

Stranger than Fact



JOE STATION

Stranger than fact

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Cover.....Joe Staton
General Semantics:A Re-evaluation.....page 3
The House In The Zoo.....page 11
Graveside Service.....page 13
War of the Words.....page 16
Last Minute Stuff.....page 19
Junkyard.....page 20
Mauling Comments (SFPA only).....page 22

ART CREDITS

Joe Staton--Cover, 2, 13, 17, 19, bacover.
Jim Hyland--10
Jim Harkness--11, 16, 20

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NOTE

Our featured article for March will be a short history of parapsychology written for STF by Dr. J.B. Rhine, of Duke University. Get your order in early!



Ed. note: SCIENCE AND SANITY was the basis for Van Vogt's WORLD OF NULL-A. Herewith Lee has demolished on of its fundamental concepts.

GENERAL SEMANTICS: A RE-EVALUATION
by Leland Sapiro

In 1933 there appeared an astonishing book, which by its investigation of human symbolic behavior purported to be the first scientific study of Man. Besides formulating "a solution of the problem of mathematical 'infinity' " and explaining some "fundamental but as yet disregarded" aspects of the Theory of Relativity, its author, Alfred Korzybski, offered nothing less than a "general theory of sanity" which "trains us how to use our nervous systems most efficiently"; a new "non-aristotelian" discipline called General Semantics which affects "every branch of science and life."

I shall consider in some detail a few of the corrective measures advocated by this writer.

Although General Semantics is essentially an abstract system for correcting our neuro-linguistic habits, it receives one exemplification capable of being seen and touched in the Structural Differential. Since it, in turn, "gives...a structural summary of the whole non-aristotelian system" (page 13) this device will serve as a convenient start for the discussion.

The basic idea is this:

According to atomic theory, a chunk of "matter", far from being the solid object we naively suppose it to be, is actually a constant whirl of microscopic particles. What Korzybski asks, therefore, is: how can we reconcile this semi-permanent piece of "matter" given by sense perception with its kaleidoscopic state as asserted by the physicist?

The explanation is by analogy: just as the eye is not quick enough to stop the rapidly-spinning blade of an electric fan and hence sees only a solid disc, so our nervous system, unable to detect the atomic processes comprising the event, manufactures the relatively static "object" in its place.

But the abstraction process does not stop here: once arrived at the "object", we can now select certain of its characteristics (ignoring those of no interest to us) and perform what Korzybski calls the characteristically human function of labeling it.

For example, we might denote a piece of "matter" by the term "block", "paper-weight", or "polyhedron", according as we abstract from it the quality of hardness, mass, or shape. These verbalizations enable us to perform "higher order" abstractions; e.g., we could now describe the object as a "toy", a "writing accessory", or a "geometric figure".

(And the basic difference between us and the animals, we are assured, is that: (1) we can perform these higher abstractions-- Fido, on the other hand, must stop near the "object" level--and (2) we can be conscious of performing these abstractions --whereas Fido cannot know that he abstracts.)

The Structural Differential is simply a group of cardboard geometric figures arranged to illustrate this "abstraction" process, the "event" and the "object" being represented, in turn, by a parabola and a circle, with various strings leading from these down to pasteboard rectangles, denoting our labels or "higher order" abstractions.

Ed. note: Lee included a diagram of this configuration, but I don't think it is necessary. Since this article is so long, I'll skip it.

Of course, this scheme is a bit misleading in its implication that the characteristics "belong to" the object and are merely abstracted or selected from it by our nervous system. Electrons themselves are colorless, odorless, and tasteless; and it is not obvious, for example, how a piece of green cheese, supposedly a neural abstract from some electronic aggregate, can exhibit characteristics not shared by its individual constituents.

Our modern viewpoint is that these properties are contributed partially by the observer. When we assert that something is green, we mean that it reflects a certain wavelength of light, which on striking the retina initiates a causal chain terminating somewhere in the brain with the sensation "green". Thus green is ultimately a fabrication of our senses.

And when we consider that...theory of the natural philosophers, that all other earthly hues—every stately or lovely emblazoning—the sweet tinges of sunset skies and woods; yea, and the gilded velvets of butterflies, and the butterfly cheeks of young girls: all these are but subtle deceits, not actually inherent in the substances, but only laid on from without; so that all deified Nature absolutely paints like a harlot, whose allurements cover nothing but the charnel-house within.²

At times, Korzybski seems to accept this newer outlook, as when he speaks of the objects themselves as being "neither cold nor warm, green nor red, sweet nor bitter" (page 384) but when discussing the Structural Differential he adopts the old-fashioned view and speaks (page 412) about "characteristics of the event" or (page 389) "characteristics which the object has" (underlineation mine).

It is not easy to "abstract" characteristics from something when they do not exist there in the first place, but, in Korzybski's words, are "manufactured by our nervous system...as responses to different energy manifestations" (page 384). Thus the Structural Differential appears not too useful as a pedagogic device, since it fails to emphasize the role of the observer in manufacturing relational characteristics.

Our next topic is Korzybski's theory of knowledge. This is closely bound with the notion of "structure" whose importance is indicated by certain initial premises which, because of their negative character, cannot be refuted without "imposing the burden of impossible proof on the person who denies the denial" (page 10).

These axioms, it is implied, furnish the one invariant characteristic of knowledge: if properly chosen, our language may be similar in structure to what it speaks about, but is never identical with it; our knowledge, therefore, must be entirely structural in character.

One of these postulates is (page 61):

Words are not things.

Now, it is a truism of General Semantics that the world is in constant flux: even a quasi-permanent event like a pencil "represents...a mad dance of 'electrons'," a set of "dynamic processes...acted upon by, and reacting upon, the rest of the universe" (page 387). Hence no basic difference exists between "objects" and "process", so that they both may denoted as "things". But in this case, words, written or spoken, surely qualify as "things"—either as sequences of ink or pencil marks (objects) or as sequences of atmospheric vibratory motions (processes).

(Strictly speaking, a word is a class of individual things called "tokens";³ this token "cät", for example, is a particular instance of the word "cat", which comprises this and all other similar tokens. Here, the distinction is unimportant. See page 7.)

The very fact that we can talk meaningfully about words, as when we say "cat" has three letters or that "Fido" has two syllables, shows that words are things: otherwise we could not talk about them in a meaningful way.

But words are things, and a small drop of ink,

Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think,

'Tis strange, the shortest letter which man uses
Instead of speech, may form a lasting link

Of ares; to what straits old Time reduces'

'Frail man, when paper—even a rag like this,

Survives himself, his tomb, and all that's his.⁴

Another fundamental premise is (page 751)

Words are not the things they represent.

In what follows we shall specify that class of things comprising dogs, men,

houses, etc., as being on the "object" level and those things called words, which de-
note things on the object level, as being on the "linguistic" level.

For example, the word "Fido" in the sentence

Fido wags his tail,

is on the linguistic level, but it refers to an animal, Fido, on the object level.

Let us perform an experiment: paint the sentence,

Fido wags his tail,

on the sidewalk; then cover the first word with a piece of canvas and on top of it place Fido himself. We now have a "mixed" sentence comprised of the dog Fido, on the object level, and the words "wags his tail", on the linguistic level. What we have done is to substitute Fido for the word "Fido", so that the word and the thing which it symbolizes are now identical.

This procedure, while simple enough for cats and dogs, might lead to serious inconvenience when applied to lions and tigers; but theoretically, at least, it offers no difficulty. Our "mixed" sentence is, in fact, perfectly legitimate, although to make it unambiguous we should have to paint quotation marks around Fido to indicate that he actually is part of the sentence, and not a stray dog which wandered on top of it accidentally.

We may now return to the Structural Differential, which is used to illustrate these axioms: the student points to the circle, representing the "object" and then to the corresponding label, meanwhile repeating to himself that the two are not identical. For (page 399)

The object level is not words, and cannot be reached by words alone.

We must point our finger and be silent, or we shall never reach this level.

This performance inculcates the disciple in the non-identity of words and their referents, thus preventing semantic reactions which lead to "non-survival, pathological states".

But since the "abstraction" terminology is misleading and neither of the accompanying postulates true, it appears that the entire scheme ought to be revised.

There is still another difficulty in this aspect of the theory. Korzybski regards "truth" as a mode of correspondence between words and what they denote; he then assumes that "knowledge" is simply the body of all true propositions—and thus ignores its essential non-verbal character. For example, if a mouse runs into the room, then my cat "knows" the location of his next meal, although he has no means of saying so. If all our knowledge is really structural in character, this fact cannot be inferred from linguistic considerations alone.

A more valid criterion for "knowledge" would be what Korzybski himself refers to as a "fulfillment of expectation", by which a belief qualifies as "knowledge" only if it leads to no surprise when we behave in accordance with it. If the cat tries to eat the mouse, which turns out to be only a mechanical spring-mechanism, then he cannot be said to have possessed "knowledge" in the original situation.

