Synthesizing Oneself, Society and Cosmos

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Synthesizing Oneself, Society and Cosmos

Published by

Dodd Memorial Library

Stuart C Dodd Institute for Social Innovation

Second Edition

Draft 2

September 2009

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Overview of Book

Near the end of his career, Stuart C Dodd taught a college course that combined his theories on the individual, society and the cosmos. He was trying to show how the basic themes of his work could be shown to extend from the individual to the universe. He also wanted to give his students practical tools with which to deal with life. This collection of papers was brought together by Dodd as a reading list for the course.

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SD:70-32
EpiDoc 193
May 12, 1970

Synthesizing: Oneself-In-Society-And-Cosmos

A paper for the General Systems Education
Conference at San Jose, June 11-13, 1970
By
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This paper contributes to all the three themes of this conference. It presents:

1. Curriculum concepts *for* general systems education in college,
2. A report on expanding *a* course *for any* university upper classmen, and
3. Proposals for future *conferences* and professional development programs *in* general systems education.
4.

This paper outlines an existing course to be enlarged next fall entitled: "Synthesizing: Oneself-in-Society-and-Cosmos--via applying scientific systemed semantics." The course *aims* to help countervail the ever-shrinking importance of individual persons in ever-enlarging social systems that grow in size and complexity.

This paper is presented in a series of eight exhibits or samples of the working documents in the course. These help develop an operational and transactive definition of synthesizing--the theme of the course--in telling who does what with whom for what near or far ends, when and where, and with what materials, symbolic devices and other circumstancing conditions and in telling in a time sequence or schedule what kinds and amounts of the above, in what relations and subsystems are to be used.

Exhibit #1 (on yellow paper) here presents the one-page Prospectus of my' course on synthesizing, called Sociology 481 and GIS 481 (General Interdisciplinary Studies). This prospectus was sent, with further handouts available, to all 500 advisers and relevant mailing list in this university of 100 departments and 34,000 students.

Exhibit #2 (on green paper) here presents the seven-page Prospectus telling more fully of the need, the purposes, and the plan of the one quarter course, open to any upperclassman or graduate student in the university.

Exhibit #3 (on blue paper) presents *a* one page matrix or Time Schedule which cross-classifies, as *a* set product, the six stages or successive themes (which are studied in the ten weeks of the course) against the seven verbal techniques used to maximize learning. The six themes are: (1) the aims of the course, (2) the synthesis of scientific methods when applied thereto, (3) synthesizing oneself, (4) synthesizing society, (5) synthesizing the cosmos, and (6) synthesizing the foregoing themes.

The verbal techniques of teaching and learning include topics and questions to study, lectures and readings, discussions, experiments and exercises or weekly papers to be written and exhibits as sampled herewith.

Exhibit #4, entitled "Things Liked Most," states in 12 stanzas of verse of exactly 400 words, 200 items (between upper dots) of desiderata or universal preferences. These 200 valued items cover the range of institutions in any culture *as a* baseline from which to measure deviations. By ranking them and revising them to include all the items that are more valued by the rater, each student rater is helped step by step to inventory and appraise his own set of values organized as his philosophy of life. He can emerge from this exercise with an explicit

recorded system of values that, by his own current decisions, catalogues the things he likes most in life and wants most to devote his life to attaining.

Exhibit #5 shows "The ACT/S MATRIX FOR MACRO-SOCIOLOGY--a model systematizing planned transacts-in-context." This matrix serves as one of the devices used in this course to help each student form his own well ordered and full list of items, written out in weekly papers, that specify, extensionally and operationally, what he increasingly sees *as* desirable versus actual for his community, nation, and world of the next fifty years of his probable lifetime. This hopefully helps to reorient the student as *a* more responsible planner of mankind's future evolving and his own participation in that process. It confronts each student with a series of simple alternatives such that, bit by bit of decision, he can build social goals for society and subgoals or programs thereto in most demonstrably effective cooperation with his fellow citizens. Each student studies and decides what, for himself and for mankind, seems desired most widely, deeply and durably.

Exhibit #6 graphs the Epicosm Model for the unitary activity of the cosmos as *a* reiterantly ordered hierarchy of random acts, or bits of decision, made on the vast average with e^{q}ual opportunity for alternative outcomes. The student is shown a vision that is empirically testable with research of how all things in the universe, whether matter or life, man or mentation, can be viewed as interacting with its own kind in a context of all else and so deciding and creating what will exist next. This naturalistic yet idealistic view can help each student to synthesize science and religion, each at his best. He is helped in comparing for himself, point for point, the cosmologies of physicists, of religious mystics like de Chardin, and their synthesis in the extensional and operational "poetry of matrices" offered by the Epicosm modeling.

Exhibit #7 restates the Epicosm -model in prose, spelling out the hypothesized reiterant system that tries to explain and predict the whole activity of the cosmos at all its levels so as to include and integrate and improve upon man's current views of the Whole and its Parts.

Exhibit #8 offers for study four semantic versions (i.e. word pictures in formulas) to symbolize the cosmos with increasing exactness. They offer a chain equation of four links which represent the whole cosmos as a unit that can be analyzed and resynthesized in many alternative but mutually consistent and intertranslatable ways.

Further exhibits and course materials and techniques are in preparation or will be creatively developed during the course.

Exhibit #9 will develop *an* annotated suggestive bibliography supplementing the readings in common that are required of all students.

Exhibits #10 and #11 might show the scales used and the Abstract of our controlled experiments on consensus-forming factors. These develop one way (among many) whereby individual decisions can be synthesized into group decisions and national actions.

Exhibit #12 might list the most effective questions (still under development) that stimulate self-analysis and self-synthesis and initiate similar analysis-synthesis of society and the cosmos in the ten weekly papers that will be written by every student.

Exhibit #13 might review the major concepts developed and used in the course--and called for by this conference in its papers on general systems education. Among these would be concepts:

a. for extensional analysis: "sets and elements, subsets, their sums, products," etc.;
b. for operational analysis: the eight transfactors of every transaction or action-in-relevant context for scientific methods ("describing, explaining, predicting and controlling"; "observing, measuring, correlating and systematizing", etc.); for personal analysis: the three modes and their measurement in "likings-felt, likenesses-known, likelihoods of doing," all in relation to "things-liked" (called

"values");

c. for social analysis: the 12 institutions of any culture, the major social processes and roles in organizing society, etc.;
d. for cosmic analysis: actants and reiteratings, cohort evolution, stochastic processes, etc.

Finally, Exhibit #14 might set forth the motivations we intend to generate and build up in this pass-fail course on "Synthesizing: Oneself, Society and Cosmos." The student's initial interest in choosing the course and ambitions to develop his own potentials is expected to be the main motivation. Interaction with knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers and with like-interested fellow students seems likely to motivate each student increasingly as the course goes on. The stimulating opportunities with materials and techniques, with inviting vistas and satisfying outcomes, should further motivate student effort towards greater self-fulfillment.