



## **HUMANISTIC NEURO-LINGUISTIC PSYCHOLOGY: QUANTUM THEORY IN NLP**

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What originally inspired us when we began studying NLP years ago is summed up in one word: possibility. As therapists, we soon realized that the beliefs and patterns of NLP provided us with an incredible range of choices. We actually remember stopping in sessions because we had too many patterns from which to choose! NLP rapidly assisted us in realizing that it was no longer a question of whether we and the client could get the job done; the only question was what would create the richest experience for the client. Prior to studying Erickson's work and NLP, our experience was very different. Then the only times we stopped in a session was when we didn't know what to do! Suffice it to say NLP has had a profoundly positive effect on our personal and professional lives. Having been in NLP for quite some time now we discovered, as John Grinder and Richard Bandler had promised, that when we became facile with the "technology" we would find its limits and those would point to future possibilities. We found this to be true.

In the past, one of the "raps" against NLP was that it was too mechanistic. It was initially created as a "bare bones," practical system that had as little to do with humanism and spirituality as possible. In fact, spirituality and the human connection were considered unnecessary elements in a "technology" that centered around "getting results." This "no fluff" approach appealed to many practitioners in the helping professions, because they were tired of approaches that were heavy on theory and light on application and results. As time has passed, the field of NLP has evolved and many of the top trainers have recognized that NLP is only part of a much larger picture. In fact, many of our NLP students began asking us, "**What's beyond NLP?**" as they grew in their understanding of it. Our answer to this question is **Humanistic Neuro-Linguistic Psychology**.

### **What is Humanistic Neuro-Linguistic Psychology?**

**Humanistic Neuro-Linguistic Psychology is the study of how Mind creates reality through language and behaviour.** We are using the word Mind with a capital M on purpose. Many scientists want us to believe that our mind is our brain. Much of what is taught in traditional treatment approaches and even in "alternative healing methods," such as **NLP**, is based upon premises about reality which physicists abandoned roughly 30 years ago. Recent research and advances in quantum physics support what ancient wisdom has taught for thousands of years: **we are more than our bodies, we are more than our brains, we are part of an interconnected whole.**

**Humanistic:** We've always believed that **NLP** was about people, their interconnectedness, and the possibilities they create for their own transformation. Change occurs within and among people. The "techniques" are just pointers, they give us a way to organize our

conscious and unconscious minds, but they are not the "magic." When change occurs in a person or relationship, there is a lot more going on than what traditional science can currently measure or explain. For our field to grow we need to think bigger. We are all here for a purpose, to actualize our true Self. Everyone is on the road to Self-actualization, whether they know it or not! We are all connected at the deepest level. If you doubt this, you might be surprised to know that science has proven it!

**Neuro:** We view the nervous system as the instrument through which we interpret what is represented as reality. It is the instrument through which consciousness, or Spirit, flows. The bodymind is the instrument that consciousness plays, and it can only be played as precisely as the instrument is tuned.

**Linguistics:** Language is one of the fundamental building blocks for creating material reality. As Deepak Chopra says, "Language is how we create something from nothing." If consciousness is the creator of reality, then language is the creating of reality. Language points to the limitations we impose on ourselves in order to make meaning of the world and to communicate that meaning to others.

**Psychology** (instead of Programming): We believe that psychology broadens the scope of possibilities which will make **NLP** more readily accessible to the general public. People are dynamic organisms growing and transforming their lives, not machines waiting to be programmed.

### **The Three Basic Presuppositions (Beliefs) of Humanistic Neuro-Linguistic Psychology**

**1. No matter what you think you are, you are always more than that.** In many ways, we believe that this is the most important presupposition. It is not only important to believe this about ourselves, but also about our clients. It is so easy to think that all we are, is what we think we are. In traditional NLP, we explain that everyone has a conscious mind and an unconscious mind. The conscious mind is that small band of information to which we are aware at any given moment. It is an established fact that we can only hold 7+/- 2 chunks of information in our awareness at any one time, yet the rest of us (the unconscious) is receiving an estimated 2.3 billion bits of information per second. Our conscious mind is like a laser beam in a dimly lit room -- it only lights the area where we shine it -- and our unconscious mind is the rest of the room. Thinking that we are only our conscious mind would be like saying the rest of the room does not exist. We are more than our conscious minds. Much more!

Most people credit Milton Erickson with the NLP presupposition: We all have the resources we need to change. Erickson strongly believed that our unconscious was a storehouse of resources, memories, experiential learnings: as well as the seat of emotions and all of our autonomic functions like breathing, digestion, and the regulation of all other vital functions. While we agree with this, we are proposing that we are even more than this. We are more than our unconscious minds.

Consider the often quoted research of Wilder Penfield. He's the Canadian neuroscientist that NLP trainers love to quote to substantiate the archival model of the brain, that everything we have ever experienced is stored as memory. He found that when he would electrically stimulate a specific point on a patient's cerebral cortex he/she would begin to relive a memory. Penfield was looking for the "engram" or memory trace -- the idea that each

memory has a specific location in the brain. As he would touch different areas of the brain, the patient would experience different memories in vivid detail. After repeating this procedure with numerous patients he formed a number of conclusions, three which are relevant to this article. One was wrong. One was plausible but virtually unprovable. One was beyond anything science could handle!