I next shall discuss several corrective measures advocated by the General Semanticist as a cure for our faulty linguistic habits. These are not to be regarded merely as aids to language: the basic argument—with which I agree—is that our thinking about any subject is conditioned by the language we use to describe it, so that if this language is incorrect our thinking likewise will be vitiated.

(The classical example is furnished by eighteenth century chemists: assuming that there must exist a "substance" corresponding to the word "heat", they searched unsuccessfully for a mysterious thing called "phlogiston", supposedly emitted when something was burned. Had their language contained only the participle "heating", with its more dynamic connotations, the impasse might have been avoided.)

We therefore must consider certain assumptions, built into our language, which according to Korzybski underlie much of our fallacious thinking and which we ought to reject. Among these is the sin of "elementalism", i.e., the verbal separation of things which in reality cannot be separated.

The "senses" and "mind", for example, "are no longer to be verbally split, because a language in which they are split is not similar in structure to the known

empirical facts"(page 30).

This distinction between the "mental" and "physical" worlds probably originated with some Neanderthal philosopher, impressed by the enormous difference in behavior of two commonly-experienced types of phenomena.

The arrow with which you so pleasingly shot your enemy in your dream left him disappointingly intact the next morning...and the strange monsters you saw after prolonged fasts or deep potations were invisible to the clansmen who were sitting beside you at the time.⁵

We experience things which interact with one another in certain predictable ways and which can be perceived by more than one observer; to such objects we assign places in the "physical" world.

But there is another group of private objects which exhibit no such regularity in behavior—and since we wish to retain some semblance of order in the universe, we allocate these "wild data", which obey no known causal laws, into a second realm of being, the "mental" world.

That there is a correlation between these two worlds—whether the creation of imaginary monsters by the drinking of alcohol or the stimulation of the adrenal glands by sudden fright—does not show them to be identical. To call the distinction "elemental" does not prove it to be such.

It is, indeed, highly probable that all perceptions can be explained in "physical" terms—perhaps a hallucinatory rabbit is caused by a physical state of the brain similar to that produced by the sight of a "real" rabbit—but the unsatisfactory state of our present dualistic language does not, in itself, comprise an explanation. In the words of Professor Lovejoy, "if it (psycho-physical dualism) is now to be abandoned, some substitute capable of performing the same office must at the same time be provided."

Let me outline one such attempt at unification, that of Bertrand Russell.

Consider a piece of matter, say, a penny, at which several people are looking simultaneously. Each one will see an ellipse differing either in size or shape⁶ from that perceived by his neighbor. Nevertheless, there is, according to the "commonsense" view, some "real" penny which is the common source of these differing perceptions.

Unfortunately, this "real" penny is never actually observed: the only things with which we are acquainted are the various impressions this thing-in-itself makes on our apparatus, sensory or mechanical. For this reason the "real" penny, according to Russell, may be dispensed with as an unnecessary postulate. Instead, we may regard the set of these varying perceptions as actually being the penny.

A piece of matter, according to the definition I propose is... the collection of all those correlated particulars which would normally be regarded as its appearances...indifferent places.⁷

Russell assumes that a "potential" perception exists even where no observer is stationed, i.e., that an eye (with an associated nervous system) placed there could register the object, and defines the totality of these perceptions, actual or potential, distributed throughout space, as comprising the chunk of matter in question.

What we call a material object is not itself a substance, but is a system of particulars analogous in their nature to sensations, and in fact often including actual sensations in their number.⁸

To use a different terminology, a material object is defined as a relation determined by the locus of possible positions of the observer and the corresponding set of his visual perceptions.

In this way the stuff of which physical objects are composed is brought into relation with the stuff of which part, at least, of our mental life is composed.⁹

Because Russell conceives "matter" in terms of its optical properties alone, his definition has several drawbacks.

To begin with, a piece of "matter" has no visible aspects coincident with itself; i.e., it cannot be seen or photographed from the place which it occupies.

Since potential visibility is Russell's criterion for existence, we come to the paradoxical conclusion that the place where we ordinarily say the object is is actually the place where it is not. "All material things, in Mr. Russell's world, are built around holes."¹⁰

In any case it seems unjustifiable to allot the object's optical properties a higher status than its tactile characteristics, which are not diffused through space, but are located where, in the "commonsense" view, the object actually is.

Notice that Russell has not attempted to explain those entities classified under "wild data", but only to account for "physical" objects in terms of certain "mental" phenomena involved in their perception. Even with this comparatively modest goal Russell's attempt is a failure, and of course the difficulties in bringing all "mental" and "physical" phenomena into a unified system would be greater still.

In short, I think the "unification of mind and matter" to be a difficult problem and the tossing of epithets like "elementalistic" an over-simplified method of solution.

We now consider a more positive semantic measure, referred to as "indexing!"

There are certain tokens (see page 4) which refer directly to the speaker or listener, and so may have a different meaning each time they are pronounced. Such expressions we call token-reflexive.

Let us examine an inscription which exhibits such token-reflexive terms. In a Grecian mountain pass there is a rock which bears the following legend:

Go you, stranger, to Lacedaemon tell

That here, obeying her behests, we fell.

This sentence contains the terms "we", "here", and "you", whose meaning varies in turn with the identity and location of the speaker, and the identity of the person being addressed. In this particular case, "we" refers to Leonidas and his three hundred warriors; "here" to the pass at Thermopylae which they defended against the Persian invaders; and "you" to the person reading their message.

Inserting this information and changing the indicative mood, we render the sentence as:

The soldiers of Leonidas request that the stranger relay to Lacedaemon news of the battle at Thermopylae.

Because the sentence is no longer built around any token-reflexive terms, its meaning is independent of the circumstances under which it is spoken.

The semantic device of "indexing" is simply an alternative way to counteract the shifting subjectivity of these reflexive tokens: instead of removing them from the sentence, we qualify them with appropriate subscripts, as in

Go you to Lacedaemon tell

stranger

That here obeying her etc., etc.

Thermopylae

There are several benefits which the General Semanticist hopes to obtain from this procedure, one of them being that it focuses his attention on the dynamic character of the physical world. For, what is true at one time may be false at another—and this fact can be introduced into the language by means of indices.

For example, the state of affairs denoted by

Charles II is king of England now

was true in 1667 but is false in 1963; therefore we index the statement,

Charles II is king of England now

1667

as a reminder.

Of course such a procedure, while theoretically unobjectional, is totally unnecessary: all we need to do is to say,

Charles II was king of England in 1667.

This is true whether asserted in the seventeenth century or the twentieth; i. e., if it is true that Charles II was king of England in 1667, then it is true he was king then at any later date. It is, in fact, "eternally" true.

Consider a more dynamic example. Suppose that at five seconds past midnight .

I dream that I am being chased by tigers. At this instant there exist a certain complex of sensation and imagery which comprises "fright". Furthermore, this fact is unchanged by my subsequent feeling of relief when I awake one second later: at six seconds--or six centuries--past midnight it is still the case that at zero minutes five this particular state existed.

Indeed, there are specialists called "writers" whose job it is to record these eternal verities, to pick out from the "river of sensuous imagery" certain momentary impressions and display them for public edification.

Could he but arrest for others...certain clauses of experience as the imaginative memory presented them...it was thus his longing defined itself for something to hold amid the "perpetual flux"...with him words should be indeed things,--the word, the phrase, valuable in exact proportion to the transparency with which it conveyed to others the apprehension, the emotion, the mood so vividly real within himself.¹¹

I shall not consider this matter any further except to say that upon any sort of analysis, the notion of "variable truth" is self-contradictory.

We now arrive at a more basic linguistic revision, namely, the elimination of the Aristotelian Laws of Thought "by which we regulate our lives" and which represent the "infantile period" of human development.

These may be stated as follows:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1) Law of Identity | $A \leftrightarrow A$ | A if and only if A . |
| 2) Law of Contradiction | $A \wedge \bar{A}$ | A and not- A |
| 3) Law of the Excluded Middle | $A \vee \bar{A}$ | A or not- A |

The Law of Identity, we learn, "is never applicable to processes" (page 405), because in our restless universe "no...event...can be the 'same' from one moment to the next"(introduction to second edition, page 11).

For the same reason, presumably, the Law of Contradiction is also invalid: a situation " A " prevalent at one instant may very well be displaced by "not- A " at the succeeding instant.

For instance, suppose that at time T_1 we somehow photograph in toto a piece of "matter" and at the same time assert, "Now the atomic configuration is ' A '." Then at any future instant T_2 --say, one microsecond later--our camera will disclose the configuration "not- A ", since by this time the position of each particle will have changed.

But in reality the Law of Contradiction makes no pretense of asserting that an object cannot possess one characteristic at one time and another an instant later.

Let us next state what this principle is: It is impossible for the same attribute to belong and not to belong at once to the same thing and in the same relation.¹²

In other words, the law applies only to the object's instantaneous "now", revealed by its "photograph" at T_1 or T_2 , and not to its succession of variant states as recorded by a movie camera.

