



A Tribute to Henri Cartier-Bresson

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The great photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson in 1999 celebrated his ninetieth birthday. As a tribute to his humanism and his achievement, we are pleased to publish this short account of his photographic strategy. He said of this work:



Henri Cartier-Bresson

"I am keeping the document of Mr. Stephen Bray precious in my files. It is a monument of investigation. I fear he may be using a microscope where he could be using a telescope, whereas for myself, I prefer a knife and fork!"

From a letter to Patricia Wheatley, Producer BBC Arts

Introduction

In the spring of 1988 John Grinder came to London and presented New Code NLP through the medium of the workshop Prerequisites of Personal Genius. During the workshop he told how he had discovered whilst modelling effective commodity traders that the effective people listened to music as they worked. When something in the music seemed out of register, then they would see something change on the screen whereupon

they would go to the keyboard and make the necessary transaction . This action would result in the restoration of a sense of equilibrium from which they would be able to resume listening to the music in comfort.& The strategy may be notated :

TOTE NOTATION

from 'an ABC of NLP' (Sinclair and Bray 1998)

A formal way of recording interpersonal, (between and individual and their environment) and intrapersonal communication, (within themselves) communication.

Within this formal code the five senses may be written up as: V = visual, A = auditory, K = kinesthetic, O = olfactory and G = gustatory

In NLP the kinesthetic component of a communication include proprioception {the reception of stimuli produced within a person, such as hot and cold; sharp or dull pains}. Such signals are coded as kinesthetic internal signals Ki. Kinesthetic signals also include perceptions of movement such as an awareness of breathing. Tactile or external body awareness is coded as Ke.

Similarly the visual and auditory components may be coded as either internal(i) or external(e); Vi, Ve and Ai,Ae. The auditory channel may also be coded into analogue, {representing tone, and timbre} and digital, {representing tape loops (q.v.)}. Analogue communication is coded as At, (standing for Auditory tonal); whilst auditory digital communication retains the logical formula Ad.

So in the case of the illustration provided by John Grinder the notation would be as follows:

Ae ~ listening to music

Ve ~ Seeing a pattern on the VDU screen

Ke ~ Making a trade on the keyboard

Ki ~ Feeling a sense of equilibrium

John Grinder commented that this was precisely the strategy of a hunter. The hunter

quietens the internal dialogue and pays attention to the surroundings using the 360 sense of sound, (Ae).

When the hunter notes a pattern in the sound signifying a change they look to see what is occurring (Ve). The arm moves and the spear is released (Ke). As it strikes the prey they identify with it at the moment of death (Ki). A maimed beast will cry out and prolong the hunters' agony. Hunters therefore ensure the animal is not in pain in the initial throwing of the spear.

In the book *Journey to Ixtlan*, the teacher Don Juan instructs Carlos Castaneda in moving using what he calls *The Gait of Power* (Castaneda 1972). This exercise forces Castaneda's attention into his sense of movement causing him to turn off his internal dialogue. This enables him to *Stop the World*, or to stop putting it together as other people have said that it has to be.

When shooting small arms, many people believe it necessary to hold one's breath prior to squeezing the trigger. However, when Dr. Milton H. Erickson was consulting to the US army rifle team he gave the following advice:

Relax the feet, the knees, the hips, the entire body. Let your hand be comfortably placed. Let the butt of the rifle be placed against the shoulder just right. You slowly lean your cheek against the butt until it feels very comfortable. Then you let the gun sight wander up and down and back and forth across the target, at the right moment you gently squeeze the trigger (Rossi 1980).

Once again, finding the right moment to squeeze the trigger has nothing to do with internal dialogue.

Erickson advises the soldier to adjust their body until it feels comfortable ~ Ki

Then they are to place the rifle against their cheek until it feels comfortable ~ Ke/Ki

Then the gun sight wanders up and down back and forth across the target ~ Ke/Ve

At the right moment the trigger is squeezed Ke

This finding the right moment to squeeze the trigger is of course crucial to the business of hunting. The anarchist Emmett Grogan describes the process graphically in his autobiography *Ringolevio*.

