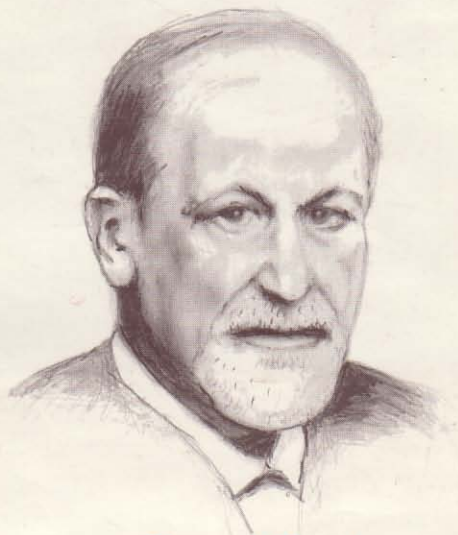
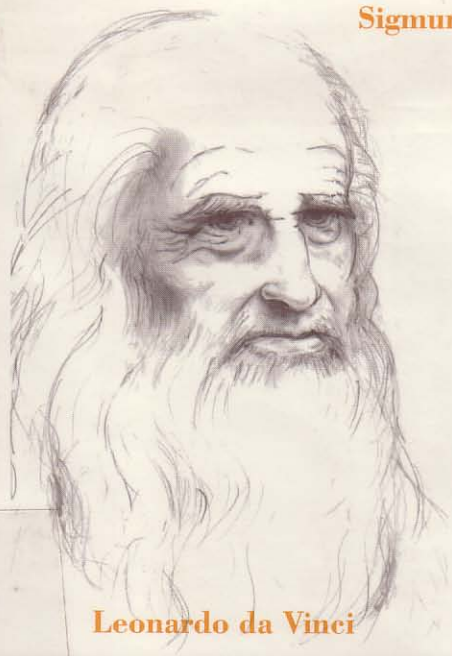


# Strategies of Genius

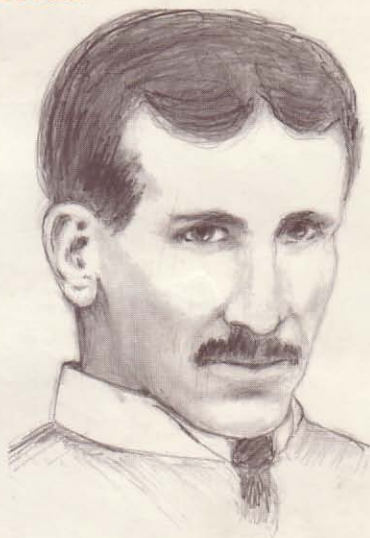
---



**Sigmund Freud**



**Leonardo da Vinci**



**Nikola Tesla**

**Robert B. Dilts**

# About Strategies of Genius: Volume III

- Is it possible for mental and even physical healing to take place through the use of language alone?
- If so, how and why?
- What was the basis of Sigmund Freud's "talking cure" for the symptoms of hysteria and neurosis?
- What is the relationship between Freud's work and modern psychotherapeutic models?
- How can his methods help deal with everyday problems or assist people to change limiting beliefs?
- What made Leonardo da Vinci such a prolific scientific researcher as well as an exceptional artist?
- Is it possible for an average person to be as inventive as Leonardo?
- What made it possible for Nikola Tesla to build an entire machine using only his mind's eye?
- How does a person learn to visualize if he or she is not already able to do it naturally?

These questions and many others are explored and answered in this third volume of *Strategies of Genius*. NLP developer, trainer and author Robert Dilts studies the cognitive strategies of *Sigmund Freud*, *Leonardo da Vinci* and *Nikola Tesla* to uncover unique strategies for healing, change and creativity. This fascinating inquiry into the minds of these three exceptional men unveils the strategies by which they were able to explore and uncover the 'deeper structures' of the mind, nature and the future, and in doing so, change our world.

Examine Freud's strategies for observation, analysis and interpretation by focusing on seemingly trivial details. Investigate Leonardo's strategies for stimulating his imagination, improving his memory and probing the 'first principles' of nature by 'chunking' and synthesizing core elements of a system. Learn how Nikola Tesla was able to visualize to the degree that the only laborer he employed to develop his incredible inventions was the

By combining the power of NLP with the brilliant insights of history's greatest geniuses and innovators, this model and present simple but effective techniques for changing beliefs and behavior.



9780916990343

STRATEGIES OF GENIUS



Strategies  
of Genius

---

**Volume III**

**Sigmund Freud**  
**Leonardo da Vinci**  
**Nikola Tesla**

*by*

Robert B. Dilts

Meta Publications  
P.O. Box 1910  
Capitola, California 95010  
(408) 464 - 0254  
FAX (408) 464 - 0517

# Contents

Dedication	v
Acknowledgments	vii
Preface	ix
<b>CHAPTER 1 SIGMUND FREUD</b>	
<b>THE SEARCH FOR DEEP STRUCTURE</b>	1
Section 1: Freud's Epistemology of Mind	5
Section 2: Freud's Analysis of Leonardo da Vinci	19
Review and Reflections on Freud's Analysis of da Vinci	56
Section 3: Freud's Analysis of Michelangelo's Moses	83
Summary and Reflections on Freud's Analysis of Michelangelo's Moses	110
Section 4: Applications of Freud's Strategies	116
Section 5: Exploring Deeper Structures	118
Section 6: The Meta Model	121
Section 7: Changing Personal History	145
Section 8: Reframing	168
Section 9: Reimprinting	185
Section 10: Integration of Conflicting Beliefs	219
Section 11: Freud and Self-Organization Theory	255
Self Organization, Sublimation and the 'Swish' Pattern	263
The Belief Change Cycle	271
Strategies of Change Management	286
Section 12: Conclusion	293

3/96 B&T 29.95  
Original artwork by Robert B. Dilts.

© Copyright 1995 by Meta Publications. Printed in the United States of America. All rights reserved. This book or parts thereof may not be reproduced in any form without written permission of the Publisher.

Library of Congress Card Number 94-77-813  
I.S.B.N. 0-916990-34-6



<b>CHAPTER 2 LEONARDO DA VINCI</b>	299
<b>MAPPING THE MICROCOSM</b>	302
Section 1: Knowing How to See	311
Section 2: Leonardo's 'Cosmography' of the Body	318
Section 3: Seeing' Systemically	323
Section 4: Imagination:	
The Rudder and Bridle of the Senses	328
Section 5: Making Machines	332
Section 6: Making Masterpieces	341
Section 7: Implementing Leonardo's Strategies	343
Developing Perceptual Filters	
Leonardo's Strategy for	
Systemic Thinking and Invention	345
Section 8: Conclusion	355
<b>CHAPTER 3 NIKOLA TESLA</b>	359
<b>MASTERING THE MIND'S EYE</b>	363
Section 1: Envisioning the Future	370
Section 2: Developing the Capability to Visualize	
Section 3: Applying Tesla's Strategy -	
Creating the Future	383
Section 4: Conclusion	387
<b>CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSION</b>	384
<b>AFTERWORD</b>	405
<b>APPENDIX A META PROGRAM PATTERNS</b>	407
<b>APPENDIX B PRESUPPOSITIONS OF NLP</b>	409
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	411

## Dedication

This book is dedicated with love and respect to  
my father Robert W. Dilts  
who taught me the love of ideas and inventions,  
the appreciation for true genius  
and the power of wisdom.

# Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge:

John Grinder and Richard Bandler, who got me started on this journey in search of genius; and who provided me with many of the tools I needed to make my way.

Peter Kruse and Wolfgang Eberling, for introducing me to the vast potential of the principles of self-organizing systems.

Paul Yurt, who directed me to the source material on Tesla.

Ami Sattinger who helped with the editing and proof reading of the manuscripts for this book and provided encouragement to get through some of the difficult stages.

My wife Anita, and my children Andrew and Julia whose continued understanding, patience and support made it possible for me to put in all of the effort necessary to complete this book.



# Preface

The title of this series is *Strategies of Genius*, but, ultimately, this work is about *wisdom* as much as it is about genius. This study of the strategies of genius has been a personal quest—a quest for wisdom that started some twenty years ago when I first became involved in the field of Neuro-Linguistic Programming. It has not only been a quest for the wisdom of the mind, but also the wisdom of nature, the wisdom of the body, the wisdom of the imagination and the wisdom of the heart.

I believe that *excellence* comes from a passionate commitment to a single perspective. In order to become good at something, one must stay associated in one's own personal perspective and focus. This is an important way to learn and progress, but it is not necessarily wise. In fact, sometimes it produces unecological repercussions.

*Genius* comes from a passionate commitment to the integration of multiple perspectives. J. Bronowski, the author of the book *The Ascent of Man*, claimed that "a genius is a person who has *two* great ideas." The work of genius arises from the person's attempts to get them to fit together. When one has become excellent in several different areas and then is able to synthesize them, one begins to approach genius. It is through the integration of multiple perspectives that the deeper structures of ideas become revealed to us. It is the discovery of the deep structure beneath the many and varied surface structures that is the core criterion of genius.

*Wisdom* comes from a passionate commitment to the constant process of taking multiple perspectives. Since the world is in constant change, we cannot rely on yesterday's answers as being true for tomorrow. Wisdom is not something you do or get, rather, it is something in which you participate in an ongoing way.

In the words of anthropologist Gregory Bateson:

*"[Wisdom comes from] sitting together and truthfully discussing our differences - without the intent to change them."*

The intent to change someone else's model of the world implies a judgment of that model. None of us are omniscient enough to know the 'right' map or take in all of the systems within systems within systems that might be effected by our actions. Wise and ecological change comes from discovering, creating and offering alternatives—from constantly widening and enriching our maps by:

- 1) Taking all perspectives relevant to the system in which one is interacting.
- 2) Considering and aligning all levels of experience in relation to the system one is in.
- 3) Respecting all time frames necessary to ecologically incorporate change within that system.

Rather than simply provide interesting ideas or new techniques, I think the geniuses in this study have contributed to widening our maps of the world in the ways described above. The previous two volumes of *Strategies of Genius* have examined the cognitive strategies and thinking processes of five well known figures, all considered to be geniuses in some way: Aristotle, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, Walt Disney, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Albert Einstein. The three individuals studied in this volume—Sigmund Freud, Leonardo da Vinci and Nikola Tesla—are equally fascinating people [I am planning a fourth volume on Gregory Bateson, Milton H. Erickson and Moshe Feldenkrais; and a fifth volume which will focus exclusively on women geniuses]. This book, however, is not intended to be biographical. Rather than focus on the specific behaviors and accomplishments of the individuals to be studied, the purpose of this book is to explore their thoughts; and more importantly the deeper structures beneath their thoughts, ideas and inventions.

As I attempted in the second volume on Albert Einstein, my goal with these three geniuses was to try to make some of their ideas and strategies more clear and 'user friendly'—especially those of Sigmund Freud. Many of the ideas, however, are nonetheless quite provocative and deep, and you may want to read some of the sections twice—just to give them an opportunity to 'sink in'. The applications portion of the chapter on Freud, in fact, could almost be considered a type of 'workbook'.

As you will see, the vast majority of this volume has been devoted to Freud. This was not necessarily by design, however. Initially, I had intended to write fewer than 100 pages on Freud, but the more I began to write about him (especially the 'applications' section), the more I realized how deeply influential he had been for myself and those in my field. Freud believed that mental, and even physical, healing could take place through the use of language, which is the essence of many NLP techniques. Freud, for example, was the main influence on me in the development of the 'reimprinting' technique. In the spirit of the quest behind this work, one of my goals in spending so much time on Freud was to 'widen the map', as it were, of his work. I decided it was time for someone to explain how and why psychoanalytic methods worked, from an NLP perspective; and how and why NLP techniques worked from a psychoanalytic perspective. Furthermore, as Bateson's comment above advises, I wanted to discuss what NLP might add to Freud's methods—and what Freud's ideas and principles could add to NLP.

I have been familiar with the work of Leonardo da Vinci and Nikola Tesla since my childhood. My father was a patent attorney and an admirer of the world's great inventors and innovators. So Leonardo, the 'patron saint' of inventors, was a kind of hero of his—and became a joint favorite of ours. Since my father's particular area of specialty was advanced electronics, he was quite familiar of Nikola Tesla's work and had a collection of Tesla's patents which he studied with admiration (Tesla's ideas were so advanced that he had to write his own patents, because the attorneys and examiners could not understand them well enough). I can remember the awe I felt when I was a boy and my father explained how one could generate electricity with an unseen magnetic force. [One of my earliest science experiments was attempting to make a 'Tesla coil.']

I have not really gone into the specific 'content' of Leonardo and Tesla's work at all, which makes them somewhat different than Freud (and probably easier for most readers).

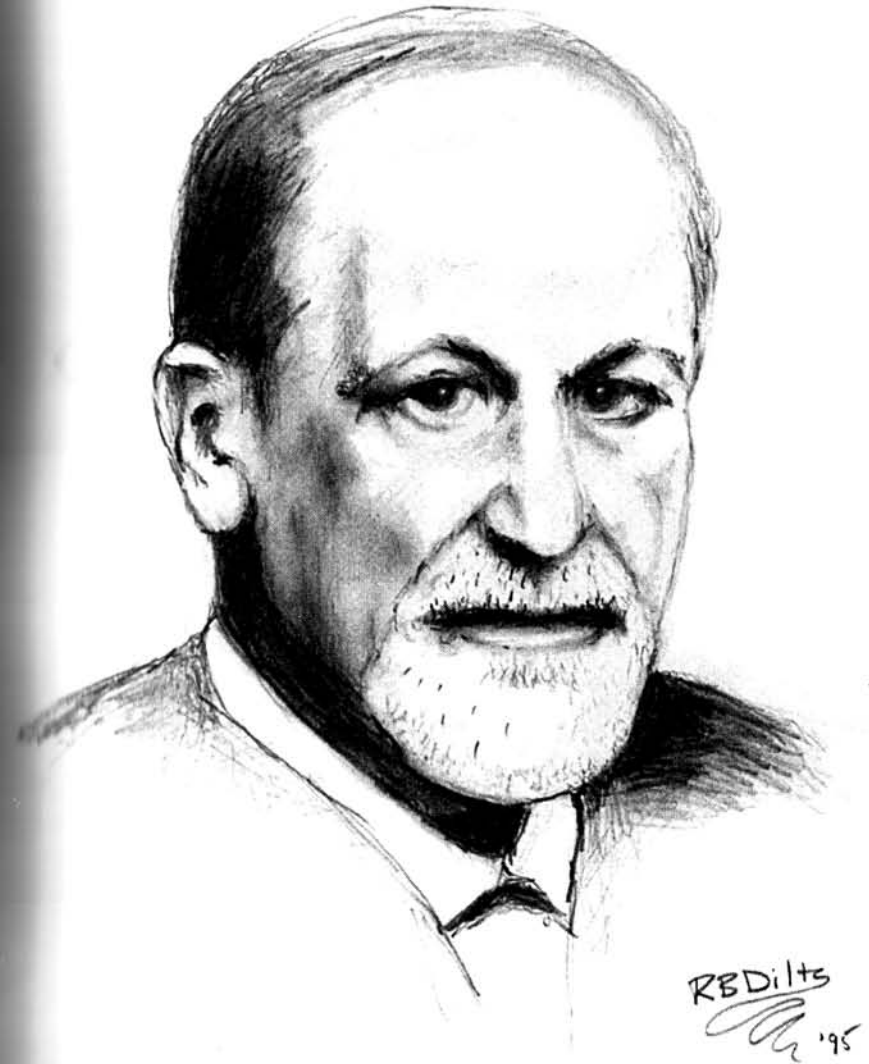
As with the previous volumes of this work, the order of the three studies is designed to build on certain themes and the chapters to make reference to one another. It is not absolutely necessary, on the other hand, to read them consecutively, and you may want to



skip around a bit. Also, because the chapter on Freud is so extensive, you may want to be selective about the sections you read in that chapter as well. The study of Freud, for instance, has two main sections; one focusing on how he thought, and one examining how his ideas may be applied, primarily to finding solutions and managing change with respect to mental and emotional issues. If you are a psychologist or therapist, you may want to turn immediately to the applications section. If you are more interested in how Freud thought than in the applications of his ideas to problem solving you may want to skip over the applications section or only read selected parts.

It has been said that the true goal of learning is not to follow in the footsteps of our teachers but rather to “seek what they sought.” I invite you to appreciate and learn not only from the genius of the people studied in this volume, but also their wisdom. I hope the strategies that I have presented in this book will help you to better “seek what they sought” and help you on your own quest, whatever that may be.

Robert B. Dilts  
Santa Cruz, California  
February, 1995



**Sigmund Freud**

# Chapter 1

---

## Sigmund Freud

### The Search for 'Deep Structure'

#### Overview of Chapter 1

- Freud's Epistemology of Mind
- Freud's Analysis of Leonardo da Vinci
- Freud's Analysis of Michelangelo's Moses
- Applications of Freud's Strategies
- Exploring Deeper Structures
- The Meta Model
- Change Personal History
- Reframing
- Reimprinting
- Integration of Conflicting Beliefs
- Freud and Self-Organization Theory
  - Self organization, Sublimation and the 'Swish' Pattern
  - The Belief Change Cycle
  - Strategies of Change Management
- Conclusion



## Sigmund Freud

### The Search for 'Deep Structure'

Sigmund Freud (1856 - 1939) is considered by many to be one of the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century. His theories of the unconscious psychodynamic forces which underlie human behavior have shaped our modern understanding of the mind. The methods he developed for his process of *psychoanalysis* not only formed the foundation for modern psychotherapy, but have also been applied to the understanding of social behavior, artistic creation, religion and the development of civilization. In many ways, Freud's work was responsible for bringing psychology from a laboratory curiosity to an applied science.

Exploring Freud's own thinking processes can make a special contribution to the study of the strategies of genius. Not only does Freud himself certainly qualify as a genius, but his methods of observation and analysis may help to supply additional insight into the understanding of the mental processes at the basis of genius. Clearly, Freud's powers of observation and analytical thinking were exceptional. They were also quite systematic and are well documented in his writings about his work.

Through the modeling tools and distinctions provided by *Neuro-Linguistic Programming* we can gain another level of insight into the underlying strategies through which Freud made his observations, interpretations and interventions. While Freud himself posed many theories and hypotheses about the mind and even the psychological processes behind genius, the focus of NLP is not on the content of those theories, but rather on attempting to identify the cognitive strategies through which they were formed and implemented. The tools of NLP allow us to explore how Freud applied processes such as vision, language and feelings to experience the world around him and form his model of it.

## Section 1:

### Freud's Epistemology of 'Mind'

To help us begin to identify and define the structure of Freud's strategies it is useful to understand the context in which they were developed and the 'problem space' to which they were applied. Clearly, the primary area of application for Freud's micro and macro strategies was the identification and treatment of mental and emotional problems. Trained as a physician, Freud found himself attracted to 'psychosomatic' phenomena - the area of symptom formation in which mind and body most overlap. In addition to his study of the use of *cocaine* as an anesthetic, Freud's early work included the exploration of the medical applications of *hypnosis* and the dramatic physical symptoms associated with '*hysteria*'. While Freud later generalized his methods to the treatment of more common neurotic symptoms and his landmark work on the interpretation of dreams, it was this work with hypnosis and hysteria that formed the basis for his operating methods and analytical approach - i.e., his "meta strategy."

As we established in previous volumes, a *meta strategy* is the higher level strategy from which a person's other strategies are derived. An individual's meta strategy relates to his or her general patterns of thinking and basic beliefs and assumptions about the world. Another term for meta strategy is "*epistemology*." The term "epistemology" comes from the Greek words *epi* (meaning 'above' or 'upon'), *histanai* (meaning to 'set' or 'place') and *logos* (meaning 'word' or 'reason') - i.e., "that upon which we set our reasoning." An epistemology, then, is the fundamental system of knowledge upon which one bases all other knowledge.

As a result of his work with hypnosis and hysteria, Freud formed an epistemology of the mind that shaped his strategies for analysis and change. He developed the belief "*that mental processes are essentially unconscious, and that those which are conscious are merely isolated acts and parts of the whole psychic entity.*"<sup>1</sup> Freud came to appreciate more and more the significance of unconscious processes in human behavior, maintaining that most of the processes that take place within our nervous system

occur outside of our awareness. Claiming that *"the acceptance of unconscious mental processes represents a decisive step toward a new orientation in the world and in science,"* Freud asserted:

*[W]e resolve to think of the consciousness or unconsciousness of a mental process as merely one of its qualities and not necessarily definitive...Each single process belongs in the first place to the unconscious psychological system; from this system it can under certain conditions proceed further into the conscious system.* <sup>2</sup>

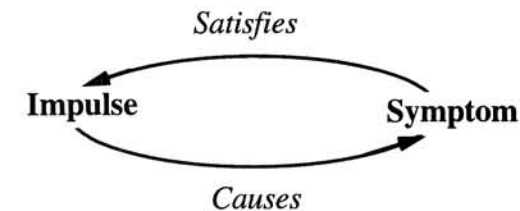
According to Freud, certain neurological processes could reach conscious awareness, but their purpose or meaning could not be determined independently of the context and ecology of the larger unconscious system of which they were a part. In this regard, his view of human behavior was analogous to Einstein's belief that "God does not play dice with the universe." That is, neither the external physical world nor the internal psychological world are simply clusters of random or statistical events. Rather, there is an underlying order even to seemingly bizarre or chaotic phenomena. We only consider them as random or chaotic because we have not yet been able to perceive the larger system of which they are a part.

In his analysis and interpretation of his patients' symptoms, Freud sought to uncover how a particular behavioral manifestation fit into the larger unconscious and unperceived system of which it was a member. He maintained:

*"Every time we meet with a symptom we may conclude that definite unconscious activities which contain the meaning of the symptom are present in the patient's mind."* <sup>3</sup>

For Freud, the resolutions to a person's symptoms emerged from finding the 'meaning' of the symptom in terms of its purpose or 'fit' into the larger system to which it belonged. Thus, his methods of observation and analysis were established for the purpose of solving the riddles posed by his patient's symptoms; to find and explain the reasons *why* the symptom existed in the first place.

*[Psychoanalysis] is desirous to know what the symptoms signify, what instinctual impulses lurk behind them and are satisfied by them, and by what transitions the mysterious past has led from those impulses to those symptoms.* <sup>4</sup>



### Freud Sought To Define The Relationship Between Symptoms And "Instinctual Impulses."

In this statement, Freud summarizes the three main goals of his observational and analytical strategies for problem solving - identifying:

- 1) what symptoms "signify",
- 2) what "instinctual impulses" are behind the symptoms, and
- 3) what series of "transitions" has led those particular "impulses" to form those particular symptoms.

Essentially, Freud believed that by bringing the underlying elements which were responsible for the formation and maintenance of a symptom through the "conditions" which allowed them to "proceed further into the conscious system," they would undergo a kind of natural, self-correcting process, and the "whole psychic entity" would again achieve balance.

A core property of any natural system is that it constantly seeks states of *homeostasis* and equilibrium. Systems are set up to internally adjust and self organize to maintain this balance as elements are added to or eliminated from the inside system or its

external environment. The human nervous system is designed to be naturally self-correcting in this way. Freud's belief was that symptoms formed when that natural process was stopped or inhibited in some way. The "symptom" was a sign that the nervous system was still attempting to heal itself but was stuck in some part of the healing process.

*[I]t follows from the existence of a symptom that some mental process has not been carried through to an end in a normal manner so that it could become conscious [and thus enter into the self-correcting feedback loop - R.D.]; the symptom is a substitute for that which has not come through.*<sup>5</sup>

According to Freud, the normal process of completion was stopped either because 1) there were missing links between parts of the system (something had not yet been connected to another part of the system to which it needed to be connected), or 2) a part of the system was being prevented from being connected to another part of the system because of an internal conflict (a process Freud called "repression").

For Freud, both of these problems were resolved by uncovering the purpose the symptom served within the system by finding its "meaning" and making that meaning conscious to the patient. He claimed, "*making conscious the unconscious, removing the repressions, filling the gaps in memory, they all amount to the same thing.*"<sup>6</sup> Freud believed that by going through processes required to discover the meaning of the symptom consciously, the gaps were spontaneously filled in and the conflicts automatically resolved.

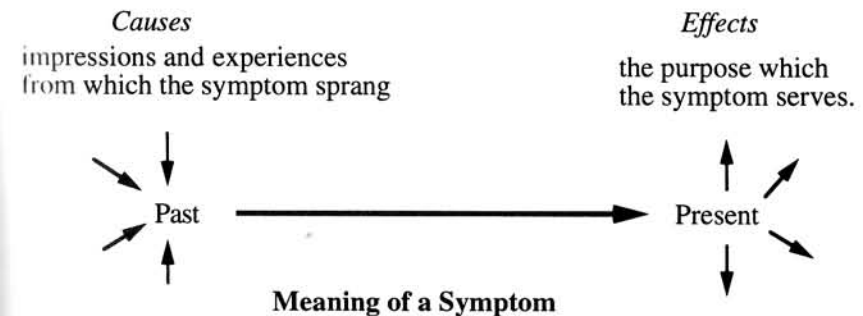
*[I]t is the transformation of the unconscious thoughts into conscious thoughts, that makes our work effective...By extending the unconscious into consciousness the repressions are raised, the conditions of symptom-formation are abolished, and the pathogenic conflict exchanged for a normal one which must be decided one way or the other. We do nothing for our patients but enable this one mental*

*change to take place in them; the extent to which it is achieved is the extent of the benefit we do them.*<sup>7</sup>

Whether or not one agrees with Freud's beliefs, it is clear that Freud's strategies and methods were all directed toward solving the riddle of a person's "symptoms" by uncovering the unperceived meaning behind the behaviors and thoughts which constituted them, and then bringing that meaning into conscious awareness.

Freud believed that the "unconscious activities" which contained the meaning of a symptom were internal processes relating to its causes and its effects within the larger system of which it was a part. As he explained:

*Two things are combined to constitute the meaning of a symptom;... the impressions and experiences from which it sprang, and the purpose which it serves.*<sup>8</sup>



The implication of this principle is that what keeps a symptom in place and gives it its impact is the position it has within a system of interactions that relate to both the *past* and the *present*. According to Aristotle (see *Strategies of Genius Volume I*), Freud is referring to 1) the 'precipitating' or 'antecedent' causes of the symptom (i.e., "*the impressions and experiences from which it sprang*") and 2) its 'constraining' causes ("*the purpose which it*



serves"). It was to discovering these types of causes that Freud primarily devoted his attention and directed his strategies.

One way to think about Freud's model is that a symptom forms a kind of point of "confluence" within the nervous system which mobilizes and connects clusters of activity from other parts of the system. Uncovering the meaning of a symptom involves the ability to discover the cluster of conditions from the past under which it came about and discern the purpose it serves within the present system. When this is done, new information may be introduced into the system that changes the dynamic relationship of the symptom to the rest of the system, triggering the natural self correcting process and leading to the eventual resolution. As Freud maintained:

*In order to dissolve the symptoms it is necessary to go back to the point at which they originated, to review the conflict from which they proceeded, and with the help of propelling forces which at that time were not available to guide it towards a new solution.*<sup>9</sup>

### *The Role of Language in Freud's Meta Strategy*

A key element in Freud's epistemology and 'meta strategy' was the role that language played in problem solving and human interaction. According to Freud, the primary tool available with which to find a symptom's origin, unveil the conflict at the base of the symptom and guide an individual towards a new solution, was language. He considered language to be more than just a means of signaling or communicating. To Freud, verbal language was the crowning achievement of human development and constituted a powerful and unique influence on the processes of human understanding and change. He believed that words were the basic instrument of human consciousness and as such had special powers. As he put it:

*Words and magic were in the beginning one and the same thing, and even today words retain much of their magical*

*power. By words one of us can give another the greatest happiness or bring about utter despair; by words the teacher imparts his knowledge to the student; by words the orator sweeps his audience with him and determines its judgments and decisions. Words call forth emotions and are universally the means by which we influence our fellow-creatures.*<sup>10</sup>

Freud's emphasis on the importance of language resonates with some of the key principles of "Neuro-Linguistic Programming." The essence of Neuro-Linguistic Programming is that the functioning of our nervous system ("neuro") is intimately tied up with our capability for language ("linguistic"). The strategies ("programs") through which we organize and guide our behavior are made up of neurological and verbal patterns. In their first book, *The Structure of Magic*, Richard Bandler and John Grinder (the co-founders of NLP) strove to define some principles behind the seeming "magic" of language to which Freud referred.

*"All the accomplishments of the human race, both positive and negative, have involved the use of language. We as human beings use our language in two ways. We use it first of all to represent our experience - we call this activity reasoning, thinking, fantasizing, rehearsing. When we use language as a representational system, we are creating a model of our experience. This model of the world which we create by our representational use of language is based upon our perceptions of the world. Our perceptions are also partially determined by our model or representation... Secondly, we use our language to communicate our model or representation of the world to each other. When we use language to communicate, we call it talking, discussing, writing, lecturing, singing"*<sup>11</sup>

Thus, according to Bandler and Grinder, language serves as a means to represent or create models of our experience as well as to communicate about it. The Greeks, in fact, had different words for these two uses of language. They used the term *rhema* to indicate words used as a medium of communication and the term *logos* to



indicate words associated with thinking and understanding. *Rhema* (ρημα) meant a saying or 'words as things'. *Logos* (λογος) meant words associated with the 'manifestation of reason'. The great Greek philosopher Aristotle described the relationship between words and mental experience in the following way:

*"Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words. Just as all men have not the same writing, so all men have not the same speech sounds, but the mental experiences, which these directly symbolize, are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experiences are the images."*<sup>12</sup>

Aristotle's claim that words "symbolize" our "mental experience" echoes the NLP notion that written and spoken words are 'surface structures' which are transformations of other mental and linguistic 'deep structures'. As a result, words can both reflect and shape mental experiences. This makes them a powerful tool for thought and other conscious or unconscious mental processes. By accessing the deep structure beyond the specific words used by an individual, we can identify and influence the process level mental operations reflected through that person's language patterns.

Considered in this way, language is not just an 'epiphenomenon' or a set of arbitrary signs by which we communicate about our mental experience; it is a key part of our mental experience. As Bandler and Grinder point out:

*"The nervous system which is responsible for producing the representational system of language is the same nervous system by which humans produce every other model of the world - visual, kinesthetic, etc...The same principles of structure are operating in each of these systems."*<sup>13</sup>

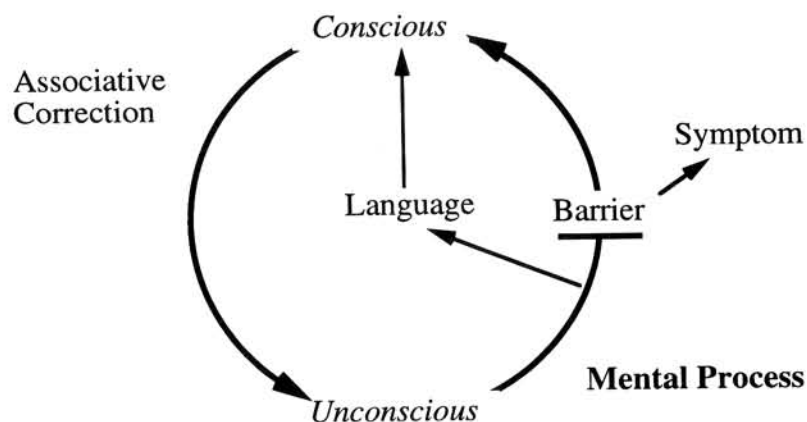
Thus, language can parallel and perhaps even substitute for the experiences and activities in our other representational systems. An important implication of this is that 'talking about' something can do more than simply reflect our perceptions; it can actually

create or change our perceptions. This implies a potentially deep and special role for language in the process of change and healing.

In ancient Greek philosophy, for instance, 'logos' was thought to constitute the controlling and unifying principle in the universe. Heraclitus (540-480 BC) defined 'logos' as the 'universal principle through which all things were interrelated and all natural events occurred'. The stoics maintained 'logos' was a cosmic governing or generating principle that was immanent and active in all reality and that pervaded all reality. According to Philo, a Greek speaking Jewish philosopher (and contemporary of Jesus), 'logos' was the intermediary between ultimate reality and the sensible world.

Freud's view of language seemed to incorporate these deeper implications. For Freud, symptoms were transformed by finding their 'meaning' and then consciously putting that meaning into words. He believed the meaning and purpose of a particular phenomenon was provided by the relationship it had to a larger system of events. And for him, language was the primary means available for human beings to discover and activate the neurological connections necessary to understand or give something meaning, and thus transform it. Freud's emphasis on language as the primary medium for 'consciousness' and change showed up vividly as the core of his so-called "talking cure." According to him:

*[Our treatment] brings to an end the operative force of the [conditions behind the symptom], by allowing its strangulated affect to find a way out through speech; and it subjects it to associative correction by introducing it into normal consciousness.*<sup>14</sup>



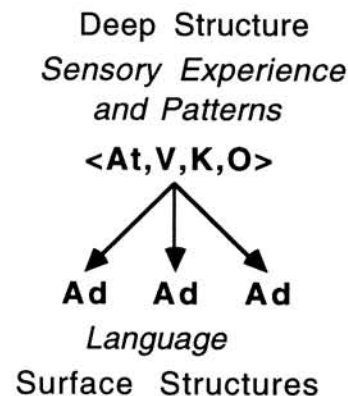
**The 'Operative Force' Behind a Symptom is Able to Achieve 'Associative Correction' by Using Language to Bring it Into 'Normal Consciousness'.**

Freud maintained that language provided an alternative channel or pathway to 'normal consciousness'. Thus, if "some mental process has not been carried through to an end in a normal manner" because it has become 'stuck' or 'strangled', language can be used as an instrument to link that process back to 'normal consciousness' so that it may be once again resolved through natural 'associative correction'.

Certainly, in human beings, language appears to be a very highly developed way of forming 'convergence zones' for clusters of other cognitive activity. Recent neurological studies employing PET scans indicate that a word serves as a point of convergence or confluence for other neural circuits. The 'meaning' and significance of a word to a particular individual is a function of the amount of neurology it mobilizes. The verbal labeling of an experience allows it to be associated and connected to other neural circuits.

In NLP, the mechanism of language is conceived of in terms of the "4-tuple" (Grinder, DeLozier & Bandler, 1977; Dilts, Grinder, Bandler & DeLozier, 1980). That is, words or 'surface structures' are triggers for a group of stored sensory representations or 'deep structures' from the four basic sensory channels: Visual, Auditory

tonal, Kinesthetic, and Olfactory. The basic relationship of language to experience is represented as  $A_d < A, V, K, O >$ ; where the verbal surface structures ( $A_d$ ) both trigger and are derived from the sensory deep structure represented by  $< A, V, K, O >$ . \*



According to the *SOAR Model* (see *Strategies of Genius Volume 1*), the internal elements of the 4-tuple (the representations coming from our five senses) combine to make up the possible 'states' within the 'problem space' created by our mental models of the world. Language is an 'operator' which influences and changes the arrangement of representations which make up those states.

In terms of the 4-tuple, Freud is suggesting that words may be used as 'operators' to link clusters of experiences to other parts of the nervous system in order to serve as a catalyst for certain process and thus 'metabolize' blocks or conflicts through "associative correction."

Freud's use of terms such as "impulses", "conflicts", "repressions" and "propelling forces" implies processes related to the generation and utilization of some form of *energy*; an essential feature of life and mind. The signals that pass through the nervous

\*NLP distinguishes between the linguistic and tonal function of the auditory system by designating pure sounds as  $A_t$  for Auditory tonal, and words as  $A_d$  for Auditory digital. The term 'digital' is used since words are discrete verbal symbols or 'digits'.

system do not do so in a linear, mechanical fashion like one billiard ball hitting another or like electricity passing through wires. In mechanical systems such as these, the initial impulse of energy that activates the chain of responses in the system gradually becomes weaker as it is diffused by mechanical chains of events. In contrast, every nerve cell in the nervous system generates its own energy. The cell 'fires' in response to the signals it receives. The energy produced by the cell is often greater than the signal it has received. Neural networks can actually escalate or amplify the intensity of the initial signal. In this way, words may indeed be able to 'neuro-linguistically' "propel" or "repress" by releasing or inhibiting energy in vast circuits of neurons.

#### *Summary of principles behind Freud's Strategies*

In summary, Freud's strategies for observation and analysis were based on the following presuppositions:

1. Mental process is essentially unconscious. Each mental process is "in the first place unconscious and may proceed into the conscious system."
2. Psychological phenomena, such as 'symptoms', are the result of transformations and "transitions" of instinctual impulses which provide the "motive force" for mental processes.
3. There is a natural self-correcting life cycle of mental processes, and the "instinctual impulses" behind them, that involves the movement between conscious and unconscious systems.
4. Symptoms form when a mental process is not allowed to complete its full 'life cycle'. A symptom is "a substitute for that which has not come through."
5. Symptoms are part of a larger unconscious system which gives them meaning. Symptoms serve a purpose within that larger system.
6. Bringing the unconscious thoughts and processes behind a symptom into consciousness allows them to become naturally self corrected.
7. Language has a special role in bringing unconscious mental processes into consciousness, and thus catalyzing and directing the process of transformation and change.

Freud evolved his therapeutic methods and strategies as a means to help his patients by probing unconscious processes in order to:

- a) Find the origin of 'symptoms'.
- b) Reveal unconscious conflicts.
- c) Introduce new "propelling forces" not initially available at the time the symptom was formed.

While Freud developed and defined his strategies of observation and analysis in the context of dealing with psychological symptoms, the genius of his cognitive processes are not limited to individual or emotional problem solving. It does not require too great of a leap to widen the scope of his principles from the definition of a symptom to many other areas of human behavior. For instance, Freud viewed works of art as similar to symptoms. He believed that any product of the human nervous system could be explained in terms of the larger unconscious psychical system which produced it. Freud perceived art as another kind of language through which the 'forces' within a person could be both released and mobilized.

In fact, Freud even wrote several articles applying his analytical methods to the works and lives of various geniuses himself, including Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. Freud's investigation of Leonardo was intended to be a full scale 'psycho-biography' of the great renaissance artist and observer, while his study of Michelangelo focused on the analysis of one particular sculpture. Because of these differences in emphasis, Freud's exploration of Leonardo da Vinci tells us more about his macro strategy, while his examination of Michelangelo's Moses gives us more insight into his micro strategies.

In a way, it seems only fitting to explore Freud's own strategies of genius by examining the way he analyzed the creative processes of other geniuses. As he himself might have done, let us explore Freud's writings and find out what mysteries we may be able to solve about how he thought.

## Footnotes to Section 1

1. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud, Pocket Books, New York, NY, 1963, pp. 25-26.
2. Ibid, p. 305.
3. Ibid. p. 290.
4. *Character and Culture*, Sigmund Freud, Collier Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 157.
5. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud, Pocket Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 304.
6. Ibid. p. 442.
7. Ibid. p. 442.
8. Ibid. p. 295.
9. Ibid. p. 462.
10. Ibid. pp. 21-22.
11. *The Structure of Magic Vol. I*, Richard Bandler & John Grinder, Science and Behavior Books, Palo Alto, CA, 1975, pp. 21-22.
12. *Aristotle*, Britannica Great Books, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., Chicago Ill., 1979.
13. *The Structure of Magic Vol. I*, Richard Bandler & John Grinder, Science and Behavior Books, Palo Alto, CA, 1975, p. 37.
14. *Studies in Hysteria*, Sigmund Freud & Josef Breuer; *Britannica GREAT BOOKS*, Volume 54, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., Chicago Ill., 1979, p. 683.

## Section 2: Freud's Analysis of Leonardo da Vinci

In a short book entitled *Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*, Freud sketched out a "psycho-biography" of the great artist, scientist and inventor - the quintessential renaissance man. Freud began his study of Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) in the autumn of 1909 and published it in May of 1910. His monograph on da Vinci was both his first and last large-scale biographical attempt. In it he was trying to widen the scope of applications of psychoanalysis from understanding the symptoms of what he termed "frailer men" to analyzing "one who is among the greatest of the human race" according to "the laws which govern both normal and pathological activity with equal cogency."<sup>1</sup> Entering his mid-fifties, Freud was evidently anxious to demonstrate that he could apply his theories and methods to the understanding of the exceptional qualities of the mind as well as its pathologies.

Indeed, in his work on Leonardo, Freud lays out many of the fundamental elements of his meta strategy for analysis and interpretation. He states:

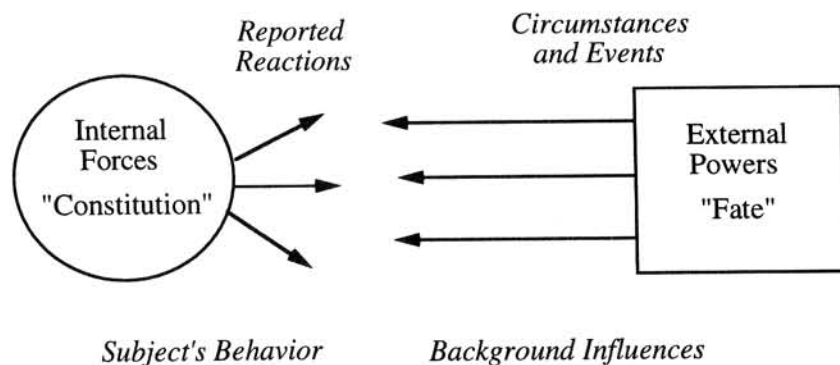
*We must stake out in a quite general way the limits which are set to what psycho-analysis can achieve in the field of biography...The material at the disposal of a psycho-analytic enquiry consists of the data of a person's life history: on the one hand the chance circumstances of events and background influences, and, on the other hand, the subject's reported reactions. Supported by its knowledge of psychical mechanisms it then endeavors to establish a dynamic basis for his nature on the strength of his reactions, and to disclose the original motive forces of his mind, as well as their later transformations and developments. If this is successful the behavior of a personality in the course of his life is explained in terms of the combined operation of constitution and fate, of internal forces and external powers.<sup>2</sup>*



In this work, Freud clearly intended to widen the scope of his strategies for understanding and explaining the meaning of a symptom, in relation to the larger unconscious system to which it belongs, to that of understanding and explaining the "behavior of a personality in the course of his life." To accomplish this, Freud sought to combine "the data of a person's life history" with "knowledge of psychical mechanisms."

In the language of the SOAR Model (see the chapter on Aristotle in Volume I), Freud is defining the 'problem space' he intends to explore as made up of "the data of a person's life history," including:

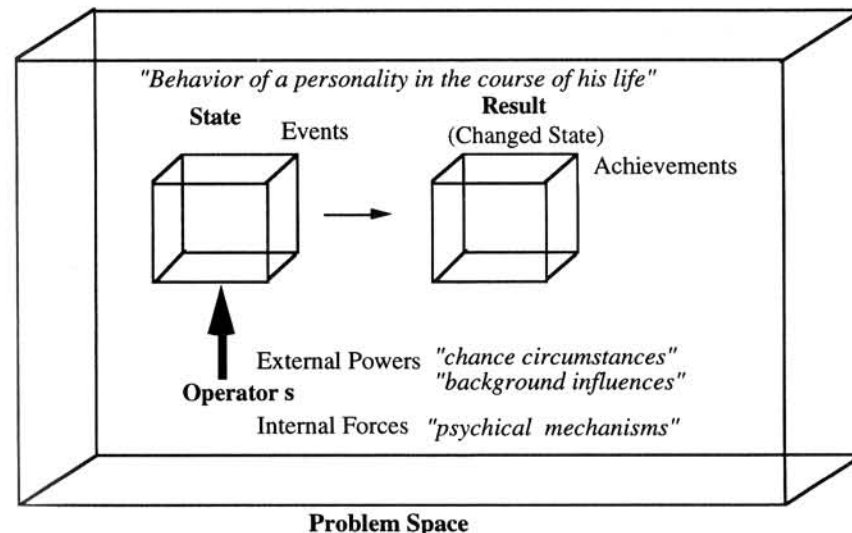
1. The "chance circumstances of events and background influences" on that person - i.e., the influence of "external powers" or "fate."
2. The "subject's reported reactions"; which Freud perceives to be a result of "internal forces" arising out of that individual's "constitution."



**Influences on The "Behavior of a Personality in the Course of His Life."**

The key achievements of the individual to be studied are a path of "states" which have formed within the 'problem space' of a person's life. The "psychical mechanisms" to which Freud refers are one of the "operators" which may be mobilized in order to

influence a particular state, and which determine the path of achievements or "transition states" of the individual's life. In other words, "states" are made up of particular combinations or interactions of "external" influences and "internal" forces. The particulars of a "state" are determined by the influence of "psychical mechanisms" which "operate" to create or change a particular state.



"The data of a person's life history"

**The Problem Space of "Psychobiography"**

By looking at the relationship between the subject's behavior and the surrounding external circumstances and applying "knowledge of psychical mechanisms," Freud endeavored to analyze the path of transition states which made up the life events of an individual's personal history in order to:

1. Establish a "dynamic basis" for the subject's nature.
2. Disclose the "original motive forces" of the subject's mind.
3. Trace their "later transformations and developments."



According to Freud, the type and strength of the subject's reactions to particular circumstances provided cues for the "motive forces" within his or her mind. Freud's strategies of analysis were targeted toward inferring and interpreting the relationship between a) the particular behaviors of a person within an certain context and b) the mental processes or 'operators' which produced those behaviors in response to that context. This involves the ability to find "patterns" of behavior, and then to connect those patterns of behavior to specific mental patterns or "psychical mechanisms."

A "pattern" of behavior is essentially something that is recurrent over time, or something that consistently occurs at key times or in specific environments. Such patterns may be revealed by what one does or by what one *does not do*, in comparison with the behavior of others. One of Freud's basic analytical strategies, for example, was to notice what could or should be there, but is not there. In this way he looked for behaviors that were significant or relevant by noticing what did not fit the typical pattern.

For instance, Freud started his analysis of Leonardo by commenting on some of the overall macro patterns of behavior that defined the context of da Vinci's life. Pointing out the wide range of Leonardo's activities and investigations resulting from his seemingly insatiable passion for exploration, Freud concluded that da Vinci was not typical in comparison to his contemporaries. Freud claimed that, although Leonardo was admired in his own time as "one of the greatest men of the Italian renaissance," da Vinci "had already begun to seem an enigma, just as he does to us today." Certainly, given Leonardo's reputation and fame in his own time, remarkably little is reported of his personal life. His biographers seemed to know little about his childhood, close personal relationships or romantic involvements. Freud wondered:

*What was it that prevented Leonardo's personality from being understood by his contemporaries? The cause of this was certainly not the versatility of his talents and the range of his knowledge...For the days of the renaissance were quite familiar with such a combination of wide and diverse abilities in a single individual - though we must allow that Leonardo himself was one of the most brilliant examples of this.* <sup>4</sup>

Freud went on to point out that da Vinci had a characteristic pattern of starting many things both scientifically and artistically but actually completing very few of them, and that many of his scientific discoveries remained unpublished and unused until centuries later. In fact, da Vinci often became so wrapped up in his scientific investigations that it distracted him from the artistic work, for which he is most well known. Leonardo himself seems to have been aware of his own pattern, and commented on its distracting affects in his final words. As Freud recounts:

*In the last hour of his life, according to words that Vasari [a contemporary and biographer of da Vinci - R.D.] gives him, he reproached himself with having offended God and man by his failure to do his duty in his art... "He having raised himself out of reverence so as to sit on the bed, and giving an account of his illness and its circumstances, yet showed how much he had offended God and mankind in not having worked at his art as he should have done."* <sup>4</sup>

While da Vinci was trained, commissioned and paid to produce artistic works, his scientific studies were something that were self-motivated. Leonardo did them on his own, for himself, without any impetus, acknowledgment or reward from the external world. Since it did not appear to be easily explained via external reinforcements, Freud viewed Leonardo's pattern of diverse but unfinished explorations as a result of an internal force or mechanism, similar to the 'symptoms' of his patients.

Freud's basic belief was that da Vinci's explorations occurred as a result of a "psychical mechanism" that he called "*sublimation*," i.e., the redirection of his sexual drives to his artistic and scientific investigations. Freud maintained that "*what an artist creates provides at the same time an outlet for his sexual desires.*" <sup>5</sup> This brings out one of the major themes in the content of Freud's thought:

*"...the assertion that impulses, which can only be described as sexual in both the narrower and the wider sense, play a*

*peculiarly large part, never before sufficiently appreciated, in the causation of nervous and mental disorders, Nay, more, that these sexual impulses have contributed invaluable to the highest cultural, artistic, and social achievements of the human mind.”<sup>6</sup>*

In Freud's view, the redirection of sexual impulses could either lead to pathology or the highest cultural and artistic achievements, depending on the nature and degree of their redirection or “sublimation.” If a creature is prevented from normal sexual activity, it may redirect those impulses into behaviors that seem pathological or perverse, as one might see in the behavior of isolated, caged animals in a zoo. On the other hand, Freud believed that given the appropriate encouragement and channels of transformation, sexual impulses could provide the motive force behind important social, scientific and artistic contributions.\*

*We believe that civilization has been built up, under pressure of the struggle for existence, by sacrifices in gratification of the primitive impulses, and that it is to a great extent forever being re-created, as each individual, successively joining the community, repeats the sacrifice of his instinctive pleasures for the common good. The sexual are amongst the most important of the instinctive forces thus utilized: they are in this way sublimated, that is to say, their energy is turned aside from its sexual goal and diverted toward other ends, no longer sexual and socially more valuable.<sup>7</sup>*

According to Freud, da Vinci's pattern of behavior could be explained in terms of the process of sublimation - that da Vinci “diverted” all of his sexual energy “toward other ends.” Freud points out that the accounts of da Vinci's life are notoriously devoid of any references to sexual or romantic activity with the exception of an unconfirmed accusation of homosexuality when he was a

---

\* While Freud doesn't say it explicitly, there is an implication that this is the reason behind the fact that so much art is religious art, since the repression of sexual activity is a common pattern in most Western religions.

young man. Freud believed that this was because Leonardo had no real sexual or romantic life - that he had substituted scientific explorations for romantic and sexual explorations.

*A conversion of psychical force into various forms of activity can perhaps no more be achieved without loss than a conversion of physical forces...He investigated instead of loving...The stormy passions of a nature that inspires and consumes, passions in which other men have enjoyed their richest experience, appear not to have touched him...Investigating has taken the place of acting and creating as well.<sup>8</sup>*

Freud's beliefs about the central part played by sexuality and his theories regarding role of sublimation are among his most provocative and controversial.\* Yet, if we are able to look past the content of Freud's beliefs for a moment, we can see that what he is essentially saying is that ‘deep structures’ (primitive instinctual impulses) may be transformed into an infinite number of different ‘surface structures’ (social, artistic and scientific achievements). Freud implies that the manner and thoroughness with which the deep

---

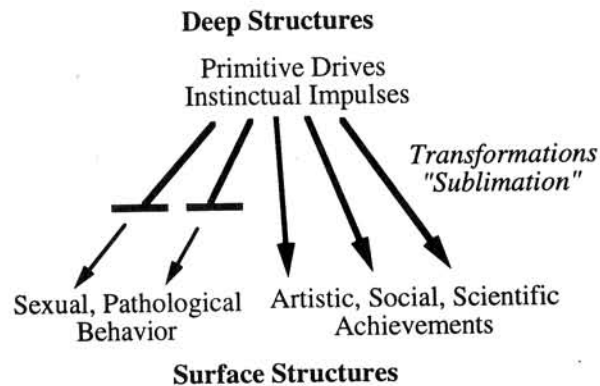
\* For instance, it has been legitimately contended that the content of Freud's beliefs were heavily influenced by his focus on male oriented Western Civilization that dominated the thinking of his era.

Also, Freud's analogy to “physical force” is unfortunate in that he seems to lapse back into mechanical metaphors for the mind. In the mechanical conversion of force, energy is transferred from one element in the chain of causation to another. In living systems, each element has its own source of energy. Therefore energy may in fact be gained or generated by the conversion rather than lost.

Yet, on an ‘epistemological’ level, Freud's notion of “sublimation” was a fairly major departure from the traditional perspective, started by Plato and intensified during the “age of reason,” that the forces of the “primitive instincts” were in perpetual opposition to the force of reason, and thus had to be suppressed in order for civilization to progress. Freud, like Aristotle, maintained that processes within the ‘psyche’ (such as “reason”) could, in fact, influence and redirect the “appetites” and thus convert and utilize their energies, rather than needing to squelch them.

Many will no doubt object to what could be perceived as the characterization of scientific and artistic exploration and achievement as merely a

structure is expressed determines whether or not it has been satisfactorily "converted" or will produce "disorders" and "pathologies."



### Redirection of "Instinctual Impulses" to Social and Cultural Achievements

Viewed from Freud's perspective, the 'strategies of genius' would involve the use of the channels and the rules of transformation by which primitive impulses and instinctual forces could be successfully redirected and sublimated into other modes of expression. 'Genius' would come from the amount of detail and the degree of

kind of 'mental masturbation'. Further, the implications seem to contradict the experience of those who explore both artistically and scientifically, but feel that they maintain a quite adequate sexual and romantic life. (In fact, it is amusing to wonder what Freud, who was also clearly an avid investigator himself, was implying about his own sexual and romantic life.)

It is also true that the inverse of Freud's claim could be argued: that the reason that many people seem to be obsessed with romantic and sexual exploration is because the natural desire to explore and express oneself through art and the investigation of the natural world around us is not encouraged due to a) the lack of understanding and development of the cognitive strategies behind such modes of expression and exploration and b) the resulting belief that only a few special people can excel and succeed in such endeavors.

perfection with which sublimation is achieved. In this view, people like Leonardo, Shakespeare or Mozart were able to more richly and completely redirect or transform their primitive drives through the channels of pictures, words or music, instead of through the typical channels of sexual and romantic behavior. Thus, Freud believed that what made Leonardo different from his contemporaries lay in 1) the degree, 2) the type and 3) the reasons for the redirection of "primitive impulses."

Freud's conclusion about the relationship between da Vinci's pattern of behavior and the 'psychical mechanism' of sublimation lead him to a next step in his strategy. Once he formed a theory of explanation, he sought further 'confirming' evidence to support it. One common investigative macro strategy employs the process of 'induction' to form an explanation of a group of environmental and behavioral clues (as we have explored in the patterns of Aristotle and Sherlock Holmes in the first volume of this work). A second investigative macro strategy involves forming hypotheses or projections based on a theory and then looking for cues in the environment and behavior of others that are evidences of those projections. In this sense, Freud, like Einstein, often attempted to explore deep patterns and principles by forming theories that were essentially "free creations" of the imagination and then sought environmental and behavioral confirmation of those theories.

#### *Macro Strategy 1:*

*Collection of Evidence / Clues → Form Theory to Explain Existing Evidences / Clues*

#### *Macro Strategy 2:*

*Create Theory → Search For Evidences to Confirm Theory*

Often the two strategies are linked together in a cycle, such that 1) the investigator forms a theory from a set of clues and then looks for further evidences that either confirm or disconfirm the theory (such as Aristotle's 'syllogisms' and Holmes' process of deduction). In Freud's words:

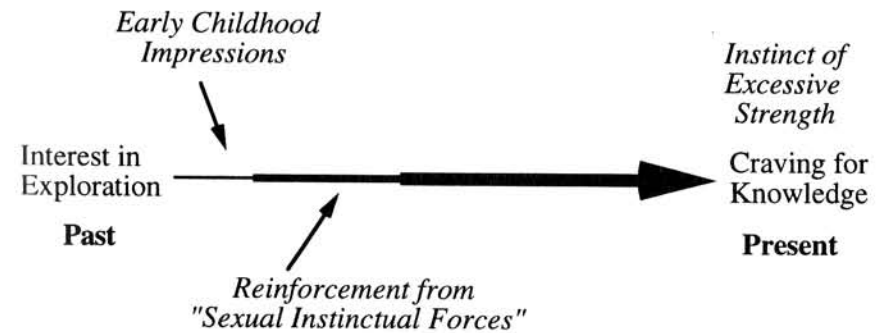


When we find that in the picture presented by a person's character a single instinct has developed an excessive strength, as did the craving for knowledge in Leonardo, we look for the explanation in a special disposition - though about its determinants (which are probably organic) scarcely anything is yet known. Our psycho-analytic studies of neurotic people have however led us to form two further expectations which it would be gratifying to find confirmed in each particular case. We consider it probable that an instinct like this of excessive strength was already active in the subject's earliest childhood, and that its supremacy was established by impressions in the child's life. We make the further assumption that it found reinforcement from what were originally sexual instinctual forces, so that later it could take the place of a part of the subject's sexual life. Thus a person of this sort would, for example, pursue research with the same passionate devotion that another would give to his love, and he would be able to investigate instead of loving.<sup>9</sup>

Freud is saying that macro patterns (i.e., "the craving for knowledge in Leonardo") tell us where we are likely to find confirming micro cues (i.e., the subject's earliest childhood and sexual life) and what kind of cues to look for. He is also describing another important part of his own strategy: the application of assumptions and expectations drawn from one area (e.g. his patient's symptoms) as analogies and guidelines for analyzing a completely different area (e.g. Leonardo's researches). For example, Freud would use patterns he noticed in his patients to draw conclusions about literature. And he would use references from literature to draw conclusions about his patients. Similarly, Freud applied patterns drawn from his patients to make sense of Leonardo's artistic processes. He also used the patterns he noticed in Leonardo to understand his patients. For instance, he wrote a letter to Jung shortly before he published his book on Leonardo commenting that he had a patient who seemed to have the same constitution as Leonardo but without his genius.