To assert that something at a given instant possesses such-and-such characteristics and that at this same time it does not, is--as Aristotle correctly surmised--to assert nothing, for the statement contradicts itself. Such, arranged in more normal fashion, is what comprises the Law of Contradiction.

We next consider the Law of the Excluded Middle, whose refutation is closely linked with Korzybski's denial of the "two-valued orientation": a statement of the form " A or not- A " is inadequate, we are told, because it "establishes as a general principle what represents only a limiting case." That is, there usually exists an infinite number of possibilities, and the law concerns only the special case where all but two are identical.

The most famous refutation of the two-valued orientation is the Ice and Water Bucket Experiment.

If I simultaneously put the left and right hands in buckets of ice and scalding water, respectively, and then put both hands in water at neutral temperature, my left hand will register "hot" and my right "cold". Hence the same water is both hot and cold at the same time.

This experiment, it is asserted, shows the inadequacy of the "either-or" terminology of language; for if we replaced the "hot-cold" labels with the numerical gradations of a thermometer—as when we say that the temperatures are 0, 80, and 40 degrees respectively—then the paradox would disappear.

We remark that merely by considering the experiment as a paradox, the General Semanticist assumes one of the Aristotelian Laws which elsewhere he claims to reject, namely, the Law of Contradiction, which states something cannot be both hot and not-hot simultaneously. If a person disavows the Laws of Thought, he thereby forfeits the right to use one to disprove another.

In any case, the Ice and Water Bucket Experiment does not refute the two-valued orientation, which is still valid in the framework of quantitative measurement, as when I assert that either the thermometer does register the boiling point or it does not, i.e., either the mercury is up to the 100 mark or it is not.

The two-valued orientation, I should say, is a necessary category of thought, since we are obliged to use it even when discussing its inadequacy, as when we speak of the two-valued versus the infinite-valued orientation or the Aristotelian versus the non-Aristotelian system, etc.

Let us examine the first Aristotelian law in more detail.

As a purely logical statement, the Law of Identity asserts that situation "A" is implied by situation "A". Because Aristotle understood "situation" in terms of attributes or properties "belonging to" something, he interpreted his law in a pseudo-empirical manner. Let us adopt, temporarily, the Aristotelian interpretation and study it in connection with Bertrand Russell's previously cited definition of a "physical object".

First we shall modify Russell's definition of matter—so as to include tactile and other properties—by defining a "physical object" as being the totality of perceptions, actual and potential, of its entire set of characteristics. That region of space where the tactile sense properties alone are perceived will be regarded as the "place where the object is" and that region where its optical properties are first manifested—i.e., where it first can be seen but not touched—as its "boundary".

Now, in Aristotelian language the Law of Identity asserts that at any specific instant an object exhibits a determinate set of characteristics. But we now regard this set of properties as actually comprising the object, so that relative to our modified definition of "matter" the law becomes a tautology. In our new interpretation, therefore, the Law is an "empty" statement, in the sense that a proposition like "all even numbers are divisible by two," is empty.

But the analytic character of the Laws of Thought—now considered in strictly logical terms—does not render them useless for practical applications; in fact it is precisely this "empty" character, as with the statements of mathematics, that their utility lies.

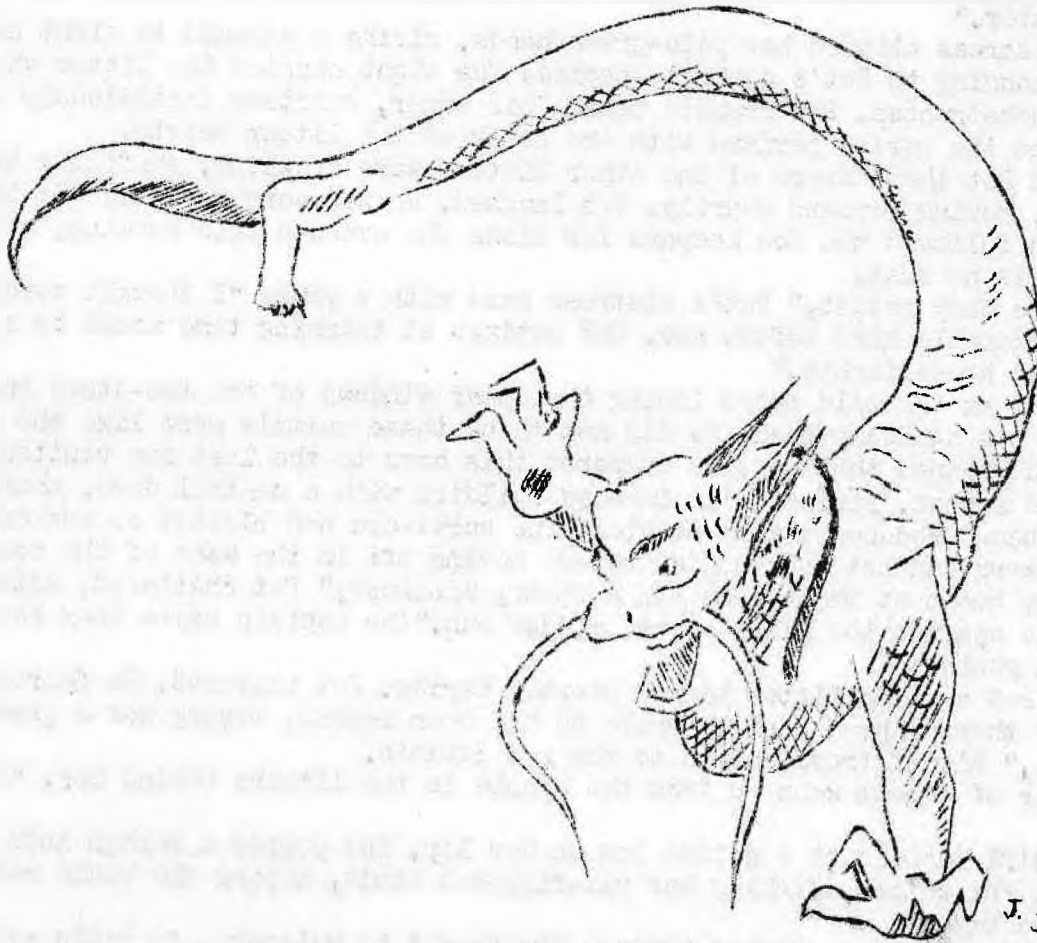
It is the great task of logic to point out those sign combinations which are empty, and empty in the sense of analytic; in these formulas the science of logic presents us with a specific instrument of thought operations necessary in all sciences. In order to know the full bearing of its assumptions, every science must use analytic transformations, which do not add anything to the meaning of the assumptions; it is for this purpose that we need the empty formulas of logic, whose addition to any scientific system is permissible because with them nothing is added to the empirical content of the system.¹³

Let us recapitulate.

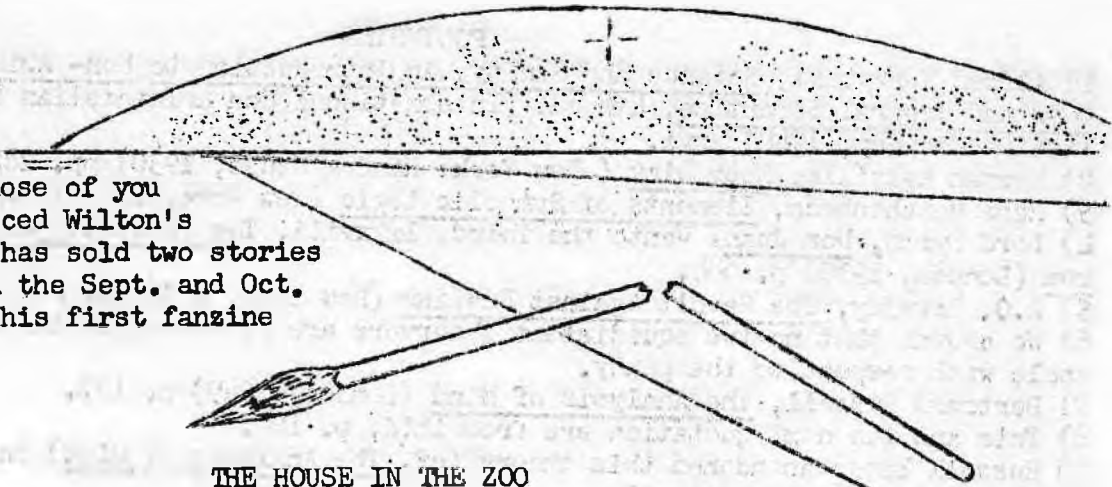
First it was argued that in their present form Korzybski's basic premises are false and further that sense-perception is inexplicable in terms of the "abstraction" CONCEPT TO BE COMBINED BY HIS Structural Differential. Next, there followed a plea for a less dogmatic resolution of the mind-body problem and a demonstration that the generality of the "infinite-valued" (as opposed to the two-valued) is illusory. Finally, it was contended that the General Semanticist does not fully understand the Laws of Thought, which are "Aristotelian" solely by virtue of their present misinterpretation. Clearly, then, the innovations of Korzybski arise from a clouded understanding of the principles which they were designed to supplant. I therefore conclude that General Semantics cannot be regarded as a legitimate application of scientific method.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Alfred Korzybski, Science and Sanity, An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics, 4th ed. (International Non Aristotelian Library Publishing Company, 1948) xxvi.
 - 2) Herman Melville, Moby Dick (New York: Random House, 1930) pp. 282-283.
 - 3) Hans Reichenbach, Elements of Symbolic Logic (New York, 1947) p.4.
 - 4) Lord Byron, Don Juan, Canto the Third, Lxxxviii, The Poetical Works of Lord Byron (London, 1930) p. 684.
 - 5) A.O. Lovejoy, The Revolt Against Dualism (New York, 1930) p. 28.
 - 6) We assume that no two equidistant observers are stationed at the same azimuthal angle with respect to the penny.
 - 7) Bertrand Russell, The Analysis of Mind (London, 1949) p. 101.
 - 8) This and the next quotation are from ibid, p. 108.
 - 9) Russell later abandoned this theory (cf. The Analysis of Mind) in favor of one almost directly opposed to it.
 - 10) A.O. Lovejoy, op. cit., p. 198.
 - 11) Walter Pater, Marius the Epicurean, His Sensations and Ideas, 5th ed., I (London, 1921) p. 155.
 - 12) Aristotle, Metaphysics, IV, 1005b. I cannot locate the translation from which this quotation was copied, but the rendition by John Warrington (London: Everyman's Library, 1956) is a close approximation.
 - 13) Hans Reichenbach, op. cit., p. 37.
- ~~11~~ ed. note: Correction to 9- that title should be The Analysis of Matter. My mistake, not Lee's. ~~11~~



