META-REFLECTIONS

2007

Over the years I had posted a great many emails on the international egroup for Neuro-Semantics. Then in late 2006 I decided that I would do so with more regularity and in a more systematic way. That lead to the series of posts to *Neurons* (the egroup) that I decided to call — *Meta Reflections.* What follows is a series of weekly posts that I have collected here and put into a larger format. The series here began in late 2006 and continued through 2007.

Many of these have to do with the field of NLP and many more the ongoing development of Neuro-Semantics as an ever-growing and developing field that takes NLP to a higher level ethically and professionally. So there are some articles that are critiques of the field of NLP. Other articles are on Self-Actualization as a psychology and as the center of Neuro-Semantics. In 2007 there were some posts and critiques on "The Secret" and on the whole idea of attraction. May you be challenged and enriched and inspired by these posts.

To your highest and best
L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.

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UP YOUR META

I'm not sure who first introduced the term *meta* into English as it is now used, but from my research I would guess that it was either Gregory Bateson or Abraham Maslow. They were certainly the two individuals who popularized the term in the fields of anthropology, psychology, and linguistics from which it was then adopted in Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Brief Psychotherapy, Solution Focus Therapy, and Neuro-Semantics.

What does *meta* mean? Sometimes after a glass of wine I will playfully answer, "I don't know, it's *over* my head!" Or, "I don't know, it's *above* me!" Or, possibly, "I'm not sure that I'm *up* to defining it yet."

But if you catch me during the day, I'll say that the term from Greek and literally means "above, beyond, about, over." When we put one experience at a *meta-level* to another and create a *meta-relationship,* the *meta* experience is above and beyond the referent experience: meta-communicating is communicating *about* our communications, meta-thinking is thinking *about* our thinking, meta-feeling is feeling about our feelings, a meta-analysis is an analysis *regarding* an analysis.

Because of this, we can use the term *meta* to refer to one thing at a *higher* level to another thing. Metaphysics refers to the physics that are *beyond* the field of physics. So a meta-state refers to a higher level state, a state that is above and beyond the first state.

Now in NLP, there is a point of confusion about this. I think Richard Bandler initiated it and that various people have picked it up. It is the erroneous idea that *meta* means to dissociation. Have you heard of that one? Of course, that's pure non-sense. When you access *fear* about your fear, does that dissociate you from fear? Does that decrease your fear? Of course not! When you access an intense state of *love of curiosity,* does that reduce the curiosity or dissociate you? Of course not!

Yes we can access a state of "just observing" our love or fear or any other emotion, and then "just observe" that observing and access a gestalt experience of being less and less emotional and more and more objective. Yet even that is not "dissociation." That term, in psychiatry refers to an unhealthy state trigger by trauma plus lack of ego-strength, and occurs as a defensive maneuver that we use to avoid representing and feeling ourselves fully in our bodies. That's why I have argued for years that we ought to abandon the use of a psychiatric term ("dissociation") for a resourceful state like witnessing or observing another state.

The bottom line is that *meta* does not refer to dissociation. And the process of stepping back from our immediate experience to *rise up* in our minds and our emotions to set a higher frame about it does not create dissociation. Moving to a meta-position is what Bateson called the *meta-function* and t his refers to creating additional thoughts-and-feelings about previous thoughts-and-feelings whether those "thoughts-and-feelings" were beliefs, decisions, values, intentions, understandings, memories, imaginations, and so on. In the *meta-function* we layer, level upon level, additional thoughts-and-feelings about something.

Actually, there's no way to *not* do that. That's because it is simply the way our kind of human consciousness works. We call this special kind of awareness, *self-reflexive consciousness* which means that we have the ability to step back, in our mind, and notice and reflect on ourselves and on the products that we create as well as the processes that we use in such creations. Now some of the higher intelligent animals can do the same, at least a level or two. Yet that's it. Bateson's work with the dolphins indicated two or possibly three meta-levels.

Yet with us humans this stepping back to reflect upon ourselves, this "going meta" to the products and processes of our consciousness, this meta-stating of our experiences is an *infinite process*. It never ends. Whatever we think, whatever we feel, we can always step back to think about it, feel about it. Korzybski described this as "an infinite regress." He took that from the philosophers who for centuries that recognized this quality about human consciousness. In Neuro-Semantics, however, we call this *the infinite progress.* Why? Because it is this meta-process that allows us to continually progress. Practically, this means that *there is always another step; that we are never stuck!*

So given that we are forever rising up in our minds to create thoughts and feelings about thoughts and feelings, what does this moving up the meta-levels do? It creates the layers of our thinking or our meta-thoughts. And meta-thoughts are more "solid" and stable than the flow of thoughts-and-feelings through our minds. They are the kind of thoughts that we "hold in mind" and carry with us as our basic frameworks of understanding. We call these meta-thoughts by various terms: beliefs, understandings, knowledge, intentions, memories, imaginations, decisions, etc. In Meta-States we now have over 70 of these levels and using these we have meta-questions and the Matrix of our frames.

Going meta we draw conclusions, create abstract ideas called concepts, principles, premises, etc. and these become the *meanings* that govern how we read and interpret things. It is in *going meta* and "holding in mind" our frames (belief frames, value frames, understanding frames, etc.) that we generate the meanings and meaningfulness of our lives. And as we repeat these, the repetition transforms them into our habitual ways of perceiving and experiencing the world. This activates the part of our brain that translates our *meanings* into our physiology and hence *performances*.

Given that we are born without "instincts" and have to make sense of the world through the use of our self-reflective mind, we are inevitably meaning-makers. And it is this that makes the meta-levels of beliefs, values, intentions, etc. so important. We inevitably live in and from the *meta-levels* of our mind. This explains why the *quality* of our lives directly reflects the quality of our

beliefs, understandings, intentions, decisions, identity, etc. It explains why our "problems" are primarily problems with our frames and why the solution involves recognizing the constructs we've built and which are limiting, sabotaging, and sometimes even toxic.

So, how's your *meta-life*? How competent are you in rising up to make a meta-move that can frame and reframe your inner game so that you can enhance your outer game? In a word, that's what Neuro-Semantics is all about and why the term *meta* lies at the heart and soul of what we do. Ready to clear out meta-muddles and master your *meta-powers*? Then stay tuned for the series of Meta Reflections.

THE FUNCTION OF THE
META-JUNCTION

In the first Meta Reflection I defined *meta,* addressed the myth that it refers to dissociation, and briefly mentioned the *meta-function,* and our unique kind of consciousness. With that in mind, the key to understanding your mind and working with self-reflexive conscious is recognizing what the role of the meta-function and how to use it for taking charge of our brains in serve of our self-actualization.

Now the *meta-function* is one of the key concepts that Gregory Bateson introduced as he went about modeling various anthropological, sociological, and personal expertise. In modeling the complexity of communication, Bateson used *meta* to designate "about" and then presented what a hierarchic series of messages would look like.
> "Our hierarchic series will then consist of message, meta-message, meta-meta-message, and so on." (*Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, p. 248)

He used this to model change, change-of-change, first level change, second order change, etc. He used it to make explicit the structure of schizophrenia. Regarding the complexities of communication, he wrote that
> ". . . by noting that messages may be about (or 'meta' to) the relationship between messages of different levels. The smell of the experimental harness may tell the dog that the buzzer will mean meat powder. We will then say that the message of the harness is meta to the message of the buzzer. But in human relations another sort of complexity may be generated, e.g., messages may be emitted forbidding the subject to make the meta connection. . . .   The hierarchy of message and contexts thus becomes a complex branching structure." (248)

He wrote this in the context of working out his Levels of Learning model. In this he was looking at *the meta connection*. That is, the *connection* between the different levels. He was looking for how one message modifies another message. He called this the meta-relationship and spoke about the "infinite regress of such relations." (250)

All of that is pretty abstract, so let me illustrate. Let's start with a primary experience of your bodily energy, health, and fitness. What do you think about fitness? What immediately comes to mind when you consider exercise? What do you feel? Whatever your answer, your thoughts-and-feelings *about* health, fitness, and exercise *set your personal mental and emotional frames.*

Suppose your first thought is, "I know I should, but it's a lot of trouble to go to a gym, it takes a lot of time, plus it costs money that I could invest in other things." And suppose that the emotional feel of it is a sigh indicating a state of feeling bothered by it all. Then with that state, you have reflexively set an emotional frame of being bothered with a dash of "should-ing."

And just about the time you identify that this is your state *about* the state of exercising, you have yet another thought in the back of your mind about it, "When I have more time and money, I'll d it." Ah, yes, procrastination with good intentions *about* the bothered-should-ing state *about* exercising. That should reduce some of the negative energies and create a sense of relief from the first negative meta-stating as it lets you off the hook a bit.

But then your reflexivity kicks in again! "Am I just fooling myself or what? I don't have the energy or vitality I once had; I really should exercise. I just wish it wasn't such a bother." Now you've meta-stated or framed yourself with some reality testing, some realistic questioning *and* some wishing. So this sets the next level of your mental-emotional attitude to this frame of mind.

In each of these moves, and the others that will arise, jumping a level and layering more thoughts-and-feelings creates the relationship of one state upon another. This is the *meta-function* of your reflexivity. Your meta-jump functions as setting a frame. It functions as modifying and modulating what is embedded within it. Each time you jump another level, you reflexively apply understandings and meanings to what you are experiencing. This makes your consciousness more complex, more layered. In the Meta-States Model, I have called this *meta-stating*. In Frame Games (Winning the Inner Game) I have called this *framing, setting a frame,* and *creating your inner game.* These are but different ways of talking about the meta-function.

Here I have described each of these in a linear way, as if we have one thought, then another, and so on, but your mind and mine is much more dynamic than that. What seems to happen in actuality is that our thoughts-and-emotions go round and round simultaneously and almost instantaneously. In the meta-function you *circle* an experience like health and fitness as if each iteration of your reflexivity was a planet circling a sun or electronics circling an atom.

Consciousness is that dynamic. No wonder the resultant state is an energy field, an energy field that creates a magnetic pull for whatever you have created. The primary state included and transcended by the circling thoughts now interact so that it invests various energies into it. If you have taken the APG Meta-States training, then you have been introduced (at least briefly) to the 16 interfaces of state-upon-state. These speak about the junctions of the meta-functions, how various states interface with other states.

Another metaphor that I've been using recently is of an onion. When you meta-state using your reflexivity power, you put layer upon layer of meaning. You create a Meaning Onion. Sometimes this is great, sometimes it is not. Sometimes it creates genius, expertise, and excellence. Sometimes it creates dragons, demons, gremlins, pathology, and disease. In either case, if you want to get to the core of your experience, you have to unpeel the layers. In *The Ultimate Self-Actualization Workshop* you will experience an process for this kind of unpeeling.

Then you can get to the core of an experience.

As a therapist, getting to the core of a person's meaning onion allows you to see how the client has misused his or her reflexivity to turn their energies against self. As a coach or modeler, getting to the core of meaning empowers one to see the structure and processes of meta-stating genius and enables you to replicate it or enhance it with even more resources.

In either case, you are working with the meta-function of the relationship of one state upon another. This is the vertical structure of self-reflexive consciousness that creates a whole matrix of frames about things. And when you know that, you have a process for quickly getting to the heart of things where you can unleash new possibilities.

From: L. Michael Hall
Meta-Reflection #3
December 1, 2006

NEURO-SEMANTIC NLP

This year's NLP Conference this year in London was a tremendous success with 450 people attending the two-day event. Not only is that one of the few remaining NLP Conferences, it is certainly the largest. And it is primarily due to the faith and vision of one person, Jo Hogg. Here's a head's up for next year's conference, it will be at Regis College again, November 25-27 2007.

This year I presented an introduction to the Wealth Creation modeling and training of Neuro-Semantics; next year I will present some facet of the Self-Actualization model on Unleashing Potentials.

While there this year, I had a dozen or so people come to the presentation, not so much for the content of Wealth Creation, but because they wanted to know more about Neuro-Semantics. The same thing happened in Avignon in southern France this past weekend, a couple people there told me about the same thing verbatim. They had read books and/or articles on the website and wanted to know more about Neuro-Semantics as a model and field.

Yet one person who I spoke with in London had a very unique way of describing his interest. He said that hewas interested in *"Neuro-Semantic NLP."* "I've read the Matrix model and Mind-Lines and I'm just really fascinated by what you're doing with Neuro-Semantic NLP." I like that. Prior to that it was always Neuro-Semantics *and* NLP or Neuro-Semantics taking NLP to a new level. This was new, *"Neuro-Semantic NLP."*

That evening I thought about it a lot and the next day I asked him what *"Neuro-Semantic NLP"* meant to him. "Well, it's a new kind of NLP. What you're doing with the idea of frames, levels of frames, multiple-levels of frames and how these dynamic frames are the logical levels and the higher states, it not only takes NLP to new places, but it gives NLP a whole new quality— you are dealing with meaning directly without getting it mixed up religion."

Since that conversation, I've thought a lot about what he said. *"Neuro-Semantic NLP"* certainly acknowledges the dominate source of Neuro-Semantics, namely NLP. *"Neuro-Semantic NLP"* also says that what we are doing in Neuro-Semantics is giving NLP a new quality and focus, one focusing on our neuro-semantic nature. As a class of life that incorporates meaning neurologically in our mind-body system, meaning is not just a phenomenon of language and concepts, it is a holistic embodied experience. We know things in our body, in muscle-memory,

and we use all of our biological senses and processing levels to generate meaning.

In London, I ran the Mind-to-Muscle pattern and talked about *embodying meaning* and several individuals who had very moving experiences with it, especially one sports coach, were thrilled about the power of closing the knowing-doing gap and taking what's conceptual and installing it as procedural knowing in the body. He commented "this puts the K back in NLP" referring to K for kinesthetics. I think I'll be making the comment from now on,

> "This is *Neuro-Semantic NLP*. We make it meaningful from the conceptual level all the way down to the kinesthetic level."

For years, we Neuro-Semanticists have been saying, "This is coaching the body to feel an idea. It is enabling you to know in your body what you know and even believe in your mind."

At the London conference I noticed that some of the directions that different branches of NLP are going really differs from our direction. Some are focusing on more esoteric and mystic things; some are focusing on the enogram and using that model over the Meta- Programs, others talk about "pure" NLP as if its not allowed to develop and evolve.

Then there is *Neuro-Semantic NLP*.

META-STATING
META-MUDDLES

— What is the heart-pulse of the Meta-States Model?
— Why is that so important?

The heart-pulse of the Meta-States Model deals with *how* your self-reflexive consciousness works and *how* you can work it to your health and effectiveness. It is about how you constantly, inevitably, and forever *reflect back onto yourself*. It is about how you reflect back onto yourself with more thoughts, emotions, and physiology. It is about how you apply one state to another of your states. Yes, I know. Stating it in that way doesn't sound very sexy. Stating it in that way, in fact, sounds boring. But I promise you that it is not.

Reflexivity is the most peculiar feature of human consciousness and it is the very essence of our consciousness that causes it to differ from that of every other creature on this planet. That's because when you *reflect back,* you move to a position *above* what you just thought or felt and as such, this means you have just *stepped up to a meta-position.* Now you are no longer in reference to the world, you are in reference to your state. You are in reference to your thoughts, to your beliefs, to your understandings, to your memories, to your imaginations, and so on. You have turned inward. And because of this, whatever you think and feel *at this higher or meta-level* sets a frame *about* whatever is below it.

Ah, and with that, the magic begins. With that, you *classify* the lower. You *catagorize* the lower, you *embed* the lower thoughts and feelings inside of a higher frame that defines the lower, that positions the lower, that determines what you will feel about the lower and how you will respond. And with that you enter into the magical land of framing and reframing.

An example. Say you have an experience wherein you *worry* about someone or something. You know that one don't you? Recall a time when you worked up a good case of worrying. Shouldn't be too hard to do. Most of us are pretty skilled at worrying, especially about things that never happen.

Now to create a meta-muddle out of worry. To do that, *worry* about your worrying! That's right, worry that your worrying is irrational and that maybe you're losing your mind or perspective, and that if this continues you'll create an ulcer. Now *fear* that this may happen. Now *dread* it. Now *hate* that this is happening to you. How's that for a sick, morbid, and very,

very un-useful meta-state which is a real meta-muddle!

So far you have categorized your worry in the class of Worry (Worrisome things). Then you classified your worry-of-your-worry in the class of Dreadful Things. Then you put all of that inside of the frame of Things to Hate. Do that and you will create some black magic. You will create a complex meta-state that will undermine your health, peace of mind, and effectiveness. And with it you just might send enough messages to your nervous system to actually create an ulcer.

But what if you want to create some white magic? Okay, let's start with *worry* again. Got it? Now step back and bring a state of *Witnessing* to the worry so that you categorize worry in the class of Things to Observe and Witness. How's that? Now given that most worry is silly and un-useful and an unrealistic exaggeration, bring *Exaggeration* to the Witnessed-Worry. Exaggerate it to the most extreme situation that you can. Doing that you categorize witnessed-worry in the class of Humor. How's that?

This describes how frames work, how meta-stating works, how reflexivity works. And it is magical. Yet, you ask, How can I say that? What does that mean?

It is "magical" in the sense that you can put almost anything in any category that you want — no matter how unsane, insane, crazy, irrational, stupid, idiotic, etc. that it may be. Consider fanatics who take a fundamentalistic attitude to whatever they believe in. They are great examples of this. A fanatic fundamentalist is someone who forgets, or doesn't know, that "the map is not the territory" and so a fundamentalist actually thinks that his or her belief is true. So above the meta-state of a belief (a validity thought about a first thought), they *believe* in their beliefs. And they believe in their belief of their beliefs. All of this, of course, closes them to new or different information. It doesn't matter if the person is a Christian fundamentalist, a Muslim fundamentalist, a Science fundamentalist, etc. The structure is the same.

So a fanatic fundamentalist might believe that they way to honor God is to kill people. They have to kill the abortion doctor who kills babies to show him or her that they are not supposed to kill. Right! The Muslim extremist has to kill innocent women and children as the 19 did on 9/11 because they are infidels and that will teach them to believe correctly. Right! The liberal fundamentalist wants free speech except where a Christian, Jew, or Moslem believer wants to speak up at school or have a rally on a state-supported university. Right.

The problem with these examples is not that these people have beliefs. Having beliefs is fine. We all do. The problem is that they *believe*-in-their-beliefs which leads them to assume that they cannot be wrong, cannot be corrected, and cannot have an open explorative conversation. In their meta-muddle, they cannot simply believe. Having over-loaded their beliefs with so much meaning and significance, even a question about their belief triggers them to feel attacked and so they get defensive about ideas in their heads or the heads of others.

The process of meta-stating involves bringing thoughts-and-feelings to an experience, to a state,

and that creates categories of the mind —classifications, frames, contexts, meaning structures, etc. And when people do this without awareness that they are not even dealing with the world, just their own layers and levels of thinking-and-feeling —they confuse their internal mappings with the territory. Then they think their meta-thoughts and meta-feelings indicate what's real. And when they get to that point, they are very deep in meta-muddle.

So what is the solution? First and foremost is to become aware of this. What categories have you created as you have meta-stated some primary experience that has become semantically loaded in a way that creates limitations and problems? Second, it is to dis-identify with the map (or belief). You are more than what you believe. Your beliefs are just human maps trying to map out something. The problem is never you as a person, the problem is always your frames. So stop identifying yourself with your frames and categories — dis-identify yourself and that will begin to give you some perspective.

Now most meta-muddles build up and get created in lightning quick speed. Really. In a nano-second you jump logical levels and bring various thoughts-and-feelings to your experiences (to your primary states or to some level of a meta-state). And just as soon as you do, the next thought —there you go again. Again, this is your reflexivity at work! And if you can begin to just observe it, you will be able to catch the process without judging and evaluating. And with that, you begin to develop an incredible skill that few humans have, a meta-skill that will enable you to unleash potentials like no other skill. Why? Well, that will be in the next Meta Reflection. See you then.

THE META-PERSPECTIVE

If you want to really see the power of a meta-move, consider the ability to *step back* from yourself. Step back from your thoughts, your emotions, your beliefs, your ego, your ego-investments, your history, your future, from all of your internal movies, fears, hopes, and dreams. When you do this, you are using and experiencing your own reflexivity. And while we may not understand all of the mechanisms involved in this, there is something amazing. Just asking you to do it *facilitates* it and suddenly, magically, wonderfully, you *step back* and begin thinking-feeling-experiencing-believing, etc. about it.

Stepping back from ourselves is reflexivity at work. And it is the very quality within our unique human kind of consciousness that reveals such a wonder within us. We can respond to our own responses! We can, as it were, step back from ourselves, or rise above what we have just created and think-and-feel about that. Philosophers have called this the infinite regress. No matter how far back you step, you can always step back yet another time. And then another. There's no end to it. Noting this in *Science and Sanity*, Korzybski described it as part of the structure of multi-ordinality. And in Neuro-Semantics I have been describing this infinite regress as *the infinite progress.*

Infinite progress means that no matter what meta-muddles you or another create, you are never more stuck than your framing. It means that *there is always yet another step you can make out of the muddle!* Mark that down. No matter how deep your meta-muddles, there's always the next step. You can always step up and gain a broader and more expansive perspective. And when you know that, when *that* is in your muscles as the knowing of muscle memory, then you will lose all fear of yourself and your insides. You will launch a whole new style of self-awareness and self-discovery so it becomes a truly exciting adventure.

Over the years, I've tracked with a person ten jumps, fifteen, even twenty as I explored with someone their "dragons," their layers and layers of unresourceful states. I do that first to *track*, to understand the meta-muddles. And yet, no matter how dysfunctional, how toxic, how morbid, a simple meta-question or two and they can *step out of the whole mess.*
> "So do you like all of that? Is that the way you want to live your life?"
> "How empowering is all of that? Would you like to continue living that way for another five years?"

Simple questions, yet suddenly, they step back from it all, take a good look at it, view it through the lens of ecology, the frames of empowerment, the belief about life's purpose, etc. and suddenly the pull of the meta-muddle loses all of its attraction. Suddenly the person is out in the clear with a larger meta-perspective.

The important thing about going meta to yourself and your experience is that you make that meta-move with acceptance and appreciation. It must be done without judgement. If you do it with judgment, then you bring threat and danger inside and that will result in self-abuse. Then, your "conscious mind" will not serve you well. Then, you might even make the unfortunate mistake of concluding that the problem is your "conscious mind." Many in NLP have made that mistake, including the two co-developers.

Yet the conscious mind is not the problem. The problem is only that you have that misused your reflexivity, your infinite progress, and your power to meta-state. You have thereby made your conscious mind a problem. But you don't have to. To avoid that and to fully access the power of your conscious mind, all you have to do is bring love, compassion, wonder, curiosity, appreciation, and such like to the products of your thinking-and-feeling. Then making the meta-move takes you to a whole new level of consciousness. Do that and you will begin to understand and feel how *transcendence is built into us.*

And we all feel it. People of all cultures, times, and places have known and experienced it and have tried to come up with an explanation for it —from magic, to religion, to aliens, past lives, parallel universes, etc. For me, I prefer to think about it more simply, as simply a psychological mechanism within our multi-layered brain. When Ken Wilbur found it, he recognized it as *the holon structure* that reflects our holographic brain (Karl Pribram) and so popularized the language of "transcending and including." That is, when we meta-state ourselves with love, appreciation, wonder, etc., we *transcend* whatever state we're in and move to a higher state, a state *about* the first one which now becomes our basic state. As we do that, we also simultaneously *include* the base state inside of the higher state.

Transcend and include. In *transcending* we rise up, access new resources of thought and emotion, and set those as our frame about the lower. In *including* we embed what was a problem inside of a solution. And because with each move, with each level of meta-stating, we keep *transcending and including*, this gives us the feel of something higher, something more, something yet to reach for, and because it is infinite – unending, the sense of transcendence *inside of us* feels like something divine, something spiritual. No wonder we all have a touch of the divine, of the sacred, of a higher intelligence.

And no wonder the meta-skill itself is such an incredible skill and experience. And when you develop it so that it is within your control, your meta-skills will powerfully enable you to unleash your potentials. The meta-perspective that evolves from this will enable you to keep growing long, long after childhood. So while every animal grows during childhood, we humans have the ability to keep growing in our mind, our emotions, our relationships, our hopes, our creativity, our learning — throughout all of our life.

Our meta-perspective enables us to see the larger picture of things literally, symbolically, with regard to time, with regard to consequences, with regard to morals, etc. The meta-perspective also empowers us to stay calm and cool under pressure. It enables us to keep our head when circumstances, events, environments, immediate stimulate would distract us or hook us.

The meta-perspective also puts you at *Choice Point*, the point were you can truly choose the direction and quality of your life. Have you been there? Have you stepped up to that place? This is the place where you become self-directed and the director of your experience. Here you bring in the authority from outside so that you can author the script that you'll play your life by. So did you know that there are so many benefits in accessing a meta-perspective? Well, now that you do, may you transcend and include your states with the very highest and best resources in your own adventure of self-discovery!

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #6
Dec. 25

WHAT THE OLD NLP GUARD
DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT META-STATING

If you've been following these *Reflections on Meta* here on Neurons, then you already know several things that "the old guard" of NLP (Richard Bandler, John Grinder, Steve Andreas, etc.) doesn't.   In writing this I don't mean to pick on them, just to highlight where they are stuck and explain why they are now arguing for "pure NLP," and discounting new developments and evolutions of the model. While I find that sad, I guess it is inevitable since it seems to happen with every organization and movement. I had assumed that perhaps it would be different in a field like NLP that's supposed to recognize the difference between map and territory and that's supposed to be a discipline of creativity.

Anyway, Steve, as John Grinder did before him, has now written a book in his attempt to discount, discredit, and explain away the "logical levels" within the Meta-States Model. Grinder did the same in his book on whispering in the wind (or was that whistling in the wind?) questioning "the proliferation of meta-states." I've written several reviews about that which you can find on the Neuro-Semantics website. More recently Steve Andreas, less elegantly has done the same. And again, I have written two articles that you can find on the website. Andreas books are on "category and scope" which he doesn't know involve the very processes within Meta-States (See *"Blind Elephant's Confusion* #1 and #2).

Now, given that any and every *meta response to yourself,* to your thoughts, emotions, experiences, memories, imagination, and a hundred other things *is a meta-state,* and that if you don't take charge of the process, you'll create meta-muddles, I will here contrast Neuro-Semantic NLP from the old classic NLP of those individuals who haven't come into the twenty-first century.

So what's the difference? The difference lies in the confusion and non-sense of the idea of Sub-Modalities. Now if you are new to NLP, *sub-modalities* is the term used to describe *the quality and the properties of our mental movies— the cinematic features that we use to code our movies.* For example, in the visual system, we can edit our movies in a wide variety of ways: close or far, bright or dim, panoramic or narrow, snapshot or movie, are some of the sub-modalities. In the auditory or sound system, we can do the same: close or far, loud or quiet, coming from one side or the other or panoramic, etc.

These are the cinematic features of our representations. They are not *sub* to the visual or auditory modality. Want proof? Okay, good. Here we go. Think about your fifth or sixth grade when you were in elementary school. Go back there and imagine it again. Got it? Good. Now, is your picture of your childhood school days in color or in black-and-white? Is there any sound in that school? How big or small is your picture?

Do you not have to *step back* from the picture (yes, *go meta*) in order to answer these questions? Do you not have to move your head or body back so that you can get some perspective to notice the cinematic features? Ah, yes, you have to go meta to notice sub-modalities! Well, try this. Make the picture bigger (or smaller), make it brighter (or dimmer), put in some circus music in it, etc. Didn't you also have to step back, and go meta, to shift or change the sub-modalities?

How large is your picture? What if you doubled it? What if you shrunk it to half-size? With each cinematic question, you are invited into a higher frame of mind *about* your representations. These questions invite you into the *editorial level* of your thinking and feeling so that you can then make changes to the cinematic features. It's as if you are in the creation room of a movie editor and you have all the tools at your disposal to alter the film. You can delete all of the noise and irritating sounds. You can put into the movie the sound track of a great piece of music. You can put a sub-script on the movie to explain things.

At this editorial level to your movies, these cinematic features are not *sub* to the movie. They are the editorial features that you can alter and manipulate at will. From this higher position you can do all kinds of things to your pictures, sounds, and sensations. That's why you can step back from any mental representation and alter it with a change of these qualities.

Also, what you are essentially doing when you do these cinematic alterations is *meta-stating*. Think about the cinematic distinction of making an image bigger or smaller. To make it bigger you are *zooming in* so that one facet of the picture totally fills the screen of your mind. Zoom in on the person's face who is criticizing you. Zoom in further. Further! Zoom in until every tiny pore is the size of a baseball so the face looks poc-marked.

Dif you do that? If so, then you have just meta-stated a primary experience (an image of a face) with the conceptual idea (a meta-state) of "zooming in" so that it telescopes the skin of the face with "big, bigger, bigger yet." You have brought the state, frame, category, and classification of "bigger" and applied it to a previous thought (image) of a face. Congratulations on some elegant meta-stating!

But don't tell the old guard. Don't tell Steve Andreas. Don't let John Grinder know. You'll just get shot down and insulted. Is it that they don't know that every sub-modality shift is a meta-state process? Can they really not know that? Or is it that they don't want to know that? Their linear reasoning goes like this, "A sub-modality is a 'finer' distinction in the rep. system, therefore if it is 'finer' it is smaller, and if it is smaller it is *sub* to the rep. system."

While I don't know the answer to that, I do know that Steve Andreas thinks that because *bigger*

/smaller are members of the class of Visuals, they are "smaller" to the class and therefore a "scope." To him, a scope is different from a category. And because of that, it has to be *sub,* hence sub-modality. He can't even imagine meta-stating with something *small* or *tiny* and setting that as a new category as you just did.

"I did? When did I do such a thing?" Just a moment ago when I invited you to start with the representation of a face and to *zoom in on the face* until it fills the entire screen in your mind, then zoom in again until a one inch area fills the screen. Doing that is meta-stating the idea of "big" (make it bigger, and bigger yet). Okay, do the opposite, *zoom out* of the face and see the person's entire body, zoom out to see the person in a house, in a city, in a country, zoom all the way out to see the planet the person is on, then the solar system. Good. You just brought "small" (make it smaller) and applied it to the base representation.

Now what Steve Andreas really doesn't know or understand is that the *size or scope* of something does not absolutely, and for all time, lock it into that category. *Bright* is a small unit in the visual category and is on a continuum with *Dim* on the other side. Yet though "smaller" to visual, we can meta-state *bright* or *dim* and bring it to a visual representation so that the visual representation is now a member of the class of *bright* or dim.

"Impossible! Couldn't happen!" One of the old guard says. Okay, then consider the optimist, the over-optimistic person who *sees everything around him and into the future as bright.* Hasn't he put all visual representations into the category of bright? Consider the die-in-the-wool pessimist who knows that it is all futile, meaningless, that she is ineffective and helpless, and so has *dimmed* all pictures and representations of her world and her future. Hasn't she put all visual representations into the category of *dim* even *dark*?

If you don't know about meta-stating, about making the meta-move and that you can meta-state any piece of "thought" or "emotion" with any other, then you don't know about our human *psycho-logics* and how we set frame upon frame of meta-levels to create our mental maps about reality. Sure it is not logical. And that's the whole point. It is *psycho-logical.*

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #7
January 2007

META-STATING
NEW PSYCHO-LOGICS
FOR YOUR NEW YEAR

With the arrival of the new year our thoughts naturally turn to what the new year holds for us and what we'd like to do or accomplish in it. Given that, how can you use the *meta response, meta-perspective, and meta-function* for making 2007 a fabulous year? Is there a way? If there is, how can you take charge of your psycho-logics so that your own meta-stating truly enriches and empowers you in the new year?

I ended the last *Meta Reflection* mentioning our "psycho-logics." This key concept in Neuro-Semantics refers to the "logic" that you create and which makes you and your life experience *psycho-logical.* By putting a hyphen within the word psychology, Korzbyski introduced this as a way to distinguish *logics* from *psycho-logics.* The first deals with the kind of logic (reasoning, understanding) that maps the *external* world. The second addresses the kind of logic that maps our *internal* world.

So what are our psycho-logics? How are we psycho-logical? We are because we are so free on the inside to *set* any state, thought, feeling, memory, imagination, decision, etc. as the *frame* for our states and experiences. I'm of course speaking again about the meta-stating process itself. Whenever we bring one mental state, emotional state, even physiological state to another, we thereby create a particular kind of *logic* to our own experience.

For example,
> What is your particular *logic* about the new year?
> What is your particular *logic* about new year's resolutions?
> What's your particular *logic* about setting goals, raising your expectations, dreaming big, and inventing audacious visions?

To find out simply reflect about what do you think and feel *about* these ideas. What do you think and feel about the idea of a new year? This means that your *thoughts-and-feelings about* (i.e. your meta-state frame) any of these ideas functions as the category and classification. And because it does, its makes up your inner "logic." Your psycho-logics. If you think, "I don't like goals setting, it just sets me up for disappointment" then you are meta-stating yourself with "anticipated disappointment tinged with dislike" and so that becomes your frame-of-mind about it.

It becomes the "logic" (your reasoning and meaning-making) about it.

> What do you think about charting your future with some fantastic new goals?
> What do you think about yourself as someone who acts on and makes your goals real?
> What do you think and feel about the goals you sat last year?

This means that you have been proliferating meta-states all over the place (which answers John Grinder's question about that! Hope you're reading, John). And, depending whether your thoughts-and-feelings *about* these things are positive and supportive or negative and limiting— so are your frames, beliefs, decisions, attitudes, and state of mind. And that's the thing about the meta-levels. When you *go meta,* rise up and set some thought, feeling, belief, category, decision, etc. at a higher level— it becomes your *frame* as in frame-of-mind or frame-of-meaning. In other words, your attitude.

Have you ever wondered how you create holistic "attitudes" that set your mind, body, habits, lifestyle, etc. in a certain way? The answer is simple: You meta-state those attitudes into existence. The stuff out of which you do that is the same stuff that make up all meta-levels: thoughts, feelings, and physiology.

This gives us the Neuro-Semantic definition of an attitude, namely, the composite of your multiple *frames of mind* about something. And knowing that, you now probably know how you can de-commission an old attitude and build up a new attitude. This is what lies at the heart of the pattern in Living Genius, *Super-Charging Your Attitude.*

So back to the new year —what's your attitude? What's the psycho-logics of your attitude? What would you like it to be? What attitude would be truly a new frame of mind for you that would support you in unleashing more of your potentials this year? In fact, what if you spent 2007 focusing more on setting *attitude goals* than you did on the traditional goals of more time at the gym, more time reading, more time with your loved ones, etc.?

You undoubtedly already know the reason. To win at the outer game of health, fitness, job, relationships, etc. you first have to win the inner game. And that's what attitude is all about, isn't it? Win at your attitude, super-charge your attitude, custom design the kind of attitude that you want to empower you through the challenges before you, and as you win the inner game, the outer game becomes a cinch. (This, by the way, is the theme of the book, *Winning the Inner Game.*)

That leads to some very different questions as you begin the new year—

> What inner game am I not winning?
> What inner game do I need to win in order to really succeed outwardly in the external game?
> What frame of mind do you have about effort, discipline, patience, long-term commitment, mastery, problems, and the other facets that make up character and a winning personality?

