrington, and M. A. Bartter (1986); *Defining the Problem: The Technology of Averting Species Suicide*; Presented at the Second Workshop on Supplemental Ways of Increasing International Stability, Cleveland, June 1986

Hilgartner, C. A., R. V. Harrington, and M. A. Bartter (1989); *Anomalies Generated by Contemporary Physics*; *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* **9**:129-43

Hilgartner, C. A., R. V. Harrington, and M. A. Bartter (1991); *The Conventions for Symbolizing*; *ETC.: A Review of General Semantics* **48**:172-97

Hilgartner, C. A. and J. F. Randolph (1969a,b,c,d); *Psycho-Logics: An Axiomatic System Describing Human Behavior*; (a) *A Logical Calculus of Behavior*; *Journal of Theoretical Biology* **23**:285-338; (b) *The Structure of 'Unimpaired' Human Behavior*; *Ibid.* **23**:347-374; (c) *The Structure of Empathy*; *Ibid.* **24**:1-29; (d) *The Structure of 'Impaired' Human Behavior*; (Unpublished ms)

Korzybski, A. (1921); *Manhood of Humanity*; Dutton

Korzybski, A. (1933); *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-aristotelian Systems and General Semantics*; International Non-aristotelian Library Publishing Co.; Institute of General Semantics, distributors. [Current address (August 2003): 86 85th Street, Brooklyn NY 11209]

Korzybski, A. (1941); *General Semantics, Psychiatry, Psychotherapy, and Prevention*; *American Journal of Psychiatry* **98**:203-214

Perls, F. S., R. Hefferline, and P. Goodman (1951); *Gestalt Therapy*, Julian Press.

Polanyi, M. (1964); *Personal Knowledge: Toward a Post-Critical Philosophy*; Harper & Row

Quinn, D. (1992); *Ishmael*; Bantam

Whorf, B. L. (1956); *Language, Thought, and Reality* (ed. J. B. Carroll), Wiley/MIT Press

PAGE

PAGE 11

Notes

This one word, *civilization*, tacitly summarizes the central dogma of the currently dominant world culture and covertly puts the Stamp of Approval on it: We hold *civilization* as “A GOOD THING”; and believe, as Quinn (1992) puts it, that we have achieved “THE ONE AND ONLY RIGHT WAY FOR HUMANS TO LIVE”.

Civil means “behaving as we do, becoming a member of ‘our’ group”.

To civilize means “to persuade, manipulate or coerce others to behave as we do, believe as we do (and we CIVILIZED humans live in the one and only right way for humans)”.

Civilized means “living in the one and only right way for humans”.

Conventions for print enhancements: **Bold face**: specifying or defining a term; *Italics*: a term “lower-ordered” than terms in Roman type (e.g., as “thing named” rather than as “name”); SMALL CAPS: emphasis. *Italics* required because WIE languages use only one logical level; non-Aristotelian notation uses several.

As I understand his work, Alfred Korzybski (1879-1950) assumed a Cosmos that has humans within it. Within this “inhabited” setting, Korzybski declared the logical construct of **identity** (the notion of “absolute sameness in all respects”) **never valid** (Korzybski, 1933; see especially pp. 187, 194-5, 201-2). To replace the traditional, *identity*-based frame of reference assumed by those who language in tongues of the western Indo-European (WIE) family (which generally regards the Cosmos as impersonal and non-living), Korzybski put forth premises which include three **undefined terms** and three **postulates** (Korzybski, 1941). For undefined terms, Korzybski chooses **structure**, **order**, and **relations**. When I use these undefined terms, I treat them as closer to *verb-forms* than to *noun-forms*: **to structure** (or *structuring*), **to order** (or *ordering*), **to relation** (or *relationing*). To express his postulates, Korzybski makes an analogy to the way humans *abstract* and use the *products* of their abstracting—specifically, how we generate and use ‘*maps*’ of some ‘*territory*’, as interpreted above. I paraphrase Korzybski’s postulates, as follows:

Non-identity: “No ‘map’ *stands identical with*’ the ‘territory’ which it (supposedly) represents or refers to.”

Non-allness: “No ‘map’ represents *all* aspects of the ‘territory’ which it supposedly represents.”

Self-reflexiveness: “No ‘map’ *stands free of* some kind of representation of *the map-maker*”; or alternatively stated, “No ‘map’ *stands free of* some kind of representation of itself” (Cf. Korzybski, 1941, p. 299; Hilgartner & Randolph, 1969a, pp. 296-7).

I assert that to say that an organism **lives** means that it generates survival-oriented ‘maps’ of that ‘territory’ composed of “what-goes-on-in-and-around-our-organism.” Non-human organisms, so far as I know, generate only non-verbal ‘maps’; humans generate both non-verbal and verbal ones.

Gestalt, German for “*whole-configuration*.” What it takes to keep a Gestalt unfinished—and what it “costs” to **complete** one—form a recurring theme throughout Perls, et al (1951). See Hilgartner (1963) for a case study, in which I discuss how I completed a Gestalt which I had maintained incomplete for at least the preceding 25 years.

Specifically, whatever someone learns about “things”—at-a-distance includes the assumptions and point of view of the distant person who made the relevant observations.

The Harper Dictionary of Modern Thought defines *dualism* as “Any theory which holds that there is, either in the universe at large or in some significant part of it, an ultimate and irreducible distinction of nature between two different kinds of thing” (Bullock & Stallybrass, 1967, p. 183a).

What Whorf says in this passage seems so important that I quote almost the whole paragraph:

“... We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds—and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way—an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, BUT ITS TERMS ARE ABSOLUTELY OBLIGATORY; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees” (Whorf, 1956, pp. 213-4; emphasis his).

Thus Whorf clearly and unmistakably discerns that every language encodes a World-View—and equally clearly distinguishes “World-View” from “world” (or ‘map’ from ‘territory’)

Please remember that the way we structure academic departments, and the very “fields” of knowledge

themselves, embeds the dualism. Thus physicists study 'matter', while psychologists or theologians study 'mind' or 'spirit'.