

# NEURONS

## The Meta-Reflections of Neuro-Semantics 2015

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**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections 2015 #1**  
**January 5, 2015**

## **CRITICAL THINKING ABOUT CRITICAL THINKING**

If there's any kind of thinking that we all need— it is the ability to engage in what is called *critical thinking*. I have written several recent “Neuron” posts on critical thinking— using critical thinking to think through the real issues of various social, political, and psychological issues. More will be coming. But before they do, I want to write about critical thinking and, in fact, to do critical thinking about critical thinking.

First of all, then, *what is critical thinking?* What are we talking about when we use this phrase? The dictionary defines it as—

“Disciplined thinking that’s clear, rational, open-minded, and informed by evidence.”

“*Informed by evidence*” means that this thinking is empirical or sensory-based. It is founded upon what we can see, hear, sense, smell, taste or put to tests to demonstrate that something exists and can be identified, influenced, changed, monitored, etc. It is fact-based. Reasonable people can agree upon the facts or evidence even though they may draw different conclusions. So in critical thinking we first ask: What are the facts? What is the evidence? How do you know that? Where did you get that information from? This is intelligence gathering. Here we do “due diligence” to make sure that we are not missing any of the most critical information or data.

“*Open-minded*” next draws our attention to the fact that critical thinkers have not made-up-their minds before they explore and examine the evidence. They are open to various possibilities. So they question— they explore — they give other possible interpretations a chance to make their case. They are not prejudiced. That is, they have not pre-judged the case and have an agenda that they are trying to prove. Instead of trying to prove anything; they are exploring, testing, being skeptical about easy answers, etc.

“*Rational*” highlights that we are going to be using *reasoning* to figure things out. Rational here is not rationalization, it is not positing that human understanding knows, or can know, everything. It is simply that we will *reason* from X to Y and see if we can find the reasons, explanations, causation factors, etc. that will make clear what is happening and why. So while we do not make Reason our god, we also do not make it our devil. It is one of the ways that our brains work as we “think” ... and it is also one of our central faculties. It is the human faculty that has launched the age of science that has taken us out of the jungle and the dark ages and into the advances of medicine, architecture, technology, etc.

What does “rational” mean? The dictionary definition of rational: Agreeable to reason; reasonable; sensible; using reason or logic in thinking out a problem, in accordance with the principles of logic or reason; having or exercising reason, sound judgment, or good sense; being in or characterized by full possession of one's reason; sane; lucid. Synonyms of rational include: intelligent, wise, judicious, sagacious, enlighten. So, if something is *rational* then it makes sense. It is reasonable.

“*Clear*” is the immediate aim of critical thinking—to clarify the factors, elements, and component variables that comprise an experience or a phenomenon. Thinking that does not generate clarity brings confusion, convoluted thinking, confusions between factors, erroneous ideas that do not produce results. Such thinking gets seduced by illusions— visual and auditory illusions, deceptions based on cognitive biases and distortions. Clarity is the primary goal so that we can then know what to do, what steps to take, and how to be more effective and successful in reaching our objectives.

“*Disciplined*” refers to structuring our thinking so that it moves out step-by-step in a sequence so that we can achieve clarity of understanding. It refers to be strategic and orderly. With most experiences, if a person does not do things in the proper order, the undisciplined approach will lead to failure. The chef who mixes up the proper order of mixing ingredients, turning on the oven or stove, acting in the proper time-frame, etc. will not produce a delicious meal, but something that has to be thrown out.

*Critical thinking is a tremendous resource if you are a Neuro-Semanticist.* With it, you will question for precision, for indepth understanding, for recognizing and working with systems as systems. It will enable you to slow down so you don't jump to conclusions or react to words and labels or over-generalize, but pause, think, reason through, look for evidence, etc. This will make you more reasonable, increase your wisdom, avoid word-traps, and see reality as it is which is also a definition of “enlightment.”

*If*, as a coach, you cannot think clearly with precision, not only do you have a problem, you will be ineffective in coaching others. If you cannot think through something in a clear way, then your thinking will be muddled, confused, and convoluted. Your thinking will probably be shallow, linear, and symptomatic. Then guess how you will be feeling or talking or acting?! That's right, you won't be able to effectively manage reality. After all, the mental maps that you create and the mental mapping processes (thinking–feeling) are your primary tools for navigating reality.

**Interested?** Colin Cox, Master Neuro-Semantic Trainer will be doing a Pre-Conference workshop on Critical Thinking Skills. June 24, 2015 – Hong Kong, Cityview Hotel. Write to Sherran — [sherran@apti.com.hk](mailto:sherran@apti.com.hk) or Ivan – [ivan@apti.com.hk](mailto:ivan@apti.com.hk) for more information.

**From: L. Michael Hall  
Meta Reflections 2015 #2  
January 8, 2015**

## **HOW TO DEFEAT TERRORISM WITH NEURO-SEMANTICS**

Another act of terrorism! 12 dead, many more wounded. Another deadly Islamist massacre at a Paris satirical magazine by two brothers with connections to terrorist organizations. And why? They wanted “revenge” against cartoonists for using humor against their religion. They even murdered a Moslem man who apparently begged for his life!

A report said that the brothers, Cherif and Said Kouachi, were known to French intelligence. Cherif had even been convicted of funneling young French jihadists to Iraq and is a follower of the then-leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

So, how can Neuro-Semantics (NLP) help? What can we do in the field of NLP and Neuro-Semantics to defeat the mentality that leads to terrorism and especially Islamist terrorism? Here are a few recommendations:

### **First, Publicize that “the Map is not the Territory.”**

Whatever idea that any person has about God, religion, life, the after-life, etc. is an *idea*. And as an idea, it is a human idea, and not the territory. That means it is not real. Now if your mental map about God is so fragile that you have to go and get revenge because someone believes something different from you and expresses doubt or sarcasm about your belief— you must have a very low view of your God’s ability to take care of himself! Your god is that small? That weak? That incompetent? Do you need to send your god to an empowerment workshop? If you have god who needs *your help* defending him (!), I’d recommend upgrading and getting a more powerful god!

Helping people realize that their mental maps are just that—fallible human understandings about something—enables people to stop treating their beliefs so seriously. In Neuro-Semantics we say, “When you get serious, you’ll get stupid.” The next step is this: When you get seriously stupid and then get serious about that— fanatically serious— then you get sick. And a religion that is beyond humor, a religion that forbids humor and jokes, a religion that seeks revenge if someone laughs or teases something about their religion — that person doesn’t have a Religion, they have a Disease.

“He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision.” (Psalm 2)

Whatever anyone says or writes or draws is just a map and “the map is not the territory.” It is just a map and therefore not real, just a construct of their understanding. Now if you get upset by their words, and suffer from *word-phobia*, you need a therapist or coach. The last thing you need is a gun

or a sick religion that validates you to act out your immaturity.

### **Second, Distinguish the Freedom of Speech from Your Self**

Apparently these two brothers engaged in *identification*. They *identified* their religion with the words of those who don't share their religion. This amounts to the childish and primitive thinking of identification: "What you say about me *is* what I am or will become, so stop! If you don't stop then I will kill you." They also *identified* themselves with the words and pictures that sarcastically made satire comments about their religion. This amounts to the irrational thinking: "If you disagree with me, mock me, make fun of my beliefs and religion, then *that makes me and my religion wrong*. Hence, I kill you."

Korzybski in *Science and Sanity* noted that all *identification* is a form of unsanity and can easily lead to insanity. He urged to avoid *identifying one thing with another thing* and urged to stop using the "to be" verb and that when you do so, do it with consciousness of what you are doing! Fanatics identify their religion with what people say about it! How silly. Sounds like what happens on first-grade playgrounds. "If you call me certain words, I have to hit you."

This was the state of the world during primitive times. Then over the centuries we humans grew up and realized that to have a healthy civilization, there are certain inalienable human rights— among them is *freedom of speech*. I don't have to agree with everything you think or say. But I defend your right to think and say what you believe.

### **Third, the Relevancy and Ecology Challenge.**

Whenever I hear about "religious" people shooting and killing or going to war against other people, I wonder if they are actually "religious" or if they are actually a fanatic nut who *uses* some religion to confirm their prejudices and hatred. True spirituality makes people more compassionate, humane, and loving. If you believe in a God and believe that human beings are "created in his image and likeness" then you do not go around killing and destroying the height of God's creation.

This violates the principles of relevance and ecology. In every true religion there is a command against killing. It was one of the Ten Commandments of Moses: "Thou shall not kill." Healthy religion and spirituality is respectful. It honors the sacred right of people to live their lives and to be responsible for themselves. Murder and assassinations violate the ecology of true spirituality and its relevance.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections 2015 #3**  
**January 11, 2015**

## **THE PRESIDENT FINALLY SPEAKS OUT AGAINST RADICAL ISLAMISM**

While I was out of the country and off in China on our PCMC Training in Guangzhou, on January first the President finally spoke out against *radical* Islamic extremism. I missed it at the time. Then this past week, after the Terrorism in Paris, I came across it. Now if you are thinking I'm speaking about the America President, then sadly no, it was not President Obama. He does not seem to be courageous enough for that. But the President who has shown the courage to do that is none other than the new President of Egypt, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. On New Year's Day, a day which coincided with the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, he spoke out against Islamic extremism. He said:

"We need a revolution of the self, a revolution of consciousness."

Having written a few days ago about how Neuro-Semantics can fight terrorism, here is an example of a leader speaking up to separate the radical misuse of a religion, Islamic extremism for Islam itself.

CNN reported that Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi called for a "religious revolution," asking Muslim leaders to help in the fight against extremism. In a speech, he said they had no time to lose:

"I say and repeat, again, that we are in need of a religious revolution. You imams are responsible before Allah. The entire world is waiting on you. The entire world is waiting for your word ... because the Islamic world is being torn, it is being destroyed, it is being lost. And it is being lost by our own hands. ... We need a revolution of the self, a revolution of consciousness and ethics to rebuild the Egyptian person—a person that our country will need in the near future."

This was the man who was elected in May after leaving the military to run for the office. President El-Sisi, a pious man and the former defense minister, led the ouster of Mohamed Morsy, the Islamist who was Egypt's first democratically elected President. CNN reported that he has long positioned himself as a more secular option, and defender against extremist views.

"It's inconceivable that the thinking that we hold most sacred should cause the entire Islamic world to be a source of anxiety, danger, killing and destruction for the rest of the world. Impossible that this thinking—and I am not saying *the religion*—I am saying *this thinking*. . . . This is antagonizing the entire world. It's antagonizing the entire world! Does this mean that 1.6 billion people (Muslims) should want to kill the rest of the world's inhabitants—that is 7 billion—so that they themselves may live? Impossible!?"



While el-Sisi's speech included some powerful language, H.A. Hellyer, a non-resident fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution and research associate at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, said the President has made similar statements in the past. Hellyer said:

"There is little to suggest (el-Sisi) is interested in some sort of Lutheran reformation of Islam. By all accounts, he's quite comfortable with the prevailing leadership of the Azhari establishment. If anything, he wants to empower it further in order to push forward a counter-narrative against radical Islamism. The real question is: How credible can such a state-empowered counter-narrative be?" Hellyer said.

Then on Tuesday, the President visited the main Coptic cathedral in Cairo to attend a Christmas mass and make a short speech. He is the first president to attend such a mass since the revolution.

"We will build our country together. We will accommodate each other. We will love each other," el-Sisi said in that speech.

### **Post Comment**

While we don't know how this will play out over time, it is a good start. We need more healthy Muslims to speak up against those who misuse Islam for politics.

The great news is we have a lot of really *great* people in Egypt, Neuro-Semantic Trainers and Meta-Coaches. In February, I'll be returning to Cairo and will be with Mohamed Tarek of *Lucid Trainings* and an Assist Team of Meta-Coaches, where we will do the *Coaching Mastery* for the APMC credentials. Come and join us. Contact email: [mohamed@lucidtraining.net](mailto:mohamed@lucidtraining.net)

One of our Trainers, Hossam Aldin Nabil sent me the following link on youtube, a presentation by Yusuf Estes which describes Islam.

[http://youtu.be/OsmYQ13xy\\_Y](http://youtu.be/OsmYQ13xy_Y)

From: L. Michael Hall  
Meta Reflections 2015 #4  
January 12, 2015

## CRITICAL THINKING AND META-STATES

At the primarily level *critical thinking* is the “Disciplined thinking that’s clear, rational, open-minded, and informed by evidence.” I described that more fully in the first *Meta Reflection* for this new year (#1). That is the kind of first level thinking that enables you and me to more effectively unleash our ability to think so that we can be as clear and accurate as possible. Then our mental map will correspond more closely with the territory “out there.” We do that because our “map” is *not* the “territory.”

This formulation came originally from Alfred Korzybski, founder of General Semantics, and is the foundation of NLP and Neuro-Semantics. Here is what he wrote in *Science and Sanity* (1933):

“A map is not the territory it represents, but, if correct, it has a *similar structure* to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness. ... If we reflect upon our languages, we find that at best they must be considered *only as maps*. A word *is not* the object it represents; and languages exhibit also this peculiar self-reflexiveness, that we can analyse languages by linguistic means. This self-reflexiveness of languages introduces serious complexities, which can only be solved by the theory of multi-ordinality. The disregard of these complexities is tragically disastrous in daily life and science.” (p. 58)

Classic NLP (1972-1994) quoted Korzybski on the first part (“A map is not the territory”) and focused on modeling due to the fact that at the source of “knowledge” is *structure*. Does our mental mapping have a similar structure to the facts, events, and experiences “out there” in the world beyond our nervous system? If so, then it is useful. If not, then it probably will not serve us well in using it as a map to navigate the territory.

"Antiquated map-language, by necessity, must lead us to semantic disasters, as it imposes and reflects its *unnatural* structure... As words **are not** the objects which they represent, *structure, and structure alone*, becomes the only link which connects our verbal processes with the empirical data. "Words *are not* the things we are speaking about... If words *are not* things, or maps *are not* the actual territory, then, obviously, the only possible link between objective world and the linguistic world is found in *structure, and structure alone*. The only usefulness of a map or a language depends on the *similarity of structure* between the empirical world and the map-languages."

"That languages all have some structure ...we unconsciously read into the world the structure of the language we use..." (*Science and Sanity*, 1994 Edition, pp. 58-60).

While NLP used the first part of Korzybski’s distinction, it did not use the second. It did not pick up on the importance of self-reflexivity or multi-ordinality. Ask most NLP Practitioners or even trainers about the Theory of Multi-Ordinality and they won’t know what you’re speaking about. So, quoting Korzybski again:

“This self-reflexiveness of languages introduces serious complexities, which can only be solved by the theory of multi-ordinality. The disregard of these complexities is tragically disastrous in daily life and science.” (p. 58)

So when I discovered the Meta-States Model in 1994, that took NLP to a new level.<sup>1</sup> That’s because we humans do not just *think*, we *think* about our thinking. We *emote* about our emotions, we think-and-emote about our thoughts-and-feelings, we experience these mind-body *states* about our states. This is the reflexivity that creates multiple problems and paradoxes. Nor do we layer just one thought upon another, we do this repeatedly, again and again, layer upon layer. So in terms of *critical thinking*, if you want to exercise a thoroughness in your critical thinking skills—you have to go meta.

Now going meta to your thinking, reasoning, metaphoring, imagining, theorizing, remembering, conceptualizing, etc. means that you have to engage in what Chris Argyris called *double-loop learning*. He spoke about this as climbing the inferential ladder so that you can get to *the kind of thinking*, to your *assumptions*, to your *expectations*, to your *beliefs*, etc. which govern our thinking. Nor was Argyris alone in noting this. The pioneer thinkers at Mental Institute Research (MIR), Paul Watzlawick, John Weakland, Richard Fisch and Gregory Bateson worked in this area of the meta-levels. These were the influences that came together in the Meta-States Model.

To engage in high quality *critical thinking using meta-levels*, use the special kind of questions that come from Meta-States—*meta-questions*. To climb the inferential ladder, the layers of states about states, *hold* the first state or experience and ask about what informs it.

“Let’s say that is true, what do you believe that supports that?”

“Given that you think or feel that, what idea (meaning, understanding, concept, etc.) supports you thinking that? Or maybe it is a metaphor? An experience you remember?”

“Great, let’s start there. Holding that in mind, what do you expect? And if that is your expectation, what rule or truth or idea informs that?”

In this way, you *hold* the current frame and move upward to the higher frames which support, enable, and govern the primary state. In this way, you can open up a belief system and find the higher level beliefs that hold the lower beliefs. You can open up the ideas, assumptions, expectations, and reasoning processes that are behind the surface statements that a person makes.

If *critical thinking* the disciplined thinking which is clear, rational, open-minded, and informed by evidence, then by moving to the meta-levels and exposing your own or another’s higher level style of reasoning and the specific thoughts that govern his or her thinking (the person’s frames), you become even more clear about how a person reached his or her conclusions.

In terms of critical thinking, this is where what we call “intuition” lives. That’s because thinking that’s repeated over the years drops out of conscious awareness. Then that process and way of thinking becomes your *assumed* way of thinking, it operates without you being conscious of it. Also what you learn and repeat drops out of awareness to becoming your *assumed frames of reference*. If it is accurate, then your “intuitions” are appropriate and helpful. If inaccurate (which is more often the case) then your “intuitions” are not appropriate and do not help you. In fact, they get in the way.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections 2015 #5**  
**January 19, 2015**

## **CRITICAL THINKING AND YOUR PSYCHO-LOGICS**

A very common assumption which is sure to get you in trouble is *assuming that people are rational, reasonable, and logical in the same way*. Even worse is assuming that *you* are rational, reasonable and logical as others are! Is that shocking? I hope you find it shocking. If you do, I also hope you are interested in finding out what these words mean.

What are we saying and signifying when we talk about *rationality*?

Here is what the dictionary gives us this about *rational*:

“Having or exercising reason, sound judgment, or good sense; endowed with the faculty of reason; agreeable to reason; reasonable; sensible; reckoning, calculation, reason.”

On first glance it seems that we are saying that *how we are thinking* is characterized by what all rational people agree is logical and reasonable. Yet take a moment and think about that. That’s assuming a lot, wouldn’t you say? And, doesn’t all of our experience go against it? After all, if we all agreed on what is rational—logical and reasonable—wouldn’t we all be pretty much of the same opinion, point of view, and values about things?

What makes this challenging is that *there are many kinds of reasoning and ways to reason*. There are many ways to reckon, calculate, and making judgments. As I have been mapping out how “thinking” works in Neuro-Semantic NLP, all the levels of “thoughts” (multi-ordinality), the meta-levels that we create by meta-stating, I have used Korzybski’s distinguish which he made about our human psycho-logics.

Korzybski created this distinguish by hyphenating the word “psychology.” Doing that generates “psycho-logics” and “psycho-logicians.” This speaks about how a person in his or her self (psyche) reasons (logics). At the simplest level, we *reason* by associating one thing with another. It doesn’t even have to make sense, it may hardly have a strong correlation, but if a person links one thing with another, then lo and behold, they then conclude that they are linked and they then reckon that the things are intricately connected.

I wrote about the story in *Mind-Lines* of a little eight-year old boy who was talking-back to his mother and just when she said, “If you talk back to your mother, something bad will happen!” an earthquake shook the San Francisco area causing everything to fall down—pieces of the ceiling came crashing down, the whole house began to shake, things on shelves tumbled to the ground.

Thereafter, within that young boy, speaking-back was associated with a deep dread and fear. Here's an association— an interpersonal conflict linked to an earthquake leaving the boy with a strong associative feeling that its bad to speak-back. Logical? Well, not to the outside. But yes, to the inside experience— very logical. For the boy, it describes his *psycho-logics*.

The girl who associates eating food with being fat develops her particular brand of psycho-logics. Thereafter when someone tries to *reason with her* that she can eat and not get fat, it doesn't make sense. To her, it is not logical. Once she put "eating" into the category of "fat," that classification began governing her way of thinking, reasoning, and calculating. In her *psycho-logics*, it makes perfect sense that if you eat, you get fat, you lose control.

Here then is a double-bind situation for developing healthy and accurate critical thinking skills. If we all have developed our own internal psycho-logics (which we have)—*then our thinking itself is the problem*. So how can we think our way to more correct and accurate thinking? How can we engage in a learning process to learn critical thinking skills?

There's several aspects to the answer. Part of the answer lies in first recognizing and accepting the fallibility of our thinking. Once we do that, then we can start questioning our logics. A great question to begin with is: Could you be wrong? Could you be mis-perceiving, mis-calculating, mis-understanding? Could there be a bias that's creating an illusion or deception? This begins the questioning. The next thing to do is to expose our psycho-logics.

This is why we "climb the ladder of meaning," moving up the logical levels to examine what conclusions we have drawn and *the kind of thinking that we used in drawing those conclusions*. How do we do this? Accept and embrace what the person says and inquire:

Help me to understand how you came to that conclusion. What are you selecting to focus on? How are you thinking about that? What are you assuming to be true to reason in that way?

To further help us do that we can use several list of distinctions: the Meta-Program distinctions, the Cognitive Distortions list, and the Cognitive Biases list.

*The Meta-Program* list gives us a very wide range of common thinking patterns which we all use everyday as we process information. All of these have useful and very effective applications and equally, every one can be mis-used and mis-applied.

The list of Cognitive Distortions were created by Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck in the field of Rational-Emotive Therapy and Cognitive Therapy and these identify childish thinking patterns which set us up for exaggeration and misery.

*The list of Cognitive Biases* is a list of built-in tendencies of our brain and nervous system for mis-perceiving, mis-understanding, distorting information, etc. There are a great many of these, some are of common knowledge, some are just now being identified by new discoveries in the Neuro-Sciences.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections 2015 #6**  
**January 26, 2015**

## **CRITICAL THINKING AND SELF-ACTUALIZATION**

Who of all the people on Planet Earth has a better chance of successfully engaging in clear and focused critical thinking? The answer is — *self-actualizing people!* Abraham Maslow said this. He said that one of the characteristics that he and his graduate students kept finding in self-actualizing people was a “more efficient perception of reality and more comfortable relations with it.” But why? What explains it? How is it that a self-actualizing person should or could have a more accurate perception of reality? This is exactly what Maslow asked:

“What are the factors that make it possible for healthy people to perceive reality more efficiently, to predict the future more accurately, to perceive more easily what people really are like, that make it possible for them to endure or to enjoy the unknown, the unstructured and ambiguous, and the mysterious?” (*Motivation and Personality*, 1970, p. 282)

Several factors enter into play here. I will mention a few that contribute to the ability and the skill of *critical thinking*.

First and foremost is the fact that the more grounded you are, the more inwardly secure, and growing that you are, then the less you have to fear from reality. With the less to fear, the less you need to distort reality to protect your cocoon of fantasies and childish wishes and into which you escape and/or avoid reality when it gets too much.

“Our healthy subjects are generally unthreatened and unfrightened by the unknown, being therein quite different from average men. They accept it, are comfortable with it, and often are even more attracted by it than the known.” (1970, p. 154)

By experiencing the process of actualizing your best self, you have separated self from behavior so that you can unconditionally value your self and treat your behavior as an expression of yourself. They are expressions that can always be improved and upgraded. You know that. You are comfortable with that. This, in turn, grounds you in the sense of having a solid sense of your value, uniqueness, and unconditional preciousness. Now you can look clear-eyed at your actions and experiences without blinking. Now, without being afraid that inferior behavior would undermine your personal worth and value, you can embrace reality for whatever it is.

With that kind of grounding in an unconditional value of yourself, you are free to face reality without a need to distort it. No fear! It is what it is, and whatever it is takes nothing away from you. For that reason, you don't need to defend self, prove anything, or arrogate to yourself qualities or traits you do not. You can be modest and humble because you are already unconditionally valuable. Yes,

it is a paradox *and* one that you can glory in. It frees you for critical thinking so that you can make ever-better adjustments to reality. Now you can more fully accept reality on its terms, not on childish demands and fantasies.

“The neurotic is not emotionally sick— he is cognitively wrong! If health and neurosis are, respectively, correct and incorrect perceptions of reality, propositions of fact and propositions of value merge in this area...” (1970, p. 153)

Second, once you are free in your person to accept and face reality, now the adventure that we call “life” becomes for you an adventure of exploration and discovery. This encourages critical thinking because it is only in thinking clearly, accurately, skeptically, and practically that we can succeed in this adventure. This gives you a big reason why for critical thinking— such *clear thinking is your primary tool for navigating the territory of reality*. Knowing that your map and your mapping-processes are fallible (liable to error), biased in various ways that can distort things, and that your map is *not* the territory— now you can step up to the human adventure to find out what is true and what is not. This is, of course, the domain of science — and philosophy and theology and many of the other “ologies” which seek to study and understand various domains of reality.

Actualizing your highest and best in any one of these domains (psychology, anthropology, sociology, politics, management, leadership, and so on) requires that you use your best critical thinking skills to find out what’s real and to separate it from what is myth. It is about being open to discovering things that might shake our old attitudes and beliefs and willing to continually update your thinking. In this way you can “prove all things” and “hold fast to that which is good” to quote an old biblical verse. It is to search for the truth which can “make you free.”

The process of self-actualizing calls for a stance of being open to consider differences, to release assumptions and prejudices, and to keep checking the quality and ecology of things. This way of operating lies at the heart of NLP, which of course, is a birthchild of the first Human Potential Movement. This way of operating also describes what it is like to engage in critical thinking. Rather than being biased and prejudice, critical thinking skills enable you to question things, look deep into the assumptions driving the things people say and do, and putting final conclusions on hold until you have sufficient information.

All of these things also enables a person to be a good, clear, and clean thinker. What kind of a *thinker* are you? Given the self-actualization drive that’s innate in every person, everybody has the potential to become a good thinker: clear, focused, unbiased, open.

“It was found that self-actualizing people distinguished far more easily than most the fresh, concrete, and idiographic from the generic, abstract, and rubrized. The consequence is that they live more in the real world of nature than in the man-made world of concepts, abstractions, expectations, beliefs, and stereotypes that most people confuse with the world. They are therefore far more apt to perceive what is there rather than their own wishes ...” (P. 153)

Are you ready to develop your critical thinking skills?

Then get to a good NLP program that puts a lot of emphasis on the Meta-Model. When you call to reserve your place, ask how many hours and how many days will there be on the Meta-Model? My best book on the Meta-Model is *Communication Magic* (2001).

Also, sign up for the Pre-Conference Workshop on Critical Thinking Skills by Colin Cox.  
For Information, contact: Sherran — [sherran@apti.com.hk](mailto:sherran@apti.com.hk)



**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections 2015 #7**  
**February 2, 2015**  
*Answering the Question:*  
*What is NLP, Really?*

## THE FIVE MODELS OF NLP

*What is Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)?* In spite of the fact that NLP has been around since 1975 (and 1972 if you count the pre-development days), the question about what it is and how to define it continues. So, what is it? And why is it so difficult to define?

Imagine that we had asked this question in 1980— five years after the official beginning of NLP and eight years after Richard and Frank began their Gestalt Class at the University at Santa Cruz. If you had asked it then, you would have heard about five models. You could also have discovered this on your own if you simply read the key books of that era. If you had read *The Structure of Magic* volumes I and II, read *The Hypnotic Patterns of Milton H. Erickson*, volumes I and II. Read *NLP: The Study of the Structure of Subjective Experience*, read *Frogs into Princes*, *Therapeutic Metaphors*, *Changing with Families ...* And you will have heard about five and only five models that comprised the content of NLP:

- 1) Meta-Model of Language in Therapy
- 2) Milton Model, Hypnotic Language Patterns
- 3) The Strategy Model— the Representation System enriched TOTE)
- 4) Representational Model including Sub-Modality distinctions
- 5) Meta-Programs of perceptual filters

Fast forward a decade to 1990 and the same answer would have also been given at that time as well. By 1990 you could have also read *Trance-Formation, Using Your Brain for a Change, Reframing, Introducing NLP, Unlimited Power*, etc. If in 1990, 15 years after the beginning (or 18) and again ask: What is NLP? The answer would be pretty straightforward and clear:

- *NLP is a Communication Model.* It is a model derived from Transformational Grammar (TG) which was the primary tool that the early developers used to modeled how Fritz Perls, Virginia Satir, and Milton H. Erickson used language (verbal and non-verbal) to facilitate change in people so that they would become more resourceful, conscious (mindful), responsible (take charge of their own lives), and able to be effective in succeeding at reaching and actualizing the goals that they set in life.
- *NLP is a Personal Development Model.* By using the internal and external communication channels, a person could then learn how to “run his or her own brain,” take responsibility to manage one’s state, understand the structure of one’s experiences, and frame and reframe the meanings that inform experience. All this was part of the original design and purpose of NLP. And no wonder, Perls and Satir were second-generation leaders at Esalen of the first

Human Potential Movement, so was Gregory Bateson. They learned the presuppositions from the new Humanistic Psychology of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers.

- *NLP is a Modeling Process.* Again, using the communication processes as well as the Strategy Model taken from the Cognitive Psychologists, George Miller and associates, NLP provided a way to find the structure of any experience, especially experiences of expertise, and replicate that structure so it can be transferred to others by training, teaching, consulting, coaching, and therapy.

**What is NLP?** The short answer is that *NLP is communication, personal development, and modeling.* This three-fold definition describes what NLP was at the beginning and what it was at its foundational stage. And it is based on those original five models.

In the beginning the developers only had two tools—they had mimicking and Transformational Grammar. First Richard Bandler copied and mimicked Fritz Perls' voice and words from audio-tapes that he was transcribing. Later, when Richard and Frank Pucelik, as students, taught Gestalt, they realized that something beyond the theory of Gestalt Therapy was occurring. So they invited John Grinder to examine the linguistics using Transformational Grammar (TG). From that they created they called “the Meta-Model of Language in Therapy.”

Now the funning thing is that while NLP started with Transformational Grammar, it quickly disappeared as an NLP tool. They put it in the first two books (*The Structure of Magic*) and then it was never used again. And rightly so! That's because Noam Chomsky, the developer of Transformational Grammar, also dispensed with it as unworkable. He did so in 1976. I noted this in the book, *Communication Magic* (1997/2001) and commented that all that TG really provided NLP was the distinction between two levels of language: surface and deep level. They rejected it because they have a better model for their purposes— *The Meta-Model*.

NLP also began, and created its own models, as the early developers modeled “best practices.” It arose first from copying (modeling) what Fritz did and then what Virginia did. Wyatt Woodsmall calls this Modeling I— modeling the products of expertise. Strange enough, NLP did not do Modeling II at the beginning. The early developers were so focused on techniques, on what the experts were doing, they did not model *how* they did what they did or how they learned to do it. So today we have *no model* of any of the original experts regarding their *creativity, learning, or development*.

This means we have never found out about *how* Perls, Satir, and Erickson thought and felt, how they created what they created— their creative strategies. What were given to us were a few of their attitudes in the form of the “NLP Presuppositions,” yet these came mostly from Maslow, Rogers, and Bateson.

Bottom line, what is NLP? A communication model that incorporates within it the variables about how human experience works. And because we create our experiences via our meanings and linguistics in our embodied state (neurology)— the “communication model” of NLP enables us to

identify how we create our experiences can be used for so much more— modeling expertise in the world around us and transferring it to others. That makes it pretty important. It makes NLP a meta-discipline about multiple disciplines and so is an inter-disciplinary model as well.

Why is it so hard to define NLP? Because it is a synthesis of three disciplines! No wonder it takes a mouthful of words to describe it. It is not a singular discipline. It is inter-disciplinary.

- *Linguistics* — Chomsky’s Transformational Grammar, Bateson’s Communication Theory, Korzybski’s General Semantics.
- *Cognitive Psychology*— Miller’s *Structure of Behavior* and TOTE, Chomsky’s TG.
- *Self-Actualization Psychology* — Maslow and Rogers, and Human Potential Movement second-generation leaders Perls, Satir, and Bateson.

### **NLP Today in Neuro-Semantics**

If this is what NLP *is*, and this is certainly *what* we present in Neuro-Semantics, then anyone properly trained in NLP needs a thorough and robust training in these five models. For us, a *Practitioner* in this inter-disciplinary field needs to know these five models inside-out. And if *NLP is communication, personal development, and modeling*, then this is the content and focus of what a practitioner should be.

- A professional communicator
- A developer of persons
- A modeler

To that end, we in Neuro-Semantics have used *Coaching* as the discipline wherein people can learn to become professional communicators. Similarly, we have used *Self-Actualization Psychology* as the discipline wherein a person can truly become a developer of persons, and we have made the *Master Practitioner* training as the foundation for modeling.

- A professional communicator — *Meta-Coaching at multiple levels: APMC, PCMC*.
- A developer of persons — *Self-Actualization Psychology Diploma: The Unleashing Series*.
- A modeler — *Master Practitioner* training in the tools for modeling, Meta-States, Matrix, Neuro-Semantic Modeling, Cultural Modeling.

**If you’re interested in getting a thorough and robust and high quality experience of the NLP models— then check out Neuro-Semantic NLP.** Contact a Neuro-Semantic NLP Trainer near you who is training Practitioner and Master Practitioners. See [www.neurosemantics.com](http://www.neurosemantics.com) — if you are a NLP Trainer, join us in Trainers’ Training this year (May 16-30) to add Neuro-Semantics to your repertoire.

From: L. Michael Hall  
Meta Reflections 2015 #8  
February 9, 2015

## CRITICAL THINKING AND COGNITIVE BIASES

How does it set with you to realize that *you*, like all of the rest of us, have numerous cognitive biases which are built into the way your brain and body works? How does it settle to know that there are numerous experiences in which you are more likely than not to distort information and come away from the experience with false ideas and erroneous understandings?

Personally, I don't like it. Yet it is a fact about our mind-body system. *Distortion* is one of the modeling processes along with generalization and deletion which is inherent in how we make our mental maps. And so I accept it *and* I also work to, first, be aware of the operational cognitive biases that are operational in us as human beings and then, second, take them into account as best I can in those situations where they are most likely to be activated.

There's something else that I also don't like. I don't like how many cognitive biases there are! There are a lot of them! There are dozens and dozens, maybe even hundreds. When Colin Cox began studying this subject, I asked him at one time regarding how many of the cognitive biases that he catalogued. I was hoping we could reduce them to a list of 10 or 20. But no. There were scores and scores of them. That fact alone makes it really challenging to know them all, be conscious of them, and not let them get the best of us.

What then are some of the central ones, the most common ones? What cognitive biases can you count on that *you* have and most of the people around you fall for on a regular basis?

### *Confirmation Bias*

This is the bias to confirm what you already know and believe. The more you know it, the more familiar it is to you, and so the stronger you believe it. The more you believe it, the more you will find even more confirming evidence for it. Talk about a Catch-22! No wonder it is so difficult to talk, and worse yet, argue, someone out of a belief.

