

# Butchers, Stage-Hypnosis and the Invention of Sex

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Rolef Ben-Shahar, A. (2007). Butchers, stage-hypnosis and the invention of sex. *Self & Society, A Journal of Humanistic Psychology in Britain*, 34(6), 39-42.

This paper was originally written as an endeavour to familiarise the therapeutic community with Neuro-Linguistic-Psychotherapy (NLPT), and differentiate this new modality of psychotherapy from Neuro-Linguistic-Programming (NLP). Although Neuro-Linguistic-Psychotherapy shares a lot with NLP, its values, focus and breadth differ. Perhaps more importantly, the therapeutic relationship has an important place in NLPT while it is of little importance in NLP. May this paper clarify some questions and awaken curiosity in Neuro-Linguistic-Psychotherapy.

My dad used to tell me that twice in our lifetime do we get to know everything: the first time is when we are two-years-old, the second is when we are eighteen. The rest of our life, he told me, we are free from this delusion. Life to him was a curious and humble discovery of our ignorance, and of the unfathomable richness of humanity.

As an Israeli living in England, I often find myself feeling this strange conflict between pride and shame: I am proud to be an Israeli, I am proud of my heritage and ancestry yet sometimes I feel great shame to witness Israeli actions, and Israeli policies. NLP frequently evokes a similar sense of shame in me, and for the sake of my community I would like to present a humanistic view of Neuro-Linguistic-Psychotherapy.

Let me reveal one of the best kept secrets behind stage-hypnosis: **Stage-Hypnosis has less to do with hypnosis and more to do with simple social-psychology.** One of the greatest human needs is to belong, and this results in a strong tendency to comply. As a species, we would often compromise our beliefs, thoughts or wishes if we believe that our behaviours would otherwise result in our exclusion.

Stage-hypnotists are masters of using this tendency: when we stand on the stage, we would rather pretend that we can see everybody naked than have to deal with embarrassment of 'not

getting it right'. Actually, research in group psychology has shown that under pressure, there is nothing we would hate more than nonconforming. So much so that we are actually likely to believe that we have seen the audience naked; even if we didn't. Sounds crazy? The traditional folk tale of "The King's new Clothes" demonstrates exactly that.

Another strong human tendency is compliance with authority. Give a man a white robe and he becomes an expert. You should hear how people change their tone when they discover that my wife is a doctor. My mom would trust my wife's advice about a backache more than she would mine even though I have trained in body-psychotherapy and my wife is a geneticist working in cancer research!

Stage-hypnotists use these forces for the purpose of creating compliance, as a tool for entertainment. Stage-hypnotists, though, did not 'discover' these human tendencies, but learned how to harness them for entertaining presentations. And they are not the only ones! The advertising industry would have collapsed without the human need to belong and conform: we buy to belong; we buy to be like...

The need to belong and conform was also present at the lowest marks of human history, and any fundamental regime made use of these powerful human tendencies.

On the other hand, those tendencies are also the very fundamentals of law, ethics and moral practice. We can trust that society, as a whole, can maintain its integrity because we have a need to comply, and will be prepared to compromise our comfort to be included and belong. These are among the strong pressures that allow for order, and for social sanity.

So, are these two human forces 'the need to belong' and 'the tendency to comply with authority' good or bad? The answer is clear – it depends.

In themselves, these tendencies have no moral value. They can be used constructively and morally, they can be used for personal or corporate purposes and they can be abused. My entire ancestry was wiped off the face of this earth as a result of such abuse, and killed in concentration camps. And human history is full of examples of the use and abuse of these tendencies.

Neuro-Linguistic-Programming (NLP) is concerned with modelling – with finding how we do what we do, and as such is highly influenced by social tendencies such as those discussed

above. The common claim that NLP co-creator Richard Bandler invented behavioural modelling is akin to trying to copyright sex. Although the market is full of books claiming to present "The ultimate orgasm," "The Only Really Amazing Technique To Pump Up Your Sex Life" or even "The Secrets of Ancient Tibetan Sex Practices – The Path for Enlightenment", it's good to know that even our fellow cavemen and cavewomen knew about sexual pleasures. Modelling, too, is a natural evolutionary way of learning by observation and by 'trying it on'. We all do it, this is how babies learn how to walk, talk and tell jokes; this is how I learned to eat with chopsticks and to patiently queue in the supermarket: I observed and followed. By the way, has anybody even considered copyrighting sex? After all, every teenager is absolutely certain that he or she has discovered it! Prior to them we have just laid eggs.