d. note: For those of you who haven't noticed Wilton's name before, he has sold two stories to Fantastic, in the Sept. and Oct. issues. This is his first fanzine appearance.



THE HOUSE IN THE ZOO
by Wilton G. Beggs

"Keep back," shouted the hook-nosed zoo captain, as Pet crept up for a closer look. "Bonbon fool!" The man spat contemptuously, his silvery tunic gleaming. "Your mistress will flay me alive if your pretty carcass gets scratched."

Grinning, Pet capered back to a gaudy litter under the trees. "They're going to kill more of them, mistress." He giggled, while the girl inside stroked his shoulder. "The herd at this house has overpopulated terribly. Picnics are such fun!"

Pet giggled again. He was remembering a barren old female the zoo keepers had surprised on the lawn minutes earlier. The female's dying cries had alarmed the herd, had sent the entire group scurrying into the house.

"I'm hungry," Pet hinted slyly. "Bonbons taste so-o-o nice."

His mistress scowled. "No candy. Would you lose your figure? You may have a sandwich later."

His mistress clapped her pale-green hands, giving a command to eight nondescript animals belonging to Pet's general species. The eight carried the litter where the view was unobstructed. Pet pranced beside his owner, snorting fastidiously as a breeze mixed the girl's perfume with the stink of the litter beasts.

Behind Pet the bearers of the other litters were growling, shuffling their fettered legs, moving forward wearily. Pet laughed. He was very much amused: the picnickers had followed the zoo keepers far along the avenues this morning, allowing the work mongrels no rest.

"I hope they resist," Pet's mistress said with a yawn. "I thought surely we'd reach an untamable herd before now. Our outings at thinning time would be a dreadful bore without house fights."

Looking at the wild faces lining the upper windows of the two-story building, Pet nodded his handsome head. He did not think these animals were like the others the keepers had thinned that day. He compared this herd to the last one visited, eastward on the same avenue. Living in an immense building with a central dome, that abject group had been reduced within minutes. The survivors had bleated so cravenly that the picnickers had not even paused before moving off in the wake of the zoo keepers.

"Every beast at this place has a spear, mistress," Pet chattered, shielding his bright eyes against the glare of the midday sun. "The captain says they have not been thinned in years."

Near Pet a young litter bearer started baying. Pet shivered. He feared the noise for in the thoroughbred kennels where he had been reared, baying was a grave offense.

"Kill," his mistress called to the zoo captain.

A roar of assent went up from the people in the litters behind her. "Kill!" they cried.

The girl fumbled in a golden box on her lap. She popped a bonbon into her painted mouth. Pet whined, licking her six-fingered hands, hoping she would relent and offer him a bite.

The litter bearer stopped baying. "Brother," he whispered in Pet's ear.

Pet checked the bark that rose to his finely-chiseled lips. He bristled, sniffing disdainfully. He felt insulted to have a work beast claiming kinship with him.

Up in the crowded windows the animals were raining lances. Two of the keepers were hit. They bellowed in agony as iron spears pinned them to the ground. The furious captain picked up a stone and smashed their skulls. Thereafter, the remaining men took precise aim. Their silent pistols flashed, and the beasts did not realize they were being fired upon until they were being engulfed by balls of flame. The howling of females drifted on the summer breeze.

Pet's mistress was ecstatic. She beat him joyfully with her fists. Applause rang out from all the litters.

"Look," said the girl, tiring of the fun. "They are retreating to the roof."

She drew her robe about her and leaned forward. Sunshine glittered on the jewels in her silken hair.

The keepers were battering down the entrance doors. Pet could see members of the herd at the balustrade that ran along the brink of the roof. Females were pushing their young ones into less dangerous areas. The pups were bawling. Mature males dashed to and fro with spears. The yapping of a leader rose above the noise. About the windows the white walls were seared by fire balls. Corpses hung across the glowing sills.

"Bah," said Pet's mistress disappointedly. "They are whipped already."

Her beautiful pale-green face settled into a pout. She pushed back into the scented cushions of the litter. Over the edge a bare leg kicked Pet lazily.

Pet giggled. He stared at the bonbon box. He was always hungry, for his mistress liked her favorites lean, desperate to gratify her whims.

"They are making the ugly sounds." His mistress smiled, shadowed by a smoke cloud floating above the north portico of the building. "What queer things they are." Her delicate brow wrinkled. "I can never recall the name of this sound."

"The anthem!"

The baying young bearer had spoken as if directly addressed. The words hung like thunderbolts, and Pet clutched a litter curtain in shock. He heard the other bearers gasping.

"Demoness, it is the ancient anthem."

Color drained from the girl's green cheeks. Keepers came racing between litters at the rear. Their six-toed feet swished through the grass. They were dragging the insolent bearer away when Pet's mistress raised her hand. A smile played about her lips.

"My kennelmen will tame it," she said.

The keepers slunk backwards, bowing, the swishing a hiss in Pet's pink ears. He glared at the bearer. He snarled a jealous snarl.

"Heel," the girl ordered Pet sternly, snapping her ring-heavy fingers.

She ran her fingers down the bearer's muscular chest and pinched his bulging biceps. Pet saw the mongrel shudder.

"Filthy," the mistress said with a leer, "but an attractive cur."

On the roof the sounds had stopped. Pet swung his attention there. An uneasy silence hung over the building, broken only by an occasional wail. Then the keepers burst upon the roof. Several males became living torches instantly. Pet watched a shrieking female fall over the balustrade in flames. She rolled about on the ground near the north portico.

"It is alive!"

Pet's mistress screamed with laughter. Draperies billowing, litters jostled by, going closer. The girl raged, and she flung her golden box at her friends for blocking the view.

At once seven bearers bore Pet's mistress off toward the portico. The keepers were flinging infants from the roof now, but Pet did not watch. Instead, he dashed in circles, picking up the bonbons that had flown out upon the ground. Giggling rapturously, he put the candy back into the box.

"Are you sick?" he asked the insolent bearer hopefully. "The masters have no patience with illness."

"God!" The bearer was kneeling, retching in the dusty grass. "They are monsters!"

Pet shrugged his broad shoulders, a frown on his flawless face. The dams of the babies were screeching, and the masters laughed so loudly that a flock of birds raced overhead in panic. Pet capered, deciding to ignore the bearer's blasphemies.

"The animals here are not so wild," Pet grinned, scratching his gilded loincloth comfortably. He looked toward the roof, where the females tore their long blond hair in anguish. "They are almost as tame as the herd to the east on this avenue, at that place with the big center dome."

"Does no one remember?" said the bearer, choking. He gazed at Pet in horror. "Before the conquerors landed, this zoo was our ancestors' capital city, fool. Look at the house, look at the color, and tell me you understand!"

"Silly," giggled Pet, stuffing bonbons into his handsome mouth. "Aren't all our kennels white?"

THE END

I hope Bill doesn't mind this layout, but good reasons (spelled S-p-a-c-e) demand it...

