In Pursuit of The Ideal of Personal Excellence Through Conscious Times-binding Self-transformations. Chapter 1

Pursuing the ideal of personal excellence is not about being a perfectionist; is not a goal to be reached, a project to prove anything to anyone, satisfy anyone's expectations, or unnecessarily stressing oneself through being obsessive and impatient. As I imagine it: The pursuit involves a personal resolve to do whatever we are doing the best we can, in the moment…with a non-allness openness to the possibility of better ways. Towards this goal "We take a heuristic self-improving approach, and "We do what we do to discover what we are doing…to learn about what we are doing…so we can learn from what we are doing…how to do better what we are doing". And when things don't go as we expect, we use this as an opportunity to learn something about ourselves, others, and the outside world. If we think of our living as 'something' we are doing, better living involves the following self-fertilizing, self-transforming factors (a.o.): well defined goals, a strong desire to do well, having the proper tools, knowing how to use them properly… effectively, efficiently, and a determination to keep learning. Pursuing the ideal of personal excellence involves a life-long self-transforming adventure of unbridled curiosity, unceasing inquiry, explorations, discoveries, times-binding development with corresponding adjustments…In other words "a creative, general semantics, conscious times-binding, generalized scientific approach" to 'doing our life'. I find this quite well put by the meta-anthropologist and meta-psychologist Bernard Lonergan, S.J. In his book "Insight", page 187: He wrote: "Not only, then, is man capable of aesthetic liberation, and artistic creativity, but his first work of art is his own living."…"Style is the man before it appears in the artistic product." (See last paragraph of this essay for more on unfamiliar and technical terms.)

Anyone pursuing the ideal of personal excellence through conscious times-binding self-transformations can expect to encounter not only external obstacles but also internal resistances to 'change'. Analogous to a 'government', an organization or an institution with different departments, the 'departmentalized' neural activity we call "the unconscious" will sometimes resist or reject its own consciously recognized resolve to 'change'. This being so, we can expect occasional conflicts of interest between our neural functions-operations and their derivatives… "conscious awareness". Neural 'departments' (like many social institutions) are not always in harmony; sometimes parts of our mind-activities do not operate to the benefit of the whole.   Except in the fields of science and mathematics, like many other complex systems "The human 'mind' minds itself…and sometimes, undermines itself". (Think of a heavy 'smoker' trying to quit; or times when we are trying to suppress a distressing memory, stay on a diet, or abandon a long held belief.) (Read "Science And Sanity", page 178.)

We enhance our self-transforming efforts, and avoid many conflicts and problems when we remember the following important self-transforming ideas: "A word is not the thing that word is about…Words do not have meanings -- We give our individual meanings to words and situations." So on the path of self-transformation we work at thinking structurally and extensionally: We remind ourselves that: "The structures and operations of the nonverbal world are not identical with, or follow our semantic maps…our words, definitions, creative imaginings, our strongly held beliefs, our unexamined assumptions, or our human created, stable, enduring, and generally accepted rules of grammar". (The sentence "There is an

apple on the table" does not automatically 'grow' an adjective when the apple is left on the table for several weeks.) We advance our self-transforming efforts towards personal excellence when we remember that with the plans we make, our definitions, descriptions, decisions, opinions, ideas, theories, feelings, beliefs, stories we tell, etc., we have left out a great deal (principle of non-allness) of what's going on, what went on, and possible future developments. We get clues to how we are being, and we can learn a great deal about ourselves and what we might have to change, through recognizing that "Whatever we think, say, imagine, etc. about anyone or anything, we are also saying somethings about ourselves…this includes our current range of our thinking, our beliefs, values, standards, expectations, interests, and so on." We enhance our self-transforming efforts and expand our horizons, the more we know about and understand ourselves – including our biases and prejudices. (Read "Lonergan's "Chapters on Commonsense" in his "Insight".) (See "Developing A Self A General Semantics Way" at <miltondawes.com>)