His first conclusion was that each memory had a specific location. Current research would suggest this is not the case. The brain seems to be organized along functional lines rather than site specific lines. Memories appear to be a product of networks of bioelectrical waves that resonate throughout the mind-body, not specific sites.

The second conclusion was that everything we have ever experienced is recorded in our brain -- and this is the one to which most of us in NLP allude. This is a useful belief to have, but hard to prove. And in most cases, easier to disprove.

The third conclusion is the least well known and perhaps the most significant: we are more than our memories, our brain and body. During the experiments Penfield would ask the patients about their memories and they would describe the experience in full detail. While they were experiencing the memory, they also had a simultaneous awareness of being in the operating room. Here's the twister. Penfield would ask them if they could be fully in the memory or be fully in the operating room and found that they could easily shift between the two. When he asked them who was doing this, the person in the operating room or the one in memory, they answered that it was neither. It was what some call "the choice maker." They experienced themselves as a witness or observer, a consciousness that operates through pure intention. In other words, someone one else was playing the instrument!

## **2. Reality is a construction.**

This notion gets to the heart of the matter (no pun intended). It all started around the turn of the 20th century when the field of (Newtonian) physics thought it had explained almost everything. Newtonian physics was based on the premise that everything (reality) could be reduced to little particles called atoms which had protons, neutrons and electrons. These were the basic building blocks of reality. It was logical, linear, organized, and it worked very well. This model created the foundation of all modern science, including medicine and psychology. A hundred years ago the only two things which they had to explain before physics would become a closed science was gravity and light. When they studied light, the neat and tidy world of Newtonian physics was rocketed into hyperspace. There was a big problem. When physicists studied light in its most elementary form called photons they discovered that sometimes light behaved as a particle (which they expected) and sometimes it behaved as a wave. To make matters worse, while an electron sometimes behaved as an object, physicists discovered it had no *dimension*!

Whether the electron "was" a wave or a particle all depended upon the context in which it was observed and how it was observed. *In other words, reality at the deepest level is observer created.* Quantum physics had dissolved the difference between "field and matter" or, for our purposes, thought and matter. **They are one and the same.**

The quantum "field" is unlimited potentiality. It is pure information and creativity. It has no form as we know it. It only exists as probabilities. The quantum field is referred to in many spiritual systems as the Void in Buddhism, the Akasha in Hinduism, the I'o in Hawaiian, to name a few which we have studied. It is everything that is, was, and will be *simultaneously*. In other words

it is beyond time, space, matter and energy. **Just think if you could learn to tap into this? You can.** There are systematic ways to do this and they are easier than you might think!

**How does creation occur?**

Physicists say that what turns the quantum field into matter is measurement. Our observation is a measurement. In fact the words "matter" and "measurement" come from the same Greek root "metra" which meant "uterus." Thought gives birth to matter through measurement. Our thoughts behave as wave forms until we identify with them. Before we have thoughts, pure potentiality exists. Once we have a thought and we put it into language (symbols, sounds and words), we are well on the way to creating a reality. This is when we begin to make something out of nothing. Language is how we do it. Our language then becomes, in large part, our map for reality and it dictates how we perceive our reality. Look around. Everything that you can sense wherever you are right now, started with a thought (including you!). The fact that you can sense it means that sufficient energy accompanied it, and as the thought developed its reality became more and more material. We create our own reality.

**3. Everything and everyone is interconnected.**

If you've studied any spiritual systems, you've probably heard or read: "We are all one." Many of us in NLP have believed this for a long time, yet it was never really included as a basic belief or understanding. Again we can use quantum physics to bridge traditional NLP and spirituality. About 20 years ago, quantum physicists proved that **reality is non-local**. What does this mean? It means that in the world beyond the quantum level, cause-effect does not exist. There is no space. There is no time. This is not quantum theory, this is quantum fact!

About 60 years ago physicists observed something that was unexplainable. They were watching two photons flying around and found that each one seemed to know what the other was doing instantaneously. Their movements co-varied exactly. This observation caused a real problem for physicists because in order for them to communicate instantaneously, the information passing "between" them would have to be moving faster than the speed of light. According to Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity this was impossible. Taking this into account, they concluded and then proved that *there had to be a deeper level of existence, outside of our three dimensional universe where everything is connected*. The reason why the "two" particles knew where the other was going was because at a deeper level they were of the same holograph. It was only the scientists' observations that made them appear separate. We are made of the same stuff as these particles. There is a deeper level of reality on which we are all connected. Mind (consciousness) is not rooted in any one place. It is omnipresent. This means we have access to all the information there is. It means that distance healing is possible and that the concept itself (distance) is a misnomer. It means we have a lot more to do with how the world is than what Newtonian physics led us to believe. We can heal each other by healing ourselves. We are all connected at the deepest level.

**.....So, What's Beyond NLP?**

There certainly is a lot more going on than what we know -- we know that for sure! We need to be willing to let go of certainty long enough to find out what is outside our map of reality. We need to go through a period of not knowing, to get to a new level of understanding. If we all have a map of reality, then that means there must be an edge to the map. For us, Humanistic Neuro-Linguistic Psychology is about finding out what is beyond this edge.