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Synthesizing Generalizations

an empowering meta-state pattern for becoming more creative, intuitive, and generative

Nelson Zink and Joe Munshaw (1996) have put together an excellent new pattern in NLP, *Collapsing Generalizations*. On the theoretical side, they argue that the meta model has played too strong of an influence in NLP and installs in some people too much of its reductionistic process. They assert that this undercuts the central scientific reasoning power of induction and undermines the generativity that inductive thinking can stimulate. To counteract this tendency, they have described “the other half of NLP” as encouraging people “to create powerful, elegant, and appropriate generalizations.”

For Zink & Munshaw a generalization refers to the process of inducing a general concept, principle or inference from particulars. As such, “a generalization is of a higher logical level than the class from which it sprang; it’s an insight into, distillation of and comment on the elements required for its formation” (21). This correlates perfectly to Korzybski’s “levels of abstraction.” Korzybski (1941/1994) argued that we create our neuro-linguistic states by abstracting from the elements of one level and thereby generating a higher level abstraction about the lower level.

For Zink and Munshaw “creativity and intuition both rely heavily on inductive reasoning for their primary logical method and it follows that to create anything original one must reason inductively.” But, they assert, those who succeed in learning the meta model too well tend to “shun inductive reasoning.” This explains, they say, why “there has not been much new development” in NLP since submodalities in 1985.

While they look upon the meta model as a deductive tool that tends to become overly reductionistic, I see it as a way to slay or tame our dragon states—to unglue the linguistic conceptualizations that sometimes do us harm. In *Meta-States*, we “slay the dragon” by de-