Re-Modelling NLP: Part Thirteen: Part B
Re-Modelling Perceptual Positioning and Processing
John McWhirter

This article first appeared in Rapport 57, Autumn 2002

Integrating the PP model with Satir, Bandler and Grinder

One of the first pieces of modelling I did was to connect the PP model with the earlier Satir work. I combined them with the additions of Bandler and Grinder as summarised in the following diagram.

Processing Area	Self	Other	Context
Satir Category	Placater	Blamer	Computer
Bandler and Grinder	Feel	Visual External	Auditory Digital
Grinder and DeLozier	1st Position	2nd Position	3rd Position

Differences within the positions

I have not been alone in identifying that there are a range of possibilities within the three positions.

"Robert Dilts and Todd Epstein (1990, 1991, 1995 &1996) suggested that there are subtle but important differences between third position, meta position, and observer position. They pointed out that a 'pure' third position is typically a point of view outside of the communication loop incorporating knowledge of the beliefs and assumptions gathered from being previously associated in both first and second positions. Meta position is a point of view outside the communication loop with knowledge of the beliefs and assumptions from only one's own first position. Observer Position is a point of view outside of the communication loop in which the observer purposefully suspends any beliefs and assumptions about first and second positions. Observer position is a basic and powerful perspective for effective modelling. (Third position, of course, should be distinguished from a "dissociated" feelingless perspective.) Dilts and DeLozier (2000), p. 941

I have summarised Dilt's and Epstein's insight as follows:

3rd Position Variations	Relation to Communication Loop	Knowledge used
3rd Position	Outside of Communication Loop	Incorporates knowledge of 1st and 2nd position
Meta Position	Outside of Communication loop	Incorporates knowledge of 1st position
Observer	Outside of communication	No knowledge of 1st and

	loop	2nd position

In applying the modelling tools of DBM I have identified a range of variations in the 1ST and 2ND positions that may be used when following an instruction to adopt or change a perceptual position.

Identified differences in Processing while 2nd Positioning

When we model what people actually do in the seemingly simple behaviour of getting into 2nd positioning a number of different behaviours emerge. The end result may be similar but how they get there can be very different - the end result can also be *very* different!

2nd Position Variations	Relation to Communication Loop	Knowledge and how used
1. "Ideal", Step into their shoes.	Limited to Other	Where others shoes are. How they are. Knowledge of self used to 'place' self in shoes.
2. "Move To"	Only Self	No "subjective" knowledge of the others processing only the sensory changes of changing position, how it looks and sounds different from a different place.
3. "Put Onto", Projection, Transference	From self to other	
4. "Make up"	Self only.	Creative but illusionary, delusionary if taken as truth.
5. "Play at"	From self, constructing based on other.	Knowledge of self and loose commitment to variations of other
6. "Take on"	From other to self. Adapting self to other.	Knowledge of other and self and effect of changing self
7. "Take into"	From other to part of self. Adopting form the other	Knowledge of self
8. "Be"	Other only (as self). An identity shift.	Knowledge of other only. This may seem like the ideal but it is probably only found in mental hospitals. if you really became the other then you would be 'stuck' as you could not have any knowledge of who you 'really' are.

9. "Becoming"	Self evolving into other. Dynamic sense of losing self.	Knowledge of self and other and knowledge of development and change.

In practice, these nine above can operate partially and / or in conjunction. So, for example, an example of 9 is method acting. When this is done well there is a potential problem for the actors in returning to themselves. For many actors engaging in 9 will be difficult and they could possibly use 4., 5, and 6 to produce the role.

Once the role is performed, it is done so from 1st position. Once again we have identified a number of variations in processing used to engage in 1st positioning.

Identified differences in Processing while 1st Positioning

1st Position Variations	Relation to Communication Loop	Knowledge used
1. Ideal. As Self	Self only	Self up to date
2. In Self	Self dislocated form body Communication source is minds body not real body	Self, slightly out of date for body
3. Partial Self	Incomplete communication source	Aspects of self
4. Multiple Selves	Multiple communication sources	Self with knowledge of possibilities
5. Past	Communication source out of date	Knowledge of Past
6. Future	Communication source premature	Self and possibilities
7. Boundary, expanded / reduced self	Communication source is distorted or inclusive of other objects, e.g. shoes, gloves, car, etc.	Self and other objects
8. Role	Communication source abstracted	Self and Role
9. Spatial, self somewhere else	Communication source dislocated	Self and spatial relations

I have also identified a number of different ways of achieving the 4th position.