### *The Patternicity Bias*

This is the bias to find and invent patterns. We are biased that way. Our brains are most essentially pattern-detection machines. We think anecdotally, not statistically and so one or more incidents can convince us of a pattern when there is none! This creates all sorts of weird beliefs and understandings that can undermine a person's effectiveness in dealing with the real world.

### *Hindsight Bias*

Have you noticed how things are so clear to you after the event? It is amazing! In hindsight, we clearly see all of the clues that should have forewarned us about things. We see so clearly what went wrong with other people and scratch our heads wondering, “What’s wrong with them? Are they blind? All the evidence was right there in front of them?” In sports we call this Monday Morning Quarterbacking. In psychology we talk about someone being an arm-chair psychologist. An arm-chair expert in any of these things, sports, profiling people, businesses, politics, etc. we are so incredibly insightful about things afterwards! We know how the game should have been played and what we would have done if we were the coach!

#### *Self-Justification Bias*

Ah, here is the bias of biases! We all come with this one—a bias to justify ourselves. We want to be right, and by God, we’re going to be right even if we have to twist the facts a bit, or a lot. Little children who are not capable of truly being “response-able” almost automatically will “explain” why they hit their brother or didn’t do his homework. Being wrong is hard. It is easier and more “natural” to tell you why I am right and you are wrong. :)

#### *Attribution Bias*

Like the previous one, in this one we demonstrate our built-in bias to attribute goodness to ourselves as we interpret our problems being due to *the circumstances of life* while we attribute *character flaws* to others when they have the same problems. In our case, the mistake is due to the situation, in theirs it is due to their disposition and character. We are good, just blocked. They are bad to the bone!

#### *Sunk-Cost Bias*

This is a bias that gets us to pay far, far too much than what is realistic or needed. The bias is that once we have invested something (money, time, effort, reputation, etc.) into something, then we are biased to keep investing even though we “know” better. After all, we have sunk so much into it already! So we can’t just stop and let it go. Or can we?

#### *Status Quo Bias*

Think of this one as also the Risk Averse bias. Here we are biased to keep things the same and avoid risk in situations where there is a strong possibility of loss. Because security is so important for us as human beings, the status quo is very satisfying in that it gives us comfort, familiar, and the known.

#### *Anchoring Bias*

This bias occurs because once something has been mentioned it tends to “anchor” our thinking and calculations thereafter. Mention an irrelevant number, even this will have an anchoring effect. This is the bias of first-impressions. It is what we do in priming.

#### *Availability Bias*

This is the bias is described by the proverb, “A bird in hand is worth two in the bush.” We tend to think, process information, and calculate according to what we have available to us, information that’s available, memory that’s available, etc.

#### *Representation Bias*

When faced with uncertainty, we are biased to make snap decisions based on various shortcuts that we use. We use these shortcuts by using whatever “rules of thumb” (heuristics) that we have developed. This reduces things to make them more simple (for us) as we judge probability. “An event is judged probable to the extent that it represents the

essential features of its parent population or generation process” (Amos Tversky, Daniel Kahneman). So what and how we represent these heuristics biases us.

#### *Inattention Blindness Bias*

When we are intensely focused on one thing, we are biased to be “blind” to other things. This explains how people can *not* see a Gorilla in the middle of a basketball game.

#### *Expectation Bias*

We are also biased to see what we expect to see! When we expect something, we tend to notice it, look for it, and then ... lo and behold, we find it. As a meta-level, our expectations set a frame which then affects our perceptual filters.

#### *Authority Bias*

In contexts where we are new or uncertain, we tend to default to those in authority and to uncritically believe them and value their opinions. Obviously, this is a dangerous one as it actually encourages people to *not* think for themselves and to be too naively trusting.

#### *Group Bias*

This is our bias for valuing and believing what our group values and believes, also known as the “bandwagon effect.” Because we are social beings and our social relationships mean a lot to us, most people find it extremely difficult to *not* deferent to whatever biases their referent group holds. In highly cohesive groups this can lead to *groupthink*.

#### *Consistency Bias*

We have a bias to be consistent. This is good. Except when the bias is so strong we cannot tolerate inconsistency. Then when we experience dissonance, our inner psychology will work to reduce the cognitive dissonance. If our beliefs and behaviors are inconsistent with each other, there will be a natural inner bias to distort our perceptions about such and/or to change the belief or the behavior.

#### *Not-Invented Here Bias*

When a group of people are highly cohesive or simply having been together for a long time, they will develop the tendency to discount information or ideas that do not come from the preferred group or source. What comes from outside and is “not invented here” will seem foreign and therefore wrong.

#### *Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Bias*

finally we are biased to set in motion a self-fulfilling prophecy based on our beliefs. When we believe something, our belief becomes a meta-level frame that then governs perceptions and actions. Then because we are a system, our whole system becomes organized to conform as best as it can to our beliefs.

If you have any questions about the importance of critical thinking skills— then take this short list of cognitive biases with you for a week and begin to notice them. I think you will be stunned to discover just how much we all distort our sense of reality and how much we all need to keep learning and updating our *critical thinking skills*.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections 2015 #9**  
**February 16, 2015**

## **CRITICAL THINKING AND NEURO-SEMANTICS**

If “the map is not the territory” then your mental mapping is only as good as it corresponds, structurally to the territory. This is obvious when we are trying to navigate the geographical territory. If my map is that New York City is west of Chicago and so I set out westward from Chicago to find NYC, because this mental map does not correspond to reality, when I go west I will *not* find NYC. People will say, “The other way, go back the other way.” And I will argue with them, “No, it’s this way. Come join me to go to NYC.” And they will say, “No, it’s not that way, turn around, go east young man!” If our map puts NYC to the left of Chicago on our map to represent west, the problem is simple: the map is wrong. It does fit with the territory.

Mental maps about how to love and to be loved, to create a business, to be healthy and fit, to enjoy one’s work, to patiently listen to a child, etc. can also be wrong. The mental maps can be erroneous, distorted, contorted, convoluted, and so on. Where we “learned” whatever we learned can be the source of that error. Our thinking patterns and the maturity of our thinking can be the source of that error. So can our cognitive biases to distort things. There are many factors which can contribute to us ending up with a distorted map that will not take us where we want to go. So, what’s a human being to do?

In NLP and Neuro-Semantics we begin with embracing “the map is *not* the territory” premise so that we stop over-trusting our maps. Whatever model we have in our head about things is just that— a model, an idea that we are using as a map to navigate our way through reality. No matter how real the map feels, it is just a map. Those who do not know and appreciate this will over-trust their map. And because they do, they will not question it or explore it or even test it. Here is a fundamental cognitive bias— deferring to our mental maps as if they are real.

I say “fundamental cognitive bias” because we all seemed wired to do this— to confuse map with territory, to think our thoughts, ideas, feelings, etc. are “real.” When children go through this stage, we call it the magical thinking stage. They give so much power and reality to their thoughts. They are convinced that by thinking something, that makes it so. As a cognitive bias, they have to learn how to do the critical thinking of distinguishing map and territory. When they do, they leave the primitive world of world-magic. And yet many adults still live there. Maybe not in every aspect of life, but some aspects. So they are superstitious, or hold to childish “magic thinking” ideas like the so-called “law of attraction,” or various new age ideas or even traditional religious ideas that are nothing more than the same.

Critical thinking starts by distinguishing map and territory, thought and reality, mental mapping of understanding and believing from what's actual. Critical thinking looks for relationships between one thing and another, "How does this X lead to or trigger this Y? What mechanism is involved in this? How does the process work?" This is the Meta-Model distinction of cause-effect and the questions that explore it. Critical thinking then moves to precision and specificity as we identify in see-hear-feel terms (empirical) the referents. "What specifically are you referring to?"

Assuming that words are real is the mistake, that's the cognitive bias here. They are not. Words are symbols. We use a word to stand for something else. And if a word stands for, and represents something else, then it is *not* the thing it refers to.

For me, all of this highlights and reveals the power of the NLP Meta-Model of Language for developing, training, and refining critical thinking skills. I wrote about this in *Communication Magic* (1997/ 2001) many years ago. At that time I said that when I discovered this, it was so amazing that my sense was that it put into my hands a more powerful tool than everything I learned at University for my Masters Degree in Clinical counseling. With the Meta-Model of Language, I could discover and understand another person's model of the world and help the other change it if they wanted to.

And yet I had more. Not only did I have a process for challenging erroneous maps and facilitating changing maps that were inadequate, my own and those of others— the process was developing within me true critical thinking skills.



**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections 2015 #10**  
**February 23, 2015**

## **THE WHY OF CRITICAL THINKING**

Why learn how to think critically? What's so important about that? What will I miss if I don't learn the critical thinking skills?

At the heart of the human experience, there's a very strange phenomenon and it is a phenomenon that is not easy to describe. In spite of that I'll give it a try here. In a few words it is this: *We humans live our lives by ideas*. Okay, yes, but so what? What does that really mean? What does that really imply?

We live our lives by ideas because we do not have information-content “instincts.” We do not instinctively, innately “know” how to live or what to do. We have to *learn*. And because we have to learn what things are, how they work, what they are for, the factors that make them effective or ineffective, the value and/or dis-value of those things, etc., it is these *ideas* that then govern our lives. That is why, in human experience, *what you think* is so crucial. And “what you think” means lots of things: how you think, how you reason, interpret, draw conclusions, the referent experiences you use, the meanings that you receive and use, the values that you learn to care about, the goals and intentions that you set, and lots more.

It is in this that *we humans live our lives by ideas*. Now, given that, then if we live our lives by *ideas*, this makes both the ideas as the *content* of what we think, believe, understand, care about, etc. and *how we generate ideas* critically important. So we ask, What is your idea about X? What are your ideas about business, entrepreneurship, budgeting, exercising, planning, cooperating with others, competition, leadership, entering into a loving relationship, arguing, resolving conflicts, and a thousand other things. Whatever your *ideas*— so will be your life. The quality of your life will not be, and cannot be, better than the quality of your ideas. This is the neuro-semantic fact that we begin with: The quality of your ideas— > the quality of your life.

Okay, so it is important! But wait, there's more! What's more is *the kind of thinking that you use to create your ideas*— let's call it *your idea-generation style*. This is where the ability to do critical thinking really comes in. Here you notice the kind of thinking you are doing, the kind and style of generation-of-ideas so that you can make sure it is accurate, appropriate, logical, healthy, and ecological. To what extend are you aware of *how* you are thinking?

The problem is that you might be using toxic and limiting ideas that you are unaware of. Low quality ideas may have crept in entirely unnoticed and now dominate your way of conceptualizing and interpreting without you have seriously examined them at all. Hayek wrote:

“When we no longer share these implicit assumptions of ages long past, it is comparatively easy to

recognize them. But it is different with regard to the ideas underlying the thought of more recent times. Here we are frequently not yet aware of the common features which the opposing systems of thought share, ideas which for that very reason often have crept in almost unnoticed and have achieved their dominance without serious examination.” F.A. Hayek, *Studies on the Abuse & Decline of Reason* (p. 285)

Here is an occupational hazard for us humans. We can be thinking with certain ideas as our frames, our interpretive lens or schemas *and not know it*. You and I can assume certain premises and presuppositions without realizing that we are doing so. You can think and reason and process information within the explicit assumptions that you have learned to be conscious about and never suspect that there are a whole range of implicit, covert, and therefore hidden frames actually governing our experience.

Whooooah! Now, isn't that a great big reason for learning critical thinking skills? Wouldn't you like to know what are the hidden and covert frames that are governing your thinking and maybe biasing your way of understanding things? Without having access to that level of your thinking, someone or some system of thought could be *controlling* you and *dominating* your responses— without you ever knowing about it!

At the very center of critical thinking skills is the ability to examine your own thinking— yes, the content, but more than the content, *the kind of reasoning* that you are using. It is to call forth your assumptions, premises, and presuppositions. This is what we especially do in Meta-Coaching. We move so far inside the person's matrix that we begin exploring the covert, implicit, and unconscious frames—the frames by implication (the FBI structures) that's governing or controlling the person's way of being in the world. And why? Because that's where the leverage for change, for transformation, for unleashing, and for fully blossoming as a human being lies.

This isn't easy. It is not easy to question a person to expose the hidden frames that's governing a person's assumptions, nor is it easy for the person being questioned. Nothing is more intimate than this. Hardly anything makes a person feel more vulnerable. And yet when you discover this about yourself, your self-understanding will increase by leaps and bounds and your ability to manage your thinking, feeling, and responding will similarly increase. Your ability to critically think about these covert assumptions will enable you to take much more control over your life. Interested?

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections 2015 #11**  
**March 2, 2015**

## **THE THEORY OF NLP**

NLP has models, but does it have a theory? I described the models of NLP when I wrote Meta Reflection #7 for Neurons, *The Five Models of NLP*, (February 7, 2015). But does NLP operate from a theoretical explanation about human functioning or psychology? If there is a theory, what is it?

The term “theory” in these questions refers to an explanatory framework which presents a plausible principle or set of principles about the phenomenon that it seeks to understand and explain. A theory presents a systematic view of a subject, one from which we can generate hypotheses and test those educated guesses to see if we can confirm or disconfirm them. The dictionary defines “theory” in the following ways:

- 1) Coherent group of tested general propositions, commonly regarded as correct, that can be used as principles of explanation and prediction for a class of phenomena.
- 2) The branch of a science or art that deals with its principles or methods, as distinguished from its practice.
- 3) A proposed explanation whose status is still conjectural and subject to experimentation, in contrast to well-established propositions that are regarded as reporting matters of actual fact.

Now the original founders and developers of NLP in the critical early years (1972–1980) avoided this subject and focus. In fact, the founders claimed that *modeling* was so different from *theory* and *research* that NLP could not be researched. Arguing mostly against statistical analysis regarding any single person’s experience, they pooh-poohed the idea that any statistics could offer any useful information. The developers who then followed, for the most part, continued the original idea that we are modelers, not scientific researchers.

This had the unfortunate result that the early “research” on NLP was performed by people unfamiliar with the NLP models, untrained in the required skills, and who did not understand the distinctions. As a result, their “research” was deeply flawed. Yet because that was the only so-called “research” available at that time, the word went around the academic circles that NLP had been dis-confirmed. Those who disliked NLP said it was a pseudo-science. This continued until about 10 to 15 years ago when researchers from within the field began testing things. Now we have significant research, a Research Conference, a Research Journal, a Research and Promotion Project, and much more (see [www.neurosemantics.com](http://www.neurosemantics.com) / writings / research for links).

In spite of all of the research that has been done and is being done in the field of NLP, I still have not answered the above questions. Does NLP have a theory? The answer from almost all of us in the field is a definitive *yes*. So, what is it?

*Theoretical Principle #1: Human psychology operates as a construct of reality.* The metaphor that vividly describes this comes from Korzybski, *The map is not the territory*. Phenomenologically it seems to us that what we think, see, hear, feel, smell, taste, etc. is “real” and the way things are “out there” beyond our nervous system. But that is a phenomenological appearance, not the actual “thing” itself. We operate in the world through our mental maps of it, a construction that our nervous system makes of the world—the electromagnetic spectrum that impacts our sense receptors is formatted in terms of sights, sounds, sensations, smells, etc. This is the theory that backs up the Cognitive Sciences, Cognitive Psychology, Gestalt Psychology, General Semantics, etc. Being embodied with multiple nervous systems, we experience ourselves, others, and the world through our neuro-filters— our senses, then our language constructs.

To test this principle, Korzybski said that given that language is a symbol of something, it is a representation of something else, the word is not the thing itself. To dis-confirm this simply produce a word that is the thing itself.

“As words *are not* the objects which they represent, *structure, and structure alone*, becomes the only link which connects our verbal processes with the empirical data. ... The empirical search for world-structure and the building of new languages (theories)... is what science does.” (1933, p. 59, 60)

This theoretical understanding leads us to be able to influence and change our experience by changing our constructs (mental maps, i.e., beliefs, understandings, etc.). That then leads to all of the map or frame-changing techniques that have developed in NLP.

*Theoretical Principle #2: Human psychology operates as a system of multiple elements and processes.* The NLP presupposition that refers to this says, “Mind and body are part of the same system.” And quoting the law of requisite variety, “The element in a system with the most flexibility exercises the most influence in the system.” This systems theory of NLP comes from the Non-Aristotelian System of Korzybski, the Family System of Satir, the Gestalt System of Perls, the Bateson’s cybernetic systems, Miller’s TOTE model, etc. Human functioning is not linear, it is systemic. The so-called “parts” of a person do not operate separately, but are always within the context of the fuller human mind-body-emotion system which is within family, language, ethnic, cultural, religious, business, national systems.

This theoretical understanding leads us to identifying and using the system principles and guidelines in facilitating change. For example, even an observer in a system affects (influences) the system, so we are careful to enter with respect, rapport, and care.

*Theoretical Principle #3: Human psychology operates hierarchically.* The theory of NLP includes a principle of levels. This came from Chomsky’s linguistic levels, Korzybski’s levels, Bateson’s levels, etc. Human functioning occurs at the primary state level of content *and simultaneously* at the meta-level of form, structure, and organization. At the meta-level is language to the senses, beliefs to thought, meta-programs to thinking, meta-states to primary states, etc. The complexity of human experience occurs due to the fact that we experience multiple levels at the same time.

This theoretical understanding leads us to recognize the meta-function (Bateson’s term) and so we

“step back” to “run an ecology check,” we step up to set new frames, and we move to a meta-level to change the structure or form of an experience.

*Theoretical Principle #4: Human psychology involves organized mental-emotional-behavioral responses that show up as patterns.* To understand a person and his/her “experience” we look not only for “behavior,” but for behavior that is sequenced, ordered, and regular. We recognize such as patterns-of-behavior or strategies that are systemically ordered to generate the expertise or pathology. This is also what we model. With an expert who can do something wonderful, we look to identify the internal mental-emotional-behavioral responses and how that pattern works.

This theoretical understanding leads us to use the cues to representational systems (eye-accessing, predicates, etc.) to identify the sequence of a patterned-behavior that we want to model.

From these theoretic premises and principles have arisen hundreds of applications, patterns, and processes in NLP as well as multiple applications—applications for therapy, coaching, education, learning, leadership, management, parenting, etc. In the past 10 to 15 years, researchers have been testing these theories via both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Richard Gray, Franke Bourke, Steve Andreas, Richard Liotta, Lisa Wake, Richard Church, Susie Linder-Pelz, Peter Schuetz, Bruce Grimley, many other people have been working in this area.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections 2015 #12**  
**March 9, 2015**

## **IF THERE'S A THEORY, THERE'S A PRACTICE**

In writing about *the Theory of NLP* (#10) I am aware that where there's a theory, there's a practice. And it is *The Practice of NLP* that has mostly been promoted during the past 40 years (1975- 2015). Given, that —

What is the *practice* of NLP? How many *practices* of NLP are there? Are there legitimate and illegitimate *practices* of NLP? What are the criteria for the *practice* of NLP?

Now as a preamble for what follows, it is not trivial for me to note that *theory and practice are not always aligned*. In fact, given human fallibility, it is very common for one's theory and one's practice to be incongruent. In fact, I can go further and assert that theory and practice are always incongruent. That's because everyone is fallible, no one is infallible (perfect), and so there are always failures in practice to fully actualize the theory.

Now with that out of the way— when we begin exploring the *practice* of NLP, we have, as it is in every field, a great range of practices. There are people who are very conscientious about being true to the theory and there are people who could care less. There are people who trace what they *do* very carefully and explicitly from the theory or the model. There are other people who use the theory/ model of NLP to legitimize, justify, and validate their own pet-hobbies and projects. The credential “Master Practitioner” sounds very close to Master's Degree and so they jump on the shortest and cheapest NLP course they can to get their so-called credibility. This is as ludicrous as it is unethical and unprofessional! But it happens. And this has seriously damaged the credibility of NLP around the world.

Now historically, the *practice* of NLP was the very context in which the *theory* of NLP was discovered and articulated. During the “wild days of NLP” (1972-1975, McClendon), NLP used Perls' Gestalt Therapy, Satir's Family Systems, and Chomsky's Transformational Grammar to begin constructing the model which implicitly assumed the theory. Then using Miller's TOTE model and Korzybski's General Semantics theory, NLP created various practices that distinguished at first:

- Questioning people about their map or model of the world to generate a fuller expression.
- Tracking representational systems as people speak to generate a model of the person's subjective experience (modeling).
- Inviting people to change their representational systems, including the language system, to generate healing, health, renewal, well-ness, etc. (therapy, self-development).
- Formatting certain subjective processes to deal with regular experiences that were undesirable such as phobia to generate a set of “patterns” (the NLP patterns).

- Using these processes and patterns in specific domains— therapy, health, business, leadership, management, parenting, hypnotherapy, sales, etc. (the NLP Applications). All of this, and more, is involved in *The Practice of NLP*. Further, as various people *practiced* NLP, most did so honorably, some did not. Some used it for manipulating people to buy what they didn't need or want and so in many places, NLP got the reputation of being manipulative. Actually, NLP is not manipulative, but a person could certainly use it to manipulate. Anything powerful enough to create positive change and transformation can be mis-used by those who are not conscientious or ethical. And that has happened and it continues to happen.

“So,” you ask, “why hasn't the governing body of NLP sanctioned those who use it unethically? Board of examiners in psychology and other fields do that. How could NLP has not done that?” For one reason, there is no governing body. There is no international association of NLP that has control over the field. There are lots and lots of associations ... and that's the problem. Many associations but no control to identify the “bad apples” and stop them from practicing. And if you ask why that is so— it goes back to the beginning and how the founders and early developers failed to set that up.

Today the practice of NLP is all over the place. There are highly ethical people who are very conscientious and caring and who you can depend on to do the right thing. There are also a good number who are not like that. I'm involved with a new movement in NLP to begin to address this. You can check out [www.nlpleadershipsummit.org](http://www.nlpleadershipsummit.org) to see what 100 of us are attempting to do.

In every field we warn: Buyer Beware. This is especially true when you are shopping for an ethical and caring and professional NLP Trainer. So, what is a buyer to do? My recommendation, Ask questions! Lots of them.

- What is covered in the training? Specifically. Can I see the curriculum?
- How much time is given to the five models of NLP? (2015 Neurons #7)
- What skills will I learn from the training?
- How will you assess or benchmark these skills so that I know I have developed them to a certain level?
- What association of NLP are you associated with? Are you in good standing with them? How can I contact that association?
- If I have a complaint about the training, who do I contact to readdress something?

In terms of quality NLP, beware of any training for Practitioner less than 7 days and Master Practitioner less than 12 days. Anything less than that, you are not getting the basics of the field. Check out *Users' Manual of the Brain, Volumes I and II* for the content of NLP Practitioner and Master Practitioner (Crown House Publications, [www.crownhouse.co.uk](http://www.crownhouse.co.uk)).

Neuro-Semantics began in 1996 in reaction to the Bandler lawsuit “against the field of NLP in the USA.” We felt that we could do much, much better in terms of the practice of NLP and so we set out a vision of collaboration, respect, high quality, giving credit to sources, being professional, apply to self, etc. Today Neuro-Semantics is a world-wide Association (the ISNS) in 50 countries, 19 national Institutes, and a leadership team who holds trainers accountable to professional standards. This is how we are attempting to correct things and be a positive influence in this field.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections 2015 #13**  
**March 16, 2015**  
Self-Determination Theory #1

## **NEURO-SEMANTICS AND SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY**

Two dozen years ago Edward Deci and Richard Ryan created what they called, and is now recognized as, *the Self-Determination Theory*. I had run across it several times over the year, but did not read anything on this theory. I did not until Colin Cox referred to it during his 2013 Neuro-Semantic Conference Keynote presentation at Kaula Lumper. Then hearing him speak and speaking with him about it, I realized I needed to study it. So I did.

They call their theory an Organismic Dialectical Perspective. To them “organismic” means that we humans are active, growth-oriented organisms. “Dialectical” means that there are two poles: one being to fulfil one’s own nature, the other is the tendency to go toward and fulfil our social environments. This theory is a view of human development wherein people are assumed to possess *an active tendency toward psychological growth and integration* (Deci, 2002, p. 8). In Neuro-Semantics we call that *the self-actualization drive* which we believe is in everyone and is the experience of all people. Deci and Ryan even describe it as we do: “actualizing human potentials.”

“Endowed with an innate striving to exercise and elaborate their interests, individuals tend naturally to seek challenges, to discover new perspectives, and to actively internalize and transform cultural practices. By stretching their capacities and expressing their talents and propensities, people actualize their human potentials. Within this perspective, active growth is complemented by a tendency toward synthesis, organization, or relative unity of both knowledge and personality. Moreover, the integration of that which is experienced provides the basis for a coherent sense of self— a sense of wholeness, vitality, and integrity.” (2002, *Handbook of Self-Determination Research*, p. 1).

They even quote Maslow and Rogers and others in the first Human Potential Movement and acknowledge:

“This general view of an active, integrating organism with the potential to act from a coherent sense of self can be found in psychodynamic and humanistic theories of personality and in cognitive theories of development. Angyal, 1963, Maslow 1955, Rogers, 1963, (p. 1).”

What they then do with Maslow’s hierarchy, however, is to reduce it and simplify it. Personally I think they over-simplify it. They sub-sum all of the human needs under three categories (Deci, 2002, p. 5):

*Competence*: To feel effective in your actions, capacities and so want challenges to extend competence, and able to achieve goals. Do you feel able to achieve your goals?



*Relatedness*: To feel connected to others, to be cared for and to care for others, sense of belongingness, sense of community, to feel a need to belong. Do you feel connected to others in a warm, positive and interpersonal manner?

*Autonomy*: To feel that you are the origin or source of your behavior, you act from your interests and integrated values, that you are responsible for you, to feel a need to express your authentic self and yourself as a source of action. Do you feel at choice and responsible for imitating your behavior?

This changes the hierarchy of human needs which Maslow researched and developed. It does so first by leaving out the survival level, putting pieces of it under autonomy and competence and then entirely leaves out a category for self and for self-actualization needs and values—the *being*-values and drives. For “self,” the theorists put it under all of the categories and speak about the importance of internalizing and integrating one’s values (they call that organismic integration). But worse, it eliminates the hierarchical nature of needs, the emergence of needs.

For the NLP Meta-Program of internal referencing versus external referencing and for the semantic meta-program of self-identification, they speak about people becoming ego-involved in an activity and its outcome (Korzybski calls this “identification”) then one’s feelings of self-worth...

“... become hinged to their performance such that they do the activity to prove themselves that they are good at the activity and thus are worthy individuals.” (Deci, 2002, p. 13)

We call that *conditional* self-esteem. And where we urge for *unconditional* self-esteem, they speak about shifting to “task-involvement” that is, being involved with a task for the task itself rather than its implications for feelings of self-worth. In some places in the writing, they seem to confuse self-esteem (being) with self-confidence (doing) and yet at other places in the writing they talk about unconditional value— no conditions.

The importance of autonomy shows up in their emphasis on self-regulation. When a person internalizes a process and brings it in from external to make it internal, they develop self-regulation.

“The more fully a regulation is internalized, the more it becomes part of the integrated self and the more it is the basis for self-determined behavior.” (p. 15). This requires meaning. “People must grasp its meaning ... and synthesize that meaning.” (p. 20)

In this model, people “grasp” meaning, they do not create it or manage it. From the NLP and Neuro-Semantic perspective it is a strange thing for a model that is supposed to promote self-determination. Now self-determination theory centrally focuses on the reason why, the motive, behind doing whatever you do. If you act for external reasons, instrumental reasons, for the end-state—then it is not internal. To be self-determining requires that a person choose to strive for their goals from out of their own values and self-knowledge. One danger is that of self-infiltration: a person incorporates the recommendations of an authority figure while believing they were his ideas (p. 81). We call that the *inside-out process*—which is central in Neuro-Semantics and Meta-Coaching.

When it comes to the basic needs, the authors use Maslow’s language (fully functioning, thwarting, eudaimonic, well-being, self-actualization, vitality), and yet do not quote or refer to Maslow when they do so (Deci, 2002, pp. 22-24). I don’t know why people do that. Do they think that no one who has read Maslow will read their work and see the plagiarism? Anyway, they do speak about the

importance of experiencing “greater organismic thriving and health” as a bottom-up process. Well-being is enhanced in this way as it arises from the lowest need to the highest.

*Autonomy* is a need of tremendous value. They write that when people are autonomous, “people experience themselves as valuable for being who they are” rather than doing a particular activity. From there, a person can then seek out various activities which the person values and do them for that reason. In some of the research by Edward Deci, he discovered this:

“...rewarding people for engaging in enjoyable, fun activities *decreases* their likelihood of future engagement in these activities.” (2002, p. 132)

This is what Colin quoted in his Keynote when he presented a challenge to what most of us think we know about motivation. Here is the shocker: *External rewards reduces internal motivation!* Now imagine the implications this has for parenting, for coaching, and for training. Where the writers of this theory go next is to the problem of “social contagion.” What does that mean? It means that when you pursue an activity “for its own sake,” this will be a compelling human phenomenon. But when you pursue an activity for a compelling social reason, it *undermines* your personal autonomy and shifts your “locus of causality” from inside to the outside. That’s not good. That will decrease your intrinsic motivation. Stunning, isn’t it?

Suppose you actually wanted to reduce a person’s motivation. What would you do? The authors write this:

“...if people are induced to ascribe boredom and obligation to a task, they are less intrinsically motivated than if they ascribe enjoyment, challenge, and interest to the same activity. Labeling an activity as work increases intrinsic motivation for those who held positive attitudes toward work compared to those who do not. (p. 143)

“Deci found that rewarding people for engaging in enjoyable, fun activities *decreased* their likelihood of future engagement in these activities.” (p. 132)

Now we are getting to meaning (semantics). They speak about it in terms of labels and labeling. Yet we know in Neuro-Semantics that *what* you attribute to an activity operates as its classification. When you put something in a category (the meta-stating process) you thereby set the frame by which you understand it. That’s why and how *the frame determines the experience*. So what do you *expect* about any given activity? Will it be enjoyable or boring? Fun or work? Be careful what you expect because your expectation (a meta-level state and frame) will set in place a self-organizing process.

As coaches, trainers, consultants, etc., this suggests that you nurture your client’s intrinsic motivation and internalization processes by encouraging them to take the initiative and develop their skills. This is a non-controlling approach (rather than Rogers’ non-directive approach) because it is not being permissive or laissez-faire. To be supportive in a way that encourages the other’s autonomy is to elicit from them *why* an activity is important, challenge them to step up to it, give feedback about how they are doing, etc. For a client to be and feel autonomous he needs to perceive his locus of causality and volitional choice. More about this in the next post.

Reference: Edward L. Deci, Richard M. Ryan (2002). *Handbook of Self-Determination Research*, UK: University of Rochester Press.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #14**  
**March 23, 2015**  
Self-Determination Theory #2

## **META-COACHING AND SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY**

In the last post I described Self-Determination Theory as a derivative from Maslow and Rogers and others in the first Human Potential Movement. It is a current theory with lots and lots and lots of research behind it. It also, in my opinion, over-simplifies much of Maslow's work which means that what you and I have in Meta-Coaching is actually much richer. The reason for presenting this is to keep you informed about what's out there, what's being developed from the first HPM, and what is also being researched.

A recent book on this theory is Susan Fowler's 2014 book, *Why Motivation People Does Not Work and What Does*. She has sought to make popular what Deci and Ryan created and so it is even more simplistic as even the title of the book over-states things(!). Yet she has a number of very valuable pieces in her book. Here is how she begins — with something that is inherent in Maslow's hierarchy of needs:

“People are always motivated. The question is not if, but why they are motivated. The motivation a person brings to any action can be qualitatively different. A naive assumption that motivation is something a person has or doesn't have. If it is a possession, then it has an amount. The assumption is that the more motivation a person has, the more likely he is to achieve his goals.” (p. 4)

Because “motivation” (a nominalization) is not a thing, it is not a possession, but an experience. That's why we have to inquire about the type of motivation and its quality to understand it. Fowler, following Deci, says that people are already inclined to learn, to grow, and to excel and it is ...

“... bribing people [that] kills intrinsic motivation. ... Rewards and punishments can work at the moment, but they only buy one thing: temporary compliance. Carrot-and-stick tactics have hurt learning, comprehension, and commitment.” (pp. 4-5)

To explain where so many of our ideas about motivation come from, she writes the following, which strikes me as humorous:

“A funny thing happened on the way to understanding human motivation. Psychologists studied animals! External rewards produce a disturbing undermining effect on the energy, vitality, and sense of positive well-being people need to achieve goals, attain excellence, and sustain effort.” (p. 7)  
[Yet] “It's unwise to confuse productivity with thriving and flourishing. People are not pigeons.”

So in Self-Determination Theory, as in NLP, motivation is a skill—a strategy. It is something we *do* and something that we *learn to do*— to motivate ourselves. It is not something outside that lands

on us and makes us “motivated.” This theory, coming as it does from the Self-Actualization Psychology of Maslow recognizes that ...

“... human being have an innate tendency and desire to thrive. We want to grow, develop and be fully functioning.” (p. 31). “Just because we gravitate toward psychological health and integration doesn’t guarantee it will happen. Human thriving in the workplace is a dynamic potential that requires nurturing.” (p. 32)

What Fowler does say about “an optimal motivational outlook” comes straight from the same source that I use— Maslow. She writes,

“When a person experiences high quality psychological needs, she will have an optimal motivational outlook. It is a mistake to think that people are not motivated. They are simply longing for needs they cannot name.” (p. 49)

What are these *high quality psychological needs* except the Being-needs at the top of the hierarchy—the self-actualization needs. When a person gratifies these needs, that person then has an optimal motivation. Of course. That’s what we mean when we speak about people having an innate self-actualization drive.

But, and this is a big *but* ... she shows her lack of understanding of the Hierarchy of Needs. How do I know? Because of what she wrote about this:

“Your psychological needs are not drives. ... Drives dissipate when they are satiated. ... Being driven is another way of saying, I am not in control. ” (p. 52)

Our psychological needs are not choices!?! Really? And her reasoning is that a drive dissipates when it is satisfied. Of course, she doesn’t explain where she got that idea or why she defines a “drive” in that way. She simply asserts it as a fact. Now it is certainly true of the *deficiency-needs*, that once fulfilled and gratified, they no longer drive a person to satisfy them—until the need re-asserts itself. But this is not true of the B-needs. When you gratify them, your experience of positive energy, vitality, and a sense of well being increases so that you want more.

If you hear about self-determination theory and read in this area, it mostly supports what we do in Neuro-Semantics and in Self-Actualization. The extensive research that is arising in this field is research that supports the Self-Actualization themes in Neuro-Semantics. So you can certainly use it and refer people to it. Yet in doing so, the theory itself is less than, and smaller than, the theories we have in Neuro-Semantics and especially those that arise in Self-Actualization Psychology.

