

A myth of transition

Modelmaking and transitional stages of reality formation as expressions of spirituality

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To allow free will and free choice, god had to withdraw from her know-all stance. She shrunk herself to enable us to create her and be. By giving up her omnipotence, god gained movement of creation; she never ceases to become. Our souls therefore became intimately ours to choose, to create, to make real - to realise.

A. Maps and Territories

Milton Erickson once said: "Never fight, reject or try to contradict whatever behaviour the patient brings" (Erickson, 1958). The first rule of reality changing is acceptance of the client's current map (accepting in Ericksonian language or Pacing in NLP). In this paper I will explore the reality-formation elements of models¹. I will talk about reality and how to use reality-making in therapy.

At the centre of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) lies the understanding that we do not operate directly onto the world but rather through our perception. Our world is not "the world" but a secondary process, mediated by our senses (O'Connor & McDermott, 1996).

The 18th century philosopher Immanuel Kant presented a similar view. He refuted our hopes to know reality as it is - the objective world could not be known other than to god, he claimed. Only phenomena are knowable to us (Bergman, 1993). This argument beautifully parallels the NLP presupposition that "the map is not the territory." Similarly, applied psychology stresses that we use schemata or constructs - secondary processes of perception - to operate on the world (for example see the discussion about Kelly in Schultz & Schultz, 1998).

There are probably as many "maps" as there are people, and then some more - because flexible and effective people change their maps when they are no longer useful. It results in a world full of different, separate universes.

The pertinent claim that we are separate entities with different realities is not new, though. It received prominent attention throughout the history of human thought. Paradoxically, although we seemed to be separate and alone, at the same time we appeared to have some communication with the world: things usually made sense. When I ask my wife to pass me the salt, she frequently understands what I mean (and sometimes even acts upon her understanding!). In the 17th century, the German philosopher and mathematician G.W. Leibniz offered a solution to this contradiction between our alleged loneliness and the seemingly world-harmony. According to his theory, which was termed 'Monadology', we indeed cannot directly communicate with each other. Each and every one of us was a unique mental entity, a *Monad*, who did not have any relation to the other souls. Yet, all the other Monads were reflected in our own worlds with perfect synchronicity. God created this preliminary harmony among all monads. God was the keeper, or holder, of this illusion of communication; god was the universal mathematical harmony (Leibniz, 1695).

The Buddhist teacher Geshe Kelsang Gyatso says: "When our mind is peaceful we are free from worries and mental discomfort, and we experience true happiness. If we train our mind to be peaceful we shall be happy all the time, even in the most adverse conditions but if our mind is not peaceful, then even if we have the most pleasant external conditions we shall not be happy" (Gyatso, 1995). These words clearly illustrate the principle of 'the map is not the territory'. Gyatso stresses the difference between reality and perceived reality. The world appears to us according to the way we perceive it; our perceptions stem from the way we think and from our beliefs. In this specific topic of happiness, Gyatso advises us that by training to achieve inner peace we will no longer be attached to the illusion that the external world can dictate our happiness. We learn to take responsibility for our own happiness; we learn to own it and claim it for ourselves.

Buddhism, western psychology and philosophy as well as NLP, all accept that we perceive different worlds - that we create different maps. From this point, there are

two major possible assumptions that we can make about the nature of 'reality'. The first (as chosen by NLP, as well as Kantian philosophy) is that the reality is 'out there', only that we are too limited to know it. The second (which can stem from Hegelian philosophy) is that there is no external reality - the process of reality making IS reality. In the act of creating maps we define the territories; through changing belief-systems, we change the world. The first point of view undermines the value of our perceived models by negating their existence-value (or reality). The second, honours and celebrates our reality. While both approaches are valid theoretical constructs, I find the latter more rewarding, since it allows direct contact with our spiritual being. By creating truths and worlds, we take a part in the divine action of facilitating life.