GRAVESIDE SERVICE by Bill Ameen

That last night, Guy followed instinct out to the cemetery again. With only a new moon to guide his steps, he hurt himself on a tombstone; and again he was not able to find, or achieve, what he wanted, whatever it was that the dark recesses of his mind yearned for. At any rate, he came hobbling slowly up the back porch steps, paused for a look down the hill behind him, and let himself into the house by way of the rusty screen door.

He took his shoes off and lay back on the bed, ruminating. It should be, he thought, any day now. He should find it any time. But one thing nagged him: would he know it when he found it? He would have to decide on his own. Surely, he could not ask her help.

She awoke when she heard the mattress springs creak, and blinking in the utter darkness she said, "Did you go out tonight, Guy?"

"Yeah," he said.

"Nothing again?"

"Unh-uh." He fumbled for a cigarette, found one on the nightstand, put it between his lips.

She turned over in her bed. "But you're not going to give up, are you?" There was a note of anxiety in her voice, then relief when he replied.

"No, of course not." He wiggled the cigarette from one side of his mouth to the other.

"Maybe we'd better call in somebody," she said, smuggling up against her pillow.

"Don't need to call in anybody." The cigarette stopped moving, and a cold, clammy sweat suddenly broke out on Guy's skin. He took the cigarette out of his mouth. "No reason to call anybody. Not yet. I just need a little more time."

"But you may wait too long, Guy. You may not be able to accomplish the task without some professional assistance." Her voice was urgent, worried.

"Where are the matches, honey?" he asked, feeling across the nightstand.

"Supposed to be by the bed," she told him.

"I can't find them."

She opened her eyes and stared through the big unclosed window, at the few stars not covered by ominous clouds. Touching her tongue to her lips, she said, "Then there aren't any matches." She found it difficult to keep her voice even. "Guy, there aren't a lot of things around this house. Things most people have that we can't have. Things that we could have if it weren't for your--"



"Go ahead and say it!" Guy spat bitterly. "If it weren't for my handicap. Say it say it--"

She let the cool tears run. "The poor man down at the store. He has to break the regulations and give us some things--"

"That's enough!" he snapped.

"--he gets himself into trouble just to give us things to live on. Things most people take for granted. And you know, that's a crime punishable by--"

"Please shut up," he begged. "I know, Astra. Giving aid to or supporting people like me is a crime that merits capital punishment. I know, Astra. And I try. Believe me, I try." He listened for a moment for her sobs. "Every night, Astra, every night. Do you, by any chance, know how it is? I wonder." He flicked the crumpled cigarette into the darkness.

The night after that, Guy went to bed early. He wanted to do some thinking before he went out into the graveyard this time. Astra stayed up.

She called in a friend of hers.

A professional.

The drawn curtains over the bedroom window fluttered. Puffing on an illegitimate cigarette, which burned because of an illegitimate match he had acquired during the day, Guy watched the curtains motion passively, without concern. Hands clasped behind his head, he savored the cigarette and the chance for reflection that being alone in the dark offered.

Alone? he asked himself. Quietly, without fear he stared at the face across the room, the face that flickered like the cigarette lighter a few inches in front of it.

"I don't have any cigarettes to offer you," Guy said drily. "I'm glad you're smoking your own."

"So am I," the other replied. "A pilfered one would taste rather bitter, I'm afraid." The cultured British accent pulsed gently across the still air of the dark room.

"Let me introduce myself," he continued. "My name is Hansen."

Guy mustered his most sarcastic tones. "I imagine my wife has already told you mine."

"Uh--yes. Your wife and I are old friends, but I don't believe I've ever had the pleasure of meeting you."

"Former suitor?"

"Old friend, I believe I said."

They were silent until Guy put out his cigarette. "No, I haven't been out yet tonight, if that's what you were wondering."

"I presume that is an ancient family burial ground," Hansen said.

"It is."

"How long do you spend out there each night?" Hansen pursued.

Guy shook his head, then, realizing that Hansen could not see the motion, said, "I don't know. I lose contact with all the world, all realism, and lose all sense of time."

"Can you remember what you do each time you go there? Your actions?"

"Before I come in, I stand on the porch and look back. It's all like a dream. I know it happened, but I can't remember what."

"I don't think you take the whole thing very seriously, or seriously at all," Hansen told him pointedly. "I don't think it matters to you. You'd as soon go ahead and live this wretched--"

Guy sat up, shaking. "No, that's not true. You're wrong, Hansen. Get out of here. I don't need you. Get out!"

Light flooded the room abruptly. Guy turned, blinking, to look at the door where Astra stood with her hand on the switch. "Turn it off," he gasped, "please turn it off."

"If you were like us, you wouldn't mind it so much," she said, but not unkindly. She placed a hand on his shoulder.

"Do you want to go out with us?" Hansen asked her.

"Yes," she said, sighing. "Tonight, Guy? Tonight?"

"I don't know. Can't promise anything."

They helped Guy through the window and the three of them started down the hill. Hansen carried a flashlight whose weak beam played diffusedly on the thick, high grass before them. They came out of the dewy weeds and crossed the little bridge. Yonder, said Hansen's groping flash, was the family cemetery in a grove of trees Guy's great-grandfather had planted.

They passed his great-grandfather's grave, and his great-grandmother's, and the graves of some before that, and the graves of all those after that. They stopped at his father's tombstone, and Guy sank to his knees. Clutching the grass he wept, and Hansen cut off the flashlight.

Astra and Hansen left him there and walked back to the brook. They gazed into the running water, while it bubbled along oblivious of them.

Hansen lifted his eyes to the starry sky, in some places obscured by dark clouds. "It's a funny thing, isn't it, Astra?" he murmured.

"What?" She rubbed at the corner of one eye. The tear stayed in it. There was no use in crying, she told herself. Look at the little bubbly brook or up at the tiny, sympathetic stars. Perhaps they cared, perhaps they didn't. At least they were places where one could leave his troubles.

Hansen was saying, "It's a funny thing how people like Guy keep turning up. In a vast, completely and recently re-organized world like this, poor ones like that who happen to be born different can't achieve proper empathy with previous generations in order to become decent citizens. Poor, helpless fellow."

Astra nodded slowly. "A recurrent post-atomic mutation. Fortunately a recessive trait. But enough of them happen along. Rog—I don't think he even knows what he's trying to achieve."

"No, he doesn't," Hansen said. "And that's what makes my job as a humanist so much harder."

She gripped his arm suddenly. "Oh, Rog, I can't stand this much longer. If—if he can't do it again tonight—will you take me away? I think I should possibly have a nervous breakdown—I think I've suffered with Guy long enough."

"Yes, you have," Hansen told her. "You'll never have to see this place again."

They started up the hill to the cemetery, hand in hand. The two did not notice the tiny, frantic salamander scurrying past them through the high grass to the friendly, inviting brook.

THE END

MOURNING AFTER, by Sidney O. Turner

'Twas the sad morning after, and even the mice Were searching around in the kitchen for ice, While each of the guests who'd stayed overnight Was moaning the blues, or out like a light. I grunted in pain as I rose from my bed, For midgetsize hammers beat holes in my head, And the strident tune that was filling my mind Was a hungover version of Auld Lang Syne. Then materializing with a giggle of glee, A bug-eyed demon stood grinning at me, And giving me not one second to think, Began a discourse on the evils of drink: "It's often quite smooth to the taste," he sa said, It starts for the stomach but stops in the head, And little it matters what the price or the name, You'll find in the end the results are the same.	"And no celebrations allowed to pass Till some poor fool's flat on his face! Be it Christmas or New Year, the date matters not, You just keep drinking till all you are shot, And then with a sudden ear-shattering roar, The bug-eyed demon sank right through the floor; And adding a note of humor to the show, Said: "I'll see you again when you get down below." Now the moral of this, if moral there be, Is never believe what you hear or see; And when you awake with a hammering head, Just have a boilermaker—and go back to bed!
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WAR of the Words (or: Battle of the Bull)



Well, gang, here we are again with another installment of our running bull session. (C'mon now—you know that's a joke. You didn't? Hmmmph. Sometimes I wonder why I bother with these intro's...) Oh, rot, let's start things off with good ol'



JOE STATON, 469 Ennis Street, Milan, Tennessee.

So you're in SFFA? IF so, howcum the zine had no mc's? If you cutting the mailing comments from the genzine copies, how about doing me a special favor and leaving them in my copy? You see, I get most of the SFFA zines by contribbing them and I like to know what the members are saying to each other about themselves and about my stuff. **!!** But you're in SFFA yourself now—so why should I? **!!**

I got STF today and was muchly impressed by the great changes you had wrought. The zine is good now, Jim. The layout is much better and the material was—with the exception of "Vanishing American"—all top-notch in concept and execution. "V.A." was terrible, but the bulk was very enjoyable/good. Dr. Keller's little bit of macabre was excellent.