In my next article "Re-Modelling Association and Disassociation" I will introduce some more recent modelling in this area. As a modeller, it is very helpful to be able to make these kinds of detailed distinctions. For example, identifying the particular use of 7 by someone identified anorexic makes it possible to intervene at a level of precision necessary to help them.

Positioning can include a number of these variations. For example, the seemingly simple step of moving from 1st to 2nd position could involve a number of different types of processing, e.g.
1. "Change role", get into therapist role

2. "Future self", identifying what to do next with client
3. "Move to", subjectively, spatially, getting closer to clients position
4. "Make up", imagine what being in their shoes would be like
5. "Play" with it until it seems right
6. "Take on" different processing
7. "Be" the person for a while
8. "In other" monitoring
9. "Partial self" checking the experience of "other"
10. "Spatial" self again at the spatial location of other

Stepping into someone's shoes is not as simple as it first appears.

In a useful application of the PP model more than being in their shoes is required. It is often one or more of the other variations that are practically applied unconsciously. By identifying them, we can replicate the successful variation.

Different Levels

Single and Multiple descriptions operate at different levels of attention.

One very useful application of this is in the difference between being and becoming. Sometimes clients are reluctant to make extensive changes because they would no longer be the "same" person. From their point of view this makes sense but only from a "Being" level of attending. If we assist them to attend from the level of "Becoming" then the fear disappears.

Being and Becoming: Example Transcript:

Therapist: "This fear of losing yourself makes sense, you will be a different person if you make these changes. Now think what it was like when you were two years old, ten years old, fifteen years old, twenty-two years old and how you are now. You are a different person now than you were then but you still have the sense of being the same person. Now this sense of being the same person through your life as a whole continues from the past through the present and into the future, doesn't it? Now really concentrate on this feeling of continuity, this feeling of becoming. Now from this feeling of becoming think how easy and safe it will be to make these changes that you had been worried about. Do you have any concerns now? What does that tell you about the power of your own thinking to help you or get in the way? It is your thinking both times but the result is very different, wasn't it?"
(I incorporated this work in the new models below.)

Objectively Speaking

There are other ways to use perceptual positioning as the following advice highlights.

> "*If someone annoys you and you are angry with them step into their shoes and walk a mile. You will then be a mile away from them and you will have their shoes.*"
> From a poster in a Glasgow pub

An actual changing of your spatial location is an objective change rather than a fundamentally subjective one. For some situations, it is highly recommended to find "real" sources of 2nd and 3rd positions, that is gather information directly from the other person and an objective observer. If the purpose is to improve the range and quality of information then this is the richest source of additional information beyond what we already "Know".

Evaluating the PP Model

Firstly, although I feel I shouldn't have to make such an obvious point my experience has proven otherwise, the 2nd and 3rd positions are not real. You never leave your body: subjectively they are real. At their best they are rich approximations of another person's point of view and overview. At their worst they are projections, fantasies and lies. Only by understanding how they work can we get the best from them (and avoid the worst).

1. As the poet Blake highlighted many years ago, seeing with your eyes is very different from seeing through your eyes. Bateson was taken with this difference and used it to distinguish between single and double vision. Double vision is not seeing double like after a blow to the head. It is to different visions. The first is what the eyes see. The second is what we see in what the eyes see. Bateson identified this with aesthetic and considered it to be an unconscious process. Today I would also identify it with skilled conscious processing. From a coordinated combining of the two single visions a double vision emerged that offered something more. In NLP the use of double description and double vision have fallen into the Gestalt fallacy I outlined in article 1, the whole can be less than the sum of its parts, not just more than (gangs, dysfunctional teams and families). More visions and positions can be chaotic and disorientating as well as emergent and useful.

2. When applied to the PP model there are a number of complex modelling possibilities.
   When "being" the other:
   a. To see with their eyes
   b. To see through their eyes
   c. To see with your eyes from their position
   d. To see through your eyes from their position
   e. To see with your eyes what they are seeing with their eyes
   f. To see with your eyes what they are seeing through their eyes
   g. To see through your eyes what they are seeing with their eyes
   h. To see through your eyes what they are seeing through their eyes

Try each of these and afterwards (in order that you don't contaminate the experience) reflect on what you experienced. After all of them compare your experience with my comments below.