There's no escape from your own psycho-logics. Everywhere you go, everything you say, every

emotion you experience is a result of your inner psycho-logics. Whatever reasoning, reasons, ideas, states, thoughts, feelings, etc. that you bring to your states sets the next level of *logics* for your mind and your emotions. The real question is this: *What is the quality of your psycho-logics?* And that's critical because the quality of your psycho-logics is the quality of your life. Your life, in fact, can be no better than the quality of the frames that you set through your meta-stating.

As we all begin a new year, realizing more fully than ever before that you are entirely psycho-logical, do you like your psycho-logics? Do your psycho-logics enhance and empower you? If not, are you ready to engage a Neuro-Semanticist for updating and enriching your psycho-logics? We have lots of coaches and trainers who can do precisely that.

So, I raise a toast to you as you begin your new year —
> Here's to the most ecological and robust psycho-logics for you so that you can live the life that fulfills your inner dreams and passions!

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #8
January 8 2007

HOW HIGH CAN YOU GO?
CAN YOU GO DEEPLY HIGH?

Within the word *meta* is the height metaphor that implies *going up, going higher, ascending,* and *transcending.* That's what gave me the idea originally of creating a *consistent* diagram of meta-relationships as higher and higher states that embed the lower states. I say "consistent" because prior to that not a single person in the field of NLP did so consistently. At the time (and still today for that matter) there was lots of mixing and confusing the depth and height metaphors.

Depth and height metaphors— let me say a bit about these. Knowing about them and their history helps to understand the meta-domain and the Meta-States Model.

The *depth* metaphor is the oldest metaphor in psychology. Sigmund Freud even called his modern invention of psychoanalysis "Depth Psychology." Originally Freud wanted to grow up to become an archeologist. That was his first love—history, and especially Greek and Roman history, hence all of his use of mythologies to explain human experiences. So, as a frustrated archeologist, he decided to delve into the *depths* of human consciousness, to go deep down into the "primary processes" of the Id, and to *unearth* the instincts of sex, aggression, greed, and death. He delved into the depths of the unconscious latent meanings of dreams in his classic *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1905) that launched psychoanalysis as "the second force" in psychology (Behaviorism or Learning Theory being the first force and the Human Potential Movement the third).

So the idea of *going down*, which was already a predominant way of talking about the "deep" things within us (lots biblical passages in Proverbs uses it), became even more so as it was popularized by psychoanalysis. It's no surprise then that most of us have grown up with the *depth metaphor* and use it to speak about our psychological forces. Yet the *height metaphor* is also one that we naturally use. We speak about our highest values and beliefs, developing our skills to a new and higher level, getting over things blocking and interfering our growth, and transcending to new heights.

This led Viktor Frankl to designate his psychology, "Height Psychology." Prior to his imprisonment, Frankl had actually been trained in psychoanalysis and had published a paper in the Journal of Psychoanalysis. But in the concentration camp he found himself thinking more about meaning and purpose, about spirit and faith than about the dark forces of the id. From that he

created *Logotherapy*, the first Height Psychology (Neuro-Semantics being perhaps the second).

The biggest example of confusing the depth and height metaphors to model human experience is in Connaire Andreas' *Core Transformation.* There she uses the word "meta" and asks a powerful meta-question at the heart of the process. Yet she pictured it as going down deep to the "core" of things. The "core" process is actually a meta-stating of intention. "What do you want?" "And when you get that fully and completely in just the way you want it, what do you want that's even more important than that?"

When I first re-modeled that using the Meta-States Model, I presented it in Houston Texas in a Master Practitioner training. As I did, I diagramed it so that with each higher state I put it *above* the previous one, and the next *above* that until we got to the *top* where we would access the *highest* and most *transcendental* state of all. Several people were there who had just learned Core Transformation and who with each new "core" state had, in their minds, *gone down deeper and deeper.* They later described the difference between the two metaphors. They said that the depth metaphor made them feel increasingly claustrophobic, even trapped into a smaller and tinier space, things seemed darker the further down they went. But the height metaphor took them *up* to a sense of greater expansiveness. It opened up more for them and created a sense of freedom.

That's the funny thing about metaphors. Metaphors come with entailments. Mark Johnson wrote about this in *Metaphors We Live B*y (1980) and then again with George Lakoff in *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* (1987). *Entailments* refer to *the unspecified implications* that come along with the metaphor. Often it is one of a metaphor's entailment that prevents us from taking a metaphor very far and have to abandon it at a certain point.

When I decided to use the term *meta* in mapping out the meta-levels of states, I decided to do so *consistently* in the diagraming and formatting. So in speaking about one state above and beyond another state, all of the diagrams show the rising up above one state, transcending it, and then including the former inside of the higher state. This enables us to diagram the layering of thoughts-and-feelings, the evolving embedding structure of the systemic complexity of our mental-and-emotional states and our own reflexive feedback loop on the inside. That is, how you feedback to yourself more thoughts, more feelings, more memories, more anticipations, etc. whenever you reach one conclusion.

Yet in Meta-States, we do not only use the height metaphor. We also use the depth metaphor. We use it to describe the feed forward loop. That's because have we have transcended a state and included it in a higher frame, we then feed that forward into the lower state and into our bodies. Feedback is information into our system, feed forward is the transformation of that information into energy which shows up as emotions, feelings, sensations, actions, speech and all of our external responses.

So the full loop of *information in* as feedback and *energy out* as feed forward maps the dynamic complexity of our mind-body system. Now we can follow the processes through the system. Now we can intervene in that system anywhere along the communication–energy loop.

This also means that we go *up* with information from the world and back to ourselves to create meaning, meaning as states and frames (the inner game). We then go *down* with energy to actualize that in performing the outer game. We go *higher deeply* so that we can feel the new meanings (Mind-to-Muscle) as *deeply higher*. All this is because of coalescing. Ah, coalescing— another mechanism that the Meta-States model introduced, and the subject for the next Reflection. Meanwhile, here's to your powers of meta— may you always take the *high* road to self-actualization!

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #9
January 15 2007

MAY ALL YOUR META-STATES COALESCE

At a certain level, meta and meta-states is all about coalescing.
> "Did you say *coalescing?* What in the world is coalescing? What does it have to do with the word *meta* and what does it have to do with the Meta-States Model?"

As a bit of a review, I ended the last reflection describing the systems loops in the Meta-States model. This is critical for anyone who wants to learn how to "follow the energy" through a human system. This is something that we teach in Meta-Coaching and in Matrix Games. And this involves a different kind of thinking than strict linear thinking, it is systems thinking.
> *Feed back* — information that we get back from the world and others "out there" beyond our nervous systems that we bring into ourselves. We feed it back to our mental representational movie. Then we feed back to ourselves our thinking about it as we reflexively think and feel all the way up the levels.

> *Feed forward* — the transformation of the information into *energy* that we experience as we metabolize our thoughts, ideas, and meanings. We feed this energy forward level by level as emotions and then feelings which then activates the motor cortex to translate into speech, behaviors, skills, and all of our responses back to the world outside of ourselves.

Feedback is the information we bring in and that we create as we draw conclusions up the levels. Feed forward is the experience we have of that feedback as it becomes energy within our mind-body system. Every time you draw a conclusion and feed that conclusion back to yourself at the next higher level, you create more meaning for yourself. You thereby set a yet higher frame of meanings. In doing so, you extend and expand your meta-mind about the subject. Feedback takes you up the levels of beliefs and abstractions.

Feed forward is bringing the higher level thoughts, beliefs, and meanings *back down*. The best example of it in Neuro-Semantics is the *Mind-to-Muscle pattern.* Here we start with a high level concept or principle that we "intellectually" know is true, valid, and useful, something that if we could just get ourselves to do would make a positive difference in our lives. But we don't. We *know* but don't *do.* To therefore close that knowing-doing gap, we linguistically drive the

principle down the system and layers of meta-levels so that we code it as a *belief.* Then we drive it down to become a *decision,* then a *feeling* state, then an *action* that engages the real world out there.

In the *Mind-to-Muscle process*, we are feed forwarding into our mind-body system information that we know at higher levels. Now it's time to *feel it*. That's why in the process of *bringing that knowledge down, we coach the body to feel it.* That's why we have a specific process for engaging more and more neurological activity and processes, why we encourage exaggerating and gesturing. We are seeking to feed the information forward and in doing so let it transform into energy— physical energy in our bodies.

I like to describe this as how we *metabolize* our ideas. We do metabolize ideas, you know. Yes, we also metabolize food and transform what we call food into fuel. We eat fish and chips, pizzas and tacos and somehow the fish in the river and the potatoes in the garden become part and parcel of Michael, or you. It becomes part of our skin, eyes, fingernails, internal organs. We masticate the food, tear it apart, digest it, and then assimilate it so that what was *other* now becomes part of *self. Metabolism* describes a basic transformation process for how stuff "out there" comes in and becomes a living part of our biology.

There is also another kind of *metabolism*, a metabolism of ideas, thoughts, beliefs, understandings, experiences, and so on. We also bring in "mental" stuff out there in the world from the conversations we have with others, from the books we read, from the symbols we receive from our various cultures and we similarly masticate them as we think and reflect, as we tear the ideas apart and as we digest them and assimilate them into ourselves. For a century Gestalt psychology has been using this metaphor.

To take the metaphor to the next level, I've used it more explicitly to describe how we integrate ideas and make them ourselves. And this is where coalescing comes in. When we *apply* one state to another (joy to learning; calmness to fear, respect to anger, abundance to relating, etc.) and bring the two states together and allow them to become linked— *they eventually coalesce.* They eventually "unite or come together in one body or mass" so that the two become one. They two now operate as one.

That's why a coalesced meta-state *feels like* a primary state. From the inside, we experience it as if it were one thing. This is what we mean by the word *gestalt* in Neuro-Semantics, the two have become a *whole*. And that *whole* emerges in the mind-body system as something more than the sum of its parts.

Coalescing is like the percolating of coffee. You take two separate things, coffee beans and water, heat the water and pass the water through the crushed beans and, presto!, *Coffee*. The coffee we then drink is something other than, more than the sum of these parts.

When we meta-state another thought or feeling to our current experience, what is *high* or *meta* to us doesn't always stay as something separate and distinct. *It often coalesces into the lower.*

From this emergence something new that's a whole, a gestalt. The emergence of this gestalt creates a new kind of state, a *gestalt state.*

So when we feed our states, ideas, meanings, beliefs, etc. forward and texture or percolate our previous thoughts and feelings with it, we metabolize our meanings in such a way that we commission our body to feel them. We commission our neurology to experience them. We close the knowing-doing gap and incorporate (put into the body, corpus) or *embody* what we know in our mind. This creates the personal power of congruence. It enables us to get ourselves to actually do and perform what know and believe in our mind. This unites meaning-and-performance, neurology and semantics, and knowing-and-doing. It gives us the synergy of the whole. And this is what lies at the heart of self-actualizing our potentials. Are you ready to coalesce? Great, then here's to your positive coalescing in 2007!

THE META-LANDSCAPE
OF YOUR MIND
Part I

In Neuro-Semantics we have long been speaking about *the land of Meta —Meta Land.* This is the space within your mind where you go when you use your self-reflexive consciousness. This is where you go when you "go inside." It is where you go when you experience the hypnotic state of trance. This is the space that's very, very special to us humans— the upper decks of your consciousness, the place where you "store" your conceptual framework about reality, and all of your beliefs about yourself, others, time, and the world. It is the space that we call your Matrix. It is all the thoughts "in the back of your mind."

In fact, while the two co-founders of NLP have completely ignored this region of consciousness, it has primarily been Robert Dilts who attempted to do so. Studying the "logical levels and types" of Bateson, Robert created an elementary model some twenty years ago that he designated, the Neuro-Logical Levels. With it, he offered a list of belief distinctions along with how much each level affected one's neurology. The biggest problem with the model is that it has not evolved, grown, or developed over the past twenty years even though Robert has.

Within the Neuro-Logical levels, the first three distinctions occur at the *primary state level.* 1) The ability or capability to act, 2) the behaviors that result and 3) the context of some environment are all primary state distinctions. Above that we get to the meta-level distinctions: 1) beliefs, 2) values, 3) identity, and 4) spirit.

Over the years, numerous writers in NLP have shown that the Neuro-Logical levels is not actually a "logical level" system, and certainly not hierarchical. Wyatt Woodsmall was the first to do so, showing that *Environment* is not a a member of the class of *Behaviors.* Inside the class of *behaviors,* we do not put *environment.* *Behaviors* are not more psychologically "encompassing and impactful" than *Environment*.

Environment is a larger phenomenon than *Behaviors*. Even though behaviors may effect environment, behaviors do not drive or modulate *Environment* as the term "logical levels" suggests. Yet this model did encourage the thinking of many other NLP trainers about the *meta landscape.*

The Dilts' list does provides a useful laundry list of items as a checklist regarding beliefs. After

all, in *Meta Land* it is beliefs all the way up. And Robert Dilts has structured the levels to correspond to the basic indexing questions of where, when, who, what, why, etc.

6. Why? (big)	Spiritual	God/Universe	Transmission
5. Who?	Mission	Identity	Mission
4. Why? (Small)	Motivation/ Meaning	Beliefs/Values	Permission/ Motivation
3. How?	Process/Strategy	Capabilities	Direction
2. What?	Actions/Reactions	Behaviors	Actions
1. Where? When?	Opportunities/ Constraints	Environment	External context

Robert (1990, *Beliefs*) has also noted the relationship between the landscape of *Meta Land* and what occurs at the lower levels of our neurology.   "These different levels each bring a deeper commitment of neurological 'circuitry' into action." (p. 210). That's due to the feed forward communication loop (as noted in Meta Reflection #8).

Given this we can now step back and explore the contributions that Robert Dilts has made to our understandings of *Meta Land*.   Not only did he initiate the first NLP mappings of this area, but he relied heavily upon Gregory Bateson's work on logical levels. Robert highlighted that this is the *land of beliefs* —beliefs about our abilities, behaviors, and environment; beliefs about our values, beliefs about ourselves, our identity, our sense of self, and beliefs about our purpose and mission.

This means that *the landscape of Meta Land is the landscape of beliefs*. No wonder this area of mind works so differently from the outside world. Bateson contrasted the two as "the world of physics and the world of communication." And in the world of communication, what you "believe" and say has tremendous influence unlike the effect of words and beliefs in the world of physics. Here the mechanism of a self-fulfilling prophecy works. Here we metabolize our ideas so that our ideas become self-organizing frames. This refers to how our mind-body system is always seeking to actualize what we think. It may or may not succeed at it, but it seeks to "make real" inside us and then outside us the messages we send our neurology.

No wonder we have to be careful what we believe. If we get a thought-virus installed in our thinking or live by old antiquated beliefs, especially beliefs that are limiting, diminishing, or even toxic and morbid, this can create all kinds of things, from illness, diseases to self-sabotaging behaviors and even destructive and pathological states.

Meta Land — the place where you live most of your life. There's more to write about it, so till next week, may you assume the full powers of your creativity and make the landscape of meta in your mind-body system a wonderful place to live!

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #11
January 29 2007

THE META-LANDSCAPE
OF YOUR MIND
Part II

In the last Meta Reflection , I began describing the *landscape of Meta Land*. There I focused on it being the space of beliefs, where we create our sense of reality and so invent belief-frame within belief frame to create our beliefs systems. This makes *Meta Land* a place where our beliefs become self-fulfilling prophesies as they seek to self-organize our mind-body system to create externally the ideas and understandings.

Because of this, the landscape is a space of layers of belief frames and when we put all the belief frames around any given idea or experience, it makes up a *matrix*. A matrix refers to a "womb." That's because within a matrix things are given birth. It may be that we give birth to a concept by creating two axes. Then, inside of the quadrants or space of those axes we can give birth to the concept of the "flow" state or "the synergy of self-actualization."

In Neuro-Semantics, I have used the metaphor of a matrix to create the 7^{+1} matrices of the Matrix Model. In doing so, I was able to combine all of the cognitive-behavioral factors that make up our reality into three *process* matrices and five of the developmental and lifespan factors that make up our construct of "self." This gives us the five *content* matrices. When combined, it gives us a systems approach to thinking about, and working with, the mind-body-emotion system of a person or of a society.

This also is part of the landscape that makes up the *meta* territory. In this landscape you will discover the multiple matrices that you and others build around various experiences, ideas, and even words. Once we build these matrices and live within them, they become our reality. And that's precisely why they feel so real. That's why they become the very fabric of our sense of reality, why they become our assumptive reality, and why they feel so solid and unchangeable.

Sometimes I'm asked if there is or could be a third axis for the Matrix model. The first two are meaning (semantics) and performance (neurology) which also constructs the Self-Actualization Quadrants. And the answer is, "Yes, there is a third axis. It is *self*." After all, when we ask "In Developmental psychology, *what is it that develops* over the lifespan?" The answer is the same—our mapping and sensing of our *self,* that, is our *identity*, how and with what we *identify* ourselves. Developmental psychology maps this in terms of our cognitive development, our psycho-social development, our sexual, cultural, moral, etc. development.

And what are all these factors, but facets of our *self*. For a fuller development of this idea of the third axis, see the article, *The Matrix of the Matrix* on the website. This means that the five content matrices are *five facets of the development of self* over the lifespan: my sense of self as a person (Self), my sense of self in terms of competencies, skills, and performance (Power), my sense of self in relationship to others and to various cultures (Others), my sense of self as existing in temporal space (Time), and my sense of self in the larger environment and in all the universes of meanings (World).

This is the landscape of Meta Land. And because the Matrix model presents this as a systems model which encourages systemic thinking, to work with this facet of *Meta Land*, we have to shift from linear to non-linear, from either-or to both-and, and think in terms of our mental-emotional energy moving through the Matrix as a system. This is where the communication loops of feed back and feed forward also come in enabling us to follow the energy through the system.

What is the space where you live, in your mind, when you use your self-reflexive consciousness? It is the Marix of your frames of meaning that you construct about all kinds of things. And now we can follow the energy that is incorporated in it and the energy that follows through it. We can follow the cognitive energy by which you can transform your inner reality so that it begins to exist externally. And with the Marix model, we can now follow that motivational energy as you metabolize and embody those meanings.

Meta Land is the place of your meaning matrices, all of them, the thousands of them. It includes the positive ones which enhances you and your self-actualization. It equally includes the negative ones which imprison and diminish you. In all of this, you like me, are a creator. Because you are by nature a meaning-maker, you have some incredible powers to create meaning— to call meaningful worlds into existence. You can also misuse these powers and create worlds of trivial or bland meaning, or worse, meaningless worlds. Knowing this is one thing, knowing *how* to effectively use your creative powers that will enable you to self-actualize, that's another. That is the theme of Day 1 of the Ultimate Self-Actualization Workshop and the theme of the next Meta Reflection.

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #12
February 5, 2007

THE META-LANDSCAPE
OF YOUR MIND
Part III

As we continue exploring the *landscape* of Meta Land, there's another structure, or to be more precise, "structuring dynamic" to mention. I'm now referring to what we call in NLP, *Meta-Programs.* Ah yes, *meta-programs.* There are numerous ways to speak about this dimension. In various NLP writings these are described and labeled by a wide variety of terms:

> perceptual filters
> thinking patterns
> neuro-filters
> neuro-sorts

Metaphorically, we think of meta-programs as the kind and color of *glasses* that you wear as you see and perceive things. This is the most common metaphor for a meta-program. What kind of glasses are you wearing?

The simplest of all meta-programs is the classic optimist / pessimist filter, "Is the glass half empty or half full?" Which ever you see, it is just that, *a way of seeing things.* And in either case, the amount of liquid in the glass is the same. Yet precisely because *the way you see it* differs, then so does your reality. If you see it as half empty, then you are looking for what's missing, what is not there. If you see it as half full, then you are looking at what is there. This gives us the classic pessimist and optimist in "personality." That is, the way we filter, sort, and think about the same object creates different ways or styles of feeling, relating, talking, and behaving— the components of what we call "personality."

Now as part of the meta landscape of the higher regions of your mind, your habitual *meta-programs* play a dominant and even a determining role in how you experience yourself, others, and the world at large. No wonder we often relate our *meta-programs* to our sense and experience of ourselves as "persons," hence "personality." I put these terms in quotes because they are highly liable to misled us. Without quotes, we easily fall into the seduction of to think of them as externally real, as objective things. They are not.

"Personality" is not what you *are,* it is *how you function.* It refers to *how you do "personality."*

This separates Neuro-Semantic NLP from all of the "typology" models (Myers Briggs, Taylor Johnson, the MMPI, the four Greek personality types, etc.). Typology assumes that people come in types or kinds. "She's X type of person," "He's got Y personality." Assuming that people *are* a certain way, typology presupposes that personality is fixed, determined, fated. This is actually a case of over-generalizing. We take some way of operating, turn it into a "trait" and then assume that that is all the person *is* and that they cannot be otherwise.

The typology approach pretty much locks out change, especially personality change or transformation. In Neuro-Semantic NLP, we start with some very different assumptions. As with classic NLP, we start with the fact that people operate in *states* and operate from *states* and that when we keep repeating *a state*, the habituated state becomes a *way of being* in the world, a way of functioning. This solidifies things so that we then operate through the lens of that state consistently and regularly.

And, when we do that for months and even years, we essentially *meta-state that state* with all of its ways of thinking and feeling so that it becomes our gestalted meta-state or *meta-program.* For example, if you keep accessing the state of *looking for sameness* and do so repeatedly for years, you may meta-state the *sameness state* so that it becomes your glasses by which you filter and sort for everything. Then the perceptual lens you use to process the information from books, conversations, work, hope, dreams, fears, etc. will be the *sameness lens.* We could say that you then become a *sameness person.* You live consistently in the *sameness state* and always talk about how things are "the same" or similar. Doing so makes you good with people and quick to get rapport. And personality-wise, you would probably dislike, even hate, conflict, differences, and disagreements.

Or, you could use the opposite end of that continuum, and always be access the state of *looking for differences.* If you meta-state *differences* in the meta landscape of your mind so that you only and always sort for differences, then you would develop *difference glasses* and that would put you in a state of *differing.* This would make you good at seeing what's left out, what's not accounted for, and how thing are not right, how people are wrong, what's missing, etc. It's this state that supports creativity and innovation *and* conflict, disagreement, and lack of rapport.

Each meta-state that has solidified into a meta-program has its strength and weakness. And each operates on a continuum. In Meta-Coaching, we have made this the very heart of self-actualizing new potentials. We do that by focusing on *expanding meta-programs.* This differs from merely changing a meta-program or trying to become the opposite. In *expanding* the meta-program in the meta landscape, you *expand* your perceptual range and that activates a wider range of states and possibilities.

And as a consequence of this, the expanding of meta-programs expands your sense of self and personality. At the lowest level it develops your personality and at the highest it absolutely transforms your personality. And it does so, not by eliminating any meta-program or state, but by expanding and transforming such.

In Meta Land, your *meta-programs* represents the ultimate coalescence of your meta-states. That is, as you set states as your frames of mind, they become your very perceptual lens so that you see the world in a certain way. With each, you thereby create strengths and competencies *and* limitations. That's why *expanding* to the full range of a meta-program is such a generative and transformative experience. That's why also, in the *Self-Actualization Workshop* one of the key ways we facilitate actualizing our highest and best is through the expanding of our meta-programs. And that's one of the key benefits of the Ultimate Self-Actualization Workshop, the transformation of personality so that you can reach your full humanness and experience more peak experiences.

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #13
February 12, 2007

THE META-LANDSCAPE
OF YOUR MIND
Part IV

In the beginning of NLP, Richard Bandler used the following example of a belief as he proposed changing beliefs with sub-modalities:

"Think of a strong belief like 'I believe the sun will rise tomorrow.'"

But is that really a good example of a strong belief? I don't think so. Are your beliefs like that one? Do your strong beliefs follow that format? Aren't your *strong beliefs* more emotional and personal than that? Are they not more like the following:

"I believe that people are human beings who should be treated with respect." "I believe that continuous learning is a key to success." "I believe that in loving my children and spending quality time with them."

These are *strong* beliefs. Believing that the sun will rise tomorrow is not a *strong* belief. Come to think of it, it's not even very much of a "belief" at all. It is more of an *understanding.* It is conceptual knowledge. The sun coming up tomorrow is something that we *know*, not that we believe. After all, what would be the opposite if you didn't believe it? That the sun will not rise? Do you believe that? Does anyone? How much emotion goes into that? How personal is that?

The idea of the sun rising is a metaphor regarding how we experience the beginning of a new day. It actually does not rise. Since the earth circles the sun, the earth "rises." But even if we take the phrase about the sun rising at face value, this is *knowledge content* about the everyday life on this planet. It is not a strong personal belief about what you can, or cannot, do. That's why, as an *understanding* or fact of *knowledge,* "I believe the sun will rise tomorrow" is an inadequate comparison to a belief.

Bandler would then use that phrase to invite a person to notice how he or she *represents* the sun rising, notice all of the sub-modality features and then to use them to encode a belief that the person wants to strongly believe with the same cinematic features. But beliefs are not just representations vividly encoded with the qualities of reality. Today with all of "the movie magic" that's available through computer generated images we can *see* and *encode* all kinds of things as

real. Yet no matter how many times we repeat the "real" representation, that in itself, will not turn our representations into a belief.

To turn a representation into a belief we have to make a meta-move to a higher level and set a frame of confirmation about the representation. We have to *confirm* what we are *representing* as true, real, factual. We may even need to layer our evidences upon the representation so that we have proof that we have the right to confirm it as true.

All of this highlights the different *dimensions* of our mind. We begin with the *representational* level and then move up to the levels. The first level up is the *meta-state level.* At this level we bring various other thoughts-and-emotions to our first ones and this begins to layer our consciousness making it richer and more complex. With regard to beliefs, we bring confirmation thoughts-and-emotions to our representational thoughts-and-emotions.

It is at the meta-state level that we qualify and texture our states. The quality of our beliefs, the quality of any of our states, the quality even of the coding of our representations are all state-about-states or meta-states. This explains why the Meta-States Model is unique in being able to explain the structure of "magic" in NLP. *All of the "magic" of NLP are meta-stating processes.* Meta-Programs are coalesced meta-states. All of the Meta-Model distinctions about language and linguistics are meta-stating processes regarding the meta-representational system (language). All of the cinematic features that enable us to add finer distinctions and textures to the movies in our mind (sub-modalities) are meta-stating processes.

Above and beyond the meta-state level is the *gestalt dimension.* Something holistic occurs when we meta-state. As mentioned in Meta Reflection #8 (January 15), *meta-states coalesce.* They do not stay "meta" but as a systemic process facilitate the *emergence* of systemic processes —gestalts. Something "more than the sum of the parts" emerge, a whole, a larger phenomena that cannot be explained by adding all of the parts together.

At the gestalt level, we experience the layers of states and frames and all of the multiple meta-levels as *one thing.* As one state. As one experience. Courage, as a gestalt state, is experienced as a single focus and state and not in terms of all of the ingredients that go into it. So with self-esteem, proactivity, responsibility. These complex states are a holoarchy made up of multiple holons (wholes that are parts within larger wholes) yet which we experience as a single phenomenon.

There is, however, yet another dimension of the mind. As human beings, we can also create, process, and operate from concepts. At the highest level of the mind, we have conceptual models, paradigms of reality, intellectual and abstract understandings about things. These are often highly abstract conceptions— hypotheses, premises, presuppositions, computations, etc. They are things like "the sun will rise tomorrow." "$E = MC^2$." "Relationships depend on respect." *Intellectually* we know, understand, accept, go with, and operate from these high level abstract principles. But *emotionally* these do not seem to have much if any somatic affect in our bodies.

So these are not beliefs so much as they are concepts and conceptual reality. They describe another dimension of mind. In the meta-landscape of your mind are these dimensions.

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #14
February 19, 2007

META-PLEASURES

It was early in the days of the development of the *Meta-States* model that I got interested in *meta-pleasures.* Why? How did that come about?

Strangely, it arose from the study of resilience. I say *strangely* because the state of resilience arises when there is pain, when there is a disappointment, a set-back, a trauma. I researched the literature of people who had been through hell and yet bounced back to participate fully in life, to contribute, etc. What I found was that they were able to enjoy life as part of the resilience process.

This was the surprising thing to me. The great majority had learned to find pleasure and joy *even during the time* when they were in the process of bouncing back. That is, it was not the case that they bounced back to life and vitality and *then* rediscovered joy in their life. It was rather the case that *while* in the midst of their pain, trouble, trauma, set-back, knock-down, they had rediscovered pleasures.

The most radical example that I can give you is that of Viktor Frankl. Even in Hitler's death camp, he and his colleagues were able to find and enjoy humor. They were able to take pleasure in the smallest of things, to appreciate, and to acknowledge value. By grim jokes, small acts of human kindness, the smallest delights they were able to experience a kind of meta-pleasures even in the concentration camp.

Nor was this the exception. The people with the most robust strategies for resilience, for bouncing back to life with vitality, those who were able to powerfully return to living with purpose and passion, were those who were able to experience *pleasure* even in the midst of their pain. As they were able to keep the hurt, pain, or evil *out* by refusing the three **p**'s of learned helplessness (personal, permanent, pervasive), they were also able to bring in joy, pleasure, and value.

It wasn't enough that they could protect themselves from taking a distress and making it about themselves (personal), forever in time (permanent) and about every facet of life (pervasive). They were able to do more. *They were able to positively fill their minds, hearts, and lives with joys.* And in doing this they were able to take the simplest of things and *endow it with rich and robust and significant meaning.* And that is the structure of meta-pleasures.

That led to the Meta-Pleasure Pattern that we run in the Meta-States training, *Accessing Personal Genius.* We begin with a simple pleasure: walking on a beach, listening to music, baking break, walking, running, reading a good book, enjoying a conversation, watching a sunrise, etc. and we begin asking *the semantic questions* as meta-questions*:* What does that mean to you? How is that valuable to you? What pleasure do you get from that? How is that enjoyable?

Meta-pleasures are the pleasures that we get from our pleasures. For example, with taking a walk in nature. People typically will say that the pleasure, meaning, value of that is *time alone, relaxation, renewal, in touch with nature,* etc. And when we take each of these as a meta-state of pleasure about the first level pleasure, we get even higher level pleasures: *connection, rejuvenation, sense of purpose, alignment,* etc.

In APG we typically encourage people to run this pattern on ten activities that they find easy to do, for which they are naturally motivated, and which create positive results for them. The reason? To model out their own unique meta-pleasures, meta-motivations. We say that this is a motivation pattern in that it uncovers the person's intuitive and natural higher values and how he or she can add *semantic pleasure or value* to something. The significance of that? If you know how to meta-pleasure yourself around some activities, you can take charge of this process and begin to *spread the pleasure around in your life.*

We do this in *accessing personal genius* because genius is characterized by joy. The totally absorbed state is one of "flow"—delight, fun, enjoyment. And when you *semantically load* an activity with meta-pleasures, you answer the motivation question. That is, you don't have to "work" on your motivation. Motivation is built in.

Long before I came up with that using Meta-States, Abraham Maslow described *meta-motivation* as the level of motivation that naturally occurs when we gratify the lower needs and move into the growth or self-actualization level of experience.

> "Once we've solved the lower problems, the material problems, empirically I insist on the tremendous role of the meta-motivations— the search for truth and excellence and perfection and beauty and justice and ultimate order and ultimate simplicity and harmony and species-hood and brotherhood and the like." (A *Memorial Volume,* 1982, p. 37)

What Maslow specified as the specific meta-motivations that enable to be at our best and unleash our deepest potentials are the very things that most people naturally talk about when they explore the pleasures-of-their-pleasures:

> Truth, excellence, perfection, beauty, justice, order, simplicity, harmony, love, compassion, cooperation, collaboration, etc.

Interesting enough, these are also our values, our highest values. Maslow called them the *being-*values. He used *being* for the realm of life that operates by abundance, growth, self-actualization, and non-insrumentalism. That is, we seek such for themselves. They are not *mean-*values, but *end-*values. They are valuable in and of themselves; they are inherently desirable and delightful. They are their own reward.

So, how's your *meta-motivation*? What have you semantically loaded with so much meaning, significance, value, and pleasure that you naturally and inevitably and intuitively give yourself to it and it's "no problem?" What would you like to meta-pleasure so that you have more pleasure in your life, more vitality, more enjoyment? How's your pleasuring and meta-pleasuring skills? How competent are you at meta-pleasuring yourself and keeping yourself in a delightful and appreciative state even when things aren't going your way?

Here's a key secret about unleashing your potentials —load it up with lots of robust meta-pleasures. Do that and you'll have all the motivation that you'll need because it will be inherently fun, enjoyable, and delightful no matter how much effort and energy you have to put into it!

For more about *Unleashing your own self-actualization —* check out the following:

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #15
February 26, 2007

META-MOTIVATION

If your levels of meta-pleasure define the joy, delight, and basic happiness of your life, then do you know how to uncover the meta-pleasures that you already have? And do you know how to begin to spread the pleasure around? That's what the Meta-Pleasure Pattern in Meta-States is all about, which was the subject of the last *Meta Reflection* (*#13*).

Let me unpack that a little further. What this means is that there is a *logical level* in your mind that we can call *pleasure, joy, enjoyment, delight.* After all, you have the ability to *delight* yourself in things, do you not? And that's a cognitive-affective response. And if you can bring thoughts-and-feelings of *delight* about something, then you can use this to meta-state many other things with delight. You can access *delight* as a state of thoughts, feelings, and physiology and set it as a frame on lots and lots of things.

When you come to think of it, isn't this one of the meta-differences between us? Look around at your family and friends and make a list of all of the things that they *delight* in which you do not? Does someone delight in jogging every day? In cleaning the house to make it impeccable? Do you have anyone in your family or friends who loves mathematics? Puzzles? Working in the garden? Cooking? Handling receipts? Being licked in the mouth by a dog?
— What *pleasures* do they have which are your *tortures*?
— Which of their *pleasures* would be your distress?
— And vise versa, which of your *pleasures* would turn them off and be their stress?

Meta-pleasures also show the principle that all of our higher logical levels are but "facets of the same diamond." What I'm calling *pleasures* and *meta-pleasures* can also be viewed through the lens of *values, meanings, significances.* This explains why Neuro-Semanticists will often use the Meta-Pleasure pattern to uncover a person's "values," that is, what a person values as important and significant. Your meta-pleasures are the experiences and meanings that you value; they are your values.

When I now tie this to Self-Actualization Theory as developed by Maslow, we begin with the fact that we humans experience *levels of motivation.* In the area of the lower needs, our motivation is mostly an *away-from motivation.* At this level our "needs" are deficiencies. We need, and are motivated, because we *lack* something essential. If you've ever been without food for two-weeks, then you truly know about hunger. It only takes a couples days to feel the need for water. And only seconds for air. We experience these survival deficiency needs with desperation. And when the need it gratified, it goes away.