Will argue you on the editorial on the basis that fandom does not have science fiction as its reason but rather as its excuse—if sf were abolished in the next thirty minutes fandom would continue to exist—only with another excuse. Most fen don't care too much about sf as a high and noble crusade. Fandom is an auto-canabalistic society existing only to provide itself with an audience. **!!** Exactly. And this is the main drawback that holds down the numbers of fans. A certain amount of in-group flavor is desirable, but faanishness can only go so far before it becomes too inane and purposeless for most to stomach. **!!**

Congratulations on the improvements in the zine. You got off to a pompous start, but you have now atoned for your sins. **!!** O Rejoice, Exult, Sing In The Streets...**!!**

PAUL BRAGUE, Box 12, Eldred, New York.

I just got my copy of STF and think it's a definite improvement over the first issue. Maybe I'm nuts, but I like the mimeo job better than I did the photo-offset. **!!** Me too. It's cheaper. **!!**

The story by Chuck Morris was without a doubt the best in either issue, and seemed to me to be pro-quality. Also liked the features.

I think the opinions expressed by one Jim Maughan in your lettercol were a little off-key—after all, the lettercol in ANALOG is nothing more than a series of technical opinions 98% of the time. So his letter was one of the fortunate 2%—still doesn't prove anything. He does have a point though, in that controversy is needed. **!!** But not such nit-picking controversy. No more on this subject, please. **!!**

A suggestion; drop the movie reviews and "Creature Corner". **!!** They were mostly in the nature of filler. Last issue I had trouble filling up space. This time, on the other hand, I'm already taking material for number four—and rejecting stuff I would have been overjoyed to get three months ago. **!!** Good luck anyhow.

CHUCK MORRIS, Route 6, Box 34, Gaffney, South Carolina.

You've prob'ly heard this many times by now, but I'll say it anyhow: the improvement over the firstish is phe--phenom--uh--fantastic. Typerrors, so prevalent in #1, were happily non-existent this time (we'll, almost). Proves you can type after all... Can see you need artwork, though the illos this time weren't too bad, just not enough of 'em and not enough shading in those you did have. // How about these? // Many thanks for illoing "E.T.A." at the end, 'stead of at the beginning, where it might have given the whole thing away. Smart boy... // Yeah. // Dr. Keller's yarn was certainly an oddity. Still don't know if I liked it or not, but the pro touch was there. Seemed a little cynical (which is okay with me since I'm a confirmed cynic, non-conformist, iconoclast, and maybe radical)... // How can you be "maybe" a radical? // The A.K. Davids story I liked very much. More cynicism, b'gosh. And quite an original idea. Smooth writing, too. Gotta hunch "A.K.D." is either Arnold Katz, Jim Harkness, or some bashful pro who's not too well established and trying to develop his lit'ry muscles in the fmzs. // No comment, except that it isn't me. // (Does that sound as dingbusted silly to you as it does to me?) And more from A.K. pliz...

The science page was a good idea, and I hope it'll continue (tho I'll prob'ly unnerstand only a fraction--but everyone ain't as dumb as me). // It'll be semi-regular; I had to cut it this issue. However, Sapiro's article sort of makes up for it, don't you think? // "Junkyard" is also good; quiet, intresting, and funny. Your typeribbon is, I believe, soaked in acid, though of mild strength (stomach acid, maybe?). // Hate to upset you, old fellow, but you don't use a ribbon when cutting stencils. // I like... "War of the Words" is the most original lettercol title I've seen in a fanzine. Promises much. Seems Jim Maughan jumped down the throat of Bob Adolfsen. Hope they have fun--and may the best fan win... Like you, I wunner how Arnold Katz knows so dang much about alcoholism. Gotta disagree about what he calls "the medical facts of alcoholism". Nuts! Doctors and medical societies, not to mention psychiatrists and welfare agencies, have been butting their bony heads against the problem for years, and they still don't know very much. As to the statement "one sees delusions after about one tear of compulsive drinking", 'tain't so. I know alcoholics, mister, several of them, and at least one who has been on the bottle since his teens or before. He is now in his fifties. Unconsciousness is no stranger to him, but delusions are. Two others fit the same mold. And none of them can say with certainty why they are alcoholics; neither can any doctor or psychiatrist. // They are alcoholics because they drink too much. // Delerium tremens or delusions seem to depend on the individual--or, to be more specific, some can take it, some can't. The only things which seem to play no favorites among alcoholics are the physical effects--if they live long enough, eventually all develop serious and usually fatal liver and/or kidney disease. // Now I'm wondering how you know so much about it. //

'Nuff said, 'cept--anybody care for a beer?

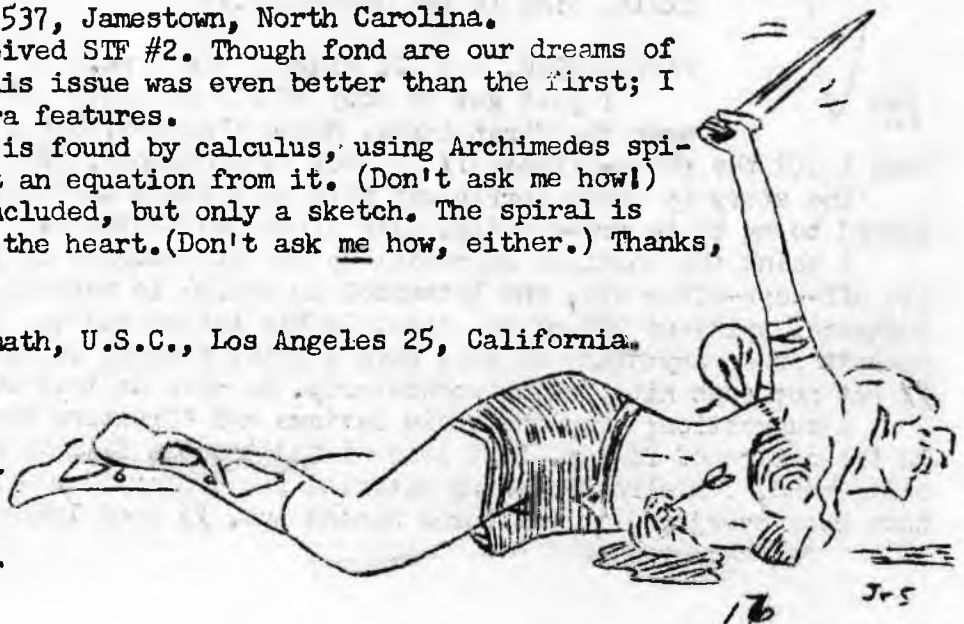
BILL AMEEN, Route 1, Box 537, Jamestown, North Carolina.

Y ep, I finally received STF #2. Though fond are our dreams of a fmz. on heavy paper, this issue was even better than the first; I guess because of the extra features.

Area of a valentine is found by calculus, using Archimedes spiral. Somehow you work out an equation from it. (Don't ask me how!) // There was a diagram included, but only a sketch. The spiral is equal roughly to half of the heart. (Don't ask me how, either.) Thanks, Bill, for the info. //

LELAND SAPIRO, Dept. of math, U.S.C., Los Angeles 25, California.

It's possible I underestimated fans' critical intelligence in my statement that Bob Adolfsen overestimated it. But I don't think we should abolish pro letter



columns altogether, since once in a while a non-trivial letter is printed.

The trouble: only two magazines--Galaxy and F&SF--print stories about which non-trivial things can be said, and neither of these print letters. As for the other mags in the Big Four, the writing in one (AMAZING) is so amateurish as to be unbearable, while Campbell's ESP banalities just make me sick--and these are the mags that print letters.

So wot's one gonna do?

// The above was excerpted from a discussion in a personal letter to me. Does anyone know the results of the experimental lettercol F&SF ran awhile back? //

PAUL GILSTER, 42 Godwin Lane, St. Louis, Missouri.

Glad I LOCed STRANGER THAN FACT #1, cuz now I've gotten #2. // Out of the goodness of my heart, you're getting this issue. No more LOC exchanges. Naturally, I want letters, but I can't afford to give a free copy to anyone who writes to me. And it would be unfair to give copies only to those whose letters were printed. // GREAT! STRANGER THAN FACT #1 was good--nothing special but nice. STF#2 really outdoes #1, in general contents, in the new format, in everything! Now just keep it like it is. The new format is good, I'm glad you adopted it that way. The other way looked much better but I know it was expensive through and through. Besides, you can fit more material in this way. And gad! 14¢ postage must have made you bankrupt.

EPILOGUE TO ARMAGEDDON--hooray for talent. That's about all that can be said. Quite nice, very nice. It would've looked good in Fantastic. // FANTASTIC should be so good. // More Morris stories next ish please?