#### References:

- Susan Fowler (2014). *Why Motivating People Does Not Work and What Does*. New Science of Leading, Energizing, and Engaging. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publ
- Edward L. Deci, Richard M. Ryan (2002). *Handbook of Self-Determination Research*, UK: University of Rochester Press.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #15**  
**March 30, 2015**

## **DO YOU HAVE YOUR LANGUAGE LICENSE?**

Words are powerful. Here are some quotes that I put in the book, *Mind-Lines: Lines that Change Minds* (2005) indicate the power of words and how because we live in the house of language, language itself operates as such a powerful frame-setting factor.

“You don’t need to take drugs to hallucinate; improper language can fill your world with problems and spooks of many kinds.” (Robert A. Wilson)

"Magic is hidden in the language we speak. The webs that you can tie and untie are at your command if only you pay attention to what you already have (language) and the structure of the incantations for growth." (Richard Bandler and John Grinder)

“The limits of my language are the limits of my world." (Wittgenstein)

"Language is what bewitches, but language is what we must remain within in order to cure the bewitchment." (Henry Staten)

If words are so powerful and we can do so many things, good and bad, with words, don’t you think people ought to get a license in order to open their mouth and say words? With words you are operating the primary vehicle of meaning. Careening along the road of consciousness in the vehicle of language, you could easily crash into someone, create a wreck, or do all sorts of damage. So, do you know how to manage and control the neuro-linguistic and neuro-semantic dynamics within words and language?

It might seem strike you as silly even ridiculous at first, but *just suppose* there was a license for using language? Suppose you had to take an exam in order to be certified that you are knowledgeable enough and competent enough to open your mouth in public? An interesting thought experiment, isn’t it? But it did not originate with me. A long time ago Alfred Korzybski proposed it in the following paragraphs in *Science and Sanity*.

“When we become more civilized and enlightened, no public speaker or writer will be allowed to operate publicly without demonstrating first that he knows the structure and semantic functioning of the linguistic capacities. Even at present no professor, teacher, lawyer, physician, or chemist, etc. is allowed to operate publicly without passing examination to show that he knows his subject.

The above statement does not mean control or censorship. Far from it. Our language involves a much more intricate, beneficial, or dangerous semantic mechanism than any automobile ever had or will have. We do not control the drivers in their destinations. They come and go as they please, but for *public safety* we demand that they should have acquired the necessary reflex-skill for driving, and so we eliminate unnecessary tragedies.

Similarly with language, of which the ignorant or pathological use becomes a public danger of a very serious semantic character. At present public writers or speakers can hide behind ignorance of the verbal, semantic, and neurological mechanism. They may ‘mean well’; yet, by playing upon the pathological reactions of their own and those of the mob, they may ‘put over’ some very vicious propaganda and bring about very serious sufferings to all concerned. But once they would have to

pass an examination to get their licence as public speakers or writers, they could not hide any longer behind ignorance. If found to have *misused* the linguistic mechanism, such an abuse on their part would be clearly a *wilful act*, and ‘well meaning’ would cease to be an alibi.” (p. 486)

So how about you? How well informed are you about *the semantic mechanisms* within language that can be dangerous, harmful, or beneficial? Korzybski, and later the developers of NLP, was not focusing on grammar as such. Instead he focused on the *neuro-linguistic* and *neuro-semantic* factors that influence our thinking and our mental mapping of our understandings. “*Neuro-*“ because it is not grammar per se that is the problem, but what grammar and language *does to us within our nervous systems*.

Precisely because in thinking we use our nervous system and brain, the thoughts that we think are not innocent. They influence and affect our subsequent neurology. They send signals to our body and when we elevate the thoughts to “beliefs,” now we send *commands* to our nervous systems. At that point, the job of the nervous system is to actualize the command. That’s why in most religions we have statements about the power of beliefs: “Be it unto you according to your belief.”

If our thinking is sloppy, if we are engaged in lazy thinking, imprecise thinking, uncritical thinking —then we are setting ourselves up for problems in life. That’s why the critical thinking engendered by the Meta-Model is so valuable and important. The following 18 minute TED presentation by Sharyl Attkisson provides a great example of the need for solid critical thinking.

**Sharyl Attkisson | TEDxUniversityofNevada**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bYAQ-ZZtEU&feature=em-subsub\\_digest-vrecc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bYAQ-ZZtEU&feature=em-subsub_digest-vrecc)

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #16**  
**April 6, 2015**

## **THE HEARTLAND OF NLP**

### **GUESS WHERE?**

### **It's Not Southern California!**

You undoubtedly know that NLP began in Southern California in the 1970s. Unfortunately, that says a lot about it, doesn't it? Things were changing culturally in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s and changing radically. The best thing was the Civil Rights Movement as Martin Luther King, Jr. and others led for a recognition of equality under the law, a promise which he noted in his famous "I Have a Dream!" speech in Washington DC., had been made, but not fulfilled. The Civil Rights Movement began to actualize that promise. There was also many other movements during that time urging for equal rights for women, minorities, etc. There was also the Human Potential Movement (HPM) which eventually gave birth to NLP. Those were the days of the Vietnam War, a war that became increasingly unpopular and unacceptable as the years progressed. Those were the years of the counter-culture movement of hippies, of free love, exploration with drugs, rock 'n roll, and more.

Right in the midst of all of that, NLP arose. It arose at the University of Southern California, Santa Cruz and many of the early developers protested against the Vietnam War and some were even strongly into the drug scene. It was the spirit of the times. All of this was also at Esalen, which at that times, was the headquarters of the Human Potential Movement, where in the 1960s Perls and Satir lived and where, in the 1970s, Bateson would move to, and died, as the Scholar in Residence.

Then when NLP burst onto the scene as a new psychology in the late 1970s, dozens and then hundreds of Training Centers arose all over the United States. The first and probably most successful one was *NLP Comprehensive* in Boulder Colorado that Steve and Connaire Andreas created. When I discovered NLP in 1986, there were multiple Training Centers in every major city in America. Then 1995 occurred. That's when the Bandler Lawsuit threatened the field of NLP naming eight individuals and 200 "John Does" to a ninety-million dollar lawsuit. In this lawsuit Bandler claimed to "own" NLP and own the right to control who taught it and who did not. [See the article on the Lawsuit in the series on the History of NLP, [www.neurosemantics.com](http://www.neurosemantics.com).]

Over the next five very long years as the lawsuit continued, one NLP Association after the other in the USA disbanded, Training Centers closed down, Trainers changed careers, and others continued doing what they had always done just under a new name. Now while Bandler lost his lawsuit in Feb. 2000 with NLP being declared in Public Domain and himself owing the former President of the Society of NLP, Chris Hall, \$650,000, the damage had been done. By that time, there were no

Associations left in the US, and within another year there was not a single Journal left, and 95% of all Training Centers closed.

*This explains how, and why, NLP barely exists today in the USA.* It is coming back. New Training Centers have started up and trainers from other countries are coming to America to do NLP Practitioner courses. But it is slow. Meanwhile, NLP which got a much healthier start in the UK and Europe has continued to grow and evolve. Most of the strong negative publicity about NLP in the USA does not exist. Also, to a great extent, NLP was established by professional, ethical, and well-trained business people, who then set up Associations, and so NLP has thrived in those countries. In Europe one new branding of NLP is NLP<sup>1</sup> — Neuro-Linguistic Psycho-Therapy which has been diligent in establishing research and getting it accepted by various European Countries as a legitimate psychotherapy. Today, in contrast to America, there are hundreds of Training Centers in Central Europe, the UK, and the Scandinavian Countries. And NLP is exploding in the former Soviet Countries, in the Asia Pacific Countries, and now beginning in the Arab countries.

NLP has long been in Australia and New Zealand, in many of the Latin American Countries, and in various countries in Africa, especially South Africa. It is growing everywhere. In most countries there are Associations although everywhere NLP Associations typically have challenges and difficulties thriving. Why? Probably because of the overly strong emphasis in NLP on individualism. It was there from the beginning having come into NLP from the HPM. And it was demonstrated ruthlessly by the original developers who quickly could not, or would not, get along with each other.

All of this now leads to the question: *Where now is the heartland of NLP?* It is certainly not in the USA and not in Southern California. Today if you want to see where NLP is the strongest and most well-developed— *it is Europe.* While it began in Southern California, it can no longer be said to be a “Southern California” thing. The hippie element has been greatly reduced although there’s still the ever-seductive presence of New Age thinking that hopes for near-magical formulas for instant health, wealth, success, and happiness(!).

Yet NLP has been growing up. We will celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, and there’s a special event planned at Santa Cruz this August to recognize this. Increasingly NLP is being represented by University Professors and Researchers and today it is much more quiet in its PR as it informs Business Consultants, Executive Coaches, and ongoing training in the Communication Arts in Organizations around the world. Are there people still misusing it? Yes, of course. Anything powerfully effective will naturally lend itself to misuse, abuse, and distortion. Yet even that seems to be less and less. Further, there is lots of good things happening in the field one of which I’m involved in— the NLP Leadership Summit.

What is the bottom line? NLP is now mostly a European phenomenon rather than a Southern California phenomenon. So if you want to take a good look at NLP, what it is, what it stands for, how it is presented, what it is being presented for— Look that NLP in Europe!



**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #17**  
**April 13, 2015**

## **UNLEASHING GROUP POTENTIALS**

We know that you as an individual have lots of potentials which are not identified, developed, and unleashed. The same is true of groups. It is true of most organizational boards, it is true of most departments, it is true of most associations, it is even true of families. In fact groups of people not only have all of the untapped potentials within each of the individuals that make up the group, they also have the systemic or gestalt potentials that could potentially come together to create more intelligence, more productivity, more learning, higher level performance and spirit than merely the sum of the parts.

Leading thinkers in organizational development, management, leadership, coaching, and business have noted for years that *most groups inside of organizations are not only **not** producing their highest and best—they are dysfunctional*. They are operating at a level lower than the combination of the parts. They are actually limiting and diminishing the possibilities of the people within the organization. It is the rare and unique organization that is able to identify, develop, and release the potentials of their people and even more rare for an organization to be truly a self-actualizing organization in that they identify, develop, and release the potentials of their groups and teams.

For years, I have been researching and modeling the companies and organizations that have learned the *secrets of unleashing group potentials*. That resulted in the book *Group & Team Coaching* (2013) and then the trainings in Group and Team Coaching. At first I trained the content material in trainings in Hong Kong, Philippines, Italy, Mexico, Brazil, etc. Now we are providing Certification Trainings in Group & Team Coaching for the GTMC credentials— *Licensed and Certified Group & Team Meta-Coach*.

### **Why the Focus on Group & Team Coaching?**

Why? Margaret Mead expressed it best when she described the power and potential of groups:

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens could change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”*

Further, every business is, by definition, a *group*. Therefore the success of every business is dependent upon the effectiveness of how people “group.” Do they know how to form and operate as an effective work group? Do they know how to communicate openly, clearly, and efficiently? Do they know how to develop the right attitude as a team member? Do they know how to work through problems together? Or are they plagued with the common dysfunctions of groups: competing with each other rather than collaborating, keeping secrets, playing politics, undermining with gossip and negativity, etc.? Most groups are simply not effective. Time is wasted in the

groups going over petty and superficial issues. Time is wasted on meetings that are irrelevant or boring. Those leading the meetings don't seem to know how to effectively lead them, inspire people, coordinate activities, and bring out the best in every contributing member. That's the bad news.

The good news is *that groups can become highly effective teams*. It is not an easy or quick solution, but the solution is available for anyone who wants to learn the core competencies that are required. If people can work together effectively and efficiently, the business succeeds in productivity and profit. If not, the business may not even survive. The benefits that result from having effective groups and teams are many: smoother coordination of efforts, greater precision and clarity of communication, so less mis-communication, greater creativity and innovation, increased sense of responsibility, the synergy of people working as a unified team, improved team spirit, sense of pride in being part of a winning team, and so on.

To address the fact that *most teams are dysfunctional*, our focus is to facilitate effective group development by identifying the individual psychology of group members, then the group psychology that shows up as group dynamics, then the actual skills a leader or group coach needs. These skills involve both the developing of the group and the trouble-shooting of the problems that undermine the group. The list of group coaching skills (which are all leadership skills) include the seven core skills that we train in Meta-Coaching: Active Listening and Support, Deep Exploring via Questioning and Meta-Questioning, Mirror via Receiving and Giving Feedback, and State Induction. To these we add: Framing, Group Functioning, Group Leadership, Meeting Management, and so on. The group coach/leader will have to know and be able to recognize the group communication dynamics, the factors which undermine and sabotage a group, the leverage points of transformation.

In managing group dynamics, the effective coach/leader has to be effective in challenging and confronting. To coach a group of individuals to become an effective work group or further, an effective cohesive team requires coaching skills taken to a higher level of working with the structural processes whereby multiple individuals can learn to *think* together, *learn* together, *decide* together, and then *act* together. This is the overall content of the GTMC Certification. Currently we have a two-phase training

- ***Three Days of Group & Team Coaching Training.*** The first days focus on group dynamics—how a group forms, norms, storms, and performs. How groups have to negotiate the twin-demands of group nourishing and group tasking. How groups negotiate the trust spiral to move from a group of individuals to a work group and then to a team. How groups handle conflict, deal with team dysfunctions, challenge group members, etc. Plus lots of group experiences to try out the skills in actual groups.
- ***Four Days of Assessment in Group & Team Coaching.*** The following four days is for those individuals who want to set for assessment *and* for those who want to watch, learn, and be part of the psycho-drama on the stage as members of groups. We set up various scenarios and ask the coach/leader to handle the group during a 45-minute session.

We have just completed our first Certification for GTMC in Guangzhou China and will repeat it in Hong Kong, Mexico City, and other places in the coming months.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #18**  
**April 20, 2015**

## **OXYMORONS: DEADENDS OR DOORWAYS TO CREATIVITY?**

Oxymoron? Yes, the dictionary defines an *oxymoron* as “a figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms are combined to produce an epigrammatic effect, i.e., ‘cruel only to be kind.’” Of course, when you take these two experiences or states and put them together, you have a meta-state structure. Hence, you could create either the meta-state of being *cruelly kind* or *kindly cruel*. Here the syntax makes a lot of difference. In previous posts I have illustrated this with the states of being serious and playful. Combining these so that one state is *above* and *about* the other state gives us *seriously play* or *playfully serious*.

In these constructs the first word describes the higher level state and as such, it sets the frame for the first level state. In practice you would first access the primary state, and then texture it with the higher state. You access the state of being *serious*, that is in earnest, committed, and concerned, and then you texture that with the higher state of playfulness. Then if we ask, “What is the *quality* of your seriousness?” the answer would be, “It is playful.” The state or attitude of playfulness—fun, delightful, joy, etc. qualifies the first state. This, by the way, is an excellent state for so many experiences—learning, working, leading, etc.

As a result, the gestalt experience of being *playfully serious* entails beliefs, values, identity, understandings, decisions, permissions, intentions, and all of the other higher level “logical levels.” In Meta-States we understand this as a hologram. We think about it in terms of a holarchy rather than a hierarchy. That is, *simultaneously* the gestalt state *is* a belief, a value, an identity, an understanding, etc. In Meta-States training (which is called APG, Accessing Personal Genius) we recognize this systems distinction about the so-called “logical levels” as what makes our self-reflexive consciousness as so rich, complex, and dynamic. Consequently, this makes all the difference in the world in terms of modeling human experiences, especially experiences and skills of experts. In fact, if you only use the NLP distinctions for modeling—you will miss this!

Recently when I used the example of being *seriously playful*, several people asked me to give them some additional examples. When I did, someone recognized that the two additional examples were oxymorons. So they asked for me to see if all of these would be oxymorons. So I Used the dichotomous states of perfection and fallibility, hence *perfectly fallible* and *fallibly perfect*. “Give another one!” they said, still not satisfied. Okay, consider the human response of *kindness* and its opposite, *rudeness*. Now we have *bluntly kind* or *kindly blunt*.

Finally they stopped, but I could have gone on and on.

- sweet sorrow, sorrowful sweetness

- civil war, battled civility
- skillful incompetence
- reasonably irrational
- a perfect mistake
- unthinking reflection
- exquisite suffering
- deafening silence
- forgetting to remember; remembering to forget
- fun boredom
- healthy selfishness; hedonistic altruism
- maturely childlike; childishly mature
- passionately excited; excited passivity
- chaotic order; orderly chaos
- notoriously unknown
- ambiguously clear; clearly ambiguous
- stringent standards
- conflicting perceptions
- constant variables
- open secrets
- abstract images
- plastic glass
- Relaxed concentration

What's the point? Some oxymorons (but not all) reveal the shortsightedness of our tendency to dichotomize. We so often revert to the more childish cognitive frame of either-or thinking and positing things as polar opposites, when that often is a very limited perspective. In other words, what we dichotomize may actually create all kinds of unnecessary problems. This reminds me of Abraham Maslow's quotation about this:

“Dichotomizing pathologizes and pathology dichotomizes.”

Consider the dichotomizing question that one participant asked during a conversation recently when I was presenting *Unleashing Leadership*. He said he asked because it didn't know which he was. “Am I a leader or a follower?” The question frames the answer in terms of polar opposites: This or That? Yet every leader is also a follower. There is no person who is a leader in everything, in every area. And many of the very best leaders are following-leaders—they hear the voice of their people and lead them accordingly. And what about leader-followers? These are people who are either being groomed for leadership or who are the support team of the leader.

The oxymoron isn't a dead-end, it is actually an invitation to think further ahead. Or perhaps better, to think upward! That's become oxymorons playfully invite you to rise up in your mind to consider how one side of a polarity could possibly texture and qualify the other side. To do this you have to step out of the dichotomized box of oppositional thinking to creatively consider possibilities that were never even available to you before. Interested in creativity? Here then is a doorway if you are bold enough and flexible enough to enter.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #19**  
**April 27, 2015**

## **INSIDE-OUT PSYCHOLOGY**

A central theme that you will find throughout Neuro-Semantics, a theme that is consistent with everything we do, is the idea that *human experiences inevitably involve an inside-out psychology*. This is most explicit in the modeling of wealth creation that I did in the early 1990s and the title of the book, *Inside-Out Wealth*. It actually took a good bit of time for me to truly understand that. That's because it is so easy to assume that wealth is an outside-in experience. This is what most people are taught, what is predominant in most trainings on wealth creation, and what seems most natural. After all, money is an external thing, isn't it?

Yet the answer is that *it is not*. What we call "money," what we typically count as money is *not actually* an external thing. This is what Dee Hock, former CEO and founder of Visa discovered. And if money is not, *wealth* is even more so *not* an external thing. If this isn't immediately obvious to you, you can read more about it in previous "Neuron" issues (see [www.neurosemantics.com](http://www.neurosemantics.com)) for the back issues and/or see the book, *Inside-Out Wealth*.

This principle actually holds true for every human experience. It holds true for *Games Slim and Fit People Play* (2001). Health is an inside-out thing. You can't buy it, you can't insure it, you can't have it delivered to your home. If you want it, the experience comes from the inside-out. First, you set your own understandings, beliefs, values, intentions, decisions, etc. for it and then—over time—you actualize it in your lifestyle. So also loving relationships. To get love and to have lots of experiences of love, first become a loving person on the inside (*Games Great Lovers Play*, 2002).

Would the same thing be true of leadership? Is authentic leadership an inside-out phenomenon? Yes of course! That's because real leadership is not a position, a title, or a status that someone gives you. Typically position, title, and status are signs that recognize that a person is a leader. Yet do you need these to be a leader? Of course, not. Many great leaders had none of these. Think Martin Luther King, Jr. And if effective leadership involves the skill of "bringing out the best in people" this speaks about a high level competency that is within a person (see *Unleashing Leadership*, 2007).

What about Coaching? Yes, the same thing. Great coaching is an inside-out process. That's why the *person* of the coach plays as important a role as the coach's skills. In fact the skills are really only truly effective when it comes from the being-ness of a caring person. That's why *being the person* who has developed his or her own unique synergy of compassion and challenge then enables a person to compassionately challenge *by one's very presence*. So no wonder there are times in a session when a coach doesn't have to do anything—just hold the space. That's because what happens in coaching is not that the coach adds "formula X" to the client. It is rather than the coach,

like any leader who brings out the best in people, does so by enabling the person to unleash and unfold the gifts and resources that are clamoring inside to be released.

Inside-out psychology means that all of us create our own psychological experiences from the inside-out using the power of our internal resources. This goes to our four fundamental powers of thinking, feeling, speaking, and acting. Owning and developing these essential functions enables us to step up to taking control of our thoughts and states and to then use our powers of influence on the world and on others (speaking and acting) in ways that enhances the quality of life. This explains why we use the pattern called *The Power Zone* in Neuro-Semantics as the most essential pattern, a pattern which informs every other pattern. To do that we invite people to step up to owning their powers, to put them “at cause” for their own lives and responses, and to awaken them to all of the choice points of life where they can access being the navigator of their own life, rather than a victim.

This inside-out psychology explains why NLP and Neuro-Semantics focus on the inside world of meaning-making. As a cognitive psychology, these self-actualization models knows that the secret key to everything lies in a person’s meaning constructions. As you construct your inner world of understandings, believing, intending, deciding, identifying, permitting, etc.—so you experience your outer world of work, relationships, budgeting, money, career, hobby, fitness, etc. In this, *the quality of your life is a function of the quality of your meanings*.

It is only when a person understands this *inside-out principle in life* that ongoing learning, personal development and training, and accessing one’s highest and best states makes perfect sense. Until then, adult learning, reading, studying, and training seems like something to do in a remedial way, or something extra that you might want to add to your life. Understanding the inside-out principle brings the realize that these processes are the key to every important value in life. And when you realize this as an “Aha!” everything changes. Then *being* becomes your orientation, purpose, and direction. Then *doing* takes second place. After all, the best *doing* comes from the highest *being*. Then *having* comes third.

In modern life we have it all turned around. Most people put *having* first—having all of the things that our modern consumer society puts before us as what we need to have if we want to be happy and successful. Some people make this not only the first purpose of life, but the only. They only have “life” if they have the latest toys. They have to be “in” with the latest brands, and the more expensive the better. Others put *doing* first and as the purpose of life. So they are always on the run—doing, achieving, experiencing. And for most, *being* comes in at a far distant third, if at all.

*Being* is less empirical and less objective, and so most treat it as less important and some treat it as non-existent because it is so internal. Yet *being* living your highest meanings and expressing your best self is the greatest success and brings the greatest joy in life. And that’s why we focus on the *Inside-Out* in Neuro-Semantics. Are you ready for that inner game? That inner journey?

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #20**  
**May 3, 2015**

## **A CALL FOR RESPONSIBLE PROTESTS**

It has happened again. Another American city, Baltimore, has suffered significant destruction from people rioting, looting, fighting, throwing rocks at the police, burning cars and buildings, and in the end—destroying a community. This past week in Baltimore, there was an eruption of rioters who did there what others did in Ferguson Missouri (part of the greater St. Louis area). So, what's going on? Why is this happening?

It seems that *the triggering event* is usually framed as “racial injustice.” Typically a single person is involved in a minor activity that brings in the police. Then things get out of hand with the result that someone is severely injured or killed. Then the “racial” frame is set to interpret the event. At this point, more people get upset about the injustice, but instead of staying calm and cool as they speak up, one or more people turn it into a vendetta for all injustices. Then framing it as “racial inequality,” they set up protests and begin to march. And while there may be some justification for that, because it is not managed well. “Thugs” and criminals come out and use that as a cover-up to riot, loot, burn, steal, destroy, injure, and kill. Then everything gets out of control.

Interesting enough, the actual “injustice” is something that happens pretty regularly. Someone acts in a suspicious way in a neighborhood, steals or tries to steal something from a store, gets into a fight, etc. Then it escalates. In the case of Mike Brown in Ferguson, he strong-armed an older man in a store and stole some items, then walking down the middle of a road (!?), got into a fight with a policeman. When he reached into the car and tried to get his gun, he wrestled with the policeman in the patrol car. As they wrestled the gun went off and the policeman was punched. Brown then fled, but soon turned around and came diving at the policeman (being a very large man, 6 foot 5, 230 pounds), the policeman shot; he died.

Of course, none of that was immediately known. It took six months for the government reports to come out. At first someone said that Brown raised his hands and said, “Don't shoot!” It was later discovered that was made up by an observer who said it to frame the conflict as an injustice. So it was immediately framed as “racial injustice,” “racial prejudice,” “racial inequality.” All of which inflamed the community.

*Now what happened* is actually not as important as *how it is framed*. Ultimately, the framing of the event determines the meanings which people take away from it. And the first to frame it—sets the frame. This is where *the kind of thinking* makes all the difference whether a community handles it effectively or if everything quickly goes to hell. The framing of the event determines if people will use their critical thinking skills or if they will over-generalize, blame, personalize, awfulize, etc.

*The problem is that the kind of thinking people are doing in the moment of the crisis is the kind of*

*thinking that's making the problem a hundred times worse.* Most of these problems seem to stem from the fact that some people *begin* with the frame of “racial injustice” and in some communities that frame is constantly being reinforced even when it cannot be validated. For some, they look for anything and everything that they can stick into that frame. It happened in the Travon Martin case in Florida. Someone wanted that to be a case of white/black racialism. Of course, the security officer there was not even white, but Hispanic.

In the Freddie Gray case in Baltimore this week, 3 of the 6 policeman who arrested him and took him into custody are black, 3 are white. That fact makes it hard to make the injury to him based on “racial inequality.” The best information that we have right now is that someone apparently put their knee in Gray’s back to restrain him, and then with the police vehicle moving around, the spiral chord was severed, bringing about his death. So it could have been an accident. But that will take time to tell. Additionally, and even more significantly, every year a thousand black young men are killed in Chicago. Never heard of that? Ah yes, most do not reach the media because it is black-on-black crime and that cannot be put into the “racial inequality” frame.

What’s the solution to all of this? Here is a recommended solution: Let’s stop jumping-to-conclusions and over-generalizing about “racial injustice.” If it turns out to be a case of racial injustice, that will come out. In the meantime, what is called for is calmer heads and cooler hearts. Then we can use our critical thinking skills to ask about the facts and to patiently allow the justice system to work. Then the reporters and media, the investigators, grand juries, etc. can all do their job of uncovering the facts so that those responsible can be held accountable. Eventually the facts do come out. That’s the good news. The bad news is that they do not and usually cannot come out in the first 24 hours or even the first month or two. It takes time. Which means that during the waiting time—waiting for the facts—what is there to protest? Is there any injustice?

Another recommended solution: Anyone and everyone planning to conduct a march to protest should work closely with the police and authorities so that the protests are peaceful and not driven by those who would profit from “racial mayhem” or full of over-exaggerated rhetoric. In Ferguson the step-father got on top of a car, yelling to a crowd, “Let it burn!” Isn’t that like yelling “fire” in a crowded theater? And isn’t it that kind of irresponsible words in the heat of the moment what’s amplifying things?

The sad and pathetic thing is that the honest and law-abiding people who want to protest injustices, if they are not careful, and responsibly manager their language and the conditions of the protest, end up creating a context where “thugs” and criminals will use the situation to burn down their communities. And then a greater injustice arises for the business owners of that community. These business owners are usually of the same ethnic race and the consequences sets up a vicious circle. It reduces the economics of the community, the presence of jobs, undermine the possibility of investors investing there and so in the end—greater injustice is done and the community is the worst for it. Protesting is a privilege we have in the United States and in many democracies. Yet it is not a privilege without responsibility.

Calmer hearts and cooler heads are needed. And everybody has responsibility in this. We cannot think critically and carefully when people are framing things in a way that only inflames people.



These problems are systemic and they will not be solved framing them in over-simplistic ways.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #21**  
**May 11, 2015**  
***Getting Behind the Obvious #1***

## HIDDEN FRAMES

In last week's "Neurons" calling for "Responsible Protests," I wrote about *the hidden frames* behind what's been happening in the rioting and looting in Baltimore. On the surface the talk is all about a particular person who died in police custody. The immediate conclusion that many make was that this is a case of "racial injustice." They say it is another example that "black lives don't count." If that is the content, what is *behind* these positions? What ideas and beliefs *drive* those conclusions? What are people assuming when they make such statements without explicitly saying?

*Asking these questions distinguishes surface and meta information.* Surface information makes up the content of what is said. Meta information gets behind things to the assumptions that make the surface information possible. These go to the beliefs, understandings, myths, prejudices, etc. Now if you are convinced ahead of time about something, then it should be no real surprise that you will find it. This is the way perceptual filters work, we call them *self-organizing attractors*. This is the way judgment and beliefs and other meta-level frames work. Once you set them up in your mind, you have eyes to see them and you self-organize to these frames so that you do not even question yourself or your reasoning.

There's another important facet of these self-organizing attractors as frames of mind. They are invisible to the perceiver. When viewing anything through a belief, value, perceptual lens, etc., we primarily see *the content of what we are looking at* and we are mostly *unconscious* of the frames which are coloring things. The frames, as our perceptual lens, set us up to see things as we do, yet they are mostly *hidden* from us. They are our blind spots.

Consider the phenomenon of "racism." That there was overt and open racial prejudice and inequality in the 1950s when the Civil Rights Movement started is without question. That it violated the basic principle of democracy is also without question. The call to "level the playing field" so that everybody can compete equally was what the original Civil Rights Leaders wanted. Later it was realized that a hand-up was needed and so Affirmative Action was instituted to provide that hand-up to those disadvantaged during those days. Now fast forward two or three generations and today Equal Rights is the established law of the land. Today color of skin plays a minor role in terms of getting an equal job, opportunity at a University, running for office, etc. Today, the playing field is much more equal and where it is not, that is an exception to the rule.

But you would never know that if you are *only* listening to the mainstream media. For them, any single instance of racism, perceived or real, is evidence that in terms of racial equality, "It is still the

1950s.” Today there is even a “racial injustice” industry led by Al Sharpton, Jessie Jackson, and others who are quick to turn one instance into a nation-wide pattern.

Take the situation in Baltimore. One black man dies at the hands of six policemen (three white, three black; five men, one woman) and the media presents the situation as if *all* of the police in *every* city is out “looking to kill young black men” (content information). In the meantime 9 black men were shot and killed in Baltimore during the seven days after that event. That’s right, *nine more in one week*. But there was no protest march for those nine. Why not? Because all were shot by other black men, so none of those killings counted as “racial inequality” and so there was no outrage. Interesting, isn’t it? Further, in New York City, a black man shot a white policemen during the same week, but again, there were no protests.

*What are frames which are hidden behind these things?* There are several:

- 1) White-on-black violence is “racism,” but black-on-white violence is “justice.”
- 2) Whenever police kill a black person that is “racial inequality” even if it involved black policemen (they must be pawns of the white establishment) and more important than hundreds of black-on-black killing since that doesn’t show inequality between the races.
- 3) Everything labeled as white-on-black racism is an “injustice” that requires protests even if the black person was involved a crime. “Racial injustice” is worse than crime. Crime is understandable and forgivable if it is because of the result of decades or centuries of oppression.
- 4) If there is any police action that involves the misuse or abuse of authority, then this is an expression of “racial injustice” and shows that all police are racist.
- 5) If there is racial injustice, then we have the right to immediately protest, assume the parties are guilty, and not wait for the facts of the case to emerge. Patience is no virtue.

### **Cartoons of Mohamed**

This past week we also had another shooting. This time two *radical jihadist* Moslems in Texas took guns to a presentation to kill people. But before they could carry out a massacre, they were shot and killed. [These were the *radicalized jihadists* who use the Moslem faith to justify their violence and terrorism. It does not represent what most Moslems believe or practice.] Accordingly ISIS took credit for the event. On the surface, the *content* of what the media generally presented as the fact that Moslems are not to make drawings of Mohamed and people who do are provoking them and bringing violence upon themselves. So, what’s behind that kind of thinking?

Freedom of speech in a democracy means that people can say all manner of things against my religion. They have that right to say what they want to say. I may not like it. But if I want that freedom, then I am under obligation to grant it to others. So when a radical jihadist sets out to murder those who make images or cartoons of Mohamed, they are assuming that others are under obligation to follow all of the dictates of their religion as they understand it. Consequently this is giving Islam a very negative public image. It assumes that taking one’s religion seriously means that no one is allowed to laugh at, or mock the religion. Humor about what one person’s considers serious or sacred is worthy of death.

Freedom of religion means that people have the right to follow their beliefs. Each person can follow his or her religion as they wish s long as they don't impose it on others. However, when a religious person in any faith-system assumes the right to violently maim, hurt, or kill those who do not share their faith, now we have a radical and legalistic religion of intolerance and hate.

The *hidden frames* are these:

- 1) I have the right to *impose* my beliefs on you.
- 2) I have the right to *enforce* you to follow my beliefs even if you don't believe them, otherwise I will feel offended.
- 3) I have the right to use violence against you so you do not offend my religious sensitivities.

There's much more to say about hidden frames and that will be the topic in the coming weeks.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #22**  
**May 18, 2015**  
*Getting Behind the Obvious #2*

## GETTING TO THE HIDDEN FRAMES

*Behind what is explicitly said are always assumptions.* There are always premises and presuppositions that a person simply accepts as true or real, and as unquestioned, and even unquestionable. These assumptions take the form of beliefs, understandings, conclusions from experiences, myths, stories, narratives, and so on. These assumptive frames are typically not only implicit, they are also unconscious. And that means that they are invisible to our inspection. In the last post I noted that they are our *blind spots*.

Now in NLP we call these assumptive frames *presuppositions*. As such we even make explicit a list of the presuppositions that govern the NLP Communication model. These assumptions are *the working premises* of the model such as “the map is not the territory.” By making them explicit we bring out and expose our philosophy about communication and our psychology of human nature so that others can respond to it. We thereby put them on the table so that we can do not *blindly* believe in them, but recognize that they are our working premises and that we may not be able to “prove” them.

We do the same when it comes to communication because if in talking with each other where there are disagreements, if we cannot get to what’s *behind* our statements—then all we can do is present our position and argue for it. But if we can make our assumptive frames explicit, if we can take a meta-moment to step back and explore the *kind of thinking and reasoning* which we are using in coming to our conclusions, then we can engage in a much deeper and profound conversation, a conversation that becomes a true dialogue which searches for meaning and understanding.

In Meta-Coaching, we do this by inviting a Meta-Moment. Then we invite a client to *step back* and consider numerous aspects of what’s *in the back of the mind* which may not be immediately conscious or visible to the person.

- *Representation*: How are you representing what you are thinking about? What representational system/s are you using? What are the cinematic features of that system?
- *Strategy*: How are you putting together what you are thinking about? How are you ordering the thoughts, events, awarenesses, etc.? What comes first, then second, third, etc.?
- *Reflexivity*: How are you reflecting back on any given step in your strategy to think-and-feel about it and layer upon it additional thoughts-and-feelings? How many times to you layer more ideas, beliefs, decisions, identities, permissions, prohibitions, etc.?
- *Systemic*: How does your system of thinking work? Is it an open system or closed? Is it spinning upward or downward?
- *Contexts*: What meta-level contexts (frames) are you using as you thinking about X? What contexts are you not considering? What invisible contexts are you assuming but not

specifying?

