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A GOOD THERAPIST AMUSES THE CLIENT – SO THAT THE CLIENT HEALS HIMSELF

About Neuro-Linguistic Programming from the perspective of Mag. Peter Schütz¹ MBA

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When I first talked with Gyula Biró, that I would like to interview you and asked for help in organising these meetings, his phone rang and it was you calling. What do you think about synchronicity and the collective unconscious?

These concepts are a little out of my reach. I'm on my phone a lot and there's a very high chance that I'd call my friends in the afternoon around 6-7 because that's when we have time to chat, after I've finished with my daily tasks. But I'll give you another example: my wife and I have known each other for a long time, sometimes when the phone rings, I can "feel" it's her at the other end of the line. But to be honest, I think I have just learned the frequency at which we search each other's company and I can feel she will call. It's easier to assume that things happen because of probability rather than search for the real "esoteric" reasoning behind things. Probably we condition ourselves to different things, and then try to tell ourselves that it's due to some higher power, because it's more credible for us that way.

In my experience, NLPt also operates with conditioning, involving other therapeutic practices, making it much more effective. How did this method develop?

Bandler, Grinder and Pucelik put NLP into a sort of draft based on Virginia Satir's, Milton Erickson's and Fritz Perls' therapeutic practices and extended by the work of Chomsky, Bateson, and Korzybski.

¹ Peter Schütz (1952), Vienna, healthpsychologist, psychotherapist, Sigmund Freud's descendant, short psychotherapy expert, EMDR trainer and accredited teaching group psychotherapist, codeveloped and teaches the Neuro-Linguistic Psychotherapy (NLPt) and professional NLP since the late 80's. He serves as secretary general of the EANLPt.org and is the coauthor of several research and publications on NLPt. More information: www.schuetz.at/ps

And in the US, behavioristic approaches are pervasive... The content and process of the work and the emphasis on conscious and unconscious modelling that they carried out was very impressive – at least for short time conditioning – with excellent thoughts and theories. On the other hand, a strong science and research phobia, coming from an anti-establishment tradition and the characters from 2 of the 3 founders, did not help the credibility of NLP. This had to be put in balance much later within the European Association for Neuro-Linguistic Psychotherapy frame.²

However, we, who met NLP in 1983 as already trained psychodynamic psychotherapists, were not too happy with our American friend's commercially well organized but professionally simplicistic and ethically highly doubtable marketing approaches. In the US, due to other working law regulations, you only have 2 weeks vacation – so NLP is sold in 2 weeks long sect-like seminars for up to 150 participants to get a NLP Practitioner certificate. Compare that to our professional programme, where a maximum of 25 students need 37 days, with 4-5 different trainers, to acquire the knowledge required for basic NLP coaching. This has been so since 1985. Obviously, the short manipulative version sells much better. As a professional in this field and in the interest of good work with clients, we go for professional quality and sustainable excellence. That is why, in addition to the enhanced structure, we decided to adapt the name, as well. From NLP to professional NLP and neurolinguistic psychotherapy. You cannot buy a € 100 diploma here or learn NLP from a CD or e-book. To work with people efficiently you need professional training and highly qualified instructors with exceptional curricula.

Our professional NLP coaching training (Austrian standard) is 2.5 years, our psychotherapy training is around 5 years long. We require a strong psychology background and understanding from our applicants, but not a psychology degree. This is the main reason why in 1999, the scrutineers of the European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP) stated that NLP's reputation in general is pretty bad, but due to our training system, NLPt will be approved with appreciation. The two are poles apart, i.e. a Lada is a Lada while a Mercedes is a Mercedes, although they both roll. Apart from NGO, we have 6 government accreditations for coaching and psychotherapy, and the efficacy has been proven.³

The only change in the name of both is a "t" at the end, which makes telling which is which quite difficult. Is there any reasoning behind this?

² Learn more at: www.eanlpt.org

³ Learn more at: www.nlpt.at/res1.pdf

Partly financial, partly out of tradition and loyalty. If we had unlimited resources, it would be easy to spread a new name, on the other hand, changing the name totally might imply, for some, the denial of our origins. NLP is known worldwide and the added “t” indicates a very high quality standard for it, with an improved version directed towards therapy. I also trust that people who want to work with others are willing and cognitively able to differentiate. Obviously, it is important that there is a distinction, as I have seen myself that since the late 80 's more and more people jump on the “NLP-train”. They wanted to get rich and manipulative quickly, even though many trainers were far from acceptable standards and that was what the students modelled on. These reduced trainings spread like an infectious disease and the brilliant blueprint that was once created had been lost. To avoid this, we chose slower growth, focusing our resources primarily on development and training.

What are your development strategies and research goals?