So with our lower needs for safety and security, love and affection, and esteem and regard. When we don't have what we require, our whole organism desperately reaches out to get it. And when the need is gratified, the need goes away. This describes *deficiency motivation.*

This, by the way, seems to be the motivation that most managers, business owners, politicians, economists, etc. operate from. Assuming *Theory X* about human nature, they build structures in business, economics, society, etc. that assume people are motivated when they experience a lack or a threat and lose their motivation when there's no lack or threat. [Douglas McGregor (1965, *The Human Side of Enterprise*) introduced Theory X and theory Y of human nature in management and business, Maslow later added Theory Z.]

Yet there is a higher motivation. At the top of the hierarchy of need prepotency, Maslow put the *growth needs* which he also called self-actualization needs, expressive needs, and *being* needs. These describe a different kind of motivation, *abundance motivation.* Here we do not "need" in the sense of deficiency, we "need" in the same of expressiveness— we need to express ourselves, grow, self-actualize, and to "be."

The difference of this motivational level is that here gratification of the need does not make it go away. Gratify the self-actualization needs and you want more! Needs at this level cannot be satisfied. Instead, satisfaction increases capacity! This is a *toward-motivation,* toward all that we value and toward all that fulfills our highest nature. So unlike the negative addiction that occurs with the lower needs, here we experience a positive addiction that makes us better, more resourceful, more creative, more of who we can be. This is meta-motivation.

And it is *meta-motivation,* as a high level toward motivation, that truly drives and facilitates the unleashing of potentials. Certainly, we unleash capabilities via deficiency motivation. After all, "Necessity is [still] the mother of invention." Yet above and beyond it is curiosity, play, experimenting around, stumbling upon fortunate accidents, etc. that unleashes our highest potentials. The fact is that those who persist in creativity and innovation in continuing to create year after year are not those driven to it by lack and need, but those who create for the fun of it, for the curiosity of it, to just explore what is there and what's possible. At this level, you can never lose your motivation.

Meta-motivation describes living for and pursing the *being*-values for the sheer joy and experience. When we move to this area, we begin to experience *end-values.* We experience and enjoy things, events, and people for themselves, without any other motive. Rather than experiencing something as a *means*-value, as a means to get to somewhere else, we enjoy the experience for itself. In fact, we can then even develop the ability to *sacralize* anything, that is, transform mean-values into end-values.

At the level of the meta-motivations, the more you devote yourself to one of the *being*-values and gratify that value, the more you want it. The motivation does not go away. It does not weaken. In fact, it grows stronger. You grow stronger. You develop more capacity for it—truth, love, beauty, synergy, cooperation, collaboration, peace, excellence, goodness, etc. Now your

unleashing not only creates a sense of fulfillment, but leaves you with the sense of goodness, "The world is good." "Life is good." "Life is meaningful." At this level, what we call *motivation* is no longer a problem. It is just the way we move through life. Whereas once we might have had to "work on our motivation," motivation is now a given. Now we experience it as life passion, vitality, meaningfulness, inspiration, even "spirit." So, how's your meta-motivations? Are you ready to *tap and unleash* your mea-motivations?

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #16
March 5, 2007

THE SPIRIT DIMENSION
OF META
PART I

Meta-Land is the land of *spirit*. That's why the four meta-dimensions of Neuro-Semantics are also the "spirit" dimension. And while this involves what we call philosophy and religion—Neuro-Semantics is not religion or philosophy. *Neuro-Semantics* is a model of human functioning, it is a model that *models* how we operate and experience our life with an eye on developing the processes and tools for mobilizing resources to facilitate full self-actualization so that we can *perform* our highest *meanings*.

If that's what Neuro-Semantics is about, *how* does it relate to "spirit?" What does it mean that there is a "spirit" dimension in the higher levels of our mind-body system? Over the years, I have received a great many questions about Neuro-Semantics and the "spiritual" dimension of life. In this and the next Reflections, I'll attempt to address some of these questions.

Modeling "Spirit"
The experience that we call "spirit" and "spiritual" is obviously part of subjective experience.
>   Yet, what does this mean?
>   How should we think about "spirit" and "spiritual?"
>   If we were to model "spirit" as in the human spirit or the qualities and experience of being "spiritual," how would we go about it?
>   What is the Neuro-Semantic take on this dimension of life?

Since "spirit" and "spiritual" are *nominalizations*, noun-like terms that falsely imply some kind of *thing*, then what are the actual *processes* (verbs) that we are referring to? Similar to the nominalizations, "mind" and "thoughts," when we de-nominalize these terms we come back to the non-specific process of "thinking" which we can then specify as representing, editing an image, creating a context by setting a frame-of-reference, etc.

In a general way, the idea of *spirit* efers to that which is *higher* in us— the meta-levels of our mind-body experiences. This is one of its meanings, something that is "above and beyond." And where does this come from? The simplest explanation is that we have a sense of spirit based upon our ability to *transcend* to higher levels of awareness. We call this higher sense of ourselves *spirit*. Neuro-Semantically, we are of course describing the experience of reflexivity— *reflecting back onto ourselves* with additional thoughts-and-feelings. So it is in the process of *reflecting back,* stepping back, meta-stating, rising up and applying our mental-and-emotional responses to — that creates our sense of transcendence and spirit.

If we are *biologically* wired with levels in our brain anatomy (which we have) which, in turn, allows us to experience *reflexivity* so that we can *step back* from ourselves (in our mind-emotions) and *transcend* our current experience and move to higher levels of awareness—then "spirituality" is part and parcel of the *human* experience. This makes it a legacy for all of us, which probably explains why all humans are "spiritual" and have to invent some "religion" to explain this transcendence. Most literally "spirit" means "breath" hence, in-spirited, hence energy.

It is in this sense that all of Meta-Land, all of the meta-dimensions, is what we might call "the spiritual dimension" of life. Here we experience the higher life above and beyond mere survival. Here we move into concepts, meanings, and understandings of things "not seen, not heard, not felt, not smelt, not tasted." We are at a conceptual level that defines and qualifies our "spirit."

And these higher frames generate our *attitude*, which, of course, is another use of "spirit." Sometimes, when we talk about someone, we say things like, "What kind of a spirit does he have?" "What's her spirit today? Is she still down?" *Spirit* in this sense works as a synonym for *attitude,* for a person's *disposition* of mind or of emotion. We even use this language to describe a group attitude, a cultural attitude. We speak about a victimhood spirit, a depressed spirit (disspirited), an inspired spirit (full of spirit, inspirited), a joyful spirit, a playful spirit, etc. We even talk about the "atmosphere" of a business, home, group in terms of spirit. "I like the spirit of that restaurant." "They have a good spirit there."

As we use our reflexivity to transcend our current state and include it within a higher attitude, belief, perception, understanding, value, etc., the "spirit" dimension of Meta enables us to ask the "spiritual" or existential (existing) questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? What is this all about? What's the meaning of life? Asking such existential questions has been the domain of religion, philosophy, and psychology. Here we enter into the semantic states of "time," "meaning," "purpose," "destiny," and a hundred other abstractions. And it is regarding these abstractions that we develop various beliefs and belief systems.

Spirit and "Time"
"Time" as another nominalization does not exist except in meta-land. We create "time" as we represent things that have happened, things that are happening, and that will happen. This gives us a flow of events "through time" and so a time line or time channel. Then, as we step back, reflexively contemplate "time" itself, we ask additional temporal questions, the *big* questions. When did it all start? How? By whom? These are also spiritual questions. Only we human beings are able to enter "time" as thoroughly as a "spiritual" dimension.

Maslow used another facet of time to define spiritual. He said "spiritual" means seeing life *"under the aspect of eternity."* It involves being able to take a long-term perspective of life and actions. Animals, who do not live in "time," do not do this. Nor do children. Nor do people who only live in the concrete world. It is an unique experience for us as we rise above the immediate, here-and-now and think in terms of what shall be.

The Sacred

We also use of the words "spirit" and "spiritual" to convey the conceptual idea of the special, the sacred, the holy, the sense of awe, the feeling of being touched by something that's more than the human, what we create. This takes us back to the original meaning of the world *holy,* it literally refers to what is *whole*, integrated, all-of-one-piece, not dichtomized. *Holy* refers to what is whole, well, and healthy. Psychologically, it is operating fully, being a"fully functioning" person (Carl Rogers).

So what is the spiritual life is the life of love, compassion, empathy, and care. It is the life of self-awareness, self-control, and self-discipline (emotional intelligence). It is the life of proactivity, responsibility, and accountability. It is the life of openness, honesty, and truth. It is the life of vulnerability, forgiveness, and healing. It is the life of abundance, giving, and extending oneself for the benefit of others. It is the life of goodness, altruism, and virtue. In all of this, are we in the realm of psychology or theology? Or, could it be both?

In Neuro-Semantics, the "spiritual" life is the higher or meta-life. It is the life of the grown-up or mature person who thinks in an integrated, holistic, and systemic way about things. The spiritual life is one of transcendence, peak experiences, and higher values. It is about being able to embrace the unknown and mystery. It is to feel appreciation and gratitude, to embrace the creaturely feeling of being limited, ignorant about so much, humble, to stand in awe before the *mysterium tremendum.*

To be spiritual is to be god-like in accepting life and reality as it is. It is the sense that life matters, that it is ultimately meaningful, that the universe is friendly (Albert Einstein), that there is good and evil; healthy and unhealthy, that we are ultimate responsible for our choices and actions, to experience self-transcendence in a peak experience. Theologian Paul Tillich defined spiritual and religion as "one's ultimate concerns," and "concern with ultimate concerns."

In all of this, "spiritual" is part and parcel of being human. So, the question is not whether we are "spiritual" beings in search of meaning, purpose, identity, and love. The question is rather *the quality* of our spirit and of our spirituality. Is our spirit healthy, beautiful and clean? Or is it unhealthy, ugly, and distorted?

In all of this, I have not spoken about "religion" at all— about the specific beliefs and belief systems that characterize the historical religions which have emerged to address our spirit and spiritual quest. So here is the Neuro-Semantic distinction— "spirit" and "spiritual" is built into our biology and nature. We are *spiritual* to the extent that we can "go meta," use our self-reflexive consciousness to enter into the higher life. "Religion" inevitably follows as our beliefs and belief systems *about* our spirituality. It is how we form and construct our understandings and maps about what we experience.

The next *Meta Reflections* will explore beliefs, ethics, values, and meaning as part and parcel of the "spirit" dimension.

THE SPIRIT DIMENSION
OF META

PART II

Neuro-Semantics, as a field, is about *performing* our highest and most exciting *meanings.* To perform our highest meanings speaks about our beliefs. It speaks about the beliefs that inspire us, the meanings that energize us with excitement. So as a discipline of modeling experience, we use the tools of Neuro-Semantics to understand our beliefs about the higher dimensions of life, what we call the realm of "spirit" and the "spiritual" state. We can do that because we know that it is beliefs all the way up, beliefs about beliefs.

In this Neuro-Semantics has no commitment to any one form of spirituality; it has no alliance with any religion, although people of many religions and beliefs do use the models and processes. Conversely, we can also use Neuro-Semantics as a modeling tool to evaluate the health or unhealth, the accuracy or inaccuracy, the quality or lack of quality, the value or lack of value of beliefs, belief systems, forms of spirituality, and religion.

How do we go about doing that? First we establish our criteria and make them explicit. Of course, as we do, we acknowledge that whatever we set as our standards, values, and understandings are our *maps about such.* There is no infallibility although popes of all sizes and shapes are constantly attempting to claim infallibility. No map is the territory. Maps, even invisible mental ones in our heads are just maps. And a map is only as good as what it enables us to do things and facilitates the journey that we want to make.

This distinction enables us to identify the primary thing that turns any belief toxic. Namely, *believing* in our *beliefs.* Believing and even having layers of beliefs about our beliefs is one thing, but *believing* in the ultimate reality and absolute rightness of our beliefs is another. That's what creates fanatics and fundamentalists. And a fundamentalist fanatic is a very different creature from a person whose beliefs keep him or her opens, curious, explorative, in dialogue, fallible, and modest. It is not belief or believing that separates people, that separates a scientist from a religious person, that separates an atheist from a religious person. *We are all believers.* The scientist believes in the scientific methodology, the atheist believes in the presence of no God.

When it comes to beliefs and belief systems, we all have them. In fact, we have hundreds, even thousands of beliefs. We have beliefs about ourselves, others, the world, business, wealth, health,

criticism, fun, holidays, etc. Whenever we *confirm a thought* about anything, we begin to believe. We believe that such is "the way it is." [see *Sub-Modalities Going Meta*]

We do not just make pictures in the theater of our mind and then add sounds, smells, tastes, and sensations, we have higher level ideas about those images— what they mean, what they suggest, what they demand of us. Beliefs don't even have to be true to be believed. How about that? How many things have you believed that you now know were not true at all? How many stupid, false, and limiting beliefs have you experienced? What have you believed that stopped you from following your vision, from being true to yourself, from taking chances, from speaking up, etc.?

And because we all believe, we are all religious. We all have ideas about life, about the universe, about purpose and destiny. And those beliefs, those assumptions, guide the way we live our lives. Do we believe in values, morality, ethics? Do we believe in being fair, loving, good, and kind? Do we believe in responsibility, choices, consequences? Beliefs can be ferreted out in behaviors. That is, we can start with a list of our behaviors, the things we do, the way we spend out time, energy, and money. The way we relate, talk, run our business, exercise, eat, etc. and we can backtrack to the beliefs that drive our lifestyle.

Beliefs are not only *confirmed thoughts* but are also *the things of importance that we value.* Do you exercise and eat heathy? I bet you not only *believe* in health and fitness, I bet you *value* such as a critically important facet of life.

When begin *believe* in our *beliefs,* our beliefs become toxic. Believe your beliefs and you close your mind, end the exploration, and become a fanatic. Now, you may even refuse to use the term "belief," and just say, "I don't believe that, I *know* it." This has been and continues to be one of the greatest dangers facing mankind— politically and internationally. It was bad enough that Hitler believed in his racist ideas. But worse, he *believed* in his *beliefs.* That's what made him a fundamentalist and impossible to work with.

The belief system of the fanatic then has this structure: he *believes in his beliefs.* This is true for Moslem fundamentalists, Christian fundamentalists, science fundamentalists, political fundamentalists, environmental fundamentalists, etc. It is the attitude or spirit of assuming one is absolutely right *and* that being right gives one the right to impose it on others.

Now something else tragically occurs. As the believer is no longer believing so much in the object of the belief, but the belief itself. The person now believes in his ideas, creed, mental maps than the object of the belief, even God. This is a form of idolatry. The *belief* is valued more than anything else, more than love, compassion, responsibility, ecology, kindness, equality, dignity—for the fundamentalist nothing is more important than the survival and expression of his belief.

Fundamentalism used airplanes as missiles on Sept. 11. Fundamentalism bombs abortion clients to kill doctors for killing. Fundamentalism fed the intolerance of Hitler, Mussolini, Saddam, and every other dictator. Fundamentalism ruins marriages, destroys businesses, and sabotages

communication.

What frees us from that kind of fanaticism is the realization that *our beliefs are beliefs— fallible maps conceived in a fallible brain.* When you know that, instead of believing in your beliefs, you'll keep an open mind to exploring the foundational facts, exploring with a humble attitude that you could be wrong, and dialoguing with others to discover what others know that you don't.

I learned a trick for separating the fanatics some years ago. I lived in town where almost weekly someone was knocking on my door wanting to share their beliefs, to give me their pamphlets, and show me the truth. "Great!" I'd say. "Come right on in, *if you can be wrong* and are willing to have an open-mind and dialogue with my truth as well. I'll be open-minded to your truth to the extent that you could be wrong. So, *if you could be wrong* in your beliefs, step across this threshold."

Talk about a way to stop a fundamentalist cold in his steps! Typically, because I set the frame, *if you could be wrong step across the threshold and let's explore*, they would stay outside and argue that they are right, no question about it. "Absolutely?" I would ask. "Totally and completely and you know the absolute truth and you could not be wrong?" Some would hesitate but eventually nod yes, others were ignorant enough about their own ignorance and fallibility to say, "Yes, of course." Ah, they believed in their beliefs!

I would then dismiss them. "I'm not interested in talking to an infallible god this morning, I was kind of hoping for a good fallible human being. If you ever step down from being an infallible know-it-all pope and embrace you own ignorance, come and see me."

THE SPIRIT DIMENSION
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PART III

If, in the dimension of spirit, there are beliefs and belief systems, and beliefs all the way up, and beliefs about all kinds of things. For example, there are beliefs about values, beliefs about ethics, beliefs about origin and source, beliefs about ending or teleology, beliefs about God or Intelligence or the Ultimate concern, beliefs about human nature, and so on. And these are the kinds of beliefs that make up the "spiritual" facet of our lives and that make up the content of our "religion."

What is the Neuro-Semantic position on all of this? There is a two-fold position. And this two-fold focus leads to two very different responses.

> First, the area where we take no position. As we consider this dimension of life where all these beliefs operate, we are dealing with beliefs, concepts, understandings and do not have access to the *actual references.* So, without any *actual referent,* there's nothing to model or study.

> Second, the area where we can take a position. Yet because these are beliefs, we can model *the beliefs* themselves, we can model the people who hold such beliefs, and we can model out the result of these beliefs.

First, No Actual References
In Neuro-Semantics we take no position about the *content* of beliefs about God, or any given belief about any given religion. All of that belongs to theology or philosophy and is not the focus, direction, or purpose of Neuro-Semantics. We respect that the mapping and modeling tools of Neuro-Semantics (including NLP, General Semantics, etc.) is for mapping *human experience*—the subjective experience of people. We leave it to other fields to figure out as best they can the content of these domains.

Second, Modeling Belief Experiences
What we can model are the beliefs and experiences of people —the beliefs that enrich their lives, expand their choices, and enable them to be loving, joyful, healthy, creative, informed, contributing, etc. And we can also model the beliefs and experiences of the beliefs that reduce the

quality of life, limit possibilities, induce negative states that undermine sanity and health. Then, from those modeling experiences, we can deduce that there are beliefs about such "spiritual" things that support and enhance life, are ecological for relationships, and those that do not. Yet even when we do that, it's important to remember that this does not establish the truth or validity of those beliefs, only their *usefulness,* their effectiveness in human personality, and whether they tend to support health or to be toxic.

We can model peak experiences— when men and women are at their best, when they feel that they are living at their best, being their best, having a sense of transcendence over time, space, culture, others, etc. And from modeling these peak experiences, we can identify the things that seem to support a "spiritual" way of life, that is, living with a sense of meaning, purpose, direction; living to create, contribute, and leave the world in a better way; living with passion and joy that enriches others.

We can even model people of "high ethics" to identify how they think about ethics, what they believe about how to treat others, what particular criteria and standards contribute to an ethical lifestyle. Does honesty, openness, flexibility, care, empathy, respect, etc.? Which are the highest in priority when there's a conflict between these values? We can model how our self-reflexive consciousness that creates our ethics, levels of ethics, growth and development of ethics, cultural ethics and development, and how they are effectively languaged.

We can model the ethical beliefs that seem to create the best kind of social relationships, that lead to an entire society being supportive of human life— creating respect, honesty, responsibility, etc. We can model the relationship between psychological growth and ethics, religious beliefs and ethics, ownership of personal responsibility and ethics. We can model ethical decision-making, how it works, those who seemed skilled in it, those who do not. We could model the ethics of the "criminal mind" and those with little sense of others, empathy, and "conscience."

We could model ethics in the light of self-actualization and the *being*-values. We could model those who have a healthy sense of "ought-ness" within them (as in, What ought I to do? How ought I to live?) and compare that to those who have an unhealthy sense of "oughtness."

In all of these ways, Neuro-Semantics, *as a tool and set of models* for discovering the inner structure and process of experience, could offer a contribution. But in itself, Neuro-Semantics is not a "spirituality," not a religion, not a philosophy, and not an ethical code. We have an ethical code that we have accepted about operating from a spirit of inquiry, abundance, professionalism, openness, responsibility, accountability, etc. But again, that's not what Neuro-Semantics *is.*

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #19
March 26, 2007

THE SPIRIT DIMENSION
OF META

PART IV

In the current Meta Reflections I've been attempting to answer the question about the relationship of Neuro-Semantics to "spirituality" and "religion." As most people notice in Neuro-Semantic trainings, because we invite people to *rise up above and beyond* the primary state to their higher mental-and-emotional states, many of the processes feel like a "spiritual" activity. This is especially true of the *intentionality pattern*, but equally true of *meta-pleasure, exploring a matrix, meaning enrichment, opening-up a belief system,* etc.

I've been referring to this as the *spirit dimension of meta* (*Reflection #15*). It is the dimension of *in-spir-ation*—passion, hope, dreams, purpose, destiny, direction, intentionality, etc. It is also the dimension of "beliefs"— those mental maps that we map about the meaning and purpose of life, who we are, what we're up to, etc. And it is in this sense that in the dimension of spirit, it is beliefs all the way up.

Now in this dimension of spirit, intention, and belief, there's another factor at work—*valuing*. That's because at the heart of the good life, the "spiritual" life, is "values." Why? Because it is in *valuing* or having *values* that we become "spiritual" persons. Recognizing and living by values raises our lives above the lowest levels of just surviving to living for something more, for something higher. Here we map out "the good life" and how to create a life well lived.

Of course, this sounds like "values" are things when they are not. The false-noun of "values" is actually a nominalization and is derived from the verb, *to value, to treat as important, as meaningful, to see the worth and significance of something.* So what we label as "values" actually is a state— a state of mind, of emotion, and even of body. Consider that. If it speaks about a particular state of mind, *what is the mental state of valuing*?
> If it speaks about a sate of emotion, then what is that emotional state?
> And if it speaks about a state of body, what is the physiology and neurology when we are valuing?

The answer may seem strange at first, but that's only because we so overuse the vague nominalization "values" and don't map valuing as a dynamic and living process. The answer is that the mental, emotional, and neurological state is that of *appreciating, sacralizing, seeing and feeling the everyday world in the aspect of eternity* and so, *seeing and feel gratitude.*

How about that? Actually this gives us a way to find our true values. What do you appreciate? What does your mind and heart feel grateful for? Where do you invest your time, energy, and money in? What do you treat as significant and important? What do you sacralize? What do you worship? Is it money, sex, power, things, status, approval, acceptance, no conflict, health, fitness, superiority, being 'right,' putting others down, growing, seeing others grow, etc.?

Values are not things, but processes. Given that, where does the process of seeing and investing with significance show up in your life? What magazines do you spend money on? What television shows do you invest time in? What activities?

It is in *valuing* that we express ourselves as "spiritual" beings.   It is in seeing wonder and worth that we are inevitably worshiping beings. Worship doesn't just occur in Churches and Mosques. It occurs wherever a human heart admires, adores, appreciates, and feels the joy of significance. So we worship leaders, movie stars, athletes, the rich and famous. So we worship money, status, and power.

We even "worship" models, beliefs, and ideas. We are a worshiping species. That's because we inevitably look around to search for value, importance, and significance. It is part and parcel of our passion for meaning. If nothing meant anything, if we didn't need to do what's meaningful, we would not feel the call to the special, the sacred, the holy, the glorious, the admirable, and the awesome.

Valuing then is the heart of spirituality. It is the essence spiritual thing you do. When you value, you look to find what matters, what makes a difference, what makes life and experiences special. And this is what drives every form of celebration. The heart pulse of celebrating is that of acknowledging value. It happens whenever we acknowledge, complement, and praise someone. It happens when we throw a party for winning, returning home, having a birthday, and just about any other occasion we can invent!

And if *valuing, seeing value, adding value* lies at the heart of spirituality, then even business, enterprise, and commerce can be spiritual. After all, what creates "wealth" other than *adding value*? It is when we create something that solves a problem, adds a benefit, invents a new tool or process, gives a service, etc. that we are doing what builds a successful business. Here, even capitalism, as an economic process, can be performed as a spiritual act. If we are adding value through our products and services, through the information, innovations, and experiences that we are offering— we are doing something spiritual— adding value to people and making the world a better place.

How then does Neuro-Semantics relate to "spirit, spiritual, and spirituality?" We do so by de-nominalizing what actually occurs in our mind-body-emotion system when we believe, value, intend, that builds up our sense of inspiration and that addresses our higher self-actualization needs for hoping, believing, intending, contributing, making a difference, creating value, etc.

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #20
April 2, 2007

THE SPIRIT DIMENSION
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PART V

Your *Being*-ness — Your Spirituality

There is *doing,* there is *having,* and there is *being.* The first two of these are easy to understand and experience. The third one is difficult. In fact, *doing* and *having* is where our minds, our consciousness normally and naturally go. Our brains go *outward* to the outside world to detect the environment, and to scan what's happening around us. We notice the results we're getting from what we are *doing* and the things which that allows us to *have.* And that's how we determine if we're succeeding or not, achieving our outcomes or not.

Being, that's where the challenge comes. *Being* refers to existing with what *is,* and so implies first witnessing what is. That is, just observing and noticing what is and *being* with it without defending against it or seeking to escape it. *Being* with also implies acceptance. That is, just welcoming it into our awareness, our world, our life. Now acceptance is not resignation. It is not condoning. It is not permission. It is just acknowledgment of what is. Because this ends the internal fight, it takes a lot of ego-strength.

Ego-strength, the ability to witness and accept what *is*, what exists, without falling apart, without caving in, and without activating the defense and escape mechanisms to protect a fragile ego that would prefer to live in a world of wishful thinking, magical thinking, and childish thinking. Ego-strength is a sign of development, actually meta-development of one's inner world, and enables us to face reality so that we can then deal with it and take effective action.

Being begins with witnessing and accepting, but does not end there. To truly enter into the meta-realm of *being*, we also have to use our meaning-making skills to *appreciate*, or to use Maslow's terminology, to *sacralize* all of life. What does this mean? *Sacralizing* is the state of *being* where we can find value, wonder, awe, significance, meaning, and importance in anything, in everything. That is, to see things in the aspect of eternity and to give it rich significance so that we sense and feel its *meaningfulness.*

This is spirituality. When you can do this, you are no longer living in a meaningless universe, a secular world that has no more significance than *doing* and *having.* You have moved to a higher realm, a higher dimension of experience, a higher realm of *being.* And from this higher place, you are able to feel inspired (in-*spirit*-ed) in living.

Maslow described this realm as the realm of *being* that describes the "growth" motivation of self-actualization. He contrasted it with the realm of *deficiency* which describes life at the lower needs. In the higher or *being*-realm we experience the *being*-needs and so think and feeling using *being*-cognition. This contrasts with the *deficiency*-needs and *deficiency*-cognition of the lower needs.

The *being*-values also reflect what every major religion and most philosophies have argued for over thousands of years: truth, goodness, beauty, unity (wholeness), dichotomy transcendence, aliveness, uniqueness, perfection, necessity, order, simplicity, richness, effortlessness, playfulness, self-sufficiency, meaningfulness. This also is the place where we become more truly human.

Another contrast with *being*-ness is *instrumentality*. When we operate in an instrumental way, we are looking at the instruments (tools, processes, patterns, models, technology) that enables us to reach our end-goals. Instrumental goals are the steps and stages that enable us to get there. Instrumentality, we go to work, make money, pay our taxes, follow the rules about driving, etc. Generally we do these things *not* for the experience itself, but for the results we obtain.

Now thinking instrumentally and operating instrumentally is part and parcel of being successful, of achieving our objectives, of making things happen in our lives, and of being human. But being human involves so much more than instrumentality. The person who makes *instrumentality* the purpose of life becomes a "human doing," rather than a human being. The person who does that then evaluates and judges life in terms of instrumental goals. That then becomes a very toxic thing. Then, if a person isn't succeeding in terms of goals, one feels like a failure *as a person.*

Yet life is not only about instrumental goals. Yet at the lower need levels, at the level of our survival, safety, social, and self needs—we *have to* achieve certain things. If we are not effectively instrumental at that level we suffer physically, economically, and psychologically. So we need to be instrumental, yet life is also about *being-needs*. It is about learning how to *be* within ourselves and with others. When we move to this level, the "modal operators" change from necessity to possibility. This is part of spirituality as defined by almost every theology and philosophy. At *being*-ness we experience "peak" experiences that are typically characterized by a purpose-lessness, a pure *being*-ness.

The external context of these experiences hardly matter at all. We can have these peak experiences at any time and in any place. That's because the quality of the experience is a *being*-experience. Inside, we transcend time and space, even self, others, environment, causality, etc. We enter into an eternal moment, a perfect moment and whatever the engagement—we are totally present. If it is holding a newborn baby, if it is enjoying a sunrise, if it is having a fierce conversation, it it is walking on a beach, if it is playing tennis, if it is holding a loved one, if it is being quiet in the presence of another person. The event that we're engaged in is not the key. The key is *being* there. It is *being* present—fully and completely present as we are *being with* the people and activities that we're engaged with. Such makes life spiritually meaningful.

L. Michael Hall

META-DEVELOPMENT

Life is the adventure of development. At every age, whether 21 or 50 or 100, *we are never finished.* There's always more to learn, to experience, to discover, to contribute, and to become. Isn't this exciting? Of all species, we of the human species are the most incomplete, not only at birth, but throughout our lifespan. It is because we are born without instincts, without the specific content knowledge for knowing how to be human, that human life is all about learning and changing. *Being* human is what we have to discover and invent. And becoming *fully human, fully alive* — this is the drive within all of us that we call self-actualization.

Self-Actualization theory, as developed by Maslow, recognizes that we are born to *develop, to unfold, to actualize our potentials, and to become what we are born to become.* We are born with an inner drive for unleashing more and more of our potentials. How do you experience this drive? How fully do you embrace this? What is your next level of development?

In fact, we now know that we can continue to grow, learn, develop, unfold, and actualize more and more of our potentials throughout *all* of the stages of life. Yet while we *can*, this is not inevitable. With our powers, we can also ignore this inner call. We can deny it. We can repress it so that it goes away.

If it is our nature to develop and we lack the specific instinctual details, then a great deal of the human adventure is about discovering *how* to fully develop and *what* to more fully develop. Yet what do you think about the idea of always being unfinished? What do you feel about the fact of all of life being about ongoing development? Does this intimidate or thrill you? Does it put you off or does it turn you on?

One secret about life is that *life,* as development, *occurs on levels.* First there is the development of our life style. This concerns how we live, what we do, who we associate with, and all of the first level of development that takes care of our lower needs (survival, safety, social, and self needs). Most of us live all of our lives on this level—getting by, finding work that we enjoy, figuring out how to get along with others, etc.

Yet there is more. There is our *meta-development*—developing *our inner world of meanings*—the beliefs that empower and enhance us as we move through life, the meanings that give us direction and purpose.

Meta-development is the ability to *reflect* on our experiences, to *edit* our inner representations, to

examine our inner perceptions, to *detect* the frames that we operate from, and to *step back* to the choice point where we can truly choose how we want to live. This is the place of true human *freedom*—the freedom to choose, to assume responsibility, to architect our future, and to become the *author* of our own experiences. NLP speaks about this as "running your own brain." In Neuro-Semantics we speak about it as developing our highest executive self and states, the states that facilitate our full self-actualization.

How highly developed are your meta-abilities? What is the next step in your own meta-development? What are you seeking to actualize in yourlife at this stage of your development? What new possibilities are you awakening to that you will work to unleash in the coming months?

Our meta-development involves the higher levels of change beyond merely enhancing our performances. They involve our developmental changes and our transformational changes. *Developmental* changes involve changes in your beliefs, meanings, understandings, decisions, etc. *Transformational* changes refer to changes in our direction, orientation, and purpose. It refers to when a paradigm shift occurs and we begin living for something new.

This is the realm of "spirit" and is related to what I've been writing about as the dimensions of "spirit." If the terms "spirit" and "spiritual" refers to feeling an *inspiration* about life, self, others, growth, etc. (in-spirit-ed), then this is the passion that drives *spirituality*. It is the high drive to find meaning so we can live meaningfully. Maslow used these words (menaing and spiritual) synonymously.

> "If there were no joy in life, it would not be worth living. ... Life has to have meaning, has to be filled with moments of high intensity that validate life and make it worthwhile. (*Journals,* p. 180)

> "The higher nature (or higher life-spiritual life) emerges to be seen clearly. Was it there all the time? Yes, as a universal potentiality. That is, every human being has within his nature a yearning for truth, beauty, goodness, justice, order, humor, completion, etc. (or a preference for the true rather than the false, or to see rather than to be blinded, etc.), but this emerges only as lower basic needs are satisfied — i.e., under the very best conditions." (*Journals*, p. 47)

How's your meta-development? Are you developing your at your highest levels? As a meaning-maker, are you living and experiencing some really rich meanings, robust meanings, and inspiring meanings that pull you out of bed every morning ready or the day?

L. Michael Hall

META-TRANCE

When people first experience a meta-state process, it's not uncommon for them to comment about how much it feels like a trance. "Wow! That was kind of hypnotic." "I feel like I've been somewhere else." And no wonder! As a state-*about*-a-state, meta-states take us inside and so we naturally *transition* from the outside world to the inside world.

It gets even more trancy as we move up the levels. Consider one of the key patterns we have in Neuro-Semantics, the Intentionality Pattern. With this pattern we essentially meta-state ourselves with *intentionality* all the way up. Here we begin with the real world—the world of physics where our experience is grounded in the empirical qualities of sights, sounds, sensations, and smells. Then we ask a series of meta-questions:

> "Is that important to you? Why is that important? What are you doing that for? What's in the back of your mind about that?"

To answer these questions, we go inside. We move into the world of symbols and communication, the world of representations and codes. Here there are no pickup trucks and fast food, no tree or yards that need mowing, no coconuts or snicker candy bars, no bosses or jobs, no faxes or reports, no gyms or court houses. These things do not enter the inside-world. This is a world of maps, ideas, thoughts, and facsimiles of the things "out there." Into this world tangible objects cannot enter. In this world there are only messages and messages-of-messages. This is the world of hypnosis. It is the world of meta-states.

We enter this world by thought, by re-presenting to ourselves the sights, sounds, sensations, and smells of the real world. This is the inner world of our minds, of our Matrix where we give birth to our sense of reality, our model of the world. It seems real and it is real-to-us when we are in there. It is also real to our nervous-system-and-brain that creates it and that will attempt to *real-ize* the messages that we send to ourselves. Yet it is not the real world of physics, it is the invented or constructed world of meaning —layers and layers of meanings.

We can go further into it. When we ask the meta-questions of intention repeatedly,

> "So that is important? Great. How is it important? What's your intention in wanting that? What will that get you? And when you get that fully and completely in just the way you want it, what will that give you that's even more important to you?"

When we then begin to answer these questions, we transition to a yet higher level of consciousness as we go into more of a trance state. Our answers even become trancy— vague,

general, conceptual. We want peace, oneness, connection, purpose, fulfillment, authenticity, contribution, etc. To move up the meta-state levels is to enter into a hypnotic state. In this, *all meta-states are hypnotic structures and facilitate hypnotic experiences.* This means that the Matrix also is a hypnotic state. And when we complete the communication loop to bring the meta-state back down to the primary level so we can interface the world with it —our meta-state sets up hypnotic suggestions, commands, and post-hypnotic behaviors for us.