As Emmett began to squeeze off the round with both his eyes open, the refrain of the Santo Domingo Pueblo hunting song played on the rhythms of his mind and the beat of his heart. The .22 Magnum explosion momentarily blurred the vision of himself falling gracefully, but hard, dead to the ground, the target and the bullet he had just fired. For he was the target, and the target was him. ... and he saw how it would be when the time came for him, and he waited silently and allowed the splendid buck to unsufferingly (sic) die in peace and in private (Grogan 1974).

Although Grogan is clearly switching between all his senses, including Auditory internal; the decisive moment seems to follow the auditory, visual, kinaesthetic strategy of the hunter:

Ae Vi Ki

The .22 Magnum explosion momentarily blurred the vision of himself falling gracefully, but hard, dead to the ground.

The act of preparing for the moment however, seems to have a different strategy:

Ke V

As Emmett began to squeeze off the round with both his eyes open, the refrain of the Santo Domingo

Ai Ki

Pueblo hunting song played on the rhythms of his mind and the beat of his heart.

The Strategy of Henri Cartier-Bresson

In a recent television documentary Henri Cartier-Bresson said:



Henri Cartier-Bresson's Leica

I always carry a camera with me except when I'm shaving, for me its an extension of the eye. Photography is for me a physical pleasure, like hunting except that we don't kill (Wheatley 1997).

Ke V

I always carry a camera with me except when I'm shaving, for me its an extension of the eye.

Ki

Photography is for me a physical pleasure, like hunting except that we don't kill.

From this comparison it seems that we may eliminate the Auditory Internal (Ai) element from the strategy of the hunter photographer. However, it may not be quite that simple. Try holding a conversation with yourself at the same time as mentally humming a favourite melody. Most people will find that either the melody or the conversation takes precedence. It is very difficult to meta-comment about, how well, (or poorly) you are doing whilst occupying the auditory channel with internal music. Try taking a walk whilst mentally playing a great melody. Notice how this amplifies changes in external sounds whilst shutting off internal dialogue.

Cartier-Bresson makes a revealing statement, later in the documentary:

You have to concentrate ~ concentrate and you can't talk and concentrate at the same time.

This seems similar to the state that Don Juan attempts to instill into Carlos Castaneda through teaching him the gait of power. Cartier-Bresson is referring here to internal dialogue as well as the physical act of talking to another person. For Emmett Grogan, shutting off the internal dialogue is accomplished by substituting internally generated music, for internally generated dialogue.

Richard Bandler suggests a similar technique to that employed by Emmett Grogan to shut off the internal dialogue when he refers to a Sizzle State .

To enhance your success in accessing the flirtatious [sizzle] state involves getting a nice tune in your head. Put a tune in there that will give you some internal rhythm. And make it strong enough and intense enough that you can feel it, that you can move to it ... feel that you live in a friendly universe. (Hall 1996)

Cartier-Bresson's colleague Eve Arnold comments:

He sort of does a little ballet. He rises to his toes, the camera to the eye ~ the click comes and you don't even know you have been photographed ~ and hes off to the next (Wheatley op. cit.)

Her comment is interesting because it provides a valuable double description of Cartier-Bresson's photographic strategy. The clue to which perceptual position she is occupying is in the second part of the statement:

She does not say the click came and I realised that I had been photographed, as would be the case were Cartier-Bresson simply occupying second position to her first. Instead she says:

the click comes and you don't even know you have been photographed.

Implying that she is occupying third position in relation to Cartier-Bresson's first, with the subject (you), occupying second position.

From third position then Cartier-Bresson's strategy appears as:

Ke Ke V Ae

He sort of does a little ballet. He rises to his toes, the camera to the eye ~ the click comes and you don't even know you have been photographed.