- *Cognitive styles*: How are you processing the information that you are using? What cognitive distortions may be present as you are thinking? What cognitive biases are present?
- *Cognitive filters*: What meta-program filters are you using as you process the information before you? What kind of thinking are you using? How appropriate is that kind of thinking for the kind of information or experience that you're working with?

If all of that seems complex, you're right. It is. That's because what we call "thinking" is complex and every person seems to have his or her own way of customizing one's thinking. This is also why getting to what's *behind* the surface level statements is crucial for a thorough understanding of a person's experience and meanings.

The way we get to what's behind begins by slowing the conversation down so that we can be more reflective and mindful of what we are saying. That's because we can use *words* for more than just providing information to others. Yes, we can use words to facilitate *learning* and discovery and exploration. But words can also function to induce states that close down learning. Words can prejudice a person so that he or she is not open to considering anything other than what they already know. I noted this is Meta Reflection #15, *Do You Have a Language License*.

This is where *semantically loaded words and language* can actually prevent understanding and learning. Such "communication" can actually shut-down communication! What these *emotionally-laden terms* actually do is induce states prejudice people so that instead of *thinking*, they go into a purely reactive position. An example of that is in last weeks Meta Reflection that's in the terminology of "racial injustice." Just say those words about an event and you can shut down the thinking processes of many people. Here's an example of that. After last week's post a reader wrote: "try being sold as a slave ... your assumptions are weak, and totally in conformity with radical white America."

- "Try being sold as a slave." So let's see, Slave Trade was declared illegal in 1811 in the United States so who today is "sold as a slave." Was the reader? That would make him more than 200 years old! So the reasoning goes like this: The fact that one's ancestors some 5 or more generations ago experienced something, that makes that something relevant today? How does that work? Can we never escape the past? Is that one's assumptions? How many generations before one is free from it? 10? 100? If that's the case then everybody is in the same boat!
- My assumptions are "totally in conformity with racial white America." So this "racial white America" has elected an African American President and hundreds of other politicians at all levels... so when and how will they become not "racial?" This sounds like guilt-by-association. If I draw a conclusion that racists draw (if we accept that conclusion), then my assumptions have to be wrong. Of course that style of reasoning itself is a cognitive distortion.

The frame hidden far in the back of the mind must be something like, "My troubles today are caused by things that happened in the long distance past." "You can never get over the past." "The past is deterministic of the future." More next time.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #23**  
**May 25, 2015**  
***Getting Behind the Obvious #3***

## **WHAT'S BEHIND IT ALL?**

What causes the high amount of crime in urbane areas in the US and especially among young African American males? What causes the high unemployment among African American young people? I have seen statistics that among Black Americans males between the ages of 20 to 30 it is as high as 22 to 25%. That is much higher than it was seven years ago when President Obama took office. In other words, whatever he has done, it has not lowered the unemployment rate but has had the effect of raising the level of unemployment. And I'm sure that is the last thing he wanted. Yet it has happened. Further, some ten million more Americans are now receiving food stamps during the past seven years. And yet billions and billions of more dollars have been spent trying to alleviate poverty. So far, it has not only *not worked*, it has made things worse.

Now *having a job* is, for most people, a basic condition for feeling self-confidence, self-respect, and satisfied with things. When you have a job, when you have employable skills, and when you have a sense of self-efficacy about your career pathway, life seems more satisfying and just. Without that, what will people feel and experience? Self-distrust, maybe self-contempt, dissatisfaction, stress, frustration, anger ... and without doubt, these will be the people who have nothing to lose—so they will be the ones most likely to riot and loot when the opportunity appears. These will be the people who will feel contempt and hatred toward “authority,” any authority, and especially the police since they are the first responders to crime and any disturbance of the police.

All of these factors have been coming together in the recent riots and looting in Ferguson Missouri and Baltimore, Maryland. On the surface, people and the media has defined “the problem” as “race relationships,” as “police brutality,” and so on. But those are red herrings. Distractions. Racists like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton *want* it to be about race relationship, they want it to be simplistically that white people are creating injustice against black people. Their multiple-million Foundations have vested interests in “race” being *the problem*. Yet if they were truly interested in the well-being of black people and the black community, they would speak out just as strong against black on black crime which happens to be five times greater than white on black crime. And they would equally condemn black on white crime. But they do not.

Behind the poverty and unemployment are these *economic issues and problems*. Current statistics show that today the economy is worse for the average person in the USA than when he took office. It is down 6% for the average family while taxes are up, and for many, taxes are up a lot. Entrepreneurs and small business owners have is much worse—which is why they generally have not been hiring or investing. Regulations and taxes are putting such a squeeze on them that they in term are not hiring or expanding. It is even worse for all those at a level where they are just barely

getting by. And worse of all, those at the bottom of the economic level.

The economic situation has been creating a greater and greater discontent. With fewer jobs available those less qualified are the first to become unemployed. This breeds crime. If there's a much greater possibility for making lots of money in crime (drugs, theft), then crime becomes more attractive and then more prevalent.

Yet we are still not done digging down behind things. What is behind these economic problems? As business people invest less, there are less jobs, people hold back on spending, then with rioting and looting, those areas that get destroyed and burned out, fewer and fewer people are willing to risk their money to invest in those areas, so more businesses close shop. Then it becomes a vicious circle. Now we have blighted out areas in urbane areas that become the habitat of gangs and drugs.

Additionally there is the problem of being un-employable. Young people graduating high schools in those areas, or having dropped out and then reaching the age of graduation without a sufficient education, now they are without commercially viable skills to get a job. So no one wants to hire them. They have nothing to contribute. And if they do land a job, often their attitude does not allow them to keep the job. If they have a sense of entitlement or a disdain for what they have to do or what they receive from the job, they tend not to learn on the job and become more skilled so that they can progress in their career development. Another vicious circle ensues. They go through job after job and live as much on unemployment as on contributing and eventually drop out of the search and become the permanently unemployed—angry at “the system” that they don't understand and do not have the skills to handle.

Let's back up yet another step. What are the schools in the inner cities, the teachers, and the homes and parents doing that's contributing to all of this? A big problem in most urban black areas is a mental frame which is against studying, learning, and improving one's educational level. And while there are great role models for this, Bill Cosby being the most obvious one, there seems to be a continual conspiracy against him, a conspiracy to undermine his influence and his voice. He has been consistently a voice for decades for keeping families together and getting educated. But the assumptive frames in far too many black communities is that education means becoming white, becoming a nerd, giving in, etc.

The anti-educational bias that is now deeply embedded in the culture in most families in the inner city leads to so many of young people being unemployable or hardly employable for what few jobs there are. Their basic communication skills in reading, writing, and communicating are so inadequate that they are hardly able to perform. So also their math skills and social skills.

Where there is a culture of learning, there is a culture of discipline. There's the willingness to work for, put the effort in for, and give oneself over the long-term to learning and development. These “manly” values are usually connected with a strong father image in the home. Yet this is precisely what is lacking in so many homes. Something like 70% of all African American babies are born of single moms. Where are the dads? Where is the sense of responsibility?

Contributing to all of this is another larger cultural factor—the Hollywood culture. Movies, songs, internet, cable, magazines, blogs, etc. all encourage exaggerated expectations in young people so that so many have a sense of entitlement. They see movie stars, sport heroes, musicians, etc. make outrageous amounts of money and they want in on the action. One survey a few years ago said that of high school graduates, 65% believed that they could be, and had a good chance of becoming, a famous movie star. Talk about some unrealistic expectations!

What's behind it all? The answer is lots of things. There is no single cause, there are a multitude of causes and, in addition, many contributing factors. We could add with the breakup of homes and the weakening of traditional moral values, there is growing a lack of community so that young people in urbane areas are attracted to gangs for a place where they feel they belong.

Where do we start to correct all of these social and cultural problems? *Wherever we are and wherever we can.* Politically we need a responsible fiscal policy that allows small businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive and grow because that's where most people work. We need to treat our economics politically as we would if it were our private home budget—spend only what we have and not extend credit so that we create a deeper and deeper hole. We need also to encourage everyone to assume full responsibility for themselves—for developing skills, for contributing value to others, for continuing to learn, etc.



**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #24**  
**June 1, 2015**

## **THE POLITICS WITHIN THE NLP AND NEURO-SEMANTIC MODELS**

While I am sure there is the full range of political views held by NLP-people in general, having explored the basic psychological principles and premises within the NLP models and the Humanistic Psychology of Self-Actualization from which it came, there seems to me to be some preferred views politically. These are implied by the models or I could say that the models seem to privilege and promote a particular political perspective. I can't here write everything about this. Yet I have written many chapters about this in the latest book, *Political Coaching*. There you can find chapters on the political psychology and philosophy of Self-Actualization.

What then is the NLP model and what is presupposed in the NLP model? In Meta Reflection #7 this year I noted that NLP is a communication model, a modeling model, and a self-development model. Originating long before Bandler and Grinder, it started from the Human Potential Movement and therefore involves several assumptions about people and about human nature.

- It assumes that *people are responsible beings*. They are people who can access their abilities to respond (mentally, emotionally, verbally, and behaviorally) and they are not inherently victims.
- It assumes that *people have all the resources that they need to live fully*. They are not broken, but they can be traumatized and hurt. They may not be accessing their inner resources, but they could. They may not have their resources sequences or developed, but they could.
- It assumes that *people can be held accountable for their responses*. They are ultimately responsible and accountable for developing their skills and making the most of their lives.
- It assumes that *people are people and there is no status hierarchy of people*. We are all equal in being human beings and that differences in skills, knowledge, and experience define what a person can and cannot do.
- It assumes that *people can learn* and that they are responsible for learning to do the best with what life has provided them.

Let's now ask, "What political philosophy does this all suggest?" "What is implied politically in terms of the way we construct governments?" "What does this imply about how we should invent ever-better government structures and policies for managing our life together as people?"

- First it implies *a democratic philosophy of equality of person's before the eyes of the law*. We all know that people are not literally equal. We are different from each other in many ways. Yet in spite of those differences mentally and emotionally, in terms of talents and temperments, in terms of predispositions and attitudes, we can treat each other as equal

human beings. And we can set up our societies and establish laws so that people are treated as equals before the eyes of the law and treated as persons without regard to where born, economic status, education status, color of skin, ethnicity, etc. This is the ideal.

- Second it implies *an enabling and facilitating of self-development and self-reliance*. Humanistic or Self-Actualization Psychology holds a high level belief in people. People can be and are wired to develop, grow, learn and to become independent. This then enables them to connect and to become inter-dependent in healthy and productive ways. This means that people should not become dependent on society and treated as victims of history or other forces. Government should generate laws and structures that encourage, teach, and support self-reliance and should seek to avoid as much as possible treating people as if they were children or incompetent by nature and needy for government hand-outs and support. Support should be for the truly needy and for those without any chance of development. Support for most should be short-term and with an eye on getting off of support. When people are healthy and developing, they want to be independent.
- It implies *the responsibility of balanced finances*. For government it means treating the people's money as they treat their own personal budgets— spending only what they have and not borrowing into incredible debt. Governments in Greece, Italy, and other European countries have been failing for this very reason. Politicians, all too often, seem to think that they money they spend is unlimited. They seem to forget that it is the people's money and not their money. That's because government gets its money by taxing the people.
- It implies that *the human way is that of learning and developing*. We are not born knowing or competent. *We become*. We have to learn and develop and that requires teaching, mentoring, training, coaching, consulting, etc. A healthy republic requires *informed citizens*. They have to also learn how to be a productive member of a society and to enter into “the democratic agreement” of adding their voices and cooperating when the vote goes against them. That does not mean a majority rule in a spiteful way against a minority, but take time to consider and fully hear the voice of the minorities. Then we can have what is called a *deep democracy*. If government should invest in anything other than defense and protection against crime and enemies, it is education. It is to a government's welfare to have as much transparency of information and citizens who can do critical thinking.

Self-Actualization Psychology— the psychology of NLP and Neuro-Semantics believes in the bright side of human nature while simultaneously recognizing that human nature can go wrong, that people can be hurt and traumatized, and therefore create highly distorted forms of humanity. Therapy along with a thorough education and continuous adult education is the solution. A society can be no healthier than its citizens. So when we have toxic beliefs and habits in a society, this lowers the quality of understanding and intelligence, which lowers the democracy, which lowers the quality of life. And that's why we have recovered the original psychology of NLP and make it dominate in all of our Neuro-Semantic trainings. We want the highest values and meanings for people's lives which they can then implement in their best performances and relationships. That's what we are about.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #25**  
**June 8, 2015**  
**Learning #1**

## THE NEURO-SEMANTICS OF LEARNING

### What Have You Learned Today?

*“There are no un-interesting things; there are only un-interested people.”*  
Lord Chesterton

I was sitting at Starbucks a few days ago as I do every morning when I'm home and reading through a book when someone started up a conversation. He asked what I was reading. When I told him, he seemed surprised, even shocked. He asked me, “Why?” I said “To learn.” He again asked me why. I said because there are a thousand things to learn and I'm committed to learning several new things every day. He paused. So I asked him a question, “What have you learned today?”

Now if he was shocked earlier by my answer, he was even more shocked by my question. “Learned? ... [pause] ... learned? Well, I don't know.” “Well, what have you learned in the last week?” What I discovered in that brief conversation is a way to induce a profound state of stunned silence(!). That was not my intention, but that was the effect.

What I learned from Maslow's work on Self-Actualization Psychology, and what I wrote in the book by that title, is that *the human unique human instinct is our instinct to learn*. We are made to learn and, in fact, to be live-long learners. Without instincts in the way which animals have instincts, we have to keep learning. And we do, whether it is formal learning or not. This is our inescapable meaning-making power which as a human being you cannot turn off even if you wanted to. So learn we do. Make-meaning we do. The question is not whether you will or will not, the real question is about *what* you learn, the *quality* of your learning, its usefulness, effectiveness, etc.

Many years ago (1970), Alvin Toffler published his best selling book, *Future Shock*, and in it wrote this about the critical importance of learning in the future—“the future” which now in 2015 has arrived:

“Tomorrow's schools must therefore teach not merely data, but ways to manipulate it. Students must learn how to discard old ideas, how and when to replace them. They must, in short, *learn how to learn*.” “To enhance human adaptability: by instructing students how to learn, unlearn, and relearn, a powerful new dimension can be added to education.” (p. 414)

The art of learning, and the meta-art of learning-how-to-learn (meta-learning), as well as the skills

of *un-learning* and *re-learning* are today essential skills for anyone who wants to be on the cutting edge of business or one's own industry. These are skills required for just staying current so that you do not fall behind. How are your meta-learning skills?

Today many of the key thinkers in the field of education can testify to the importance of something else which Alvin Tofler wrote 45 years ago: "Tomorrow's illiterate will not be the man who can't read; he will be the man who has not learned how to learn." Precisely because things are changing so quickly, if you do not know how to unlearn and relearn (the meta-learning skills), you could very well be functionally *illiterate* in your area of focus or expertise.

Now within this area of meta-learning are the critical thinking skills which are inherent in the NLP Meta-Model of Language and in the area that enables us to recognize cognitive distortions and cognitive biases so that we can not fall victim to them. The problem with such cognitive distortions and biases is that *they prevent effective learning*. They distort how we input information, listen to conversations and speak as we work with conceptions and premises in our understandings. Without recognizing such, we can develop significant learning disabilities and never understand why we are not getting something.

When it comes to learning, your personal neuro-semantics either makes learning a joy and delight or a drudgery that you avoid until you just have to learn something. This goes to how you have meta-stated the primary state of learning. Have you meta-stated learning with joy, delight, and fun? Or have you associated learning with boredom and/or work. Have you concluded that it is hard and useless? Have you decided that it's for nerds? Whatever meta-level frames you have brought to learning will govern your strategies for learning, comprehending, remembering, and integrating.

We can think about learning using many different distinctions. There is the distinction between capitalization and compensation learning. *Compensation learning* is the learning that a person does to overcome a weakness, insecurity, or a humiliation. The person learns to *compensate* for something so that the weakness does not undermine his effectiveness. *Capitalization learning* is completely different. In this kind of learning, you are building on your strengths.

Howard Gardner, who was the cognitive psychologists who invented the Multiple-Intelligence Model, has identified eight different kinds of intelligences. He has also created an inventory for a person to figure out one's strongest form or forms of intelligences so that a person can compensate where one is weakest by strengthening one's best dispositions. The NLP model does this to a lesser degree as it highlights the different sensory systems that we have and can use for learning.

*What did you learn today?* How committed are you to your learning? How are you recording your learnings? How well do you do in integrating your learnings into your mind-body system so they make you more effective? What are you planning to learn this year? What are the benchmarks that you are using to measure the quality of your learnings?

Ah, yes, *learning*. Learning, un-learning, and re-learning—these are the meta-learning skills which lie at the very heart of human excellence.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #26**  
**June 15, 2015**  
*Learning #2*

## **THE ADVENTURE OF LEARNING AND META-LEARNING**

**Do You Know How to Learn?**

The questions which I'm about to ask you will seem, on the surface, to be non-sense and even obvious. Yet I assure you, they are not. Not really. I write them here because, surprisingly, because most people do not know how to learn. What?! Oh sure, they learn stuff. And they learn lots of stuff. And they also learn lots of stuff that's wrong and even harmful. Learning stuff is inevitable given that a person is a human being. Given that we humans do not have information-instincts, we have to learn. So learn we do. But learning things and *knowing how to learn* are two entirely different things. So if you are ready, here is the question I'm inviting you to ponder:

- Do you know *how* to learn?
- Do you have a well-developed *strategy* for your learning?
- What are your best states and how skilled are you for accessing those states when you want to learn something efficiently and thoroughly?
- Do you know how to meta-learn— to learn about your learning?
- To what extent do you identify yourself as a lifelong learner?
- Are you still in school or is school out for you?

The amazing fact is that most people are stunned and stopped by *these learning questions*. They do not even think of themselves as learners, let alone life-long learners. Consequently, they have no learning goals or plans. They do not intentionally set out to learn new things each year.

One of my conversations recently at Starbucks was with a man who was unemployed. I turned around the question and asked him what he was studying? His immediate response was, "What?" as if the question didn't compute; as if I had asked him when he was planning a vacation trip to Mars. "Well, you said you were unemployed didn't you? ["Yeah.]" So now you have a great opportunity to be studying to add new knowledge and new skills that will give you greater employability, right?"

"Well .... I never thought of that. [Pause] Anyway I don't know what I would study. And ... anyway, I don't like to study."

"You don't like to study?!" I said raising the volume and tempo of my voice. "Well I'm really sorry to hear that. Do you want some help in designing a learning program for yourself so that you can fall in love with learning and then add new skills so you can make a lot more money than you have ever before?"

I added the last line to provide an intentional motivation to the conversation and to see how he would respond. He didn't take the bait. I felt sad for him as he left, and when he walked out some twenty minutes later, a sense of pity rose up in me that here was a person with all of the time and opportunity to increase his internal wealth of knowledge, understanding, and skill to add more value in the marketplace and to improve the quality of his life and even though I had tried to shaken his comfortable world and challenge him to wake up to the possibilities— he continued his sleep as he socialized with some friends and then left to go watch daytime TV. I know that because he told me that when I asked him what he's doing with all the time on his hand.

If you think that I don't know what I'm speaking about, then a quick story. In 1975 I was fired for the fifth time from my first career and lost my first profession. That's when I finally concluded, "The problem is *me*, not the ministry; I do not have a good fit with this job." Now for most people, "three strikes and you're out" would have been enough to convince them to move on and find something more compatible. But either I was a slow learner, or very stubborn, or persistent to a fault, or a combination of all three! Anyway, it was 1975 and I was unemployed so while I spend two hours every morning making the rounds, putting in applications and checking on applications, I spend the rest of the day in the public library. Doing what? I was reading everything I could find on therapy. Well, I needed it! So I read everything Sigmund Freud wrote, then everything by Alfred Alder, then Otto Rank. The next year, 1976, I found TA (Transactional Analysis) and read every book in the public library on the subject. When I did get employed in some in-between jobs, I continued the same using all my spare time reading in the field of Rational Emotive Therapy (1977).

In that way I began a new career. As I progressed I started picking up diplomas in TA and RET and others, then later I did a degree program in clinical counseling, and later Cognitive Psychology and in that process I found NLP. Being unemployed (and without any unemployment benefits!) was a gift—it gave me the gift of time and motivation and so with it I learned another profession.

*Learning and learning-about-learning is the premier career development competency.* Whether you are unemployed today or in a career who's growth potential is lessening, or ready for a new challenge in life—the secret to wealth creation, to vitality in your life, to living with a sense of adventure and inspiration—is to keep learning. Pity those people who have let School and Schooling destroy the pleasure of learning. Pity those people who went to school and never learned *how to learn*. They are at such a disadvantage in today's world of rapid change!

It's funny how School prevents so many people from getting an education. Perhaps the person confuses the two, thinking that if he went to school, he's educated. What a big delusion! Others think that what happens in most schools is "education." Wrong again. In fact, a great many kids in urban city schools are not being "educated" there, they are being warehoused until their 16<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Calling it "education" doesn't make it so.

If "necessity is the mother of invention" being without money and a job enabled me to discover how to learn, to improve my learning-competencies and to use what was available (the public library) to invent a new career. That career lasted 20 years. My third career (modeling human experiences of excellence) began after I learned NLP and its now been another 20 years. And yes, over that time

I got some degrees to validate the learnings, but getting a degree is not the same as getting an education. But more about that — next time.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #27**  
**June 22, 2015**  
**Learning #3**

## THE CRITERION OF LEARNING

### How Do You Know that You Have Learned?

When I went to the “University of the Public Library” (see the last Meta Reflection, #26) and got my education in therapy (not my schooling, that came later), even before my training in NLP, I knew that *the proof of the learning would be in the skills of competency*. I knew that the question would then be: “Could I translate what I was learning conceptually into good practice so that I could facilitate the healing, empowerment, and mindfulness of clients?” If I could not, had I really *learned* what I thought I was learning? If I could, then what I was discovering and learning in concept and principle was somehow becoming effective practice. Even today these are key questions about learning:

- How do you know if you have learned something?
- How can we measure “learning?”

Nearly every “school” deceives you and me in answering these questions. Most schools use *grades* as their way to measure learning. “If you make the grades, then presto, you must have learned!” Of course, today we know that a person can learn “how to take a test,” and how to develop testing competency, without actually being able to demonstrate what they supposedly learned. Others use degrees, certificates, diplomas, etc. as measurements of learning. They are also wrong. Degrees and certificates do not measure “learning,” they measure test-taking, jumping through hoops, meeting expectations of teachers, getting along with others, playing a political game, etc.

So what is the true measurement of learning? **Doing**. If you cannot *do*, if you cannot *perform the practices of a learning*, if you cannot turn the concept into a *competent performance*— *then you have not truly learned*. Doing demonstrates the practicality and reality of learning. That’s why in Neuro-Semantics we constantly talk about the Knowing—Doing gap and how to close that gap so that what you know you can do. This is the meaning of the Meaning—Performance axes that then generates the Self-Actualization Quadrants.

This was the test I began using when I started by third career of modeling human experiences of excellence. I began with Resilience. That was my first modeling project. I studied it for almost three years. But studying it, researching it, modeling it would have been insufficient. The test of that learning— “Would I be resilient in the face of life’s set-backs and knock-downs?” “Could I,

or would I, *bounce back* after a set-back with resilience—with hope, determination, inspiration, etc.?” The test would be in the doing.

Similarly, I used the same criterion of learning for the other studies—selling, leadership, negotiation, coaching, business, self-actualizing, etc. This reveals that *all true learning is experiential in nature*. It begins with what you can visualize, or say, or imagine, but it always leads to a kinesthetic engagement and practice. It always involves *embodying* the learning in practice, in getting high quality feedback from people who can make quality distinctions, and a deliberate practice of those details that make a difference.

So, how do you know if you have learned? Your behavior will be different, that’s how! Your actions are more refined, more developed, more thorough, more expansive, more flexible, etc. If you have truly learned—you can now demonstrate your learning. If you have thoroughly learned, you can demonstrate it at anytime and any place. You are now the master of that competence. You not only can talk about it, you can show it in your actions. You are now *able-to-respond* appropriately and adequately. And that means you are a responsible learner.

With this criteria, *competency measures true learning*. If you cannot *do*, you have only intellectually comprehended the subject, you have not learned it in your body. *Performance* is the true test. For this reason we set out in Neuro-Semantics to establish benchmarks for competencies in all of the things that we “teach” and that we “learn.” The behavioral benchmarks measures both the quantity and the quality of the learning performance. The benchmark also tells a person where he is on the scale of that performance and what his next steps are.

“Learning” without the ability to *do, to take effective actions, and to put into practice* actually perpetuates one of the central problems with this kind of insufficient learning. It widens the Knowing—Doing gap. You are filling your head with more intellectual understanding without activating your body to be able to *do* the actions of that understanding. In the long run, this will undermine your competence, and then your confidence, and then your enjoyment.

If *performance* is the ultimate criterion of learning, then learning is inherently and inevitably *experiential* and why we emphasize hands-on learning via trainings and coaching. Then you can give it a go, test it out, and see how much you can do at any given point. To the unleashing of your highest and best learnings!



**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #28**  
**June 29, 2015**  
*Learning #4*

## **TRYING TO FEEL GOOD WHEN LEARNING**

**What Do You Feel when You are truly and effectively Learning?**

I hear it all the time. People are constantly telling me that they “just want to feel confident.” Whether they are learning a new skill, whether they are facing a challenge, dealing with a blind-spot, actualizing a vision, suspending old meanings and constructing new ones—the one thing I can very frequently count on is that the person wants to “feel comfortable” when doing this. And always my very first thought is, “Good luck!”

Where this hunger to “feel good” and to “feel confident” comes from could be a variety of sources. It could come from being so used to “the good life,” and things coming easy. It could come from having watched too many Hollywood movies. It could come as a personal decision that the person no longer wants to work, exert effort, or exercise discipline. I suppose with different people it comes from different sources. The problem with it—it does not fit life as we know it on this planet.

This is especially true for learning. When it comes to wanting to learn something new, develop new skills and competencies, actualize the next level of development, deliberately practice a skill for a decade so that you can reach the level of expertise that you desire—*comfort and confidence* are two of the prices that you will be paying.

If that does not immediately make sense, then I guess I’ll need to write about the nature and the structure of learning and expertise. Learning is that state of mind where you do not know something that you know you need to know in order to progress. And when you *do not know something*, then you are unsure and uncertain and that means that what you are facing is new, different, unfamiliar, and uncomfortable. It means that you might be struggling to understand, to figure it out, to put it together, to make sense of it. It might mean that you are holding and embracing what you’re sure you will eventually *get*, but that right now you do not get, that seems confusing. After all, if you knew it, if you felt sure, if you were certain—there would be nothing to learn.

*Learning by its very nature involves uncertainty and ambiguity.* So if you have to be “comfortable” or worse yet, “confident” in order to learn—then kiss it good-bye. You will *not* learn very much.

You are in the absolutely worse state for learning. You are in a state that contradicts and opposes that experience of learning. How about that!? Isn't that interesting? So what state do you need to be in for the best learning?

- You need to be in a state of openness and receptivity.
- You need to be in a state of know-nothing, emptiness, curiosity, and wonder.
- You need to be in a state of embracing and welcoming uncertainty and discomfort. That's why people who demand comfort and security are actually not even open to learning.
- You need to be in a state of mind where you are anticipating receiving and discovering things that you did not know. That's why know-it-alls need not apply to the doorway of learning.
- You need to be in a state of mind of openness about mistakes and errors because it is through "trial and error" learning that we learn best. Then when you make a mistake, instead of hiding it, feeling ashamed about it, pretending that you did not really make a mistake—you wholeheartedly jump into the fact of the mistakes trying to harvest every learning from it that you can. And you are not satisfied until you understand the mistake and have a higher level learning-about-your learning and know that from now on you will be making new and more interesting mistakes.

What a paradox! The very states that you probably want when you are learning are the very states—both mental states and emotional states—that will undermine your effectiveness as a learner. Strange as it may seem—*comfort and confidence* are two states that will actually sabotage your learning, prevent you from getting it, and slow down the time it takes for you to learn. Conversely, some of the best learning states, states that will accelerate the time it takes and enhance the quality of your learning is *fascination with errors, wondering curiosity about what you are missing, and playfulness with running the mistake over and over to harvest its lessons*.

Sometimes when I approach a new area, one that I do not have a lot of experience with, I sense that its going to involve "a steep learning curve." What does that mean? For me it usually means that what I need to do is what I most naturally resist—being a student again, starting with a "beginner's mind" again, stepping into the know-nothing state, releasing my previous knowledge and experience and entering into it with "the innocent eye" — seeing things as if for the first time.

You and I were born for learning. It's our primary instinct. And for most people, they were in their best learning states when they were infants and young children—passionate learners. They were ready to explore, to curiously ask the dumbest of questions, and to try things on to see what would happen. Then of course we kill that accelerated learning state by sending kids to school!

Yet all is not lost. You can recover that childlike "innocent eye" and accelerate your learning today as an adult if you want to. The formula for that has just been revealed. And all you have to do is give up those pretentious "adult" states of confidence, know-it-all, comfort states and behind asking the best dumb questions. So, how much do you want to learn and meta-learn?

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #29**  
**July 6, 2015**  
*Learning #5*

## **STATES FOR ACCELERATING YOUR LEARNING**

There are states for accelerating your learning and there are states that will not only de-accelerate the learning, but actually bring your learning to nearly a stand-still. In the last “Neurons” (#28) I spoke about the state of trying to feel good when learning and how that will interfere with your learning. Because learning, by its very nature, means entering into a realm where you *do not know something* and/or are unsure, uncertain, confused, ignorant, etc. if you do not know how to *live comfortably with the discomfort of not-knowing*, then your dislike-of-your-discomfort will undermine your learning. You will be focused on your feelings rather than on your learning.

Let’s now focus on the states which will accelerate your learning. And probably the very best model for this is a young child who is still *a ferocious learning machine*. What enables a young child to be so incredibly able to learn? Isn’t it the drive of curiosity, the playfulness of experimenting, and the passion of being safe to learn? Put a small child in a home where two languages are spoken and the child will become fluent in both. If there are three languages, the child will fluently speak three. How do explain this?

The child isn’t “trying” to learn in the way that we adults “try.” The child’s trying is more that of playing around, testing, and experimenting. The child will jabber all sorts of sounds trying to make the sounds of the languages and he does that without any self-judgment, without any pressure for performance. The child will laugh and giggle and play at it. It’s fun. For the child there’s no mistakes, there’s just the practice and the play and there’s no long-term goal by which he is measuring himself.

Could this be the difference? Could we adults be *trying too hard*? Could we be interrupting the learning by our premature evaluations? Could we be inducing ourselves into states of pressure when we need states of fun and passion?

We know that children during the early years are passionate learners. They learn easily and quickly, and it doesn’t seem that they have to be trying. By way of contrast, if we fast-forward just a few years, with most children we begin to see a very different picture. They become less effective in learning, now learning becomes a struggle for them, now they have less passion, less fun, less experimenting. Now they may even come to “hate school,” think “learning is stupid,” despise and not want to go through that experience. So what’s happened? What has gone wrong?

Could it be that School has induced the wrong learning states? Could it be that the teachers and classes have not preserved the original passionate states about learning? Conversely, what if the

School and the teachers set out to create a context where a child's original learning states could be maintained? If that happened, they would aim to create a context for the drive of curiosity, the playfulness of experimenting, and the passion of being safe to learn. How would they do that? What changes would be required? What new skills would the teachers have to learn to be able to facilitate this?

I'm mostly involved with adult learning. In the trainings I conduct, the books and articles I write, the consultations and coaching sessions that I do, those I seek to influence are adults. This provides me two challenges. The first concerns the learning states and strategies of those who come to the trainers. The questions I ask myself regarding them are these:

Do they know how to learn? Do they have access to their best learning states when they arrive? Do they have an effective learning strategy?

Many simply do not. They want it but simply have not developed it. So in the trainings I assume responsibility for facilitating the context for inducing the best states—curiosity, relevance, fun, challenge, meaningfulness, playfulness, etc. With them I will use lots of practices (exercises) which will immediately challenge them to *do* something about the learning. Many “professional students” find that challenging and very uncomfortable. They want to passively receive and just sit back and think about it (philosophize) and not *do* anything.

The second concern is for those who have *learned* ineffective learning states and strategies. This is a bigger challenge because they not only lack the best states and strategies for learning, but they first have to do some *unlearning* to eliminate states and strategies that are in the way. Here I also ask myself lots of questions to discover the specific things that they have learned which now block and interfere and prevent effectively learning today.

Do you have permission in yourself to be confused? Do you have to get everything the first time? Do you put pressure on yourself to understand fully, to be able to perform with excellence, to pass the tests? Do you allow yourself to ask “dumb questions?” Do you mismatch everything you hear trying to find how it is different and not the same as what you already know? “That can't be right because of ....” Do you match everything you hear so that you put it into the categories you that you already know then you can tuck it away, “I already know that, it's the same as...”

Learning requires lots of things—openness, exploration, experimenting, trial and error, making mistakes, doing uncomfortable things, playing around, having fun, being silly, using your full mind-body system (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, etc.), interacting, reflecting, getting confused and living with the confusion, etc. Learning involves taking in information of all sorts, representing that information in multiple ways, using it, experimenting with it, seeing how it fits, its relevance, comprehending its meanings and significance, and integrating it into one's overall style and life.

Now given that the future belongs to those who are forever learning and learning faster and more thoroughly than the competition—the states and strategies of learning lie at the heart of business, of entrepreneurship, of wealth creation, of living an adventurous life, etc. Here's another thing about learning states and strategies—when you see a human being, regardless of age, in the accelerated learning states, you see someone *alive* mentally, emotionally, and physically. The accelerated

learning states makes that person *young, more vital, more passionate, more awakened to the wonder and mystery and joy of life*. For me, that's reason enough. Now, pass me that book! :)

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #30**  
**July 13, 2015**  
***Learning #6***

## COGNITIVE FILTERS THAT DIMINISH LEARNING

When it comes to learning, your very *way of thinking* may be undermining you. Fundamental to learning is thinking and if you have some *kinds of thinking styles* that prevent you from thinking effectively, then those *ways or styles* of thinking will diminish your learning. Interested?

If the answer is *yes*, then we are talking about your meta-programs and cognitive filters (which include cognitive distortions and cognitive biases). And these *meta-programs* can actually *prevent* you from learning. If you use any of these *programs* which are *meta* to your thinking (hence meta-programs) when you first encounter something new that you want to learn—they will *filter out* the new learnings and distinctions so that you do not learn. You do not get it, you do not understand it. Consequently, you will probably experience confusion, disagreement, and disorientation. You may look around you and see others getting it, learning, being able to then develop the new skills that the learnings lead to, but you cannot. I hope you are getting really interested now!