Given this, *every state of hypnosis is actually a meta-state.* It involves layers of meta-states that have been built up in our mind as we have gone inside and created various ideas, images, and suggestions. The *depth* of the hypnosis is the *height* of our meta-stating frames. Knowing this about meta-states now enables us to examine our states and behaviors that have a hypnotic feel to them and that do not serve us well and re-formulate them so they do enhance our lives in releasing our highest potentials.

Trance states are meta-states and meta-states are trance experiences. Knowing that, you probably won't be surprised to know that one of the things we often do in some of our trainings (Master Practitioner) is to have people take their genius meta-stating process from *Accessing Personal Genius* (APG) and write out the genius state as an induction. Ah, an induction! As in "a hypnotic induction" that creates and facilitates the meta-state structure.

So in the Intentionality Pattern, when you meta-state yourself with intention upon intention, it takes you to your highest frames of purpose, destiny, identity, legacy, etc. This generally induces a very deep hypnotic state, or shall I say, a very high hypnotic state. You go higher-deeper within your inner world, internally seeing your highest meanings, highest purposes, and feeling inspired by the inner vision. Then *with all of that in mind,* when you bring it to the interface point and see your everyday activities *with those eyes*— you set up a post-hypnotic suggestion for how to move through the world. It creates a higher level way of *being in the world.*

That's meta-trance. That's trancing out with your highest and best meta-states. That's more up, up, and away from the first primary state to the levels of your meta-mind which is generally outside-of-consciousness. How are you at meta-trance? What are your best meta-trances for work, relationships, health, exercise, creativity, wealth, etc.? What is Neuro-Semantics about? What will *Meta-States* do for you? It will create great *meta-trances*— trances of genius, of love, of passionate commitment to things that matter to you, and of unleashing potentials!

May all of your trances this week be positively empowering ones that unleash more and more of your potentials!

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #23
April 23, 2007

META-CONSCIOUSNESS

Several years ago I wrote an article that I titled, *Which Unconscious Mind Do You Train?* In it, I distinguished several references that we call by the same term, "the unconscious mind."
      1) Conscious dropped into unconscious awareness as our storehouse of knowledge
      2) The autonomic nervous system
      3) The sub-conscious mind processing information below the threshold of consciousness
      4) The forgotten mind of stored memories
      5) The repressed mind
      6) The meta-consciousness of assumptive frames

The design of the article was to warn against a sloppy use of the vague phrase, "the unconscious mind" and to warn against positing the unconscious mind against the conscious as if it were god —always right, infallible, all knowing, etc. and the conscious mind was inferior. I argued that "the unconscious mind" should no more be implicitly trusted than the conscious mind. Every aspect of our holistic *mind* is human and therefore fallible.

Yet "mind" as reason, consciousness, and meaning-creation is our primary survival mechanism. And it is through developing a *mindful awareness* that we are able to monitor and regulate our consciousness and use it in thinking with clarity, precision, and understanding. And this is what makes us most fully alive/ fully human and so actualizing our best. And this applies to our whole mind in both conscious and unconscious forms.

This, in fact, was part and parcel of the original NLP vision about "running your own brain."
      It is *mindful awareness* that allows us to recognize the movies that we're playing on the theater of our mind and begin to edit them in terms of their cinematic features.

      It is *mindful awareness* that enables us to discover the perceptual filters (meta-programs) that govern what and how we sort for information as we move through the world and expand those perceptual filters so that we don't create a self-impose blindness by over-relying on a particular meta-program.

      It is *mindful awareness* that empowers us to recognize the states we apply to our states that create our higher and more complex meta-states by which we create our sense of personality and identity and the textured qualities of our states.

And what is *mindful awareness* but the ability to access and use our *meta-consciousness*? How well are you able to do that? Now to read some authors and some disciplines, you would think that consciousness is the central problem of human life. You would think that being mindful, having the power of reason, and being aware is the source of all evil. It is not.

True enough, there are *forms of consciousness* that are very problematic. If your consciousness is full of judgments, harshness, demandingness, rules, and punishment— well, you would experience that as a really big problem. You could hardly "think" or be aware without experiencing immense pain. A consciousness like that would make you your own worst enemy. A consciousness like that would be so hard on yourself. A consciousness like that would tempt you to try to avoid thinking and avoid awareness itself. And that, in turn, would undermine your cognitive efficacy.

Timothy Gallwey calls that kind of consciousness *Self-1* and identifies it as the reason so many people sabotage themselves and prevent themselves from taking their performances to new levels of expertise (*The Inner Game of Tennis*). That's why we use *acceptance, appreciation, awe, love, support, empathy*, etc. so often in Neuro-Semantics as resource states to meta-state ourselves and others with. Doing so changes consciousness. Doing so gives us a kinder/gentler meta-consciousness whereby we are able to live more graciously with ourselves and then, in turn, with others. For this reason also we use the *"Releasing all Judgment" pattern* in Neuro-Semantics to shift out of a critical demandingness state of mind to one of simple witnessing and noticing.

As one facet of our "unconscious mind" is our *meta-consciousness* which includes all of the assumptive frames that we have absorbed from the numerous cultures that we live in. These higher outside-of-consciousness frames make up the content of our overall "model of the world" that we live within as our mental-emotional atmosphere. And while we are unconscious of it, we can bring these frames into awareness so that we can *quality control* them and choose those that enhance our self-actualization.

To further develop a rich and robust *meta-consciousness*, we explore our matrix of frames. If we aren't able to detect the assumptive frames that govern our everyday experience, then the matrix has us. To become a master of your own matrix and to be able to change it from within at will, we have to be able to detect and explore our highest presuppositional frames. That's where the Matrix Model offers us a useful tool.

How open are you to your meta-consciousness? How skilled are you in exploring your assumptive frames? How often do you run a meta-cognitive analysis to quality control the self-organizing frames that structures your life? How able are you to create a new matrix of frames to tap into potentials yet to be released?

It is within our meta-consciousness that we can set "standing orders" as policies of our executive level of mind. Here we can establish self-organizing attractors at the higher levels and automatize a frame. And that will be the subject of the next *Meta Reflection*.

ATTRACTOR FRAMES

There is a part of your mind that makes decisions. It's at a meta-level. Now it is true that at the primary level you can make a simple choice. You can choose to go toward something attractive that you like and that gives you pleasure. You can choose to move away from something aversive that you dislike because it creates pain. At the primary level, our neurology is designed for this and so it comes equipped with *toward and away from* energies (one of our meta-programs). That happens pretty much automatically and without thought.

But decision generally involves thought. Lots of thoughts. Thoughts this way and thoughts that way. We go back and for as we weigh the pros and cons of a choice. We alternate back and forth, saying *yes* one minute, and then *no* the next as we weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the choice before us. At this point we are *in-decisive.* We are in a state of doubt. We don't know what to choose. Yet eventually we "make up our mind" and so we say *no* to one side of the choice and *yes* to the other. It is this *cutting off* of some alternatives that allows us to make a decision. And the word *de-cision* speaks of this. We *cut* (-cision) *off and away from* (de-) one thing from another thing. Ah, within a decision we use our primary states of validation (*yes*) and dis-validation (*no*).

The executive part of your mind that *makes up* your mind makes a choice, chooses, decides, says yes and no and so cuts a pathway that will determine your actions and orientation. When that part of your mind does this, it terminates the indecision, throws its energy one way, and so sends messages to your mind-body system to make the internal and external changes that the decision formats.

Actually the executive part of your mind is a pretty *high level* facet of your meta-consciousness and one connected with the part of your mind that creates and sets *intentions.* In fact, to *intend* to do something, believe something, feel something, identify with something, etc. is part of the *decision* process. In this way the *conative* part of our mind and personality operates as one of your key faculties. That's because, you get to choose. In fact, without the programming of instincts with content-information like animals, you have to choose. You don't have a choice about *not* choosing!

Yet when you choose, when you *make up your mind*, you formulate the content of your meta-consciousness. You set the higher frames of your mind which operate like self-organizing attractors in a system. What does this mean? It means that the decisions operate as your intentions and these intentions as beliefs (after all, it's beliefs all the way up) operate in a way that

we typically describe as a self-fulfilling prophesy. That is, what you believe and expect to get is precisely what you are *set* to see, perceive, and receive. If you decide to believe that you live in a friendly universe and that positive intentions drive what people do, so you will find that in the world. You attract *friendliness and positive intentions* to yourself. You attract it inside yourself — as your way of seeing, processing information, interpreting, creating meaning. You attract it outside as it invites those who agree to befriend you.

The *attractor* that you set by your decision, intention, and belief operates like the "rules of the game." That if we think about it as a "game" —an inner game, these are the *rules* of the game which set in motion the way you play the game of life and the game that you invite others to play with you. Yet because all of this comes from your meta-consciousness, most of this is outside-of-consciousness. It's part of your "unconscious mind" and to the extent that it is, it operates automatically and without your awareness. No wonder *frame game analysis* then becomes such a powerful Neuro-Semantic tool for gaining control over this facet of your unconscious mind.

The decision-intention-belief that you set through your *yes-ing* one choice and cutting off by *no-ing* the other choices also sets a "standing order" in your mind. This offers another way to think about an self-organizing attractor. The attractor is a *standing order* about what to sort for, pay attention to, notice, respond to, and punctuate. That *standing order* may be a taboo — what you have decided to prohibit and forbid, or it may be a command — what to welcome into your consciousness. So, given all of this:
• What self-organizing attractors have been set in your meta-consciousness as standing orders, executive policies for coping and mastering things, and the rules of the games you play?
• What patterns do you find keep repeating in your life?
• What do you keep attracting time and again, year after year, in your life, in your finances, in your relationships, in your health, in your business, in your fitness?
• And even more important — what new policies would you like to establish?
• What standing orders would you like to executively make and set in your meta-consciousness?

Your self-organizing attractors do *not absolutely* create your "reality." Oh that things were that simple! But they are not. Your self-organizing attractor frames (as meta-states) *interact* with "reality." In fact, we could say this, your self-organizing attractor frames *is* the inner "reality" that you create as you map things from your experiences. You then use them to test out how well those maps work on external reality.

So *attracting things to you* is not an absolute process, but a relative one and *dependent* on the accuracy and usefulness of your maps. If you map out something totally irrational and erroneous, you only create a very un-useful map that will put you at odds with reality as it exists beyond your nervous system—physical reality, social reality, political reality, etc. To quote from Korzybski, a map is only as good and useful as it has some correspondence to the territory, at least enough so that you can use it in navigating to the places that you want to visit and experience.

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #25
May 7, 2007

LEVELS OF REALITY

We set higher level attractor frames in our mind (Reflection #22), to influence our own *inner reality* and we do that, in turn, to affect our *outer reality.* It's the inner game/outer game dance! This gives us minimally at least two dimensions of what we call "reality." There is the *inner* reality of your matrix of frames of meaning. This *defines* your inside reality; it also *creates* a great deal of that reality. Then there is the *external* reality of the factors and constraints that we have to deal with "out there" beyond our own skin.

So even before we ask the fundamental questions about reality there is a step. And that step is to define what we mean by "reality."
•   What is real?
•   What is reality?
•   How can we determine our reality?
•   To what extent do we contribute to creating our reality?
•   How do the inner and outer realms of reality relate to each other?
•   Do we create our reality?

So the question before all of these questions is, *"What reality are you speaking about?"* We have to ask this because there are different dimensions and levels of reality.

The *external* reality has been the subject and focus of science. Once upon a time, with the discovery of the atom we thought we had gotten to the bottom of it all. But there's now all kinds of sub-atomic factors of neutrons, electrons, quarks, etc. and the quantum world. But since none of us take our cars to a quantum physicist for repairs! For the mechanics of a car, we need a Newtonian physicist— someone who knows how to deal with the Newtonian world of physics where the macro-level of mass, energy, and movement interact.

Yet that is not the only *external* reality "out there." We also have the external social world—*social reality.* This is the reality that we find and encounter "out there" made up of the relational interactions of other people. Here we have families, groups, colleagues, movements, corporations, etc. Here we have external facts about people and the cultures they create. And these cultures contain both lots of *external things* (rituals, environment, architecture, schools, clubs, etc.) and lots of *internal things*: values, beliefs, understandings, identities, etc.

Then there is another external reality—the external political world, *political reality.* This is the reality that's "out there" that govern how groups of people relate for decision making and

leadership that creates various political structures – socialism, bureaucracy, democracy, etc.

These are some of the dimensions of external reality. And in addition to these, there are the dimensions of *internal* reality. There is the level of representational reality— what we represent in our mind that creates the beginning of our inner reality. Above that is the linguistic reality of how we use words and language to define and call into existence the landscape of our inner world. Above that are the higher and more abstract concepts that give birth to our conceptual reality. These are some of the levels of inner reality within the meta-dimensions of our mind-body system.

Given that we can now begin to specify different *realities,* how do these different inner and outer realms of reality relate to each other? And, do we create our reality?

Obviously we create some of our reality. We create ideas in our mind as representations, words, and concepts and then translate those creative inner concepts into objects for the outside world as we innovate new inventions. But we do not create all of our reality. There are givens and constraints with which we have to learn about and adjust ourselves to. There are neurological constraints of our nervous-system-and-brain constraints regarding what our sense receptors can receive and how our nervous system create transforms of physical phenomena. There are external constraints of time, energy, money, intelligence. There are social constraints even in the language we use to think and encode our understandings of things. Each language also establishes categories of reality for members of a social system. This creates the socially agreed upon fictions in that culture.

> "One way in which our models of the world [inner reality] will necessarily differ from the world itself [external reality] is that our nervous system systematically distorts and deletes whole portions of the real world." (*The Structure of Magic,* Volume I, page 9, John Grinder and Richard Bandler)

So while we participate in the creation of our subjective reality, we do so while living within the givens and constraints of other realities—social, political, linguistic, and physical realities. Given that some NLP people are now assuming that we create all of our reality, this seems to be a overlooked or forgotten part of he NLP Communication model. Yet you can read about these "constraints" in the first volume of *The Structure of Magic* (pages 5-13).

Do we create our reality? *Yes, in part, but not the whole; reality is also a given.* This means that "reality" is both objective and subjective and they interface with each other. Our subjective reality influences objective reality *and* objective reality ought to influence our subjective reality. When it does, we *map* the territory and create "our model of the world."

Ah, now we are back to mapping. We map reality in order to create our inner "model of the world" so that we can navigate reality with more skill and elegance. We also map new possibilities for reality so that we can then create and innovate new influences in the world. And as we do this, our inner mapping and framing thereby attracts skills and resources to ourselves. So with our skills, resources, communication, responses, and interactions we attract new external

possibilities to ourselves. But the so-called "law of attraction" is not absolute. Nor does it operate apart from the givens and constraints of the real world. And, more about this in the next Reflection.

LEVELS OF ATTRACTION

In the last Reflection I wrote about *Levels of Reality* to distinguish the dimensions of inner and outer reality and some of the multiple levels in each of those. The term "reality" is not a monolithic term referring to a singular thing. What is *real* depends on the *dimension* in which w are referring. The two primary dimensions are within our nervous system-brain (inner reality) and "out there" beyond all of our interpretations, understandings, information processing, communication about it (outer reality).

To fail to make this critical distinction *confuses map and territory.* Some people who confuse the two are fanatics. For a fanatic, his or her *map* is the one, the only, the true, the only true map. It is real. It is the territory, and woe be unto the person who questions it! Eric Hoffer called this kind of person a "true believer." For the fanatic the primary purpose in life is imposing the maps on others and even on the world.

There are others who confuse map and territory. One group doe so by assuming that whatever they map is real or is going to be real. This is a delusion however. The delusion is that they have that kind of power in their mapping and that the *only* possible thing that could be wrong in life, in the world, is that they are just not mapping enough— believing enough, imagining enough, intending enough, etc.

The problem in this is that they think that they can map anything, and that whatever they think, they make it so. This over-simplistic understanding of reality forgets that we are mapping a *territory* and that the territory has to be taken into account in the mapping. It's the old thing of taking a map of London and trying to navigate around any other city on the planet. It won't work! Sure, there will be a few streets with the same name, perhaps a similar river or mountain, but for the most part that map is not designed for any territory other than London.

Mapping does not create external reality. By mapping we create some of our *internal reality* —our subjective reality so that it calls our beliefs, identities, hopes, dreams, intentions, etc. into being. And as our mapping interacts with the constraints of our body, our context, our mind, our nervous system, we are able to tap into the predispositions, talents, and potentials and create something new from all of those components.

It was on this note that I ended *Meta Reflection #23* regarding the givens and constraints of the world. Yes indeed *thinking makes it so* to quote Shakespear, but thinking does not make

everything so and it does not dismiss or automatically over-ride the givens and constraints of reality. Mostly, the thinking that "makes it so" refers to our *self-reflexive thinking*, the thinking we engage in as we create our inner models of ourselves, our world, our place in the world, etc.

It is on the inside, in that inner world of our subjective reality made out of the thousands of belief frames, intention frames, decision frames, understanding frames, identity frames, permission frames, etc. that "as we think, so we are." This is the domain of psychology, of your inner psycho-logics. As you map things with your thinking, believing, and framing— so your brain and nervous system attempts to "make it real." It does this first and foremost inside your body as your representations on the theater of your mind which then, in turn, sends messages to your body and all of your higher belief frames sends commands to your body.

No wonder it's so critical to learn all you can of your Movie Mind—becoming conscious of your representations and how to edit the cinematic features with as much skill and elegance as possible (see *MovieMind* or any good NLP Introduction). And no wonder it is even more critical to learn all you can of your higher self-reflexive mind —your meta-states so that you can become conscious of the frames you have set and continue to set. Awareness of that level of your mind puts you at *choice point* in your psychology. Then you are able to elect what to set as your desired frames (see *Winning the Inner Game*).

Think of these first two meta-dimensions as levels of attraction. Attraction at the first level, the level of representation is pretty powerful. What you picture in your mind and all the qualities of sound, sensation, smell, etc. that you edit into those images powerfully influences what you create in yourself and your world. This is the place of *imagination—* images, inwardly "seeing" your goals, hopes, dreams, or fears, dreads, worries, angers, resentments. Twenty some years ago in Dallas, Texas the cancer researchers discovered the power of images and imagination. And for longer than that, athletes have known the power of "seeing" their best practices in their minds from Jack Nicholson's famous quote about only hitting the golf ball after he creates a little movie of a perfect shot.

Yet if that level of attraction is power, *the meta-state level is a hundred times more effective.* This is the level of *belief.* It is the level when we take our representations and step back and confirm them with layers of validation so that we say to ourselves "This is real," "This is the way it is." "This is true." Say that about anything and you will convince your nervous system that it is real and so you will feel and then act and try to bring into creation.

At this level we have to be careful, because as Jesus noted, "Be it unto you according to your belief." Whatever you believe— true or false, heathy or sick, invigorating or dis-empowering, life-enhancing or morbid and neurotic — whatever you believe you will see the world in terms of it and attract things into your life to try to make it real. I say "try to make it real" because you may or you may not. It depends. If the map is really delusional, you won't be it real at all. If the map does not take into consideration the facts of reality— physical facts, empirical facts, political facts, social facts, etc., then the map probably will not empower you to actualize it. You will end up frustrated, angry, confused, disillusioned, etc.

It is at this higher level also that we have the attraction of our *intentions*. Our intentions govern nearly everything. This is the executive level of consciousness where we get to decide, set our direction, choose our beliefs, choose our thoughts, behaviors, even our emotions. Of course, it does have to be acknowledged, appreciated, and owned. And when we do that, then we can align our attentions to our highest intentions. When it is not, we will suffer from IDD— *intention deficient disorder* and, living attentionally, be pushed to and fro by everything in our environment and head that grabs our attention. But, more about that next time.

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #27
May 21, 2007

THE ATTRACTION LEVEL
OF INTENTION

From the *Levels of Reality* arise our levels of attraction. These levels move from representational attraction (images, inner movies) to the attraction power of beliefs and intentions. Today most people recognize that beliefs operate as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Beliefs operate so that they attract to us the very things that we believe. That's what we mean by the phrase —a self-fulfilling prophecy. And yet this process is *not* absolute. It is not an infallible "law of attraction," rather it is a basic tendency at work in our psychology.

This process works relative to constraints of external reality and the constraints of our mind-and-body. Beliefs, no matter how irrational, toxic, or morbid will attempt to get our body to actualize it. That's why above and beyond the state of depression are *depressive beliefs* about self, life, and the future.

So also with *numbness.* Above and beyond the state of numbness and a sense of being "out of the body" are fearful beliefs about it being unsafe to acknowledge and own one's physical sensations. The person may even believe that he or she is not in his body. But they are. There's no such thing as dis-embodied persons or consciousness. The depressed person is in his body, and his mind in all of its dimensions is running the person's autonomic nervous system, immune system, heart and lungs, memory, imagination, body temperature and a million other things. The person just doesn't believe that it's safe or okay or right to be "in" their body and that belief is attempting to actualize that idea of dis-embodiment. There is no actual "disassociation," only the feeling of it — numbness, strangeness, weirdness, etc.

> [Understanding this should give us pause about the glib way many in NLP talk about and use th word "disassociation." I'd recommend to avoid using it when you are simply speaking about *stepping back from* one state and accessing or *stepping into* another state. These are relative terms. Every time you *step out* of one, you are *stepping into* another. We are always in some state.]

What's the point in this? First, that there's an *attraction of beliefs* and second, that it's good to become picky about the beliefs we feed our mind. Ultimately, as you believe, so you will tend to become. Beliefs work as commands to the nervous system and that's part and parcel of how they organize us.

All of this is even more true of *intentions.* Set an intention and, *pow!* that intention will begin

assuming an executive role in your personality. I like to say in Meta-States that "All consciousness is motivated." Take any piece of consciousness — conscious awareness or unconscious unawareness and within it you will find three strands— *content* of something, *context* which then gives that content meaning, and *intention.* Content is the details and specifics, context is the frame (frame of reference) and intention are all of the thoughts in the back of the mind about it —motivation, agenda, objective, outcome, etc.

Animals and small children live entirely in the world of *attention.* They responded to any loud noise, bright light, strong smell, touch, etc. — the sensory based facts of the world that gets their attentions. And typically their minds are full of attentions. This and that, then this other thing. They notice this voice, then that music, then those actions. In this there's hardly any focus, but lots of shifting and changing. An abundance of attentions— yet we call it *attention deficit disorder*!

Then, when a person gets lots of things in the mind, there's even more to distract from a focus and more to attend to — this thought, that memory, this fear, that joy, thousands of them! Without taking charge of intentionality, we are doomed to live in the world of attention. We live *attentionally* highly receptive and response to all of the stimulus around us and in us. Whatever intentions we have are outside-our-awareness and so driving us unconsciously.

To step back and access an intention, then an intention of that one and so on all the way up the reflexive levels until we get to some of our highest and most expansive intentions enables us to then *choose* to energize those intentions and then deliberately *align* our attentions to that intention. To do that is to live intentionally, to move through life on purpose, and to enter into the human domain.

And, to do this also is to *set an self-organizing attractor in place in our mind* that will send out messages to our body and commands to our nervous system that will enable us to attract our intentions. This is powerful. Very powerful. Not absolute power, not divine power. It can be interfered with, but it is nevertheless, a very powerful process.

For most of us, while we have this power, it operates unconsciously within us. We have not consciously set our intentions. Our highest intentions emerge through experiences outside-of-our-awareness and often involve intentions that, while driving, are not all that useful. Our intentions are to always be right and never wrong; to be on top; to avoid criticism at any cost, etc. So the power is there and it participates in creating our experiences, yet it is mis-used and untapped as a resource.

The solution? First, becoming aware of this power and how we are now using it. Then from awareness we can choose to stop the old unconscious intending and set new self-organizing intentions. And of course, this is what we do within the *Accessing Personal Genius* training as well as other Neuro-Semantic trainings.

META-ATTRACTIONS

In the last two Reflections I've described what we call a *self-organizing attractors*. In the human mind-body-emotion system, we can set frames of beliefs and intentions which, due to the lack of genetic content information about life or "instincts," and the information that we set send commands to our nervous system to make the content of our beliefs real in our lives.

This basic mechanism is powerful. And yet in saying that, *it is also not an absolute power*. To be explicit— this does means that *not* everything you think, believe, or even intention will be attracted to you or that you will be able to make real. For one thing, *fallibility is built into the system.* Your thinking, believing, and intending is fallible and variable as it is influenced by numerous other things.

The system is also relative to, and dependent upon, *the constraints of reality.* It is required in all of our internal *mapping* through thinking, believing, and intending that we map things that are within the realm of possibility and that our maps be accurate enough to the territory so that we are not living in delusions and fantasies. The map must accord at least somewhat to the territory. It must have a similar structure to the territory. If it does not, we start to create and live in a fantasy world of make-believe that does not allow our neurology to actualize our content.

It is true that "as we think so we are," that "thinking makes it so," that believing is a powerful mechanism for health and success, but such thoughts (at whatever level) must be thoughts that can be actualized. That the thoughts send messages and commands throughout our mind and body and enable and empower us to act on them.

Thoughts are not magical. They do not "create" reality in some magical way. And this means that calling upon "the quantum dimension" doesn't suddenly endow thoughts with supernatural power. Yes, I know that "quantum"is a sexy term and that using "quantum" as an adjective is very popular these days, but creating that label does not make it so. That's why there are no such things as "quantum linguistics," "quantum psychology," "quantum understanding," etc. And because these sexy-sounding PR phrases are captivating, but totally empty of actual references, they are meaningless goobledygook.

Yes, the ultimate bottom line of reality may involve the quantum world, but we do not live there. We do not drive quantum cars, we do not ride on quantum elevators, we do not go to quantum mechanics for car repair, or quantum builders to add on an addition to our house, or quantum

interior decorators, or quantum doctors when we're not feeling well or need surgery. With the bodies we have, we live at a much higher macro-level of life.

We do not even live our lives at the molecular level, let alone the sub-molecular level. That's why we cannot and do not put our hands through solid furniture, cannot walk through walls, and cannot fall off a skyscraper without getting hurt. Stones crush our bones, speeding cars rip our fragile bodies apart, and spoiled food turns our stomachs. And even the best thought, the most powerful beliefs, and even the most innocent and focused intention, cannot prevent or stop these things. Think quantum thoughts all you want. But if you jump off a skyscraper or out of an airplane without a parachute, you will fall and you will suffer and probably kill yourself.

In the small book that's now in bookstores, *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne (2006) quotes John Assaraf who says, "A thought has a frequency, we can measure a thought." (p. 9). Again, a fascinating and even sexy kind of thing to day, but it is just not so. The author has confused levels. A "thought" exists at a macro-level of our phenomenlogical experience. What occurs at the level of the brain processing is the exchange of chemicals (neuro-transmitters, peptides, etc.) and the charging of protons and electrons as a bio-impulse moves along the neuro-pathways and the ions are exchanged in the cells. We can see and measure and somewhat understand these mechanisms, but these are not "thoughts" or "emotions" — those terms do not apply at that level, they apply as a much more macro-phenomena.

All of these bio-electrical and bio-chemical processes are the sub-strands and sub-layers that comprise a gestalt that we call "thoughts" or consciousness. So "thought" has no frequency. The overall functioning of the brain has frequencies and within those operations of the brain, we experience different kinds of thoughts.

The author Assaraf has also forgotten that the idea of "frequency" applied to thought is a metaphor — *a metaphor!* — not an empirical description. This is similar to the metaphor that is used throughout the book of magnetic attraction, "Thoughts are magnetic." Yes, metaphorically. But no, not empirically. And this confusion of levels has led to non-sense and ignorant statements like the following, statements asserted without any evidence:
>"The law of attraction simply gives you *whatever* it is you are thinking about." (p. 13)
>"Quantum physicists tell us that the entire universe emerged from thought!" (p. 15)
>"*Nothing* can come into your experience unless you summon it through persistent thought." (p. 28)

Such over-simplistic explanations create several toxic thought viruses. The last statement implies there are no other factors, no other variables in the world except thought which, of course, is blatantly false. The first statement is indistinguishable from the magical thinking stage of cognitive development that occurs in children from 3 to 5 years of age, again implying that thought is the only creative factor and that there are no constraints of reality to interfere. If only! And the second statement is completely undocumented; I have never read a legitimate book on the subject that even comes close to asserting anything like that. Yes, the indeterminacy factor means that we tend to observe what our assumptions and premises prepare us to observe since the

observer influences the field. But that's a very long way from saying that the universe emerged from thought!

There's several dangers in this. Exaggerating, confusing levels, failing to index statements, failing to include the other multiple contributing factors etc. leaves the impression that people are "gods" or at least almost all-powerful in creating reality. Not so. Where is fallibility in all of this? Where is mortality? Where is social reality? Where are the constraints of reality?

So to ameliorate all of this, the truth is more balanced. We do create ideas and meanings and as we hold them in mind, we send messages and commands to our neurology to try to actualize them in our bodies. *Try to* make them actual and real, however, is a very different thing from thought absolutely creating your reality. If it did, the people in the back rooms of psychiatric hospitals would be some of the most powerful people on the planet instead of some of the most sad and pathetic.

Yes, thinking, feeling, believing, and intending do create and set up self-organizing "attractors" or attractions within us, but this is mostly a way of talking about the mind-brain relationship, the reflexive communication processes within us, and should not be taken as an empirical description. There's still much mystery about all of this, and anyone even slightly educated acknowledges.

Yet there are a few people in NLP who have taken this exaggerated and unbalanced view and created the toxic non-sense that therefore everything that happens to you— you are responsible for it. You brought it into your life. Ah what power! There were no other factors. No other variables. No other influences. You and you alone are totally responsible for everything that happens to you. Now, that's about as toxic an idea as they come. It implies that other people cannot be responsible for what they say and do. It implies that you do not live in various family, cultural, social, political, economic worlds. It implies that you are like a "god" who makes everything happens.

If only! But it is not so. There are constraints in all of those dimensions that we have nothing to do with. We did not create the world. We were born into the social, cultural, political, and economic worlds that we now live. Our responsibility is to first map out these territories and then develop the knowledge and skills for coping with such. So here's to your effective mapping as you set belief frames, understanding frames, and intentional frames that will bring out your highest and best!

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #29
June 4, 2007

THE MYTH OF
TOTAL RESPONSIBILITY

In the domain of personal development, self-actualization, modeling of excellence, creating success in living your visions and values, *accepting, acknowledging, and owning your personal responses* is fundamental and essential. Even the word *responsibility* tells the story. After all, the word contains *ability* at its core and so it speaks about an expression of personal *power*, that is capability, energy, and vitality. It speaks about the *power-to-respond* with our essential powers, our powers of mind, emotion, speech, and behavior.

In a way, this is core to Neuro-Semantics. On day one of almost every training, we begin with *the power zone* wherein we access our four core powers and meta-state them with awareness, ownership, acceptance, and appreciation. If we don't do that explicitly (as in APG), we do that implicitly and by implication. The result is that this then enables people to build up more complex meta-states (gestalt experiences) such as proactivity, initiative, a sense of being in control of one's life, self-efficacy, and much more. Part of that "much more" includes the abilities (powers) to learn, relate, receive feedback, flexibly adust, etc.

Given all of that, in the Neuro-Semantic approach we present *responsibility* as a high level meta-state that creates the foundation for effectiveness and success. But, as I mentioned in the last reflection, there is a sick, toxic, dis-functional, and morbid "belief" abroad that distorts the idea of responsibility as it over-exaggerates it and ends up creating a new subtle way to induce existential guilt.

What is that toxic belief? It is this:
> "Whatever comes into your life, you created. You attracted it into your life, and so you are responsible for it."

Now in Neuro-Semantics we talk about all of the hidden assumptions and presuppositions behind things as an FBI frame— *a frame by implication.* And everything we say and do contains FBIs. In fact, in the Meta-Coach training, we even provide training for Meta-Coaches to learn to listen for FBIs and to address them in their questioning. Why? Because when you do that, you can often get to the heart of mattes and find leverage points for change very quickly.

Given that, what are the FBIs of that toxic belief? Here are some:

1) The world you live in is *totally* and *completely* created by you with no influenced from anyone or anything else.

2) You are *all-powerful* in how you create and attract *everything*.

3) There are no other influences, variables, factors in the world— just your thoughts!

4) Life is extremely simple and can be explained with a simplicity, namely, there is just *one cause* for your reality—what you think.

5) There are no contexts that have any influence in your life— no social context, no linguistic contexts, no family, racial, financial, political contexts that play any role in your life.

6) If there's any pain, distress, failure, problems, etc., you attracted it into your life by your thoughts, therefore the problem is you.

7) If you had a miserable childhood and suffered various things in it, you are guilty of inviting it into your life.

Now did I mention that this belief was sick? It is about as sick as the opposite belief that is equally as extreme and exaggerated: "I am a pawn of life, fate, genes, parents, culture, experiences, etc. I am not responsible for anything and I can do nothing to change things."

The bottom line is that it is a myth that we are totally responsible or that we bring everything that is in our lives into it. It just ain't so. We are just not that powerful. There are forces abroad that we have had nothing to do, forces that influence our lives and sometimes that create great problems and/or great opportunities. There are forces that operate as cultural, linguistic, political, and economic frames and realities that existed long before we came along and that will exist long after we're gone.

I suppose that it would be nice in a way if life was so simple and if such over-simplistic explanations were true. We would not have to think so hard, search so far, or hold so many ambiguities in mind at the same time. But life isn't so simple. And we do have to embrace multiple explanations at the same time. We have to share responsibilities as there are numerous people and events that create the *responses* that we have to deal with.

The total responsibility myth also ignores, downplays, or complete dismisses the factor of randomness or chance. It's said in Ecclesiastes that "time and chance happens to them all," that bread is not always to men of understanding, nor is the race always to the swiftest, nor is the battle always to the strongest, but time and chance happens to them all." Of course, as meaning-makers we are so quick and so skilled at giving meaning even to random events. "It's no mere coincidence, we were meant to meet." "It's not luck, I was destined to this."

The worst thing about the total responsibility myth, of course, is the incurable guilt it induces. After all, you are responsible for *everything* that comes into your life. No one else has offered anything, influenced anything, created anything. In your world, they are *nothing*. They have no power. You have all power. This is the non-sense that the myth foster. And knowing that frees us from being seduced into it. Here's to your healthy responsibility and empowerment!

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #30
June 11, 2007

META-QUESTIONS
AND THE SKILL OF ITERATION

The Meta-States Model opened up the whole realm of questioning at meta-levels and so introduced *the meta-questions*. Given that this will be new to many people, I'll offer a little description about meta-questions. For more about them, you can find a list of 26 meta-questions in *Coaching Conversations, Meta-Coaching, Volume II.* Or, better, in the new training manual for the Ultimate Self-Actualization workshop you can find a list of 70 meta-questions.

Actually, meta-questions have been around for centuries, even millenia. In NLP, there was one meta-question that caught the interest of Bandler and Grinder, but they didn't know what to make of it. So they dismissed exploring what could have led to the Meta-States model much earlier. The meta-question was Virginia Satir's question, "How do you feel about your feelings *about* what is happening?"