These expectations and analogies taken from other areas mark out the boundaries of the 'space' in which one is apt to find other cues and information. Taking Leonardo's "craving for knowledge" as a kind of symptom, such as he might find in his psychoanalytic patients, Freud brings in the assumptions that a strong pattern of behavior in the present:

- 1) has 'antecedent' or 'precipitating' causes in the past; i.e., *an instinct like this of excessive strength was already active in the subject's earliest childhood, and that its supremacy was established by impressions in the child's life.*
- 2) has a constraining cause that sustains it in the present, in that it serves a purpose with regard to the larger system of which it is a part: i.e., *it found reinforcement from what were originally sexual instinctual forces, so that later it could take the place of a part of the subject's sexual life.*



### Freud's Assumed Influences on the Development of Leonardo's Behavior Pattern

Applying these assumptions, Freud approached Leonardo as he would one of his own psychoanalytic clients. He first looked for references in Leonardo's notebooks that related to his memories from childhood. He then checked to see if they could be related to basic "instinctual forces" (in this case sexual ones) that would give the memories special meaning. As he noted:

*What someone thinks he remembers from his childhood is not a matter of indifference; as a rule the residual memories - which he himself does not understand - cloak priceless pieces of evidence about the most important features in his mental development.*<sup>10</sup>

Maintaining that, "There is, so far as I know, only one place in his scientific notebooks where Leonardo inserts a piece of information about his childhood," Freud focused the essential body of his analysis of da Vinci on a single entry in one of his notebooks on flight. In the entry, in which da Vinci is commenting on some of his observations of a particular bird of prey known as a "kite," Leonardo "suddenly interrupts himself to pursue a memory from very early childhood which had sprung to his mind," stating:

*"It seems that I was always destined to be so deeply concerned with kites; for I recall as one of my very earliest memories that while I was in my cradle a kite came down to me, and opened my mouth with its tail, and struck me many times with its tail against my lips."*<sup>11</sup>

Freud's emphasis on da Vinci's comment, and his attempts to draw some kind of meaning from it, shows us a great deal about his strategies and methods of analysis. Initially, one might wonder why he would focus on something whose validity appears so dubious in order to form conclusions about a person's character. Leonardo's "memory" seems more a dream or fantasy than an actual memory. To think that a bird would hover above a baby, intentionally "open" the baby's mouth with its tail and then strike its tail against the baby's lips seems rather far fetched.

Freud clearly acknowledged the dubious nature of such memories in his analytical work, but maintained that:

*[T]he childhood-experiences reconstructed or recollected in analysis are on some occasions undeniably false, while others are just as certainly true, and that in most cases truth and falsehood are mixed up. So the symptoms are*

*thus at one minute reproductions of experiences which actually took place...and at the next a reproduction of phantasies of the patient's...[P]hantasy and reality are to be treated alike and that it is to begin with of no account whether the childhood-experiences under consideration belong to the one class or to the other.*<sup>12</sup>

Freud is echoing the NLP belief that '*the map is not the territory*'. That is, that as human beings, we can never know reality. We can only know our perceptions of reality. We experience and respond to the world around us primarily through our own unique internal 'models of the world'. In this sense, it is our 'neuro-linguistic' maps of reality that most influence how we behave and that give those behaviors meaning, not reality itself. Thus, it is generally not 'objective' reality that determines our reactions, but rather our 'subjective' map of reality.

This becomes especially relevant when it is a person's internal map that is the 'territory' we wish to explore. Fantasy, memory and even our ongoing perceptions of external reality are all a function of processes within our nervous systems. Thus, all of them have potentially equal influence on our behavior. Therefore, as Freud points out, "*phantasy and reality are to be treated alike and that it is to begin with of no account whether the childhood-experiences under consideration belong to the one class or to the other.*" \*

According to Freud, whether Leonardo's recollection is a memory of an actual experience or a memory of a dream or fantasy is not important. What is important is that it is a "memory" of something that Leonardo has preserved long into his adult life for some reason.

*It should not be a matter of indifference or entirely without meaning which detail of a child's life had escaped the*

---

\* Freud even proposes that the visit of the bird may have even been something that was observed by Leonardo's mother, which she told him about afterwards. According to Freud "he retained the memory of his mother's story, and later, as so often happens, it became possible for him to take it for a memory of an experience of his own."



*general oblivion. It might rather be conjectured that what had remained in memory was the most significant element in that whole period of life, equally so whether it had possessed such an importance at the time, or whether it had gained subsequent importance from later events...*

*Generally they seemed indifferent, worthless even, and it remained at first incomprehensible why just these memories should have resisted amnesia: nor could the person who preserved them for long years as his own store of memory see more in them than any stranger to whom he might relate them. Before their significance could be appreciated, a certain work of interpretation was necessary, which could either show how their content must be replaced by some other, or would reveal their connection with some other unmistakably important experiences, for which they were appearing as so-called "screen-memories".*

*In every analytic work on a life-history it is always possible to explain the meaning of the earliest memories along these lines.<sup>13</sup>*

In his approach to finding the "precipitating causes" of behavior, Freud applies one of his basic pattern finding strategies to the process of memory: looking for something that does not fit the typical pattern. In the case of childhood memories, he points out that most of them disappear into the "general oblivion." That is, most people have only very scattered and hazy recollections of early childhood experiences. In Freud's model, rather than be a problem, this "amnesia" serves as a filter such that "what had remained in memory was the most significant element in that whole period of life."

At first glance, it would seem that if this were indeed the case, that people should remember only obvious 'significant events'. But often the memories people recall appear to be irrelevant. They are "indifferent" and even "worthless" so that it is "incomprehensible why just these memories should have resisted amnesia." Certainly, one initially wonders what value or significance Leonardo's strange childhood "memory" could have as meaningful 'data' about his life. It seems more like something that should be discarded rather than

emphasized as useful information about the development of Leonardo's genius.

Freud's response to this issue was that "a certain work of interpretation was necessary, which could either show how their content must be replaced by some other, or would reveal their connection with some other unmistakably important experiences." This brings out one of Freud's most important macro strategies - the "interpretation" of the content of mental experience in order to expose its "significance." Interpretation involves the explanation of actions, events, or statements by pointing out or suggesting inner relationships or motives through relating particulars to wider frameworks or general principles. The purpose of interpretation is to clarify the meaning of something which is not initially explicit. It often involves a certain amount of "translation" with respect to the content of an experience. As with all effective translation, this requires an understanding of the relationship of a particular statement or event to a larger 'problem space'.

In this sense, Freud's goals and methods recall the strategies of analysis and deduction applied by the great fictional detective Sherlock Holmes\* (whose methods were actually modeled after a medical school professor of Holmes' creator Arthur Conan Doyle - a contemporary of Freud). In the chapter on Holmes in the first volume of this work, we established that a 'problem space' is defined by the parts of a system one considers to be relevant to the problem or issue one is investigating. What you consider to be the 'space' of a problem will determine what kind of events or 'states' you look for and what significance you give to what you have found. We also identified several factors influencing the accuracy, validity and usefulness of one's conclusions in relation to one's investigation of a particular phenomenon.

#### 1. *Specific interpretation of the meaning of an input or event.*

Interpretations involve connecting and fitting a particular input or event into other frameworks. Thus, in order to interpret the

---

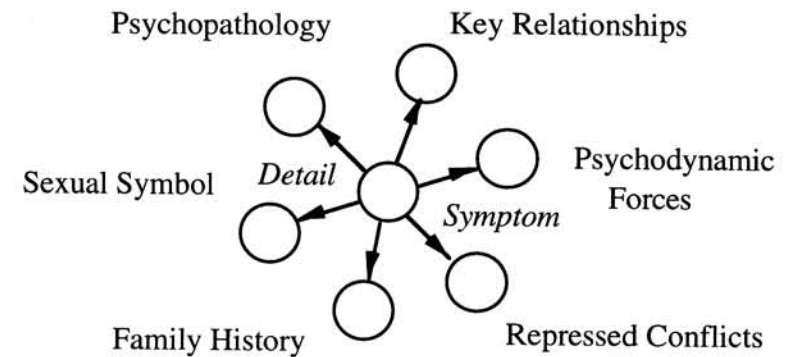
\* In fact, there has been a fictional account written about an imagined meeting between the two in which they combined and shared techniques. The novel, entitled *The Seven Percent Solution* (which was subsequently made into a movie), also plays on the connection both had with the drug cocaine.

meaning of something, you must make *assumptions* about the problem space in which you are operating. Many of Freud's interpretations are based upon fundamental assumptions, such as the influence of early childhood events and the role of instinctual forces (such as sexual drives) on an individual's behavior. The challenge is that certain assumptions may be valid only within a narrow social or historical scope. This can make interpreting the meaning of clues and events subject to a fair amount of potential variation.

A further challenge is that, since the outcome of the interpretation of a particular input or phenomenon is the conclusion that "*their content must be replaced by some other,*" interpretations are often based on other interpretations. Each additional element in the chain of interpretations introduces another potential source of error in translation.

### 2. Completeness / thoroughness of coverage of the problem space.

Since everyone must make assumptions in order to give something meaning, we might ask, 'How does one minimize problems brought about by inappropriate assumptions or mistaken interpretations?' The validity of one's conclusions relates to how thoroughly one covers the total possible problem space. Clearly, Freud acknowledged that conscious mental processes were, "*merely isolated acts and parts of the whole psychic entity.*" There are often several different perspectives which can be taken with respect to any particular pattern of behavior. Perspective is one key element of problem space. Time frames are another. Perceiving events from different time frames can change the implications that they have. As Freud pointed out, a particular behavior or event may gain "*subsequent importance from later events.*" A key element in Freud's analytical strategy involves his ability to identify and include the possible perspectives and time frames that could be part of a particular problem space.



### The "Interpretation" of a Particular Detail or Symptom Involves Relating it to Elements Making Up the Wider 'Problem Space'

### 3. Order in which problem features / elements are attended to.

The sequence in which one makes observations and inferences can also influence the conclusion one draws - especially when inferences are being drawn from one another. Some inferences are not possible to make unless others have already been made. There is a logical dependency between the 'states' that make up a path within a problem space. Sequence is implicit in the concept of a 'strategy'. We have already identified a macro level sequence to Freud's process involving a) forming a theory from a set of clues and then b) making projections based on that theory and c) looking for further evidences that either confirm or disconfirm the projections derived from the theory. Freud also appears to have had a pattern of moving from 'big chunks' to 'small chunks'; in that he tended to initially pay attention to generalities as clues that would give him contextual information and then proceed to look for the details or particulars of the actions or events that may confirm or fit within that context.

#### 4. Priority given to problem elements/features.

In addition to sequence, the priority or emphasis given to various clues or elements determines their influence in shaping an inference or conclusion. For instance, as cited earlier, Freud gave special priority and attention to verbal cues. Freud emphasized the importance of different elements or features depending on his perception of their relevance to what he was investigating, "*whether it had possessed such an importance at the time, or whether it had gained subsequent importance from later events.*" For instance, certain clues give more indications about the character of a person, others give more information about the recent behaviors of a person, others are more priorital in determining a person's physical or social environment. Freud, like Holmes, appreciated the importance of "minutiae" claiming, "*Is it not possible, under certain conditions and at certain times, for very important things to betray themselves in very slight indications?*" Similar to Holmes, who pointed out that "*Singularity is almost invariably a clue,*"<sup>14</sup> Freud tended to give priority to subjective memories and experiences which did not fit the expected or typical pattern. He maintained that such anomalies "*cloak priceless pieces of evidence about the most important features in [one's] mental development.*" Freud was, in fact, attracted to da Vinci's "childhood memory" because it was "*one of the strangest sort...strange on account of its content and on account of the age to which it is assigned.*"<sup>15</sup>

#### 5. Additional knowledge about the problem from sources outside the problem space.

The assumptions used to give meaning to clues and features are often derived from information that comes from knowledge brought to bear on a particular problem from frameworks or sources not directly related to the problem space. This information will often "*reveal their connection with some other unmistakably important experiences.*" As we shall see, Freud used not only knowledge about "the data of a person's life history" and "psychical mechanisms," but also knowledge about cultural patterns, literary works and world history to make inferences and draw conclusions.

#### 6. Degree of Involvement of Fantasy and Imagination

Another source of knowledge that originates outside of a particular problem space is *imagination*. While the process of 'induction' involves finding patterns within clusters of empirical observations, 'interpretation' involves pointing out or suggesting the meaning of a phenomenon by connecting its particulars to wider frameworks or general principles. When a problem space is very broad and complex, there are often many 'missing links'. When confronted with a serious gap in information most people have a tendency to perceive it as an obstacle, throw up their hands and give up on the problem as 'unsolvable'. It is just here, however, that the 'genius' will use imagination to fill in the void and go on. Like Albert Einstein, who claimed, "Imagination is more important than knowledge," Freud utilized a healthy dose of imagination and "free creation" in his interpretive work.

Bringing these various factors to bare on da Vinci's "memory," Freud concludes that the adult Leonardo is indeed "remembering" something from childhood, but it is not a recollection of an actual event. Rather, it is a memory of an early metaphorical fantasy that symbolizes something else, "which he formed at a later date and transposed to his childhood." Freud explains:

*If we examine with the eyes of a psycho-analyst Leonardo's phantasy of the vulture, it does not appear strange for long. We seem to recall having come across the same sort of thing in many places, for example dreams; so that we may venture to translate the phantasy from its own special language into words that are generally understood. The translation is then seen to point to erotic content, A tail, 'coda' is one of the most familiar symbols and substitutive expressions for the male organ, in Italian no less than in other languages; the situation in the phantasy, of a vulture opening the child's mouth and beating about inside it vigorously with its tail, corresponds to the idea of an act of fellatio, a sexual act in which the penis is put into the mouth of the person involved. It is strange that this phantasy is so passive in character; moreover it resembles certain dreams and phantasies found*



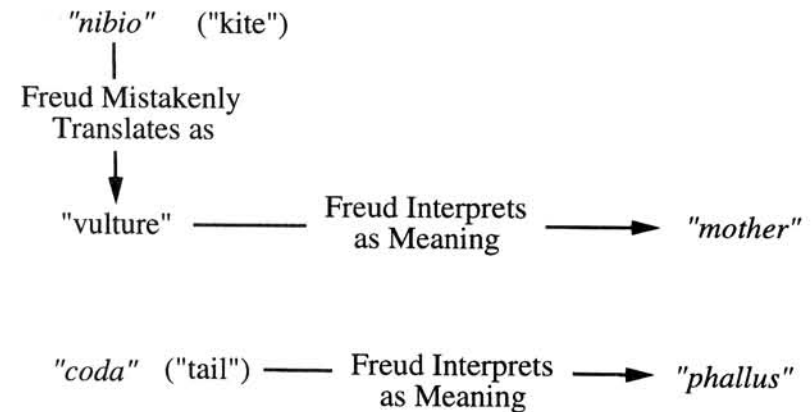
*in women or passive homosexuals (who play the role of women in sexual relations)...*

*Further investigation informs us that this situation, which morality condemns with such severity, may be traced to an origin of the most innocent kind. It only repeats in a different form a situation in which we all once felt comfortable - when we were still in our suckling days and took our mother's (or wet nurse's) nipple into our mouth and sucked at it...We interpret the phantasy as one of being suckled by his mother, and we find his mother replaced by - a vulture.<sup>16</sup>*

Thus, according to Freud, the bird is actually a symbolic representation of Leonardo's mother; and the tail of the bird represents a male phallus. At first consideration, it may seem that Freud's interpretation of Leonardo's strange "residual memory" does little to make its significance clearer or to establish its relevance to da Vinci's artistic and scientific genius. We are inclined to ask ourselves, as Freud did, "Where does this vulture come from and how does it happen to be found in its present place?"

It is interesting to note that the historical and cultural evidence that Freud uses to support the interpretation of the bird as a symbol of the mother is based on a misinterpretation of the word "kite" which he consistently translated as "vulture." \* Yet, while the mistake may have been unfortunate for Freud in terms of the accuracy of his conclusions about da Vinci's memory, it can actually be of some benefit to us. Since we no longer need be concerned with, and thus distracted by, the validity of the 'content' of Freud's study, we can focus more fully on his 'strategy'.

\* In the recounting of his memory in his notebook, Leonardo used the word "nibio" which means "kite" ("nibbio" in modern Italian). Freud, however, translates this word as "Geier" (the German word for "vulture") instead of "Milan" (the normal German word for "kite"). This was due to an error in the German translation of Leonardo's notebooks from which Freud was working. The mistranslation leads Freud to draw conclusions that are clearly in error; although, as Freud's supporters have been quick to argue, the mistake does not necessarily detract from Freud's basic conclusion about the psycho-dynamic forces that may have shaped Leonardo's character.



### Freud's Initial Interpretation of Leonardo's "Memory"

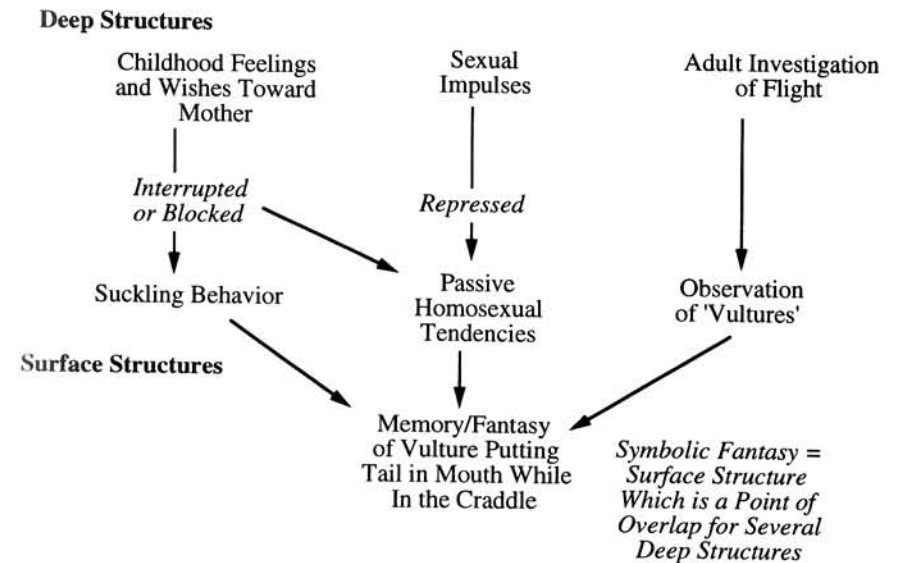
Freud's first step in the interpretation of Leonardo's "memory" highlights one of the key elements of his analytical strategy: perceiving symptoms and unusual mental phenomena as *symbols* of something else rather than taking them at face value. A symbol is essentially a 'surface structure' that must be traced back to 'deeper structures' in order to understand its meaning. The same deep structure may produce a number of different surface structures - as in the process of 'sublimation'. For example, Freud pointed out that "In hieroglyphics of the ancient Egyptians the mother is represented by a picture of a vulture." Thus, for one familiar with this symbol system, the deep structure 'mother' could be transformed (either consciously or unconsciously) into surface structure as either "mother" or "vulture."

At the same time, a particular surface structure may be an overlapping point for more than one deep structure. That is, according to Freud, Leonardo's fascination with 'vultures' may have been the result of both his investigation of flight and a result of unconscious feelings and wishes relating to his mother. From this perspective, a fixation on vultures could be seen as both 1) a

symbolic reflection of unfulfilled but forgotten childhood wishes and 2) a part of an adult research into flight. In other words, it represented a place where Leonardo's past and the present overlapped.

Freud's remark about the bird's tail pointing to "erotic content" brings up a third area of potential overlap - sexual drives. Freud implies that the fantasy is also connected with the "sublimation" of repressed homosexual feelings on the part of da Vinci. Freud concluded that the memory/fantasy was in part a symbolic reflection of a mixture of an unconscious desire for 'suckling' and oral sex. He claimed that the fantasy arose from the processes of repressing childhood curiosity about sex and difficulties Leonardo had in bonding with his natural mother (da Vinci was an illegitimate child). Freud postulates, based on the histories of his own patients, that some kind of interruption in his relationship with his mother at the suckling stage could have caused Leonardo to become 'fixated' on her in such a way to lead to homosexual tendencies.

Freud implies that, rather than being a source of illness, the overlapping of these multiple deep structures onto the single surface structure of "vultures" could also serve the positive purpose of providing an additional unconscious motivation for da Vinci's adult researches; pushing him on where others would have never devoted so much externally 'unrewarded' time and energy.



### Freud's Interpretation of the Sources of Leonardo's "Memory"

Freud proceeds to elucidate the implications of his interpretation and 'make his case' in a manner more reminiscent of a detective or a lawyer than a physician or scientist. Drawing from sources as diverse as Egyptian mythology, the symptoms and dreams of his own patients, literary works and Leonardo's own notebooks and paintings, Freud attempts to show that da Vinci's memory belies the forces behind the development of his unique personality and abilities.

Freud begins by making an extensive excursion into Egyptian mythology to provide historical background for his interpretation of "vulture" as mother (and went through some lengths to show that da Vinci could have been familiar with Egyptian mythology and symbolism). Freud notes the fact that the Egyptians worshipped a Mother Goddess who was represented as having a vulture's head (or several heads, at least one of which was a



vulture's) stemming from their belief that only female vultures existed and that there were no males of the species.

Freud goes on to point out the sexual connotation of the word "bird" in many languages, the fable of the stork delivering babies in many European cultures and the common occurrence of 'flying dreams'. Freud concludes "...all of these are only small fragments from a whole mass of connected ideas, from which we learn that in dreams the wish to be able to fly is to be understood as nothing else than a longing to be capable of sexual performance."<sup>17</sup> Applying the implications of this to da Vinci's "memory," Freud argues, "In admitting to us that ever since his childhood he felt bound up in a special and personal way with the problem of flight, Leonardo gives us confirmation that his childhood researches were directed toward sexual matters..."<sup>18</sup>

Freud's comment that "all of these are only small fragments from a whole mass of connected ideas" indicates another significant part of his macro strategy - adding together "fragments" from 'surface structure' in the attempt to unveil "a whole mass of connected ideas" at the level of 'deep structure'. This strategy is an extension of Freud's belief that "mental processes are essentially unconscious, and that those which are conscious are merely isolated acts and parts of the whole psychic entity...Each single process belongs in the first place to the unconscious psychical system; from this system it can under certain conditions proceed further into the conscious system." Freud believed that much information was deleted or blocked in the transition from the unconscious deep structure of the "whole psychic entity" to its expression in conscious surface structures. His macro strategy was organized to identify and piece together "fragments" of surface structures in order to try to understand the 'psychic whole'; in a manner similar to the way an archeologist might unearth and then piece together artifacts in the attempt to reconstruct the culture from which they came.

Freud demonstrates this strategy even more clearly in his examination of Leonardo's notebooks for further clues that could support his hypothesis. He first points to the notable absence of erotic and sexually explicit drawings within Leonardo's copious anatomical sketches as an evidence of his repression of sexual feelings. He mentions the inaccuracies in Leonardo's depictions of

both male and female genitals and his drawings of the sexual act, which Leonardo called "hideous." Freud also notes Leonardo's eccentric habits of writing in reverse script (from right to left) and of often addressing himself in second person in his notebooks. He then focuses on Leonardo's peculiar habit of obsessively making written accounts of minutiae relating to small sums of money in places in his notebooks. Freud claims that the taking of such notes "recorded with exactness, as if they were made by a pedantically strict and parsimonious head of a household," paralleled the behavior of patients who have "obsessional neurosis." Freud maintains that such obsessive acts are actually the 'tip of the iceberg' for deeper unconscious feelings.

*"The expression of these repressed feelings has been lowered by the forces opposed to them to such a degree that one would have had to form a most insignificant estimate of their intensity; but the imperative compulsiveness with which this trivial expressive act is performed betrays the real force of the impulses - a force which is rooted in the unconscious and which consciousness would like to deny."*<sup>19</sup>

Freud points out that most of these notes relate to expenditures made by Leonardo's pupils, for whom Freud interprets da Vinci had repressed sexual feelings. Freud notes that these pupils, Cesare da Sesto, Boltraffio, Andrea Salaino and Francesco Melzi, did not ever achieve much importance as painters and had great difficulties reaching independence from their master. He concludes that "Leonardo had chosen them for their beauty and not for their talent."<sup>20</sup>

One note, however, is a dispassionate accounting of the costs of the funeral of a certain "Caterina"; the name of Leonardo's natural mother. Freud interpreted this reference to in fact be to Leonardo's mother - da Vinci's only overt reference to her in all of his notebooks. According to Freud, this is another clue revealing Leonardo's deep and conflicted feelings toward his mother. Freud believed it was these feelings that stood at the foundation of Leonardo's character and which were responsible for his mysterious 'memory'.

Freud proceeded to reference information about Leonardo's childhood to confirm his hypothesis of Leonardo's confusion and fixation in relation to his mother. He pointed to the fact that Leonardo was an illegitimate child (although, as Freud noted, in those days it was not considered a grave social stigma). Leonardo's father, Ser Piero, married another woman - Donna Albiera - who remained childless.\* His mother Caterina (probably a peasant girl) later married another man. Freud mentions that, although nothing specific is known of his earliest years, it is documented that by the time he was five, Leonardo was living in the household of his father and not with his natural mother. According to Freud, except for the possible reference in the cryptic accounting of the funeral costs, Leonardo's mother does not appear as a figure in Leonardo's life. Freud traces the cause of much of Leonardo's character to what he infers to have been the separation from his natural mother at an early age.

Freud postulates that, in his early infancy, Leonardo still lived with his mother and, due to the absence of his father, was subject to affection from his mother that was even more intense than usual. Freud interprets the 'vulture' memory as an indication of an unconscious and forgotten erotic attachment between mother and son. He conjectures that, because of the "barrenness" of his father's first wife, da Vinci was taken to live with his father and step mother at a relatively young age as a kind of "compensation." In Freud's view, this led to the interruption of the typical bonding and weaning cycle between natural mother and child, and created a confusion within the infant Leonardo about the identity of his real 'mother'.

Freud claimed that these same unconscious conflicts about his mother, at the basis of the 'vulture memory', emerged in Leonardo's paintings as well. For example, according to Freud, the same theme is expressed in Leonardo's painting *The Madonna and Child*

---

\* Ser Piero, a notary and member of a long family line from the area of Vinci in Northern Italy, had a total of four wives. The first two died childless, and it was not until his third wife that Ser Piero had a legitimate son. By that time, Leonardo was already in his mid twenties and working as an apprentice in Andrea del Verrocchio's studio in Florence. Ser Piero's fourth wife (taken when Ser Piero was in his fifties) bore him 9 sons and 2 daughters.

*with St. Anne.* In the painting, Mary is depicted sitting on the lap of St. Anne (her mother) reaching toward the baby Jesus to hold him, while her mother is leaning back and away. According to Freud:

*Leonardo's childhood was remarkable in precisely the same way as this picture. He had two mothers: first, his true mother Caterina, from whom he was torn away when he was between three and five, and then a young and tender stepmother, his father's wife, Donna Albiera.* <sup>21</sup>

In Freud's view, it is in fact these subtle but deep and unconsciously expressed emotional themes that give Leonardo's works of art their real power, not simply their technical or aesthetic execution. For instance, of da Vinci's most famous artistic work, the Mona Lisa, Freud maintained:

*[Mona Lisa] this woman who now appears to smile on us so seductively, and now to stare coldly and without soul into space...[is] the most perfect representation of the contrasts which dominate the erotic life of women; the contrast between reserve and seduction...* <sup>22</sup>

Freud points out that da Vinci was in his fifties when he began work on the portrait of Mona Lisa del Giocondo. Leonardo spent four years "painting at" the picture, yet never considered it a completed work. Rather than deliver it to the person who commissioned it, Leonardo kept the painting, taking it with him to France where he spent the last years of his life (and where it was finally acquired by his patron Francis I for the Louvre). Freud explained Leonardo's fixation on the painting and the power of its affect as being a direct result of his mixed feelings toward his mother.

*[T]he smile of Mona Lisa del Giocondo had awakened in him as a grown man the memory of the mother of his earliest childhood...Leonardo was successful in reproducing on Mona Lisa's face the double meaning which this smile*

*contained, the promise of unbounded tenderness and at the same time sinister menace...*<sup>23</sup>

Freud goes on to propose that the dynamics of Leonardo's childhood situation planted the seed for what he believed to be Leonardo's homosexual tendencies, claiming:

*In all our male homosexual cases the subjects had a very intense erotic attachment to a female person, as a rule their mother, during the first period of childhood, which is afterwards forgotten; this attachment was evoked or encouraged by too much tenderness on the part of the mother herself, and further reinforced by the small part played by the father during their childhood.*<sup>24</sup>

Freud believed that all of these dynamics were reflected in the symbolism of da Vinci's 'vulture memory'. As an interesting part of his strategy, at various stages in his analysis Freud 'translated' the different aspects of the visual symbolism of Leonardo's memory "from its own special language into words that are generally understood." Put together in sequence they read:

"While I was in my cradle a [vulture] came down to me, and opened my mouth with its tail" —> "That was a time when my fond curiosity was directed to my mother, and when I still believed she had a genital organ like my own."

"It struck me many times with its tail against my lips." —> "My mother pressed innumerable passionate kisses on my mouth."

"It seems that I was always destined to be so deeply concerned with [vultures]" —> "It was through this erotic relationship with my mother that I became homosexual."

While Leonardo's relationship with his father later in his life seems to have been a good one, Freud argues that it was established after a certain critical period and that Ser Piero da Vinci

played only a 'small part' in his illegitimate son's early childhood. Freud points again to minute and seemingly trivial details in Leonardo's notebooks to add evidence to his claims, noting that, "Among the entries in Leonardo's notebooks there is one which catches the reader's attention owing to the importance of what it contains and to a minute formal error." Translated into English, the entry reads:

*"On July 9, 1504, Wednesday at 7 o'clock died Ser Piero da Vinci, notary at the palace of the Podesta, my father, at 7 o'clock. He was 80 years old, and left 10 sons and 2 daughters."*<sup>25</sup>

Freud goes on to explain what has caught his eye, applying once more his strategy for giving priority to details which go counter to the typical pattern.

*As we see the note refers to the death of Leonardo's father. The small error in its form consists of the repetition of the time of day [at 7 o'clock], which is given twice as if Leonardo had forgotten at the end of the sentence that he had already written it at the beginning. It is only a small detail, and anyone who was not a psycho-analyst would attach not importance to it. He might not even notice it, and if his attention was drawn to it he might say that a thing like that can happen to anyone in a moment of distraction or of strong feeling, and that it is of no further significance.*

*The psycho-analyst thinks differently. To him nothing is too small to be a manifestation of hidden mental processes. He has learnt long ago that such cases of forgetting or repetition are significant, and that it is the 'distraction' which allows impulses that are otherwise hidden to be revealed.*<sup>26</sup>

Freud's comment that "nothing is too small to be a manifestation of hidden mental processes" emphasizes the key presupposition at the heart of his micro strategy for analysis and interpretation. For Freud, behaviors were expressions of mental process (not



simply mindless reflexes) - they were surface structures reflecting deeper structures. Freud implies that micro behavioral cues, such as Leonardo's accidental 'repetition', provide a greater amount of information about deeper processes than the obvious contents of behavior, which are more easily monitored and filtered by consciousness. Freud terms a repetition of this kind a "perseveration" and believes, as he states above, "that such cases of forgetting or repetition are significant, and that it is the 'distraction' which allows impulses that are otherwise hidden to be revealed."

*Without Leonardo's affective inhibition the entry in his diary might have run somewhat as follows: 'To-day at 7 o'clock my father died - Ser Piero da Vinci, my poor father!' But the displacement of the perseveration on to the most indifferent detail in the report of his death, the hour at which he died, robs the entry of all emotion, and further lets us see that here was something to be concealed and suppressed.*<sup>27</sup>

Freud's implication was that Leonardo's error in reporting the death of his father reflected a pattern of suppressing feelings for his father that had begun in his earliest childhood - because his father was absent from his life during those years.

To find further evidence of Leonardo's lack of bonding with his father, Freud changes his focus to macro behavioral patterns such as Leonardo's rejection of authority and his seeming lack of 'religious feeling'. Freud interpreted the belief in a personal 'God', represented as an all-powerful masculine figure in many cultures, as a sublimation of feelings for one's father. In Freud's perspective, da Vinci's varied and uninhibited researches, and the absence of any strong religious or political affiliations in his life, indicated an unusual degree of independence from his father in early childhood.

*In most other human beings - no less to-day than in primaeval time - the need for support from an authority of some sort is so compelling that their world begins to totter if that authority is threatened. Only Leonardo could dispense with that support; he would not have been able to do so had*

*he not learnt in the first years of his life to do without his father. His later scientific research, with all its boldness and independence, presupposed the existence of infantile sexual researches uninhibited by his father, and was a prolongation of them with the sexual element excluded.*

*When anyone has, like Leonardo, escaped being intimidated by his father during his earliest childhood, and has in his researches cast away the fetters of authority, it would be in the sharpest contradiction to our expectation if we found that he had remained a believer and had been unable to escape from dogmatic religion. Psycho-analysis has made us familiar with the intimate connection between the father-complex and belief in God; it has shown us that God is, psychologically, nothing other than an exalted father, and it brings us evidence every day of how young people lose their religious beliefs as soon as the authority of their father breaks down.*<sup>28</sup>

Freud's comment that the "boldness and independence" of da Vinci's later scientific research "presupposed the existence of infantile sexual researches uninhibited by his father, and was a prolongation of them with the sexual element excluded," re-emphasizes a basic theme in Freud's work and a fundamental influence on his analytical strategies. Freud presupposes that 1) basic instinctual deep structures are given form by certain conditions in early childhood, and 2) those forms or patterns of behavior continue into adult life with different elements substituted for the original contents.

Freud asserted that the conditions surrounding the establishment of Leonardo's basic patterns of behavior related to a combination of the early stages of psycho-sexual development and a set of events that were too confusing or painful to be consciously remembered. As Freud put it:

*The curiosity of small children is manifested in their untiring love of asking questions; this is bewildering to the adult so long as he fails to understand that all these questions are merely circumlocutions and that they cannot*



*come to an end because the child is only trying to make them take the place of a question which he does not ask...most children, or at least the most gifted ones, pass through a period, beginning when they are about three, which may be called the period of infantile sexual researches. So far as we know, the curiosity of children of this age does not awaken spontaneously, but is aroused by the impression made by some important event...<sup>29</sup>*

According to Freud, then, the reason da Vinci's life was characterized by investigation as opposed to completion was because this research was actually a "circumlocution" that was taking the place of what he really wanted or needed to investigate but felt he must repress. The intensity of this curiosity was "aroused by the impression made by some important event" - his traumatic separation from his natural mother.

Pointing out that "it is said that all great men are bound to retain some infantile part," Freud refers to Leonardo's passion for making elaborate mechanical toys as more evidence that he had in fact retained an unusual amount of his childhood curiosity. Freud maintained:

*Indeed, the great Leonardo remained like a child for the whole of his life in more than one way...Even as an adult he continued to play, and that was another reason why he often appeared uncanny and incomprehensible to his contemporaries.<sup>30</sup>*

In Freud's perception, da Vinci fixated at a certain time in his life because the traumatic situation between his natural parents arrested his development at a certain critical period in his life. Because it had not "been carried through to an end in the normal manner," Freud concluded that Leonardo's obsession with investigation was a "substitute for that which had not come through." According to Freud, "his urge for knowledge was always directed to the external world; something kept him far away from the investigation of the human mind."<sup>31</sup>

Thus, Freud concluded that Leonardo's investigations were essentially the result of the constant replaying of the pattern by which he had learned to cope with the disruption of his sexual inquisitiveness as a child; a pattern which he applied to more and more contents in order to avoid the confusion and pain of his past. In Freud's words:

*When the period of infantile sexual researches has been terminated by a wave of energetic sexual repression, the instinct for research has three possible vicissitudes open to it owing to its early connection with sexual interests.*

*In the first of these, research shares the fate of sexuality; thenceforward curiosity remains inhibited and the free activity of intelligence may be limited for the whole of the subject's lifetime, especially as shortly after this that powerful religious inhibition of thought is brought into play by education. This is the type characterized by neurotic inhibition. We know very well that the intellectual weakness which has been acquired in this way gives an effective impetus to the outbreak of a neurotic illness.*

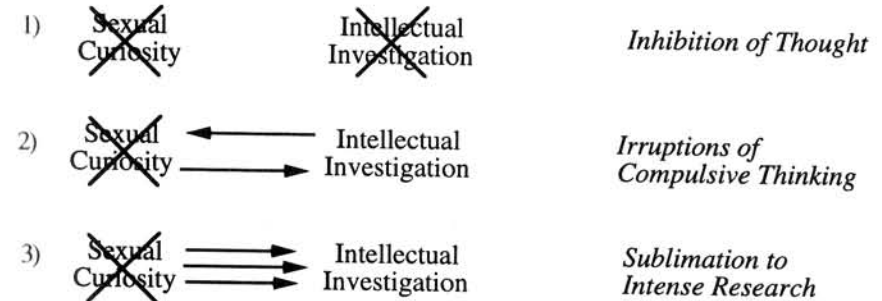
*In the second type the intellectual development is sufficiently strong to resist the sexual repression which has hold of it. Some time after the infantile sexual researches have come to an end, the intelligence, having grown stronger, recalls the old association and offers its help in evading sexual repression, and the suppressed sexual activities of research return from the unconscious in the form of compulsive brooding, naturally in a distorted and unfree form, but sufficiently powerful to sexualize thinking itself and to color intellectual operations with the pleasure and anxiety that belongs to sexual processes proper. Here investigation becomes a sexual activity, often the exclusive one, and the feeling that comes from settling things in one's mind and explaining them replaces sexual satisfaction; but the interminable character of the child's researches is also repeated in the fact that this brooding never ends and that the intellectual feeling, so much desired, of having found a solution recedes more and more into the distance*

In virtue of a special disposition, the third type, of which is the rarest and most perfect, escapes both inhibition of thought and neurotic compulsive thinking. It is true that here too sexual repression comes about, but it does not succeed in relegating a component instinct of sexual desire to the unconscious. Instead, the libido evades the fate of repression by being sublimated from the very beginning into curiosity and by becoming attached to the powerful instinct for research as a reinforcement. Here, too, the research becomes to some extent compulsive and a substitute for sexual activity; but owing to the complete difference in the underlying psychical processes (sublimation instead of an irruption from the unconscious) the quality of neurosis is absent; there is no attachment to the original complexes of infantile sexual research, and the instinct can operate freely in the service of intellectual interest. Sexual repression, which has made the instinct so strong through the addition to it of sublimated libido, is still taken into account by the instinct, in that it avoids any concern with sexual themes.

If we reflect on the concurrence in Leonardo of his overpowerful instinct for research and the atrophy of his sexual life (which was restricted to what is called ideal [sublimated] homosexuality) we shall be disposed to claim him as a model instance of our third type.<sup>32</sup>

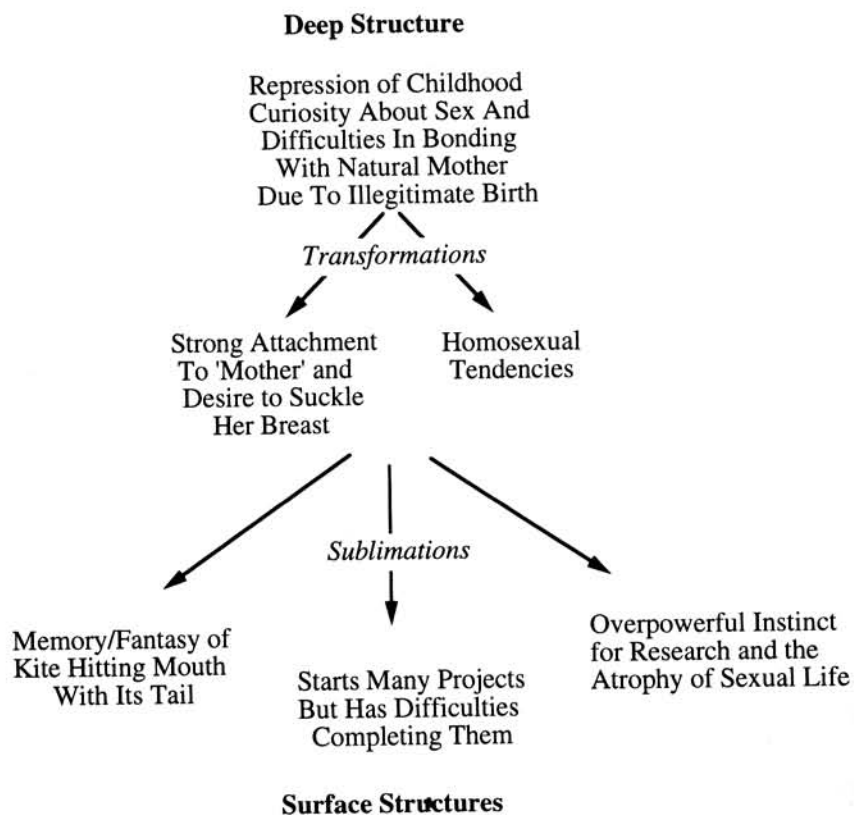
In Freud's model, instinctual childhood sexual curiosity is at the root of adult intellectual activities, and forms the unconscious motivational basis for later adult intellectual investigations. According to Freud, when this natural childhood curiosity with one's own sexuality is interrupted or suppressed, it can influence adult intellectual development in several ways; 1) the suppression of sexual curiosity can lead to an inhibition or atrophy of both adult sexual activity and intellectual curiosity altogether; 2) the suppressed curiosity may reappear as either bursts of compulsive thoughts (whose contents may or may not be sexual) which take the place of sexual activity, or as a type of intellectual 'fundamentalism' because "the feeling that comes from setting things in one's mind and explaining them replaces sexual satisfaction;" or 3) if the

individual has already learned to 'sublimate' sexual curiosity into other forms as a child, the suppressed sexual curiosity is fully redirected into intellectual investigation, intensifying intellectual pursuits even more.



#### Freud's View of the Possible Influences of the Suppression of Childhood Sexual Curiosity on Adult Intellectual Development

Freud categorized Leonardo da Vinci as an example of the results of the third type, in which the full force of sexual curiosity had been 'sublimated' into intellectual and creative activities. According to Freud, da Vinci's normal childhood sexual development was interrupted by his separation from his natural mother at a critical period in his life, when he was removed to live in his father's household. Freud maintained that because da Vinci had initially been able to freely engage in his infantile sexual researches without inhibition from his father, the later "wave of energetic sexual repression" did not totally squelch Leonardo's inquisitiveness but rather forced its full intensity into artistic and intellectual pursuits. Freud conjectures that while the initially intense connection with his natural mother and the absence of his father set the stage for what he believed to be homosexual tendencies in Leonardo, it also set the stage for da Vinci's unique character. Freud maintains that because Leonardo learned to sublimate his feelings and his need for his father early on, he was able to apply that ability to redirect his sexual curiosity more easily.



### Freud's Explanation of the Development of Leonardo's Adult Behavior Patterns

By applying his strategies for identifying and interpreting micro and macro behavioral clues that do not fit the typical pattern, Freud believed he had succeeded in explaining some of the mysteries behind Leonardo's unique character and accomplishments. In his view, Freud had attained his goals in making sense of the quintessential 'renaissance man' by:

- a) establishing a "dynamic basis for his nature" through the interplay of instinctual drives, developmental cycles, childhood events, family interactions and adult circumstances and interests.
- b) disclosing the "original motive forces of his mind" in the form of 'primitive instincts' related to his difficulties bonding with his father and mother and his struggles with the development of his own sexual curiosity and impulses.
- c) accounting for "the later transformations and developments" of these forces by tracing and explaining the sequence of development and links between early experiences and subsequent patterns of behavior (such as the influence of sublimating childhood sexual curiosity on adult intellectual investigation).
- d) explaining his behavior "in the course of his life" in terms of the effects of these dynamic patterns on Leonardo's notebooks, paintings, scientific researches and relationships with his fellow human beings.

Although he acknowledged the importance of the interaction between 'constitution' and 'fate' in the development of a personality, in his assessment Freud has given 'fate' the decisive hand in shaping Leonardo's life and accomplishments. As he asks in his concluding remarks of his analysis of da Vinci:

*But may one not take objection to the findings of an enquiry which ascribes to accidental circumstances of his parental constellation so decisive an influence on a person's fate - which, for example, makes Leonardo's fate depend on his illegitimate birth and on the barrenness of his first stepmother Donna Albiera? I think one has no right to do so.*

*...we are all too ready to forget that in fact everything to do with our life is chance, from our origin out of the meeting of spermatozoon and ovum onwards - chance which nevertheless has a share in the law and necessity of nature, and which merely lacks any connection with our wishes and illusions.*<sup>33</sup>



## Review and Reflections on Freud's Analysis of da Vinci

On a process level, we can summarize the basic steps of Freud's macro strategy as a sequence involving:

1. Defining the problem space to be explored.
2. Enumerating the range of elements and cues related to that problem space.
3. Specifying the current assumptions and beliefs which describe and explain those cues.
4. Identifying cues or elements which do not fit the current map.
5. Questioning the current assumptions.
6. Forming a new set of assumptions and beliefs which can account for or explain the anomalies.
7. Seeking other confirming evidences for the new assumptions and beliefs.

In reflecting on Freud's application of this process in his analysis of Leonardo, we can see both the strengths and some of the potential difficulties in applying his strategies. On the one hand, we have been given a rich and provocative perspective of the great renaissance man that has acknowledged a missing dimension to his life story. On the other hand, we are left somewhat skeptical of the validity of Freud's conclusions because of the nature of some of the assumptions we must accept (such as the central role played by sexuality, the mechanical nature of 'repression', etc.) and the degree to which many of his inferences rely on his particular interpretations of the content of Leonardo's memory.\*

At their best, Freud's methods of implementing this basic sequence parallel the delightful incisiveness of his fictional counterpart Sherlock Holmes. In many ways Freud's approach reflects

\* For instance, in addition to his interpretation of the bird in Leonardo's memory as a "vulture," Freud also quotes Leonardo several times as saying that "he had been destined from the first to investigate the *flight of birds*" - indicating that his admitted long standing preoccupation with flight was a clear evidence of repressed sexual urges. In fact, Leonardo's statement was "It seems that I was always destined to be so deeply concerned with *kites*" not with "*flight*."

the views of Holmes, who claimed that life was a "great chain, the nature of which is known whenever we are shown a single link of it," and maintained, "The *ideal reasoner would, when he had once been shown a single fact in all its bearings, deduce from it not only all the chain of events which led up to it but also all the results which would follow from it.*"<sup>34</sup>

Similar beliefs appear to have played an important role in Freud's strategies for investigation. For example, Freud's study of Leonardo's "memory" is an expression of the belief that a part of any system is in some way an expression of the whole. In tracking Freud's analysis of da Vinci's "memory," one is reminded of Holmes' comment that "from a drop of water one ought to be able to infer the existence of a Niagara or the Atlantic." Freud approaches Leonardo's memory as a "drop of water" in the gushing "Niagara" of his passion for his scientific investigation and art, and in the vast "Atlantic" of his incredible accomplishments.

In fact, the manner in which Freud investigated da Vinci's strange memory seems to have many similarities to Holmes' examination of the watch of Watson's unfortunate brother (detailed in Volume I of this series). Both men make inferences from apparently insignificant details. Then they combine them, applying assumptions and imagination, to piece together surprising conclusions about the character and behavior of their subject.

There are times, however, when we find it necessary to question the validity of Freud's conclusions. As we reflect on Freud's interpretation of Leonardo's "memory," we find ourselves echoing Watson's first impressions of Holmes' methods - Freud's analysis appears to be "*a remarkable mixture of shrewdness and absurdity. The reasoning [is] close and intense, but the deductions appear...far fetched and exaggerated.*"<sup>35</sup>

The validity of Freud's deductions and conclusions are certainly colored by some of his obvious misinterpretations; such as translating "kite" as "vulture" (which turned out to be a "red herring" in his analysis of Leonardo). [In English murder mysteries, a "red herring" is a misleading or irrelevant cue or clue.] Freud's emphasis on Leonardo's "vulture" brings up one of the greatest challenges for his methods of analysis and interpretation. Because he chooses to focus on content details of his subject's experience, his theory



ends up being disconfirmed to the degree that his interpretation of this content is shown to be in error.

This, and the misquotation of Leonardo tying his destiny to 'flight', also underscore some of the pitfalls of looking for confirming evidence. When a person really wants to find the details that confirms his or her theory, it is often all too easy to find just what one is looking for (but only what one is looking for). As Sherlock Holmes warned, "*Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts.*"<sup>36</sup>

There is a phenomenon humorously entitled 'fish in the dreams' in NLP. The term stands for the process of unconsciously projecting one's own beliefs onto the behavior of another, and then selectively searching for (or unconsciously drawing out) only those cues which confirm that belief. The name was inspired by a radio comedy program in which a comedian portrayed a psychoanalyst who had a theory that all people's problems could be traced to fish in their dreams. So when a client would come in he would continue to probe them and push them until he found the confirming evidence he was looking for. A typical interchange might go something like:

- Doctor: "Well. Did you have any dreams last night?"  
 Patient: "I don't think so. I don't remember having any."  
 D: "Think about it. You must have had dreams. Just try to remember. We must work through your resistances."  
 (Of course, since he is a good patient, the person will find a way of going along with the doctor.)  
 P: "If it will help me get well, then yes, I had a dream."  
 D: "Were there any fish in it?"  
 P: "No. I don't remember any fish."  
 D: "Hmmm. Well what were you doing?"  
 P: "Just walking down the sidewalk."  
 D: "Were there any streams or lakes by the sidewalk?"  
 P: "No."  
 D: "Are you sure? Don't be resistant."  
 P: "I don't know."  
 D: "Just think about it. There could have been a stream or some water couldn't there? What about any puddles? There could have been puddles by that sidewalk."

- P: "Yes. I guess there could have been a puddle."  
 D: "Was there any fish in that puddle?"  
 P: "No, no."  
 D: "Well, were there any restaurants on this street?"  
 P: "No. Not that I remember."  
 D: "Now, you must let go of your resistance. There could have been a restaurant couldn't there?"  
 P: "OK, I guess there could have been a restaurant."  
 D: "Were they serving fish?"  
 P: "I don't know."  
 D: "But they could have been serving fish, couldn't they?"  
 P: "Yes, I guess they could have been serving fish."  
 D: "Amazing! There it is again. I must note this down, 'Patient reported fish in his dreams.' My theory has been confirmed again. It's incredible how consistent this is. I'm surprised nobody noticed it before. What a genius I am."

Obviously, the interaction is a gross exaggeration for comic purposes. But it highlights the fact that it is often all too easy to selectively choose or draw out only those cues which fit with one's theories. One cannot help but see the parallel between the 'fish' the comic psychoanalyst found in his patient's dreams and the 'vulture' Freud found in Leonardo's 'flying dream'. (As I pointed out earlier, Freud's study of Leonardo probably reveals much more about Freud's thinking than it does about Leonardo's thinking.)

While Freud certainly valued logic and clear reasoning he did not seem to 'test' his logic as thoroughly as some of the other geniuses in this study. For instance, he did not apply Aristotle's strategy of seeking counterexamples to his assumptions. Nor did he utilize the strategy of his fictional kindred spirit, Sherlock Holmes, by checking and disconfirming alternative hypotheses. In terms of Disney's strategy, Freud appears to have operated mostly as 'dreamer' in his analysis of Leonardo's "memory," entering only somewhat into the 'realist' and 'critic' mode with respect to his interpretations. Interestingly, Freud's strategy is in some ways most like the strategy for musical composition employed by his fellow Austrian, Mozart. Like Mozart did with sounds, Freud starts collecting together fragments and synthesizes them together as a whole, which stands mostly on the merits of its own internal

consistency. Perhaps most of all, Freud's strategies parallel those of his colleague Albert Einstein. He uses the free creations of his imagination to find and question basic assumptions.

In this regard, we must keep in mind that Freud was not attempting to claim objective validity. Rather, he wanted to show that his methods could add new insight into the "psychical mechanisms" behind the behavior of historical figures as well as his patients. Freud acknowledged that 'the map is not the territory', especially when we are making a map of someone else's map. Unlike Holmes' situation, Freud was not dealing with 'hard evidence' - in Freud's world there was no body, no smoking gun, no footprints in the mud. When it is a person's internal map that is the 'territory' we wish to explore "*phantasy and reality are to be treated alike* ." As I mentioned before, from a 'neuro-linguistic' perspective, fantasy, memory and even our ongoing perceptions of external reality are all a function of processes within our nervous systems. Thus, all of them have potentially equal influence on our behavior, and it is not important if there is conclusive evidence in 'objective reality'. What is important is the influence of one's conclusions on one's internal map and subsequent behavior.

Along this vein, one of the key elements of Freud's analytical strategy that differed from people such as Aristotle and Holmes was perceiving symptoms and other peculiar mental phenomena as *symbols* of something else rather than taking them at face value. Symbols and metaphors are 'surface structures' that reflect 'deeper structures'. From this point of view, a particular surface structure is only one of many "fragments" from "a whole mass of connected ideas." Freud's misinterpretation of da Vinci's "kite" as a "vulture" was on the level of surface structure. As Freud's supporters would claim, it was only one of many other fragments that point to similar patterns and processes at the level of deep structure.

Freud himself maintained that a particular surface structure may be a point of overlap for several different deep structures. Thus, it may be subject to more than one interpretation. In fact, a potential pitfall in applying or evaluating Freud's strategy for interpretation is in thinking that there is only one correct deep structure for a particular symbol or that the direction of interpretation can only go one way.

For example, I once met a woman at a party who told me that she had gone to a psychoanalyst many years earlier. She said he was constantly asking her about her dreams. If she told him she dreamt about riding on a train, he interpreted the train to represent a penis and told her she was subconsciously wishing for sex. Another time she dreamt she was flying on a plane. He interpreted that as a 'flying dream' which was also a wish for sex. This pattern continued for some time. One day she came in to see the psychoanalyst and he asked how she was doing. She responded, "I guess I am getting ready to go on a long trip." "Oh really?" said her analyst, "Why is that?" "Because I dreamed all night about having sex," She replied. "I figure if a train is a penis then a penis must be a train, so I must be very interested in travel." According to her, the analyst became so enraged that he terminated her therapy on the spot.

Even though the map is not the territory, it is still possible for one to make the mistake of believing that he has the one 'right' map.

If we approach Freud's interpretation of Leonardo from the perspective that he was not trying to assert that he had the right map of a single universal symbol system, then we find an interesting and useful strategy for finding new perspectives and explanations. In fact, if we apply Freud's strategy to the reinterpretation of the bird in da Vinci's memory as a "kite," we can find other implications with respect to Freud's theory about Leonardo's childhood that are potentially just as interesting as the interpretation of the bird as a "vulture." As an example, if we remove the imperative for a sexual explanation of Leonardo's "memory," other interpretations become possible that also fit elements of Freud's hypothesis. One of the distinguishing features of the kite is a deeply forked tail - which could be interpreted as a symbol of the two mothers. Since Freud initially interprets the meaning of the bird's tail in the mouth of the infant as a metaphor for nursing, the two tails could represent the two mothers and the bird could be either Leonardo himself or his father.\*

---

\* Even if, according to Freud's assumptions, the two tails were to represent two phalluses, if there were a 'gender reversal' (given Freud's inference that Leonardo had homosexual tendencies) such that male and female were reversed, the tails could indicate two mothers and the bird Leonardo's father.

Rather than become stuck in arguments about the validity of a particular symbol system, it seems more fruitful to consider the implications of Freud's strategies for understanding the dynamics of deep structure. At the level of deep structure, Freud saw a person's life as composed of recurrent cycles of sexual, emotional and mental processes that continually repeated themselves. These cycles were *iterative*, in that each repetition involved the substitution of new contents in the place of those which were initially responsible for establishing or activating the cycle. Symptoms occurred when a cycle was prevented from completing its natural course. Like the tire of an automobile trapped in the sand, the cycle would continually spin ever faster, but never succeed in moving forward.

Freud's various interpretations presuppose that there are macro cycles and micro cycles which make up a person's life. Each new wave of phenomena at the surface was a result of the reiteration of deeper level cycles. The relationship between these cycles may be likened to the patterns of cycles which make up our own earthly existence. For example, there is a yearly cycle which is made of the four cycles we call the "seasons." The seasons are in turn made up of monthly cycles based upon the phases of the moon. Finally, there is the daily micro cycle of sunrise and sunset, etc. While each day, month or year will bring new 'surface structures' in the form of changing weather patterns, crops, animals, human beings, etc., these contents emerge from the background of the deeper global cycles.

The implication behind Freud's interpretation of da Vinci's behavior was that similar cycles took place in human beings at the level of deep structure. These deep structure macro cycles included such fundamental patterns as one's relationships with one's father and mother, stages of child development and the establishment of sexuality. In Freud's view the deep structure macro cycles would constantly repeat throughout one's life substituting different contents at the level of surface structure. Freud implied that the degree to which these cycles influenced a person was relative to the degree to which the individual was conscious of the cycles and their contents. (As an analogy, if we are unaware of seasonal weather patterns, such as rain, snow, drought, etc., we will be more effected by them because they will catch us by surprise and thus unprepared.) Freud indicated that because da Vinci 'repressed' his sexuality and his feelings about his mother and father, these

issues played an unusually significant role in shaping his life at an unconscious level.\*

Some examples cited by Freud include:

- a. Leonardo replayed his conflict and confusion about his relationship with his mother in his depiction of women in his paintings.
- b. Leonardo replayed the suppression of feeling in his relationship with his father in the distance he displayed in his relationships with the other men his life (i.e., his mentor Andrea Verrocchio, his patron Francesco Sforza, and his colleagues and apprentices.)
- c. Leonardo replayed the sublimation of his sexual inquisitiveness in his incessant scientific investigations.
- d. Leonardo replayed the interruption of the development of his relationship with his father in his continual rejection of authority, and replayed the interruption of the development of his relationship with his natural mother in his inability to bring projects to their completion.