Her choice of the word ballet, suggests a pulse, rhythm or music, but we don't know if this music is in her mind, or that of Henri Cartier-Bresson. Certainly, he moves very gracefully through the sequences of frames which accompanied her comment in the BBC documentary. The click, she reports as coming to her in third position. (but not in second, or you would know you had been photographed), would in Cartier-Bresson's first position be experienced as kinaesthesia for we know for him:

Photography is for me a physical pleasure.

In his essay *The Decisive Moment* he writes:

“To me photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as the precise organisation of forms which give that event its proper expression.”

I believe that, through the act of living, the discovery of oneself is made concurrently with the discovery of the world around us, but which can also be affected by us.

A balance must be established between these two worlds - the one inside us and the one outside us. As the result of a constant reciprocal process, both these worlds come to form a single one - and this is the world we must communicate (Cartier-Bresson 1952).

This statement is significant in so far as it seems to say much, but reveals very little, in terms of Henri-Cartier Bresson's photographic strategy. However if we apply the meta model to it we find within it a number of significant patterns to help us build up a model of his internal world.

Photography is the simultaneous recognition (what specifically do you recognise?), in a fraction of a second, of the significance (nominalization? how specifically? what is significant?) of an event (nominalization) as well as the precise organisation of forms (how are they organised? which forms?), which give that event (nominalization) its proper expression (proper according to whom?).

I believe that through the act (nominalization) of living, the discovery of oneself (nominalization) is made concurrently with the balance (nominalization) of the world around us, but which can also be affected by us.

A balance (nominalization) must be established (how will it be established? what would

happen if it was not established?) between the two worlds ~ the one inside us and the one outside us. As a result of a constant reciprocal process, both these world come to form a single one ~ and this is the world we must communicate (what would happen if we did not communicate it?).

We find Cartier-Bresson uses three principle speech patterns. Nominalization is the most common of these. This is perhaps not surprising because converting processes into objects or artifacts is an essential feature of being an artist.

A second (and related pattern) occurring is that of unspecified verbs. Nominalizations and Unspecified verbs belong to the meta model category of information gathering. In short, Cartier-Bresson leaves the reader to take their own meaning from his words.

Those familiar with Cartier-Bresson's work will know of a picture of a yin /yang symbol photographed by him in a pool or water during a journey through China. This symbol originated in China and represents the ever moving circular pattern of change. Nominalizing this pattern through the medium of a photograph enables us when viewing the picture to re-experience the joy of finding the symbol. However to do so once again we have shut off our own internal dialogue and lose our sense of self, so we may experience more of his original experience.

The third pattern falls into the different meta model pattern of modal operators of necessity. This category is placed within the category of Limits to an Individuals World Map. Some limitations are inevitable when addressing oneself to a specific task. The question arises does this pattern relate to photography, or to his life as a whole?

As we begin to build up a picture of the internal world of Cartier-Bresson it becomes apparent that there is a richness in his description of experience which is at a different logical level than those of a behavioural strategy which may be notated as can Ericksons instructions to the US shooting team, or simple meta-model coding. In order to add the extra dimensions necessary levels from what has been termed Conceptual Modelling are required.

Conceptual modelling has perhaps been developed most completely as an art by Robert Dilts who has made a study of a number of exceptional individuals. These studies are written up in a series of books entitled Strategies of Genius.

Roberts contributions to the development of NLP have been legion. One major

development has been the way in which he developed a theory of neuro-logical levels into a unified field theory for NLP. In this elegant move he has been able to conceptualise a map of reality which traces various levels of being and the transforms which link them.

Henri Cartier-Bresson writes:

“A balance must be established between these two worlds - the one inside us and the one outside us. As the result of a constant reciprocal process, both these worlds come to form a single one - and this is the world we must communicate.”

We could simply take this statement as applying to the neuro-logical level which Robert has called behaviour. If this is the case then Cartier-Bresson's balance, need only be established between the inner and outer world within the context of photography. He does not do so, instead he leaves it for us to decide to which level his statement may best be applied.