Indeed, Richard Bandler and later developers of NLP have created systematic ways of modelling, but these are not 'creations' as much as 're-organizations'. Bandler (and NLP co-creator John Grinder, who is no longer best friends with Richard) observed three of the greatest therapists of our modern time, Milton Erickson, Virginia Satir and Fritz Perls and developed therapeutic models out of their work. What NLP did to therapy is making the complex work of these genius therapists more accessible to us simpletons. It's like 'human change for dummies', which allowed many therapists to actually put highly complex patterns into practice in a clear and effective manner. NLP has also turned the attention from asking 'why do you do this?' into "how do you do this, and how can you do it differently?"

Like the human tendency to comply, Neuro-Linguistic-Programming has no immanent moral value. Its value is created in the way NLP is used. And indeed, NLP has been used in very different ways! The advertising industry has applied NLP understanding (and other social-psychology principles) to make people buy more stuff - after all, this is YOUR LAST CHANCE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR LIFE BY BUYING THIS EVEN BETTER BLABLABLA. In the cooperate world, NLP has been used to increase effective communication and/or to increase profits. In other contexts, NLP principles have been used to manipulate, to seduce, to distort and, in the case of Paul McKenna – to entertain and sell more books; a whole load of more books! And to claim that people need fixing because there is something wrong in the way we use our brains – how pretentious!

Unlike stage hypnosis and writing many books about how to fix people, psychotherapy isn't such a lucrative business. People don't become psychotherapists out of wish to make loads of money. Television shows and self-help books are a much quicker way to make a buck.

NLP, when used by a person who has been trained as a psychotherapist; someone who invested their time, money and heart in wanting to help people, can look very different than the NLP presented in last week's article. We call ourselves Neuro-Linguistic-Psychotherapists and not Neuro-Linguistic-Programmers because we don't believe that people are machines, nor do we believe that our problems 'require fixing' like machines. As Neuro-Linguistic-Psychotherapists we also understand that people can be helped in many ways, and NLP is not the only path to enlightenment. Most psychotherapists that I know are highly respectful of other therapies, and are keen to learn from others. Most psychotherapists that I know are engaged in the curious and humble discovery of our ignorance, and of the unfathomable richness of humanity. But we are still curious about language, and about how we can change behaviours, beliefs and values, and how we can grow as people, and help others grow in their own way.

In the Jewish Tradition, the person who performs the ritual of circumcision is called a Mohel. Not only are Mohels trained in the famous cut, but they also approach the circumcision with ritualistic, humanistic and religious intent, which is just as important to the cut. Their heart skills are just as vital as their steady hands. Surgeons are just as skilful in cutting, and may have broader understanding of the human body, but they may lack the ritualistic and religious intent. After all, circumcision is more than a cut; it is a ritual of belonging and a declaration of commitment. And then again, Butchers are highly skilled with the knife too, and most butchers I know are really nice people.

I am grateful to the art of surgery, which has made the life of my loved ones possible. I am respectful of butchers and recognize their importance in our society, and their skills.

But when my son is born, I will make sure that I find myself a Mohel, one that comes with recommendations.

My dad used to tell me that twice in our lifetime do we get to know everything: the first time is when we are two-years-old, the second when we are eighteen. The rest of our life, he told me, was a curious and humble discovery of our ignorance. And when this discovery is painful or confusing, and when my heart aches - I seek professional psychotherapeutic help.

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**Internet resources for Neuro-Linguistic-Psychotherapy in the UK:**

Neuro-Linguistic-Psychotherapy & Counselling Association (NLPtCA): [www.nlptca.org](http://www.nlptca.org)

Beeleaf Training and development: [www.beeleaf.com](http://www.beeleaf.com)