I have been speaking about this to audiences in the past year or two, usually at the beginning as we get started. Sometimes I wait until the second day after some people have begun to experience the difference between themselves and others and feeling frustrated, “They are getting it, I’m not. Why?” I spoke about this recently at NSTT this year in Mexico and this week in Guangzhou China during the ACMC training. Here are perhaps the most impactful meta-programs, as cognitive filters, that can undermine your ability to learn.

*Mismatching for difference.* If your frame of mind is to look for what’s different, then when you hear brand new information, you will not primarily be seeking to match your understanding to what is being presented. Instead, looking for differences, you will be mis-matching what the speaker is saying and you will be looking to see how it is not right or accurate. You will be saying inside your mind, “Yes, but...” Yet in doing so, you will not be learning something new, you will be trying to force what you are hearing to fit with what you already know. In terms of learning, this is a terrible strategy. Want to reverse this? Then set a frame of mind that you first will seek to fully and thoroughly understand what’s being presented and that you will sort for differences later.

*Options as alternative ways to do something.* If your frame of mind is that you are forever looking

for options and for alternatives, then when you hear new information and especially a procedure for how to understand something or do something, then you will not follow the procedure. No, you will try to creatively figure out another way to do it. Doing that, of course, will prevent you from learning the correct way to do it from the start. Now you will miss out on learning how to play up and down the notes on a musical instrument and trying to jump forward to playing music. Yet without having incorporated the foundational procedure, you lack the fundamentals for building more advanced skills. Want to reverse this mind-set? Then set a frame of mind that procedures provide the foundation for more advanced understandings and skills.

*Discounting small steps.* In the mental state of discounting, when you notice that something is working or of value, you have a tendency to frame it in such a way that you end up saying, “It doesn’t count.” It does not count because it is too small, too little, too late, too easy, too simple, because anyone could do it, etc. Yes, it may be just a “baby step” forward, but if you discount it, you miss its significance and value. When you use this frame of mind when you are trying to learn something new, you trash the small bits and pieces of the new, bits that could possibly come together later to create a life-changing concept. In the context of learning, you can discount by saying, “Oh, I know that.” “That’s the same as ...” “Everybody knows that.” You may discount by setting your ears on high alert for big discoveries and insights, then everything smaller than that is automatically discounted as insignificant. Want to reverse this cognitive filter? Set up a he frame of mind so that you look for small pieces and variables. Ask yourself, “What could be great about this?” “How could this contribute to an ever larger insight?”

*Strong-willed in temperament.* This phrase is a description of a person who “cannot be told.” A strong-willed person *must* make his own choices and does not take instructions very well. This person has to do it her way or she feels imposed upon, control, and in a prison. As a semantic meta-program the person identifies one’s self with will or choosing, “I am a chooser.” In this way the person semantically loads “choosing” with so much meaning, then he cannot follow another’s instruction without feeling controlled or pressured by that person. In the learning context, the person will not follow instructions. She will sabotage them; he will avoid them in all sorts of creative ways. Yet in not following the instructions the person prevents himself from learning. His emotions and issues of control keep getting in the way of the learning. Want to reverse this cognitive filter? Set a new frame of mind that when learning something new, you are choosing to following the instructions of others.

There are additional meta-programs that play into diminishing learning. For an entire book on Meta-Programs, see *Figuring Out People* (1999/ 2007).

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #31**  
**July 20, 2015**  
**Learning #7**

## **LEARNING AND THE TIME COGNITIVE FILTERS**

Here is something so obvious that it is a truism: *You can't learn* very well or not at all *if you are not present*. That is, if you are not fully in the *here-and-now* as far as the time-zone that you are in, you will not get very much or remember very much, to wit, you will diminish your learning. How could you not? If your mind is drifting off into memories of the past—nostalgic memories or memories of regress and distress, or if your mind is drifting off into the future—worrying about remembering(!) or planning for dinner or a hot date or whatever—then you are not even *present* in the present moment to learn whatever is available to learn.

One of the readers of *Neurons*, Antonina Bivona, wrote after last week's *Meta Reflection* (#30) the following which nudged me to write yet another one on the Cognitive Filters which can undermine the ability to learn.

“I think one of the most debilitating mental frames is one's perception of time. I have noticed over the years a distinct escalating of anxiety about time: how this anxiety affects us, as individuals and as society, seems to me a very important, but not widely acknowledged factor, in diminishing our learning, both our disposition towards new learning and our ability to enjoy the process of learning. Many thanks and best regards, Antonina.”

“*The escalating anxiety about time.*” Ah yes. I saw and heard this last week in Guangzhou China while doing the APMC training for Meta-Coaching. What I saw and heard were people *so worried about getting the score and reaching the benchmark for their coaching skills that they were not listening* to the client who was sitting in front of them. And of course, if you are not listening— then the quality of your support, rapport, questioning, state induction, frame, pattern detection, and on and on will suffer. It will actually suffer a lot! After all, the *quality of all of the other coaching skills depends on listening*. In other words, on learning— listening to learn the client's objective, style, patterns, state, etc.

In NLP we recognize that there are several “perceptions of time.” One time-filter is *the time-zones* (past, present, and future), another is the meta-program of in-time and through-time (actually, out-of-time). The cognitive filter of the time-zones is what keeps seducing all of us to *not be present*, but to be somewhere else. Regarding this filter, the more I spend my mental-and-

emotional energy, focus, and time in the past or in the future, then I will not be present. And if I'm not present, not in the here-and-now, then I will be missing what's going on in this moment. In terms of learning *comprehension* and *memory*, no wonder I don't do well in comprehending and remembering— two key facets of learning. Here then are two additional cognitive filters which will diminish your learning and your capacity to learn.

Suppose you are anxious about the past, reading what's happening *now* in terms of some past event and not able to truly see, recognize, and deal with today for what it is, but constantly coloring it in terms of the past. Then whatever happened in the past will keep blinding you from learning what is possible for you to learn today. Suppose you are anxious about the future, worrying about what the things of today (studying or being assessment) will mean for you tomorrow. That, of course, will send your mind and awareness away from what you are doing *now* thereby reducing your learning in this moment.

So as obvious as it may seem, *you can't learn very well if you are not present in the here-and-now moment*. Yet being present in the now is not easy. In fact, the more you experience and learn— the more likely you will not be present but in another time zone. No wonder Perls constantly urged that we “lose our mind and come back to our senses.”

Regarding the cognitive filter of being in-time or out-of-time, this meta-program enables two divergent skills: spontaneity in the moment and awareness of the movement of the moments and how they fit into the larger scheme of things. This correspond to being in the sensory-awareness of a primary state (in-time) and being in the ability to recognize larger patterns of time from the meta-state of perspective (out-of-time or through-time). Both are important and necessary which explains why you need at least two time-lines to be effective in life.

The in-time filter enables you to be present to experience the moment and to make a vivid representation of what you've seen, heard, felt, etc. However, if that's all you do, you will have lots and lots of experiences without a way to sort things out or meta-learn about them. The out-of-time (through-time) filter enables you to encode when, where, and with whom you had an experience and learning and to put it within a larger framework of meaning.

When you are in a learning mode, how anxious are you about time? Are you worrying that you don't have enough time? That you are under pressure and have to hurry? Do you use past learning events as a reference point for what the learning that you are now engaged in? When in a learning experience are you fully present and able to slow your sense of time down? How effective are you in your use of time for accelerating your learning? If this interests you, see the book, *Adventures in Time* (1997) that Bob and I wrote.



**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #32**  
**July 27, 2015**  
**Learning #8**

## WHAT IS LEARNING REALLY?

*What is learning?* As I've been defining learning in all of these posts about learning, there are numerous ways to think about learning and about all of the facets of learning. Now before I read what Husserl, the founder of Phenomenology, said in defining learning, I would have said that it is knowledge. Learning is increasing one's knowledge base in order to become more knowledgeable. And while learning does involve that, it is more than that. Here's what Husserl wrote:

“Learning is not the *accumulation* of scraps of knowledge. It is *growth*, where every act of knowledge develops the learner, thus making him capable of constituting ever more and more complex objectivities—and the object growth in complexity parallels the subjective growth in capacity.”

This fits with the very heart of Self-Actualization Psychology where the *Being-Values* of knowledge, understanding, learning, meaning, meaningfulness, and wisdom replace, for us humans, what instincts do for animals. We do not have information-loaded instincts; we only have blind, deaf, and mute impulses that create a multitude of urges within our mind-body system. For any given impulse we have to ask, what do this mean? What is this urge? How do I fulfill it truly and accurately? This is the place where we have to learn. We have to gain knowledge so that we understand what the urges are, what satisfies them, how to effectively cope with them, how to maximize our biological urges and when we do—we experience an increase in mental, emotional, and physical vitality.

The bottom line is that because we do not come with innate knowledge regarding what they mean, we have to learn. If there's any human “instinct,” it is the instinct to learn. And good news: *When we learn, we unleash our potentials. That is, we grow.* We grow as human beings; we develop our possibilities; we grow in maturity and wisdom. So again, what is learning? Learning involves knowledge yet it involves so much more.

Learning is our primary source for *becoming* all that we can become.

“So what?” you ask. Lots! You learn best and you accelerate your learning when *you learn to grow.* So if you are reading something and I approach and ask you the following, what would you say?

“Oh you're reading! What are you reading? How will *you* change based on this reading? What will this reading and study do for you *as a person*? How will it enable you to be a

better person? How much have you been growing *while* you've been reading right now? What will be some of the first things that you will do based on this study?"

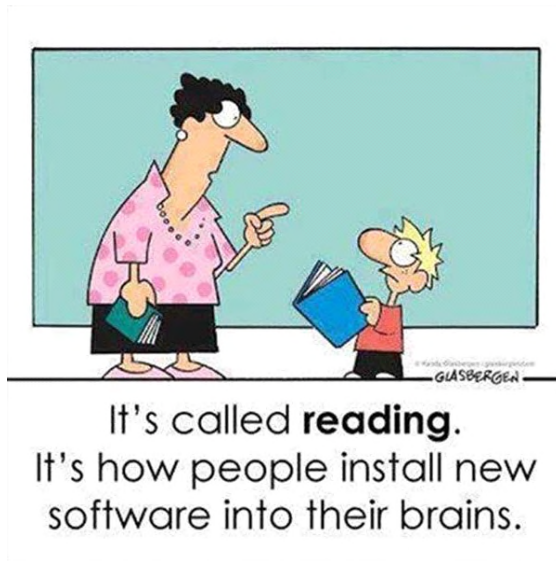
Now if you frame learning as just intellectual data, and not personal, and not an aspect of actualizing your best potentials, then you might even think of learning either intellectual information which is either relevant or irrelevant, as exciting or boring, as an effort or just for entertainment, etc. Yet if you frame learning as primarily a mental exercise, you thereby diminish the richness of what learning could do for you. It won't excite you and put you in a state of joyful anticipation and wonder about your own self-development.

Gregory Bateson created a model of the levels of learning, from *Level 0* where there's no learning, one knows and does the same thing over and over. *Level 1* you expand what you know so that your learning becomes richer. *Level 2* you learn how to learn by adding new learning skills and strategies to your learning (meta-learning). *Level 3* you learn how your meta-learning works so that you can change the way you are learning and the assumptive frames you are working from.

He also called that model a model of the levels of change. That's because when you learn, you change. That's true on both the macro-level and on the microscopic level. This is easy to see at the macro-level because as you learn and know more, and know different, you talk and act differently. It is equally true at the microscopic level as neurons are activated differently in your brain, new neuro-pathways are created, assemblages of cells are stimulated in new ways, etc.

What then is learning? It is actually the heartbeat of personal change and growth and development. This means that *learning* can be one of the ways that you actualize your highest meanings (visions and values) and best performances. This explains why for self-actualizing people school is never out, learning is never completed. It explains why self-actualizing people are continuous learners and why they live on the edge of excitement when it comes to adult learning. They not only learn, they keep learning about their learning and that meta-learning enables them to get better, more skilled, more competent about their learning.

In Neuro-Semantics we see *learning* as a core competency for ongoing personal development, competency in business, relationships, wealth creation, health and well-being, leadership, and much more.



**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #33**  
**August 3, 2015**  
**Learning #9**

## **FEEDBACK FOR ACCELERATING LEARNING**

“Are you clear about what your client wants?” I asked this of one of our new participants learning Meta-Coaching not too long ago. She did not hesitate, not for a second, “Yes!” “You are?!” I responded trying my best to sound incredulous as I could. I then commented, “I’m really confused, I don’t know anything about what your client is speaking about, I t’s all very vague to me.” I said this hoping to get a question from the coach-in-training. But no. Nothing. I looked at the benchmarker, but he did not have anything else to say. No. So she started up again and as predicted, for the next four or five minutes the session didn’t go anywhere.

At that point I asked the benchmarker if he wanted to interrupt. After all, that was my job. I was supervising the benchmarkers and sitting in with each of them to see how they were doing and to give them feedback about their supervising of the coaching sessions. “Yes? No?” He said “yes” and then said a few words to the coach, but he didn’t address the ongoing lack of clarity. So I interrupted again. We do this in Meta-Coaching because of our basic principle, we do not want people to coach wrong. They can do that anywhere so we don’t want them to do that here.

This time when I interrupted I said, “What’s preventing this from progressing? I think it is the lack of clarity, the theme of the session has not be grounded. Here are ten things about what your client

wants which I would need to know if I were to coach the client...” And then I mentioned at least 10 items that were not clear to me about what the client was saying. Then to drive home the point of getting these details, I asked the client, “Do you know the answer to these things?” “No,” she did not. “Do you think you need to?” “Yes.”

At the end of the session we spent most of the 15 minutes for the benchmarker to provide feedback to the coach on his or her skills and to then debrief the structure of the session. Once that was complete, I asked the benchmarker what he had learned. He thought and thought and finally said something about the value of grounding the session. I commented that his answer was just about as vague as the coach had been. “So what will you do differently next time?” Again he was nearly speechless. Then he was saved by the bell so we had to quit.

Later the other Meta-Coach trainer and myself chose nine benchmarkers of the 18 to be those officially qualified to “sign off” Meta-Coaches when they sit for assessment. We thought those nine had sufficient skills to give feedback and benchmark the skills. But the previous benchmarker was one of the nine not chosen. He and another one didn’t like the fact that they were not chosen. But they didn’t say that to me directly. I heard about it from someone else who heard it. In fact, I later found out that they were pretty upset about it.

Among the other seven who were also not chosen, they asked learning-based questions, “Why do you think I’m not ready to sign people off?” “What do I need to do so that I can be ready?” The other two could have asked those kinds of questions. They could have said, “I want to be officially recognized as someone with the skill to give feedback and benchmark and sign someone off as having reached the competency level. What skill should I work on?” If they had, I would have given them specific details about their skills, examples, and what to do to reach that level. After all, the purpose of supervising them is to enable them to develop the required skills.

Now on the skill of *Receiving Feedback* we have at the 3.0 level the behavior of asking questions, exploring what to do, and then getting excited about knowing what to do that will make a difference. Yet these two actually demonstrated the opposite of that skill. Instead of treating the feedback as important information for their learning and development, they got upset. They talked about it, or rather complained, to others. And in doing this, they showed that they actually had not developed the skill of receiving feedback and using it for learning. They showed that they didn’t have the right attitude and that would have made them a very poor example of receiving of feedback effectively. For me that was further evidence that they were not ready to sign others off. If they can’t receive feedback, they are not ready to give it.

They probably need to repeat what we do on Day 2 of the ACMC training— *create a personalized Matrix for receiving feedback effectively*. In that way they could reframe the feedback as valuable information, as data for learning, as a way to sharpen their skills, as a tool for accelerating their learning, etc. For the majority of people who attend the training, this is essential. That’s because most people get “feedback” in school and early job experiences which is not “feedback” at all but judgment, criticism, rejection, and insult. No wonder the word “feedback” is so loaded semantically that it puts people off and even induces a state of fear and dread!

Yet ultimately real *feedback* (what people say and do) is just *information*. At best it is the persons experience of you through that person's filters and background. Hopefully the person has learned how to present it in a clean and objective way. If so, then it comes as an excellent opportunity for accelerating your learning. If so, ask more about it. Explore it with the person. If not, then realizing that most people don't know how to give it in a clean and clear way so that it is high quality feedback, you may have to work to get it formulated in that way. Do that, and you will really have the ability to accelerate your learning.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #34**  
**August 10, 2015**  
***Creating Response-Able Persons #1***  
***Unleashing Your Response-Abilities***

## **ARE YOU RESPONSE-ABLE?**

If you want to unleash your potentials and live a self-actualizing life, if you want to make the most of your possibilities and live life as fully as possible (and who doesn't?)—then you have to *unleash your responsibility powers*. It's required. No one can give you this. You have to choose it and then you have to act on it. You have to begin to unleash within yourself living a more responsible way of life. Self-actualization is that simple and it is that profound.

In Neuro-Semantics we train and coach this subject by beginning at the core—with identifying and accessing your innate, inevitable, and inescapable *powers*. This is pattern number one in APG (Accessing Personal Genius, also known as Self-Leadership and Coaching Genius). We *identify* these powers because so many people live their lives and talk as if they are completely unaware and unconscious that they have these innate personality powers. They talk victim talk. They talk as if they are helpless. They talk depression talk. They talk as if they are hopeless. They talk as if they are not human beings with these innate powers, but helpless victims living in a deterministic universe where they are fated and controlled and forced.

Now the profound simplicity of what follows will elicit in some people yawning boredom and in others “Aha!” eureka moments. Yet whether you yawn or go Yahoo! it all depends on the meanings you construct. And the “problem” with the meanings we construct is that because our innate powers

are so simple many will discount them. Yet the implications are incredibly profound for your everyday experiences and how you can create actualize so much more of your potentials.

What are your innate powers? They are your powers of mind, emotion, speech, and behavior. They are *your mental powers* for thinking, representing, framing, evaluating, imagining, remembering, and much, much more. They are *your emotional powers* to “move” yourself “out” (ex-motion) from your current state to your desired states and to feel the full range of human emotions, to develop your emotional intelligence (EQ) and live with love, joy, peace, passion, compassion, appropriate fear and anger, hope, excitement, etc. They are *your linguistic powers* of speech which enables you to inquire to understand, assert to explain, explore to learn, invite in and set boundaries to keep out, bless and curse, heal and wound, to tell stories, make music with poetry, create hypothesis, etc. they are *your behavioral powers* to gesture, take action, plan, converse with others, create partnerships, do risk management, practice, persist, bounce back (be resilient), etc.

In other words, *you have incredible powers within your very person*. How amazing! Are you amazed? Are you impressed? In these powers, you have all of the foundational resources to actualize your potentials. These powers give you all the resources that you need for almost every skill on Planet Earth. After all (and here is a tremendous secret), *every skill is comprised of these four powers*. Where we are talking about doing surgery, dentistry, driving a car, flying a plane, deep sea diving, building a generator, being a general manager, leading a company, managing your budget, exercising regularly, being a loving partner, parenting, teaching, coaching, whatever— all skills are comprised of these four powers.

When you identify and become aware of these powers, you create the meta-state of *awareness* of your *powers*. That’s first, but that’s not the end. Next you need to *take ownership* of this awareness and these powers. That creates the next level frame-of-mind or meta-state, *ownership* of your powers. By then owning your responses and deepening that so it becomes fully embodied, you begin to feel you innate powers— hence the gestalt meta-state of *responsibility*. From this other meta-states are now able to emerge: *proactivity, taking the initiative, openness to action, bias to action, courage, risk-taking*, etc.

In Neuro-Semantics, trainers frequently use the quotation from Viktor Frankl to drive home the power of being response-able. When in the concentration camp that Hitler set up to kill those who he hated, Frankl lived on a meager eight-ounces of soup and a piece of bread every day. As a young doctor and psychiatrist he was stripped of his clothes and possessions, he was imprisoned for no misdeed except he for Hitler’s hatred. His mother and father were killed, so was his wife and sister. And yet ... in the midst of that hell, in the midst of that unjust cruelty he later wrote in *Man’s Search for Meaning*:

“They can take everything away from me, but they cannot make me hate them.”

Talk about power! He maintained to the end his *power to respond as he chose*. His thinking and feeling was his and they could not control that! In fact, within the hell of that camp he developed *Logo-Therapy* and came out basically unscathed because he gave his experience meaning. Another of his powers that he refused to relinquish. He owned his power to construct meaning about things

and would not let them set the frame—*he set the frame for himself*. He identified and owned his response-powers and embodied them so that he did not feel—even in *that* situation—that he was not in charge of himself and had the freedom to live life as he wanted to. Did I mention this was profound?

No wonder he was later recognized in the field of Humanistic or Self-Actualization Psychology as one of the pioneering thinkers for his development of Logo-Therapy. The amazing thing is that he came out of the concentration camp showing no signs of having been traumatized. Now how fantastic is that? This means that even *trauma* is not merely what happens to you, no matter how hurtful, it also involves what *you do with it*. So, what do you do with things not being fair? With disappointments, hurts, accidents, disasters? You can think and feel and talk and act like a victim—that's within your power. You can also think and feel and talk and act like a person with *response-powers at your command*. Then you can forge the kind of life you want—and make the most of things. And it all begins by identifying and owning your four foundational powers. Read more about your response-ability powers in *Secrets of Personal Mastery* (1997).

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #35**  
**August 17, 2015**  
***Creating Response-Able Persons #2***

## **FERGUSON AGAIN**

### **What's the Real Problem?**

This past week was the one-year anniversary of the original shooting of Mike Brown in Ferguson Missouri which then led to thousands protesting and then to rioting which involved burning down businesses, looting, stealing, etc. That was a year ago. Now it seems to be happening again. At least this week there has been more protesting and rioting and more shootings. So, what is this all about? On the surface, the protesters say that it is about police brutality. Then there are the criminals among the protesters who use the protest as a cover for violence. Yet is it really about police brutality?

In the past year Eric Holder led a Federal Investigation directed by Obama and in the end they completely cleared and vindicated the policeman who shot Mike Brown. Meanwhile more Black policeman have joined the Ferguson Police Department, other African Americans have been joined the City Counsel and other community organizations. So, given these improvements, what's the *real* problem? What do the protesters *really* want? What do the rioters *really* want?

In asking this question, I want to go deeper than the surface answers. Many people and the media

keep perpetuating the false narrative that Mike Brown had raised his hands and said “don’t shoot.” The evidence however has shown that to be false. Brown actually attacked the policeman, grabbed his gun, caused it to go off. Then there’s the shallow and false answer that young black men all around the country are being targeted by police everywhere. To prove that, the pundits collect every incident where a white policeman shot a young black man and then over-generalize to draw this conclusion of police racism and brutality. The problem with that narrative is that it over-generalizes from a few instances by a few individuals assuming it is all the same. It is not.

### **Deeper Questions**

Let’s go back and ask some deeper questions:

*What is the real problem? What do all of the participants in these protests and riots want?  
What drives human beings to protest and what motivates human beings to become violent?*

I’ll start with the subject of violence. Obviously violence against persons and property is a physical response and yet it inevitably occurs within a psychological context. So what is that context? It is *powerlessness*. It is the sense of impotence in feeling that one has the ability to effectively make one’s life better, to change things for the better, to address perceived injustices, and to unleash one’s potentials for being fully one’s best self. When one feels powerless to effect change and to make things better—violence becomes the person’s only option.

Now the idea that *powerlessness lies at the heart of violence* is an idea that numerous people have suggested for a long time. It is a central theme in Rollo May’s book, *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence*. The premise is that when people feel powerless then their felt sense of life is such that they have nothing to lose. This is what makes them dangerous. Rollo May (1975) said that those who act violently in our society are largely seeking to establish their self-esteem, to defend their self-image, and to demonstrate that they too are significant.

“Violence arises not out of superfluity of power, but out of powerlessness.” (May, p. 23)

“Violence is a symptom. The disease is variously powerlessness, insignificance, injustice—in short, a conviction that I am less than human and I am homeless in the world.” (p. 243)

### **Powerlessness and Violence**

It is true that more young black men are arrested, and even killed, than those of any other group. Yet that fact alone does not tell us why. It does not account for all of the factors that come together to make that so. What is at the source of all the violence? How is it that many others can get caught up in the violence, into the mob mentality, and start to do senseless acts of destructive violence which pushes their own people and communities?

Given this, why is there so much of a sense of powerless among young Black men and in the urban Black communities? As a psychologist, one thing that stands out to me is that there are so few pathways for opportunity to the American Dream for them. By the time so many of them become adolescents, the key pathways to opportunity are seemingly gone—education, excellent role models at home or in the community, and mentorship in business acumen.

The power to control their lives and manage their future which they could have is mostly no longer



available to them—at least in their perspective. For the majority of young black men, the culture of home and ethnic race mocks learning and education, “That’s for nerds and whites.” Their school systems has failed to provide a context of learning, mentoring, and role modeling. The Hollywood and Sports Cultures have dangled the idea of “get rich quick” and “get fame quick” via sports, music, and entertainment. The drug culture has provided a context for escaping the pain and anxiety but carries the price of addiction and then the need for more money for more drugs. Then the vicious cycle of all these factors and more leaves young urban people in a state of feeling powerless to do anything positive about all of this.

### **Powerlessness and Personal Significance**

Here then is the real problem: by making people powerless in these ways, we have unintentionally promoted violence. Often violence is the end result of repressed anger and rage. So what are they angry about? They don’t sense that they have a legitimate way to struggle for a sense of significance. And, after all, “power and the sense of significance are intertwined.” (May, p. 35). And because no human being can exist for long without some sense of his or her own significance, the possibility of violence increases.

If this is the case, then people are looking for something whereby they can assert themselves and affirm themselves. This is a basic psychological principle, namely, we can only develop as a person to the extent that we can affirm ourselves and assert ourselves. Take that away, and there will inevitably be anger and rage. Recognizing this Rollo May wrote:

“The challenge before us is to find ways that people can achieve significance and recognition so that destructive violence will not be necessary.” (p. 179)

What then do the protesters want? What do the rioters want? Is it not a structure whereby they can attain a strong sense of personal dignity, value, and meaningfulness? This points us back to the problem of the black culture in which the protesters and rioters live. While many come out of that culture just fine, many do not. Many come out with a set of values that they learned at home or church— others come out without such. That’s what’s missing—a set of values, personal discipline and responsibility that values self and resiliently handles the challenges of life. But with 72% of black babies born to unwed mothers (and the majority are teenagers at that) they are set up for poverty and all of the banes of urban life. The young black men are set up for lacking a strong responsible male image in the home.

Others are victims of other sub-cultures dominant in the black community such as the Victim Culture which frames the problem as centuries of slavery, that they are victims, that they cannot compete on even footing with others, that they should be entitled to special privileges, etc. Yet others have been programmed by the hip-hop culture that seems to think it is cool to call women bitches and hoes and each other by the N-word and to sing and dance about violence— assuming that it is just music and entertainment and it will do no damage. That’s the delusion.

### **Violence and Interpretation**

There’s another factor about violence however that we must face: Violence is not automatic. Just because a person feels mistreated, unfairly treated, is frustrated and angry, is even outraged, that

alone does not guarantee violence. Where there is a violent response by a human being, there is also *a human interpretation*. The reason for this is because we do not just react as humans, we *respond*. We choose our responses (and hence we are ultimately responsible for our choices and actions).

What does this mean regarding violence? It means that *how* you interpret a situation determines your readiness to strike back in hostility or perhaps to simply smile and move on. This means that *how* you see and interpret the world about you is crucial to whether you respond in violence or not. If one's interpretations are decisive, then where are people getting their frames by which they create their interpretations of things?

From their culture! That's why *the culture of ideas, beliefs, understandings, etc.* — the Hollywood culture, the hip-hop culture, the victim culture, the school system culture, the family culture, the church culture, the political culture *lies at the heart of the problem*. Here's another way that we are responsible for the violence in our society. We are feeding these ideas which people then use for interpreting which creates their anger and sense of injustice in the first place. The real problem lies in the ways that people are interpreting their perceived sense of injustice.

### **Solutions**

What's the solution? Let's go back to the solution Rollo May suggested in 1975.

“The challenge before us is to find ways that people can achieve significance and recognition so that destructive violence will not be necessary.”

The problem isn't power, *power is the solution*. Power is the birthright of every human being and that's why each person has four fundamental powers of response (Meta-Reflection #34). Power provides each of us a source for a solid sense of self which enables us to like ourselves and feel interpersonally significant. Power enables one to have response-power (response-ability) which lets him know that he or she can make a difference to improve one's life.

If powerlessness is the problem and source of violence, then the more we empower people to take charge of their lives, take ownership of their responsibilities, embrace the power of learning, the more we undercut the need for violence. Doing this will actually reduce the sense of injustice. By taking responsibility for how we interpret things, we will stop over-generalizing, stop framing ourselves as victims, stop waiting for someone to rescue us, and start taking creative action.

To undermine powerlessness, we need to reframe the current cultural interpretation. Too many people interpret what a person *is* by what he *does* or what she *has*. They make self-esteem conditional and dependent. Do that and then the lack of knowledge and skills, the incompetence to handle life's demands create a sense of impotent powerlessness which, in turn, leads to violence. Let's change this to *your value as a human being is unconditional*—so assert it. Affirm it. Don't let a toxic culture tell you that you're a nothing if you don't have things or can't achieve things.

The interpretation that the injustices of 2015 are equivalent to those of 1960 is another source of anger and violence. The protests today are very different from those of the 1960s and are not a continuation of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. Then there was segregation and unjust laws on

the books which disadvantaged the Blacks and privileged the Whites. But all of that has changed. Today, where there is racism, it is in a few individuals, it is no longer in the system. From time to time, a rouge policeman is discovered picking on Blacks and today, with everyone having a phone camera that person is usually identified and dealt with as he should be.

Interpreting things in these inadequate ways and undermining the pathways that would empower people with a sense of significance, choice, responsibility, and hope lies at the heart of the problem. The challenge today is to change these things. It is to enable people to gain true and authentic *personal power* to take charge of their lives in healthy ways, then the violence will go away. What the protesters and even the rioters *really* want is what we all want—to be able to actualize ourselves to be fully alive and human. This is the self-actualization drive within all people and is what we in Neuro-Semantics are dedicated to.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #36**  
**August 24, 2015**

## **GIVE ME A NON-POLITICIAN!**

Who makes the best person for political office— a politician or a non-politician? Having seen the mess that career politicians have been making of things in the USA and in other countries, the idea really appeals to me that we should try a non-politician for a change. Now having published a book earlier this year on *Political Coaching* (2015), I have been fascinated by the psychology, the neuro-linguistics, and the neuro-semantic of politics. Having now studied political science and having followed politics using NLP and Neuro-Semantics for more than a decade, there are a couple of phenomena which is currently taking American politics by storm. One is the fact that leading the poles are three non-politicians: Donald Trump, Dr. Ben Carson, and Carly Fiorina.

Now one person who most thought was the least likely person ever to be a serious candidate was Donald Trump. Pundits and critics did not take him serious in the least for the first weeks of his campaign. Then a week ago in New Hampshire, Donald Trump was called for jury duty and was asked to fill out a form which asked about his occupation. He said he could not bring himself to write, “Politician.” “I just can’t do it. So I wrote, Real Estate.”

I like that. Having studied several biographies of Lincoln, Jefferson, Mandela, and others, the paradox is that when almost anyone becomes “a professional politician” this invites and seduces that person to become their worse self, not their best. Why? Probably because by making your living *in politics and by politics* so often leads to corruption. When that happens the person is easily bought by interest groups so that he no longer serves the people. Anyway I like that about Donald Trump, and come to think of it, there are certain other things that I also like about him. I’m *not* writing this to promote his candidacy, but to point out some of the non-politician like things that he’s doing which is endearing him to people.

### ***1) Trump is not Politically Correct.***

In recent years, the need to be *politically correct* (PC) has reached levels that would make the fictional characters in George Orwell’s classic, *1984*, proud. To be *politically correct* (PC) means to say the right words, and use the right euphemisms, and to not be too blunt or direct. Well, Trump doesn’t do that. Not at all. And because of that, it has caused a fervor among the pundits, journalists, and his rivals. Nor does he make any bones about it. He speaks his mind. He speaks off-the-cuff and there have been times when speaking he is actually thinking aloud about a topic, which he will adjust a few days later. I like that. You get the real thing with him, rather than the crafted “speaking points” that have been refined by pollsters and speech writers.

How different from the lawyer-like politicians who are oh-so-careful in how they speak. You can see and hear them being very “careful” in their speech, measuring their words, as if anticipating who could get an advantage over them if they speak what they really think.

By way of contrast Trump calls things as he sees them, as they are, and does so even if it offends their PC sensitivities. Apparently lots of other people also like it because it is a breath of fresh air in a field that is so staid and so obsessively politically correct. He speaks extemporaneously and without a script and that makes him sound real and authentic. And that no-nonsense approach is something I find desirable in a politician.

### ***2) He has lots of fun with his speeches.***

Because he doesn’t even try to be politically correct, he is not stiff and formal. Instead he is informal and real, and watching him, it’s obvious that he is thoroughly enjoying himself and his audience. He will interact with the audience the way an entertainer does, not the way a politician does. That’s why people find him entertaining while he speaks and makes his points. Further, he’s had years of experience with this kind of a thing. For years he produced a business show on TV (how boring would that be) but did so in the most entertaining way. *The Apprentice* was always very well designed and put together so that it was a very high rating show and he played off of the “someone will be fired in the boardroom” theme. That is, he knows how to use the twin forces of away-from and toward to generate a creative tension. The intelligence to do this is a social and emotional intelligence that I have not heard anyone speak about.

### ***3) He openly and unashamedly speaks about greatness.***

At first the pundits and commentators took his over-generalized language as a sign that he lacked details and was not able to be specific. They heard him talking about making “American great

again.” Or how he would describe someone as great, awesome, a smart cookie, terrific, etc. When asked about his own company, he doesn’t hesitate one moment to say he has a great company full of great people. When asked about how he is going to build the wall on the southern borders and a comment about Mexicans, he says that he has hundreds of great Hispanic people working for him, and that “the Mexican people are great, it’s their politicians who are sending murders and rapists here;” and “they are smarter than our politicians.”

He also speaks about the greatness of America and being a great president for jobs, great on the military, building it so that it is great again. When interviewed about his vision he talked about what we can do, not what we cannot do. How different that is from so many of the professional politicians who downplay greatness.

#### ***4) He thinks and talks like a CEO.***

Well, of course he talks like a CEO! He is the CEO of his business, Trump Enterprises, and has been since he created it by himself as an entrepreneur. Long time before this, two decades ago, I was reading him about real estate and wealth creation. Business is his background and in terms of building a company, or buying a company, he talks like a business man. He focuses on competency, intelligence, and results. I think his appeal is that everything about his style goes against incompetency and bureaucracy. Business people know that there is not an unending amount of money, they plan, they budget, they watch the numbers, they adjust. Politicians seem to not know where money comes from and somehow get confused to think that the money belongs to the government.

