

WHAT I BELIEVE

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## APPENDIX VI

### WHAT I BELIEVE

I AM deeply honored to participate in the Symposium, *The Faith I Live By*, compiled and edited by Krishna M. Talgeri, and to contribute this paper particularly written for the contemplative audience of Indian readers.\* This is the first opportunity I have had to write a 'credo', where I do not need to go into theoretical explanations.

It happens that I come from an old family of agriculturists, mathematicians, soldiers, jurists, and engineers, etc. When I was five years old my father, an engineer, gave me the feel of the world's most important scientific discoveries of the nineteenth century, which prepared the groundwork for the scientific achievements of the twentieth century and remain fundamentally valid today. The *feel* of the differential calculus, as well as non-euclidean and four-dimensional geometries, which he conveyed to me at that time shaped the future interests and orientations of my life, and became the foundation of my whole work.

My observations and theoretical studies of life and mathematics, mathematical foundations, many branches of sciences,

\* This was originally written in 1948 in response to an invitation from Mr. Krishna Mangesh Talgeri, M.A. of 26, Atul Grove, New Delhi, India, to contribute to a symposium entitled, *The Faith I Live By*. It is to be published soon, and includes such international contributors as Gandhi, Nehru, Montessori, John H. Holmes, Radhakrishnan and others. I admit that without Mr. Talgeri's invitation, and the most valuable assistance of Miss Charlotte Schuchardt, which I wish to gratefully acknowledge, I would never have undertaken the difficult task of formulating such a condensed summary of life studies and experiences which any 'credo' would require.

also history, history of cultures, anthropology, 'philosophy', 'psychology', 'logic', comparative religions, etc., convinced me that:

1) Human evaluations with reference to themselves were mythological or zoological, or a combination of both; but,

2) Neither of these approaches could give us a workable base for understanding the living, uniquely human, extremely complex (deeply inter-related) reactions of Smith<sub>1</sub>, Smith<sub>2</sub>, etc., generalized in such high-order abstractions as 'mind', or 'intellect'; and,

3) A functional analysis, free from the old mythological and zoological assumptions, showed that humans, with the most highly developed nervous system, are uniquely characterized by the capacity of an individual or a generation to begin where the former left off. I called this essential capacity 'time-binding'. This can be accomplished only by a class of life which uses symbols as means for time-binding. Such a capacity depends on and necessitates 'intelligence', means of communication, etc. On this inherently human level of interdependence time-binding leads inevitably to feelings of responsibility, duty toward others and the future, and therefore to some type of ethics, morals, and similar social and/or socio-cultural reactions.

In the time-binding orientation I took those characteristics for granted as the empirical end-products of the functioning of the healthy human nervous system.

It was a fundamental error of the old evaluations to postulate 'human nature' as 'evil'. 'Human nature' depends to a large extent on the character of our creeds or rationalizations, etc., for these ultimately build up our socio-cultural and other environments.

I believe that our approaches to the problems of humans have been vitiated by primitive methods of evaluation which still often dominate our attitudes and outlooks. With a time-binding consciousness, our criteria of values, and so behaviour, are based on the study of human potentialities, not on statis-

tical averages on the level of *homo homini lupus* drawn from primitive and/or un-sane semantic (evaluational) reactions which are on record. Instead of studying elementalistic 'thinking', 'feeling', 'intellect', 'emotion', etc., a misleading approach implying the inherited archaic, *artificial*, divisions or schizophrenic splits of human characteristics which actually cannot be split, I *investigated functionally and therefore non-elementalistically the psycho-biological mechanisms of time-binding*—how they work.

By induction we pass from particulars to the general. However, this method is not reliable enough. We have to build a deductive system and verify empirically whether the general applies to the eventual random particular, which then would become the foundation for predictability. This, after all, is the main aim of all science. So far what we 'knew' about 'man' were statistical averages gathered inductively, and so our human world picture was rather sad, distorted, if not hopeless. The human understanding of time-binding as explained here establishes the deductive grounds for a full-fledged 'science of man', where both inductive and deductive methods are utilized. I believe that this very point of inductive and deductive scientific methods with regard to humans tangibly marks a sharp difference between the childhood and the manhood of humanity. In other words, we try to learn from the study of the individual the main characteristics of the *phylum* (the human race). Now with the time-binding theory, for the first time to my knowledge, having accumulated data by induction (statistical averages), we can start with what we have learned about the *phylum* and analyze the individual from the point of view of human potentialities *as a phylum*. I may be wrong, but perhaps this may become the turning of a page of human history.