In pursuing the ideal of personal excellence in a world, where as far as we know "everything is in relationships", we are better off thinking of "changes" rather than 'change'. We do not change just one thing without disturbing or changing other things to some degree: "Changes brings changes…and sometimes unexpected and undesired changes".   "We see-relate-treat ourselves and others, and respond to situations following our personal values, standards, expectations, and beliefs (conscious or non-conscious): so in changing the ways we think, talk about, and define things, situations, others and ourselves, we will unavoidably change the ways we interact with others. In changing our own rhythms we will jar others' usual expectations. Since humans and other living systems, for their survival, and structural-operational integrity are generally self-protecting and self-maintaining, they will work to preserve their structural-operational integrity when challenged by "non-systematic" (unexpected, irregular, surprising) changes: Disturbing others' rhythms will trigger a variety of responses…some not necessarily supportive: O*ur behavioral* changes might be resented when others feel compelled to make their own inconvenient or uncomfortable adjustments. External unsupportive responses from others and our own internally generated resistance to changes can present us with major challenges in pursuing the ideal of personal excellence through self-transformation.

Among the biggest blocks in our self-transforming adventures are our own words – the ways we usually think and talk. Changing our language habits could be the most challenging aspect of our self-transforming efforts…So it suits us to recognize the power of words: Words will use us--if we do not attend to our ways with words. Words trigger our creative impulses, and influence the choices we make. We use words to validate our ways of going about things. With words we reinforce, re-evaluate, or hang on to our cherished beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, biases, and assumptions. Our species, our societies, our institutions and ourselves, retard self-transforming efforts following a general lack of correspondence between the words we use and the actualities   we are talking about. As our ways of talking with ourselves and others have been established through years of cultural conditioning and institutionalized practices, they are not easily recognized, modified, or abandoned. In pursuing the ideal of personal excellence we can use general semantics principles as semantic supervisors, monitors, interveners, and critical semantic tools, to assist in our self-transforming efforts. We can learn to monitor and modify our well

established language habits, and learn to anticipate and reasonably adapt to unsupportive reactions to what might be seen by some as highly unusual or strange behavior.

In Pursuit of The Ideal of Personal Excellence Through Conscious Times-binding Self-transformations. Chapter 2

Pursuing the ideal of personal excellence can be both challenging and enjoyable as "a life-long experiment". Anyone pursuing this ideal will find in general semantics many semantic tools sh-e can apply to this personal project. General Semantics principles can be thought of as "nouns", "verbs" and "adverbs"…(not just 'jargons' as the term is usually understood) but technical names for how we can be conscious, actions we can take, and ways we can do things towards getting more satisfying results. These principles are not just words to write and talk about. All general semantics principles can be thought of as "ways each one of us can direct our consciousness to modify its activities towards higher levels of correspondence with outer realities". We can use general semantics tools to help us anticipate and better manage the challenges we will face in pursuing the ideal of self-transformation and improving our approach to other activities or projects. (Read "Science And Sanity", Preface To The Third Edition".) A general semantics approach to "the pursuit of the ideal of personal excellence" involves "practicing "conscious times-binding-guided by "conscious times-binding ethics". "Conscious times-binding ethics" (a heuristic starting point) is based on conscious times-binding intelligence, and as such, is not absolute or final: It's an ethic that advances as our conscious times-binding intelligence develops towards "conscious times-binding excellence" (ctbe). "Ctbe" comes through developing skills in "using general semantics heuristic, self-directing, self-developing semantic tools as self-transforming paradigms."

The following are some general semantics principles naming actions we can take: "Times-binding"…a natural spontaneous action where we build on (not just copy) and improve the ideas, discoveries, inventions, etc., of others and ourselves, with each generation passing on to the next what they have learned. With "conscious times-binding"-guided by "conscious times-binding ethics" we recognize and improve our natural times-binding approaches; we times-bind on times-binding so as to minimize the harmful products and effects of natural times-binding. With natural times-binding we build better bombs. With conscious times-binding ethics, we explore the possibility of finding better ways of dealing with our personal, national and international problems and conflicts.

