

NEURONS

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NEURONS

2021

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From: L. Michael Hall
2020 Neurons #1
January 4, 2021
High Quality Living #1

NEW QUESTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR

High Quality Living— that’s the bottom line of Neuro-Semantics. Call it running your own brain, unleashing your best self, actualizing your highest potentials, inside-out wealth, etc., it is all in service of one thing— high quality living. It is *away from* low quality living— angry, depressed, fearful, stressed, living merely to survive, living only for material goods, living to consume, living to accumulate money, etc. Therefore I thought I’d kick off the new year with a series of articles on High Quality Living.

To do that, let’s start with questions. *What are the questions that you are currently living?* That’s right, you and I *live* questions. Questions are not just inquiries, they comprise the heart of thinking and from thinking, living.

Now because questions elicit answers, or at least puts us on a search for answers, *questions are a wonderful stimulus for activating thinking*. And some questions are especially powerful in triggering us to think deeply and profoundly. In NLP we have a question that we call *a core question*. It is a question that invites you to your core— your center. It goes like this:

“If your life is *the answer* to a question, what is the question?”

In other words, what is the *question* in the background of your mind that is eliciting you to *live* the way you are living? What question are you trying to *answer with your actions*? “Do they like me?” “Am I okay?” “Will I ever amount to anything?” If these are the questions you’re trying to answer, you are probably living a low-quality life. There are several problems with those questions, first of all, they are yes/no questions. That makes the answers black-and-white, either-or answers and as such causes you to get over-generalized answers. Those questions also accept the hidden assumptions rather than question them.

We use the core question in Trainers Training (NSTT). “If your training is *the answer* to a question, what is the question?” Questions that focus on oneself like, “Am I impressing people?” “What do they think of me?” makes the training, *as an answer*, focused on the speaker not the content of the training and not on the participants. Not good. Far better would be other questions:

“How much are people learning?”

“How much fun are people having as they learn?”

“What transformative insights are people experiencing?”

“How much more can I enable people to translate into their everyday lives?”

Imagine now that as you face the new year, you face it with *a life question for 2021*. If there

were a question, a single question, that could set you on your best path and evoke from your whole being your very best resources, what would that question be? What question would you like to ask yourself such that *you would love to live the answer and the consequences of that question?*

What insights will I learn and integrate into my life in 2021?

How much more appreciative will I become in this new year?

What new skills that will enhance everything I do will I develop in the coming year?

How much more will I be in the “here and now” moment in 2021?

What things will I learn to cherish about my loved ones in the new year?

The possibility of creating one or more *great life questions* is unlimited. It is as wide open as your imagination and your willingness to experiment until you find some truly fantastic questions. In *The Structure of Delight*, Nelson Zink wrote, “A well-formed life question becomes a self-correcting life map, a valuable something to possess.” Why? Because the very structure of the life question creates its own power to transform life.

2020 has been a really tough year for most people. Some of that has arisen from the questions people have asked themselves during the lock-down. “Will I die from covid?” “Will I be able to survive the economic downturn and this lockdown?” “When will this ever be over?”

In place of those dis-empowering questions, isn’t it time for some empowering questions? I think so. How about —

“What liabilities in myself, or this covid situation, can I turn into an asset?”

“How can I survive and be resilient with an optimistic attitude?”

“What can I contribute to others to make their lives a bit easier?”

The questions you ask create the reality that you live. And the quality of your questions, whether to yourself or to others, determines *the quality of your life*. And, when you change your questions – you change your life. Here’s to new questions for the new year!

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #2
January 11, 2021
High Quality Living #2

NEURO-SEMANTICS— DESIGNED FOR HIGH QUALITY LIVING

Given that Neuro-Semantics is centrally focused on enabling people to live *high quality lives*, the question rises, What is a *high quality life*? Is it the same thing as “living the American Dream?” Is it the same thing as being “happy?” Is it the same thing as being “successful” in terms of career, money, reputation, etc.?

The short answer is *no*. Now certainly the quality of your life is strongly influenced by such external things as career, money, reputation, friends, loved ones, security, etc. “Strongly influenced,” but not dependent on them. All things being equal, it is good to learn how to be successful in love and in work since personal relationships and satisfying work are external signs of a high quality life. These things can definitely raise the quality of life. Yet, paradoxically, living a high quality life is not dependent upon these things. There are people who, lacking such, are still able to live a *high quality life*. They live a high quality life *before* they are able to manifest it in these externals. So, what do they have that makes the difference?

Most essentially, a high quality life springs from *an inside-out orientation*. First comes your personal growth and development *on the inside*, then comes all of the external expressions. That is why, in Neuro-Semantics, we have put a strong emphasis on the inside-out approach. There are books and training manuals on *Inside-Out Wealth*, *Inside-Out Persuasion*, and the same applies to selling, resilience, motivation, inspiration, leadership, management, health, and on and on.

Is this self-development? Sure, it is the process of developing the best version of you—to fully grow up and mature and live wisely as well as intelligently. That’s why we start with Neuro-Linguistic Programming to get your communications cleaned up and effective. After all, how you communicate to you functions as the heart of the meanings you create, the strategies you develop, and the skills you cultivate. First you’ve got to learn to run your own brain so that you can manage your own states. When you achieve that level of self-management and then self-leadership, you’re ready to take on the world. That’s the design of the NLP Practitioner course.

That’s also why we have added Meta-States to the basic trainings. As an inside-out being, the states you create about your states determine your inner frames which, in turn, govern your mind-body system. Yet this is an area that’s mostly outside-of-conscious awareness. And this takes self-development to a whole new level. Here you develop a higher level of awareness— *a mindfulness* about yourself that allows you to begin to be the Executive of Yourself. That’s what APG (Accessing Personal Genius), *Winning the Inner Game*, *Executive Thinking and Executive Decisions* is designed to achieve.

That's why we have added the Self-Actualization Psychology Diploma to our basic trainings. There is an inner structure to how you find what is a potential in you and unleash it (*Unleashed!*). And once you understand the unleashing or actualizing processes, then there's the *high quality living* that inherently involved in self-actualizing. High quality living comes from actualizing your vitality, your creativity, and your leadership (the first four modules of the Self-Actualization trainings). Then there's actualizing your authenticity, persuasiveness, productivity, collaborative leadership, resilience, etc.

In addition, we have designed the Meta-Coach trainings to complement all of this. Using the methodology of compassionate challenging (which is the essence of coaching), we have designed multiple coaching conversations for both self-coaching and coaching others. Here the psychology of Self-Actualization guides the Meta-Coach since this is not about therapy, but about challenging a person to stretch out of one's comfort zone and step up to one's next level of growth. The very process is the process of facilitating *high quality living*.

Now how you will experience your own personalized *high quality living* will be unique to you. In fact, all of the trainings that we provide in Neuro-Semantics is designed so that *you become the interior decorator of your own high quality life*. No one else can tell you what you should do, it's up to you. Our focus is on providing the models and tools for you to competently use as you develop your own *high quality living*.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #3
January 18, 2021
High Quality Living #3

IT'S AN INSIDE-OUT PROCESS

I noted in the post last week that the process for designing and living your own *high quality life* is an inside-out process. It is not something to be added to you as if you were deficient, it is something that arises from within, that develops within, and that then manifests itself externally. Take the world-wide lock-down, for example. We're still locked-down here in Colorado as we have been for the past 11 months. Everyday when I get up, all around me are all sorts of constraints— some make sense, many more do not. Yet while there are so many external constraints preventing all sorts of freedoms— *I myself am not locked down, I am free* and will continue to live free.

I'm free because I *choose* my actions, my talk, my thoughts, and my emotions. No one is “making” me feel anything, whatever I feel is my response and response-ability. It is my response that I create using my thoughts and that I express verbally and behaviorally. My *freedom* is an inside-out freedom. It is not dependent on whatever “prison” I may physically be in— whatever constraints and limitations to my freedom.

Freedom, like a thousand other central human experiences, is an inside-out phenomena. If I'm not free on the inside, no amount of external physical freedom will help. But if I am internally *free*, then that inner freedom will enable me to live a high quality life. So it is with thinking and emoting. If you are free in your thinking-and-emoting, then it is because you have developed your capacities. You are capable of thinking regardless of the intellectual environment that you live in. You have cultivated your thinking skills— and most of all, your executive thinking skills. Thinking is definitely an inside-out phenomenon and experience.

So also with emoting. Awareness of your thinking about yourself, others, environment, or any particular subject enables you to be aware of *how you generate your emotions*. And from emotional-awareness comes all of the other inherent skills that comprise emotional intelligence: emotional tracking, emotional registering, emotional management, emotional relating. Here's another set of inside-out competencies. With them you know how to detect your emotions, be aware of them, register them, and regulate them. Yes, external things can still trigger them, yet even when they do, you know your emotions are *your responses*. They are within your power.

Obviously, your speech and behavior are inside-out processes and because they are, so is everything that you and I do with our linguistic and behavioral powers— selling, persuasion, resilience, decision-making, humor hypnotic trance, leading, managing, parenting, coaching, training, etc.

What does all of these mean? Several highly significant things. First, *to succeed on the outside, first take care of the inside*. Success comes to those who first win the “inner game.” When you

win the inner game, the outer game is a cinch. But if you focus only on the “outer game,” as many salespeople do, as many managers do, as many leaders do, etc., then the chance of success reduces by probably 90% or more.

90% or more! Those are not good odds! So as we often say, if you don't have your head on right—you won't get very far. You will more than likely mess things up. That's why in Neuro-Semantic NLP, we focus first and foremost on the inner game, the meta-game. To that end I wrote several books on that theme: *Games Business Experts Play*, *Games Great Lovers Play*, *Games for Mastering Fear*, *Games Fit and Slim People Play*. This also explains the name that we trademarked for our brand of coaching, *Meta-Coaching*.

Nor is any of this new. More than a century ago, Napoleon Hill wrote *Think and Grow Rich*. The idea of the best things human being inside-out has been around for a long time. We can even go back two thousand years to the time of Christ and there also is the theme, first the heart, then the mouth. “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things...” (Matthew 12;34-35).

The principle is *easy* to understand and *hard* to apply. It is so much easier to focus on the outside. The outside, after all, *seems* so much more available and present. It seems to be at your beck and call. The inside is more difficult to get to due to all of the ego-defenses, self-blindness, and cognitive biases. Yet if you want *high quality living*, it begins with the trip inside and the development inside.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #4
January 25, 2021
High Quality Living #4
Benjamin Franklin's Wisdom

FRANKLIN ON HIGH QUALITY LIVING

If high quality living is an *inside-out* process, what are *the inside qualities* we need to bring out? In summary: Begin with quality thinking so that you establish high quality values, intentions, and motives. That will give you the energy of purpose, hope and passion to move forward with persistence and resilience. Next focus on character—the quality of person you are and want to be so that you can take the initiative to take consistent action and treat people with compassion and optimism. Integrate these two *quality thinking and quality being* so you can actualize your highest and best.

A long time ago Benjamin Franklin wrote and talked about living “a life well lived” focusing on character, thinking, motives, and style. By living fully in the here and now and moving gracefully through time, when you come to the end of your life, you can say, "I have lived my life well!" This phrase "*a life well lived*" was Franklin's way of talking about *a high quality life*. What follows comes from George L. Rogers (1990), *Benjamin Franklin's The Art of Virtue*.

1) *Begin with quality thinking.* That's because, “As you think, so you are.” And you won't be better than your thinking. Franklin focused on *good* thinking— thinking long-term, thinking about consequences, thinking with tomorrow in mind. Doing this reduces acting rashly or impetuously. Good thinking is the work of thinking about what is really important (your values) and your purpose (intentions). What do you want to experience and achieve?

Quality thinking is thinking things through, getting clear, thinking about "things to come." Do this optimistically so you don't torment yourself with all the things that could go wrong. What a waste of thinking that is! Quality future thinking begins with a well-formed desired outcome aligned with your values.

For Franklin, *good reasoning* meant getting accurate information. "Correct action is dependent upon correct opinion." You need an accurate map for where you're going. Good reasoning detects bad information and avoids poor judgments. To engage in this good thinking, Franklin recommended *ask lots of questions*, regularly *doubt your reasoning*, stay thoughtful and open-minded, openly admitting your errors, don't let your reasoning be contaminated by self-interest.

2) *With clear thinking, set valued intentions.* Quality living comes from mindfully choosing quality values which makes your mind alive and intentional. Now you can *live on purpose*. Chart out for yourself high values and visions as your way of being. By clarifying your values, you construct a world-view which becomes your “spiritual” perspective on life. If "values govern life" (Franklin) then choose values you want to govern your life. Choose values that

uphold human dignity like love, faith, and hope.

Quality values lead to high level motives. "Motives of personal gain tend to be opposite of one's true self interest"(Franklin). He saw mere self-interest as a danger to true success and said self-gratification, as a primary or sole motive, narrows your life, makes you small-minded, and undermines trust. The solution: expand your motives beyond self-interest, think about contributing to others.

3) Focus on a high quality character. An inside-out principle is that the most important factor is *who you are*— your character. What kind of *person* do you want to be? Your *achievements* will mean little if your “way of being” is of low quality. Given your values and intentions, how will that make you the person you want to become? Have you chosen the kind of meanings and values you want to *live*? Franklin made a list of thirteen virtues for himself and then he set out to develop his character based upon them.¹ You can do the same – perhaps, compassionate, contributing, disciplined, and collaborative? What are yours?

4) Now live it out with style and elegance. When you get *the inside stuff* right, you’ll be fully ready to *live* it. This has to do with your actions, how you relate, and how you carry yourself. Franklin said beginning with your tomorrow in mind, enrich your future with good planning. Develop a time consciousness that “the days of your life” run by *the wisdom* of yesterday's learnings and tomorrow's *hopes*. Meanwhile be present fully in the here-and-now living your meanings.

Aim to live the virtues you’ve chosen (e.g., live with integrity and honesty). "Without honesty, there can be no happiness." (Franklin). An inner joy arises when you know yourself as honest and holding integrity. *Honesty* refers to "being true to oneself, true to the facts, and true to reality." In honesty, you speak truth. *Integrity* is the state of doing what you say. Your words can be trusted because they correspond to your actions. You *live* your truths.

Dishonesty is lying to self and/or others and it undermines trust. It leads to incongruency. This inside-out principle is *living from within*. Franklin wrote, "True happiness depends more on one's own judgment, than on the condition of external things."

"I give myself as little concern about [reports of criticism] as possible. I have often met with such treatment from people that I was all the while endeavoring to serve. At other times I have been extolled extravagantly, where I had little or no merit. These are the operations of nature. It sometimes is cloudy, it rains, it hails; again it is clear and pleasant, and the sun shines on us. Take one thing with another, and the world is a pretty good sort of world, and it is our duty to make the best of it, and to be thankful. One's true happiness depends more upon one's own judgment of one's own self, or a consciousness of rectitude in action and intention, and the approbation of those few who judge impartially, than upon the applause of the unthinking, undiscerning multitude, who are apt to cry Hosanna today, and to-morrow, Crucify him." (p. 151).

Now live *proactively with consistent effort*. When you have a purpose, you have something specific to implement. For constant effort— take the initiative, be proactive, delightfully accept responsibility. As you now add value and make money, do so intelligently. "The proper

acquisition and use of money *may be* a blessing, but the opposite is always a curse." Wealth *may be* a blessing—it depends on your attitude and focus. He said focus on the process not the end results. Use the virtues of industry, frugality, and meaningful engagement as you work. Doing what you love brings inherent rewards.

Access a joyful state in all you do. "Happiness springs immediately from the mind." *Things* will not make you happy. It is *your attitude* which creates happiness. Franklin "...there are no uninteresting things, only uninteresting people." Take charge of what happens *inside* you.

"Many who are good and virtuous in other respects have not learned to gain sufficient control of their thoughts and feelings as to be able to experience a full enjoyment of themselves or of the world around them. ... To develop a happy constitution requires a conscious effort to see the good around us, to make the best of things, to look at the bright side. Learn to have a little fun with the problems that come our way." (p. 203)

As for your *style*, make it collaborative. "Life is immeasurably more satisfying to those who get along well with others than to those who do not." This will reduce the unhappiness of *conflicts* (quarrels, fault-finding, criticizing, etc.). Franklin recommended adopting a modesty in how you communicate. For himself, he didn't allow himself the pleasure of directly contradicting others and aimed to make others feel good in his presence.

"I made it a rule to forbear all direct contradiction to the sentiment of others, and all positive assertion of my own. I even forbid myself ... the use of every word or expression in the language that imported a fix opinion ...

"When another asserted something that I thought an error, I denied myself the pleasure of contradicting him abruptly, and of showing immediately some absurdity in his proposition; and in answering I began by observing that in certain cases or circumstances his opinion would be right [he paced and validated first], and in the present case there appeared or seemed to me some difference" [then he lead].

"I soon found the advantage in this change in my manner; the conversations I engaged in went on more pleasantly. The modest way in which I proposed my opinions procured them a readier reception and less contradiction; I had less mortification when I was found to be in the wrong, and I more easily prevailed with others to give up their mistakes and join me when I happened to be in the right. ... For these fifty years past no one has ever heard a dogmatical expression escape me." (p. 235)

"Criticizing and censuring almost everyone you have to do with, will diminish friends, increase enemies, and thereby hurt your affairs." (p. 247)

Finally, in terms of style, adopt a *modest diffidence*. Here Franklin framed power as selflessness, moderation, and modesty— attractive traits.

"...I continued this method some years ... retaining only the habit of expressing myself in terms of modest diffidence, never using, when I advanced any thing that may possibly be disputed, the words certainly, undoubtedly, or any others that give an air of positiveness to an opinion, but rather say, I conceive or apprehend a thing to be so and so; it appears to me, or I imagine it to be so; or it is so, if I am not mistaken."

"This habit, I believe, has been of great advantage to me when I have had occasion to inculcate my opinions, and persuade men into measures that I have from time to time engaged in promoting; and, as the chief ends of conversation are to inform or to be informed, to please or to persuade, I wish well-meaning, sensible men would not lessen their power of doing good by a positive, assuming manner, that seldom fails to disgust, tends to create opposition, and to defeat

every one of those purposes for which speech was given to us,—to wit, giving or receiving information or pleasure."

"For, if you would inform, a positive and dogmatical manner in advancing your sentiments may provoke contradiction and prevent a candid attention. If you wish information and improvement from the knowledge of others, and yet at the same time express yourself firmly fixed in your present opinions, modest, sensible men, who express do not love disputation, will probably leave you undisturbed in the possession of your error. And by such a manner, you can seldom hope to recommend yourself in pleasing your hearers, or to those whose concurrence you desire." (pp. 130-131)

References:

1. Franklin's 13 virtues for the character and person he wanted to be.

Temperance in eating and drinking

Silence when speaking wouldn't add benefit to others.

Order to create proper sequencing of things

Resolution to perform duties and responsibilities

Frugality to waste nothing

Industry to stay engaged in useful activities

Sincerity in seeking not to hurt or offend others

Justice to do no injuries to others.

Moderation to avoid extremes, to forbear resenting injuries even if undeserved

Cleanliness in body, clothes, habitation

Tranquility in taking an undisturbable attitude toward trifles, accidents, etc.

Chastity in sex and sexual behavior.

Humility as modeled by Jesus and Socrates

From: L. Michael Hall
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February 1, 2021
High Quality Living #5

SYNERGIZE YOUR MEANING AND ACTION

It has been said, “*Action* alone is blind, *reflection* alone is impotent.” This refers to the Response Style meta-program: reflective/ active. Either one is inadequate for living a high quality life. Some people are doers, always doing, doing before acting. Yet they act blindly. By itself it leads to burn out, exhaustion, spinning one’s wheels, and not achieving goals that are worthwhile. So before investing great amounts of energy in a goal for this new year, it always pays to raise and reflect on the fundamental questions behind the activity.

Does this activity fit with and is aligned with my highest values and meanings?
Is this something I really want to do? Does it fit with my talents?
Is it something I enjoy doing, could enjoy, am I likely to enjoy in the foreseeable future?
How will this activity be affected by my identity and how will it affect my person?

Other people are thinkers. They reflect, they consider, they weigh possibilities against the cost. They think things through. They get opinions from others. They read and research. But reflecting is impotent by itself, it leads to nothing without action. It ends in disillusionment and disappointment. So before wasting days, weeks, months, even years reflecting, it pays to raise some fundamental questions about reflecting.

How much reflection is needed on this issue? How much information do I need?
How much information do I already have? How much more is required before acting?
What’s the quality of my reflecting? Is it of high quality or am I going round in circles?
What cognitive biases and distortions may be infecting my reflective thinking?

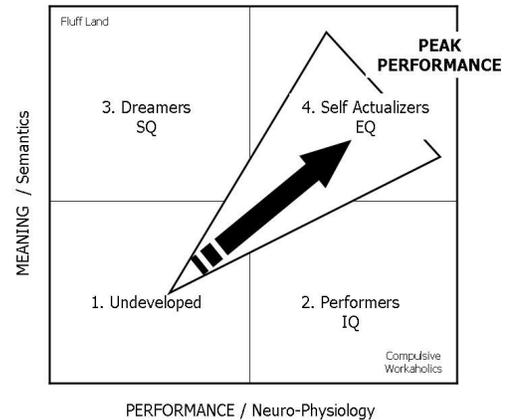
Obviously, you and I need both. We need *a synergy* of reflective meanings and consistent actions. This refers to *an integration* of the meanings, values, and visions that you create in your semantics with the behavioral actions that you take as energized in your neurology and manifested in your physiology. The *synergy* gives you your personal neuro-semantics— your highest meanings in your best performances.

This has been our focus in Neuro-Semantics from the beginning— unifying what we know with what we do. In that way we close the knowing—doing gap and live a life that continues to make real (actualize) our highest potentials into our best actualities. When we put meaning and neurology together we have neuro-semantics. When we pull them apart we have the meaning—performance axes and quadrants.

On the vertical Semantic Axis— you move from low level meanings to high level meanings. Things make sense, have meaning, and are ultimately *meaningful*. Along this axis we also have all sorts of semantics forms from representations, to linguistics, to frames, to patterns, etc. Along

the horizontal Performance Axis — you begin at the far left with unconscious incompetence, slowly moving to conscious incompetence, then to competence, next comes expertise (give it ten years) and finally to mastery.

From the Meaning–Performance axes, we developed the Meaning—Performance Quadrants. Each of the quadrants indicate where you live your life— each one defines an experiential dimension.



Quadrant I: Undeveloped. This is where we all begin because we are born undeveloped. We don't know what anything *means* and we are unable to *do* anything! We're completely ignorant and incompetent. From here you can develop mind and body for cognitive and behavioral development. This is where you live if you are not continuing to learn and develop, to challenge yourself and to get out of your comfort zone.

Quadrant II: Performers. Move to this place by acting, speaking, taking action, reacting, etc. In these ways you learn the behaviors and strategies that succeed in various domains. As you develop, you increasingly become a skilled performer. You find ways to increase your competency. If you live here then when you over-do acting, you become reactive, even compulsive. Do this long enough and you will burn-out; you will fall into a pit of disillusionment. In stress, you will play to this strength which makes things even worse.

Quadrant III: Dreamers. Move to this place by dreaming, imagining, and going off on flights of fantasy. You invent or have a zillion ideas! You spend your time using your mind as your primary style. As you become a dreamer, you come up with all kinds of ideas and schemes as you are forever imagining and talking. If you live here, when you over-do this, you become addicted to the rush of dreams, options, alternatives, ideas, creativity, etc. Yet you spend little time acting on your ideas. Eventually you become frustrated that your great ideas never amount to anything. You fall into a pit of disillusionment.

Quadrant IV: Self-Actualizers. If you live here you create a synergy by balancing meaning with activity, idea generation with implementation. Here you *synthesize* meaning and performance as you mix dreaming with pragmatically doing, with testing and experimenting. Here dreaming and daring come together in a synthesis allowing a new emergence. Here you have *meaningful* activity.

Since action and reflection alone are inadequate, the solution is to create a synergy of the two. In the diagram the diagonal line from quadrant 1 to quadrant 4 is the *synergy line*. It reveals *the synergy zone*. Live in that zone and you operate in a dimension of integration and ongoing development. It is the place for actualizing, for self-actualizing, and for high quality living

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #6
February 8, 2021

THINKING ABOUT THINKING

While NLP is a Communication Model below or behind or above communicating a message or the meaning of something is *thinking*. First you *think*, then you speak (or at least that's the best sequence even though we know people who reverse it). Given that, we can say that *NLP is essentially about thinking*— it's a model of how we think which creates our sense of reality.

When you study NLP, you study the representational systems *as the components of thinking*. We think visually, auditorially, kinesthetically, as well as with the other sensory systems. And with that, we can ask the modeling question, "How are you representing X? What are you seeing, what sounds are you hearing, what sensations in your body are you experiencing, and what are you saying to yourself?" Of course, the last one is *linguistic thinking*— we also think in words. Above the representational systems (the VAK for short) there are the cinematic features of the pictures and sounds that you create. Sub-modalities, although they are not "sub" at all, they are actually meta-modalities. But that's another story. (*Sub-Modalities Going Meta*, 2005).

When you study NLP, you study the Meta-Model about how words work as a meta-representational system. You learn that words work by evoking internal VAK movies. These movies may be in conscious awareness or unconscious. Either way, when a word works, it evokes an internal trip to whatever you are referring to (called a transderivational search). You also study the Milton Model and how you can use words to invite those internal searches which cause people to transition from the sensory awareness world to the world inside — to go into a trance for resourcing and healing.

When you study NLP, you study how you *think* sequentially about something— how you have a *thinking strategy* for each and every experience you experience. That's the Strategy Model of NLP and how we do more formalized modeling. Next is the *perceptual thinking model* that we call the Meta-Programs Model. This provides 60-plus distinctions in how you *think* through various filters or lens.

Finally, there is the *thinking about thinking model*, the Meta-States Model that explores how your self-reflexive consciousness thinks a second time, a third time, a fourth time, etc. to create the patterns of your *systemic thinking* that sets frames (usually unconscious frames) that make up the hidden assumptions and presuppositions that influence your thinking. You think in layers and as you add layers of thoughts, you create your own unique logical levels.

That's a lot of thinking about thinking! To summarize, NLP presents *thinking* in multiple dimensions:

Representation thinking — the VAK of the sensory systems.

Linguistic thinking — language, descriptive words, evaluative words.

<i>Editorial thinking</i>	— cinematic features that code the VAK.
<i>Strategic thinking</i>	— the steps in a thinking strategy that creates an experience.
<i>Perceptual thinking</i>	— the formats of our thinking lens.
<i>Reflexive thinking</i>	— the self-reflexivity of systemic thinking.

Thinking is the black-box that Behaviorism would not touch. Yet we know we do it, that is *think*. So Cognitive Psychology delved into thinking with Miller’s 1960 work that culminated in the TOTE model which, in NLP, became the Strategy model. We know we *think*, but you can’t see it or hear it. *Thinking* itself is completely intangible. Yet it feels so close to us— so immediate that it seems most real. Now the *thinking* that I’m speaking about is not apart from emoting, speaking, or acting. As a system, all of these are linked together and interact. Yet *thinking* is the driver. “As a person thinks, so he (and she) is.”

Because of all of the above, in 2016 after completing the Meta-Coaching System series of books and trainings, I began thinking about *thinking*. That has led to a series of books on various aspects of thinking itself.

<i>Executive Thinking</i>	— the neurology of our pre-frontal lobes that enable us to engage in a much higher level of thinking— which allows us to plan, anticipate, remember, establish patterns, frame, decide.
<i>Thinking as a Modeler</i>	— the kind of thinking that enables a person to model expertise in identifying the conscious and unconscious patterns that comprise a high quality competence.
<i>Hypnotic Thinking</i>	— the kind of inner thinking, trance thinking that allows us to construct internal worlds of wonder and amazement.
<i>Humorous Thinking</i>	— the kind of thinking based on noticing incongruency, exaggeration, and playfulness, foundational to framing and reframing.
<i>Decision-Making</i>	— the kind of thinking that makes decisions, makes up one’s mind, and that anticipating the future, makes smart plans, that can think wisely if so used.
<i>Metaphoric Thinking</i>	— the kind of thinking that enables us to use references from some source domain and map it across to a target domain of our choosing.

Thinking is our glory as human beings and it is also our agony— our nemesis. Do it well and the world is yours. Do it poorly and inadequately, and you will be a victim. In Neuro-Semantics, one of our essential focuses is on enhancing and enabling a person’s *thinking capacity and competency*. We started “Brain Camp” for that purpose; it is about critical thinking and yet it is about so much more.

What is thinking? *Thinking is a skill*. It is a capacity that is yours by birth— but it has to be developed, enriched, enabled, and cultivated. If you don’t, *your thinking can go disastrously wrong* so that you suffer cognitive distortions, fallacies, and biases.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #7
February 15, 2021
The Flow State #1

WE CALL IT SYNERGY

In 1994 I not only discovered the Meta-States Model, I also discovered an immediate and incredibly powerful application— an application that changed my life and one that hundreds of Trainers are training all around the world. *I discovered the strategy of flow.* Now in NLP at that time we did not call it *flow*, we called it *genius*. We also called it *expertise* or *excellence*. That was what we modeled— mastery of a given activity.

Grinder and DeLozier had worked on “the prerequisites of genius” in their classic book, *Turtles all the Way Down*. Robert Dilts had worked on the “Strategies of Genius” in his three-volume series by that title. Both quoted Bateson’s work on meta-levels and asserted that the secret, whatever it is, inherently involves meta-levels.

Then using the Meta-States Model, I took their work and the variables that these NLP founders had identified and simply *meta-stated* them. The pattern that I worked out became the “Accessing Personal Genius” pattern that I first ran on myself and then started teaching. Eventually I designed the training that we call APG, *Accessing Personal Genius*.

Now most fundamentally, “genius” or flow or expertise is *a state*. It is an optimal state of being at your best because you are singularly focused on what you are doing so that you are *all there*. You are not distracted or torn by competing interests. You are not multi-tasking. You are *completely engaged in one thing*. That’s why you have fuller access to all of your mental and emotional resources which, in turn, seems to amplify your problem-creating skills and your creativity. Plus, it is inherently exciting and fun to be so “on,” so much “in the zone.”

I mentioned that one of the first things I did was apply it to myself. My first “genius” state of flow was reading. Why? Because in those years I often found myself at the end of a page, and not having the slightest idea what I had read. I was somewhere else. I had lost focus and now I had to read the page all over again. So I built my first “genius reading state.” Next, I built a “genius writing state.” Why? Because I found myself often stuck and suffering writer’s block.

Once I did that, I suddenly found myself with an incredibly high reading comprehension, one that I had only experienced on unique occasions. One that ordinarily I could not replicate. And just as suddenly, I found myself free to write and not suffering writer’s block. In fact, I haven’t had writer’s block since 1994.

So, how do you get there? What is the strategy for how to turn on the flow state and operate at your best? It turns out to be a meta-stating process. Actually, a pretty simple one. Typically most people can fully run the pattern in thirty-minutes. You start with your primary state, the state that you need to be in to do what you want to do — a reading state, a writing state, a

presenting state, a listening state, a coaching state, a dancing state, a running state, whatever the state is. You then set up a barrier between when you are *in* the state and when you *step out* of the state. In this way you protect the state. Then *your very physiology incorporates the state* and because it does, it anchors the state. Now your body “knows” the state. It is embodied kinesthetically. Athletes do this all the time.

Once you set up the state boundaries, and you can step in and out instantaneously, you can screen out things which are irrelevant so that you can focus your awareness and attention on what you are doing. Next, we spend a little bit of time focusing on the *activity of the flow state*— *the expertise* you are developing. How do you do it? What skills are involved? What competencies? What is the strategy that you’re using?

Next comes the framing stage. Giving yourself to the experience in your imagination, you allow the facilitator to ask a series of questions which you answer with your executive prefrontal cortex. Each answer establishes more of the boundaries of the genius state, when to have it, where, with whom, etc.

Finally, comes the commissioning. You check for quality control so that it fits well with the ecology of your system and then allow the strategy that you’ve created as a “program” to be commissioned. Then your unconscious mind can allow it to run without you having to focus on it. You’re free to focus exclusively at the primary level on what you are doing.

With the Accessing Personal Genius pattern you create *a unity* between your highest meanings and values and your best performances. In Neuro-Semantics this is the Meaning axis (vertical axis) and the Performance axis (horizontal). When Csikszentmihalyi developed his flow model, he called the meaning axis *challenge* and he called the performance axis *skill*. Then he noted that “flow” was a function of the integration of the challenge/skill ratio. He diagramed it so that it comprised “the flow zone.” In the Meaning/Performance diagram, we call that same zone— *the zone of synergy*. *Here you have integrated meaning (challenge) with your performance (skill)*. Now you are “in the zone.”

Today everybody knows about being “in the zone,” being in flow, and in the flow zone. What many do not realize is that this is the *pathway to expertise*, to accelerated learning, and to self-actualization. If you want to master something, you have to take what is a challenge or meaningful to you and integrate it into your actual skills, your skillful performance. Do that and you are on your way to developing expertise in your field.

Now you know that there is a step-by-step process for how to get there. We have demystified flow in Neuro-Semantics. And that’s what the APG training is all about. It is what Neuro-Semantic trainers train and what Meta-Coaches coach.

The pattern itself (Accessing Personal Genius) is in the APG training manual on “The Shop” and also in the book, *Secrets of Personal Mastery*.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #8
February 22, 2021
The Flow State #2

NEURO-SEMANTIC SYNERGY

The Secret of Flow for Developing Expertise

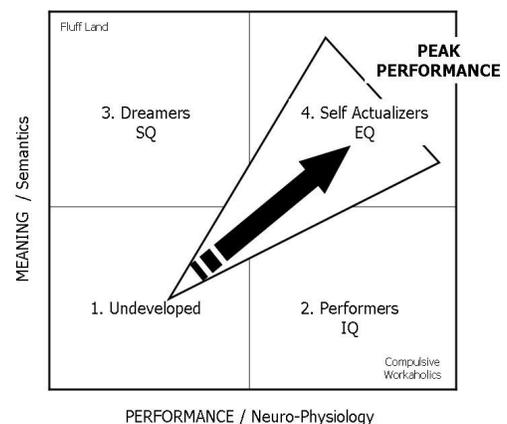
Who doesn't want to be his or her *best self*? This drive for excellence comes with being human. You can see it in the raw in small children. You can see it in professional athletes, in professional people in every field. It drives people to keep searching for excellence. It's natural and it is inevitable. Although I should add, it can be distorted and even extinguished, if we're not careful.

What's normal is to want to step up, take on the challenge of living fully, and strive for mastery. That is an expression of being *alive*. But how? That has always been the big question. *How do we unleash our potentials and make what is potential actual?* We now know how. In the past 50 years, research from many different areas have identified the process. And in Neuro-Semantics, the *Meaning—Performance Axes* defines the Self-Actualization Quadrants and the *synergy zone*, that is, the flow zone.

Yet how many people live in that zone? How many have learned how to access it and live there? The problem is that there are some other zones. There is the Panic Zone, the Drone Zone and the Dead Zone. And we find ourselves in these other zones depending on *failing to create a synergy* of meaning and performance, challenge and skill. When the ratio is on, we're in "the flow zone," when the ratio is off, we're thrown out of it and into one of the other zones.

The Dead Zone is the place where you live when you do not have significant meanings and challenges informing and inspiring your life. And without an internally significant value, vision, or meaning, then you will also be failing to take effective action to a meaning real in your life. We all start here in the undeveloped quadrant (I) and we leave it when we start constructing positive and inspirational meaning.

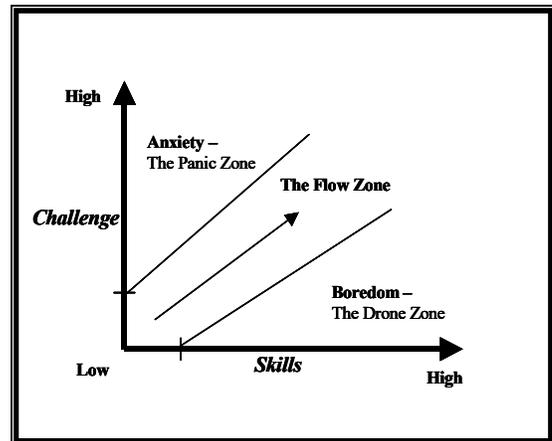
The Drone Zone is quadrant II where a person focuses primarily on *doing*. Here you are active and energized and involved, but what you may be doing lacks the *quality* and *richness* of significant meanings. You *do* what is required and what is conventional. You follow the rules and do what you *should* do, *must* do, *need to do*, etc. You are busy, you look busy, you stay busy, you confuse *busy* with doing something significant. You have



far enough skill to do what you do— so you're bored, uninspired. You strive, but for what?

The Panic Zone is quadrant III where the *dreamers* live. They take flights of imagination into the stratifield, dreaming and imagining, creating wonderful ideas and meaningful concepts. But they are less likely to act on their dreams, innovate what they have created. They tend to always be waiting until it is perfect and/or as soon as they finish one dream, they are off onto other adventures of the imagination. Here panic arises when it comes to acting on a dream. It's one thing to dream, it's a very different thing to act on it. Now things are getting scary. That's because there is too little competency.

The Synergy Zone is quadrant IV and is characterized by a balance ratio of meaning and performance, challenge and skill. And most amazingly, it begins just at the edge of quadrant I so that to enter into the flow zone and to create synergy does not require a high level of either meaning or performance. It only requires that you combine the two. A heuristic for this zone is: "Do what you can with what you know." That puts you in the *synergy zone*, the flow zone, and now you're off and running. Another heuristic is: "Whatever you're doing, add some meaning or challenge to it." When you add *doing*, you also add risk. Now there are things at stake. When you add meanings, you add inspiration.



The *synergy zone* explains why it is so absolutely critical to *close the knowing—doing gap*. That gap is the very gap that stops you from being "in the zone." It keeps you in the *dreamer's* Quadrant III, the panic zone where there is plenteous of meaning but not enough skill to handle things, hence panic. Or it keeps you in the drone zone of doing when you are in danger of burning out because there's insufficient meaning.