Many are speaking about Trump as “articulating the anger and frustration of the population.” I wonder if that’s the dynamic at work or if he is simply coming to the issues of the country, the issues of government, from the perspective of business and simply doing what anyone with business acumen would see and say. Effective business people see problems and get to work fixing them. That’s what I sense that he is doing.

He speaks about building a wall. American politicians have been talking about this for 30 years; they have debated it for that long. Very little has been done. Opponents say it cannot be done. Trump says why not? We only have 2,000 miles to cover, and only actually 1,000 miles is needed. “That is nothing compared to the 13,000 miles of the Great Wall of China.” he says. He quotes the Wall that Israel has built to protect its borders. Business people talk about how to get things done.

When asked about how he would go about defeating ISIS, some people like President Obama say it cannot be done. We can only degrade them a bit. Trump says “go into the oil fields, take them over, stop ISIS’ primary source of income, and then take over the oil to pay for fighting the war against them.” Now that’s thinking like a business man, not a politician.

#### ***5) He hits back hard when he is hit.***

At first when I heard him hit back hard I didn’t understand it and I certainly didn’t like it. I thought that his critical and negative comments would undermine his chances. But then some

strange happened. Unlike others who have done so and suffered a severe set-back, each time he hit back at someone, he seems to come out stronger. During July and August, there were lots of people mocking him, and attacking him. His response, “When I’m attacked, I will attack back.” And he did. As they called him names, so he called them names— “Losers” was, and is, a favorite. And he usually hit back hard. He would as one on CNN said, “spew invectives.”

In giving them a strong dose of their own medicine it would, at first, caused things to flare up even more. But after awhile many of his critics stopped. He would do it without empathy or apology. At first I thought, “This political game that he’s playing is a dangerous one and will probably destroy him.” But it didn’t. In part, it was his refusal to be politically correct, but in part it was administering a strong dose of aversion therapy.

It reminded me of a proverb in the Bible. “Answer not a fool according to the ways of the fool, lest you be like him. Answer a fool according to the ways of a fool lest he be wise in his own eyes.” (Proverbs 23:3-4). So what is it? Do you or don’t you? The answer is *yes*. Sometimes you answer a fool in the same way; sometimes you don’t. It all depends. At first I didn’t like it because in most contexts, when you get into a word fight with someone—name calling, insulting, criticizing, taking jabs—it doesn’t make things better. Mostly it alienates even your friends. And that’s not good. Yet when we move to a much, much larger context, to the national political context, where people do not already know you, do not know your character, then the attacks and criticisms— if you smile and leave it alone and take the higher road—people will usually assume that the attacks are true and that you have nothing to say to the contrary.

#### **6) *He is funding his own campaign.***

One of the biggest problems with most professional politicians— they have a hunger and greed for money and so they can easily be *bought*. But Trump has said at times that he doesn’t need the money and so far has not only *not* asked for donations, but has actually turned down money. One offered him five million, but he turned it down. I really like that. The temptation of money and greed seems to ruin so many politicians. This is epidemic in many countries and it is also prevalent in the USA which is why we have so many rules trying to stop it.

What will happen to Trump’s candidacy? No one knows. It is still a long, long time before the primaries and the general election. Yet right now we have him and the other non-politicians who are leading the pack and, personally, I like that. It’s a breath of fresh air in a domain that is typically stuffy and formal and overly managed.



**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**“Neurons” Meta Reflection #37**  
August 26, 2015

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY NLP!**

Monday August 24, Robert Dilts led us (the 140 of us at NLP U.) in singing “Happy Birthday” to NLP. Robert also encouraged those from different language groups to sing Happy Birthday in many different languages. That was one of the ways that the group recognized and celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of NLP. For the celebration, Robert invited Trainers and Leaders from around the world, I was there with Ian and Paulette McDermott, Christine Hall, Frank Pucelik, and others who came in for a couple days before I got there, Tim and Kris Hallboam, Sid Jacobson, etc. I was glad that five of us there were Neuro-Semantic Trainers and Meta-Coaches.

**Forty years** means that we have to go back to 1975 when *The Structure of Magic* was finalized and then published. Prior to that we have what Terry McClendon called, *The Wild Days of NLP: 1972-1975*. Those were the days that two different groups of people, some 20 people in all, co-created the field and model that we now call NLP. What stands out for me about that is this: *It took a community to create it*. We often say that the co-developers were Richard Bandler and John Grinder, but that’s really not accurate. Frank Pucelik was also a key player as were another two dozen people who actually made it all happened.

Further a strange thing happened. Somehow the first group of people never really knew what they were involved in and saw no real future for it so except for Terry McClendon none of them stayed around and became leaders. It was the second group made up of Judith DeLozier, Robert Dilts, Leslie Cameron, David Gordon, etc. who actually stepped up to leadership and developed NLP as a field and discipline, this included Steve and Connaire Andreas (1975-1980).

From the beginning Bandler and Grinder did not provide anything that we would call “leadership” for the field of NLP. They were not, and are not, “leaders” in the sense of thinking about others, building a community, bringing out the best in people, grooming leaders, organizing conferences, creating ongoing support for trainers and up-coming leaders, etc. They did none of that. What they did was at the creation level; they articulated “the magic” which they found in Perls, Satir, and Erickson.

*Richard* embodied those skills in himself by his gift of mimicry and patterning; John used the formulations of Transformational Grammar (TG) to give it professional and academic credibility.

*John* brought into NLP the Cognitive Psychology premises from Chomsky (TG) and George Miller (having worked in his lab).

*Frank* was from the beginning the connector that put the people together and organized the first Gestalt Therapy class at the College.



But they also did not understand what they had or its potentials. After Richard chased Frank away in 1976, Richard and John became business partners for a couple years to take advantage of all of the bubbling energy and creativity *and money* which was available during that early period (1976-1979). For them it seemed to be about money, seminars, fame, power, etc. It never seemed to be about community, gifting people with tools for changing the world, grooming others to be leaders. That fell to Robert Dilts who has done the most in this regard and Leslie Cameron Bandler who put the format of the first trainings together (now called Practitioner and later, Master Practitioner). Judith joined Robert as did Todd Epstein and many others.

Robert Dilts is reported to have once said, “NLP was created by two wild individualists who modeled three wild individualists.” And also, “Richard and John gave birth to NLP but never stayed around to father the field.” So in the field of NLP, the originators never led, and have never provided leadership. We tried to get them back involved in 1997 at the Visionary Leadership Conference. They would not come or participate. That was repeated at the Millennial Project (2000), and it happened again now at the 40<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary. Although Richard Bandler did send a short video recognizing what we were doing. That’s a first! Late by 40 years, but a warm and kind gesture.

So who have been the leaders? Mostly that second group mentioned above. Then joining them were many of the second generation of trainers who arose. Many of them began exercising a lot of influence via the NLP Associations that arose in most countries, in the Journals, and at the Conferences. These leaders sometimes pulled people away from the others to create a “kingdom” around themselves. In those areas of NLP, they were exclusive rather than inclusive. And they were mostly organized around a business model of some sort.

The leaders of NLP have therefore mostly been *thought leaders*. Those who wrote and/or clearly articulated NLP— its principles, premises, patterns, etc. in writings or in presentations became recognized as those leading out. This is how I “accidentally” found myself in a position of leadership. I didn’t plan for it. I didn’t even understand that it was happening until later. I think there was such a hunger for leadership, that when I began detailing out the Meta-Model and expanding it (1991-1993) and then when I found and articulated a model for self-reflexive consciousness (the Meta-States Model, 1994-1997), people wanted to be a part of it. I wrote NLP books primarily to learn the model more thoroughly. Yet as more and more of my books appeared, I found that there was a following.

With the books came opportunities to train— both Prac. and Master Prac. and Meta-States and from that people wanted to join up and be a part of what I and others were doing. When Bob and I created Neuro-Semantics and registered it in 1996, just as soon as we put our Vision statement on the website, people started calling and wanting to join. That’s how the International Society of Neuro-Semantics was given birth. I trained *Accessing Personal Genius* (APG) for five years (1995-1999) before running our first Trainers’ Training. Soon thereafter the 90 million dollar lawsuit against the field of NLP ended with Bandler losing and “NLP” being put in public domain (Feb. 2000).

Fast forward to 2015 and we have now reached 40 years as a field. Frank Pucelik and I launched *The NLP Leadership Summit* in 2012 as a way to gather “the elders of the tribe” together so that they could get acquainted, begin a conversation of the future, and see if we can *associate* with one another. We decided to *not* create another association— just to associate as people with a common interest and vision— Promoting the value, credibility, and professionalism of NLP ([www.nlpleadershipsummit.org](http://www.nlpleadershipsummit.org)). That is now fully underway and corresponds to what Robert, Judith, and Teresa are doing with the NLP Community Project. A big thank you to these three for their vision and leadership!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #38**  
**August 31, 2015**  
*Creating Response-Able Persons #3*

## **RESPONSE-ABLE**

### **Empower for Action or as a Victim?**

Ultimately *responsibility* is about your actions (responses) and about your ability to take action. In a word, it is about what *you* are *able to do now* which can make a difference in your life as you meet your basic human needs. Did you get all of that? There's a lot packed into that sentence so don't read it too quickly. Especially don't race through it. If you do, you will miss a lot which is packed into it. Let's unpack it.

- *Able*: This speaks about the capability and the capacity for action which comes from the awareness and ownership of your innate powers (Meta Reflections #31). Ability is first of all the innate *potential* and *ability* depends on both knowledge and skill practice to become *actual*. For ability to develop you have to learn and incorporate what you have learned so you can execute what you know. What do you know and what are you able to do to unleash your potentials?
- *Do*: This refers to taking action. The responsible behavior is something that you *do*, it is not about your opinions, beliefs, excuses, emotions, or what you feel, but actions. It is about, What are you going to *do*?
- *Now*: This speaks about the time element which is today and into tomorrow. It is not the past. The past, at best, only refers to the conditions in which you learned something. It is not the problem. The problem is always one's frames. The question is, "What will you do today that will make a difference for your future? The responsible person does not keep recounting his history of abuse and misfortune.
- *You*: This refers to the person who has the most influence to improve things. It is *you*, not others. So, What are *you* going to do?
- *Basic needs*: This refers to what's required for any human being and arises from the innate "needs" (life requirements) for being biologically healthy (survival needs), psychologically healthy (safety needs and self needs), and relationally healthy (social needs of love and affection) and one's meanings needs (self-actualization needs).

Let's now summarize: What is responsibility and what is it about?

*Responsibility is about what you are able to do now which can make a difference in your life as you meet your basic human needs.*

If you take your powers-of-response (thinking, emoting, speaking, behaving) and integrate them by meta-stating ownership and embodiment, then you create *responsibility*. Then, regardless of the circumstances that life has thrown at you—responsibility is responding with the powers you have at your disposal and taking a responsible course of action to make things better for you and others.

To lead a responsible life and to take a responsible course of action, you need to be prepared with your basic powers (Meta-Reflection #35) for taking action. Doing that will make you responsive. Conversely, if you want to be ill-prepared for the world, or to send your child into the world ill-prepared— *go out without* thinking, feeling, speaking, and acting as if you are the one responsible for yourself. Instead blame. Blame others, blame your parents, blame your partner, blame the government, blame your school, blame history. In other words, you can be *an empowered victim* if you so choose!

But William Glasser calls this blaming “nowhere talk.” To do that, talk about your mother, father, brother and all of the people who hurt you. These may be easy to talk about, and blame, because they excuse your failures. There is however a price to pay. That’s because in the end—they lead nowhere (Reality Therapy, p. 38). That’s because it leads to both lack of responsible behavior and irresponsible behaviors. The irresponsible behaviors may be feeling sorry for oneself (emotional behavior), blaming the world (linguistic behavior), wallowing in misery and inadequacy (interpersonal behavior). For this reason, in *Reality Therapy* (1965), therapists accept no excuses for irresponsible acts:

“We accept no excuses for irresponsible acts. Students are held responsible for their behavior and cannot escape responsibility on the plea of being emotionally upset, mistreated by mother, neglected by father, or discriminated against by society.” (p. 70).

*Nowhere talk* focuses on the past. By then focusing on the past some people over-emphasize their inadequacy. That undermines their response-ability and weakens their will. Others think that if they can gain insight into the “cause” of whatever problem or mistake or bad thing that happen, that will solve the problem. But that’s an illusion. Whatever you learn about the past will not “solve” it. That’s because you still have to live with whatever happened, deal with it, and move on. Plus, learning what went wrong seldom tells you what to do right. So the sooner you learn to cope better, understand what to do today, the better.

Paradoxically, to be un-responsible or irresponsible requires using your “responses” to avoid effective responsibility(!). When a person is irresponsible, he is using his intellect to invent ideas, excuses, explanations that justify him. A pretty powerful response! The paradox is that every victim, every person playing helpless, weak, unable to do things—is actually a powerful person. What’s typically not recognized are *the responses* which the victim makes which are in his control. He victimizes himself by focusing on some inadequacy in self or frustration with the world and frames it as beyond his power to do anything and then argues for that perspective. In other words, *he is using his mental and emotional and linguistic powers to be a victim*. She clings to the secondary benefits of being a victim— others jump in to help, others give pity and compassion, she gets attention, maybe government assistance, etc.

In spite of how powerful irresponsibility is, it has a *nowhere direction*. It takes you nowhere useful. There are lots of secondary gains which people get from irresponsibility— self-justification, an excuse from effort, blame of others circumstances. Yet all of that is the loser’s way, not the way to win in life. *Response-able responsibility* is a very powerful meta-state. Try it on. It will do you good.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #39**  
**September 7 , 2015**  
*Creating Response-Able Persons #4*

## **THE ART OF RESPONSIBILITY**

Is there an *art* in living a responsible life and stepping up to taking responsible actions in one's life? There is certainly a strategy—the strategy begins with identifying, accepting, owning, and embracing your powers (Meta Reflection #35). It also involves recognizing the seductive power of irresponsibility which seems to trap so many people (#38). Here the strategy of what to do, and the knowledge of *how to* do that begins to blend into the art responsible living. First comes the understanding and knowledge that requires learning to recognize and avoid the irresponsibility seduction. At this point, you develop the competence of resisting blaming—blaming life, others, government, parents, history, human nature, and on and on. And this arises when you have learned and actually practiced stepping up to develop your innate powers.

A story. This week I received scores of emails which were sent to the HOA (Home Owners Association) distribution of 30 home owners in my neighborhood. Those of us on the board had discovered that we had several unexpected expenses with the water system, the pump house, etc. and so we went out a letter inviting a full neighborhood meeting. In response to the problem that we identified, three of the emails came back, hastily written, full of blame, accusation, and threats. The three blamed the builder, two of them threaten legal action, and the other was very “preachy” shouting about how stupid all the rest of us were, unable to understand things, and guilty of fraud! “It stinks of fraud” one home owner wrote.

Now being on the board and having 7 hours at the Houston airport ... I responded to each of the three persons who were heavily infected by the virus of blame. I framed my responses that we all need to have calm and reasonable minds as we addressed the problem and that the task before all of us was to first gather information about the facts before jumping to conclusions. It all started when the president of the association sent out an email asking for \$100 from each home-owner for some additional expenses that arose. You would have thought he had asked for \$10,000 given the intensity of the accusations, blaming, and insults by three of them! Several pipes had broken and were repaired and the cost was an expense to the HOA and whether anyone agreed with the cost or the problem, the bill was ours and had to be paid. As a legal entity, that's just the way it was.

But the emails were full of charges of “abuse of power,” “it's not my problem,” “I didn't agree upon the person who did the repairs,” “how much longer do we have to put up with this incompetence?” “It stinks of fraud.” This is what I decided to respond to. It wasn't that I wanted

to use email to establish the facts of the case— that is scheduled for a meeting at the end of the month. I mostly wanted to call attention to the process itself. I wanted to make the point: *If this is the way we solve problems, nothing will be solved, we will just have a shouting match.*

Did that resolve things with the three blamers? No. Instead one decided that I had “lectured” him about being cool and collected and who was I to do that?! Another wrote numerous mind-reading statements saying that I wanted to intimidate them to be quiet and not express their opinion. Another charged me with trying to manipulate the upcoming meeting by forcing people to take turns and not talk over each other— “That’s pure manipulation” he wrote.

All of this made me reflect on the theme of what is the *Art of Living Responsibly*? Here’s my reflection so far: I think *the art* comes in from one’s character and one’s state. Responsible people know and quickly acknowledge when they make a mistake. They say so. And depending on the circumstances, try to make things right. Living responsibly means recognizing that we have responsibilities that are both personal and social. As a social being in multiple social contexts, how I conduct myself means making *responses* in both dimensions.

The art of living responsibly also includes challenging and confronting. Are we really responsible when we let bullies or big-mouths intimidate people? Do we not have the responsibility to help create a context or culture where we can bring out the best in each other?

In the midst of the flurry of emails, five of the home owners chimed in. Four were very polite and validated the points I was making about being respectful. One, however, “yelled” at the three blamers accusing them of being loud and throwing an adult size tantrum. He “yelled” on the email by writing in ALL CAPS! **AND USING BOLD AND EXCLAMATION MARKS WHEN HE REALLY WANTED TO MAKE A POINT!** I wrote him privately thanking him for his *intention* while pointing out the contradiction—“You are blaming them for blaming.”

Two others wrote to me, saying that they appreciated my courage to stand up to the neighbor who had threaten to sue just about everybody in the neighborhood. But ask, “Are you afraid he will sue you?” When I asked, “Are we not responsible for the quality of conversation in our community?” he acknowledged that, “well yes, but...” And then proceeded to say that he was not the kind of person to do that. He would prefer a low profile.

All of this speaks to the subject of *the art of responsible living* and how we hold ourselves and others responsible for our actions. Some seek to escape from responsibility, some are irresponsible and blame everybody and everything else for problems (real and imagined), and some passively accept responsibility but out of weakness, not strength, others accept and own responsibility as a matter of duty, and others see *response-ability* as a resource and a means of changing the world. I want to be increasingly more in that last category. How about you?



**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #40**  
**September 14 , 2015**  
*Creating Response-Able Persons #5*

## **FINDING RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE**

*Responsibility* is a meta-state. It is comprised of a primary state as you engage in doing or experiencing something in the world. Then to that primary state of engagement, you layer onto it a few key variables—awareness, ownership, acceptance, appreciation, etc. Then all together these come together to generate a strong personal sense of both the ability and the sense of obligation to respond. When awareness of your fundamental powers plus a sense of ownership come together it gives birth to the meta-state of *responsibility*.

About responsibility, lots of people wonder, “How can I be a more responsible person?” “How can I help my employees take on more responsibility?” When I first got into real estate as a means for wealth creation, I asked myself, “How can I find renters who will be responsible and act responsibly?” Parents ask these questions about their children and their parenting, “How can I raise my children to grow up to be responsible persons and manage their opportunities, talents, etc. well?”

When a person is responsible, he or she is empowered to act on his or her abilities in a way that fits for the activities of life: working, relating, contributing, enjoying, growing, learning, etc. In this empowerment, the person is proactive in that he takes the initiative. She doesn’t wait around until she just has to act, she thinks ahead about what needs to be done (proactive) and then initiates a response (takes the initiative). These are expressions of being a responsible person.

Opposite to being and living responsibly is being reactive, playing helpless like a victim and so blaming and accusing, and/or being passive and letting opportunities and life pass one by without stepping up to take action. The opposite may also include being paralyzed by fear, dread, anxiety or some other emotion. Then instead of acting responsibly, one shuts down and/or gives in to discouragement, depression, and “just getting by.” That’s the weak side of things. The strong side is being *irresponsible*. That is, being hostile and destructive. This person fails to appreciate the value of things and is positively irresponsible.

In *not* being responsible then, there are numerous alternatives. On a continuum there is sitting passively and doing nothing and letting things get messed up by inattention and neglect. I’ve seen people do that in the houses which I rent— things go bad and things get messed up, not because someone has thrown things around the house, but because they ignored things that needed attention and let them go until. Then the problem grew and grew until it was a major



disaster. Others are *not* being responsible because the actions they are taking are the wrong ones. They destroy the very things that are needed in their lives. I once saw the end result of a young artist who got into a negative state and in that state tore up and burned a decade of his art work. Now it was all gone.

That's the dark side of responsibility— when it goes wrong, when it becomes *irresponsibility*. The bright side of responsibility is proactivity and initiative. Here the person knows and understands *the responses* that she can do, accepts the obligation to self and to others to handle those responses in a way that enhances one's life over the long-run. This person operates from a sense of intentionality and choice. He sets high level intentions and then expands his awareness to understand his range of choices. He creates a set of practices (discipline) that accords with the exercise of his talents and skills so that it develops, expands, and manages them well.

As a responsible person, she will persist in that set of practices, recognize them as a *discipline*, and willingly organize her life around them. Then, when there is a set-back or disappointment and she is knocked down, she gets up again. She “bounces back” and this resilience itself is part of her responsible actions that keeps her on course and able to make great things happen in her life over the long-run.

From this description we can see that there is a sense of *will* on the part of the responsible person, they intend and attend (“will”) want they want and then follow-up with a set of practices (a discipline) that allows them to turn it into life-style. By contrast, the not-responsible person is either lacking will (energy, focus, interest, passive) and/or too willful (stubborn, insistent on his way, defiant, hostile, destructive).

In terms of Meta-Programs, this maps the continuum between un-responsible (irresponsible) to responsible and then over-responsible. Bob Bodenhamer and I put that in the book on Meta-Programs, *Figuring Out People*, as one of the semantic meta-programs that governs a person's perceptual sorting and responding. My original research for this was stimulated by my need to find “responsible” people to rent my properties to. After having some not-so-pleasant experiences with some irresponsible persons, I wanted to figure out how to find *responsible people*. And I knew that advertizing, “Responsible persons wanted for a 4-bedroom home...” would not do it.

The continuum of how people handle their capacity for *responding* gave me the area to go find the clues which I needed. Now I could look at several areas of their lives to see if they responsibly handled those areas and if so, was this style habitual and in character for them. So today I ask and sometimes check out how they treat their car, their dog or cat, how they handle a conflict and a mis-communication, etc. I check on whether they are on the passive side or the aggressive side in terms of using their response-powers. In conversation with them, I look for situations where something didn't go well, was a set back, something was a mistake and then use that to understand the person's *style of responding*.

We need responsible people if we are going to have a good world— a good home, a good business, a healthy community, etc. So search for and helping to create responsible people lies at the heart of leadership at all levels. To your success in this!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #41**  
**September 21, 2015**  
*Creating Response-Able Persons #6*

## **ISN'T IT TIME FOR TRUMP TO APOLOGIZE?**

### **Responsible Apologizing**

Some time ago in an interview, Donald Trump said that he doesn't ask for forgiveness; he doesn't need to. Since then he has used his media savvy intelligence—not only saying whatever comes to his mind—but also by seemingly intentionally saying provocative things. Why would he do that? Well, it certainly captures the media's attention, he gets more air time, and by that it has given him a dominating influence in the field of the candidates. So it works. It also allows him to stand out. So unlike the overly cautious political correctness of the others, Trump stirs things up, gets attention, and then later offers a calmer and more reasonable explanation. But now he is beginning to pay a price for that.

The price? A call to apologize. Several have called upon him to apologize for various things—for the names he has called people and for insulting implications that he has intimated. Yet he refuses to apologize. In the Republican Debate this week, when called upon to apologize, he took another tact—he uttered very kind and complementary words to those he had formally insulted. He did that about Jeb Bush's wife, "I hear she is a fabulous women." He did that about Carly Fiorina, "She has a beautiful face." Still he would not apologize. He was asked to apologize directly and explicitly, he said he would not. "I didn't say anything wrong."

*Dictionary: An Apology can be written or spoken as an expression of one's regret, remorse, or sorrow for having insulted, failed, injured, or wronged another.*

What's with it that a person can't utter a simple apology? "You're right. That was a mistake. I'm sorry for doing that to you, I apologize for what I did." While I can buy that much of exaggeration and bragging of Trump is for entertainment purposes and to get the attention of the media, and that it does indeed set in motion a focus on him— a simple apology is also powerful and important. A simple apology can go a long way in healing hurt emotions and can be the smartest thing for a person to do. In this instance, it would be the most politically expedient thing to do. But he doesn't.

That brings up the questions: “Why not?” “What holds him and/or any other person from doing so?” Further, given that this is a human problem and not particularly a political one, what stops so many people from just owning up to what they said or did, acknowledging it, and saying so?

At the heart of apologizing is recognizing and owning what one does and says as one’s own. Actually, this is a critical aspect of being a responsible person. After all, this is what being responsible means and entails. Owning your words and behaviors and accepting that they have consequences, when you make a mistake, you say so. When an error of thinking or judgment occurs, you acknowledge it and do whatever you can to make things right. This is the point of making an apology: to make things right between people.

This is important due to the obvious and ubiquitous fact: Things can go wrong between people. We say things that another person doesn’t like, we call names, we insult with disrespectful behaviors, and so on. Then they feel “hurt” about such because it violates their values and what they want and believe in. When people make promises and then break them, we feel betrayed. At that point we cannot sweep it under the rug and pretend that we did not betray a trust, we need to own up to it.

The power and wonder and elegance of an apology is that it enables us to back up. We can go back and re-do something. We can shift into reverse gear and then back up to un-do the path that we have traveled. Imagine a car without a reverse gear. How easily you could drive into a dead-end with no where to go. That’s not a very wise move! With a reverse gear, you can back up, make amends and get to start all over again. It gives you a new beginning. That’s what’s *great* about an apology— you can have a *new beginning!*

In claiming that he doesn’t need to apologize, Donald seems to be proud of this. He seems proud that he doesn’t have to say he is sorry for the results or consequences of his actions or words, and that he doesn’t need to ask for forgiveness. Yet now this is to his detriment and unless he changes his tactics on this one, he will find himself in those dead-ends without a way to recover.

The power of an apology is that in acknowledging a mistake, in making amends for a wrong, for expressing sorrow that words and/or actions which led to misunderstandings and hurt feelings, we fail to admit that we are human— fallible and “liable to err.” There is no virtue in trying to present yourself as above fallibility. Pretending to be infallible or perfect is an illusion and, after all, who wants to be around such a person?

If you and I want to truly become a highly *responsible person*, it’s required that we learn how to apologize and make amends. It takes nothing away from a person, in fact, it adds to a person’s character and quality of character. The person is *big enough* to apologize, to admit a wrong, and to reverse to make course corrections.

Another politician make that mistake decades ago. Over an activity that was really a little thing, a burglary in a hotel (Watergate), Nixon’s big problem was his cover-up, his refusal to own up to things. He derailed by the coverup, not the burglary. Then there was Clinton and his

protestations, “I did not have sex with that woman,” which dominated the news until he admitted that he did. It wasn’t the sex that was the problem, it was the coverup, the denials, the refusal to just simply own up to his responsibilities.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #42**  
**July 27, 2015**  
*Creating Response-Able Persons #7*

## **WHEN WILL ARAB LEADERS STEP UP TO THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES?**

*Being responsible* as a person entails accepting responsibility for the *responses* that one can make to people and circumstances. In recent weeks, on just about every media outlet, we have seen hundreds of thousands of people fleeing as refugees from the war in Syria. We have seen pictures of babies and young children dying in the Mediterrean Sea as families have fled and tens of thousands blocked from entering various countries. There’s been a flood of migrants heading mostly for Germany and the UK where welfare benefits are the highest, and it has created a massive humanitarian crisis. Many of the refugees have arrive in some of Europe's poorest states— Greece, Italy and Hungary.

So, what’s to be done? What can we do? Whose responsibility is this? What responses can jthe world make to this crisis?

Dr. Denis MacEoin, a Senior Fellow at the Gatestone Institute, has gathered stunning statistics from a *Amnesty International* report (Dec. 2011) and has shown a thoroughly imbalanced response from the immediate Arab world around Syria. In reading the following, I began asking myself, “When will Arab leaders step up?” In doing so, I am putting out a challenge to Arab leaders: “Will you be responsible or irresponsible in this humanitarian crisis?”

Today the problem is that while countries in the European are experiencing an overwhelming influx of refugees from Syria and other collapsing Middle East countries, “the vastly wealthy Arab nations of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States are sitting back and watching as Europe takes the toll.” That is *not* the behavior of responsible people and especially those who claim to be leaders, including spiritual leaders.

*Fact #1:* 95% of the first 3.8 million refugees fleeing Syria are located in five countries. With the exception of Turkey, those five countries are among the poorest in the region: Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Amnesty's breakdown of the figures are these:

- Lebanon hosts 1.1 million registered refugees— 26% of the country's population.
- Jordan hosts 618,615 registered refugees— 9.8% of the population.
- Turkey hosts 1.6 million refugees— 2.4% of the population.
- Iraq hosts 225,373 registered refugees — 0.67% of the population.
- Egypt hosts 142,543 registered refugees — 0.17% of the population.

Amnesty International is calling for at least 5% of the refugees to be resettled from the main host countries by the end of 2015, with a further 5% to follow by the end of 2016. But that's only a total of 380,000 people.

*Fact #2:* Six countries speaking the same language (with regional variations), belong to the same ethnic group, share the same religion and much of the same culture, and are among the wealthiest countries in the world. Yet they have no room at all for their fellow Arabs. The six Arab Gulf countries of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, the UAE, Kuwait and Bahrain have offered zero — **0** — places for desperate refugees! Now, what's with that? Do Arabs in these six countries not care? Do they refuse responsibility to their fellow human beings?

Dr. MacEoin writes, "They [seem to be] perfectly happy to let hundreds of thousands to squeeze into an already saturated Europe, into countries that have not, for the most part, succeeding in assimilating or integrating existing Arab, Turkish, Somali, and other mainly Muslim minorities."

Nor is he alone. There are many others now joining the criticism of these six Gulf States. Others who have been speaking out include the following:

- Sarah Hashash, Middle East and North Africa press officer at Amnesty International, has "called the Gulf Arab states' behavior 'utterly shameful' and criticized Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for officially taking in zero refugees."
- Daniel Gorevan, a NGO official, Oxfam's Syria country director, states: "Gulf countries clearly can and should do an awful lot more."
- Danish Finance Minister Claus Hjort Frederiksen: "I'm most indignant over the Arab countries who are rolling in money and who only take very few refugees," "Countries like Saudi Arabia. It's completely scandalous."

So, when will the Arab Leaders in those six Gulf States step up to their responsibilities? When will they open their doors and their hearts to this humanitarian crisis? Do they fear that there might be terrorists planted by ISIS among the refugees? Welcome to the same fear that every nation receiving the refugees!

The choice of being and living in a responsible way entails doing responding the best that we can given the situations of life. This is especially so for leaders and even more so for political and

spiritual leaders. Where is the outcry among Moslem leaders within these countries? Isn't it about time?

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #43**  
**October 5, 2015**  
*A What if...*

## **WHAT IF BANDLER HAD MODELED MASLOW?**

“Every age but ours has had its model, its hero. All these have been given us by our culture; the hero, the gentleman, the knight, the mystic. About all we have left is the well-adjusted man without problems, a very pale and doubtful substitute. Perhaps we shall soon be able to use as our guide and model the fully growing and self-fulfilling human being, the one in whom all his potentialities are coming to full development, the one whose inner nature expresses itself freely, rather than being warped, repressed, or denied.” Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, p. 4.

Now if Bandler had modeled Maslow rather than Perls, then *yes indeed, how different indeed NLP would be!* Well, after all, history is the story of accidents, coincides, and unplanned events— probably to a greater extent than planned strategic occurrences. That’s especially true of the beginning of NLP. It all began in 1972 when young college student Richard Bandler accidentally found himself in a situation where he got the opportunity to listen to audio tapes of Fritz Perls. That happened because of another accident, some years earlier, when he got acquainted with Dr. Robert Spitzer and his family when he had a speech impediment. And that led to another fortunate opportunity, he got a part-time job in the warehouse of *Science and Behavior Books*.

Then, it just so happened that Dr. Spitzer, the publisher for both Fritz Perls and Virginia Satir, receive a lot of audio-tapes of Perls’ speeches after Fritz died on March 14, 1970. So he decided that he could now finish the last book which Fritz had been working on. That’s when Dr. Spitzer got Richard, who was 21 at the time, to listen to those tapes and transcribe them. That’s how it came about that Richard “modeled” Fritz Perls— he heard the voice, tone, and language patterns of Perls with his gruff and frog-like voice doing the gestalt conversations like having someone hallucinate his mother in a chair and yelling at her. Richard thought it was funny. So he began playing around mimicking the psycho-drama of Perls. Then, from that, somehow Frank got him to “do” Gestalt as a class at Kresgie College, and out of that NLP eventually arose.

But Fritz was not exactly the best person to model. By his own admission in his biography, *In and Out of the Garbage Can*, he was a “dirty old man” and proud of it. He was rough and crude, cursed a lot and smoked even more, he had numerous mistresses, and he loved getting into the hot sulphur pools at Esalen with the young girls. In spite of his character flaws and lack of applying the Human Potential principles to himself, or maybe because of them, Perls was the

person Richard modeled. Then, with Perls as his model, Perls set the tone for how Bandler play out his life for during the next few decades as he, consciously or unconsciously, incarnated Perls.

“He [Perls] liked to refer to himself as a dirty old man, and often introduced himself as such...”  
Anderson, 1983, p. 131.

Perls’ style, using Gestalt, was full of theatrical and dramatic techniques. It was a good show! He believed that life is a stage and so using the “hot seat” he led experiences of psycho-drama—  
“... the more crying and volume, the better. Fritz would encourage the individual to project the various personalities of his or her psyche into the room and deal with them verbally and emotionally in an attempt to reintegrate the fractured self and so create a new gestalt or whole.”  
(Kripal, 163)

And that’s what happened in the early days (1972) when Bandler and Pucelik began their Gestalt Awareness class in Santa Cruz as Terry McClendon noted in *The Wild Days of NLP*.

*But what if ...* what if Dr. Spitzer had been the publisher for Maslow and what if he had received a box full of tapes of speeches and presentations of Maslow, and what if Richard had modeled Maslow. Now imagine that! *What if...?* Here’s an imaginative thought-experiment. When I run that thought-experiment in my mind, my first thought is that *NLP would be completely different today*. As a strange coincide, both Fritz and Abraham Maslow died the same year, Perls in March and Maslow in June of 1970. So it could have happened. There are, after all, numerous tapes and videos of Maslow that have never been transcribed and published.

Now as a historical reference, Perls and Maslow didn’t get along very well. Perls was quite envious of Maslow and as Jeffrey Kripal wrote in his biography of Esalen, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion*, (2007), Perls was there and wanted to “capture the flag” of the Human Potential Movement. He wanted to create it after his preferences, namely Gestalt. In fact, because he could not do that, he left Esalen in 1969 and went to Canada to establish a Gestalt Kabutz there. But he was too old and too sick and so he died so thereafter.

Fritz was a star at Esalen, he was a celebrity and Murphy even had a house built for him there. “Despite his favored position, Fritz remained insecure, jealous, and combative.” (Anderson, p. 133).