"We do "conscious abstracting" to develop "consciousness of abstracting"… We approach a situation with an awareness that whatever we 'do', we are abstracting–we are selecting-leaving   out-elaborating-diminishing, etc. (Lonergan's "Insight", page 355, offers this succinct expression on "abstracting": "…a direction of attention to some aspects of the given with a concomitant neglect of other aspects."). "Consciousness of abstracting": a general semantics master principle applicable to all g.s. principles as "abstractions", and an antidote to "identification: We are identifying if we are not conscious of abstracting. In identifying we forget that if there are two things, they cannot be identical (the same in all

respects) if they occupy different locations. In practicing consciousness of abstracting and applying a calculus approach (finely tuned awareness), we can catch ourselves in 'action' and be able to diminish our automatic identifying behaviors. "Identification" can be considered the root of most of our personal, social, national and international misunderstandings, problems, and conflicts: In identifying, we treat part of a structure-operation as the whole...We treat an individual as if they were the same as the tribe, profession, group, etc., sh-e happens to be a member of; we behave as if there was nothing more to a situation or person than what we have seen, experienced, understood, the meanings or values we have given, or what we 'know'. It's worth emphasizing: If we are not conscious of abstracting, we are identifying….Applying "asymmetric relationships" (an elaboration of "non-identity" in terms of "how things are different"), we remember that if "a" is bigger, faster, more informed, etc. than "b", "b" is necessarily smaller, slower, etc. than "a". We remember that it is sometimes easier to get into a situation that to get out. We remember that what's going on in our 'inner' world of images, ideas, thoughts, memories, feelings, etc., is not the same as what they are about in the 'outer' world (and sometimes might not be about the 'outer' world). We live in a world of asymmetric relationships…Mathematicians deal with "equalities", and "identities". But in the dynamic world of differences we know, no two things are equal, or identical (the same in all respects.

  Re "non-elementalism" and "organism-as-a whole-in environments": We think in terms of interrelationships and inclusiveness; we do not conceptually separate what is actually not separate. (e.g. thinking from feelings-our values and beliefs-from our behavior-our actions from re-actions and unavoidable so-called "unintended consequences". With "multi-meaning", and "multi-ordinality" we remember that words, things, etc. do not have meanings: We give our different meanings dependent on our usually unconscious individual contexts…a source of many conflicts.   (See "Webster's Collegiate 10th Ed., page 28a".) Re "dating": We acknowledge the importance of times…a foundation for the principles of "non-identity", "non-allness" and "consciousness of abstracting": what we 'know', understand, value, etc., here-now,   is not all that can be known, understood, etc. Re. "non-additivity": We recognize that more of a good thing is not necessarily better: rushing might not get us there earlier or faster; knowing more does not automatically make us more intelligent; training, working harder might not make us 'fitter' but might wear us down. "Heuristic, conscious times-binding approach": We acknowledge and value "non-allness", and being conscious of abstracting, we consciously, deliberately take an experimental-let's see what happens approach to learn from, to learn more, and improve our 'doings'. We treat our ideas, opinions, things we do, etc. as behavioral 'drafts', times-binding starting points to be developed in the light of more accurate information and refined evaluations.

In working at self-transformation, we cannot expect significant changes if we hang on to unreflective, unanalyzed old ways of thinking, imagining, and talking with ourselves. As 'The progress of science and technologies is due to scientific methods and linguistic revisions', so progress in self-transformation also requires us to be engaged in linguistic revisions. (See "Science And Sanity", 5th. ed, page xciii) And since, as mentioned before, our words influence the ways we go about doing things: To advance in conscious times-binding excellence requires us to train ourselves to use the new general semantics,

mathematics and scientific terms we learn. **If we ignore structural differences and translate them into our old ways of thinking and talking about things, we are likely to continue to think, talk, and behave in the old ways with not much self-transformation or advancement in pursuing the ideal towards personal excellence.** (See "Science and Sanity", 5th. ed, page xciii) and pages, 26, 33, 46, 64, 130)

For more on general semantics principles as self-development and self-transforming tools: Read Martin Levinson's "Sensible Thinking for Turbulent Times" and "Practical Fairy Tales for Everyday Living". Read Bruce Kodish's "Korzybski: A Biography", Email: Extensional Publ@aol.com. Read chapters on "Commonsense.." page 173-244, in Bernard Lonergan S.J.'s "Insight. A Study of Human Understanding", Third Edition. Visit <miltondawes.com>…Then tackle Korzybski's "Science and Sanity". Books are available from the "Institute of General Semantics". (Lonergan's "Insight" available from "Toronto University Press".)

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