With meaning you are challenged to rise up to access your values and vision. With performance you are challenged to translate the meaning into the world in your behaviors. Do both in a synergistic way and you close the knowing—doing gap and actualize a little bit more of your potentials. You become more fully *alive*, more fully *human*.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #9
March 1, 2021

THINKING AS A LEARNER

When it comes to thinking about thinking, here is a question I have been puzzling about: *How do you think when you learn?* After all, *thinking* is one thing; *learning* is another. How are they related? Are they synonymous? If they are distinct, what's the relationship between thinking and learning? Is there a particular kind of thinking that is unique to learning?

Amazingly, when it comes to *the kind of thinking* that governs learning, we do not have a single unique word for it. In spite of the fact that we have lots of words for many, many different kinds of thinking, we really do not have a word for the thinking that enables learning. In a previous *Neurons* (#6), I mentioned the following:

- Representation thinking* — the VAK of the sensory systems, visual, auditory, kinesthetic.
- Linguistic thinking* — language, descriptive words, evaluative words.
- Editorial thinking* — cinematic features that code the VAK.
- Strategic thinking* — the steps in a thinking strategy that creates an experience.
- Perceptual thinking* — the formats of our thinking lens.
- Reflexive thinking* — the self-reflexivity of systemic thinking.
- Executive Thinking* — pre-frontal lobes process for planning, anticipating, remembering, establishing patterns, framing, decision-making.
- Thinking as a Modeler* — identifying the patterns that comprise a high quality competence.
- Hypnotic Thinking* — transitioning inside to construct an internal world.
- Humorous Thinking* — noticing incongruency, exaggeration, and playfulness.
- Decision-Making* — weighing options, making up one's mind, anticipating the future.
- Metaphoric Thinking* — using source domain references for a target domain.

That's just the beginning! There are many more kinds of thinking. In fact, a great many fields, in addition to these common forms of thinking, require its own unique kind of thinking. That is, thinking in terms of the paradigms, models, and terminology that govern that field. This gives us specific kinds of thinking about specific subjects.

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Psychological thinking | Leadership thinking | Engineering thinking |
| Mathematical thinking | Sociological thinking | Creativity thinking |
| Authenticity thinking | Medical thinking | Military thinking |
| Musical thinking | Chess thinking | |

Learning depends on the nature of the subject. If the subject is visual, you will be engaged in visual thinking. If you are learning mathematics, you will be engaged in mathematical thinking. Also, every subject will call for the appropriate meta-programs (perceptual thinking patterns) that best fits the subject. Perhaps this is why there is no one single kind of thinking by which we can distinguish as *learning thinking*. The *thinking* that enables *learning* is richer and more systemic, is multi-dimensional, and also is more unique as it requires just the right amount and selection of specific forms of thinking.

Yet what is the kind of thinking that is uniquely required for the experience that we call learning? In learning we are seeking to *understand, comprehend, remember, and use*. Yet to call it *comprehensive thinking*, or to use any of these other words does not quite express the thinking that's within learning.

Question: *How do you think* when you are doing your very best learning? What kind of thinking enables you to really learn? Or to learn like an expert?

The answer is problematic because as with thinking, there are different kinds, levels, and dimensions of learning. You can learn what something is (identify it), but not know how it works (intellectual comprehension). You can learn how it works (intellectual comprehension), but not perform it as a lived experience. You can perform it and demonstrate skill with it, but not really understanding how it works (intellectual comprehension).

Learning is the ultimate purpose of all thinking. We think so that we can understand ourselves and the world. We think so we can make intelligent decisions and reach our desired objectives. We think so we know what to do to both survive and thrive. And above and beyond all that we think— *the capacity to think itself and to learn from our thinking* is one of our greatest resources. Without intelligent thinking, we would still be in the jungle eking out a savage life of mere survival. Thinking has allowed us to tap into the hidden resources all around us and build civilization.

Thinking-for-learning ought to be our primary focus for schools, businesses, and everyday life. Yet *thinking-for-learning*, as a skill, as an experience, is probably way down the list of things that most people concern themselves with, let alone prioritize. In *thinking-for-learning* we make predictions as we answer the question, "What can we expect will happen next?" The *thinking-for-learning* is a pattern recognition process— it enables us to learn to recognize patterns and establish science. We learn to connect events into a pattern. Once we have a sequence of events as a pattern, we "chunk" them together as an integrated whole. So while the word "learning" itself hardly ever creates excitement, it lies at the heart of being human and the essence of our most valued experiences. To your learning excellence!

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #10
March 8, 2021

FOR THE BEST LEARNING

Question: What have we learned during the last year of the pandemic about schools, education, and learning? Several things, among them is that *the best learning is not done in front of a computer screen!* And there's lots of reasons why that's the case.

1) Most children have not learned *how to concentrate their attention*, so to ask them to sit in front of a computer screen for an extended period of time is asking them to do what they are not prepared to do. I even know adults who have difficulty concentrating on a screen for an hour or two! "An hour or two?" "How about 10 minutes!?" Ever wonder why Ted Talks are 18 minutes in length?

2) Most children *and adults* have not learned *how to listen or gather information*. Listening is a skill in and of itself, and from my experience in training professional Coaches how to listen—schools don't have a clue about how to teach that. Demanding energetic little kids to sit still and listen, especially to what doesn't seem relevant, often teaches them that school is boring so that they come to hate it.

3) Most children *and adults* have not learned *how to gather information*. Listening is just the beginning, it is a tool for gathering information and gathering information is a precursor to learning. Yet if a person doesn't know how to gather relevant information, that person will not know which data is important and which is not. The result again is finding school boring and distasteful, something to avoid.

4) Most children *and adults* have not learned *how to learn*. Just gathering information is not learning. Just *thinking* is not learning. Learning involves more. Yet schools are notorious about teaching content (the *what*) and avoid teaching process (the *how*). Consequently, children do not know the process of learning any particular subject—how to learn to read, to write, to do mathematics, to learn history, to learn geometry, etc. In each domain, there's a different kind of thinking required for a different kind of learning.

Yet such meta-learning is not taught in schools and so when a child is stuck at home during the pandemic looking at a computer screen— they are often bored to death, anxious to tears, and completely stuck. And because meta-learning is not taught, even parents and other adults often do not know how to help.

5) Most children, and even adults, *need guidance in learning*. When it comes to learning anything new, learning is always accelerated if you have an informed guide. If you have a teacher who is intelligent, caring, and engaged. That always makes it easier to learn. Such a teacher will be skilled first and foremost in creating a positive learning environment, set up expectations for learning, and create a sense of the relevance of the learning.

Everything is harder to learn, and sometimes impossible, when you don't see the point. "Why should I learn this? How will this help me?" Relevance of the materials and its value to a person's life is what transforms a learning from being boring to being interesting and exciting. And again, most people don't know how to do that for themselves. That's part of meta-learning — learning how you learn best and why it is important.

Given all of that, no wonder *mental disorders in children* has skyrocketed in the past twelve months. No wonder anxiety, depression, and even suicide has become an even larger problem. What I hope we have learned is that — *it is not good to shut down schools*. That was a mistake. Private schools for the most part stayed open and have done just fine. Today only 44% of children in the US are back in school. That means 56% are still at home and waiting to return.

Since the best learning does not occur in front of a screen, but in person in the classroom with a competent and caring teacher, and since science says it is safe to open the schools, then *it is time*. Who would oppose that? Who is preventing the children from returning? Paradoxically, the Teacher's Unions! Not the teachers, but the Teachers Union.

My guess is that most teachers want to return to the classroom. It is the *Teacher's Unions* that are ignoring the science that says it is safe to return. Worse of all President Biden is catering to the Unions rather than to the parents, children, and teachers. He has shown no courage to stand up to the Unions and order them to get back to work. That part of it is nothing but political dysfunction. And it is time for all of that to change. After all, *learning is the heartbeat of humanity*.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #11
March 15, 2021

LEARNING — THE HEARTBEAT OF HUMANITY

On the surface, the idea of *learning* seems staid, static, and boring. It commonly calls for multiple yawns, and stretches, as you think about what would be more exciting. When you are bored, and looking for something more exciting to do, who thinks, “I just need to get away and do a few hours of studying, reading, and writing! That would get my juices flowing and fill me full of energy and excitement!”

Learning has gotten a bad rap and it probably comes mostly from our experiences in school. We had to go to school whether we wanted to or not. We had to study things whether we wanted to or not. We had to study things without understanding its relevance or importance. So we then engaged in learning while being in the worst state possible for learning— bored and uninterested. And given how everything habituates, no wonder many developed an automatic program from getting sleepy when they read.

After so many years of that, for a teacher to have a class of people at least minimally engaged, they have to work really hard to come up with ways of motivating students. Sometimes they use positive reinforcements, sometimes negative reinforcements, sometimes they dangle the carrot that learning will lead to an interesting career.

Yet all of that pails as nothing before presence of excellence in learning, how experts learn, and effective learning states. *Real learning is so different from how most of us learned to learn.* Yet most people also engage in some *genuine learning*. It occurs when they find an experience or skill that they want. He wants to become a world-class gymnast. She has a vision of designing clothes. Experts at learning learn because of a passion or a vision. They have an objective and learning is the way to get there.

That’s why it doesn’t seem like learning, it seems like fun, like an adventure, like a privilege. That’s also why the learning comes pretty quickly. You talk to him and he can quote the statistics of battering averages for dozens and dozens of baseball players. What at memory! “How did you memorize all of that?” you might ask. But he didn’t. He did not sit down and cram one weekend to learn all of that. He learned it bit by bit and because it’s important to him, he has excellent recall of the information.

The role learning plays in being human and becoming increasingly authentic as a person is a central one. Being born human means that we *know nothing* about who we are, what we’re to do, what’s important, what are we like, what are our gifts, who are other people, what’s life all about, and on and on. Learning is therefore the heartbeat of being human. It is the way we become

fully alive/ fully human. That's because *we have to learn everything*. Unlike the animals who have information content instincts, we do not. We only have impulse instincts— but without content. For that we have to learn. If there's any human instinct, it is the instinct to learn.

That's the amazing thing about learning. Learning is what we do, what we all do. And for many, that means learning wrong things, stupid things, even utterly irrational things. Everyone learns, but not everyone learns useful, practical, and resourceful things. Many learn how to sabotage themselves, how to treat themselves with disrespect, how to be ugly and nasty to others, how to undermine their talents and potentials. Mis-learning is a big problem when it comes to learning.

Now if learning is the heartbeat of humanity—I wonder what so many millions of children locked down at home, and sitting bored-out-of-their mind day by day, are learning? I wonder how much unlearning they are going to have to do when schools start back up so that they can get back in the game?

In the US we are still below 50 percent of the schools being open for person-to-person learning. Yet there's no good reason for that. All the science about covid, and about children being in school, says it is perfectly safe for the schools to open. Many states have demonstrated that. Many schools have stayed open the whole time and shown that. It's time that political leaders at all levels reopen the schools. It's time for some leadership, instead of politics, from the White House. Enough of this hiatus of learning, while schools may not be the place for the best learning, it is the place where learning begins. Let it begin again!

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #12
March 22, 2021

LEARNING

HOW TO REPORT THE NEWS

With Trump out and Biden in, the press with its hard questions and “in your face” style of disrespectful comments and questions have suddenly disappeared. Did they suddenly learn better? Did they all take an NLP course on effective information gathering and reporting? Sadly no. In its place they have replaced one form of dysfunction with another. Now they have a sickening sycophant pawning — asking, at best, softball questions and doing the work of justifying the actions of the president. The contrast is as stark as day and night; heaven and hell.

The shame of it all is that the press is supposed to be the watchdog for all politicians and should not take sides. But the American press, for the most part, does not and has not for the past ten years. One result is that everything reported here is repeated verbatim internationally so that anyone outside of the US is getting a severely biased account and really does not have a clue as to what’s really going on.

Once upon a time journalists did journalism— they presented the facts, and only the facts, and let the listening public interpret what they meant. Today they editorialize and refuse to even acknowledge that’s what they are doing. Once upon a time, they knew the difference between descriptive language that was sensory based and empirical and evaluative language that reflects the values and perspectives of the speaker. But no longer! What they need is some good NLP training in communication.

Once upon a time journalists would be ashamed of presenting propaganda and calling it news. But no longer. But that’s mostly what the new programs today are doing. These days I watch the news with my TV clicker so that I go back and forth between the mainstream media (ABC, NBC, CNN) and Fox and Fox Business. The contrast is pretty drastic.

This past week there was a case that highlighted the difference between propaganda and actual empirical news. The young disturbed man, who had a tremendous sexual compulsion shot 9 people in Atlanta and killed seven of them, was immediately arrested. He confessed to the crime. He said he did it to stop himself from being tempted to go and have sex (a terrible strategy for avoiding temptation!). When asked if it was racially motivated, he said no. Apparently that had not even crossed his mind. That the workers in the Spa happened to be young Asia women, however, was jumped on by the mainstream media and that became ‘the story.’ Here the bias of the press to interpret anything through the lens of racism overshadowed the true facts in the case. Now the press was off and running with the story they preferred, even though it was entirely made up and ignored the facts.

Non-biased and non-partisan journalism used to be the saving grace in the US. Precisely because journalists did *not* take sides, it served the function of holding politicians accountable. That’s a

good thing. But when journalism itself becomes contaminated with its own biases, then every news agency becomes a voice of propaganda ... and all of us are worse for it.

Learning to report the news sounds like something just for journalists. It is not. You and I do that ourselves. We do it every time we come home from work and talk about *what happened*. We do it whenever we get with others and someone asks, “So what’s been happening with you?” Even kids get into this one when we ask them about their day at school.

Further, *reporting the news* is the beginning of knowledge. First, the facts—the details, the empirical see-hear-feel facts that can be verified, then the interpretation. Whoever gets that mixed up, or turns that around, is doing something destructive to their ability to think straight, reason intelligently, and develop high level concepts that bring understanding into the world.

This is not rocket science. It is the process for how we legitimately learn and come to comprehend our world. It is the scientific method itself. *First the facts, then the interpretation*. If you take that as your mantra, you have the foundation for resolving conflicts, the foundation for leadership, the foundation for creativity and innovation, the foundation for effective communication. So many things depend on it.

This is also the foundation of NLP. In trying to figure out the “secret of the magic” of Fritz Perls and Virginia Satir, the founders went back to the basics. What was Fritz and Virginia noticing, saying, and doing? One thing both were doing was *distinguishing descriptions from evaluations*. Why? Because they were working with therapy clients—they noticed that part of the distortions people suffered started with confusing description with evaluation. That population tended to live in the world of evaluation and didn’t know how to get out of it. Fritz and Virginia brought them back *to the real world*. “Lose your mind and come to your senses” was the way Fritz phrased it. Virginia did so by distinguishing the “languages of the mind” (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, that by the way is where the founders got the VAK).

If the journalists are no longer doing it— then all of us have to do it. We have to *get back to the facts and report the news before we promote the interpretation*. May it be so.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #13
March 29, 2021

UNLEARNING THE NON-SENSE OF RACISM

Even though there actually are no “races,” *there is just the human race*, we humans are very skilled at making non-existent distinctions and treating other family groups as if they were of another “race.” The whole idea is preposterous from the outset. It is further perpetuated by the word “race.” Korzybski declared it a *pseudo-word* since it actually has no referent. That’s why as long as we talk and use the term “race,” we are so likely to end up thinking that there are different races. You couldn’t find something so common that is such pure nonsense.

Imagine what would happen if we eliminated the word “race” and substituted “family” for it. Then we might legitimately talk about family characteristics, the tendencies of some families, family cultures, etc. How warm and inviting is the word *family*! How brutal and aggressive is the word *race*. Language does make a difference and does influence thinking and feeling.

Here’s the problem. Once you invent the word “race,” and once you assume that there are multiple “races,” you then can create the hateful concept of *racism*. That’s the crazy and dysfunctional idea that there are good and bad races, superior and inferior races, that one’s race is always better than other races, etc. Try to do that with *family* and it just doesn’t fly very well.

When we deal with individuals, it is obvious that we are all different and unique. You and I marry individual persons who are different from us and it is *love that embraces the differences* and creates the collaboration. Differences by themselves do not inherently invite hate or contempt. Even in the small groups— a family, brothers and sisters are different, they do not have the same capacities, predispositions, thinking or emoting styles, intelligence, etc. Differences within your immediate family are obvious, and yet even with those differences, we do not separate into categories of superior and inferior. Here we can recognize differences without condemning them. Could it be that *the category itself* is what’s doing the damage?

But enlarge the size of the family and, for some people, everything changes. Now some people look at the differences and distinguish them into categories of superior and inferior and somehow feel entitled to degrade, judge, condemn, and hate those who are inferior. That’s what we call racism. Yet to call it that creates an *-ism* that works as destructively on the body politic as cancer works on the physical body.

Question: Can a person be biased for his own family without hating and condemning those of other families? I would think so. In fact, I would think that is normal and natural. A person should *love and care* about his family first and then with maturity, love and care about other families. That kind of bias is **not** the same thing as “racism.” You can be biased for your immediate loved ones **and** have no antagonism against others.

Can you be biased for your social group, religious group, educational group, ethnic group, cultural group, etc. **and** not be hateful, ugly, or inflammatory toward others? I would hope so. Actually, it is a natural human tendency for us all to be ego-centric toward our family and ethnic-centric to the cultural group we identify with. There's nothing inherently bad or ugly about that. It only becomes ugly when we over-exalt our group over others and judge the others as inferior and hateful.

The newest invention to promote racism today is “systemic racism.” Those who invent that have taken fallacious thinking to a new level of non-sense. First of all, even the words reveal that we are not talking about individuals, we are talking systems. Maybe a school system, maybe a legal system, maybe a financial system— some system has bias built into it so that some people are handicapped right from the start. Martin Luther King Jr. and the other leaders in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s addressed bias and unfairness in the legal system. They sought and helped to improve laws so that all people *were equal in the eyes of the law*.

Equal before the law does not mean that we are actually equal. Of course we are not. And we will never be. Nor do we need to be “the same” in all aspects of life. Actually it's the differences that drive us to each other, to complement each other's strengths and weaknesses. The solution lies in *respect differences*. It is in *loving people — all people of the one singular human race*, not trying to get rid of our differences or to create conformity.

How? That's the big question. How can we unlearn “racism” and move beyond *seeing each other in terms of the limited, narrow-minded perceptive of “race?”* The answer begins with **stop using the word ‘race.’** When you talk about “groups of people,” talk about *family*. Talk about embracing, respecting, and loving *people*. The solution is not more legislation, the next step is the heart— valuing all people because *they are people* and ending the demand for conformity. Then the judgments we make will be about a person's character, not the color of the skin.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #14
April 5, 2021
How Metaphors are Meta-States #1

METAPHORS ARE META-STATES

Whether you know it or not, a metaphor is a meta-state. Actually, the word itself tells you that. *Metaphor* from *meta* “over or above” and *phorein* “to carry” refers to *carrying over one idea, feeling, state, or reference* to another. When you create a metaphor, you compare something that you know (a source) to something that you’re trying to understand (a target). You rise above the target and apply the source to it. You meta-stated the target with your source.

So structurally, a *meta-phor* is a meta-state. You have set up a structure for understanding using something common and well-known and applied it to something less well known or that you want to understand in a new way. You have started with a primary state or experience (X) and in reference to it, you have made a meta-move, transcended it, and now include it inside of a larger frame—the metaphor.

Consider this metaphor. “NLP is like having the owner’s manual for running your own brain.” The subject as a target is Neuro-Linguistic Programming. What is it like? What can I compare it to? Let’s see, what if it is like a *Owner’s Manual*? I know about owner’s manuals—I have one for my car, I have one for my computer, I have one for several electronic items in my home. So what do I know about an owner’s manual?

- It provides instructions about how to use the item.
- It lists the parts and variables of the item.
- It shows relationships between things.
- It lists things to do and warns about things not to do.

Thinking about NLP *as an owner’s manual* suggests that in NLP you will discover instructions about what to do to run your own brain, you’ll come to understand the key variables of your mind and consciousness, how it’s related to your body, neurology, emotions, etc. You’ll learn how to effectively set outcomes, achieve goals, access resources, attain expertise, and much, much more.

<u> Owner’s Manual </u>	Source Domain
/ <i>Managing Your Brain</i> \	Target Domain

As meta-states, metaphors set frames for *how to understand* something and *how to respond*. As a meta-states, metaphors suggest or imply experiential states that you will step into and feel *about* the target subject. With a metaphor, now you have a lense through which to think about and emotionally respond to the target subject.

Given all of that—the metaphors that you and your clients use are *doorways* into consciousness. It provides a *pathway* into a person’s mind and personality— how they think, feel, and respond to something. This will be especially true of the metaphors that a person repeats and relies on for

thinking. As any meta-states sets the higher level frames as the internal contexts, it establishes the domain of understanding for that person.

- As you think about a given area of life, what are the metaphors that you use?
- What metaphors does your client use that formats her way of thinking and understanding about the area in which you are coaching her?

Asking these questions is easy, answering them is not. That's because most metaphors hide. Most of them are invisible to your awareness— unless or until you have developed your own skills of *metaphor awareness*. As all language is ultimately metaphorical, most metaphors are hidden in plain sight in the language that you and your clients use— but you never notice. Noticing metaphors, like noticing values, beliefs, predicates, etc. requires training, focus, and repetition. At first, you will only notice the most obvious metaphors and especially the novel metaphors. Only with focused practice will you begin to catch the orientation metaphors that arise from neurology and physiology, metaphors like up, down, in, out, forward, behind, beyond, etc. Sentences that include statements such as “it is like...” announce as if they were Romans horns, the coming of a metaphor. Whereas sentences that use the passive verb “is” hide the potential metaphor and you are more likely to identify X with Y and think it is literal. “Cause is a force.”

“I feel like a hamster in a cage on a treadmill that goes nowhere.” A client who says this is clearly shouting, “Here's a metaphor about my job.” He is not a hamster. He is not literally on a treadmill. He is not literally going nowhere in his job. That is a source metaphor that he is using as a meta-state about his feelings about his job. Think “Caged hamster on treadmill” as the meta-state over his “feelings about job” —the primary state.

The meanings that this client has created is encoded in a metaphor. The metaphor, like a nominalization, like a cause-effect statement, like a complex equivalence, is a linguistic structure that you can meta-model. And like the other linguistic statements, to truly understand the person, you will want to work with the metaphor to gain more clear and precise information. And for that you will need to ask questions that first “run with the metaphor” to see where it goes and then de-metaphor the metaphor to get back to primary experience.

- What kind of caged hamster on a treadmill is this for you?
- How fast or slow are you running on the treadmill?
- What kind of running are you doing?
- Do you always feel like a caged hamster or are there times when you're not on the treadmill?
- This running-nowhere-caged-hamster feeling refers to what activities that you do at work?

Key your eyes open— a new book, *Thinking Metaphorically* will be available in sometime in April, 2021.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #15
April 12, 2021

CRITICAL RACE THEORY LACKS CRITICAL THINKING

These days Critical Race Theory (CRT) is getting lots of publicity in the news here in the US. But that's a shame because when you examine it, it is full of falsehoods, biases, and cognitive fallacies. The bottom line— it lacks critical thinking.

“CRT is the view that the law and legal institutions are inherently racist and that race itself, instead of being biologically grounded and natural, is a socially constructed concept that is used by white people to further their economic and political interests at the expense of people of color.”

The first requirement for believing CRT is an extremely divisive maneuver. First of all you have to divide up *the human race* into “races.” But *race* implies basic and incompatible differences. Yet all humans on planet earth are of the same species which explains why we can intermarry and produce children. We are a singular species! That means there is no incompatible differences. Actually, it is false to say that there are multiple “races,” there is only one race— *the human race*. The idea of more than one human race is simply false. There are many human families, and as all families have their own history and values, so with the many human families. Yet in the end, it is the one and only human family (see Neurons #13 March 29).

The next cognitive fallacy involves turning “race” (a non-existent entity) into “racism.” And with any *-ism*, it then becomes a belief system and an ideology. Those who believe this ideology adopt the cognitive bias that “racism” is “present in every aspect of life, every relationship, and every interaction.” Talk about a belief system gone toxic! Here is over-generalization that promotes “race” over character, morality, love, compassion, law, ethics, etc. It is as if the only important thing is your so-called “race” — whatever that is.

What “race” tends to be for CRT is skin color (the most superficial distinction of all). People are divided into groups of white, black, yellow, brown, etc. Mostly it is white versus color. Then with that, we have the next bias in CRT— the bias against white people. “White people only give black people opportunities and freedoms when it is also in their own interests.” Of course, the immediate question that arises from that is, “What date are you talking about?” 2021? 1950? 1870? 1500? Given the history of Europe in 1600s, perhaps we could say that “most” white people at that time “*only*” gave “black people” opportunities when it is in their own interests. But is that still true? What about “black people” who today are CEOs, or wealthy, or in positions of authority? Can they not give opportunities to people when it is in their own interests?

Another distortion of CRT is that it because treats race issues as “socially constructed,” there are no individuals in this theory. CRT rejects the vision of Martin Luther King Jr. that we'd become a country color-blind and focused more on a person's character, to see a person as an individual

—a member of the human race.

Another aspect of CRT that's pretty ridiculous is that it frames science, reason, and evidence as a "white" way of knowing. As a cognitive distortion this makes science and reason bad and ugly. Conversely, CRT presents storytelling and lived experience as a "black" alternative. A cognitive distortion known as either/or which is a polarizing over-simplification.

CRT sets up a double-bind so that anyone who disagrees with it thereby demonstrates that they are racist and strangely enough that even includes people are black(!). This double-bind prevents a white person from saying, "I am not racist," that is something he cannot say. He is a racist by nature and always will be. Now racism is inherited and genetic! What's required is that he confess that he is a racist simply because he was born with white skin color. If he believes all people are equal, he is still a racist. If he believes people should be respected on the basis of their character, he is still a racist.

The problem with CRT is it came out of Marxism. That's why it divides the world into oppressors and the oppressed. Here the cognitive distortion of over-simplification creates two categories of people: oppressors and victims. Then with a sleight of hand, they categorize all minorities as automatically victims. That means all white people are oppressors.

As more over-generalizing and over-simplifying, all white people (regardless of their economic conditions) are privileged, that's mostly because as white people, they bear "the sins of their fathers" (meaning numerous generations ago). Reparations for the sins of slavery (pre-1860) is now what's supposed to cure the illness. Of course, trying to figure that out is another major problem. Would whites whose relatives fought for the union be excepted? Would abortionists who created the underground railroad?

CRT is irrational on so many counts. It is irrational in its framing of history, irrational in the face of the legitimate problems we have among different ethnic groups, and irrational in its proposed solutions. Rather than helping, it polarizes people and promotes hatred. It offers a childish frame about history— an over-simplified good versus evil. For these reasons, *CRT should be rejected* by every politician, school administration and every thinking person who cares to protect equality of persons before the eyes of the law. CRT only makes things worse. It is completely unworkable for mixed "race" couples and families, their children, and people who have learned to be color-blind. Because CRT lacks critical thinking, it violates what it means to think clearly.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #16
April 16, 2021

SAD, TRAGIC, AND UNNECESSARY

The accidental shooting of a young man that occurred this past week in Minnesota is a tragedy. There was no need for him to die. Yet what happened also shouts volumes—if people will actually *think* about it and not just react— about how to avoid getting shot. The solution? Stop resisting.

From George Floyd to Dante Wright (and the majority of others who have been shot and killed), there would have been no deaths if those who were being arrested would just comply. Even more sad is that the crimes that they were committing were for the most part small. Floyd was passing a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill. Dante had a warrant for his arrest for a minor issue. But by resisting— they paid the ultimate price— their lives!

And for what? I guess they didn't want to get into trouble ... so somehow they thought that resisting arrest and running or fighting was somehow a solution! While the solution is simple and stares us in the face. But it is “hard” and “difficult” and maybe even “impossible” for someone with *distorted and biased thinking*.

If you believe in “systemic racism,” then you will see all police as racists (over-generalization) and trying to kill you.. Then, in that paranoid state, you will do the very things that will make things a whole lot worse for you. You will fight and resist and that's like to get you killed.

Thinking clearly and unbiasedly is a challenge for all of us. But the media is today one of the chief proponents of distorted and biased thinking. By highlighting minor variables, they ignore the larger context and statistics about shootings and deaths. They completely ignore black on black shootings which are much, much higher than police shootings. They ignore the systemic problem of single-mother families in the black community and the absence of fathers. With the media promoting the black lives matter movement and critical race theory, they encourage *biased thinking, racial thinking, and fallacious thinking*.

After what I wrote on CRT (Neurons #15, April 8), a good friend of mine in the UK who nailed it with the following words.

“I don't know any other country other than the US where there are so many successful black people from science, music, entertainment, business and politics (they voted for a black president twice, no other white majority country has achieved this as far as I'm aware). I also believe no other country has as many black millionaire and billionaires, even the countries in Africa.

For some unfathomable reason the real issues of fatherlessness homes, a lack of appreciation of education, black on black killings (which has not been reduced since BLM), the idolisation of the rap culture, is very rarely if ever discussed.”

He also sent this YouTube link that's worth listening to:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=7mn6ZLzteJg> .

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #17
April 17, 2021

I SUPPOSE YOU DIDN'T KNOW

A funny thing happened on the way to writing about the so-called “race” problem in the US, I had a number of people write to tell me that I “know nothing of what I’m writing about.” Several told me to “shut up” and a couple said they could not stand to read anything else from me—which actually sounds like a lot of intolerant bias. Whatever happened to the critical thinking ability to read and think about things that you might disagree with?

Anyway, I wrote back to a couple of them and told them a little of my history and they said they never knew that, never had a clue. One suggested that I ought to communicate it. So here goes. A long time before I found NLP and returned to school to get my doctorate in psychology, I went off to study the Bible.

It was 1968 when I went off to Seminary. I went south to Memphis Tennessee and I just so happened to arrive there just after Martin Luther King Jr. was shoot. Talk about a city in turmoil! There were road blocks in many places and we were stopped and searched many times. I say *we* because my class was 25 percent black and so I frequently travel in and out of the city with my fellow students. Numerous times I rode in a car where half of us were white and half were black. Coming from the north (Indiana) I didn’t think anything about it, we were all classmates, but the police and others in Memphis treated it like it was a crime.

In my second year, I took an assignment with a church in Mississippi on Sundays. That was my first experienced of “the deep south” in those days and that’s where I encountered white prejudice against black people. Once I invited a black friend with me to Baldwin but he had been in the deep south and he would not go. Naively I told people at the church that Sunday that my black friend was hesitant about coming with me and “I’m sure all of you would make him feel at home.” *Flabbergasted* doesn’t even begin to describe the shock I got. So being naive, unsophisticated, and confrontational, I began preaching on “race relationships!” I quoted the passage over and over: “In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, for all are one in Christ” (Galatians 3:28). After all, that was theologically— *we are all equals* and all of us are equally made in God’s image and likeness.

After I graduated I took a church in the Louisville Ky area and upon discovering there was a small black church of the same denomination, I began urging that we combine to create an integrated church. And that’s exactly what we did in 1972-3. I visited and broke bread in nearly every single home of our black brethren, and they in my home. A few years later I joined the NAACP and participated in a protest in Caruthersville Missouri (1977). After than I worked with an inner city black church in St. Louis, a church which was 10% white and 90% black. I worked as youth minister at that time focusing on the young black kids.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #18
April 19, 2021
How Metaphors are Meta-States #2

THE ART OF META-STATING METAPHORS

When you engage in the meta-stating process (bringing one state and applying it to another) one of the results that often occurs is the creation of metaphors. It actually works both ways. Whenever you create and/or use a metaphor, you are meta-stating and this unconscious process is true whether you realize it or not.

"Reading this article is like going on a journey. By the time you finish you will have seen and heard—visited—places in your mind and you could very well have experienced an exciting adventure."

The metaphor above is "Reading is a journey." But, of course, it is not literal. While reading this article, you do not *literally* go on a journey. You actually stay seated (if you are sitting) and you hardly took a journey anywhere. So to understand the words, you have to shift to *metaphorical thinking* and realize that I'm speaking about going on a journey *in your mind*. As I created that metaphor, I made it explicit and obvious. With the words, "it is *like*..." I was all but shouting, "Metaphor! Metaphor! Here is a metaphor!"

Of course, those words are two more metaphors. Formatting the idea that some words are "shouting" metaphorically pictures the words in that sentence as a person. Words don't shout; people shout. The words "it is like" is like a person shouting. Then there is "a metaphor is coming." Well, metaphors do not travel, go places, come to persons. People and animals do those kinds of things. Yet on a metaphorical journey in the mind, a metaphor, like a person, could approach you.

In all of this, I am asking you, inviting you, to engage in a *different kind of thinking*. I'm suggesting that you think of reading this article using the lens of a journey and thinking of the word, "like" as a person shouting. I'm meta-stating. I'm taking something empirical, see-hear-feel, something concrete like "a journey" or a "person shouting" and applying them to reading. In this, I have held the primary experience constant and have invited you to a meta-level. Bring what you know about a journey or a person shouting to reading or to the word "like."

Now as you meta-state when you detect, understand, use, or create a metaphor, there is an incredible richness in the process. When you put X over Y, you set an X-frame and within that frame there are lots of things *implied*. What's implied, but not stated when I put *journey* over reading? Well, let's see, what's involved in a journey?

Starting one place, moving along a pathway, getting to another place. Journey implies change, development, there may be blockages, interferences, problems, dealing with these things, overcoming them, finding resources, solving problems, etc.

From the field of Metaphor, these are *entailments*. Metaphors *entail* much more than they say. *Entailments* come along with the metaphor as implications and to pick up on them, to understand them, you engage in *inferential thinking*. You infer what is implied in the metaphor. This makes a lot of what comes along with a metaphor covert and implicit. Lakoff and Johnson describe this as the inferential structure which is inherent in a metaphor (*Metaphors We Live By*, 1980; *Philosophy in the Flesh* 1999).

So, when you use a metaphor, think about a metaphor, *you are meta-stating numerous covert implications*. This explains why the frame structure of a meta-state like the ever-ready rabbit, keeps on giving. It has entailments, some of which are extremely useful, some not so much, and some very harmful.

Further, when you think or speak metaphorically, your self-reflexive consciousness is activated. About the first subject— the target of the metaphor, you are entertaining other ideas— hopefully ideas that will help you understand the first idea or at least to understand it in a new way. “What is reading an article like? That question invites you to use your self-reflexivity.

“It is like rubbing a magic lamp and wondering what will appear.”

“It is like fishing in a deep pond and hope to catch something for dinner.”

These metaphors (magic lamp/ fishing) imply certain emotional states— curiosity, hope, wonder, etc. They will do you good unlike the following ones which will induce some unuseful states (drudgery, work, boredom).

“It’s like being back in school with a monotone teacher.”

“It’s like trudging through deep mud.”

Accordingly, metaphors can be a blessing to your life or a curse, they can heal or harm. Most of the time we are unconscious of the metaphors that are all around us. It is when you become aware that you then have choice. Now you can ask, “What emotional state is implied by the metaphor of a journey for you?” When you know that, you will know what meta-state the metaphor is eliciting in you.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #19
April 23, 2021

NLP TO THE RESCUE

For many years I have repeatedly argued that there is no such thing as “races” among us humans. Not in the sense that there are multiple races. There are not. There is only one race— *the human race*. If you were to point to the reference of what you mean by the word “races,” what would you point to? If you point to a person, a human being, yes that person is a member of the human race. But what about races? This is where NLP comes to the rescue. With the NLP Communication Model that we call “The Meta-Model of Language” we now ask:

- How many human races are there? What distinguishes one race from another?
- If there are difference races, how is it that all races can intermarry? Doesn't that demonstrate that they are members of the same race?

That there is just one race— *the human race*— speaks to the fact that we all share the same characteristics and traits— human traits. Spiritually I think about this in terms of all human beings being God's children. If we are all “made in God's image and likeness,” then we are all members of the same family. And as there are plenty of differences within every family— so there are plenty of differences within the human family. The fact of difference does not create different “races.”

Given that there is but the one human family, how can there be such a thing as “racism?” Again, NLP to the rescue. The term is a nominalization and an abstract one at that, so when we denominalize this abstract nominalization, racism comes down to some very specific behaviors that a person *does*. To be “racist” or to operate in a “racist” way, you have to do the following:

- *over-generalize* a person or persons based on some trait or feature.
- *label* a person or persons, confusing the person with the label.
- *confuse* a person or persons with their trait or actions.
- *judge* a person or persons in a negative due to some feature.
- *hate* another person or persons due to something the person has associated with them.
- *prejudge* a person or persons so that the judgment is now an automatic feeling or mood.

When we look at the strategy by which a person would learn the behavior of engaging in “racism,” we see that *it requires a whole set of cognitive distortions*. You have to confuse map and territory. You have to get into some pretty negative mental/emotional states. Then you have to let it influence your talk and your behavior. The bottom line is that the subjective experience that is called “racism” is chosen. It is learned behavior, learned and chosen.

It is not an identity unless the person *identifies himself* in those terms. It is not a *thing* at all, it is a set of mental, emotional, linguistic, and behavioral *actions*. Given this, “racism” is about one's character and ethics (or the lack of such!), not the color of the skin. Whatever your skin color— that does *not* define or prescribe the “racist” set of actions. There's no such thing as “white racism” or “black racism” or any other kind of “racism” that would be based on something that a

person received and over which one has no choice. No one is by their birth heritage or identification with a family group a “racist.” To be a “racist” you have to choose to over-generalize, label, confuse, judge, hate, and pre-judge. It occurs in people who have not yet matured in their mental and emotional development.

In the 1960s Affirmative Action resulting from the Civil Rights Movement, sought to give a hand up to those who had been disadvantaged educationally. That made good sense. It was a hand up so that minorities could more equally compete in this democracy. But Affirmative Action was not to be a permanent hand up, that would imply that the minorities were inferior and could not compete on an even playing field.

The equality we seek is one of opportunity. The idea of equality does not negate our differences. Nor is it equity that we seek, but an even playing ground. Our differences are not due to our country of origin or ethnicity or skin color, it is neurologically wired in individually. Howard Gardner developed the Multiple Intelligence Model based on the neuroscience discoveries of our innate differences. With it we are enabled to celebrate differences, rather than label, judge, hate, and prejudice them.

