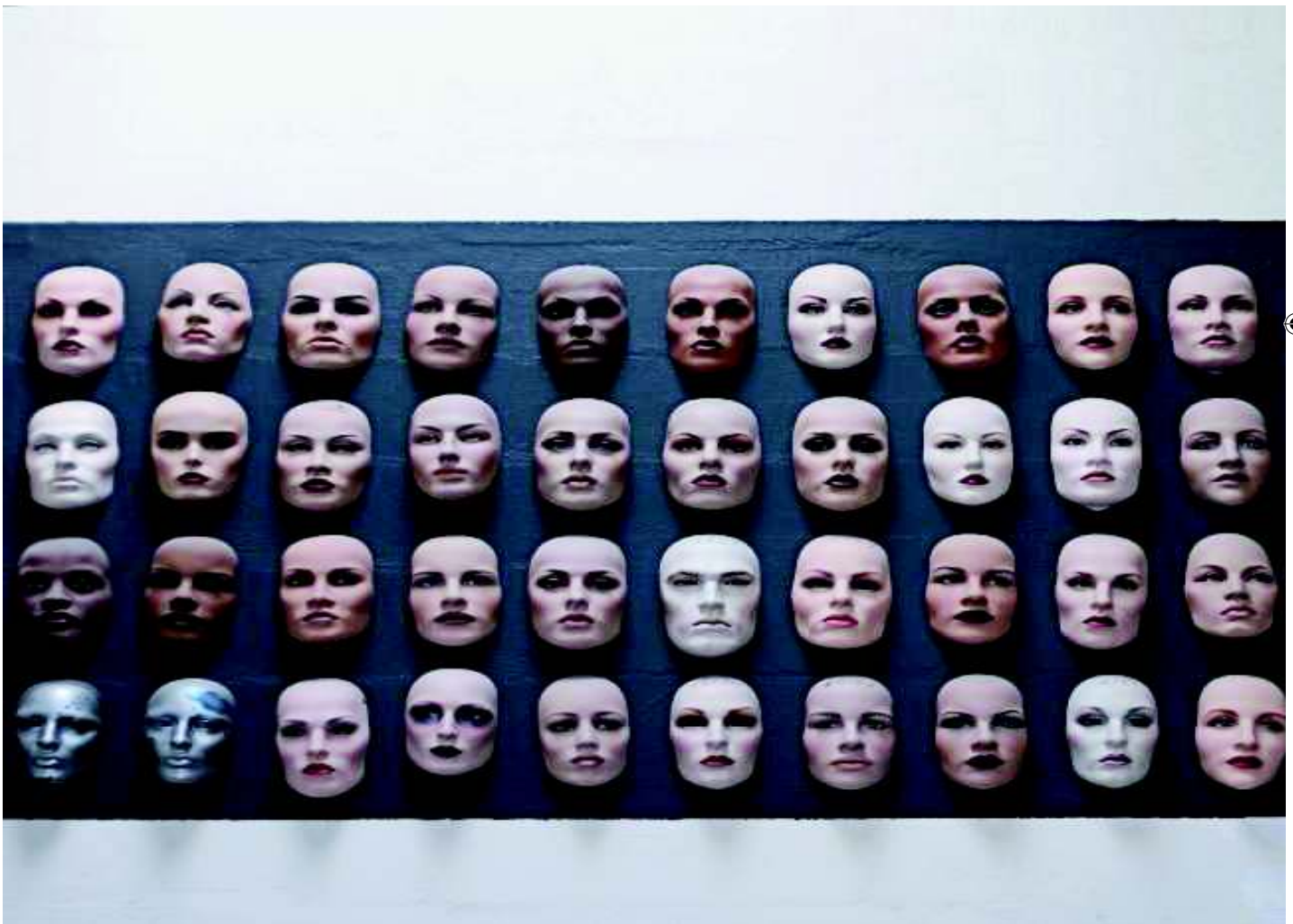# The Multiple Models of NLP

We map the future and call it goals and planning. We map our minds and others and call it psychology. When we put things into categories, we are making maps. It's so natural we hardly notice it.

<Charles Faulkner>

The Map is not the Territory
Count Alfred Korzybski, the Polish polymath, is best remembered for the phrase, "The map is not the territory." He wanted to be known for having said (holding up a pen), "Whatever you say this is, do not say it is a pen." Both of these statements point at an unbridgeable difference between a map, any map, and the territory it describes. After all, a roadmap is not the road. A weather map is not the weather. An historical timeline is neither the passage of time, nor the experiences it depicts. The same goes for a spreadsheet, a Powerpoint™ presentation, or the word pen which is not a pen. And each of these maps is made for a fairly specific purpose. It might be for identification, directions, or planning, or for action, or for understanding. There are lots of reasons for making maps. And the better a map serves its particular purpose, the more selective it is, and the less it serves other interests and outcomes. For example, a detailed road map just shows you the roads, maybe all the roads, but not what trees and flowers are growing beside them or what animals nest there. For that, you need a different map or maps. Each specific map selects for different aspects of the territory. In any town or city, even yours, the newcomers and old time residences notice some different highways, byways and landmarks and have within them different maps of the same territory, and with those different maps, they experience different places.

We map so much more than just the space around us. Korzybski called us "time-binding creatures." We map the past and call it history. We map the future and call it goals and planning. We map our minds and others and call it psychology. When we put things into categories, we are making maps. It's so natural we hardly notice it. Eatable ingredients are found in cookbooks, while roadside flora and fauna are found in nature guides. Organizational charts and business processes are also kinds of maps.