Freud also suggested that aspects of these cycles could overlap periodically, sharing similar elements of a particular surface structure. Such an overlap could occur naturally or might be stimulated by a combination of events that brought together two or more cycles. The point of overlap of these cycles often marked critical periods or key junctures in a person's life.

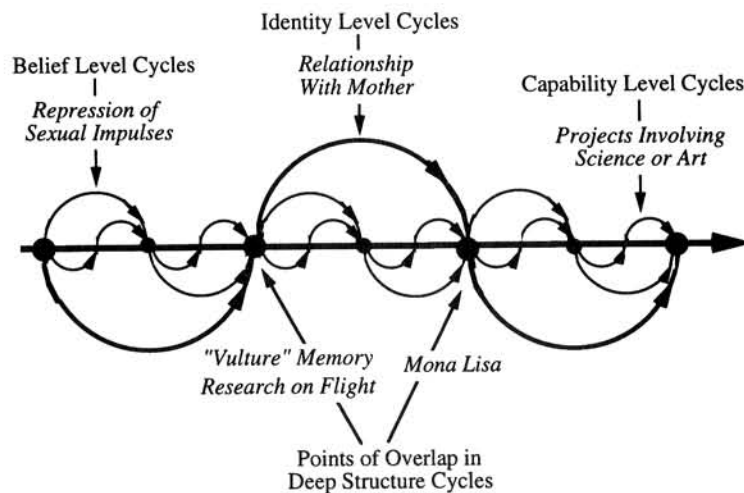
For example, Freud's comment that "the smile of Mona Lisa del Giocondo had awakened in [Leonardo] as a grown man the memory of the mother of his earliest childhood" is an example of the overlapping of a 'macro cycle' involving da Vinci's relationship with his mother with the beginning of a 'micro cycle' involving an art project. An implication to be drawn from the fact that Leonardo worked at the painting for four years, abandoned it as incomplete, yet kept the painting with him until his death, is presumably that he had again replayed his relationship with his mother. It is as if his four year relationship with the painting mirrored his childhood relationship with his mother. The painting then became a tangible expression of the memory of his mother.

\* In fact, one wonders if, according to Freud, Leonardo would have painted the Mona Lisa so exquisitely if he had been through psychoanalysis and become aware of the background behind his creativity.



Freud proposes a similar point of overlap between several cycles at the beginning of Leonardo's researches on flight. He indicates that the memory/fantasy of the "vulture" marks an overlapping point of (a) the macro cycle of Leonardo's relationship with his mother, (b) a cycle involving the 'repression' of sexual impulses and (c) a micro cycle involving the 'sublimation' of these other two cycles into a research project on flight of birds, for which he felt he was "always destined."

One way of summarizing this perspective would be that there are different 'levels' of cycles. Macro cycles involve deep processes related to one's *identity* - such as Leonardo's relationships with his mother and father - and to one's *beliefs and values* - i.e., da Vinci's struggles with sexuality and authority. Micro cycles would relate to the development or applications of *skills and capabilities*—such as scientific investigations (anatomy, flight, machines, etc.) and art projects—and *specific patterns of behavior* - i.e., entries in notebooks, Leonardo's obsessive accounting practices, etc. The length of these different cycles take place within different time frames, thus they tend to begin and end at different points in time. There are instances, however, when the beginnings or endings of these cycles overlap, however, creating significant moments and time periods in a person's life.



**Unfolding and Overlapping of Macro Cycles and Micro Cycles Through Time**

### *Influence of Different Levels of Experience in Psychobiography*

I mentioned in an earlier section that one way to avoid some of the problems of interpretation brought up by Freud's methods is through the *thoroughness* of one's coverage of the 'problem space'. Thoroughness has to do with how many relevant perspectives and time frames one is able to bring to bear on a particular subject. For instance, in the previous volumes of this work I have pointed out that, in attempting to model or understand an individual, there are a number of different aspects or levels of the system in which that person operated that we may explore.

At one level, we can look at the historical and geographical *environment* in which the individual lived - i.e., *when* and *where* the person operated. That is, we can consider the individual's living space, natural surroundings, work place, etc. Furthermore, we can examine both macro environments and micro environments. Micro environments would involve specific locations such as the individual's office or studio, or the details of their home. Macro environments would include the individual's general habitat, social contexts, public events, etc. In addition to the influence these environments may have had on the individual, we can examine the influence and impact that person had on his or her environment and what products or creations the person left in the environment.

At another level, we examine the individual's specific *behaviors* and actions - i.e., *what* the person did in that environment. What were the individual's patterns of work, interaction or play? As with the environmental level, we can focus on either micro or macro behavioral patterns. Macro behaviors would involve general patterns of communication, work, romantic involvements, etc. Micro behavioral patterns would involve more detailed and specific actions such as particular qualities of voice or movement, specific work routines, eating habits or significant idiosyncrasies.

We may also look at the intellectual and cognitive strategies and *capabilities* by which the individual selected and guided his or her actions in the environment - i.e., *how* the person generated these behaviors in that context. On a macro level, capabilities would include general strategies and skills such as learning, memory,



motivation, decision making and creativity. On a micro level, examining a person's mental capabilities would involve detailing how the person used micro cognitive patterns such as visualization, internal dialog or self talk and his or her senses in the performance of a particular behavior or task.

We could further explore the *beliefs and values* that motivated and shaped the thinking strategies and capabilities that the individual developed to accomplish his or her behavioral goals in the environment - i.e., *why* the person did things the way he or she did them in those times and places. On a macro level, basic beliefs relate to the type of meaning, cause-effect relations and boundaries a person places on events or perceives in the surrounding world. On a micro level, a person's beliefs and values can relate to any of the levels which make up his or her experience. That is, a person may have beliefs *about* his or environment, behavior, capabilities, identity, family system, profession, community, etc. A person can even have beliefs about his or her beliefs, judging them as "good," "bad," "progressive," "in conflict," etc.

We could look even more deeply to investigate the individual's perception of the self or *identity* he or she was manifesting through that set of beliefs, capabilities and actions in that environment - i.e., the *who* behind the why, how, what, where and when. This would involve exploring the person's character traits, personality and self-concept.

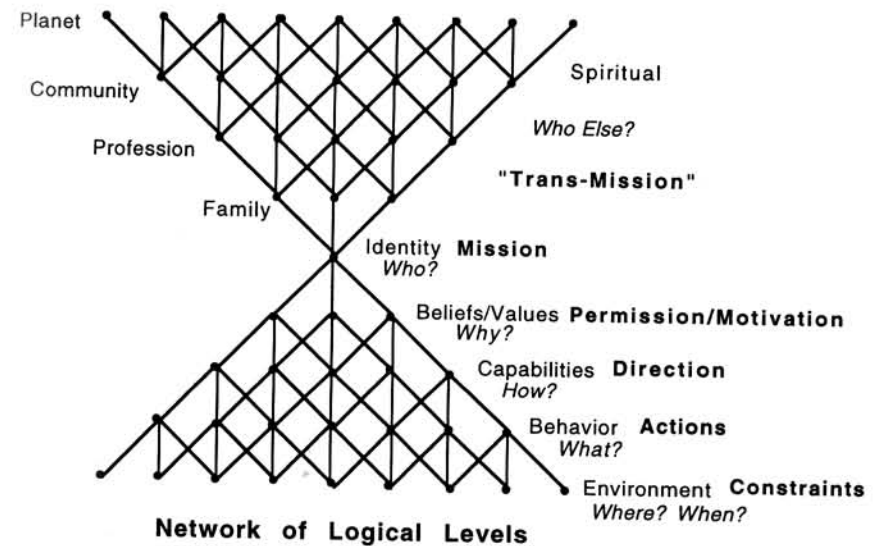
We might also want to examine the way in which that identity manifested itself in relationship to the individual's family, colleagues, contemporaries, Western Society and Culture, the planet, God - i.e., who the person was in relation to *who and what else*. In other words, how did the behaviors, abilities, beliefs, values and identity of the individual influence and interact with larger systems of which he or she was a part in a personal, social and ultimately *spiritual way*?

On a *family* level, for instance, we can examine the individual's relationships with his or her father, mother, siblings, spouse and children. On a *professional* level we can consider the person's teachers, mentors, peers, colleagues and students. At the level of *community* we could contemplate the individual's religious, political and social affiliations. We can also consider that person's educational background, local culture and social status. On the

*global system* level we would take into account the individual's race, gender, nationality, genetic background, geographical location, historical era and the global events and social and technical developments that made up the larger system in which the person existed and operated.

A 'thorough' model, or psychobiography, of a particular individual would involve filling in and relating together information on each of these different levels.

One way to visualize the relationships between these elements is as a network of interconnected reference points that focus or converge on the identity of the individual as the core of the interaction.

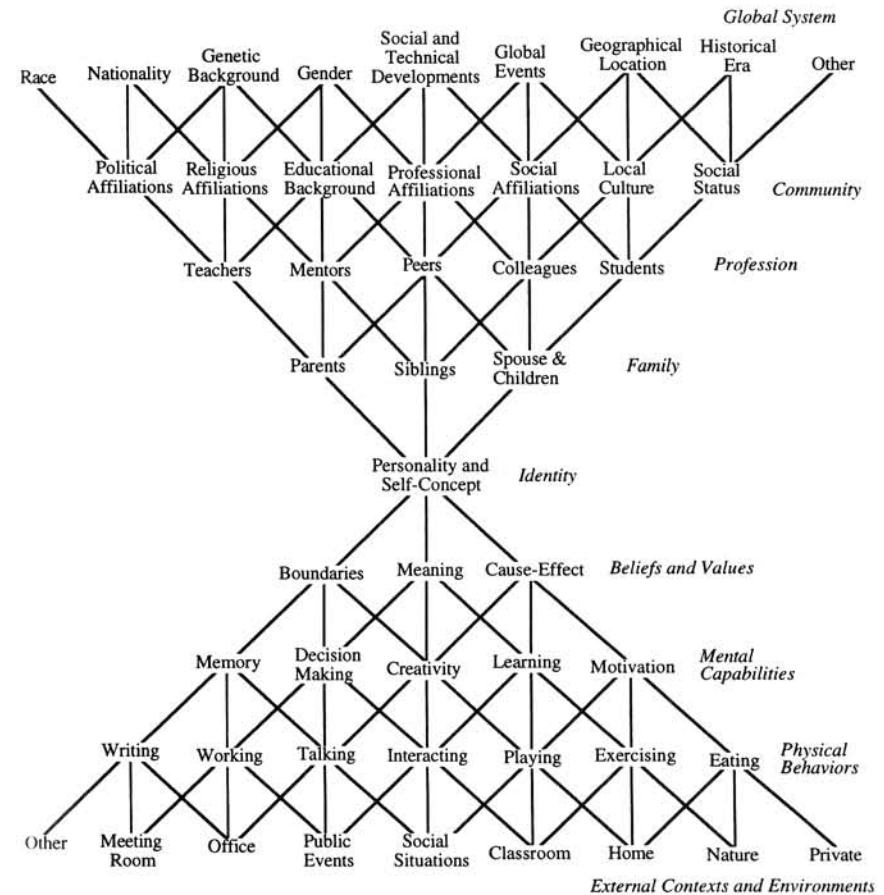


According to this diagram, 'identity' is expressed and shaped most closely through one's core beliefs and values on one hand, and through one's relationships with key family members on the other. Beliefs and values are manifested into external reality through the development of mental capabilities and skills. One's internal capabilities, in turn, stimulate and direct specific behavioral ac-

tions which are shaped by but also leave their impression on one's concrete external environment. Similarly, the relationships one establishes with family members (especially those early in life) influence and become extended by the professional relationships one establishes. Family and professional relations both shape and are determined by one's place or role in his or her larger community. This system of relations is shaped by and ultimately determines one's place in the world or global system.

As an analogy, our identity is like the trunk of a tree - it is the core of our being. The trunk of a tree unfolds organically from a seed by growing a support network of unseen roots that reach deeply into the ground to provide strength and nourishment. It has another network of "roots," in the form of limbs, branches and leaves, that reach into the light and air to provide nourishment of a different kind. The roots and branches of a tree both shape and are shaped by the ecology in which they exist. Similarly, our identities are supported by internal, invisible "roots" in the form of neural networks which process our perception of our personal values, beliefs and capabilities as well as our physical being and the environment. Externally, identity is expressed through our participation in the larger systems of which we are a member: our family, professional relationships, community and the part of the overall global system to which we belong. The phenomena that make up a person's life are manifested through the identity and are expressed and strengthened through the development, enrichment and growth of these two systems of "roots" - 1) the unseen system of our neurology which grows in the soil of our bodies, and 2) the leaves and branches of the larger family, community and global networks of which we are a part.

The following diagram provides some examples of the types of information that relate to the various levels of elements which make up this fabric of a person's life.

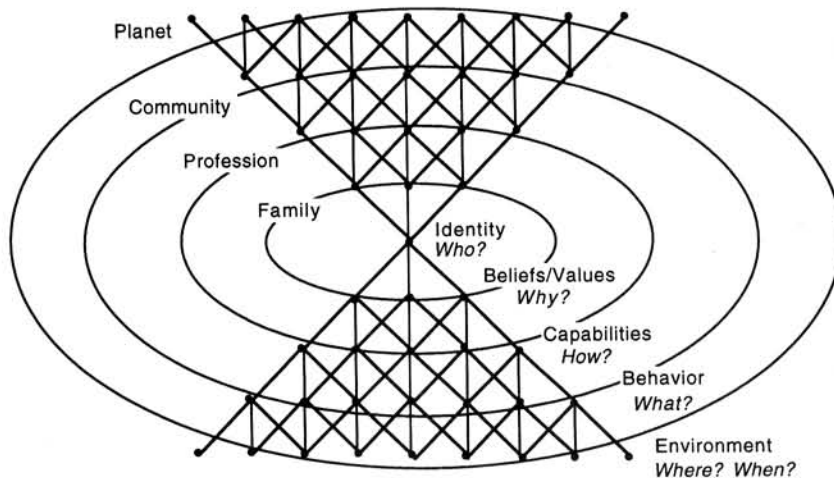


**Levels in System of Influence and Expression  
Relating to the Development of Identity**

An implication of this diagram is that the outer points of the network, on either the upper or lower portions of the diagram, tend to be more related to surface structures. As one moves closer to the point representing 'identity', the more one is moving to deeper structures. Typically, what is at the outer edges of the network is more observable or knowable than the core processes, but is also a more distant influence or expression. That is, it is easier to sensorily observe a person's actions and the impact that behavior has on the surrounding environment (such as Leonardo's paintings

and notebooks) than it is to observe the invisible artistic skills, intellectual capabilities and internal motives that produced those behavioral expressions. Likewise, it is easier to know that Leonardo was a 'Caucasian male living in Northern Italy at the time of the European Renaissance', than to know the complex details of his relationship with his natural mother, his step mother and his father.

Another implication of the diagram is that there is a potential relationship between corresponding levels on the upper and lower portions of the network. For instance, one's core beliefs are likely to have been established in relation to one's basic relationships with family members early in life. One's professional relationships are likely to be determined by the skills and capabilities one has developed as one has matured into adulthood. At the same time, one's professional relationships provide a context for the development of further skills and capabilities. One's external behaviors and actions tend to be what determines one's standing with respect to the larger community in which one is involved. Finally, the impression one leaves upon one's external environment is what is most likely to determine one's ultimate place in the part of the global system in which one existed. Some people, like Leonardo and Freud, have left a deep and lasting impression. For others, the influence is less obvious and perhaps more temporary and transient.



**Relationship Between the Different Portions of the Upper and Lower Levels of the Network**

It is important to keep in mind that the relationships implied by this diagram are not simply 'hierarchical'. Rather, they are a system of 'relationships'. Each level influences and is shaped by the relations of the elements on the level below it. Likewise, the relationships between the elements which make up a particular level, provide the basis for the level above them. Thus, there is a mutual influence between adjacent levels.

For instance, a particular belief may stimulate the development of several capabilities and inhibit the development of others. For example, the belief that "a person must work hard in order to survive," would tend to support and stimulate the development of capabilities relating to concentration, organization and decision making. The same belief may tend to inhibit the development of capabilities such as creativity, investigation and imagination. At the same time, a particular capability may strengthen and support certain beliefs and values. As an example, a person who has been taught skills and capabilities for communication and problem solving is probably more likely to develop or reinforce the belief that "there are other solutions to conflict than force," than a person who is unskilled in these areas.

This type of mutual influence operates in a similar manner between other levels. Our skills open the doorway to whole classes of new behaviors. And, at the same time, when it is necessary for us to behave in a certain way, we are put under pressure to develop the skills and capabilities that support those behaviors. There is a parallel relationship between our behaviors and our environment. Behavioral competence allows us to survive and succeed in an ever wider range of environmental contexts; and the demands of the environments in which we find ourselves call for the development of particular patterns of behavior in order to survive and succeed.

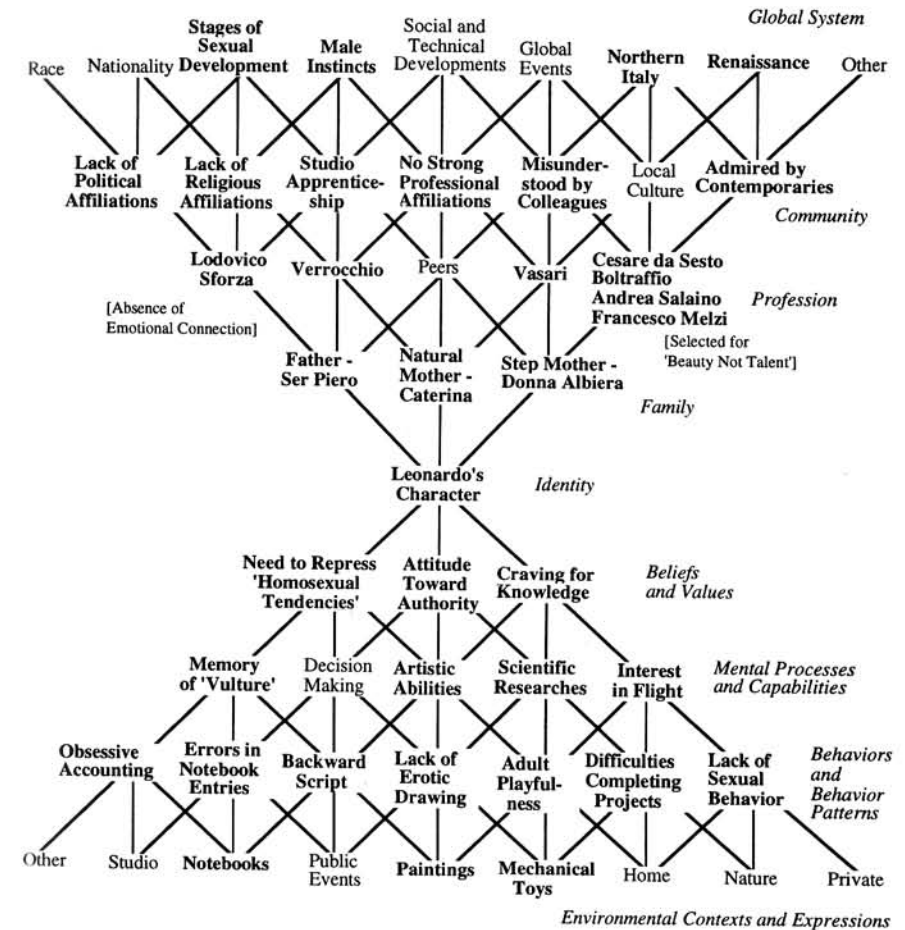
The upper portion of the network functions in much the same way. The quality of relationships we have developed with our family is often transferred to a certain degree to our professional relationships. Likewise, professional relationships may support family relations or put pressure on them to change or evolve. Our impact on the community, is often determined by professional accomplishments and affiliations. These accomplishments and affiliations may also be heavily influenced by one's community



standing. Finally, the place that one fits within the larger global system is a result of one's role within one's profession and community; and one's place within that larger system provides a great deal of influence on the position one has within one's community and profession.

In *Neuro-Linguistic Programming Volume I* my co-authors and I discussed the notion from *decision theory* that the elements which influence our decisions may be considered as either environmental variables or decision variables. *Environmental variables* are those which are outside of our ability to control or influence directly. *Decision variables* are those which we can intentionally change or vary. The top part of the network is largely outside of our 'locus of control' - unconnected to our "illusions and wishes" as Freud would say. The bottom part of the network is within our locus of control; although we become progressively less conscious of them as we approach the level of identity. Thus, the bottom half of the network has more to do with our "internal forces" and our "constitution," while the upper half of the network has to do with "external powers" and "fate."

It is the interweaving of all of these elements that tell a person's life story. In his study of Leonardo, Freud did a remarkable job of filling in many of the details of this network in relation to Leonardo's life. The following diagram depicts some of the elements of the puzzle of da Vinci's character that Freud attempted to piece together.



**Freud's Map of System of Influences and Expressions  
Relating to the Development of Leonardo's Character**

Starting from a single, subtle mental process - a strange "memory" - Freud eventually covers the whole range of levels associated with Leonardo's life. He attempts to show how *macro behavioral patterns and micro behavioral details*, such as Leonardo's obsessive accounting practices, errors in notebook entries, backward script, lack of erotic and sexually accurate drawings, child-like playfulness in adulthood, difficulties completing projects and lack of reported sexual behavior are the results of deeper level



*beliefs and values* involving the repression of homosexual tendencies, lack of dependence on authority and an unusual craving for knowledge. The behavioral expression of Leonardo's beliefs and values have been shaped by the artistic abilities, strategies for scientific research, and specific interests he has developed at the level of *capabilities*. Combined together, this system of processes was the channel for the tangible expressions he brought into his *external environment*; i.e., his notebooks, paintings, mechanical toys, and so on.

Freud also attempts to demonstrate that Leonardo's basic beliefs and attitudes were formed in relationship to the family dynamics between his father Ser Piero, his natural mother Caterina, and his young step mother Donna Albiera. According to Freud, these early family relationships determined many of the patterns of professional activity and relationships in Leonardo's adult life. For instance, Freud points to Leonardo's lack of bonding with his father as the source for his weak professional affiliations with his master Verrocchio, his apprentices and even his key benefactors, such as Lodovico Sforza - one of the powerful 'princes' of the Renaissance era. Freud believed that da Vinci's confusion about his parents and his subsequent disassociation from his feelings for them also lead to his lack of political and religious affiliations, and, though he was admired by contemporaries, left him incomprehensible and misunderstood by his colleagues. Freud portrays all of these dynamics against the deep and more global background influences of male instincts and stages of sexual development, unfolding during the renaissance era in Northern Italy.

Freud's statement about the role of "chance" in shaping Leonardo's character and accomplishments, indicates that he tended to give more priority to the upper levels of influence. His conclusions tend to perceive the bottom part of the network as being an expression of the connections and relationships made up by the upper part of the fabric. (NLP, on the other hand, perceives the lower part of the network as having a mutual influence on the upper half of the network, in that one's capabilities and beliefs will shape the types of interweavings that will take place in the upper level of the fabric.)

Freud's emphasis on chance call to mind Darwin's theory of natural selection in the process of evolution, and perhaps was a

result of a felt need at that time to emphasize 'antecedent' causes in science. In other words, it was believed that if an explanation did not point to objective external causes from the past, it could not be considered truly 'scientific'. It is as if Freud felt compelled to trace one's adult world back to a kind of 'big bang' in one's childhood that set the direction for everything else in one's life.

This brings up one of the potential weaknesses in Freud's analysis of Leonardo. While Freud's assessment of the external forces which contributed to shaping Leonardo's character and behavior is interesting (and possibly even accurate), Freud admits that his study has not actually lead us any closer to being able to think, analyze a phenomenon or draw like da Vinci.

*We should be most glad to give an account of the way in which artistic activity derives from the primal instincts of the mind if it were not just here that our capacities fail us....Since artistic talent and capacity are intimately connected with sublimation we must admit that the nature of the artistic function is also inaccessible to us along psycho-analytic lines.* <sup>37</sup>

In acknowledging some of the limits of his model and his methods, Freud leads us to address the issue that thoroughness of coverage must also be balanced by 'depth' of coverage. For instance, Freud went into great detail about certain micro aspects of da Vinci's behavior, potential family dynamics and the influence of instinctual forces. He was very sketchy, however, at the level of the specific cognitive processes and mental capabilities underlying "artistic talent and capacity." As Freud wrote sometime later:

*What psychoanalysis was able to do was to take the interrelations between the impressions of the artist's life, his chance experiences, and his works, and from them to construct his constitution and the impulses at work in it - that is to say, that part of him which he shared with all men...It can do nothing towards elucidating the nature of the artistic gift, nor can it explain the means by which the artist works - artistic technique.* <sup>38</sup>

Freud's approach focused on the "external powers" and "internal forces" that formed the motives and reasons behind a person's actions; the *whys* of the person's behavior. As he states, Freud focused on "that part of [the artist] which he shared with all men" as opposed to the elements of his genius that made him unique. Thus, the filters that Freud was using to analyze da Vinci's behavior and thinking processes were not developed to break the components of the mental strategies behind his behavior down into the types of 'chunks' necessary to make them learnable or replicable. (As a contrast, Neuro-Linguistic Programming focuses on the cognitive 'programs' and structures - visual, auditory, kinesthetic and linguistic - through which actions are manifested and directed; the *how* of behavior.)\*

Of course, Freud's stated goal was to explain "the behavior of a personality in the course of his life...in terms of the combined operation of constitution and fate," not to discover 'how to' learn or replicate his capabilities. His outcome was to illuminate the elements of identity, beliefs and values at the basis of da Vinci's behavior, rather than model his strategies for research and creativity. From this perspective, Freud's strengths were more as a philosopher and therapist than a biographer or 'modeler'.

In fact, one is ultimately lead to wonder just what were Freud's purposes in publishing his study of Leonardo: To try to assert the 'truth' about Leonardo's character? To demonstrate the range of his psychoanalytic methods? As a means to introduce to a more general public his provocative ideas about the influence of early childhood, the role of the 'unconscious' and sex? To simply provide

---

\* As I hope to show in the next chapter on Leonardo, NLP does not "fail us" when it comes to identifying some of the key cognitive elements behind "artistic talent and capacity." Through the methods and filters provided by NLP we are able to fill in some of the missing links that Freud has identified as being necessary in order to account for "the nature of the artistic function" and "artistic technique." As we shall see, NLP provides us with tools to be able to analyze Leonardo's writings and works in such a way that we can identify some of the essential elements of the thought processes behind his scientific and artistic accomplishments. These elements may then be organized and applied in such a way as to help teach a person to think and even draw like Leonardo regardless of the 'chance circumstances' of that individual's personal or sexual history.

a fresh perspective? Perhaps it was even to help his patients by showing them that even "one who is among the greatest of the human race" is subject to "the laws which govern both normal and pathological activity."

An interesting insight into this question is provided by Freud toward the beginning of his study of Leonardo. At one point, Freud attempts to provide an analogy for the role of Leonardo's curious "memory" by claiming, "A man's conscious memory of the events of his maturity is in every way comparable to the first kinds of historical writing." He goes on to state:

*It was inevitable that this early history should have been an expression of present beliefs and wishes rather than a true picture of the past; for many things had been dropped from the nation's memory, while others were distorted, and some remains from the past were given a wrong interpretation in order to fit in with contemporary ideas. Moreover people's motive for writing history was not objective curiosity but a desire to influence their contemporaries, to encourage and inspire them, or to hold up a mirror before them.* <sup>39</sup>

In fact, Freud may be "holding up a mirror" to his own study of da Vinci with this comment when he states, "some remains from the past were given a wrong interpretation in order to fit in with contemporary ideas." Rather than produce a "true picture" of Leonardo's life or pursue "objective curiosity," it may be that Freud's motive for his study of 'Leonardo's memory' sprang from a desire to "influence" his contemporaries, "to encourage and inspire them," and "to hold up a mirror before them."

As a therapist, Freud was less concerned with the accuracy of a particular interpretation or explanation than with its affects. From his work with his patients, Freud was well aware of the influence of "delusions which are inaccessible to logical criticism and which contradict reality." Healing does not necessarily come through precise logical arguments nor adherence to "reality." To borrow from Einstein, healing comes from finding a new way of approaching a problem that is different than the approach that created the problem. At this endeavor, "phantasy and reality are to be treated

alike" and it is of "no account" whether the surface structures under consideration "belong to the one class or to the other." What is important is the degree to which they influence a person at the level of deep structure. Even a purely constructed explanation can have a therapeutic value.

In fact, in the final years of his life, Freud claimed that he preferred the term "construction" to "interpretation." He claimed that the analyst's task in dealing with memories, fantasies or even delusions was to "make out what has been forgotten by the traces it has left behind or, more correctly to *construct* it." He went so far as to claim that "*The delusions of patients appear to me to be the equivalents of the constructions which we build up in the course of an analytic treatment - attempts at explanation and cure...*"<sup>40</sup> The problem was that the delusions of patients are unfortunately a reapplication of the same type of thinking that was creating the problem to begin with.

Freud's strategies for analysis and interpretation were intended to challenge assumptions, generate new perspectives, uncover potential missing links and lead us to consider the influence of deeper structures as much as they were intended to provide us with 'bullet-proof' explanations. It is the former processes which reveal the "meaning" of a symptom, subject it to "associative correction" and provide the "propelling forces" which guide the individual toward new solutions. It is the degree to which these outcomes are achieved that distinguish the 'delusions' of a psychotic from the 'constructs' of a therapist.

According to information theory, '*information*' is essentially the perception of the relationship or difference between something and something else. New perspectives, and thus new information, about a particular subject emerges naturally when it moves or changes, allowing the observer to see a different angle, a new side to it or to reveal a new quality of it in relation to something else. Another way to get information is for the observer to move or change with respect to the subject he or she is observing. One way to think about genius is that it is a function of the ability to move and change perspectives with respect to something else. Whether it is out of fear, inability or perhaps just laziness, the average person sits and waits for the subject to move or change. The genius has

the courage, ability and motivation to move and change with respect to the rest of the world.

Freud's strategies enabled him to move into and through an astonishing array of mental 'spaces'. As a result, his thinking processes possess a degree of richness, freedom and a refreshingly provocative quality that most of us only experience in dreams. In applying these strategies to Leonardo's memory, it seems to me that Freud intended to make da Vinci's life come alive in a new way. We are able to see da Vinci as a breathing, thinking, feeling human being subject to the same "laws" which govern all of us as opposed to a glorified but brittle and colorless statue.

## Footnotes to Section 2

1. *Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*, Sigmund Freud, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1964, p. 13.
2. Ibid., pp. 85-85.
3. Ibid., p. 14.
4. Ibid., p. 14.
5. Ibid., p. 24.
6. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud, Pocket Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 26.
7. Ibid., p. 27.
8. *Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*, Sigmund Freud, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1964, p. 25.
9. Ibid., p. 27.
10. Ibid., p. 34.
11. Ibid., p. 32.
12. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud, Pocket Books, New York, NY, 1963, pp. 376-377.
13. *Character and Culture*, Sigmund Freud, Collier Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 193.
14. *The Bascombe Valley Mystery*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1979.

15. *Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*, Sigmund Freud, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1964, p. 32.
16. Ibid., pp. 35-36.
17. Ibid., pp. 75-76.
18. Ibid., p. 76.
19. Ibid., p. 55.
20. Ibid., p. 52.
21. Ibid., p. 63.
22. Ibid., p. 58.
23. Ibid., p. 64.
24. Ibid., p. 49.
25. Ibid., p. 69.
26. Ibid., p. 69.
27. Ibid., p. 70.
28. Ibid., p. 72-73.
29. Ibid., p. 28.
30. Ibid., p. 77.
31. Ibid., p. 26.
32. Ibid., pp. 29-30.



33. Ibid., pp. 86-87.
34. *A Study in Scarlet*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1979.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. *Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*, Sigmund Freud, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1964, p. 86.
38. *An Autobiographical Study*, Sigmund Freud, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1964, pp. 110-111.
39. *Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*, Sigmund Freud, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1964, pp. 33-34.
40. *Therapy and Technique*, Sigmund Freud, Collier Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 285.

### Section 3: Freud's Analysis of the Moses of Michelangelo

While Freud's analysis of Leonardo da Vinci brings out some of the potential challenges and problems in applying his strategies, Freud's study of Michelangelo and his masterpiece, Moses, highlights some of the strongest aspects of those strategies.

Pointing out "*the apparent paradoxical fact that precisely some of the grandest and most overwhelming creations of art are still unsolved riddles to our understanding,*"<sup>1</sup> Freud's study of Michelangelo (1475-1564) focused on his analysis and interpretation of the marble statue of Moses in the humble church of S. Pietro in Vincoli in Rome. While a marble statue may not seem to be as interesting or important as civilization, war, neurosis and some of the other profound topics that Freud tackled, his analysis of Michelangelo's Moses illustrates in a concrete way many of the aspects of Freud's strategy that were responsible for his genius. By noticing and questioning a few seemingly trivial details that appear out of place, Freud not only came up with a completely unique and startling perspective on the statue, but also on Michelangelo, Moses and the Bible itself! This characterizes one of the fundamental qualities of genius - finding a detail which does not fit the accepted paradigm or belief system which consequently leads to a reformulation of the old paradigm or belief system itself.

Freud wrote up his analysis in 1914 and initially had it published anonymously in a psychoanalytic journal. Stating that "no piece of statuary has ever made a stronger impression on me than this", Freud pointed out that the statue of Moses was considered in some circles to be "the crown of modern sculpture." In his introduction to the study, Freud gives some interesting insight into the structure of his own cognitive micro strategies when he claims:

*[W]orks of art do exercise a powerful effect on me, especially those of literature and sculpture, less often of painting. This has occasioned me, when I have been contemplating such things, to spend a long time before them trying to apprehend them in my own way, i.e. to explain to myself what their effect is due to. Wherever I cannot do this, as for instance with music, I am almost incapable of obtaining any pleasure. Some rationalistic, or perhaps analytic, turn of mind in me rebels against being moved by a thing without knowing why I am thus affected and what it is that affects me.*<sup>2</sup>

In the model of NLP, Freud is offering quite a bit of information about his use of his senses and his preferences related to his cognitive modalities. Freud's comment that he must *explain to himself* a particular effect, indicates a cognitive process clearly related to language. This kind of inner self talk is categorized as 'internal dialog' ( $A'_d$ ) in NLP. He indicates a definite preference for the verbal representational system by expressing his desire to cognitively understand something at a conscious level via having a verbal explanation of it. The fact that "literature" would affect him most strongly and that he would have a difficult time appreciating painting and music, is a further confirmation that language was probably his most highly valued and developed representational modality. Painting is clearly a visual experience, and music addresses the tonal as opposed to the verbal dimension of the auditory representational system.

The processing of both music and painting are believed to be focused in the non-dominant hemisphere of the brain (the so-called 'right brain'); whereas language tends to be focused in the dominant cerebral hemisphere (the 'left brain'). As we established earlier, Freud believed that speech was the doorway to consciousness and understanding. In a way, Freud seems to be saying that he was driven to integrate the two hemispheres of his brain by getting his 'left brain' to encode the workings of his less conscious 'right brain'.

Freud's comment that it is necessary to know "*why I am thus affected and what it is that affects me*" indicates that he is not so

much interested in understanding the process of painting, sculpture or music, as he is in understanding his *feelings about* a work of art. In fact, Freud's stated appreciation of sculpture over painting and music points to a secondary preference for the 'kinesthetic' representational system since sculpture is the most tactile or kinesthetic of the arts Freud mentioned. This strategy of encoding unconscious or non-verbal processes, such as feelings, into language (notated  $K_i \rightarrow A_d$ ) played a central role in Freud's therapeutic work as well, showing up most vividly as the core of his 'talking cure'.

Freud's stated emphasis on the levels of the *why* and the *what* are also a significant aspect of his strategy for observation and interpretation. As we saw in his analysis of Leonardo's "memory," Freud's strength was in his ability to connect *what* someone did, in terms of their actions and productions, to *why* they did those actions in terms of the beliefs, values and other deeper structures that were at the root of those actions. He did not concentrate on the intermediate cognitive processes of *how* particular beliefs produced particular behaviors. For example, in his landmark work on dreams, Freud explored the content of dreams and the possible motives behind those contents. He was not interested in how people dreamed, but rather what they dreamed and why. Similarly, his interest in art was not *how* to create it, but rather *what* an artist produced and *why* the artist produced it.

*In my opinion, it can only be the artist's intention, in so far as he has succeeded in expressing it in his work and in conveying it to us, that grips us so powerfully. I realize that it cannot be merely a matter of intellectual comprehension; what he aims at is to awaken in us the same emotional attitude, the same mental constellation as that which in him produced the impetus to create.*<sup>3</sup>

From the NLP perspective, Freud is implying that various forms of stimuli (words, music, paintings, sculpture, etc.) activate or "awaken" patterns of activity within our nervous system in the form of emotional and cognitive experience. In Freud's view, the most effective works of art were those which were able to trigger or

'awaken' an emotional and mental "constellation" in an observer that is similar to the emotional and mental constellation that motivated or compelled the artist to produce the creation.

Freud's comment that "it cannot be merely a matter of intellectual comprehension" is important. It is no doubt what distinguished Freud from a typical art critic and also made him an effective therapist. Freud's strategies were not directed toward simply describing or understanding something on only a cognitive or intellectual level, but to understand it thoroughly in all of its dimensions. He wanted an explanation, but he did not want a trivial or simplistic explanation. There is a difference between having an explanation of something and having an explanation that adequately covers the entire 'problem space' of a particular phenomenon. Whether it related to his patient's problems or a work of art, Freud did not want to 'explain away' the problem, rather he wanted to develop a more rich and profound map of human experience - one that could be felt as well as verbalized.

In fact, like many other geniuses, Freud believed that too many different and conflicting explanations were an indication that only the surface was being considered and that a deep level of understanding had not yet been achieved. Many times, explanations are simply arbitrary applications of some theory or logic, or they may simply be projections of a particular observer's own biases. Like a work of art, Freud thought that a good explanation should be able to produce the same emotional attitude and intellectual constellation that it sought to describe. Freud believed it was possible to reach an explanation for something that could account for all of the observed features of an expression and yet still be simple and elegant.

*Let us consider Shakespeare's masterpiece, Hamlet, a play now over three centuries old...it was not until the material of the tragedy was traced back analytically to the Oedipus theme that the mystery of its effect was at last explained. But before this was done, what a mass of differing and contradictory interpretive attempts, what a variety of opinions about the hero's character and the dramatist's design. Does Shakespeare claim our sympathies on behalf of*

*a sick man, or of an ineffectual weakling, or of an idealist who is only too good for the real world? And how many of these interpretations leave us cold—so cold that they do nothing to explain the effect of the play and rather incline us to the view that its magical appeal rests solely upon the impressive thoughts in it and the splendour of its language. And yet, do not these very endeavours speak for the fact that we feel the need of discovering in it some source of power beyond these alone? <sup>4</sup>*

Similar to his opinion about Shakespeare's masterpiece, Freud was dissatisfied with what he perceived as the many seemingly contradictory and trivial descriptions and explanations for the greatness of Michelangelo's Moses, which he called "inscrutable."

*[W]hy do I call this statue inscrutable? There is not the slightest doubt that it represents Moses, the Law-giver of the Jews, holding the Tables of the Ten Commandments. That much is certain, but that is all...An art critic..has said, "No other work of art in the world has been judged so diversely as the Moses with the head of Pan. The mere interpretation of the figure has given rise to completely opposed views..." <sup>5</sup>*

For instance, the statue has often been cited as a prime display of *terribilita*, an 'awe-inspiring' quality associated with Michelangelo's works, that made one critic remark that he would not wish to be left alone in a room with it. However, Freud points out that other interpretations of the state of Michelangelo's Moses vary from "a mixture of wrath, pain and contempt," to "a proud simplicity, an inspired dignity, a living faith". Some experience Moses' eyes as communicating "infinite wrath and all-compelling energy"; others see his eyes as being "beneficent and prophetic, with the reflection of eternity upon his brow, taking his last farewell of his people."

Freud goes on to point out that there are even wide differences in the descriptions of the physical details of the statue. Moses' hands are variously described as 'pulling', 'pressing', 'grasping' and 'resting'. Observers often mix up the left hand with the right hand



of the statue. Some say the stone tablets are held tightly, others contend they are just about to slip out of his grasp. One critic even erroneously described Moses as leaning his chin on his left hand! The wide diversity of opinions even drove one critic to claim in frustration, "There is an absence of meaning in the general conception, which precludes the idea of a self-sufficing whole..."

Freud asks, "*Has then the master-hand indeed traced such a vague ambiguous script in stone, that so many different readings of it are possible?*" In considering this question, one must keep in mind that Michelangelo worked on the statue for over three years, between 1513 and 1516 (the years immediately following his work on the Sistine Chapel). The statue is essentially a fragment of a much larger work, the tomb of the powerful Pope Julius II which was supposed to have become 'the eighth wonder of the world'. The statue's present 'unassuming' surroundings do not convey the 'great expectations' under which it was initially conceived. Freud wondered whether the man who had just completed the spectacular ceiling of Sistine Chapel would spend three years creating a statue - which was to be part of the "eighth wonder of the world" and go on to become "the crown of modern sculpture" - such that it had "an absence of meaning in the general conception, which precludes the idea of a self-sufficing whole?" Clearly, Freud believed that a profound work deserved a profound explanation. Perhaps, on some level, he was not willing to accept that he himself would be deeply affected by something shallow or trivial. What Michelangelo had done intuitively, Freud wanted to recreate rationally (what Michelangelo had formed with the right brain, Freud wanted to transfer to the left brain).

What might make other people shrug their shoulders or throw up their hands in bewilderment was precisely what Freud found most challenging. In fact, the situation surrounding the interpretation of Michelangelo's statue is a good metaphor for the conditions surrounding many of Freud's patients and their neurotic symptoms - confusing, frustrating and seemingly unintelligible. It is also similar to the way that most people perceive their dreams - they have a strong emotional affect but are incomprehensible for the most part. It is in such paradoxical situations that Freud's strategies have the potential to shine most brilliantly. He confidently states:

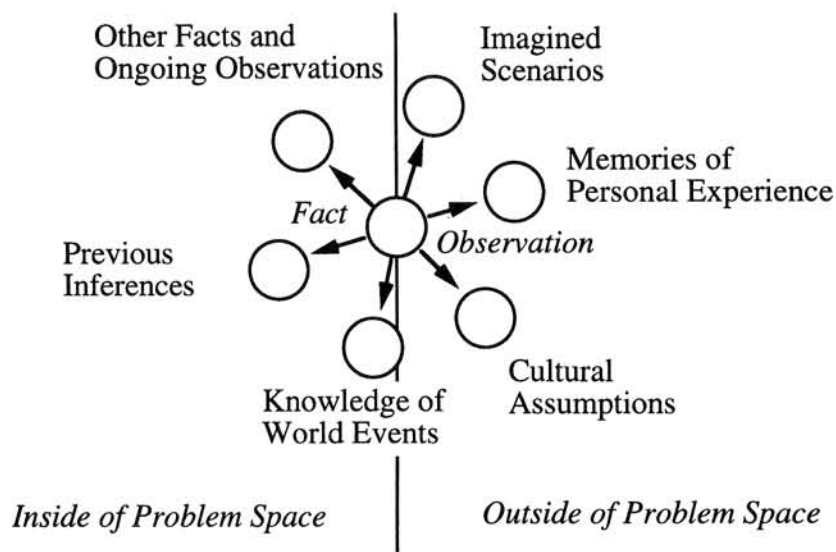
*I will first set out what are the doubts associated with the figure of Moses; and it will not be difficult to show that behind them lies concealed all that is most essential and valuable for the comprehension of this work of art.* <sup>6</sup>

The first step in Freud's strategy for analyzing Michelangelo's statue was to put it into a larger context that would begin to offer some kind of meaning. In the language of NLP, this would be described as defining the 'problem space' surrounding a particular phenomenon. A problem space is determined by the parts of a system, both physical and non-physical, that one considers to be relevant to solving a particular problem. As we established earlier, what one considers the space of a problem to be will determine what kind of cues one looks for and how they are given meaning. One's definition of and assumptions about a problem space will influence one's interpretation of phenomena occurring within that space. As Freud asks:

*Did Michelangelo intend to create a "timeless study of character and mood" in this Moses, or did he portray him at a particular and, if so, at a highly significant moment in his life?* <sup>7</sup>

One basic meta strategy for analysis and interpretation is to first connect particular observations to a number of frameworks both within and outside of the scope of the accepted problem space one is addressing. This creates an enriched cognitive space which gives priority and meaning to observations and inferences. One may then synthesize this information together into a single explanation which is confirmed by other observations and reduced to a single possibility through a process of elimination.





**Connecting Facts and Observations to a Number of Frameworks Within and Outside of the 'Problem Space'**

Given the fact that the Moses in the statue is depicted clutching the Tables of the Ten Commandments, Freud establishes that the scope of possible contexts is narrowed to "a highly significant moment in his life." Given the Biblical account of Moses' life and deeds, Freud lays out the typical assumptions associated with the events surrounding Moses' receipt of God's laws for his people.

*It is the descent from Mount Sinai, where Moses has received the Tables from God, and it is the moment when he perceives that the people have meanwhile made themselves the Golden Calf and are dancing around it and rejoicing...Michelangelo has chosen this last moment of hesitation, of calm before the storm, for his representation. In the next instant Moses will spring to his feet...hurl the Tables to the ground, and let loose his rage upon his faithless people.<sup>8</sup>*



**Michelangelo's Moses**

As we observed in his study of Leonardo, once Freud had established a particular context for interpreting some phenomenon, his next step was to look for details that did not fit with the typical assumptions related to that context.

*Now we may be allowed to ask what this arrangement means and to what motives it owes its existence. Were they indeed considerations of linear and spatial design which caused the sculptor to draw the downward-streaming wealth of hair across to the right of the figure which is looking to its left, how strangely unsuitable as a means appears the pressure of a single finger! And what man who, for some reason or other, has drawn his beard over to the other side, would take it into his head to hold down the one half across the other by the pressure of a single finger? <sup>9</sup>*

Given the setting that has been established for the Moses in the statue, Freud begins to check how the details of the statue fit with and are given meaning by the larger unseen context. As he did with the details of Leonardo's notebooks, Freud attempts to connect the 'what' to the 'why' behind the what. Of the physical details of the statue, he inquires "what this arrangement means and to what motives it owes its existence."

For Freud, it is the details which seem contrary to the context or typical cultural assumptions often become key elements. The strength of Freud's strategy, and of his genius, was to be able to find what was significant in the clusters of details that most people overlooked. He asks:

*"Yet may not these minute particulars mean nothing in reality, and may we not be racking our brains about things which were of no moment to their creator?"*

*"Let us proceed on the assumption that even these details have significance."<sup>10</sup>*

As he stated in his study of Leonardo, Freud believed, "nothing is too small to be a manifestation of hidden mental processes."

Consistent with this presupposition, Freud sought to find the significance of things which were typically overlooked or discarded. As he put it:

*[T]he technique of psychoanalysis...is accustomed to divine secret and concealed things from unconsidered or unnoticed details, from the rubbish heap, as it were, of our observations.<sup>11</sup>*

Freud's belief was that, in an interconnected system, everything fits with everything else. In this sense, Freud's analysis of Michelangelo's statue again vividly calls to mind the strategies of observation and interpretation employed by Sherlock Holmes. The main difference between the two is that Holmes sought to solve a mystery by uncovering how it happened, Freud sought to solve a mystery by uncovering why it happened - the "meaning behind it".

Like Sherlock Holmes, one of the key elements to Freud's methods was his ability to widen his perception of the space in which he was operating beyond the usual assumptions and interpretations and find alternative explanations. For instance, rather than interpret Moses' physical cues as a representation of a "last moment of hesitation, of calm before the storm," Freud invites us to consider a different perspective.

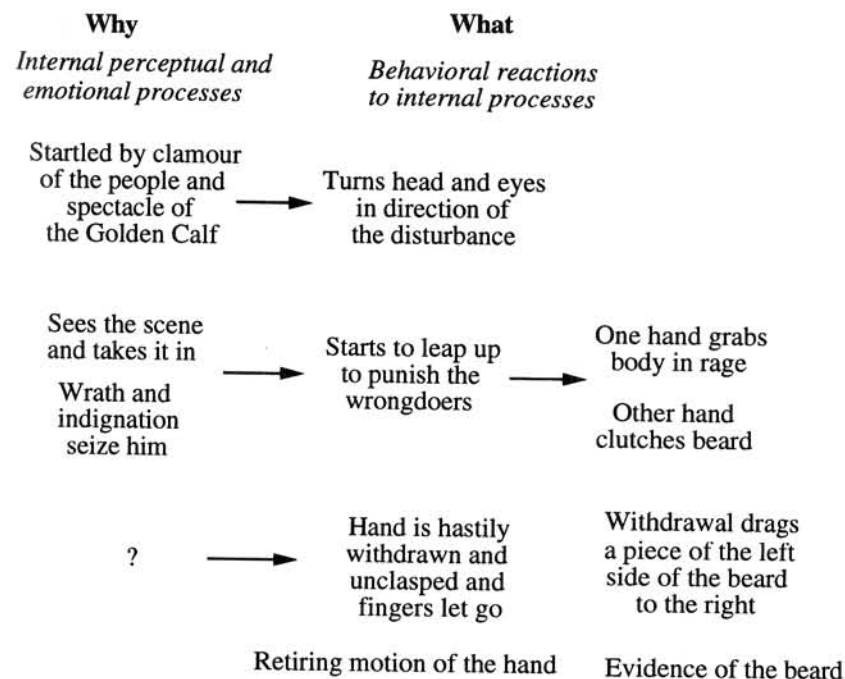
*"...we may perhaps take this pose as the last stage of some connection between his right hand and the left half of his beard as a connection which was a much more intimate one at some moment before that chosen for representation...the beard now testifies to a movement which has just taken place. The loop of the beard would thus be an indication of the path taken by his hand."<sup>12</sup>*

Rather than consider Moses' position as the inception of some movement that is about to happen, Freud asks us to view it as the "last stage" of a "movement which has just taken place." In other words, Freud places the attitude of the statue at the end of an action rather than at the beginning of an action, as is the typical interpretation. By making this shift in 'punctuation' Freud is compelled to 'fill in the blanks' created by the repunctuation. He

must attempt to 'construct' or 'reconstruct' the antecedent path of actions which has led to the current state depicted by the statue.

*Thus we have inferred that there has been a retiring motion of the left hand. This one assumption necessarily brings others with it. In imagination we complete the scene of which this movement, established by the evidence of the beard, is a part;...[T]he resting Moses is startled by the clamour of the people and the spectacle of the Golden Calf...[H]e turns his head and eyes in the direction from which the disturbance comes, sees the scene and takes it in. Now wrath and indignation seize him; and he would fain leap up and punish the wrongdoers, annihilate them. His rage...[is] directed in a gesture against his own body. His impatient hand, ready to act, clutches at his beard...but...is hastily withdrawn and unclasped, and the fingers let go their hold; but so deeply have they been plunged in that in their withdrawal they drag a piece of the left side of the beard across to the right...[T]his new position...can only be understood with reference to the former one...<sup>13</sup>*

Rather than take the statue at face value, Freud has attempted to look past the 'surface structure' of the statue's present attitude to find the past sequence of transformations and 'deeper structures' which produced that surface structure. He has defined a path of events in terms of what actions have taken place and why they have taken place. Claiming that the present position of the statue "can only be understood with reference to the former one," he has proposed a sequence of physical 'transition states' and the concomitant cognitive and emotional 'operators' that have led to the present state of the Moses represented by the statue. In other words, he has constructed a series of behavioral actions and reactions which he has connected to a corresponding sequence of internal perceptual and emotional processes.



### Freud's Reconstruction of the Series of Events Leading to the Physical Position of Michelangelo's Moses

In order to have defined such a sequence, Freud has added a way of perceiving the statue that appears to be different from previous observers. NLP has defined three fundamental 'perceptual positions' from which an individual can perceive an event (DeLozier, Grinder, 1987, Dilts, 1990). A 'first position' perspective would be one's own point of view in an interaction or situation. A 'second position' perspective involves the attempt to view the situation from the standpoint of one or more of the significant others involved in the situation or event - to put oneself in 'their shoes' or in their 'skin'. A 'third position' perspective would be that of an uninvolved observer who is outside of the situation, watching the interaction between all of the characters involved in the situation, including oneself.

Consider for a moment the situation of Freud contemplating Michelangelo's Moses. From 'first position' Freud would be looking at the statue from his own point of view, seeing the surface of marble and the various external details visible on the statue, feeling the "powerful effect" that it has on him. To take a 'second position' in this case, Freud would attempt to place himself into the perspective of the statue itself, as if he were stepping into the physical being of the statue and becoming Moses for a moment.\* To assume a 'third position' perspective, Freud would need to view himself looking at the statue as if he were a video camera or 'fly on the wall' surveying the relationship and interaction between himself and the man of stone, and trying to understand and explain to himself why he is affected by the statue and what it is that affects him.

To construct the perceptual, emotional and behavioral sequence of events leading to the present physical attitude of the statue, Freud would have had to put himself into 'second position' with the marble Moses to some degree. In doing so, Freud traced a chain of responses which provide the connection between the assumed context of the figure (the descent from mount Sinai) and the physical characteristics of the statue.

There is, however, one link in the chain that is conspicuously absent. Freud infers that after Moses has grabbed his body and his beard out of "wrath and indignation," Moses has "hastily withdrawn and unclasped the hand on his beard. But, unlike the other actions he has reconstructed, Freud does not supply the perceptual or emotional 'reason' for the hasty withdrawal of the hand. It is the search for this missing link that leads Freud to notice another seemingly trivial inconsistency in the statue.

---

\* It is interesting to note that Michelangelo appears to have used the process of 'second position' himself to create his sculptures, claiming that his technique was to release or 'free' the statue that was already in the block of stone. The implication is that he would somehow place himself within the raw marble and feel what was waiting to be expressed by it. Then, rather than carve something 'into' the stone, he would chip away the bits of marble that were covering up the form embedded inside of it.



Fig. 1

*If we look at the drawing in Fig. 1 we shall see that the Tablets present one or two notable features hitherto not deemed worthy of remark. It has been said that the right hand rests upon the Tablets; or again that it supports them. And we can see at once that the two opposed, rectangular tablets are standing on edge. If we look closer we shall notice that the lower edge is a different shape from the upper one, which is obliquely inclined forward. The top edge is straight, whereas the bottom one has a protuberance like a horn on the part nearest us, and the Tablets touch the stone seat. What can be the meaning of this detail? It can hardly be doubted that this projection is meant to mark the actual upper side of the Tablets, as regards the writing. It is only the upper edge of rectangular tablets of this kind that is curved or notched. Thus we see that the Tablets are upside-down. This is a singular way to treat such sacred objects. They are stood on their heads and practically balanced on one corner. What consideration of form could have led to such an attitude? Or was this detail too, of no importance to Michelangelo? <sup>14</sup>*



Freud notices that "the lower edge [of the tablets] is a different shape from the upper one" and that a "protuberance like a horn" is at the bottom of the tablets. Applying a basic cultural assumption, Freud remarks that "it is only the upper edge of rectangular tablets of this kind that is curved or notched." Thus, he concludes that "it can hardly be doubted that this projection is meant to mark the actual upper side of the Tables, as regards the writing," and that the tablets are "upside down."

Freud maintains that it seems highly unlikely that Michelangelo, acclaimed by most critics as "the greatest sculptor that ever lived," would, in the course of spending three years on a particular work, 'accidentally' carve the tablets of the ten commandments upside down. Commenting that "this is a singular way to treat such sacred objects," Freud wonders what could have "led to such an attitude?"

Applying the same strategy that he used to analyze the curious position of Moses' fingers in his beard, Freud concludes that it was the fact that the ten commandments were slipping out from under Moses' arm that has caused him to hastily withdraw his hand from his beard in order to catch the tablets before they fall and break to pieces. That is, Moses noticed that the Tables were falling out from under his arm and suppressed his anger in order to protect the sacred object.

Putting the observable details of the statue together with his own inferences, Freud reconstructs the chain of actions represented by the statue in the following way.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

*Fig. 4 reproduces the statue as it actually is; figures 2 and 3 represent the preceding stages according to my hypothesis - the first that of calm, the second that of highest tension, in which the figure is preparing to spring up and has abandoned hold of the Tables so they are beginning to slip down.*<sup>15</sup>

By applying his strategies of noticing unexplained details and putting himself into different perceptual positions, Freud has arrived at a new and unexpected interpretation of the statue of Moses and its 'intention'. As he puts it:

*[T]he Moses we have reconstructed will neither leap up nor cast the Tables from him. What we see before us is not the inception of a violent action but the remains of a movement that has already taken place.*<sup>16</sup>

In support of his interpretation, Freud points to some of the non-verbal messages he perceives to be presented by the physiology of the statue. He presupposes that, in addition to being the "remains of a movement that has already taken place," the subtleties of the physical patterns represented by Moses' body are surface structures which reveal information about the underlying cognitive and emotional processes which caused those movements. Like Sherlock Holmes reading Watson's "innermost thoughts" by observing subtle patterns in his eyes and facial expression (see *Volume I*), Freud interprets the significance of some of the key physical details of the statue in the light of his imaginary reconstruction of Moses' behavior.