VANISHING AMERICAN. This just didn't seem to be quite as good as the first Davids piece in STF #1. T'was good, but the first story was better, to me, in plot, writing style, etc. A tip, as such--don't rely too much on any one author each time. You could get into a huge mess if you didn't have any other mss. ready. // No, I wouldn't. I'd just hack out an article on the origin of the universe or something. //

Your "Junkyard" was a lot of fun. Make this a regular feature. // It's been combined with the editorial. // You have a kid who's always flying his plane, eh? // He's not my kid. // Man, that is one of the most annoying things the good Lord ever saw fit to place on this earth--little boys with model airplanes that fly. What a racket. We have a kid around here who flies his plane on the golf course near our house. He's been out there for about four hours at the time of this writing. I hope he leaves soon so I can go fly mine.

Thanks for the Keller story, too. Your zine has a lot of fiction, and that's okay as long as the fiction is good. Some zines specialize in cruddy fiction and nothing else, I'm glad you don't.

I better turn myself off now.

AND WE DIDN'T HAVE ROOM FOR:

Mike Randall, 929 Riley St., Atchison, Kansas, who doesn't like the endings to our stories, and doesn't like "Cinema Capsules", and can't understand A.K. Davids, but he did like "Junkyard"--except that it was too short. // This issue better, Mike? //

Jim Maughan, 617 2nd Avenue South, Tumwater, Washington, who says our first two issues have excelled many a prozine, and that "Epilogue To Armageddon" was worth the money he paid for the fanzine. // Blush! //

Paul Williams, 163 Brighton Street, Belmont, Massachusetts, who thinks STRANGER will never be popular as long as I print so much fiction. // But look at SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN. //

And this about wraps up the correspondence for now. There were other letters, of course, but I've tried to select ones that were representative of what the general opinions seemed to be. Actually, I'd like to run a longer lettercol, but I don't get the type of letters that make this possible. You know, just because the lettercol appears in STRANGER doesn't mean you have to stick to the mag itself in your letters. "War of the Words" is meant to be a discussion column more than a review column--so let's discuss something, huh?

If your corflu dries up, add a few drops off alcohol. It works like a charm. 18

LAST MINUTE STUFF
by Divulgent Types

I usually have all the material for STRANGER collected pretty well before the deadline, just in case something might come up that otherwise prevent me from getting the zine out on time. That was the case with this too, but just afore the time to start repro had arrived a whole flood of filler and cards and things came in that I wanted to use this issue. There were a few pages I hadn't stenciled yet, so I pre-empted them. This column is the result. It won't be here next issue--unless lots of good stuff comes in at the last minute again--so enjoy it. Or else!

So here's two postcards that came in too late for "War of the Words" that may interest you...or they may not...

DONALD A. WOLLHEIM

Thanks for STRANGER THAN FACT, which I was pleased to receive. Doc Keller's story was a nice little bit of grue, typical of him, and reminiscent of his good old days...

Sorry I won't be able to contribute anything myself--but I have more than enough professional chores to do, and besides I really think fanzines should act as testing grounds and training grounds for up-and-coming new writers rather than dumping grounds for pros' excess jottings.

FRITZ LEIBER

Once in a blue moon I feel compelled to write something about some pet topic like HPL or the Mouser that can't be sold for money (worse luck!) but I try to do that as infrequently as I can, since it's truly hard enough earning a living by this devilish machine--an Olympia which just now forced me to make my next novel 120,000 words long instead of a sensible 50,000--this is THE WANDERER, which Ballantine has scheduled for next Feb. STRANGER THAN FACT is an intriguing title. Here's one: U.S. Citizen, you're not welcome anywhere on the largest and most picturesque island group lying in sight of the Pacific coast! (They're the Santa Barbara Islands, 20 miles outside my window. S. Rosa and S. Cruz are privately owned, the other three are gov't.) But come to think of it, that is a fact, so not stranger than.

Joe Staton, who draws some of the best looking girls around (even if they do have antennae) sent this:



By the way, I commented in the lettercol (and mc's, for you SFPANs) that Joe had joined the Southern Fan Press Alliance--I'm no longer sure of this. It seems Joe sent his masters to Dave Locke to be ditto'd and some postal official thought the envelope was "a damn accordian". I've been trying to get him to re-type them, but he's sulking right now. So he may not be a SFPAN after all. Tch.

Jim Harkness



I can't believe it. I've been visited by a fan.
It came about thusly...

"It's for you, James. Long distance."

"Hah? Me? Betcha it's Bill Plott." I dunno why I thought it was Bill. He's never called me before, and there was no reason to expect him to. It's just that Plott has a famous tendency for long-distance calls. Probably they're all collect. "Hullo"

"Mr. Jim Harkness?" I admitted it reluctantly. "Hold the line, please." To the other end of the line, "That will be a dollar thirty."

"One-thirty? All right." Clung...clung...clung...clung. (It appeared that I was being called from a booth.) "Jim, this is Rick Norwood."

"Why hi, Rick. Gosh, this is a surprise. I got a copy of your zine in the SFPA mailing just yesterday."

"Yes, and I got two issues of yours too. Where did you get all that good fiction anyway?"

Whereupon I told him at great length and detail, no doubt causing him to skip dinner to pay for the extra time I ran up. Finally I finished and Rick went on, "Uh, yeah, that's nice. Well, I'm driving back to Southwestern tomorrow, and I thought I might stop by if it's okay."

"Great! Sure."

"Well, will I have to go. Any trouble finding your house? Some slan shacks are hidden away, you know."

"No, I don't think so. See you tomorrow, then."

"Right. S'long."

"G'bye."

So it was that at app. twelve-thirty p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 15, 1963, that Rick Norwood stepped onto our porch.

It must be stated that he does not look like Bill Gibson's cartoons.

Rather, Rick is sort of six feet tall and weighs, at a guess, around 180 pounds. He has unruly black hair, a light complexion, and indeed does wear glasses.

Did you know you looked like that, Rick?

We exchanged the usual inanities while sizing each other up. I worked a crick into my neck staring up at him, as he stood there with his hand out, waiting for me to notice it. I think he was trying to decide whether to run screaming back to his car or to stand there and throw up. Finally I remembered to invite him in and we had lunch, baked ham and tuna fish. I don't believe Rick likes tuna fish, which is odd, because tuna fish is a fannish food.

As we ate, an art discussion arose—first in fanzines and then in prozines. Rick kept saying that Finlay traces his work, though I wouldn't believe such blasphemy. Then we debated what was beautiful. I contended that realism is beauty, but Rick's ideas seemed to tend toward "prettiness". I would have beat him up, except he's bigger.

The rest of the afternoon—a cold, overcast one, just right for long discussion and fannish debate—we discussed and debated fans, fandom, science fiction, cons, and the fact that Rick is twenty-one years old. I couldn't accept it. When you come to think of it most college juniors are twenty-one years old; but I couldn't accept it. He's tall enough, and he certainly doesn't act like someone younger—he's a fan sir!—but Rick looks young. Like Poul Anderson, sorta, but even more. Later on, at church, I kept telling everyone he was twenty-one, and they didn't believe it.

Tell me, pal, do you have trouble getting into dirty movies?

Along about seven o'clock we got back from church. Nothing much happened till

nine, when Rick decided he had to go. Imagine. Driving that far so late at night. I would have invited him to stay with us, but he had a class the next morning. I pointed out the shortest route—a new highway has been built that Rick didn't know about—and drove to the outskirts of town with him.

After a lot of goodbyes and promises (which I intend to keep) Rick drove off into the night. I slowly retraced my route home, contemplating the awful fact that I still hadn't learned the Declaration of Independence, but I had been visited by a fan.

I can't believe it.

I don't think any program of the new season was so looked forward to by myself than the new sf series, THE OUTER LIMITS. It boasted a top budget, well-known stars, and a long enough slot for good plot development. In addition, it was reputed to concern itself with "real" space opera. I was told (where do you get your information, Chuck Morris?) that it was scripted by Bob Bloch.

I've never been so repelled in my life.

For those of you fortunate enough not to have seen it, a word of warning: DON'T! Why not? Well...let's take the first in the series...

Some radio station owner is experimenting with microwaves. Through various unspecified processes, he makes contact with a rather unlikely specimen from Andromeda nebula. This ignoring that the electromagnetic spectrum is limited to the speed of light. They converse for a while, but the earth guy is forced to go off to some testimonial dinner. He tells his interstellar pal to keep the transmission going until he gets back. It agrees, but cautions him to use low power. Our hero tells the dj on duty to hold it down and cuts out.

All Goes Well for a while; soon, however, the punk-type on duty decides he'd like the extra filip of people all over the country hearing his voice, and turns the power on full. Apparently this agitates our nitrogen-cycle friend, who reels around screaming in wunnerful Hollywood fashion. Then, in the most hilarious scene in the history of television, this creature falls right through the viewscreen! From Andromeda! Oh, I thot I'd never stop laughing...