B. What do we talk about when we talk about life?

Modern physics claims that light 'behaves' in two characteristic ways. Under certain conditions, it behaves as particles and can be calculated and worked with accordingly. Under other conditions, light behaves like waves and can be looked at as such (Ne'eman, 1989). What does it actually mean that light can be both particles and waves? It means absolutely nothing. Modern physics constructed two different models that endeavour to supply an aesthetically plausible explanation for reality. Scientists have created different realities, under which light behaves differently. The particles and the waves are not the same thing, though. They are two different phenomena in two different models that are mistakenly given a common name. It is hard to admit that we create realities, but we do! We created god an infinite numbers of times, and killed it all the same, we brought faith and goodness, physics and biology, chemistry and astronomy, psychology and NLP.

All the big theories in human history are models, are human-generated realities. Genetics is a model and gravity is a model, love and god are models, language is a model. We model existence by creating it, and at the same time we are being created by it. Us humans are model-generating organisms; we create realities. And we can change them. Why stick to realities that don't work?

In the book *'Magic of NLP Demystified'* (Lewis & Pucelik, 1990) the authors try to explain the reason for our secondary perceptions (the 'scientific' reasons for 'the map is not the territory'). They talk about neurology and selective sensory information. It is a nice metaphor for territory making, but neurology is not real, you see, it is a metaphor. Under their own model of reality, few children, and certainly no animals have synapses and neural transmissions. Neurology is a model (reality) that should be used inasmuch as it is ecological and useful. When we have a pain, and this model can supply us with an economical answer - that's great, we should use it. But we should not delude ourselves to believe that this is where NLP ends, or where modelling begins. *"The limits of my language mean the limits of my world,"* said Ludwig Wittgenstein (1921), and how crucial it is to unleash the dragon of modelmaking. We are free to create new models, more creative, more effective and expansive. When we forget about choice we betray god, because we do not express our life-generating capacities to the full. Stagnancy is apostasy because we do not manifest god as wholly as possible, because we do not celebrate being in the process of modelmaking. When we talk about life we generate realities, we explore pulsating rhythms of being.

C. Genesis - Models create reality

Life is a movement through reality-making; in the act of creating models, of founding realities - we are. Energy is the dynamic movement of reality formation.

Any model is meaningful and positive inasmuch as it promotes the creation of a reality, inasmuch as it manifests more life. At the same time, any model is limiting and negative inasmuch as it encourages stagnation and fixation, inasmuch as it limits expressions of life. However, no model is complete; all models are partial by definition, as they form only confined infinity. To attain holism one ought to allow movement between realities, between models.

The philosopher Martin Heidegger said that we are merely a plate upon which existence (Sein - being) is being projected and reflected (Mansbach, 1988). We are the means, through which life realises itself; we are the substrata for the act of life

INTRODUCTION. To understand the process of realisation, lets look at the verb 'realise'. Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines 'realise' as follows: "to make real:

change from what is imaginary or fictitious into what is actual: bring into concrete existence." And so, by being more alive we actualise ourselves and become; we make ourselves real, we realise. The vital person manoeuvres between and amongst realities in an ever-expansive exploration, to allow life express itself upon him or her in multitude ways.

D. Approaching the inaccessible - transitional stages of in-between models

Moses Ben-Maimon (better known as Maimonides) (1135-1204) was probably the most important medieval Jewish thinker. In his major theological-philosophical work, 'Guide to the Perplexed', Maimonides tried to integrate Aristotelian philosophy with monotheistic religions (and especially Judaism). We cannot know god in a direct manner, claimed Maimonides; god is beyond our comprehension, beyond what we can cognise or convey with language. We can gradually get close to comprehend divinity by two indirect approaches. The first is through god's actions. Divinity manifests itself in the universe and the universal laws. Physics and biology, teleology and creation - they are all expressions of god, and by studying the universe we get closer to understand god. The second way of knowing god is by negating his qualities. The negative-predicates theory is a journey from knowledge to confusion. The process is as follows: we say that god is good, but god isn't good, the predicate (adjective) good does not apply to divinity, but rather to our worldly reality. We can say, though, that god is not bad, and by doing so we can get closer to his true nature. The first negation in the sentence 'god is not bad' is of the application of the predicate 'bad' to god. The second, and deeper one, is negating the whole category of such judgemental predicates from applying to god (Guttman, 1951; Maimonides, 1190). The naïve understanding of the negative-predicates theory is the creation of anthropomorphic god, with worldly characteristics. The deeper understanding is of divinity that lies beyond our realistic understanding - beyond our structural language. This Aristotelian god is in-fact similar to what I will later refer to as the nothingness and wholeness, the in-between stages of realities, of model formation. By forming and reforming models, we get closer to comprehend the nature of the divine.