I could not use, in my further studies, the older 'organism-as-a-whole' approaches, but had to base my analysis on the much more complex 'organism-as-a-whole-in-an-environment'. I had to include neuro-linguistic and neuro-semantic (evalua-

tional) environments as environments, and also had to consider geographic, physico-chemical, economic, political, ecological, socio-cultural, etc., conditions as factors which mould human personalities, and so even group behaviour. This statement is entirely general, and applies to highly civilized people as well as the most primitive.

Common sense and ordinary observations convinced me that the average, so-called 'normal person' is so extremely complex as to practically evade an over-all analysis. So I had to concentrate on the study of two extremes of human psychological reactions: a) reactions at their best, because of their exceptional predictability, as in mathematics, the foundations of mathematics, mathematical physics, exact sciences, etc., which exhibit the deepest kind of strictly human psychological reactions, and b) reactions at their worst, as exemplified by psychiatric cases. In these investigations I discovered that physico-mathematical methods have application to our daily life on all levels, linking science with problems of sanity, in the sense of adjustment to 'facts' and 'reality'.

I found that human reactions within these two limits do not differ in some objectified 'kind', but only in psycho-biological 'degrees', and that the 'normal' person hovers somewhere in between the two extremes. Nobody is as 'insane' as the composite picture a textbook of psychiatry would give us, and nobody is as sane as that which a textbook of sanity would give, the author included. The mechanisms of time-binding are exhibited in most humans except those with severe psycho-biological illnesses. However, some *inaccessible* dogmatists in power, particularly dictators of every kind, have blocked this capacity considerably. Clearly police states of secrecy, withholding from the people knowledge of, and from, the world, or twisting that knowledge to suit their purposes, 'iron curtains', etc., must be classified as saboteurs among time-binders, and certainly not a socio-cultural asset to the evolution of humanity.

Linguistic and grammatical structures also have prevented

our understanding of human reactions. For instance, we used and still use a terminology of 'objective' and 'subjective', both extremely confusing, as the so-called 'objective' must be considered a construct made by our nervous system, and what we call 'subjective' may also be considered 'objective' for the same reasons.

My analysis showed that happenings in the world outside our skins, and also such organismal psycho-logical reactions inside our skins as those we label 'feelings', 'thinking', 'emotions', 'love', 'hate', 'happiness', 'unhappiness', 'anger', 'fear', 'resentment', 'pain', 'pleasure', etc., occur only on the *non-verbal*, or what I call *silent levels*. Our speaking occurs on the verbal levels, and we can speak *about*, but not *on*, the silent or un-speakable levels. This sharp, and inherently natural, yet thoroughly unorthodox differentiation between verbal and non-verbal levels automatically eliminates the useless metaphysical verbal bickerings of millenniums about 'the nature of things', 'human nature', etc. For many metaphysical verbal futile arguments, such as solipsism, or 'the unknowable', have been the result of the identifications of verbal levels with the silent levels of happenings, 'feelings', etc., that the words are merely supposed to represent, never being the 'reality' behind them.

Such psycho-logical manifestations as those mentioned above can be dealt with in a unified terminology of *evaluation*, with the result that an empirical general theory of values, or general semantics, becomes possible, and, with its roots in the methods of exact sciences, this can become the foundation of a *science of man*. For through the study of exact sciences we can discover factors of sanity. Different philosophical trends as found in disciplines such as Nominalism, Realism, Phenomenalism, Significs, Semiotic, Logical Positivism, etc., also become unified by a methodology, with internationally applicable techniques, which I call 'non-aristotelian', as it includes, yet goes beyond and brings *up to date*, the aims and formulations of Aristotle.