If as an experiment we take the statement and apply it to a familiar activity, we find that the quality appertaining to that specific activity is affected. However, if we shift the same statement up to the level of beliefs, then we as we scan all the various aspects and activities in our life, that all of these are affected. Imagine limiting your world view to one where balancing inner and outer reality is a compulsive undertaking. What differences would you wish to make? This inventory will take you toward applying Cartier-Bresson's hunting strategy in the various areas of life you can identify.

Neuro-logical Levels

Spirit ~ that which informs but is impossible to define.

Identity ~ Who I Am (An Ego Ideal).

Beliefs ~ Values, Permissions, Motivations.

Capabilities ~ What I feel. What my body and mind can manage.

Behaviours ~ What I do.

Context ~ My environment, what influences me, and what in turn I influence.

With acknowledgement to Robert Dilts

By mapping Cartier-Bresson's statements on Robert Dilts table of neuro-logical levels we may expand our picture of the photographers model of the world.

Why does he take such unique photographs? - because a balance must be established between the world within us and the world outside, of us.

How is this balance recognised? - it is a physical pleasure

What occurs? - he rises to his toes, the camera to the eye

Where & when does this take place? - [everywhere and all of the time] except when shaving

We may further amplify this map by using the concept of meta programs developed by Tad James (James 1987)

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META PROGRAMME

Excerpt from 'an ABC of NLP' (Sinclair and Bray 1998)

Meta Programmes are the deepest level of basic programmes that filter our perception.

There are nine components to the metaprogram:

1. Toward the Positive vs. Away from the Negative
2. Match (seek out sameness) vs. Mismatch (seek out differences)
3. Past (Remembered); Present (External); Future (Constructed)
4. Associated (In Time) vs. Dissociated (Through Time)
5. Toward External Behaviour vs. Internal Response
6. Referring to Self? Other? Context? or Spirit? (Corresponding to 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th positions)
7. Sorting by: Who? What? Where? When? or How? (Person, Information, Place, Time and Behaviour)
8. Chunking: Up (specific to general); Down (general to specific) or Lateral (through analogy).
9. Value orientation toward: Power, Affiliation or Achievement.

Individual parts of an individual or organisation may operate out of different metaprogrammes. They provide a useful tool in the contexts of psychotherapy and organisational consulting.

Henri Cartier-Bresson's Meta Programmes

Toward the positive/away from the negative?

it is a physical pleasure - Toward the positive

Seeking sameness, or difference?

"photography is the simultaneous recognition" - Seeking out sameness

Remembered, Present or Future orientation?

"in a fraction of a second" -Oriented in the present

Associated, or dissociated?

"it is a physical pleasure" - Associated

"you cant talk and concentrate at the same time" - Fully associated

Toward external behaviour, or internal response?

"a balance must be established" - Internal response

"it is a physical pleasure" - Internal response

Referring to Self? Other? Context? or Spirit?

"The discovery of oneself is made concurrently with" - Self

"the discovery of the world around us" - Context

Sorting by: Who? What? Where? When? or How?

"Photography is the simultaneous recognition" - When

Chunking: from specific to general; from general to specific; or through analogy?

"Photography is ... like hunting" - Analogy

Orientation: Power? Affiliation? or Achievement?

"A balance must be established between the two worlds

the one inside us, and the one outside" - Affiliation

As I write this I find already I have begun to be affected by the analysis of these meta programs with the result that I feel a slight pressure at the area of my chest at the central point adjacent to my heart. The effect is to make me sway slightly and to feel off balance, although in fact I am seated securely on a chair. The reason for my imbalance, is I know, because in the act of thinking about and writing the meta program analysis I have unconsciously accessed some of Cartier-Bresson's programs. I know however that there is a contradiction within the meta program table I have written which now needs

addressing.& Here is the pattern concerned:

Referring to Self? Other? Context? or Spirit?