Sir James Hopwood Jeans, the English astronomer and physicist said: "The universe begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine²." But what is a great

thought without thinking? What is a process without processing? We echo and resonate genesis by allowing growth and life. The fluidity of modelmaking is much broader a concept than construct-theory or even than NLP presupposition, this is the material from which universes are created.

As the German philosopher Hegel (1770-1831) understood, our thinking is historically conditioned and the history of the world is in fact the progress of the consciousness of freedom; expanding consciousness is history. Divinity is the process of forming history, and "Philosophy equals the spirit of the time at which it appears, it is... the mere consciousness of the objective essence of its time" (Hegel, 1823-8). History is a process that has been shaping our own choices and nature, through our shaping of it (ibid; Honderich, 1995). This view actually injects meaning into the act of reality-making: by creating reality, by perceiving and modelmaking, we actualise not only history and reality, but also ourselves. Moreover, in the act of map-designing, we participate in the divine. When we realise that we are shaped by our past maps and by our creation of new ones, we can join the act of god and create absolute, yet flexible truths.

In his famous book '*The structure of scientific revolutions*' (1962), Tomas Kuhn presented the process of new modelmaking, of paradigm shifts in science. The historical structure of paradigm changing requires not only revolutionists and sudden revolutionary acts, as Kuhn demonstrated, but also incubating time and generational transitions, to allow digestion time for the historical adaptation to change (Freudental, 1977; Honderich, 1995). Living and acting in a mode supplies us with specific tools to manage within our reality (the laws and axioms of our reality). Moreover, we also learn about meta-tools, about the structure of models - to apply later in making new realities, when we explore other ways of being. I hope that by now you can appreciate the connection between paradigm shifts, modelling and the multitude-reality thesis.

When we integrate the Hegelian understanding of historical processes with the paradigm shifts of Kuhn and NLP presuppositions, we find ourselves in a very flexible space of magical transitions. In this space, God is the aesthetic and ecological application of realities; god is the process of creation, and we participate in the endless creation of god inasmuch as we are constantly being created.

E. Therapy in the transitional stages

The structure of model making is very simple: we have a reality, we expand on it until it is no longer adequate, we enter an in-between stage of meta-reality and, since it is difficult to stay in that liquid amoeba-like stage, we form another reality. Frequently, because it is so frightening to be in the void of in-between realities, people tend to cling to the nearest model - symptom substitution is one example for that. It is difficult to tolerate the nothingness and wholeness of the meta-reality because we exist only in realities. When we stay in this void, we cease to exist to a certain extent and although we transcend mortal life, we also die.

This paradox stems from the inevitable determinism of existence (a model). We cannot not have a subjective point of view; we cannot not live in a particular reality. Our subjective point-of-viewness implies that we are bound to perceive the world, at a given moment, through a particular model. It is impossible to live in the world of Meta models. The Meta model (nothingness and wholeness) is a space outside space, in which existence is more theoretical than concrete. This is a transitional space, which abides to quantum reality more than a Newtonian space. It has tentative and absolute qualities at the same time. However, although we cannot but hold a specific view, it is possible to quickly shift between different ones. As a matter of fact, this is what we aim for.

Elvis Costello wrote a beautiful song about personality change and fear of change.

The chorus says:

All grown up

And you don't care anymore

And you hate all the people that you used to adore

And you despise all the rumours and lies of the life you led before³

This is an example of moving through realities, we change as our models change, as our worlds form. Sometimes we seem to turn into different people when we change our realities. One of the fears people associate with changing models is losing

themselves and turning into someone else. But who would I be if I lose weight, if I'm attractive and sexy, asked me a client who wanted to lose weight. I believe that the core-thread that holds us when we flow between different realities is god; that we are generously kept **ONE** through creative movement, through dynamics.

According to my model, when we are in the space of nothingness and wholeness, we manifest god and become inspired. We get meaning and reality that constantly change. We are endlessly created in the shape of god, so we experience immortality. In the action of making sense, we create ourselves and others. We take part in the paradox of limiting our reality by defining it, and expanding our reality by enabling being.