“Fritz was Murphy’s greatest problem. He was hard to handle, and he would not get in step with the human potential movement, even though everyone recognized that gestalt therapy was a principle ingredient of it.” (p. 133)

Walter Truett Anderson in his biography of Esalen, *The Upstart Spring: Esalen and the American Wakening* (1983) describes how Perls conflicted with everyone there. He had conflicts with Michael Murphy and Dick Price. He conflicted with Will Schultz. He even conflicted with Maslow.

“Nobody has ever described Fritz as ‘nice.’ ... He would insult you by describing you, to your face and in front of a roomful of people, with any of the inelegant terms he had available to describe ways of being phony: bitch, shithead, weeper, mindfucker, crazy-maker. If you bored him, he might fall asleep in his chair.” (Anderson, 1983, p. 131)



Maslow visited Esalen twice every year. In 1966 Maslow appeared at Esalen to launch the first set of Leaders to be trained at Esalen. On that visit, Maslow describe the concept of “*being* language” as part of the higher *being*-values within the self-actualization needs. He appeared in the Maslow Room (which is still there) and of course, he was always received as the primary founder of the Movement. On that occasion, Perls was there, scoffing at the “fluff” and the “bullshit” of what Maslow was presenting. Everyone else was captivated and people were asking questions.

“‘This is just like school,’ Fritz called out. ‘Here is the teacher, and there is the pupil, giving the right answer.’ Maslow pretended to ignore this. Getting into arguments was not his thing, he preferred to have friendly high-level discussions about humanistic psychology.” (Anderson, p. 135).

While speaking on *being* language, Fritz who was nearly 70 years old, decided on a new way to insult Maslow.

“Fritz was sliding down from his chair onto the floor. In a few second everyone else had noticed, the whole group watched in horrified silence as Fritz slithered across the floor toward the philosopher, reached one supplicating arm toward him, and said. ‘Come down here with the rest of us; get down with the common people.’ Maslow told Fritz he was being childish, so Fritz proceeded to be childish in gestalt therapy style: do it all the way ... He crawled around on the floor and made whining sounds and hugged Maslow’s knees. ... ‘This begins to look like sickness,’ Maslow said.” (p. 136)

Perls had been looking to push Maslow’s buttons and that finally did it. Maslow was furious and threaten to leave. This was what Perls loved— psychodrama, shouting, yelling, stirring people up, and so on.

### **What would have been different about NLP?**

Enough of that for now, let’s get back to the thought experiment. *What would have been different about NLP?* Lots of things! NLP would have started from *the source person* of the Human Potential Movement instead of from the two people who were second-generation leaders— Perls and Satir. Then instead of the “dirty old” man, NLP would have modeled Maslow who was himself very much a self-actualizing person— caring and compassionate, intelligent and passionate, collaborative and visionary, etc.

“Maslow was as good a model of self-actualization ... he had reached the top ranks of his discipline, but was still an unpretentious, available person. ... The only thing anybody had against him was that sometimes he seemed *too* nice, *too* warm and generous, suspiciously lacking in rough edged. Gregory Bateson, who didn’t much care for Maslow, would sniff and say, ‘He was always so *good*.’” (Anderson, p. 67)

Actually Bandler, Grinder, and Pucelik never model *the persons* of Perls, Satir, or even Erickson. What they modeled, or at least what came down as “NLP,” was what they did with their language. And that’s why NLP is essentially a Communication Model. Wyatt Woodsmall noted this many years ago— the founders of NLP did *not* model the persons, just their products.

In 1937 Maslow modeled Max Wertheimer who founded Gestalt Psychology and Ruth Benedict who founded Cultural Anthropology as *the first two self-actualizing individuals*. He then spent 40 years modeling hundreds more. He focused on human excellence, peak experiences, meaningfulness, being-cognition, being-values, character, etc. He also wrote a book on science, *The Psychology of Science*, about how to do science. That was one of the seminal books which began the movement to qualitative research. He presented ideas about research questions, recommendations for how to do so, etc. NLP would have started with a respect for research and using newer methodologies for science rather than iconoclastically challenge and mock statistical models.

Yes, NLP would today be a very different discipline and field if Bandler had modeled Maslow rather than Perls. But, of course, he did not. He did not go to the source of the Human Potential Movement and somehow all of the original co-developers did not know or if they did, did not give credit to Maslow and Rogers and the movement seeking to make explicit the process of self-actualization. And that's why, standing on the shoulders of so many insightful geniuses, we in Neuro-Semantics are correcting those historical errors in service of explicating Self-Actualization Psychology.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #44**  
**Oct. 12, 2015**  
*Creating Response-Able Persons #8*

## **SABOTAGING RESPONSIBILITY BY COMPLAINING**

To complain is to be human. Nothing unhuman about that. Find a human being and there will always be complaining. It comes with citizenship. When you are born human and grow up human, you learn to complain. To an extent, this is good. Maslow talked about this in terms of *grumbles*. He noted that when people get to the *being*-level of experience then your grumbles go meta. They become *meta-grumbles*. I didn't invent that phrase, it comes straight from Maslow's 1954 book. Meta-grumbles are grumbles about injustice, lack of beauty, need for more accurate knowledge, need for more profound meaning and meaningful— that kind of thing. It is not grumbling about money, bickering about someone else getting a promotion, or fussing about having to wait in line.

High level grumbles indicate that a person has moved to the *being*-level of experience and beginning to live a self-actualizing life. By contrast, low level grumbles typically indicate that you are still struggling to meet the basic animal needs for survival, safety (stability), love and affection (social needs), and self-needs (that you count and are a somebody). Yet everything can be distorted and misused. So can grumbling. Complaining can make a person's life go sour.

In fact, when you are complaining and not taking action, you are *just complaining*. And with that, you are probably undermining, even sabotaging, your personal power and responsibility. Because that's a pretty heavy charge as well as a profound understanding of the relationship between being a responsible person and a complainer— let's look deeper into it.

First, note the contrast. Response-ability, as the *power or ability* to respond describes your actions when you are using your emotions to move you to take effective action to make things better. Complaining, as talk to someone else, assumes that you can't do anything, so you are trying to enlist someone else to take effective action for something you care about. Yet in reciting a verbal list of the things you don't like, don't prefer, and want someone else to change—you are avoiding your own responsibilities. And isn't that what children do? Isn't that an expression of powerlessness and victimhood?

Shifting from taking actions and engaging in effective behaviors to *just talking about things and reciting lists of grumbles* both expresses the lack of power and deepens that lack. Think about this in terms of the following:

- Complaining that you don't feel like getting up and going to work.

- Complaining that you aren't motivated to exercise.
- Complaining that no one else you with a project.
- Complaining about the food in the cafeteria.
- Complaining that the temperature is too cold, too hot, not enough fresh air, etc.

The funny thing is that some people *feel good, nurture themselves*, and/or think that they are doing something constructive about a problem when they complain. Imagine that! All you have to do is think about that for a few seconds and recognize how silly that is. When someone recently complained to me, I asked about his complaining. "Have you thought about doing something about this problem?" They said, "I am. I'm telling you so you can do something about it." Ah yes, you *solve* a problem that *you* have by getting *someone else* to solve it! The problem was that he didn't like the air conditioner being set on the temperature it was set on. Prior to that, the setting of the temperature was explained to the group. But instead of accepting that and grabbing a sweater or layering clothes—effective actions he could have taken—he recited how cold he was to everyone who would listen. Poor man!

Here then is a pseudo-grumble, an illegitimate complaint. Here the dissatisfaction may be real, but in the final analysis, it is just a dissatisfaction that is better accepted with grace and magnanimity. After all, there's lots of things in life that can irritate, annoy, and piss you off which aren't worth rally a campaign against. Sure, you have to wait in line. Yes, sometimes the temperature in a room isn't to your liking. Someone uses a word that you don't care for. In fact, if you are looking for something to be dissatisfied about and complain about—there are plenty of things. You'll find them everywhere! And if you develop a complaining perceptual lens, you will increasingly find them.

What do you do with complainers? Is there somewhere you can go to get away from them? Sadly, no. You're just going to have to learn to deal with them! So rather than complain about the complainers, here are some ideas about how to respond:

- "Great!" (That will annoy them.) "What are *you* going to do about it?"
- "Sounds like *you* have a problem ... to solve. How will *you* do that?"
- "Sorry to hear that [empathy], do you need me to coach you for accessing *your* resources so that you can either accept it, be gracious about it, or learn to reframe it?"

What do you do when the person you have to live with as a complainer is *you*? That's more challenging. At least with an external complainer, you can leave. But you can't do that with the internal complainer! Now you have to go to bed every night with that complainer!

- Access the states of observation and acceptance and reduce the amount of complaints you create.
- Access appreciation and see if you can find three values in every complain you create.
- Gauge the misery level that complaining creates for you so you sense the price you are paying for complaining your way through life.
- Imagine being in the presence of a truly Great Person, someone you stand in awe of, and notice how the tendency to complain melts away.
- Recognize that complaining is what undeveloped and irresponsible children do and give yourself a big kick in the ass when you even think about complaining.

- Find a Meta-Coach or a Neuro-Semantic Trainer so you can create some great meanings for the irritations of life.

**From: L. Michael Hall**

**Meta Reflections #45**

**Oct. 19, 2015**

***Creating Response-Able Persons #9***

## **THE VICTIM — RESPONSIBILITY META-PROGRAM**

After last week’s post (#8) about the relationship between complaining and responsibility, I began entertaining the possibility of the idea that a person in the mind-set of complaining have it as a *perceptual filter*. And if so, then similarly the mind-set of *responsibility* could also be a perceptual filter. We already have one meta-program about responsibility (*Figuring Out People*, #53 Degree of Responsibility). That meta-program addresses the degree of responsibility, this one contrasts responsibility with its opposite— victim thinking and perceiving. What would this meta-program would look like, sound like, and feel like in actual responses and behaviors?

### **The Response Ownership Meta-Program**

<i><b>Victim</b></i>	<i><b>Responsibility</b></i>
I can do nothing, have no influence	I can always do something, always have influence
Defensive	Open and Responsive
Factors I cannot influence	Factors I can influence
Self-focus: What can I get from this?	Others-focus: What can I contribute?
Explanations (excuses, defenses) for non-action Or mistakes, errors, etc.	Ownership of actions and participation
Thinking linearly	Thinking Systemically

On the *Victim* side of the scale a person thinks and feels, “There’s nothing I can do about this! I cannot influence any of the factors that make up the experience. I can’t. It’s beyond me, someone else has to do this.” Thinking in terms of dis-empowerment puts the person in a passive victim role— receiving the actions of others, of circumstances, of culture, of history, etc. “They *make* me... think, feel, and experience what I do.” Given this, the person is always looking for *external reasons* and explanations for what causes things to occur. The person does not put oneself into the picture as if an actor in his or her own life.

On the *Responsibility* side of the scale a person thinks and feels precisely the opposite, “I can always choose my response; I can always do something. There are factors that make up the experience that I can influence.” Thinking in terms of empowerment puts the person into the role

of Actor and Architect of his or her life. Viktor Frank described this attitude in his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*.

“We who lived in the concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances—to choose one's own way. ... It is this spiritual freedom—which cannot be taken away—that makes life meaningful and purposeful.” (p. 75)

As a meta-program, each perspective provides a different lens through which to look at things. As a perceptual filter, *dis-empowerment thinking* means that the person pays attention and focuses on *what he cannot influence*. So he blames. She accuses. He explains. She adopts this as her explanatory style as a response style. Rather than being an under-responsible pattern, it is an *anti-responsibility* pattern.

As a perceptual filter, *empowerment thinking* means that the person is paying attention and focusing on the factors that *she can influence*. He looks around and takes the full context into account. She identifies the things that she can do and distinguishes the things to accept and the things to change. Thinking systemically, he knows he is a part of the system and therefore always, to some extent, responsible. While this is bad news to one with the victim-filter, this is good news for this pattern. That's because if you are a part of the system, you can do something to influence it. Being part of the problem means you can be part of the solution!

Each pattern experiences and treats *explanations* in a different way. The victim-filter leads one to think that an explanation releases one from responsibility or the need for action. This has the effect of multiplying explanations. The victim-filter increases the perceived value of explanations, reasons, and justifications. Yet some explanations are not only worthless, but positively sabotaging of one's ability to influence the direction of one's life.

Consider what happens when your phone rings. Some people pick it up and answer it *when it rings* and then explain that they had to answer it *because it rings*. This probably sounds reasonable, at least on the surface. Yet that is deceptive. When you answer your phone, you do so *not* because it rings. The ringing is just a trigger. You answer it because you *want* to answer it. You answer it because you *choose* to answer it. You always have a choice. No one *has* to answer it. You can let it ring, can you not? Or, you can turn it off.

Other explanations may be true as far as the facts go, but they do not lead to any useful response. Suppose a glass of orange juice falls from your breakfast table. You say, “Opps, the juice fell and spilled on the floor.” Well, yes, it “fell,” but why? “Why did the juice spill?” “Gravity!” Yes gravity played a roll in the experience. If there was no gravity, the glass may have been knocked down but it would not have spilled. It might have floated away. *But the explanation that gravity caused it does not help*. It gives us nothing practical that we can do. Knowing that solves nothing. There's nothing you can do about gravity. Conversely, recognizing that you didn't pay attention to the glass, that you moved too quickly and jarred the table, or that you

threw your coat and it hit the glass—those explanations give you something to do to prevent future problems. And that should be the design of any and every *explanation*. That's why people who have a responsibility-filter think about explanations.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #46**  
**October 26, 2015**  
***Creating Response-Able Persons #10***

## THE JOY OF RESPONSIBILITY

I got an email last week that really got me thinking. The person expressed his appreciation for the series on Responsibility and then noted—“if there was more pleasure in responsibility, more people would be positively attracted to it.” That made me think ... and think.

“Is there no joy or is there very little joy in responsibility?” “If there is joy and pleasure in being a response-able person, what is that joy?” “Do I take any pleasure in the experience called ‘responsibility?’ If the answer is yes, then what pleasures?”

That started me reflecting. What joy or pleasure do I experience from being responsible? The greatest pleasure that I experience in responsibility is that of sensing that I can take charge of my own life. I am not a victim of circumstances, a pawn in the hands of other people, or a straw blown about by the winds of fate. I can, and do, exercise a sense of control as I activate my innate personal powers. Those mental, emotional, linguistic, and behavioral powers both allow and enable me to choose my responses to circumstances, people, and fate. Then, by exercising the power of choice, I have the joyful delight of knowing that no matter what happens, I can always choose my attitude, my frame of mind, and my mood. For me, that is the first and the greatest joy—pure joy.

How miserable is the opposite! To feel that you are not even in control of your attitude strikes me as a really, really sad and miserable way to live life. To miss the joy of having influence over your own brain and mind describes the “learned helplessness” which Seligman discovered and which lies at the heart of clinical depression. Conversely the joy of responsibility is the joy of “learned optimism”—the sense that we can always make some response to what happens. And isn’t this the heart of NLP as it arose in the 1970s and as expressed in the phrase, “run your own brain.” In the beginning the developers noted that if you are not running your own brain, someone else will.

Another misery avoided by being and living responsibly is the misery of blaming and accusing others for one’s situation and/or problems. Yes, I know, some people actually take a sadistic joy in that. But that so-called “joy” is a sad and pathetic joy. Much more joyous is to *feel free from the need of blaming*. But you may ask, What is the joy of acknowledging our own error or mistake or failure? It is the paradoxical joy of knowing that if you *made* an error, then you can *do something about it*. You can *un-make* it. You can learn to avoid it. You can develop more competence and thereby make that response redundant.



You are also free from the pain of perfectionism. And if you have suffered from that mental-emotional disease, you know that there's real joy in that! You no longer have to torment yourself with those inner voices, "I'm not good enough." "It could be better." "I need to be perfect, flawless, confident that I won't make a mistake." Talk about pressure! Responsibility frees you from that pressure and introduces the joy of being a real human being— fallible and okay with it. Now you can enter the human race and be a fully fallible and mortal human being. Now if you make a mistake (which you will), you can be self-respectful and self-compassionate. You can treat yourself kindly and gently and not beat up on yourself or insult yourself. This is the joy of being fully human and using mistakes for learning and developing rather than feeling bad.

There's another joy. It is the joy that's inherent in the art of responsibility which means you can live in the now without the need to replay old miseries from the past or borrow possible problems from the future via worrying. That's because living responsibly orients you to live in the now. After all, you can only *respond* in the here-and-now. Sure, you can prepare yourself for responding later, but when you step up and take on a responsibility— you are living in the moment, in the now. So in this, responsibility facilitates the joy of the now. And that enables you to become more alive.

All of this suggest that there are many joys inherent in accessing the state of responsibility and developing as a response-able person. Sure, these are not the superficial joys being the irresponsible child. They are the joys of using your adult powers to forge your life and your future as you desire. The joy of the child is superficial because it is a joy of dependency, of being taken care of, of being protected, etc. The joy of the responsible adult is that of using one's powers to influence oneself and others. This deeper joy includes living on purpose and fulfilling one's highest self-actualization needs for beauty, meaning, excellence, and making a difference.

The deeper joy of the responsible adult is a joy that comes through rising up to meet a challenge. It is the joy of getting to the top of a mountain, finishing a race, working as a winning team, discovering the answer to a problem, etc. Unlike the passive joys of sitting on a beach, having your neck massaged, etc., this describes *an active joy of responding that expands your capacity for responding and that makes a meaningful difference in your life and the lives of others.*

Given all of this, what do you think? Is there enough *pleasure* in adult responsibility to attract you? Is there enough *pain* in being irresponsible or under-responsible to move you away from it? What other joys can you add to this list? What other pains have you suffered from the lack of adult responsibility? It's worth reflecting on.

**From: L. Michael Hall**

**Meta Reflections #47**

**November 2, 2015**

***APG — The Flagship of Neuro-Semantics #1***

[This post begins a new series on APG which is also titled *Self-Leadership* and *Coaching Genius*. While some of the articles were written 2 decades ago, most readers of *Neurons* have not seen them.]

## THE ART OF TURNING “FLOW” ON & OFF AT WILL

In Neuro-Semantics we have discovered how to turn *the flow state* on and off at will. That’s what the APG training is about. Turning *flow* on and off at will refers to the requisite ability to step in and to step out of an optimum state so that you can be absolutely *at your best* when you need to be at your best with all of your resources available, and to step out when that’s appropriate. Interested?

***The Flow State.*** Csikszentmihalyi is the cognitive psychologist who explored and made “the flow state” explicit in his doctorate dissertation on happiness. Originally, he was searching for the structure of happiness. Then, in the process, he stumbled onto the fact that has been known for centuries. Namely, the best way to *not* be happy is to pursue happiness! Philosophers have long know that the direct pursuit of happiness is the best way to *not* experience it. The best way to achieve happiness is to pursue something that’s important to you, something that makes a difference, and something requiring knowledge and skilled which you develop along the way. That’s what Csikszentmihalyi discovered—to be happy you need to be doing something that’s meaningful and challenging and something which is based on a skill—a competence.

Yet being happy is not something will happen immediately or automatically. In fact, the opposite may occur. In the immediate moment when you have a meaningful challenge which may be at the edge of your competence, when you step up to it, it will not “easy.” Usually it is hard. Usually you have to begin using all of your energy, effort, knowledge, and intelligence to be able to do it. This is true of running a race, playing chess, rock climbing, taking on a challenging project, writing a book, etc. So where’s the happiness? Ah, that’s the secret. The state of “happiness”(joy, delight, even ecstasy) comes later. It comes when you look back on the experience. That’s when you say, “What great days those were!” “I was the happiest when I was doing X!” The joy of the experience typically occurs afterwards. Happiness is the afterglow of a worthwhile attempt at something important.

In mapping this out Csikszentmihalyi used two axes—challenge and competence. That generated four quadrants and the “flow zone”—the pathway to flow which involved integrating a

challenge with the appropriate skills. In Neuro-Semantics our Self-Actualization Quadrants integrates this and extends it as we use the axes—*Meaning* and *Performance*.

***Stepping in and out.*** What NLP brings to the flow experience is the phenomenon of a mind-body *state*—a state that you can access, step into, and step out of. States are like that. Comprised of a dynamic combination of what’s on your mind, the condition of your body, and the emotions that you generate from your meanings—a *mind-body-emotion state* is simultaneously a state of mind, a state of body, and a state of emotion. This gives us three ways into state.

Further, we can also distinguish states in terms of purity. The great majority of our everyday states are mixed states: a part of me is in a state of learning, a part is preoccupied with work, another part is fearful of rejection, etc. Very, very seldom do we access a *pure state* wherein we are *of one mind* about something. A pure state refers to being *fully engaged* with one referent. Then we are “all there”—fully present. In that situation, we have a laser-beam focus or concentration and that also describes the flow state.

In early NLP literature, this was called a “genius” state, not because it raises IQ, but because it describes the power of the focused, engagement state—the power of being of one mind about something. That same literature identified many of “the prerequisites of genius.” And that’s what we took in Neuro-Semantics to create the *Accessing Personal Genius* (APG) training. Taking the prerequisites of personal power, self-valuing, self-acceptance, self-appreciation, ability to choose one’s beliefs and suspend limiting beliefs, pleasuring oneself in higher values, making peace with troubling emotions, closing the knowing-doing gap, using the as-if frame for generating new possibilities, setting high intentions and aligning attention to one’s highest intention—we have meta-stated these genius requirements into a single pattern.

The result? By custom-designing your own “genius,” or flow state, for a particular engagement, you can step in and out of that state at will. Pretty amazing wouldn’t you say? “Yes, but does it really work?”

I will tell you about my experience with it. Upon learning and designing the pattern in 1994, I ran the pattern on myself to create two genius or flow states. One was the genius reading state, the other was the flow writing state. That was 1995. Prior to that date, I had written a book, *Emotions: Sometimes I have them/ Sometimes they have me* (1985). That took me eight years. By 1995 I was still working on the book that eventually became *The Spirit of NLP* (1997). That only took five years to put together.

Then came the ability to step in and out of the flow state. The first result: no more “writer’s block.” None! I wrote two books in 1995. And since that time have averaged 2 to 3 books a year, three to five articles a week, two to three training manuals a year, and numerous Prefaces, Introductions, and Chapters in other books. How do I explain this sudden productivity and ease of writing? I can step into the writing state, write for one minute or five or for two hours, and then cleanly step out. Then, when I want to step back in, I do precisely that and start again

wherever I was, even in mid-sentence, without any loss of focus, attention, energy, vitality, etc. Now how cool is that? Today (2015) I have written 54 books and counting the serial books, 68.

The same can be said for other flow states: the coaching state, the training state, the exercise state, etc. The great thing is that when you can turn the flow state on and off at will— it is there to serve you and your engagements. You don't have to wait around to "get in the mood." You don't have to do superstitious activities like wearing your favorite yellow shirt or making the victory sign seven times to get into state. You have it well anchored in the physiologies of the state and so you just step in.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #48**  
**November 9, 2015**  
*The “Genius” State #2*  
(Originally written in 2009)

## THE FLOW STATE IS ABOUT ENGAGEMENT

Several years ago (2002) I showed up at 7 am one morning to do an hour interview at a radio station. I did that as part of the process of promoting two trainings that I was promoting locally where I lived, *Prolific Writing* and *Accessing Personal Genius* (APG). The interviewer, Kevin, was very personable and had a gift of gab. Before we began I watched him do his magic with the microphone in a small room full of electronic equipment. He seemed almost to have a relationship with the microphone.

Kevin also knew how to ask great questions and get to the heart of things quickly. I don't know if this was a natural gift or if he had developed it as a style. Wherever it came from, it was certainly one of his strengths as an interviewer. All too often I've been interviewed by people who didn't seem to know what they were doing or what an interview was for. Consequently, they would ask either placid questions which had no energy which weren't worth answering or such conventional questions that would only bore people to sleep.

But not Kevin. Kevin intuitively went for the passionate center of things to see if there was any core. He also knew that to ask such fierce questions, he had to do his homework. So before showing up at the radio studio, I sent him some of the promotional material on *Accessing Personal Genius* and Neuro-Semantics. On the day that I met Kevin I noticed that he had marked up the written materials, had circled words and statements, had written large question marks by some words, and that he had even been to the website and downloaded materials.

Seeing that, I felt excited. I knew this would not be a humdrum interview. I then discovered that Kevin knew about framing. He didn't call it that, but that's what he did when he introduced me, mentioned the trainings, and then set the structure of the interview: he would ask questions for the first half and then invite the audience to ask questions. With that, he delved right into it.

“The first thing I think when I hear ‘*Accessing Personal Genius*’ is over-sell, that you are over-selling and over-promising. Surely you don't mean that you can create geniuses or that everybody can become a ‘genius,’ do you?”

“That's a great question! It's great because what we call ‘genius’ is not something that's created, it is something that is *accessed* and *released*. That's because ‘genius’ is not so much about I.Q. intelligence as it is about being *fully present*.”

“You mean we are already geniuses? Is that what you're saying?”

“Yes and no. *No* if the word ‘genius’ means high I.Q., but *yes* if you mean *being at your best*, being fully engaged in whatever you’re doing so that you are ‘in the zone,’ and fully ‘on.’ We call the genius state ‘a state of flow’ because when you are in it, your activities just flow. It’s as if all of our mental, emotional, and personal resources are fully available.”

“That’s a different way of looking at ‘genius.’ So genius is more of an experience than a status. That must be why there’s no Universities that give degrees in ‘genius.’ So if it is an experience, then how do we experience it or as you say, ‘access’ it?”

“Suppose I told you that you were born for genius, that everyone listening to us right now was born for genius? Have you ever noticed how little children can get so lost in a toy or game as they play? Then they become so engaged in that activity that you have to almost shout to get their attention? If genius is *being all there*, then that child is in a genius state of full engagement, of one mind —single minded about that activity.”

“So genius is about focus and concentration? So it is the opposite of multi-tracking? Is that why we think of some geniuses as absent-minded and lost in their thoughts?”

“Yes, exactly. They are of one mind about something and because they are not splitting their awareness, but focusing it. They have a *laser-beam focus* and that’s what makes them so present, so engaged, so much in the zone.”

“That’s the best golfers do. They get in the zone and are able to stop all the mind-chatter so they aren’t disturbed by the things going on around them.”

“You’ve got it. Genius is a natural state of mind, we were all born for it. The challenge we have is not in creating it, but in *getting back* to it. Our problem as adults is that we have too many things on our mind, we have too many things going on in the back of our mind. We need to ‘Lose our mind and come back to our senses’ so that we can be present and enter that zone of focus and flow.”

[Laughing] “That’s good. When I’m working at my home office on some of my projects, my wife is always telling me that I’ve lost my mind because she can call me for supper over and over and I never hear her. Now I’ve got the best excuse ever— I’m in my genius state!”

“That’s a great example. When you’re in that state, what enables you to be so lost in your thoughts? How do you get so involved that you don’t hear the call for supper?”

“Well, I’m just doing what I love, usually searching for songs and clips that I can use on the radio. . . . And then it’s like I’m lost in my own world.”

“And when that happens, what happens to time, to your sense of time?”

“I don’t know, it’s gone.”

“And what happens to your environment?”

“Gone.”

“And to other people?”

“Gone.”

“Well, Kevin, sounds like in that context you already have accessed your personal genius state!”

“That’s great. Of course, the problem is that I can get lost in that state for hours and hours and then miss appointments, or not get sufficient sleep.”

“So how would you like to be able to switch that genius state of flow on and off at will? How would you like to be able to step into it and step out of it and to do so whenever you want to?”

“That would be great. I’d like that.”

“Glad you asked! That’s precisely what the training and the books about *Accessing Personal Genius* are all about. When you can do that, you *have* the state instead of it *has* you. That’s what I did with the states of both reading (researching) and writing. Prior to doing that, I suffered from writer’s block, but now that I can simply step into my *writing genius state*, I have not suffered from writer’s block since. Now, I can turn that state on for an hour or five minutes or however long I want it.”

“Now that would be different. Sometimes when I get into flow, I fear that if I stepped out of it, I couldn’t get it back.”

“Yes, that’s very typical. Because it’s such a joyous and powerful experience, when we are there we don’t step out and when we are not in it, we feel that we have to wait until it happens again. But once you recognize how *you* do it, then you won’t have to wait around for the genius state to occur. Because it is your state, *you created it*. And if you create it, then you can learn to turn it on and off at your choice.”

“So this is not more over-selling, is it? Just *how* can we just turn it on and off? How does that work?”

“Have you ever watched the Olympic athlete turn it on and off? Have you ever seen a gymnast, a diver, or a sprinter just step up to the time of their performance and just turn it on. When we watch them, we see them take their stand, access the state, and then *explode* into the activity.”

“Yes, that’s fantastic, but are you now saying we all can be Olympic athletes? That we can be or do *anything* we want to be or do? Does it go that far?”

“Perhaps. But who really knows? What I’m really saying is that we can take charge of the *focus state itself*—that we can learn to run our own brains so that we can get the best attitude, mood, and performance *out of ourselves*. Wouldn’t that in itself be enough to make your day? What if you could simply step into a highly focused state when you are here in the studio or when you are creating a new show or when you are with a loved one . . . wouldn’t that make your life a little bit more wonderful?”

“Yes it would. That really would. . . . And you will teach how to do this in the training?”

“Definitively.”

“And what about you? Are you able to step into . . . what did you just call it, ‘the genius writing state?’”

“Yes, people often ask how I can write so much or how I come up with so many new models . . . and I can only say that since experiencing the genius pattern which I ran with myself in 1995, I have not had writers block.” Consequently I’ve written two or three books a year and hundreds of articles. All because of a simple pattern that is now taught all around the world by Neuro-Semantic Trainers.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #49**  
**November 15, 2015**  
*The Tragedy in Paris*

## RELIGIOUS TERRORISM

Yet another terrorist attack in Paris France with more people killed (129) and more wounded (392). Again, it was terrorism from “religious” fundamentalists— fanatics who *misuse* religion for hatred, intolerance, murder, and brutality. They are fanatics who never understood the true meaning of religion or who have only been exposed to a sick and distorted form of a hateful and intolerant religion. Either way, their misuse of religion, in this case Moslem, corrupts it so that it does *not* honor God but diminishes Islam making it a thing of shame. To run into a building crying “God is Great!” and then start shooting civilians— women and children is the ultimate sacrilege that dishonors God. It does not and cannot please God who, according to the Bible, is “love.”

Now just to be clear, Islam is not the problem. It is the misuse, abuse, and corruption of Islam into “radical Islam” that’s the problem. If Islam was my faith, I’d be as mad as hell against such barbarian infidels and would be speaking up every chance I get against them. That’s what ever person who holds Islam as a healthy, respectful, and peaceful religion should be doing.

Intolerant fundamentalists did the same thing to Christianity some 500 years ago. They corrupted the spirituality of a religion whose first command is to “love God” and whose second command is to “love your neighbor like you love yourself.” Their intolerance back then led to the inquisitions, crusades, torture chambers, and dozens of other forms which showed hatred, *not* love. It led to what we call “the Dark Ages.” It also led to people fleeing Europe for America as a counter-movement. They sought out a place where there would be no State-based Churches, but where they could have freedom *of* religion (not freedom *from* religion). They wanted to practice tolerance of differences, acceptance of people with different views, and where religion and politics would operate as separate realms.

Today those who practice the Moslem faith is facing this same challenge— to separate religion from politics and to develop a tolerance and acceptance of those who hold different views. While there are many outspoken Islam people speaking up against the current intolerance and brutality of ISIS by Islamic radicals and terrorists here in the United States—there is far too much silence in the Arab countries and too much acceptance of the violence. The time has come for this to change. If there is to be a true and lasting Arab Spring, leaders have to arise who will speak out against the current corruption of Islam by the Jihadist terrorists and against the idea of creating a country governed by religious law.



Everywhere that Islam believers rejoice at the murder and brutality that occurred in Paris we have a demonstration that they share the hate and prejudice of the Radical Islamic terrorists. They too have corrupting a religion, showing their lack of understanding, and adding to the problem. May there be an ever-rising chorus of voices rejecting violence as a corruption of Islam (and any other religion) and creating more and more a culture of tolerance, acceptance, and love.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #50**  
**November 16, 2015**  
*The “Genius” State #3*  
(Originally written in 2009)

## HOW META-STATES BEGAN

It all began with an *Aha! experience* in 1994. It was that *aha!* experience in the middle of a workshop at a NLP Conference which led to the discovery of Meta-States. Most of you know the story, but for those who don’t, here it is again.

I was involved in my very first modeling project on *resilience*. I had decided to study how people develop the quality of “bounce” in their thinking-and-feeling so that when they get knocked down, they don’t stay down. In the process I took to interviewing numerous people who had suffered set-backs, who had been through a living hell of one sort or another, and who had recovered their passions about living and were back in the game of life. In the process I had been sketching a basic working schema for the stages of recovery from *set back* to *being back* in the game of life. Using the schema of the NLP Strategy Model, I prepared a 3-hour workshop for the Denver NLP Convention when “the call for papers” went out. After applying for the previous three years, Steve Andreas finally accepted this one. So I went and presented to some 50 or 60 people.

After presenting the *stages* in the process of “*Going for It – Again*,” I invited someone to come forward “who had been through hell and had returned.” When several raised their hands and briefly described the traumatic events that they had been through and the degree to which they were back. I selected one gentleman and began inquiring about his strategy. I wanted to use the interview questions to model out *how he did it*. At one point, he mentioned that he moved from one stage to another. So I asked, “What was on your mind as you did that? What did you think or feel?” He said something about knowing that it would all work out. “I know that eventually I will come out of this stage.” “How did you know that?” Then either he said “I have a *state* about my state, a meta-state,” or I said, “So it is a *state about the first state*, a meta-state.” I no longer remember who said it. And there’s a reason for that.

Suddenly the lights and bells went off inside my head! Suddenly the phrase “meta-state” brought together all of the studies in Korzybski and Bateson that I had been studying for years. Suddenly it all made sense. And with that, the Meta-States Model was given birth. The Conference ended a few hours later, and that evening I drove with three friends over the entire Rocky Mountain range (250 miles) from Denver to Grand Junction and I couldn’t stop talking about it. That week, I sat down and wrote out the model in a 40 page document. And because the *NLP Trainers Association* was running a contest for innovations in NLP, I sent my document to Wyatt

Woodsmall. Two months later he called and said it would be given the award for “the most significant contribution to the field of NLP in 1995.”

Now the *Aha!* facet of this experience was that the term *meta-state* brought together things that had been percolating in the back of my mind for several years. Suddenly, lots and lots of things became clear. First and foremost was the structure of *complex states*. While it was easy to identify the structure of the basic states, not so with the complex ones. NLP gave me a way to think about the *primary states* of fear and anger, stress and relaxation, aversion and attraction, love and hate (or apathy), joy and sadness, etc. I described them by saying that there are “two royal roads” for accessing these states—first, *mind* (thinking, imagining, talking, hearing) and second, *body* (physiology, acting, gestures, breathing, etc.).