NLP rescues us from the non-sense of such primitive thinking and language so we can use our language for sanity. The next time you hear “white racism,” “black racism” or “racism,” let a light go off in your mind warning you that “this is primitive language” that itself is highly biased and insane. It will keep you more alert to the fact that “the map is not the territory.”

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #20
April 26, 2021
How Metaphors are Meta-States #3

METAPHORICAL THINKING

You think metaphorically. You may or may not realize it, but you do. Actually you do much more metaphorical thinking than you do literal thinking. In fact, it is amazing how little literal thinking plays in our lives. What explains all of the metaphorical thinking that we do? *Learning.*

We mostly use metaphors for the purpose of learning and understanding. So when you do experience and/or understand one thing, it is tempting to think of other things *in terms of something else that you understand.* In understanding anything, we always begin by asking, “What is X?” The next most frequent question is, “What is X like?”

When I originally studied *resilience*, the word itself gave me a metaphor which I used to explain it. The word literally refers to “return to its original form.” When you have a set-back, then resilience is “bouncing back” (returning) from that set-back or knock down. The image that comes to mind is that of a person falling or down on the ground and then *bouncing back* as a ball might bounce back.

More recently I put together the book on resilience and I used another metaphor in the title, *Resilience: Being the Phoenix.* I used a picture of the ancient Egyptian bird, the Phoenix rising from the flames of a fire. What is resilience? It is a rising up again even from the destructive nature of fire, up from the ashes to live and thrive again.

What is it like? enables us to use things that we know to more fully understand something we do not know. Or perhaps we know it, but a new metaphor helps us to understand it in a new way. In this, the more metaphors that we have for something, the more perspectives we can bring to a subject and with multiple perspectives— more wisdom.

The challenge, however, is that no metaphor is perfect. No metaphor can completely give us an exhaustive understanding of a subject. In fact, every metaphor is far from perfect. Actually, with every metaphor there are all sorts of limitations— places where the metaphor breaks down and where the subject is *not* like the metaphor. What’s also fascinating about this is that we humans seem so quickly to forget this, yet when we do, we begin to engage in fallacious thinking that deceives us.

That’s especially true with any metaphor that has been used for a long time. The longer it has been used, the more often we refer to it, and ironically, the more it relates in multiple ways to the subject, the more we forget that it is a metaphor. We begin to think it is literal and actual. This happens regularly with models. Whether they are models of physics, psychology, human nature, social organizations, etc., familiarity and over-use can deceive us. We then forget, *it is just a*

way of talking and thinking about things, it is not real.

A metaphor in physics that was popular in the twentieth century was that atoms and electrons and other sub-atomic particles are like a miniature *solar system*. The nucleus is like the sun and the electrons are like planets that circle it. Today we know that that metaphorical picture is not accurate at all. In psychology, John Lock introduced the metaphor of a child being born as *a blank slate*. Today the cognitive sciences and neuroscience has led us to recognize the falsehood of that image.

When we ask, “What is it like?” the best answer will always be, “In some ways it is like A and in some ways it is like B, and yet neither of these comparisons are complete.”

NLP is like a computer program, with our linguistics we program our neurology.

Learning NLP is like learning how to drive your own bus; it's like stepping up into the driver's seat and taking control.

NLP is like finding the ingredients of the recipe for the subjective experience that you want to have. Now you're the chef and the world is your smorgasbord.

You think metaphorically to a great extent because that's how thinking and learning works. What you already know cannot but help influence what you are seeking to understand. Yet because this comparison process can and does occur unconsciously, you and I are both in danger of letting false comparisons in our reasoning apart from our awareness. That's when it can become dangerous to your well-being. So one the skills with metaphors, in being a metaphorian, is making them conscious.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #21
April 30, 2021

WHEN LINGUISTICS GET SLOPPY

At its heart, the NLP Communication Model is designed to enable people to be more precise and accurate in the way they hear and use language. The model is all about language— how language works as symbols and representations, how language gets “distorted, deleted, and over-generalized,” and what you can do about it. So, what can you do about it? Detect the kind of distortion, deletion, and/or generalization and ask specific questions to establish more precision and accuracy.

Criminal Heroes. Let’s begin with how the media uses language to turn criminals into “heroes.” What’s been happening in the past few years is that they take someone caught in some criminal behavior who got caught and/or shot and/or killed, and made that person into a “hero.” Now, perhaps if the person who ended up getting shot was basically a good person— someone trying to do good in his community, and then somehow he happened to get shot and killed— that would be a good case for showcasing a person’s life and urging for justice for that injustice. It would still give no validity to people rioting, throwing things at the police, burning down buildings, setting cars on fire, etc.

But that almost never happens. Instead you have a drug addict with a prison record who is now passing counterfeit twenty-dollar bills, resisting arrest, and fighting with police for 17 minutes. Instead you have a person with warrant out for his arrest for carrying a gun, and driving with an expired license, and then resisting arrest. Instead you have a 13-year old boy running around the neighborhood with a gun in hand at 2:30 am. These are not “good” people. These are people committing crimes. George Floyd did not rush into a burning building to save someone, he did not rush into gunfire to save a boy, he did not courageously stand up against injustice for someone else. He was committing a crime.

It’s very sloppy languaging to call a criminal a *hero* just because he died. The media recently reported that Floyd “sacrificed” himself for police reform. Are you kidding me? He did not sacrifice himself on that alter. He did not offer himself up for anything. He was tragically killed in the process by a combination of things— partly by the policeman’s reckless behavior, partly by the drugs in his body, partly by his bad heart condition.

When the media does this, when it turns criminals into heroes and celebrities and then turns on the police and makes them totally and exclusively the problem, we have language misuse at the level of what George Orwell anticipated in *1984*.

Systemic racism. Here’s more sloppy languaging. Biden used it as an indictment against America. But how could *racism* be systemic— throughout the whole system— when America voted twice for a black president (Obama) and again for a black vice-president (Harris)? Harris, standing behind Biden when he made that indictment, is a living symbol that America does *not*

suffer from “system racism.” How could America have that problem when it has elected black men and women to Congress, to the Senate, to the Supreme court, to every level of courts, to Governors, etc.? All of that shouts against Biden’s indictment and makes his statement completely unfounded in fact.

My friend Kenneth Attwell, UK, sent me the following video. It is between John McWhorter, Professor of Linguistics and Glenn Lourey about how they, as African Americans, are experiencing the current media debates. Very insightful.

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=X0H4M5uP_y8

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #22
May 3, 2021
How Metaphors are Meta-States #4

WARNING: METAPHORS LURKING

I ended the last post on metaphors with the suggestion that *we need to make them conscious*. By becoming mindful of the metaphors that we're using in our thinking and reasoning, we can then manage them and make sure that they are ecological for our system.

Until you develop a sensitivity to metaphors, you will tend to think of them only in terms of poetry, humor, a tool of persuasion, etc. The truth is that they are everywhere—they are all around you. There are several reasons for this. One is that all language, by its very nature, is metaphorical. That is, words stand for something other than themselves. As we use words to refer to people, objects, experiences, actions, ideas, etc., the words we use are not literal or real, they are metaphorical.

Then there is the fact that we inevitably use metaphors to learn. We do that so naturally, so quickly, and so unthinkingly that it almost seems obvious when we explain it. Whenever you encounter something new, something you have had no experience with, what do you do? You try to find something comparable that you can compare it to. Your brain is trying to work out, “What is it like?” And with that you are now thinking metaphorically. You are comparing what you already know are familiar with to something that you are not familiar with.

What are you most familiar with? Yourself and how you move about the world and how your body functions. This leads to the *orientation metaphors* that Mark Johnson and George Lakoff have highlighted in *Metaphors We Live By*. These metaphors are so integrated into everyday language that we hardly ever notice them. They arise due to the bodies we have. For example, because we stand up and look around, *up* and *down* are fundamental orientation metaphors. “Happy is up; depressed is down.” “Success is up; failure is down.” We are comparing the state of being happy to the concept of something going up.

As a metaphorian, there's an art to flushing out unconscious metaphors. After many years of using sub-modalities, I did that with that domain of NLP. Actually several clues came together at the same time. Why are some so-called *sub*-modalities also *meta*-programs? Why do we use nominalizations and categories to describe sub-modalities if they are supposed to be the smallest elements? So I began questioning the terminology. Maybe we are been calling these cinematic features of our movies by the wrong name. Maybe they are not *sub*- at all. Maybe the metaphorical idea of them being smaller units is the problem. And that's what Bob and I discovered. The lead to the book, *Sub-Modalities Going Meta* (2005).

I did the same thing with framing. As a metaphor, your frames are not your basement walls. They are the structural forms that form the building and that make up the roof. A frame

operates *above and over*, hence *meta*, to the content. And of course, that's the domain of Meta-States.

Consider the metaphors in “success is up” and “success is more.” Using *up* and *more* metaphorically then leads us to assume that to be more successful, you need to build up more and more— whatever the “more” is. We need more money, more stuff, more cars, more influence, more brand names, etc. We don't ask why. We don't ask what are we going to do with all the stuff when we get it. We just want *more*. No wonder consumerism is such an intoxicating factor in most people's lives. No wonder dissatisfaction is as prevalent in first-world countries and sometimes more so than in the countries that are striving at the survival level.

The metaphors we use are not innocent. They can be incredibly powerful and determining and, to a great extent. And why? Primarily because we are not even aware of them. So first, we need to make them conscious. Once you tune in to the metaphors all around you and begin to become mindful of them, then you are in a position of true choice. Then you can ask:

- Does this metaphor actually improve things?
- What are the entailments of this metaphor that may be bringing along with it things that do not serve my well-being?

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #23
May 8, 2021

IT'S AN INTERPRETATION, NOT A FACT!

In the field of communication, a basic and fundamental distinction is that between facts and interpretations. The reason is obvious, we are much more likely to agree about the facts of a case than how to interpret those facts. When it comes to interpretations— everything can be viewed in multiple ways and the more diversity there is, the greater the extent of viewpoints and perspectives. From the beginning, NLP, as a communication model, has stressed the difference between *descriptive* and *evaluative* words. This is the basic distinction between fact and interpretation.

But here's the problem— *interpretations are constantly being put forward as facts*. And to deepen the problem, the sources we use to gain information of the facts are often oblivious to this distinction. It is either that (i.e., incompetence) or it is dishonesty. If they know the difference, but they are trying to deceive us by propagandizing our minds, then it is dishonesty. Where facts should be the basis for interpretations, many news agencies of today's media frequently turn this upside-down and present interpretation as if they were facts.

Even to discern what is a fact is not all that easy. Generally if something is sensory-based, that is, empirical (you can see, hear, feel, smell, taste it), then we treat that something as a fact. But not so fast. Even in this realm, facts are not so clear-cut. What about visual illusions, auditory illusions, and illusions of the other senses? Magicians earn their keep by playing tricks on our eyes and ears so that we think that something is a certain way, "It's a fact! See it!" Then they pull the rug out from us and what seemed factual is revealed to not be so.

There's also the problem of the multi-ordinality of facts. At best the first primary level of facts are descriptive and "things" or actions and therefore empirical. Even here, things can get really complicated and messy. That's because the word "fact" is not very factual. You can't see it or sense it. It's a nominalization (a false noun). It sounds like a *thing*, yet it is not. The word *fact* is a category and into that category we put see-hear-feel things. And after that, when we move up the levels of facts— facts become less and less empirical. We can have facts about facts. A whole set of facts, say all of the facts about a chess board and the chess pieces, now you can have facts about those facts— the guidelines, rules, and procedures for how to play chess. Again, those are facts, but you cannot see them. They are not things.

You can have facts about when something happened, where, who was involved, who said what, etc. That would be a set of descriptive facts— a police report. Then we can have facts about police reports— their nature, form, style, etc. Above the descriptive facts we could draw conclusions and create statistical facts, sociological facts, psychological facts, ethnic facts, etc.

This past week I listened to the controversy that Liz Cheney stirred up. The person “reporting” on the story, a “supposed” journalist presented what he thought were facts. About the 2020 election “Cheney was right in accusing Donald Trump of ‘the big lie,’ namely, that the election was stolen.”

Of course, both interpretations are interpretations and *not facts*. Actually, the fact is that we do not know if the election was stolen or if it was fair. Trump’s statement that it was stolen is *not* a fact, it is his interpretation of certain facts that he’s referring to. Cheney’s statement is also *not* a fact, it is her interpretation that she has concluded from other facts.

The reason that neither statement is *a fact* is because the actual facts of the case have never been presented. Yes, there were several lawsuits in the six states where there were accusations of voting fraud, but not a single one was ever accepted by a court to be heard. All were dismissed out of hand. So we do not know. There were plenty of suggestive evidence to indicate fraud, but we cannot say it was or was not a fraud. The ballots, the sworn testimonies, the videos, etc. that were presented in the media and on social media was never brought into a court and considered, so we simply do not know.

And without any determination of the facts, whatever conclusion anyone draws is just that— *a person’s interpretations*. And as an interpretation— it is that person’s understanding, belief, perceptiveness, etc. The most truthful thing would be for all to acknowledge, “This is my opinion.” So here it is, six months after the election, and we still do not know what the facts are, and the likelihood at this point in time is that we never will know.

But the reporters did not distinguish his interpretations and evaluations from the facts. If unintentional, then it is a case of being incompetent. If he knew what he was doing, then it is a case of being dishonest. In either case, that media reporting was a case of false information. No wonder we all need to learn to read or listen critically and carefully if we don’t want to be deceived.

Finally, I am reminded that Korzybski warned that “the ignorant or pathological use [of language] becomes a public danger” even greater than that associated with unlicensed automobile drivers. (*Science and Sanity*, p. 486). That’s why we teach the NLP Meta-Model as one of the very best models for critical thinking (*Communication Magic*, 1997; *Executive Thinking*, 2018). It will keep you sane!

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #24
May 10, 2021
How Metaphors are Meta-States #5

CRITICAL THINKING ABOUT METAPHORS

A long time I got a call from Dr. Martin Roberts on behalf of Richard Bandler. Martin said that Richard wanted me to review all of the NLP literature on the Meta-Model and then we would co-author *Magic Revisited*. That was 1996 and I immediately went to work reviewing everything I could find that had been written since 1976 on the NLP Meta-Model of Language as presented in *The Structure of Magic*.

Part of the reason for this request to me, was that back in 1992 I had written a series of articles on “Missing Elements of the Meta-Model” based on what Alfred Korzybski had written about language. Those articles were republished in German and other languages. Among the additions that I added to the *Extended Meta-Model* that was published in 1997 was “metaphors.”

Actually, how metaphors had been overlooked in the original work is a mystery to me to this day. After all, the founders had modeled Milton Erickson who was a wizard at metaphors, especially therapeutic metaphors. But even Perls is known for numerous metaphors (top dog, under-dog, computer-mind, introjecting ideas by swallowing them whole and not chewing them up, etc.). And there then is Virginia with her “pot” full or empty, people-making, the Satir categories—blamer, placator, etc. which she used metaphorically.

Then there was the entire book, *Therapeutic Metaphors*, that modeled the structure of isomorphic metaphors for healing and for transformation. So how in the world did the linguistic format of metaphors get passed over? While I still do not know, what I knew was that it ought to be added to the *Extended Meta-Model*. And that’s what I did, today it is in the book *Communication Magic* and it was replicated in *Magic Demystified* by Frank Pucelik and Byron Lewis.

Accordingly, just as with a nominalization, when you have a metaphor, it is important to meta-model it. What are the meta-model questions that you can and should ask? Here are some:

- What is the comparison? What is being compared to what?
- Who is offering the comparison?
- How valid is the comparison?
- What does the comparison highlight? What does the comparison hide?
- What else is entailed in the metaphor?

In essence, as you are de-metaphoring the metaphor, you are seeking to identify the real referent that is actually being talked about. You are using X as a metaphor for what? What specifically are you talking about?

Now while metaphors can be fun, silly, humorous, and poetic, metaphors also play a much more serious role in our lives. Much more seriously they

- Structure our concepts.
- Set frames of references over different experiences.
- Imply and activate beliefs, decisions, intentions, and many other meta-level formations.

And it is precisely for that reason that we need to think critically about metaphors. If you don't you make yourself open to making false and untrue comparisons and to inventing comparisons that may be unhealthy, even toxic. I made a whole list of "bad" metaphors (Appendix B) in the book *Thinking Metaphorically*, some examples:

"I'm so angry, I could *explode*."

"I *can't face* the future."

"My job is going *downhill*."

"Life has *cheated* me and I will always *resent* it."

It's easy to read or listen to such lines without recognizing the metaphor within them. Yet if you do, you tend to treat them as literal and as real. But they are not. They are not literal or real. That's a good reason to play with them. Playing around with the metaphor can quickly reveal that what you have in hand is a metaphorical map and not reality.

"If you are that angry, what's stopping you from exploding?" "If you do explode, how big or small would the pieces be that would scatter around?"

If you can't face the future, then turn around this way. That's better. Now you are facing your past. How does that feel?"

Metaphors are ways of thinking— ways of comparing and ways of imposing a particular way of understanding upon something else. It may work to make things clear, it may not. So be sure to run an ecology check on your metaphor and be ready to invent more productive metaphors. To your ability to become an aware, insightful, and skillful metaphorian!

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #25
May 14, 2021

WHY WRITE ABOUT POLITICS?

Over the last few years, as I've written about various political decisions and activities, numerous people have asked a variety of questions about this. Here are some of them.

Why do you write about politics? My most basic aim is to apply the NLP Communication Model, especially the Meta-Model, to things going on in the world of politics and political movements. And why do I want to do that? The reason is simple— as politics is about *how we relate to each other in community, it is essentially a function of our thinking, languaging, framing, and meaning-making*. And NLP, as “the study of the structure of subjective experience” applies to every form of subjective experience— including the subjectivity of politics.

Why do you write about your political opinions? Mostly because those are the only opinions that I know. Others can — and do— write about their opinions. And many own their opinions as their own. Some do not. They assume their opinions are universal Truth (with a capital T) and are ready to impose it upon others. I do not. My opinions, as everyone's, are certainly informed by my own beliefs and understandings. By using the Meta-Model as a critical thinking tool, my aim is to think as clearly as possible and to expose those ideas that seem to me to be ill-formed and that violate the very principles of clear and precise thinking.

What does NLP have to do with politics? The value of NLP is that by *thinking about our thinking*, we can run an ecology check on what we are thinking and test its validity. There is also value in looking at the internal semantic structure of various ideas as we also do with any other human strategy. After all, there is an internal neuro-semantic and neuro-linguistic form for every human experience and behavior. Now with the tools of Neuro-Semantic NLP, we can fully examine the ideas and meanings that govern a political understanding, policy, and experience.

This means that the way people talk and act gives us a window into their internal processes that lead them to talk and act in the way they do. And with that, we can now explore what's behind the surface activities. We can examine the premises and assumptions behind the policies. And this is as valid for the corporate politics that occur in the boardroom as it is for the national politics that occur in the halls of Congress.

Won't you get people upset and angry by writing about politics? Probably. Well, at least people who are rigid in their thinking will get upset. And yes there have been dozens who have written angry emails to me. Some have stooped to name-calling and insulting. Many just ask to be dropped from the mailing list. A few write to seek to understand. I don't write to be liked or disliked, what someone thinks about me is not the point. I write about what's relevant and important especially for human sanity and well-being.

Those who are closed-minded, cannot and will not even *consider* an opposing view, obviously are not able to do critical thinking. They have so identified with an idea or position or side, that their ideology now dominates them so that they are what Erik Hoffer called “a true believer.” And of course, we cannot even have a conversation with such people. They are not able to enter into do the very first of “thinking” — *considering* what someone with an opposite view is saying.

That level of intolerance, dogmatism, and closed-mindedness is the very epitome of the opposite of true *thinking*. It is essentially a left-over from the world of the Middle-Ages or the Dark Ages before the introduction of scientific thinking where men and women present an idea, then set up life experiments to test if their ideas, as hypothesis, are valid or not. Dogmatic people want to shut the conversation down and exclude from the marketplace of ideas any view that they disagree with.

It seems that with the “cancel culture” and “political correctness” fewer and fewer people are willing or able to calmly listen to an opposing view. Instead they step into “the deity mode” of thinking and speaking, assuming that they have all truth which excludes others from speaking any opinion that differs.

I write about politics because our lives, for better or worse, result from how we think, how we learn, what we believe, and the meanings we construct. When we do it poorly, we not only create limitations— we undermine our well-being and the well-being of the next generation.

Over the millennia, the human race has tried out many versions of government and economics: theocracies, dictatorships, kingdoms, socialism, communism, capitalism, and democracy. From that we can learn what works and what does not work. And we can apply a criteria that goes beyond just working for some. For me the ideal is to “create a more perfect union,” an union that fulfills the vision of “equal justice for all,” an equality of opportunity, and equality standing before the rule of law. (For more, see *Political Coaching: Self-Actualizing Politics and Politicians*, 2015).

For a fascinating short video about *people relating to people*, click on — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzKtI9OfEpk>

It’s just 12 minutes and you’ll see why it is an award winning film.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #26
May 17, 2021
How Metaphors are Meta-States #6

HAVING FUN WITH METAPHORS

*“The metaphor is perhaps one of man’s most fruitful potentialities.
Its efficacy verges on magic, and it seems a tool for creation
which God forgot inside one of his creatures when he made him.”*

Jose Ortega Y Gasset

Metaphors verge on magic because you are using one thing—something you know pretty well to stand for and represent a way to understand something else. When you think and speak metaphorically, you wave a magic wand as it were over one thing so that now you see it through the lens of another thing. It’s like magic.

#1: “With all the work I have to do, I’m struggling just to keep my head above the water.”

#2: “So how long have you been dog paddling? If you’re tired of treading water, take my hand and I’ll pull you into the boat.”

As you are now playing with the metaphor, both of you can have fun as you expose the metaphor and play around identifying a more empowering metaphor. Of course, to have fun with metaphors, you have to first sensitize your ears so that you can hear them and recognize them. That’s probably the biggest challenge since thinking and speaking in metaphors occurs mostly at an unconscious level. I recall reading that someone once told Tony Robbins that he was “carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders.” Tony’s reply was, “Why don’t you set the world down and move on.”

Amazingly, metaphors are often used in complaining about problems. When we have problems that we don’t fully understand and that we don’t know how to solve, we so often revert to metaphors.

“I’m at the end of my rope.”

“I’m drowning in paperwork.”

“It’s a war zone at work.”

“I’m up against a brick wall and can’t get through.”

“Our marriage is on the rocks.”

“She’s going to be the death of me yet.”

Once you have tuned your ears to detect metaphors, the critical question to answer is, “What is being compared to what?” In “I’m drowning in paperwork” — the target subject is *paperwork* and the source domain you are using to understand it is *drowning*. That evokes a picture of lots and lots of paperwork, papers so high that you are trying to swim but cannot but you are doing down under it all where you won’t be able to breathe. Now we’re ready to play with the metaphor. You might look at a wastebasket and say, “There’s your life vest!” “Or maybe it is a drain ... you could use it to drain the pool.”

“All he ever offers me are *half backed* ideas.” “Great! Now you know how to solve the problem. Give him some time off so he can more thoroughly bake his thoughts.” If he complains

that that will not work, then be ever-so-much-more playful. “Maybe he doesn’t have enough heat in the oven of his mind. What could you do so as to encourage him to increase the heat?” Or, “Do you think that he has a big enough oven to bake his thoughts? Maybe he needs to expand the oven so he can put some fully grown up ideas into it.”

“I just feel like *withdrawing into my shell* and never coming out again.” Sometimes what you’ll want to do first is a pattern interrupt— something that jars the person awake, something that surprises the person so that she becomes fully conscious to what she just said. “Is the shell nicely decorated on the inside?” “Why don’t we all come over and have a party inside your shell?”

When you meta-state with a metaphor, you bring something known and set it over what is less well-known or something that’s problematic and in doing that, the metaphor becomes a frame. Then along with it comes various implications, beliefs, and assumptions. Because of this structure, metaphors can do a lot more to you and within you than you might ever suspect. And sometimes, just sometimes, a single metaphor can completely revolutionize your life. If you don’t believe me, take the blue pill and believe whatever you want to believe. Take the red pill and you can begin to discover how deep the rabbit hole goes.

Dr. Carl Lloyd, a close friend of mine wrote this example of playing with metaphors. “I told him one day, “Tex, I feel like I have let God down.” Without even a blink, he replied, “Carl, you can’t let God down because you don’t hold Him up!”

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #27
May 21, 2021

THE POLITICS OF FEAR

While there are lots of ways to think, one of the most fundamental ways is to think fearfully. And this is not all bad. *Fearful thinking* makes perfect sense when you are in the face of a *true* danger or threat. It protects you. If the danger or threat that you are considering is *not* a true one, but psychological or perceptual, then the fearful thinking is dysfunctional and could be positively toxic and dangerous.

Further, neurologically, we humans have a negativity bias. This bias is wired in and shows up as the fight/flight syndrome. And it makes sense that we should be primed for awareness of dangers because then we can quickly and immediately go into a defense state when we are in true danger from some external threat. Almost instantaneously we access a state that allows us to either flee or fight. Our sympathetic nervous system withdraws blood from brain and stomach and sends to the larger muscle groups so that we have sufficient energy for taking flight or engaging in a fight. All of this also makes perfect sense when we lived in the jungle and regularly faced fierce predators.

Fast forward to the twenty-first century, however, and things are very different. There are hardly any fierce predatory animals roaming our streets. The best change for danger today is to put yourself in “the wrong neighborhood,” one where there are gangs, drugs, shootings, etc. Otherwise, you hardly need the activation of your neurological defense system.

Yet in spite of that, most people regularly activate their neurological defense system of fight/flight. We call it the stress response—a response pattern that is a common one and that undermines the health and well-being of millions and millions of people. Many such people live with a siege mentality. They live *as if* they live in a jungle where danger is all around them. And with our negativity bias—they zoom in on any and every bad news that the media serves up. They may even have a predilection for bad news.

So while fearful thinking is appropriate, useful, and even highly resourceful *in the right context*, it is inappropriate, unuseful, and unresourceful in other contexts. The problem today is that the media operates as a *fear industry* constantly seeking to mobilize your fear responses. And that is a pernicious threat to your well-being. It will play havoc with your ability to think clearly, to learn, and to create significant meaning.

Unrealistic fear makes people stupid. Living with a siege mentality, they suffer the ravages of stress and so are more emotional and less rational. They are given to reacting. This causes flaws in their perceptions. They are quick to fall back on the cognitive distortions as they exaggerate dangers, magnify fears, emotionalize risks, and catastrophe possibilities. They then pay high costs socially and economically as they are paranoid about normal risks in living. The fact is, many people are not thinking clearly because they are so afraid.

The problem with *fearful thinking* occurs when it becomes habitual. When you default to fearful thinking, now you are seeing (and inventing) dangers and threats where there is none or very little. The media is great at facilitating this destructive perception. A current example relates to the CDC's message last week that the science now indicates that if you are fully vaccinated or have recovered from covid, you do not need to wear a mask outdoors or indoors and do not need to socially distance. Amazingly, when this was announced, a group of people on CNN rejected it and fearfully thought it was a dangerous message(!). They did their best to deepen the fearful thinking. Yet, why would they do that?

This brings us to the politics of fear. People who like to control others, and especially to limit their freedoms, tend to operate from and promote *fearful thinking*. It helps them maintain power. They like it when people *depend* on them to keep them safe. For them, every crisis is an opportunity to deepen the dependency.

Fearful Thinking Solutions and Cures

A resource that will enable you to use your fearful thinking appropriately and positively is *critical thinking*. If you can think critically, you can properly assess risk in an objective and rational way. Now you can identify the statistical probability regarding any given risk. What is the probability that X will happen? Is the chance of that happening remote or is it high and very likely?

By thinking critically you realize that risk is built into living. Risk is a constant. Yet all risk is not the same. The odds of getting struck by lightning is pretty low. So with winning the lottery. In life, there's no success, development, learning, or adventure without risk. What we need is *a realistic view of risk*. By using critical thinking and your own ingenuity, you can anticipate, abate, and eliminate most risks.

When you use your executive functions and engage in executive thinking, you can develop *a mostly fear-free mind*. And a fear-free mind is always a better working mind. Where there's fear, there's an interference with focus and concentration. What we want to be able to do is to take intelligent and calculated risks. Then to take out the guesswork as much as possible, you will want to get as exact numbers as possible. Executive thinking enables you to plan, develop independence of thinking, self-regulate, and solve the problems that you face.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #28
May 24, 2021
A Meta Series #1

MECHANISMS & MYTHS OF META

I spoke about “going meta” the other day. It was a presentation on Modeling Using the Meta-States Model. It was a description of the very nature of *self-reflexive consciousness*. As the central executive function in the highest development of the brain (in the prefrontal cortex), self-reflexivity is what distinguishes us from all other species. Yet not only does this special kind of consciousness distinguish us from the animals, its multiple aspects and functions play a critical role when it comes to the highest areas of understanding, intelligence, and performance. That’s why we have to include it in our modeling if we want to get a full picture of any expertise.

This is where the original NLP models for modeling are completely inadequate. As good as *Neuro-Linguistic Programming: The Study of the Structure of Subjectivity* (1980) is, it only scantily mentions the meta-move in how a strategy is structured. Yes, there is the little (m) notation after some responses, but that tiny little (m) is only briefly mentioned and never really developed.

For a fuller development of the meta-move within any linear strategy, you have to study and learn the Meta-States Model. It is true that other NLP models began “going meta” and including some of the meta-level structures. Several people enriched NLP modeling with meta-levels:

Robert Dilts with *The Neuro Logical Levels*. In that model, Robert included four meta-levels (i.e., beliefs, values, identity, purpose) over and above the primary state (i.e., behaviors, environment, and capability).

David Gordon and Graham Dawes with *The Experiential Array Model* included the meta-levels of beliefs (i.e., motivating, contributing, and enabling beliefs), values, and criteria.

James Lawley and Penny Tompkins with *Symbolic Modeling with Clean Language* included the meta-level of metaphor.

Leslie Cameron-Bandler, David Gordon, and Michael Lebeau in their *The Emprint Method* included beliefs, values, and criteria.

Most of these developers also acknowledged a debt to Gregory Bateson for his Levels of Learning, his extensive description of the meta-response, and the epistemology of meta. Yet it was only in the Meta-States Model do you can find a full development of meta and its mechanisms. Seven of those mechanisms are self-reflexivity, self-organization, multi-ordinality, holographic structuring, systems thinking of the loops, mindfulness, and simultaneality.

These mechanisms of meta reveal the systemic nature of human consciousness and therefore the need for systemic modeling. Because your thinking, feeling, and learning reflect back onto itself, your first thinking–learning becomes the content of your next level thinking–learning, and that becomes the content of the next higher context that you set. And when you set it, it becomes a meta-level frame of reference for all that went before. Complex? Yes. Human? Even more so!

The idea of *meta* has always played a big role in NLP. In fact, before the name NLP arose (Sept. 1976), the people and community that were working things out was called Meta. Frank Pucelik even registered “Meta Institute” when he moved to San Diego (1977-8). If you read some of the original books, you will find meta-moves, meta-patterns, meta-tactics, etc. all over the place. So no wonder whenever you sign up for NLP training anywhere in the world, you will get hands-on practice of patterns with three people and you will take turns being experiencer, coach, and meta-person. The role of taking a meta-perspective occurs in nearly every single NLP pattern.

Strangely enough, however, Grinder has come to downplay the meta-role as he aimed criticisms at the Meta-States Model and myself. In spite of his book *Turtles All the Way Down* (1987) where he abundantly talked about the meta-moves, he has come to now constantly questioned meta and meta-states. “Why do you refer to it so often?” “What is the need for going meta from one state to another state?” In the Bandler camp, there are trainers who have foolishly announce that they do not go meta “because it takes away from being in the moment.” Of course, that is a major misunderstanding of the concept of “going meta.”

“Going meta” does *not* mean becoming dissociated. It does not mean being less involved or less present. The truth is the exact opposite. When you *step out* of one experience, you *step into* another state—perhaps observing, witnessing, learning, being curious, etc. Taking another perspective may make you more emotional, “joyful about learning,” “angry at being afraid,” “love sadness,” etc. When you “go meta” you may become *more emotional*, rather than less.

The idea stepping out of one experience always and only means disconnection is a big myth in NLP that some are still repeating today. Regarding consciousness, you and I can be present to a moment *and simultaneously* aware (at a higher level) of numerous patterns. Our self-reflexive consciousness is able to set a frame for a moment *and be present in the moment*. The human kind of mind is that rich and robust. It is not an either-or choice, “either be aware of your awareness *or* lose that awareness and be in the moment.” That is a far too simplistic dichotomy.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #29
May 27, 2021

GUILTY FOR BEING BORN

Currently in the news this week are some people who are promoting a really stupid idea which is in CRT (Critical Race Theory), namely, that “being born white means that you are a racist. You cannot help but being a racist if your skin color is white.” Of course, that is just another form of racism itself. It is *reverse racism*. Just as racism is a prejudice against a person *simply because* of the color of the skin (or some other superficial factor) so here, being white automatically makes you guilty. You were born guilty!

Martin Luther King Jr. would turn over in his grave. His vision was for a country where the color of one’s skin becomes *irrelevant*. He envisioned a national where *the quality of one’s character* would be the determining factor in how we think about each other and treat each other. The dream that he had and the hope that he offered up was a hope that —

“... my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.” It was the desire to “transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood.”

There’s a reason why King focused on *character* rather than “race” (or what is falsely called “race”). Namely, you can do something about character! You can develop better attitudes, beliefs, actions, and skills. And since those words in the 1960s, people have been *learning better*. Today nearly everyone thinks and values treating each other as equals, especially as equals in the sight of the law. Only a small minority on the extremes would give any credence to the idea that some people are better than other people.

Yet if the condition for so-called “racism” is birth, color of skin, family of origin, then depending on what you were born with—you are doomed, you are stuck. The truth that sets us free is that *we are each responsible for our thinking*. You are responsible for what and how you interpret things, make meaning of things, and therefore act. You are responsible for how you treat people. That means that we can change. If we hate a person or group of people, we can learn to love. No matter what conditions and gifts you were born with, *the character* that you develop is in your hands.

The problem of racism is not about your birth, your genetics, your ethnic background, or anything that is “a given” in human nature. Racism refers to being *prejudiced against* a certain group, disliking them to the point of hatred or intolerance. That’s the problem— *that attitude*. The good news is that every person who wants to can change that attitude.

If you *believe in change*, then you will not, and cannot, accept the Critical Race Theory which presents a black-or-white, either-or, polarized view of things. CRT actually *increases* prejudice, dislike, hatred, and intolerance! It separates people based on something people cannot change—the color of their skin and something that is *the most superficial distinction* about a person. In

that sense it is completely infantile. Infants and small children are the ones who cannot *distinguish* between appearance and reality. They confuse what a thing looks like with what it is. Maturity begins when we can distinguish an external superficial feature from internal reality.

In NLP we have several belief change patterns so that if someone holds to a toxic belief about the superiority of one group of people over others, you can change that. Using NLP's Meta-Model we distinguish that the very word "race" is a pseudo-word. We do not have multiple "races," there is only one race—the human race. In Neuro-Semantics, we have meta-stating patterns for changing attitudes. Attitudes are composite meta-states and so, yes, *we can change attitudes*, especially dysfunctional attitudes of prejudice and hatred.

"Guilt" has to do with what you *actually do* which is wrong, rather than right. Being born is not what you *do*, it is an experience that you have, so you actually cannot be *guilty* for any characteristic of your birth, not your skin color, nationality, ethnic family, etc. Birth begins the human experience— let's make it a great one!

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #30
May 31, 2021
A Meta Series #2

META SOURCES AND TRUTHS

After writing about the mechanisms and myths of meta (Neurons #28), several questions arose. One was about the source of the term. The word *meta* primarily goes to Gregory Bateson and his anthropological studies and then to his communication / psychological studies, especially those dealing with schizophrenia. Bateson analyzed the communication/ thinking dilemma of the schizophrenia as being unable to meta-comment about a conflicting situation. While Bateson was not the first to use the term, he certainly introduced and popularized the term in those fields as well as in the field of systems thinking. And given that it was Bateson who was the professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz who taught all of the developers and leaders in NLP—they learned it from him and incorporated it into NLP.

Another question asked “What exactly does *meta* mean?” For that we have to go back to the Greek language. There the word carries a range of meanings— above, about, beyond, after, change. It is used in the Greek New Testament many, many times and in numerous words. An example that strikes most people as very strange is that it is the word for “repentance.” In the original, the word is μετανοέω, transliterated, metanoia. *Noro* (νο'εω) refers to the mind, so to repent is to *think again, think about, think above* what you previously thought or did and *change* your mind to something different. The Analytical Greek Lexicon defines it as “to undergo a change in frame of mind and feel, to repent.” When you do that, you “repent.”

Now that’s not the typical meaning of repentance today. That’s because during the dark ages it got contaminated with ideas of pain and suffering. You do “penitence” for your misdeed. But that is not what the word meant when Jesus (Matthew 4:17) or Peter (Acts 2:38) used it. Much, much more simply it means *to change your mind, metanoia*.

Another New Testament word that involves *meta* is “transformation.” The Greek word here, μεταμορφοῶ is literally transliterated (not translated) as *metamorphóo*. The passage that says “be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is good, acceptable and perfect ...” (Romans 12:2), the word *transform* is literally *metamorphosis*. *Morphóo* is form and *meta* is above, beyond, about. When you go above your current form, when you transcend it, you *transform*.

Linguistically, the term *meta* is simply a prefix for a great many words. In itself it is neutral. It is not a psychological term, a new age term, emotional term, etc. It just means *above, about, beyond* and so used to modify other words.

Another question came from someone who recently read *Thinking Metaphorically*. He wanted to know more about the metaphor within the term *meta*. Interesting, the prepositions “above” and “about” imply a height metaphor and so with *meta* we inevitably think about things going up and

transcending. We think about levels — this level being above that level. So with the layering of thoughts and feeling, we now have more precise language for talking about a thought *about* a thought, a feeling *about* a feeling, etc., hence meta-states, meta-communication, meta-analysis, and on and on.

