

## 12.1 MEANING OF HAPPINESS

Question: What is the end-goal of human life?

Answer: Happiness

### What is Happiness?

The top three sources of are:

1. Relationships – with family and friends
2. Work – satisfaction and meaningful work
3. Leisure – engaging and enjoying one’s interests, hobbies and passions.



Sunrise in Bantayan Island.

This seems to be common sense. But the reality is far from common. We seem to be trapped in the physical, a world everything is measured by one’s material possessions, with the symbol of it all being that piece of paper called ‘money’. We are driven by a need to acquire more, consume more, acquire more, consume more, *ad libitum* (at one’s pleasure). We buy and buy things, derive fleeting pleasure, then shortly, tire and then throw it away. That is what consumption is – waste.

A man was riding a horse in full speed. He does not see he flowers and the trees on the oadside, not even his friends. At a bend, his horse skids and he is thrown off. Screaming in pain with a broken bone, one of his friends come his aid and asks the rider, “Why were you so in a hurry? Where are you going?” The rider answers, “I don’t know. Ask the horse.” \_\_ ( \_\_ this is an anecdote I read somewhere. Need to find source.)

Most of us really just want a simple life. But many are tied up in debt for their homes, cars, appliances, gadgets, and other 'stuff'. Suddenly we realize that much of these stuff that we have is of little or of no value in the pursuit of genuine happiness – relationships, meaningful work, and leisure.

### Goal of Governance

The end goal of human governance, therefore, must be to advance the three sources of genuine happiness. But what does the world of economics tell us? It says that in the material world, measurement of happiness is by this standard called 'GDP' -- the total goods and services measured in terms of money.

But GDP is a flawed standard of measuring progress and well-being. Someone said it so well – that measures everything, “except that which makes (our lives) worthwhile.”<sup>i</sup>

Remember what we said about changing words changing meanings and mindsets? From now on, let us change the meaning of GDP to Great Disaster for the Planet (and People).

“Too much and for too long, we seemed to have surrendered personal excellence and community values in the mere accumulation of material things. Our Gross National Product, now, is over \$800 billion dollars a year, but that Gross National Product - if we judge the United States of America by that - that Gross National Product counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage.

It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for the people who break them. It counts the destruction of the redwood and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl.

It counts napalm and counts nuclear warheads and armored cars for the police to fight the riots in our cities. It counts Whitman's rifle and Speck's knife, and the television programs which glorify violence in order to sell toys to our children.

Yet the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials.

It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, it measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.”

(Put in end note, source: Robert Kennedy, 1968)

In its place, let us use the term “Common Good” (CG) -- the greatest good for the greatest number .... for the longest time.”<sup>ii</sup>

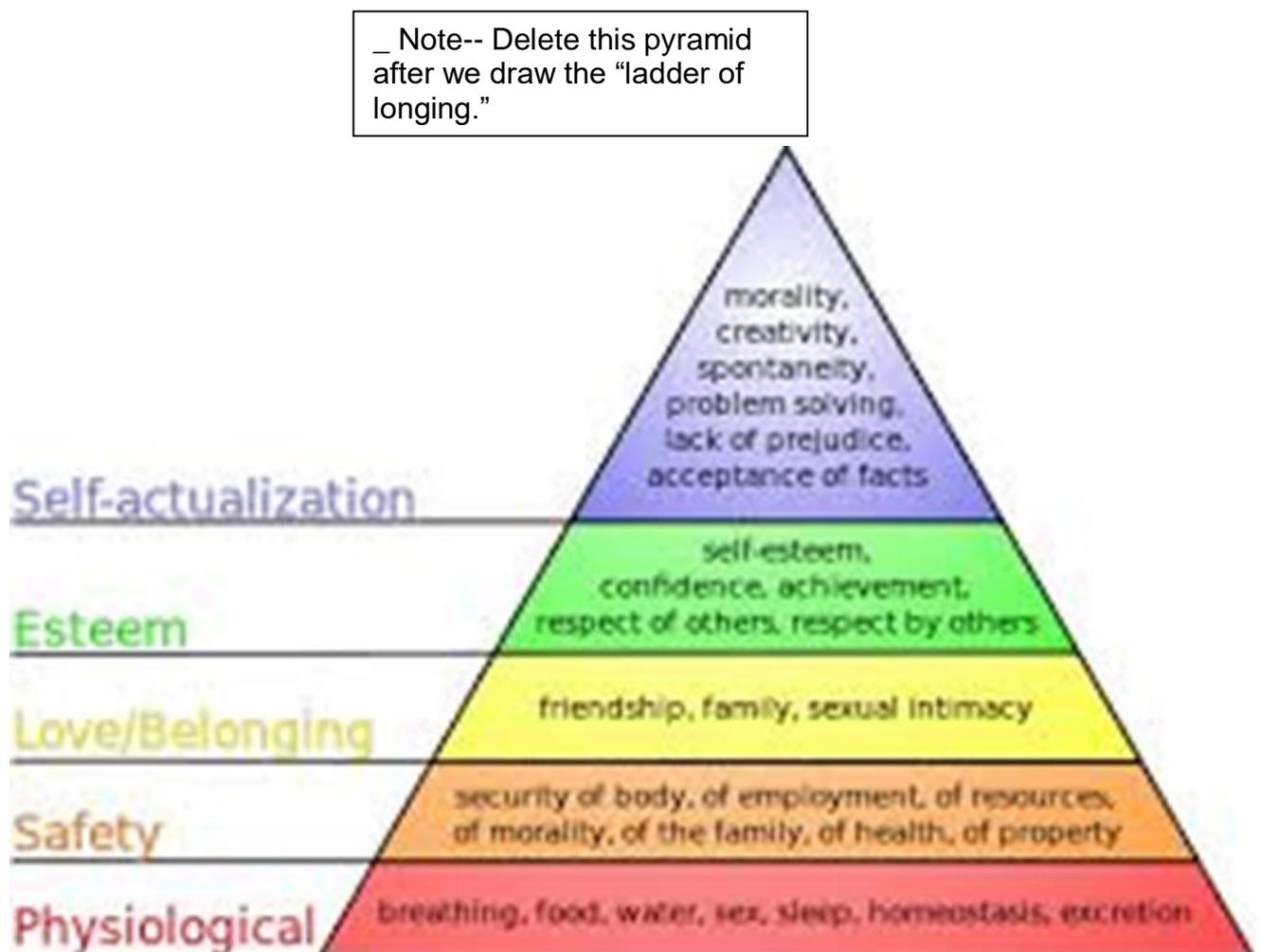
With this shift of measurement from GDP to CG -- how can humans manage themselves to face their problems of poverty, crime, social alienation, inequality and

injustice, land, air, and water pollution, psychological depression, and the array of physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual maladies that plague the world today?

Good question. The clue to the answer is not in politics, in governance, in economics, or in law. It lies hidden in human philosophy and psychology, i.e., how we see ourselves in this world, and how our feelings and thinking affect our behavior.

To guide our path to good governance, we must remember that we are a species of needs. Our needs range from the physical to the emotional, then to the intellectual, and all the way to the spiritual dimensions of being human.

We can call it the Pyramid of Need, or the Ladder of Longing. <sup>iii</sup>



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<sup>i</sup> Robert Kennedy, speech at the University of Kansas, March 18, 1968.

<sup>ii</sup> "Common good" -- quote from Clifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground*. Pinchot, a former governor of Pennsylvania, was the founding Chief of the US Forest Service.

<sup>iii</sup> This pyramid of need, or 'ladder of longing' is patterned after the work of the 19<sup>th</sup> century psychologist Abraham Maslow