But what about more complex states? What about self-esteem, proactivity, forgiveness, understanding, responsibility, etc.? I knew that to model *the structure* of these states there was something more, something missing. Mere representational images and sounds on the movie of the mind is not sufficient for most of the people I was seeing as clients. After all, how do you represent “self-esteem?” What picture induces “proactivity?” What sound track fully elicits “forgiveness” or “responsibility?” Where do you kinesthetically sense “self-esteem?” The primary representational data of sights, sounds and sensations cannot fully describe these complex state.

So, what’s missing? Within complex states, there was also typically a much less direct and different kind of kinesthetic. So when the gentleman that I was interviewing started to describe a higher state, a state *about* the other states in coming back from a set-back, he said it was a “state of knowing that he would eventually get through it all.” I echoed back his words.

“So it’s a state of knowing that he would eventually get through it all. Ahhhh. So what do you call this state?” He didn’t know. “I’m not sure, it’s a *big picture* state, like I’m above it all and know that I’ll get through it all.”

“How do you know that you’re in this big picture state of knowing that?” I asked again, trying to understand what he was doing in his mind, how he represented it, and how I could replicate what he was doing.

“Well, it’s like this state is about that other state of feeling the emotional ups-and-downs of the setback, but I’m not too concerned about my roller-coaster emotions because I know I will get through. It’s like a state meta to the other.”

“You mean it is a meta-state about the first state?” I reflected back. “Yes, a meta-state.” My friends tell me that I finished the workshop that day. But I don’t remember it. Inside my head was a whirlwind of ideas spinning around. I was picturing a circle of a mind-body energy state *meta* to a first one and *governing* it and *framing* it as its internal reference structure. This dynamic picture provided a new understanding of the meta-levels of learning in Bateson’s “levels of learning.” I was also seeing Korzybski’s layers of referent experiences in action, now his “Structural Differential” (which was his way of solving the self-reflexivity of the human mind)

was alive and dynamic. This initiated a new search and began my second modeling project, the structure of self-reflexive consciousness.

Six months later I had written the first book, *Meta-States* (1995), and immediately began running it as a new training which I called “Dragon Slaying.” My initial focus with Meta-States was to analyze the problematic states that arise when a person brings a negative state of thought-and-feeling *against* oneself. What I discovered is that this usually created meta-muddles of self-conflict and self-antagonism. It creates the disordering of personality, self-sabotages, and wastes incredible mental, emotional, and personal energy. *Dragon Slaying* (1996) was then transcribed and written from that training.

What are meta-states? A meta-state is the structure of thoughts-and-emotions *about* the first level thoughts-and-emotions which you have about an experience. If your first thoughts-and-emotions are *reactions* and *responses* to the world, meta-states are your *reactions* and *responses* to yourself. This includes reactions to your thoughts, to your emotions, to your experiences, to your concepts, to your abstractions, to all of your meanings.

My meta-states and your meta-states are our *reactions to ourselves*. So, how do you react to yourself? To you react to your thinking-emoting states with kindness and grace or harshness and judgment? Whatever you do, that sets the *frame* or meta-state for the first state. In this a meta-state is a “logical level” jump. We step back from ourselves as it were to then think-and-feel a second time, then a third time, a fourth, and so on.

In fact, the process is never-ending. Korzybski noted that it is “an infinite process.” This is “the infinite regress” which philosophers have long noted. In Neuro-Semantics I began calling it “the infinite progress.” Why? Here the good news. Whatever frames you have set and whatever meta-muddles you have created with limiting beliefs and self-sabotaging understandings and decisions, *you can always make one more step forward and set a whole new empowering frame*. Talk about opening up things so that you are only as stuck as your frames. This is it!

Why meta-states? That will be the subject for the next *Reflections*. There you will discover the power, extensiveness, and nature of meta-states and how to use them for fun and profit.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #51**  
**November 23, 2015**  
*The “Genius” State #4*

## THE REFLEXIVE HEART OF META-STATES

The Meta-States Model is a model of the special kind of consciousness that we humans have—*self-reflexive consciousness*. NLP modeled representational consciousness—how we represent sights, sounds, sensations, etc. as well as words by which we create our basic “model of the world.” This form of consciousness operates as our basic code for understanding things. By way of contrast, self-reflexive consciousness defines and creates the deeper and more unconscious frames of our model of the world.

When I first discovered the *reflexivity of meta-states*, I knew that I had in hand a *structural format / code* for the complex human states. Similar to the primary colors and all of the secondary and tertiary colors that arise through the mixing of the colors, so with states. We begin with primary states and then through the mixing of them, we create scores of first-level meta-states, then hundreds of second-level meta-states, then tens of thousands of third level, then millions of multiple layers of meta-states.

Reflexivity is a function of *reflecting back* on ourselves. As we *reflect* back onto ourselves, our experience, our thoughts, our emotions, even our physiology (the component elements of a mind-body state), we then entertain other thoughts-and-emotions *about* our first experience. On the surface, this sounds simple. It is not. As a *system* of interactive parts, when we step back and reflect on ourselves, we move to a higher or meta level and we set the second thoughts-emotions as the classification or category for the first. Now we have some system complexity at work.

Stepping back to reflect on ourselves is known in NLP as “going meta.” Ken Wilbur and Integral Psychology call it as “transcending and including.” From logical levels, it is known as classifying and categorizing. From Korzybski’s General Semantics it is described as “abstracting at a higher level” and creating our human “psycho-logics.”

Wow, it entails all of that! Yes, and even more, but that’s enough to bite off for this *Reflection on Meta-States*. When we *meta-state* by going meta, we transcend the state of mind and body that we’re in and move to a level higher from which we then include the first state inside of it. In this we are *embedding* our states inside of higher frames.

As we transcend our first state and include it inside of a higher thought or emotion, that higher or meta-thought and feeling becomes the governing frame. It is in this way that we create layers upon layers of *meaning*. Let me give an example.

Start with the primary mind-body state of learning. Now step back to entertain some thoughts-and-emotions of delight, pleasure, even fun and joy *about* the learning. Do so by thinking about what the learning will do for you. Consider what the learning will open up for you, what it will unleash inside you. As you now *transcend* your learning experience and step up into the delight and pleasure feelings *about* it, notice how you *include* your learning experience within the frame and category of joy.

And with that, you have now created the meta-state of *joyful learning*. Ready for another “step back?” Then go meta and access *passion* about your joyful learning. Transcend joyful learning to the state of passion, excitement, and love for so that joyful learning becomes embedded inside of passion. Now you have *passionate* joyful learning. What class is learning a member of for you? *Fun things*. And what class is joyful learning a member of? *Passion*. Is this logical? Probably not. But is it psycho-logical? You bet it is.

The process of *meta-stating* is the process of transcending and including, going meta, setting higher frames, abstracting to create beliefs and belief systems, and abstracting to set up psychological structures. Pretty profound, wouldn't you say? All of this is also a higher and different facet of “running your own brain.” In NLP, running your own brain mostly means *managing the representations on the screen of your mind*. This is the genius of NLP. NLP focuses mostly on representation. By zooming in to the movie theater of our mind, NLP looks at the sensory representation systems (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, etc.) and the meta-representation of language, mathematics, etc.

NLP also discovered that there are even finer cinematic features within each of these systems and so developed the domain of sub-modalities. Yet the cinematic features like an image being close or far, clear or fuzzy, big or small, two-dimensional or three-dimensional, etc. are actually how we edit our movies and so operate as higher frames to our movies. The Meta-States Model takes this further as it expands and enriches it by recognizing the meta-levels of the mind—that, is, the multi-dimensional nature of our thinking-and-feeling matrix.

Consider “sub-modalities,” as an example. Prior to the Meta-States Model, all of us in NLP thought that the cinematic features of our movies were somehow at a “lower” level, a “sub” level. Then one day we began to realize that to make our pictures closer or further away, we have to *step back*, notice this feature of our representations, and then *edit* it in a new and different way. In other words, we had to *go meta* to detect and alter the close-far “sub-modality. This led to the Aha! Discovery that “sub-modalities” are meta-frames, that is, meta-states.

Nor does it stop there. Because of the infinite regress (or progress) dynamic, we can always step back, transcend and include, go meta, and meta-state yet one more level up. It's this unending process that allows us to always *outframe* to get leverage on managing the meta-levels of our mind. The art of learning Meta-States is that of learning to handle and manage the meta-levels that we dynamically create through the going meta process. And when you know this and become skilled in this process, you'll understand that nearly all of the “magic” of NLP occurs at meta-levels— which is what Meta-States makes explicit.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #52**  
**November 30, 2015**  
*The “Genius” State #5*

## **HOW META-STATES HAS BEEN “EATING” NLP**

In 1996 Dr. Graham Dawes wrote a book review after reading *Meta-States* and *Dragon Slaying*. Graham was the first person to create a NLP Training Center in London. Later Graham collaborated with David Gordon to write a book on modeling with NLP using the Experiential Array. At the time that Graham wrote his review and some of his comments, he surprised me about one of his comments. Namely,

“Meta-States will be the model that eats NLP”

Dr. Graham Dawes, 1996, Book Review of *Dragon Slaying*  
*Anchor Point* (USA) and *Rapport* (UK), and *NLP World* (Europe).

I still remember the shock that I felt when I first read that statement in the book review. Truth be told, I was actually utterly shocked by the statement. That was a statement that I had *never* even entertained, I had not thought of Meta-States in that way. Yet given that it was presented so bluntly, I even felt a bit confused about it at first. Having not been my radar, I didn’t know how the Meta-States model could have consumed NLP.

That was 1996. Then one day a decade later I suddenly realized that Graham was more right than I ever suspected. Since that 1996 review of Meta-States, *the Meta-States Model* has indeed almost “eat up” and consumed the NLP Model in numerous ways. During the years in which this took place, I was mostly unconscious of it. Yet in review, I am able to take a broader perspective and to see the revolutionary effect of Meta-States on the original NLP model and domains.

<b><i>Date</i></b>	<b><i>NLP Model</i></b>	<b><i>Book updated by the Meta-State Model</i></b>	
1997	Meta-Programs	<i>Figuring Out People</i>	60 meta-programs in a meta-level structure (2005 edition)
1997	Time-Lines	<i>Adventures in Time-Lines</i>	16 kinds of “time” in a multi-level model
1997	Reframing	<i>Mind-Lines</i>	7 directions for sending a brain and 26 ways to reframe a statement.
2001	Strategy Model	<i>NLP Going Meta</i>	Modeling using Meta-States, book formulated as “NLP: Volume II.”
1998	Meta-Model	<i>Communication Magic</i>	Expanded Meta-Model with 22 distinctions.

1997	Strategies of Genius	<i>Secrets of Personal Mastery</i>	Meta-States for “Flow” or Genius State
1999	Sub-Modalities 2005 edition:	<i>Structure of Excellence</i> <i>Sub-Modalities Going Meta</i>	Discovery that “sub-modalities” are actually meta-level editorial frames
1999	Framing & Reframing	<i>Frame Games</i> (1999) <i>Winning the Inner Game</i> (2007)	Frame analysis using Meta-States
1999	NLP Practitioner	<i>User’s Manual of the Brain</i>	Training Manual: Meta-NLP. NLP informed by Meta-States
2002	NLP Master Prac.	<i>User’s Volume II</i>	Meta-Masters Training Manual
2003	Modeling	<i>Cultural Modeling</i>	Modeling cultural phenomenon using Meta-States.
	Modeling	<i>Advanced Neuro-Semantic Modeling</i>	

I never set out with a futuristic Mission Statement to create these books and training manuals for the purpose that Neuro-Semantics would “eat up the NLP model.” Yet that is what essentially happened over the years. Further, at the time, I did not know that it was happening. That only became evident in looking back.

In the mid and late 1990s I wrote a series of articles as critiques of NLP. Some of the articles I wrote by myself and some of them I wrote with others. One of the first was written with Dr. Bob Bodenhamer, “The Downside of NLP.” Later I wrote an especially biting critique of DHE, “Ten Years and Still No Beef.” In all of them I attempted to address problems in both the field of NLP and the NLP model itself. The design was to take NLP to a new level professionally and ethically.

Yet through it all we discovered many things and began to distinguish what we were doing from NLP. What we have discovered? One of the things that we mainly discovered is that a large portion of the magic of NLP occurs above the representational level. Now, true enough, the *representational level* is indeed the genius of NLP. It is a genius and contribution that we readily recognize as the unique creation of John Grinder and Richard Bandler. What NLP does best and what NLP is mostly about is *representation*. That is, it is about what and how we *represent* information on the theater of our minds and how that some simple shifts can generate very powerful results.

In this, NLP is truly magical. As a cognitive psychologist, when I found NLP I immediately knew that it filled in the gaps of Cognitive Psychology, Rational-Emotive Therapy, and of Reality Therapy. That’s why I found it so compelling.

Yet while NLP is all about *representation*, we learned something unbeknownst to Bandler and Grinder. We learned that there was another part of NLP that created magic that actually



operated at meta-levels, at meta-state levels, and that the founders and developers somehow never truly realized this. We learned that what we had found in the Meta-States model actually explained most of the so-called magic.

This is nowhere better illustrated than the whole mis-adventure into the so-called sub-modalities. NLP decided that the finer features of the various sensory representational systems were “sub” to the modalities and so thought and used metaphors about “going down” and probing to a sub-level to find the elemental particles of experience.

Yet these cinematic features of our mental movies, the qualities of our visual, auditory, and kinesthetic systems are not “sub” at all. As the features by which we edit our movies, they occur at a meta-level as one of our frames. Somehow the entire process of even *detecting* these features is discovered by stepping back and going meta. And when we discover them, we discover meta-programs and meta-model distinctions. All these are strong indicators that the term “sub-modalities” was the problem and had mis-led us.

In all of this, the reductionistic approach of Bandler and Grinder that created NLP in the first place by identifying the “languages of the mind” in terms of the sensory and meta representational systems ultimately proved to be its own confusion. The result? There has been essentially nothing new produced within the basic NLP model in the past 20 years.

By way of contrast, Meta-States that originated as a NLP model and so recognized by the International Association of NLP Trainers has continued, year after year, to generate new models, hundreds of new patterns, new modeling of experts to create new training modules and programs, etc.

The reason for this? Meta-States is all about referencing rather than representation. Mere representation is a first level mapping whereas the frames that we set about a representation is much more governing. So the direction for finding more of the “magic” of NLP was not down but up. And that’s the direction that Meta-States took us. That’s why the idea of Meta-States becoming a model that “eats up NLP” was obvious to several people before it dawned on me.

The meta-level *states* and *frames* of Meta-States explains why and how the mind-body-emotion system operates as it does and brought forth a whole series of new presuppositions for the field of NLP and which later established the presuppositions of Neuro-Semantics. “The person who sets the frame governs the game.” “Someone always sets the frame.” “Where there’s a game, there’s a frame.” And that will be the subject of our next *Reflection*.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #53**  
**December 6, 2015**

## **A MEANINGFUL ANTIDOTE FOR TERRORISM**

Another terrorist attack! It happened this past week in Bernardino California and, oddly enough, by *a young couple with a six-month baby*. Shocking! How can that be? What could possibly lead a young couple to go on a murder spree, killing 14 people and planing to kill many more? Most puzzling is *why*—Why would a young mother with a baby choose to become a terrorist? Some they were “radicalized” by their religion. What does it mean to be radicalized by religion? How does that happen? How could they think they are doing their “religious duty” and blame Islam for this way of thinking?

Prior to carrying out the murders and dying in a shootout, Tashfeen Malik, the woman swore her allegiance to ISIS on Facebook. She apparently “radicalized” her American husband, Syed Rizwan Farook. In contrast, the entire Farook family and the Muslim community in that area strongly condemned the killings. This speaks about the contrast between people of the Muslim faith who are not “radicalized” and those who are. Syed Farook and Tashfeen Malik, like many deluded people before them, thought it acceptable to create terror in the name of Allah. This is an insult to peaceful Muslims and every time it happens, it threatens to further discredit Islam.

Now while I cannot speak for the Islam faith (I don’t know it well enough) I can speak for the Christian faith (my first master’s degree was in Biblical Language and Literature). From that perspective I can identify the Christian principles that prevent one from the crazy thinking that validates killing. Accepting these principles effectively *inoculates* one against twisted thinking that justifies killing. This also explains why “Christians” are not involved in “holy wars” or acts of terrorism.

Starting with the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that in relating to neighbors and enemies, we should *love* them, we should *bless* them, we should *give to them* without expecting anything in return. These are the kind of ideas that create “a religion of peace.” Anyone who is your “enemy” and anyone who is ‘persecuting’ you is *not* someone to hate or kill, but someone to seek to understand, want the best for, forgive, etc.

“You have heard that it has been said, ‘You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, *Love* your enemies, *bless* them who curse you, do good to them who hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.’” (Matthew 5:43-44)

“As you would that men should do to you, do you also to them likewise. For if you love them who love you, what thank have you? For sinners also love those who love them. And if you do good to them who do good to you, what thank have you? For sinners also do even the same. And if you lend to them of whom you have to received, what thank have you? For sinners also lends to sinners, to receive as much again. But *love* your enemies, and *do good*, and *lend*, hoping

for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and you shall be the children of the highest; for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.” (Luke 6:31-35)

Later in stating the first and second commandments, that is, *the most important commands*, Jesus compares the love we should have for others as the same kind of love that we should have for ourselves.

“Jesus said, ‘Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment, and the second it like unto it, ‘Thou shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matthew 22:37-39)

To posit “the first and great commandment” in these words completely eliminates anyone from ever thinking that he has any right to hurt people. That’s an inoculation passage against every kind of revenge killing.

Of course, my favorite anti-fundamentalist passage and statement that establishes the foundation for followers to be *psychologically healthy* is Paul’s statement to Timothy. In urging him to be courageous and not governed by fear or timidity, he explains the “spirit” that God gives:

“For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (II Timothy 1:7)

Any religious message of fear is *not* from God. That’s not the spirit (attitude) that God encourages. Instead, he gives the spirit of *power, love, and sanity*. These are our basic needs and create a healthy perspective. We need a sense of *power* so we feel that we have some control in our lives— self-control and the ability to respond (response-ability). We need *love* so that we feel compassion, concern, empathy, and even sympathy with others. This allows us to humanize them and treat them as equally valued persons. We need *sound mind or sanity* so that we can comprehend what’s real and what’s not, to understand life as we experience it, and rationally think things through. In another passage Paul urges critical thinking:

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.” (I Thessalonians 5:21-22)

I could continue, but these sufficiently establish the basic principles for Christians to be *psychologically healthy*—caring about others, accepting that life is often unfair, forgiving hurts, getting on with life, mentally “proving” things (critical thinking), and abstaining from evil. Passages like these, as well as the list of the “fruit of the spirit” (e.g., love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, humility, self-control, Galatians 5:22-23), prevent one from being radicalized. These ideas inoculate one against any “religious killing.”

To prevent Muslims from being radicalized, I call upon Muslim leaders and clerics to make their *peaceful principles more predominant*. In Mosques they need to be speaking about compassion, kindness, and love. Because every outbreak of “Muslim” terrorism like this besmirches Islam, the religious leaders need to be stepping up to condemn the terrorists acts who murder “infidels.” They need to be teaching tolerance, non-violence, and even love for one’s enemies.

I don’t know if there are such passages in the Koran but surely in a “religion of peace” as Islam is presented, there have to be such passages somewhere—passages which need to be presented thousands of times at Mosques to create a mindset of peace as an antidote to the pathology of the terrorists who have been hijacking Islam. So for any and all who are *leaders* in Muslim

communities, it's time to step up and change the culture to one of peace and love. When that's the meaning, the performance will follow.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #54**  
**December 14, 2015**  
*The "Genius" State #6*

## THE STORY OF *META-STATING*

When you hear the name *Doug Adams* you probably think about the guy who wrote *A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. But there was another *Doug Adams* and one who played a key role in Neuro-Semantics at the beginning. The Neuro-Semanticist Doug Adams was an IT guy who grew up in Kansas City Missouri (where I first met him) and later moved to work in Washington DC. I met Doug in the mid-1980s and later introduced him to NLP which he took to passionately.

He was passionate enough about it that he was one of the people who traveled to Denver for the 1994 NLP Conference where I spoke on my first modeling project on *Resilience* out of which arose the Meta-States Model. He flew in from Washington DC and attended the presentation when I first discovered the Meta-States Model and he was one of the three people there that I immediately began talking to after that presentation about Meta-States. Then, throughout 1994 and 1995, Doug was one of the colleagues with whom I brainstormed about many of the factors and features that I incorporated into the first designing of the Meta-States Model.

Yet what I remember Doug Adams mostly for is this: he was the person who invented the verb *meta-stating*. After reading my initial paper on Meta-States and contemplating it for a couple of weeks, we have a long conversation on the phone in December of 1994. That's when Doug asked me about "the steps of *meta-stating*." "The steps of what?" I inquired. "Meta-stating?" I repeated, "I've never thought of it like that. What are you thinking Doug?"

"Well, if you're not going to turn Meta-States into another nominalization so that people think that it is a *thing* rather than focus on the process and the mechanisms of reflexivity, then don't you need a verb form of the term Meta-States?"

During that dialogue, Doug challenged me to come up with a meta-state process. When I later came up with the original meta-stating process. I think it had 11 steps! Talk about exhaustive, it said everything I knew and could think about self-reflexivity. Later as I began traveling and presenting Meta-States to various NLP Centers in the USA, I discovered one of the real benefits of presentation—feedback. People found the eleven steps *far too much to remember and practice*. So I began to simplify the process and to put it in a more memorable form. That resulted in the **Five "A"s** of meta-stating:

1) *Access* a resourceful state that you want to set as your frame or meta-state.

- 2) *Amplify* that state so that it is strong and robust enough to be felt. It's the feeling of the state that counts.
- 3) *Apply* that state to a primary state or situation.
- 4) *Appropriate* it into the life context, environment, or relationship where you want it.
- 5) *Analyze* the result to make sure it is ecological, congruent, and empowering.

After coming up with the **Five "A"s**, Denis Bridoux in England translated it into French using 5 French words starting in A; others found 5 Spanish words. When Colin Cox in New Zealand learned the five English words starting with A, he applied his creative genius to them by turning them into gestures so that people could mime them for easy learning. He also added two more "A"s—"awareness" and "accelerate." He put *Awareness* as the first step (aware of the primary state to be outframed) and *Accelerate* as the last (accelerate into life).

- 1) *Awareness* of the present and primary state that needs to be outframed, textured, or meta-stated with some higher resource.
- 7) *Accelerate* your actions and behaviors to make this new experience real and practical in your everyday life.

The meta-stating process then involves these seven steps: 1) Awareness. 2) Access. 3) Amplify. 4) Apply. 5) Appropriate. 6) Analyze. 7) Accelerate. Back in late 1990s Doug Adams' name occurred in most of the issues of *The Meta-State Journal* (1997, 1998). Those monthly journals are now incorporated in the book, *Meta-State Magic*. Before his untimely death at 38 years old, Doug was a beloved colleague as he contributed his insights and feedback for what has become the Meta-States Model.

Now you know who first came up with the phrase, *meta-stating*. Of course, if you don't know what a meta-state is you wouldn't know what "meta-stating" means. That's why from the beginning we came up with other phrases. The one that I used predominately for the first five years was "bring to bear." "*Bring* this resourceful state (X) *to bear* upon this primary state (Y)." I think Dr. Bob must really love it because I see and hear him using it most often to this day.

One day in 1998 I was in Austin Texas presenting Meta-States for Business ("Genius at Work") and a lady walked into the training on the second day with two teddy bears dangling on each side of her. She had tied them together with a string. It's not everyday you see a woman walking round with two teddy bears strung around her neck and dangling on each side, so everybody was asking, "What's with the bears?" When I asked, she said: "You of all people should know! You talked about two bears all day yesterday." "I did?"

"Yes, you said 'bring *joy* to bear on your learning,' 'bring *ownership* to bear on your awareness of your personal powers,' 'bring *pleasure* to bear on that pleasure.' So that's why I brought my *two bears* with me today."

Others have done similar things. I have walked into training room in South Africa and Australia and other places to find *two bears* in the front of the room. We *meta-state* by bringing one state (thought, emotion, physiology) to bear upon another, by applying one to another, by embedding one inside of another (like Russian and Chinese dolls), by transcending and including to create

new categories or logical levels, by finding out “waz up about waz up” (to quote a couple of Neuro-Semantic trainers).

In these, and other ways, we speak about *meta-stating* ourselves and others with resources that make a transformative difference and that create new empowering frames of mind.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #55**  
**December 21, 2015**  
*The “Genius” State #7*  
Written in 2009

## GENIUS ‘R US

When was the last time you thought of yourself as a “genius?” Audacious, right? Well, have you *ever* entertained such audacious thoughts? What would have to happen in order for you to begin to believe that you are a budding genius? In our culture, we simply do not easily or lightly use the term “genius,” especially for ourselves. On the other hand, we are a bit more comfortable with attributing genius to a specific idea or behavior. At times we say or accept the compliment about an action or idea, “That was a stroke of genius!”

*Genius* speaks about an attendant spirit of a person or place, a strong inclination, a marked capacity, and finally a high intelligence quotient (Webster). *Genius* speaks about being in an especially resourceful state, being completely engaged and present and with all of one’s resources full available. Psychologist Csikszentmihalyi has describe this as being in a *flow state*. That is a state where you become so completely engaged in an activity that you get lost in it.

Now, *what if* we could learn and habituate this engagement state of flow, genius, or being “in the zone” so that we could *turn it on at will*? Would you like that? What if there is a pathway to genius, to awakening and unleashing your own budding genius? What if there is a process for stepping in and out of a genius state so that when you are in that state you experience a laser-beam focus so much so that the world, time, others, and self go away? Would that enable you to do some things that could enrich the quality of your life and empower you for accessing your resources? Would that be a great Christmas gift to yourself?

*I found the pathway to the genius state in 1994.* Upon that discovery, I set out to apply it to myself to see if it would really work. My first choice was to set up a genius research and writing state. Since that day I have not experienced “writer’s block.” After years of misery with writer’s block, suddenly that interference was simply no longer there. Gone. And the result of that? Since then I have written 60 books, many of which are best sellers in the field of NLP. To this day I write 2 books a year and a 100 articles. And whereas once writing was “hard” and “a

struggle,” now it is a source of play and fun. After that I established some genius states for reading, doing business, being with a client, being present to a loved one, training, etc.

So what is the big secret? Simple: discover how to use your mind-body states, run the movies in your mind, and handle the thoughts-and-emotions “in the back of your mind.” All of this is part of what we call in NLP *state management skills*—skills for managing your mental and emotional states. Actually, you already know and regularly experience flow states. From time to time when you are doing something valuable that you enjoy, you get lost in that experience. Perhaps you’re watching a movie, talking with an intimate friend, engaged in a game, a sport, gardening, almost any enjoyable activity will do. Then suddenly you’re gone. Well, that’s how it appears on the outside.

On the inside you are so completely engaged in something and present to something that you are more fully you and completely *un-self-conscious*. To state that in the positive— you are absolutely *engaged in one thing*. And because you are out of the way, you are self-forgetful. You’re in the zone. Yet at that time you don’t notice. It is only later when you look back on it that you realize how you were “right on” and how enjoyable it was. Even things that might otherwise seem unpleasant become enjoyable and pleasurable when you were “in the zone.”

This explains, in part, the runner’s high, the mountaineer’s or rock climber’s thrill, the high performer who finishes an eighteen-hour sprint on some project and feels totally energized and thrilled. What’s going on in this? At the neurological level there are the endorphins and other neuro-transmitters conveying the buzz. Yet what activates that neurology?

Csikszentmihalyi said that to get into “the flow channel” you have to have a balance between two things: challenge and competency. *Competency* speaks about your abilities and skills. You have to have some basic skill to do something (cooking, gardening, cycling, etc.). If the activity is too demanding, you will go into the panic zone rather than the flow zone. This invites too much self-consciousness, fear, and other interfering states. *Challenge* speaks about meaning, purpose, vision, and value. You have to feel that the activity is meaningful, that it contributes to yourself or others, and that it is not too easy. If there’s no challenge, then you enter into the drone zone and fall asleep.

Competency without challenge, without feeling a call to tap into more resources, to learn more, to discover more, to become more, etc. creates a satisfaction so that you lose “the eye of the tiger.” It takes both a meaningful challenge to your inner capacities and competencies to step into a flow state of engagement. This is the state that geniuses and high performers live in and operate from.

Those who we think of as geniuses are typically those who find their talents and follow their passions creating new things, innovating new processes, producing the highest quality products, and achieve high performance in their area of expertise. Like world-class athletes, when they get into the zone, *they are all there*. They are extremely focused. Time, the world, others, even self

disappears. They are alone with the engagement. And in this ecstatic state their competencies are challenged at an optimum level thereby unleashing more and more of their hidden potentials.

All of this describes what top performers naturally do. Somehow or in some way they have found a way to access their best states and to be fully present. This is what gives them their edge in business, wealth creation, entrepreneurship, relationship, health, sports, etc.

Now, *what if* this highly focused state where skills and meaning interface is precisely that which unleashes your potentials as it mobilizes your resources for *becoming* more of who you are and contributing more of what you have to offer? *What if* this describes the innate transcendence that most of us long for as we move toward self-actualizing and truly making a difference? What if that's why even our body with its neurological wiring is designed to massively reward us with inner pleasure when we experience these flow states (the endorphin rush)?

Wouldn't you like to take charge of this process and put it at your command? That's what *Accessing Personal Genius* or **APG** is all about. In three short but intense days, you learn the basic state and meta-state management skills to rise up in your mind-body system and from the executive level of our mind set the frames of mind that free you to access your genius states. You will learn how to create specific genius states for yourself, states that you can step in and out of so that even interruptions will not stop you.

**Accessing personal genius** is based on the cognitive-behavioral sciences, developmental psychology, and self-actualization psychology. The larger framework that holds all of this together into a practical system—Neuro-Semantics. This refers to how you translate great ideas, values, visions, and principles in your head (semantics, meaning) into your body so that your neuro-physiology can “know” it in your muscle memory thereby *in-forming* your everyday actions for higher quality performance.

Why do this beside having incredible focus, the foundation for high performance, and the neurological rush of massive pleasure? I'd recommend that you do it also to live more intentionally, to blow-out all excuses from selling yourself short, to become all that you can become, to facilitate your own self-actualization, to fulfill your life vision and specific goals, to enrich your relationships, to create wealth in your business, to enjoy your passions more fully, and to make a difference in the world.

In Neuro-Semantics, “Genius R Us.” Come and see. There are APG trainings run all around the world (see below). Here's to your budding genius!



**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #56**  
**December 28, 2015**  
*The “Genius” State #8*

## **META-STATES IS MINDFULNESS**

*Mindfulness* results from *meta-stating*. That’s because when you *meta-state* you are “stepping back” (metaphorically) from yourself and your experiencing and becoming aware of your experience. You can do that right now.

Right now you are reading about the process of meta-stating (bringing one state to another state) and right now, as you are reading this, you have the opportunity to learn about how to use your self-reflexive consciousness in a precise way to make your life much better. By stepping back from your present state of learning (a primary state) you gain a larger perspective about your learning. Now if you consider this a good thing, then when you step back from your learning state and notice the joy and delight you take in learning, you create a meta-state of *joyful learning*.

In doing this, you have become *mindful* of your learning, and specifically *the quality* of your learning. What is that quality? In this case, “joyful.” And that’s because you layer a sense of delight *about* learning as you “step back” from your experience. Nor does it end there. Noticing this process, you could then amplify that delight by thinking, “I’m actually pretty good at learning.” Yet that thought (another mind-body state) does not just amplify the joy, it adds another awareness to your awareness of joy. In this you bring an awareness about yourself and one of your capacities— “I’m pretty good at learning.”

*If mindfulness refers to expanding your consciousness* and becoming more present and more aware, then the meta-stating process itself provides an important key for “running your own brain.” It enables you to take charge of the process of coming fully into the *Now* and *being present* and *aware* of this moment. That is actually an advanced form of mindfulness, one that many are not yet ready for. First they have to undo their negative meta-stating.

That’s probably why many seek to gain mindfulness by a passive mediation in which they try to not think. Actually, their problem is that they are “thinking too much” and thinking too much about the wrong things! This especially works for those who already have the negative meta-stating in which there is a lot of internal chatter of judgment and self-criticism. That form of mindfulness involves first inducing both a physical and a mental relaxing. It then seeks to stop all of the inner voices by which a person has learned to insult themselves or push themselves with demands about all that they need to do.

What’s wrong is that over the years they have taken all of the voices of parents, teachers, friends, and enemies and meta-stated their commands, judgments, and insults. They now have a layer of “consciousness” in their heads torturing them. This is the “inner dialogue” that’s preventing them from hearing their own inner voice and that makes their inner world noisy, unpleasant, and even painful.

First then, they need to learn to meta-state themselves with a calm and quietness. They may use the NLP intervention of *noticing* their inner voice and *changing its qualities*. “Where is that voice? What is its tone? Its volume?” Then by lowering the volume, making it sound humorous or sexy, they bring these (so-called) sub-modality shifts to the voice and meta-state a change in the voice. You could also meta-state it with challenges:

“Is this voice speaking truth to you? Do you believe what you are saying to yourself? Do you want or need this message? Have you had enough of it?”

These questions enable you to “quality control” the noisy self-talk that confuses and stresses so that they are calmed and reduced and even dismissed as irrelevant today. They enable you to meta-state them with a new decision—you will no longer listen to them. The mindfulness that then results is a calmer consciousness—one of peace and patience. Now you are in a position to begin to listen to your own inner voice and move forward to a more authentic way of living that will be congruent to your beliefs and values.

Now you can engage in the more advanced forms of mindfulness—consciously managing the higher levels of your self-reflexive mind. Now you can “step back” and customize your consciousness so that it has the quality of peace and serenity that you want, of passion and excitement that you desire, of love and compassion that you choose, etc.

This is what we do in the **Accessing Personal Genius (APG)** (also called Self-Leadership]. First you identify the primary state that you want and from which you want to operate when you are engaged in a particular activity such as reading, writing, coaching, training, parenting, delegating, leading, managing, etc. Then you begin to set frames of meaning (meta-states) *about* that primary state. What qualities of mind-and-emotion do you want about that state? What state of mind or attitude do you want when you are engaged in that activity? What mental-emotional resources do you want? Whatever your answer—this establishes the kind of mindfulness that you’ll have in your “genius” or “flow” state.

The good news is that it is your choice. You no longer have to wait until you are “in the mood” or when the right external circumstances arise. Now you can choose to turn on that best state at will. Now the key to your optimal states is in your control. Now its your decision about how to “run your own brain” and access your most excellent states for achieving the things that are important to you. And that’s what you will learn in APG —the flagship training of Neuro-Semantics.

