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NLP: The Quantum Leap

A THE QUANTUM SHIFTS BEHIND THIS ARTICLE

Shift one

In 1971 I was deeply involved in what was then called “Eastern Religion”. I belonged to a weekly meditation group founded on the ideas of one of the popular gurus of the time. He, of course, claimed to be an incarnation (avatar) of god, and devotion to him was the path to enlightenment and oneness with the universal being or Brahman. I felt pretty confident in my beliefs. I knew what I believed, and I could read or hear other opinions without it changing my basic worldview (it was just that I only read things by Indian gurus). One day I bought a book by what I assumed was another Indian guru; his name was Jiddu Krishnamurti. Unfortunately, Krishnamurti, though brought up within the Hindu belief system I was so sure of, severely rejected it. All beliefs, he pointed out, are human inventions, and the reality of the person’s life is shaped by them. But “that reality, I say, has nothing to do with truth.” I could hardly understand his meaning, let alone come to terms with how it reframed what I had considered “life’s ultimate truth”. Years later I wrote to Krishnamurti and told him that reading his book had profoundly upset me, caused a crisis in my life, and changed my direction. He, understandably, wrote back that this sounded like a very useful thing and where I took it was not up to him to say.

Shift two

By 1984 I’d advanced “beyond gurus” and was a trained counsellor and psychotherapist. I worked using Carl Rogers’ client centred model and Fritz Perls’ Gestalt therapy. I knew that all the significant breakthroughs in the development of Psychotherapy had been made before 1960. In the twenty-five years after that, only subtle refine-

ments had been added. You couldn't improve on what Rogers and Perls said, because (after all) humans would always be humans, and psychotherapy simply meant responding to the human being in my office. And in this happy state, I came upon a book in a second-hand shop. It was called *The Structure of Magic*, and it carried the recommendation of Virginia Satir, a therapist I greatly admired. The trouble was, it blew my model of psychotherapy to pieces like a worn out balloon. Richard Bandler and John Grinder had studied therapy from a whole new perspective—that of linguistics. What they uncovered had implications for the entire field of human communication. (Even so, it took me six years to let go of my old models completely and train as an NLP Practitioner.)