*[T]he figure exhibits three distinct emotional strata. The lines of the face reflect the feelings which have become predominant; the middle of the figure shows the traces of suppressed movement; and the foot still retains the attitude of the projected action. It is as though the controlling influence has proceeded downward from above.*<sup>17</sup>

Freud's implication is that the present state of a person's body is a kind of 'holographic' embodiment of both past actions and the cognitive and emotional 'deep structures' that accompanied those actions. Thus, by observing the present we see not only a current slice of time, but also the remnants of the history of transition states which have led to the current state. Freud's strategies were developed in order to attempt to uncover and tell the story of those transitions.

According to Freud, different aspects of the physical constellation of Moses' body are still holding and displaying different parts of the whole story that lies behind their present configuration. Freud sees the path of influence as a wave that has "proceeded downward from above," with the head reflecting the most recent reaction, the feet reflecting the cognitive influences most distant in time, and the "middle of the figure" showing the link or transition between the two.

Because a story that extends beyond the present moment in time is being told by the total physiology of the statue, different parts of that story will come into the foreground depending upon which part of the sculpture one chooses to focus one's attention. Thus, different interpretations of the meaning and intention of the statue become possible. As Freud points out:

*Now it is remarkable how the two drawings in the supplementary drawings vindicate the incorrect descriptions of the earlier writers...[T]hey would have been correct if they would have been describing not the statue itself but the middle stage(s) of our reconstructed action. It almost seems as if they emancipated themselves from the visual image of the statue and had unconsciously begun an analysis of the motive forces behind it, and that analysis had led them to make the same claim as we, more consciously and more explicitly, have done.<sup>18</sup>*

Freud's statement that the earlier writers "emancipated themselves from the visual image of the statue" and had "unconsciously begun an analysis of the motive forces behind it," indicates that the

previous observers had been unwittingly looking past the surface structure of the statue. He implies that their seemingly conflicting interpretations have reflected the deep structures embedded within the form of the sculpture that have in fact been there all along at an unconscious level.

Freud's comment that his new interpretation "vindicates" the apparently "incorrect descriptions of earlier writers" brings out one of the most unique and endearing parts of Freud's analysis. He did not simply assert his interpretation as being 'right' at the expense of other views - in Freud's interpretation everyone is ultimately validated. In a sense, the 'microcosm' of Freud's analysis of Michelangelo's statue reflects many of the general patterns of genius. One characteristic of genius is that, rather than merely oppose existing interpretations, the new explanations proposed by the genius incorporate and validate all of the previous descriptions, but add other elements that account for the elements and details that were unaccounted for in the previous conceptions. For example, Einstein did not invalidate Newton's laws of mechanics with his theory of relativity. Rather, his ideas and equations both encompassed and extended the validity of Newton's model of the physical world.

If we choose to accept the presupposition that the map is not the territory, and no map is any more objectively 'true' than any other, then how do we decide which map to operate from? Is it simply an arbitrary decision? Since we cannot select based on 'objective validity', then other criteria must come into play - such as 'internal coherence', 'ecological fit' with other maps and the 'number of choices' which are made available through a particular map. Thus, a map which encompasses the choices and conclusions of the other available maps and offers other possibilities besides would be the more desirable map.

Freud's construction of the chain of events surrounding the sculpture include both the "infinite wrath and all-compelling energy" as well as the "beneficent and prophetic" attitude reported by other observers. His chain of events also incorporates the 'pulling', 'pressing', 'grasping' and 'resting' attitude of the hands described in the various accounts of the statue. It also explains why some see the stone tablets held tightly, while others contend that they are just about to slip out of Moses' grasp.

Yet, while Freud's reconstruction seems to solve the issue of the conflicting interpretations and exonerate the statue itself from having "an absence of meaning in the general conception which precludes the idea of a self-sufficing whole," it creates another more substantial problem. By challenging one set of assumptions Freud is lead into a direct confrontation with other deeper assumptions. For example, one issue that immediately emerges in relation to Freud's interpretation of the statue is that the Moses that Freud has reconstructed conflicts with the traditional interpretation of the Moses of the Bible. As Freud puts it:

*But here it will be objected that after all this is not the Moses of the Bible. For that Moses did actually fall into a fit of rage and did throw away the Tables and break them, This Moses must be a quite different man, a new Moses of the artist's conception; so that Michelangelo must have had the presumption to emend the sacred text and to falsify the character of that holy man. Can we think him capable of a boldness which might almost be said to approach an act of blasphemy?<sup>19</sup>*

In many respects, Freud is speaking of himself in this passage as much as he is of Michelangelo. Freud's 'bold' religious and psychological views were no doubt perceived as equally 'blasphemous' by his culture and medical colleagues as Michelangelo's purported reinterpretation of Moses would have been to his contemporaries. Indeed, Freud's outspoken opinions on the role of sex, the nature of religion and the influence of unconscious processes brought him much of his professional and public notoriety.

Furthermore, it is actually Freud who has proposed the reinterpretation, not Michelangelo. It is therefore Freud who has in fact presumed to "emend the sacred text and to falsify the character of that holy man." By ascribing his own interpretation to "the artist's conception," however, Freud is able to temporarily deflect any negative reactions away from himself for the moment. He is then free to valiantly come to the defense of the artist. Like Plato, who put his own philosophy into the mouth of his deceased mentor Socrates (in order to avoid the unpleasant fate of one whose ideas

approach the "act of blasphemy" as Socrates did), Freud ascribes his interpretation to Michelangelo as if it was in fact what the artist actually did purposefully intend.

Certainly, it seems that Freud's version of Moses undeniably contradicts the reported actions of Moses in the Bible; well known to anyone from the Judeo-Christian world. Yet, just when we are ready to begin shaking our heads again like Dr. Watson and claim that, while we admire the reasoning as being "close and intense," we must reject the deductions as being too "far fetched and exaggerated," Freud pulls another card from his hand. In perhaps the most remarkable part of his analysis of Michelangelo's statue, Freud re-examines the Bible itself and brings us to re-evaluate our assumptions about Moses and the reports of his behavior.

*The passage of the holy Scriptures which describes Moses' action at the scene of the Golden Calf is as follows (Exodus xxxii 7-35):*

*"And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people which thou broughtest out of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: (8) They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten calf, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. (9) And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: (10) Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation. (11) And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said Lord why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with mighty hand?...*

*"(14) And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. (15) And Moses turned, and went down from the mount. ..and the two tables of testimony were in his hand: ...(17) And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. (18) And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them*



*that cry for being overcome; but the noise of them that sing do I hear. (19) And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. (20) And he took the calf which they made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it into powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it....*

*"(30) And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. (31) And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh! this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold!"<sup>20</sup>*

As one scrutinizes the account, one does find oneself in some confusion about the reported chain of events. Freud points to the obvious inconsistencies in the passage.

*It is impossible to read the above passage in the light of modern criticism of the Bible without finding evidence that it has been clumsily put together from various sources. In verse 8 the Lord Himself tells Moses that his people have fallen away and made themselves an idol; and Moses intercedes for the wrongdoers. And yet he speaks to Joshua as though he knew nothing of this (verse 18), and is suddenly aroused to wrath as he sees the scene of the worshiping of the Golden Calf (19). In verse 14 he has already gained a pardon from God for his erring people, yet in verse 31 he returns into the mountains to implore this forgiveness...<sup>21</sup>*

Certainly, we must agree that the description from Exodus depicts Moses as expressing more than one emotional reaction to the incident of the Golden Calf - a heretofore little acknowledged detail in the traditional interpretation of the Old Testament. At one moment Moses talks God out of his own rage and keeps him from 'waxing hot' against his "stiff-necked" people; and at the next,

Moses 'waxes so hot' himself in response to the same event that he breaks the Sacred Tables. It would appear that, similar to Freud's interpretation of the statue of Moses, the Biblical description itself expresses several different perspectives regarding the emotional character of Moses. Freud implies that, like the previous observers of Michelangelo's sculpture, a certain part of the description has been in the foreground of the traditional interpretations of the Bible. But the other elements have always been latent within our 'collective unconscious', as it were, and that Michelangelo has intentionally chosen to represent the total character of Moses.

Freud concludes that, in a sense, Michelangelo had "emancipated" himself from the seeming contradictions of the Biblical account and created his Moses from the deeper structure existing behind the Biblical portrayal of the great law-giver - revealing the different aspects of Moses' character in the unnoticed details of the statue. It has been by examining these seemingly 'insignificant details' that we have "*arrived at an unexpected interpretation of the meaning and aim of the figure as a whole.*"<sup>22</sup>

*The Moses of legend and tradition had a hasty temper and was subject to fits of passion...But Michelangelo has placed a different Moses on the tomb of the Pope, one superior to the historical or traditional Moses...In this way he has added something new and more human to the figure of Moses; so that the giant frame with its tremendous physical power becomes only a concrete expression of the highest mental achievement that is possible in man, that of struggling successfully against an inward passion for the sake of a cause to which he has devoted himself.<sup>23</sup>*

According to Freud, Michelangelo has approached the surface structure of the figure of Moses as "only a concrete expression" of a more profound deep structure that the figure of 'Moses' represents in relation to human history and evolution. Freud sees the statue and character of Moses as representing "the highest mental achievement that is possible in man" - physical power used in the service of a higher cause. To Freud, Michelangelo's Moses is not simply a traditional representation of a 'slice of time' of some dusty historical event or an esthetically pleasing 'study of mood and character'.



In it, he perceives a deep and universal story of humankind, that of "struggling" with and redirecting, or 'sublimating' an "inward passion" for the sake of a greater "cause" or "mission." In Freud's words, "*his design was to trace the passage of a violent gust of passion in the signs left by it on the ensuing calm.*"<sup>24</sup>

As a final stage in his analysis, Freud shifts his attention from the statue of Moses to the creator of the statue. In addition to taking a 'second position' with the subject of a work of art, there is another 'second position' that is relevant for "understanding" the affects of such a work; that of the artist himself or herself. Freud mentions in the beginning of his study that it is "the artist's intention, in so far as he has succeeded in expressing it in his work and in conveying it to us, that grips us so powerfully." He states:

*It can still be asked what motives prompted the sculptor to select the figure of Moses, and a so much altered Moses, as an ornament for the tomb of Julius II...these motives are to be found in the character of the Pope and in Michelangelo's relations with him.*<sup>25</sup>

Freud believed that the mission of the artist was to "awaken in us the same emotional attitude, the same mental constellation as that which in him produced the impetus to create." As such, the sculpture, in addition to telling a story about Moses, is also conveying a story about Michelangelo.

It is known that Michelangelo's vision for the tomb of his patron (and sometimes nemesis) Pope Julius II was formed in 1505 while the Pope was still very much alive. At that time, as Freud pointed out, there were "great expectations" for the work. In fact, Michelangelo spent eight months in the mountains selecting the marble blocks to be used for the 40 figures which were supposed to adorn the tomb (envisioned to become the "eight wonder of the world"). When he returned, however, he was informed by the Pope that the plan for the grandiose tomb had been scrapped in favor of a plan to

rebuild the basilica of Saint Peters.\* For that project, Michelangelo was assigned the task of painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel (which he worked on from 1508 to 1512). Michelangelo, who considered himself foremost a 'poet', secondly a 'sculptor' and not a 'painter' at all, regarded the reassignment as a betrayal and a humiliation.

For years, Michelangelo continued to petition for the completion of the tomb. Finally, in 1513, after the conclusion of his work on the Sistine Chapel and the death of Pope Julius, Michelangelo was able to renegotiate a much reduced version of the tomb with the Pope's heirs, consisting of the statue of "Moses" and two "slaves."

Evidence for Michelangelo's emotional involvement with the statue can be seen in his own laments about the project to which the statue belonged.

*"I find myself having lost my youth and manhood tied down to this tomb, which I defended as much as possible with Popes Leo and Clement, and my excessive loyalty which no one has consented to acknowledge has ruined me. Thus my destiny wishes it."*<sup>26</sup>

Freud proposes that Michelangelo's depiction of Moses is actually a metaphor for his own relationship with the Pope and the pontiff's heirs, and that it represents Michelangelo's own response to "the tragedy of the Tomb." In this view, the basilica of Saint Peters can be likened to the Golden Calf, the Popes and heirs are the "stiff-necked" Israelites, and the tomb is the 'promised land' which Moses only saw but was never able to enter. Freud perceives the statue of Moses as the embodiment of the complex "emotional attitude and mental constellation" that Michelangelo experienced in relation to the circumstances surrounding the tomb.

As Freud explained it:

---

\* It has even been speculated that the plans for the tomb precipitated the Protestant Reformation because the indulgences the Pope demanded from the churches around the rest of Europe in order to fund the tomb were so high that it caused Martin Luther to object and eventually rebel against such extravagance.

*The artist felt the same violent force of will in himself, and, as the more introspective thinker, may have had a premonition of the failure to which they both were doomed. And so he carved his Moses on the Pope's tomb, not without a reproach against the dead pontiff, as a warning to himself, thus rising in self criticism superior to his own nature.* <sup>27</sup>

Thus, Freud asserts that the three distinct emotions he has perceived in the statue - wrath, restraint and serenity - also reflect the story of how Michelangelo dealt with the greatest disappointment of his life.\*

It is interesting to note that, in a revealing addition to the end of his analysis, Freud himself takes on the same emotional pattern he has described in both Michelangelo and Moses. Immensely proud of the originality of his own thought, Freud describes his reaction to the discovery of an essay which anticipated and reflected some

---

\* In an interesting contrast to his analysis of Leonardo, Freud makes no references whatsoever to the potential influence of Michelangelo's family or sexuality. For instance, Freud does not mention the death of Michelangelo's mother when he was six years old (which apparently caused him to withdraw into imagination and art), his physical weakness (the opposite of the great physical power he portrayed in Moses), his siblings (Michelangelo was the second of five gifted and classically trained brothers), his ill-tempered father (who considered art a lowly profession, unworthy of the family), nor the artist's relationship with his powerful patron Lorenzo Medici (whom he considered a "second father"). Most likely this is because the analysis of the statue was not intended to be a 'psychobiography' of Michelangelo, and Freud seemed to be ultimately more interested in the character of Moses than of the artist.

In this regard, there is a fascinating parallel between Moses and Leonardo da Vinci that, while it was unmentioned by Freud, was surely in his unconscious. When Moses was a very young infant his mother set him adrift on the Nile in a basket made of reeds (in order to save him from the Pharaoh, who had ordered that the male children of all Hebrew women be put to death). The baby was discovered by the Pharaoh's daughter who later unwittingly hired Moses' own mother to nurse him until he was old enough to go and live with the Pharaoh's daughter as her own son. Thus, like Leonardo, Moses also had 'two mothers' during his earliest and most formative years.

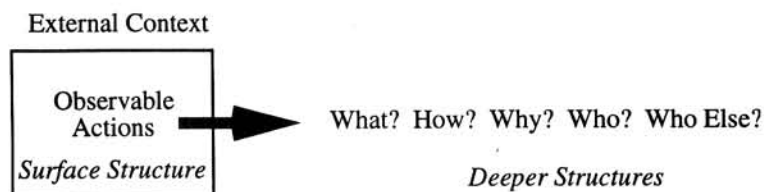
of his own views and discoveries in relation to the statue. As he reports:

*I succeeded in getting hold of this short essay of forty-six pages, and read it with mixed feelings. I once more had occasion to experience in myself what unworthy and puerile motives enter into our thoughts and acts even in a serious cause. My first feeling was one of regret that the author should have anticipated so much of my thought, which seemed precious to me because it was the result of my own efforts; and it was only in the second instance that I was able to get pleasure from its unexpected confirmation of my opinion.* <sup>28</sup>

## Summary and Reflection on Freud's Analysis of Michelangelo's Moses

As he did with Leonardo, Freud created a multilevel profile the statue of Moses and its creator. Starting from seemingly trivial details, Freud drew inferences and made interpretations that wound up rattling the foundations of previously unquestioned assumptions about Michelangelo, Moses and even the Bible. To accomplish this, Freud employed a multi-level 'macro modeling' strategy involving the identification of multiple levels of deeper structures behind behaviors and actions. The general form of this strategy involved a sequence of steps consisting of:

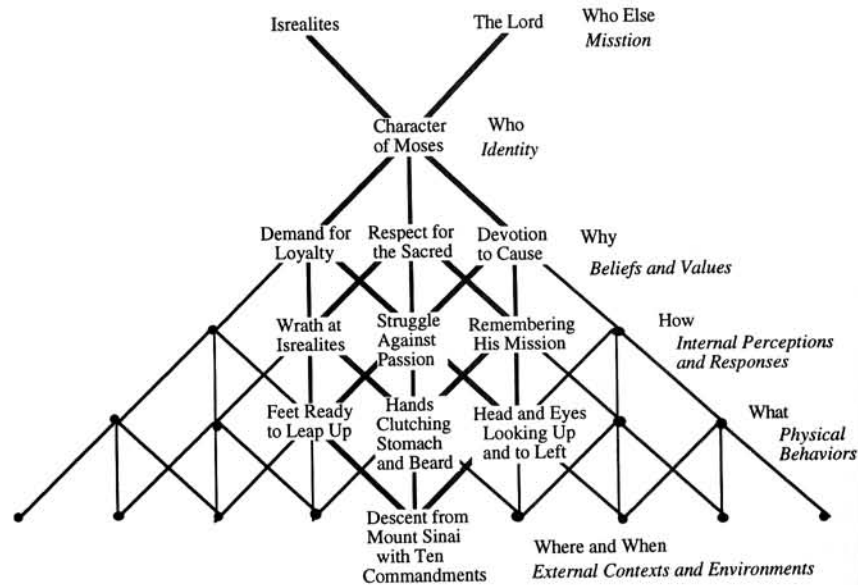
1. Observing or reviewing the behavior of the individual to be analyzed within the environmental context in which he or she was acting or operating.
2. Identifying specific behavioral patterns and details within the observable actions (surface structure) of the individual — especially those which do not seem to 'fit' the context.
3. Starting with key behavioral details, exploring the how, why, who and who else that make up the deeper structure behind the surface behaviors to be analyzed.
4. Identifying any missing links or changes in assumptions about the levels of 'deep structure' behind the behavior and their relationships to one another.
5. Exploring the implications of those discoveries or changes on the other levels of deep structure and their impact on the interpretation or significance of the behavioral surface structure.



**Freud's Multi-Level 'Macro Modeling' Strategy**

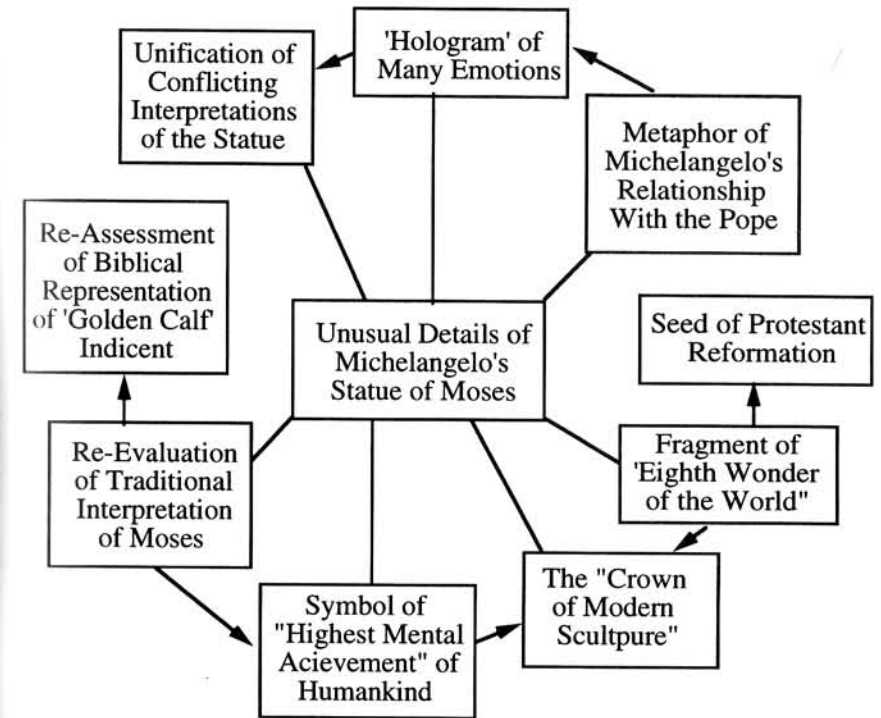
For example, in his analysis of Michelangelo's Moses, Freud's strategy involved first establishing the context in which to be able to interpret the meaning of the statue — the 'where' and the 'when' Moses has been portrayed (i.e., the descent from Mount Sinai). He next closely examined what his subject was doing within that assumed environmental context - noticing previously unmentioned details in the physical form of the statue. Using his imagination he then reconstructed how the figure would have arrived at its present physical manifestation, in terms of the mental and emotional sequence which would have provoked it. Freud proceeded to focus on why such a sequence would have occurred; leading him to re-assess the traditional interpretation of the event, and the beliefs and values associated with Moses. This in turn, led him to re-evaluate who Moses was — his identity — and his sense of purpose or mission with respect to who and what else made up the larger system of which he was a part. This brought Freud to challenge some of the traditional assumptions about the character of Moses and consequently re-examine and re-interpret the descriptions and significance of Moses' reported actions in the Bible. Freud concluded by relating these new interpretations back to the 'surface structure' of the statue and the significance and impact it has on those who observe it.

By systematically exploring successive levels of deep structure, Freud was able to build a chain of inferences, each element of which became progressively more far reaching in its scope. Each link in the chain of levels provided context, meaning and support for successive links. As the following diagram shows, Freud was able to weave together diverse but related factors at several different levels of experience in order to convincingly connect the character and personality of Moses to his behavior in a particular environment and situation.



### Freud's Interweaving of Different Levels of Elements Connecting the Character of Moses to a Particular Environmental Context

Similar to the way he kept Leonardo from being a lifeless statue, Freud brought Michelangelo's statue of Moses to life. While most people see an interesting and impressive carving of stone, Freud saw a hologram for history and humanity. Rather than the unassuming physical surroundings of the church in which the statue rests, Freud viewed it within a 'space' of non-physical frameworks, each adding to the emotional intensity of the sculpture. For Freud, the statue was a focal point for dynamic events as diverse as the Exodus of his ancestors from Egypt, the Renaissance, the Reformation and ultimately the deep structure of the patterns of mental and emotional life universal to all human beings.



### 'Space' of Frameworks Surrounding Freud's Analysis of Michelangelo's Moses

As we reflect on Freud's analysis of Michelangelo's Moses, we find ourselves in awe of the seemingly unbridled creativity, scope and audacity of his thinking process and its products. Freud exhibited the same 'boldness' in approaching Leonardo's "memory," analyzing and interpreting the problems and symptoms of his patients, and ultimately questioning the underlying nature of our perceptions of reality. Even if we disagree with Freud's conclusions, we are left in admiration of his mental strategies. We envy his apparently high degree of confidence in his own thinking ability. It is as if he feels that his thoughts and ideas are every bit as meaningful and worthy as any other person on the planet. He appears to have no internal inhibitions on what he can or should think, allowing his thoughts to roam over any subject available to the 'mind of man'; going even where "angels fear to tread."



### Footnotes to Section 3

1. *The Moses of Michelangelo*, Sigmund Freud, *Character and Culture*, Collier Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 81.
2. Ibid., p. 81.
3. Ibid., p. 81.
4. Ibid., p. 82.
5. Ibid., p. 83.
6. Ibid., p. 83.
7. Ibid., p. 85.
8. Ibid., p. 85.
9. Ibid., pp. 93-94.
10. Ibid., p. 94.
11. Ibid., p. 92.
12. Ibid., p. 94.
13. Ibid., pp. 94-95.
14. Ibid., p. 96-97.
15. Ibid., p. 98.
16. Ibid., p. 99.
17. Ibid., p. 100.
18. Ibid., p. 98.
19. Ibid., p. 100.
20. Ibid., pp. 100-101.
21. Ibid., pp. 101-102.
22. Ibid., p. 105.
23. Ibid., p. 103.
24. Ibid., p. 106.
25. Ibid., p. 103.
26. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., Chicago Ill., 1979.
27. *The Moses of Michelangelo*, Sigmund Freud, *Character and Culture*, Collier Books, New York, NY, 1963, pp. 103-104.
28. Ibid., p. 104.

## Section 4: Applying and Implementing Freud's Strategies

As I have pointed out in previous volumes of this work, the objective of the NLP modeling process is not to end up with the one 'right' or 'true' description of a particular person's thinking process, but rather to make an *instrumental* map that allows us to apply the strategies that we have modeled in some useful way. An 'instrumental map' is one that allows us to act more effectively - the 'accuracy' or 'reality' of the map is less important than its 'usefulness'. Thus, the instrumental application of the micro, macro and meta strategies that we have modeled from a particular individual or group of individuals involves putting them into structures that allow us to use them for some practical purpose. This purpose may be similar to or different from that for which the model initially used them.

For instance, some common applications of modeling include:

1. Understanding something better by developing more 'metacognition' about the processes which underlie it - in order to be able to teach about it for example.
2. Repeating or refining a performance (such as in a sport or a managerial situation) by specifying the steps followed by expert performers or during optimal examples of the activity. This is the essence of the 'business process reengineering' movement in organizations.
3. Achieving a specific result (such as effective spelling or the treatment of phobias or allergies). Rather than modeling a single individual, this is often accomplished by developing 'techniques' based on modeling a number of different successful examples or cases.
4. Extracting and/or formalizing a process in order to apply it to a different content or context. For example, an effective

strategy for managing a sports team may be applied to managing a business, and vice versa. In a way the development of the 'scientific method' has come from this type of process, where strategies of observation and analysis that were developed for one area of study (such as physics) have been applied to other areas (such as biology).

5. Deriving an inspiration for something which is loosely based on the actual process of the model. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's portrayal of Sherlock Holmes which was based on the diagnostic methods of his medical school professor Joseph Bell is a good example of this.

Thus, we may use all or merely parts of the information we have modeled from a particular genius. In Freud's case, for example, we can apply the strategies we have modeled by:

- a) applying his principles, strategies and methods to topics and areas that he did not himself consider or that were unavailable during his lifetime,
- b) combining elements of his strategies with other methods and approaches (such as those provided by NLP) in order to enhance and enrich them, or
- c) using them as the inspiration for building a completely new approach to thinking about or working with something.

There is a tremendous scope for the application of Freud's macro, micro and meta strategies. This is, no doubt, one of the reasons Freud has had such an influence upon modern thought. For instance, Freud's beliefs about the nature of symptoms and how they are healed have obvious implications for the processes of psychotherapy and healing that can help one to identify and relate many different levels of influences within a system. However, Freud's strategies also have value with respect to more general problem solving and analysis.

The following applications demonstrate how we can use the information we have gathered from our modeling of Freud's strategies in several different ways.

## Section 5: Exploring Deeper Structures

One way to apply Freud's strategies is to make more explicit the processes that Freud was using intuitively. In Freud's analysis of both Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo's statue of Moses, for example, we identified a strategy used by Freud to explore multiple 'levels' of 'deep structure' behind particular surface level behavioral cues. By using NLP distinctions to make the elements of the process more explicit, this multi level modeling strategy can be used to explore almost any 'problem space'. For instance, take a moment and think about a person you know whose behavior is either:

- (1) a problem that you would like to change, or
- (2) something that you admire and would like to understand better or be able to do yourself.

As you think about the behavior of this person, consider the following questions:

- a. Questions about "Environment": "*When and where* did/does the individual enact the behavior to be analyzed?" "What was the external context surrounding the individual and his or her actions?"
- b. Questions about "Behavior": "*What, specifically*, did/does the individual do behaviorally in those times and places?" "What are the details of the behavior?" "How did/does that behavior 'fit' or relate to the environment in which it occurred?" "Which behaviors, if any, do not seem to 'fit' with the typical assumptions related to the context?"
- c. Questions about "Capabilities": "*How* did/does the individual use cognitive or mental processes in order to carry out those

behaviors?" "What capabilities were needed or presupposed in order to trigger or guide those actions in that place and time?"

- d. Questions about "Beliefs and Values": "*Why* did/does the individual use those particular cognitive processes or capabilities to accomplish those activities?" "What beliefs motivated or shaped the individual's thoughts and cognitive activity?" "What values were/are important to the individual when he or she was/is involved in those cognitive and behavioral activities?"
- e. Questions about "Identity": "*Who* was/is the individual such that he or she engaged those particular beliefs, values, capabilities and behaviors in that particular time and place?" "What was/is the individual's perception of his or her own identity and mission?"
- f. Questions about "the Larger System": "*Who else* may have shaped or influenced the individual's beliefs, cognitive strategies or behavior with respect to this activity?" "What was/is the broader vision that the individual was pursuing or representing?"

Imagine you are Sigmund Freud desiring to unravel the mysteries of the mind as you ponder your answers to these questions. Notice how considering each question changes or enriches your perception of the person or the behavior.

Keep in mind that there are different perspectives from which to think about the answers to these questions. When analyzing the behavior of another person, you can consider it from your own point of view, the view of the other or from an uninvolved observer or commentator. For instance, notice the difference in the way you might answer them if you put yourself into the 'shoes' or into the 'skin' of the other person (as Freud did with the figure of Moses) as you contemplate your response.

One could apply the same analytical strategy to one's own behavior as well, or use the same questions in the role of a

consultant or counselor to help others gain new perspectives about situations in which they are stuck.

Certainly one of the primary modes in which Freud operated was as a therapist; helping others to better understand and overcome their problems and their symptoms. Let's explore how we might apply what we have learned about Freud's strategies more specifically within a problem solving framework.

## Section 6: The Meta Model

As I mentioned earlier, Freud emphasized language as the primary medium for 'consciousness' and change. The therapeutic use of language was the core of his so-called "talking cure." In fact, he went so far as to say, "*In psychoanalytic treatment nothing happens but an exchange of words between the patient and the physician.*"<sup>1</sup> Through words, however, Freud claimed one could "*discover what normal mental process has been checked in its course and replaced by a manifestation of anxiety [or some other symptom],*"<sup>2</sup> and then bring "*to an end the operative force of the [symptom], by allowing its strangulated affect to find a way out through speech.*" Thus, if "some mental process has not been carried through to an end in a normal manner" because it has become 'stuck' or 'strangled', language could be used as an instrument to link that process back to 'normal consciousness' so that it could be organically resolved through natural 'associative correction'.

As Freud put it:

*Our therapy does its work by transforming something unconscious into something conscious, and only succeeds in its work in so far as it is able to effect this transformation.*<sup>3</sup>

In essence, Freud is saying that healing comes through the development of 'meta cognition' or increased conscious awareness of the deeper structures behind one's own map of the world. In Freud's work, the transformation of these mental deep structures into consciousness was accomplished through words. He maintained that language provided the primary channel or pathway to 'normal consciousness'. In this sense, the mission of his work was to help his patients to enrich and expand their conscious maps of the world through the use of language.

In evaluating and applying Freud's methods it is important to keep in mind that the purpose was to assist the patient to widen his or her map. As he pointed out:



*Knowing on the part of the physician is not the same thing as knowing on the part of the patient and does not have the same effect.* <sup>4</sup>

Thus, a key to the therapeutic use of language is to guide the 'patient' to become aware of his or her own mental processes. Explanations or understandings of the patient's symptom on the part of the physician or facilitator are only useful to the degree that they help the patient's own understanding. Seen in this light, Freud's "interpretations" of his patient's experiences were not an attempt by him to find the correct map of his patient's problems, but rather a means with which to provoke patients to their own awarenesses.

In many ways, Freud's therapeutic approach reflects the NLP presupposition that people already have (or potentially have) all of the resources they need to act effectively. Change comes from releasing or triggering the appropriate resource (or activating the potential resource) for a particular context by helping the individual to enrich his or her model of the world. The reason that people do not automatically apply their resources to their problems is because they are missing the information or feedback they need to be able to mobilize the appropriate capabilities. NLP has developed a number of tools to help people find and 'fill in' these missing links.

One powerful application of modeling is to matrix patterns of thinking and behavior from the individual one is studying with new distinctions and structures that have not been previously available. These new distinctions can often unveil and explicate relationships and linkages that have not before been 'visible' in the behavior of the model. For example, NLP has used many principles and distinctions from the field of *transformational grammar* (Chomsky 1957, 1965) as a means to create models of people's verbal behavior. NLP has encoded many key elements of transformational linguistics into a structure known as the 'Meta Model'. By applying the distinctions of the Meta Model to Freud's methods we can explore the ways that modern linguistics can add to our understanding and application of Freud's strategies.

In fact, the Meta-Model was initially developed by NLP founders John Grinder and Richard Bandler as a means of identifying and

responding to problematic patterns in the speech of people in the therapeutic environment. The Meta Model was inspired by observations made of exceptional therapists such as Fritz Perls, Virginia Satir and Milton H. Erickson. It would appear that, similar to these modern counterparts, Freud also intuitively applied principles and patterns of transformational grammar throughout his research and therapy.

The Meta Model consists of a series of categories identifying a variety of different areas of verbal communication that are susceptible to considerable ambiguity and which may create limitations, confusion or miscommunication. It also provides a question or set of questions for each category that may be used to help specify, enrich or clarify verbal ambiguities and challenge or transform potential limitations. The identification of Meta-Model patterns and the application of the corresponding questions is not confined to therapy, however, and can provide substantial insight into the structure of thought and speech when applied to any type of problem solving.

The basic principle behind the Meta-Model is *the map is not the territory*. That is, the models we make of the world around us with our brains and our language are not the world itself but representations of it. The Meta-Model maintains that our mental and verbal representations are subject to three basic problem areas: generalization, deletion and distortion. As Grinder and Bandler describe it:

*The most pervasive paradox of the human condition which we see is that the processes which allow us to survive, grow, change, and experience joy are the same processes which allow us to maintain an impoverished model of the world - our ability to manipulate symbols, that is, to create models. So the processes which allow us to accomplish the most extraordinary and unique human activities are the same processes which block our further growth if we commit the error of mistaking the model of the world for reality. We can identify three general mechanisms by which we do this: Generalization, Deletion, and Distortion.*

**Generalization** is the process by which elements or pieces of a person's model become detached from their original experience and come to represent the entire category of which the experience is an example. Our ability to generalize is essential to coping with the world...The same process of generalization may lead a human being to establish a rule such as "Don't express any feelings."

**Deletion** is a process by which we selectively pay attention to certain dimensions of our experience and exclude others. Take, for example, the ability that people have to filter out or exclude all other sound in a room full of people talking in order to listen to one particular person's voice...Deletion reduces the world to proportions which we feel capable of handling. The reduction may be useful in some contexts and yet be the source of pain for us in others.

**Distortion** is the process which allows us to make shifts in our experience of sensory data. Fantasy, for example, allows us to prepare for experiences which we may have before they occur...It is the process which has made possible all the artistic creations which we as humans have produced...Similarly, all the great novels, all the revolutionary discoveries of the sciences involve the ability to distort and misrepresent present reality.<sup>5</sup>

In language, these processes occur during the translation of *deep structure* (the mental images, sounds, feelings and other sensory representations that are stored in our nervous systems) to *surface structure* (the words, signs and symbols we choose to describe or represent our primary sensory experience).

The function of the Meta-Model is to identify problematic generalizations, deletions or distortions through the analysis of the 'syntax' or form of the surface structure and provide an inquiry system so that a more enriched representation of the deep structure may be attained.

## Natural Groupings of Meta-Model Patterns

In their first book, *The Structure of Magic Vol. I* (1975), Bandler and Grinder defined 12 basic 'syntactic' categories that represent common problem areas in verbal descriptions and communication. These patterns are of particular relevance in our study of Freud because of his intense emphasis on the role of language in his analytical and therapeutic methods.

The following is a summary of the basic patterns and corresponding questions which make up these three areas of the Meta Model, accompanied by a discussion of their relevance to Freud's methods of analysis and therapy. The various patterns are clustered into three areas: 1) information gathering, 2) setting and identifying limits and 3) semantic 'ill-formedness'.

### A. Information Gathering

The language patterns grouped under '*information gathering*' essentially involve those relating to the recovery of 'deletions': *missing links* and *key details* regarding a verbal description or communication. They include:

1. SIMPLE DELETIONS—In many statements a person, object or relationship, that can enrich or even change the meaning of the statement, is left out or deleted from the verbal surface structure. For example, in the statement, "It is dangerous to express your own ideas," a number of things have been deleted from the surface structure: "Dangerous for whom, specifically?" "Express your own ideas to whom, specifically?" "Express your own ideas about what, specifically?" "Express your own ideas in what way, specifically?" Locating deletions in surface structure can often identify areas that have not been adequately defined, even within the deep structure of the individual or group who made the statement.

Clearly, a primary goal of Freud's therapeutic and analytic methods was to identify and recover elements of deeper structures that had been deleted from either verbal, behavioral or emotional surface structures. As he claimed, "making conscious the uncon-

scious, removing the repressions, filling the gaps in memory, they all amount to the same thing."

2. COMPARATIVE DELETIONS—There is a particular class of deletion that involves comparatives and superlatives; such as words like "better," "best," "most," "least," "greatest," "worst," etc. For example, the statement "It is *best* not to ask too many questions," uses the superlative "best." In such a case it could be asked, "Best compared to what?" Statements involving comparatives like, "It would be *worse* if I said what I really feel," "It is *less* important what I think" or "Its *better* to just stay with the old ways of doing things," are all missing a key part of the implied comparison. This important element of the deeper structure that is absent in the surface structure could be recovered by asking, "(Worse, less, better) compared to what?" or, "(Worse, less, better) than what?" This will help to get an idea of what kinds of reference experiences the speaker is considering in order to make his or her comparisons and draw the resulting conclusions.

Usually what has been deleted from a comparative are the experiences and assumptions upon which the evaluations have been based. As we have seen in his analyses of da Vinci and Michelangelo's Moses, Freud sought and challenged underlying and often unquestioned assumptions. By doing so, one is often able to achieve a deeper level of understanding and synthesis of seemingly conflicting ideas or opinions. Freud's "vindication" of the differing interpretations of the statue of Moses is a good example of this. By questioning which critic's interpretation was 'best' or 'better', Freud was led to consider more and more levels of the deep structure behind the statue. He ended up discovering a framework in which all of the seemingly conflicting opinions could be seen as legitimate but partial expressions of particular elements within the deeper structure underlying the creation of the statue.

Similarly, Freud explored the underlying reference experiences and assumptions which shaped the forms and meanings of his patient's symptoms. In a way, a symptom may be viewed as an attempt at healing oneself but one which achieves only partial success. This is because it does not take into account the full deep structure related to the problem space (similar to Freud's view of the critics' interpretations of Michelangelo's statue or Leonardo's

incessant researches). Freud seemed to share the NLP presupposition that people make the 'best' choices available to them given the possibilities and the capabilities that they perceive within their model of the world. From this perspective, any behavior, no matter how evil, crazy or bizarre it seems, is the 'best' choice available to the person at that point in time. Helping the person to widen his or her map of a situation by discovering and filling in comparative deletions increases the possibility that a more appropriate or 'better' choice (within the context of that person's model of the world) will be found.

3. UNSPECIFIED NOUNS (or UNSPECIFIED REFERENTIAL INDEX)—In many statements a key noun, or 'referential index' (the person, people or objects to which the statement refers), may be left unspecified or unclear. For example, in the statement, "Authorities are not interested in new ideas," the specific 'authorities' to which the statement is referring, have been left unspecified. In this type of distortion, the behavior of a few may become confused with the behavior of an entire group or culture. This has the tendency to de-humanize the group to which the statement is referring in the model of the speaker or listener. Some other examples of unspecified referential index could include statements like: "People are basically self-centered;" "They are responsible for the problems in society;" "Women are more emotional than men;" "Psychoanalysts are not concerned with practical results." The question to be asked in this case is, "Which (authorities, people, women, etc.) specifically?" This helps to focus the speaker back to the particular reference experiences upon which the generalization has been built.

The pattern of unspecified referential index is at the root of what Freud called "transference" - the projection of the characteristics of one person onto another. For instance, perceiving all "men" as "father figures" or "authority figures." Symbols could also be considered a form of unspecified referential index in which their content may be "replaced by some other." Freud believed that by identifying the individual or individuals to whom the transference originally referred, problem solving could take place more effectively by concentrating on the actual contexts in which the generalization was formed.



4. UNSPECIFIED ACTIONS (or UNSPECIFIED VERBS)—The specific mode of action is not always implied by the verbs or adverbs used in a statement. It is often important to define or explore the details of a particular action or relationship referred to in a verbal description. For example, the statement, "I *failed* to control my anxiety," does not define just how, specifically, one has "failed" nor how, specifically, one has attempted to "control" one's anxiety. The statement "We have thoroughly *analyzed* the problem," does not specify which strategies, assumptions, perspectives, levels, etc. were actually involved in the process of "analyzing." Making sure a specific mode of action has been established before a decision is made can be of critical importance. This is typically done by asking questions like, "How, specifically, have you *failed* to control your anxiety?" or "How, specifically, have you *thoroughly analyzed* the problem?"

Obviously, one of Freud's primary missions was to attempt to specify the details of how, specifically, certain mental and psychological processes operated in such a way that they produced symptoms in his patients. His comment that psychoanalysis "is desirous to know what the symptoms signify, what instinctual impulses lurk behind them and are satisfied by them, and by what transitions the mysterious past has led from those impulses to those symptoms," is essentially saying that the goal of psychoanalysis is to recover the deletions in relationship to the deep structure of his patient's symptoms. In other words, the significance of symptoms are revealed by recovering the unspecified nouns ("the instinctual impulses which lurk behind them and are satisfied by them") and unspecified verbs ("what transitions the mysterious past has led from those impulses to those symptoms") that make up their 'deep structure'.

5. NOMINALIZATIONS—The process of nominalization occurs when an activity, ongoing condition or relationship (a verb or an adverb) is represented as an object or noun. Saying, "My *fear* gripped me," for instance, is different than saying, "My *father* gripped me," in that one's father is a being that may be seen, felt and heard by other individuals. "Fear" on the other hand is a complex emotional process, not an object or individual that may be

directly observed by others - even though it is often spoken of as if it were an object or 'thing'. Similarly, "*anxiety*," "*neurosis*" and "*aggression*" are actually words representing evaluations and relationships that may be experienced very differently by different individuals. At the level of deep structure, they are processes; not objects or things. They have been 'nominalized' by being transformed into objects at the level of surface structure.

Often, a nominalization is an 'unspecified verb' (or adverb) that has been further distorted by being used as a noun. When language becomes too distant from experience in this way it can create potential confusion or miscommunication. The typical way to deal with a nominalization is to put it back into verb form and recover the deletions. For example, in relation to the examples cited above, one could ask, "You *fearing* what and in what way?" "Who *being anxious* about what, specifically, and in what way?" "Who *acting neurotically* according to whom, under what conditions and in what way?" "Who *being aggressive* to whom, specifically, about what specifically?"

Freud's comment that a symptom is a substitute for "some mental process that has not been carried through to a normal end" implies that a symptom itself is a kind of 'nominalization' - a process that has become somehow frozen or static at the level of surface structure. Freud's therapeutic methods were designed to use language as a means to allow the symptom's "strangled affect to find a way out through speech" essentially by somehow 'denominalizing' the symptom through the language patterns associated with the symptom.\*

In many ways 'symbols' are also nominalizations - processes which have become encoded in a concrete object or image. And, in many respects, Freud treated them as if they were the equivalent of a verbal nominalization. His approach to Leonardo's symbolic 'memory', for example, was similar to the process of denominalization. In fact, as we saw, he would actually translate

---

\*Ironically, Freud also promoted the use of certain nominalizations as well. The terms "ego" and "id" are classic examples of nominalizations - processes that are talked about as if they were things. To say that "My ego is repressing my id" portrays the two processes as objects. To say "Your resistance is getting in the way of your recovery" makes it seem as if "resistance" is a thing or an object.



aspects of the symbol into verbal language (i.e., "from its own special language into words that are generally understood") and then begin to explore the deletions and unspecified verbs.

### B. Setting and Identifying Limits

The verbal categories defined under 'setting and identifying limits' have to do with words relating to 'generalizations' in which a person places (or assumes) *boundaries* and *limitations* on either their own behavior or the actions of others. This group contains patterns such as:

1. UNIVERSAL QUANTIFIERS—Typically characterized by words like "all, every, never, always, only, everyone, everything, etc.," universal quantifiers are essentially statements of generalizations. Difficulties can arise when such language leads us to overgeneralize behaviors or relationships observed in a few (or even many) cases to characterize all such situations. The statements, "We will *never* understand the human mind," or "The symptoms will *never* get better," exemplify such a generalization. Some other examples include: "Everyone knows that Moses broke the tablets of the ten commandments in a fit of anger." "Physical symptoms can *only* be treated through physical means." "All symptoms of mental illness are a result of sexual repression." "Behavioral problems can *always* be traced to organic causes."

The implied universal validity of such statements are typically explored or challenged by finding exceptions to the rule or counterexamples to the claim made by the statement. For instance, one could ask, "Is there *anything* that we *are* able to understand about the human mind?" "Has there *ever* been a case in which such symptoms *did* get better?" "Are there *any* examples of successfully treating physical symptoms through some means *other* than physical?" etc.

Freud's strategies were quite well suited to finding counterexamples to these types of generalizations. He was constantly searching for the elements which did not fit in with the accepted pattern (as he did with da Vinci and Michelangelo's Moses). In fact, it seems to have been one of Freud's major missions to examine and challenge generalizations of this sort in

order to influence, provoke or "hold up a mirror" to his contemporaries.

2. MODAL OPERATORS—Modal Operators are words like "should, shouldn't, must, can't, is necessary, impossible, etc.," where a statement is defining a limit by asserting a claim about what is possible, not possible, necessary, or unnecessary. For example, the statements, "It is *impossible* to change people's behavior simply through an exchange of words," or "You *can't* heal the body through mental processes," are expressions of limitations that may or may not be accurate. Some other examples include: "You *must* be absolutely certain about the acceptance of your ideas before you express them." "You *shouldn't* challenge traditional ways of thinking." "Such a small detail *couldn't* be of any real significance."

Modal operators can be viewed as the linguistic embodiment of what Freud called 'resistance'. Too often they are simply assumed and accepted as unchangeable constraints. A typical way to explore and challenge modal operators is to ask questions like: "What stops you?" "What would happen if you could (or did)?" "What would you need in order to be able to?" These are different ways of prompting a person to consider "what if" or to act "as if" a border or limit could be crossed.

It seems that Freud was quite keen on challenging and crossing these type of boundaries. In his writings he was constantly asking his readers to consider "what if" a certain conclusion or situation was so, or to act "as if" a certain assumption or possibility were in fact the case. In his analysis of the cryptic details relating to both Leonardo and Michelangelo's Moses, for example, Freud invited readers to "proceed on the assumption that even these details have significance." Similarly, Freud urged his patients to cross such boundaries in order to release the "strangled affect" behind symptoms and hopefully lead them to "associative correction by introducing it into normal consciousness."

3. PRESUPPOSITIONS—Presuppositions occur when a certain assumption must be accepted as true in order to make sense of a particular statement. For example, to understand the statement, "When you stop trying to sabotage our therapeutic efforts, we'll be

able to make more progress," one must assume that the person already has been, in fact, trying to sabotage the therapeutic efforts. The statement also presupposes that there is some kind of therapeutic effort being attempted and that at least some progress has been made. Similarly the statement, "Since they leave us no alternative, we must resort to violence," presupposes that no alternative, in fact, exists and that "they" are the ones who determine whether there are alternatives or not. Presuppositions are often explored or challenged by asking, "How, specifically, do you know that?"

Freud was constantly seeking such presuppositions - in both language and behavior. For example, Freud was clearly searching for what was 'presupposed' by the details of da Vinci's obscure "memory," his obsessive accounting practices and the curious "perseverations" in his account of his father's death. His analysis of Michelangelo's Moses involved seeking the behaviors presupposed by the physical attitude of the hands, head and feet of the statue and then seeking the thoughts and emotions presupposed by those behaviors. When Freud pointed out that "the beard now testifies to a movement which has just taken place," he was essentially saying that Moses' beard is the marble equivalent to a verbal presupposition. Freud's comment that "The loop of the beard would thus be an indication of the path taken by his hand," implies that the position of Moses' hand and beard *presuppose* other actions which must have already taken place in order for them to have arrived at their current state. Much of Freud's method of interpretation of his patient's symptoms and descriptions seems to have been based on the process of seeking what antecedent actions, experiences or transformations were presupposed by their current state or 'surface structure'.

### C. Semantic Ill-Formedness

The patterns clustered under the heading '*semantic ill-formedness*' have to do with the processes by which people *judge* and give *meaning* to behaviors and events. These processes can become 'ill-formed' when they lead to oversimplifications or distortions that are not useful. These patterns consist of:

1. COMPLEX EQUIVALENCE—This pattern occurs when two or more experiences are talked about as if they are 'equivalent' in the surface structure of the speaker. For example, in the statement, "He is in poor health, he must really hate himself," the speaker is implying that "poor health" is in some way equivalent to "self hatred." Yet the two are not necessarily the same at the level of the complex emotional and physical deep structures which make up a human being. Some other examples of 'complex equivalences' would be statements such as, "Thinking or acting outside of the social norms *means* that you are mentally unstable;" "Safety *means* having the power to fight unfriendly forces;" "If you don't say much, then it must *mean* you don't have much to say." Each statement establishes a kind of 'equivalence' between two terms. Perhaps more accurately defined as "simplistic equivalence," the danger of such statements is that a complex relationship on a deep structure level is oversimplified at the level of surface structure. As Einstein said "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not any simpler." It is often important to explore and challenge such equivalences by inquiring, "How, specifically, do you know that?" This helps to uncover the assumptions, presuppositions and reference experiences behind the stated equivalence.

It seems evident that the essence of 'interpretation' is the establishment of clusters of complex equivalences which both give meaning but also attempt to answer the question "How do you know that?" Clearly, a large part of Freud's analytical and therapeutic methods were based on either forming or challenging clusters of 'complex equivalences'. For instance, the interpretation of symbols is almost entirely based on forming such equivalences. To say that "'vulture' *means* 'mother'" or "'tail' *means* 'phallus'" is a classic example of creating a linguistic 'complex equivalence'. Freud's analysis and interpretation of Leonardo's life involved

establishing and then piecing together many "fragments" of equivalences into a "whole mass of connected ideas." His analysis of Michelangelo's "inscrutable" statue of Moses, which had been "judged so diversely" and had "given rise to completely opposed views," involved establishing a new scheme of complex equivalences for interpreting the physical attitude of the statue and the character of the great leader in order to provide a new perspective that resolved the previously conflicting views.

Thus, on the positive side, the connections established by some interpretations may help to either simplify or explicate complex relationships. On the problematic side, however, complex equivalences may distort or oversimplify systemic relationships. Patients (and the families of patients) often interpret their symptoms in a very negative way, or in a way that continues to maintain the symptom. As we have said before, the issue is not so much whether one has found the "correct" complex equivalence, but rather whether one is able to find interpretations which offer a new perspective, a wider map or a way of thinking which is different than the type of thinking which is creating the problem to begin with. (Freud's purpose in reinterpreting Leonardo's behavior and Michelangelo's Moses was not to claim the one correct interpretation of the two great Renaissance artists, but rather to show that wider maps were possible based on new and different complex equivalences.) If one were to fantasize for a moment being one of Freud's patients, one might imagine what a delightful surprise it would be to have someone tell you that your problems are related to processes which also influenced Leonardo, Shakespeare and Egyptian mythology, rather than having them simply being interpreted as a 'pain in the neck' by one's relatives. Freud's interpretations of one's symptoms might have been much more enriching and appealing than one's own.

2. CAUSE-EFFECT—These are statements where a cause-and-effect relationship is either explicitly or implicitly implied between two experiences. As with complex equivalences, such relationships may or may not be accurate or valid at the level of deep structure. For instance, in the statement, "Criticizing him will *make* him respect the rules," it is not clear just how, specifically, the action of criticism will in fact make the individual being referred to develop

respect for rules. Such an action may just as easily cause the opposite effect. This type of statement leaves many potentially important missing links unspecified.

Of course, this does not mean that all cause-effect statements are invalid. Some are valid but incomplete. Others have validity, but only under certain conditions. In fact, cause-effect statements are a form of unspecified verbs. The primary danger of cause-effect statements is the implication that the relationship being defined is overly simple and/or mechanical. Because complex systems are made up of many mutually causal links (such as the human nervous system, for example), many phenomena are the result of multiple causes rather than a single cause.

Thus, for statements such as, "Leonardo's intense relationship with his mother when he was an infant *caused* him to become homosexual," "Repressing sexual urges *causes* symptoms to occur," "Unconscious conflicts *cause* the symptoms of hysteria," or, "Talking about your problems will *make* them clear up," one might want to explore and check the validity of the causal relationship being asserted. This would be accomplished by examining the details of the implied causal chain. To do this one could ask, "How, specifically, did Leonardo's intense relationship with his mother as an infant cause him to become homosexual?" "How, specifically, does repressing sexual urges cause symptoms to occur?" "How, specifically, do unconscious conflicts cause the symptoms of hysteria?" "How, specifically, will talking about problems make them clear up?" Wherever such questions cannot be answered, the implied cause-effect relationship may be rejected for lack of support, or else accepted as a matter of faith or authority (or for the lack of a better explanation). Freud spent a great deal of time attempting to fill in the missing links in such cause effect statements, and leading others to examine and reconsider their own cause-effect beliefs. In fact, it seems that much of his life's work was devoted to explicating the details and exploring the ramifications of certain cause-effect premises.

Along with complex equivalences, cause-effect statements and beliefs are a key element in the process of interpretation. They are the basis upon which we choose our actions. It is ultimately these beliefs which determine how we concretely apply what we know. For instance, if we believe that an allergy is caused by an external



"allergen" then we will try to avoid that allergen. If we believe an allergy is caused by "histamine" then we will take an "antihistamine" If we believe an allergy is caused by "stress" then we will attempt to reduce stress and so on. In fact, the combination of complex equivalences and cause-effect relationships form the basis for our belief systems and are the fundamental processes behind programming and diagnosis. Statements such as "If X = Y then do Z" involve initiating a causal action based on the perception of an equivalence. Obviously, Freud's analytical and therapeutic methods were based on a certain set of cause-effect beliefs. As with complex equivalences, the issue is not so much whether one has found the "correct" cause-effect belief, but rather what types of practical results one is able to achieve if one acts "as if" a particular causal relationship exists.

3. MIND-READING—In these statements the speaker claims to know what another individual or group feels, means or thinks. In the statement, "Freud *thought* that everything was a function of sex," the speaker is claiming to know the internal experience of another person—to be able to "read his mind" so to speak. This may be more of the speaker's interpretation than a statement of actual fact about Freud's own thoughts. To say that, "Psychologists *don't care* about the biological influences on health," or "Doctors *ignore* the feelings of their patients," would be a similar type of mind reading. To qualify the degree of validity of the statement, one will typically want to ask, "How, specifically, do you know that?"

Of course, this is not to say that statements implying some kind of 'mind reading' are inherently bad. 'Mind reading' of some form is at the basis of empathy and compassion as much as it is of prejudice. Like other patterns of verbal surface structure, 'mind reading' simply involves a certain amount of generalization, deletion and distortion. The issue is not so much to avoid mind reading as if it were some kind of violation, but rather to be clear about the chain of complex equivalences, presuppositions and cause-effect assumptions one has made in order to arrive at one's conclusion.

In fact, in some ways effective 'mind reading' is the ultimate goal of interpretation - and of modeling for that matter. To say that, "Michelangelo *intended* to portray a different Moses than was

described in the Bible," "Leonardo *wanted* to make up for the loss of his mother by painting the Mona Lisa," or that "Freud *put himself into* the perceptual position of Moses," are clearly a form of mind reading. The validity of these statements will be based on the particular chain of complex equivalences, presuppositions and cause-effect assumptions being made to reach these conclusions - i.e., answering the question "How do you know that?" It is the duty of NLP no less than Freud to be able to answer such questions. It is perhaps one of Freud's greatest strengths that he did constantly attempt to answer this question. While others might shy away or become defensive when asked this question, Freud seemed to find it a stimulating and worthy challenge. Maybe the reason that Freud is remembered today instead of having fallen into the "general oblivion" is because he was so committed to exploring and answering the question, "How do you know that?"

4. LOST PERFORMATIVE—Evaluative words such as "*right, wrong, good, bad, just,*" etc., tend to become disassociated from the actions, reasons and reference experiences that established their value in the first place. In other words, the process and perspective through which the judgment was initially 'performed' has become 'lost' at the level of surface structure. Such words can often become more rigid or ambiguous than useful. To say that "Freud had the *right* map of the world," or "Freud had the *wrong* map of the world," is equally dogmatic and unuseful. In either statement, the speaker has begun to equate or confuse his or her own representations of the world with the world itself. In a complex system there are many different perspectives, each with its own relevance and validity. As anthropologist Gregory Bateson said, "Wisdom comes from sitting together and truthfully discussing our differences...without the intent to change them." Thus, the response to a lost performative would be to ask "Right or wrong according to whom?" or "Bad according to what criteria" or "Good compared with what?"