“So you mean *meta* never means dissociation?” No, that was not the point of the previous Neurons. The point was that “dissociation” is only one of many, many states that *meta* can induce. Using “going meta” does not have anything inherently to do with “dissociation.” In the Meta-States training manual (APG) we have a list of 16 interfaces that typically result when you apply one state to another state. Of those 16, only one refers to “dissociation.” Anyone who thinks “going meta” inevitably creates “dissociation” or the lack of emotion clearly does not understand the process of going meta.

“Why do you think Grinder has been so critical of meta and Meta-States?” I don’t know. My guess is it’s because he didn’t invent it. He seems to have that syndrome, not only for me, but for Dilts and others. While he used *meta* abundantly in all of the early NLP books and even in *Turtles*, once Robert Dilts and myself started using it to develop meta-level systems, he began avoiding *meta*, and after that, he actually made himself an opponent of meta(!).

The bottom line is that the term *meta* has been around as long as the Greek language has been around— over two thousand years. And it is a marvelous word that enables us to conceptualize higher level functions and processes. And given that your brain has higher level (meta) functions, the executive functions, *meta* enables a more precise language for talking about consciousness.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #31
June 7, 2021

HOW RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE VIEW BIG GOVERNMENT

In NLP we focus on the psychology of personal responsibility when we work with individuals and groups. What personal responsibility means is, first and foremost, that *you are responsible* for yourself. You and only you have *the ability to respond* to what happens mentally as you think, emotionally as you feel and value, linguistically as you put your thoughts and feelings into words, and behaviorally as you take actions to manifest your thinking-and-feeling. This is fundamental. It's fundamental because *the ability to respond* is the essence of "responsibility."

Consequently, by learning, accepting, and developing your fundamental powers of thinking, feeling, speaking, and acting, you become increasingly a more responsible person. And as you do, these powers enable you to take the initiative, be proactive, and define yourself as a person who can forge his own destiny. If this seems simple and obvious, then what about all of the millions of people do not do this. They could, but they don't.

They don't take initiative, they are not proactive, they don't think like a person in charge of their own lives. They think, feel, talk, and act as if they were victims. Instead of *owning* their own powers, they *attribute power* to other people, to circumstances, to the environment, to government, to parents, to school, to ethnic origin, to a whole range of things *outside* of themselves. That's how they infantilize themselves, disempower themselves, and make themselves victims. And to seal this, they don't even know that at some level, they are choosing to play the victim using their powers to give away their power.

Now in describing *personal* responsibility, this does not eliminate or disqualify other forms of responsibility, namely, the social responsibilities. We are also responsible to our families, friends, peers, colleagues, etc. Yet there's a big difference. The first is *responsibility for*. Each of us is responsible *for* ourselves. No one can do your thinking, feeling, speaking, or acting. Those are your powers. They give you the ability to *respond* from out of yourself—your understandings, beliefs, values, etc. You can give this power away; you can play the victim. Yet even when you do, *you are the one with the ability to grant someone else the right to tell you what to think, feel, say, and do*.

The other kind of responsibility is *responsibility to*. This is a very different kind of responsibility, it establishes *relationship*. The persons to whom you are responsible *to* are the people you are in relationship with. You have the *ability to respond to* them in terms of what you say to them, how you talk to them, what you do in regard to them, etc.

Responsibility for establishes *accountability*. In this you *give account for yourself*. You are responsible *for* what you think, feel, say, and do. *Responsibility to* establishes relationship with those with whom you give and receive. There's an exchange.

Together both forms of responsibility enable a person to become a highly effective and productive person in society. This proactive person has a can-do attitude and takes pleasure in learning, developing, and becoming increasingly competent. This is an empowered person who wants to make her own way in the world and not be the child or puppet of someone else.

So when we ask about a highly responsible person about government, that person will not look to government as a Nanny state, or as a new substitute Mother and Father. That person will not view government as the solution to one's personal problems. The proactive person does not look to Government for a job, a family, a career, etc. These are things that are up to each person.

The political philosophy of keeping government as small as possible rather than wanting big government starts from the foundation that we are intelligent enough, competent enough, and responsible enough to look after our own affairs. We do not need to "be taken care of." We do not need Pappa Government to make sure we feel comfortable.

Because NLP encourages self-determination, self-governance, self-monitoring, and self-development, we not only assume that we can take charge of our own lives—we want to! We want to take ownership of our powers and we want to develop them so we can be the best version of ourselves. We delight in experiencing the self-actualizing process of growing up and becoming more mature. So we do not want big government intruding into our lives and taking away choice. That would only serve to keep us in a dependent position.

Here the *psychology* of NLP leads to a particular *political philosophy* that fits for the NLP premises. To think otherwise is to either *not understand* the foundations of the cognitive psychology of NLP or to ignore them. From this perspective, government should be a *servant* of the people and never *the master*. Responsible people, wanting government to be as small as possible, will then feel free to be as responsible as possible.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #32
June 7, 2021
A Meta Series #3

WHEN META DIVES

The concept of “going meta,” and the self-reflexive process of actually moving to a higher cognitive awareness *about* your thinking and feeling, while it goes meta, goes upward, transcends, it doesn’t stay there. *It dives*. With your self-reflexive consciousness and your prefrontal cortex, you have the ability to *think again and again* about previous thoughts, ideas, beliefs, emotions, etc. Incredible things happen when you do. From all of these dynamic processes which occur are all the results of civilization, beginning with science.

The *meta* drive within us enable us to set goals, plan, monitor our progress, focus our attention, sustain that attention, make thoughtful decisions, etc. These are the executive functions of your higher cognitive processes. But they do not stay higher. They do not stay meta. What goes up must come down, and so it is in your neurology. As you think at the higher levels, so you thereby send messages and commands to the lower parts of your brain to thereby activate your motor programs.

Higher and lower brain anatomy and functions are all inter-connected. And they are interconnected in such a way as to set up multiple circular systems. In systems language, we input *information*, process that information, and then output it as *energy*— emotions, reflexes, behavioral responses, speech, actions, skills, etc.

So while at any time you may “go meta” to a thought or feeling or experience that you’ve had, going meta is not a static thing. It’s not that you climb up some inner mental stairs and now live there. It’s not like that! All of the brain anatomy and functions are operating *at the same time*. It is more the case, that one aspect of you has inputted and is processing some thoughts-and-emotions and *while* you are doing that, another aspect of you are *stepping back to think about* your first experience.

You learn a new concept, you discover a category, you detect a pattern— these are high level processes that transcend and go beyond mere representation. Yet once you have gone meta to create these, the information that you processed and created then takes a dive. It dives into your memory banks as your long-term memory. It dives into your cognitive unconscious as your perceptual filters— your thinking patterns. And that includes your meta-programs, your beliefs, your values, your biases, you cognitive distortions, etc.

When meta dives, you have “programs” for how to respond and how to function. You have your automatic procedural programs like typing, driving a car, and doing a hundred mindless things from dressing to fixing your eggs for breakfast, etc.— things that you don’t have to think about. You also have your unconscious and unthinking learning programs which support numerous biases — especially the Confirmation, Availability, and Status Quo biases.

The big myth to this day in NLP is the equation of “meta” with “dissociation,” auditory-digital, and mere intellectualization. Actually each misunderstanding shouts aloud that *the person does not even know about self-reflexivity* or has forgotten to take it into account. When I first discovered and presented the Meta-States Model, I included the fact that you can go meta with a kinesthetic representation. That led a dance therapist in Chicago to develop a meta-state dance as part of her dance therapy. And from that I developed several kinesthetic meta-state patterns. Why? What explains that? Namely one thing— *meta dives*. It dives into neurology so that it becomes a felt reality— something that you can then know in your body.

If you think about meta or “going meta” as a static *thing*, then you generate a picture of a static hierarchy or you use a metaphor like a ladder or a set of steps. But it is not like that. Not at all! It is dynamic. And as a dynamic process, moving to a meta-position *about* other internal experiences (thoughts, feelings, ideas, memories, decisions, imaginations, and on and on) then puts them into new categories and classes and creates an internal psychological-logic. That’s another aspect of “going meta.”

From: L. Michael Hall

2021 Neurons #33

June 11, 2021

How Self-Actualization

Can Save Politics #1

SAVING POLITICS

For many people, politics is beyond saving. But not for those of us who believe and operate from Self-Actualization Psychology, for us the possibility of actualizing the highest potentials in people include the realm of politics. Now while I've written an entire book on *Self-Actualizing Politics and Politicians* (2014) and given examples of self-actualizing politicians, in more than seven years, politics has become even more divided and divisive, and it seems headed in that direction. This series of articles is designed to counter-balance that trend.

To understand *politics* is to understand that we are talking about *human relationships*. That is ultimately what all politics are—the ways that human beings *get along* or fail to get along with other human beings. That's why politics occurs everywhere when there are at least two human beings. Every couple has their own unique politics. Every group has its politics. Every business, every office, every board.

The question is never, “Shall we or shall we not allow politics into our business or group?” That's a false question because it is not a possibility. The question always is, “What kind of politics do we want?”

- Do we want respectful, thoughtful, and reflective politics or the opposite?
- Do we want transparent and open politics or politics of secrecy and hidden agendas?
- Do we want politics that include all voices or just a select few?
- Do we want politics that starts with the equality of all persons or do we want a politics based on skin color, ethnic origin, and “race?”

Politics is about human relationships, about how we get along with each other, and how we govern ourselves. The term itself comes from the Greek word for “city” (polis) and originally referred to a “household” and how the household functioned and was governed. Who did what? Who made decisions? How are resources allocated? How do we work together to create a functional home where we can be productive, safe, and respected. Where we can grow to become our best selves, find and actualize our best talents, and create a loving and caring environment.

Given this, *the idea within politics is a most honorable idea*. It inherently assumes that we are family and that by means of collaboration, we can create a mutually supportive environment that is the best for all. In this, politics is about creating a win/ win/ win set of arrangements. A win-win arrangement between individuals and a meta-win arrangement for the whole. This blows out the myths that misunderstand politics seeing it as something dirty, competitive, and inherently ugly and hateful. These are descriptions of *politics gone wrong*.

What then do we need in order to *save politics* from turning ugly, dirty, competitive, cruel, etc.? What will save us from the partisan politics of today that views things in either-or terms, that posits solutions as black-or-white and which cut off conversation so that we cannot have the difficult conversations that we need to have?

Obviously, the quality of our politics is a function of the quality of the people who exercise the most influence on politics. To have good self-actualizing politics, we have to have good people. Abraham Maslow said that anyone who *wants* power is precisely the person who should not have power. Yet far too often, the very people who “go into politics” (at the office or nationally) are people who are hungry for power. Yet these power-hungry people are the very ones who will not handle power humanly and respectfully, but misuse it.

Having *good people*, however, is not enough. It is a good start, but only the beginning. We need *good ideas* as well— good policies, good understanding of societal and cultural bonding works, how economics work, etc. Nor are these two sufficient. We also need *good strategy*. You can have great ideas and correct understandings, but without effective strategies for implementation, the good ideas will not get you very far.

Is that enough? Good people, good ideas, and good strategy? The answer is no. We also need *good governance*. Once we have set up a system that is good— separation of powers, shared powers, transparency, due diligence for selecting intelligent and ethical people, we still need the ability to govern in an unbiased way. To supplement good governance, we need *good accountability*. How many governments go to hell precisely because those in power are not held accountable? They live by the “good ole boy” practice of protecting each other’s hindside, and letting officials “get by with murder” (sometimes literally).

It takes a lot to create good healthy self-actualizing politics. It takes an informed population, an educated population, people who care about the quality of the governance, who will speak up about injustices. When we put these ideas together— whether it is for a family, a business, a nation— they describe human relationships. How we think, feel, talk, and act with each other.

Good people: Intelligent, caring, open, transparent, collaborative individuals.

Good ideas: Intelligent understanding about how things work.

Good strategy: Effective processes for how to make things work efficiently for all.

Good governance: Effective management of the processes that builds trust and respect.

Good accountability: Holding those in charge accountable to their responsibilities and duties.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #34
June 14, 2021
A Meta Series #4

HOW META CREATES YOUR PSYCHO-LOGICS

In the last article in the *Meta Series*, I mentioned that “going meta” is dynamic. It’s a dynamic process with lots of hidden and unconscious things occurring within it. I ended that article alluding to the process of how your internal psychological-logic works:

“And as a dynamic process, moving to a meta-position *about* other internal experiences (thoughts, feelings, ideas, memories, decisions, imaginations, and on and on) then puts them into new categories and classes and creates an internal psychological-logic.”

“Psycho-logics” came from *Science and Sanity*. In 1933 Alfred Korzybski took the word *psychology* and hyphenated it; that created *psycho-logics* and *psycho-logicians*. By separating the term, he then described more fully the kind of *logic* (or logics) that is inherent in psychology. He noted that “the logic” any given person uses for thinking about and reasoning about something was almost never formal logic. Instead it was the unique and idiosyncratic “logic” or the thinking that each person does at any moment of time. That’s why it is plural— *logics*.

The particular *psycho-logics* that you use to make sense of something, understand it, reason about it depends on the kind and quality of *thinking* that you bring to it. Bring a child’s way of thinking and presto, you use childish “logic” that will make sense to a five-year old or thirteen year old, and which will be full of cognitive distortions. Any given person’s psycho-logics depends on that person’s use of his thinking patterns as he “makes sense” of things. He *goes meta with his thinking patterns*— using them to reason about, interpret, and explain things *through those lens*.

Example. A mother gives a little boy a slice of chocolate cake when he brings home a B on his report card. “You’re such a good boy, you did so well, I’m so proud of you— here is a slice of chocolate cake to show my love.” Seems innocent enough. The mother is simply thinking, “Reinforce good behavior, give a reward.” But how is the boy thinking? It depends on his internal *psycho-logics*. Suppose with his childish mind he thinks, “Getting a slice of chocolate cake means being loved; I feel loved as I receive the cake.” He could be thinking all of that unconsciously. Consciously, he just feels good and associates “chocolate cake” with “love.” Cause-effect.

Forty years later, the boy is a 48-year old man, overweight, in bad health, and cannot resist sweets, especially slices of chocolate cake. The therapist says, “What comes to mind when you think of a slice of chocolate cake?” Eventually self-awareness reveals his psycho-logics. “Love.” “Being cared for, appreciated, rewarded.” Ah, the secondary gains for his sweet tooth and unable to deny himself desserts. Well, we call them “secondary gains.” Actually, they are *first level gains*— the meta-level values that he has established in his mind about sweets. He has

meta-stated “a slice of chocolate cake” in such a way that it is now an item in the category of Love. It is a member of that class. And if it is the only member of that class, then he is really in for some difficulty in terms of changing.

Your logic and logics (the way you reason, interpret things, make sense of things) is a function of having gone meta where you established your beliefs, values, criteria, references, etc. It is almost *never* logical in the sense of formal logic (Aristotelian logic, syllogisms, etc). It is almost always an emotional logic, a value logic, a subjective logic that arises from your history of experiences and the *learnings* that you have made from them.

This process of *psycho-logics* explains how each of us lives in our own unique world of meaning. It explains why you never know what meaning structures you’re going to find with any given person. One person hears “failure” and he has meta-stated it to mean that he is worthless and no good. Another person hears “failure” and thinks, “Great! This means I’m about to learn something new and useful!” It’s not the *thing* itself that has meaning, it is the meaning-maker who imposes meaning upon things. May you meta-state some great meanings this week and develop a healthy and vigorous psycho-logics for yourself!

From: L. Michael Hall

2021 Neurons #35

June 18, 2021

How Self-Actualization

Can Save Politics #2

LET'S BEGIN WITH TRUTH

To save politics using the psychology of self-actualization, we first of all have to have good people. And *good people* are good to themselves and others because they traffic in truth rather than falsehood. They tell the truth as best they can and tell a better or newer truth as they keep learning and developing, and they work diligently to *not* tell what is false, fabricated, or deceptive. Of course, the problem is that speaking truth is difficult.

What makes truth speaking difficult? Primarily because life is complex and messy. In most things, there are lots and lots of variables and easy explanations are few and far between. We have developed many forms of science as a methodology for getting to the truth. Yet as we all know, what is science^{today} may not be science^{tomorrow}. It keeps changing, updating, improving, learning about what it has learned and now learning better.

The best way for us to make our speech more precise, accurate, and truthful (scientific) is to use the Meta-Model of NLP and the Extensionalizing Mechanisms of Korzybski. Each of these models enable us to index information more accurately— when, where, with whom, in what way, which, how, etc.

Truth speaking is also difficult because we humans learn early on *how to avoid reality*. And that is especially true if you were severely punished for being what you are— human, fallible, prone to errors. Given that, it's more likely that you learned how to avoid the truth than openly pursue it. We all have learned a whole range of defense mechanisms— ways of covering up and hiding what real. We learn to give out false information, misinformation, dis-information, to deceive by using words with double-meanings, of simply not telling the whole truth, and by using weasel words to escape direct statement that might cause upset or conflict.

No wonder then that we see the same in our politicians! Biden and Democrats are pushing an “infrastructure bill” for roads and bridges costing trillions of dollars except that only 7% of it is for roads and bridges. Deception. The Secretary of Defense announces that our “border is closed” except that 150,000 illegal aliens are crossing the border *every month*. That's hardly what the word “closed” means for most people! One half million (500,000) have entered so far this year. What exactly is “closed” about that? And that's just the people who have been counted, not the other hundreds of thousands who “got away.”

Deceptive language like that, double-talk that rivals George Orwell's description of double-speak, seems to be the basic language is used in both politics and the media today. *Good* people become good truth speakers by growing up out of the cognitive distortions of childhood and work be open, honest, and transparent in their speaking. Part of being good is exposing individuals and the media when they use dishonest language or fake news.

Just this past week most media outlets in the US admitted for the first time that they made a mistake in reporting that “the government cleared Layette Park for a photo op for President Trump.” A report last week demonstrated that it was fake news. The park was cleared for fence construction and had nothing to do with a photo op. Of course, this correction comes a year too late, a year during which the various media outlets used it to promote their own agenda.

Good people begin with truth because bad things happen when the truth is sacrificed for a political agenda. The problem with the truth is usually that it does not fully condone one’s positions, but at times, it validates the positions of the opposition party. That’s why truth-speakers will frequently acknowledge, “That’s a good point.” They do not make themselves an enemy to truth and if the opposing side happens to have it, good people simply recognized it. Truth-speakers who move beyond partisan politics can, and do, acknowledge when truth is on the opposing side. (See 2020 Neurons #22, May 11, 2020, Looking for Good Points.)

When religion, philosophy, and psychology is healthy, it enables people to be and become *better* people— more loving, kind, compassionate, focused, disciplined, ethical, moral, courageous. A fundamental passage says that the first commandment is to love God and the second to love your neighbors as yourself. If we make *love* the central criteria for a healthy spirituality, we eliminate killing. Killing is not loving. Obviously! War, murder, rape, attacking children, etc. is *not* loving. If “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, humility, and self-control” are the fruits of the spirit, then any and all religious terrorism demonstrates the opposite to being a good person.

The key for becoming a good person is to pursue the truth. It is to seek to be open and honest, straightforward and caring. The truth sets us free when we will follow it even if it means admitting that we’ve been wrong and will be wrong about numerous things. The key isn’t “being right,” but righting things as we keep learning.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #36
June 21, 2021
A Meta Series #5

SELF-RENEWAL AT THE META LEVEL

When you *go meta*, you *rise up above* your current experience so that you can then *reflect* on your experience. And when you do, you then *think-and-feel about* that first level experience. You're now engaged in second-level thinking and feeling. If you do that again, you arrive at a third level of thinking and feeling, and so it goes all the way up the levels. I say "levels" but that's not exactly the right word because there are no levels as static things. There is the process of leveling—that is, layering more ideas and emotions upon ideas and emotions.

Now we call this meta process, *meta-stating*. Yet it is so much more than just bringing "a state" to a state. Yes, you can do that. You can *fear* your fear, get *angry* at your anger, become *afraid* of your anger, etc. Yet because "a state" is comprised of thinking—that means that the particular kind of thinking you are doing at any given moment may be a whole range of different kinds of cognitions. You could be believing, valuing, evaluating, judging, imagining, remembering, prohibiting, permitting, modeling, and on and on.

Additionally, each and every kind of cognitive idea that you bring to your previous ideas sets off particular kinds of emotions. That's why I hyphenate thinking-feeling. It's a system and it works systemically. We can only separate these words linguistically; they do not actually operate separately.

Now with each meta move that you make, you establish the next-higher level psycho-logics for your mind-body-emotion system. That is, the *logics* or reasoning that you do in bringing any particular cognitive idea to yourself sets an interpretive frame. This explains why healthy, empowering beliefs, values, decisions, permissions, identities, etc. give you the power for productive change, transformation, and renewal.

In *Mind-Lines* (2007) we call this outframing. You move above all of your current framing and layering of thoughts-and-feelings and you set up a higher and more enhancing one. Most of the NLP presuppositions are enhancing outframes. When you set them, you establish an empowering frame of reference that enables self-renewal.

The map is not the territory, but if it corresponds structurally, it can provide a good guide.

The meaning of your communication is the response you get regardless of your intention.

Mind and body are a single system.

You cannot *not* communicate.

Renewal, change, transformation, empowerment, learning, development, etc. all originate from the meta-level, not the primary level. It is at the primary level that the change or enhancement occurs. That's only where it shows up at.

Now when you know that, it gives you entrance into the secret of how nearly every single NLP pattern works its “magic.” The patterns are ways to influence *the way you think* (and therefore feel) and with the new mental mapping inside, you are able to create new skills and competencies on the outside. Transformation is, after all, inside-out. Inner game first, then outer game.

By the process of going meta, you are able to *step out of* the old mapping, the old framing, the currently layering of thoughts-and-feelings and set up better and more productive frames. By stepping out, you move to *choice point*. This is the place where you truly have choice. You can now make new decisions, empowering decisions, that will set up the new “rules of the game.” And when you win the inner game in this way, the outer game becomes a cinch. It becomes a piece of cake. Details about how all of that works is in the book, *Winning the Inner Game* (2007).

What prevents self-renewal and the true choice for change is being caught up and captivated by content. This was the failure of first psychologies that were developed— they focused on *what* you were thinking, rather than on *how*. The same problem arose in the education system as the focus went to teaching children *what* to think, rather than *how* to think. Yes, content is important, but it is not the whole story. When I work with someone as a client, 15 to 20 percent of the focus is on content and 75 to 80 percent on structure— on the code.

Content is important because it *grounds* the conversation in the real world and actual referents. Structure (or process) *flushes out* the hidden meta-levels of interpretative frames that controls the experience. And when you get there, you’re in the land of transformations.

From: L. Michael Hall

2021 Neurons #37

June 25, 2021

How Self-Actualization

Can Save Politics #3

GOOD POLITICAL IDEAS

Ultimately, all of human life as we know is a function of the ideas that we think. That's why *the quality of life* depends on the quality of our ideas— our thinking. It is the old idea, “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” What we think about politics— about group life, getting along with others, managing our communities and societies, our relationships, etc. that thinking makes all the difference in the world. In this, there are good ideas and there are bad ideas. Historically, we have mostly operated from some bad ideas.

At the heart of all bad ideas is the concept of separating people— there are the elite royals and there are the common person. There are the people who have power and the people who have no power. There are those who are superior and those who are inferior. And worse yet, is the idea that one cannot move from one class to another. Sadly this has been the majority of the experience in the history of the human race.

When the idea of democracy, the idea that “all people are created equal by their creator and endowed with certain inalienable rights— life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” first arose in the 18th century— it was radical. It was revolutionary. In fact, it created the American Revolution and it began a historical process that continues to this day as we continue to make that actionable in everyday life. This political idea puts equality as a matter of personhood. Obviously we are not equal in intelligence or talent. We are not equality in the way we were parented. But in the eyes of the law, we are equal.

That idea, in turn, opens the door to other ideas. Primarily the idea of social movement— we can move around in our social world. The idea that anyone can move to any position in a society depending on his ambitious or depending on her goals. No one is any more stuck or locked into a class or position than they think they are. In American culture this has shown up in the statement, “Any boy or girl could grow up to be President.”

Coming out of the dark ages, once the world discovered democracy, that idea spread all around the world. First America, then Europe and eventually to every other continent. The age of Kings and Queens, of Dictators and Tyrants was over ... well almost. The twentieth century saw desperate world events arise which brought out the worst in people— creating a desperate fear and need for a Big Daddy to protect us and take care of us.

In the 19th century, nation after nation condemned slavery and sought to end that practice, the idea that “all men created equal.” This seed took root deeper and deeper in the human heart. By the 1950s it blossomed in the Civil Rights Movement and Martin Luther King Jr. articulated best in 1964 in his famous “I have a Dream” speech that it was now time to cash in on the promise

made at the beginning of the self-government experiment. And now, over 5 decades later, we have elected men and women of color and “race” to every position in government, including President. And until recently, the idea that we should treat people apart from their skin color, ethnic background, economic status, etc. seemed to be pretty much universally accepted. Then critical race theory came around attempting to set back the gains of the Civil Rights Movement to a racially divided time.

Critical Race Theory is a very bad idea. Teaching people to make discriminations based on skin color was the toxic poison that promoted slavery for centuries. Falling back to “identity politics” is a regression to a darker time and leads only to more racial divide, partisan conflict, and social unrest. It is not the solution, it is the problem. As it is teaching black children to hate white children, it is contributing to the difficulty. It offers no solutions.

Both communism and socialism are also very bad ideas. Ask those who have fled from Cuba, , Venezuela, etc. The socialism that we see in some Latin American countries has proven to be very bad for the people. Rather than working out to create equality among people, it results in dictatorships that are abusive and ruthless. It presupposes that people are not able to be self-determining or self-resourceful; they *need* someone to “take care” of them. And the communism that we have seen in Russia and now in China and other places shut down free speech, forbids debate, and imprisons those who disagree. Ask the young people in Hong Kong.

What are the best ideas for politics? They are those which are generally associated with the liberalism of the Enlightenment. What are these main tenets? Political democracy, limitations on the powers of government, universal human rights, equality for all before the law (not equity), freedom of expression, respect for diversity of opinion, honest debate, respect for reason and evidence, separation of church and state, freedom of religion.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #38
June 28, 2021
A Meta Series #6

META TEXTURING

“How can you manage your emotions with Meta-States?” That’s what a person in Romania asked me this past week. Another person asked, “Can you do anything about negative emotions with the Meta-States Model?” The short answer: *Yes, definitely!* If you want to know how, here’s how.

After you make an emotional response to some event, person, or word and you are in an emotional state, *then what you think-feel next* will govern the very quality of your emotions and emotional state. Imagine that you are feeling fearful and afraid of something, that you are in a state of fear. What do you think or feel about that experience?

If you are ashamed of it, then you have *shameful fear*.

If you are angry at it, then you have *angered or resentful fear*.

If you are accepting, then with that *acceptance* you probably have a *calm and thoughtful fear*.

As the second thought-feeling sets an interpretative frame for the first, it thereby *textures* the first. And with that, you now know *how to bring resourceful thoughts and feelings to your emotions to raise the quality of your emotional states*. Now, isn’t that powerful?

Take anger. What is the quality of your anger? How have you textured it? Do you have respectful or disrespectful anger? Do you have calm or stressful anger? Do you have rough or kind anger? The modifying word (“compassion”) before the emotional term (“anger”) describes a meta-state, e.g., *compassionate anger*. When I used to run “Anger Control” workshops, my goal was to enable each person to develop a very rich and resourceful anger state. What if you developed a calm, respectful, thoughtful, and compassionate anger state? Now that would be a different animal!

To texture a state is *to bring* a resourceful thought, feeling, belief, memory, imagination, decision, etc. *to the state* you want to qualify. In meta-stating, you set up the mental and neurological connection so that your second state is *about* the first state. Making this meta-move enables the second state (the meta-state) to govern the first. And because things do not stay meta in the human experience (June 7, *When Meta Dives*, Neurons #32), that resource penetrates into the primary state and textures it. In Neuro-Semantics, we call this coalescing. The higher state *coalesces into the previous state*.

Now we can ask, “What meta resources do you have fully embodied into your primary state?” Actually, this is the design of the Accessing Personal Genius program. We go through a list of requirements or prerequisites of “genius”— the component elements that characterize someone in an optimal “in the zone” state. We take a sense of personal empowerment, proactivity, and

responsibility (the Power Zone pattern) and texture it into your optimal state. We take the states of self-acceptance, self-appreciation, and self-esteem and texture (Meta-States Self pattern) it into the optimal state. In APG, we spend three days doing this with 14 patterns and in the process, we meta-state your best state 21 times. That is a lot of meta-texturing.

Meta-texturing is the technique by which you can texture or qualify your emotional states so that you can have *high quality emotions*. Doing that also puts you in charge so that you have your emotions rather than your emotions having you. This is the process that we use for emotional intelligence— emotional awareness and management.

What is the quality of your emotions? Do they reflect your best resources, values, and intentions? If not, then the answer lies in meta-texturing.

For more— check out *Secrets of Personal Mastery, Meta-States, Winning the Inner Game, The Crucible, Unleashed*.

From: L. Michael Hall

2021 Neurons #39

July 2, 2021

How Self-Actualization

Can Save Politics #4

NO SYSTEM CAN BE RACIST

Given that politics requires *good ideas*, then if we operate from *bad ideas* then politics *will suffer*. Obviously, this means it's essential that we make sure that we operate with, and from, good ideas— even great ideas. Now today there's a really bad idea floating around, an idea that is actually toxic and completely dysfunctional for political well-being and health. It is the idea of “systemic racism.”

Previously I have written that here is a term (‘race’) that has no reference. It is actually a pseudo-word. Because there is only one race on Planet Earth, *the human race*, and there's no such things as multiple races, then there is no thing about being prejudiced against other “races.” What we're usually talking about are people from different *families of the human family*, and if we would use that terminology instead of “race,” we would find it easier to have a friendly and more compassionate attitude toward those who are part of the *human family*. (Neurons #13, March 29, 2021).

Now to be “racist” is to be prejudged against certain people that you have come to dislike. There could be a reason for the dislike (e.g., mistreatment), although such dislike and prejudice is usually taught. What is this experience and state of “racism?” It is *a personal human thought* that is an attitude and an emotion. It is *a psychological state* wherein one person takes an oppositional stance against other people. Coming from inside a person, it is then what *a person does*. Inside the person develops a negative attitude and outside the person insults or talks disrespectfully. Worse yet, the person becomes externally physically abusive, tries to harm the others, sets up conditions so that it disadvantages the other person.

But what if you have is an entity such as an organization, you do not have a real person. It does not think or feel. It does not have a brain to think or a body to emote. It is a legal entity. It exists on paper and the articles of incorporation which describe how *people* come together for some purpose or business. As a legal entity it does not eat or breath; it does not love or hate. It is a construct of law that lawyers, politicians, and tax accountants invent to tax. In this, it cannot be “racist.” This is why the phrase “systemic racist” is non-sense.

Yes, an organization can have unjust rules. It can have laws that favor some people over others and privilege some over others, or put some at a disadvantage. If that is what we're referring to, then what we have is not “systemic racism,” we have *bad ideas* in the legal paperwork and organization structure. That is not “racist” thinking-and-feeling, *that is a policy*, a set of rules. And it can be changed, and should be changed.

You may be wondering, as I did, why would anyone invent this different kind of racism? For what purpose? The answer is simple— *the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s succeeded!* By the 1990s and 2000s, old type “racism” was pretty much done and over with. The largest majority of people in the USA had moved on and King’s idea of a colorless society was beginning to emerge. A great manifestation of that was the election of our first Black President? And he was elected twice. With the idea of equality spreading throughout the country, with the idea of judging people “not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character” —the focus shifted from Affirmative Action to education, training, development, personal responsibility, competency, meritocracy, etc. All good stuff.

That’s when some on the left decided that they needed a new “racism” to fight. Since people of color from all ethnic groups were being elected to every position possible in politics and succeeding in the marketplace in every possible industry, it was obvious that the old “racism” was slowly but surely dying out. Therefore having nothing to protest, they needed something new, so they invented “systemic racism.” They invented *critical race theory* which announced, “racism is everywhere and it is permanent.”

This explains why is it a very bad idea— it is presented as everywhere and forever. If that’s the case, then you cannot solve it. Ah, now you have an invisible enemy to fight. It is an enemy you cannot see, hear, or feel— its incorporated into the hidden assumptions of the organization. Because it is everywhere and forever— it can never be solved as actual racism was solved. There are also many more reasons why “systemic racism” is a terrible idea — which I’ll present in the next post.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #40
July 5, 2021
Bold Thinking Series #1

WE NEED BOLD THINKERS (#1)

“We are a species built for bold thinking.”
Peter Diamondis and Steven Kotler

Let’s say that is true— that we are a species built for bold thinking. Are we? What do you think? I’ll make it personal: Do you think boldly? Do the people around you think boldly? Actually, I think we need to modify that quotation— “We are a species who have *the capacity* for bold thinking.” We have the capacity— the potential, yet unless that potential is identified and develop, then we don’t think boldly. That would explain all of the small thinkers, the negative thinkers, the pessimistic thinkers, etc. that surround us, run our companies, and govern over countries.

Now I decided to write a series on *bold thinking* to supplement what I’ve written on other kinds of thinking— critical thinking, metaphorical thinking, humorous thinking, hypnotic thinking, etc. I’m doing this in part because this is one of the characteristics of Neuro-Semantics— enabling people to more boldly think and imagine. After all, Neuro-Semantics began with the boldness that is inherent in the Meta-States Model. When I found that model, I began to boldly present it in the field of NLP, but not because *I* had found it, but because of *what I had found*. In finding the structure of self-reflexivity and how mind can set frames, self-organizing attractors, and can revolutionize the mind, emotions, and personality— I had found an incredibly bold way to make transformational change.

What’s needed is a world where there are better thinkers, and when people learn how to think better, they will think in more bold and audacious ways. Boldness follows clarity. That’s obvious. What’s not so obvious is that Neuro-Semanticists can significantly contribute to enabling people to *think better*. So much of the thinking that goes on in the world is of such low quality that it actually is the source of a great many human problems. But we can change that. With Neuro-Semantics we can raise *the quality of people’s thinking*— and empower people to solve the problems in our personal lives and the lives of our societies.

Yet above and beyond *better* thinkers, *we need bold thinkers*. Like a good critical thinker, a bold thinker is actually a tremendously powerful person. In thinking about this, here is a list of qualities that came to my mind:

- 1) A bold thinker boldly cuts through the fluff in ideas and language.
- 2) A bold thinker thoroughly examines things.
- 3) A bold thinker aims for the specificity of precision.
- 4) A bold thinker plays the long-game, thinking consequently.
- 5) A bold thinker sees through the darkness of problems to the light of solutions.
- 6) A bold thinker embraces the difficult, rather than backs away from what’s hard.

- 7) A bold thinker embraces others and so thinks collaboratively.
- 8) A bold thinker lets the passion of meaning drive her thinking.
- 9) A bold thinker stirs things up for the sake of creativity.
- 10) A bold thinker gets turn on when things fail.

While we usually think of *boldness* as relating to actions, we can apply it equally well to *thinking*. In fact, the problem that many people suffer is that they are too timid, wimpy, and fearful *in their thinking*. They think pessimistically, fearfully, and depressively. It's hard being around such people and that's especially true if you are that thinker! They exude a dark cloud of pessimism when they enter a room. And that dark cloud can go viral so they infect lots of other people. There are entire families so contaminated. There are entire companies and even entire countries.

Get ready to become a bold thinker, or at least more bold in your thinking. You don't have to be "right" or "know perfectly" to think boldly. Requiring that only limits your thinking. Thinking is designed to be *how you move forward*. It is not a test of your value or worth. Think boldly, make mistakes, learn from them, update your information, then think even more boldly!

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #41
July 9, 2021
How Self-Actualization
Can Save Politics #5

WHY CRITICAL RACE THEORY IS A TERRIBLE IDEA

In the last blog, I mentioned that “critical race theory” was not only a bad idea, but a terrible idea. I suggested that with the *success of the Civil Rights Movement*, the left needed a new “racism” to fight so they invented “systemic racism” and *critical race theory* (CRT).

What’s terrible about CRT is that they have put forward the belief that “racism is everywhere and it is permanent.” Of course, if you *believe* that, then it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and you can find it everywhere! If you believe that, then you will also believe that you will always be discriminated against even when there’s no external sign of it— it is still there, hidden, unconscious, and lurking in the hearts of the “racists” who are all around you.

Now, psychologically, this is very unhealthy. Why? Because it is teaching young people to *mind-read* insult, hostility, and prejudice into every interaction. No wonder so many now see the world as hostile to them and suffer either depression or aggression against “the system.” Two scholars on CRT, Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay in *Cynical Theories*, write:

“The core problems with critical race Theory are that it puts social significance back into racial categories and inflames racism, tends to be purely Theoretical, uses the postmodern knowledge and political principles, is profoundly aggressive, asserts its relevance to all aspects of Social Justice, and —not least—begins from the assumption that racism is both ordinary and permanent, everywhere, and always.” (2020, p. 133)

CRT is a bad idea because it contradicts Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s ideal of a color-blind society. They refute and object to “color blindness” and demand that we think of people, not in terms of individuals, but group identity. For them, the group or groups you belong to *define you*. You have a “race identity,” an “economic identity,” a “gender identity,” and on and on— and so CRT doesn’t deal with you as a person, but as a member of a group. This is the foundation of identity politics.

What they don’t seem to understand is *the unsanity of identification*. This was one of the central themes in Korzybski’s *Science and Sanity*, if you “identify” in an absolute way, you are doing something insane. That’s because there is no sameness in the world; everything is different and differs from everything, even itself, at different times. Ultimately it is the core of insanity. Whatever groups you belong to *does not define you*. *You are more than* your skin color, ethnic group, religion, gender, etc.

Again, Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay speak to this in their new book, *Cynical Theories* (2020):

“It is bad psychology to tell people who do not believe that they are racist— who may even actively despise racism— that there is nothing they can do to stop themselves from being racist— and then ask them to help you. It is even less helpful to tell them that even their own good intentions are proof of their latent racism. Worst of all is to set up double-binds, like telling them if they notice race it is because they are racist, but if they don’t notice race it’s because their privilege affords them the luxury of not noticing race, which is racist.” (p. 134)

This double-find leads to name-calling and mind-reading— two significant cognitive distortions that are as irrational as they produce high levels of misery in people. The CRT strikes me as a theory looking for a problem. Those who affirm it are unthankful, ungrateful for the heroes of the real Civil Rights Movement. Many of them severely criticize Martin Luther King. Jr.