Here's what they wrote in the first NLP book:
> "When you ask questions like, 'How do you feel *about* that?' (Whatever *that* might be) you are, in fact, asking your client for a fuller representation (than even Deep Structure) of your client's experience of the world. And what you are doing by asking this particular question is asking for what you know is a necessary component of the client's reference structure." (*The Structure of Magic, Vol. I,* p. 160)

Actually, "How do you feel *about* that?" is a *meta* question which takes us *upward* to the next higher logical level inasmuch as it asks about thoughts-and-feelings at the next highest level. In terms of the Meta-States model, it elicits the person's frame-of-reference and the *conceptual or semantic state* that governs the experience.
> "The new question, which is characteristic of Satir's work, is: 'How do you feel *about* your feelings *about* what is happening?' Consider this question in the light of the Meta-Model. This is essentially a request . . . for the client to say how he feels about his reference structure—his model of the world." (p. 161)

But they all lost their way. First Virginia, then Richard and John. What got in their way from recognizing meta-states is that they blindly accepted the erroneous explanation that the "reference structure" elicited "was the client's self-esteem." (p. 161). Unquestioningly they bought into the equation "Referent structure" = "self-esteem." So in spite of stumbling onto a meta-question in the work of Virginia Satir, Bandler and Grinder failed to see what it offered.

Now the power of meta-questions is that they allow us to enter into a person's (including our own) matrix of frames of meaning, level upon level, and identify the full structure of a model of the world. Currently, we have identified 80 some terms and expressions that can be used as meta-questions. But the key is not how many terms or even what terms, the key to effectively using meta-questions is *the iteration process.*

Iteration refers to repeating a process. So with meta-questions the process is inviting a person to peak into the *frames* that hold an experience in place. And given that our frames are typically outside-of-conscious awareness, being unconscious of them gives them even more power to influence us. But *by stepping back* and *holding* our experience in place (or that of another) and simultaneously *inquiring* about it— we are able to make a meta-move to the conceptual structures that frame the experience.

If someone says that he feels upset and stressed by how another person is communicating, we ask, "So given that this seems to be the case, what do you *believe* about that?" Now typically the person will not answer that question but will speak about his or her *feelings* that derive from it or *actions* contemplated. "I feel putdown by him and that I never want to talk to him again!"

What we teach and model in Meta-Coaching, Self-Actualizing psychology, and Meta-States for handling this is to affirm the *expression* of the state and iterate again using another meta-term to find the *frame* that creates that state.

> "Ah yes, you feel putdown and want to avoid talking. That's what you feel and want to do. Yet I'm wondering what that *means* to you? What do you *think* about him doing that?"

Again, the person may go *out* with his or her responses instead of *up* to the structural frame. "I just want to avoid him . .. Forever."

> "Great. Now we know what energies is being generated that comes out of you. Yet how do you create that response? What is your *frame* that generates that? What are you *aware* of *about* his communications?

"Well, that it is disrespectful."

> "Great. So that's what it means! Disrespect. That's what you believe it means to you. Good, now we're getting somewhere. And let's say that's true, it means *disrespect*, starting there — what does that mean to you? What do you think about that?"

Iteration —that's the key. Keep repeating over and over meta-questions, dancing with the person round and round the experience, inviting, teasing, tempting, evoking, provoking, and exploring the frames that create and hold that experience in place. Once you can do that, you will become truly masterful in being able to enter and explore a matrix of meaning. And that, in turn, will give you the ability to tease out all of the layers as you go up the meaning ladder.

The key skills here are the following five: 1) the step back skill 2) the iteration of meta-questioning, 3) the flexibility in using multiple meta-questions, 4) the holding a previous level for

yourself or another as you keep moving upward, and 5) distinguish state expressions from state frames.

THE META-SECRET

The Secret of the Secret

There are secrets, and there is the Secret (as the Movie and the book), and then there is the Meta-Secret. In several of the recent Meta-Reflections I've written about *The Secret* under the themes of attraction and responsibility. Now it's time to move to the secret of life, well, the secrets of life Neuro-Semantically.

* Do you know the secret of life?
* Do you know the secrets of living life fully and humanly?

Similarly I also wrote an article for *Actualise* this month about this same subject (which you can obtain by signing up for Actualise on the Neuro-Semantic website, the article is in the second edition of *Actualise* June). I will not be repeating that here. Instead I'll talk about one secret, the highest secret of all, the Meta-Secret.

In the movie *The Secret*, the idea that we can and do attract things into our lives (which is reasonable) was elevated to an absolute degree. It was pushed to an extreme and turned into an inevitable, immutable, everlasting, absolute, without exception, "law" of the universe. Yet if that was the case, we would be living in a nightmare universe. Anyone and everyone who "thought" anything so it would dominate his or her mind would bring that into existence. And that would last until someone else "thought" and "attracted" it into their lives; or someone thought-attracted the opposite, etc.

It would be the kind of nightmare world Alice experienced in Wonderland where nothing seemed to operate by the regular laws that we know and can count on. People and things and animals grew and shrink and reality kept shifting and changing by mere thought. In that world Alice couldn't depend on things. Nothing was predictable, regular, systematic.

In the movie, *The Secret,* over-simplistic ideas combine with the simplistic thinking patterns characteristic of children —either/or, black-and-white, single cause attributions, magical thinking, ego-central perspective, over-optimistic thinking— to create a world of simple answers. What happens in your life is totally and solely your responsibility. You attracted it. You thought it. You believed it.

Ah, that things were so simple. But thankfully, they are not. Thankfully we live in a more complex world that calls for adult thinking. And this gives hint to the Meta-Secret. So what is the meta-secret? It is that to live and thrive and succeed in the real world (rather than the fantasy world of childish fantasy where we can attract anything into ur lives and in fact attract everything) we have to develop sufficient ego-strength to deal with the world as it *is,* not as we wish it to be.

Disappointed? Don't be. *Developing ego-strength is a tremendously exciting thing.* It lies at the very heart of being human, of growing, of actualizing potentials, of developing resources, of modeling the excellence of those who are the best specimens of human kind. After all, ego-strength speaks about a very special kind of consciousness, a consciousness that can look at reality, stare at it directly, without falling apart, without caving in, and without the need for defense mechanisms, or escaping to fantasy. Ego-strength speaks of a strong sense of awareness that simply acknowledges what is so that it can then begin inventing processes and skills for coping effectively.

Ego-strength is also developed. No one is born with it. For that matter, no one is born with an ego, *a sense of self,* that also is developed. In fact, all of life is about developing the construct called *self* so that we *become* what we are in our deepest self in possibility. Developmentally, this is the heart of growth and development, we grow up to become the best version of ourselves, of unfolding the potentialities within, and of developing the maturity.

For the growth of ego-strength, we have to develop more and more of an awareness of ourselves, others, and our world. It is also required that we develop our coping and mastery skills so that when things happen, we have a way to figure things out, rigorously define and understand problems and invent solutions. Ego-strength is the first step in being able to be fit for life as it is, for figuring out the life you live and for shaping it so that you fulfill your highest potentials.

This is the secret of creating a life well-lived. Instead of operating with the magical-thinking and wishing of a child, we create a life well-lived by developing our inner strength and resilience. We mature our skills and competencies and we develop the ability to perceive reality as it *is* so that we can then take effective action.

After there is thought, meta-states that operate as attractor frames, high level intentions, then there is ego-strength. Without ego-strength we don't face reality as it *is* and begin working to transform it so that we attract to us the values, visions, and dreams that we have within our minds. To think that mere thought, mere desire, mere wishing is all that's required is to live in a fantasy world that will lead to disappointment and dis-illusionment. Mere thought is not sufficient. That's just mind. We need the full mind-body system. We need the active ability to *do* something about our dreams and visions and values. Sure we need semantics —rich and exciting meanings, but we also need neurology as well. We need the full neuro-semantic system. This is where the self-actualization quadrants comes in, the meaning-performance axes.

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #32
June 25, 2007

ON BEING A META-CONNOISSEUR

If a *connoisseur* is someone who knows and understands the details, techniques, and principles of an art and has become competent to make critical distinctions about it, then it speaks about a high level of expertise. At the primary level a person could be a connoisseur of wines, flowers, literature, architecture, or ten-thousand other things.

- But what is a connoisseur at the meta-levels?
- Could a person become a meta-connoisseur?
- If so, what would that be like? What would that be about?

I began thinking about this last week in a training and then afterwards at dinner when we were dealing with the multifaceted nature of mind and meaning within an experience. For several years now we have used the metaphor of a diamond to speak about "logical levels." That's because there are no "levels" in logical levels in the way steps up a pyramid are hierarchical levels. In the "world of communication" or "mind" (Bateson), things are just not like that. It just not that simple or that literal.

The metaphor of "levels" here (as a nominalization) refer to how we *layer* one thought or feeling upon another. And, of course, we do not literally do this. This is just a way of talking. Just the way we use language in an attempt to describe an experience to which we then use our self-reflexive consciousness to think about it and to layer level upon level other thoughts and feelings.

When we use the *diamond metaphor*, we can then step back and reflect upon the experience using a wide-range of meta-terms. And each one then gives us another discriminating look at this or that *facet* of the experience. It's like turning the experience over and over in our mind and gazing at its different facets as a connoisseur contemplates a fine painting, seeing it now in terms of this organization and then in that.

That's when it struck me! After you learn about the meta-levels and the meta-dimensions and begin to use the more than 80 meta-terms, you become more like a *meta-connoisseur* enjoying the multi-facetic nature of an experience, forever becoming more fascinated as you look at it from this and then that perspective, all the while being able to make new and finer distinctions about it.

If you consider what seems like such a simple state, the state of *passionately joyful learning,* what is this state in terms of "logical levels?" If you say, "Well, it's a belief. You believe in

passionately enjoying learning." *That's one facet* to that experience. But is it the only? Perhaps it is a value? Could you value learning in a passionate and joyful way? Yes, you could! But perhaps it is a decision. Could it be a decision? Again, yes, of course. What about an intention? An anticipation? A memory? An identity? A permission? An awareness? A feeling? And on and on we go covering all 80 of the meta-terms.

Yes it is all of those things— and here's the profundity of it all, *it is all of those things at the same time.* So instead of one step after another step up a hierarchy of levels, it is more of a holarchy, a hologram where the slightest sliver of the image can enable us to see the whole image.

But you have to become a *meta-connoisseur* to recognize that and to have the expertise to work with it effectively. And this, in a manner of speaking is what you can learn from Meta-States, Meta-Coaching, and Neuro-Semantics. You learn to take an experience and whether it creates a hell or a heaven on your insides, that experience has structure, has form, has a hundred distinctive facets and you can stand in awe of it, stand in fascination of it, and then, as you turn it this way and that, witnessing and observing and appreciating its structure— you can identify its distinctive qualities. And that's when magic happens.

That's when you yourself enter into the diamond and are able to identify the critical leverage points for change, transformation, or enhancement. Again, language fails to do us justice in describing this. So I have to shift metaphors again. Now as with a dynamic and interactive system as we turn the experience over and over in our minds, our turning itself influences the system, changes the system. *After all, we are part of the experience.* If it is our experience, then the facets are facets of our inner world and of the experience is that of another, then we have entered into its inter-personal dimension and so we influence and change it.

Ah, becoming an informed and wise meta-connoisseur! Perhaps we should market Meta-States that way. After all, it is about developing finer discriminations of taste — mental tastes.
> *"Fine minds* developed from the richest ingredients, blended together to give you the quality of mental and emotional states that you deserve! For those with discriminating tastes for luxury —who have no tolerance for greasy fast food beliefs. If you want to live in the penthouse of life with an expansive views of beauty, then choose the higher states for the kind of interior decorating that makes your mind a place of beauty, tranquility, and wealth."

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #33
July 2, 2007

META-HEROISM

At the primary level, a *hero* is the person who faces some danger or risk, who puts his own welfare at risk in order to do something of a higher value. We consider someone a hero who rushes into a burning building to save a child. We consider it heroism when people give their time and energy to be a part of a rescue team, to hunt for a missing person, to lend their hands and shoulders to rebuilding a community.

Of course, even at the primary level of response, these heroic activities involve meta-states for courage, passion, love, commitment, etc. so that in spite of the fears, apprehensions, worries, uncertainties, etc., the person *faces the fear anyway and stands against his or her fears.* Typically it takes stronger and more emotionally intense meta-states to overcome the primary level fear.

- If that's the case with primary level heroism, what about meta-heroism?
- Is there such a thing as *meta-heroism*?
- If there is such a creature, what is an example of meta-heroism?
- What is the range of things that a person could be heroic about at a meta-level?

To move up to a level into *meta-heroism* this is where being heroic in attitude and spirit about higher values and experiences of the mind and spirit. This means facing fears and dangers at meta-levels. It refers to an attitude of being daring, audacious, and courageous regarding things of our higher states.

What's an example of this you ask? An example of meta-heroism is a person manifesting the willing to engage in the struggle of self-understanding to know one self and to look directly at weaknesses and character flaws. For a person to persist in this to gain self-knowledge, a higher level courage is required. Meta-heroism is sometimes required to face oneself, to know that "I am more than my problems." In this it takes a meta-courage to refuse to let your circumstances define you. Not infrequently I see a lot of meta-heroism when someone decides to face his or her dragons— the shadow side of self.

More recently, as I've been working with the new Self-Actualization Models, I have seen people demonstrate tremendous meta-heroism to their vision to self-actualize. Sometimes this is in the realm of taking charge of their power to construct meaning, to resacralize life, to refuse the

discounting skepticism of our age, and to take the courage to believe in goodness. Sometimes this occurs in the area of entering the Crucible of Change and letting old forms of meaning, old cultural rituals, dated emotions and impulses, etc. melt down and be de-constructed. Sometimes it is even in the zone of engagement. After all, it takes courage to let go of self, of ego, and to get lost in an engagement.

Courage is also required for gaining knowledge. It's required in the struggle to understand things, to make sense of the world, and to overcome the challenges to solve problems. When many give up and take the easy road on the path of least resistance, those with the higher levels of courage continue the pursuit. They refuse to give in to pessimism or skepticism. As meta-heros, they refuse to belief that defeat is permanent. They stubbornly refuse to stay down after a set back but instead resiliently bounce back. They pick up the pieces, learn from the experience, and give it another go.

It is meta-heroism to refuse to accept a temporary helplessness, to refuse to conform to society, to live off the opinions of others, to make a commitment and to follow through on one's dreams and visions. In these ways, this is what Nathael Brandon calls "the heroism of consciousness." Here it takes a higher meta-state of courage to accept our own consciousness and to be responsible for it.

After all, as semantic beings who live by our beliefs, concepts, and understandings at the higher meta-dimensions, it is a meta-heroism to choose high ones and then to translate them into reality. You engage in meta-heroic behavior when you use your determination to translate from mind into body. It's easier to feel satisfied that you "know" something without transforming the knowledge into doing.

Other examples of meta-heroism include the courage to change your mind. Sometimes it takes a lot of courage and commitment to truth to admit to the need to change your mind and then to do it publically. We can view this also as the meta-courage to refuse to be a prisoner to yesterday's knowledge and choices.

There is the heroism of acceptance, of just acknowledging what *is,* accepting the cards that life or God has dealt us, and to then ask the coping question. "Given that this is the case, what's the best way to handle this?" A form of meta-heroism is to live in the moment. It's easier to escape the here-and-now moment into the nostalgia of the past or the beauty of a different future. For us humans, living fully in this moment takes more focus, more awareness, more choice.

Ah, there are a great many areas within your higher state that you can rise up and demonstrate a meta-heroism. May your life this week be meta-heroic in the choices you make!

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #34
July 9, 2007

THE LEASHING POWER OF EGO

One of the leashes that will limit you and that will prevent you from truly self-actualizing is the leash of letting your ego get in the way. And what does that mean? It means letting your own self-promotion, self-investments, and self-focus contaminate what you're attempting to do. Several years ago a line in *The Wild Days of NLP* from Terry McClintock stuck in my mind. He was writing about Richard Bandler and John Grinder training together and said that "the stage was not big enough for both of their egos." It was at that time that I decided to create a "Getting the Ego Out of the Way" pattern. And it is that same pattern that we continue to this day to run in NSTT (Neuro-Semantic Trainers' Training).

Why? Because if you have ever attended a training, seminar, key note speech or other presentation by a speaker who's "ego is in the way," who has a massive ego then you know the irritation, annoyance, and even the damage it can create. Suddenly instead of you as the participant and delegate investing your time, energy, money, and mind into receiving something of value that will enrich your life, when a trainer's ego is in the way, the design of the training shifts. Now you there to stand in awe of the speaker. Now it's all about him. Now it's all about her. His or her success, genius, incredible life, gifts, skills, and experiences. And this, of course, is the beginning of a guru and a cult.

A person like that, one with a big ego, however, involves a paradox. It is, in fact, paradoxical. That's because *a big ego results from a fragile and weak ego.* And the paradox continues if we look at the other side. It takes a lot of self-esteem to be humble and modest. It takes a lot of love and unconditional regard for oneself as a precious human being in order to get the ego out of the way.

The ego gets in the way when you feel that you have to always been parading your credits, your resume, your achievements, your stories, and your perspective. It is when our sense of *self* as an individual, as a person feels weak, inadequate, not enough, and conditionally important that we get our ego in the way.

Given this, take a quick test to determine the extent that your ego may be in your way in turning your dreams into reality:
__ When I meet someone I feel a need to let them know the successes I've been having.
__ When I'm at a social event, when I'm asked "How are things going?" I immediately present a

list of my achievements.

__ If I don't parade my achievements out, at least I do so in my head.

__ I feel impatient listening to the stories and achievements of others.

__ When someone tells of some success, I feel an urge to present a success of mine.

__ When I go to a meeting or meet someone, my mind is full of chatter about whether I'm as successful as the others.

__ I worry about my standing and status a lot.

__ I have not admitted "not knowing" something in at least 3 days.

__ I constantly anticipate and run through scenarios in my mind of how to present myself so that I make a good impression.

__ I feel really uncomfortable with silence with others.

__ I not only like telling stories, but I enjoy hearing myself telling my stories and engaging people with them.

__ When I work one on one with someone (coaching, helping, mentoring, consulting), it's important to me to know how I did.

__ When I hear someone else speak, I'm always preparing my response in order to make a good impression.

__ I almost always have a voice in my head evaluating how I'm doing.

__ I have not spent time learning from someone else in the past 3 months.

__ When someone asks me what challenge or issue or difficulty I'm working on, I can't think of any.

There are so many ways that our ego can get in our way. Yet however it does, it inevitably contaminates whatever we are doing. When the ego is in the way there's always a voice in the back of our mind evaluating and judging how we did, how we're coming across, how to position ourselves in the best light, etc. And as such, this state of consciousness, of self-consciousness, distracts our focus for whatever we're attempting to do.

When the ego is in the way, we typically come from a place of insecurity and conditionality. In ourselves we are not enough without praise from others, applause from others, acknowledgment, recognition, etc. Our value and importance is conditioned upon impressing others. Now there is another place that this could arise from. It could emerge from having learned some marketing and selling skills and then not knowing how to be appropriate with it, learning when and where and how to turn it off. So the person seems to be on a perpetual marketing and selling crusade.

The solution? Ah, that's the easy part. Meta-state your sense of self, your identity as a human being as *unconditionally valuable and precious.* Meta-state your self as a *somebody.* Set the frame in your mind, "I was born a somebody; I don't have to prove anything!" "It's a given; it is innate; it can't be taken away from me." "Not only do I not have to compare myself with anyone else, but the only true comparison is where I started from and how much further I can develop."

Getting the ego out of the way is absolutely essential if you want to be an effective leader, trainer, coach, consult, parent, lover, etc. When you are engaged in giving of yourself, sharing an expertise, responding to someone's need— it is essential to be fully present to them and for them.

And you can't do that if you're ego is weak, wounded, insecure or fragile. Then your ego comes across as "big" because you have to brag and carry on about yourself, then you have to con and manipulate others to let all the stories be about you. So it is a weak, wounded, insecure, or fragile ego that ties us down and leashes us to our limitations and ego-centric world-view. And that's not the kind of inner experience one needs in order to lead, contribute, communicate, or do almost anything in the human realm.

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #35
July 9, 2007

SUCCESS AND META-SUCCESS

We all want to succeed. Wanting to succeed is wire into us. We want to achieve our goals, our values, our intentions, our hopes, our dreams. It is part and parcel of being human. There's nothing wrong with this at all. It's part of living and surviving— reaching the values that are requirements for living.

So first level *success,* primary level *success,* is the fulfillment of our basic needs. This means that the biological definition of success is having enough to eat and drink, keep warm, etc. Part of the biological definition of success is to feel safe and secure, to have a social life so that we feel love and affection, and that we have sufficient sense of self so that we feel that we count, we matter, we have a place in the social/ political world.

By way of translation, most of us think of being "successful" as having sufficient money to take care of these needs, having a sufficient job that gives us a sense of safety and respect, and having sufficient amount of friends and family. Obviously these are all the "lower needs" on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, they are our basic instinctoid needs that we share with the animals.

Yet when you are successful at this level, you are ready and prepared to enter into *the human dimension of life.* I didn't realize this when I first read Maslow in the mid-1970s. I read through his classic work *Motivation and Personality* and did not realize that all of the lower needs are our animal needs, our physiological needs. Somehow I had mistakenly thought that the social needs (love and affection) and the self needs (self-regard, self-esteem) were higher needs and not animal needs. But they are not. The higher intelligent animals also have these needs. As social creatures, they live in communities, and thrive only through connection and support of each other. And the higher intelligent animals also have political structures from the top-dog, to the superior Alpha males so that their societies are comprised of a sense of self in the community.

And because we also have those needs as part of our biological nature, to be successful we have an instinctoid need for love and affection as well as a sense of self-regard in the communities that we live. So this, in part, explains why we all have these drives and experience them as some of our innate, intuitive drives.

From the Meta-States model, we can call all of that *primary level success.* And if we do so, then *meta-success* is succeeding at life in self-actualizing. This means moving out of the deficiency-driven needs that operate by lack, desperation, and competition and moving up into a whole new level of motivation, one that's driven by abundance, expressiveness, and being-ness. Success at this level makes us truly human and fully human as it enables us to do human things and to engage in the human adventure. Here we strive for order, beauty, structure, justice, love, compassion,

equality, contribution, meaningfulness, excellence, art, wonder, awe, and a thousand other things that make us uniquely human.

Now while primary success is for the most part objective, empirical, and therefore easily measured, not so with *meta-success.* While you can measure your income, your equity, how many cars you have, the amount of food, the quality of your shelter, the extent of coverage of your insurance policy, your status in an organization, your degrees, certifications, etc., it is immensely more difficult to measure *meta-success.* Why is that?

*Meta-success is **the quality** of your life rather than the quantity of it.*

The other day a friend of mine paraded his new Mercedes before me. I was impressed. "Nice car! Awesome!" I said wanting to congratulate him and give him some good feelings. Later at breakfast he talked about his worries with his relationships with several people and ongoing conflicts with management and competition with some others. Through the conversation I got the distinct impression that the new car was a way for him to salve on his wounded ego, a way to try to feel good about himself.

So I inquired, "Jim, if you were to gauge, what's the quality of your life?" After exploring that question with him, he commented that he felt his life sucked, that he was on a decline, and that things were not going in the right direction. "So to make up for the *quality* of life you purchased an expensive car hoping that the *quantity* of that purchase would fulfill you, is that right?"

Long, long, long pause. Tears filled up his eyes. Countenance change. "Yeah, I think that's right. I think that I unconsciously was hoping that if I bought something special just for me it would make me feel better." "And how has it worked out to enrich the inner quality of your life so that you feel your life more rich and meaningful on the inside?" And, obviously, it had not.

Primary success is like that. It can only take us so far. And then, beyond a certain level of affluence, success at the primary levels of our needs actually becomes unfulfilling for true satisfaction. Why? Because *meta-success* is about your inner self, your spirit, and about your sense of the highest human values— the values that make life feel significant and meaningful. At that level it's not about what you *have*, success is about what you *give* and *contribute*. At the highest level of success, it is about what you *are* and *are becoming*.

In the Psychology of Self-Actualization, this level of *meta-success* is what we call self-actualizing, experiencing our "full humanness," and being "fully alive/ fully human." How *meta-successful* are you today? How much more *meta-success* will you develop this year? Ready for a Meta-Coach to facilitate this with you?

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #36
July 16, 2007

SUCCESS
AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS

Several years ago we began selling some T-shirts at Trainings read: "Meta-States — We do it at higher levels." Recently I began wondering about what specifically is success at the highest levels? What is *meta-success*? And, of course, the answer is obvious. It is satisfying the higher needs and impulses that the chest of every human being— the needs that distinguish us as human beings above and beyond our animal needs. And even above the social and self-regard needs as I noted in the last Reflection.

Yet at this level there are so many paradoxes. Perhaps the most profound paradox is that in self-actualization as in the genius state of being "in the zone," success involves getting beyond the self so that we have a sense of self-forgetfulness. It is as if in becoming so completely engaged in something, our sense of self goes away as does our sense of time, others, the world, etc. This "oceanic" feeling has been described by philosophers, saints, theologians, and psychologists over the years. It is a sense of merging-with-the-object of our engagement. It is a sense of becoming one with that engagement. It is a sense of being lost in the experience.

The paradox is that this is not the loss of self at all. That's because it takes a strong sense of self to let go. As it takes a lot of self-esteem to be humble and modest, so it takes a solid and strong sense of self to give of oneself to the engagement and to others. Insecure people cannot do that. It's too frightening. They are too concerned about themselves.

And people who develop some kind of a belief that they should get rid of their ego are, of course, focused on themselves and getting rid of their ego! They are always checking on their sense of self to see if they have that sense and as they do, they notice themselves, which they then read as having their ego in the way! What's in their way is their ego-investment in the belief that they should not have their ego in the way. The belief itself is the problem. There's no solution to trying to get the ego out of the way by focusing on one's ego to get it out of the way.

The solution is counter-intuitive. It is to become so centered and secure in oneself, that one can turn and give oneself completely to some significant engagement that adds value to others and in that engagement, one simply forgets oneself. Self-forgetfulness is the key. And doing that is *not* turning inward and worrying about one's sense of self or ego; it is turning *outward* to making a contribution from your strengths, resources, gifts, and uniqueness.

We often experience self-forgetfulness when we get go to the movies and get caught up in some

great movie. It occurs when we are engaged in an intense conversation with someone. It occurs when we are passionately involved in a match or game or a contest or an activity that demands all of our mind and emotions. It can happen when we read, when we run a race, when we make a presentation, when we are coaching.

Success at the highest levels involves this kind of self-forgetfulness or perhaps I should say that when you are fully engaged in giving yourself to something (performance) that's important to you (meaning), that contributes value (meaning) from your unique skills (performance), then you step into a state where you are synergizing a competence that is challenging to you. That puts you in the "flow" zone of self-actualization.

Maslow called this kind of success at the highest levels as "peak experiences" and, of course, if you do that regularly and consistently with something that's you have lots of talent for, you'll then move your delivery so that you have "peak performances." *Peak experiences* are moments when you are all there, when you are at your best, when you have all your resources available, when you are pushing your own limits, and when you feel one-with the activity that you're engaged in.

Most of us experience such moments of peak experiences as something "spiritual," something above and beyond our mere minds-and-emotions, our bodies and kinesthetic sensations. It feels beyond that. As a gestalt, it seems to be the sense of transcending our mind-and-emotions and experiencing ourselves at a higher level. What this is we do not really know.

My postulation about this is that it is the *self-reflexive consciousness* at work. That is, when we look back on the total engagement experience (the peak experience) and we noticed the self-forgetfulness, we have a sense of transcending our mind-body-emotion system and not having any words for this state, we call it our spirit.

L. Michael Hall

SELF-ACTUALIZATION
MADE EASY

O n the day that we launched the new Human Potential Movement in South Africa (Friday, July 20) we had just completed the 3-days of *The Ultimate Self-Actualization Workshop.* Sixteen Meta-Coaches and Neuro-Semantic Trainers had just experienced the three Acts of the Drama of Self-Actualization that we call the Construct, the Crucible, and the Zone of Self-Actualization. As they gathered for the Launch Day in Pretoria, I used the occasion to ask them what they had personally received from the experience. And I told them why I wanted to know that.

> "The reason I want to know what you received from the workshop is because it is critical that we all can both identify the value experienced and articulate it clearly to help us in our marketing of the workshop."

So what did they say? Willem Fourie, a new Meta-Coach, said that for him the Self-Actualization workshop was *Self-Actualization made easy.* Brand Coetzee, a Meta-Coach and Neuro-Semantic Trainer, said that it was *Self-Actualization made practical.* Then a large group of those present said that they were and continue to be surprised at how gentle the transformation process of the Crucible was. They didn't expect that. And even on Day 2 when we entered into the Crucible, time and again people said, "It just can't be that easy." "I expected it to be hard, rough, and painful, but it was so gentle, so organic."

Cary Lucas, a Meta-Coach, Neuro-Semantic Trainer, and a part of *People South-Africa* (the sponsoring organization)*, said* the workshop was for her *Change without a Crisis.* All of this reminded me of what Jim Walsh, a Meta-Coach and Neuro-Semantic Trainer in Florida, said about the Crucible, *It is a Change Machine.*

And, of course, that led to the questions that I've heard time and time again,
> "How does this particular change model work?"
> "How does the Crucible as a change model differ from the Axes of Change?"

And that initiated much of our discussion that day with those who knew both of these generative Neuro-Semantic change models. Much of the discussion also focused on the demise of the first Human Potential Movement and of the multiple techniques that they used in their attempt to find and unleash human potentials. Back in the 1960s through the 1980s, scores upon scores of processes were explored in an attempt to unleash potential. From various Gestalt Therapy processes to numerous Body Therapy approaches to the Encounter group, to experimentation

with psychodelic drugs, to the sexual promiscuity at the sulpher hot-springs at Esalen, to meditation, and so on. Those were the days of wild experimentation as they tried to find some mechanism, some process, some magic key, some enlightened *Aha!* that would facilitate the unleashing of the incredible potentials that are within human beings.

And while some people found new personal powers and began finding their way to unleashing their potentials, most did not. And more important, the "movement" as such did not work through the chaotic creativity of those days to define a theory and specific processes that would consistently lead people to actualizing more and more of their inner powers and moving into a self-actualizing life as Maslow had described. And so, three decades later, the movement was gone, all of the original leaders dead, and no one carrying the movement forward.

Yet within the original vision and theory that Maslow presented were keys—significant clues about the actual *processes of self-actualization.* So while the "movement" fragmented into numerous groups and disciplines, all trying various ways to facilitate self-development, no one seemed to think about returning to the source (Maslow) and seeing what could be developed from his original genius. Fortunate for me, that was the gap I found when I first returned to this area and that's all that I've attempted to do during the past two-and-a-half years—to revisit the master of self-actualization psychology to see what I could mine from the richness of his extensive research.

And that's precisely what many at the workshop have said: "This is the next stage of Maslow." "This actualizes the self-actualization theory of Maslow." "Standing on the shoulders of Abraham Maslow, Dr. Hall has made the Hierarchy of Needs practical and dynamic so that we can use it for unleashing potentials; now the Pyramid really has become a Volcano."

Is the process for self-actualizing *easy*? Can it be made easy? The process is certainly natural and organic. We are all made to develop, to grow, to learn, and to become more and more of who and what we can become. The biggest problem that interferes with this is that of fearing the process, of getting stuck at a lower need, and of distorting our needs through toxic and limiting beliefs. These are *the leashes*—the things holding us back, tying us up, and preventing us from actualizing our highest and best. And these are the things to unleash.

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #38
July 30, 2007

MOVING UP TO
A CLEARER PERCEPTION

Repeatedly in his writings, Maslow said that self-actualizers see reality more clearly and accurately. From his studies of self-actualizing people, he concluded that they are "able to see concealed or confused realities more swiftly and more correctly" than most people. He saw this leading to several other benefits. First, living life more efficiently since "they do not have to spend any time laying the ghost, whistling past the cemetery, or otherwise protecting themselves against imagined dangers." And secondly, solving problems more effectively and creatively since they are more problem-centered rather than ego-centered.

• But what leads to this clearer perception of reality?
• What enables a self-actualizer to have this ability to see reality more clearly?

While I don't think that the answer will surprise you, I suspect that it will delight you and may even create an *Aha!* moment. It did for me.

The answer involves *the level of need* at which you live. If you are still living and operating at the level of the basic needs of hunger, thirst, shelter, sex, money, safety, love, self-regard, etc., then you experience life in terms of need and deficiency. You need something. And all such deficiency motives color and distort our perceptions of reality by causing us to make demands on it. At the basic needs level of lack, we look at our world through our needs and so make demands: "Feed me! Clothe me! Protect me! Love me! Respect me!"

There's a principle in operation here: *The greater our need, the greater that need colors our perception.* At this level, we also see others as the gratifiers of our needs. This explains the stereotype of the red-blooded male who sees females as nothing more than sex-objects. At the lower basic needs, we see others as those who are givers (or withholders) of affection, esteem, safety, etc. We don't see people as ends-in-themselves, we see them as *means* to our ends and of our objectives. This is what makes life *at this level* ego-centric.

Maslow's point is that as long as deficiency motivation drives us we look out upon the world through clouded lens. He called this level the *instrumental* level. By way of contrast, the higher level of the self-actualization needs he called the *being* level. It's at that level that we are not striving or seeking to do anything, we are just *being,* just *expressing* ourselves, and *non-purposefully* perceiving nature and human reality for what it *is.*

When we move to this higher *being* level, it is as if we remove *the clouded lens of instrumentality* and *means-to-ends* thinking and that, in itself, enables us to see the world more clearly. We no longer see the world through the deficiency-motivated *demandingness* of our needs. We can now see what *is* so that we can observe it, witness it, and even appreciate and enjoy seeing whatever we see.

This level of the self-actualizing life changes the very quality of our life. Now instead of being driven by deficiency motivation, we are driven by *expressive* motivation, *being* motivation. We shift to a non-striving accepting, noticing, and appreciating motivation. Instead of "striving" we live a different kind of life, we live a life of "unfolding." Our highest potentials and best values simply *unfold* as we express our gifts, talents, and possibilities.

Now if there are wonderful possibilities in all human beings and yet so few actualize their potentials, what explains this gap? There are many answers to this, one of which is that most people live their lives at the more prepotent levels of deficiency motivation. This means they see themselves, others, social reality, nature, etc. through the ego-centric lens of their own demanding deficiencies. This means that they live life "striving" as if they are deficient. And that's because they have given too much meaning and importance to the lower need, attempting to use it for some higher self-actualization need.

So instead of eating for fuel and vitality, they eat for love, fulfillment, the good life, reward, and many other psycho-logical reasons. So sex is used for proving self, achievement, etc. Money is used as power, achievement, success, etc. Yet these *psycho-logics* (the reasoning, understanding, and meanings that we give to the basic needs) over-load them making them *other* than they are and locking us into the lower needs. Our psycho-logics *leash* us to the deficiency level because they *distort* the actual need and prevent us from adequately gratifying it with a true gratifier.

