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The Way of Unfolding: A New Paradigm with Ancient Roots

Introduction

The very first issue of *NLP World* carried a dialogue between Jan Ardui and myself entitled 'NLP Presuppositions Revisited'. In that dialogue, we suggested that a meta-model worthy of the name needs some way of examining and revising its own presuppositions.

Of course, such an endeavour is beset with logical difficulties. How do we examine the presuppositions we use to examine the presuppositions that we used in examining the presuppositions we began with? Creating a genuine meta-model invites such endless and unmanageable regress.

What usually happens is that a new model emerges when people become aware of limitations in the presuppositions of the 'old' model and update them. The new model then replaces the old or exists alongside it, as various forms of Protestantism did alongside Roman Catholicism, stimulating a significant revision of the latter in the so-called 'Counter-Reformation'.

When NLP appeared it offered a significant revision of existing models of psychotherapy. Furthermore, it offered the promise of enhancing our understanding of how mental models in general functioned. However, the original model of NLP, in spite of numerous extensions, is not without limitations. Questions such as those Jan and I raised in the original dialogue remain pertinent. For example, is the programming metaphor really appropriate for living systems? Can the NLP model adequately handle the complexities of systems larger than individuals and pairs? Does the original emphasis on rapid change remain appropriate?

Since that original dialogue, Jan Ardui and I have continued our discussions, culminating in a book to be published later this year, *The Way*