It’s as if their success now leaves today’s protesters without anything to protest. So CRT invents a bug-a-boo that can’t be demonstrated to exist or disproved. And if it cannot be falsified, it is certainly not scientific. It is a belief system. But it seems that those who believe in the theory do not care. They are post-modernists and don’t believe that there’s an objective reality anyway. And because that’s another really bad idea, that will be the subject in the next post.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #42
July 12, 2021
Bold Thinking Series #2

BOLD THINKERS CHANGE THE WORLD (#2)

Yesterday a bold thinker (Richard Branson) went into space. And next week another bold thinker (Elon Musk) will do the same. They are thinkers who are changing the world. So first and foremost, the call to think boldly is a call to think optimistically and strategically with a view of changing the world for the better. Bold thinkers boldly embrace, explore, define, and work on solving the problems that stop us from being fully alive/fully human—the domain of inner space.

If we ask, “What feeds wimpy and fearful thinking?” The answer is—dangers, risks, challenges, problems, conventionality, uncertainty, perfectionism, instant gratification, and short-term perspective. That’s why *to think boldly* is to think in such a way about these very items so that not only do they *not* stop you, you use them to propel you forward. To think boldly is to *not* be put off by many of the things which are inherent in any, and every, significant endeavor.

1) A bold thinker boldly cuts through the fluff in ideas and language.

When you think boldly, you work rigorously to cut through the fluff and vagueness that plagues most thinking and communicating. The fierce thinker does not suffer a string of generalities to stand, but digs down into the specifics to create more precise descriptions. She cuts through the sloppiness and fuzziness of over-generalized statements with her sharp thinking that makes distinctions where others do not. She uses the Meta-Model for linguistic clarity. So to become more bold in your thinking, learn the Meta-Model. Learn how to use it rigorously. Be bold to challenge vague fluffy statements.

I’ve been doing that for years about the word “race.” That’s because given the fact that there is *only one race on this planet—the human race*, there is no such thing as different “races.” It’s non-sense to say there are multiple races. Anyone who uses the word “race” in that way does not even know what he or she is talking about. The same thing with “voter suppression” when a person is talking about have some criteria like voter I.D. That’s not suppression, that’s voter integrity.

2) A bold thinker thoroughly examines things.

The bold thinker knows that “the map is not the territory,” that language is not the reality, and so he thoroughly examines and tests what is said. “Does it correspond to the territory?” “Does it refer to anything that actually exists in the world?” “How accurate is the mapping?” “How useful?”

When many people think and speak, they say the first thing that comes to mind. As a result they generate featherweight ideas, softball understandings, and cotton-candy perspectives — all which

belong to elementary school. They lack a disciplined mind. When you discipline your mind, you refuse to accept insipid expressions or words that run out in senseless and diffuse ways. When you are in the presence of a bold thinker, expect that he will trigger you to *think*. He will ask questions hard to answer which, in turn, activates neural circuits that may have been on vacation for a long time.

3) A bold thinker aims for the specificity of precision.

As a bold thinker, she will fiercely push for clarity and precision. Good communication starts in the mind and specifically it starts with high quality thinking. How many reports or articles convey nothing but a haze of general ideas that never commit to anything? In an attempt to crowd everything into the picture, the speaker moves so far back to take it, that it is eventually snapped at a distance so that nothing is in focus. It is all a blur. The article is loaded with linguistic weeds, “It is obvious that...” “There’s was no doubt that...” “I need not mention that ...” These say-nothing phrases need to be weeded out. A bold thinker goes for the facts so that he can ground the idea or proposal in evidence-based details.

Once I thought that this was the unique problem in the field of theology. Then I entered the field of psychology and “lo and behold,” the same problem! It’s really bad in education, business is not much better— but, of course, politics has to be the worst. All these fields and more need bold thinkers who will demand specificity and precision.

4) A bold thinker plays the long-game, thinking consequently.

Those who are bold in thinking *think ahead*. They take the long-term view and do not get caught up with the tunnel-vision of today, or this quarter. As a bold thinker embraces consequences, she thinks consequently. The bold also engage in visionary thinking—for a vision that inspires. They look far ahead and prepare themselves for the long game. They know expertise requires ten-years and that there is no “instant” mastery. It is the long-game that gives you something significant enough and meaningful enough to invest your life in.

Bold thinking has changed the world, is changing it, and will keep changing it. The question is whether you will be one of the bold thinkers. Here’s to your highest and boldest thinking!

From: L. Michael Hall

2021 Neurons #43

July 16, 2021

How Self-Actualization

Can Save Politics #6

THE BAD IDEA OF POST-MODERNISM

I ended the last article asserting that postmodernism is a really terrible idea. Now I want to explain *why* and *how* it is not only a bad idea for politics, it is actually a disastrous idea. To accomplish that I will need to define both modernism and post-modernism.

Modernism describes the modern age of science from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century. This idea was based on the belief that there is an objective reality. Starting from that premise, the brilliant thinkers of that age began researching and studying to be able to make a map of that territory. From that came the development of science as a methodology for engaging with an object or an experience, defining what it is, determining how it works, and then determining the validity of the mental maps that we make about it. In this way, Newton's laws of physics were discovered, the elements of the periodic chart, the foundation of chemistry, the anatomy of the human body, and on and on.

Modernism brought about developments in engineering and construction, it gave us the foundational principles for democracy and self-government of a people by themselves, it led to discoveries of electricity, cars, electronics, computers, and all of the things that we take for granted today that comprises and that advances civilization.

Then certain philosophers in Europe (Foucault, Derrida, etc.) began questioning all of this. First they questioned whether any human truth could provide an objective representation of reality. With this doubt, they eventually concluded that *all* truth claims are actually cultural constructs and therefore unreliable and science is not a better way to produce knowledge. Post-modernism's reaction to modernity,

“... the profound cultural transformation which saw the rise of representative democracy, the age of science, the supersedence of reason over superstition, and the establishment of individual liberties to live according to one's values.” (Pluckrose and Lindsay, 2021, p. 22)

Here they took a grain of truth and exaggerated it into a corrosive cynicism about objective knowledge, science, and truth. Yes, a great deal of our knowledge is cultural and culturally defined. Much of it is thoroughly contaminated by built-in biases. But just because the maps we make are not the same thing as the territory does *not* mean *there's no territory*. If you don't believe in external reality and if you think it is all a social construct, jump off a ten-story building. You will quickly discover that in spite of whatever culturally informed ideas you have, gravity will have the last word.

It is only true in a banal sense that a lot of our knowledge is socially constructed. Yes, the maps we make are made by fallible human beings. And human beings are social beings who are

consciously and unconsciously significantly influenced by their cultures. Yet that does not mean that some maps are more valid, useful, and effective than others. Nor does it mean that once a map is created, it cannot be improved, updated, upgraded, refined, etc. That's what science is designed to help us do— to keep testing and improving what we know so that it becomes increasingly valid and reliable.

But post-modernism gave this up and then, taking skepticism as their creed, took things to a whole new level until it became cynicism. This was the problem with post-modernism from the 1960s to the 1990s. It created a nihilistic despair. If there's no objective reality, if all is a social construct, if it is all relative, then what does it all mean? What is meaningful? And if it is all meaningless, what's the point of living?

Post-modernism attacked reason, science, and rationality as the “Western way of thinking,” suggesting that rigorous, evidence-based research belongs to the West and does not apply to the East. It accused the West of “colonizing” indigenous people and Eastern countries, disadvantaging other forms of knowledge. But that's over-simplified and polarized presentation. Further it demeans anyone not from the West as irrational and superstitious.

Later, post-modernism had a rebirth in the 1990s. Activists took the ideas (e.g., there is no objective reality, it is all a cultural construct, it has been the West's way to subjugate people, it's the group that counts, not the individual, etc.) to create their current revolution. By putting their focus on power rather than truth (“it's all about power”), post-modernists invented “identity politics” as a way to take control. For them, *the group you belong to* defines who you are, what you think, how you vote, how you are victimized, etc. All of this became tools in the service of gaining power. But identity politics is not the answer. Historically it has led to tribalism, revenge, racism, wars, genocide, totalitarian governments, etc.

This led to Critical Theory and its many forms: critical race theory, queer theory (which ignores biology and makes sex, gender and sexuality new forms of oppression), post-colonial theory, etc. Since language governs the maps (mental models) that we make and since “knowledge” is considered to be totally a social construct, post-modernists sought to gain power by controlling and changing the language. We see this in the demand that people use only approved and prescribed pronouns and other expressions. This eliminates freedom of expression. “Racism” no longer is prejudice or hatred in one's heart against other people, it is a “unconscious system” that you can't see. It is always there even if you can't detect it, and cannot be eliminated. If you disagree, that proves you are racist. If you disagree, you have committed “epistemic violence” against them.

These post-modern ideas teach people to assume there is racism, prejudice, victimization, colonization, etc. all around them and victimizing them. It teaches them to be angry, upset, and ready to cancel or even overthrow society. As a result, post-modernism has become highly intolerant and an authoritarian ideology. The only social justice to be had is not equality, but equity. Merely offer equal opportunity to all people is not enough. People must have equity—made equal in money, possessions, positions, etc. If you disagree, you should be censored.

Disagreeing makes others feel inadequate and victimized, so it must be eliminated or you must be eliminated.

Unlike modernism and liberalism which is self-correcting as it welcomes fierce debate and testing the validity of things, post-modernism refuses opposing views. This makes it especially closed-minded and rigid. It refuses freedom of debate and post-modernist universities cancel conservative speakers from their campuses.

Now how many really terrible ideas does post-modernism involve? A lot! So what's the solution to all of these really bad ideas? Open conversation and debate so that in the marketplace of ideas— the best ideas will eventually win out. Truth is not afraid of free expression or even conflict of different ideas— it welcomes it so that we can have a more complete perspective of any given subject.

What is stultifying and victimizing is censorship. To separate people between those who are so-called “woke” and those who are not is just another form of prejudice and name-calling. It is also quite arrogant and presumptuous. While the truths we know and the knowledge we have attained is still influenced by culture and language and always will be — there is a larger truth. Namely, we are all *human beings first* and human from a particular society second. We have more in common than what divides us. Because of that, we can save politics if we have a mind to.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #44
July 19, 2021
Bold Thinking Series #3

NEEDED: BOLD THINKERS TO CHANGE THE WORLD (#3)

Are you a bold thinker? If you think you are or fear that you are not, here's a question to find test yourself: "Are you working on something that can change the world?" Yes or no? In their book, Diamondis and Kotler assert that the answer that 99.99 percent of people give to that question is 'no.' They are working on much more mundane things. And it was probably such awareness that led Larry Page to say, "I think we need to be training people on how to change the world."

Why do we need to become bold thinkers? In part because of the world that we now live in. It's a world that is global and exponential. Once upon a time things were small, local, and linear, but that's not the case any longer. What you do can have global ramifications. Your influence can extend far beyond yourself and a small circle.

When Apple introduced it's "Think Different" campaign, it did so with these words:

"Here's to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes ... the ones who see things differently — they're not fond of rules ... you can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them, but the only thing you can't do is ignore them because *they change things*.... they push the human race forward, and while some may seem them as the crazy ones, we see genius..." (1997, p. 232)

In founding SpaceX, Elon Must gave us a great example of how a bold thinker thinks. To seriously think about planting a colony on Mars— now that is bold thinking! As I think about the bold pursuit we have set in Neuro-Semantics — enabling people everywhere to actualize their highest meanings into their best performances by owning their powers of thinking, learning, and meaning-making, the question that then arises is how can we scale this?

5) A bold thinker sees through the darkness of problems to solutions.

What's involved in any and every significant goal are *problems*. If there are no problems, it would already be done. The bold thinker is a fierce thinker who boldly embraces both an optimistic future *and* the problems that are in the way and which need to be solved. The bold thinker embraces problems honestly and openly. The purposeful intention of the bold thinker is to make a difference, or as Steve Jobs said, "to put a dent in the universe."

The bold thinker thinks with courage. He is audacious in his attitude because he focuses on what is possible and what he is willing to risk. At times she will throw away the rule book and "invent it as she goes." Because the bold thinker thinks big, thinks at scale, he does not engage in wimpy thinking. Further, the bold ideas of bold thinkers are often considered crazy.

"The day before something is truly a breakthrough, it is a crazy idea." (Burt Rutan).

“Trying out crazy ideas means bucking expert opinion and taking big risks. It means not being afraid to fail. The road to bold is paved with failure and this means have a strategy in place to handle risk and learn from mistakes is critical.” (*Bold*, p. 76)

Bold problem-solvers use rapid iteration of an action or process to intentionally learn from failures while still in the discovery process. Intentionally increase rapid iteration which is one of the best risk-mitigation strategies ever developed. Create an agile design that has fast feedback loops so that you can constantly upgrade things. Reid Hoffman, LinkedIn founder,
“If you’re not embarrassed by the first version of your product, you’ve launched too late.”

For the bold, there is no failure. Therefore at times they even aim to fail; they know that’s the source of new ideas. The unofficial motto of Silicon Valley: “Fail early, fail often, and fail forward.”

“Failure comes part and parcel with invention. It is not optional ... we understand that and believe in failing early and iterating until we get it right.” (Jeff Bezos)

“If you fail in doing something ambitious, you usually succeed in doing something important.” (Larry Page, Google)

6) A bold thinker embraces the difficult.

A bold thinker is a fierce thinker in going where others fear to tread. She entertains questions that cannot easily be answered and she stays with the question. With it she constantly interrogates reality and will not let it go until it releases its secrets. It takes courage to be a bold thinker—courage to question, courage to doubt, courage to say, “I don’t know, but I will search.” It takes courage to face one’s own ignorance and confusion without giving in to cynicism. The bold thinker embraces skepticism as a tool for discovery, but never gives up the search. It takes courage to admit the lack of skill and “go back to school” to develop the competency which is next needed.

Bold thinkers love challenge and are ruthless about challenges. They love change, growth, and development. They love pushing the boundaries. In a word, they “have a healthy disregard for the impossible.” The impossible is to them what a red flag is to a bull.

We sometimes consider the constraints of reality as hard or difficult. Critical thinkers, however, simply treat them as constraints and embrace the constraints. If it is a real constraint, the constraint actually liberates just as a good constraint is a lane marker on the highway. Things like time limits; competition limits and conditions are just factors to work with. Without constraints, people actually take their time and are more wasteful with their energy and money. If it is not a real constraint but a false one, a man-made one, then critical thinking can be used to expose that it is fluffy vagueness.

As a framework for thinking, critical thinkers boil things down to the most core or fundamental facts, elements, and truths. They ground their thinking in those fundamentals and thereby are able to edit out unnecessary complexity. Here’s to you and I become truly *bold thinkers!*

From: L. Michael Hall

2021 Neurons #45

July 23, 2021

How Self-Actualization

Can Save Politics #7

SHUTTING DOWN DIFFERENCES

Another Really Bad Idea

Who likes disagreements? Hardly anyone. But it happens and it happens all the time. It is part and parcel of life. It happens also at the highest levels among the most intelligent— after all, that’s how science works. We propose a hypothesis, we design and run tests, we give a detail account of the protocol that we used so others can also test it. If they get similar results, that helps to confirm the hypothesis. If not, it helps us figure out what made the difference so we can tighten up the protocol, change the hypothesis, refine the model, etc. Presenting your idea about how you think it is valid is how knowledge grows.

But today the far left of the Democratic party has become highly authoritarian and have adopted policies that are designed to shut down debate and differences. All around the US, college campuses forbid conservative speakers, boycott them, conduct protests against them. What is this? What is so scary about having an *open discussion* so people can hear all sides?

Now the social media tech. giants have gotten into the game. Facebook, Google, and Twitter are now monitoring your speech and shutting it down if it disagrees with their opinions. They use so-called fact-checkers, but they are checking if your presentation fits their favored facts. And because they even shut down the former President, nobody is protected from their authoritarian approach.

This past week, current President Biden became the latest person to jump on the bandwagon of killing free speech. He justified it by calling anyone or anything that he disagrees with “misinformation.” Then he condemned it in the strongest language saying “it is killing people.” As if that was not enough exaggeration and awfulizing, he said it was the worst thing since the Civil War. Now, yes, perhaps all of this is dementia eating away at his brain. But if not, then he has become the first President to stand a stand against the First Amendment of the Constitution which protects free speech.

In a democracy where there is free speech and where we trust that in the marketplace of ideas, the best ideas will — over time— win out, we are willing to hear each other out. We are willing to listen to all sides and let critical thinking have its day. But the post-modernists and the socialists have a better idea— *Crush* those who disagree; *Prevent* their voices from being heard; and *Pass laws* to prevent them from having free access to social media.

But that “better idea” is actually a really, really bad idea. It stems, first of all, from the arrogance that they know better. They label anything they disagree with “misinformation” so that they can

cut off open debate and conversation. They then over-exaggerate and catastrophize that it is “killing people” and “the worst thing since the Civil War”— Is anyone else hearing a lot of *cognitive distortions* in any of this?

I have a question: *Who is afraid of differences and open debate?* Those who have ideas which cannot stand up to scrutiny, that’s who! Those who do not know how to use critical thinking to test the validity of ideas. Those who easily get their feelings hurt and consider disagreement with their precious ideas a form of abuse or attack or insult. They even talk that way. They use such phrases as “verbal abuse.” And many of them actually believe that words can hurt them!

Now if they knew even a tiny bit about NLP, they would know that words are just words, symbols by which we convey meanings, and the each person is the meaning-maker. The meaning that arises is the meaning that any given person *creates*. So actually, these over-sensitive ones are *abusing themselves with the words*. But, of course, by projecting this out onto others, they play the victim game (more cognitive distortions).

When you know that “the map is not the territory” then any map — any word, phrase, or idea— is just that. It is someone’s mental map. It may accurately describe things; it may not. But it is just a thought, just an idea. And because we all operate from different maps, there will always be differences — differences you cannot legislate away, try though you may. And that’s why it is a really, really bad idea to try to shut down conversations about differences. For that social media, colleges, universities, and even the president ought to be ashamed.

A really, really *good idea*, and the one that fits for intelligent people in an open democracy, is to *let the differences among us be heard and debated in open forums*. Let there be freedom of speech for all.

From: L. Michael Hall

2021 Neurons #46

July 26, 2021

Introducing the Next New

Book from Neuro-Semantics

WHEN YOUR EDUCATION IS INADEQUATE

You know your education was inadequate if you were not educated with the ability to solve problems, to think through a problem, and use critical thinking skills to figure out a solution. If you can't do that — you have not actually been educated, what you call “education” was only being warehoused. They kept you in school and entertained you with facts about various subjects, but did not educate you on *how to think* or *how to learn*. Teachers filled your head with *what* to think, but failed to teach you *how* to think for a new learning.

You know your education was inadequate if you were not taught about *how* to activate your thinking executive functions so you could identify premises, analyze evidence, challenge biases, differentiate factual, inferential, and theoretical statements, create empowering meanings, and determine implications from statements.

You know your education was inadequate if you are not a passionate learner. If school turned you off to learning, if it left you with a bad taste in your mouth for reading non-fiction— then it failed to teach you how to make learning fun, enjoyable, and a meta-pleasure. If you did not come out of school with a highly developed curiosity, the ability to stand in wonder at the mysteries of life all around you, then your education was definitely inadequate.

You know your education was inadequate if you don't know how to succeed in whatever area is important to you. Success is a function of the right strategy, the right attitude, and the right effort. When you learn how to learn then you know how to approach any subject that you want to achieve or any problem that you want to solve. As a result, that gives you a “can do” spirit of optimism. So if you struggle with depression, boredom, anxiety, helplessness, etc— your education was probably inadequate for learning how to cope and thrive.

You know your education was inadequate when you struggle to accurately assess situations. If you react when you should be pausing and delaying reaction for a more thorough due diligence of the situation, you haven't learned lesson one in self-management. Reactiveness is a symptom of childish thinking, of jumping to conclusions with little evidence. And that inevitably leads to poor decision-making. If your education was adequate, you learned how to develop executive decision-making skills thereby giving enabling you to make superior judgments and decisions.

You know your education was inadequate when you tend to be dogmatic about your opinions, closed-minded to even considering contradictory information or the views of others. If you can't be wrong, and have to be right, and you get defensive when someone disagrees— you were not

educated, you were propagandized. If you feel wrong for being wrong, then your so-called education failed to produce the scientific mind-set of experimenting and openly exploring when you are wrong.

You know your education was inadequate if you are always focused on short-term goals and objectives and you sacrifice long-term values and objectives for immediate pleasures. If you get overly upset about what's happening this quarter in your business and failing to think in terms of development and capacity building, then your education failed to prepare you for real life.

You know your education was inadequate if you think that words are real and if you fail to recognize the limitations of language. If you don't know that language distorts perceptions and don't know how language is a flawed means of mentally mapping things— deleting, generalizing, distorting things, then you aren't aware of how language inevitably slants and biases things or what to do to challenge language itself as a tool for thinking and not reality.

These are some of the most obvious signs that your education was inadequate. There are others as well. An adequate education puts you in charge of yourself— your thinking and learning. You are then able to use your highest executive functions as you make decisions about what and how to do what's most effective. And that sounds pretty important to me!

Coming very soon — within days:

Executive Learning: Learning How to Learn (2021).

From: L. Michael Hall

2021 Neurons #47

July 30, 2021

How Self-Actualization

Can Save Politics #8

THE BAD IDEA OF EQUITY

In thinking about *bad ideas* in politics, ideas that are having a field day these days, the idea of equalizing out everything is one of the worst. Equal opportunities—sure. Equal access—yes, definitely! Equal in the eyes of the law—of course! But trying to control things so that all get the same thing—equal outcome—that's a really bad idea.

Why? The first reason is the simplest one. Namely, *given human nature, it is not possible*. Given differences in talents, intelligence, creativity, interests, desires, energy, motivation and on and on, the socialist/communistic idea of equity, of equalizing out everything, is an utopian hope. And historically, it has always turned out to be a nightmare, rather than a dream. Even for parents in a home with just two or three children, it is not even possible to do this! While the kids want things to be fair, they don't want to be treated as if they were all the same. And if we go to communist regimes around the world who purportedly believe in this bad idea, none of them have created economic equality. In spite of a hundred years of trying communism, what country has actually achieved economic equality? None. Actually, the separation between the rich and the poor is much more extreme in those countries.

It's a bad idea also the consequence of trying to force equity (equal outcome) leads to *forcing conformity* upon people, banishing true diversity, and lowering standards. People are not the same in scores and scores of ways—they don't want the same thing, aren't interested in the same outcomes, don't prioritize values in the same way. So trying to get everyone to conform is another impossible dream and one that fails to respect diversity and uniqueness.

Pursuing equity puts all the focus on the result or the end and to do that means unequal treatment of the individual or group. Of course, to do that is to construct a structure that is inherently unequal. That's a bad idea because it is a step backward. By contrast, legal equality means treating people as equal in the eyes of the law and being color-blind to skin color so that each person is given an equality of opportunity. Something that is very different from equity.

A much better idea is to believe in people, to validate and embrace diversity, and to let people choose to create the kind and quality of lives that they want. Some will strive as entrepreneurs to create new enterprises and build businesses and become wealthier than most people. They will work 12 to 16 hours a day and love every minute of it. Others would utterly hate that way of living. They want to find a good secure job, work at it from 9 to 5 and then leave work so that they can focus on something that they care about—perhaps family, or sport, or recreation, or some hobby. They don't care about how much money they accumulate. They spend whatever they get. Others do not even want a full-time job. They would prefer to work as little as possible—just enough to have the lifestyle they want.

The bad idea of equality of *outcome* would deny people the right to set their own values and to live by those values. It would rob them of their basic freedom of choice and impose on them a false promise and an impossible dream. In terms of self-actualization, equity doesn't work. What works is equality of persons and opportunity which is why it is a much better idea.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #48
August 2, 2021
Be the Executive #1

THE EXECUTIVE SERIES

I did not know it at the time, but when I created the Meta-States Model in 1994 and modeled *self-reflexivity*, the factor that makes human consciousness so special— I was simultaneously modeling the highest factor of all of the executive functions. And it is the executive functions that uniquely combine to make us the unique species that we are— that has allowed us to create literature, science, technology, civilization, etc.

Developmentally, the executive functions arise in our prefrontal cortex and is the source of language, self-consciousness, time-consciousness, social-consciousness, morality, responsibility, learning, etc. It is these executive functions that enable us to truly “think” so that we can rise above and transcend our learning, habits, and programs. It is the executive functions that enable you to be able to chose your ideas, beliefs, knowledge which you create and therefore operate as the CEO of yourself— the company of you.

So when you develop and activate your executive functions, you can transcend yourself, your family’s programs, your cultural programming, your childhood programming— in fact, any and all programming that does not serve you well. To that end, I have been working on how you can do just that— namely, to *develop and activate your executive functions*. That had led to the most recent books and trainings that we have developed in Neuro-Semantics.

Book 1: Executive Thinking (2018)

While your brain anatomy equips you to think at higher executive levels, to think like a high quality and successful executive requires a good bit of learning and training. You have to learn to think like an executive in gathering information, questioning, exploring possibilities, thinking long-term to check out consequences and repercussions, making intelligent decisions, etc. Doing all of this is an inherent part of your biological heritage.

With your executive thinking you can explore the subject of *thinking* itself, the problems that thinking presents, how to get out of the non-thinking stages and become mindful, and how to think more effectively. You can learn to engage in all sorts of thinking patterns — critical thinking, creative thinking, metaphorical thinking, humorous thinking, hypnotic thinking, etc. After all, *the quality of your thinking determines the quality of your life*. Other executive thinking books:

Hypnotic Thinking (2020)

Humorous Thinking (2020)

Thinking as a Modeler (2019)

Metaphorical Thinking (2021)

Book 2: Executive Decisions (2021)

Once you learn how to use your executive thinking, you can make executive decisions. What's the quality of your decisions today? How well do your decisions turn out in creating a high quality success in achieving your goals? Do you feel proud and confident that you can make intelligent decisions? The quality of your life is the quality of your decisions.

The problem with making decisions is that we humans have an astonishing weak and miserable history in making intelligent decisions. Why do we humans make so many poor decisions? Because smart decisions is an advanced skill requiring learning and practice. All around us are multiple signs of really poor decisions: divorces, failed mergers, incompetent employees, closets filled with unused items, conflicts between business partners, people choosing drug addiction, stealing, shootings, etc.

While it is our glory as human beings to be able to choose our attitudes, beliefs, lifestyle, career, and ten-thousand other choices, choosing is complex. Choosing well also involves navigating many hidden biases and cognitive distortions. Your everyday decisions are functions of higher executive decisions which are mostly unconscious. Little decisions can wallop you with a devastating impact making life a living hell.

Book 3: Executive Learning (2021)

When it comes to learning— *learning is at the very heart of being human*. Learning enables you to be fully alive/fully human. It opens up everything beautiful and transcending about being human. Learning drives self-understanding — how to tap into your strengths and pull up your weaknesses, how to cope, how to get along with others in respectful and loving relationships, how to develop your talents, and how to unleash your potentials to be the very best version of you. Learning enables you to know how to succeed in business, finances, and career. Learning drives your ability to solve problems, invent solutions, innovate life transforming products, and on and on. Everything you *are* and everything you *achieve* comes through learning.

Yet learning has gotten a really bad rap and it has a dark side. On the surface it seems boring and then there are “learning disabilities.” Most people do not know how to access a great learning state or to discern the best learning strategy for expertise. They have not learned *how to learn*. The good news is that you can **learn** *how-to-learn* and stay ahead of the game. You can discover the secrets of the executive functions in meta-learning and activate the seven dimensions of learning. Then learning can be an exciting adventure of discovery.

Book 4: Executive Wisdom (scheduled for 2022)

Then above and beyond your intelligence by which you build up knowledge and understanding, there is the mystery of wisdom. Wisdom is practical, yet also heavenly. It speaks about how you treat yourself and others, yet as it deals with timeless truths, that makes it philosophical. Moments of creative insights give you that Aha! wherein suddenly and inexplicably you discover a wisdom that changes everything. Then instead of foolish thoughts, words, and actions, you wisely know what to do and how to do it. It is as close to magic as we humans get.

As wisdom transcends intelligence and knowledge, it empowers you to avoid both the foolishness of rash responses and the stupidity of forgetting to fully contextualize an insight as you speak and/or take action.

The Executive Series is not only for company executives, it is for every human being who wants to be the executive in his or her own life. This fulfills the NLP dream of “running your own brain.” Now you can truly take charge of yourself— from the inside-out. No more victimization, instead personal empowerment. No more dominated by a trauma, instead resilient to your core. No more whining about life being unfair, instead becoming a self-actualized person who strives for social justice.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #49
August 6, 2021
How Self-Actualization
Can Save Politics #7

A BAD IDEA: YOU ARE ONE OF A COLLECTIVE

Critical Theory and its derivative, Critical Race Theory (CRT), does not see you as an individual person. No. Instead you are viewed as a member of a collective. You are defined in terms of your Race, your Economic Status, your Politics, Your Gender, your Religious, etc. Who you really are is a function of your *group identity* with several identities, and because of that you may be defined in terms of multiple identities— which leads to the idea of intersectionality.

Now once you are a member of a collective, you are seen and related to not as the unique person that you are, but stereotypically through the group that you belong to. So if you are black, then you are expected to be a Democrat. That’s how “black people” think and what they value. If you don’t, then something wrong with you. In this bad idea, your group identity is supposed to be the most critical and dominating factor about you. Yes, I know it sounds like sci-fi, like the Borg Collective on Star Trek who wants to assimilate you.

By this theory, if you belong to the group that historically created problems long ago, you now have “white guilt.” And this is so regardless of how non-prejudiced you actually are. CRT posits that we are to identify and treat people according to their group identity— which ironically is as racist an approach as there is. Next, to make this bad idea even worse, if people in your race did something bad— *you share a collective guilt with them*. CRT asserts this about “white people.” If you are “white,” you automatically inherit white guilt, white racism, white superiority, etc. Supposedly, it is inherent in you so inescapable that there’s nothing you can do about it. Talk about a determinist ideology.

Now in General Semantics, Alfred Korzybski defined this as the problem of *identification*. Whenever we *identify* one thing with another, we make them equal to each other, the “same.” Yet in reality, there is no sameness, so to identify is a form of unsanity. We have made ourselves less sane. Taken to the extreme, it leads to insanity. Language is part of the problem here. It is so easy to say “he *is* X.” Or, “they *are* Y.” The other side of the problem is the inability to make important distinctions between things.

- All black people *are* not the same.
- All white people *are* not the same.
- All members of X group *are* not the same.

Identification is the process of lumping a whole group of people into a single category and then treating them all the same. Of course, that’s irrational. They are not all the same. Ultimately this idea is bad because it is *so disrespectful of people and so dismissive of individual*

uniqueness. It leads to misunderstanding each person in his or her own right. And such stereotyping is just another form of prejudice and racism.

Imposing group identity or identities on people is one of CRT's bad idea. Here's something else that makes identifying people via a group a bad idea — with group membership personal responsibility vanishes. It gives way to group responsibility or more accurate, group blame. A much better idea comes from NLP, the idea of personal responsibility. How you personally *respond* arises from your unique personal *abilities* to think, feel, speak, and act as an individual person. Your *response-ability* gives you the personal *power* to think, speak, and act on your own behalf. This empowers you to never be a victim! And this arose, as did NLP, from the Humanist Psychology movement that Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers inspired from the 1940s onward to the 1970s. Here the emphasis is on the dignity and value of each person. You are more than, and different from, your group association. It is your differences that makes you special and unique.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #50
August 9, 2021
Be the Executive #2

ACTUALIZING THE EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

Given *the executive functions* in your brain (Neurons #48), you have both the capacity and the potential to be your own best executive making executive decisions about what to think, believe, decide, say, and do. How great is that? This capacity lies in your prefrontal cortex— because it is there that you have executive functions. These powerful functions is also why— without training— you can completely ruin your potentials. Without training, you can so misuse your executive functions that you will end up creating a living hell for yourself. Conversely, with training, your potentials open up and the sky is the limit.

What are these executive functions? Here is a basic list of the key functions— executive functions by which you can become *fully human/ fully alive* as you actualize your highest potentials as a human being. It's by the executive functions that you are able to be *human* in the highest and best sense.

- 1) Response inhibition and emotional control
- 2) Reflecting and meta-cognition
- 3) Working memory
- 4) Task initiation
- 5) Sustained attention: attending, staying focused
- 6) Intentionality and planning
- 7) Organizing: Prioritizing, organizing, sequencing.
- 8) Time management
- 9) Flexibility in adapting, dealing with change
- 10) Goal-directed persistence
- 11) Stress tolerance
- 12) Social intelligence in communicating, empathy, expressiveness.

1) Response inhibition. This refers to the ability to hold yourself back from doing what other parts of your brain may be mobilize to do. Here you can *notice* your emotions *without* acting on them. Here you can ignore distractions and stay focused. Here you can exercise self-control. It includes emotional restraint as the ability to self-regulate your emotions, drives, and choices. You can over-ride your impatience, pride, and need for instant gratification. You can monitor yourself and assume responsibility.

2) Reflecting. This refers to the ability to think before you act. You can take a moment to pause, to be silent and just notice what *is* without jumping to conclusions. Reflecting means you can think things through and deliberate about what information is most important. Here you can use your meta-cognition for abstract thinking— thinking in terms of concepts, beliefs, understandings. With your *reflexivity* you recognize hidden frames and reframe.

3) *Working memory*. This refers to the ability to keep information in your mind and to retrieve it at will. You can not only remember, you can *consciously recall* what you want to retrieve. While your working memory is short, just a few seconds, you can develop it so that it can *hold in mind* something for thirty minutes or a day. Memory is your ability for information retention so that you can then have access to it as needed which then allows you to build on your knowledge base.

4) *Task initiation and decision*. This refers to the ability to start a task and stay focused on it unto completion. You can concentrate on a task and stay focused. This is the ability to evaluate a decision, to weigh pros and cons, to prioritize the importance of values, and to make a final judgment. Now you can be the executive of the decisions, beliefs, understandings and policies that you set for yourself.

5) *Sustained attention*. The ability to focus your attention on a task, to ignore distractions, and to maintain your intention is what we call concentration. Unlike animals and small children who live in a world of attentions, you can live in the world of *intentions*— and by your intentions direct your attentions do serve them.

6) *Intentionality and planning*. This refers to the ability to set intentions and decide and then involves structure and/or format a plan to fulfill your intention. The ability to make a good guess about what will or could happen. It is the ability to think strategically about how to achieve an objective, to consider consequences and to think a few steps ahead.

7) *Organizing*. This is the ability to order and sequence the activities that make up a plan. It is the ability to track what you're doing and how you are doing it, in other words, self-monitoring. By organizing things in your mind (and on paper), you are not dependent on how information comes to you, you can re-sequence things and create more useful organizations or strategies.

8) *Time management*. This is the ability to balance “now” (today) and “then” (the future). When you can do that, you can prioritize long-term over short-term values. You can be aware of your own mortality and “number your days” accordingly. You can choose to live in the now and you can choose to step out of the now to learn from the past and to anticipate the future.

9) *Flexibility*. This is the ability to flexibly shift your thinking and your strategy as needed in a given context. It is the ability to be nimble rather than rigid. It is the ability to shift perspective, adopt multiple perspectives, and contextualize things. This facilitates the executive ability to stay relevant and appropriate in any context and to make changes in real time.

10) *Goal-directed persistence*. This is the ability to define an objective and to solve any and all problems that arise to block that achievement. It is the ability to sustain a goal for the long-term and to bounce back from set-backs (resilience). It is the ability to persist.

11) *Stress tolerance*. This is the ability to embrace uncertainty and the ambiguous, to use humor to lighten up, to calm yourself when under pressure, to restrain yourself from reactivity. This is the ability to turn stresses and challenges into eustress.

12) *Social intelligence*. This is the ability to communicate empathy and care to others in order to create a connection and bonding with significant others. It is the ability to express yourself and your presence, your understandings and to receive feedback from others. It is the ability to create a social support system for yourself and others.

Now, obviously, before you can actualize these executive functions, you have to know them. After that comes the step of developing them as fully as possible. That's where teaching, coaching, and training comes in. As you can tell, these involve what we call emotional intelligence, social intelligence, and practical wisdom.

From: L. Michael Hall

2021 Neurons #51

August 13, 2021

How Self-Actualization

Can Save Politics #8

HISTORY IS FOREVER OR IS IT?

How should we think about what someone did in the past? Is it truly past or is it still alive? Obvious, someone, or many some ones, did something, good or bad, and it influenced those who were born afterwards. Now once upon a time in human history, when a country conquered another country, they would take the people defeated and turned them into slaves and make them work for them. From ancient Egyptians to Romans to European colonizing countries, it was a developmental stage that our ancestors went through. It was an aspect of man's inhumanity to man.

Fast forward several centuries, and we learned better. Knowledge grow, science developed, mankind learned how to test and validate ideas and as we learned better, *we developed better ideas* — democracy, equality of persons, rule of law, balance of powers, etc. As we learned, we became more conscious and more conscientious about our actions. Legislators forbid the slave industry almost from the beginning of this country, Lincoln freed the slaves, the Civil Rights movement inspired and motivated new legislation to move us step by step toward “a more perfect union.”

But with Critical Race Theory (CRT) there is a really bad idea about history. Whatever bad things that happened in history continue today and cannot be undone except by total Revolution. They fail to see and appreciate *the continuous learning and development* making us a more color-blind nation. In fact, the promoters of CRT scoff at Martin Luther King's idea of color-blind. Instead they push a racist ideology just as a reversed racial ideology was pushed upon their great, great, great grandparents. Of course, it was not pushed on them personally, they were not around! CRT has simply *reversed the racism* and are trying to do in kind what has been done a hundred years ago.

The really bad idea is that “the past is still alive.” That's also a stupid idea. It leads to thinking that what happened in 1619 or what happened in 1860 or the 1930s *is still a problem* that needs to be solved today. A much better idea is that “what happened in the past is *past*. It is done and over with.” Certainly consequences from the past may continue, and if so, then if there is something happening today that's hurtful, or ugly, or de-humanizing, then we need to address that as a problem to be solved. But the problem we're solving is not the past, or in the past, it is in the present— here and now.

