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Bob Janes

Musings on Well-Formed Myths

THE IMPETUS FOR ME to put pen to paper comes from Joseph O'Connor's article 'The Myth of the Well-Formed Outcome, Part 2' in last July's issue of *NLP World* – though I hasten to say that it was chance that settled on this article in preference to many others. I have read much of and around NLP over the best part of the last decade and I become increasingly curious and sometimes concerned at some of the presuppositions that emerge in current writing. In this short article I will try to give voice to a few examples.

What is NLP?

First there is the reification, the nominalization and the anthropomorphic genesis of NLP. In one paragraph (on page 39) Joseph writes 'In NLP . . . NLP would work . . . NLP has exaggerated . . . NLP's metaprograms . . . NLP mismatched . . . NLP modelled . . . the NLP anthem . . . NLP is no longer an adolescent psychology.' Here we have NLP as field (or container), as machine, as speaker, as owner, as actor and as psychology. So is NLP all of these? Does 'it' have a voice that is in any way coherent? Did 'it' model – I always thought that was Bandler, Grinder, *et al.* Is it indeed a psychology despite the avid avowals of its founders to the contrary?

I don't believe that there are any true answers. For me, NLP is a field of inquiry, of inquiry into human subjective experience. That field has many inquirers; I think that many of those currently engaged in the burgeoning area of 'Consciousness Studies' would consider it as but a subset of their field – and probably a trivial one at that. Even if we limit our examination to those who believe themselves to fall within the NLP community there is certainly no common voice. There are as many flavours of NLP as can be trademarked. Christina Hall's document in the same issue of *NLP World* is an example of a legal finding about who owns 'The Society of NLP', its logo and certain unspecified intellectual property rights. Despite Chris's wish for the future the document says little or nothing about what NLP 'is.'