Introduction to: A Proposed Distinction for Neuro-Linguistic Programming, by Robert Dilts

Anyone who claims to know or care about NLP is aware that the process of modeling is the life blood of the field. The origin of NLP and its continued evolution come from the ability of NLP practitioners to model the verbal, cognitive and behavioral patterns (the "neuro-linguistic programs") of exceptional people. It is frequently pointed out that the basis of NLP is modeling and not the "trail of techniques" that have been left in its wake.

For all of the acknowledgment and emphasis on modeling, however, there has not been a clear and shared perspective on exactly what NLP modeling is, nor an awareness that there are different varieties of modeling.

For some, modeling is essentially strategy elicitation. For others it simply means using NLP distinctions when describing some phenomenon. Others perceive modeling as the imitation of key behaviors.

The most powerful and generative models are those which capture something of the deep structure of the individual or individuals being observed. This is quite different than describing or imitating surface level behaviors. Reaching this deep structure has been one of the crowning achievements of NLP and requires a special methodology.

In the following article, John Grinder and Carmen Bostic St. Clair lay out a set of criteria for distinguishing between the unique form of modeling from which the initial techniques and distinctions of NLP were derived ("NLP modeling") from other forms of modeling that apply NLP distinctions but use other means of information gathering and pattern fining.

The distinction presented in this article is a result of several ongoing discussions we have been having about the system of knowledge (or "epistemology") of NLP. While different forms of modeling may be useful and even necessary in order address particular contexts or to reach particular outcomes, the distinction and criteria John and Carmen are proposing feel to me to be essential in order to more clearly establish and honor what is unique to NLP as a field as well as to respect its intellectual history.

I admit that my own modeling work frequently falls into the category that John and Carmen refer to as Analytic Modeling, and at other times applies a combination of Analytic and more pure NLP Modeling. I fully support John and Carmen in making this differentiation and believe it is vital that practitioners of NLP learn the unique form of NLP Modeling and understand its difference from Analytic Modeling.

As John and Carmen state, the distinction presented in this article are intended to be the beginning of a conversation for those committed to the field of NLP, an ongoing and hopefully fruitful conversation, to bring greater clarity, precision and understanding about the truly unique contributions of NLP.

As Gregory Bateson used to say, "Let it be heard."

Robert Dilts

A Proposed Distinction for Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)

The development of any discipline, and especially one still organizing its initial patterning requires a certain attentiveness to precision in its fundamental vocabulary. Older disciplines have either clarified their fundamental terms (once or repetitively) and have established an apparent relatively stable platform on which further investigations and professional dialogue may be based.or they have fallen upon the sharp points that often protrude from their ill-defined terms, suffering debilitating and sometimes even fatal wounds that have precluded significant further development. Such ill-defined distinctions sway in the wind, impaled on these sticking points.

Some care must be given in making determinations with respect to a standardized vocabulary. In general, distinctions in experiences are awarded distinct descriptive terms while notional variants are assigned to equivalence classes. This is the normal business of a discipline during its formative stages: to achieve a richness of distinctions, a descriptive precision and simultaneously an economy of expression; in an ideal world, at any rate.

The distinction in question in this note is the term *modeling* as used in the field of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). In particular, the distinction between modeling as practiced in the field of NLP and modeling as practiced more generally.

NLP Modeling, in the creation of the initial models that founded the field of NLP, at present and in the future of NLP, references an appreciation of and respect for two criteria that apply to modeling in NLP:

1. the suspension of any taxonomic and/or analytic attempt (all f2 transforms as described in *Whispering in the Wind*, see www.nlpwhisperinginthewind.com) to understand consciously the patterning of the genius or model of excellence during the assimilation stage of patterning and until the following criterion is met

2. the modeler must demonstrate the ability to reproduce the patterning of the model in parallel contexts and in such contexts elicit roughly the same responses from client with roughly the same quality and time commitment as the original genius or model of excellence prior to beginning the challenging and rewarding activity of codification of the patterning demonstrated by the modeler

We further note that all modeling work products failing to meet these criteria are to be classified as some other logical type of model – we suggest Analytic Modeling as a general term for such work products; employing the patterning and the distinctions available in the technology of NLP applications but failing to respect the definition of NLP modeling.

It is also quite clear that there are applications (e.g. modeling a story teller) or contexts (e.g. the model is not available, deceased) in which the rather more extended and

demanding commitment implied by NLP modeling may not be either applicable or the most efficacious or efficient strategy for explicating the patterning of a genius or extraordinary individual whose patterning is of interest. We intend this statement to be a recognition that there are other forms of modeling perfectly legitimate as strategies for learning which, nevertheless fail to meet the criteria that we are proposing defines NLP modeling.

The essential difference of consequence between the process of NLP modeling and Analytic modeling is the relative contributions of the model and modeler to the final work product. This difference resides principally in the degree of imposition of the perceptual and analytic categories of the modeler during the modeling process. - in the case of NLP modeling, the imposition is minimal; in the case of Analytic modeling, the imposition is maximal. These two extremes define a continuum of possibilities and it may well be that other practitioners of other forms of modeling may wish to propose further distinctions. We would welcome such refinements but at present will content ourselves with the one proposed here.

The requirements that the development of all cognitive representations be systematically suspended during the unconscious assimilation phase and the requirement that the modeler demonstrate the ability to perform as does the origin model or genius prior to beginning any cognitive coding describes the source of these profound differences.

The intention behind this description is to ensure that this distinction – arguable the most revolutionary contribution of NLP - is preserved and that by the systematic use of this distinction, the public may appreciate the differences between the two logical classes of models and the distinctive processes of modeling thereby implied: NLP modeling and Analytic modeling. We invite well-intentioned practitioners of NLP to join us in preserving the distinction herein proposed or to offer commentary about how such an essential distinction can be preserved in the field of Neuro-Linguistic Programming..

We further invite members of the NLP community who are considering participating in courses presenting modeling to request clarification of the type of modeling being presented. Such activity will ensure that the distinction is maintained in the field and that participants in courses will be able to determine whether the type of modeling is what they wish to master.

Carmen Bostic St. Clair John Grinder

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