Those who focus on the past and complain about the injustices and cruelties of the past are also the very ones who *disdain all of the progress* that we have made over the centuries toward a more perfect union. It was in the 19th century that the great majority of nations outlawed slavery. In the US, we fought a bloody Civil War to end slavery. After that it still took the Civil Rights

Movement of the 1950s and 1960s to bring about groundbreaking legal changes that made equality the law of the land. It took the visionary leadership of Martin Luther King Jr. to change the focus from “the color of one’s skin” to “the one’s character.”

The past is not forever and it is certainly no longer present. It is past. That’s why we call it *the past*. It is done and gone. The best idea is to live today and focus on what we can do today that will make for a brighter future.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #52
August 16, 2021
Be the Executive #3

TAKING EXECUTIVE CONTROL

Built into your brain are multiple executive functions. That's a given and it establishes a great human capacity. It establishes a capacity that explains "human potential" and why and how it extends far, far beyond the potential of any animal. With their instincts, animals are quite limited. They are programmed and their programming tells them all they need to know in terms of who they are, what they are to do, how to live, who they eat, who eats them, etc.

The situation is completely— *completely*— different and unique with us humans. We don't have information content instincts. Maslow said that at best we have "instinctoids," left over remnants from instincts that have *no content*, only a drive or urge. And the problem with these urges is that in feeling them, we really don't know what they are signaling us— do we need to eat, drink, sleep, mate, or what?

We are without programs. And as "You can't tell the players without a program" so we can't tell who we are, what we are, what we're to do, what to eat, who wants to eat us, etc. Enter the *executive functions*. These are the higher level brain functions that enable us to learn what we need to learn, and *in learning, we create our own programming*. Ah, yes, be careful what you learn!

Your learning and the meanings that you construct become *the instincts that you live*.

Now given that you can learn some really stupid things, destructive things, things that violate your health, well-being, relationships, ability to live peacefully with yourself, and on and on— *the central key to effective and joyful human living is effectively using your thinking and learning potentials!*

How sad it is that a human being doesn't elevate *thinking* (critical and creative thinking) and *learning* as the most critical skills that one needs to be effective, efficient, and happy! These executive functions— thinking, learning, deciding, and developing wisdom — define your potential. They give you a pathway to actualizing your highest potentials and your best performances.

But you have to *take control*. Here's another *critical* distinction between humans and animals. Because they have their programs and are programmed by their instincts and we are not— you *can* become your own best programmer, *if you accept that responsibility*. And you have an executive function in your higher brain functions to do just that.

In NLP we call this "running your own brain." In many psychologies and philosophies it is called "accepting personal responsibility." Otto Rank developed the concept of will. William Glasser made this his primary theme in Reality Therapy and in Control Theory.

But what if you don't? What if, instead of detecting your executive functions of thinking, learning, and deciding, you choose to default to whatever programs that your parents gave you, the programs in your culture, school, media, etc.? The paradox here is that even in *choosing* to not take control, you are already exercising control— only *you are giving all of your control away!* You are giving all of your power away. You are powerfully thinking, learning, and choosing to be a victim.

Now there are several secondary gains that you will get from this: You can enjoy the pleasure of blaming. You can blame parents, society, history, genetics, government, some particular person — you can blame them for everything that you experience that's wrong. You can also evade the effort of assuming responsibility for using your mind, developing your learning skills, and for making wise choices. You can depend on others for your happiness. You can depend on family, friends, or government for bailing you out of your troubles. Of course, none of that describes a very happy way to live.

Conversely, you could step up to the human plate and *take executive control*. You could choose to be the CEO of you and of your life. You can be the one exercising critical thinking, creative thinking, effective learning, and wise choosing. It is possible. In Neuro-Semantics we call this “human potential” and our focus is on *actualizing* that potential to its fullest.

For more: See *Unleashed!* Or *Winning the Inner Game*.

Or if you're ready for the heavy stuff: *Neuro-Semantics* and/or *Meta-States*.

Or the *Executive series*: *Executive Thinking*, *Executive Learning*, *Executive Decisions*.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #53
August 20, 2021
How Self-Actualization
Can Save Politics #9

BAD IDEA: WE NEED OPEN BORDERS

Among all of the bad ideas that are being floated today, one of the big ones is that we need open borders. Of course, a country without borders is no longer a country. To be a country inherently involves having borders. It answers the questions: Where does this country start? Where does it end? How far does it go in this or that direction? Borders define the territory that designates and defines a country. And all countries have borders.

Interesting enough, Communistic countries protect their borders for a different purpose, namely, to *prevent their people from leaving*. Democratic countries typically use their borders to protect foreigners *from entering their country* without going through due process. With borders, those in leadership roles in a country can determine who is here, who is a citizen, who is not, who is a visitor, etc.

Borders for a country are similar to walls and doors for a house. A house without walls or doors would not be anyone's particular house. It would be more like a park pavilion. Without walls or doors, you would not be able to sleep very well knowing that anyone at any time could enter into your home and do whatever they want to do. With walls and a door, at least they have to knock and seek entrance. Since it is your house or apartment, then you have control over who enters and who does not.

Borders are also needed psychologically for an individual person. It is needed in order that one has a solid sense of self. For those borders, we call them boundaries. Without boundaries, without knowing who you are, what's important to you (values), and how to say "yes" and "no" in an assertive way— people can walk all over you, treat you however they want, and you can't do a thing about it, except feel like a victim. Psychological health requires good solid boundaries. Such boundaries make up your personal borders. Now you can guard your mind and heart against intruders into that inner place that would do you harm.

So with a country. Countries need borders. I typically travel to one or two dozen countries every year. And as I make entrance into a country, I go through "customs." I let them know who I am, why I'm there, how long I will stay, etc. They check my luggage and person making sure that I'm not there to do harm. That protects them and it protects me. I'm glad that each country I visit have borders. If I were to go somewhere without borders, I would not feel very safe.

Since 1965 and the Immigration and Naturalization Act, the United States has welcomed more than one million (1,000,000) new immigrants to become citizens every single year. No other country in the world does that. In recent years we have had more and more illegal immigrants

seek entrance and given what Biden said in the campaign, he essentially opened the borders so that there are no borders. With a much more than a million illegal immigrants in the first six months of 2021, the flood-gates have been opened and there's no indication that the Biden Administration is doing anything to stop it.

This is a tragically bad idea. Today 20% of the illegals crossing the southern border are coming in with Covid19 and are being sent all around the country. Who in their right mind thinks that's a good idea? Trump was right to negotiate with Mexico and other Latin American countries to keep people in their own countries while applying for asylum. Biden rejected that wisdom and has thereby created not only chaos at the border, he is undermining the very protection that government is designed to protect. Secure borders — good idea; lack of them — bad idea.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #54
August 23, 2021
Be the Executive #4

THE REFLEXIVE EXECUTIVE

To be the executive of *you*, of your life, you have to take charge (#52), *and* to do that you tap into and activate one of the executive functions that is especially designed to enable you to do that. It is this executive function gives you a very special kind of consciousness, one very, very different from animals. It is your self-reflexive consciousness that empowers you to, *as it were*, step back from yourself and *reflect* on your experience.

Your *self-reflexivity* replaces the “instincts” that animals have and give you the power to create your own instincts. By *thinking* about your thinking, *feeling* about your feelings, *evaluating* about your evaluations, *creating concepts* about concepts, and so on. It is what enables you build up a set of frames for how to interpret what anything means. That’s how a frame functions— it establishes an “interpretative schema.” It enables you, at a higher level, to make executive choices and decisions about how to live, what to focus on, what values to deem important, etc.

Now while you, like all humans, inevitably do this, most misuse this executive power. Why? In part, it is because they have not been taught how to use the self-reflexivity effectively. Schools certainly do not teach it. Nor do most parents. Even modest self-development programs do not facilitate it and even more pathetically, most therapist do not know how to utilize it.

There are other reasons, for one thing, many have developed some really bad habits with their self-reflexivity. In their upbringing, their schooling, and their experiences, they have learned and practiced to bring negative thoughts-and-feelings to their thinking-and-emoting. As a consequence, whenever they reflect back onto themselves, they apply thoughts of judgment, contempt, dislike, anger, disgust, fear, etc. onto themselves. No wonder they then have become afraid of their own self-reflexivity!

Today there’s a great many people who fear the self-reflection that occurs when they turn inward. If you ask, Why in heaven’s name would they fear a thought about a thought? It is because all of their experience with it has been negative. This is what most people mean when they talk about having a “noisy mind,” with “thinking too much,” with “voices in their heads ‘should-ing’ on them,” etc. The second-thoughts they bring to their first thoughts are all negative and judgmental. Consequently, many of them falsely think that they need to stop thinking! That is a bad choice to a bad choice! What’s wrong is not *thinking*, but *the kind* of thinking that they have been doing.

They have an executive mind but it is a cruel and hateful dictator! The CEO that’s running the company of *them* is a mean bastard who is a hateful tyrant. This is the mis-using of the self-reflexive executive function. Whenever I do “Dragon Slaying and Taming” using Meta-States in

the APG, I always warn people, “Do not bring negative thoughts-and-feelings *against* yourself, that’s how you create the ‘dragon’ states.” Then to drive that point home, I always ask everyone to raise their right hand and repeat after me. “From this day forward, I will not bring negative thoughts-and-feelings *against* myself; I will keep those thoughts and feelings at the primary level about the context I’m in.”

To tap into and activate the executive function of self-reflexivity and make it work for you, you may have to clean out and unlearn that bad habit. There’s something else you may need to clean out— some old negative beliefs. Those who end up fearing themselves, their negative judgments about themselves, often develop negative beliefs about human nature and what is inside. They fear that they will find monsters inside or some kind of ugliness. Again, that’s just the misuse of their self-reflexivity.

To be your own best CEO and make the most positive use of your self-reflexivity— set the frame that what’s within is sacred— special, precious, and unique. Their humanity. Their potential for actualizing their highest values and meanings. Their most developed and most mature human responses of love, compassion, courage, contribution, and so on.

have

From: L. Michael Hall

2021 Neurons #55

August 26, 2021

How Self-Actualization

Can Save Politics #10

WHEN THE EXECUTIVE IS FOOLISH

Currently I'm working on *wisdom*. Having completed an extensive research on thinking, deciding, and learning, I'm now bringing all of that together to formulate a process for the structure of wisdom. To that end I've been focusing on the process of how to model wise thinking, wise deciding, and wise actions. Why? One of the big reasons is simply to avoid foolishness. And if there's anything epidemic among us humans it is foolishness— foolish thinking, foolish talking, foolish decisions, and foolish actions. I know! I've engaged in plenty of foolishness in my life and a lot of my research has been to become, at least, a little bit less foolish. We humans get ourselves into so many problems and create so much agony for ourselves because we make stupid and foolish mistakes. And while it does come with being human, it is not inevitable. We can learn better.

I write this now because what is playing out in full techni-color on television every day this week are the ongoing consequences of the foolish mistakes of President Biden. His foolish decisions about the August 31 deadline and his foolish rush to leave Afghanistan has created a humanitarian crisis and it promises to result in the death, slaughter, and torture of thousands — who will be left behind.

More foolish than his original decision when he sat an arbitrary deadline is his ongoing foolish refusal to listen to his generals and his democrat colleagues. All week, democrats have accused him of being tone-deaf. "He doesn't listen" has been the refrain heard over and over. This is the essential formula for being foolish— not listening to others. That's what I did when I was 16 when I would not listen to my dad's wisdom about his recommendations for college. I did not listen and that eventuated in additional foolish choices. If only I had listened!

Now for Biden, it was utter foolishness to evacuate the army before the thousands of Americans and people of Afghanistan. Who even *thought* of that!? It was utter foolishness to leave 80 billion of dollars worth of weapons for the terrorists (Blackhawk helicopters, 600,000 guns, etc.). Whose bright idea was that? Or to close down the other airport (Bagram air force base), the one with multiple landing strips and the one that was fortified?

When confronted by the democrats, generals, and the leaders of other countries, Biden at first went into absolute denial— what he said was not only *not true*, but contradicted by his own staff and the Pentagon. Talk about foolishness! Once the mainstream media called his hand on that, then he went into stubborn refusal to change the time line. More foolishness.

Now you would think (I would think) that we have intelligent people at the helm making these decisions or informing the president or helping him make better decisions. Even though intelligence is not wisdom, it is better than the lack of intelligence. Even so, there are a lot of intelligent fools in this world. In fact, all of us can *know* things and still make really stupid decisions. Wisdom transcends intelligence because it involves heart— compassion, understanding, multiple perspectives, humility— the willingness to be wrong and the willingness to learn from others.

Biden’s foolishness started with the decision to withdraw without adequate planning. Didn’t he (or they) think about the ten to fifteen thousand Americans there? Didn’t he (or they) think about all of the equipment and getting it out? Didn’t he (or they) think about all of the translators and their families and plan for them to get out? Why did the CIA leave six weeks ago? Did he not think that intelligence “on the ground” would be needed in the evacuation?

Executive foolishness is the worst kind because it is top-down and can get a nation (or a person) into deep do-do. That’s what is happening today and is, and will be, the cause of more “man’s inhumanity to man” in the coming weeks and months.

What’s good is that all of this provides us a short glimpse of *wisdom factors*— factors that save us from doing foolish things— openness to information, willingness to listen to others, willingness to change one’s mind, willingness to take counsel of others, and to work collaboratively with others.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #56
August 23, 2021
Be the Executive #5

EXECUTIVE CONTROL

One thing that everybody knows about executives is that they are in control. “The buck stops at the executive’s desk,” or at least it should, because, ultimately he or she is responsible for the policies of the organization and their execution. That’s executive control. So it is inside you—inside all human beings. It is the very development of the executive functions that enables us to *think* about our thinking so that we can *take the time to choose* the best course of action. Unlike animals that operate from their genetic code and from their built-in emotional reactions, or the unthinking actions that we can condition them to make—we humans can *rise above* all of those processes.

Then, in rising above those processes, we can strengthen the ones that add value and vitality to our lives and dampen those that undermine our effectiveness and efficiency. By rising above *our own experience*, we can then *qualify* our experiences with the resources that we have learned and developed.

You can rise above your *fear* and bring courage, hope, responsibility, love, etc. so that you don’t have to live as a victim to fear. You can transform fear into cautious but courageous action.

You can rise above your *sadness* and bring hope, determination, resilience, and commitment so that you use your sadness to humanize your heart and deepen your appreciation of the preciousness of life.

You can rise above a *mistake* and bring curiosity, fascination, and responsibility so that the mistake becomes a resource that you learn from which makes you better.

Today we speak about executive control as *emotional intelligence* since that involves emotional awareness, monitoring, and regulation. We also speak about it as *self-management*. I like to talk about it as the place where we make *executive choices*. That’s because when you rise up, activate your prefrontal cortex, become aware of yourself—*you are at choice point*. You are at a place in your consciousness where you can take control by making informed, smart decisions. And when you do, you are turning a central part of yourself to becoming the person you want to become (see *Executive Decisions*, 2021).

Every human has this power, but most humans do not use it. At least they do not use it for the development and unleashing of their potentials. Many powerfully mis-use it as they choose to be a victim, to blame, to evade responsibility, in a word—to give their power away. They give it away thinking that by escaping the freedom of choice, they will not be responsible. Yet they are. Blame as they may as a way to feel good about themselves—yet the decisions they make is the life they live. Choosing to live in a disempowered way is ultimately their choice and responsibility.

In Neuro-Semantics we address executive control by beginning with the “Power Zone” Pattern. In this pattern, we focus on the four inevitable *powers* or *responses* that every person has in order to bring awareness, acceptance, appreciation, and ownership to these response-powers. From a meta-stating perspective, this sets up several gestalt states. In this meta-stating, the gestalt states of *proactivity*, *taking initiative*, and *responsibility* arise. Philosophers have theorized for centuries about the structure of these complex meta-states without success. That’s because they did not consider them a gestalt of multiple states that arise as emergent properties in the human system.

But now we know. Start with the primary state of your ability to think—feel, speak, and act. To that state, meta-state it with awareness and acceptance. Then bring appreciation to it, then ownership. As you then mix all of these together into your neurology (state induction), give it time and experience (perhaps through repetition) to thoroughly jell. Do that until the gestalt states start emerging. But don’t stop there. Next meta-state the sense of fallibility to your powers— that will enable a sense of robust humility. Meta-state it with a sense of celebration and you get that “can do” attitude of appropriate optimism. Then like Viktor Frankl in the concentration camp, you too can experience something fantastic such as, “They can’t make me hate them; they can’t take away the final human freedom!”

Executive control— it is a possibility for you. It is a prize and reward from some basic meta-stating which you can begin to do today. And if you want to be the CEO of the Company of “You,” it’s a great place to begin.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #57
September 3, 2021
How Self-Actualization
Can Save Politics #11

WE NEED MORE GOVERNMENT

Here's another bad political idea. It is a really bad idea, and always has been, to think that "we need more government." More government, no matter what form it has taken over the centuries and millennia has never been socially good for people. Even if Kings were "benevolent," they had all power and there was no appeal if you felt that power was unfair. Even in modern times, the more government means more *bureaucracy* and that inevitably means more regulations and more inefficiency. Bureaucrats, like everyone else, want to feel important and needed, so what do they do? They seek to have more and more oversight of things and that means they create more regulations so that they have more control. None of that is good.

Reagan put it succinctly when he noted that "*government is the problem.*" Now if the citizenry of a country were all primitive, uneducated children, then maybe, just maybe, in that situation, we would need more government. But where you have education and an educated citizenry, then you have the context wherein there can be a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people." But it does take *an educated people*, and *a level of maturity* in the people, to be able to create an effective self-determining government.

It is an immature and overly dependent citizenry that would even *want* more government. The idea of capitalism is that government provides enough safety and protection from enemies, foreign and domestic, so that people are free to pursue their interests, develop their different potentials, and contribute to creating value in a free marketplace. That means entrepreneurship. That means the development and self-actualization of individuals to pursue opportunities, to assume responsibility for themselves, and to create their own destinies.

So who would even *want* more government? Answer: Those who *want to be taken care of*. And what does that sound like? Doesn't it sound like immature children who are afraid of life, of risks, of responsibilities, of maturing, and of growing up? They want a governmental *mommy and daddy* to take care of them— and that would be a socialistic government so that they don't have to think for themselves. But, of course, that goes against healthy human development.

It is human nature that we mature and learn to accept responsibility. Our bodies, our minds, our social relationships, etc. are all designed to mature. If we have learned anything from Developmental Psychology, we have learned this. Erickson explored the cognitive development and the psycho-social stages of development. Freud explored sexual development over the life-span. Fowler explored the development of belief. Even cultures grow up and mature.

Who else might *want* more government? Well, people employed by the government, of course! Politicians, bureaucrats, the permanent government employees, lobbyists who want more and

more support from government, some who have become addicted to government handouts, and those who have mental-emotional compulsions for being dependent. This is the problem with more and more government programs— people become dependent on them. Eventually they are treated as “entitlements” which creates its own pathology.

More government is a bad idea that has lots of negative consequences. It means more taxes to pay for the bigger government and that goes against entrepreneurship and self-determination. It undermines the middle-class. More government feeds dependency and undermines independence and self-efficacy. More government means more intrusions and more control over our lives. The very idea of wanting more government is a thought virus— a virus that needs a good vaccination of critical thinking and compassionate capitalism.

The further you go to the right on the political spectrum, the more you find larger personal liberties and smaller government. Why is that? Because men and women who are healthy and self-actualizing are willing to accept responsibility for themselves (and to others) and don't need to depend on a nanny state. A much better idea for politics is small government and large personal development.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #58
September 6, 2021
Be the Executive #6

EXECUTIVE POWER

To speak of executive control (#54) is also to speak about executive power. If we ask, “What is the power that enables us to step up and fully exercise our executive rights as a person?” after we talk about the four innate “powers,” there is the power or energy that refers to *vitality*. This is the sense of being fully alive as a person— alive to life, to possibilities, and to unleashing our potentials. It is the vitality of living for something that is bigger than yourself, hence a sense of meaning, meaningfulness, and purpose.

To relate that to executives in organizations, we know that a vigorous and inspiring vision can make all the difference in the world. But the problem with the great majority of businesses and organizations is that they do not have a vision. Oh, they might have a so-called “vision” that they post on a wall or carry around in their billfolds. But it may not be a true vision. It is a forecast by the top brass about desired profits! Or it is a fluffly vague dream coded in some big fancy words. It is not a well-formed vision that activates a spirit of inspiration in all who read it.

A real vision is, in the final analysis, a highly meaningful description of living inspirational values. It is also actionable— people can unite to *live* those values. And it is not the superficial value of more money, profit, or status. A true vision inspires hope, determination, and commitment in the minds and hearts of people. Their values resonate with it.

True well-formed visions also tend not to be *urgent*. Important— yes; but urgent— usually not. As Covey so effectively laid out in *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (1987), confusing urgent with importance prevents people from clear thinking about values. The confusion of urgency with importance leaves many people running from one urgent crisis to the next. They are always putting out fires *and* procrastinating on what’s truly important.

The problem is neuro-semantic in nature. When something is urgent, we usually *feel a need and demand to hurry up and take care of it*. Urgency is *felt* as a push, a demand, a requirement, even as a threat of danger if we don’t. We then neurologically translate that to “it must be important.” Now we have a Meta-Model complex equivalent, urgency feelings = importance. But it is a lie. Just because something is presented as urgent does not make it important. Just because there is a ringing phone, a person knocking on the door, a project that is due, a TV that’s blaring, etc. does not make it important.

This is where you really need to develop and access your executive functions. That’s because there’s power (vitality) in your executive functions—

- 1) Response inhibition and emotional control — *the power of restraint.*
- 2) Reflecting and meta-cognition — *the power of awareness, insight and meaning construction.*

- 3) Working memory — *the power of remembering, holding in mind.*
- 4) Task initiation — *the power of proactivity.*
- 5) Sustained attention: attending, staying focused — *the power of focus, concentration.*
- 6) Intentionality and planning — *the power of planning.*
— *the power of intention.*
- 7) Organizing: Prioritizing, sequencing — *the power of organizing.*
- 8) Time management — *the power of sequencing events.*
- 9) Flexibility in adapting, dealing with change — *the power of adjusting.*
- 10) Goal-directed persistence — *the power of persistence.*
- 11) Stress tolerance — *the power of utilizing stress.*
- 12) Social intelligence communicating, empathy — *the power of connection, collaboration.*

There's power for vitality and energy in your executive functions. If you feel low energy, low motivation, depressed, discouraged, procrastinating, etc. — *you have not adequately identified, developed, and activated your executive functions.* When you do activate them, you have the true executive power to set an orientation for yourself that will be full of meaning, give you a sense of purpose, and you will be able to sustain it in your focus.

Now, are you that kind of executive with yourself? With the goals you set, the values you strive to experience, and the way you live? Do you wake up with a sense of vitality about the rich meaningfulness in the purpose of your life? You can ... if you want to. You can learn to engage in executive thinking, executive learning, executive deciding, and that will enable you to experience executive wisdom.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #59
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How Self-Actualization
Can Save Politics #12

WE NEED THE “THOUGHT POLICE”

Here’s a bad idea politically. Actually it is a rotten idea due to the consequences that follow. “We need thought police to make sure that mis-information isn’t presented in the media.” This is what’s happening now with big Tech — Facebook, Twitter, Google, Apple etc. are all acting as if they were *the thought police and shutting down anyone* (mostly conservatives) who hold an opinion that differs from their’s.

Many social commentators have labeled this “cancel culture.” If those in control of the media don’t like your opinion, they cancel you. And we now have had a great many people “cancelled” for this reason. They say something that is not “politically correct.” They associate with someone or something that is not “politically correct.” Then the next thing— they are cancelled. [Ironically, while they do this, Twitter continues to allow the Taliban while forbidding the former President of the United States!]

Now who would think this is a good idea? What kind of persons would like this? Ah, yes, those who *fear* that their ideas will not hold up in the marketplace of ideas. Those who are afraid that they could not compete, that their arguments would not stand up in the face of public scrutiny. It’s the insecure and the poor thinkers who want everyone and any one who disagrees with them to be shut down. They don’t want open debate of opinion, they just want one opinion— theirs. So they call for the thought police to shut them down.

Anyone who is a clear and critical thinker would find this not only appalling, but a form of pathology in a culture. Healthy cultures not only want diversity of ideas and opinions, but thrive with that diversity and debate. Healthy cultures not only can handle them, but value them. They know that this is how knowledge grows and is refined. Conversely, unhealthy cultures (whether it is a nation or a local business) cannot handle such diversity and so seeks to shut conversation down. We see this on college and university campuses all around the country who prevent conservative speakers from speaking. They operate as thought police trying to protect someone from being offended or having their sensitivities exposed to a different idea.

One thing that would solve this problem is the application of the basic ethical principle of “Do unto others what you would have them do until you.” If I would not want to be shut down and prevented from having a voice, I should not do that to others. An even more powerful principle would be one of respect for people and belief in truth to handle the light of scrutiny. Encouraging vigorous debates, and not shutting people down, reflects a deep respect that people can and will come to mutual understandings, maybe not agreement, when we can talk things out in a context of respect.

Any coordinated movement to silence an opinion, especially a minority opinion, is a form of oppression and goes against the basic scientific mindset. The idea of “political correctness” is *a form of groupthink* and, to that extent, is unhealthy. To try to control what people think and say, to forbid open debate or vigorous disagreement is a form of Orwellian authoritarian government control. It threatens the basic human freedoms. When people start doing that they also learn other forms of manipulative thinking and speaking: hedging in their statements, speaking in vague terms, using doublespeak, etc.

When would I need thought police? Only when I don’t trust you and your thinking to think things through. Only when I doubt that you can develop and use critical thinking skills and the scientific model. Or, only when I have such a need to control that I “need” you to think what’s right, that is, think as I think!

The best control for thoughts, especially those which are false, weak, uninformed, wild, crazy, etc. is open debate. Transparency and debate is what enables us to refine our thinking. Open, respectful feedback, not name-calling, insults, or manipulations, enables us to separate the chaff from the kernel.

If you just absolutely want the “thought police,” then *police your own thoughts*. Step back to a meta-position and evaluate your own thinking in terms of accuracy, ecology, and clarity. Then for any and all cognitive distortions, biases, and fallacies— arrest them. Send them to jail so that you reduce their influence on your thinking.

From: L. Michael Hall
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September 13, 2021
Be the Executive #7

THE WISE EXECUTIVE

An analogy. *Wise* executives are few and far between. Organizations are seldom privileged to have a wise executive at the helm. More typically, especially these days, are executives who have wrestled the CEO position for themselves by craft, manipulation, and clever politicking. Typical today is the executive who is a master of persuasion, ego-driven for his own fame and legacy, money mad and ruthless in how people are treated. He or she serves the stockholder, but not the stakeholder in the company.

Who is an executive? Anyone in a position of *determining* the conditions and *makes decisions* that affect other people is in an “executive” position. To that extent the person gathers information on people, processes, and things and then decides about how things are to go. There are junior executives and senior executives. There are executives over specific areas or departments, and there are executives over other executives.

In your brain the executive functions of the prefrontal cortex handle the information processing, storage, retrieval, decision-making, restraining, exciting, commissioning, checking, evaluating, judging, and so on. Given that, *are you a wise executive to yourself— to fully functioning as a learning, growing, and alive human being?*

A wise executive, whether the one in charge of an organization or you—in charge of your own internal organization of thoughts, emotions, speech, behavior, intentions, etc., is one who is able to slow things down, mindfully reflect on values and processes, and come to smart decisions about how to proceed. It is the *wise* executive who is able to manage the whole system enabling it to operate in ways that support life, well-being, effectiveness, and productivity.

But just as corporate executives often make poor decisions and lead organizations to do very foolish things, so we also—with ourselves. Often we do not produce wise ideas or decisions, but foolish ones. When I recently read Robert Sternberg’s book, *Why Smart People can be so Stupid* (2002), I was actually stunned by many of the stories of really stupid things that otherwise highly intelligent people did, believed, or proposed. An obvious conclusion is that neither information, nor knowledge, nor intelligence is *wisdom*. You can be well-informed and end up doing some very foolish things. We all have; it is inherent in being human.

Wisdom requires more. Wisdom requires the functioning of even more of the executive functions in the highest part of the brain *and* holistic functioning of all of the parts. Much foolishness occurs by over-focusing on one thing to the exclusion of the larger context. Wisdom often requires holding back and restraining yourself from doing what you feel like emotionally saying or doing. *Wisdom requires mindful reflection*, which is Kahneman’s “slow thinking” rather than “fast thinking” which is also not very typical in the speed of life in the 21st century.

Wisdom also involves an ethical character—the quality of being a “good” person who honestly speaks the truth, is caring and compassionate, lives with integrity, and is humble rather than arrogant. All of that indicates a well-developed maturity—a maturity that has conquered most if not all of the cognitive distortions and with humility, knows that one is always liable to be influenced by the cognitive biases.

As Jim Collins and colleagues discovered this in organizations, he wrote the book, *Good to Great*. The greatest CEOs who were at the top of the leadership scale had “a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will.” They were—surprisingly—humble about themselves, not ego-driven, it was not about them, *and* simultaneously (and paradoxically) had a strength of will to pursue a comprehensive vision. This is a “wisdom” that channels ego needs away from oneself and to the higher purposes and meanings.

To be a truly wise executive to yourself—the CEO of your own life, requires a lot. It requires a lot of personal development that culminates in a mature personality. And you have all the resources you need to make that happen. Those resources are the higher or meta-executive functions in your brain. As you access them and develop them—you are developing your personal mastery—the very secrets which is in the Meta-States model (*Secrets of Personal Mastery*, 1997).

From: L. Michael Hall
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How Self-Actualization
Can Save Politics #13

JUDGING THE PAST BY TODAY

Another Bad Idea

Here's another bad political idea— judge what happened in previous times and ages by the standard and criteria of today. Forget about indexing an event to the time and culture in which it happened. Forget about what people were thinking, where science was at that day and age. Assume that not only can you impose your more advanced understandings on the past, but that by your hindsight view, you can now truly understand the past *from* your future position as you look back on things. Of course, in logic this is the Hindsight Bias and Fallacy.

Why is this a bad idea? It's a really bad idea because it is *the structure of mis-understanding*. To understand anyone or anything, you have to start *where* the other person or the situation is. In NLP we talk about the structure of influence and effective communication in terms of *matching* where the other person is in order to take that person's perspective. Only then can we gain a sense of what and how things look like to that person. This comes from Milton Erickson's formula for connecting to clients, "pace, pace, pace lead."

Conversely, to jump in *without* taking the other's perspective not only indicates the lack of compassion and empathy, but the unwillingness to "seek first to understand" a person on that person's terms. It really an act of arrogance as it assumes that your perspective is the only true and right one. Spoiler Alert: It is not!

Evaluating or judging the founding fathers of the new constitutional republic of the United States by today's standards inevitably puts them in a bad light. Science^{1770s} was extremely primitive to science²⁰²¹. The average person today knows more about medicine and the human body than the most advanced doctors of that age. They had no idea about bacteria or germs; they had no concept about vitamins or minerals. They used leaches and engaged in blood-letting — which led to George Washington's death.

In addition to being *arrogant*, it is actually downright *stupid* to impose our thinking patterns, understandings, cultural background knowledge, etc. on people in the 17th or 18th centuries. At that point in history, the world (meaning most countries) was just coming to a level of conscience that made them think that slavery was wrong. They still put the mentally ill in dungeons and would go out on the weekends to make fun of them and mock them. It was sport. From our perspective today, it is cruel and inhumane.

Paradoxically, many of the founders of the country in the north actually kept their slaves and treated them with respect and human decency *because* to free them was to turn them loose in a society that was not ready to integrate them. They would be treated worse and would be more

vulnerable to mistreatment if freed. If the gears of social changes grind away slowly, often it is because there are other changes that first have to occur. So long before the proclamation of emancipation by Abraham Lincoln in 1860, there was the prohibition of slave ships in 1808. They first had to cut off the supply chain which meant the slave dealers had to change, the slave sellers in Africa had to change, and so on.

To understand the past accurately, we can never view it through the lens of today. To truly understand what was going on then and how things developed from then to now, we can not judge them by the criteria which has been developed since that time. All of the current “cancel culture” of today ignores and disrespects the advances that people were making two hundred years ago. That’s a foolish and fallacious way to try to comprehend the past.

In psychology, sound mental and emotional health also has to avoid this Hindsight Bias. If you judge your seven-year old self by your more grown up and mature understanding of today— you will always come up short. You will always be condemned and blamed. Of course, when you were 7 or 15 you had a 7-year old brain and operated by 7-year-old values. A much better idea is to judge the past with the values, criteria, and understandings of *that day and time*.

From: L. Michael Hall
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Living Wisely #1

STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE AND OTHER FOOLISH ACTS

Perhaps the most subtle way that people sneak perfectionism into their lives is by giving it different names. Because many are weary about perfectionism, they don't use that term. Instead they call it by other names. "I'm just striving to be the best that I can be." Or, "I'm just trying to meet the quota and deadlines that have been set, that's all." Or, "I'm just striving for excellence, not to be perfect." Ah, yes, sneaky indeed!

If you ask, "What's the problem with perfectionism?" there are many. Not only does it establish a nearly impossible goal, but *it sets up an expectation* that is sure to come back to bite you in the rear-end. You raise your standards or criteria and then when you get anything less—you feel disappointed! You're upset, perhaps even depressed. So you beat yourself up, and freely "should" on yourself. "I should have tried harder." "I should have started sooner." "I should have..." the expectation delivers a bite into your attitude and state of mind. You now become less and less patient, tolerant, and accepting. These are the unecological consequences of perfectionism.

Another problem. Perfectionism puts you on a treadmill so that you strive and strive. Now sometimes, through all of that striving you may actually reach your goal and if so, you will then feel great. But this also becomes a danger point—dangerous that you might take that illusion outcome and think that this is the way to do things, to get things done. "Just give 100%, burn the candle at both ends if necessary, strive until you're exhausted, run on adrenalin—that's the secret of success."

But it is not. All of that is delusional. It is not ecological and it is certainly not sustainable. That's a formula for burn-out, for stress-induced illnesses, for ruining your relationships, and for the loss of your vitality over the long-run. It is also a formula for procrastination. The reason is that if it takes all of that to succeed, then you are more likely to wait until you are fully ready to make that commitment. So today, you put things off.

Using "striving to be the best you can" or "striving to be excellent" as your approach to learning, to skill development, to actualizing your highest and best—is unrealistic for fallible humanity. It does *not* bring out our best. In the short-term, it may work and thereby deceive you, but in the long-term, it is a disastrous strategy.

What's more effective? A more effective strategy is to learn a new skill one step at a time. It is to take things slow and easy and to have fun playing with it until you get the feel for it. Instead of "striving to be the best" aim to simply learn one new distinction at a time. Then aim to

practice that new distinction until you get it—until you integrate it and make it automatic. First learn to keep the bicycle balanced so it stays upright and moves forward. Later on you can think about riding with no hands or doing flips. Don't worry about excellent, instead concern yourself with *quality*. If you need to go slower to do quality work or learning, go slower.

One way to be kind and gentle with yourself as you learn is to *count everything that moves in the right direction*. Rewarding the little pieces that are working sets in motion the learning process. It is the high standards of perfectionism that leads to *discounting* the progress you are making, and that will kill your spirit. Then, when you have a whole day of *discounted attempts*—you'll feel like quitting, you'll go home feeling frustrated and angry.

The best learning and development comes from states of openness, exploration, curiosity, fun, playfulness, etc. It does not come from stress— from being upset, frustrated, angry, etc. Those are *not* good learning states. Putting yourself under pressure *does not* bring out your best. Learning a single distinction, integrating it well, having fun is the way to go. Then you can go on to the next distinction, the next skill. Focus on one thing at a time and as you do— *be fully present to it*. Release from your mind and concern any worry about the future. Keep bringing your focus back to *today* and to the activity.

Instead of striving to be the best, or excellent, strive to enjoy learning what you are learning. If the striving is “work” if it is hard, burdensome, a chore, tedious, etc., you will burn-out. If the striving is enjoyable because it is meaningful, valuable, if it counts— then you will keep at it and if you keep at it in this way— you will get better and better and one day, you may become an expert. And that's how you'll actualize your highest and best.

From: L. Michael Hall
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How Self-Actualization
Can Save Politics #14

POVERTY CREATES CRIME

An Idea of Immense Stupidity

In an attempt to fight crime, some have taken to the mistaken idea that the cause of crime is poverty. They justify this conclusion by looking at the people who rob, steal, and kill and they conclude that it occurs more often by poor people than those who are not poor. So presto! It must be that poverty causes crime.

But wait, that's a very hasty conclusion on the scantiest of evidence. In fact, to draw that conclusion is immensely stupid. Why? Because to believe that, you have to believe that poor people have fewer and weaker moral values than people with money. So does "money increase morality?" You have to conclude that it is money that saves the wealthier person from considering doing something wrong. You have to believe that the circumstance of poverty (however that is defined) is what causes, forces, and makes a person release his moral values and put getting what he wants, when he wants it, and from whoever he can get it *over* his moral values. Not only is that a stretch, it completely under-estimates the moral drive within human beings.

Further, to draw that conclusion, you have to focus on some particular *kind of crimes* and ignore other kinds of crimes. In this, blue-collar crimes differ from white-collar crimes. People with more money, more connections, and perhaps more education often create just as much, if not more, chaos, crimes, death, and destruction as those who go to a corner grocery store and pull out a gun. How much human misery have those who run various patsy schemes created over the years? How much did the whole housing crisis of 2006-7 create that led to the world-wide economic downturn, destroying the financial security of millions, the loss of jobs, etc.?

Actually the stupidity of that conclusion can also be seen by looking at *all of the poor people who do not rob, steal, and kill*. What stops them from going on and getting what they need or want if "poverty creates crime?" Why would the great majority of people who are poor, or who have incomes below the poverty line, live upright, decent, and moral lives? Why would they work hard and work long hours when they could spend their energies plotting some scheme to get money from the wealthy?