Why self-actualization? Why move to that level? Why move beyond the deficiency needs? To move into the truly *human* level of the higher self-actualization needs where you can take off the clouding lens of deficiency and demandingness and see reality clearer. Then you will be able to live and express your *full humanness*, live more efficiently, and solve the real problems of life rather than the pseudo-problems.

Our basic needs are legitimate needs. They are our biological needs, the needs of our physiogical well-being, and the needs that we share with the animals, especially the higher intelligent animals. And at any moment, we can be sent back to these needs. These needs are always with us and can ascend to dominance. They are the foundation for life and vitality and to that extent, good, valid, and important. *But they are not the purpose of life.* We humans are made for something much more— to be fully human / fully alive, to experience and express our full humanness. We call this experience self-actualization.

MOVING UP
FROM THE JUNGLE

I concluded the last *Meta Reflection* with a statement about our basic needs being legitimate needs—biological, essential to our physiological well-being, and the needs that we share with the higher intelligent animals. I also noted that at any moment, we can be sent back to these needs because these needs are always with us as they serve as the foundation for our life and vitality.

Yet here's the rub. When we *could* satisfy them in an accurate and stable way, but *do not*, we then perpetuate our life at the level of the deficiency needs. And that perpetuates *instrumentality* thinking that leads us to view people and things as means-to-ends rather than being ends-in-themselves. This puts us back into life in the jungle.

Jungle life? Yes, life at the deficiency needs is life *in the jungle.* Maslow used this phrase when he began translating self-actualization and his new psychology to management, leadership, and business. Human beings who could and *ought* to be rising up to the human level of living —expressive, *being,* self-actualizing, living the *being-*values, enjoying *being-*love, *being-*cognition, peak experiences, and even peak performances —do not, then continue to live life at a much lower level, the level of competition, demandingness, competitiveness, deficiency, lack, reactiveness, and ego-centricity.

And what causes that? Each person's unique and idiosyncratic *psycho-logics.* "Psycho-logics?" Yes. Now if you are new to Neuro-Semantics, this might be a new term and idea for you. So let me explain. *Psycho-logics* comes from Alfred Korzybski and General Semantics and his classic book, *Science and Sanity* (1933/ 1994). Korzybski derived the term by putting a hyphen inside of the term psychology. This created psycho-logy, psycho-logicians, and psycho-logics.

His point? That we are not logical beings, we are psycho-logical beings. Our "logics" depends not upon Aristotle or Plato or syllogisms or mathematics, but upon our personal psychology. Our way of thinking, reasoning, and making sense of the world —our psycho-logics— depends upon something very subjective, personal, and idiosyncratic. Namely, upon the connections, associations, and emotional experiences. It's in this way that what something *means* to us depends upon our experiences and the conclusions that we have drawn from those experiences.

In NLP we say that it depends on the way we have *mentally mapped* something. And that depends upon the generalizations we have created (beliefs, decisions, understandings), the

deletions we've made as we mapped things, and the distortions that we modeled. Your psycho-logics about what anything means to you depends upon how you have created meanings about it. Now we can ask about any particular thing— food, wealth, money, exercise, work, budgeting, selling, negotiating, etc. —*what does this mean to you?* And whatever you say it means to you, whatever frame of reference you use — that creates your meanings, your psycho-logics.

It is in this way that you can take any of the basic human needs, the lower needs, and over-load it with so much meaning that you can condemn yourself to that level of living. With the meanings that you attribute to food, shelter, money, safety, friends, respect, etc., you can imprison yourself inside that need so that it becomes all-consuming. By semantically over-loading a basic need with existential meaning, it can become to you the very purpose of life. You can live to please people, get along peacefully with everyone, be in control of every social situation, accumulate millions (or billions), etc.

And it is precisely by semantically over-loading something, even a basic lower need, that you can doom yourself to life in the Jungle. How does that happen? It happens because by giving it so much meaning, any threat to it feels like a physical threat to you—like an existential threat. And because that locks you into life at the lower needs level, you are prevented from moving up to the highest human needs, the self-actualization needs.

What's a human being to do? Ah, that's the simple part. Well, *simple* if you know about your own psycho-logics and how to work with them neuro-semantically! The answer? Simply identify what and where you have semantically over-loaded something with too much meaning, step back to quality control your life with that meaning, then step up to release or suspend the over-load of meaning, and set a limit of meaning on it so that the lower need is just what it is without all of that extra meaning. Simple.

Well, on second thought, you might want to contact a Meta-Coach or a Neuro-Semanticist to help you with the res-structuring of your meanings so that you can move up out of Life in the Jungle to the highest of Human experience. Or get some training in the neuro-semantics of your psycho-logics and learn to run your brain at all of the higher levels of frames —the frames of meaning that create your inner reality. This also is theme of the book, *Winning the Inner Game.*

And because this is the determining factor of the very quality of your life — here's to your highest and best of what's human!

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #40
August 13, 2007

BIOLOGICAL ASSAYS

In *Meta Reflection* (#35) I presented the concept that Maslow developed that *the process of self-actualization in itself involves a clearer perception of reality.* This is not just a possibility which is available to just a few people. It is an intrinsically human height to which anyone can potentially ascend in the peak experience, even if only rarely and momentarily. Here's what Maslow wrote in *Toward a Psychology of Being*:

> "If self-actualizing people can and do perceive reality more efficiently, fully and with less motivational contamination than we others do, then we may possibly use them as biological assays. Through their greater sensitivity and perception, we may get a better report of what reality is like, than through our own eyes, just as canaries can be used to detect gas in mines before less sensitive creatures can." (Chapter 6)

And what do these self-actualizing people *see* more clearly that those of us who still struggle with the deficiency needs do not see, or only see vaguely through clouded lens? The answer is the *being realm* of life and experience —the nature and glory of *being* itself, the *being-values*, *being*-cognition, *being*-choices.

For most people, our everyday values are heavily contaminated by deficiency needs and motivation. These needs cloud what we value and how we value. They cloud them through the frame of mind of scarcity and deficiency that the lower needs create so that we see *being* and being a human *being* through the filter of instrumentality. That is, we see it through the questions, "What's in it for me?" "What can I use this for?"

By way of contrast, when we move to the higher needs, the self-actualization needs, as self-actualizing persons we enter into the realm of *being*. At this level our motivation changes. It ceases to be instrumental. Now, instead of attempting to do or achieve something, our motivation is to simply notice, see, experience, and *be*. This also is precisely what enables us to see clearer and to make better choices.

Maslow argued that self-actualizers are "good choosers." Have you ever known someone who just seemed to be predominantly a good chooser in the sense that they regularly and consistently choose alternatives that are conducive of health, wholeness, joy, learning, etc.? When we choose, we have a framework of values, a value-system from which we make our choices.

From his research and study of self-actualizing people, Maslow said that the good choosers among human beings are the self-actualizing people. They make choices more quickly and

naturally. They make choices that the rest of us would make if we had more time, wisdom, options, and understanding. Somehow they seem to perceive sharply and clearly what we perceive more dimly. And because they see more clearly, they are able to discern the best and choose it more quickly.

Using the idea of a biological assay as a metaphor, Maslow said that these self-actualizers with their ability to be good choosers are like canaries in mines who can detect gas long before people can. From this Maslow then made a list of the common values of self-actualizers. As he correlated the values that he found in them over and over and over, he eventually called these the *Being*-values (the B-values). And what are they? Here's Maslow's list:

B-Values

Truth	Goodness
Beauty	Unity; wholeness
Dichotomy-transcendence	Aliveness; process
Uniqueness	Perfection
Necessity	Order
Simplicity	Richness, totality, comprehensiveness
Effortlessness	Playfulness
Self-sufficiency	Meaningfulness

What does the process of self-actualization entail and what is the experience of living a self-actualizing life like?

The process involves moving from an instrumentality mind-set to one of *being*-ness where we just observe and see and appreciate what *is* so that we can then fully *express* ourselves without ulterior motives.

And it is like rising up to a level of perception where we can see clearly, broadly, and with an ever-increasing perspective so that we see the *B*-values of what human life is designed to be at its best.

Interested in actualizing your highest visions and your best values? This is the heart of Neuro-Semantics— the purpose of our trainings, the focus of the Meta-Coaches. And when individuals begin to actualize in this way, so do families, and groups, and companies, and businesses, and nations.

To your Highest and Best!

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT *IT* IS?

There he was in a night club at one o'clock in the morning. Standing alone in a corner . . . enduring the music that was blaring. And the people that he could see were dressed in black and in leather. Everywhere he looked there were tatoos.

What was he waiting for? How did all of this start? Earlier he had awakened with a start, having fallen asleep at his computer desk. That's when a message flashed onto the screen, a message about something *having* him and the instruction, "follow the white rabbit." That's when a knock came on the door. And an invitation, an invitation that bring him to his night club.

Then suddenly in the midst of the crowded night club and the loud music someone appeared before him. She introduced herself. Her name was Trinity. Small talk followed and then some surprising reflection: "It's the question that drives us. And the answer is out there. Do you want to know what it is?" And Neo asked, "What is Neuro-Semantics?"

> "It's all around us. It's when we go to the grocery store, when we turn on the TV, when we take out the garbage. It's the world of meaning that you live in; it's the world of meaning that you live out from. It is in your mind and in your body, it is the world that you began mapping out from your first days and that you now accept as 'reality.' It is what you perform in all of your actions and your talk, in all of your emoting and even in all of your inward thinking. It is the world that you have pulled down over your eyes so that it is what you feel and see."

While Morpheus said all of this to Neo, it was not all that he said or even the most important. What he said next was actually the key.

> "No one can tell you what Neuro-Semantics is, Neo. No one can tell you what the Matrix of your mind with all of the layers of meanings upon meanings is or how it informs your body and sends commands to your nervous system. To know what *it* is, you have to experience it. I can point to the door, but you have to walk through it. Are you ready to do that? Do you want to experience the Matrix of your neuro-semantics for what it is—a matrix made for your mind?"

And the Neo that you are, that I am, that we all are—the *new* person that you have the potential to be within yourself, what will you say? Will you walk through the door? Are you ready to do that? What will your answer be?

If the sense that there is something wrong with the world that you've been living in, if you know deep inside that there's something about that world that just doesn't fit, if something about it is like a splinter in your mind driving you mad—then you may very well be ready.

> "I hold before you two pills. Take the blue pill and wake up tomorrow and live out whatever mental mappings that you've inherited and that you've created. Continue to live in that world and experience whatever that matrix of frames offers you. Or, take the red pill and I'll show you how deep the rabbit hole goes. I will show you all of the labyrinths of your mind, all of the layers of the frames of your mind, all of the convoluted psycho-logics of your mind. Are you ready to become the One—the master of your matrix who holds the keys to the quality of your life, your states, and your experiences?"

So, do you really want to know what *it* is? Your neuro-semantics are all of the ways that you use your mind-and-body system to map out reality, yourself, others, the world, and everything you encounter. It is all of your neurological mappings, all of your mental and conceptual mappings, it is all of your meanings and the meanings-of-your-meanings that defines and describes "reality" as you know it.

It is the meanings that you invent in your brain and attribute to the things that happen. And this may work well for you or it may make life a living hell. Again, the choice is yours. As a species of life without instincts, we are the meaning-makers. Or to quote Colin Cox, we are *magical meaning-making machines.* And so our neuro-semantics is the construction inside our neurology (brain, body, nervous systems) of all of our ideas, thoughts, beliefs, decisions, intentions—in a word, all of our meanings (semantics).

And your neuro-semantics shows up in your *states* —your mental states, physical states, and emotional states. This is where your matrix is grounded. It is here, in your mind-body-emotional states that you reveal, actualize, and experience your matrix of frames. What is *it*? The matrix is the everyday expression and experience of what you've mapped out in your mind and body.

If you do want to know what *it* is, of the identity and reality of the neuro-semantics of the matrix of your mind, then you can take the red pill when you enter a Neuro-Semantic Training or contact a Meta-Coach or work with a Neuro-Semanticist. We are the community of Morpheus— those who have the privilege of awakening and then training or coaching ever-new Neos to become the One of their Matrix. And in doing that, it awakens new possibilities. It actualizes new potentials. It activates core talents. It transforms old ways of thinking, feeling, and acting, and it facilitates the release and unleashing of human potential like nothing else.

So with all of that in mind — here's to your full unleashing, unleashing your highest and best!

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #42
August 27, 2007

I have been working on an article
and thought I'd put it here — esp.
for those of you who have been through
the Self-Actualization Workshop and
the Trainers & Meta-Coaches who are
now part of the New Human Potential
Movement that we are launching.

WAYNE DYER

AND THE MANTLE OF MASLOW

L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.

In 1984 when I read *The Sky's the Limit,* a 1980 book by Wayne Dyer, I had no idea that Dyer was attempting to pick up the Mantle of Maslow and run with the Self-Actualization Psychology that Maslow invented. Yet I should have. Re-reading the book recently I found that it was there in black-and-white. But somehow I didn't see that in 1984. I suppose that since I wasn't interested in that at that time, I didn't see it. At that time, I didn't know that was even significant. But my ignorance of all of that created a blindness in me at that time!

Today, however, I'm a bit more conscious of things. So in July of 2007 I so happened to pick up the book and suddenly noticed something. Wayne Dyer had dedicated that book to the memory of Abraham H. Maslow —"the original pathfinder in he study of man's potential for greatness." So I had no choice. I had to sit down and re-read the entire book! And guess what? The whole book is an attempt by Dyer to pick up on many of the key themes of Maslow and to give it his particular energy, focus, and twist.

> "When we look at humanity's potentials for living in peace, harmony, productivity, even joy, and then look at the world as it is, the comparison is pathetic. ... Each person on this planet is inherently, intrinsically capable of attaining 'dizzying heights' of happiness and fulfillment." (xv)

> "Dr. Abraham Maslow, who devoted a large portion of his life to the study of what he called 'self-actualization,' or the very highest levels of being available to humanity.

Maslow described the qualities that distinguish self-actualized people from others in an effort to create what he called a Psychology of Being. I have adopted or adapted a number of Maslow's 'self-actualized' qualitites in putting together my picture of the No-Limit person, and have dedicated this book to his memory because of my tremendous admiration for his pioneering spirit." (xvii)

Dyer reviews how Maslow wanted to look at humanity (human nature) from an entirely new perspective, namely, by studying the great achievers and learning from their examples. But just as soon as he acknowledges Maslow, Dyer then seems to have a compulsion to differ from him! That's what then led to some of the mistakes that I think he made. First, thinking that he was simplifying Maslow's language, Dyer introduces two phrases. "The NEZ person is the No Erroneous Zones person" [from his book on the *Erroneous Zones*] and the No-Limit person describe the greatness that Maslow discovered in the self-actualizers that he studied."

So if you think that "self-actualization" was a tough phrase, Dyer introduces "the NEZ" and "the No-Limit person"—as if *that* helps! Somehow this strikes me as a case of refusing to stand on the shoulders of the giant and trying to invent one's own vocabulary instead of starting with what had already been developed.

And yet Dyer was on to something:
> "You cannot become a No-Limit person without having eliminated your erroneous zones, and if you have eliminated them, if you are a NEZ person, you are already on the way to ... creating a life of full freedom for yourself." (xvi)

Now as a cognitive psychologist, he knew the power of cognitive distortions and how they create limitations and so *leash* people to hurt, trauma, difficulties, etc. But then Dyer did something in his book that I have seen so many times. In order to distinguish himself from Maslow and create his own name— *he actually misrepresented Maslow.* He wrote some things about Maslow's position that are simply *not* true.
> "According to Maslow, such people [those who are masers of their own emotional worlds] are few and far between, but they *do exist*. Maslow thought that the self-actualized person ... *had to be rare* on our planet. He believed, in effect, that 'many are called but few are chosen'; that only a *special breed of person* could attain what I have called *total mastery* of life." (14)
> "Maslow implies that being 'completely evolved' is reserved for a very special category of elite people." (16)

Now having read and re-read Maslow's works several times I can tell you that *none of that is true! Not at all.* When I first read that paragraph I was literally shocked at the level of misrepresentation. In all of my readings of Maslow's five books on Self-Actualization and his hundreds of articles, and his other book on the Science of Psychology, Maslow never said anything like that.

In fact, Maslow argued strongly that *every person* has the possibility of self-actualizing. He

framed it as what is within every person as part of our normal development.

> "Self-actualization, the coming to full development and actuality of the potentialities of the organism, is more akin to growth and maturation than it is to habit formation or association via reward." (1954 / 1970, p. 233)
>
> "Every baby has possibilities for self-actualization but most get it knocked out of them. I think of the self-actualizing man not as an ordinary man with something added but rather as *the ordinary man with nothing taken away*. The average man is a human being with dampened and inhibited powers."

Now Dyer tries to distinguish himself by writing the following:

> "I firmly believe that each person who resides on this planet has the innate capability to live his life in a rewarding and spontaneously exciting way. Anyone can rid himself of self-defeating thinking and behavior and grow into a human being who lives fully day by day. In sum, a high level of mental and physical health is available for anyone who is willing to go after it, and no one has any better chance of becoming more self-actualized or more fully functioning than anyone else." (16)

Yet that is precisely what Maslow was after. Here is Maslow's statements in his own words:

> "Self-actualization, full humanness, the development of the biologically based nature of man and therefore is empirically normative for the whole species rather than for particular times and places." (1968, p. vi)
>
> *"Self-actualization is not a lack or deficiency.* It is intrinsic growth of what is already in the organism, of what is the organize itself. They have no aim or goal, non-purposive. They were not elaborated for the sake of need gratification." (134)
>
> Self-Actualization is the tendency of every human being ... to make real his or her full potential, to become everything that he or she can be. The self-actualizing person is the true human species-type .. not a normal person with something added, but a normal person with nothing taken away.

Where he may have misunderstood this is from this quotation from Maslow.

> "Self-actualizing people, those who have come to a high level of maturation, health, and self-fulfillment, have so much to teach us that sometimes they seem almost like a different breed of human beings." (1968, 71)
>
> "Maturity, or self-actualization, from this point of view, means to transcend the deficiency needs. This state can be described then as meta-motivated. Self-actualization is easy in principle, in practice it rarely happens, by my criteria, certainly in less than 1% of the adult population." (204)

So while Dyer seemed to have been attempting to pick up Maslow's mantle and carry on the work, by changing the terminology that Maslow developed and even mis-understanding or mis-

representing Maslow perhaps that's why Dyer has *not* been recognized as connected with Maslow.

Now in *The Sky's the Limit* he did play off of many of Maslow's themes:
- The art of living now. Living in the moment and being present *now*. (19)
- The art of being in contact with life now and completely engaged in it. He quoted Maslow on the Japanese term *muga* "the state in which you are doing whatever you are doing with a total wholeheartedness." (25)
- Transcending time in that engagement (28)
- Creatively involved in your life (32)
- Tolerating ambiguity (38)
- Transcending dichotomizing (41, 84)
- Transcending culture and enculturation (fifty-five)
- Accepting personal choice in life (81)
- Thinking and operating holistically (88, 106)
- Freshness of appreciation (93)
- Transcending gender limitations (9five)
- Transcending the work/ play dichotomy (112)
- Fully accept the lower needs ("be a good animal") (130, 217)
- Recover childlike curiosity and learning (170)
- Develop your own internal "locus of control" (218)
- Welcome and cultivate your creativity (232)
- Find and trust your inner voice (236, 240)
- Respect your higher needs (chapter 7, pp 259.   And yet in this chapter, he does not mention or quote Maslow once. He also mixed up lower and higher needs making me wonder how carefully he read Maslow in the first place.
- Overcoming the fear of greatness (308)
- Viewing all of life as sacred (311)

What I appreciate that Dyer did achieve was the he add the dimension of *meaning* to the self-actualizing process that Maslow missed (274, chapter 8 "Cultivating a Sense of Purpose and Meaning, 293).

> "The most important ingredient in the feeling of having personal meaning is the *attitude* that you bring to anything that you elect to do. But if you are simply going along with the routine of your life, performing duties that you find distasteful and having internal feelings of emptiness, then you have a huge void to fill." (294)

> "The importance of having a sense of meaning cannot be over-emphasized." "You can make the decision to live meaningfully each and every day for the simple reason that it will make you a happier, more effective and, most importantly, contented human being." (296, 300)

> "See yourself as someone who can change the world, who is informed and who really counts, and you'll also develop a sense of inner purpose as well." (320)

Weaknesses

Here is something that I find it so strange. If we begin with a new paradigm shift such as the one Maslow initiated where we look on the "bright side" of human nature and look for potentialities rather than limitations and problems, some people seem to be unable to leave it at that. They then have to turn the bright side into something so divine, so incredible, so fabulous that they soon start using phrases like "limitless potentials."

> "Nothing can be more important to me or to us than the legacy of ... the belief in the limitless potential of human beings..." (xlx)
> "It means being in awe of your humanity and your limitless potential as a human being." (2)

Limitless? Really? No limits at all? No constraints? And, of course, when people *over-sell* something in this way, they end up undermining the value and good that they set out to add. Dyer also turns this into his theme "No-Limit thinking is perhaps the highest art of which the human being is capable." Now we're into something very different, a kind of new age belief that seems to not be able to accept human nature in all of its fallibilities, weaknesses, and limitations.

Summary

From what I can discern in Dr. Wayne Dyer's works, I think that really did intend to carry on the pioneering work of Abraham Maslow. And I think he could have picked up Maslow's mantle back in 1980 and carried on the work. But that didn't happen. Dyer made a name for himself with his books and trainings and from what I can tell, never returned to the writings of Maslow to attempt to carry on that work.

Dyer's trilogy of books — *Your Erroneous Zones, Pulling Your Own Strings,* and *The Sky's the Limit* seems to me to have both popularized some of Maslow's works as well as add the needed cognitive-semantic emphasis that Maslow missed. In that, Dyer could have been a key leader in reviving the Human Potential Movement at that time and carried on the self-actualization psychology that Maslow initiated, but in the end, he did not.

TRANSCENDING CULTURE #1

When you arrived in this world, your birth was inside a culture. As through the years, you were culturalized. Eventually, when the enculturalization is complete, culture is inside you. And at that stage, you take your culture everywhere you go. You never leave home without it.

Now while all of this is normal and inevitable, it is also one of the great *leashes* that hold you back from full self-actualization. *Enculturalization* actually holds you back from your fullest expression as a human being and from unleashing your highest potentials. In this, culture plays a double-role and one that is both a blessings and a curse. "Culture" is both a great contributor to human development as well as a great limitation and inhibitor of human development. How can it be both? Well, it operates in both ways at different times in our development.

In the first stages of our development, culture is essential and tremendously contributes and usually in a very positive way. In fact, without it we would not become human at all. Children who are taken out of human culture and are raised in the wilderness by animals (feral children) never become human. If they miss the language imprint period, they never learn to talk. And as they miss the symbolization period of cognitive development, they also never learn how to enter into the human dimension of symbols of which culture exists.

Our first exposure to "culture" occurs in our homes—the home environment created for us by our parents. Here they *cultivate* our mind, emotions, speech, and behaviors as they plant their cultural seeds of meaning within us and shape and condition us to respond as they do to the cultural frames of their own enculturalization.

How have you been enculturalized? In and by what culture? What culture or cultures were you born inside of? If you don't know it, your culture is your Matrix—a set of frames pulled down over your eyes to hide you from the truth (from what is real) and to create a man-made reality for your mind. You were born in the Matrix of your culture and to the extent that you think it is real and true and right — to that extent you have been throughly enculturalized and to that extent, the Matrix *has* you.

Now to escape that Matrix, you have to take the red pill. And why escape your culture and enculturalization? Because it limits you. It puts a leash on your possibilities. It prevents you from even seeing and experiencing the full range of human possibilities.

In Neuro-Semantics, we recognize that *culture* is one of the logical levels. It does not exist "out there" in the empirical see-hear-feel reality. We never walk down the sidewalk and stumble over a hunk of culture. Culture exists in the minds of those who have been *cultivated* to see certain things, value certain things, have in certain ways, recognize certain rituals as meaningful, etc. In fact, *culture* which sounds like a thing is an invisible nominalization referring to a high level set of invisible frames in our minds that are for the most part outside-of-our-awareness (i.e., unconscious). We mostly become aware of our culture when we meet other cultures.

Now when Abraham Maslow was modeling the characteristics of self-actualizing people, one of the distinctions he recognized was that the self-actualizers "resisted enculturalization" so that they do not live conventional lives. They are not within the statistical norm of "the average" of their group. Instead, they are free enough inside themselves to find and value their own uniqueness, to live from within their own reference system. And yet they are not rebels, but typically wear the conventionality of their culture "lightly on their shoulders" able to dispense it easily and quickly.

He also noticed something else about them. They not only resisted enculturalization, but they also *transcended their cultures.* They lived at a level above and beyond whatever culture or cultures that they had been raised in. As a consequence, they are "deeply democratic" in the true sense of the word. They see people as people and not through stereotype descriptions as belonging to this or that culture.

When I first read this, I was reminded of the way Alfred Korzbyski talked about "racial" qualities. He used the term "racial" constantly in his writings and it took me awhile to figure out what he was referring to. At first, I really didn't know what he was referring to. "Racial" to me had always meant the other races. But eventually I realized that he was talking about *the human condition.* Then it dawned on me; there are no "other races." On planet earth there is only one race—*the human race.* We all belong to the same species, there are no others.

I say that it "dawned" on me. If that sounds like an immediate insight that struck me out of the blue and totally changed my thinking and feeling in one swell swoop, well, it was not exactly like that. The transformation was much slower. Slowly I became aware that what we call the different "races" are but different families. Different family distinctions.

In this, the differences between the different groups, nationalities, and peoples are actually hardly important or significant—color of skin, shape of mouth, nose, eyes, etc. We all say of newborn babies, "She's got her mother's eyes" or "He's got his grandfather's nose." In a similar fashion to these family traits, what we have called "racial" distinctions are but family traits that large families carry on. Nothing more. They are not actually "racial" differences since we are all part of the same race—the human race.

Yet though we are all one race, we are raised in different cultures which explains how our minds-and-emotions and our talk and actions can be *cultivated* to think, feel, speak, and behave so differently. Culture speaks about the *cultivation* of our inner games. And given that every culture is limited and limiting— the challenge for all of us is to rise above our cultures— to transcend

them. And we will continue this subject in the next Meta Reflections.

TRANSCENDING CULTURE #2

In the last Reflection I mentioned that *culture* works as both a blessing and curse. It facilitates our first development as human beings and then it puts us in boxes and so limits our full self-actualization development. What does this mean for our lives? Namely, that we first have to *be enculturated,* then we have to *resist that enculturation,* and finally we move to *transcend our culture*.

While we were all born inside of a culture, we were not born inside of just one, but many cultures. We were born inside of multiple cultures and even cultures of cultures. For each of us there is first of all our family culture, then there is our extended family culture. There is also our so-called "racial" culture, linguistic culture, religious culture, national culture, educational cultures, and many others.

Each of these groups played a role in *cultivating* our mind and emotions, our speech, and actions. And that's what a *culture* is—all of other people and processes by which our nature is *cultivated* to think, believe, care, respond, and perceive the world. Culture also involves everything about how we do life—from our habits and rituals of eating, greeting, talking, perceiving, feeling, etc.

As you can see, *culture is entirely man-made.* In fact, it is made out of the understandings, ideas, beliefs, and ways of acting that originated long ago. That's what makes them "traditional," they are the ideas about how to live life that have been passed down from those who went before. And what they passed down as the traditions and that now make up the "culture," was often very effective for a previous age and no longer relevant or useful. So like people, our "cultures" go through birth-growth-and-death stages. They are given birth, they grows, they evolve, they get old, they become irrelevant, and they pass away.

In this every culture operates like the proverbial Procrustean bed. We live down in the Procrustean bed of our culture and if we are "too short" —if we don't measure up to the things that our cultures values and treats as important —not pretty enough, strong enough, intelligent enough, wealthy enough, etc. then the culture does its work in attempting to "stretch" us. It does it through teaching, demanding, shaming, punishing, etc. And if we are "too tall" then the culture works to "shorten" us through criticism, scolding, warnings, etc.

In these ways every culture no matter how wise, developed, advanced, caring, or noble works to

create a "product." The product is that of a well-culturalized person who fits in, gets along, and exemplifies the values and ideals of that particular culture. So to be a "cultural man" or a "cultural woman" is like being an "organizational man," a "yes man," a good compliant, non-questioning, non-disturbing cog in the machine of that culture. And to this extent, our enculturalization creates limitations and dis-empowerment. To this extent it prevents us from discovering and developing our own uniqueness os that we can be authentically ourselves.

As you can see, no culture is divine, God-given, or ultimate. They are all fallible. And so we can and should *quality control* them to gauge them for their—

Usefulness / Unuseful	Humanness / De-Personalization
Relevance / Irrelevance	Openness / Closedness
Effectiveness / Ineffectiveness	Health / Sickness

Abraham Maslow said that *self-actualizing people resist enculturalization.* They do not become give too much meaning to their culture, but recognize their culture for what it is—one set of possible ideas, understandings, beliefs, actions, rituals, etc. for living. They recognize them for being fallible and therefore harmful to one's full development as a human being.

With regard to the conventional ways of thinking, feeling, and being that goes along with every culture, self-actualizing people are not rebels, but neither have they given up their individuality to their culture. They wear their conventionality very lightly and are ready at any moment to take it off. They do not *believe* in their culture as if their culture or society had some divine right to dominate others. They do not *worship* their culture as if it is absolutely right. Instead they view it as just some ways that the human mind, heart, and life can be shaped, one set of possibilities among hundreds if not thousands of other possibilities.

This ability to resist enculturalization and to transcend culture enables self-actualizing people to operate as effective *cultural change agents.* They can identify effective factors in the *cultivation* of mind, heart, and life and they can identify ineffective factors. Obviously, all of these distinctions suggest many personal questions:
> – How much has your culture enculturalized you and how much do you resist it?
> – What parts of your culture do you resist?
> – To what extent is your identity tied up in your culture of origin?
> – How easily can you transcend your culture?
> – To what degree can you look and relate to people apart from their enculturalization?
> – How aware are you of the lens that your culture has placed upon your way of perceiving things?

The bottom line is that like fish in water we live in culture and hardly notice it until we go swimming in a different pool of humanity. Then suddenly *culture* stands out and we notice it. We become conscious of it as a filter, a logical level, a meta-state, as the mental context that we have just assumed without question. But now we can begin questioning it. And when we can do that, we can challenge it, change it, and transform it. Here's to the Neuro-Semanticists who are conscious Cultural Change Agents!

TRANSCENDING CULTURE #3

*   Can culture be changed?
*   How easily or difficult is it to change culture?
*   What are some of the cultural change processes?

Given that "culture" is a man-made construct, a construct of frames of meaning, interpretation, understandings, and beliefs—of course *culture can be, has been, and is being changed.* In fact, it is changing all the time. That's why the old cultures of the ancient world, the old Babylonian, Assyrian, Egyptian, Hebrew, Greek, Roman cultures are no longer around as such.

Because "culture" refers to ideas, understandings, and beliefs, and because we carry this cultivation around with us *in our minds* and in our *lifestyles* (ways of interacting, operating, being engaged in business and other things), *cultural change occurs in the mind.* It occurs as belief systems about the ways we cope with our humanity, how to effectively master the activities that concern us, how to get along with others, how we define ourselves, our group, our people, and how we define and think about us in relationship to other groups and peoples, etc.

Given that "culture" is a frame of meaning in the mind, an *interpretative frame of meaning,* when we change the meaning of any facet of culture, we change "culture." So, if we want to change the "culture of violence" which exists in nearly every country and society, we have to change the minds of the people involved in such. So with the "culture of victimhood." As long as people *believe* that they "are" victims, that they have no power within themselves, that they can only react, they have no hope, that there are not powerful non-violent methods for taking charge of one's life—it will be that long that they remain in that culture.

•   So how do we change culture?
•   What are the tools and processes available to us for altering the content and nature of a given culture?

To answer this, and to share a bit about what we do in Cultural Modeling and Change work in Neuro-Semantics, we use the formula developed by Professor John Searle that has a set of meta-levels and which corresponds to the Mea-States model.

John Searle's analysis of *the construct of social reality* in his book by that title distinguishes the

levels of "facts" and the meta-structure of culture. On the primary level it begins with the *brute facts.* Here we have sensory-based things. For an example, here we have balls, fields, lines marked on fields, poles, seats in a stadium, nets, people, players, etc. And it is here that these brute facts can become more. They can become *social facts* if there is an agreement among people that when a player kicks a ball into the net that, then that player's team will win a "point."

Now if we ask, "What is a 'point?'" "Can you see, hear, feel, smell, or taste a "point?" The answer is, "No you cannot." At that level, there's no such *thing* as a point, not in brute reality. A "point" can only occur in the mind, in a human mind, and in the human mind which *understands* the set-up and structure of the "game." Then when the player kicks a ball into the net, a "point" occurs. That's then reflected externally on the score-board.

Fido the dog who doesn't understand about "games," "points," the "rules of the game" of course, doesn't see a "point" when a ball goes into the net. But Fido could hear the roar of the crowd in a stadium when the ball goes into the net. And what if we endowed Fido such advanced consciousness that he now can mentally *perceive* a "point." So next day when the teams are on the field and kicking the ball, the ball again goes into the net, Fido now with his advanced consciousness is ready to see "point."

But there's no point. Why not? Because it is not a "game" but "practice." The team is just practicing for the game and so the ball into the net doesn't mean a point, it does not count as a point. In fact, there's no counting going on at all. And there's just a few people in the stands watching. So something else is going on. Another kind of social reality. Here we are dealing with "culture"—how the minds and hearts of those people have been cultivated.

So Fido now learns to wait for the day of the *real* game when there's lots of people in the stands. And so he now sees a man kicking a ball and it goes into the net, but something is wrong. The crowd is not cheering. There no additional number put up on the score-board. Why not? Man kicked ball across white lines and into net. That should have been a "point," right? But no.

So, what's going on now? Oh, the man who kicked the ball was a spectator who jumped down onto the field and kicked the ball. That's why it did not "count" as a real "point." He was not a legitimate "player." What he did violated the "rules of the game." The culture of that ball-game has rules, set by groups of people who are authorized to make up the rules and enforce the rules. Yet Fido did not know all of that. He was not privy to all of the "culture" of the game.

Searle's analysis shows that it is through the agreed-upon understandings, rules, beliefs, etc. about the game that *brute facts* become *social facts* become *institutional facts* and become a whole "culture." This brings into play various facets of culture in how we construct social reality through the assignment of meaning as we call and designate certain things so that they hold a meaning that many people share. What we call "culture" then is the inner game that many people share and it has multiple-levels, meta-levels. And that's how it is, in part, held in mind as a cultural meaning.