Some of our maps we learn at school – think of those models of our solar system or of molecules. Many of our maps we learn from interacting with the world – why the car won't start, how does cooking works, what's the best ways to win at sports or games and so on. Other maps we simply make up out of whatever is around – why the boss is happy on Tuesdays, why a friend lied, why I don't get what I want sometimes. There are all kinds of maps. They show up in under many monikers – ideas, insights, hypotheses, theories, proofs, assumptions, beliefs and most recently, mental models. NLP co-founders John
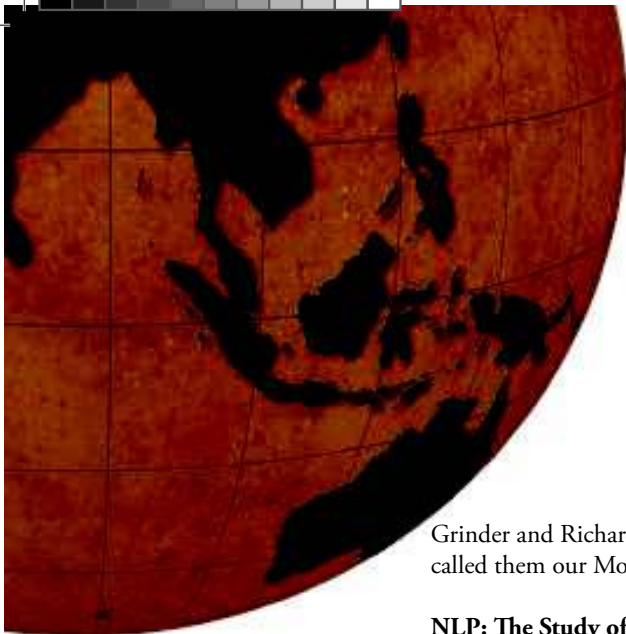
Grinder and Richard Bandler originally called them our Model-of-the-World.

NLP: The Study of the Structures of Subjective Experience

The term Model-of-the-World was first applied in NLP to the mix of Meta-Model distinctions that an individual uttered in everyday conversation. For example, if an individual spoke in terms of Lost Performatives, Unspecified Verbs, and Modal Operators of Necessity, as in "It ought to be built," this was taken to describe, at least in part, this person's Model-of-the-World. When Representational Systems were discovered and codified, the term Model-of-the-World was applied to an individual's relative distribution and sequence of these sensory modalities, as in "Anyone can see it ought to be built."

As NLP developments exploded, there was a proliferation of neuro-linguistic perceptions and interventions that led to more and more questions about what to do when. A number of intervention models were proposed – each an aggregate of NLP discoveries made up to that point. The early and prolific innovator Robert Dilts created a number of these including the Seven Cs, the ROLE, the BAGEL, and SCORE. He struck a cord with what he

called the Neuro-Logical Levels.

Since the Neuro-Logical Levels have been written about extensively elsewhere, very briefly: We all live in various Environments in our lives where we engage in specific Behaviors which are the visible expression of our largely unseen Capabilities which we engage depending on our Values and Beliefs as well as how congruent these are with our sense of our Identity and to what we belong to Spiritually. For example, I might be a guest in someone's home (Environment) and finding that I am hungry, I want to cook something (Behavior). I know how to cook (Capability), but I won't because my sense of politeness and propriety (Values & Beliefs) keep me (Identity) from going through their cupboards or using their kitchen. Then again, if I feel they are very much like me (Identity) or we are connected in some important way (Spirit), then that may allow the rest.

Robert Dilts uses this heuristic – a guide in the investigation of a problem or solution – to organize change processes and determine which kind(s) of change will be most appropriate and/or most effective. In the example above, maybe I could use is more behavioral flexibility in getting something to eat, or a more creative approach to my

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situation, or to value my needs as much as the needs of others, or to believe it possible for everyone to get what they want, or to develop my identity as more independent person, or appreciate my part in the great chain of being. What changes do I know to want? What will be their effects? What change will make the most difference in and across my life? The Neuro-Logical Levels offer a structure in which to think about these questions and choose an appropriate intervention. Dilts also uses these categories together in sequence to create compelling states of congruence.

It's easy to appreciate that each Neuro-Logical Level encapsulates a different domain of experience, and therefore, different kinds of change processes. We know we can change our Environment (where we are), our Behavior (what we do), and even our Capabilities (how we do it). We can clarify and to some extent influence some of our Values. On the other hand, it is most people's experience that their Beliefs and Identity are mostly stable and unchanging. Meanwhile what is Spiritual is often considered outside of themselves. With the discovery of the NLP Belief Change Processes and Metaphor-based Identity change, those with NLP experience have come to regard these as choices as well. The 'higher level' interventions used in value, belief and identity change have also been applied to participants' spiritual concerns.

The hierarchical structure of the Neuro-Logical Levels shows the ways in which these domains of change can interact with each other in this particular configuration. Our Environments shape our behavior from the clothes we wear to the careers we chose. (Not much call for buggy whip makers these days.) Our Behavior, and misbehavior, can and does change our environment as well as the behavior of each other. We learn new things that change our Capabilities and these change our behavior, and can even change our Values and Beliefs. (I learn to repair antique furniture and in the process learn to value quality workmanship and to see and value myself as a quality workman.) Our Values and Beliefs are confirmed or questioned with our life experience in the various environments in which we bring our behaviors and capabilities to bear on the challenges and opportunities we find or are confronted with. After while, we sense a secure and/or limiting sense of self with which we form an Identity. Many people seek release from this settled sense of self through Spiritual affiliations like organized religions and/or through activities like celebration, meditation, prayer and retreat. These in turn transform Beliefs, Values, Capabilities, Behaviors and Environments. Robert Dilts, given his admiration of 20th century physics, might describe the Neuro-Logical Levels in NLP as akin to the 'Standard Model' in today's physics.