To prove to the Academic world and the press that professional NLP/NLPt really function. Initially, we had a problem with the research, due to our small number of trained therapists. But even with our disabilities we managed to do a comparative analysis RCR Study at the end of 90's⁴. 55 clients participated in traditional therapy, while our team of 37, treated a group of 60 (paired according to their medical history) with the NLPt method. After the treatment the group involved in traditional therapy reported that 47.5% of them didn't feel any different, 8% felt worse. Whilst those involved with the NLP therapy reported that 1.9% of them felt the same, 0% felt worse and in addition nearly two thirds of them felt much better. It would be sufficient if we could just keep up the quality. Of course, in the meantime our work is developing, although at slower pace, because every change comes with responsibility. We must also be certain that any development achieved will advance us forward and enhance the method.

If I understand correctly, this rigorous training system greatly contributed to your membership in the EAP?

Yes, we requested the initiation of the recruitment process, because it was thought that the self-reference in worldwide NLP is rather problematic. In other words, stating things about ourselves can easily be questionable and might also seem rather frivolous and narcissistic. In most European countries, it's considered enough if someone claims they're a therapist. In some places you can call yourself a psychotherapist without having any formal training, which can

⁴ Genser-Medlitsch, M. & Schütz, P. (2004): /Czy neurolingwistyczna psychotherapia jest efektywna/? In: Nowiny Psychologiczne. Warszawa: Polskie Towarzystwo Psychologiczne

be very misleading. However, it was important for us to not only develop a training program a psychotherapist – who knows his craft – would be proud of, but to have the acceptance of professional organisations. We were granted EAP membership back in 1999. In fact, this means that the industry giants acknowledge our work, while the other branches of NLP, especially the manipulative commercial versions prove to be interfering and disturbing.

Also, please note that professional NLP and NLPt is a synthesis of goal orientation, Gestalt, systemic, cognitive, psychodynamic, linguistic and hypnotherapeutic approaches. It gives a lot of competence and takes some time to get competent.⁵ You'll understand it quickly, but it takes some time and effort to get competent in applying it with inner and outer conflicts and goals.

What has changed over the years? How did the economic processes affect the emerging challenges and problems that needed solving?

Above all, the processes are much more streamlined, technology accelerates development and puts more and more pressure on the less competent workers, thus, reducing their actual mobility.

We also develop a very thorough process for competence check with videos, so that the clients can trust the certificates. Of course, this can be improved with personal development, but professional NLP and NLPt isn't magic, it can't fix everything. For example, we cannot cure ADHD or psychosis. Research has shown though, that among other things, depression, phobias, PTSD, psychological allergies, systemic topics, compulsion and lack of motivation can be treated excellently, if the client is motivated. Thus, with our professional NLP and NLPt method, we managed to improve the life quality of a large number of people. Of course it will take time until the CEOs recognize this.

How is it possible to continue with short term therapy, when you come to the conclusion that to reach your wanted goal, you have to jump over a bigger, different barrier?

This is not only relevant for psychotherapy, but also for the much larger field of professional NLP coaching. Incorrect goal orientation and incomplete assessment is to blame here. The same is true concerning execution of work. In general, untrained coaches and therapists believe that the goal is obvious from the first sight. Even if time does justify the first assumption, you still need to create

⁵ A short summary on the key paradigm is at:
<http://www.nlpzentrum.at/outcome1/outcomeframe1.pdf>.

rapport and find out what actually blocks the client from achieving their goals. The rest is a matter of professional training and practice. In other words, if the therapist is well-trained, organized and in the right state of mind.

As I understand the emphasis is on the latter, am I correct?

Yes. How you can help, if you yourself need help? How can you give what you don't have? The well-being of the soul is most important, then the mind, followed by professional readiness. You have to maximize these three factors, to create a balanced environment in which the clients can develop and safely transform their coping strategy for a better life. NLPt training and professional NLP –for the Coaching field - at this high level has been seen in many countries in Europe, and thanks to Doctor Biró, it is also present in Hungary⁶.

How would it be possible to draw policy makers' attention to the differences due to methodological and ethical reasons?

In many European countries, NLPt is accepted in therapeutic practice, however, in the corporate world, much more is needed. Firstly, there are way too many „wizards and snake oil merchants” out there, who use newly introduced concepts to dazzle and scam the average number-driven sales manager because these concepts are difficult to verify. Yet, we don't have to worry about them being burnt like witches, as was the case in the old days, as soon as people realize they are frauds. Of course, on a large scale, this is tragic for trained NLPt therapists and professional NLP coaches, because of these people, NLP at times gets a bad reputation, and we lose the opportunity to bring a real positive change for the environment. Do you know what NLP really stands for?

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New Laughing Program. Depressed people don't laugh. The people that we work with laugh more and more each day. A good therapist, coach and management trainer needs competence and humour. Or in the words of NLP and systemic psychiatry professor Harry Merl: “A good therapist or coach amuses his client so that the client heals himself.”

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⁶ About trainings in Hungarian: www.nlphungaria.hu