The positive purpose of 'lost performatives' is to give meaning to observed actions and events. They are often the end results of interpretation. What is important is not to get rid of evaluations but rather to specify and be aware of the path one has taken to arrive at one's final judgment. Oftentimes we accept a conclusion



without checking or retracing the steps that led to that conclusion. Freud seemed to have been determined to 'recover' the 'performatives' behind his evaluation. In fact, this is probably the key to his success and his fame. He traced his own thinking processes by developing a high degree of 'meta cognition' of his own patterns of thought. His comment that he had to analyze the path of his own deep reaction to Michelangelo's statue of Moses because "some rationalistic, or perhaps, analytic, turn of mind in me rebels against being moved by a thing without knowing why I am thus affected and what it is that affects me," indicates a strong awareness of lost performatives. While he had certain blind spots to other meta model patterns, perhaps this was Freud's greatest strength and even what made his who he was.

The table on the following page summarizes the basic Meta Model patterns and the corresponding questions to ask in order to explore the deeper structures that may lie beneath them. In reflecting over the various patterns of the Meta Model, it is evident that more than one of these categories may be applied to a specific word or group of words at the same time. Some words may even present several areas of ambiguity. Likewise, any particular statement will often contain more than one Meta Model pattern.

META MODEL PATTERN	RESPONSE	DIRECTION
<b>INFORMATION GATHERING</b>		
<b>SIMPLE DELETION</b> Key element left out of surface structure. eg. "I am confused."	"Confused about what, specifically?"	Recover missing element in the problem state.
<b>COMPARITIVE DELETION</b> Referent implied by a comparison is left out of surface structure. eg. "It is better not say anything." (more/less, worse/best, most/least)	"Better than what, specifically?"	Identify and specify criterion of comparison.
<b>UNSPECIFIED REFERENTIAL INDEX</b> Noun or object is not specified. eg. "People just don't learn." (they, it, them, man, NLPers, etc.)	"Which people, specifically?"	Clarify to whom the statement is referring.
<b>UNSPECIFIED VERBS</b> Details of action or relationship is undefined. eg. "I have difficulty communicating in words"	"How, specifically do you have difficulty communicating?"	Define problem state activity or relationship.
<b>NOMINALIZATIONS</b> Action or process is referred to as if it were an object or thing. eg. "I broke off the relationship."	"Who specifically is relating to whom about what and in what way?"	Putting the activity, which has been distorted into an object, back into a process statement.
<b>LIMITS TO THE INDIVIDUAL'S MODEL OF THE WORLD</b>		
<b>MODAL OPERATORS OF NECESSITY AND POSSIBILITY</b> Statements identifying rules or limits to behavior. <b>NECESSITY</b> (should, need, must, have to, necessary) eg. "Men shouldn't show emotions." <b>POSSIBILITY</b> (can't, impossible, won't) eg. "I can't learn this material."	"What would happen if they did?"  "What stops you?"	Identify the consequence responsible for the rule or boundary.  Identify the cause of the problem state symptoms.
<b>PRESUPPOSITIONS</b> Something implicitly required in order to understand a statement. eg. "If he knew how much I suffered he wouldn't keep acting that way."	"How do you that he doesn't know?" "How are you suffering?" "How is he acting?"	Challenge and clarify the processes and relationships presupposed in the statement.
<b>UNIVERSAL QUANTIFIERS</b> A broad generalization. (always, never, all, every, no one) eg. "She is always critical of me."	"Always? Has there ever been a time when she hasn't been critical?"	Identify counter-examples to the limiting generalization.
<b>SEMANTIC ILL-FORMEDNESS</b>		
<b>CAUSE-EFFECT</b> An implied causal link between a particular stimulus and a response. (make, cause, force, compel) eg. "Her tone of voice made me angry."	"How, specifically, does it make you angry?"	Identify the causal links presupposed in the statement.
<b>MIND READING</b> Claiming to know someone's internal experience. eg. "He doesn't care about me."	"How do you know he doesn't care about you?"	Identify criteria used to make assumptions about the other person's internal state.
<b>COMPLEX EQUIVALENCE</b> When two different experiences are stated as meaning the same thing. eg. "He's doing poorly in school... he has a learning problem."	"How, specifically, does his doing poorly in school mean that he has a learning problem?" "If you did poorly in school would it mean that you had a learning problem?"	Checking the validity of the relationship implied by the complex equivalence.
<b>LOST PERFORMATIVES</b> A statement of a value judgment that omits who performed the judgment and how it was made. eg. "It's selfish to think of your own feelings."	"Selfish according to whom?"	Identify the source and the criteria used to make the judgment.

## 'Meta Modeling' Self Analysis Exercise - Example

In conclusion, it seems that, in both his analytical and therapeutic work, Freud was unconsciously guided by the patterns defined by the Meta Model. The following exercise provides a method through which one may consciously apply the Meta Model patterns as a tool for self analysis and exploration.

On line (1) write down a sentence describing a problem, outcome or situation you would like to analyze or explore. Look over the words in the description and circle, highlight or mark the key words in some way. Using the table provided earlier, identify to which Meta Model category each key word belongs. You may use the abbreviations provided below to mark the category to which a particular key word or phrase belongs.

<b>UV</b> =Unspecified Verb	<b>CD</b> =Comparative Deletion
<b>N</b> =Nominalization	<b>UN</b> =Unspecified Noun
<b>D</b> =Deletion	<b>MO</b> =Modal Operator
<b>CE</b> =Cause—Effect	<b>UQ</b> =Universal Quantifier
<b>MR</b> =Mind Reading	<b>LP</b> =Lost Performative

Write down the appropriate corresponding 'meta model' question for each marked word on the line just below the sentence. Intuitively choose which question is the most important to explore and write your answer on the next numbered line. Repeat the process for each new sentence until you have filled in each line. An example is provided on the next page.

UV CD

1. Issue: I would like to express myself more easily.

Questions: **Express myself how specifically?** *More easily than whom or what specifically?*

UV UN UN

2. Communicate my ideas to other people.

Questions: **Communicate how specifically?** *Which ideas specifically? Which other people specifically?*

UV UN MO

3. Write them down in an article or book like I know I could.

Questions: *Write how specifically? Which article or book specifically?*  
**What stops you?**

CD UV UN

4. I get too self critical and become blocked.

Questions: *Too critical compared to whom or what? Critical how specifically? Blocked how specifically?*

UV N LP CD

5. I begin to think that my work is not good enough.

Questions: **Think how specifically?** *You working on what in what way? Good enough for whom? Good according to whom and what criteria? Good enough compared to what?*

6. Hear negative comments in my mind about what I am writing.

## 'Meta Modeling' Self Analysis Exercise

Now try it for yourself. On line (1) on the next page write down a sentence describing a problem, outcome or situation you would like to analyze or explore. Look over the words in the description and circle, highlight or mark the key words in some way. Using the table provided earlier, identify to which Meta Model category each key word belongs. You may use the abbreviations provided below to mark the category to which a particular key word or phrase belongs.

UV=Unspecified Verb	CD=Comparative Deletion
N=Nominalization	UN=Unspecified Noun
D=Deletion	MO=Modal Operator
CE=Cause—Effect	UQ=Universal Quantifier
MR=Mind Reading	LP=Lost Performative

Write down the appropriate corresponding 'meta model' question for each marked word on the line just below the sentence. Intuitively choose which question is the most important to explore and write your answer on the next numbered line. Repeat the process for each new sentence until you have filled in each line.

1. Issue: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions: \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Questions: \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Questions: \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

Questions: \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

Questions: \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

It is important to keep in mind that the goal of the Meta Model is not to find the 'right' answers, but rather to ask better questions—to widen our map of the world more so than to find the 'right map of the world'. The purpose of the Meta Model inquiry system is to help identify missing links, unconscious assumptions and reference experiences that make up the 'deeper structure' of our conscious models of the world. By doing so, we are able to use language as a means to promote the natural process of "associative correction" that Freud believed was the source of healing. \* Thus, the Meta Model questioning process is open ended—it is an investigation that can lead to many insights and discoveries.

---

\* Another powerful method for promoting "associative correction" through the use of language is the strategy for 'Finding a System of Causes in a Problem Space' described at the end of the chapter on Aristotle in the first volume of this series. The strategy utilizes key words, or 'prompts', to trigger various mental pathways of association while one is attempting to find the possible causes and solutions to particular problem or symptom.

## Footnotes to Section 6

1. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud, Pocket Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 21.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 410.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 293.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 292.
5. *The Structure of Magic Vol. I*, Richard Bandler & John Grinder, Science and Behavior Books, Palo Alto, CA, 1975, pp. 12-14.

## Section 7: Change Personal History

While, as Freud maintained, insight is often in and of itself transformative, the Meta Model is not intended to be a "therapy" or problem solving technique on its own. In fact, one of its purposes is to guide us to find areas in which more specific 'problem solving' needs to be done. For instance, when asking Meta Model questions of oneself or others it is possible to reach a kind of 'impasse'. It is not uncommon to experience a block or a void with respect to the information one is attempting to gather, or to have the sense that one is simply 'going around in circles'. This is the type of phenomenon that Freud termed "resistance." As he described it in the behavior of his patients:

*Whenever we are at the point of bringing to his consciousness some piece of unconscious material which is particularly painful to him, then he is critical in the extreme; even though he may have previously understood and accepted a great deal, yet now all these gains seem to be obliterated; in his struggles to oppose at all costs he can behave just as though he were mentally deficient, a form of 'emotional stupidity'. If he can be successfully helped to overcome this new resistance he regains his insight and comprehension.*<sup>1</sup>

According to Freud, it was often just at the point where the most significant information was about to emerge - the answer for which both patient and therapist had been diligently searching - that the patient would suddenly become most resistant; as if he or she were actually struggling *against* bringing the answer needed for change into consciousness. This 'resistance' is a kind of 'meta symptom' in that it is an interference that occurs which prevents one from exploring or addressing the other identified symptoms that one is attempting to resolve. This type of 'impasse' can occur in many forms. Freud mentioned a kind of "emotional stupidity." Sometimes it is an irrational feeling of anxiety, anger, confusion, or a kind of mental 'fog'. Perhaps it is a feeling with which one has



struggled for a long time but still seems to arise uncontrollably at key times.

While this is the kind of reaction that is a frustration and irritation for most people, it was just the type of mystery that intrigued Freud most and drew his attention.\* Rather than be upset and indignant about this resistance from his patients, Freud asked:

*In what way can we now account for this fact observed, that the patient struggles so energetically against the relief of his symptoms and the restoration of his mental processes to normal functioning? We say that we have come upon the traces of powerful forces at work here opposing any change in the condition; they must be the same forces that originally induced the condition.*<sup>2</sup>

Instead of being dumbfounded or peeved at his patients, Freud sought the causes and 'meaning' behind their resistances. As he did with all of his investigations, Freud looked for the meaning of

---

\*Freud's account of how he arrived at his theory of resistance provides another interesting glimpse into his strategies. In his *Autobiographical Study* Freud recounts how he found "it was necessary to overcome something that fought against one in the patient." He felt that "The expenditure of force on the part of the physician was evidently the measure of resistance on the part of the patient. It was only necessary to translate into words what I myself had observed, and I was in possession of the theory of *repression*." Firstly, Freud's strategy of taking his own subjective feelings of effort ("expenditure of force") as a 'measurement' of something within his patients is quite unique for a physician. Most 'scientific' observers tend to delete their own experience from their observations, in the attempt to be 'objective'. Freud used his own subjective experiences as a key element in his 'observations'. Freud's comment that "It was only necessary to translate into words what I myself had observed" is probably the essence of his genius and his contribution. Most of us do not find it that easy to "translate into words" our feelings and observations - let alone find words that form the basis of theories. It was Freud's ease of movement between observation and language that helped establish him as a significant figure in history. It is also the movement between experiences and words that formed the basis of Freud's therapy.

this 'meta' symptom in "*the impressions and experiences from which it sprang, and the purpose which it serves.*"\*

In Freud's view, these seemingly irrational resistances made more sense when thought of in relation to the past rather than the present. He believed that such resistances occurred when something in the present triggered a person to "*regress*" back to earlier life experiences and unconsciously relive them or parts of them. These past events acted as a kind of inertia "opposing any change in the condition."

According to Freud, when the exercise of some mental, emotional or instinctual function encountered an external block or constraint, the individual might "regress" to earlier expressions of that function formed at a significant point in the individual's personal history. As he described it:

*"The impulse will find occasion to regress in this way when the exercise of its function in a later and more developed form meets with powerful external obstacles, which thus prevent it from attaining the goal of satisfaction."*<sup>3</sup>

Freud likened the process to the settlement of a frontier by pioneers or "*migrating people who have left large numbers at the stopping places on their way...the foremost will naturally fall back upon these positions when they are defeated or meet with an enemy too strong for them. And...the more of their number they leave behind in their progress, the sooner will be the danger of defeat.*"<sup>4</sup> Freud coined the term "*fixation*" to describe the "stopping places" in an individual's personal history in which there had been an

---

\*Freud's strategy of seeking the originating circumstances behind a symptom and the purpose it serves is the 'meta strategy' for almost every modern therapy. I have, in fact, written several other books and works incorporating a number of Freud's ideas and principles into the process of personal change - see *Beliefs; Pathways to Health and Well-Being*, and *Changing Belief Systems with NLP*. In the next several sections I will provide an overview of some common NLP change processes and their relation to Freud's principles, methods and strategies. Since they are written about in more detail elsewhere, I will not give transcripts or extended case descriptions of these NLP techniques but rather show their relevance to understanding and applying the patterns modeled from Freud.

"arrest in a component impulse at an early stage."<sup>5</sup> Such a 'fixation' would be caused or formed by certain significant experiences in the person's life (such as da Vinci's separation from his biological mother at an early age). Later on in life, the individual might "regress" back to these experiences in certain situations or under certain conditions. According to Freud, "*the stronger the fixations in the path of development the more easily will the function yield before the external obstacles, by regressing to those fixations...*"<sup>6</sup>

Thus, in Freud's perception, both symptoms and resistances, were often a result of precipitating causes related to earlier significant life experiences in which a "fixation" had been established. For instance, in his classic study of hysteria (with Joseph Breuer, 1895) Freud asserted that:

*In traumatic neuroses the operative cause of the illness is not the trifling physical injury but the affect of fright - the psychological trauma. In an analogous manner, our investigations reveal, for many, if not for most, hysterical symptoms, precipitating causes which can only be described as psychological traumas...In the case of common hysteria it not infrequently happens that, instead of a single, major trauma, we find a number of partial traumas forming a group of provoking causes.*<sup>7</sup>

Freud believed that, for people who exhibited "neurotic" or "hysterical" symptoms, a "psychical trauma" or group of "partial traumas" established by certain events in their life had created a "fixation" to which the person would regress under certain circumstances. Claiming that "*Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences,*" Freud maintained:

*[A] normal person is able to bring about the disappearance of the accompanying affect through the process of association...memories which have become the determinants of hysterical phenomena persist for a long time with astonishing freshness and the whole of their affective colouring...these experiences are completely absent from the*

*patient's memory when they are in a normal psychological state, or are only present in a highly summary form.*<sup>8</sup>

Freud was essentially saying that the person was regressing and remembering the event on an emotional and physiological level, but had little or no conscious mental representation of the experience. According to Freud this situation prevented the memory from completing its natural cycle of "associative correction" and blocked the "discharge" of the emotional affect.\*

*The fading of a memory or the losing of its affect depends on various factors. The most important of these is whether there has been an energetic reaction to the event that provokes an affect. By 'reaction' we here understand the whole class of voluntary and involuntary reflexes - from tears to acts of revenge - in which, as experience shows us, the affects are discharged. If this reaction takes place to a sufficient amount a large part of the affect disappears as a result...If the reaction is suppressed, the affect remains attached to the memory.*<sup>9</sup>

Thus, according to Freud, a "fixation" is established when some process has not been allowed to complete its natural life cycle and become released or "abreacted." As Freud explained:

---

\*Freud's observations and model correlate surprisingly well to modern brain research. Studies of the brain indicate that the limbic system, a structure that connects lower brain functions with higher level processes in the cerebral cortex, is associated with emotional and autonomic functions. It also plays an important role in forming memories. Deeper unconscious 'affective' processes would be a function of the limbic system. Conscious awareness, insight and understanding would be a function of the higher areas of the brain, such as the association areas of the visual and auditory cortexes. Neurologically speaking, Freud is indicating that some experiences can become encoded and remembered in the lower brain areas (the limbic system) without reaching the higher association areas. These memories will retain a strong emotional and physical affect as long as they are unable to reach, or are inhibited from reaching, the vast neural networks of the association areas, in which they would become 'naturally corrected' through their connection with other thoughts, experiences and higher level problem solving capabilities.

*It appears...that these memories correspond to traumas that have not been sufficiently abreacted; and if we enter more closely into the reasons which have prevented this, we find at least two sets of conditions under which the reaction to the trauma fails to occur.*

*In the first group are those cases in which the patients have not reacted to a psychical trauma because the nature of the trauma excluded a reaction, as in the case of the apparently irreparable loss of a loved person or because social circumstances made a reaction impossible or because it was a question of things which the patient wished to forget, and therefore intentionally repressed from his conscious thought and inhibited and suppressed...The second group of conditions are determined, not by the content of the memories but by the psychical state in which the patient received the experiences in question. For we find, under hypnosis, among the causes of hysterical symptoms ideas which are not in themselves significant, but whose persistence is due to the fact that they originated during the prevalence of severely paralyzing affects, such as fright, or during positively abnormal psychical states, such as the semi-hypnotic twilight state of day-dreaming, auto-hypnoses, and so on...In the first group the patient is determined to forget the distressing experiences and accordingly excludes them so far as possible from association; while in the second group the associative working-over fails to occur because there is no extensive associative connection between the normal state of consciousness and the pathological ones in which the ideas made their appearance.*<sup>10</sup>

Freud claimed that there are two reasons that the memories do not complete their cycle and become "sufficiently abreacted;" 1) because external circumstances prevented it or because the content is something that the individual "intentionally repressed" because he or she wished to forget it, or 2) because the individual was in an unusual state of consciousness at the time of the event that prevented natural "associative connection" with the "normal state of consciousness."

In either case the goal is to fully reconnect the memory to natural associative processes so that it could reach a point of completion. It was to this end that Freud believed one could "bring to an end the operative force of the idea which was not abreacted in the first instance, by allowing its strangulated affect to find a way out through speech."<sup>11</sup> He maintained:

*The injured person's reaction to the trauma only exercises a completely 'cathartic' effect if it is an adequate reaction - as, for instance, revenge. But language serves as a substitute for action; by its help, an affect can be 'abreacted' almost as effectively.*<sup>12</sup>

For language to be effective as a mechanism of healing, however, it had to be used in a certain way. As Freud described it:

*[W]e found, to our great surprise at first, that each individual hysterical symptom immediately and permanently disappeared when we had succeeded in bringing clearly to light the memory of the event by which it was provoked and in arousing its accompanying affect, and when the patient had described that event in the greatest possible detail and put the affect into words. Recollecting without the affect almost invariably produces no result. The psychical process which originally took place must be repeated as vividly as possible...and then given verbal utterance.*<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the success of the "talking cure" in relieving symptoms was based on the ability to a) bring clearly to light the memory of the event by which it was provoked, b) describing that event in the "greatest possible detail," c) arousing the accompanying affect and d) putting the affect into words. This is different than just simply "talking about" an event. Both the event and the emotional affect associated with the event had to be re-experienced first and then put into words. As Freud pointed out, "Recollecting without the affect almost invariably produces no result." Merely talking about something keeps it disassociated and does not produce the necessary connection between the affect and 'normal consciousness'. The



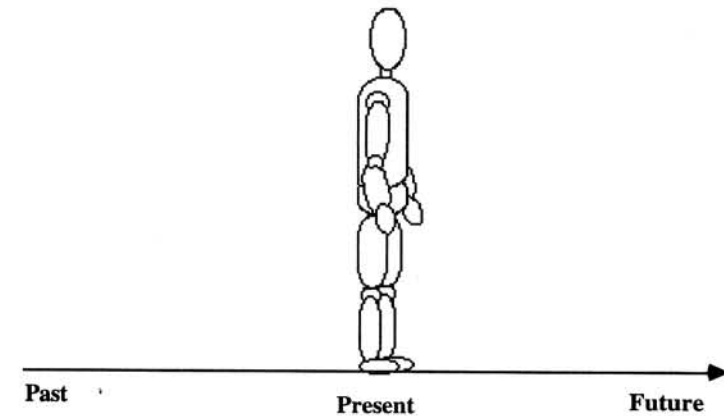
words must relate to and express felt experiences and emotions. Thus, in order to relieve the symptoms, "The psychical process which originally took place must be repeated as vividly as possible...and then given verbal utterance."

In the model of NLP, Freud is implying that representations which are initially primarily 'kinesthetic' (related to feelings and emotions) must be overlapped to the visual ("bring clearly to light the memory of the event") and then verbal ("describe that event," "put the affect into words") representational systems.

Once past events were 'brought to light' and given verbal expression, 'associative correction' could begin. Part of the process of 'associative correction' was developing the 'metacognition' of the relationship of the symptom's present expression to past events and circumstances. For instance, of his work with obsessions and compulsions Freud claimed:

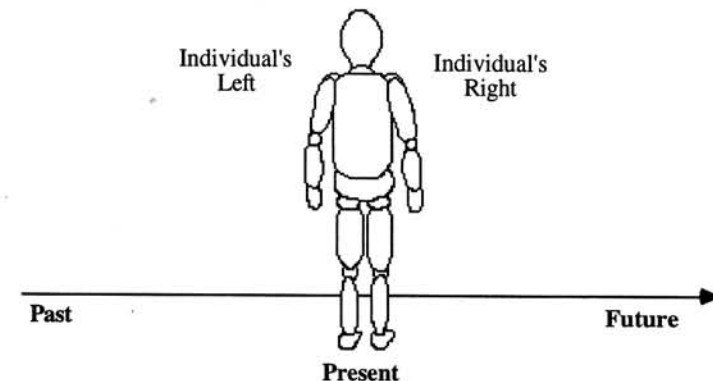
*The wildest and most eccentric obsessional or compulsive ideas can be cleared up if they are investigated deeply enough. The solution is effected by bringing the obsessional ideas into temporal relationship with the patient's experiences, that is, by inquiring when a particular obsessional idea made its first appearance and in what external circumstances it is apt to recur.*<sup>14</sup>

In the model of NLP, there are two fundamental perspectives one can have with respect to the perception of 'temporal relationships': perceiving something "in time" or "through time." Perceiving an event "in time" involves taking a vantage point associated within the event that is unfolding; seeing, hearing and feeling what is happening through one's own eyes, ears and body; with "the whole of their affective colouring". From this perceptual position, the 'present' is one's current physical position with the 'future' represented as a line extending off in front of oneself and the past trailing behind - such that one is walking into the future and leaving the past behind. In order to relive or "regress" to an experience, one would be experiencing it "in time."



"In Time" Time Line

When one perceives events "through time" one takes a vantage point that is outside of the sequence of events, disassociated from whatever is being observed. From this perspective, the 'time line' is typically viewed such that the 'past' and 'future' are lines extending off to the left and right, with the 'present' being somewhere in the middle. In order to describe an event and its accompanying affect and then put them in "temporal relationship" with one's other experiences, one would need to perceive them "through time" in this way.

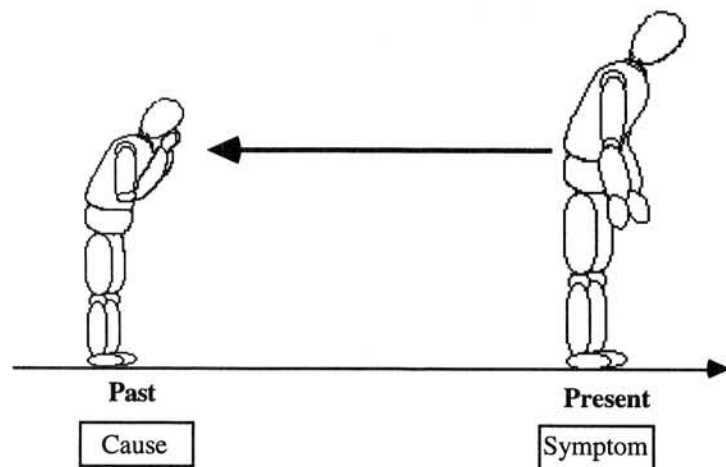


"Through Time" Time Line



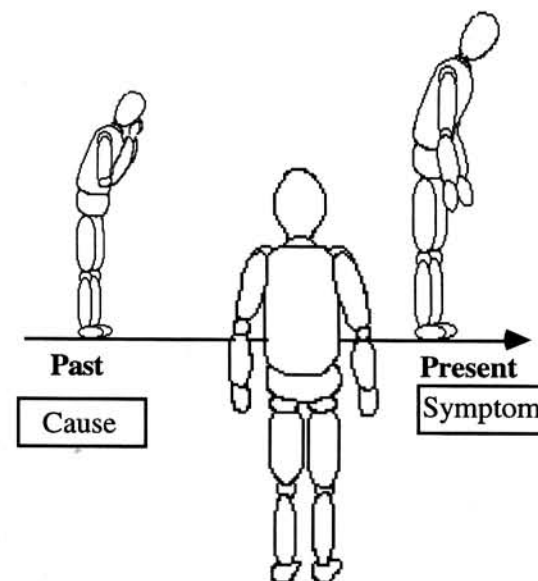
The two perspectives (which may be represented either visually or through the use of actual physical space) create different perceptions of the same event. The "through time" perspective is effective for analysis, but is more passive because it is disassociated. The "in time" perspective is more active and involved but makes it easier to be caught up in the experience and "lose sight of the whole."

In Freud's view, many mental and emotional symptoms which occurred in the present were the result of a regression "in time," as it were, to past experiences - without having the choice of assuming the more distant 'through time' observer perspective. As a result, the person was unconsciously reacting in the present as he or she had done at an earlier time in the person's life. As an example, an individual who has a seemingly irrational fear of public speaking in certain circumstances, may find that there was a time when he or she was made fun of or humiliated as a child in front of a class or group of people. Even as an adult, similar circumstances may trigger associations back to the childhood situation which the person feels emotionally but is not conscious of mentally.



**A Symptom in the Present is Often a Result of a Regression 'In Time' to a Past Event**

According to Freud, such feelings could be cleared up through analysis by bringing them into "temporal relationship with the patient's experiences." This was accomplished by inquiring when a particular reaction "made its first appearance and in what external circumstances it is apt to recur." One of the values of the "analysis" of one's experiences and thoughts in this manner is that it shifts one's perspective of those experiences and thoughts from a regressed or associated "in time" perspective to a more disassociated and broader "through time" perspective. It also allows the person to understand how and why he or she is having the reaction so that it no longer seems so irrational and frightening. Frequently, this new perspective can often automatically produce a change in the individual's response, leading to what Freud would term "associative correction."



**Viewing the "Temporal Relationship" of Past and Present Experiences from a 'Through Time' Perspective**

The first step, however, was to reaccess the precipitating event and the individual's responses "as vividly as possible." To assist his patients to discover when a particular reaction "made its first

appearance and in what external circumstances it is apt to recur," Freud developed what he called the process of "free association." As he described it:

*[W]e require the patient to put himself into a condition of calm self-observation, without trying to think of anything, and then to communicate everything which he becomes inwardly aware of, feelings, thoughts, remembrances, in the order in which they arise in his mind.*<sup>15</sup>

Through patterns of association, and with the help of the analyst, the patient would eventually stumble upon key past experiences relevant to understanding his or her present reaction.

One of the values of modeling is that we may also consider the effects of using other tools and operations that were not available to Freud at the time he developed his methods. In NLP, for instance, the results of "free association" are reached through a process that would be more appropriately called a 'directed association'. The individual is asked to focus his or her attention on the particular emotional affect that is creating the difficulty and allow that feeling (even though it may be uncomfortable) to guide him or her back to events in the past that share the same emotional reaction. This process is called a "transderivational search." The implication is that one is searching across the experiences from which the current symptom or 'surface structure' has been derived.

This 'transderivational search' is facilitated by the use of either a mental or physical 'time line' and/or an 'anchor'. The use of a time line involves having the person either mentally or physically move along his or her time line in the direction of the past. For instance, a 'time line' can be physically laid out on the floor. The individual begins by standing in a location representing the present, facing the future. The person is then instructed to walk backwards 'into the past', while focusing his or her attention on the problematic feeling or response, and notice any memories or associations that arise.

'Anchoring' utilizes the process of association to create a trigger or 'anchor' for the problematic feeling or response. The anchor may then be used to help the individual keep his or her attention focused. A common application of anchoring would be for the

facilitator to touch the individual on the shoulder, arm or knee when the individual is experiencing the problem state. Through associative conditioning this touch becomes a trigger or 'anchor' for the experience of the state. By holding the 'anchor' the facilitator is able to help the individual sustain a more concentrated focus on the feelings and thoughts associated with the state during the search process.

Both of these methods can be used to help direct a person more quickly to find the 'originating circumstances' of the problem state, which Freud maintained was essential to the healing process. They can be especially helpful when the individual has a resistance to bringing a particular memory into consciousness because it contains traumatic or fearful contents. As an example, I was working with a man who was a professional diver, but who would become, in his opinion, irrationally nervous and afraid if he was diving in muddy or 'murky' water. I asked him to put his awareness on the feeling and allow himself to go back along his time line. I used an anchor for his fearful state to assist him in staying focused. After searching for a while, the man suddenly had a recollection from his childhood. He and a friend were swimming in a lake near his childhood home. It was just after a storm and the water was quite murky. They saw a some people in a nearby boat dragging the bottom of the lake for the body of a person who had drowned during the storm. My client, who was a boy at that time, stepped on something that felt funny and when he reached down through the murky water to discover what it was, realized that he had found the body. It was a shocking and frightening experience to him as a boy, but one that he had long since forgotten about (or potentially "repressed"). By recollecting and describing the event and his feelings he was able to complete the emotional cycle that had been stopped because of his state of shock, and to verbally release or "abreact" the affect and see it 'through time' as 'part of the past'. This brought about an immediate relief from his symptoms.

There are times, of course, when the insight produced by finding the originating circumstances is not enough to relieve the symptoms. For example, in another instance, I was working (together with my colleague Ed Reese) with a man who had great resistance to being specific in any way regarding the setting of future goals

and outcomes. When asked to be specific he would enter into a state of confusion or "fog." (This made him a difficult person to work with because he was never able to say what he wanted.)

Rather than have him try to clear the "fog" as others had, we asked him to concentrate his attention on the fog and let it take him back into his past. We used a touch on his knee as an 'anchor' to help him stay focused. After a few moments, the man began to perceptibly convulse as he "regressed" into a traumatic past experience. With great emotion he recounted an event from his childhood in which he had been practicing baseball with some of his friends. He would toss up the ball and hit it with the bat to his friends out in the field. At one point he had set the goal for himself to hit the ball as hard as he could; so hard that it would go over the fence surrounding the field. He put every ounce of concentration and strength into achieving that goal. He was so focused, however, that he did not notice the three year old brother of one of his friends running up behind him. He swung the bat as hard as he could, missed the ball and struck the little boy on the head, killing him. Having recovered this memory, it was not so difficult to understand why he had been having such a difficult time setting specific goals.

However, the awareness of the incident was not enough to bring about the 'associative correction' needed to deal with the man's emotions. Sometimes, the map that has been formed in the original circumstance is the only map that the individual has regarding situations of that sort. It is necessary to help the individual update that map to include new alternatives. As Freud himself maintained, to completely address a resistance or symptom involved helping the individual to bring something new into the past experience:

*In order to dissolve the symptoms it is necessary to go back to the point at which they originated, to review the conflict from which they proceeded, and with the help of propelling forces which at that time were not available to guide it towards a new solution.* <sup>16</sup>

This is a version of what is called "pacing and leading" in NLP. "Pacing" involves following an individual where he or she is likely

to go naturally - i.e., to "go back to the point at which the symptoms originated." "Leading" involves incrementally adding to or shifting that response in a new direction - i.e., to "guide it towards a new solution." To accomplish this, the NLP tools of time line and anchoring become invaluable aids.

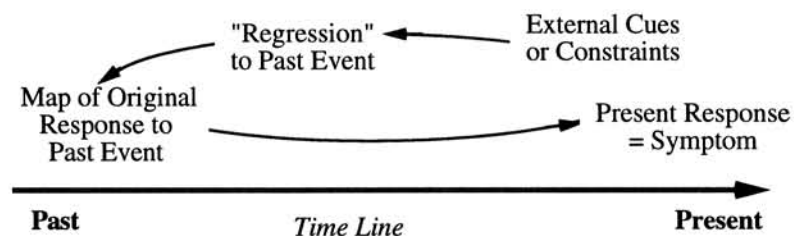
For example, in the instance cited above, it was important for the man to access some of his adult capabilities and understandings in order to update the map that he had made that 'setting specific goals was dangerous'. This was done by having him fully orient himself to his adult body, perceptions and learnings. This state was 'anchored' by a touch on the shoulder. I then asked him to re-experience the traumatic situation again but to bring in his adult resources in two ways - 'through time' and 'in time'. To bring them in 'through time', he was to stay in the 'observer' position as if he were an adult; returning as a kind of guide, big brother or 'guardian angel' to his younger self. From this perspective he could speak to and comfort his younger self, offering suggestions and advice.

Bringing his adult resources 'in time' involved 'regressing' back into the event again; but this time using the anchor for his adult resources to bring understandings and capabilities "which at that time were not available" into the model of the world and experience of his younger self. The anchor was important to help counterbalance the natural tendency to return to the strong emotional reaction which initially created the 'fixation'. Keeping my hand on his shoulder (the resource 'anchor'), I asked him to relive different parts of the event 'with these new resources' in order to discover how he would have reacted differently. For instance, to consider how he could have committed to his goal but not had his attention so consumed by it that he accidentally hurt someone. How could he have maintained peripheral vision, for example? He also re-experienced his reaction to the accident of hitting the little boy, but did so with his adult understandings and resources. He realized that what he needed to learn from the event wasn't that he 'should not set goals' but rather that he should widen his awareness and map of the system in which he was attempting to achieve the goal in order to insure that the results of his efforts were ecological for the whole system. These new experiences brought a great sense of peace and healing with respect to the incident and his resistance to setting goals dissipated.



Obviously, the man's memory of the original event and his emotional reaction to it was not 'erased'. It was still there, but he also had an alternative map related to the same experiences that offered different responses and "new solutions." The goal of this process of healing is not to get rid of or eradicate important life experiences, but rather to 'pace and lead' them to other choices and alternatives.

In summary, by applying the tools of NLP to the principles and strategies we have modeled from Freud we are able to arrive at a relatively simple but powerful process of change. According to Freud, symptoms and resistances often had 'deeper structures' relating to past events in which a particular mental, emotional or instinctual function had become 'fixated'. Certain external cues or constraints in the present could cause a 'regression' to a past situation, and the person would respond from the map of the world formed at that earlier time. The map and the response, which were the best choice available to the individual at that time - and may have even been successful for those circumstances - are often outdated and mismatched to the present situation.



### Regression to Past Experiences and 'Fixated' Map Leads to Symptoms and Resistances in the Present

By becoming aware of the regression, and the event to which one is regressing, one can shift perspectives and bring one's experiences into "temporal relationship" with one another. This awareness allows a person to access understandings, resources and other "propelling forces which at that time were not available" and reach a "new solution." The previous map of the situation may be updated to add the new choices and alternatives.

In the terms of the Meta Model patterns defined earlier, Freud is first helping the person to identify the 'cause-effect' processes presupposed by the 'surface structure' of his or her symptoms: i.e., current cues and constraints which *cause* the person to regress to earlier experiences which, in turn, *causes* the person to act in a maladaptive way. Next Freud is filling in 'deletions' and missing links: i.e., leading the person to vividly reexperience the event and its associated affect and to describe them in detail. He then explores and updates the generalizations ('complex equivalences' and 'lost performatives') associated with the past event: i.e., introducing new understandings and awarenesses that were not previously available through 'associative connection' with 'normal consciousness'.

Because the new alternatives and resources are associated with the cues and experiences which make up the 'deep structure' behind the problem state, they will automatically be accessed and available without any effort from the individual in the future.

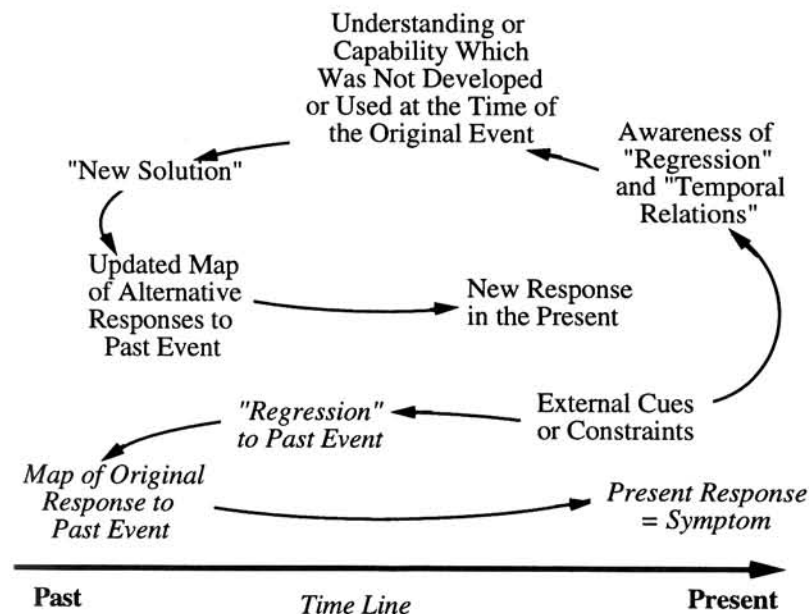


Diagram of Adding New Resources to Past Events Through the Change Personal History Process



In the parlance of computer programming there is a term known as a "change history." A "change history" is a record of the corrections made to a program or user's manual. It basically lists the original erroneous code or description and the corrected text opposite it. The process discussed above is called "Change Personal History" in NLP because it accomplishes something similar with respect to a person's 'neuro-linguistic' programming. It provides a way to both review the original "program" and also to see the elements of the program with the 'bugs' corrected.

The following is a summary of the basic steps of the NLP Change Personal History Process.

## Summary of the Steps of the Change Personal History Process

1. Identify the unwanted or unpleasant feeling or resistance.

*"What is the feeling or response you want to change? Experience it now and notice where and how you sense it in your body"*

- 1.1. Create an 'anchor' by touching your arm, wrist or knee while you are experiencing the problems state.

2. Holding the anchor and go back in time, on your time line, finding other similar times when you felt the same way (transderivational search). Make your search from an 'in time' perspective, such that you are seeing what you saw, hearing what you heard and feeling what you felt at the time.

- 2.1. When you notice exaggerations of the feelings or physiology associated with the problem state, note what was going on and how old you feel during the situation associated with that experience.

- 2.2. Search until you find the earliest or most intense memory associated with that problematic feeling or response.

*"Put your attention on the feeling and allow it to take you back into your history. Experience yourself becoming younger and younger. Find times in your past when you have had a similar feeling. Go all the way back to your earliest memory of having that feeling."*

3. When you have found the earliest memory, re-orient yourself back to the present and view your time line from a 'through time' perspective, as though you were an observer of the events you just identified (not a participant).

3.1. Recognize that you did the best you could in that situation with the resources and map of the world that you had available at that time.

3.2. Experience clearly that you are more mature now and have many understandings and resources that you did not have at the time the problem state first began.

*“Now completely leave that feeling and those events. Come fully into the here and now, so that you can look back on those times with more mature eyes. You can see what happened then as if you were watching a movie of it. You can notice that you did the best you could in that situation with the resources you had then. At the same time, you can realize that you are more mature now and have many understandings and resources that you did not have then.”*

4. Identify what resources you would have needed in those past situations in order to have been able to reach a more adequate solution.

4.1. Elicit an associated reference experience for the needed resources. Create a new anchor for these resources by touching yourself in a different location than you did to anchor the problem state.

*“Feel yourself fully in your present body, perceptions and understandings; with full access to your current resources and potential. As you look back at your younger self in that situation in the past, what resources or understandings do you have available now that you did not have then that you could bring back to that younger you. Experience those resources now as fully present in your body.”*

5. ‘Change history’ by using the resource anchor, go through each of the earlier identified past experiences (starting with the earliest and coming forward in time) adding in the new resources so that each experience is now satisfactory.

5.1. If you have difficulty changing any of the past experiences or are not satisfied with the result, then return to step 4 and elicit and anchor more intense or appropriate resources.

*“Holding these resources fully present in your body, go back to the younger you offering any comfort or advice that (he/she) may have needed. Then, bring these new resources into your younger self. Step back into the shoes of that younger you bringing these new resources and understandings. Notice how your perceptions and understanding of the situation changes bringing you new and important learnings about that situation and yourself. Then, come all the way back up in time to the present, changing and updating any experiences associated with this past event.”*

6. Once you have changed all of the past experiences, remember them with no anchors and discover if those subjective memories have been changed. If not repeat the process with new or more appropriate resources.

*“As you stand once again in the present, in your present and more mature body, remember those past events once again. Notice how your experience of them has changed. They are learning experiences that can remind you of many resources and choices.”*

7. When the past experiences have been changed, put your attention on the external cues and situations which have previously brought up the problem state or imagine the next time a similar situation is likely to occur. If the changes have generalized, the feelings and physiology associated with the resources should appear. If they do not, find what further resources are needed and repeat the process.

*“Think about the situations that have brought up this problem state. Imagine the next time you will be in such a situation. Put yourself fully into those future circumstances and notice how your feelings and reactions have changed. Now many new*

*resources and alternatives are available to respond in the way that is most appropriate and ecological for you."*

Notice that NLP does not make the requirement that the originating circumstances be related directly to issues of sexual content - nor does it preclude it. Thus, NLP processes can make an important complement or supplement to Freud's therapeutic principles and methods.

## Footnotes to Section 7

1. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud, Pocket Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 303.
2. Ibid., p. 304.
3. Ibid., p. 350.
4. Ibid., p. 350.
5. Ibid., p. 349.
6. Ibid., p. 350.
7. *Studies in Hysteria*, Sigmund Freud & Josef Breuer; **Britannica GREAT BOOKS**, Volume 54, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., Chicago Ill., 1979, p. 670.
8. Ibid., p. 674.
9. Ibid., pp. 672-673.
10. Ibid., pp. 674-676.
11. Ibid., p. 683.
12. Ibid., pp. 672-673.
13. Ibid., p. 671.
14. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud, Pocket Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 45.
15. Ibid., p. 298.
16. Ibid., p. 462.

## Section 8: Reframing

According to Freud the “meaning” of a symptom came from both “the impressions and experiences from which it sprang, and the purpose which it serves.” The process of changing personal history primarily focuses on the events and “impressions” which established the symptom. Its purpose is to bring “propelling forces which at that time were not available” into the experience of the event in order help to guide the individual towards a “new solution” with respect to the past situation - to “finish the business” as it were.

It is also important to acknowledge and account for the purpose which a behavior or symptom serves in a person’s present system. Freud pointed out that symptoms often serve a useful purpose or lead to “secondary gains” in a person’s ongoing reality that are desirable or necessary for that person, or for the system of which that person is a member. When these positive purposes or secondary gains were not identified and taken care of in a new way, Freud noticed that there was often a “*lack of permanence in the results*” such that the individual would relapse into the symptomatic behavior or response. Alternatively, the individual may experience ‘*symptom substitution*’ in which a new type of symptom appeared in place of the previous one. Freud maintained that “*the old malady had reappeared or had been replaced by another*” because “*the conditions of the satisfactory outcome remained hidden.*”<sup>1</sup>

For instance, in his explanation of the seeming imperviousness of delusions and obsessions to rational or experiential refutation, Freud noted:

*The inaccessibility of delusions to logical arguments and to actual experience is to be explained, as it is with obsessions, by the connection they bear to the unconscious material which is both expressed by, and held in check by, the delusion or the obsession.*<sup>2</sup>

Freud’s comment that such irrational symptoms both “express” and “hold in check” some “unconscious material” echoes the NLP notion that no response, experience or behavior is meaningful

outside of the context in which it was established or the response that it elicits next. Thus, any behavior, experience or response may serve as a resource or limitation depending on how it fits in with the rest of the system. It is very important to keep in mind, however, that not all processes in a system are on the same level. What is negative on one level may be positive on another level and vice versa. For example, in his reflections on the symptoms of paranoia Freud noted that “*The patient who has a primary tendency to believe himself persecuted draws from this the conclusion that he must necessarily be a very important person and therefore develops a delusion of grandeur.*”<sup>3</sup> Thus, a positive purpose of paranoia may be to have a sense of self importance. The “delusions of grandeur” which can emerge from too much of a sense of self importance, however, are “held in check” by the fears of persecution. What produces something on one level can ‘hold it in check’ on another level.

Similarly, something that is positive on one level may lead to something negative on another level. As Freud claimed:

*[A child does not come into the world] suspicious and terrified of an overpowering aggressivity in the world. On the contrary, the child starts back in fright from a strange figure because he is used to - and therefore expects - a beloved and familiar figure, primarily his mother. It is his disappointment and longing which are transformed into dread...*<sup>4</sup>

The implication of Freud’s statements is that people are not inherently irrational, delusional, fearful, wicked or negatively intended. Our instincts and impulses were essentially designed to promote the well-being of ourselves and our species. People develop delusional, fearful or aggressive responses because of limitations created by their own models of the world.

One of the most important therapeutic principles of NLP is the principle of ‘*positive intention*’. The fundamental premise of the principle of positive intent is that systems (especially self organizing or “cybernetic” systems) are geared toward *adaptation*. That is, it is intended to optimize some important element in the system or to keep the system in balance. Thus, the ultimate purpose of all



actions, responses or behaviors within a system is adaptive - or was adaptive given the context in which it was established. Another way to say this would be that at some level all behavior is (or at one time was) "positively intended" or serves a 'positive purpose'; and that this positive intention is another one of the key elements of 'deep structure' behind the 'surface structure' of the behavior or symptom. The positive purpose behind 'fear', for example, is often 'safety'. The positive intention behind 'aggression', is often 'protection'. The positive purpose behind anger can be to 'maintain boundaries'. 'Hatred' may have the positive purpose of 'motivating' a person to take action. Problems arise when the person's map of the world presents these responses as being the only choices for reaching these positive intentions. In that case, the person must be helped to find other alternatives for achieving the positive intentions.

Seen from this perspective, any behavior no matter how evil, crazy or bizarre it seems, is or was the best choice available to the person at that point in time, given his or her model of the world. That is, all behavior is or was perceived as necessary or appropriate given the context in which it was established, from the 'actor's' point of view. Thus, another reason for the observation that "the patient struggles so energetically against the relief of his symptoms and the restoration of his mental processes to normal functioning," is that the positive purpose of his or her symptoms have not yet been identified and/or adequately addressed. In other words, the "powerful forces at work here opposing any change in the condition...must be the same forces that originally induced the condition" - i.e., the positive intent or purpose for which the behavior was originally established. Even though the situation in which the problematic response initially occurred is now outdated, the positive intention behind it, or the purpose which it was intended to serve, may still be valid.

When the positive intentions and purposes of the problem state or symptom have not been satisfied, then, ironically, "normal functioning" can also produce just as problematic or pathological results. A person who stops being aggressive, but has no other way to protect himself or herself, just exchanges one set of problems for another.

Sometimes a particular behavior or symptom may even serve multiple positive intentions. I have worked with people who wanted to quit smoking, for instance, who discovered that it served many positive purposes. They smoked in the morning in order to "wake up". They smoked during the day in order to "reduce stress," "concentrate" and "stay focused." They smoked at night in order to "relax." Often, smoking served to cover up or 'cloud' negative emotions. Perhaps most importantly, smoking was the one thing that they did "just for themselves" to bring some pleasure into their lives. Quitting the behavior of smoking without finding alternatives for these important functions can lead a person into a nightmare of new problems.

Even physical symptoms may serve a positive purpose. NLP views any symptoms, including physical symptoms, as a communication that something is not functioning appropriately. Physical symptoms often signal people that something is out of balance. In fact, sometimes physical symptoms are even a sign that something is being healed.

In some situations the positive function of a symptom or behavior was not part of the initiating circumstances but was established later as a 'secondary gain'. For instance, a person may not have intended to become physically sick, but nonetheless received a lot of attention and relief from his or her responsibilities when he or she did become ill. This attention and relief, received as a positive by-product of the illness, could become a secondary gain - indicating areas of imbalance in the person's 'normal' life that need to be addressed. If they are not adequately dealt with, the person might be likely to relapse.

In a general sense, then, the positive intentions behind 'resistance to change' could encompass a range of issues; including the desire to acknowledge, honor or respect the past; the need to protect oneself by staying with the familiar, and the attempt to hold onto the positive things one has had in the past, and so on.

It is important to realize, of course, that the fact that some action or symptom may have a positive intention behind it does not justify the behavior or make it acceptable or "OK." Rather, the principle of positive intention states what is necessary to be able to permanently change a behavior or resolve a symptom or resistance. Healing or "associative correction" from this perspective

would involve adding new choices to the individual's impoverished model of the world. These new choices would be able to satisfy the positive intention or purpose the individual is (consciously or unconsciously) attempting to fulfill, but would not have the negative or pathological consequences of the symptom.\*

Of course, positive intentions are not always conscious nor obvious. Because we are not used to thinking in terms of positive intentions, it is sometimes difficult to find them right away and therefore easier to lapse into another explanation for the behavior or symptom. But if one is committed to finding them and looks deeply enough, they will be there. Sometimes the intention or 'deep structure' is far removed from the surface level behavior. In these cases, the relation between the intention and behavior may seem paradoxical. For instance, I have worked with suicidal people whose positive intention is to "attain peace." Parents sometimes physically punish or even abuse their children to "show them that they love them." The mystery of the seemingly paradoxical relationship between the positive intention and the resulting behavior lies in the past events and the model of the world in which the relationship was formed.

For instance, many times, the positive intention for which the behavior was established is no longer actually being served by the behavior. As an example, the positive intention behind 'revenge' is often initially to "put things right" in order to try to heal them. Instead it can create an unending or escalating feud (like the Hatfields and McCoys).

Further, people will often have a positive intention for only the particular part of the total system that they are aware of or identify with. Thus, an individual who is knowingly and 'purposefully' doing something harmful to another, will often have a positive intention for himself or herself which does not include the other. In fact, the concept of 'negative intentions' probably stems from this kind of experience. The positive intention behind the

---

\*This process has many similarities with Freud's notion of 'sublimation' in which one behavioral expression of an instinct or impulse is replaced by another. The success of the 'sublimation' is dependent on the degree to which the new behavior satisfies the purpose for which the initial behavior was established.

belief in negative intention, and the rejection of the notion of 'positive intention' is undoubtedly protection. People who reject the notion of positive intention are often afraid of either being or appearing 'naive'. It is important, however, not to confuse the notion that people are motivated by 'positive intentions' with the idea that people are always able to keep in mind the 'best interests' of others or the rest of the system. The fact that others are positively intended does not automatically make them wise or capable of being altruistic - these are the results of intelligence, skill and their map of the world. The issue is to be able to widen one's own model of the world to include other choices and capabilities for protection and wisdom and to assist others in doing so as well. In a way, this has been one of the missions and contributions of NLP.

What often confuses people about the principle of positive intention is that it seems that the person "should know better." They should have the intelligence or maturity to employ other alternatives to achieve their desired intentions. It is not uncommon for a person to say over and over again that they realize something is not good for them or achieving what they really want or intend, yet still persist in practicing the behavior. Freud, of course, was well aware of such incongruencies and sought to understand them. As a result of his studies on hysteria, he proposed an explanation of such phenomena:

*The longer we have been occupied with these phenomena the more we have become convinced that the splitting of consciousness which is so striking in the well-known classical cases under the form of 'double conscience' is present to a rudimentary degree in every hysteria, and that a tendency to such dissociation, and with it the emergence of abnormal states of consciousness (which we shall bring together under the term 'hypnosis') is the basic phenomenon of neuroses... We should like to balance the familiar thesis that hypnosis is an artificial hysteria by another - the basis and sine qua non of hysteria is the existence of hypnoid states. These hypnoid states share with one another and with hypnosis, however much they may differ in other respects, one common feature: the ideas which emerge in them are very intense but*

*are cut off from associative communication with the rest of the content of consciousness.*<sup>5</sup>

The implication of Freud's comments are that the influence of past events often extended far beyond the specific memory of the particular situation. Under certain conditions, events could produce abnormal or "hypnoidal" states which led to a "splitting of consciousness;" such that a part of the person's thinking process became disassociated from the rest. This disassociated part of consciousness could produce ideas which "are very intense but are cut off from associative communication with the rest of the content of consciousness." According to Freud, this was the "basic phenomenon" of all neurosis or mental problems.

Certainly, it is important to keep in mind that events in our lives influence us on different levels. Some simply influence our behaviors; others influence us upon the level of our capabilities - either helping us to develop them or showing us that we lack them. Situations and events may also serve to form or reinforce our beliefs and values. At times, events may even influence us on an identity level. Freud is implying that under special circumstances and in special states, events may cause a disassociation or splitting of the mental and neurological processes associated with these different levels - even the levels of beliefs and identity. He explained that:

*"in hysteria groups of ideas originating in hypnoid states are present and that these are cut off from associative connection with the other ideas, but can be associated among themselves, and thus form the more or less highly organized rudiment of a second consciousness."*<sup>6</sup>

Freud is saying that, rather than simply regress to the memory of a past event, individuals could switch to a part of consciousness that was formed as a result of past events. This part of consciousness could possess clusters of "ideas" which were internally interconnected but separated from "normal consciousness." The type of phenomena reported by Freud is the basis for what is called the "parts model" in NLP. 'Parts' are essentially "groups of ideas" that

are "associated among themselves" but have less "associative connection" to a person's "normal" state of consciousness. As such they are able to operate as a kind of "second consciousness." For instance, people may talk about themselves as being essentially 'confident' and 'powerful' but have parts of themselves that are more 'doubtful' or 'vulnerable'. A person may think of himself or herself as essentially realistic but also having 'parts' that can be 'creative' or 'critical'. It is not uncommon for people to talk about a part of themselves that is still a 'child' or 'childlike'. We have all probably had the experience in which it seems that a 'part' of ourselves wants to do something while some other 'part' is hesitant or afraid to commit.

According to Freud, these 'parts' of a person originated in "hypnoidal states," and as such were prevented from full associative connection with the rest of our consciousness. It should be pointed out that these altered or "hypnoidal" states are not necessarily "pathological" and in most cases have an adaptive value. They may occur for a variety of reasons. For instance, a person may be in a very focused state of consciousness in order to complete a difficult task or in order to cope with an unusual or difficult situation.

In the view of NLP, people are always drifting or moving between various 'states' of consciousness. There is a wide variety of states which the nervous system is capable of achieving. In fact, from the NLP perspective, it is useful and desirable to have 'parts'. In circumstances that require high levels of performance, for instance, people often place themselves mentally and physically into states that are different from their "normal state" of consciousness. Certain tasks require that individuals use their body and their nervous system in special ways. For instance, athletic performances, labor and birth experiences, even tasks requiring high levels of concentration like surgery, are often accompanied by special states. The ideas, perceptions and thoughts that occur in these states can be "associated amongst themselves" more easily than experiences that occur in other states or circumstances. This kind of process is one of the ways in which we keep from being overwhelmed by the vast contents of our experiences.

The degree of influence of a particular 'part' depends upon the 'level' at which it has been formed. Some parts are more at the



capability level; like a 'creative' part, a 'logical' part or an 'intuitive' part. Other parts are more at the level of beliefs and values; such as a part that 'values health more than success' or a part that believes that 'family is more important than career'. Still others may be at the level of identity; such as a part that is an 'adult' versus a part that is a 'child'. These various levels are a result of successively more "highly organized" groups of thoughts and associations. For instance, parts at a belief and identity level would also contain clusters of capabilities. The value of "health," for example, would be connected to a certain group of capabilities (such as those related to exercise, diet, managing stress, etc.). Parts created at the identity level will contain clusters of beliefs, values and capabilities, and can be like different personalities or personas.

Different 'parts', then, may have different intentions, purposes and capabilities that are more or less connected to other parts of a person and to his or her normal state of consciousness. Thus, while one part of a person may understand something, another part may not. One part of a person may believe something is important while another part may believe it is unnecessary. As a result, an individual may have different parts with different intentions. These intentions may come into conflict one another, or lead to behaviors that seem bizarre and irrational to another part of a person's consciousness.

As usual Freud's way to address this type of situation was to first help the individual develop the awareness or 'metacognition' of the process. For example, in his celebrated case of the "Rat Man," Freud went to great lengths to help his patient understand the dynamics underlying his distressing thoughts and actions:

*The unconscious, I explained, was infantile; it was that part of the self which had become separated off from it in infancy, which had not shared the later stages of its development, and which had in consequence become repressed.*<sup>7</sup>

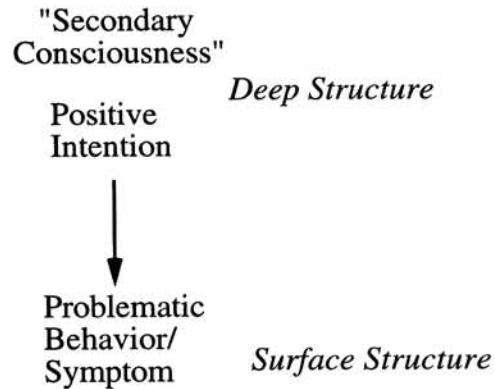
In the model of NLP, even this level of understanding begins to help bring about a form of "associative correction" known as

'reframing'. To "reframe" something means to transform its meaning by putting it into a different framework or context than it has previously been perceived. By defining his "unconscious" as a part of him that was "infantile" Freud began to help his patient change the way he thought and reacted to his own behavior. Freud then continued to 'reframe' the unacceptable thoughts and behaviors of the Rat Man in the following way:

*I pointed out to him that he ought logically to consider himself as in no way responsible for any of these traits in his character; for all of these reprehensible impulses originated from his infancy, and were only derivatives of his infantile character surviving in his unconscious; and he must know that moral responsibility could not be applied to children.*<sup>8</sup>

The course that Freud pursued with his patient is another example of 'pacing and leading'. Rather than trying to shame the patient, or attempt to fight with or eradicate the patient's 'fixation' or 'symptom', 'pacing' involves acknowledging the various parts of the person and attempting to understand the positive purposes and intentions behind their problematic behaviors. One of the basic principles of NLP is that it is useful to separate one's "behavior" from one's "self" - that is, to separate the positive intent, function, belief, etc., that generates the behavior, from the behavior itself. In other words, it is more respectful, ecological and productive to respond to the 'deep structure' than to the expression of a problematic behavior.



