

An interview with Dr John Grinder

As one of the few individuals who has developed a whole new field of endeavour, do you have any thoughts regarding the circumstances that make it possible for you to be in that position?

There is a metaphor which is extremely common in western European traditions in which an investigator establishes his or her contribution while simultaneously paying tribute to the work which forms the foundation which made their specific contribution possible. This is typically expressed by noting that the new contributor can see farther than the original giants who established the foundation for their new work by standing on their shoulders. For me, this is quite misleading and not at all congruent with my experience.

Rather than a physical metaphor—that is, the additional height achieved by standing on the shoulders of the giants who preceded me—it seems to me that what Bandler and I did in our original work—the classic code of NLP—was much more accurately captured by the idea of seeing in a totally different way rather than seeing farther.

So while one of the circumstances which made it possible for us to create NLP certainly was the previous work, especially by Russell, Turing, Godel, Chomsky, and Bateson, as well as the specific models of Perls, Satir and Erickson, the actual value added by our activity was an audacious style of provoking the world by refusing commonsensical wisdom, most assuredly by rejecting the presuppositions of the vast majority of researchers active in the field, by seeking to extend the patterning to its limits and by creating the process tools (at a higher logical level than the content of the investigations) to enable others to follow the paths of discovery which lie all around us. As Stephen Jay Gould said beautifully:

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