In practice, all of these could be used to describe the 2nd position experience. If we are more stringent in our modelling, demanding precision, then many of these are more

---

clearly partial explanation of the individuals conscious experience and not what they are doing unconsciously that is working. To guarantee replication, this is not good enough. The "double vision" is better made explicit so that it can be identified clearly and made available for replication or change.

Although it is possible to create an experience of all of the above variations, they are subjective variations based on what we "think" the other is experiencing. We can at the most approximate the others experience. When we are sensitive and have a rich experience base of the individual and knowledge of the processing possibilities we can at times be extremely accurate. We can also be partially wrong, through to totally wrong.

This is at its best in NLP tradition "useful" rather than "truthful". I have sadly come across NLP practitioners who use it as if it was truth.

We need to know what to usefully do when we are in any perceptual position. This is beyond the model. The position doesn't guarantee that a useful processing will occur.

The third position is only a detached or distanced position that makes no direct use of alternative contexts. At most it is a-contextual, a neutral position. This can be very useful but impoverished when compared with the rich possibilities of varying context.

References:
Bandler, Richard & Grinder, John, *The Structure of Magic vol.1*, Science and Behaviour Books, Inc 1975
Bandler, Richard, Grinder, John, and Satir, Virginia, *Changing with Families*, Science and Behaviour Books, 1976
Bateson, Gregory, *Mind and Nature*, Dutton, 1979
Bateson, Gregory, *Angels Fear*, Rider 1988
Bateson, Gregory and Ruesch, Jurgen, *Communication, The Social Matrix Of Psychiatry*, Norton & Co. 1951
Bateson, Gregory, *Sacred Unity, Further Steps To An Ecology Of Mind*, Harper Collins 1991
Dilts, Robert and DeLozier, Judith, *Encyclopaedia of NLP*,
http://www.nlpuniversitypress.com
Grinder, John, and Bandler, Richard, *The Structure of Magic vol.I1*, Science and Behaviour Books, Inc 1976
Grinder, John, DeLozier, Judith, *Turtles All the Way Down*, Grinder, DeLozier and Associates 1987
McWhirter, *Re-Modelling NLP, Part 1 - Models and Modelling,* Rapport (1998)
McWhirter, *Re-Modelling NLP, Part 2 - Re-Modelling Language,* Rapport (1999)
McWhirter, *Re-Modelling NLP, Part 3 - Feeling, Conflict and Integration,* Rapport (1999)
McWhirter, *Re-Modelling NLP, Part 4 – Basic Structures and Processes,* Rapport (1999)
McWhirter, *Re-Modelling NLP, Part 5 – Planning, Problem-Solving, Outcomes and Achieving,* Rapport (1999)
McWhirter, *Re-Modelling NLP, Part 6 – Understanding Change,* Rapport (2000)
McWhirter, *Re-Modelling NLP, Part 7 – Facilitating Change,* Rapport (2000)
McWhirter, *Re-Modelling NLP, Part 8 – Performing Change,* Rapport (2000)

McWhirter, *Re-Modelling NLP, Part 9 – Organising Change,* Rapport (2001)
McWhirter, *Re-Modelling NLP, Part 10 - Unconscious Processes and Hypnosis,* Rapport (2001)
McWhirter, *Re-Modelling NLP, Part 11 – Metaphors,* Rapport (2001)
McWhirter, *Re-Modelling NLP, Part 12A – Hypnotic Inductions and Hypnotherapy,* Rapport (2001)
McWhirter, *Re-Modelling NLP, Part 12B – Hypnotic Inductions and Hypnotherapy,* Rapport (2002)
Perls, F., Hefferline, Ralph, F., and Goodman, Paul, *Gestalt Therapy*, Penguin Books 1973 (1st published 1951)
Stevens, John, O., *Awareness*, Real Peoples Press, 1971

DBM is a registered trademark of Sensory Systems Training.

Copies of previous articles are available on the Sensory Systems Training web-site.

John can be contacted at:
Sensory Systems Training
162 Queens Drive
Queens Park
Glasgow G42 8QN
Phone: 0141 424 4177
Email: johnm@sensorysystems.co.uk
Discussion Forum on Web: www.sensorysystems.co.uk