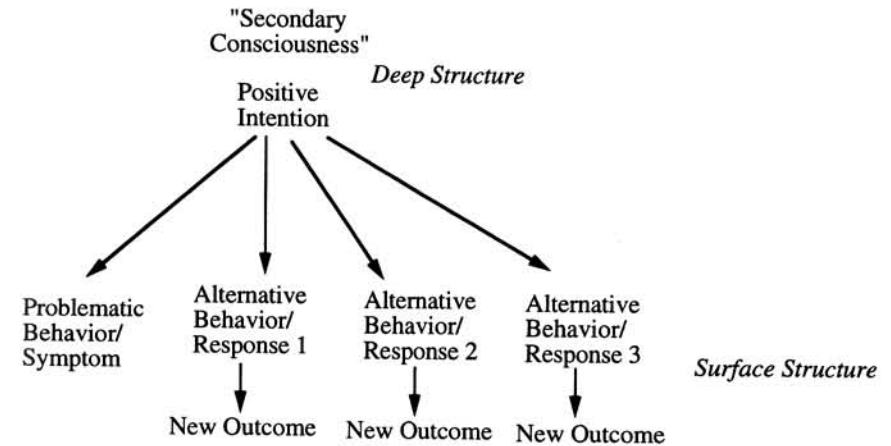


### Problematic Behavior is a Result of a Positive Intention

'Leading' would involve assisting the individual to find a more appropriate choice for successfully achieving those positive intentions. Of course, the fact that the "normal consciousness" of a person recognizes other choices does not mean that the "secondary consciousness" that is initiating the behavior understands or accepts those choices. A symptom is only completely 'reframed' when the part of the person that is generating the problematic response is identified, the positive intention behind the response understood and acknowledged, and when other effective choices for achieving the positive intention have been internalized by that part.

It is important to keep in mind at this point that there is a subtle but significant difference between 'alternatives' and 'choices'. 'Alternatives' are external to a person. 'Choices' are alternatives that have become a part of the person's map. An individual could be given many options or alternatives but really have no choice. Choice involves having the capability and the contextual cues to be able to internally select the most appropriate option. This is why it is important to verify that the "secondary consciousness" both understands and approves any options proposed by the facilitator or the individual's "normal consciousness."

In NLP, it is also considered important that the person possess more than one other alternative besides the symptom or problematic response. There is a saying in NLP that "One choice is no choice at all. Two choices is a dilemma. It is not until a person has three possibilities that he or she is really able to legitimately choose."



### 'Reframing' Involves Adding at Least Three Other Choices Which Satisfy the Positive Intention But Do Not Have the Negative Consequences

Because of his strong emphasis on speech, Freud's way of accomplishing this process of 'reframing' was through discussions and verbal interactions with the patient's "normal consciousness." The NLP approach is to establish communication more directly with the 'part' of the person that has been 'split off' in some way from the rest of consciousness. It is often the case that the parts which have been cut off from consciousness are non-verbal, so that this mode of communication is not as easy to do initially. Therefore, while communications are initiated through speech, it is not required that responses be made verbally. Signals may be given through other representational modalities than language (such as

images or feelings). Many times the experience of the symptom itself may be used as a means of communication. (The specifics of how to conduct such communications have been detailed in other NLP books including *Roots of NLP*, *Frogs Into Princes*, *Solutions*, *NLP Volume I* and *Reframing*.)

Rather than have the "secondary consciousness" be a subject of speculation, NLP attempts to involve it directly in communicating its positive purposes or intentions and in approving the validity of the new choices for satisfying those intentions. Because the "secondary consciousness" does not necessarily have a great deal of associative contact with the individual's "normal consciousness," the person may not be consciously aware of all the details of the various communications from it. In the NLP view, however, as long as the signals are clear enough to discover the positive intention and find effective alternatives, complete conscious awareness is not required. The key is to establish a *channel* of "associative communication" with the "secondary consciousness"

To find the three new choices, it is important to access a way of thinking that is 'different from the way of thinking that has been creating the problem'. While suggestions and ideas can be posed by the facilitator, this is another case where "Knowing on the part of the physician is not the same thing as knowing on the part of the patient and does not have the same effect." It is generally more effective and ecological to have the individual generate his or her own new choices. But clearly the "secondary consciousness" has not been able to attain this aspect of "associative correction" on its own. In NLP new choices are typically generated by having the individual access his or her 'creative part' - a part of consciousness that comes from or is associated with a creative state.

Again, because the ideas associated with the "secondary consciousness" have been cut off from "associative communication" it is important to verify that this part of the person understands and accepts the alternatives being offered. If it does not accept them, new choices may be generated and offered until at least three acceptable options have been established.

A final step in the NLP 'reframing' process, is to check the 'ecology' of these new choices with the individual's "normal consciousness" and any other 'parts'. This is to insure that the new alternatives do not conflict with or interfere with the positive

functions or purposes of any other aspect of the individual's system. If there are objections, the 'part' responsible for the objection can then become the focus of the process. The 'reframing' cycle is repeated with that part to find its positive intention and determine what other choices it needs in order to be able to satisfy those intentions in the context of the changes in behavior associated with the other 'part'.

The reframing process can even be used with physical symptoms. As a personal example, many years ago, when I was first getting involved in NLP, I developed what is called a "pilonidal cyst" at the base of my spine. The cyst was both painful and embarrassing (given its location). I went to several doctors who all told me that the cyst was probably congenital and that the only way to treat it effectively was to have it surgically removed—a process that would require several weeks for recovery.

Before considering surgery, I decided to try 'communicating' with the 'part' of myself responsible for the cyst, as if it were any other behavioral symptom. As soon as I began, I realized that my map of the cyst, and the part of my body in which it was located, was very narrow and limited. I had simply perceived it as a 'pain in the butt'. To establish "associative communication" with it, I focused my attention on the cyst, letting go of any negative judgments. I asked what it was trying to communicate to me and what its positive purpose was. After repeating the question several times and waiting patiently for some kind of response, I heard the words, "Get off your butt." After considering the somewhat startling reply for a while, I realized that I did not have any consistent routines established for my physical health. As a result of this communication I created three alternatives in terms of exercise, diet and personal hygiene. Within three weeks of the time I began implementing these choices the cyst had completely disappeared and has not returned in over twenty years.

The following is a summary of what is called the "6-Step Reframing" process. It is particular format for reframing that involves communicating with your 'parts' as illustrated in my example above.

## Summary of the 6-Step 'Reframing' Process

1. Identify the symptom or problematic behavior.

*"What is the behavior or symptom you want to change?"*

2. **Establish communication** with the part of yourself (the "secondary consciousness") that is responsible for the behavior.

*"Go inside of yourself and ask the part of you that creates this behavior, 'Please give me a signal if you are willing to communicate with me.' Pay attention to any internal words, images or feelings that might be a signal from that part of yourself."*

- 2.1. If you do not get a clear signal, ask the part to exaggerate the signal. You may also use the symptom itself by asking "Please intensify the symptom if your answer is 'yes'."

- 2.2. If the part is not willing to communicate, ask "What is your positive purpose in not wanting to communicate with me?"

[If you have continued difficulty establishing communication with the part, you may want to try the change personal history process described earlier or one of the other process described later on.]

3. Separate the **positive intention** of the part from the problematic behavior.

*"Go inside and thank the part for communicating with you and ask, 'What are you trying to do positively for me or communicate to me with this behavior?'"*

- 3.1. If the intention of the part seems negative, keep asking "And what will *that* do positively for me? What is your positive purpose?"

4. Find **three other choices** that satisfy the positive intention of the part but do not have the negative consequences of the symptom or problematic behavior.

*"Go to the 'creative part' of yourself and ask it to come up with at least three other ways to satisfy the positive intention of the problematic behavior."*

5. Have the part that creates the symptom or problematic behavior **agree** to implement the new choices.

*"Go inside and ask the part responsible for the problematic behavior, 'Signal me if you accept the alternative choices.'"*

- 5.1. If any choices are not acceptable, or there is no signal, go to step 4 and modify or add choices.

6. **Ecology check.** Find out if any other parts object to the new choices.

*"Go inside and ask, 'Do any other parts object to these new choices?'"*

- 6.1. If yes, identify the part and go to step 2, repeating the cycle with that part.

It is important to note that a presupposition of the NLP 6-Step Reframing process is that the 'splitting of consciousness' is not in and of itself pathological or problematic, but that rather the problem is caused by a lack of alignment of the functioning of the 'part' with the rest of the person's mental processes. This is generally the case for issues at the behavior and capability level. In cases where the separation itself is the problem, which might occur in conflicts of belief systems or a split identity, other processes are more appropriate and ecological (see the following sections on Reimprinting and Conflict Integration).

## Footnotes to Section 8

1. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud, Pocket Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 457.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 457.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 431.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 414.
5. *Studies in Hysteria*, Sigmund Freud & Josef Breuer; *Britannica GREAT BOOKS*, Volume 54, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., Chicago Ill., 1979, p. 677.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 681.
7. *Three Case Histories*, Sigmund Freud, Collier Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 37.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

## Section 9: Reimprinting

We have touched upon the notion several times that events can influence us on different levels. Change personal history and reframing tend to deal effectively with issues that involve specific behaviors, feelings and symptoms. Higher level issues concerning a person's beliefs and identity involve deeper structures and may relate to whole clusters of symptoms and behaviors. In many ways, the processes by which beliefs and identity are formed and changed are different than processes by which we develop and change capabilities and behaviors.

According to Freud, the level at which we were affected by a particular event often related to when that event occurred along our life path. In his view, those which were more likely to shape our identity and deep beliefs tended to occur early on in life. Claiming that "*Faith repeats the history of its own origin,*"<sup>1</sup> Freud maintained:

*In the first three or four years of life certain impressions become fixed and ways of reacting to the outside world are established which can never be deprived of their importance by later experiences.*<sup>2</sup>

These early impressions and experiences seem to be more associated with developmental stages in life than specific events or temporary changes in one's state. Although such states may still be an important part of the process, the formation of one's sense of identity and one's beliefs about one's identity often relate to longer term relationships with significant others (such as parents, siblings, mentors, etc.). Freud believed that key relationships such as these formed the backdrop upon which other experiences and changes were played out. For instance, Freud noticed early on that:

*[E]ven the most brilliant results [with hypnosis] were liable to be suddenly wiped away if my personal relation with the patient became disturbed. It was true that they would be re-established if a reconciliation could be effected; but such an*



*occurrence proved that the personal emotional relation between doctor and patient was after all stronger than the whole cathartic process, and it was precisely that factor which escaped every effort at control.*<sup>3</sup>

Freud's perception that "the personal emotional relation between doctor and patient was after all stronger than the whole cathartic process" led him to his theory of "transference." The basic implication of his theory was that the therapeutic relationship was more important than any of the suggestions, techniques or behaviors which took place within the context of that relationship. Freud came to believe that the relationship between the "doctor and patient" was like 'the water in which they were swimming'. It surrounded them and determined much about their behavior, yet "escaped every effort at control." For instance Freud noticed that at key times in the therapeutic process the relationship between him and his patients would suddenly come strongly into focus.

*We observe then that the patient, who ought to be thinking of nothing but the solution of his own distressing conflicts, begins to develop a particular interest in the person of the physician.*<sup>4</sup>

During these times, the patient would start to act differently toward the physician and make interpretations of the physician's behavior that did not fit with either the situation nor the physician's intention. In other words, the patient would begin to respond to the physician as if the physician were someone else - usually a parental type figure. If the physician or facilitator were not aware of this dynamic, his or her client's responses would seem irrational, inappropriate and confusing. Of course, it was these types of problems that Freud found most intriguing and challenging.

Freud coined the term "transference" to describe what seemed to him to be a 'transferring' of a whole set of thoughts, feelings and reactions developed in relation to one person into a completely different relationship with another person. As he explained:

*By this we mean a transference of feelings on to the person of the physician, because we do not believe that the situation in the treatment can account for the origin of such feelings.*<sup>5</sup>

Freud believed that these feelings did not originate in the treatment situation but were projections of past important relationships with significant others; relationships that were established during formative experiences in the patient's life.

Freud's observations and comments appear to relate to a special form of learning known in the study of animal behavior as "*imprinting*." Imprinting is thought to be the result of an instinctive behavior pattern by which the young within a species rapidly learn to recognize and follow a member of their own species; typically the mother. Thus, it is generally associated with the establishment of a relationship with a significant role model - such as a "mothering figure." This phenomenon seems to occur only during a critical stage early in life. Ducks, geese, chickens, and turkeys, for example, which are able to leave the nest soon after they are hatched, by 'instinct' begin to follow the first object they see, most often the mother, and continue to do so until they are almost adults. If the mother is absent during the critical period for imprinting, the chicks will follow almost any conspicuous object, such as a decoy or a human being.

As early as the 1st century AD, Roman author Pliny the Elder wrote of "a goose which followed Lacydes as faithfully as a dog." In 1873 an investigator observed that a newly hatched duckling or gosling will follow practically any moving object in the same way that it follows its own parent. A German ornithologist observed the same phenomenon in 1910 and christened it *Pragung*, which was translated into English as "*imprinting*."

In animal studies, imprinting consists largely of the development of familiarity with a moving object, which begins soon after the newborn animal can move about. The time period for imprinting to take place is relatively restricted. Ducklings, for example, have an imprinting period only hours in length, with peak effectiveness about 13-16 hours after hatching. During this period a duckling will imprint as easily on an old man or on a rubber ball as it will on a mother duck. The sensitive period seems to end either

with the natural loss of the following response because of maturation or with the establishment of other types of behavior, fear responses in particular, which inhibit the tendency to follow. An important feature of imprinting is that if an infant has become attached to some other object, either natural or artificial, it will no longer respond to its own biological mother after the 'imprinting' period has ended.

Nobel laureate Konrad Lorenz asserted that imprinting, whether to the mother or to a substitute object, was irreversible, although other studies have indicated that some following responses can be extinguished. Lorenz also proposed that imprinting may be the way an animal chooses members of the species (other than its parents) for reproduction. In fact, another key feature of imprinting is the effect it seems to have on the subsequent social, sexual, and parental behavior of the adult individual. Cases have been reported in which the sexual preference of the adult bird was more or less irreversibly determined by the types of companions or objects to which the bird had been imprinted early in life.

Thus, imprinting is unique in that it seems to be a combination of both 'instinctual' and 'learned' behavior. The instinctive tendency to be imprinted is part of the animal's biological heritage, while the object on which it is imprinted is a matter of experience. Specific rewards, such as food or contact with the moving object or model, are not necessary for imprinting to occur. While it may be necessary for the imprinting stimulus to become associated with a response of some kind, it does not have to be the same response that occurs in subsequent activation of the imprint. In fact, objects which at first invoke fear may later elicit following responses (after they have become more familiar). Also, unfamiliar objects are more likely to elicit the following responses if presented in the same situation in which the animal has previously been imprinted to other objects. Clearly, then, imprinting relates to higher levels of learning than the establishment of simple stimulus-response reflexes.

While the phenomenon of imprinting has been primarily studied in the behavior of young animals in relationship to parenting, there is some indication that a process similar to imprinting may occur throughout the life of human beings as they pass through various developmental stages. Some modern psychologists, such as

Timothy Leary, believed imprints in human beings were formed in chronological stages that effected specific aspects of the intellectual and emotional development of the individual in later life. Leary considered imprints to be associated with certain biochemical states, and believed that if the state could be reaccessed through drugs (such as LSD) a person could be 're-imprinted' and substitute new experiences for those which had originally been associated during the initial imprinting period.

Certainly, Freud's theory of transference seems to point to imprint like phenomena. In imprinting, a deep structure like "mother" or "father" may assume different expressions at the level of surface structure. Thus, the 'doctor' or 'analyst' may become an embodiment of a "mother" or "father" figure. In the same way that individuals tend to regress back to past events to which they have become "fixated," they may also regress to the key relationships within which their impressions were formed. To understand or give something "meaning" we must consider it in reference to the system of individuals, objects and events in which it has occurred or is occurring. In other words, the "meaning" or "purpose" of something comes from the context and system of relationships in which it has been placed. Thus, during those times of healing, a person may need to regress to 'fixated' or "imprinted" experiences involving relationships with significant others in which the symptoms were initially formed. If it is not possible for the actual significant other to be present, because of physical separation or death, the person's relationship with the facilitator becomes the most tangible context in which the person may re-experience or relive and update the past relationship with the significant other.\*

According to Freud, this type of 'imprinting' occurred as a result of an "object-identification" or "introjection" of the significant other into the person's "ego" or sense of self. Freud believed that it was one way people were able to manage life transitions in which they had to give up an attachment to something significant to them. According to him *"an object which has been lost has been set up*

---

\*The "transference" of the relationship may occur in the same way that new and unfamiliar objects can become imprinted if they are presented in the same situation in which an animal has previously been imprinted to other objects.

*again inside the ego.*"<sup>6</sup> He maintained that the traits of a person's character contained the "history of those object-choices."<sup>\*</sup>

The field of Neuro-Linguistic Programming views "imprints" as being associated with highly stable 'neuro-linguistic' patterns or 'programs' that have been deeply encoded in the central nervous system. In NLP, 'imprints' are related to the "modeling" of significant others - through a process of unconsciously taking "second position" with them. It is well known, for instance, that children learn by imitating others; most often their parents. In fact, studies show that infants begin to imitate facial expressions of people around them within hours after they are born. Imitation is a powerful form of assuming 'second position' in which one 'acts as if' one were someone or something else. This type of "acting as if" creates "highly organized" associations of ideas or mental models.

A great deal of our survival and success depends upon our ability to manage the key relationships that make up our lives. Relationships often involve complementary roles, such as:

Parent - Child  
Teacher - Student  
Physician - Patient  
Leader - Subordinate

In order to understand and predict what will happen in such relationships, we cannot only represent our particular half of the relationship. Rather, we must create a model of the whole relationship and its dynamics. Rather than encode only our own perceptions, we must map the "relationship" between ourselves and others. This involves forming a model of both "self" and "other" in

---

\*I have seen people even internalize and maintain the physical symptoms of significant others as a way to maintain this type of attachment. For instance, I have worked with people who kept their connection with a father or mother by having allergies, being overweight or even developing cancer as their parent did. While these may certainly be shared genetic traits, I have seen such symptoms clear up or go into remission when the person has developed other choices for maintaining their attachment to the significant other.

the relationship and establishing cause-effect beliefs about the behavior of the various roles which make up the relationship.\*

In addition to the phenomena of transference, this type of process seems to be at the root of codependency and the transmission of behavior patterns through generations. Like all of the other processes which make up the deep structure of our emotional and mental lives, the purpose for both imprinting and transference is essentially positive. For example, our social behavior is greatly guided by our imprints. When people form groups and teams with other people that they do not know, they must determine how to behave by 'transferring' what they have learned from other relationships. Since our relationships with our parents and siblings are our earliest and strongest reference experiences for relating to others, we often seek and establish similar types of relationships, whether it be in social, personal or professional situations. For example, people will often behave toward a supervisor or 'boss' similarly to the way that they behaved toward their own father or mother. If they had a difficult time with their parents, they may find themselves having many difficulties with their boss, and so forth. Similarly, observations of group behavior by social psychologists indicate that leadership in the group tends to spontaneously form around a person who is a kind of 'father figure' and another who is a kind of 'mother figure'.

In fact, people who are in leadership roles in companies sometimes find themselves in the position Freud described as a physician. In times of crisis or destabilization, their collaborators begin to reexperience and project long forgotten issues relating their parents onto their relationship with the leader. Their responses may seem inappropriate or unrealistic because they do not relate to the present situation. The lack of understanding and awareness of this process can lead to a lot of unnecessary conflicts.

There are other problems that can arise as a result of 'imprinting' and the resulting transference as well. Under conditions of trauma, or in the presence of the altered or "hypnoidal" states mentioned by Freud,

---

\* What Freud called the "ego" or the "I" was our conscious model of our "self". What he termed the "id" essentially contained our representations and models (often unconscious) of everything else, including that which was not perceived as part of ourself.



one's sense of identity can become destabilized. In such situations the internal model of a significant other can become 'split off' from ideas that one perceives as 'one's own'. Thus, people may have the experience of their mother or father being 'inside' of them. I have even had people say to me that they feel "possessed" by their parents. They find themselves acting as their parents did, even acting out behaviors of their parent's that they intensely disliked. This is because they have encoded the "deep structure" patterns related to these significant others so fully that they seem to function as a "second consciousness." In certain situations, these deep structures can become manifest in the surface structure of the person's behavior. These circumstances bear a resemblance to Freud's description of what happened during "hysterical attacks."

*During the attack, control over the whole of the somatic innervation passes over to the hypnoid consciousness. Normal consciousness ...is not always entirely repressed. It may even be aware of the motor phenomena of the attack while the accompanying psychological phenomena are outside its knowledge...If the normal personality can regain control, what is left over from the hypnoid ideational content recurs in hysterical attacks and puts the subject back from time to time into similar states, which are themselves once more open to influence and susceptible to traumas. A state of equilibrium, as it were, may then be established between the two psychological groups which are combined in the same person: hysterical attacks and normal life proceed side by side without interfering with each other. An attack will occur spontaneously, just as memories do in normal people; it is, however, possible to provoke one, just as any memory can be aroused in accordance with the laws of association. It can be provoked either by a stimulation of a hysterogenic zone or by a new experience which sets it going owing to a similarity with the pathogenic experience...In other cases the equilibrium is very unstable. The attack makes its appearance as a manifestation of the residue of the hypnoid consciousness whenever the normal personality is exhausted and incapacitated."*<sup>7</sup>

According to Freud, even though a person's "normal consciousness" may be aware of what is physically going on during a "hysterical attack," his or her behavior is determined by the "hypnoid consciousness." Because the person has no awareness of the "psychical phenomena" responsible for the attack, however, the situation is never corrected and the two parts of "consciousness" may "proceed side by side without interfering with each other." "Attacks" may be brought on by (a) special stimuli (a "hysterogenic zone" or 'anchor'), (b) an experience which is similar to the experience in which the 'imprint' occurred or (c) a situation in which the person's "normal personality is exhausted and incapacitated." While "hysterical attacks" are quite dramatic, less intense types of such experiences occur constantly in "normal people."

I first became aware of this type of phenomena through the observation of seeming anomalies in the behavior of people with whom I was working. I remember talking with a woman once about how movies were able to effect people emotionally. She agreed, mentioning how much she had been affected by the Alfred Hitchcock movie *Psycho*. She maintained that, even though she had seen the film as a young girl, she could still feel a sense of fear and panic when she recalled the "shower scene," in which a young woman is stabbed to death. As she mentioned the scene, however, I noticed that she unconsciously made a stabbing motion with her right hand, as if she were gripping a knife and sticking it into her own body. It was as if a part of her had internalized the part of the relationship that was the killer, as well as the part of the victim.

Shortly after that, I was working with a woman who had cancer of the throat. She complained of feeling that her throat was 'not hers', that it had never felt like it was a part of her body. Intending to do a change personal history process with her, I asked her to focus on the feelings associated with her throat and to go back on her time line into her past to find the origin of the experiences. She began to describe an early childhood memory, saying, "I'm a little girl and my mother is holding me and she is *shaking* me." As she described the incident, however, she made shaking movements with her hands and spoke with a voice that seemed full of violence and anger. As I observed her, it was evident that she had not regressed into the behavior of the scared and helpless little girl, but was rather unconsciously manifesting the behavior of the angry mother.



She had indeed regressed back into the experience, but into the perceptual position of her mother instead of herself. It became obvious to me that what needed to be updated was not only the experience of the little girl, but the physical and emotional imprint of the woman's mother.

As one woman who had been physically abused by her mother put it, "When I was younger it was easier to identify with the frightened little girl. Now it is easier to identify with the angry and aggressive mother." This change in identification probably comes from a shift in body image. Since the woman's body was now more like her mother's and less like herself as a child, it was easier for her to kinesthetically associate with her mother's half of the relationship.

This dynamic makes the effect of some imprints appear to be 'retroactive' in the sense that their influence stays dormant until a person enters, as Freud pointed out, a situation that is similar to the imprinting experiences, and in which the person's role in that situation has shifted to become more like that of the significant other. For example, imprints are more likely to arise when people are confronted with life transitions, such as getting married, becoming a parent, dealing with a serious illness, beginning a new job, etc. It is not until a person becomes a mother or father, for instance, that certain parental imprints begin to arise as significant. Incidents and issues that the person thought were already dealt with long ago, suddenly become issues once again. Not because they were inadequately dealt with. In fact the situation might have been quite effectively resolved; from one's perspective as a youth, but not from the other half of the relationship. When the person becomes a parent, the portion of the imprint relating to the significant other suddenly comes into the foreground because the person has now identified with that part of the relationship.

Because the process of 'imprinting' involves the taking of 'second position' to a certain degree, individuals can even become imprinted by events and 'traumas' that did not happen directly to them (like the woman who was affected by the movie *Psycho*). They may take on the perspective and the pattern of behavior of another person. I once worked with a woman who had feared for years that she had been raped by her father when she was a child. When she was able to go back to the event, however, she discovered that she

had actually overheard her mother telling someone else about how she (the woman's mother) had been sexually abused as a child by her uncle. The woman with whom I was working was half asleep at the time of the event and had internalized her mother's fear and shame as if it were her own. Because she was in a "hypnoidal state" at the time, her sense of herself had become somewhat "incapacitated" or destabilized.

This destabilization of one's conscious sense of identity combined with the process of assuming 'second position' seem to be key factors in the establishment of 'imprints'. In fact, I reviewed the famous "shower scene" from *Psycho* sometime after my observation of the woman's behavior I mentioned earlier. By running it in slow motion, I noticed that during the three minute scene, Hitchcock changed the camera angle seventy five times (much faster than an individual can consciously track). He continually shifted between the perspective of the victim and of the killer while creating an 'anchor' with an unusually sharp and repetitive sound.\* While the scene is certainly not as graphic as many later horror films, its effect comes from the ability to destabilize the viewer's conscious perception and shift perspectives.

According to Freud, the processes behind the phenomenon of "transference" related to a destabilization of the person's identity and at the same time produced an intense level of rapport between the patient and the facilitator. Because the person was reexperiencing the conditions of the imprint situation, he or she could become very impressionable and susceptible to communications from the facilitator. The influence was also increased by the fact that the person would often regress into a childlike role with respect to the physician. In Freud's opinion, this was the foundation of many of the phenomena of hypnosis.\*\*

---

\*A similar strategy was used by Steven Spielberg in the film *Jaws*, in which the movie begins by placing the viewer in the perspective of a 'killer shark' and anchoring it with simple but unique background music. At later times, he creates dramatic tension by either shifting again into the perspective of the shark (as it is just about to bite someone) or by playing the background music.

\*\*It is important to keep in mind that Freud's beliefs about hypnosis refer to the 'hypnosis' practiced in his time and not the the 'Ericksonian' methods utilized by many of today's hypnotherapists.

Freud claimed:

*What (Bernheim) called suggestibility is nothing else but the tendency to transference...we have only abandoned hypnosis in our methods in order to discover suggestion again in the shape of transference.*<sup>8</sup>

Freud had “abandoned hypnosis” because he felt it dealt too much with surface structure rather than the deeper processes behind symptoms. As he mentioned, it was too easy to ‘wipe away’ the results of hypnosis if his “personal relation with the patient became disturbed.” He also believed that hypnotic methods did not always respect the natural “self correcting” processes necessary for true healing and that hypnotic suggestion put ‘locus of control’ in the person of the hypnotist rather than the patient.

*Hypnotic therapy allows the patient to remain inactive and unchanged, consequently also helpless in the face of every new incitement to illness. Analytic treatment makes as great demands for efforts on the part of the patient as on the physician, efforts to abolish inner resistances. The patient’s mental life is permanently changed...In employing hypnosis we are entirely dependent upon the condition of the patient’s transference and yet we are unable to exercise any influence upon this condition itself...In psychoanalysis we work upon the transference itself, dissipate whatever stands in the way of it, and manipulate the instrument which is to do the work...we guide his suggestibility.*<sup>9</sup>

Freud believed that “suggestibility” was as much a function of the relationship between people as it was about the characteristics of a particular individual. He perceived transference as that which determined a person’s ‘suggestibility’. Therefore, working with the transference that an individual was experiencing was a way to “guide his suggestibility.” Consistent with his meta strategy, Freud’s way of “working upon the transference itself” was to help the person to develop ‘metacognition’ of it, and to become aware of its origin and its purpose.

*The transference is overcome by showing the patient that his feelings do not originate in the current situation, and do not really concern the person of the physician, but that he is reproducing something that had happened to him long ago. In this way we require him to transform his repetition into recollection. The transference which, whether affectionate or hostile, every time seemed the greatest menace to the cure becomes its best instrument.*<sup>10</sup>

Freud’s comment that he required the person to “transform his repetition into recollection” again implies a shift from the associated ‘in time’ experience of the situation to a ‘through time’ experience of it. Because the circumstances involve a key relationship, however, the resolution is not effected by simply ‘changing history’ with respect to the content of the event. The relational ‘deep structure’ related to the experience must also be dealt with. As Freud put it:

*This revision of the process of repression can only partially be effected by means of the memory-traces of the processes which led up to repression. The decisive part of the work is carried through by creating—in the relationship to the physician, in “the transference”—new editions of those early conflicts, in which the patient strives to behave as he originally behaved...in place of the patient’s original illness appears the artificially acquired transference...in place of a variety of unreal objects of his libido appears the one object, also “phantastic,” of the person of the physician. This new struggle which arises concerning this object is by means of the analyst’s suggestions lifted to the surface, to the higher mental levels, and is there worked out as a normal mental conflict.*<sup>11</sup>

The therapeutic process Freud suggests is another example of ‘pacing and leading’. First, by pacing the person as he or she “regresses” into past experiences and then leading him or her to confront resistances, the facilitator triggers a spontaneous reenactment or “new edition” of “early conflicts, in which the patient

strives to behave as he originally behaved." This reenactment of the conflicts involving significant others leads to a shifting of the person's symptoms onto his or her relationship with the facilitator, such that "in place of the patient's original illness appears the artificially acquired transference." The person is paced and then led to substitute the ongoing relationship with the facilitator for the "fixation" on the past imprint, so that "in place of a variety of unreal objects of his libido appears the one object, also 'phantastic', of the person of the physician." This essentially allows the situation to be brought out of the past into the present where it can be worked with directly. According to Freud, "this new struggle which arises concerning this object" (the "object" now being the facilitator) could then be paced and led, through the process of developing 'metacognition', such that it was "lifted to the surface, to the higher mental levels, and is there worked out as a normal mental conflict."

Thus, according to Freud, in order for the woman who had the throat cancer to resolve her issues with her mother and feel that her throat was her 'own', she would have had to 'transfer' her relationship with her mother into her relationship with me (or some other facilitator). I would then be in the role of a 'mother figure' to her. In some way, the woman would reenact her conflict with her mother in her relationship with me. But because I would respond differently than her mother did, offering her suggestions and helping her develop new awareness of her behavior, the old unconscious role model of 'mother' would become "lifted to the surface" and updated.

In his description of his therapeutic process, Freud mentions that the physician or facilitator takes the place of "a variety of unreal objects" of the patient's "libido." In Freud's model, the "libido" was a fundamental deep structure within a person that operated from what he called the 'pleasure principle'. Its essential intention or purpose is to maximize the pleasure of the individual and avoid pain. Freud associated the "libido" with certain characteristics. It tended to be more associated 'in time', responding to immediate or short term experiences. \* It was primarily 'inter-

---

\*Freud's concept of the "libido" was in many ways similar to Aristotle's "appetites."

nally referenced' or self centered (what Freud called "narcissistic"). It could become attached to "objects" (such as significant others) that were associated with either pleasure or pain. And, because it was directed internally, it could respond just as fully to fantasy as to 'reality'. In fact, Freud noticed that while the 'precipitating' memories behind some symptoms could be related to the symptom in a fairly rational or linear chain of cause and effect, others were not so obvious.

*In other cases the connection is not so simple. It consists only in what might be called a 'symbolic' relation between the precipitating cause and the pathological phenomenon - a relation such as healthy people form in dreams.* <sup>12</sup>

Like Leonardo's strange "memory," the "objective" accuracy of experiences relating to a person's distant past is highly questionable. But, as Freud pointed out:

*[T]he childhood-experiences reconstructed or recollected in analysis are on some occasions undeniably false, while others are just as certainly true, and that in most cases truth and falsehood are mixed up. So the symptoms are thus at one minute reproductions of experiences which actually took place...and at the next a reproduction of phantasies of the patient's...phantasy and reality are to be treated alike and that it is to begin with of no account whether the childhood-experiences under consideration belong to the one class or to the other.* <sup>13</sup>

Freud's comment reflects his belief that healing was more related to processes at the level of deep structure than their surface level expressions. For instance, the presence of the 'deep structure' of a 'mother' within the nervous system of a baby duck is not initially related to the external reality surrounding the duckling. (The duckling is not born with a clear visual image of a feathered creature with a beak and webbed feet in its brain. It only knows that "mother" has certain key features; that she "moves," for instance.) Thus, this inborn 'archetype' can become attached to a



number of different surface structures. It is sometimes the case that if a person's parents are absent or unavailable for some reason, they will imprint a fantasized figure instead of a real person (similar to the way a duckling could imprint a cat or a human being as its 'mother').

From this perspective, the goal of healing, or "associative correction," is neither to make a person think that he or she has found his or her 'real' past nor to confuse that person about the actual events of his or her personal history. Rather, it is to add to or update the role models that have become the surface structure representations of the archetypic 'deep structures' that shape one's beliefs, values, sense of identity and relationship to the significant others.

Freud maintained that if the imprints, and any conflicts associated with them, stayed only in the realms of memory and fantasy, separated from the rest of the developments and experiences in the person's "normal consciousness," they would never be able to be updated nor subjected to "associative correction." Naturally, Freud believed that through language, in the form of verbal suggestions from the analyst and the oral recollections of the individual, these forgotten or "repressed" processes could be "lifted to the surface, to the higher mental levels, and is there worked out as a normal mental conflict."

While most people are aware of the feelings associated with a particular symptom (i.e., anxiety, fear, depression, pain, etc.), Freud believed it was more important to verbalize, and thus bring into consciousness, the other levels of deep structure which produced those feelings. In other words, to produce healing, Freud considered it more important for the individual to verbalize the thought-processes (i.e., mental representations, beliefs, values, etc.) that were producing the feelings than to simply describe the feelings themselves. As he explained:

*Whereas with unconscious ideas, connecting links must be created before they can be brought into consciousness, with feelings, which are themselves transmitted directly, this does not occur...Even when they are attached to word presentations, their becoming conscious is not due to that circumstance, but they become so directly. The part played*

*by word-presentations now becomes perfectly clear. By their interposition internal thought-processes are made into perceptions...thoughts are actually perceived—as if they come from without.*<sup>14</sup>

Freud is indicating that different senses have special roles with respect to our mental life. He states that 'feelings' may move into consciousness directly, without the aid of any special "connecting links." He asserts however that 'ideas' and 'thought-processes' needed the aid of language or "word-presentations" to reach the level of awareness. In other words, Freud thought that in order to be conscious of one's feelings, one did not need words. In order for the mind to become conscious of its own thinking processes, on the other hand, those processes had to first become 'externalized' by being put into language. Freud believed that this was why people were able to vividly "repeat" the feelings associated with past experiences and events even though they did not know consciously why or how those feelings were occurring. Putting thoughts into words, however, got them outside of the mind so that they could be perceived just like any other object or phenomenon in the environment. It would be similar to getting outside of the water in which one has been swimming so that one can see if it has become polluted.

Thus, Freud believed that language could help to both access and then sort out the experiences related to the imprints behind the 'transference'. The second position 'role modeling' which forms the imprint is often both unconscious and kinesthetic. The translation of the limiting beliefs established by the imprinting experience into words brings those beliefs into awareness and creates the possibility for new pathways of association. For example, let's say the woman who had internalized the killer in *Psycho* did so because she had formed an unconscious belief like "I deserve to be punished because I am a bad person," as a result of some earlier negative imprinting experience. Having her put that belief into words would allow her to externalize it and separate herself from it. By listening to it as though it were an external idea, this belief may then become connected to other groups of ideas so that it may be reevaluated and updated.



Freud implies that 'feelings' are the only representations that do not need translation through language in order to become conscious. In his view it is the fact that the thought processes associated with feelings are unconscious that gives them their influence. From the NLP perspective, however, the influence of an experience is more a matter of the 'level' and 'perceptual position' from which that experience is perceived, rather than whether or not it is conscious or represented in particular sensory modality. For instance, 'imprints' may be related to consciously perceived words or images as easily as they are to feelings. As an example, a person may constantly hear critical comments from a parent in his or her mind's ear. A person may also be plagued by imagery or visual memories of particular events as well. The conscious awareness of these words or images does not automatically change their influence.

In NLP the external 'perception' of a particular sensory representation is considered to be on a different level of experience than the 'beliefs' one has *about* that representation, or the way in which one relates that perception to one's 'identity'. Any one of the senses, sight, hearing or feeling, may be involved in experiences at the different levels. Language can allow us to shift the level at which we are experiencing something.

For instance, contrast the statement, "*I am afraid because I am a neurotic person,*" with "*I am afraid because I can't control my fear in certain circumstances*" and "*I am afraid because, when I visualize a certain event from my past, I reexperience the fear I felt at that earlier time.*" All three statements could be used to describe the same fearful experience. The first, however, places the cause of fear at the level of 'identity' ("*I am a neurotic person*"), the second makes it a matter of 'belief' ("*I can't control my fear*"), and the third expresses it at the level of 'capability' ("*when I visualize certain events...I reexperience the fear...*"). It is only the third description that begins to put the experience into a form that something could be done about it. Considered from this framework, the *type* of language that someone uses to describe a particular experience

and its causes, is as significant as the fact that they are verbalizing.\*

Notice how the following description makes the experience of the fear seem even more like a mere "recollection" - "*I had been afraid because, when I visualized a certain event from my past, I reexperienced the fear I felt at that earlier time.*" This statement is made in the past tense, which shifts one's "temporal relationship" with the experience. The fearful response is talked about as if it is something that is in the past and no longer a part of one's present reality.

As a further example, consider the statement, "I can see that the younger me would become afraid when *his* father would threaten *him*." In this description the individual is using third person language ("his," "him") as well as the past tense when describing his own experience. Shifting language in this way alters one's 'perceptual position' with respect to the experience as well as its "temporal relations" (one has become an observer with respect to the past experience instead of a participant in it).

The point of these examples is that, from the "neuro-linguistic" perspective, the patterns of language that a person uses to verbalize his or her experience have as much influence as the fact that a person is using language. You can try this out for yourself. Think of a situation involving another person that produces some kind of negative emotion when you think about it (perhaps a situation in which you were angry or irritated at someone). Describe the situation to yourself or someone else using third person, past tense language. Describe the event as if it were something that you are perceiving outside of yourself, in the external environment. For example, you might say, "The past me was arguing with this other person about who had been responsible for a particular task. The past me felt that the other person was being disrespectful to him..." Notice how describing the situation in this way changes your perception of it and your emotional reaction to it.

---

\*From the point of view of the Meta Model, the sequence of statements specifies progressively more deletions in relationship to the experience of 'fear', thus reducing the degree of generalization and distortion. This leads to an increased 'metacognition' of the particular mental processes responsible for the fearful reaction.

Freud believed that such a shift in one's perceptual position was an essential part of resolving the problems created by "transference." This shift involves the establishment of what is called a 'third position' or 'meta position' in NLP. As I mentioned earlier, 'third position' is a perspective in which one is outside of the relationship one is considering—viewing it as an external observer. Changing one's response from a "repetition" to a "recollection" involves moving from a 'first' or 'second' position (i.e., being in the "shoes" of either oneself or the significant other) to a third position perspective (i.e., observing one's own behavior and the behavior of the significant other as an event in the past). In a sense this is truly a "higher mental level" in which the interaction between other perceptions may be perceived and addressed. A 'third position' is above and between the other two perspectives. When one is able to achieve this type of 'meta position', the problems and differences between 'first' and 'second' position can be "worked out as a normal mental conflict." If not, Freud maintained the person was doomed to repeat the past over and over again.

*He is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, remembering it as something belonging to the past...[The physician] must get him to re-experience some portion of his forgotten life, but must see to it, on the other hand, that the patient retains some degree of aloofness, which will enable him, in spite of everything, to recognize that what appears to be reality is in fact only a reflection of a forgotten past.*<sup>15</sup>

In order to obtain a wise 'third' position, however, one must first have the knowledge and experience from 'first' and 'second' position. Otherwise, one is simply 'talking about' the situation from a disassociated perspective. It would be like a mediator or negotiator attempting to resolve a conflict he or she knows nothing about. In order to effectively and ecologically resolve the imprint experience, one must experience the perspective of all of the roles that make up the relational situation surrounding the circumstances of the imprint. That is, one must have been to some degree 'in the

skin' of each individual involved in the relationship. Then, through the new awareness and perspective arrived at through 'third position', the conflicts in the relationship may be paced and led to a new resolution.

Sometimes the reason a person cannot resolve the problems or feelings associated with an imprint is because the person has no idea what was going on inside of the significant other. In other words, the individual only has a representation of his or her own portion of the relationship and not of the dynamic of the system. Because the imprint involves both sides of the relationship, however, the other side of the person's mental model is never updated and thus keeps repeating the same internal reactions. In this case, it is important for the person to widen his or her map of the situation to include the 'second position' experiences of the significant other. Many people that I have worked with, for instance, are surprised and moved at the insights they get when they are able to empathize with the experience of their parents in past events.

In other situations, the problems and confusion of identity and belief that arise from a negative imprint have in fact occurred because an individual is being overwhelmed by his or her consideration of the feelings and experiences of the other person. In situations where there is an important or intense relationship we often create vivid representations of the other person's experience. Some people have spent a good deal of their lives trying to 'second guess' the reactions of significant others by constantly putting themselves into the other person's shoes. In these instances, it is important for a person to establish clear boundaries between his or her own thoughts and feelings and those of the significant other.

In other cases the various perceptual positions are not clear - i.e., one is not sure what are his or her own feelings, thoughts, beliefs, etc., and which are coming from significant others. In NLP we speak of the 'contamination' of perceptual positions. These are situations in which one is not sure where one's own experience ends and another person's experience begins. Because our different senses can operate to some degree independently of one another, it is possible for a person to experience several different perspectives simultaneously. For instance, a person may be *feeling* the emotions of his or her younger self, *hearing* the voice of the significant other, and yet *seeing* an image of both the younger self

and significant other as if he or she were observing them both in the past. It is also possible for a person to be picturing a past event as if one were reliving it from one's own perspective, yet be feeling the emotional reactions of another person involved in the event, and at the same time be talking to oneself as if one was an observer of the event.

It seems clear that this type of 'contamination' of perceptual positions is at the basis of processes such as "transference," "codependency," "paranoia" and other issues that involve the perception of oneself in relation to others. Freud believed that the resolution to problems such as these came from identifying the areas of confusion or 'contamination' and then developing the metacognition necessary to sort them out.

The first step in accomplishing this, was to reaccess the experiences in which the confusion or 'imprint' was initially established. As I pointed out earlier, Freud's method for finding relevant past events was through the process of 'free association'. While listening to his patients and assisting them in this process, Freud employed "a certain ceremonial observance regarding the position in which the treatment is carried out." According to him:

*"I adhere firmly to the plan of requiring the patient to recline upon a sofa, while one sits behind him out of his sight. This arrangement has an historic meaning; it is the last vestige of the hypnotic method out of which psychoanalysis was evolved; but for many reasons it deserves to be retained. The first is a personal motive, one that others may share with me, however. I cannot bear to be gazed at for eight hours a day (or more). Since, while I listen, I resign myself to the control of my unconscious thoughts I do not wish my expression to give the patient indications which he may interpret or which may influence him in his communications. The patient usually regards being required to take up this position as a hardship and objects to it...I persist in the measure, however, for the intention and result of it are that all imperceptible influence on the patient's associations by the transference may be avoided, so that the transference may be isolated and clearly outlined when it appears as a resistance."* <sup>16</sup>

It is interesting to contrast this with the NLP approach in which the facilitator or guide would sit or stand either facing the client or next to him or her. This difference is for purposes of observation and rapport. Much of NLP involves observing for subtle (and typically unconscious) non-verbal cues as well as the verbal information being offered by the client. Also NLP often requires that an individual involve his or her body in some way as part of the information gathering process - physically walking back on a time line for instance.

Freud's stated intention in persisting in his approach was to insure that "all imperceptible influence on the patient's associations by the transference may be avoided, so that the transference may be isolated and clearly outlined when it appears as a resistance." While it is understandable and admirable that Freud did not want to influence his patients unnecessarily nor lead their associations in a direction that was more relevant for himself than for them, the NLP belief is that it is impossible not to influence others in some way. In addition to expression for example, one may influence others by subtle changes in breathing, or the tone of voice one uses while asking questions, etc.

In NLP the issue is not so much whether one *will* influence the other person, but rather to be aware of *in what way* one is influencing the other. This requires an ability to acutely observe the reactions of the other in response to one's own verbal and non-verbal cues.

Another assumption behind Freud's particular methods of therapy was his belief that the only way to access and then maintain the state of association necessary to deal with the effects of the imprinting experience, was to reembody the imprinting relationship in the "transference" with the physician. In NLP, other tools make it possible to exercise alternative choices. In fact, I have used NLP methods to develop a technique based upon the notion of 'imprinting' and some of Freud's principles and strategies of change. This process, which I call "*reimprinting*" (Dilts, 1990; Dilts Hallbom, Smith, 1990), allows individuals to find 'imprint' experiences by following a path of associated reminiscences, and 'reimprint' them by connecting them to other 'programs' or resources that were developed later in life, but were unavailable to the individual and/or significant others at the time of the original 'imprint' experience.



The reimprinting process involves assisting the individual in creating a physical 'time line' upon which one can spatially locate events or time periods in his or her life. The individual is also assisted in sorting out the different perceptual positions of significant others involved in those experiences by arranging them in different physical locations within the space representing the past time frame or events. By physically sorting and then assuming "second position" with significant others, the person is able to more easily and graphically recognize that "his feelings do not originate in the current situation," and do not "really concern the person of the physician, but that he is reproducing something that had happened to him long ago." In fact, by assisting the person to create physical locations for significant others and then 'stand in their shoes' one can actually more effectively redirect the focus of the "transference" to a context in which it is more likely to be recognized and adequately dealt with by the individual.

While reimprinting has a number of similarities with the 'change personal history' process, there are also some key differences. Change personal history deals primarily with the influence of the "chance circumstances of events," which primarily relate to how one reacts to "external powers." 'Reimprinting' addresses how "internal forces" or 'deep structures', such as our models of key relationships with significant others, in addition to the external context, have molded our beliefs, values and sense of self. In reimprinting one is not seeking merely a new solution to a past 'event' but rather an integration of stages of life and an updating of one's beliefs and sense of identity with respect to one's system of relationships with 'significant others'.

For example, in my work with the woman who had cancer of the throat, whom I mentioned previously, my goal was not simply to 'neutralize' the negative emotional affect of a particular experience with her mother. In order to help promote both her emotional and physical healing, it was important for her to recover the sense that her throat 'belonged' to her. To accomplish this she had to first sort out the relationship between herself, her mother and her throat, and then update her internalized imprint of her mother. This involved addressing issues that related to her beliefs, identity and ultimately her 'mission' or purpose in life.

It is important to realize that imprinting situations involve more than the good or bad feelings associated with them (as was demonstrated by the animal studies that showed that objects which at first invoked fear could later on elicit following responses.) As Freud pointed out, these events can "never be deprived of their importance by later experiences." Our judgments and conclusions about the significant others in our key relationships say as much about our half of the relationship as it does about theirs. In other words, if I conclude that my mother is a 'duck', that says something fundamental about me as well. Thus, imprinting experiences often bring up many deep questions. If my mother was abusive to me, what does it say about me? About her? About being a mother? About how to treat a child? Attempting to answer these questions brings up others, such as: Why did she do it to me? Was it a function of her character? Of my behavior? The circumstances? "Genetics?" Weakness? Evil? Ignorance? If it is a function of her 'character', then how much am I like her? How and why am I different from her (or similar to her)?

It is here that the principle of 'positive intention' is of the utmost significance. As I mentioned earlier, NLP believes it is important to sort out 'levels' of processes as well as 'perceptual positions' and 'temporal relations'—to separate a person's identity and intention from his or her behavior. The woman with throat cancer had clearly internalized her mother's behavior but not her positive intention. When I asked the woman about the positive intention behind her mother's actions, she didn't even have a clue, and would have sworn that there was none. To help her explore the question, I pointed out to her my observation of how she had actually exhibited more of her mother's behavior than her own in her recollection of the memory. I then assisted her in spatially creating separate locations for both her mother and her younger self with respect to the past event. By putting herself physically into each location and acting out the behaviors congruent to each location, she was able to clearly sort out the part of the experience that was hers versus her mother's without 'contamination'.

While she was standing 'in her mother's shoes', I asked her to notice not only the behaviors but to also be aware of any associated thoughts, beliefs, sense of self, etc., behind the behavior (as described in the 'Exploring deeper structures' processes presented



at the beginning of this applications section). By doing so she had many new realizations, insights and understandings about her mother and her mother's behavior. She recognized that her mother did indeed have a positive intention at the time of the incident, but was operating from an impoverished map of the world. The intention of her mother was to 'hold her life together' and 'keep the world from crashing down around her'. But because she lacked the knowledge and the necessary resources she had to act out of frustration and aggression. Once the woman was able to identify the positive intention, she could access and bring back new resources to the imprinted model of her mother that had been unavailable at that time. The resource involved being able to use words instead of her hands.

From a 'third position', standing in the present and looking back on both her mother and her younger self in the distant past, the woman was able to realize that she had many new understandings and abilities that neither her younger self nor her mother had possessed at that time. She realized that even if her mother had possessed only some of these understandings and resources, she would have behaved very differently. I asked her to stand in a location on her time line that represented a time when she had most vividly experienced the understandings, beliefs or sense of self that her mother would have needed at that previous time. When she was able to have the sense of those resources with their "full affective coloring" I asked her to "anchor" it by forming a 'symbolic' image of this resource as either an energy, light, sound, music or some other symbol that she felt represented the 'deep structure' of that resource. She visualized it as a sparkling golden light that flowed through her body. I then asked her to imagine that she could send this golden light 'back through time' to her mother in that situation and watch how her mother's behavior would have been different. She saw that her mother changed dramatically with this resource. I then instructed her to physically take the light back 'into her mother's body' by stepping again into the shoes of her mother bringing the sparkling golden light, and act out the difference in behavior. This was very profound for her.

A next step was to have the woman reassociate back into her half of the relationship as the child and experience the differences from that perspective. I asked her how she would adjust or update her beliefs and perceptions about herself, her mother and the relationship between mother and child. Naturally there were many changes in her feelings and reactions.

The final step was to have her bring a new resource to her younger self (as in change personal history); to be both a mentor and resource to that younger part of her. She then returned 'in time' to the present, internalizing how those changes would help to facilitate her physical healing. She found that in addition to feeling that her throat was now her own, she was more clear and confident about herself and her ability to heal. Furthermore, she felt she could express her own creative ideas more confidently with both conviction and humor. She suddenly realized that part of her mission in life was to 'give a voice' to the needs and feelings of people who could not speak for themselves.

Again, the purpose of the reimprinting process is neither to make a person think that he or she has found his or her 'real' past nor to confuse that person about the actual events of his or her personal history, nor the behavior of significant others. The 'objective accuracy' of an event of a person's life is only relevant if one needs to justify an action, such as taking 'revenge' against the person who caused one pain. 'Healing', however, involves finding and addressing the positive intentions behind such actions, finding alternative choices that lead to the prevention of the situation or a change in one's response to it. The 'bottom line' with respect to the importance of our past is how it influences us in the present and will continue to influence us on into the future. (I often find that people exhibit more physical and emotional affect when they stand in the shoes of a significant other than when they are in their own perceptual position.)

According to NLP the purpose of remembering the past is to learn. For instance, to learn how to avoid repeating past mistakes and to draw resources and find solutions in the reality of our present (which may be quite different from our past). We must remember that not only is the 'map not the territory' but the 'territory' is not even the territory because the territory is constantly changing.\* What we draw from our past depends upon the maps of the world we have formed as a result of it. The basic

---

\*The Western nations' map of the Soviet Union as a Communist aggressor against the 'Free World', attempting to destroy 'our way of life', for instance, had a lot of implications about the role and mission of the Western powers. Now, not only would a map of the Soviet Union not be the actual USSR, but the territory that map represents no longer exists.

mission of NLP is to add more choices to those maps so that we may manage the present and reach our desired futures in the most effective and resourceful manner. Reimprinting is an expression of that mission which builds upon Freud's principles and strategies.

The following is a summary of the basic steps of the reimprinting process.

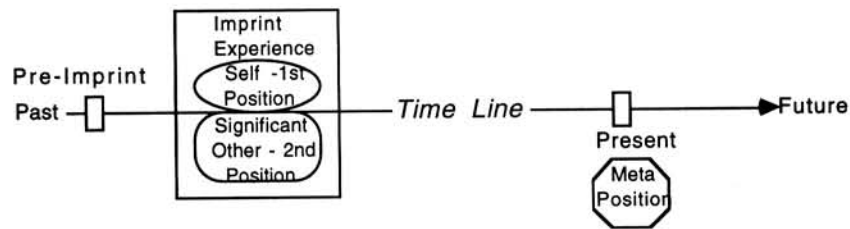
## Summary of the Reimprinting Process

An **imprint** is a significant experience or period of life from the past in which a person formed a belief or cluster of beliefs, often in relationship to one's identity. An imprint experience often involves the **unconscious role-modeling** of significant others. The purpose of reimprinting is to find the resources necessary to change the beliefs and update the role-models that were formed (not simply to resolve the emotional issues associated with a particular event, as in the NLP technique of **change personal history**).

1. Identify the specific physical manifestation of the symptoms to be addressed. Stand in the physical location on your time line representing the present and face the future direction. Focus your attention on the physical expression of your symptoms, and any beliefs associated with them, and walk slowly backwards, pausing at any location that seems to be relevant to the symptom or to the accompanying beliefs. Keep moving back in time until you reach the earliest experience associated with the symptoms and/or the beliefs.
  - a. Keeping in the associated or "regressed" state verbalize the cluster of generalizations or beliefs that were formed from the experience(s). Make sure you speak in first person, present tense; i.e., "*I am feeling...*"
  - b. Take a step backwards to a time before the initial imprint experience. When you do so you should feel differently - as if the imprint had not yet effected you either mentally or physically.
2. Step off of the time-line and return to the present and look back at the imprint experience from 'meta-position'.
  - a. Notice the effect that the earlier experience has had on your life. Verbalize any other generalizations or beliefs

that were formed as a result of the imprint experience. (Beliefs are often formed "after the fact.") This time, speak about the events you experienced in third person, past tense; i.e., "*He/She (or 'The younger me') thought that...*"

- b. Find the positive purpose or secondary gain of the symptoms or responses formed at the imprint experience. What positive function did the symptoms serve in relations to those past events?



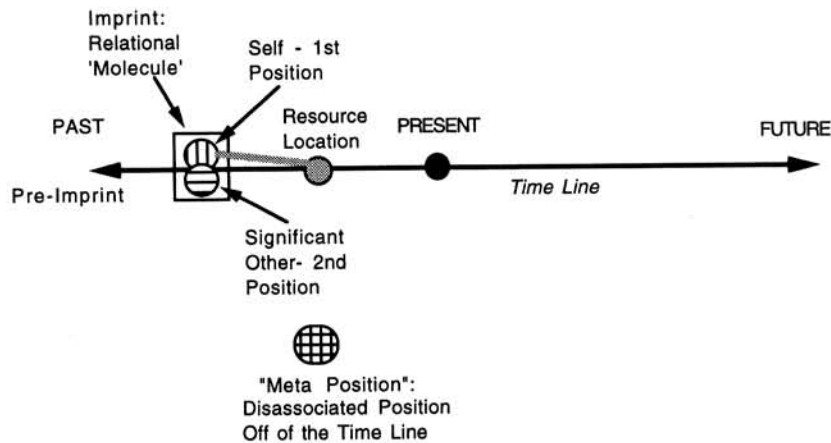
3. Identify any significant others involved in the imprint. [Some symptoms may actually come from the role modeling of a significant other]. The significant others do not necessarily need to have been physically present during the event or period. Sometimes an imprint occurs because the significant other was somewhere else at the time of the imprinting situation (and thus became 'internalized').

