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Brian Van der Horst

An NLPrimer on Spirituality

The context

When I came to NLP in 1979, I asked my teachers, "Where does spiritual experience fit in NLP?" "We don't know," they all answered. "We are studying the structure of subjective experience. And we haven't had any spiritual experiences to model."

NLP has changed a great deal since then. Some of my teachers have had children—perhaps *the* fundamental human experience of our inherent spirituality. Some have encountered healers, sages and saints; gifted clients have taught us about dimensions of the spirit. All this has resulted in a host of seminars addressing matters of the soul.

So now things are different. When John Grinder met healer Finbarr Nolan, the word *soul* crept into accounts of modelling sessions.[1] Robert Dilts began modelling Jesus of Nazareth,[2] and the word *spirituality* heads his Bateson-inspired neurological levels model. Leslie Cameron-Bandler created a model of personality that hovers around existential Virtual Questions. Richard Clarke gives Zen-flavored seminars on NLP and spirituality. Tad James teaches "The Lost Secrets of Ancient Hawaiian Huna." Connirae and Tamara Andreas have identified five core states: being, inner peace, love, OKness, and oneness at the heart of the "Core Self, a universally known concept that goes by many names: our inner essence, our full potential, self-actualization, our True Self, our Higher Self, the God within, and the Soul, to name a few."[3] Practically all of the origi-

nal founders and developers of NLP now address this realm.

It seems to me that the true NLP modeler's quest is to find the structure common to transcendent experience, be it Sufi, Buddhist, Platonic, Jewish, Taoist, Hindu, Zen, or Christian. People like William James (*The Varieties of Religious Experience*), Huston Smith (*The Religions of Man*), Joseph Campbell (*The Masks of God*), Aldous Huxley (*The Perennial Philosophy*), Carl Jung (*Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*), and Ken Wilber (*Spectrum of Consciousness*) have already contributed much in this direction.

This article has been written in support of this quest, and in appreciation of what our teachers are investigating today. Many models already exist for the structure of spiritual experience. It may aid us in our quest to know what has come before us.