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #46
September 24, 2007

TRANSCENDING CULTURE #4

In the previous three *Meta Reflections* on transcending culture, I first focused on defining "culture" (what it is and where it is) and then I focused on identifying the structure of "culture" as a logical level within our minds. What is "culture?" It is our inner understanding about the community and the community life we share and how we frame our shared-sense-of-reality. This makes it one of the logical levels of our mind. And because we were born into a "culture" and culturalized to those frames, culture is one of our highest and most unconscious frames of meanings.

So given this, is culture itself a problem or an opportunity? Ah, an either-or question! It is both. At different times and in different ways, what we call *culture* can operate as either a problem or an opportunity. It all depends.

It depends first and foremost upon how "good" or "bad" the society is. And what is the criteria for "good" or "bad?" Simple, self-actualization. A good culture fosters universal self-actualization so that every single person is encouraged and enabled to actualize his or her best gifts and potentials. In *Motivation and Personality* Maslow wrote:

> "A good society [is] one that gives to its members the greatest possibility of becoming sound and self-actualizing human beings. This means that the good society is the one that has its institutional arrangements set up in such a way as to foster, encourage, reward, produce a maximum of good human relationships and a minimum of bad human relationships." (1970, p. 255)

Then in *Toward a Psychology of Being,* Maslow wrote about the absolute critical role that culture plays in our development and it better "better" or "poorer" according to self-actualization:

> "... we know that a culture is a *sine quo non* for the actualization of humanness itself, e.g., language, abstract thought, ability to love; but these exist as potentialities in human germ plasm prior to culture. This make theoretically possible a comparative sociology, transcending and including cultural relativity. The 'better' culture gratifies all basic human needs and permits self-actualization. The 'poorer' culture does not." (1965, p. 211)

Enculturalization is the process we all go through as we become members of our culture. Our minds and hearts are *cultivated* to think and feel in such a way that we *fit in* with our culture. Our speech and behavior is also *cultivated* so that we are talk and act the way that others of our culture talk and act. The way we carry ourselves, the rituals we engage in whether greeting

rituals, eating rituals, study, work, mating, whatever easily identify us as part of that "culture." This is true whether that *culture* is a religious one, business one, national one, racial one, language one, etc. As such it enables us to find our place in the world, understand and effectively relate to those who nurtured us, and feel "normal." To that extent, culture is inevitable and essential in our humanness.

But to the extent that we have been completely and totally enculturalized, it can also very much set limits, inhibitions, and taboos upon us and so diminish us as human beings. To the extent that all we aim for in life is the conventional, "normal" life, to that extent the culture has become a Procrustan bed stretching or shortening us as necessary to fit in. This works against actualizing our unique gifts, talents, and dispositions. It works against self-actualization.

This is in-your-face evident when we think of some really sick cultures and societies. When we think about the culture of violence, the culture of victimhood, the Nazi culture of Hitler, the culture of Hollywood, the culture of anorexic models, the culture of corporate greed, the culture of political corruption, etc. To become enculturated into such cultures and to become "normal" would *not* be a good thing. Sure you might be able to "get along" and be accepted and not be looked upon as strange and weird, but the price you'd pay for such would be immense.

How then do we change culture? What are ways in which we can operate as effective cultural change-agents and bring about human and humane change to cultures that are poor, inadequate, hurtful, sick, even neurotic? Maslow asked that question in *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* and provides a most intriguing answer*:*
> "How is culture improved? What are the good effects of the deviant? We know that culture can never advance or be improved without deviants. Why have they not been more studied? Why are they generally considered to be pathological? Why not healthy?" (1970, p. 289)

Ah, cultural deviants! This is what we need? Yes, we need more people who wear their conventionality lightly, who know and recognize that getting along and fitting is a means objective, not an *end* goal. And so they can easily rise above and transcend their culture, criticize it, and work to bring about change. So, are you a cultural deviant? If so, to what extent and in what way?

Maslow's comments calls for deviants—deviants who can advance and improve culture. If you have been enculturalized to such an extent that you cannot rise above it, evaluate it, transcend it, then you will not be able to change it. You will be a slave to that culture because you have *identified with it* and it now *defines* you. You are more a member of that culture than you are a member of the human race and that puts a leash around you preventing your full self-actualization as well as the actualization of each and every culture. What's needed is a new and higher level of social and cultural consciousness.

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #47
October 1, 2007

TRANSCENDING CULTURE #5

In the last Meta Reflection, I ended by saying,

> What's needed is a new and higher level of social and cultural consciousness.

And, what is that new and higher level of consciousness? It is first and foremost a particular realization, a realization that sets a whole new frame from what's current in our world. It is the realization that *there is but one species of humans* on this planet.

I mentioned this in the first reflection on this subject, referring to Korzbyski's use of the adjective "racial" to speak about the human condition. What does this mean? It means that on planet earth there is only one race—*the human race.* We all belong to the same species, there are no others.

Now, when you realize that, when you realize that we are all members of the same human family, something happens to you. You are then able to begin to transcend your culture, your ethnocentric self-definitions and perspectives. And this also enable us to begin to treat each other with the respect, compassion, and deep democracy that will bring an end to wars and interpersonal conflicts.

Idealistic? Yes, of course. But is it not also a vision worth establishing and pursuing? After all, it is *not* differences in personality, styles, looks, shapes, expressions, values, etc. that create conflicts and wars. No. It is being disrespectful and hateful about our differences. Differences can be worked through, understood, disagreed upon, accepted, etc. Of course, to do so necessitates some high level skills: seeking to understand skills, accurate empathy skills, conflict resolution skills, getting accurate information skills, meta-modeling skills, defusing skills, etc.

It is when we *dis-value a person* and treat the person as if he or she is not from our family, our human family that's creates conflict and turns a disagreement into something hurtful and nasty. At the same time it prevents us from even seeking to understand and hold the kind of conversation which can create solid resolutions.

Conversely, when we rise above our individual and separate cultures with *a new level of cultural consciousness* that we can move above "party-lines" politically, economically, and socially, above the small-minded feuds. This is what then enables us to begin to *create a truly good society.* Ah, a *good* society. And, what makes up a good society?

First and most fundamentally is *the attitude of treating people as persons,* as valued and respected persons who are first and foremost human beings. Once we have that frame established, then we can begin to re-construct and re-arrange our cultural expressions. Then we can make new arrangements politically and socially where everybody can have a chance at satisfying the basic needs.

Any social arrangement that prevents this and which has inequality built deeply into the very fabric of a society is the very thing that invite desperation, futility, aggression, hostility, and crime. And where do these come from? Such arise not because human nature is evil, bad, deprived, or corrupt, but because of our biology. Biologically we are designed to fulfill these needs for safety, security, order, protection, connection, respect, etc. It is frustration of these needs that bring about desperate frustration and then from there angry aggressiveness.

In this, to build a good society, we need to create what Maslow called the necessary *"good conditions"* that allow human beings to develop as healthy persons. What else does this include?

It includes making the society synergistic in structure. Maslow following cultural anthropologist Ruth Benedict said that a good society is one that is set up so that *virtue is rewarded.* That is, in that culture, it pays to be good. A culture is synergistic when what benefits one individual contributes and adds to all members of that society. In that case, the whole society would have a vested interest in the well-fare, well-being, and success of every single member. Your success contributes to me. It makes my world richer, fuller, better. My success contributes to you. It is a win/win game, not a zero-sum game. In this analysis, we can examine a culture to see if it is growth-fostering or growth-inhibiting.

A good society is a society that fosters the essential growth of humans so that we become all that we can become. Maslow wrote:

> "What are the effects of living in a dishonest world, an evil world, an ugly world, a split, disintegrated world, a dead, static world of cliches and stereotypes, an incomplete, unfinished world, a world without order or justice, an unnecessarily complicated world, an oversimplified, over-abstract world, an effortful world, a humorless world, a world without privacy or independence?" (1971, p. 136)

There's a goal for transcending our individual cultures. That goal is to create *good societies.* It is to create truly *human cultures* that are respectful of all humans, democratic, creative, loving, and that provides structures whereby everybody can find ways to gratify the basic and higher human needs.

L. Michael Hall

TRANSCENDING CULTURE #6

In thinking about this subject of *transcending* culture, what is the opposite? What if we do not? What happens then?

The opposite of transcending culture is *enculturation.* The culture gets inside of us so that we are *cultivated* in mind, emotion, body, habits, perceptions, etc. by the cultural standards and values. And to be enculturated is to make a good adjustment to the culture that we are in. If the culture is a business culture, we then become a good company man (or woman). If it is a religious culture, we are a loyal member. If it is a racial, ethnic, or other kind of culture, we are well-adjusted to the demands, requirements, and nature of that culture.

This, in itself, is neither a good nor a bad thing. It all depends. It depends on the *content* of the culture to which we are being cultivated. Is the culture healthy or is it sick? Is it life and growth enhancing or denying? So we have to ask the questions, "Adjusted to what? To Nazis, criminals, delinquents, drug addicts? Popular with whom? Admired by whom? Thought a well-adjusted man in Hitler's Nazi culture may fit in, create no waves, be accepted, curry no disfavor —most of us would not view that as a good thing.

Culture is both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand we cannot be human without it, on the other, we may lose our humanity by over-conformity to it. And it is precisely because the "instincts" that we do have are so weak that makes it so that they can easily be overwhelmed by culture. And it is power to overwhelm us that makes our cultures dangerous. An uncritical attitude about culture, a attitude that says, "My culture— right or wrong!", that urges unquestioning loyalty, that requires us to identify with it and make it part of our identity invites us to give far too much meaning and too much power to it. And that will create a *leashing* of one from one's full range of potentials.

In terms of self-actualization, this means that "normality" and "conventionality" can be the things that interfere with our highest development. We can become too dependent on our culture for defining us. We can become too dependent on our culture for our beliefs, understandings, decisions, etc.

Given that Maslow defined a good society as one that gives its members the greatest possibility for becoming sound and self-actualizing human beings (1970, p. 255), a society or culture is sick to the extent that it prevents such. This means that we can examine a culture in terms of the

psycho-pathogenic forces within it— forces that invite sickness. And what is "sickness" at the cultural level?

If what makes us "sick" individually, and what reduces our self-actualization, are such things as a predominance of danger, threat, attack, destructiveness, selfishness, coldness, conflict, humiliation, injustice, disrespect, racism, cruelty, etc., then the more these are present in a culture, the more that culture is sick and that culture creates sickness. Now given that, what does this say about so many of the things in our daily lives? What does it say about television, movies, urban areas in the inner cities, the daily news, the tabloid journals, etc.?

And as we look at that list, the things that undermine our self-actualization and make a culture sick are the very things that frustrate a healthy and appropriate satisfying of our basic human needs. Danger, threat and attack prevent the fulfillment of our survival and safety needs. Selfishness, coldness, conflict, etc. frustrate a healthy satisfying of our social needs for companionship, love, affection, etc.   Humiliation, injustice, cruelty, disrespect, prejudice, ethnocentricism, etc. prevent the fulfillment of our self-regard needs.

Also way cultures become sick is that we give distorted meaning and/or exaggerated meanings to our lower needs. This create interferences and can even sabotage self-actualization—frustrate our full growth and development as people within a culture. And so the culture itself does not grow and mature, but remain at a primitive level of funcioning. When we attribute distorting meanings to our nature as human beings, we create invite the basic need to become neurotic. And when this becomes "instituted" in a culture via education, entertainment, news, etc., the culture becomes neurotic.

What are examples of neurotic cultures that we need to transcend?
> The culture of violence and aggression
> The culture of glorification of the body as if our body defines us and our worth
> The culture of greed and luxury as if such is the purpose of life
> The culture of chauvinism, racism, prejudice, etc.

The bottom line is that any and every "culture" is just a man-made construct of beliefs, decisions, ethics, and understandings that have created a traditional way of life. As such they are the *old maps and understandings* of the fallible people who went before us. So, as *old* maps, they need to be re-examined from time to time for their appropriateness and relevance for today. They also need to be constantly updated so that we don't unconsciously perpetuate misbeliefs or beliefs about things that are no longer relevant. In this, "traditions" should not be valued or given importance *just because they are traditions.* That means nothing more than they have ben around for a long time and we are *familiar* with them.

Like the beliefs and mental maps of children, cultural maturity requires that we out-grow the childish thinking and believing and grow up to a full development of what's possible for human communities.

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #49
October 15, 2007

MATRIX OR META-STATE

A couple days ago at the Meta-Coach training in Mexico City one of the new coaches in training to become a Meta-Coach asked a question that I've never been asked before.

> "What's the difference between the Matrix questions in the Matrix Model and the Meta-Questions in the Meta-States Model? How can I tell the difference?"

We had been using both sets of questions, the first dozen meta-questions for the skill of meta-questioning and the matrix questions to explore a person's matrix to deeply and thoroughly understand a person. How would you answer that question? Instead of immediately answering, since I was more in a coach mode rather than a trainer mode, I used questions to see if I could bring out the person's own intelligence and ability to make that distinction.

> "What is the subject of the meta-questions? What process are you seeking to discover with those questions?"

She said that she didn't exactly understand the question. So I rephrase my question to her.

> "What are you attempting to do, to discover, and to explore when you ask meta-questions?"

"Well, I am trying to find the person's meta-state, the person's state about their first state."

> "Great. And what is a meta-state? What else can we call a meta-state? What process within human functioning or psychology does a meta-state refer to?"

She said, "A higher state . . . uh . . . a frame, yes, a frame of mind."

> "Yes that exactly right. A meta-state is a higher frame of mind, a frame of mind about the previous state. And what else might we call this?"

She struggled for a bit, so I prodded her.

> "When you have this frame of mind it is a frame of .... what?"

"Oh, of meaning, a frame of meaning." she said excitedly as if either remembering a jewel of understanding or finally connecting things that she already knew.

> "So if a meta-state is a frame of meaning, if *meaning* is the process that we are working with when we meta-state and do so layer upon layer, then what do we create . . . what results when we have multiple layers of states or frames about something?"

"The Matrix!" she said nearly shouting. I confirmed that and asked if she now had the distinction that she wanted. She reflected about that and was quiet for a few moments, and then she asked another question.

"So what about the content questions in the Matrix? Are the questions about the matrices of self, power, others, time, and world —those *content* matrices, are they also meta-questions? They seem different? They are not like the meta-questions like belief, value, understand, know, remember, imagine, anticipate, expect, permit, etc."

I was impressed with her quick list of some initial meta-questions.

"Great job of listing some basic meta-questions! And an excellent question. And of course, unlike the *process* matrices of meaning, intention, and state, these refer to the developmental stages and the *content meanings* that we create as we grow and develop."

She looked puzzled, apparently had not worked that through in her mind. So I asked another question about the *content* matrices to facilitate the next discovery.

"What develops within the content matrices? What is the subject of the content matrices? What ties all of the content matrices together?"

She didn't know and couldn't identify the factor or mechanism that's coheres throughout the content matrices. So I asked her to reflect upon a possibility.

"What if the *content* of the *content* matrices is your self? What if your identity, your sense of self, your construct of an invented identity in numerous facets is what develops and what if the different content matrices simply sorts these out to give different perspectives about how you have mapped out *you* and taken together they describe your full sense of self?"

She said she had not thought of that and wanted me to explain further.

"Okay. In the *Self matrix* we have our first maps, meanings, beliefs, values, understandings, decisions, etc. (the meta-questions) about our self as *a human being.* This relates to our worth, our value, our dignity, our *being-ness.* That's our self-esteem. In the *Power matrix* we have our mental mapping about our powers, resources, and capabilities. This creates our self-confidence— our confidence in what we can do and achieve.   In the *Others matrix* we have our meanings about our self *in relation to others.* Here are our meanings, beliefs, representations, etc. about people, human nature, social skills, getting along, fighting, making up, communicating, etc. This is our relational-self, who we are in-relationship with others.

"In our *Time matrix* we have our meaning-mapping about the concept of time, of our ability to stand back from *events* and represent events that have happened (the "past"), those that will happen (the "future"), and those that are now happening. This creates our *temporal self*— our self in time or out of time. Finally, there is the category of the *World matrix* which defines our understandings of various worlds of meaning and all of the beliefs and maps we have that enable us to navigate those worlds, or not."

That was the insight and distinction she was looking for. I then pointed out that we have an article on the website, *The Matrix of the Matrix* that explains some of this, and with that, she gave me *a meta high-five* that we do in Meta-Coaching.   Here's a Meta High Five to you!

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #50
October 22, 2007
Unlearning Series #1

THE POWER OF UNLEARNING

It is one thing to know how to learn, to be highly effective at *learning*—discovering new awarenesses and insights, incorporating principles and concepts as elegant maps for navigating life, for accelerating one's learning processes in order to stay on the cutting-edge of discovery and experience. It is an entirely different thing to be an effective *un-*learner. That is, to be able to *unlearn* old ideas, beliefs, decisions, identities, etc. and to create space for new learnings.

I say it is an entirely different thing because in the first case learning is pretty simple and straight-forward, we simply construct our mental-emotional maps about something and that map then becomes our understanding. It becomes our perceptual reality. It becomes what we believe and the self-fulfilling prophesy that we put forth. But things are not so simple in the second case. In the second case, we have *something in the way* of our new learnings. We cannot just map it out and put it in our heads-and-bodies. It's not that simple.

No. First we have to unlearn. We have to open up some space to let the new ideas in. The problem in the second case is that *we already know something!* We already have a map about something and that map as a set of beliefs, understandings, principles, and identities determines what and how we see, how we experience ourselves, our skills, our emotions; it determines our entire response pattern!

This is precisely where unlearning comes in. In order to adopt the new updated maps about something and change from a limiting belief to a new enhancing and empowering belief, we have to clear some space. We have to reverse the learning that we've already made and *un*learn. But who teaches the unlearning strategy? Who directly offers training and coaching in *unlearning*? And if they do, what is the strategy of unlearning? How does that work?

Actually, as a adult with a head-full of ideas, beliefs, understandings, identities, etc. left over from childhood, young adulthood, and the cultures we've grown up in (family, school, religious, national, etc.) *being a good un-learner is undoubtedly far more important than having the skills of effective and accelerated learning.*

Why? Because while you can keep learning all kinds of things, if it is blocked by previous learnings, it won't go in. This may be part of the problem that most people experience in attempting to *close the knowing-doing gap.* You learn something new, get excited about a new understanding, insight, or principle and you easily and quickly add it to your "mental" repertoire of great ideas, but then you find that you do not *live* it, you do not *experience* it. It does not

actually govern or influence the way you live your life. What's wrong? What's in the way? What's blocking or interfering with the practicing of this great new idea?

What's in the way and blocking the integration of the new idea is *an old idea.* An old mental-emotional map about something is in the way and needs to be removed. But *how* do we remove the old meaning construct? And especially *how* do we rip it out of our mind-body if it has been in there for a decade, or two decades, or five decades? How do we get it out of our neurology, as the well-worn grooves in our neuro-pathways? *How* do we unlearn?

Now it is true that sometimes, and perhaps even a lot of the time, when we learn something new that is so much better than the old idea, the old idea just pops out and is easily and quickly replaced by the new. This is especially true if you have a frame that encourages ongoing learning and updating of your understandings. But sometimes we have to run a belief-change pattern to consciously and intentionally reject and refuse the old belief. We have to dis-confirm it and de-commission it so that we put a stop-order on it. Then we can confirm and commission te new belief. This is what the *Meta-Yes Belief Change pattern* in Neuro-Semantics is all about (see articles on website, or *Sub-Modalities Going Meta,* 2004). Or, as we do in APG on Day 2 as we "clear the pathway" by meta-stating concepts and dancing with our dragons.

Now the learning of anything is *a construction of meaning.* We may call that construct a belief, a decision, an understanding, an identity, or any of the 80 other meta-terms (the meta-questions). Yet, in the end, it is a *construction of meaning.* It is something "held in the mind" that gives us content information about the world, others, ourselves, etc. And *meaning*, when it gets inside our mind-body-emotion system becomes neurological. It becomes the way we use our neuro-pathways, nervous systems, etc. and so ultimately we *feel* our meanings as "emotions." [We cover this in the Ultimate Self-Actualization Workshop.]

So how can we undo the meaning constructions within our neurology? Is there any way to change the very functioning and operating of our neurology? Ah, yes, the *Crucible*! The Crucible is a change machine for the unlearning of old meanings, especially old meanings that have become "habits," i.e., habitual ways of thinking, feeling, perceiving, speaking, and acting.

So, do you have any old meanings (beliefs, decisions, understandings, identities, etc.) that is interfering with your current learnings? If so, the Crucible is the recommended change process for that. In this space that we call *the human crucible* you can bring those old learnings that now feel so firm and which interferes with your ongoing development and you can allow them to melt down into what they are—thoughts, images, pictures, sounds, words, etc. — the processes of mental mapping. You can then let the dross of cognitive distortions to burn off so that you can reform them into something new, something relevant, something empowering, something that will enable your full self-actualization! The crucible is now available in the Self-Actualization Workshop and you can even read a chapter about it in *Unleashed: A Guide to Your Ultimate Self-Actualization* (2007).

UNLEARNING NON-ENHANCING MEANINGS

In the last *Meta Reflection* on the power of unlearning, I introduced *the human crucible* as a change machine for unlearning what you have already learned that no longer serves you. This is a recent invention in Neuro-Semantics, one that arose from the new modeling on self-actualization in revisiting the work of Maslow and Rogers and taking it to the next level.

How did it come about? It came about through an exploration into the idea of "encounter" that was central in the 1960s and 1970s in the first Human Potential Movement. It seems that Fritz Perls, Abe Maslow, Carl Rogers, Will Schutz, and the others in that movement had become aware that there was something special about a real, authentic "encounter" experience. Accordingly, at Esalen in the hands of Perls, and then later Schutz, "the encounter group" became the central mechanism among scores of others for the unleashing of human potentials.

But there was a problem with such encounter groups at that time. Following on from the way Perls conducted his gestalt encounters and the influence of the Synanon group (a community of former drug addicts on Staten Island NY), the *encounters* were pretty intense. In fact, thjey were very confrontative. They had the quality of being an in-your-face-encounter with the truths that you are denying, rationalizing, bull-shitting, pretending, etc. As I have read some scripts of those encounters, I did not get the sense that it was a pleasant place or a safe place to change. It was more, *"Change now* or we will increase the pain you are already having!"

Esalen in those early years mostly used Gestalt therapy processes of encountering blocks and limitations. With Gestalt therapy you would project your "issues" onto an empty chair and then start a conversation with that issue. Fritz presented the Gestalt approach as using awareness, contact, and integration as the liberating factors for human beings.

A good example of this is in the book *Hot Springs: The True Adventures of the First New York Jewish Literary Intellectual in the Human Potential Movement.* This pop book published in 1971 by Stuart Miller gives a novel-like description of his sex-craze adventures at Esalen. In his book he called Esalen "a honey pot of eroticism" (p. 14). He speaks about them being inner-space astronauts (p. 37) and experiencing marathon encounter sessions. These involved being deprived of sleep and having intense encounters. "A marathon is a very serious thing, a muscular form of encounter, going for broke." (p. 73).

Will Schutz who wrote *Joy* in 1967 describing the goings-on at Esalen. He popularized the human potential movement at that time, and then later evolved the "encounter group" approach, slowly modifying it and making it more acceptable as a process for group and team development. His expertise developed in the area of group dynamics. Eventually, however, the Esalen kind of encounters came to an end. They seemed to create as much trauma and hurt and defensiveness as the unleashing of potentials.

Yet there was something in the idea of an encounter with oneself, one's truth, one's reality that somehow facilitates one becoming real, more authentic, more true to self and getting free from one's limitations. One clue that I came across was Maslow's description of Synanon and his analysis of the liberating factors within the encounter. Another was his list of characteristics of self-actualizers, in fact, from that list I began setting out the qualities that seemed to make for a powerful, respectful, life-changing, and transformational encounter. [That list is in *Unleashed: A Guide to Your Ultimate Self-Actualization* if you want to examine it].

Maslow spoke to the Synanon group and their leaders and commented,
> "The assumption in your group seems to be that people are very tough, and not brittle. They can take an awful lot."

And what was the design of encouraging them to be brutally frank with one another? The design, was to help them e-establish contact with reality, to get real, to become authentic, to let go of all ltheir defenses and pretensions.

In creating the human crucible, I began with Roger's three key components to self-actualizing therapy (Client-Centered Therapy)—accurate empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruent authenticity—and used them to begin to describe the qualities of the Crucible. I then added two of the characteristics in Maslow's list that were "change factors." Those five elements made up the Crucible when I first presented it in Portland in March of this year. But later two other elements came to my awareness—also from Maslow's list. That provides the seven elements that now makes up the human crucible.

Three of these elements facilitate the first stage and creates *the safety* that's required to change and sets the stage for the central feature of *the encounter*— the ability to acknowledge and speak the truth honestly. That's what creates the fire of transformation in the crucible, the truth that sets us free from self-deceptions and lies. Yet there's more. There are two more features that amplifies the heat as we find old meanings now melting down, old "introjects" that haven't been fully digested finally fragmenting into chewable bits, and old limiting habits of mind, emotion, or body that have held us back evaporating in the light of a new expanded consciousness. And then from that furnace something new emerges—*a transformation* as we are able to fall in love with life, vision, values, etc.

While I'm not revealing the whole story of the human crucible here, *the crucible is the place for unlearning.* The experience that so many have shared about it so far is that it is a place of gracious and gentle transformation. They have been utterly surprised at how natural and easy it

is. They have expressed shock having expected it to have been more confrontative or "hard" or painful.

Yet it is none of those things. That's because the crucible is itself *not* hot or intense or scary. In itself, it is a safe place. It is a sacred place. It is a loving and transformative place that brings out your best and allows you to embrace developmental change naturally and elegantly. What generates the heat in the crucible? The hot thoughts, emotions, fears, hopes, dreams, dreads, guilts, mis-understandings, etc. that have held us back. And the shock of it all, the surprise, the paradox is that by embracing the very "dark" things that we have feared and hated—they melt away and then we see them for what they are— just human thoughts and feelings.

Are you ready for the crucible? To have your own special sacred place for unlearning and transforming so that you can soar? Are you ready to welcome and release the "shadow side" that has plagued you, the "dragons" that you fear would consume you, the "dark night of the soul" that would overwhelm you? Are you ready to release potentials from within that you weren't even aware of?

UNTYING THE KNOTS OF OLD HABITS

Habits—a habit is a solidification of some way of thinking, way of feeling, way of talking, or way of acting that now allows us to go unconscious. This is truly a powerful dynamic in human nature, is it not? We have the innate ability to repeat some thought, emotion, attitude, belief, ritual, way of responding, etc. and through the process of repeating *and* validating *we can put install it as our default program* for how we operate as a person. At that point the program goes on automatic so we don't have to think about it, but our neurology, our neuro-pathways, and our conditioned muscle memory "knows" how to continue the operation.

Further, once we have done this, we can relax our concern for remembering all these things. We can trust that it will just operate whenever its cues are triggered. So like typing on a keyboard, driving a car, tying a bow, playing a sport, or hundreds of other things in daily life—we now become unconscious of the content of that learning. The learning goes on automatic pilot. As a result this frees our mind for turning our attention to other things, new things, things more interesting, new things to learn.

This description enables us to see habit as an old learning. *It is a past learning that is now fully incorporated in our neurology thereby freeing our mind for learning something else.* This is part of the "ecology of the mind" that Bateson wrote about in his classic work, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972).

Now, as a meta reflection, consider the essence of a habit. We could say that a habit is a mind-to-muscle embodiment. How about that? In the creation of a habit, we take what we know consciously in our mind, and agree with intellectually, and through repetition, through practice, through affirming it repeatedly, through using our body and actions to act on it—we take what was just mental and we make it corporal. We in-corporate it. We embody it. We run neuro-pathways until it becomes "in the body" and our "way of being in the world."

That's really powerful! You and I —in the mechanism of "habit"— have the ability to mind-to-muscle great ideas into our neurology. It is in this way that we "metabolize" ideas. We digest them and they become part and parcel of our soma, our body.

So all of this is great, right? Well, no, there are some problems in this. And they begin so innocently. For example, once we have developed a *habit*, the habit is in control. That's a problem? Well, yes, it is if the world changes. It is if we need to change. It is if our current situation calls for new flexibility to adapt to new influences and factors in our life. After all, a habit by definition reduces our adaptability (our ability to adapt) and so our resilience, flexibility, being present to each present moment, and ability to continuously learn and

improve.

This describes both the bright and dark sides of habits. They enable us to get great ideas into our body and they lock also us up within the prison of those very ideas reducing our choices and adaptability. Habits, in fact, are one of the great interferences to self-actualization. Habits as past-learnings-solidified-into-neurology are often the very things we have to *unlearn*. As solutions and answers to previous challenges and problems, habits are *old answers* and sometimes they become *irrelevant answers* to problems and questions that no longer exist.

Ah yes, *unlearning*. We come back to that. This means that *unlearning our habits of mind, emotion, speech, and behavior* makes up one of the key mechanisms for continually unleashing new and exciting potentials from within ourselves. So, how about you? What former ways of thinking, believing, deciding, emoting, speaking, acting, and so on that once was a new perspective, a new strength, a new development but is now a problem? Now it is in the way? Now it interferes with taking your skills or person to a new level?

The skill to unlearn is as critical, if not more so, than the skill to learn. And as accelerated learning improves the quality and speed of our learning, so does *accelerated unlearning*. This is, in fact, the *kind* of change that often that precedes a new development or transformation. First, we have to clear the space and undo the inner structures– the psycho-logics that hold it in place.

Now while the *Axes of Change* model is an efficient change model for generative change that describes how psychologically healthy people change, its focus is on the dance of change that primarily seeks to create and invent something new rather than unlearning something old.

And this is where the Crucible comes in. As a holistic and holographic change model, it is designed to facilitate unlearning. And it is especially appropriate when a former learning has become an ingrained and unconscious habit. As a default program, when we try something new, we find our old habit of thought or emotion activated in a nano-second and long before we become conscious of it. In this way it interferes with the installation and integration of the new learning.

So, if you find yourself trying and trying to get a new learning inside, if you find yourself knowing intellectually what you should do, and even know how to do it, but even before you have an external cue for realizing now is the time to use that learning—an old learning is activated and interferes, you have the very thing that calls for an unlearning strategy and change process. You have the context that is perfect for using the Crucible. And it is this which is ideal to take into the Crucible of Change and Transformation.

UNLEARNING
AND EGO-INVESTMENTS

Two questions have arisen repeatedly in the past 3 weeks regarding what I wrote in the past *Meta Reflections* about unlearning.
•   The first one is, What makes *unlearning* so difficult?
•   The second one is, What is the crucible, what are you referring to, and where can I read more about the crucible?

About the Crucible, there is a chapter about that in the new book, *Unleashed: A Guide to Your Ultimate Self-Actualization.* We devote a full day (day 2) on the Crucible in the Self-Actualization Workshop which I and other Neuro-Semantic Trainers are now presenting. You can also now see Day 2 about the crucible in the DVD that Tom Welch has created of that training (www.nlp-video.com). Regarding what a "crucible" is generally, simply google the term and you will see all types and shapes of crucibles used in industry and in art studios.

Now for the more difficult question, What about *unlearning*? Why is it often so difficult? What creates that difficulty? What can make it less difficult; even easier?

What challenges our ability to unlearn are our ego-investments. This refers to how we can become invested—mentally, emotionally, and experientially—in our ideas, concepts, understandings, beliefs, and so on. Whenever we invest effort to learn something, whenever we invest our energies to act on some idea, whenever we put our reputation on the line about a belief by making a public statement—we turn the object into one of our ego-investments.

I often hear about this when someone at the critical point of a choice point. They have identified a limiting belief, usually a very toxic one, one that has severely hold them back and impoverished their life. Finding it, identifying it, recognizing it for what it is through the "quality controlling" of a frame (or belief) puts them at a significant cross-roads. Have they had enough of it? Will they give it up? Will they refuse it? Will they say "hell no!" to it and be done with it?

That's the existential question and crisis. Often at that very point the person will turn to me and ask, "But who will I be if I release this?" "Will not all my life up until now be in vain if I do this?" "I feel scared because I don't know what will replace this belief!"

Our ego-investments refer to how we *invest* ourselves into various ideas, values, ways of operating in the world, ways of thinking about ourselves and living within a certain self-image, etc. This is our first frame, our first belief. Then we begin to semantically load it. At an even higher level we then begin to *believe* in our belief. And that is what actually does the damage.

Believing is one thing. It is committing ourselves to something, saying that something is "true, real for us," and "the way it is." In believing, we commit ourselves to that idea or concept or self-definition. That's all good and fine. Our beliefs send "commands" to the nervous system which will attempt to actualize it, that is, "make it real" for us. And believe we must. Beliefs enable us to test things, see what works, what does not. Beliefs get us involved in living.

Believing is not the problem. The problem begins when we *believe* in our *beliefs* (a meta-state structure). When you do that, you close the door to any new or different ideas, you become as Eric Hoffer described, "a true believer," that is, a fanatic. While a belief is one level of investing yourself into an idea and set of actions, *believing in your belief* means that you closing the door to learning, to feedback, to continual searching, and that you are now totally ego-invested in your belief. This changes everything.

For example, suppose we begin with a belief in God. That's one thing. But suppose you then *believe in your belief* about God. Do that and you now are actually *believing* more in your beliefs than God. So like the Pharisees of old, you are more committed to your beliefs *about* God than God. In the case of the Pharisees, this made them rigid, closed-minded, head-strong, and blind to new facts and evidence. It made them fools.

This structure of *believing in our beliefs* makes one a fundamentalist, that is, a closed-minded and dogmatic fanatic who refuses to learn and who thinks that he or she cannot be wrong. But the truth is—we all can be wrong and are wrong many times every day. We are fallible beings. We have fallible brains and bodies and that makes us highly "liable to error." Refusing to acknowledge this indicates a form of ego-investment; we *have* to be right; our beliefs *have* to be true.

The funny thing about this *believing in our beliefs* is the subtle shift it creates. When it comes to God, other people, or activities that you believe in, once you *believe in your belief* about the belief, you no longer need faith. Now you "know." Now there's no doubt. No question.

Yet *belief* or *faith* is just that— a belief in something, a trusting commitment to the content of whatever you believe. If you *knew it*, if there was incontrovertible evidence— faith would not be required. Knowledge would be required. Science would be required.

Ego-investments—we all have them. It's part of being human. When we find and experience the good things in life, even good ideas, concepts, understandings, etc., we invest ourselves in them. And so we should. Yet in *believing* in whatever we believe in, we must resist the temptation to jump a logical level and *believe* in our *belief.* Doing that gets too much ego invested and then learning something new or different becomes almost impossible. Then *unlearning* what we had learned and believed—well, that becomes very difficult.

The solution? *Believe* and keep the doors of learning, discovering, growing, refining, doubting, questioning, exploring, etc. open. Keep them wide open. Become a searching believer!

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #54
November 19, 2007

MASLOW'S
REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH

When I read the first biography of Abraham Maslow I discovered that way back in the late 1930s, after he earned his doctorate and started teaching psychology as a young professor, he wrote a book on abnormal psychology. Having spent years reading in abnormal psychology and having had my fill of such books, I was not interested in reading another book on how people become neurotic, sick, and suffer various pathologies. Not even Maslow's book.