- a. Associate into each of the significant others (2nd position) and experience the imprint situation from their perceptual position. Describe their experiences using first person language.
- b. Step out of their perceptual position to a point off the time line (3rd position) and find the positive intention of their actions and responses.

4. For **each** of the people involved in the imprint experience:

- a. Identify the **resources** or choices that the person needed back then and did not have but that **you do have available now**. Remember that you need not limit yourself to the capabilities that you or the significant others had at that time. So long as you (not the significant others) have those resources available now you may use them to help change that experience. [Make sure the resource is at the appropriate logical level to address the needs of the person - i.e., belief, identity, spiritual.] Sometimes a single resource is needed for the whole system.
- b. Step onto your time-line at the location where you most strongly experienced having that resource and relive as fully as possible what it feels, sounds and looks like. "Anchor" this experience by symbolically representing the resource as a kind of energy, light or sound.
- c. Still standing in the resource location, "transmit" the resource back through time to each person in the system that needed it. This may be done metaphorically through the energy light or sound.
- d. When you sense that the "associative connection" has been made through the "anchor," step off of the time-line, walk back to the imprint experience, step into the position of the person who needed the resource and relive the imprint experience from that person's point of view incorporating the needed resource. You may continue to use your symbolic "anchor" to bring the resource into that perspective.
- e. Associate once again into your own perceptual position within the imprint experience, and update or modify the beliefs and generalizations you would now choose to make from the experience. Verbalize them from first person, present tense.

Repeat this procedure for each of the significant people involved in the imprint experience.



5. Identify the most important resource or belief that you would have needed as your younger self. "Anchor" that resource and take it back to the location on the time-line before the imprint occurred. Take the resource into your younger self and walk all the way up your time-line to the present, experiencing the changes made by the reimprinting.

## Footnotes to section 9

1. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud, Pocket Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 453.
2. *Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*, Sigmund Freud, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1964, pp. 41-42.
3. *An Autobiographical Study*, Sigmund Freud, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1964, p. 45.
4. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud, Pocket Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 447.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 449.
6. *The Ego and the Id*, Sigmund Freud; *The Freud Reader*; Gay, Peter (Ed.), W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1989, p. 638.
7. *Studies in Hysteria*, Sigmund Freud & Josef Breuer; *Britannica GREAT BOOKS*, Volume 54, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., Chicago Ill., 1979, pp. 681-682.
8. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud, Pocket Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 454.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 459.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 441.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 462.
12. *Studies in Hysteria*, Sigmund Freud & Josef Breuer; *Britannica GREAT BOOKS*, Volume 54, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., Chicago Ill., 1979, pp. 669.



13. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud, Pocket Books, New York, NY, 1963, pp. 376-377.
14. *The Ego and the Id*, Sigmund Freud; *The Freud Reader*; Gay, Peter (Ed.), W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1989, p. 634.
15. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Sigmund Freud; *The Freud Reader*; Gay, Peter (Ed.), W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1989, p. 602.
16. *Therapy and Technique*, Sigmund Freud, Collier Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 146.

## Section 10: Integration of Conflicting Beliefs and Identities

Sometimes, even after one has updated one's maps of the events of his or her past history and 'significant others', there are still issues remaining to be addressed. These issues do not relate to external events nor other people, but rather to the deepest structures within the person himself or herself—to conflicts between different 'parts' of one's own mental system. In other words, these issues relate to conflicts between oneself and oneself. Freud believed such internal struggles were ultimately at the root of many psychological problems. As he maintained:

*One side of the personality stands for certain wishes, while another part struggles against them and fends them off. There is no neurosis without such a conflict.<sup>1</sup>*

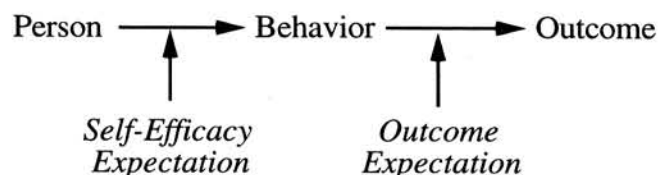
Freud believed that such conflicts stemmed from our expectations; and the uncertainties related to those expectations. He explained:

*There are certain ideas which have an affect of expectancy attached to them. They are of two kinds: ideas of my doing this or that—what we call intentions—and ideas of this or that happening to me—expectations proper. The affect attached to them is dependent on two factors, first on the degree of importance which the outcome has for me, and secondly on the degree of uncertainty inherent in the expectation of the outcome. The subjective uncertainty, the counter-expectation, is itself represented by a collection of ideas to which I shall give the name of "distressing antithetic ideas"...In the case of an intention, these antithetic ideas will run: "I shall not succeed in carrying out my intentions because this or that is too difficult for me and I am unfit to do it; I know, too, that certain other people have failed in a similar situation." The other case, that of an expectation,*

*needs no comment: the antithetic idea consists of enumerating all the things that could possibly happen to me other than the one I desire.*<sup>2</sup>

In NLP these “counter expectations” are known as a ‘polarity’ response; in which people reflexively think or express “antithetical ideas” to whatever is being expected or demanded of them by either themselves or some other person. Freud indicates that “counter-expectations” reflect the degree of “subjective uncertainty” which is “inherent in the expectation of the outcome.” Thus, they are a feedback and a measure of a person’s congruency about reaching a particular outcome.

Freud suggests that one’s beliefs and expectations about outcomes and one’s own personal capabilities play an important role in one’s ability to achieve desired states. Freud’s distinction between “intentions” and “expectations” refer to what are known in modern cognitive psychology (Bandura, 1982) as ‘self-efficacy’ expectation and ‘outcome’ expectation. *Outcome expectancy* is a result of a person’s estimate that a given behavior will lead to certain outcomes. *Self-efficacy’ expectation* relates to the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the desired outcome (what Freud referred to as “intentions”).



### **The Relationship of ‘Self-Efficacy’ Expectation to ‘Outcome’ Expectation**

These kinds of beliefs and expectations often determine how much effort people will expend, and how long they will sustain their efforts, in dealing with stressful or challenging situations. In

self-managed activities, for instance, people who are skeptical of their abilities tend to undermine their own efforts in situations that tax their capabilities. Typically, a lack of outcome expectancy leads to a feeling of ‘hopelessness’ or apathy which causes the person to give up. The absence of ‘self-efficacy’ expectancy, on the other hand, leads to a sense of inadequacy which makes the person feel ‘helplessness’.

Given the importance of such expectations upon our ability to reach our goals, Freud asks:

*How does a person with a healthy ideational life deal with antithetic ideas against an intention? With the powerful self-confidence of health, he suppresses and inhibits them as far as possible, and excludes them from his associations. This often succeeds to such an extent that the antithetic ideas against an intention are as a rule not manifestly visible.*<sup>3</sup>

The implication of Freud’s comments is that, under normal circumstances, “counter-expectations” or ‘polarity reactions’ serve the positive purpose of bringing some kind of ‘checks and balances’ into a person’s system of ideas. They function as a type of internal ‘critic’ and help to muster self-confidence and motivation in order to overcome obstacles. If the degree of subjective uncertainty was too great to be inhibited, the person would presumably readjust or lower his or her expectations accordingly.

Freud maintained that certain situations, however, could disrupt the balance between one’s expectations and counter-expectations. In his study of the symptoms and causes of hysteria, for instance, Freud noted that states of ‘hypnoid consciousness’ and ‘normal consciousness’ could coexist within the same individual. He asserted that “A state of equilibrium, as it were, may then be established between the two psychical groups which are combined in the same person,” such that the person’s normal consciousness and the secondary consciousness “proceed side by side.” The separation between the “two psychical groups” interfered with the natural feedback loop between them. As he explained:

*The process in hysteria differs from this [normal process] in two respects...[Firstly,] in accordance with the tendency to a dissociation of consciousness in hysteria, the distressing antithetic idea, which has the appearance of being inhibited, is removed from association with the intention and continues to exist as a disconnected idea, often unconsciously to the patient himself. [Secondly,] it is supremely characteristic of hysteria that, if it should come to the carrying out of the intention, the inhibited antithetic idea can put itself into effect through the agency of the somatic innervations just as easily as does the volitional idea in normal circumstances. The antithetic idea establishes itself, so to speak, as a "counter-will," while the patient is aware with astonishment of having a will which is resolute but powerless.*<sup>4</sup>

Freud came to believe that the dissociative processes which produced a seeming "counter-will" in his hysterical patients even functioned to a lesser degree in someone with "a healthy ideational life," producing internal conflicts about one's intentions. According to Freud, conflicts about our intentions or expectations were most likely to arise in situations where our outcomes were not being reached.

*Conflict is produced by frustration...in order to become pathogenic, external frustration must be supplemented by internal frustration...external frustration removes one possibility of satisfaction, internal frustration tries to exclude another possibility, and it is this second possibility which becomes the debate ground of the conflict.*<sup>5</sup>

In a typical situation, if we are prevented from reaching a goal due to an external impasse, we maintain our focus on the outcome, inhibit any "antithetical ideas" and continue to attempt other avenues or strategies in order to attain the goal.

If there is an internal conflict or "counter-will," however, the "debate ground" shifts inward, and a battle begins between the two parts of one's self. As Freud points out, the external frustration is supplemented by internal frustration. It is as if the person is

"caught between a rock and a hard place." And when the fight is between two parts of one's self, one can never "win." As Freud put it:

*This conflict is not resolved by helping one side to win a victory over the other...one side in either event will remain unsatisfied.*<sup>6</sup>

Attempting to solve this type of conflict by suppressing one side, as one would do with typical "antithetical ideas," creates a 'double bind' in which you are "damned if you do and damned if you don't." It is as if the struggle is between two conflicting intentions rather than between an intention and the uncertainty as to whether it will be achieved. This makes the situation different than what we addressed in the section on reframing, in that the core issue is not understanding the intention of the part to which one has not been listening. In that case, the focus is on a particular problematic behavior. The resolution involves finding the intention behind the behavior and generating alternative choices in order to reach the intention. In the case of conflict, however, it is the confrontation of antagonistic intentions that is at issue. Because the parts are at cross purposes, no alternatives can be produced which satisfy both intentions directly.

Furthermore, because the internal conflict is not grounded in external events or results, it can not be resolved by feedback from some external source. In fact, in such a situation, anything can become another stimulus (or excuse) for a fight. Even the simplest decisions lead to a struggle - a struggle which is never resolved because it is not really about the content of the decision but about the deeper structure beneath it.

The constant stress coming from the conflict and frustration may lead to other symptoms, including physical symptoms. These symptoms also become a "debate ground" for the conflicting parts. Since systems attempt to reach balance or homeostasis, however, certain symptoms may actually provide a potential point of "compromise" between the conflicting parts. As Freud claimed:

*The two powers which have entered into opposition meet together again in the symptom and become reconciled by means of the compromise contained in symptom-formation. That is why the symptom is capable of such resistance; it is sustained from both sides.* <sup>7</sup>

An example of this would be Freud's observation about the "paranoid" person who believes he or she is being persecuted. At one level, the person "draws from this the conclusion that he must necessarily be a very important person," thus satisfying a part of him that wants to have a sense of self importance. On another level, the fear of persecution keeps the person from acting upon his "delusions of grandeur," appeasing the part that wants to keep him humble or protect him from his own arrogance. Thus, the fear of persecution becomes a "means of compromise" which serves both purposes and is "sustained from both sides."

As another example, I have previously written about the work I did with my mother who had developed a recurrence of breast cancer in the early 1980's. As with many women who have this disease, it occurred at a transitional time in her life. This transition had brought up a deep level of conflict within her sense of identity. The youngest of her five children had left home for college, bringing an end to her role as a 'mother'. She had decided to go back eventually into a nursing career, which she did with great zeal, but found herself becoming increasingly dissatisfied.

It seems that there was a part of her that had been wanting to do things for herself that she found enjoyable and pleasurable; a part that she had been inhibiting during the years she was raising her children. Another part of her felt tired and wanted to rest. It also maintained that she did not have the resources necessary to follow her desires, and that if she did, it would be damaging to her children who might still need her assistance some day. This part believed that it was necessary for her to maintain her role of taking care of others - as a mother or nurse would do. These two parts of herself were in conflict about which direction she should take at this transitional point in her life.

She had tried a number of different solutions, but, as Freud indicated, one side always remained dissatisfied. Regardless of which side of herself she tried to please, the other side was always

disgruntled. Because she was not aware at that time of the nature of her conflict, it seemed to her that everything she tried was wrong and unsatisfying. She lived in a state of constant turmoil, feeling trapped by her apparent lack of choices. When she discovered that she had breast cancer with an extensive metastasis and would probably die soon, she almost had a sense of relief. She mentioned that when she imagined herself dead, it seemed pretty peaceful. She even mentioned how much she had been "dying to have a vacation." It was as if her symptom and its seeming inevitable result were the only acceptable compromise that could be reached between the conflicting parts. It was a way in which one could 'get rid of the other, and achieve peace without allowing the other to "win."

Whether or not the cancer was formed as a result of the stress on her body and immune system by the constant conflict, her attempts at recovery certainly became just another 'battleground' for the conflict within herself.

Freud believed that the 'deep structure' behind such conflicts was an age old and "stubborn conflict" between one's "libidinal desires" and one's "ego." As I mentioned in the previous section, Freud considered the libido to operate solely from the 'pleasure principle'. Freud believed that a person's "normal consciousness" or "ego," on the other hand, operated more from the 'reality principle'. The "ego" had as its primary purpose or intention the survival of the individual. Thus, it tended to be more externally referenced, operate more 'through time' and respond in a longer term time frame.

*From the point of view of the self-preservation of the organism among the difficulties of the external world, [the pleasure principle] is from the very outset inefficient and even highly dangerous. Under the influence of the ego's instincts of self preservation, the pleasure principle is replaced by the reality principle. This latter principle does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but it nevertheless demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step in the long and indirect road to pleasure.* <sup>8</sup>



Freud believed that the "libido" was primarily related to 'primitive' and more unconscious processes such as instincts and "appetites," while the "ego" was related to "higher mental processes." Interestingly, his distinctions between the "libido" and the "ego" reflect Aristotle's contrast of the "appetites" versus the "mind," that I outlined in the first volume of this series. According to Aristotle, appetites and desires were feelings formed relative to some goal or end which provided the 'motive force' that allowed the mind to operate. As he maintained:

*"[M]ind is never found producing movement without appetite... but appetite can originate movement contrary to calculation... [I]t is the object of appetite which originates movement, this object may be either the real or the apparent good..."*

*"[A]ppetites run counter to one another, which happens when a principle of reason and desire are contrary and is possible only in beings with a sense of time (for while mind bids us hold back because of what is future, desire is influenced by what is just at hand: a pleasant object which is just at hand presents itself as both pleasant and good, without condition in either case, because want of foresight into what is farther away in time)." <sup>9</sup>*

Aristotle's implication is that "appetites" were internal feeling states which operated on what Freud called the 'pleasure principle' - the pursuance of pleasure and avoidance of pain. These feeling reactions could be brought about either by ongoing experiences or through mental calculations. Ongoing experiences could create a feeling of "pleasantness" or "unpleasantness" in relation to the object itself. The "goodness" of an object, on the other hand, came as the result of 'calculations' or projections of future consequences in relation to the external world.

Aristotle maintained that conflicts between feelings were created by the perception of time because principles of "reason" and "desire" could operate in different time frames. "Calculation" tended to be more associated with the perception of the future and "desire" with the present. Aristotle implied that the experience of

"what is future" could produce a perception of something as "good," but what is "just at hand" could be "both pleasant and good." Problems arose when one was torn between "what is future" and what was "just at hand" or "because of a want of foresight into what is farther away in time."

According to Freud, a further complication was introduced by the fact that these two processes could become dissociated from one another in such a way that there was no feedback between them. One of them could exist as a "secondary consciousness" or "counter-will" which has become "removed from association with the intention and continues to exist as a disconnected idea, often unconsciously to the patient himself." In such a situation the person would experience the affects of frustration and resistance without knowing what was causing them.

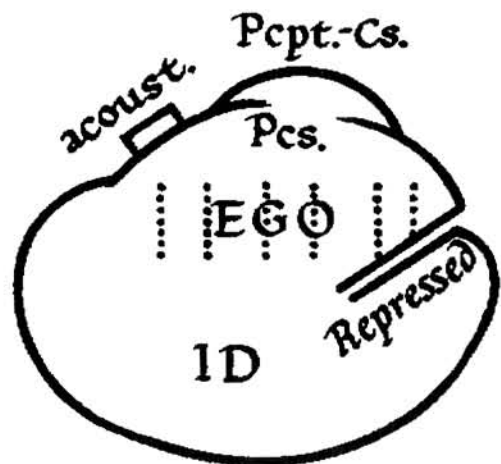
Freud's model of conflict is another reflection of his belief that "mental processes are essentially unconscious, and that those which are conscious are merely isolated acts and parts of the whole psychic entity." As he explained it:

*[C]onsciousness may be, not the most universal attribute of mental process, but only a particular function of them... What consciousness yields consists essentially of perceptions of excitations coming from the external world and of feelings of pleasure and unpleasure which can only arise from within the mental apparatus... It must lie on the borderline between outside and inside; it must be turned toward the external world and must envelop the other psychical systems. <sup>10</sup>*

According to Freud, "consciousness" was the meeting point between "perceptions of excitations coming from the external world" and "feelings of pleasure and unpleasure which can only arise from within the mental apparatus." He believed that the function of consciousness was not simply to operate as a 'window' of awareness; but that it was also a unique place where we could form and update our working model of the world. In Freud's system, consciousness was the temporary 'workbench' upon which one constructed or repaired that model before putting it back into the machinery of the unconscious where it was stored and acted upon.

Thus, Freud saw both the “ego” and the “libido” as parts of a vast unconscious system that he called the “id.” Maintaining that “Each single process belongs in the first place to the unconscious psychical system; from this system it can under certain conditions proceed further into the conscious system,” Freud described the system in the following way:

*We shall now look upon an individual as a psychical id, unknown and unconscious, upon whose surface rests the ego, developed from its nucleus the perceptual system. If we make an effort to represent this pictorially, we may add that the ego does not completely envelop the id, but only does so to the extent to which the perceptual system forms its [the ego's] surface...The ego is not sharply separated from the id; its lower portion merges into it...We might add, perhaps, that the ego wears a ‘cap of hearing’—on one side only, as we learn from cerebral anatomy. <sup>11</sup>*



**Freud's Pictorial Representation of the Relationship Between Ego and Id**

In Freud's view, the ego was like the 'tip of the iceberg' to an array of processes that took place within our nervous systems; largely outside of our conscious awareness. It was the part of the system that interfaced with the outside world. It was literally a 'surface structure' of the larger 'deep structure' of the id. Freud likened the ego to the outer layers of cerebral cortex in our brains, and the id to the deeper and more primitive structures. Freud's description makes reference to the fact that language is localized to one side of the brain - the side typically associated with logical and rational understanding and processing. He implied that, while one's sense organs brought in the "perceptions and excitations" coming from the "external world," the "cap of hearing" could transfer perceptions from one's internal "mental apparatus" between the id and the ego.\*

Freud conceptualized the ego and id as elements in a larger system that had different roles and functions with respect to that total system.

*It is easy to see that the ego is a part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world through the medium of the 'perceptual-conscious' system; in a sense it is an extension of the surface differentiation. Moreover the ego seeks to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavors to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the id. For the ego, perception plays the part which in the id falls to instinct. The ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions. <sup>12</sup>*

\*Of course, this model may tell us much more about Freud's mental structure than human beings in general. For instance, in all of his writings Freud rarely mentions the role of visual imagery in either the ego or the id. He tends to equate unconscious processes with feelings and "affect" and conscious processes with words and language. Yet, some people's primary mode of thinking is more through visual imagery. From the NLP perspective, the structure defined by Freud reflects a person whose primary representational strategies are verbal and to some degree kinesthetic. (Freud's colleague Carl Jung, for instance, emphasized the role of vision and visual imagery much more than did Freud.)

Freud's comment that "For the ego, perception plays the part which in the id falls to instinct," implies that ego and id are two subsystems whose sources of action come from two different arenas of life, internal and external. In the language of Freud's earlier comments, it would appear that the "id" relates to one's 'intentions' (one's internal wishes and desires) while the "ego" relates to one's 'expectations' (the anticipated influence of the outside world). In order for one's goals and desires to become manifested, both parts need to be involved. The ego without the id would simply maintain *status quo* and never grow or evolve; whereas the id without the ego would remain undirected and ungrounded.

#### 'Meta Program' Patterns

The types of characteristics Freud associated with the "ego" and the "id" are related to what are known as 'meta program' patterns in NLP. *Meta program patterns* are descriptions of some general ways in which a problem or situation may be approached or perceived. They are called 'meta programs' because they relate to overall characteristics as opposed to the specific details of a person's strategies. As with the other NLP distinctions, a person can apply the same meta program pattern regardless of content and context.

In the nervous system, for instance, the influence of one part of a neural network on another may be either 'excitatory' or 'inhibitory'. This fundamental dynamic shows up in our general patterns of behavior as well. For example, in approaching a particular problem or situation one can emphasize moving either *toward* something or *away* from something (or potentially some ratio of both). Clearly, Freud considered this to be the fundamental dynamic that drove the 'pleasure principle'—"an avoidance of unpleasure and a production of pleasure." On a more general level, however, Freud's descriptions of the functions of the id and the ego imply that he considered the id to be essentially excitatory or "passionate" while the ego was more restrained or inhibitory.

One may also consider a problem or situation from different 'chunk-sizes'. *Chunk-size* relates to the level of specificity or generality with which a person is perceiving or analyzing a

problem or problem space. Situations may be analyzed in terms of varying degrees of detail (micro chunks of information) and generalities (macro chunks of information). Freud indicated that the id, and its related "instincts," tended to operate from 'bigger chunks', generalizing indiscriminately from one situation or relationship to another. The ego, on the other hand, was more rational and analytical, 'chunking', separating, and categorizing experiences in much greater detail.

As Aristotle indicated, problems and situations may be examined with reference to long term, medium term or short term time frames. The *time frame* within which a problem or outcome is considered, can greatly influence the way in which it is interpreted and approached. For instance, short term pleasure might lead to pain in the longer term, and vice versa. Clearly, Freud viewed the "passions" of the id to operate in a much shorter time frame than the ego, which was able to "effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step in the long and indirect road to pleasure."

It is also possible for a person to place his or her *time orientation* on past, present or future events. One may look to the past for the source of one's problems or for possible solutions, for example. Alternatively, one could stay more focused on present opportunities and constraints, or orient more toward future consequences. Freud's explanations of the dynamics between the ego and the id indicate that id tended to operate more in terms of the past and the present, while the ego emphasized the repercussions of present actions on future outcomes.

In considering the implications and ramifications of actions and events, a person may operate from either an *internal or external reference*. An internal reference emphasizes the affect that something has on oneself. An external reference focuses on the effect that something has on the external environment or other people. A person operating from an internal reference, for instance, would say, "It doesn't matter if I am successful or not in getting an external result, I know that I tried my best and I feel good about my performance no matter what anyone else says." In contrast, a person operating from an external reference would say, "It doesn't matter how I feel about the situation, or whether or not I get any



recognition, what is most important is whether or not the external result has been achieved." According to Freud, the ego was both "turned toward the external world" and "modified by the direct influence of the external world", whereas the desire for internal personal pleasure "reigned unrestrictedly in the id."

A person's perception of a problem or situation may emphasize different sensory representational systems. Habitual cognitive patterns on an individual level may be expressed in terms of a general thinking style on the macro level or group level. Vision, action, logic and emotion are more general expressions of visualization, movement, verbalization and feeling. Freud clearly equated the ego with logical and verbal processes. He also implied that it had enough 'vision' to be able to stay "aloof" from the emotional affect of problem situations. The "passions," "desires" and "instincts" of the id, on the other hand, were intimately related to emotion and action.

In summary, Freud's "ego" and "id" may be characterized by particular clusters of meta program patterns as illustrated below.

### "Ego"

Away - Inhibitory  
 Details - Small Chunks  
 Longer Term  
 Present - Future  
 Externally Referenced  
 Logic & Vision

### "Id"

Toward - Excitatory  
 Generalities - Big Chunks  
 Shorter Term  
 Past - Present  
 Internally Referenced  
 Emotion & Action

### **'Meta Program' Characteristics Associated With Freud's Definition of the "Ego" and the "Id"**

From the NLP perspective, meta program patterns are not "all or nothing" distinctions and may occur together in varying proportions. Different personality traits and thinking styles are characterized by different clusters and combinations of meta program patterns. The various meta program patterns cover different areas of a 'problem space'. In this respect, there are no 'right' or 'wrong' meta programs. Rather, their effectiveness in connection with problem solving relates to the ability to apply them to cover the

space necessary to adequately deal with a problem or situation. In this regard, meta programs typically interact in such a way that they balance one another.

Freud held a similar view with respect to the relationship between the ego and the id. He saw them as entities that kept each other in balance. Freud likened their relationship to that of a horse and rider; implying that the ego harnessed and directed the id through a kind of 'pacing and leading'.

*In its relation to the id [the ego] is like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse; with this difference, that the rider tries to do so with his own strength while the ego uses borrowed forces. The analogy may be carried a little further. Often a rider, if he is not to be parted from the horse, is obliged to guide it where it wants to go; so in the same way the ego is in the habit of transforming the id's will into action as if it were its own.*<sup>13</sup>

Freud maintained that it was only in situations where they become "split off" from one another and become polarized and exaggerated that they created conflict. According to Freud, problems arose not just because something originated in the "id" or was "unconscious," but rather because it had become separated from "associative connection" with the rest of the person's mental system by the process of "repression." (In the terms of Freud's analogy, if the horse becomes separated from the rider, the horse begins to wander aimlessly while the rider remains stranded and helpless.) When this occurred, problems and double binds began to emerge because a particular action could produce "unpleasure for one system and simultaneously satisfaction for the other."<sup>14</sup>

In his work with the "Rat Man," for instance, Freud at one stage pointed out to his patient that "every fear corresponds to a former wish which is now repressed."<sup>15</sup> Freud's implication is that many things one fears in the present may have been something that one wished for at a previous time. For instance, if a person has an "irrational" fear of death, it may be that at some time in his or her life that person "wished" he or she would die—perhaps to get 'back at' or to get sympathy from some significant other. If, rather than



understanding the positive intention behind such a wish and finding other choices, another part of the person simply tries to squelch those thoughts and the part responsible for them altogether; that part becomes split off and is no longer available to feedback and “associative correction.” As Freud explained:

*The pathogenic conflict in a neurotic must not be confounded with a normal struggle between conflicting impulses all of which are in the same mental field. It is a battle between two forces of which one has succeeded in coming to the level of the preconscious and conscious part of the mind, while the other has been confined on the unconscious level. That is why the conflict can never have a final outcome one way or the other...An effective decision can be reached only when they confront each other on the same ground. And, in my opinion, to accomplish this is the sole task of the treatment.*<sup>16</sup>

The negative aspects of “repression” seem to be associated with a confusion or ‘collapsing’ of logical levels - such that the identity and intentions of a part of the person are made equivalent to its behavior. That is, rather than simply inhibit one’s “counter-expectations”, one begins to inhibit the part of oneself that is producing the “counter-expectations.” This creates a much deeper level of conflict. And, according to Freud, it is not possible to completely inhibit or get rid of a part of ourselves. The attempt to do so merely forces that part of oneself into the unconscious where it is separated from associative connection with the rest of our system. Its positive intentions become limited to its own small part of the system and thus exacerbates the problem and the conflict by acting only in its own interests and at the expense of the larger system. This in turn exaggerates the perceived need for repression, and so on.

Thus, rather than perceive the need for communication and integration between their parts, the person feels it is essential to continue the “repression.” As an example, I can remember working with a woman who had recently discovered that she had cancer. This had led to an intense conflict within her about her identity. When I remarked to her that it would be important that she was able to be integrated and whole in order to help support her

healing, she responded, “Of course I want to be whole and integrated; and I will be just as soon as I get rid this part of myself.”

By bringing the repressed or unconscious parts of the conflict equally into awareness, Freud maintained that it would become “a normal mental struggle between two tendencies on the same ground; between motives striving to maintain the countercharge and those which are ready to abolish it.” As he went on to explain:

*The first of these are the old motives which originally erected the repression; among the second are found new ones more recently acquired which it is hoped will decide the conflict in our favor. We have succeeded in revivifying the old battle of the repression again, in bringing the issue, so long ago decided, up for revision again. The new contribution we make to it lies, first of all, in the demonstrating that the original solution led to illness and in promising that a different one would pave the way to health, and, secondly, in pointing out that the circumstances have all changed immensely since the time of that original repudiation of these impulses.*<sup>17</sup>

Again, consistent with his strategy, Freud claims that the solution is found by developing metacognition of the conflict and then pacing and leading it to a new outcome. This is accomplished by 1) “revivifying the old battle of the repression again” so that it is brought “up for revision”; 2) “demonstrating that the original solution led to illness”; 3) “pointing out that the circumstances have all changed immensely” since the time of the original conflict and 4) introducing new alternatives that “pave the way to health.”

Freud’s therapeutic process acknowledges that one’s beliefs and the various ‘parts’ which make up one’s identity are developed at different times in one’s life. Many beliefs that make up a person’s model of the world are in fact established in childhood. These beliefs are often limited in their scope and perspective, but seem more ‘real’ because they are more familiar and have more personal experiences and memories to back them up than those established later in life. Rather than perceive all beliefs as being “timeless” it is often helpful to find the time of origin of a particular belief or part of oneself so that it may be placed and evaluated with respect

to its appropriate time frame. It is then possible to move to another level of perceiving the conflict.

As an illustration of the process Freud suggests, I recall once working with a man who had a phobia of heights, but only of certain heights. He was not afraid of small heights, such as a ladder, nor very distant heights, such as being on an airplane. His phobic reaction was typically triggered in buildings that were over a few stories high. In exploring the origin of his fear the man uncovered a memory from his childhood. His father worked in a tall building and had reluctantly taken his son (my client) to work with him that day after a fight with the boy's mother. The father eventually became very involved with his work and became peeved with the frequent interruptions he was getting from his young son; so he sent the boy out to play on the balcony of the office building.

Upset, alone and angry at his father, the boy looked over the edge of the balcony wishing he would "never grow up" and have to be like his parents. This led him to fantasize about Peter Pan. The boy began to wish he could be like Peter Pan, who stayed a boy forever and could fly. In his imagination, the boy began to visualize himself leaping off of the edge of the balcony and flying like Peter Pan. Arousing from his reverie, the 'rational' part of him suddenly realized the potential danger of this fantasy and began to strongly attempt to inhibit not only the 'wish' but the part of him that had produced the fantasy. A conflict between his 'dreamer' and his 'realist' had been raging ever since that time. The conflict, which had become unconscious, intensified when he was in tall buildings, bringing with it a sense of fear and confusion.

By becoming aware of the situation at the root of his conflict, the man was able to understand the "old motives" or 'positive intentions' of both parts involved in the conflict. He was also able to realize that the circumstances of his life (in terms of both himself and his parents) had "changed immensely." He became aware that the 'Peter Pan' part of him that left his imagination so long ago, had never been allowed back in his body in order to be acknowledged and grounded. I asked him to visualize the 'Peter Pan' part of himself in one of his hands and the 'realist' part of him in another. Interestingly, he saw the 'realist' side of himself as a large concrete building, that was stable and had a strong foundation. I then asked him to bring his two hands together and visualize what

it would look like if these two parts became integrated into one whole part. He saw a shining marble statue of Peter Pan; one that would be there forever, firmly rooted to the ground, which could always remind him about the importance of dreaming.

We checked the 'integration' by going to the top of some buildings that formerly would have triggered a phobic reaction. Instead of fear, the man reported that he felt confident and free, and on each building he had the sense that he was welcoming home the part of himself that had been away for so long.

It is important to keep in mind that not all challenging internal conflicts occur because of past traumas or "repression." Sometimes they are a natural by-product of growth, and are even necessary in order for a person to reach higher levels of integration. Freud himself pointed out that "*conflicts and dissensions...take place in the mental apparatus while the ego is passing through its development into more highly composite organizations*".<sup>18</sup> Many internal conflicts arise naturally as we undergo transitional stages in our lives, as in the example of my mother that I cited earlier; or in the struggle that Freud interpreted to be within Moses that was between his passion and his sense of mission.

During these transitions, it often becomes necessary for people to rebalance or 'reshuffle' the constellation of their meta program patterns; which have served them in their previous stage of life. For instance, a person may make a new job change which requires that he or she be more oriented to a longer term time frame or become more proactive. If the person has been used to operating reactively in a short term time frame, this change can produce a struggle. As a spiritual leader, Moses struggled between his short term emotional responses and his long term vision. Some common kinds of struggles that can occur in these situations include:

Short term pleasure *versus* Long term good  
 Self *versus* Others  
 Past (child) *versus* Future (adult)  
 Emotional *versus* Rational  
 Growth *versus* Protection  
 Excitatory *versus* inhibitory  
 Dreamer *versus* Critic

In my mother's situation, for instance, she had been in a role that required her to be very 'externally referenced' and 'other oriented' for over thirty years. The natural developments of her life put her into a situation in which she needed to become more 'self referenced'. This adjustment was creating a struggle for her.

These natural struggles become crises when people do not have the awareness or vocabulary to be able to identify the parts of themselves that are in conflict and bring them into the "same mental field." [In fact, one of the advantages that meta program patterns bring into the area of conflict resolution is that they allow us to make finer discriminations about the processes that may be creating the conflict.] When I first spoke with my mother about her situation, for example, she was completely unaware that she was in such a deep conflict with herself. Often, when a person has two dissociated parts, they simply bounce back and forth between one and the other. My mother for instance would gesture with her left hand when she talked about all the things that she wanted to do for herself and the reasons she felt she deserved them. Then, she would literally sit on her left hand and begin to gesture with her right hand and talk about how what she wanted wasn't really that important, and that it had always been her life to take care of others. Then, just as suddenly, she would sit on her right hand and begin gesturing with her left hand, talking about how necessary it was for her to do the things that she wanted to do. She had no consciousness that she was contradicting herself until I pointed out to her what she had been doing with her hands.

According to Albert Einstein, 'you cannot solve a problem with the same type of thinking that is creating the problem'. This is probably the most essential principle of conflict resolution. As with reimprinting, an important step in the resolution of conflicts is to reach a 'third position' or 'meta position'. Rather than observing the conflicts between self and other, however, one is observing parts of one's identity or self. When one is able to reach a 'third position', one is able to widen one's map and get outside of the rigid duality or polarities that are often presupposed by the conflict.\*

---

\*This new perspective can bring both understanding and humor. For instance, there is an old saying which states, "In this world you either sink or swim...or you don't." Or further, "There are two kinds of people in this world. Those who divide the world into two kinds of people and those who don't."

To get a 'third position' perspective of her conflict, for instance, my mother needed to be able to see both of the parts of her that were in conflict at the same time, without being in the 'shoes' of either one. In NLP this is typically done by physically sorting the conflict in some way. Since my mother had been using asymmetrical gestures with her hands, I asked her to physically sort the two parts involved in the conflict by placing one in each hand. In other situations I will have people sort the parts into two different spatial locations and act out the responses and reactions of each part with their whole body. In addition to helping to reduce any confusion or 'contamination' between the parts, the physicalization of the parts helps the person to form a clearer model of them and create the 'common ground' which Freud felt was so essential to the resolution of conflict.\* Involving the body also helps to activate unconscious processes. This is important because many of the experiences associated with conflicts may be highly kinesthetic or preverbal. The spatial sorting of the parts with either one's hands or whole body also serve as 'anchors' to help reaccess and focus the experiences and thoughts associated with the different 'parts'.\*\*

In fact, Freud felt that the 'body image' was one of the most significant factors in the formation of one's ego and sense of self. As he explained it:

*Another factor, besides the influence of the perceptual system, seems to have played a part in bringing about the formation of the ego and its differentiation from the id. A person's own body, and above all its surface, is a place from which both external and internal perceptions may spring. It is seen like any other object, but to the touch it yields two kinds of*

---

\*It is interesting to note that Freud's interpretation of the physical attitude of Michelangelo's statue of Moses includes all three perceptual positions. Moses' legs and feet have the attitude of 'projected action'; his arms and hands grip his body as if he is 'suppressing' his desire to move; his head and eyes are more 'aloof' reflecting a 'third position' with an awareness of his mission and vision beyond the immediate moment.

\*\*The use of the body as a way to spatially sort 'parts' has been incorporated by many developers since Freud's time, such as J. Moreno, Fritz Perls and Virginia Satir.



*sensations, one of which may be the equivalent to an internal perception...[Thus,] the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface. (i.e., the ego is ultimately derived from the bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body, besides...representing the superficies of the mental apparatus.)*<sup>19</sup>

One advantage of using the body, or parts of the body, in sorting out conflicts, is that it helps to involve all of the senses. As Freud pointed out, the body can be seen and it can be felt, both on the surface and from the inside. By adding verbalization, one is able to involve all of the major senses in the identification and resolution of the conflict. In NLP it is considered especially important to involve all of these representational systems for effective conflict resolution.

For example, since my mother had been gesturing with her left hand while she talked about the part of her that wanted to do things just for herself, I asked her to hold out that hand with the palm up and visualize what that part would look like. She saw it as a "strong, vivacious, younger woman dressed in gaudy (orange, purple and gold) clothes." She was "overflowing with energy and drive, full of ideas about everything." I then asked her to imagine the other part of herself on her right hand. She saw "a very tired, worn-out, old hag-like woman with long, stringy white hair and wearing a shredded gray gown". This woman 'desperately wanted rest and peace.'

To involve the auditory representational system, I asked her to have each part of herself look at the other part and verbalize what they thought about each other. Because internal conflicts are self-directed, the "debate ground" of the conflict are the beliefs and judgments the parts have about one another; as opposed to their beliefs about external events or situations. Not surprisingly, the two were initially far apart and not trusting of each other. They each felt that the other part was an enemy, and in fact the tired gray woman was trying to get the gaudy ambitious woman out of

the way so they both could have some rest (thus, she practically welcomed the cancer as a means to an end).

As Freud pointed out, putting these thoughts and beliefs into words allowed them to become externalized and "perceived as if they came from without." This helps to bring the beliefs and judgments at the basis of the conflict into conscious awareness where they may be acknowledged and examined.

The next step was to have my mother look beyond the negative expressions, thoughts and beliefs of each part to their '*positive intentions*'. In many ways, this is the most important step in actually beginning to resolve the conflict. For instance, the purpose and intention of the ambitious, brightly dressed part was not to harass and exhaust the older one. Her positive intention was to enjoy life and take pleasure in what she had. Likewise, the positive purpose and intention of the old gray woman was not to threaten or 'kill' the other part; rather it was to conserve strength so she could do her duty and service to others. By expressing their positive intentions, the two parts realized that, at the level of their intentions, they were not polarized. 'Enjoying life' and 'conserving strength to do one's duty' were not inherently incompatible, but were complementary. They had only become incompatible because of the way she was attempting to satisfy those intentions.

I then asked my mother to consider from a 'meta position' what was the '*common mission*' beyond the positive intentions of both parts. That is, what purpose on a deep level (such as identity or spiritual) did they both share and serve together? She realized that enjoying life and conserving strength to do one's duty had as their common purpose to attempt to reach one's highest expression in life, and fulfill one's destiny. This was a very deep and important realization for her.

Once she recognized that, not only were the two parts not in conflict at the level of intention, but that they shared a deeper mission, she was able to recognize that each part actually had important and complementary capabilities and resources. These capabilities could be used in many different ways and for many different purposes. In fact, she realized that the old gray woman could actually benefit from the energy and ambition of the younger part. Similarly, the ambitious gaudy part could benefit from the stability and the quiet strength of the older woman. I pointed out



to her, that if these parts could share their resources instead of fight with one another, they could work together in new and more effective ways to reach their shared mission of helping her reach her highest expression in life and fulfill her destiny.

In the context of these new understandings, I asked her to bring the parts together by moving her hands slowly toward one another. As she did I asked her to create a new image which represented the synthesis and integration of the two parts and their complementary intentions and capabilities. To her surprise, when her hands came together she first saw an image of an immense winged Mercury that was silver and shining. After some time the image transformed into an "attractive, pleasant woman appropriately dressed with much potential, but at peace." I invited her to bring that new image inside of her body and feel internally what it was like to be integrated and whole. She was filled with a sense of health and peace and the belief that her body would do nothing to unnecessarily hurt her.

In addition to helping with the process of integration, the clasp of her hands served as an 'anchor' for the state of wholeness in my mother. She claims that she still uses the handclasp gesture as an anchor for the integration if she feels confused or anxious.

While there were many other things my mother did to promote her recovery, this process marked the beginning of her healing. Within some months after that, her cancer went into remission (without the need for radiation or chemotherapy). At the time of this writing she is still very much alive and whole; over twelve years later. She is able to physically and emotionally meet the challenges of her life as she continues to fulfill her destiny.

A large part of the NLP conflict integration process described in this example involves sorting experiences into their appropriate levels in order to avoid unnecessary confusion and trouble. As I pointed out in the volume of this work devoted to Albert Einstein, a typical approach to conflict resolution in NLP is to first "chunk up" one level above the conflict to find consensus with respect to "higher level" values. A second step involves "chunking down" one level below the level at which the conflict is taking place. At this "lower level" it is possible to find "complementary" resources related to the parts of the system which are seemingly in conflict.

**Consensus in Relation to  
Intention on Higher Level**



**Level of Conflict**

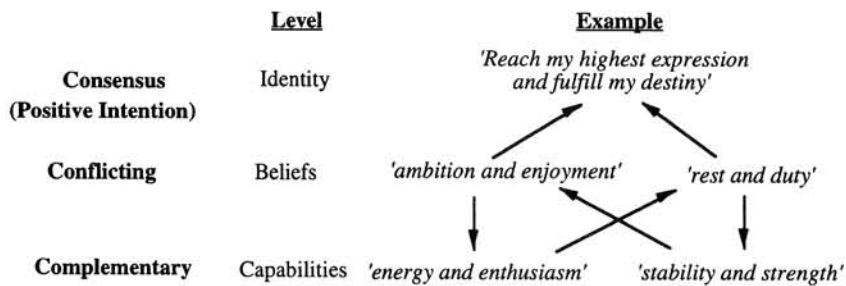


**Complementary Resources  
on Lower Level**

### **Solving a Problem Through a Different Level of Thinking Than is Creating the Problem**

In the case of my mother, she had a conflict on the level of her beliefs and values related to the past and present identity. She experienced a polarization between the part of herself that wanted to grow and have fun, and the part of herself that believed she needed to rest and stay as she was. Trying to solve the problem at the same level of thinking that was creating it led her into a double bind.

The solution came through "chunking up" to the level of identity and 'spirit' and finding the common purpose of the positive intentions behind the conflicting parts of herself. Once the level at which there was 'consensus' between the parts was identified we "chunked down" to the level of capability. At this level we were able to identify 'complementary' resources associated with each of the conflicting parts that could be used in service of the positive intention of the other parts.



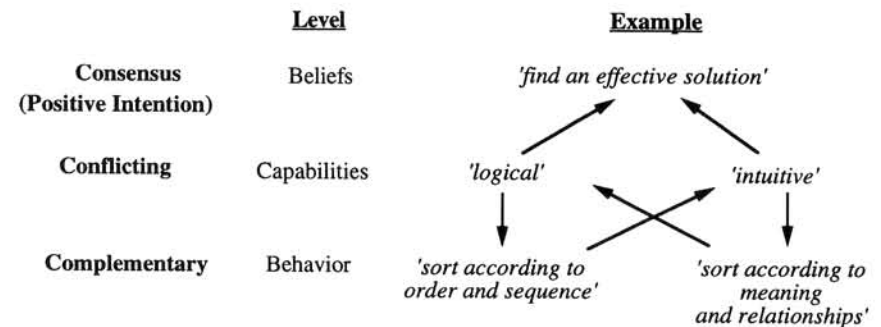
### “Chunking Up” and “Chunking Down” To Find A Solution to Conflicting Beliefs and Values

One implication of this is that conflicts can occur on several different levels. In the example of the man with the phobia, the conflict was on the level of beliefs and values related to ‘imagination’ versus ‘safety’. There may be conflicts, however, on other levels. For instance, a person may experience conflict between their capabilities to be “logical” versus “intuitive.” The person may be stuck or confused about which type of thinking process to apply to a particular problem or decision.

As I pointed out in the previous volume of this work on Einstein, resolving this level of conflict may be done in much the same way as resolving conflicts of beliefs and values - through (a) “chunking up” a level to find the positive intentions or purposes of the two different ways of thinking, and then (b) chunking down to find how the subprocesses or results of the two different capabilities can actually complement and support each other.

In the case of a conflict between “logical” and “intuitive” thinking, The common purpose at the level of intention may be at the values level, such as “finding the most effective solution.” The complementary processes associated with the different capabilities may be at the level of behavioral results. Logical thinking, for example, produces the result of “sorting something according to linear order and sequence.” This order and sequence may actually serve to stimulate new intuitions. Intuitive thinking, on the other hand, produces the behavioral result of “sorting something accord-

ing to meaning and nonlinear relationships.” These meanings and relationships may then be ordered and sequenced according to logical thinking. This seems to me to be an integration that people like Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein were able to achieve to a high degree.



### Resolving a Conflict at the Level of Capability by “Chunking Up” and “Chunking Down” to Other Levels

Perhaps the most challenging conflicts are those which occur at the level of identity. Many of us experience the tension between being a “parent” versus a “career person” or between being a “spouse” versus an “individual,” etc. Resolving conflicts related to identity involve “chunking up” to a level beyond one’s own identity. Accomplishing this requires that we are able to widen our maps of the world to be able to perceive ourselves as part of the larger system around us in order to get a sense of overall ‘mission’ and purpose.

When one aligns or identifies oneself with either the body or the mind, the ego or the id, the left brain or the right brain, logic or imagination, stability or change, then one has created an imbalance and a potential conflict. When one identifies oneself with a larger system beyond oneself, then one can see that it is the relationship between these elements that is important. Evolution and adaptation, for instance, are a function of a process of *change* on an individual level and a process of *stabilization* on a larger

environmental level. Personal evolution requires the same balance of forces at different logical levels.

The following is a summary of how Freud's principles and strategies may be applied through the NLP technique of integrating conflicting 'parts'.

1. Identify the conflicting beliefs or identity issues you have and physically sort out the 'parts' in conflict.
2. Establish a 'meta-position' or 'third position' that is disassociated from either of the beliefs or identity issues related to the conflicting parts.
3. Ask each part to express its beliefs about the other.
4. Find the *positive intention* and purpose of each part.
5. Make sure that each part recognizes and accepts the positive intent of the other.
6. From 'meta position' identify what is the common mission on a higher level (identity or spiritual) that both parts share.
7. Identify the resources and capabilities that each part has that would be helpful to the other part in order to accomplish its own positive intention and the common mission.
8. Physically synthesize and integrate the formerly conflicting parts into a new identity and internalize it in your body.
9. Imagine what it is like to go into both your past and future, taking this integration with you and experiencing how it positively influences the events of your life.

The following pages provide a more detailed description of the NLP conflict integration process (Dilts, 1978, 1983, 1990; Dilts, Hallbom, Smith, 1990), indicating how the conflicting 'parts' may be physically sorted and integrated without using either one's hands or by creating different spatial locations.

## Integration of Conflicting Parts

Internal conflicts occur when two or more co-existing belief systems or 'parts' of oneself lead to behaviors which are contradictory. This type of situation often creates a "*double bind*" (where you are "damned if you do and damned if you don't). The most problematic conflicts occur when the opposing beliefs involve identity issues where there is a negative judgment about oneself. This kind of conflict will almost always be at the root of a problem that involves a mistrust/hatred/fear etc. of oneself.

1. Identify the conflicting beliefs or identity issues you have and physically sort out the 'parts' in conflict. Some examples of common internal conflicts are provided below.

Short term pleasure *versus* Long term good  
 Doing for Self *versus* Doing for Others  
 Past (child) *versus* Future (adult)  
 Emotional *versus* Rational  
 Growth *versus* Protection  
 Dreamer *versus* Critic  
 Play *versus* Work  
 Well *versus* Ill

In general, Freud believed that the deep structure of internal conflicts involved the suppression or 'inhibition' by the "ego" of the 'excitatory' desires and passions of the "id."

- 1.1. Get in touch with the 'excitatory' part of you (the part connected with your "id") and notice any feelings associated with that part. (This may be done by asking yourself, "What do I want and desire that I am not doing, or that I feel blocked from doing?") Notice where in your body you feel that part of you. What physical posture and gestures are associated with the 'excitatory' part of you? (Pay particular attention to *asymmetries* of movements and gestures.)



1.2. Intensify the feeling of the 'excitatory' part of you even more and either:

a. Allow the feeling to move from its location in your body into the open palm of your left hand and become an image that you can see. If you have any difficulties seeing it, imagine what it would look like if you could see it.

or

b. Step into a location which represents the 'excitatory' part of you (this may be a related to position on your time line).

1.3. Get in touch with the 'inhibitory' part of you (the part connected with your "ego") and notice any feelings associated with that part of yourself. (This may be done by asking, "What is stopping me or holding me back from doing what I desire?") Now notice where in your body you feel that part of you. What physical posture and gestures are associated with the 'inhibitory' part of you?

1.4. Intensify the feeling of the 'inhibitory' part of you even more and either:

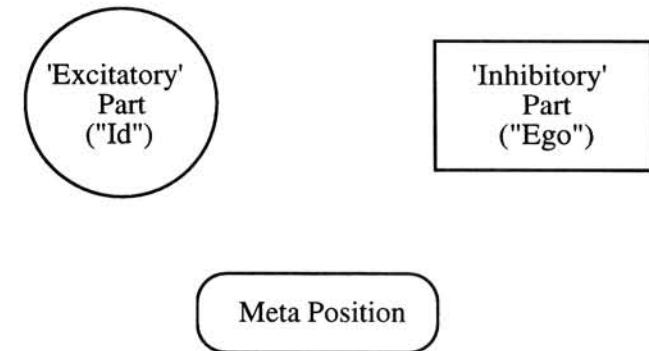
a. Allow the feeling to move from its location in your body into the open palm of your right hand and become an image that you can see. Again, if you have any difficulties seeing it, imagine what it would look like if you could see it.

or

b. Identify and step into the location that most represents the inhibitory part of yourself (again this may be a position on your time line).

2. Establish a 'meta-position' or 'third position' that is disassociated from either of the beliefs or identity issues related to the conflicting parts. (If you are using your hands this is done by visualizing both parts simultaneously. If you are using

spatial locations, this involves establishing a third location that is equidistant from the locations of the two parts in conflict.)



3. Ask each part to express its beliefs about the other. At this stage the different parts (identities) will typically dislike and distrust the other.

3.1. Ask the 'excitatory' part of yourself to turn and look at the 'inhibitory' part of yourself (or step into that part and turn to face the other) and verbalize what it thinks of that part of you. Does it like the 'inhibitory' part? Is it angry at that part? What does it think?

3.2. Now ask the 'inhibitory' part of yourself to turn and look at the 'excitatory' part of yourself (or step into that part and turn to face the other) and verbalize what it thinks of that part of you. Does it appreciate the 'excitatory' part? Is it afraid of that part? What does it think?

4. Find the *positive intention* and purpose of each part.

4.1. Return to the 'excitatory' part of yourself and ask, "What is your positive purpose or intention?" "Is it your intention to (frighten, anger, disrespect, etc.) the 'inhibitory'

part of myself? If so, what are you trying to accomplish positively by doing that?"

- 4.2. Now go to the 'inhibitory' part of yourself and ask, "What is your positive purpose or intention?" "Is it your intention to (frighten, anger, disrespect, etc.) the 'excitatory' part of myself? If so, what are you trying to accomplish positively by doing that?"
5. Make sure that each part recognizes and accepts the positive intent of the other. Ask each part if they can understand and appreciate the positive purpose or intention of the other part. Point out that, "Even though your expressions have been in conflict, your intentions are not."
6. From 'meta position' identify what is the common mission on a higher level (identity or spiritual) that both parts share. Explain the need for them to "work together in new and more effective ways."
7. Identify the resources and capabilities that each part has that would be helpful to the other part in order to accomplish its own positive intention and the common mission.
  - 7.1. Secure a congruent agreement from the parts to combine their resources so they can more fully accomplish their own purposes and the common mission. [Usually the reason that they will have mistrusted or disliked each other previously is precisely because the other has not had these resources and has thus seemed foreign and out of control.]
  - 7.2. Keep an eye out for other limiting beliefs to appear at this stage that have not surfaced previously and which will need to be refined or updated. For example, "*It isn't possible to be responsible and enjoy myself at the same time.*"
8. Physically synthesize and integrate the formerly conflicting parts into a new identity and internalize it in your body.

### 8.1. If you have been using your **hands**:

- a. Focusing on the common mission and complementary resources of both parts, allow your hands to come together slowly. As you do, sense the two parts mixing and synthesizing to become an integration that is 100% of both parts.
- b. When you feel that the integration is complete, open your hands to discover a new image which represents a full integration and synthesis.
- c. Put the new, integrated part of yourself into your body by bringing both hands to the part of your body to which this new part now belongs.

### 8.2. If you have been using **spatial sorting**:

- a. Step into location representing the 'inhibitory' part of yourself. Anchor the state (positive intent, sense of common mission, resources and capabilities) associated with that part.
- b. Holding the anchor, walk to a location just behind the 'excitatory' part and act as a mentor to that part giving support and any needed resources.
- c. Then step into the position of the 'excitatory' part of you and experience the presence of the wisdom, support and resources of the other part.
- d. Focusing on the special resources of the 'excitatory' and the transformation brought about by the resources of the 'inhibitory' part, walk to the location of the 'inhibitory' part, carrying all of those resources, and step into the location of the 'inhibitory' part - so that each part has within it the resources of the other. Pay attention to the experience of integration and symmetry.

e. Return to your 'meta position' and visualize the two parts moving toward one another at the same rate that you walk toward them. At the location where the two parts meet, reach out both of your hands and bring both identities inside of you.

9. Imagine what it is like to go into both your past and future, taking this integration with you and experiencing how it positively influences the events of your life.

[NOTE: Sometimes a conflict may involve more than two 'parts'. In such a case you may either do the integrations two at a time (if you are using the 'hands' method) or expand the process to include all of the parts at once by creating additional physical locations for those parts.]

## Footnotes to Section 10

1. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud, Pocket Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 358.
2. *Therapy and Technique*, Sigmund Freud, Collier Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 46.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.
5. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud, Pocket Books, New York, NY, 1963, pp. 358-359.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 440.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 368.
8. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Sigmund Freud; *The Freud Reader*; Gay, Peter (Ed.), W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1989, p. 596.
9. *Aristotle*, Britannica Great Books, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., Chicago Ill., 1979.
10. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Sigmund Freud; *The Freud Reader*; Gay, Peter (Ed.), W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1989, p. 606.
11. *The Ego and the Id*, Sigmund Freud; *The Freud Reader*; Gay, Peter (Ed.), W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1989, p. 635.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 635-636.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 636.



14. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Sigmund Freud; *The Freud Reader*; Gay, Peter (Ed.), W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1989, p. 603.
15. *Three Case Histories*, Sigmund Freud, Collier Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 39.
16. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud, Pocket Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 440.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 445.
18. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Sigmund Freud; *The Freud Reader*; Gay, Peter (Ed.), W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1989, p. 596.
19. *The Ego and the Id*, Sigmund Freud; *The Freud Reader*; Gay, Peter (Ed.), W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1989, pp. 636-637.

## Section 11: Freud and Self-Organization Theory

In Freud's time, the formal study of systems had not yet begun. It was not until after the second World War that 'cybernetics' and 'systems theory' became a part of science. Yet, in many ways, Freud's theories and ideas anticipate systems theory and are remarkably systemic in their assumptions. In fact, a number of his principles are quite close to one of the most recent developments in the study of systems—the study of 'self organizing' systems.

*Self-organization theory* is a branch of systems theory that relates to the process of order formation in complex dynamic systems. Paradoxically, it arose from the study of chaos. Scientists studying chaos (the absence of order) noticed that when enough complexly interacting elements were brought together, rather than create chaos, order seemed to 'spontaneously' form as a result of the interaction.

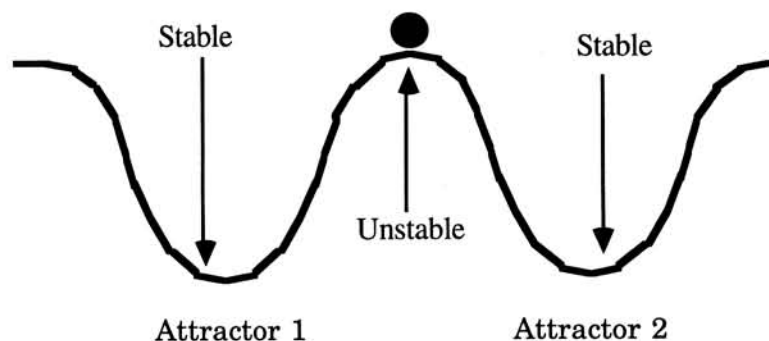
In our nervous system, for instance, self-organizing processes are thought to be the result of massive associative connections between our nerve cells. These associations are thought to be established and elaborated according to the 'Hebb' rule. Hebb was a Nobel prize winning neurologist that discovered if two interconnected neurons in a similar state respond simultaneously, their connection is strengthened. In other words, rather than a 'beaten path' established by physical force, the strength of the associative connections between the parts of our brain and nervous system is determined by a kind 'rapport' between the nerve cells.\*

According to 'self-organization' theory, order in an interconnected system of elements arises around what are called '*attractors*', which help to create and hold stable patterns within the system. These attractors form a kind of 'landscape' that shape and determine patterns of interaction within the system. The following diagram illustrates a simple landscape made of two '*attractors*',

---

\*The Hebb rule may even be at the root of the basic strategy for establishing rapport in NLP, which involves the 'mirroring' of another person's behavioral or cognitive patterns.

represented as two valleys or 'basins'. If one imagines that the ball shown in the diagram is able to move over the landscape, it is easy to visualize how the bottoms of the valleys would make a very stable location for the ball. The ridge where the ball is sitting, however, would be a very unstable location. If the ball were resting at the bottom of one of these valleys, it would take much more energy to move it to a new location than it would if the starting state of the ball were in the unstable location.



