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The Myth of the Well-Formed Outcome, Part 2

IN THE MARCH ISSUE OF *NLP World* I tried to set the scene for deconstructing the traditional form of NLP outcomes. They need an overhaul, but my main concern was over how narrow NLP values have become. Usefulness lords over all else, with aesthetics nowhere to be seen. I believe that NLP can be more useful if it can find ways to be beautiful too. Perhaps too, it can discover an aesthetic sense that will allow it to be more useful still. Utility and aesthetics work together better than utility alone. Leave out aesthetics and you leave out important parts of human experience.

In this article I want to look at the classic NLP ‘well-formedness conditions’ for outcomes to see their strengths and weaknesses, where they are appropriate and where they do not work, and attempt to fit them into a better-formed model – a more aesthetic model.

Before looking at these conditions, we need to define our terms. An outcome is what you want; it sets the direction in which you travel. A task is what you do to move in your chosen direction. An outcome is an end; a task is a means to that end. Achieving an outcome means making a change from a present state to a desired state. An outcome is a destination, not the journey. One general problem with the NLP outcome model is that it blurs the distinction between journey and destination. Some of the conditions refer to the journey and some to the destination.

The NLP outcome conditions vary slightly depending on which book you read, or which training you attend. I have taken the seven conditions that most authors have agreed on.

Outcomes are expressed in the positive

The NLP model of change proposes that we move from a present state