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The Happiness Purpose

If I had to design a new religion this would be it



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The new meta-system could be said to be based on the nature of perception and the pursuit of happiness

Having looked in the preceding section at the general mood of the new meta-system, we can summarize the structure of the system before we move on to consider in the following pages the application of the meta-system to daily life.

Belief

The new meta-system is not derived from or dependent upon a particular set of beliefs. As a working background it is assumed that man is a functioning biological system who usually lives in an organizational system called society. The meta-system requires no explanation of man's origins or destiny. An explanation of man's origins may, however, be found in the behaviour of self-organizing systems and the self-organization of basic chemicals into higher and higher orders of organization until man is the culmination.

The emphasis is on the here and now rather than on some after-life or release from the cycle of life. The purpose of the human system is identified as the proper functioning of the human system, and this is defined as happiness. The pursuit of happiness therefore becomes the main purpose of life.

Man's mind

Man's mind creates the world in which he lives. Man lives according to his own map of the world, his own way of seeing things, which has been created by his perception. The process of perception is a self-organizing one in which signals from the external world received through the senses are converted into nerve excitations in the brain. These excitations organize themselves into recorded patterns. The patterns are individual and depend on circumstances, past experience and the particular sequence of arrival of the information. It is quite possible for the same information to be put together in another pattern by a different brain or by the same brain in the process known as insight or creativity.

Lateral thinking is a provocative process used for changing the patterns of perception. Thinking, in general, is an exploration of the map of the world created by perception. The purpose of thinking is either direct enjoyment or else a change in the world map intended to increase happiness. This change in the world map may take the form of an adjustment to circumstances or an alteration of circumstances by means of activity which follows the thinking. The balance between adjustment of oneself or alteration of circumstances is emphasized.

Proto-truths

The new system replaces absolute truth with proto-truth. Absolute truths only exist in circular systems or special universes. Proto-truths exist in the sort of open universe with which science and life deal. A proto-truth is as free from conscious error or deception as any other truth, but it is never held to be unchangeable. A proto-truth is believable so long as it is realized that it can be improved or replaced by a better one.

Proto-truths are regarded as relatively stable states in the evol-

ution of ideas. The self-organization of experience forms such stable states both in the mind of individuals and also in society as a whole. There are individual proto-truths or cultural proto-truths. Proto-truths are not dogmas but acceptable and sensible ways of looking at the world that fit experience. Proto-truths may be changed by new experience or by the restructuring of existing experience.

Because proto-truths are not regarded as absolute there is no effort to impose them on other people, and this gives rise to the tolerance of the new meta-system. Nor is there a need to defend the proto-truths at all costs, and this gives rise to the positive and constructive attitude of the meta-system. Improvement in the proto-truths is brought about by the process of exlectics instead of dialectics. Dialectics seek improvement by a process of *attack* and clash whereas exlectics seek improvement by *reconstruction* of the initial idea.

Biodic symbol

The main track and the side track of the biodic symbol refer to the possibility of changing patterns in a patterning system such as perception. The symbol therefore symbolizes perception, change, possibility and hope. It symbolizes the possibility of escaping from a particular way of looking at things.

Humour is a key element in the new meta-system because it is the characteristic of mind that arises directly from the biodic process. Humour indicates a switch in patterns: a sudden change to a *different way of looking at things*. Humour is also tolerant, easy-going and good-natured.

Self

The new meta-system is definitely *self-centred*. Instead of denying the self, as do so many religious meta-systems, the new meta-system places self at the centre of concern. Man's first priority of consideration (though not necessarily in a conflict of interests) is his self. If a man is at ease with himself then he will be at ease with the world and he will be happy.

Life-space

Life-space refers to the total pressures, demands and expectations that are made upon an individual by himself, by others and by circumstances. For this reason life-space may also be called *demand-space*. Life-space is also the space in which an individual will be operating – to meet the pressures and expectations. So life-space may be called the operating-space.

Self-space

Self-space is that part of the life-space with which a person can cope with ease. Self-space can also be called *cope-space*. Cope-space or self-space includes that part of the demand-space that a man has as it were 'under control' or 'under his skin'. Within his self-space man must be his own master. The self-space may be affected by outside influences but must not depend on some outside thing or person for its functioning. When a person is within his self-space he is free and independent.

Cope/demand ratio

When self-space enlarges to coincide with life-space that is happiness. The usual gap between the two is the opportunity-space or the pressure-space, depending on how it is seen by the individual. An unfulfilled opportunity is, however, a pressure of sorts. The cope/demand ratio refers to the amount of life-space that is filled by self-space. If self-space completely fills life-space the ratio is unity. If self-space only half fills life-space the ratio is one half. If self-space fills only one quarter of the life-space the ratio is one quarter. An increase in the cope/demand ratio (for example, from one quarter to one half) means either that the self-space has increased or that the life-space has shrunk – and it signifies a move towards happiness.

Dignity

The ego refers to a person's self-image or the image which he wants others to have of himself. When the ego corresponds exactly to the self-space then there is dignity. Dignity is the destination for the self. When a man has dignity he is at ease with himself. When a man has dignity he can respect himself. The degree of dignity is determined not by the content of the self-space but by the closeness of fit of ego and self-space.

Respect

Respect replaces love as the operating idiom of the meta-system on the basis that respect is more workable. There are three basic respects: respect of an individual for himself; respect of an individual for others; respect of an individual for society.

Happiness

The pursuit of happiness is the legitimate purpose of the human system. Happiness is based on enjoyment of the self and dignity. Happiness includes ingredients that can become counter-effective unless used with care and balance. These include pleasure, excitement and enthusiasm. There are other, more dependable, ingredients such as peace, joy, interest and achievement.

Activity

Activity is important and so is involvement. Activity can be directed inwards at the internal world or outwards at the external world. There can be the activity of *action* or the activity of *awareness*. Activity involves achievement: the achievement of destination or the more preferable achievement of performance. Activity is of value because it enlarges the self-space.

Key elements

The key elements can be summarized as perception, humour, self, dignity, respect and happiness.