The answer is *character*. They have developed an upright moral character. The great majority never even consider robbing, stealing, or killing because they have a religious faith that forbid the mistreatment of other human beings. They may live by the Ten Commandments. Or they may have developed a conscience that values and respects other people. They may believe in love, compassion, and kindness and so just never think about engaging in crime.

That brings us to a more accurate idea. Crime is not caused by poverty as it is by low moral values. Crime is caused by a narcissistic emphasis on self at the expense of others. It is caused by immediate gratification thinking that ignores long-term consequences and consideration for others. Like most everything else in human life, crime is an inside-out phenomenon. It comes from a mind and heart that thinks in *criminal ways*. That's what *creates* crime. If we want to stop crime, if we want to reduce the probability of crime – let there be more Churches, Synagogues, and Mosques. Let there be more ethical training in homes and schools. It is the lack of moral education that's contributing to crime, not poverty.

In 2020 in the United States, we saw a rampage of crime— looting, stealing, destroying, harming, violating, etc. On the left we saw the Black-Lives-Matter people loot and destroy, we saw Antifa engaged in violent acts. On the right, there were white racists also engaged in violent acts. All of these are crimes against humanity— against human rights. What all of them seem to forget is that you can't protest *for* human rights *while violating the human rights of others*. These crimes aren't created by poverty, but by poor ideology!

The truth is that “as a person thinks in his heart, so that person is.” Poverty is an external condition; criminal mentality is an internal state of mind. The first only offers an opportunity at best, the second is actually *the inner hidden cause of crime*. Finally, the popular notion that “poverty creates crime” completely misdirects our attention if we want to reduce crime.

L. Michael Hall
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Living Wisely #2

FORGET DEADLINES, THEY ARE DEADLY

Many people think that to get things done, to be productive, to accomplish goals, and to achieve their highest and best, they need deadlines. But this is fallacious. They say, “I work best under deadlines.” “When I have a deadline, I can always count on having lots of energy at the very end and produce my best work.” But this is more self-deception than anything.

True enough, *deadlines are dramatic and they do focus attention— at least at the 12th hour*. But actually they are very poor tools for being productive or producing high quality work. While you may think they are helpful, they ultimately are counter-productive and undermine effectiveness.

To understand a *deadline*, let’s define what we’re talking about. In this the term itself should be a warning that this is not the most positive of ideas— *deadline*. This term developed during the Civil War. In prison camps, the guards would draw a line for the boundary beyond which if any prisoner walked across, he would be shot. This is still the first definition given by Webster, “a line drawn within or around a prison that a prisoner passes at the risk of being shot.” So given this attractive picture, and you still desire deadlines!?

By way of transfer, deadline came to mean “a date or time before which something must be done.” Ah, *something must be done*. And why *must* it be done on that date? Who says and for what reason? These questions are important. That’s because most deadlines are far too arbitrary and therefore unrealistic. The date given may be an aspiration as a goal. It may be a dream. But how is that date established? Who set it up? What factors were considered? What variables? Was there any consideration for delays, unexpected events, sickness, the discovery of unexpected elements? Ask these kinds of questions when you set a deadline or when someone sets one for you.

How are most deadlines set? Many are set as a way to hurry workers. The assumption is “people will work harder, put in more effort if there’s a deadline.” Some are set as a way to beat out a competitor. When it’s discovered that a competitor is planning a new product, then the pressure is to put employees to beat them to the punch. Some deadlines are completely arbitrary— it is set so that the boss can go on his vacation at a certain time.

A deadline implies and produces a *product mentality* over a *process mentality*. It focuses you on a product at a certain date and essentially ignores the process for achieving it and the quality of that process. All that matters is meeting the deadline. If instead, you start by thinking about the process— then you think about the steps, coordinating them, and the many dynamic interactions.

Now it is true that some deadlines are inevitable and we just have to live with them. If a paper has to be turned in on a certain date because that's when the professor grades them and concludes the term, then the thing to do is to create a well-formed plan for achieving your goal. Then it is not about a deadline as much as effectively achieving your goal. How?

- Identify the beginning and ending states. Where are you now. Where do you need to be?
- Identify all of the intervening steps to get you to your goal. What are the steps? How many are there?
- Resource each step. What resources do you need, internal and external?
- Specify the strategy to achieve each step? A learning strategy, research, memory, writing, etc.?
- Build into the strategy appropriate rewards and punishments. What will be the propulsion system you design that will set up pushes and pulls?
- Identify emergencies and contingencies do you need to anticipate?
- Create a flow chart of the entire process.

Deadlines given to you or imposed upon you can often be negotiated so that they are realistic and ecological. If someone says that they want something by a certain date, engage in an exploration conversation to discover the details, the thinking behind the date, etc.

- What leads you to set the date at X?
- What are the factors that convince you this is realistic and doable?
- Where in this have you scheduled time and space for emergencies that might arise?
- How much leeway is build into the date?
- If a delay occurs, what is Plan B and Plan C?
- How will you stay on top of things and monitor how it is going?
- What feedback will you want as information about the ongoing progress?

Managers and employers who set deadlines because they want more product, more money, to beat out the competition often do so at the expense of their people. Somehow in the corporate world, the culture of "more and more" infects them so that they don't think about their employees. They get caught up on the never-ending treadmill of going faster and faster. And worse yet, if they are stress-junkies themselves, and get off on it, they may be completely blind to the devastating effect deadlines, pressures, burning the candle at both ends, etc. has on the health, the well-being, the family life, etc. of their people. They need to know that *your success depends on your people's success*. That is one principle that can help you live more wisely.

From: L. Michael Hall
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How Self-Actualization
Can Save Politics #15

GUNS KILL PEOPLE

Here is an idea that gets lots and lots of publicity every time there is a shooting and yet it is an idea that is based on *a fundamental confusion between agent and instrument*. Here the instrument that a person uses is confused with the person who *uses* the instrument. What makes the idea fallacious, and even stupid, is that if we applied the same logic to other instruments, we would have to ban just about everything.

“Cars kill people.” Yes, that’s true *from one perspective*. There are thousands of car accidents every year killing thousands of people— thousands! Yet we also know that the car is not the problem, the problem is almost always the driver of the car. If the driver is intoxicated, texting, sleep deprived, not paying attention, etc. then the driver *mis-uses* the car or *mis-handles* his use of the car with the result that someone gets killed.

“Knives kill people.” Here’s another one and one that is dominant in countries where guns are limited. So without easy access to guns, people turn to knives. In some countries it is the primary way that violence against another person is expressed. But again, the problem is not the knife or the machete, it is the person wielding the instrument.

If an *instrument* is just that— an *instrument*, then it cannot be the problem. That’s why nearly all of the gun laws are powerless to reduce the amount of violence perpetuated by guns. The guns do not have a mind of their own and do not go out on a rampage firing at people! It is the humans who are *mis-using* the guns that’s causing the problems. And who is doing that? Mostly criminals.

Ah, now we’re getting closer to the real problem. Certain people who should not have guns in the first place, persons who “solve” problems by banishing a gun, threatening to shoot, or seeking revenge by planning to shoot— they are the ones with the problem. They create the problem *by the way they think, make decisions, and act*. In Chicago where there are dozens upon dozens of shootings every single week, and death by guns every single week— it’s primarily the gangs of young men who are engaged in this criminal activity. And they obtained their guns, not legally, but illegally. So even though Chicago has some of the strictest guns laws in the nation, such laws are totally inadequate to stop the criminal gang members from getting them and using them.

The real problem? The low moral thinking and deciding of those who are mis-using the guns. If they didn’t do it with guns, they’d use some other instrument— cars, bombs, knives, and so on.

“Swimming kills people.” Yes, hundreds of people die every single year by going into a swimming pool or into the ocean. People also die every year from many other things—

sometimes from what they are doing and sometimes from what they are *not* doing. People die of obesity because they eat too much. People die of heart attacks and strokes from eating too much fast food, red meat, and things deep fried. People die from the lack of exercise, from not taking care of themselves. In a hundred ways, people die from all sorts of things and yet we do not pass laws against swimming, fast food, KFC, etc.

Should we have gun laws that govern their use? Yes, of course. Should there be background checks on who is licensed to have and use a gun? Sure! Just as we have a licensed procedure for driving a car, it makes sense that anything that can be easily *mis-used* ought to have certain constraints. But taking guns away from responsible people only means that the only persons with guns will be the criminals— an exceedingly bad idea.

Certainly while we can tighten up the laws about gun use, that will never address *the real problem*. At best, the gun laws will help to keep guns out of the hands of those who are mentally incompetent to handle them. But that will not address the gun violence in Chicago or Wash. D.C. and other urban cities.

The problem lies in the way some people *think, feel, and decide*. We have to influence their thinking, values (and valuing), respect for human life, consideration of consequences, etc. That's an education solution, not one of passing more laws.

Footnote:

Houston and Chicago are comparable as large cities.

In Jan 2020 Chicago's unemployment rate was 3.8% and there were 13,000 police. There are no gun stores and the murder rate there is: 24.1% per 100,000.

At the same time, Houston's unemployment rate was higher, at 4.1% with nearly 1/3 the number of police were 5,000. By contrast there were to no gun stores, Houston had hundreds of gun stores. And the murder rate? Less than half of Chicago's at 11.5%.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #66
October 4, 2021

MEDIA MANIPULATION

The book that took the longest to write was *Inside-Out Persuasion*. Originally I planned it to be the second book in the Meta-Coaching series. I planned that because, if a coach is effective at anything, it has to be in influencing in setting goals and establishing an inspiration purpose and then persuading the client to persist in the activities that are required to succeed. I researched the field of persuasion, I even wrote more than a dozen chapters, then I got stuck.

I got stuck at a barrier—a barrier which to this day still exists in 99% of the works on persuasion. The name of that barrier is *manipulation*. Back in 2003-4, I had the heuristic and techniques that would enable one person to influence another, but I did not have a robust human ethical framework to put it in—a framework that would eliminate manipulation. So I waited. I waited nearly 15 years until I eventually found a framework— suggested by the title of the book, *Inside-Out Persuasion* (2017).

Now in terms of *an anti-manipulation set of tools*, there's no better place to start than the NLP Meta-Model. Built originally from therapists helping clients get their heads on straight about the internal mental maps they had built about the world, themselves, others, work, life, etc., the Meta-Model distinctions point out *problems in the mapping* and *questions* to ask to straighten the problems out. Using the Meta-Model, manipulation inevitably occurs 1) when someone *deletes key information* and doesn't provide a fully picture for "the whole truth. 2) When someone *over-generalizes information* so that it is too broad, too general, and one-sided. 3) When someone *distorts the information*, twisting it round, taking it out of context, changing words, etc.

This is also what the media does. Now that the media manipulates is not news. What is news is the extent of that manipulation and the many different forms that the manipulation takes. It's not a matter of *if* the media manipulates, or *when*, but *how*. How does the media manipulate us and what can we do about it? Let's use the three aspects of the Meta-Model to examine how the media does it's thing.

A good example of *over-generalization* occurred last week. Just when 15,000 people had crossed the southern border and were camping under a bridge, some of the border patrol agents on horseback were video-taped trying to stop a horde of people from entering the US illegally. As they steered their horses back and forth, several used the reins to direct the horse to go this way and then that way. Nothing abnormal about any of that. But the way the news media picked it up, they changed "reins" to "whips" (!) and then evoked references to 50 years ago to instances where minorities were indeed whipped by police. That gave a completely false impression about what was occurring and sought to create an automatic emotional response of "How terrible!"

Of course, anyone who knows anything about horses and how you control a horse so it goes where you want it to, knows about reins and how to use them. They are not whips! You use the

reins of a horse like you use the steering wheel in a car to drive it. It's completely manipulative to over-generalize in this way, distorting the word "reins" and not on the illegality of the people but on the cruelty of the border patrol agents. On that day, no one was hit, no one hurt, no one whipped. But you would not know that from how the media presented it.

An example of *deleting and simply not making critical information available* occurred the weeks before the election in 2020. Hunter Biden's laptop had just been found and lots of damning evidence was being reported from it. But the mainline media never said a word. They went on with other news and never even mentioned it. Three months later, polling indicated that 13% of those who voted for Biden, and who had read or seen the information about Hunter, said that they would not have voted as they did if they had known that information. The media manipulated by deleting critical information.

An example of *distorting information* has occurred this week in Durham's investigations into the Russian collusion. The story that the media reported on for years has turned out to be a non-story about Trump and a disturbing story about the Clinton campaign. The only collusion occurred by the Clinton camp in what they were doing. Indictments are now being handed down about that and probably, more will be coming. But, of course, it is some four years late.

How can you and I handle all of the manipulations by the media?

- 1) Expect it.
- 2) Sceptically look for it. Don't react to the first report. Because a great many news stories are eventually retracted, hold off on coming to a definite conclusion too soon. And even when you do, be ready to change your mind. A good bit of it may eventually prove to be media generated to sell papers and increase viewers.
- 3) Challenge stories using the Meta-Model questions. That will help to flush out the real facts.
- 4) Use the lists of cognitive distortions, fallacies, and biases to check out information.

Resources for understanding and dealing with media manipulation

Communication Magic (2001) for the extended Meta-Model.

Inside-Out Persuasion (2017) for persuading without manipulating.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #67
October 11, 2021

WHY SELF-HELP BOOKS DON'T HELP

That was the question Geraldine asked. “Why is it that self-help books don’t help?” “You mean ‘a lot of people’” I added to clarify the question. “Yes, for a lot of people it doesn’t seem to help very much or at all. Why is that?” I was busy reading at our favor coffee shop and so I answered her briefly, “They don’t know *how* to read and they read *too fast*.” But, as usual, my brief answer did not satisfy her so she re-engaged me and we continued the conversation. At the end, she said, “You ought to write an article about this!” And I knew what that meant!

Here’s the thing. The process of actually reading any book and using it for significant and effective *learning* and development involves a set of skills that the majority of people have simply not learned. That means that they actually *do not know how* to read a non-fiction book to mine it for its riches and transfer that wealth into themselves.

For the first thing, most people read too fast, too passively, and too shallowly. The shallow part goes to a person’s intention. Most people read in order to get a general idea about something. Many are looking for something specific and so as they read, they filter out anything and everything that doesn’t fit. Many read a non-fiction book the same way they read fiction. They skim through the paragraphs. They’re looking for the story.

Non-fiction books are, for the most part, not written to convey a story. They are written to present an understanding, a concept, and a procedure. In *Executive Learning* I recommended *applying* the seven dimensions to your learning in order that your learning be active and dynamic.

Get in the right state, establish how to record (represent) the information you gather in your mind, sort out the background information you already have about the material that helps and that may hinder, encode the higher level concepts as the knowledge to be constructed, identify the meta-level principles of learning the specific subject, make the information experiential, and then identify pragmatic steps for incorporating it.

The problem for most people is that their learning is *passive*. They “cover the material.” They “finish the chapter.” They follow the line of thinking or reasoning and they then conclude that they “know” the material. In all likelihood, they do not. This is one of the great illusions about learning. By following what someone is saying or writing, you assume that you thereby *know it*. If so, then let’s test it. A good way to test it is to *explain* what you read, or heard, to someone who doesn’t know it. That will test to see if you actually know it. The bottom line: *If you can’t explain it to another, you don’t really know it.*

This is also why most people *read too fast*. They try to read a book in the same manner that they read a newspaper or magazine. They need to slow down and see if they can summarize a paragraph or a page *in their own words*. For years, my habit of reading is that at the end of each page, I stop and write one to four words at the top of the page that identifies the subject of that

page. Even better, write a summary of one sentence on a blank sheet of paper that succinctly sums up that page. That will make you *think!* Which is what most people are actually *not* doing when they're reading. They are not thinking. They are just mentally following along. There's no real mental work, just a passive following. But to truly think is to consider, to question, to explore, to doubt (see *Executive Thinking*, 2018).

It is in getting yourself to actually *digest the ideas* in the text that begins the process of actually beginning to learn it. Next comes the process of integration wherein you make it yours. This means making the material, the ideas, *experiential*. Plant this question in your mind as you read: "Given that I am reading, or listening to this, *how specifically* will I make it part of my inner and outer experience?" If you think that reading or listening is just a mental activity, you have cut off half of the learning process. Learning is inevitably experiential.

- So, what are you experiencing? What actions will occur?
- After all, you are reading for a purpose, are you not? What is that purpose?
- What difference will reading X make in your life?
- How will it change you— your person, your skills, your relationships, etc.?

If you don't know, stop and establish a learning intention. Self-help books could help, but to help you have to take an active stance. You can't read for entertainment. Instead, read for transformation. Identify the change that you want. Then, using the seven dimensions of learning, use that structure to organize your learning experience.

For more, check out: *Executive Learning* (2021) on www.neurosemantics.com

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #68
October 15, 2021

WHAT'S UP WITH PROTESTING MANDATES?

Over the past weekend (Oct. 9-10), over 2,000 flights were cancelled on Southwest Airlines. It was not a problem of weather. It was not a problem of mechanics. There was no computer hacking involved. Instead it was a case of pilots who simply did not show up. Why? Nor were they the only ones, lots of traffic controllers also did not show up. Why? They were protesting the mandates for covid vaccinations.

Now why would anyone object to the vaccinations? There are several reasons. 1) Some have medical conditions which prevent them from receiving the vaccine. 2) Some have religious views against it, 3) some are fearful of possible side-effects, 4) some (millions of people) are already immune to covid having had covid, 5) as a matter of principle about government mandating medical procedures. [As a disclosure, I'm certainly not against the vaccination shot, as soon as the vaccine was made available, I got mine.]

The problem is *mandating* it. That's because a *mandate*, as a command or order, is an authoritarian approach to managing behavior. In organizations it shows up as the old fashion and ineffective Command-and-Control approach. In government, mandates are usually injunctions *against* things. Most mandates are about *what not to do*. Do not steal, kill, defame, destroy, set fire, rape, rob, etc. The 10 Commandments is an example of moral mandates. Mandates occur also in every domain, for example, there are mandates about driving on streets and highways: do not speed, do not go through a red light, do not block emergency vehicles, etc.

In all of these mandates— there is a danger. What danger? *The loss of freedom*. When a mandate is issued, a person does *not* have the freedom or the option to do otherwise. Now in a represented government, as we elect people to represent us, we grant them the right to create laws (mandates). Yet there are many kinds of limitations to what can be mandated. For example, government cannot mandate what we are to think or believe. We are completely free to think and believe as we wish.

Generally, government also cannot mandate what we are to speak. While there are some exceptions, like shouting fire in a crowded gathering, the exceptions are few and refer to very restricted situations. In the recent exception in Canada where they prescribed gender language, Dr. Jordan Peterson arose as a defender of freedom against that mandate. He argued that in English law, no government had ever before *prescribed language*.

Given that mandates take away freedom, mandates should be made very carefully and infrequently. In part that's because with mandates, government uses force, threats, and punishments to enforce the mandate. This goes against the basic approach of democracy. In a democracy rather than using force, we generally use persuasion to influence the minds and hearts

of people. In a democracy, we rely on education, information, healthy debate, respectful disagreements, science, and we appeal to moral consciousness.

When government relies on mandates instead of information to govern, it indicates that the government itself has become ineffective. “If I can’t convince you, I will force you.” In doing this, using mandates rather than persuasion also reveals a basic disrespect for the intelligence and understanding of people.

It is especially questionable to mandate a medical procedure. What we’re talking about here is the government forcing conformity to a medical procedure upon people— a highly questionable power, even for government. What other medical procedures is government allowed to impose on people?

It is even more questionable to threaten a person’s employment by those who refuse the mandate. That’s what’s happening today. Thousands of good people, healthy people, and skilled people are being tossed out of their jobs because they are exercising their freedom of choice. The science tells us that people under 60 who are healthy have a 99.2 percent chance of *not being hospitalized or dying*. Forcing them to get vaccinated not only is bad government, it not only goes against science, it goes against human psychology. Start ordering people around, and they will resist — on the principle of it.

While 67 million have not been vaccinated, millions of them are already immuned having gotten covid and recovered. Their immunity is said to be 11 times better than the vaccination shot. Mandating them is the epitome of stupidity as it the failure to count them as part of the immuned.

Here in “the land of the free and home of the brave” there is no freedom without bravery. It is the courage of the brave that makes freedom possible. And that’s what I see the pilots and traffic controllers doing— bravely standing up for their right to choose.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #69
October 18, 2021

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MEDIA'S ETHICS

More than 25 years ago, Erich Fromm, a psychoanalyst and philosopher of Humanistic Psychology wrote several books about social problems. He wrote ruthless critiques about the danger and damage of the media. This is what he wrote in 1974 in the book *The Art of Being*:

“Another helpful attitude is one of one of deep distrust. Since most of what we hear is either plainly untrue, or half true, and half distorted, and since most of what we read in the newspapers is distorted interpretations served as facts, it is by far the best plan to start out with radical skepticism and the assumption that most of what one hears is likely to be a lie or a distortion. If this sound too grim and cynical, I might add that I do not mean this quite literally but that I want to emphasize that it is much more healthful than the opposite premise, namely, to believe that people say the truth until the opposite is proven. (44)

How about that! And if that was the case in 1974 when we still had true journalists, I wonder what Fromm would think today when most so-called journalists have become social activists and political commentators?

Most of what we hear is either plainly untrue, or half true, and half distorted.

Most of what we read in the newspapers is distorted interpretations served as facts.

This is definitely *not* the way to get to the facts of a case or the truth of a story. Now in court, a witness is asked to swear that he will tell “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” Over the centuries, it became clear that if we want to get *good evidence* upon which to build our understandings and make legitimate evaluations, we need truth in these three dimensions so we can to determine the facts of a case.

For a judge or a jury to adequately, appropriately, and rightly think through the facts as known in a context and to make an intelligent decision, we need the evidence of facts. Only in that way can we draw conclusions that will be as just as possible. Such facts, which will always be fallible, and therefore will inadequate to varying degrees, that will still be is the best chance we have.

In court, when jurists are chosen, they are questioned pretty thoroughly by lawyers on both sides to determine if they are capable of making unbiased decisions. We ask if they have any vested interests in the case? Do they have any allegiances that might be compromising to the case? We ask them if they know the defendant or the claimant or members of the state who brought the case to the court? We ask if they are related to anyone? We ask if they have any biases against the police, the company, and so on. Are you willing to make an evaluation based on the facts?

If all of these things are important for determining the truth, as best as possible, in a court of law— it seems even more so in *the court of public opinion*. That is, media ought also to be held to the standard of telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?”

- Will you present the facts even if they do not fit the editorial policy of your newspaper, television station, or the ownership of the cable network?
- Will you present facts on both sides of an issue so the listeners can then make up their mind and decide?
- Will you eliminate as best you can all of the cognitive biases and fallacies?
- Will you make retractions and connections on the front page or in the beginning of a broadcast?

Today perhaps our biggest problem in getting “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” So much of what is presented is only partially true; some of it is completely untrue. Trump called it out when he called it “fake news.” But he’s not the only one. Just this past week, I heard Biden pounce on CNN for “fake news.” Whenever the facts presented are not true, but are partial, the media’s ethics are in question.

So what is a person to do? One thing I do is that I switch channels constantly as I watch the news. I also compare what and how the various broadcasts present the same story in different ways. I also keep note of what is *not* presented. What mostly strikes me is what the mainstream media does *not* present—what they simply leave out. They just ignore so many of the stories. Right now, the biggest story missing is the open borders and the influx of tens-of-thousands of people entering illegally.

Given how polarized the media has become, how biased, how agenda-driven, how the media spins the news to fit their ideology— we have to become more skilled in critical thinking.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #70
October 25, 2021
Facts #1

CRITICAL THINKING ABOUT FACTS

After writing about Media Ethics (#69) last week and writing about “facts,” I decided that I would do some critical thinking about facts. As I got into the process, I discovered that it is a lot harder than I suspected. Like most people, I start from the false premise that a fact is empirical data. Even the dictionary makes this confusion: “Fact: Information presented as objectively real; something having real, demonstratable existence; a thing that has been done.” From Latin *facere* “to do.”

Now facts are funny things. Not funny as in “ha ha” or in laughing out-loud, but funny in a strange, weird, and amazing way. They are funny in that we think of them as so real and solid, yet that is just not the case. Thinking critically about facts, in fact, takes us into a realm where there is a lot of room for wonderment and curiosity.

Facts are funny in that we think of them as so solid, staid, and real but when it comes to a fact—you cannot see, hear, feel, smell, or taste a fact. Try it if you like. What does a *fact* look like, sound like, smell like? Strange enough, the word *fact* does not refer to anything empirical even though that’s precisely how we think we are using the word! Here’s the first funny fact about a fact, *a fact is a category or classification*. It is into that category that we put certain statements that we consider facts. This means *a fact is a statement that makes some assertion*.

It is a fact that there are three birds in the yard.	Observational fact, sensory-based
It is a fact that there are 24 hours in a day.	Definition fact, fact by social agreement
It is a fact that there are 12 inches in a foot.	Definition fact
It is a fact that my name is Michael.	Personal and social fact.

Now because facts are products of our semantic constructions (the categories that we invent), they are fallible human products and they can suffer from every sort of illusion (visual, auditory, etc.). The next funny thing about facts is that they are dependent on context.

It’s a fact that roses are red.	This fact is dependent on light, eyes, and language.
That chair is made of wood.	Depends on what person means by wood.
That car is going too fast.	Depends on speed limit, conditions, etc.

Facts that occur in a first level category about empirical, public, and testable. “Red” as a socially shared concept can be tested by looking and seeing if the color matches what is generally considered red. The statement, “I worked out for one hour at the gym” can be tested by checking with the gym or workout partners. There are facts that are *inherent in the definition of the concept*. “There are 60 minutes in an hour.” Mathematical facts are inherent to the definition. So also, “A circle is round.”

Facts as statements assert things. Some facts assert that something exists, “There is a dog.” Some facts assert that there is a process, “They are running a race.” Some assert causation, “His

angry thoughts is making his face red.” Some causation ‘facts’ are *false facts*, “She makes me angry.” [That’s mind-reading, a Meta-Model violation and cognitive distortion.]

Some facts assert a conclusion from a field of study. “The experience of phobia involves imagining being inside a fearful experience.” That *psychological fact* is not empirical or public and it cannot be directly tested. It is a fact that someone *concluded* from a lot of other facts, “each person who demonstrated a phobia reported thinking about the frightful experience *as if* being inside it and not outside observing.” Secondary ‘facts’ are *conclusions* drawn from first level ‘facts.’

When we generate *conclusion facts*, we are dealing with second level constructs (or third, fourth, etc.). This is the case with *all facts* in every field (psychology, economics, sociology, etc.). These constructed statements as conclusions from facts are the next level of facts, meta-facts and further removed from reality. Freud started with id, ego, and superego as facts about the person. Adler invented other facts— the individualist drive, the social drive, importance of first memories, Maslow started with the fact of deficiency needs and abundance needs. And so it goes.

This past week President Biden at a townhall meeting made some statements *as if* they were facts. 1) “I’ve been to the border; 2) I know all about it.” 3) “I haven’t had a hell of a lot of time to go there.” Doing some fact checking, it turns out that he has *never been to the border*, not as President, not as Vice-President, not as Senator. So that is factually incorrect. The second statement is an over-generalization (“I know all about it”) — that is a belief, not a fact. And the third one is an excuse, he left the townhall and went to Delaware for another holiday! He has the time, he just does not want to go there.

Ah, facts! Because they are not as simple as we assume, they require critical thinking to handle them properly. In past weeks Biden has claimed that the new 3.5 *trillion dollar* bill in congress will cost nothing, “zero.” Strange. Then why are the democrats of his own party fighting and negotiating about the cost? Ah yes, it’s probably not a fact at all, just a manipulative selling point.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #71
November 1, 2021
Facts #2

DEEPER CRITICAL THINKING

ABOUT FACTS

“Just the facts, ma’am, just the facts.”
Jack Webb’s Joe Friday of *Dragnet*

I noted in the last Neurons (#70) that we talk about facts as if they were things and objects, as if they were empirical and sensory-based. We talk about facts as if a fact will bring a controversy to an end.. “Now here are the facts; case closed.” But unfortunately, things are just not that simple or cut-and-dried.

On first glance, it seems that facts are ... well, factual— real, sensory-based and therefore uncontroversible. While facts seem like a solid things, *they are not*. Can you see a fact? What does a fact look like? *Things are just not that simple*. What we call “facts” are our *concepts* about things and not the things themselves. The word “fact” itself is not empirical. The word *fact* is a nominalization and a category. It refers to a category of things that normally we would consider sensory-based of something actually done. Yet sensory-based facts are, at best, *facts at a macro-level*. At worse, sensory-based facts may be illusions altogether. When you put a stick in water, you will see it *as if it were bent* and not straight. But it is not bent. It only appears that way to your eyes.

Kinds of facts: One fact about a fact (a meta-fact) is that there are many kinds of facts.

- 1) *Empirical facts:* A statement that refers to see, hear, feel, referents. It can refer to macro-level referents, micro-level, or even sub-atomic level referents.
- 2) *Phenomenological / Psychological facts:* Statements about an internal experience that you have, your state— joy or depression, calmness or anxiety, resilience or failure, etc.
- 3) *Definition facts:* Statements that are facts by definition.
- 4) *Cultural facts:* Statements about how a group of people have given meaning or value to something which is now a ‘fact’ in their social life.
- 5) *Conclusion facts:* Statements that we make as conclusions from other facts.
- 6) *Interpersonal facts:* Statements about relationships, what characterizes them, how people are interacting.
- 7) *Statistical facts:* Statements concluded from analysis of data and formulated into statistical percentages.

When it comes to a fact, the data upon which we construct a fact does not speak for itself. The data, and then the fact, become meaningful via interpretation and we create interpretations based on a number of things— context, criteria, theory, level, and kind. Facts, are statements that assert something.

Levels of facts: As we use the same word “fact,” we can use the word, reflexively, on itself. We can have facts about facts. At each level, the word refers to and means something different. Ah yes, it is a multi-ordinal term. That means the same term refers to different things at different levels. So we have to ask, “at what level are you using the term?” Consequently, we now have meta-facts.

Meta-level facts are facts that arise from particular kinds of information processing. Under this category we have mathematical facts, statistical facts, heuristic facts, inferential facts, etc. None of these facts occur at the primary level. To reach these facts, you have to “go meta” and access a higher level meta-state. In fact, within each and every field of study we have different kinds of facts— psychological facts, sociological facts, economic facts, etc. We can even have pseudo-facts— a fact that is a false fact.

Finally, when we have a so-called “fact” as a statement that asserts something about reality, we can then distinguish it as — true or false; valid or invalid; confirmed, disconfirmed, or unconfirmable; real or pseudo; congruent or incongruent; conditional or unconditional; perceived or reasoned; limited or comprehensive, objective or subjective, etc.

“Facts” in the Media

We naturally look to the media (newspapers, magazines, TV, cable, social media) for data— information about what’s happening, who did what, who said what, etc. Yet in searching out data and presenting it to us, the media has its own interests and agendas. The media inevitably *spins* and *frames* the data, serving it up as facts, when that is seldom the case.

It is only weeks or months later that we read about corrections and retractions— usually in the back pages of the newspaper. An *appearance* of a fact was taken, a conclusion was jumped to, a bias was exploited, and then an agenda was manipulated for the reading or viewing public. It happens every single day.

And our only defense against it is an understanding of *how to think and listen and reason* when people purport to offer us facts. So when someone offers you a so-called “fact,” that is time to be suspicious, to use the power of skepticism and to do some healthy critical thinking. It’s time to get out the Meta-Model and challenge the so-called facts.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #72
November 8, 2021
Facts #3

EVEN FACTS NEED EXPLAINING

Once you have a healthy skepticism about “the facts” that you are regularly fed by the media, you can prepare yourself to *think through* those facts to determine their validity, truthfulness, and usefulness. That facts are critically important, no one will deny. To think clearly we need facts. And we need them for many reasons.

For one thing, we need facts in order *to be sane*. As facts ground us to what is real and actual, they save us from living in an imaginary, pretend world. That’s why we scour for facts. We collect them, analyze them, interpret them, and then use them to build knowledge. Learning works best when it is connected to reality. Alfred Korzybski noted this in his classic, *Science and Sanity*:

“Men do not ‘go crazy’ *in response to facts* as such. They tend to ‘go crazy’ as *they get away from facts*, out of touch with reality—when what they say and think no longer stand in an adequate relationship to their world of not-words.” (1933/1994, p. 175).

When a statement is “true-to-fact,” rather than “false-to-fact,” you can build up good useful mental maps and take actions that will lead to being effective and productive. That’s why it is so important to be able to determine what is and is not a true factual statement. Our lives depend on it. When you take any statement, ask, “Is it a fact or not?” The answer will always be, “It depends.” As noted in Neurons #71, it depends on context, criteria, theory, level, and kind.

- “*That’s a rubber mat.*” Visually it may look like it is made of rubber, but is it? How will you test it? When a manufacture calls something ‘a rubber mat,’ that labeling does not make it so.
- “*She is our third child.*” That fact is dependent on not counting a child that die at birth. In some cultures, they would count the child that died as number three, so now there are four. Here, facts are influenced by the culture in which they arise. A fact in one culture may not be a cultural fact in another.
- “*That is a big truck*” “*That is really loud music.*” These are relative facts because these “facts” depend on who is making the statement and what criteria the person is using. “Big” and “loud” in comparison to what? Here we actually have comparative deletions.

To be a clear, creative, and critical thinker, you have to be able to *test language to determine if something is factual or not*. So while we normally think of facts as items that we trust and automatically treat as valid and true, it is not wise to do that. While advertisers present facts as unquestionable and absolute, always keep in mind that it may not be so. It is not irrefutably true. Check it out. What kind of “facts” is being presented? At what level is it being offered? In what context and what is being left out? According to what theory or assumption?

Yet things are not that simple. Facts, as statements that assert things, are based on data — which keeps changing. Korzybski explained in this way:

“Since no two things are the same and no one thing stays the same, your inability to adjust to reality will be in proportion to the degree to which you insist on certainty as to facts—and believe that you have achieved it.” (Korzybski, *Science and Sanity*, p. 187).

We often attempt to *sneak* a map-territory *confusion* into our conversations and reason by talking, thinking, and feeling that some things are “facts” —meaning, real, actual, “a real happening,” etc. Yet the term that we are using is not so one-dimensional as it seems.

So, facts are not the last word about an issue! That why, more typical than not, facts do not bring an end to an inquiry. They are essential to every inquiry if we are to build up robust *knowledge* about things. We need facts and so that’s where we start, “What are the facts of a case?” Then we have to consider context, background, hidden premises, etc.

Post Script

After five years of false information used to keep a conspiracy theory alive, John Durham’s investigation has now led to indictment against Igor Danchenko, for his work providing information to former British spy Christopher Steele for the dossier. He was the Russia analyst who contributed key research to the so-called Steele dossier that detailed alleged ties between ex-President Donald Trump and Russia during the 2016 election was arrested Thursday as part of a probe by special counsel John Durham. Finally, the *facts* of the case come out, although it is certainly five years late. As it turns out, the Russian hoax had nothing to do with Trump and everything to do with the Clinton campaign.

www.cnn.com/2021/11/04/durham-probe-analyst-tied-to-christopher-steele-trump-russia-dossier-arrested.html

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #73
November 15, 2021
Facts #4

THERE ARE FACTS AND THERE ARE META-FACTS

If you have been following these articles on *facts* you know that *not all facts are the same*. There are facts at different levels of abstraction and there are meta-facts—facts about facts. While I have mentioned them in passing, let's now identify and describe this phenomenon of *meta-facts*. For example, we have already noted these things about facts:

- Facts are statements that assert something about reality.
- Facts are dependent and fallible in sensing and in thinking (reasoning).
- Facts are dependent on context.
- Primary facts are empirical and public and can be tested.
- Secondary facts are conclusions drawn from first level facts.

As we now step back and think about facts, here are some meta-facts:

- 1) *Category/ Classification*: The term “fact” itself refers to a mental/verbal *concept* or *map* about something at some level— a conceptual statement that asserts something. It is not just data.
- 2) *Incomplete*: As an abstract term, “facts” are always incomplete and limited because they inevitably leave distinctions out. So we have to ask, “What else? What other facts are there about this?”
- 3) *Tentative*: Given that facts are announced by individuals, they reflect that person's perceiving in an ever-changing reality. We therefore have to embrace facts tentatively, look for additional facts, and not treat them as absolute.
- 4) *Personal*: “Facts” inevitably arise from a personal observation and so co-created between observer and observed at a particular time and place. That's why we have to index facts to person, place, and time.
- 5) *Contextual*: The use of “facts” depend on the context to which we refer: in what context, where, when? In what environment, field, culture, etc.? Facts are always in a context— a context that needs to be made explicit.
- 6) *Multi-ordinal*: The term “fact” can refer to itself, and so is a multi-ordinal term. Because we can have facts about facts, hence, meta-level of facts, we have to ask, “At what level are you using this term?” “Is this a first level fact or a conclusion from other facts?”
- 7) *Theory driven and dependent*: Every “fact” depends upon a governing theory or understanding about the subject. What are the premises or assumptions?

All of that is a lot! It explains why *getting to the facts* is not always an easy task. Given that

facts come in levels, what most people consider a “fact” is actually a macro-level datum as an event or thing. You can see, hear, feel, smell, and/or maybe taste it. From that data you can then state something as a fact.

“There are three cows in the field.” “The red bicycle is turned upside-down.” “I paid a thousand dollars for that picture.”

Below the macro-level is the *micro-level*. What seems solid and real at the macro-level of our eyes and ears, at the microscopic level is typically anything but solid. Cut your skin and when you look at a drop of blood, it looks red and thick. Yet at the microscopic level, a dot of blood looks like a world of many smaller parts. Below that level we have yet more levels. If we went to the sub-atomic level, one fact at that level would be that what exists is mostly empty space!

Above the macro-level are the *inferred* facts that we derive from the first level of facts. Here we use reasoning to infer what we think is implied in the nature of things. The field of statistics and therefore “statistical facts” are an obvious example of this. So also are the ideas and conclusions that are drawn in every field that are considered “the laws” of that field, so “the law of physics.” When a field has over decades or even centuries repeatedly come to the same conclusion, those understandings take on the standing of a “fact.”