Therapy is harnessing meta-modelling approaches to encourage incubation of divinity. I have been told by Jamie Bloom, a Tai-Chi teacher, about a movement that is called 'embrace tiger to return to the mountain.' The tiger seeks solitude in the mountain to gather courage and strength before coming back. This is what we do in therapy - we supply the safe home to facilitate model expansion. In successful therapy, the therapist holds the nothingness and wholeness for the warrior. Successful therapy is an invitation to explore spaces of different realities, where god (or freedom) accompanies us.

In transitional stages, before adopting (or being projected by) a new reality, before constructing a new model - there we are, at genesis, at Tohubohu⁴. Nothing is rigid or absolute; all is possible. It is unbearably flexible; it is painfully fluid. Maybe this is what Thales of Miletus, the pioneer of natural philosophy meant when he said in the 6th century B.C "All is water" (Hussey, 1972; Scolnicov, 1981). In these transitional stages we face a void of nothingness and wholeness - where all opportunities are potential albeit no one yet actualised, breathed. Surely this is why change and changework can be such as struggle. To begin a structural change is to acknowledge the nothingness and wholeness of our reality; to be able to stand in the chaotic abyss of hyleic emptiness and say: I am, let there be light.

Good therapists can tolerate the holding of the emptiness and wholeness for their clients, without tempering with the infinite opportunities. They can leave the universe

chaotic yet safe. It is more than being an auxiliary ego for the client, as some psychotherapies claim; in a good therapeutic process, the therapist serve as an auxiliary reality former, so the client can call forth upon god, to realise himself.

F. Aesthetics of models

If there are, as I propose, infinite realities that are created by the act of realisation, that are equally valid representations of god, then what is it that makes some models better than others?

I believe that the universe aspires harmony and diversion, and that to some extent all models are good, all realities are worthy of existing - they all have some aesthetic value because they all **ARE**. However, when I take a therapeutic point of view, the value of a model changes according to the degree of flexibility and pulsation, to the degree of life it holds. I try to find how beneficial is this model for the person that lives this reality. To find this I may ask:

Does the current model foster expansion of life?

Can the person live fully, prosper and grow under his or her reality?

Is it economical? Is it aesthetic? Is it simple?

Does it allow other models / realities in? Is it flexible? Can it change?

Is the person alive in this reality? Are there manifestations of life in this model?

Can this reality survive and prosper within the common/shared sociocultural realities?

Happiness, so I believe, is about the creation of aesthetically congruent realities.

Being in a model that fosters life and expansion is a nurturing experience. But even more important than the nature of the current reality one holds, is the ability to move between models, to shift perceptions and realities - to live in god. To be able to do that, we need to tolerate the nothingness and wholeness of meta-models; to be able to do that, we need to have faith.

In our era, when so many realities lack god, therapists serve as the priests and prophets who hold god for the people to communicate with. As therapists, we allow our clients to have something bigger than themselves, so they can transcend their

reality into the space of wholeness-nothingness, before taking (hopefully) a more beneficial one. Without faith, without 'holding the space' we frequently become fearful of the Tohubohu and choose an inadequate new reality. When we can tolerate it a little longer, we can wisely construct a reality that is more nurturing, moving and dynamic. The better models and realities are usually shorter-lived than the rigid ones, because a part of their efficacy lies in their dynamic change into others. I believe that god's disappearance from so many realities is the direct cause for the extensive need for holding, for therapy. To allow faith, in any form it may take, is to cuddle in the embrace of nurturing reality-formation and to grow. To bring faith into therapy is to give absolute validity to the client's model, and to bring divine value to the process of reality formation.

Footnotes

1. Different psychological and philosophical approaches use different terms when talking about models. Models are reality-maps, schemata, loci of perception, personal constructs - they all mean the same thing, which I refer to as models.
2. Quoted in Rogers, 1978
3. Elvis Costello, All grown-up, in *Mighty like a rose*, 1991
4. Derives from Hebrew Tohu Wa Bohu - without form and void, from Tohu: formlessness, confusion + bohu: emptiness (Merriam Webster's Dictionary).

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