Whatever we may *say* something is, obviously *is not* the 'something' on the silent levels. Indeed, as Wittgenstein wrote, 'What can be shown, cannot be said.' In my experience I found that it is practically impossible to convey the differentiation of silent (un-speakable) levels from the verbal without having the reader or the hearer pinch with one hand the finger of the other hand. He would then realize organismally that the first-order psycho-logical direct experiences are not verbal. The simplicity of this statement is misleading, unless we become aware of its implications, as in our living reactions most of us identify in value the two entirely *different* levels, with often disastrous consequences. Note the sadness of the beautiful passage of Eddington on page 11. He seems to be unhappy that the silent levels can never be the verbal levels. Is this not an example of unjustified 'maximum expectation' ?

I firmly believe that the *consciousness of the differences between these levels of abstractions*; i.e., the silent and the verbal levels, is the key and perhaps the first step for the solution of human problems. This belief is based on my own observations, and studies of the endless observations of other investigators.

There is a tremendous difference between 'thinking' in verbal terms, and 'contemplating', inwardly silent, on non-verbal levels, and then searching for the proper structure of language to fit the supposedly discovered structure of the silent processes that modern science tries to find. If we 'think' *verbally*, we act as biased observers and project onto the silent levels the structure of the language we use, and so remain in our rut of old orientations, making keen, unbiased, observations and creative work well-nigh impossible. In contrast, when we 'think' without words, or in pictures (which involve structure and therefore relations), we may discover new aspects and relations on silent levels, and so may produce important theoretical results in the general search for a similarity of structure between the two levels, silent and verbal. Practically all important advances are made that way.

So far the only possible link between the two levels is found in terms of relations, which apply equally to both non-verbal and verbal levels, such as 'order' (serial, linear, cyclic, spiral, etc.), 'between-ness', 'space-time', 'equality' or 'inequality', 'before', 'after', 'more than', 'less than', etc. *Relations, as factors of structure, give the sole content of all human knowledge.*

It has been said that 'to know anything we have to know everything'. Unfortunately it is true, but expressed *in the above form* 'knowledge' would be impossible. Mathematicians solved this impasse simply and effectively. They introduced postulational methods, thus *limiting* the 'everything', out of which the *limited* 'anything' follows.

The identification (confusion) of verbal with silent levels leads automatically to the asking of indefinitely long arrays of verbal 'why's', *as if* the verbal levels could ever possibly cover all the factors and chains of antecedents of the silent levels, or ever *'be'* the silent levels. This is why in science we limit our 'why' to the data at hand, thus avoiding the unlimited metaphysical questioning without data, to which there cannot be an answer. Mathematicians solved these inherent dilemmas by stating explicitly their undefined terms in their postulational systems, terms which label nothing but occurrences on the silent levels. Metaphysicians of many kinds or many creeds since time immemorial tried to solve the same perplexities by postulating different 'prime movers' or 'final causes', beyond which the further 'why' is ruled out as leading to the logically 'verboden' 'infinite regress'. Originally religions were polytheistic. Later, in the attempt for unification, perhaps to strengthen the power of the priesthood, and also because of the increasing ability of humans to make generalizations, monotheisms were invented, which have led to the most cruel religious wars. Different rulers, dictators, 'fuehrers', etc., have followed similiar psycho-logical patterns with historically known destructive or constructive results. The above statements are limited by the historical contexts.

In our human evolutionary development the structures of religions and sciences, because all man-made, do not differ psycho-logically. They all depend on fundamental assumptions, hypotheses, etc., from which we try to build some understanding of, and/or rapport with, this world, ourselves included. Some of these involve archaic and false-to-fact assumptions, etc., others, such as sciences, involve modern, potentially verifiable, assumptions and hypotheses. In brief, any religion may be considered 'primitive science' to satisfy human *unconscious* organismal longings; and modern science may be considered 'up-to-date religion', to satisfy *consciously* the same human feelings. If we are supposed not to separate elementalistically 'emotion' and 'intellect', we have to take into consideration organismal longings spread over continents for millenniums, which find their proper expression according to the date of the specific human developments, at a date. Religions and sciences are both expressions of our human search for security, and so predictability, for solace, guidance, feelings of 'belonging', etc., culminating in self-realization through a general 'consciousness of abstracting', the main aim of my work.