**Attractor 'Landscape'**

In many ways the mental and emotional fabric of our lives could be viewed as such a landscape. Perceptual "attractors," for example, are the focal point in a phenomenon around which the rest of our perceptions become organized. Consider the well-known picture below. Is it an image of a young woman wearing a necklace or old woman with her head bowed?



Attractor 1  
Young Woman

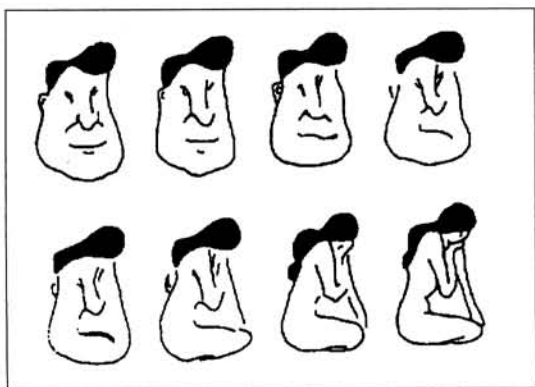
Attractor 2  
Old Woman

**Attractor 'Landscape' of the Picture Above**

Of course, the picture itself is simply a complex combination or 'landscape' of lines and light and dark areas. The women, young or old, are not really on the paper, but rather in our minds. We "see" a "young" or "old" woman because of basic assumptions and deep structures within our own nervous systems - what Aristotle referred to as "formal causes." To move between the 'images' in the 'landscape' we need to first destabilize our focus on one attractor and subsequently restabilize or 'fixate' our attention around the new attractor.

Some other examples of 'attractor landscapes', are shown below. The first group shows the face of man transforming or "morphing" into the body of a woman (a transformation that Freud would no doubt appreciate). At the extremes the two images are clear and 'stable'. The intermediate images become progressively more ambiguous. In the middle, it is more difficult to "fix" upon one particular image.

Again, the experience of "man's face" or "woman's body" are not in the marks on the paper but in our own nervous system (a bee or a dog would not be likely to recognize either image).



### The Face of Man or the Body of a Woman?

The following set of words show a transformation between the words "endure" and "change" as the two verbal 'attractors'.



### "Endure" or "Change?"

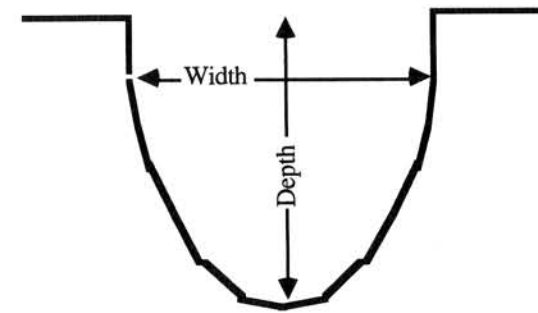
Of course, 'attractors' are not only a perceptual phenomenon. They occur in other forms as well. For example, a similar process seems to be behind the neurological mechanisms by which we are able to establish different 'parts' of ourselves within the same nervous system. As an analogy, the two parts of my mother, the gaudy young woman and the old hag-like woman, were both present within her, like the images of the women in the picture above. In certain circumstances, her system would self organize to bring the energetic, younger woman into the foreground. In other situations, the older gray woman would be in the foreground. The transition time in her life created a destabilization in her system such that neither self image was no longer appropriate or ecological for her. By integrating these parts into a new self image, she altered her internal 'landscape'.

Certainly, Freud's concepts of "fixation" and the idea of an "imprint" are quite similar to the notion of an 'attractor'. Of course, in self organizing systems, the 'force' of the "attraction" does not actually come from the object or event outside of the system, but is rather the result of the interaction between the system and its environment. 'Attractors' are simply an external reference point around which the rest of system organizes its activity. For example, for a newly hatched duckling, 'movement' is

the initial attractor around which the nervous system of the duckling begins to form the rest of its representation of 'mother'.

Freud's theory of the phenomena of hysteria and neurosis can be enriched by the understanding of self organization theory. For instance, Freud connected many of the phenomena of hysterical and neurotic symptoms with the establishment of 'altered' or 'hypnoidal' states. According to self organization theory, such states would be considered patterns of organization within the nervous system of the individual which could be 'self organized' and maintained under certain conditions. Aspects of the events in which these states first occurred could become anchors or 'attractors' around which the state would spontaneously self organize and reoccur later on. Thus, events and "imprints" function as the initial "attractors" for our later models of the world; both drawing out experiences and collecting them into memory. These collections of representations then become an "attractor" themselves for the next level of organization.

In self organization theory, the 'strength' of an attractor is described in terms of the 'depth' and 'width' of its 'basin'. The 'depth' of the basin relates to the intensity of the attraction. The 'width' of the basin relates to how easy it is to access that particular state in different situations. For example, some of our states may be very strong and powerful, but only available to us in a small number of special circumstances - like moments of inspiration that are intense but few and far between. Other states may be relatively weak, but are available to us in many different circumstances - such as short moments of irritation or doubt which may occur in a variety of situations but are easily overcome.



**The Influence of an 'Attraction' is Described in Terms of the 'Depth' and 'Width' of its 'Basin'**

Thus, a basin that is 'deep' but 'narrow' would be a strong state that we only experience upon occasion. A 'shallow' but 'wide' basin would be like a state that we are able to experience in many different situations, but which is not very intense. A 'shallow' and narrow basin would represent a very transient state that we experience only rarely and not very strongly. A 'deep' and 'wide' basin would be a state that is intense and easy to access in a variety of different circumstances.

The individual 'attractor landscapes' of our own lives would depend to a certain degree on the influence of our personal histories. For instance, a person who has experienced a traumatic event, but in a very unusual circumstance, might develop a very intense reaction (a 'deep' basin) but only in very specific circumstances (a 'narrow' width). The man I mentioned earlier who had a fear of diving in 'murky water' would be an example of this. A person who has had a frightening experience but in a more common situation might have an intense reaction as well, but experience it more often and in more contexts (its basin is 'wider'). This would be more like the situation of the man who had the phobia of being in any building over a certain height.

Establishing a 'metacognition' or 'meta position' with respect to challenging past experiences could be viewed as a way to help make the 'attractor basin' of those particular experiences 'wider'



(available to our conscious awareness in more circumstances) but also more 'shallow' (lowering the emotional affect associated with the experience).

Within the metaphor of a 'landscape', change processes could be viewed in one of two ways; (1) surface level or (2) deep level changes. 'Surface' level change would involve moving the ball to a different part of the landscape; but leaving the landscape unchanged. Trying to ignore a bad feeling and stay optimistic would be an example of attempting to move the ball of one's 'consciousness' to a different part of one's mental or emotional landscape. Change at the level of 'deep structure' would involve modifying the landscape itself by actually altering the 'attractors' or the attractor 'basin'. Finding the source of the bad feeling and transforming it by 'reimprinting' for instance, would be an example of this level of change.

The basic process of deep level change in a self organizing system involves first 'destabilizing' the existing attractors which hold the system in its present state, and then introducing or activating a new attractor that will alter the 'landscape' of the system. In self organization theory, the resulting change in the landscape is considered to be produced or 'unveiled' through the process of 'iteration'. This is because self organizing systems tend to impact their environment by continually attempting to manifest their own internal deep structures. Looked at from this perspective, solutions to problems emerge organically through successive cycles of iteration—similar to Freud's notion of "associative correction." A strong representation of a goal, for example, can be an "attractor" for possible resources and solutions. Each stage of the process of achieving that goal is another 'iteration', building upon the previous ones, until the final product is produced; much like organic growth in nature or a mathematical fractal.

One illustration of how these principles may be applied to personal change is in the NLP technique known as the 'Swish pattern'. Combined with the principles of self organization, the swish pattern can also cast some light on the important and fundamental process that Freud called 'sublimation'.

## Self-Organization, Sublimation and the 'Swish' Pattern

In his study of Leonardo, Freud claimed that the specific mechanism of 'sublimation' was essentially a mystery. Within the framework of self organization, however, the sublimation of one object for another—such as Leonardo's substitution of scientific research for sexual activity—could be viewed as finding an alternative 'attractor' for a particular deep structure.

In NLP, 'attractor' type phenomena are believed to occur with respect to the 'submodalities' of the various sensory representational systems. *Submodalities* are the particular perceptual qualities that may be registered by each of the five primary sensory modalities. Our visual modality, for instance, can perceive such qualities as color, brightness, shape, depth, etc.; our auditory modality is capable of registering volume, pitch, tempo, etc.; our kinesthetic system perceives such qualities as pressure, temperature, texture, etc., and so on. Each sub-modality registers qualities that may range between two opposites: color<=>black-and-white, bright<=>dim, loud<=>quiet, high<=>low, hot<=>cold, heavy<=>light, etc.

According to Aristotle (see *Volume I*) it was the ratio between these polarities that determined what was pleasurable and unpleasurable, and thus what was to be approached or avoided and how much it was to be approached or avoided. If something was too much at either end of the polarity, for instance, it became uncomfortable. There was a certain range of balance in which one experiences comfort. For example, a fire is, in and of itself, neither good nor bad, pleasurable or painful. If one gets too close to the fire the ratio of hot-to-cold is too much on the hot side and it becomes uncomfortable. If one gets too far away from the fire, and it is cold weather, the ratio of hot-to-cold gets too much on the cold side and it also becomes uncomfortable.

In NLP it is also believed that the submodality characteristics of an experience determine much about the type and degree of affect that experience will have for a person. In other words, it is not only the content of a particular experience or memory that will determine how a person responds, but the formal characteristics of the

representation of that experience. The same image, for example, may be experienced as either attractive or repulsive depending upon certain submodality characteristics. An inviting image of a slice of chocolate cake may seem less inviting if the color of the cake is suddenly changed to green, for instance.

As another example, there was a time in my mother's process of healing her cancer in which an image came into her mind of a demonic looking creature dressed in black that threatened her and made her feel doubtful and afraid. She tried to block the image and put it out of her mind; but it kept returning. It was as if this image had become an 'attractor' for her fears and doubts. (In the metaphor of a 'landscape', this creature was like a hole or ditch along the path of her healing. She would try to roll the ball out of the middle of the basin, but as soon as she stopped efforting, the ball would roll back to the bottom.)

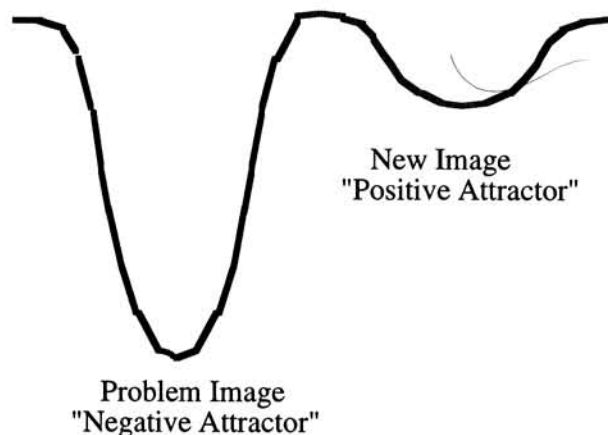
Rather than blocking out the image, I invited my mother to explore the positive purposes of fear and doubt. She realized that the positive intention of both of them was to protect her and make sure that she was taking care of herself. Having understood and acknowledged those intentions we decided to use a more appropriate 'attractor'. Rather than simply trying to make the old one go away, we adopted a strategy of 'pacing and leading'. I first asked her if she could just make the image of the demonic figure slightly smaller. She was able to do this and, when she did, its affect became a little less. I then asked if she could make the image two-dimensional—not change the content of the image, but simply make it two dimensional. She was also able to do that, which lessened the affect even more. I then asked if she could put a frame around it. She did. Finally I asked if she could change its color. She imagined the figure in a bright yellow outfit. At this point the image of the creature had become so laughable and harmless to her that it just seemed to disappear on its own—never to return. In place of this creature my mother decided to replace it with an image of a 'guardian angel'. To make the image of this angel powerful and 'attractive', she made the image large, three-dimensional, bright and glowing with light. This new image would also satisfy the positive intention of protecting her and making sure that she was taking care of herself, but the affect, of course, was quite different.

In Freud's terminology one could say my mother 'sublimated' her fear by shifting it to a different image. In the language of self organization theory, one would say that she had reduced the 'depth' and 'width' of the negative attractor's basin (by altering the submodalities of size and dimension) and finally destabilized it (by placing the image of the creature in the yellow outfit). She then substituted a new attractor, using submodalities to increase the depth and width of its basin.

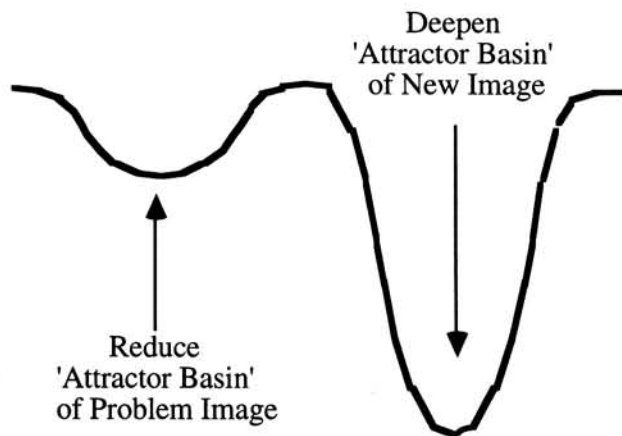
On another level, one could say that this process was a basic application of Freud's 'pleasure principle'. My mother was using the submodalities of the internal images to move 'away from' the negative unpleasurable image, and 'toward' the positive pleasurable image.

It is this combination of processes that make up what is called the 'swish pattern' in NLP (Bandler, 1984). The swish pattern is typically used to help people deal with problematic responses that are associated with a specific mental image. Compulsive or obsessive responses, such as the uncontrollable desire for cigarettes, sweets or food, for example, are often associated with a particular image of the item toward which the compulsion or obsession is directed—what Freud might have called an "object of the libido." These are the types of images that always seem to keep coming back no matter how hard one attempts to put them out of one's mind.

The swish pattern begins in much the same way as the intervention I described with my mother's internal 'creature'. The first step is to identify the compulsive desire or idea and the associated image. The next step is to identify or create an image, to take the place of the problematic image, that satisfies any positive purposes of the problematic image but leads to a different affect. Of course, even though this new image will be desirable, it will still not be as strong an 'attractor' as the problem image (i.e., the 'basin' of the problem image will be 'deeper' than the new image).

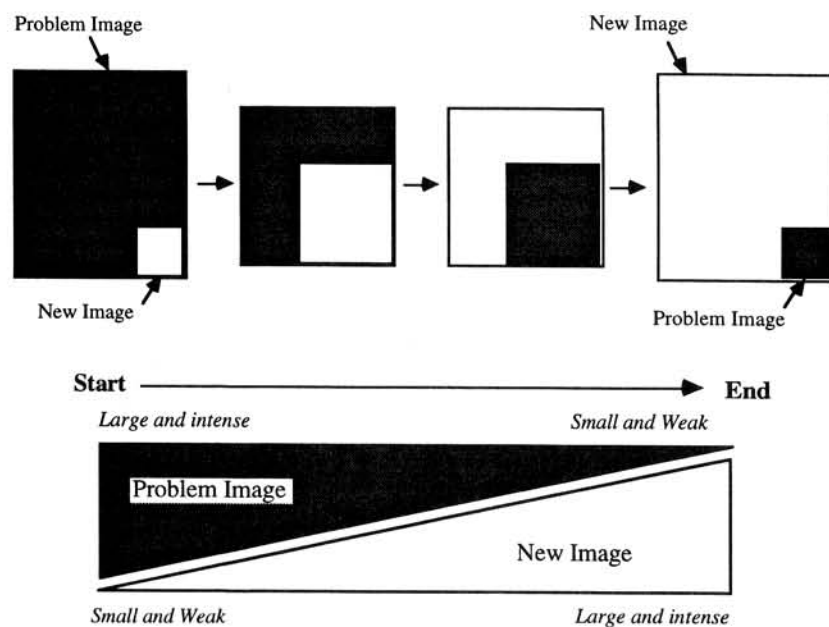


The third step is to explore which of the submodality qualities of the images influence the degree of intensity of the response. This is done by altering such qualities as the color, brightness, focus, movement, depth, shape, etc., of the images and noticing how it influences your feelings in relation to them. The key is to find the submodality qualities that diminish the intensity of response associated with the problematic image and augment the intensity of the response associated with the new image. (That is, which submodalities make the 'basin' of the problem image 'shallower' and the 'basin' of the positive image 'deeper'.)



The core of the swish pattern, however, (and the reason for the name 'swish') lies in the way the new image is substituted for the problematic image. The problematic image needs to be destabilized and replaced with the new image such that you have the sense of going 'away from' the problem image and 'toward' the new 'attractor'. This is done by a unique form of 'pacing and leading'.

In a typical swish process, the problem image is made large and close, so that its associated affect is strong and immediate. Superimposed on the problem image, say in the lower right hand corner, is the new image; small and distant. The swish process proceeds by slowly beginning to make the large and close negative image become slightly smaller and a bit more distant. At the same time, the new image is made slightly larger and closer. As the problem image becomes progressively smaller and more distant you begin to further diminish its intensity by shifting the submodality qualities that you explored in the previous step. As the new image becomes closer and larger, you begin to apply the submodality qualities that you found to enhance and strengthen it. You continue the process until the new image has become large and close and the problem has become small, dim and distant.



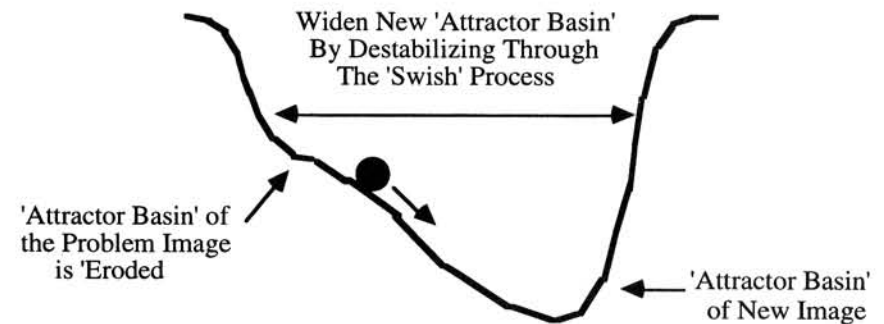
Progression of Exchange of Images in the 'Swish' Pattern



When you have been able to make this exchange, you then return the two images again to their starting state—in which the problem image was large and close, and the new image was small and distant. It is important to note that you do not do this by reversing the exchange you just made. Once the first exchange has been made you simply stop, clear your mind, and return to the starting state of the two images. This is done so that the transfer is always made in the direction of the new image.

When you have returned again to the starting state, you repeat the swish process again; making the problem image progressively smaller, more distant and less intense, while you simultaneously bring the image closer, making it larger and more intense. This time however, you imagine the exchange happening a little faster. When you are done you again return to the starting state and repeat the swish process, a bit faster. You continue to iterate this cycle of exchange in your mind, faster and faster until you reach a rate of exchange that is faster than you can consciously keep track of.

This process of rapid iteration serves to not only 'deepen' but also to 'widen' the 'attractor basin' of the new image, such that it encompasses or 'erodes' the basin of the problem image. In the metaphor of a 'landscape', the ball will roll on past the small indentation of the problem image into the deeper basin of the new image. In fact, the check for how well a particular 'swish' process has worked is to try to bring the previously problematic image back and hold it. If the process was successful, the problem image should immediately give way to the new image. In Freud's terms, the 'affective force' of the previously problematic image would have been transferred or 'sublimated' to the new image. All of the deep structure 'instincts' and 'impulses' which were previously attached to the problem image are now reattached to the new image; although their "affective coloring" will be different. Whatever other issues may be associated with, or symbolized by the images, become addressed naturally through "associative correction."



**Through the Iteration of the Exchange of Images  
The Attractor Basin of the New Image is Deepened  
and Widened to Incorporate the Basin of the  
Previously Problematic Image**

According to Freud the impact of an experience had more to do with its rate of change within a given period of time than its content. As he explained it:

*We have decided to relate pleasure and unpleasure to the quantity of excitation that is present in the mind but is not in any way 'bound'; and to relate them in such a manner that unpleasure corresponds to an increase in the quantity of excitation and pleasure to a diminution. What we are implying by this is not a simple relation between the strength of the feelings of pleasure and unpleasure and the corresponding modifications in the quantity of excitation...the factor that determines the feeling is probably the amount of increase or diminution in the quantity of excitation in a given period of time.<sup>1</sup>*

Freud comments that "unpleasure corresponds to an increase in the quantity of excitation and pleasure to a diminution," but not in a simple mechanical correspondence. He claims that "the factor that determines the feeling" is a function of "the amount of increase or diminution in the quantity of excitation in a given



*period of time.*” One of the ideas from which the ‘swish’ process sprang was what I call the ‘pico principle’. A ‘pico second’ is theoretically the smallest imaginable unit of time. The application of the pico principle in the swish process involves making the greatest “amount of increase or diminution in the quantity of excitation” in the shortest possible period of time.

Thus, in the swish process, two fundamental dynamics are operating simultaneously. First, both “increase” and “diminution” are happening at the same time in order to maximally direct the ‘pleasure principle’. Secondly, by working to produce the change in the briefest amount of time, the greatest possible impact is being achieved.

The following is a brief review of the ‘swish’ process.

1. Identify the compulsive desire or idea and the associated image.
2. Identify or create an image, to take the place of the problematic image, that satisfies any positive purposes of the problematic image but leads to a different affect.
3. Explore which submodality qualities of the images influence their degree of intensity by altering such qualities as the color, brightness, focus, movement, depth, shape, etc., of the images and noticing how it influences your feelings in relation to them. Find the submodality qualities that diminish the intensity of response associated with the problematic image and augment the intensity of the response associated with the new image.
4. Begin with the limiting image very large and intense and the desired image small and weak. Slowly make the problem image smaller and weaker. *At the same time* make the new image larger and more intense. Repeat this at least five times, making the process faster and faster each time.
5. Test by trying to make the limiting image and hold it.

## Belief Change Cycle

The swish pattern works well for relatively simple ‘landscapes’ associated with a well defined problem. It is not really designed to address deeper issues that involve changes in core beliefs and identity. Principles of self organization, however, can be combined with Freud’s strategies and NLP tools to create a basic framework for deeper level belief changes. In fact, I have developed a process called the ‘belief change cycle’, that employs Freud’s principles together with self organization theory and NLP to make a simple but powerful process of changing beliefs.

People often consider the process of changing beliefs to be difficult and effortful. And yet, the fact remains that people naturally and spontaneously change dozens if not hundreds of beliefs during their lifetime. Perhaps the difficulty is that when we consciously attempt to change our beliefs, we do so in a way that does not respect the natural cycle of belief change. We try to change our beliefs by “repressing” them or fighting with them. According to Freud’s principles and the theory of self organization, beliefs would change through a natural cycle in which the parts of a person’s system which hold the existing belief in place become destabilized. A belief could be considered a type of high level attractor around which the system organizes. When the system is destabilized, the new belief may be brought in without conflict or violence. The system may then be allowed to restabilize around a new point of balance or homeostasis.

As Freud acknowledged, organic systems often change through processes that take the form of cycles. While the content of these cycles shift and vary, the deep structure of the cycle stays constant. From the view of systems theory, Freud’s therapeutic methods involve a structure in which an existing pattern in the ‘landscape’ is reaccessed and then ‘destabilized’ by bringing in new insights and perspectives. When new ‘attractors’ are introduced into this destabilized state, in the form of new understandings and resources, the system naturally and spontaneously reorganizes itself through “associative correction” into a new stable pattern.

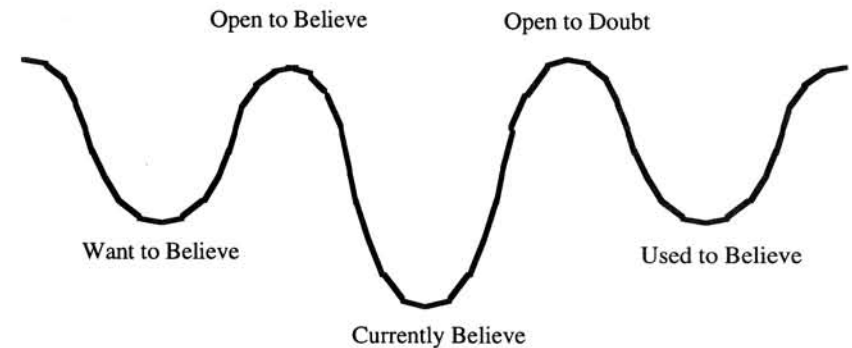
This natural cycle of change might be likened to the changing of the seasons. A new belief is like a seed that becomes planted in the

Spring. The seed grows into the Summer where it matures, becomes strong and takes root. In the Autumn the belief begins to become outdated and wither, its purpose served. The fruits of the belief, however, (the positive intentions and purposes behind it) are retained or 'harvested', and separated from the parts that are no longer necessary. Finally, in the Winter, the parts of the belief which are no longer needed are let go of and fade away, allowing the cycle to begin again.

In my work with beliefs and belief change, I have noticed this cycle occurring over and over again. As we prepare for the different stages in our lives or careers, for instance, we 'want to believe' that we will be able to manage them successfully and resourcefully. As we enter that stage of life and learn the lessons that we need in order to manage, we become 'open to believe' that we may, in fact, have the capabilities to be successful and resourceful. As our capabilities become confirmed, we become confident in our 'belief' that we are successful and resourceful and that what we are doing is right for us for now. As we begin to pass that stage of life or work, we begin to become 'open to doubt' that the success and activities associated with that stage are really what is most important, priorital or 'true' for us anymore. When we are past that stage, we are able to look back and see that what used to be important and true for us is no longer the case. We can recognize that we 'used to believe' that we were a certain way and that certain things were important; and we can retain the beliefs and capabilities that will help us in our current phase, but we realize that our values, priorities and beliefs are now different.

All one needs to do is to look over the cycles of change that one has gone through since childhood, adolescence, and the stages of adulthood to find many examples of this cycle. As we enter and pass through relationships, jobs, friendships, partnerships, etc., we develop beliefs and values which serve us, and let them go again as we transition to a new part of our life's path. One need only look at the changes in the relationship between the 'communist' and 'capitalist' countries in the second half of this century to see the cycle on a macro scale. As these countries have gone from allies to enemies to neighbors, they have gone through the process of becoming open to believe something new and are open to doubt what was true in the past.

In the terms of self organization theory, we can summarize this cycle as a 'landscape' that looks something like the following diagram.



### 'Landscape' of Natural Belief Change Cycle

What we 'want to believe', what we 'currently believe' and what we 'used to believe', are like three 'basins' in the landscape. The experiences and ideas, both perceived and imagined, which make up our lives can collect or rest in the bottoms of these basins. If one visualizes a particular experience or idea as a ball or pebble that can pass over the landscape, then in order to move from wanting to believe something to actually believing it, we must first pass over the part of the landscape in which we become 'open to believe' it. The part of the landscape in which one is 'open to believe' something new is less stable than those at the bottoms of the basins on either side of it; and it sometimes requires an investment of effort to reach this part of the landscape. The 'currently believe' basin is represented as deeper than the others because the ideas that we do currently believe are generally held more strongly and are more stable than what we 'want to believe' or 'used to believe'. It sometimes takes more effort to move one of our current beliefs to the less stable part of our landscape in which we can become 'open to doubt' it. Once we have made that transition, certain aspects of that belief may fall back into the basin of our current beliefs.

Others, however, come to rest in the part of the landscape that holds those beliefs that we are aware of and that we 'used to believe' but no longer believe.

Of course there are times when what we want to believe comes in conflict with what we currently believe. In this case it may be necessary to be both open to believe and open to doubt at the same time, so that the positive intentions and purposes of the two beliefs may be examined and harmonized. Similar to the process of conflict integration described earlier, both the desired belief and the older belief may need to be revised and synthesized. It should be kept in mind however, that being open to believe and open to doubt both involve instability, which can be quite disorienting and even frightening to some. To preserve the ecology of the system in these moments, when one is not sure what to believe, it is often important to introduce another 'attractor' into the system in the form of the experience of 'trust'—that which goes 'beyond belief'.

The destabilization of one part of the system requires that its point of stability shifts to another part of the system or to another level in the system. (As Aristotle pointed out, "That which creates change or movement, is that which does not change.") Changing the 'content' of one's behavior, for instance, is usually done by applying a stable and consistent 'process'. For example, spelling involves the learning of many different words. For a good speller, however, even though each word is different, the process, or 'strategy', for learning each new word is the same. It involves establishing and stabilizing a visual image of the word in one's mind's eye. In the process of reframing, as another example, many different behaviors are able to serve the same stable positive intention. In general, instability on one level most ecologically takes place in the context of stability or integration on a higher level.

Thus, when something is changing or unstable on one level, it is helpful to establish stability at the next highest level of 'deep structure'. If, instead of changing behaviors, people are learning a new mental skill or capability, for instance, it is useful for them to have stable beliefs and values in relation to that skill. In other words, even though people may be uncertain about their new skill they can be certain in their belief that they will eventually learn the skill and that it is valuable. Likewise, if a person is in a

situation where he or she is changing a belief or needing to establish a new belief, it will make it easier if that person has a stable sense of identity. So that even if the person does not know what to believe anymore, the person still knows who he or she is. Similarly, if a person's identity is changing or unstable, it would be important for that person to find a point of stability on a 'spiritual' level in terms of his or her position within the larger system of which he or she is a part.

The experience of 'trusting' in something that is beyond one's beliefs, or trusting in a larger system than oneself, can help to make the process of belief change smoother, more comfortable and more ecological. In guiding people through the process of changing their beliefs I generally have them create a space or location for the experience of 'trusting' in something beyond their beliefs, which serves as a kind of 'meta position' to the rest of the process. I then have them lay out separate locations for each of the states associated with the 'landscape' of belief change. This essentially involves having the person put himself or herself as fully as possible into the experience and physiology associated with each of these aspects of the natural cycle of belief change and 'anchoring' them to specific spatial locations.

1. 'Wanting to believe' something new.
2. The experience of being 'open to believe' something new.

[Note: As an additional 'attractor' I sometimes invite people to identify a 'mentor' that helped them to become more 'open to believe' by 'resonating' with, releasing or unveiling something deeply within them. I then have them make a physical space for the mentor near the 'open to believe' space. Mentors can include children, teachers, pets, people you've never met but have read about, phenomena in nature (such as the ocean, mountains, etc.) and even yourself.]

3. The beliefs that you 'currently believe' now, including any limiting beliefs or beliefs that conflict with the new belief that you would like to have more strongly.



4. The experience of being 'open to doubt' something you had believed for a long time.

[Again I may invite people to identify another 'mentor' that helped them to become more open to doubt something that was limiting them in their life.]

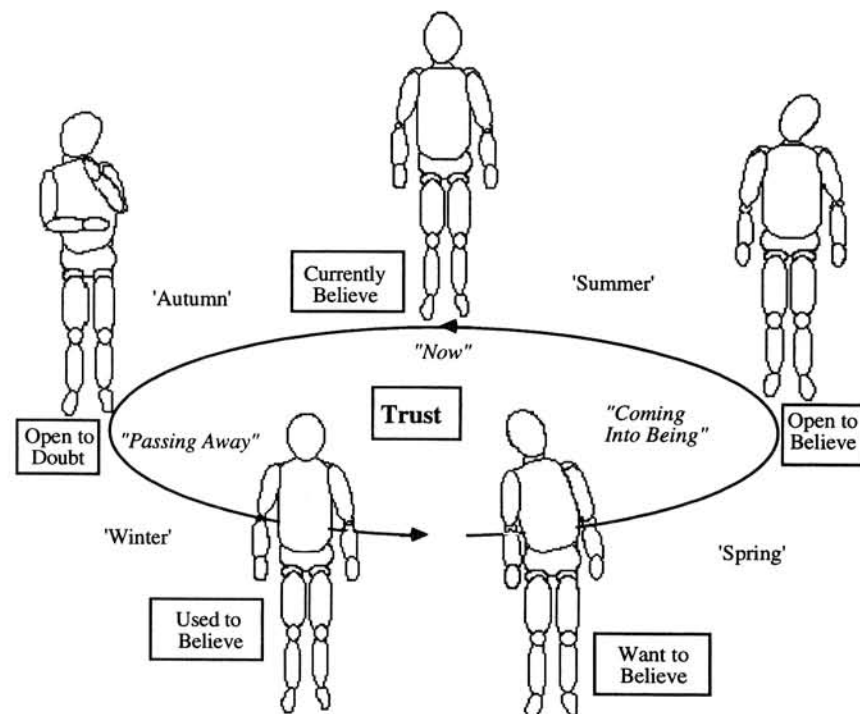
5. Beliefs that you 'used to believe' but no longer believe.

[This is a space that I like to call the 'museum of personal history'. The implication being that these beliefs are not simply garbage that has been discarded, but are experiences that have played a significant role in one's life. They can now be observed and respected instead of "repressed." (In fact it has been said that "He who ignores his history is doomed to repeat it.") They are still a part of one's history, even though they are no longer a part of one's identity.]

6. An experience of deep 'trust' - perhaps a time when you did not know what to believe anymore but were able to trust in yourself or a higher power.

Incidentally, these states and mentors do not need to have any connection to the current belief issue the person is trying to resolve. In fact, when initially laying out the landscape, it is best to keep the states as general as possible, otherwise the person becomes too caught up in the content of his or her current issue, and can 'contaminate' the landscape.

Rather than have people locate these states on a linear time line, I have them organize them into a kind of circular pattern representing a cycle. This is because different types of time lines focus our attention in different ways and tend to be more appropriate for different levels of processes. For example, preparing to enact physical behaviors can be best done via an 'in time' time line. Planning a course of action or considering one's capabilities requires the broader perspective of the 'through time' time line. Processes related to beliefs and identity are often best represented in the form of cycles as they tend to involve recurring patterns rather than one time linear events.



### 'Landscape' of States Associated with the Belief Change Cycle

Aristotle, for instance, believed that linear time lines were more appropriate for describing processes that related to mechanical cause and effect and identifying specific and discrete sequences of steps. He considered the influence of time with respect to biological and mental phenomena in a different way. As he explained it:

*"[There is a] common saying that human affairs form a circle, and that there is a circle in all other things that have a natural movement of coming into being and passing away. This is because all other things are discriminated by*



*time, and end and begin as though conforming to a cycle; for even time itself is thought to be a circle...So to say that things that come into being form a circle is to say that there is a circle of time; and to say that it is measured by circular movement."*<sup>2</sup>

Perceiving events in the "circle" or "cycle" of time help us to recognize recurrent patterns, view processes as whole and to identify how the different steps relate to the "natural movement" of the whole. Thus, time that relates to mechanical processes is best represented by the classical 'time line'. However, time that relates to more organic processes involving the "natural movement of coming into being and passing away" may be best represented in the form of circles and "cycles."

### *Implementing the Belief Change Cycle*

Once this landscape has been laid out it can be utilized in many different ways. One of the common ways in which I use it is to have a person think of a new belief that he or she would like strengthen and simply 'walk it' through the natural steps of the cycle. The instructions would proceed as follows:

1. Stand in the 'Want to Believe' space, think of the 'new belief' that you would like to have more confidence in. Holding this belief in mind move into the 'Open to Believe' space. (If you have chosen a 'mentor' for this state, you may step into his or her 'shoes' at this point. Seeing yourself through the eyes of your mentor, you may give the you who is 'open to believe' the new beliefs any helpful advice or support.)
2. Feel what it is like to become more open to believe this new belief. When you intuitively feel the time is appropriate, step into the 'Currently Believe' space concentrating on the new belief you want to have.
3. If there are any conflicting or limiting beliefs that come up in the 'Currently Believe' space, hold them in mind and move to

the 'Open to Doubt' space. (Again, if you have chosen a 'mentor' for your 'open to doubt' state, you may step into his or her 'shoes' at this point. Seeing yourself through the eyes of your mentor, you may give the you who is becoming 'open to doubt' any of the limiting or conflicting beliefs any helpful advice or support.)

4. *Ecology Check:* Go to the 'Trust' space and consider the positive intents and purpose of both the new belief and any conflicting or limiting beliefs. Consider whether there are any changes or revisions you would like to make to the new belief. Also consider if there are any parts of the old beliefs that would be worth retaining or incorporating along with the new belief.
5. Return to the old limiting or conflicting beliefs that you left in the 'Open to Doubt' space, bringing the insights you had from the 'Trust' space and move them into the 'Used to Believe' space—your 'Museum of Personal History'.
6. Step back into to the 'Currently Believe' space and focus on the new beliefs you want to strengthen. Experience your new sense of confidence and verbalize any new insights or learnings that you may have discovered during this process.
7. *Ecology Check:* Again step into the 'Trust' Space and consider the changes you have made. Know that, because this is a natural, organic and ongoing cycle, the process can continue to evolve and that you can make any necessary adjustments in the future in the way that is most appropriate and ecological for you.

Many people find that simply walking through these locations (or even imagining walking through these locations) and reexperiencing the states allows them to gently and completely shift their beliefs.

*Symbolic Belief Change Cycle*

Another application of this belief change 'landscape' involves the creation of symbols for each of the locations. This can be very powerful for two reasons. First, it adds an additional 'attractor' to each state making them more easily accessible. Secondly, as Freud pointed out, symbols often help us to involve unconscious processes more in the process of change.

The symbolic belief change cycle involves creating symbols for each of the states that make up the belief change 'landscape'. The symbols are then synthesized into a personal story or metaphor for belief change.

When coming up with the symbols, it is important to keep in mind that they do not need to 'logically' relate to each other in any way. They should just simply emerge from your unconscious. It is not necessary that they make any sense at first. Just write down what pops into your mind as a symbol for the state.

Remember the states which make up the landscape and their symbols should be kept general and not connected to any particular belief issues. In this process, there will be separate symbols or characters for the particular belief you would like to have or to strengthen, and any limiting or conflicting beliefs. As an analogy, the symbols relating to the states which make up the belief change landscape will make up the 'stage' on which the story is played out. The desired and limiting beliefs will be the 'characters' that move around on that stage.

1. Stand into the 'Want to Believe' space and think of what it is like when you want to believe something new. Create a symbol or metaphor for 'wanting to believe' something new.

Symbol: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1.1. Make up a character or symbol for the new beliefs you would like to develop or strengthen.

Character/Symbol: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Move into the 'Open to Believe' space and think of what it is like when you are open to believe something new. What is your metaphor or symbol for being 'open to believe'?

Symbol: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Stand in the 'Currently Believe' space and think of the current beliefs that you have. Focus on any limiting beliefs that you would like to change or which conflict with the new beliefs you would like to strengthen. Create a symbol or metaphor for the old belief or beliefs you would like to change.

Symbol: \_\_\_\_\_

- 3.1. Make up a character or symbol for the conflicting or limiting beliefs you would like to update or change.

Character/Symbol: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Move into the 'Open to Doubt' space and think of a time you were open to doubt something you had believed for a long time. What is your metaphor or symbol for being 'open to doubt'?

Symbol: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Stand in the 'Used To Believe' (your "museum of personal history") space and remember something you used to believe but no longer believe. What is your metaphor or symbol for all the beliefs in your life that you used to believe but no longer believe?

Symbol: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Step into the space for the experience of deep 'Trust'. Create a symbol or metaphor for the experience of trusting in something beyond your beliefs.

Symbol: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Tell your 'story of change' by incorporating all of the metaphors and symbols that you have created. If you want to, as you are telling the story, you may physically walk to the spaces to which you are referring.

Allow the story to 'self-organize' itself. That is be intuitive. Just begin and let the story take you where 'it needs to go'. Tell it as if you were telling a fairy tale to a child or as if it were a dream. In fact it is best to start the story with the words, "Once upon a time..." or "I had a dream that..." and then just let it flow.

As an example of how this process works, I once used it with a woman who was undergoing a difficult and complex transition in her life. In setting up her 'landscape, she came up with the following symbols:

Want to believe - A sunrise  
 New belief - A little girl  
 Open to believe - An open window  
 Currently believe - A room in a tall tower  
 Limiting beliefs - A person who is bound and gagged  
 Open to doubt - A whirlwind  
 Used to believe - A pile of dead leaves  
 Trust - a large eye in the sky

At the time she created these symbols, she had no idea how they related to one another at all, and was skeptical that she would be able to make anything coherent out of them. I asked her to start by standing in her 'trust' location and simply allow her unconscious to come up with the story. She started very hesitantly, but after a short time, she became very involved in the story, telling it as if she were almost in a trance-like state. Her story went something like this:

*"Once upon a time there was a person who had been bound, gagged and locked up in a room for as long as she could remember. The room was high up in a tower. It had no doors and only one small window that was closed and locked from the outside.*

*"This person was very sad and depressed. Her one consolation was that every morning she could watch the sunrise come up through a small window in the room and dream that one day she would be able to be free and sit on the beach and watch the sun rise gloriously each morning.*

*"Now, a little orphan girl lived near by and every day she walked by the tower in which that this person was trapped. And the little girl often wondered who lived in that tower because it was so solemn and silent. One morning the little girl was up very early and happened to be passing by the tower. When she looked up at the window she saw the two sad eyes of the person who was trapped inside looking longingly out at the sunrise. The little girl felt very sorry for this sad person and made up her mind that she would help her.*

*"But there was no doorway into the tower, and the window was very high up. The only way in was to climb the tower and go in through the window. The tower was quite tall and the little girl was afraid to climb so high. When she remembered the sad look in they eyes she had seen, however, she became determined to reach the window.*

*"She began the long and dangerous climb to the window. It was difficult but the little girl was determined. Then, when she reached a point about half way up the tower, a strong wind came up. It got stronger and stronger and the little felt as if it would tear her off the tower and cast her to the ground below. She became afraid and wanted to turn back.*

*"As she began to look around for ways to get a better hold on the stones of the tower, she suddenly became aware of a strange glow in the sky. She looked over her right shoulder and noticed that the rising sun no longer appeared to be a ball of fire in the sky. Instead it appeared to be a large and gentle eye; an eye that seemed to be watching over the little girl. Under the calming gaze of the watchful eye, the little girl got up the courage to look down at the ground so far beneath her. When she did she noticed that the wind had blown a large pile of dead leaves directly beneath her. The*

*little girl realized that if she did slip, her fall would be broken by this pile of leaves.*

*"With renewed courage and determination the little girl climbed on, finally making it to the window. It was a struggle to open the window however, because the wind was blowing against it so hard. The little girl pulled and pulled with all her might and finally the window flew open. Into the room the wind blew. It picked up the person who had been bound and gagged in the chair and began to spin her around and around like a cyclone. As the person was spinning, the ropes that had been binding her so tightly began to come loose. Within a few moments they had fallen away completely; and at that very moment the wind stopped.*

*"The person and the little girl stood in the midst of the silence and looked at each other. Even though they were just meeting for the first time, it seemed as if they had known each other forever. The little girl took the person by the hand and led her to the window. Giggling with excitement, the little girl leapt out of the window and landed safely in the soft pile of leaves below. She beckoned to the person to join her. At first the person was afraid, but then she too became aware of the large eye watching from the sky. Taking a deep breath, the person leapt from the tower. When she did so, she felt a sense of freedom like nothing she had ever felt before in her life. It seemed as if she was flying for a moment.*

*"When she landed in the soft pile of leaves, she let out a tremendous laugh. Full of laughter she grabbed the little girl by the hand and ran to the beach. The two stayed together laughing and talking through the night and watched the beautiful sunrise the next morning. Afterwards, they walked along the beach collecting many treasures. When their arms were full they walked back to the tower. They made a ladder out of driftwood that they had collected so that it would be easy to get in and out of the window.*

*"That night, the person invited the little girl to live with her. The little girl was thrilled to finally have a home of her*

*own. Together the person and the little girl remodeled the tower, creating many new doors and windows."*

When she had completed telling her story, she felt very calm and tranquil. She said that she felt as if something very deep and profound had changed, even though she did not consciously know what it was. After that she was able to successfully complete the transition in her life with a sense of confidence and serenity.



## Strategies of Change Management

We have established that, in terms of self-organization theory, a dynamic 'landscape' is altered through the process of 'destabilizing' the existing 'attractors' which make up that landscape, and then subsequently restabilizing it around a new system of attractors. The degree of effort and difficulty that this involves depends to a large degree upon the starting state of the existing landscape. The key elements influencing strategies for managing change, according to the principles of self-organization, are the 'complexity' and 'stability' of the landscape with which we are working.

As we reflect over the various applications relating to Freud's strategies and principles that have been described in this book, we can view them as processes which deal with different types of 'landscapes'. Certainly, different types of mental and emotional problems and symptoms involve different types of landscapes. A phobia would involve a different mental, emotional and historical landscape than hysteria, an obsession, paranoia or schizophrenia. The strategies for managing and healing the symptoms associated with these different kinds of problems relate to the deep structures or landscapes behind those symptoms.

For example, many phobias could be characterized as 'simple' and 'stable'. Regardless of the intensity of the emotional response, they are 'simple' because they involve a specific reaction to a particular stimulus. They are stable because they are very consistent. Each time the stimulus is present, the response occurs. With a symptom that is simple and stable the primary intervention approach involves doing something to 'break' or destabilize the pattern. For instance the celebrated NLP 'fast-phobia' cure essentially involves destabilizing the mental representations at the basis of the phobic response. One of the versions of the NLP phobia technique involves finding the 'mental movie' associated with the phobic response and then changing it to 'black and white' and running it backwards. This often destabilizes the rigidity of the phobic association enough that it becomes open to "associative correction" and is able to spontaneously reach a new state of equilibrium.

Even the symptoms of hysteria are often simple and stable in the sense that they involve the regression to specific experiences and events. When these reminiscences are disrupted and brought into connection with other processes within the system, they can be healed through "associative correction."

A technique like 'change personal history' is designed to deal with simple stable landscapes. It presupposes that there is a stable pattern related to associations with specific events in the past. Its essential function is to destabilize and update the memories associated with those past events. The 'swish pattern' is another modality of dealing effectively with a simple, stable issue like a specific compulsion, because it destabilizes a rigid association and redirects it. \*

Attempting to apply such simple techniques on symptoms of complex or unstable systems will be ineffective. Blocking the expression of a symptom in a system that is already unstable will simply lead to other expressions of the problem.

As examples of a different type of landscape, the emotional and behavioral volatility of manic-depression, bulimia or certain neurotic conditions are essentially conditions of 'instability'. The bingeing behavior of a bulimic person may be simple, in the sense that the behavior is easy to define and isolate, but it is unstable. A person who is manic-depressive moves only between two emotional polarities; but the very instability of his or her state is often what makes the symptoms difficult to pin down and treat. Even certain phobias are inconsistent or very generalized, making their 'precipitating causes' difficult to zero in on.

The goal in treating these types of problems is to attempt to stabilize them, not destabilize them. In these cases it is difficult to apply one particular 'pre-programmed' technique or method, be-

---

\*Similarly processes like the EMDR process for dealing with post-traumatic stress essentially involve interrupting patterns that are highly stable because they are blocked, "strangulated" or 'frozen'. The EMDR process, for instance, involves having a person move his or her eyes back and forth rapidly while thinking of a frightening or traumatic event. The movement of the eyes in effect 'scrambles' or destabilizes the representation. Providing the person has other resources available, this destabilization will lead to 'associative correction' without further intervention on the part of the facilitator.

cause, when the landscape is always changing, it is hard to know what will in fact be appropriate or effective from moment to moment. A technique that works well within a particular landscape may suddenly become ineffective when the terrain changes. Furthermore, applying processes that are effective for one part of the landscape may not be effective in another. A person may make gains in one emotional state, or in a certain context, but if there is a shift in the state or the context, this progress disappears.

The assessment of change in unstable systems is also different than in a stable system. A person who has had a phobia of spiders for many years that is able to be in the presence of a spider and feel no fear at the end of a session will feel fairly convinced that his or her pattern has been significantly effected. A person with bulimia, on the other hand, who is able to complete a single therapeutic session without overeating will not be convinced that anything has really changed. The time frame for assessing change with respect to different landscapes changes depending on the type of landscape. Many people are able to stop smoking for several days or weeks without having actually broken the compulsion. Inconsistency is a property of many types of habits.

One way to deal with instability is to seek a point of stability on a higher level of deep structure. The process of reframing, for instance, is a method that seeks to identify a higher level of stability in the 'positive intention' behind a behavior. Many different behaviors may be the expression of the same positive intention applied to varied circumstances. Even conflicting behavioral expressions may be unified by a common intention on a higher level. By identifying a higher level point of stability, a feedback loop can be established that helps to regulate the shifts in emotion or behavior and select the appropriate expressions for the appropriate situations.

The elaborate rituals characteristic of obsessive-compulsive behavior exemplify another type of landscape. Obsessive-compulsive behavior could certainly be described as 'stable', but they are often much more 'complex' than phobias or reflexive emotional responses. The varied conditions under which they are performed, the intricate character of the rituals and the complex interweaving of the thoughts behind them, make them much more difficult to 'destabilize' or address with a single technique.

A complex, stable problem is usually a function of many contributing factors. Even if one of those factors is dealt with effectively, the other factors manage to adjust in order to hold the problem in place. It is not until a 'critical mass' has been achieved that the constellation of factors as a whole is able to change. Rather than a single technique, dealing effectively with these kinds of landscapes involves establishing strategies for sorting and addressing a multiplicity of elements and then planning an intervention 'path' that may be made up of many different techniques.

Many problems also involve complex relational issues (such as imprints, "transference", the 'contamination' of perceptual positions, etc.) rather than specific events. A process like reimplanting is designed to manage this type of complexity by providing a means of spatially sorting both the temporal relations and the perceptual positions that are involved in its deep structure. The problem is ultimately solved by including and addressing a variety of perspectives and time frames that make up the system of elements which is producing the problem situation.

Psychosis or schizophrenia, would be examples of landscapes that are both 'complex' and 'unstable'. So are the types of conflicts that occur between multiple 'parts' of a person during certain life transitions. Psychosis, for instance, is much more complex than even a sophisticated obsession because it tends to effect systems (both family systems and social systems) that extend far beyond the patient himself or herself.\* In phobias, obsessions and most habits, the symptoms primarily bring distress to the person himself or herself. Problems involving deep identity issues, like psychosis or major life transitions, sometimes effect others as much if not more than the identified patient.

In addition to a complexity of contributing factors and relational issues, these types of problems often involve many different levels of processes, leading to double binds and other complex situations. One reason that dealing with life transitions can become difficult is because they can produce multiple levels of stability all at the same time. That is, they destabilize one's beliefs and identity as well as requiring change in one's capabilities and behaviors.

---

\*Attempting something like the EMDR technique (i.e., having someone move his or her eyes back and forth rapidly) during a psychotic episode would probably exacerbate the problem and lead to an unecological result.

This is because the issues that arise from these types of problems are often somewhat chaotic or unprecedented. Thus, attempting to deal with them using existing techniques or methods is useless. Addressing complex, unstable landscapes involves both dealing with the complexity and attempting to bring stability into the system. This often requires extended periods of surveillance and the ongoing mutual adjustment of the various elements in the system. Rather than applying rigid narrow methods, managing these types of situations involves the establishment of higher level 'generative' processes that encourage the maximum amount of self-organization and integration at the deeper levels of the person or system.

Processes like the 'integration of conflicting parts' or the 'belief change cycle' are more suited to dealing with complex, dynamic situations. They help to sort out and address multiple levels of processes as well as different perceptual positions. They are designed to manage more complex landscapes, but at the same time bring about a higher level of integration.

To summarize:

- In simple and stable systems, change can be managed by pre-programmed reactions or 'techniques'—such as the 'change personal history' or 'swish' process.
- In simple but unstable system, change may be managed through higher level rules and regulated through feedback loops—such as those established by the process of 'reframing'.
- In complex but stable systems, change may be managed by communication strategies and 'intervention paths'—such as those employed in 'reimprinting'.
- In complex and unstable systems, change must be managed through constant surveillance, mutual adjustment and the establishment of 'generative' processes—such as 'integration of conflicting parts' or the 'belief change cycle'.

	<i>Stable</i>	<i>Unstable</i>
<i>Simple</i>	Pre-programmed Techniques	Rules and 'Negative Feedback'
<i>Complex</i>	Strategies and Intervention Paths	Surveillance Mutual Adjustment

**Matrix of Change Management Strategies**

Incidentally, these same distinctions hold for problem landscapes other than those related to psychological symptoms. In the area of physical symptoms, for example, it is easy to see that a simple allergy to cats or a broken bone would be examples of problems that are more simple and stable than cancer or aids, which are complex and often unstable. Likewise, in the management of change within social and organizational systems, problems can be classified according to this matrix. Making an incremental improvement on an existing product would be simpler and more stable than managing the introduction of a new product in a dynamic marketplace.

## Footnotes to Section 11

1. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Sigmund Freud; *The Freud Reader*; Gay, Peter (Ed.), W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1989, pp. 594-595.
2. *Aristotle*, Britannica Great Books, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., Chicago Ill., 1979.

## Section 12: Conclusion

In my own work, and in my study of various healers and the process of wellness, I have found three common components to the healing process. The process of healing essentially requires:

1. An intention
2. A relationship
3. A ritual

Healing, of course, starts with the 'intention' to heal. With that intention, even the crudest of methods and tools can produce healing. Without it, even the most sophisticated techniques tools and can fail. This intention is most concretely expressed in the relationship between the people involved in the healing context. The depth and intensity required by that relationship is related to the level at which the healing is intended. For instance, healing at the level of body or behavior requires less intensity and depth of relationship than the healing of the mind. Healing involving one's beliefs system or identity places even more emphasis on the quality of the relationship.

The intention to heal and the relationship which supports that intention are manifested through a ritual of some kind. There are many different types of rituals that can be effective. Human history has been filled with various and sundry rituals for healing which are all effective in their way. The most important factor in the success of the ritual seems to be its degree of congruence with the level of intention and the relationship it is supporting.

When these three elements are aligned, the deep structures behind healing may be activated and healing occurs in a natural, self-organizing manner. While external techniques and tools may be used mechanically to prod or aid the healing process, the source of healing is within the system of the individual. This source may be activated and directed by 'pacing and leading' the basic functions of the body's interconnected systems.

As we look back over Freud's therapeutic methods and principles, we can see that they acknowledge and support these three elements. He clearly recognized and stressed the significance of



relationship on the healing process and he understood the influence of ritual in his methods. His approach to therapy tacitly assumed that, by creating the appropriate context, systems will naturally self-organize their own healing through processes such as "associative correction" and their own natural cycles of change.

Of course, Freud's theories and strategies can also be, and have been, generalized beyond the context of healing. It is evident that Freud's own thoughts and work ranged over a vast landscape of subjects and ideas. As he himself prophetically claimed, "the acceptance of unconscious mental processes represents a decisive step toward a new orientation in the world and in science." It could be argued, for instance, that Freud's assertion of the role of the unconscious, his emphasis on the development of metacognition and his principles of conflict resolution made Einstein's theories possible.

As we widen our view to include Freud's strategies for approaching and analyzing a problem or situation in general, we are left with the conviction that Freud was an innovative thinker, an astute observer and a dedicated scientist. Claiming that, "If a knife will not cut, neither will it serve the surgeon," he displayed a unique creativity and boldness of thinking; challenging accepted ideas and assumptions. It is in fact ironic that many of Freud's ideas are presented or applied today in a rigid or dogmatic fashion. This is a situation that Freud himself would have undoubtedly been uncomfortable with. He approached his own theories as having flexibility and constantly evolving; both grounded in and modified by experience. Even in his earliest writings, Freud claimed:

*It remains true in scientific matters it is always experience, and never authority without experience, that gives the final verdict, whether in favor or against.*<sup>1</sup>

Over thirty years later, when Freud was well into his sixties, he still maintained the same view, stating:

*We must be patient and await fresh methods and occasions of research. We must be ready, too, to abandon a path that we have followed for a time, if it seems to be leading to no good end. Only believers, who demand that science shall be a substitute for the catechism they have given up, will blame an investigator for developing or even transforming his views.*<sup>2</sup>

My purpose in this work has been to map out more explicitly some of the deeper structures of Freud's strategies and suggest some further applications of his principles and methods. In many ways there is a parallel between my analysis of Freud's writings and his study of Michelangelo's statue of Moses. Like the Moses of Michelangelo, there have been many previous explanations and interpretations of Freud's ideas and methods. My hope is that by viewing Freud's ideas and theories through the filters of NLP, self-organization and systems theory, elements of his work may be clarified, enhanced and integrated—in the same way that Freud's interpretation of Michelangelo's Moses framed and unified the previously diverse and even disparate perceptions and interpretations of the statue.

## Footnotes to Section 12

1. *Therapy and Technique*, Sigmund Freud, Collier Books, New York, NY, 1963, p. 29.
2. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Sigmund Freud; *The Freud Reader*; Gay, Peter (Ed.), W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1989, p. 626.