"The discovery of oneself is made concurrently with - Self

the discovery of the world around us" - Context

Within this statement there appears a contradiction. Spirit may be defined as something that is greater than us as individuals; or as even the sum total of our Identity, Beliefs, Capabilities, Behaviours and Context. Within NLP classification it is sometimes referred to as fourth position.

Spiritual Energy

Fourth position gives a visceral, felt knowledge of what is happening in a relationship ... we are not observing but sensing through direct identification what is happening among the couples and groups of which we are a part. He advises us to think of a relationship we are in and know well, and to step into the space between ourselves and the other person. This is a big step. An easier exercise is to imagine a stormy night. Hear the effect of the wind whistling around the sharp edges of your house. See how it blows leaves, and paper up the street, witness all its many effects before you close your eyes and become the wind. Feel what it is like to be everywhere, pressing under the door, causing ripples on a puddle, occupying vast space as you stretch across the sky and at the same time attend to every little detail ensuring that you pressurise every tree and leaf in the direction of your force. If you can do this, then you are beginning to train your neurology to become familiar with fourth position (Wrycza 1997).

Henri Cartier Bresson puts it more simply:

“Its the spiritual energy which is permanent and everything is just mere chance. The joy with the camera is to take that chance, and to be available.” (Cartier-Bresson op. cit.)

This statement removes the contradiction in the meta program pattern as it is now clear that Cartier-Bresson is neither referring to the self, or the other but the relationship between them.

Referring to Self? Other? Context? or Spirit?

"The discovery of oneself is made concurrently with " - Self

(The relationship between them is the) Spirit (Fourth Position)

the discovery of the world around us" - Context

As Peter Wrycza comments: fourth position is a visceral experience. Once it is clear that Cartier-Bresson is occupying fourth position when working it is necessary to amplify our understanding of two of his other meta programs:

Associated, or dissociated?

"it is a physical pleasure" - associated

"you cant talk and concentrate at the same time" - fully associated

Now we may understand that the physical pleasure defined by Cartier Bresson is that of being associated into the relationship between his body and his environment rather than simply into his body. This is similar to what Emmett Grogan attempts to describe in words when he reports:

The .22 Magnum explosion momentarily blurred the vision of himself falling gracefully, but hard, dead to the ground, the target and the bullet he had just fired. For he was the target, and the target was him ... (Grogan op. cit.)

Grogan's experience however, is not so immediate, for unlike Cartier-Bresson the kill seems to displace Grogan in time, possibly because his consciousness at the moment of firing seems to be in the visual rather than visceral modality.

The second meta program which requires examination is:

Toward external behaviour, or internal response?

"a balance must be established" - internal response

"it is a physical pleasure" - internal response

Within our lives we are constantly losing and restoring our balance. The act of walking is just this activity, as indeed is the act of breathing where we balance the concentrations

of oxygen and carbon dioxide in our circulatory systems. The act of balancing is essentially the act of living. To balance from fourth position then is to be living spiritually which is in itself a pleasure. Fourth position is in effect the culmination of the addition of all the neurological-levels within the Unified Field Theory of NLP. Within it the linkages between each level provide a mysterious gateway to encounter the new and the unknown. Robert Dilts evokes our potential to enter into this unknown spiritual world when he refers to:

“The unseen system of our neurology which grows in the soil of our bodies, and the leaves and branches of the larger family, community and global networks of which we are a part”, (Dilts 1995).

In this context whilst it is true to say that Cartier-Bresson is oriented toward an internal response, this is because fourth position, is a heart-felt connection to all that we experience through our five senses.

At this point a balance is restored to my sense of equilibrium. I sense we have a workable map of Cartier Bresson’s model of life and the relationship he holds to the world in which he finds himself. This conclusion is a physical pleasure, a balanced sense of completion and a knowing in my heart that the job is well done!

Happy 90th birthday Henri ~ long may your eye continue to twinkle and your heart beat out the tune of joy as your spirit balances the two worlds.

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