The progress of modern science, *including the new science of man as a time-binder*, has been due uniquely to the freedom of scientists to revise their *fundamental assumptions*, terminologies, undefined terms, which involve hidden assumptions, etc., underlying our reflections, a freedom prohibited in 'primitive sciences' and also in dictatorships, past and present.

As to the space-time problem of the 'beginning and the end of the world', I have 'solved' it for myself effectively by the conviction that we are not yet evolved enough and so mature enough as humans to be able to understand such problems *at this date*. In scientific practice, however, I would go on, in search for structure, asking 'why' under consciously *limited* conditions. Probably in the future this problem will be shown to be no problem, and the solution will be found in the disappearance of the problem. By now science has already solved

many dilemmas which at first seemed insoluble, as exemplified, for instance, in the new quantum mechanics.

Another important point which clarifies the problem of the 'unknowable', religions, etc., is that we humans have a capacity for *inferential knowledge*, which is not based on sense data, but on inferences from observed happenings. All modern sciences on the submicroscopic, electro-colloidal, etc., levels are of this 'as if' character. In fact, inferential knowledge today leads to testing in unexpected fields, and so is very creative. Epistemologically the fundamental theories must develop in converging lines of investigation, and if they do not converge it is an indication that there are flaws in the theories, and they are revised. Inferential knowledge today in science is much more reliable than sense data, which often deceive us. In religions we also translate the *still unknown* into inferentially 'known', which become creeds, but based on primitive or prescientific assumptions. The most primitive religion in which the savage believes, or the more generalized and more organized religions in which the 'man in the street' believes, represent non-elementalistically his *inferential* 'knowledge', which involves his 'feelings', wishes, desires, needs, fears, and what not, as combined inseparably in living reactions with his 'intellect'.

I firmly believe that the still prevailing archaic, split, schizophrenic orientations about ourselves, which without a modern science of man are practically impossible to avoid, are an extremely hampering influence to any understanding of the potentialities of 'human nature'. These outlooks, inherited from the 'childhood of humanity' and perpetuated linguistically, keep our human reactions and so our cultures on unnecessarily low levels, from which we try to extricate ourselves through violence, murder, rioting, and in larger expressions of mass sufferings, through revolutions and wars. This is in sharp contrast to the peaceful progress we have in science, where we are free to analyze our basic assumptions, and where we use a language of appropriate structure.

I firmly believe that an adequate structure of language is fundamental for human adjustment to the silent levels of happenings, 'feelings', etc. Thus, the non-elementalistic Einstein-Minkowski *space-time*, instead of the split, elementalistic newtonian 'space' and 'time', revolutionized physics. The non-elementalistic *psycho-biology* of Adolf Meyer, instead of 'psychology' and 'biology', marks the sharp difference between humans and animals. Non-elementalistic *psycho-somatic* considerations, instead of the older 'psyche' and 'soma', revolutionized the whole of medicine and rescued it from being merely glorified veterinary science. Etc., etc. I give these specific examples to indicate the general practical value of structural linguistic innovations which express and convey to others our new structural outlooks.

I am deeply convinced by theoretical considerations and empirical data that the new (historically the first to my knowledge) formulation of time-binding throws enormous light on our understanding of 'human nature', and will help to formulate new perspectives for the future of time-binders. This new functional definition of humans as time-binders, not mere 'space-binders', carries very far-reaching scientific, psycho-logical, moral and ethical beneficial consequences, which often remain lasting, today verified in many thousands of instances. It explains also how we humans, and humans alone, were able to produce sciences and civilizations, making us by necessity *interdependent*, and the builders of our own destinies.

All through history man has been groping to find his place in the hierarchy of life, to discover, so to say, his rôle in the 'nature of things'. To this end he must first discover himself and his 'essential nature', before he can fully realize himself—then perhaps our civilizations will pass by peaceful evolutions from their childhood to the manhood of humanity.