In the meantime I began conducting the *Self-Actualization Workshop* and using *Day 4* to prepare Neuro-Semantic Trainers to step up to teaching, presenting, and training self-actualization as we create a new human potential movement. And as part of that I've been encouraging them to read *Toward a Psychology of Being* by Maslow as well as other books.

Well, some of the trainers have really gotten into it! Recently while in Australia, Steve Hodgson told me about the hundreds of dollars that he has spent acquiring all of the Maslow books. And every week, others are writing to say that they have finished their second, or third, or fourth book. More recently, while in Mexico, Omar Salom showed me the stack of Maslow books he purchased, one of which is that first and original book by Maslow, *Principles of Abnormal Psychology: The Dynamics of Psychic Illness* (1941) by Abraham Maslow and Bela Mittelmann. I took that book with me as well as several others to read, for example, *Dominance, Self-Esteem, Self-Actualization: Germinal Papes of A.H. Maslow.*

This past week I began reading *Abnormal Psychology* and I got a big shock. Yes, it is about pathology; yet it is so much more. From page one Maslow's approach integrate cultural anthropology of Ruth Benedict, gestalt psychology of Max Wertheimer, social psychology of Alfred Adler! And surprise of surprise—in his Foreword he thanks *Gregory Bateson* and Margaret Mead for the conversations he had with them! Then he quotes *Milton Erickson* as he began chapter four on unconscious psychological processes of conflict!

Ah, more NLP roots! More of the unrevealed history of NLP that no one to date has revealed. Yet there's more. To understand abnormality, Maslow did something revolutionary in 1940, he first set out "manifestations of psychological health ('normality')" (p. 14). That was absolutely *revolutionary* in that time. It was revolutionary first of all because there was almost nothing known, studied, or established about *psychological health*. Secondly, it was revolutionary because *he used psychological health as his reference point.*

Now if you don't know it, Maslow got his doctorate as a Behaviorist and was the very first research student in the laboratory of Harry Harlow who did the studies of chimanzees and their bonding. It was this background that eventually led him to start thinking about "good specimens" among humans. After all, Behaviorists typically study animal behavior by finding

the best specimens and build their model from there. Later Maslow would model the best specimens of psychologically heathy humans—self-actualizers.

In *Abnormal Psychology* Maslow quoted numerous animal studies is he defined the heart of pathology. And this also was revolutionary. Instead of starting from the assumptions of Freud and Watson, Maslow defined pathology as distorted and inadequate attempts to solve the problems of life. That's great! It means that *pathology has a positive intention!* Its design is to cope with life, to try to adapt to the challenges before us, and to master life's problems.

In other words, pathology is not "bad" or "evil." If you have wondered about the source of the NLP presupposition, "Behind every behavior is a positive intention*,"* wonder no longer! What Maslow discovered was that in a context of *stress* when there is an "inability to master the problem presented, an impossibility of escape from the problem," *an inner sense of helplessness arises.* It is the conflict between needing to solve the problem and the inability to solve it that creates the various forms of pathology.

Do you see the brilliance in that? Let me quote from Maslow directly:
> "... healthy behavior and pathological behavior are best conceived of in terms of force, desire, goal, or drive. The individual wants something, or feels driven. Even if obstacles arise, he persists in pursing the goal. He *has* to cope with the problems that confront him. He wants to solve them, or rather he feels forced to solve them." (p. 25)
> "In the *healthy reaction* the individual usually feels that he is able ultimately to master the task confronting him. In the pathological reaction the individual feels that he has not adequate strength to dare even to want his goal. In other words, a healthy personality pursuing a goal does so actively, dynamically, with his whole personality. In the case of a pathological reaction, *the feeling of helplessness* assumes great dynamic importance; it becomes an urgent, threatening force, and the individual feels forced to take all sorts of measures to meet the situation." (p. 25, italics added)

This "the concept of capability and of helplessness" predominates in the first hundred pages of the book. And yet it would take psychology another thirty years to begin looking for a person's strengths, resources, and capabilities and invent the "solution focused" and "strength-based" therapies. Yet Maslow was there first. He said that when things go wrong in human personality, the heart of the problem goes back to the feeling of helplessness, worthlessness, and catastrophic expectations (p. 72). These things block and frustrate (chapter 5) a person from successfully solving the problem of effectively gratifying one's basic needs.

Reading all of this reinforces my appreciation of why APG begins with meta-stating *a person's sense of power* to create a solid "power zone" and then meta-stating *a person's sense of personal value* with unconditional positive regard. These two processes enable a person to feel in control of his or her life, mind, choices, and development of capabilities and a solid sense of self as valuable, loved, worthwhile, and with innate dignity. When you begin there, you eliminate the great majority of neurotic pathology that diminishes people. When you begin there, you set the foundation for effective coping that leads to mastery and to self-actualizing as a way of living.

MASLOW'S REVOLUTION

In initiating the most revolutionary paradigm shift in psychology in the twentieth century, Abraham Maslow wrote five books and more than a hundred articles. In fact two of his last books were essentially collections of his articles (*Toward a Psychology of Being; Farther Reaches of Human Nature*). In these he mostly was making intuitive leaps into the unknown as he continued pioneering a whole new way of thinking about human beings and human nature. But if you read his first book and his first articles, well, that's a very different story. It's a very different story in both of content and style.

First, content. In 1941 Maslow and Bela Mittelmann, a psychiatrist, co-authored a massive book under the title, *Principles of Abnormal Psychology: The Dynamics of Psychic Illness*. I say massive because it is a textbook of 600 pages of small print with dozens upon dozens of case studies. And unlike the books and articles that followed, this book was written with all of the rigor of two very careful scientists. And as a result, *Principles of Abnormal Psychology* established Maslow, and probably Mittelmann as well, as experts in the field of psychology.

Second, style. This past weekend at the NLP Conference in London, someone told me that he had read that Maslow was an "N" on the Myers-Brigg Personality Typing Instrument. He wanted to know my opinion. Now if he had asked me prior to reading that book (as well as his scholarly articles on chimpanezes, dominance, and sexuality) I would have said, "Yes, without question. But having read *Principles* I had to say, "No, I really doubt it."

One most immediate and powerful impressions I got as I read this 600-page book is its exhaustiveness. It covers everything you can imagine about abnormality! They covered about everything that a person could cover under the category of "abnormal"—genetic disorders, physiological and somatic disorders, alcoholism, war trauma, childhood disorders, errors in parenting, problems with school, peers, stuttering, bedwetting, criminality, personality disorders, and the list goes on and on. At the time Maslow was teaching abnormal psychology and perhaps this was his way to summarize his own learnings and to put them into a single source.

The book also covers a very wide range of psychotherapeutic processes for intervening. Even in 1941, Maslow and Mittelmann describe Adlerian, Gestalt, the body-therapies, psychodrama, group therapy, and many, many other techniques for bringing about healing. I was also surprisingly amazed at the breadth of reading and comprehension that is revealed in his book. And as I noted in the last Meta Reflection, the most revolutionary thing Maslow did was to describe abnormality *in terms of the psychologically healthy person.* That was new, it was different, and it was mapping out a whole new approach.

Yet something else impresses me about this first book of Maslow. Given that it is almost an encyclopedia about abnormality, I have a hallucination about it and what it did to him. My mind-read is that due to the exhaustive nature of the book, it served as a completion for him. I think it is as if Maslow reached *closure* on the subject of abnormality and that the book freed him so that he could move on to the next step in his own development. And that next step also happened to be the next development in the evolution of the field of psychology itself. And, of course, the next stop would be *the psychologically healthy person.*

It's kind of ironic, isn't it? *Abnormality* and his study of gathering together everything one could know about abnormality (in that day) using Psychoanalysis and Behaviorism (the first two forces in psychology) freed Maslow to pursue *normality* and then *"the farther reaches of human nature."* It freed him to create the new paradigm shift and to launch "the third force" in psychology— which he labeled in numerous ways as self-actualization psychology, humanistic psychology, positive psychology, and growth psychology.

In the new psychology, Maslow wrote about "normality." He described the different ways that term is used and then went on to not only talk about the "best specimens" of humans, but to model hundreds of people who were "self-actualizers." From that sampling, he then began describing a new "syndrome" (alias, pattern or model), namely, that of psychologically healthy people. Later he would say that these are not ordinary people who something added, but "ordinary people with nothing taken away." I like that.

Ordinary people, he would later say, are people whose natural powers, resources, and potentials have been inhibited and dampened. That's the problem. The dampening and inhibiting of our basic powers. Yet since every child has within him or her the natural drive and disposition to actualize his or her best, what primarily interferes with that is the way those potential powers are inhibited and dampened. And that's because our so-called "instincts" are so weak, so fragile, so easily disturbed and distorted.

What little "instinct" we have left is so easily overwhelmed by culture, by learning, by school, by family, etc. It doesn't stand a chance. All that's left of our "instinct" is a weak little inner voice. And because of this gap, we humans have the chance to replace programmed instincts with choice, with learning, with conscious decisions, and with any understanding or belief that we so design.

Which brings me back to abnormality. Maslow introduced one other revolutionary idea into the whole picture. He said that much, if not most, of abnormality, of neurosis is not human nature gone back, gone wrong, gone evil. It is rather human nature creatively searching for answers, for ideas, and for solutions in the wrong places and in the wrong way. A neurosis is an attempted solution for healing, an attempt that just didn't work. Yet within it is a positive intention.

In saying that neurosis is "a failure of personal growth," Maslow shifted the focus and put a new frame on things, didn't he? Neurosis is no longer some big mysterious entity, but simply an interruption of the growth/ development process. In another place, he referred to neurosis as the feeling of being cut off from one's own powers. And so the Bright-side Psychology revolution began.

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #56
Dec. 4, 2007

"IT'S JUST A MAP!"

The power of the neuro-linguistic/neuro-semantic model of Alfred Korzybski rests in how it enables us to distinguish things. And most fundamentally to distinguish my *mapping and maps* of the world from the actual world that exists outside of my nervous system of sensory perceptions. Succinctly summarized in the smallest of sentences, Korzybski wrote, *"The map is not the territory."*

We all know this is absolutely and totally true when we go out to eat and dine in a nice restaurant. I don't know anyone personally, nor have I even heard of anyone, who ever went to a restaurant, picked up the menu and, confusing it with the food that it represents, began chewing on it, biting off sections of the menu and then swallowing. If I ever find myself in a restaurant and someone with me actually starts *eating the menu,* I am sure I would say, "Hey, that the menu, not the meal!" And I think most of us would do. Wouldn't you?

The *menu* is a symbolic representation *of* the food and not the food. Similarly a *map* is not the land, buildings, mountains, woods, houses, train station, airport, rivers, etc., it is a symbolic representation of such. And so with all of our thoughts, ideas, understandings, beliefs, decisions, memories, imaginations, and every other meta-level in our mind.

Yet there is something about us humans that is able to actually forget this and act as if our mental maps (especially our beliefs) are real. We have the exquisite ability to *confuse* map and territory. We can *identify* our maps and mapping with the territory (the reality). And, when we do, we confuse ourselves, we semantically over-load things (giving them too much meaning), and in the process create distortions and neuroses and all kinds of problems for ourselves. This also is the structure of fundamentalism.

Now the reason I'm writing about this is because of all the goings on this past week in Kartoum, Sudan with Gillian Gibbons and all of the riots, arrest, imprison, and media blitz about it (at least from what I could tell watching the BBC).

Who would have ever thought that a teacher of small children could have triggered such disturbance, even riots and that it would get so out-of-hand that people would take to the streets demanding her to be lashed and even put to death? And why? Because she asked some young children to name a Teddy Bear after one of their heros! And given that one of the most influential persons in their lives would be Mohammad, that they would innocently name their hero Teddy Bear Mohammd. And *that* would cause a riot?!

So what started out as a way to teach, support, and empower the children became *in the minds of some people* "religious blasphemy!" So what was it? Did that action *mean* and *equate with* honor and recognition of being a hero or sacrilege and dishonor? Was it being

offensive and insulting or caring and respectful? Is that violating the religion or its highest expression?

The answer is that it is neither. And the truth is also that it is both. For some, it stood for and represented one thing and for others it represented the other thing. And whether it was for honor or dishonor, the *meaning* of these evaluative judgments depends upon the mind of the meaning-maker in so attributing the different meanings. "The map is not the territory." Those who mapped it one way, so it was to them. Those who mapped it different, so it was to them.

Yet outside of these *mapping operations,* these evaluations, we simply have a Teddy Bear and a name.

This again underscores the power of "beliefs" and the danger of "beliefs." Whatever anyone believes, so it becomes to that person.   And since beliefs are self-fulfilling prophecies and commands to the nervous system—these explains how hundreds of people would march and protest in the streets demanding not merely the imprisonment and lashes of the British School Teacher, Gillian Gibbons, but also her death. For many of them, her 15 day imprisonment terms is far too "light" of a punishment for "insulting Isalm." For others of us, any imprisonment for that innocent act is an utterly ridiculous act that should never have occurred in the first place.

This Kartoum Violence reminded me of the Cartoon Violence that occurred a couple years ago in Denmark (if memory serves me well) when the same kind of over-serious believing in one's beliefs lead to violence against the artist and against the newspaper. And it highlights what I think is the biggest threat facing this planet—*fundamentalism.* Whether it is Islam fundamentalism, Christian fundamental, scientific fundamentalism, liberal fundamentalism, conservative fundamentalism —fundamentalism is the problem.

And what is fundamentalism? The structure of it is *believing* in your *beliefs.* That is, it is confusing map and territory and assuming that our ideas *is* the reality and that if we say something "is" something, then it is and that any other perspective, interpretation, understanding, belief, etc. is automatically wrong. Believing is what we have to do as we make guesses about things and step out to respond, but when we *believe in our beliefs* then we close our minds, become dogmatic, think we know-it-all, and refuse to adjust any of our thinking to new facts or to even listen and engage in respectful dialogue. And that is what initiates the unsanity. And of course, as we say in Neuro-Semantics, "When we get serious, we get stupid." Here's to the unleashing of more laughter on the planet!!

    For more, see "The Magic Nature of Beliefs" on www.neurosemantics.com

THE ART OF CHASING YOUR TAIL

Sometimes when a person is frustrated in the attempt to solve a problem will use a metaphor as expressed in the title of this Reflection, "I feel like I'm chasing my tail." What does this mean? It means that in some way the person feels that he or she is going round and round in circles in attempting to solve the difficulty and yet getting nowhere. Yesterday I heard this metaphor.

A group at the *Self-Actualization Workshops* here in Italy were working on some "problem" that someone had said they would to address in order to stay *in the zone.* Immediately when they said that they were going round and round and round, I knew that the *kind* of problem that they were working on was not a real problem, but a paradox. This is the nature of paradoxes. We go round in circles with a paradox because we're trying to nail down a problem and it refuses to be nailed down.

Actually this happened both last week in France and this weekend here in Italy in the *Self-Actualization Workshop.* Someone presented a "problem," and when the others in the group began honing in with the precision questions of the Meta-Model to nail it, just as soon as they seemed to be getting somewhere, suddenly the "problem" shifted and it was something else. Something different. So they went after that asking about when it occurs, where, with whom, in what way, how is it a problem, and again just about the time that they think they are getting ready to create a well-formed problem, *poof!*, the "problem" changes again and so round and round and round we go trying to figure it out.

In each case we had to stop, but more typically in real life, this tends to go on for weeks, months, years and eventually almost everybody begins to feel that it is a problem with no solution. No escape from the frame. So it induces strong feelings of disillusionment, powerlessness, helplessness. And as the would-be problem-solvers feel more and more powerless to help, they sense that the situation is unsolvable. This, of course, is yet another indication of the presence of paradox, the sense of "damned if I do and damned if I don't."

So what is a paradox? On the surface a paradox seems to be the contradiction of two opposites. Two ideas, two behaviors, two choices are in conflict and work as contradictions to each other.

A classical paradox is the one that Paul quotes in the New Testament, "A Cretian said, 'All Cretians are liars.'" The problem is that if it is true that all Cretians are liars, and a Cretian said that, then he lied. So actually, all Cretians are not liars. But if they are not all liars, then it is a lie that all Cretians are liars. And so the spin begins! Because *on the surface level,* the

statement contains a contradiction so that it cannot both be true or false.

Another classic paradox is the "be spontaneous" paradox. Suppose a wife wants her husband to be more romantic with her and wants him to be romantic because he wants to be romantic. Yet what happens when she tells him, "I want you to be more romantic, but it has to come spontaneously from you." If he obeys her request, he's not be spontaneous. But if he does not obey, then he does not engage in the romantic behavior that she wants. So he decides to do it but doesn't feel spontaneous because it was her idea, not his. That undermines his romance feelings, so he stops, but then he's not being romantic. And as he spins round and round, he is "damned if he does, damned if he does not." Paradox.

These paradoxes *seem* to contain contradictions. Actually, they do not. The so-called and *seeming contradictions* are not truly contradictions. They only arise when we try to frame them as occurring on the same level. And that's the key. *Thinking of them horizontally on the same level—that is the problem.* When we do not do that, but separate the levels within the statements, the seeming contradictions disappear and the so-called paradoxes go away.

To solve the paradox, meta-state the levels. Distinguish between the *classification* and the members of the class. That is, recognize that there are *levels* of thought and awareness involved so that you can stop *confusing* levels.

When the Cretian says, "All Cretians are liars" he is not including himself and his statement as members of the class of "Cretian lies." His statement is at a higher level to the statement. It is *about* something else.

Have you heard about the book that has the title, "This book has no title!" Does it have a title? Yes, of course, it has a title. The title is, "This book has no Title!" The title itself is not a member of the class, it is the name of the class. So the *class* of elephants is not an elephant, it is a linguistic term, "elephant." It is when we attempt to make *the classification* a member of itself that we begin going round in circles.

The romance-desiring wife who wants spontaneous romancing creates with that structure a double-bind that cannot be responded to in that way. She's using a "request" to request that which cannot arises as a-response-to-a-request. So the form of the request itself is the problem and creates a contradiction which locks a person into a frame where it cannot succeed. Bateson identified this structure as the kind of double-bind that creates the craziness in schizophrenia where a person splits himself to be able to handle the contradictions (see *The Bateson Report*).

One example of a so-called paradoxical contradiction that arose in the *Self-Actualization Workshop* in Avignon was this. "I cannot sell myself or set high prices for my services without feeling guilty because I'm not have enough self-esteem as a person; but I need to sell myself as a coach and trainer to make a living and meet my basic needs." Those who were trying to pin down the "real problem" and get a well-formed problem kept going in circles. They even started offering suggestions that would solve one side or the other side of the contradictions. "Anchor a good feeling about selling." "Try something other than coaching." "Expand your skills so you have more value."

But all of that is *within the frame of the classification* that creates the problem. What was that frame? It was the frame that "What I do as a person in business in selling my services determines and reflects my value as a human being." On the same horizontal level *being and doing* are in contrast, conflict, and contradiction. Yet what we *are* as human beings and what we *do* are different logical levels. Recognizing that what we *do* is a member of the class of *being* begins to sort out the levels so the paradox disappears.

Then what seems complex becomes simple. The solution is really simple. Separate the confused levels. Recognize the distinction between the meta-level of a *classification* and the primary-level of *a member of that class.*

It is the process of taking a *classification* and confusing it with a primary level experiences that we create contradictions and paradoxes. Yet these are just "creatures of the mind," creatures we create and then respond to as if they are real. Take *any belief* about anything and confuse that with anything at the sensory-base see-hear-feel level and, presto!, you have yourself a paradoxical problem.

So, the next time you hear someone (including yourself) confuse a belief with a sensory detail, suspect that you may be in the presence of a paradox. "If I raise my fees that will make me materialistic and selfish." "If she turns me down for a date, it will make me such a fool for asking." "If I say I will take that speaking engagement, I could mess up and ruin my reputation forever."

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Meta Reflections #58
Dec. 18, 2007

PARADOX

AND THE META-STATE SECRET

In the last Meta Reflection, "The Art of Chasing Your Tail" I wrote about paradox to contrast it to a real problem. Actually, a paradox is not a real problem, it is a pseudo-problem. What seems like a problem or a confusing contradiction only *seems* like a contradiction. The situation in a paradox is that we have confused levels. When we un-confuse the levels by clarifying the structure of the experience, the paradox goes away. The paradox simply disappears.

How does this relate to Meta-States? Ah, that's the beauty of this. "Paradox" often lies at the very heart of meta-stating. That's why if anyone wants to effectively work with meta-levels (with Meta-States Model and Neuro-Semantics), it's critical to understand paradox. It's important to understand how it works, and what you can and cannot do with it.

Since the beginning, I have always included a list of meta-state interfaces in the APG training manual. These detail 16 of the possible interfaces that can occur when you apply one state to another state. Sometimes in creating a-state-about-a-state structure, the higher state will *negate* the first. At other times, it *creates paradox*. It can also create *confusion, humor, weakening of a frame, solidification of a frame,* and so on. These mixtures of meta-states generates some truly wild and wonderful human experiences, some that are existential, conceptual, transcendental, complex, and even paradoxical.

The seventh interface in that list is one about creating paradox. Via meta-stating we often create paradox by confusing levels. Examples in the manual include:
"Now I want you to try really hard to relax."
"Never and always are two words one should always remember never to use."
"I'm absolutely certain that nothing is absolutely certain."

How does this work? In meta-stating we can create paradox because we covertly shift to a higher state about a primary state without even being aware that we are doing so. Sometimes this works as a limiting double-bind (as noted in the last Reflection) and sometimes this works to delight and thrill us. The meta-stating process of paradox creation actually offers lots of possibilities for creative transformation.

The Paradox of Welcoming Fear
The meta-stating process also can provides a way of analyzing such powerful techniques as

the "paradoxical intention" intervention. In the field of Logotherapy, Viktor Frankl (1953) developed "paradoxical intention" to address the troublesome experience of "anxiety about anxiety" and "fear about fear." The most typical reaction to *fear-of-fear* is flight from fear. About this Frankl wrote:

> "'Flight from fear' as a reaction to 'fear of fear' constitutes the phobic pattern, the first of three pathogenic patterns that are distinguished in Logotherapy. The second is the obsessive-compulsive pattern: whereas in phobic cases the patient displays 'fear of fear,' the obsessive-compulsive neurotic exhibits 'fear of himself,' being neither caught by the idea that he might commit suicide—or even homicide—or afraid that the strange thoughts that haunt him might be signs of imminent, if not present, psychosis. How should he know that the obsessive-compulsive character structure rather is immunizing him against real psychosis (pp. 131-132)

When we meta-state fear with a higher level of fear we create paranoia, fearfulness, timidity, and the like. This structure actually serves as a model for most negative meta-states. We are responding to ourselves and our states with *negative* thoughts and feelings which paradoxically is only making things worse. The fearful thoughts-feelings (a meta-level state) *about* the primary state of fear amplifies it. Then paranoia, as one's frame-of-mind, typically leads to more morbid ways of thinking and feeling. To then fear our fear-of-fear can create a whole complex set of embedded states that becomes a runaway system of fear. As such it creates an unsolvable paradox or a double-bind. At least it does so until the levels are sorted out and un-confused.

So the most paradoxical or counter-intuitive thing you can do in this case is *welcome* your fear, *honor* your fear, *explore* your fear, *be curious* about your fear, even *enjoy* your fear. The solution is paradoxical, seemingly contradictory. That's because the problem is not the original primary fear, it is in the frames that we bring to the fear.

Procrastination

Similarly, we can take the primary state of procrastination, and by reflexively applying procrastination to itself, we create what seems like a contradiction. As we feed it back onto itself, we shift levels and the meta-procrastination results in negating the primary procrastination. If you have ever procrastinated, recall the experience for a moment. At the primary level you experienced it as an immediate and intense mind-body state of putting off something. You know it needs to be done, but you hesitate. You excuse yourself. You don't feel that you're ready. You have lots of inhibiting thoughts and feelings holding you back. That's the state of *procrastination.*

Now imagine meta-stating the procrastination with procrastination. As you bring a "putting off" state (with all of its thoughts-emotions) to eventually getting around to the task of procrastinating, you know that one of these days you'll get around to procrastinating, but not now. You procrastinate on your procrastination. And when you procrastinate on your procrastination, you get busy with things. Ah, the seeming contradiction!

In this case, the meta-level procrastinating negates the procrastination state. This is the structure that creates paradox. The result seems like a contradiction, the solution to procrastination is to procrastinate on your procrastination? Who would have thought? Yet actually you are creating a second response to the first one at a different level.

Paradox
About paradox Webster defines it as "a statement seemingly self-contradictory or absurd, a self-contradictory proposition." It comes from the Greek word, *paradoxon* which means "contrary to received opinion."

This process opens up a whole world of possibilities for constructing human realities and creating positive changes. Turning a state on itself has the possibility of enabling us to design-engineer all kinds of paradoxical states, that is, states that seem counter-intuitive. The process is simple. Simply take a primary emotion or state and feed it back onto itself. Do that and generate a batch of paradox. When I *doubt my doubt*, I become more sure. When I procrastinate on my procrastination, I get busy with things.

The structure in this is reflexivity. We turn the state back onto itself. In this lies the power for "paradoxical intervention" so that we prescribe symptoms. "I want you to intentionally practice the stuttering this next week; each morning practice stuttering for five minutes." It seems contradictory. It is the last thing the person would think of doing or that would help. In fact, the person stuttering has spent his whole life *avoiding* stuttering. Why would he now actually *practice* the non-fluency of stammering? It's counter-intuitive. Yet the practice of non-fluency changes things. At a higher level we are meta-stating a new frame. The person can now apply a non-serious, even a playful attitude to what has been a source of pain.

The bottom line, not frequently *paradox* is the very thing that governs solutions for health, integration, balance, transformation, and empowerment. At a higher level, the frame we set alters our experience; it's always about the frame. But when we entertain second thoughts or states and fuse them so that we think they operate on the same level, we experience what seems to us as a contradiction. But it is not. That's why as soon as we recognize the truth, the truth that our second state is a higher frame; the paradox vanishes.

That's why the way to rid yourself of unwanted thoughts, emotions, behaviors, habits, etc., is to paradoxically welcome, accept, appreciate, and even celebrate those thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Who would have thought! Welcoming the experience allows you can take counsel of it, reality check it, and learn from it. To *not* reckon with it, the fight begins as you try to repress it or use some other defense to reject it.

META-STATING
PARADOXICAL STATES

To meta-state is to create, work with, and understand paradox. It is inevitable. Why is it inevitable? For the simple reason that when you *meta-state,* you reflexively move to a higher level of awareness and bring that higher frame into the lower frame. This is what the founders of NLP got wrong. Bandler and Grinder wrongly assumed and popularized the current mythology in NLP that to "go meta" is to dissociate. And it is that myth which has blinded most people trained in classical NLP and new code NLP to the fabulous magic in the Meta-States model.

But to "go meta" is *not* dissociation. To *step back* from one state of consciousness full of thoughts and feelings is to *at the very same moment to step into* another state. When you step out of depression, what state do you step *into*? Neutrality, observation, witnessing, joy, curiosity, wonder, playfulness, concern, or what? The choices are infinite. The point is that *you will always step into some state!*

Yes you could step into a state where *it feels as if* you have stepped out of your body and are dis-embodied. But that's just a sense; just a feeling. You have *not actually* stepped out of your body! You are still in your body. Your heart is still beating. Your lungs are still breathing air in and out. The whole concept of "dissociation" is just that—*a concept.* So the "feeling" of dissociation typically is that of feeling numb, weird, viewing one's body from outside, etc.

Going meta to your current state simply and only refers to stepping *into* another state and you can step into highly emotional states *about* the first state as you can step into less and less emotional states like witnessing, observing, or neutrality.

And there's something else. When you *meta-state*, while you first move to a higher level of thoughts-and-feelings *about* your first state, that's not the end of the story. You don't stay meta. *Meta* is not a place or thing, the term refers to a process. The moving up to this higher state is just step one. It is just the *feedback* loop of your inner communication. The next step is your *feed forward* loop by which you *feed forward* the thoughts, feelings, energy, and frame of your meta-state *into* the first state.

That's why we describe meta-stating as *transcending and including.* We *transcend* our first state and we *include* it within the higher meta-state. That's how we create *joyful* learning, *respectful* anger, *calm* fear, *mindful* anxiety, *playful* intensity, etc. Over the years I've illustrated this most often by contrasting playful and serious, the different syntax of meta-

states, and the difference it makes. If we meta-state playfulness with seriousness, we get *serious playfulness.* If we meta-state seriousness with playfulness, we get *playfully serious.* And the second meta-state, playfully serious, is much more resourceful than the first one.

And it may strike you as paradoxical. After all, playful and serious are opposites on the continuum of earnestness. Yet if we jump a logical level and make *serious* a member of the class of playful, we meta-state ourselves with *playfulness* so that even our seriousness operates within the frame and category of playful. To "serious" people this can seem so much of a paradox that they just can't figure out.

I remember once being called into a local hospital to work with the critical care nurses. I had a small group of about 24 nurses, mostly female, but 5 males. The supervisor who brought me in was concerned about their stress levels. In gathering information about their stressors, there was first of all their hours, they worked 12-hour shifts. But even greater was the very thing that brought them into that profession and was their best quality—their care. They cared so much. And that same care of compassion, desire to help, refusal to give up on people, etc. was also the source of their biggest stress. Most of them absolutely dreaded and hated, and felt like a failure, when someone died, especially on their shift.

My overt task was to teach them relaxation skills. And the supervisor knew I could access relaxation states, anchor them, and also to facilitate the development of a "core relaxed state" so that they could use an "instant relaxation" strategy to help reduce their stress level. And while I did that, I also recommended that they lighten up about the seriousness of their job. Most of them were so serious! I suggested that they needed a good dose of *playful seriousness.*

Yet when I said that, some of them responded as if I had just uttered the worse heresy within the realm of their profession!
> *"Be playfully* serious? You've got to be kidding. This is serious business. We can't do that; we're professionals."

"So you need to be *deadly* serious?" I asked playfully. "Does that help your patients live or die?"
> "But we have to be professional; we can't makes jokes or not treat things lightly."

"So making jokes and lightening up, being *playfully* serious in your earnest commitment to do the best you can, that would somehow be unprofessional? So tell me, in your image of being 'professional,' does this mean that you must not smile. You have to look unhappy. You are now allowed to lighten up and be human and treat human mortality as if it is unnatural? Do you think that any of us are going to get out of this alive?"

Eventually, they got it. And as they did, they began to lighten up and to use what seemed so counter-intuitive, so paradoxical—*playful seriousness*—as a way of reducing their own stress and of bringing a more caring and authentic presence to the people they were caring for.

META-STATING
PARADOXICAL STATES

A paradox is only a *seeming* contradiction. It is not a real contradiction. It only *seems* like a contradiction. And it seems that way when we do not, or cannot, separate levels. That's what creates the apparent contradiction. We are thinking about things in either-or terms, as black-or-white, as this-or-that. We are thinking linearly about something which is what traps us in the frame of polar opposites.

Everything changes as soon as we shift from linear thinking to the non-linear thinking of meta-states. When we shift to thinking in terms of levels we can recognize the role of reflexivity in our human states. Then the paradox disappears or is resolved. (It is not "solved," but resolved.)   Actually, the term "'paradox" suggests this. *Paradox* comes from two Greek words— *para* (besides, alongside of) and *dokein* (to think). So paradox literally refers "thinking besides or alongside of." And that's the problem. We are putting two thoughts alongside of each other on the same level, on a continuum that has two polar opposites, and this is what creates the seeming contradiction.

That's why many meta-stating processes and results seem paradoxical. In the previous *Reflections* I've given a few examples. Here are some more.

Successful failures or successful mistakes. Because we often learn best through "trial and error learning." That is, we learn best from what doesn't work. This enables us to shift and refine our responses until we find what does work. To accelerate our learning we have to become comfortable with making mistakes, learning from mistakes, welcoming mistakes, even making more mistakes so that we can learn quicker and more efficiently. So what about this as a goal for the new year? For perfectionists it will be a significant stretch goal.
> "In the new year I will learn to become more comfortable with mistakes, and in fact, to make more useful and informative mistakes."

Does this seem paradoxical? True *success* requires making mistakes and learning from our failures. And that requires being open and comfortable with mistakes. Of course, many people will have to first unlearn their old associations. They will have to unlearn the habit of connecting a sense of threat or danger with "mistakes." So as a performance task, why not set a goal of a daily mistakes quota? Set a goal of making 7 mistakes a day.

If you do, then to be *successful* you will have to meet your quota of *failures.* If at the end of the day you have not reached your quoted, that is, you have failed at making a sufficient number of mistakes, you keep trying and make a few more mistakes so that you can

successfully reach your goal. If you do and learn from them, you will have succeeded in experiencing *successful mistakes.*

If you put *success* and *mistakes or failure* on the same level, you create a contradiction. Is it success *or* failure? But when you *succeed* at using your mistakes effectively for learning, development, growth, and refinement of skill then the higher category above the *mistake* is *success.* You succeed at failures.

An opposite meta-state would be *failing at success.* There are many people "successful" at the primary level of life in terms of money, status, fame, etc. and yet they *fail* at their success. How do they do that? Perhaps they misuse their success. They fail at financial or business success by thinking that it somehow makes them a success as a person. Yet if they are cruel, unethical, prejudiced, etc. then they fail at being a decent human being.

The permanency of change. Today we often hear people talk about "change as the only constant." Or that "there is nothing permanent except change." These statements may seem a bit paradoxical given that things which are constant and permanent are opposite to things that change and are in flux. Yet when we put *change* as a member of the class of *permanent* things, the paradox disappears.

It is when we contrast permanency and change that we get a seeming contradiction. "You're always wanting to change things, change for change sake; we need to stop changing things so we can develop something solid enough to be dependable and constant."

What can you do if you find yourself with a problem that seems to be unsolvable? Suppose you have one of those either-or problems that forces you to choose one thing over the other: mind *or* body, mind *or* emotions, nature *or* nurture, selfish *or* unselfish, self *or* others, matching *or* mismatching, global *or* specific, etc. What can you do?

First, put the so-called opposites on a continuum and name the continuum using a positive attribution. Make it a virtuous continuum. So if the problem is lazy or active, put lazy and active on a continuum. Now using your best creativity, search for a way to view the continuum as a valued or virtuous continuum. To do that you will usually need to change the semantically-loaded term "lazy" with something more neutral, say, "inactive."

Next, with a continuum that runs from inactive to active, what would be a positive term for this continuum? Perhaps *relaxation.* Or perhaps *responsiveness.* If so, then inactive becomes *high level relaxation* or low level responsiveness. Now "laziness" is a masterful ability to relax! If we then intentionally use the negative semantic terms for each end of the continuum like laziness or reactivity, we can resolve what would otherwise be a paradox. Lazy responsiveness, relaxed reactivity, inactive reactivity, reactive laziness. And would this meta-stating create paradox only, or also humor? Ah, the subject of Meta Reflections in the new year.