Now for a surprise—facts can be false. While we often use the word “facts” for data, it is more appropriate to say that data exist and *statements* about them can be true or false. So a false fact is an unsubstantiated opinion, evaluation, or conclusion. Now, of course, we seek facts in order to determine what is real and what is not, what to map as “the territory” we are seeking to navigate, and how to navigate it well. Sometimes it takes a lot of fierce searching to determine the facts.

The Facts of the Case

What any and every court trial attempts to do is to determine *the facts of the case*. That is, *what happened? Who did what? What are the factors involved? Etc.* We have seen this play out of television this past week as the Rittenhouse Trail has been constantly in the news. In a riot situation on August 25, 2020, a 17-year old boy, Kyle Rittenhouse went with his father to protect some people and a business. The media did not believe him and members of the media “jump to the conclusion” and accused him of being a white racist and vigilante. Against all of that there was no *fact checking* among the media.

But now *the facts of the case* have been coming out which is what a trial and the due process of the law is designed to do. With the video we have a macro-level record of events. We can now see that Rittenhouse did not shot *until after* a gun was pointed at his head as he was running away and rioters were chasing him. Even the man who pointed the gun and who got shot, who was brought in as a “key witness” for the prosecution admitted that he was shot *after* he pointed a gun at the boy’s head. Watching the video and hearing these facts, it certainly indicates a meta-level fact, “a case of self-defense.” But the closing arguments are today, Nov. 15 and then the jury will decide.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #74
November 21, 2021

COURAGEOUS ON THE BATTLEFIELD AND FEARFUL OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

After General Ulysses S. Grant defeated General Robert E. Lee in the Civil War in 1865 and returned to Washington D.C., the crowds were ecstatic to see and hear him. Here was a man who had distinguished himself as a soldier, having fought in several wars, and who had just brought an end to the bloody American Civil War. Here was someone with the courageous fortitude to go against a well-armed army, to lead the charge, and to live with threats from assassins on a daily basis. But when he got to Washington and the crowds yelled “Speech! Speech!” Grant looked for every way to avoid speaking and he did. Why?

“He was deathly afraid of public speaking.”

He had *the credibility to speak* having earned it over a lifetime. He had *a great story to tell* just coming from the surrender of Lee at the Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia. He had *the opportunity to speak* as crowds urged him on. So what was wrong? What the fear? Guess he didn’t have the right state! And sadly, there was no Neuro-Semantic Presentation Skills training going on in the United States that year — or for the next Hundred and Thirty-five (!), so he missed out. **But you don’t have to!**

This coming year, in February in a beautiful resort hotel in Egypt— you can learn the art of public speaking, the structure and strategy of effective presentations, of accessing your best presentation states, how putting your thoughts together into an effective speech to inform, to inspire, to motivate, to empower, and to unleash potentials. If you want to train NLP— you can take your training and presentation skills to the next level and unleash more and more of your potentials as a Trainer. You can train and certify under the ISNS (International Society of Neuro-Semantics) and become part of a national Institute in your country.

If you want to train the short “gateway” trainings, you can do that, or the Self-Actualization Trainings, or the first two modules in the Meta-Coaching system, or you can take the things you’ve been training and turn them into Neuro-Semantic trainings, and that’s just the beginning.

Three of us on the leadership team are the lead trainers of NSTT (L. Michael Hall, David Murphy, and Mandy Chai). You will also hear presentations from five additional trainers who are in the Master Trainer Track. And so you have a community of international trainers to learn from and model. The *Master Trainer* track in Neuro-Semantics is very, very different from what’s called “Master” trainer in the rest of NLP. Everywhere else there are no benchmarks. Well, for that matter there are no benchmarks for presentation skills or training skills in the first place. In fact, those who have paid someone for the title of “master” trainer typically find that

they have to really, really work at just reaching the benchmarks for “Trainer” in Neuro-Semantics. *That’s the level of the standards we use and how rigorous we are in holding people to the standards.* There’s no need to let people off the hook— we want top-notch trainers who can deliver, who can produce, who can and do *live* the materials that they train.

Ready for the Challenge? Here are the prerequisites. They are high, and they are not for everyone.

You will need a Certification in NLP Practitioner.

A certification in NLP Master Practitioner.

Or, ACMC certification

A certification in APG (Meta-States).

And a recommendation from a licensed Neuro-Semantic Trainer.

If you are a NLP Trainer (from a legitimate organization), we have a special for you: fifty-percent of the cost. To revisit for Neuro-Semantic Trainers: twenty-five percent of the investment.

Training: **Neuro-Semantic Trainers’ Training (NSTT)**

Dates: February 12- 26, 2022

Venue: Renaissance Golden View Beach
Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt

Contact: Mohamed Tarek
mohamed@lucidtraining.net

Write for —

Application and Registration Form

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #75
November 22, 2021
Facts #5

WHEN THE MEDIA DOESN'T CHECK THE FACTS

In this deep dive into facts, what they are, how to identify a true fact from a false one, how to establish factual evidence, there has been playing out on the media in the past couple weeks a real mis-use of “facts” and generation of non-facts. Some of the media, not all of it, has played really loose and wild with facts, others have offered lies as “facts” with a straight face. In the last administration, the media “fact checked” everything President Trump said. Today they have given that up and do not even attempt to fact check President Biden.

Here’s a fact to start with. On Friday, the jury in Kenosha Wisconsin returned a “not guilty” verdict on all five counts against Kyle Rittenhouse. After 26 hours of deliberating, they decided on the basis of the facts and the evidence presented that Kyle had shot three people in self-defense. That event occurred in August of 2020 when a young teenager came to Kenosha where his dad lived the day after riots and burnings of buildings to give medical aid and to protect a friend. Once there, he was asked to help protect a friend’s car dealership from the violence and rioting.

The amazing thing about facts is that they are pretty easily established when you have a video record. And that’s what the jury had. So the case for self-defense was pretty easy given that you could see Kyle running away from the mob and being chased and then defending himself. There was also video of him falling to the ground, being beaten on the head with a skateboard.

When Gaige Grosskreutz pointed a gun at his head, Kyle shot him in his hand. This is man who also testified and said, yes, Kyle did not shoot *until* he had pointed the gun at his head. He was supposed to have been the prosecution’s star witness, but that statement certainly establishes self-defense. This was a hard fact from a participant in the riots.

Then there are the facts about who Kyle shot. When he was being chased by a mob and he turned and shot his pursuers, who exactly was chasing him? One was Joseph Rosenbaum, an ex-con who had been sentenced to prison for 10 years, a convicted child rapist. Another was Anthony Hoover, another criminal who had been convicted of domestic violence. He was the person who beat Kyle on the head with a skateboard. These facts were established in the trial. That doesn’t sound like they were innocent victims let along good people.

But against all of those facts— facts established in the courtroom is the fact that the mainstream media had been presenting lies and false propaganda from the beginning. Even in August 2020 Joe Biden jumped the gun and called him a “white supremacist.” There was no evidence of that and none surfaced in the year since that statement. But the media picked it up calling him a racist

and terrorist. But without any factual evidence, that's just name-calling. There are no facts that provide any evidence of that.

The bizarre and crazy thing is that the media called him a racist even though no black people were involved in the drama at all. It was a white teenager against three other white men. As a fact, all of the people Rittenhouse shot were white. None were black. To frame it as a racial event completely distorts the story.

Without any facts to support them, MSNBC ramped up the charges of "white supremacists" on Friday after the verdict. They thereby perpetuated the fake news and ignored the justice system. MSNBC had also been forbidden to enter the court house on the last day due to misbehavior of one of their reporters had run a red light when chasing the jury bus.

At least Biden, when asked about the trial, he had enough sense to say, "The jury system works and we will have to stand by it." Good for him.

Here's an example of the media playing really loose with facts. On Friday ABC news announced that the riots had started because the police had "killed an unarmed black man," Jacob Blake. But, of course, that denies *the actual facts of the case*. First, the police did not *kill* anyone—Jacob Blake is still alive—to this day! And he was not "unarmed," he had a knife and he admitted that he did. It seems that the media just cannot face the *facts as facts* and *let the evidence speak for itself*.

What is not factual is *name-calling*. People tend to do that when they don't have the facts on their side. Yet sticking a label on someone does not make it so. Kyle was not a white supremacist, vigilante, racist, terrorist or any of the other names that the media has tried to put on him. What's pathetic is that the media misrepresented these things for over a year which essentially had been "media brainwashing" of the public. In smearing and vilifying him, they used speech to incite anger and rage. If there ever was "fake news" this was it.

I use this example about some of the media because it is so obvious and shows the critical nature of being able to intelligently and critically deal with what we call "facts." It should be a big warning about the things that the media presents as "the facts." The time has come when all of us have to do *fact checking ourselves*.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #76
November 29, 2021
Facts #6

REASONING ABOUT FACTS

When you reason, you reason *using* facts and *about* facts. The process begins with data, the data is then turned into facts as a factual statement that assert something. The process for turning the details into facts involves reasoning—how you order your thoughts. This process is the very way that you and I *construct meaning*. We invent meaning about what exists and so in our reasoning we make factual statements, “X exists,” “There is such a thing as Y.” We invent meanings about causes, “X causes Y.” We make meanings about what’s important and significant, “X is Z (a value term).” The bottom line is that we have to structure facts, to put them together in an ordered form to construction meaning.

In this way each of us invents our sense of reality for ourselves. We express this in NLP by calling it a person’s *model of the world*. This internal representation of things that we select and present to ourselves operates like a map—we map what things are, how they work, the rules by which they work, what we can or should do, etc. To make all of this work, we first construct facts and then we work the facts into a coherent picture or a coherent narrative as the story we tell ourselves. As we do, we start to assume our facts and take them for granted. This moves the facts to a position where they are unquestioned, and even unquestionable. They become the premises upon which we build more elaborate theories and understandings.

Amazing, isn’t it? I hope this description brings into focus the critical nature of facts and the importance of *getting your facts right*. This is such an important piece for clear thinking, rational reasoning, and creation of knowledge that makes a positive difference in your life. Only in that way can your reasoning from the facts give you a map by which you then navigate your life effectively and productivity.

This description also suggests that *there are several places where things can go wrong*. In “getting the facts,” you may select the wrong facts or facts that are irrelevant. You may encode the facts in a way that is inaccurate or imprecise which gives you a weak foundation upon which to build. You could get facts sorted out in inappropriate proportions, that would distort things. And even if you get the right facts, in the right proportions, in an accurate code, from there you could misuse the modeling processes — deletions, generalizations, and distortions— to come up with false conclusions.

It’s not easy to be a human trying to get the facts and work with them adequately to create precise mapping! No wonder so many people fail at it. No wonder people get caught up in cognitive fallacies and distortions that make their lives a living hell. They have not learned how to *think and reason to both get the facts and reason from them*. Ideally, that’s what school should teach— thinking skills, critical thinking skills, creative thinking skills, accurate reasoning skills, etc.

To the extent your reasoning is contaminated by cognitive biases, fallacies, and distortions, to that extent your conclusions will be wrong, untrue, and disastrous for human life. Here is an example:

False reasoning: Fact — the percentage of black men in prison is greater than white men.

Bias reasoning: America is a fully racist country, it is everywhere. Therefore: it is because of racism.

When we think systemically, we will consider many other facts in the system. Here's a few:

Economic status of the families

Absence of a father in the family

Absence of the importance on education.

Schools that pass students on without requiring competence.

Presence of drugs in the community.

Presence of gangs and illegal guns.

Unemployment of young black men.

It is fallacious reasoning to draw a single and absolute conclusion from a single fact. If we are to answer the question about the large percentage of black men in prison, we have to gather high quality information, from many sources, and about many things. Otherwise, we will draw an over-simplistic conclusion that will fail to solve things.

Life is more complex than most people assume. So not being equipped to handle the complexity, many over-simplify. Of course, there's a problem with that, namely, the original problem does not get solved, it keeps returning so we have to keep dealing with it. Factual statements are not enough. We need good reasoning as well. We need clear thinking and openness to feedback in our search for truth. Finally, Eric Fromm speaks to this in this quotation:

“Facts’ are interpretations of events, and the interpretation presupposes certain concerns which constitute the event’s relevance. The crucial question is to be aware of what my concern is and hence of what the facts have to be in order to be relevant. Am I the man’s friend, or a detective, or simply a man who wants to see the total man in his humanity? ... What I want to show is that the one fact from which we start means nothing without the evaluation of the whole system, which means an analysis of a process in which we as observers are also included. Eventually it must be stated that the very fact of having decided to select certain events as facts has an effect on ourselves.” (Eric Fromm, *The Revolution of Hope: Toward a Humanized Technology*, 1968, pp. 55, 56)

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #77
December 1, 2021
Facts #7
A Mental Health Alert

THE FEAR PANDEMIC WORSENS

It was reported this week that there's a new variant, the omicron. When it was reported by a doctor in South Africa, the doctor said that those who had catch it had "very mild symptoms" and they were all treated at home. No hospitalizations. That was the "fact." Oh, yes, there was one more "fact"— there is, as of today, not a single case at this date in the United States.

But facts have to be interpreted. And that is exactly what the mainstream media did, the President did, and Wall Street did. However, *how* they interpreted it and the *kind of reasoning* they used in interpreting it created an even bigger problem. Yes they reasoned from the facts but they did not do a very good job in reasoning.

- The media covered this new fact and then started using all kinds of projective conjectures about it— Will this cause more shut-downs? Will this spread all around the world and kill more people? In watching the news on NBC, ABC, MSNBC and CNN last night— it was their lead story and they had Fauci back on making dire predictions about the future.
- The President then put travel bans on eight African Nations.
- New York Governor, Kathy Hochal, reestablished the mask mandate for New York and urged that hospitals suspend elective surgeries.
- Wall Street panicked on Friday and dropped some 960 points and then another 600 on Monday.

Now, *what kind of thinking is all of these over-reactions?* If we open up the list of cognitive distortions— we see over-generalization, awfulizing, negative prediction of the future, emotionalizing, blaming, etc. Talk about *Panic Thinking!* It strikes me as **the Fear Pandemic**— a hysteric panicking that has no basis in reality, especially since it is primarily catastrophic predictions about a potential holocaust.

It also strikes me as more media miscarriage of information. The media is supposed to deal with facts and science, not wild conjectures. Yet because *fear*, disaster, problems, threats, etc. "sell newspapers," the media seems unable to help itself from fear-mongering. True journalists are supposed to be the guardians of facts, to objectively present the truth and let it stand. Now things may change, but as of right now, the medical doctors in South Africa have only said that the variant has "very mild symptoms." You would think that should be good news.

If "the truth shall set us free" and if the best policy is to follow the facts, and the science, then one of the biggest problems we have today is *the media*. So, be skeptical what you hear via both the mainstream media and the social media. Ask questions about the facts and about the *kind of thinking and reasoning* people are applying to the facts.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #78
December 6, 2021
Facts #7

FACTS CAN TELL YOU WHAT TO DO

The Transition from *Is* to *Ought*

First, the *is*. What exists—where, when, and in what way. What we can assert as a true and valid statement about the data we discover in the world. Normally facts point to *grounded* sensory-based information. Yet Maslow also noted that they also point in a direction, i.e., they are vectorial.

“Fact just don’t lie there like pancakes, just doing nothing; they are to a certain extent signposts which tell you what to do, which make suggestions to you, which nudge you in one direction rather than other. They ‘call for,’ they have *demand character*, they even have ‘*requiredness*’ as Kohler [co-founder of Gestalt] called it.” (*Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, 1971, p. 26, italics added)

The discovery of facts, truth, and reality depends on what *is*, that is, on what exists. When you know what *is*, often you then know what to do. In fact, Maslow suggested that the facts, the *is*, can tell you what to do. He illustrated by referring to carving a turnkey.

“Carving a turkey is made easier by the knowledge of where the joints are, how to handle the knife and fork—that is, by possessing fully knowledge of the facts of the situation. *If the facts are fully known, they will guide us and tell us what to do.* But what is also implied here is that the facts are very soft-spoken and that it is difficult to perceive them. In order to be able to hear the fact-voices, it is necessary to be very quiet, to listen very receptively. ... If we wish to permit the facts to tell us their oughtness, we must learn to listen to them in a very specific way...” (Ibid., p. 120)

Now “to listen very receptively,” in NLP terms, is “losing the mind and coming to one’s senses.” It is coming into an uptime state (rather than down inside oneself) and into sensory awareness. Then you can more cleanly see and hear reality for it *is* rather than for what you wish it to be. As Maslow was modeling fully functioning people, he noted that the self-actualizing person is “a good perceiver of reality and truth” and has a “clear perception of facts” because he accepts reality for what it is. He places no demands on reality. This enables her to see what is the case and to end up be superior in perception of reality and in the ability to reason.

Who were these self-actualizing people that Maslow modeled? Alfred North Whitehead, Henri Bergson, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Plato, Spinoza, Eleanor Roosevelt, etc. These were people who listened deeply to facts and allowed the facts to tell them what to do.

Fact: Math, science, even reading scores have been going down for decades.

Ought: We ought to refocus on teaching the basics of *how to think and how to learn* and stop the “woke” policies of political correctness.

Fact: In the most gun-restrictive city in the United States, Chicago where there are no gun shops— none. Deaths by guns are the highest and 90% plus of all deaths of young black men are caused by other black men. What can we conclude from these facts? From these facts we can conclude that the problem is not the guns, it is the people wielding the gun.

Ought: We ought to focus on creating better homes and schools that promote higher morals and a sense of responsibility, and promote more respect for law and order.

Maslow concluded that *who you are*, in terms of your personal development and actualization of your highest potentials, affects your ability to process information and to clearly see and listen to the facts. That's because it is human to project the constructions we have built in the inside world onto the outside world.

Many people today separate facts and values and treat them as if they not only are different, but incompatible. They are different, but are they truly incompatible? Where we have facts, does that not imply that we should treat factual statements as fundamental in our search for truth? That we should speak the truth? Here we transition from the *is* to the *ought*. Here facts tell us what to do.

A different picture of reality comes into view when “the *is* reveals an *ought*.” Maslow believed that by studying superior individuals, self-actualizing people who were fully functioning, he could find a common set of values which would enable this higher level of development. In that way, he sought to identify right and wrong behavior, good and bad behaviors. A characteristic of self-actualizing people is their low degree of self-conflict. “He is not at war with himself; his personality is integrated.” And that's what makes his perceptions clearer and cleaner.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #79
December 10, 2021
Introducing a New Book

IT'S ALL INSIDE-OUT

If there's anything really unique to the Neuro-Semantics approach, it is that we train, coach, consult, parent, do therapy, and live our lives *inside-out*. You could say that we operate from an Inside-Out Psychological premise. And what is that premise? Namely, that everything (yes everything!) humanly important functions *inside-out*. Over the years I wrote books emphasizing this: *Inside-Out Wealth*, *Inside-Out Persuasion*, *Winning the Inner Game*.

But that is just a small, a very small, list of things that function *inside-out*. Communication is inside out, motivation is inside out, self-esteem is inside out, and so also leadership, management, parenting, emotional intelligence, self-control, learning, teaching, thinking, emoting, resilience, coaching, meta-programs, weight management, humor, attitude, hypnosis, decisions, and the list goes on and on. It's amazing

This is radical! The reason why it is radical is because, for the most part, we live in an *outside-in* world. We live in societies and cultures that are organized and that present themselves as *outside-in* and so most of us have come to talk and think that way about ourselves and our lives. You hear it whenever you hear things like:

“She *makes* me so angry I could wring her neck.”

“My boss *makes* me feel like I'm worthless.”

“If you buy X-brand, you will increase your self-esteem.”

“Vote for Mr. Y and he will increase your personal wealth.”

Further, you and I were born and experienced our lives during the first 14 to 18 years of life entirely as *outside-in*. That's because we were born without any content information *inside*. How different it is for animals. They have all of the “content information” they need to be fully and completely who they are. Ducks don't have to go to Duck School to learn to be a duck. But we do. Well, not to Duck School, but to Human Schools. And for all of our early years, what we get into our minds and hearts *comes from the outside*—from parents, siblings, teachers, books, television, etc.

Now the challenge for an *adult* human is to develop one's own clearly thought out thoughts, ideas, values, beliefs, goals, decisions, identities, etc. so that we can now live *inside-out*. When you can do that, then you are no longer dependent on what others think or say. You are not longer blown about in the wind of whatever fad is going on outside. Now you have become the driver of your own bus, the architect of your own future, the CEO of your own mind. It is the *outside-in* person who is *dependent* on outside factors and sometimes a *victim* of them. That's why the *outside-in* person is so often easily blown off course or blown away.

To live deeply rather than superficially requires the *inside*–out life. This means going “in” and developing your inside world, your inside self until it is robust and resilient. Do that and then your life truly becomes your own. Do that and your inside life gives you a “center” out of which to function. Do that and you begin to actualize your highest meanings into your best performances—the synergy of self-actualizing.

Given all of this, you now know why *Meta-States* is no central. Going “in” you are in your first and primary state, then above and beyond that (“meta”) are the states that you have about it. These make up your inner world, your matrix of frames. For the most vitality and aliveness, you have to not only go *in*, you have to go *inside and up to the contextual frames of meaning that hold your inner world together*. And, as a spoiler alert, that’s what you do in the APG training.

With all of that said, I am delighted to announce the latest Neuro-Semantic book, ***Inside–Out: Empowered From Within (2022)***. Like *Hypnotic Conversations (2020)*, this book is now published only as a PDF file. It is on “The Shop.” Here is the writing on the back cover:

INSIDE–OUT

Two worlds—one inside, one outside. One the world of *being*—person, spirit, self, the other the world of *things*—doing, using, possessing, having. One is the world of mind, imagination, and communication, the other the world of objectives, activity, and people. Because everything human is *inside*–out and everything socio-cultural is *outside*–in, we experience tension. If the socio-cultural is too dominant, the inside life suffers and is diminished. We are domesticated. Not good.

Yet the inside–out orientation is the secret for becoming *fully alive/fully human*. It is the secret for stepping up as the CEO of your own life. Yet learning the inside–out life is a challenge in today’s outside–in culture.

All of human life is uniquely *inside*–out. Thinking is inside–out, learning is inside–out. So also are all of the highly desired experiences of—love, joy, serenity, understanding, productivity, communication, persuasion, well-being, humor, resilience, etc. While all of these, and many more, operate from the inside to the outside, society is structured *outside*–in. We are also trained from childhood for outside–in living, yet outside–in reduces things to living like animals in a deterministic stimulus–response world.

The solution is to get to your center, to *being*, and to live *inside*–out. It is the foundation for personal empowerment, proactivity, and productivity. It is the secret to the joy of flow and the meaningfulness of everyday life. With the *inside*–out orientation, you have an inner aliveness and vitality that enables you to take charge of your life, an inner gyroscope for stability and mindfulness. This is orientation is a rich life since you live out of your own inner abundance.

In *Inside–Out* you will discover one of the most essential principles for personal development and personal mastery. It will accelerate your development and enable you to integrate and apply what you learn. Enough said. You can find it via:

<https://www.neurosemantics.com/product/inside-out-empowered-from-within/>

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #80
December 13, 2021
Facts #8

DISTINGUISHING FACTS AND OPINIONS

There are many different kinds of statements. Some statements are factual, some are not. Given the nature of language, most of the statements that you make and that you hear are *not factual*. Amazing, isn't it? So what are they? Most of the statements that we exchange among ourselves as we communicate are opinions, evaluations, judgments, beliefs, decisions, identifications, and on and on. Further, when it comes to *facts* as I have noted, there are real facts and there are pseudo-facts.

What then? How should we operate in a world where facts are actually pretty scarce and where there are many kinds of statements that are derivative (or supposedly) from facts? The most obvious answer is to aim to make statements that are *true-to-the-facts*. That is a phrase from Alfred Korzybski in *Science and Sanity*. By way of contrast, he spoke about false-to-fact statements and how they fail to align with reality and therefore represent false mapping. Such statements do not accord to the facts that we can determine or detect in reality. And doesn't all of that make sense? So here is what we have.

- *Factual statements*. These are statements that we can substantiate as true, valid, or confirmed.
- *Value statements* and *belief statements*. These are different kinds of statements. Values are what you consider important. A statement about value tends to be an *ought*—something that we ought to do, namely, to live the value (i.e., honest, truthful, kind, loving, etc.). Beliefs are what *you have concluded* is real and have confirmed. A belief statement may not be true, but for the person who believes it, it is true or valid *for him or her*.
- *Opinion statements*. These are statements that reflect your thinking and evaluating, your biases and distortions and are not supported directly by factual evidence.
- *Predictions and guesses*. These are statements about the future and these cannot be considered factual. Why not? Because by definition, because the statement is about something that is *not yet existing*. That's why it cannot be based on a fact (a currently non-existent fact). At best, it is a guess or a speculation about something that is yet to be. Statements about the future anticipate what could happen and even if the probability of it happening is very high, it is still not about a fact and should never be treated as such. All predictions about the economy, the weather, possibility of war, etc. are *not factual statements*.

David Gilbert argues that facts are conjectures that have met a certain standard of proof (*Stumbling on Happiness*, 2005, p. 184). His test for a true fact is interesting. He says if you can express it with a universal quantifier (i.e., always, never, all, none, etc.). “This information is absolutely true, no question, no explanation, no variation.” Otherwise, it is an evaluation and an opinion.

Remind me why facts are so important. They are important because we humans gather facts and *sets of facts* so that our information is grounded in reality. Then, from them, we can draw valid

conclusions. Next, these conclusions, when tested and replicated by others, can then become *the next-level up fact* in a given domain, a conceptual fact that we can concern a legitimate or valid principle. That's how science works. To learn and understand a given domain, you first need to know the facts and what is considered factual information in that field. Often what was considered a fact in a field is discovered to be an opinion, a partial fact, a false conclusion, etc.

When validated *facts can give birth to concepts*. As we use the data at our disposal to *conceive* of a structure or process that unifies the data, we come up with and conceive an idea or an understanding. When certain facts cannot be explained in a field, that's when we have difficulty inventing concepts that provide a logical explanation for the field. At that point, that field is being readied for a new paradigm—a new explanatory concept.

This gives us a brief understanding of a concept. Because concepts are based on facts, they are not directly available to us empirically. To reach them, we have to *reason from facts and construct them*. What that means is that you have to use your reasoning powers to infer what is implied (or what you think is implied). You have to *order* your thoughts in the search for truth. You can order them inductively or deductively.

Now you know why critical thinking and reason is so important if we are to construct mental maps from facts that will be true-to-fact and enable us to navigate the territory that we want to explore and experience. And while we all reason from facts, we do not all reason the same or with the same quality. To the extent that you have not outgrown the inherent cognitive distortions of childhood, your reasoning skills are not only low, but highly distorted. And unless that changes, you will bring upon your lots of misery.

This is where Neuro-Linguistics and Neuro-Semantics comes to the rescue. If you want a tool for precision in thinking and communicating, you can do no better than the NLP Meta-Model of Language. It's a great tool for clear and creative thinking, for logical reasoning, and for distinguishing fact from opinion. Want more? Check out *The Structure of Magic* (1975), *Communication Magic* (2001), and *Executive Thinking* (2018).

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #81
December 20, 2021
Facts #9

FACTS AND VALUES

A day came in Maslow's life when he made a big semantic leap. It happened the day that he said that facts can be both description and normative. Now that is a big leap! In this he suggested that facts do not just point out what *is*, but also what *ought* to be. You may recall (Neurons #78) that Maslow said that facts can tell you what to do.

Now to facilitate this leap, he also said he would call such the words which facilitate this semantic leap—"fusion-words." For him, these words describe "a fusion of facts and values." If facticity tells us about the data (the empirical information at the sensory level), then fusion-words like...

"... mature, evolved, developed, stunted, crippled, fully functioning, graceful, awkward, clumsy, self-actualization, diminution" and the like are "fusions of the normative and the descriptive" (*Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, 1971, p. 28)

Words in that list are *fusion-words*. In NLP we recognize them mostly as nominalizations. In Meta-States many of them are evaluations and classifications that exist at a level up from the primary level. And, for what reason did Maslow bring them up and invent this idea of *fusion-words*? Maslow wrote this in the context of critiquing science for falling into the trap of attempting to be value-free. But the very idea of a value-free science or world, he noted, was non-normative and non-human.

"Fusion concepts and words permit us to participate in the normal advance of science and knowledge from its phenomenological and experiential beginnings on toward greater reliability, great validity, greater confidence, greater exactness, greater sharing with others and agreement with them." (Ibid., p. 28)

Facts facilitate values and that which is valuable to us when they are relevant. That's a good place to begin, "What are the relevant facts in this case?" We often get distracted and off-target by facts which are essentially irrelevant. All data is not equally important. So from data we select the facts that we consider relevant to the subject. That's why facts themselves are also partly subjective. When you select certain events, you have already imposed an interpretation as you have imposed what you consider important to the subject.

Further, you have a purpose for whatever you are trying to understand. "Why are you gathering these 'facts?'" "To what end?" We can also ask, "What is your relationship to the other persons who are involved in this situation?" Eric Fromm said that it is crucial to be aware of the subject at hand and what facts are being considered relevant. "Am I the man's friend, or a detective, or simply a man who wants to see the total man in his humanity?" (*The Revolution of Hope: Toward a Humanized Technology*, 1968, p. 55)

Here again is a way to distort facts and the conclusions that we draw from them. The one fact from which we start with will mean nothing, or some distorted meaning, without an evaluation of the system it lies within. And that requires an analysis of a process in which we as observers are also

included. “Eventually it must be stated that the very fact of having decided to select certain events as facts has an effect on ourselves.” (Eric Fromm, *Ibid.*, 1968, p. 56).

What is my point in all of this? Namely, *facts are inevitably colored by values*. Your values along with your cognitive biases inevitably and inescapably influence your facts, your conclusions, and the concepts, beliefs, decisions, etc. that you come to. If we are to be honest, then we need to acknowledge the influence of our values on the facts that we quote.

We see the lack of honesty (or should I say dishonesty) about this in the news media, social media, television, radio, movies, etc. All too often those who would “report the news” or “report the facts” fail to recognize or acknowledge their own bias and values. They pretend that they are “objective” in a way that no human can be objective. Korzybski often urged scientists and regular people to “put your premises on the table” when you talk. Don’t pretend that you have no agenda, no values, no orientation! You do and when you are transparent and authentic about it, you will be a clearer communicator.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #82
December 27, 2021
Facts #10

THE PROBLEM WITH FACTS

In this series on *Critical Thinking about Facts*, we have seen that there are lots of problems with facts. While facts are essential to our well-being and sanity, they are *not* so easy to access or determine. What's clear is that merely calling something a "fact," does not make it so. And there's a great many ways to distort a "fact" so that it is not factual.

The next time someone quotes a "fact" to you to make a point be sure to ask these questions: *What is the context and background of the fact? What are you not saying about the fact?*

Recent Biden went on the campaign trail declaring that the new three trillion bill "will cost nothing, zero." "It's all paid for already." He repeated that so-called "fact" over and over. But it seemed fishy to me from the beginning. If it costs nothing and if it's already paid for, why all the opposition? Why did Joe Manchin worry about the cost and did the Congressional Budget Office estimate it would cost three trillion? How could the government aim to spend 3 to 5 trillion dollars when it has a deficit of 21 trillion and it "cost nothing."

Every news channel these days lead out on their evening news about Covid. They state "with the new variant omicron, cases of covid are rising." But what are they *not* saying? Without more context, a fact like that is not actually a fact, but mere propaganda. So let's get some more facts. Here's one from the CDC:

"The average person dying of covid in the USA is 79 years of age with four co-morbidities."
Ah, now that's a very different picture! Especially when you add another fact. "The average age of death for males in the US is 79."

Oh my God! Those who are dying of covid are mostly the people who would be dying anyway! This is what they are *not* telling us. So what's the deal with the *Fear Pandemic* that the media, and most governments, are perpetuating? Facts need context. So here, from the CDC, are the numbers of deaths per year in the US from 2014 through 2020 to give even more context to the subject.

2014: 2,626,418	2015: 2,712,630 : Increase - 86,212 - 3.28%
2016 : 2,744,248 : Increase - 31,618 - 1.16%	2017 : 2,813,503 : Increase - 69,255 - 2.52%
2018 : 2,839,206 : Increase - 25,703 - 1%	2019: 2,855,000 : Increase - 15,794- 0.55%
2020: 2,913,144 : Increase - 58,144 - 2%	

From the beginning, it is a fact that people die. And when you have an aging population and the average age of death is 79, there's going to be a lot of deaths *every day*. CNN is notorious for putting up the number of deaths by Covid to create panic. But what if they put up the number that normally die *every day*? Before the pandemic in 2019, that number in the US gives a base number of 7,821.92 *daily*. Whoooo! Nearly 8,000! Not new cases, but deaths.

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #82
December 27, 2021
Facts #10

THE PROBLEM WITH FACTS

So, we have the problem of *out-of-context* “facts.” That turns them into false facts because we don’t have the proper context for understanding them. Then there is the problem of *leaving out critical conditions, factors, and variables* that help contextual the fact. This speaks to what is left out and what they are not telling us.

Additionally, we have the problem of language. Here the media really messes up because they have lost *the distinction between empirical descriptions and evaluations*. Today they throw around evaluative words as modifiers without any concern for accuracy. A big one for many the mainstream channels is still to call the January 6 riot an “insurrection.” Yet on August 20, 2021 the FBI released documents declaring that there was no “insurrection” (see below).

What strikes me is the fact that *if it were an insurrection*, how come there were no guns among the rioters? How do you overthrow a government and its army without any guns? Further, why is it that all of the people who were hurt that day were Trump supporters? And why was the one person (a woman) who was killed (shot by the Capitol Police) also a Trump supporter? There’s no question that it was a stupid and terrible riot among many who were simply not thinking or using their heads and others who disturbed enough to want a riot and destruction. But an insurrection? Only with some pieces of lumber and a plastic shield?

When you use an emotionally-laden word like “insurrection,” you are implying a lot more than just a riot. Semantically loaded words reveal a person’s biases. We are now no longer dealing with facts, but opinions. And that’s fine, but call an opinion “an opinion” and don’t distort it into a false fact.

Source:

WASHINGTON, Aug 20 (Reuters) - The FBI has found scant evidence that the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol was the result of an organized plot to overturn the presidential election result, according to four current and former law enforcement officials.

"Ninety to ninety-five percent of these are one-off cases," said a former senior law enforcement official with knowledge of the investigation. "Then you have five percent, maybe, of these militia groups that were more closely organized. But there was no grand scheme with Roger Stone and Alex Jones and all of these people to storm the Capitol and take hostages."

FBI investigators did find that cells of protesters, including followers of the far-right Oath Keepers and Proud Boys groups, had aimed to break into the Capitol. But they found no evidence that the groups had serious plans about what to do if they made it inside, the sources said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/exclusive-fbi-finds-scant-evidence-us-capitol-attack-w-as-coordinated-sources-2021-08-20/#:~:text=WASHINGTON%2C%20Aug%2020%20%28Reuters%29%20-%20The%20FBI%20has,to%20four%20current%20and%20forme r%20law%20enforcement%20officials>

From: L. Michael Hall
2021 Neurons #83
December 31, 2021
Facts #11
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MORE PROBLEM WITH FACTS

With this article, I am concluding this series on *Critical Thinking about Facts*. With the new year, there will be a new series. In the last post I noted that facts become really problematic when—

- They are out of context so that there's no way to evaluate them.
- They are partial and many things which need to be said about them are not said, but left out.
- They are anonymous and not owned by whoever identified or created the fact.
- They are coded in vague, abstract, evaluative terminology rather than descriptive empirical language (sensory-based language).

Another problem concerns the fluidity versus immutability of a given fact. Generally, the word *fact* carries an unstated implication, namely, that it is immutable. “This is the way it is, it is a *fact*.” Yet while some facts are immutable (they don't change), many are fluid. They change. And they are facts which are more likely to change over time.

Sometimes a factual statement asserts something that just *is*, something that is immutable. It is something that you cannot change or alter, something that is *a given*. “Like what?” you may ask. Well, like the old joke, “There are two inevitables in life—death and taxes.” Factually, you and I are going to die. Factually, every person who has ever been born before the last generation has died. That's an immutable fact that you cannot gainsay. Argue against it all you will, rage against it, protest by raising your fist to the heavens—and the fact remains.

There are many more. When my wife was trying to geographically locate herself in the Grand Valley, she asked, “Which way is east?” I pointed to the Mesa Mountain, “There, from our perspective, the sun rises on that mountain.” “Every day?” she asked. “Yes, unless the earth starts wobbling in its orbit, we will see the sunrise there.” An immutable fact that is also gruesome is this: Jump off a skyscraper and you will die. *Immutability*—that's just the way it is.

Other *facts* can be changed. Until the invention of the airplane, it was a fact that “man cannot fly.” Now we can. Once it was a fact, “If you get polio, you will be crippled for the rest of your life.” Now that is no longer the case. Facts about polio have changed.

What then do we do when we cannot change the facts—when it is immutable? What do we do when we have to live with certain facts. “Yes, your son was in an accident and died.” “Yes, your job has been eliminated so there's no longer a place for you here.” The answer is simple is say, but hard to live. *Change your thinking*. Change the way you have been interpreting things, adopt a new attitude about it, and use your meaning-making skills to attribute more resourceful and ecological meanings to the facts that cannot be changed.

For the immutable fact, change your thinking from rejection to acceptance. Meta-state yourself first

of all with *acceptance*. If it is inevitable, part of the way things are, and outside of your control, then access and apply the magic of acceptance to it. This will enable you to *acknowledge the fact as real* and part of reality. You are living the serenity prayer when you do.

Next, change your thinking by altering the meaning, that is, change the frame. As you identify the old frame, shift the frame until you find one that contributes to your well-being and vitality (see *Mind-Lines: Lines for Changing Minds* for a book on that subject). Now you can *reframe a fact* by giving it meanings that enable you to keep learning and developing. Since you are the meaning-maker and you have an extremely wide range of meanings that you can create and adapt you have a tremendous capacity, to frame and deframe meaning until you find those that will empower you and bring out your best.

Just because a fact is immutable, that's not the end of the story. You can make it the beginning of a new story. If you know how to live *inside-out*, then you can treat the immutable fact as one of reality's constraints that invites you to use your creative thinking to figure out how to best deal with it.