It is a source of deep satisfaction to me that similar notions about the circularity and self-reflexiveness of human knowledge are taking root in our orientations as expressed by other

writers. In 1942 in Monograph III published by the Institute of General Semantics, in my foreword with M. Kendig, we wrote:

'It should be noticed that in human life self-reflexiveness has even "material" implications, which introduce serious difficulties. Professor Cassius J. Keyser expresses this very aptly: "It is obvious, once the fact is pointed out, that the character of human history, the character of human conduct, and the character of all our human institutions depend both upon what man *is* and in equal or greater measure upon what we humans *think* man is." This is profoundly true.

'Professor Arthur S. Eddington describes the same problem in these words: "And yet, in regard to the nature of things, this knowledge is only an empty shell—a form of symbols. It is knowledge of structural form, and not knowledge of content. All through the physical world runs that unknown content, which must surely be the stuff of our consciousness. Here is a hint of aspects deep within the world of physics, and yet unattainable by the methods of physics. And, moreover, we have found that where science has progressed the farthest, the mind has but regained from nature that which the mind has put into nature.

"We have found a strange foot-print on the shores of the unknown. We have devised profound theories, one after another, to account for its origin. At last, we have succeeded in reconstructing the creature that made the foot-print. And Lo! it is our own."

'Dr. Alexis Carrel formulated the same difficulty differently, but just as aptly: "To progress again man must remake himself. And he cannot remake himself without suffering. For he is both the marble and the sculptor."

Those self-reflexive and circular mechanisms are *the uniquely human types of reaction* which made our human achievements possible. With the new formulations, the consciousness of this special capacity with its profound implications has become generally teachable on all levels, that of uneducated people and children included, and this consciousness may now mark a new period in our evolution.

History, anthropology, and general semantics establish firmly that the enormous majority of humanity so far lived

and live on the animal biological level of mere subsistence, without the opportunity to realize their potentialities. For time-binders are not merely biological organisms, but psychobiological, and this introduces incredible complexities, which so far we did not know how to handle. The old notions about 'man' have hitherto led to a generally sick and bewildered society. We cannot be psycho-logical isolationists and try to be constructive time-binders, or we are bound to be bogged down in an asocial morass of conflicts.

The theory of time-binding and extensional methods of general semantics have been tested in many scientific, educational and managerial fields. Even on the battlefields of World War II they were applied by American physicians, officers and men in thousands of cases of 'battle fatigue', with telling results. Today the new methods are taught in many schools and universities, and there are study groups on all continents.

To conclude, I may quote from my new preface to the third edition of *Science and Sanity*: 'We need not blind ourselves with the old dogma that "human nature cannot be changed", for we find that it *can be changed* [if we know how]. We must begin to realize our potentialities as humans, then we may approach the future with some hope. We may feel with Galileo, as he stamped his foot on the ground after recanting the Copernican theory before the Holy Inquisition, "*Eppur si muove!*" The evolution of our human development may be retarded, but it cannot be stopped.'

Alfred Korzybski

Lakeville, Connecticut, U. S. A.

April 1949

*Bibliographical Note*

The time-binding theory was first propounded in my *Manhood of Humanity: The Science and Art of Human Engineering*, E. P. Dutton, New York, 1921, second edition, with additions, to be published in 1949 by International Non-aristotelian Library Publishing Company, Institute of General Semantics, Distributors. It was further elaborated in my 'Fate and Freedom', *Mathematics Teacher*, May 1923, reprinted in *The Language of Wisdom and Folly* by Irving J. Lee, Harper, New York, 1949, 'The Brotherhood of Doctrines', *The Builder*, April 1924, in my papers read before the International Mathematical Congress in Toronto in 1924, before the Washington Society for Nervous and Mental Diseases in 1925, and before the Washington Psychopathic Society in 1926, when I was studying at St. Elizabeth's Psychiatric Hospital in Washington, D.C. It culminated, after extensive studies of the mechanisms of time-binding, in *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-aristotelian Systems and General Semantics*, The International Non-aristotelian Library Publishing Company, first published in 1933, second edition 1941, third edition 1948, distributed by the Institute of General Semantics. In this book, with a physico-mathematical approach, I introduced for the first time the new appropriate scientific methodology for the time-binding theory, which I called 'extensional method', with principles of essential simplicity.

A.K.