Anyhoo, ole bug-eyes immediately forgets it's supposed to be intelligent and staggers off to beat up on the natives. This he does until he comes to the place where brave protagonist is being reveled around. (Huh? Well, what did you expect? Originality? Don't be silly.) Everybody runs off except the hero and his wife—she's fainted and can't run, natch. He convinces Our It to go back to the lab. They pad the program until the Army shows up. The wife wakes and breaks for the door, but she gets shot. (How should I know why?) The creature drags her back in and kisses her wound to make it all better. The mercenaries are thusly informed of this, but they are a bit skeptical. Then Whatsit comes out and sayes we're nothing but a bunch of savages anyway and to (quote) "go to your homes and contemplate the mysteries of the universe." Wow. Then, to evidence his good intentions, he blows up the radio tower with psi, or something. The Army decides to go contemplate before they get clobbered. Martinis are served and the bem disintegrates.

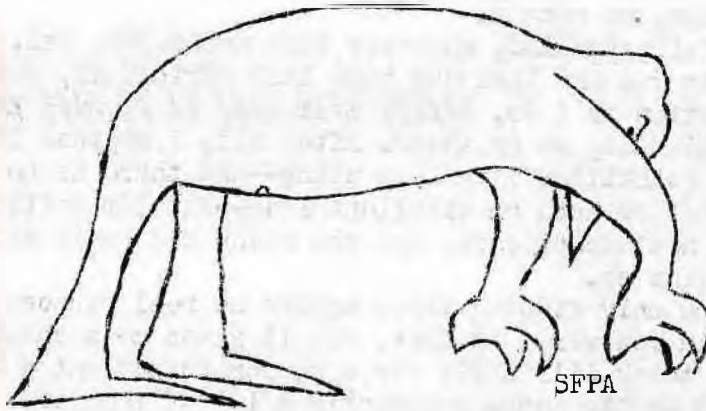
Needless to say, Bloch isn't connected with it.

But perhaps I've been too harsh. Truthfully, outside of poor acting, assinine dialog, scientific tomfoolishness, and general idiocy, it wasn't too bad.

If all goes as planned, our annish should have a color photo-offset cover. But don't get your hopes up, fan artists, because I already have the drawing to be used. Joe Staton sent it, thinking that we still used photo-offset, and it was so good that I'm holding it until I can have it duplicated. The reason for the announcement is that it was drawn from a model, Suzanne Maynard of Milan, Tennessee. It was her first try at modeling, and Joe and I think she deserves credit. Thanks, Suzie.

This, people, wraps it up for another issue; and for 1963. I want you to know STRANGER has been the biggest headache I ever had—and the most fun. I've loved every brain-racking minute of it, and my hope is that perhaps you enjoyed it too. Thank you for your compliments, pointers, friendship, and criticisms; but for now:

THE EDITOR AND STAFF OF STRANGER THAN FACT WISH YOU A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS, AND THE BEST OF ALL POSSIBLE NEW YEARS.



MAULING
COMMENTS
by Jim Harkness
(Well, who did
you expect?)

Okay, SFPAns, off we go with a few on-stencil remarks on the last mailing. (An NFFF --shudder, shudder-- fanbook defines "on-stencil" as the equivalent to THE FOURTH ESTATE's "in the slick". Fine. Now--what does "in the slick" mean?) 'Nuff of such meanderings, let's get down to the bloody business, startin' off with

ISCARIOT: Biggest zine gets best of the mailing, but not on size alone. A most personable fanzine. I found the whole contents interesting, especially the lettercol. Oftentimes, however, I was annoyed by my lack of previous familiarity with the zine. More specifically, I wish to Ghu I had read ~~THE~~ IDIOT. From what was discernible from letter comments, it was a Freudian short which nobody understood except Andrews. This type of story is always interesting if well handled, but they often gripe me. I wish people would get off this pseudo-intellectual kick of attributing every stunt some jd pulls off to a psychic disturbance. Some people act like mean scum because they are mean scum.

OUTRE: I guess I should read this, but somehow I can't bring myself to look at the inside of a zine whose logo is misspelled. Maybe I'm being unfair, but I keep thinking of what would happen if some mundanian saw this, and it makes me want to lie down.

WORMFARM: G ee, Bill. I sure do like your typewriter. Looks like typesetter work. (The letters, that is. Actually, I've never seen the machine itself.) Also like the cartoon-type cover and interior cartoons. And the robot drawings and the poetry and other context, what there was of it. In fact, I liked the whole zine, so much I'd have written to tell you so, but I'm lazy. As for number two, I don't believe it anyway, so I won't tell you I liked it--but I did.

DOL-DRUM: Really now. Was that nice?

To get serious for a minute(you thought I was serious all along? Aw, now...) I enjoyed the appearance of the zine muchly. Not that it was mimeographed all that well (look who's talking!!) but the script type really catches one's attention. Before I got into pubbing, the mechanics of it didn't interest me in the slightest; and for the first issue, it showed. Now, though, ~~its~~ one of my major concerns. Naturally, writing is the largest single factor, but the way in which the writing is presented has suddenly become much more noticable since I've learned to appreciate the work that goes into it.

Oh, yes, the zine as a whole was pretty funny. Does that surprise you?

SPORADIC: Why did you have to use that stupid extra cover? My father caught a ' glimpse of the word "pornographic" and like to have killed me before I could convince him that it was a joke.

We had a cat too, ~~one~~ ~~ceupon~~ ~~atime~~. It was a cute little bundle of energy all tied up with black and white fuzz. Unfortunately, it dozed off, as kittens will do, under the back wheels of the car. It took me two years to find out what happened to that animal.

CLIFFHANGERS AND OTHERS: Well, this ish is so short that there isn't too much I can say. Somehow, I can never make myself start a serial in a fanzine--I always expect treachery, like the zine's folding of something.

Firsttime I ever saw mailing comments in poetry--well, I think it was supposed to be poetry. Still say the scansion is off.

Then, after changing stencils, we come to

CANTICLES FROM LABOWITZ:(Postmailed, whatever that means.)Hi, pal. Whycum you never did answer my letter to you and Leah way back last spring? Ah, well. You print almost as much fiction as I do, ~~except that mine is so much better~~ but it isn't the crud most fan fiction is, so go ahead. After all, I suppose I'll always print it--though not in the quantities I've been using--and there is no reason why you other faneds shouldn't follow such an excellent lead--but I'm getting carried away. Material was good, if not exceptional, and the cover and cover repro are beautiful. Honest, I actually thought so.

SPECTRE: I hope you were only kidding about having no real purpose in publishing your zine, Larry. I'M certain you were, in fact, but it gives me a chance to express some views on fanpubbing. I think it's silly for a person to put out a fanzine because he thinks that, as a fan, it is his duty. Apparently a lot of them are, however. I look upon STRANGER as a hobby, not my life, but nevertheless it is something I enjoy and want to do and I am proud of it. A fanzine should have a purpose of some sort, it seems to me, or there is no point in publishing it. From what I can tell, new fanzines are coming out every week--but why? If they satisfy the editor, this is reason enough, but if they don't they are useless.

I don't have any facts to back that up; it is merely my opinion. But I wanted to say it.

And, excluding my own, this wraps up the fanzines in the 9th mailing. I have noticed that most of you don't review all the zines in the mailing, but just those which you like best or strike your fancy, or whatever. I'll probably adopt this practice also, but I thought as a new member I'd give my initial thoughts on each of the zines. If there has been a preponderance of "I"'s, it is because I've tried to put some of myself into the mc's--perhaps this has been overdone. But bear with me... I'll learn.

Anyway, I enjoyed the mailing very much. There were features I didn't like--the brevity of most of the zines, for instance--but in the end they didn't detract much from my enjoyment of the mailing. I was somewhat surprised at the number of new pubs in SFPA, but I certainly can't gripe here--STRANGER itself is new.

The roster is still growing. A quick "hi" is necessary to Lynn Hickman, Joe Staton, and George Proctor, whom Bill tells me have joined the roster. If anyone new joins after this is stenciled --and I'm winding up right now--the same goes for you too. Keep 'em coming, Bill.

There aren't any page numbers on this because I'm not sure how I'll connect this to the mag. Mc's don't appear in the genzine copies of STRANGER, so I may just send these to Plott loose as a supplement, or complement or something. Depends upon how much time I have for collating.

Now I have about 13 lines to fill up before I can stencil a Staton-type fillo and go to bed. What can I do now? I could sing, but that doesn't look so good in pica, so I better not. I could tell you about the origin of the universe, but I can't repro my photos of the Earth being formed, so I won't do that either. I might tell you about how I came to be in fandom--no, no, not that! I suppose I could tell a few jokes...yes, I think I will. I have all sorts of good jokes, you know. Ask Joe Staton. That's what we do in Algebra II, we sit on the back row and tell elephant jokes. You've heard of the elephant jokes, haven't you? They're taking the country by storm. For instance, why did the elephant and the ant get married? Because they--well, I'll be darned. End of the page already? Tsk,tsk. I'll have to sign off now.



This turns out to be a Jim Harkness type illo. Staton draws too big.

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