KORZYBSKI'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO NLP

As Bateson was one of the "grandfathers" of NLP, Alfred Korzybski was another. And the two were related. In the early 1950s Bateson published many articles in "ETC." the General Semantics Journal, articles that today are incorporated in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972). Bateson even worked on Korzybski's formulation, "The map is not the territory." In his 1969 Presentation to the International Conference of General Semantics, he extended the work on it by asking "what gets onto the map?" and answered that question by talking about "the difference that makes a difference."

What Richard and John took from Korzybski and put in *The Structure of Magic* was that famous quotation, "The map is not the territory." Given that our mental maps (our model of the world in our heads) *is not the territory,* but a map of it, it is at best *a facsimile* of that external reality. We then use the model that we create to guide us in the world.
> "...important characteristics of maps should be noted. A map is not the territory it represents, but, if correct, it has a similar structure to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness." (*Science and Sanity,* p. 58-60)

Now in spite of the 830 pages of *Science and Sanity,* that is the one and only quote that they ever took from Korzybski. Did they take other terminology from Korzybski? For example, did they take "Neuro-Linguistics" from him? He used that phrase over and over again and in the 1940s he traveled the United States doing "Neuro-Linguistic Trainings." If so, they never gave credit to him. And what about "human design engineering?" After all, as an engineer, Korzybski filled his book about patterns and structures, even mathematics, about how to design or engineer aspects of human experience.

One of the distinctions Korzybski made was about humans as *time-binders*. He contrasted the kind of life characteristic by plants, animals, and humans. Plants *bind* chemicals into themselves, animals *bind* space by movement, and humans *bind* time—we can incorporate into ourselves the learnings of people in previous times. He then went on to create a *Theory of Time-Binding*. In fact, he later said that he originally intended to title his system *Time-Binding.* On second thought, he decided to name it "The Science and Art of Human Engineering." Eventually he called it *General Semantics.*

What is not so well known, because most people do not read original sources, is the rest of the quotation about the map and the territory. Notice the fourth sentence in the quotation that I have put in italics:
> "A map is not the territory it represents, but, if correct, it has a *similar structure* to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness. ... If we reflect upon our languages, we find that at best they must be considered *only as maps.* A word *is not* the object it represents; and languages exhibit also this peculiar self-reflexiveness, that we can

analyse languages by linguistic means. *This self-reflexiveness of languages introduces serious complexities, which can only be solved by the theory of multi-ordinality.* The disregard of these complexities is tragically disastrous in daily life and science." (p. 58, italics added)

Now in the beginning, they quoted Korzybski on the first part ("A map is not the territory"), but did not go further. Over the years I wondered if either Richard or John ever even read Korzybski's original work. If so, why did they *not* pick up on the importance of self-reflexivity or multi-ordinality? My guess is that they picked up that quote form other writers and never directly studied Korzybski.

Twenty years later it was my privilege to do that. So in 1991-1992 I began writing articles on the *unknown Meta-Model distinctions* of Korzybski and published in *Anchor Point* as a series of articles (1991-1993). Using Korzybski's distinction of self-reflexivity, in 1994 I created the Meta-States Model.

Precisely because Korzybski founded *General Semantics* in linguistics, he focused on how language works, on how the human nervous system operates, and on how language operates as a psycho-physiological function in our lives. That's why *Science and Sanity* contains a great many linguistic patterns—patterns that make for both unsanity and unsanity. Not surprisingly, while many correspond to the Meta-Model distinctions, there were many *new* Meta-Model distinctions. And like the linguistic distinctions in the Meta-Model, these indicate deleted, generalized and distort information which create limitations in mental mapping processes and result in leaving us impoverished.

As I began writing about Korzybski's original neuro-linguistics, I began wondering why these linguistic patterns were not included in the first NLP Meta-Model. "Why were these not picked up and used?" Bandler and Grinder started with Korzybski's premise, "The map is not the territory," and yet they did not follow-up with the ill-formed linguistic structures that Korzybski identified or nd how to question them. Strange. At first I guessed that they had their hands-full with the linguistic distinctions from Transformational Grammar, but today I think that they didn't even know about them.

Then in 1997 Richard Bandler asked me to co-author a new book on the Meta-Model to celebrate 25 years of the Meta-Model. He suggested a title for the book—*Magic Revisited*. The book would update the original Meta-Model with the discoveries made in those 25 years. Actually, this is what Richard and John predicted would happen to the Meta-Model. In speaking about those in Generative Semantics they wrote that these *"will be particularly useful in expanding the Meta-Model further."* (p. 109, also p. 38, *The Structure of Magic, Volume I,* 1972).

In 1992 I had suggested in numerous articles in NLP journals both in the US and in Europe seven new patterns from Korzybski to the Meta-Model. In the 1997 book which we were to co-author (now titled *Communication Magic,* Crown House Publications), I added a total of nine. Two additional ones from Cognitive psychology. All of these patterns continues the original design of enabling a person to re-connect one's language to the original experience so that you can develop a richer and more effective map for navigating life. (The reason why we didn't put both names on the

book was that after Richard signed the contract, he got upset with me for something and so refused! Such is life with geniuses!)   By the way, when Frank Pucelik and Byron Lewis updated their original book, *Magic of NLP Demystified* (1990) based on Lewis' 1980 work, they included the 9 additional distinctions, Second Edition, 2012. Not surprisingly, John was very upset about the second edition!

Did Korzybski contribute to some of the other NLP presuppositions beyond "the map is not the territory?" I don't know, there's no evidence for or against it. Yet in *Science and Sanity* there are statements that could have been the origin of some of the presuppositions:

> People communicate from their model of the world (p. 419).
>   The human nervous system works perfectly well (p. 466).
> People have all the resources they need.   "His [the average man] nervous system works continually, as does that of a genius. The difference consists in that its working is not productive or efficient." (p. 485).
> You can learn to solve your own problems (p. 529).
> There's a structure in every experience, so search for that structure; structure is the only source of knowledge (p. 544).

Alfred Korzybski certainly contributed much to NLP, he established the basic language of NLP— neuro-linguistics, neuro-semantics, human engineering, states, etc., and the central NLP Presupposition. And he did that forty years prior to the birth of NLP— in 1933-1941. His work then, as it does today, continues to inspire new discoveries.

L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.
   Neuro-Semantics Executive Director
   Neuro-Semantics International
P.O. Box 8
Clifton, CO. 81520 USA
      1 970-523-7877
         Dr. Hall's email: meta@acsol.net