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Entropy in Psychoanalysis and NLP: a comparison

Introduction

Spatio-temporal concepts figure significantly in many NLP techniques such as Time Line Therapy or the Swish Pattern. No other psychological teaching or therapy exploits space–time notions as NLP has done. Elsewhere, I have demonstrated that the use of spatio-temporal concepts and associations in NLP is in accordance with a world-view derived from modern physics (Al Rubaie, 1996a, b).

There is nothing new in using parallels or metaphors derived from natural sciences, such as physics, to gain a better understanding of psychological phenomena. Freud and his contemporaries understood the value of tying psychology to physics and biology. Jung, in redefining libido as undifferentiated psychic energy, looked beyond psychology to parallels in physics, in particular to the theory of the transformation of energy. All psychological phenomena, like all physical phenomena, Jung argued, are manifestations of energy and this gives symbols their dynamic transformative power (Stevens, 1990).

However, there are objections to the use of physical concepts in psychology, which stem mainly from two camps. The first is exemplified by Althusser. Macey (1994) indicates that Althusser described Freud as having borrowed concepts from the thermodynamic physics that dominated the nineteenth century and that Althusser thereby avoided the difficult issue of whether or not Freud's reference to thermodynamic physics was a metaphor, a borrowed conceptual framework, or an integral part of his analysis of the libido and the primary process. Althusser has also argued that Freud's concept of the fantasy was not scientific because it was a metaphor (Macey, 1994). It is nonetheless unfair to criticize Althusser of positivism, since he was against positivism and empiricism. Greatly influenced by (the de-constructionist concepts of) the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, Althusser

recognized the lack of clear distinction between the real and the imaginary, and considered this lack as a system that pushes us, a system of motivation (Ricoeur, 1994).