

The Revolutionary Unconscious

From chemical pollution to evangelism of psycho-somatic disease to relentless propaganda, capitalism has reinforced the importance of the mind-body element in human activity. This article provides some metaphors for this total human activity. The progress of capital is always opening up methods that can either help capital or open a wider front of struggle. We will take ideas from Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), hypnosis and theories of the unconscious and give an outline of how these might be put in a subversive framework.

ASAN's project has certainly involved digesting a number of perspectives, from those by revolutionaries to those created by this society's paid thinker. Critical theory has to be the opposite of the arbitrary addition of some trendy novelty. There are many appealing concepts. The Situationaists, postmodernism, chaos theory, military strategy, NLP, anthropology, quantum mechanics or other "big ideas" can all be either important tool or the opaque novelties of specialists in abstract extremism.

While not aiming at revolution, NLP is a powerful tool for understanding the dynamics of the human conscious and unconscious. Subversive activity becomes richer through looting ideas. Once a conceptual framework has become part of effective subversive activity, where exactly you get it is not the most important factor. To make tools like this your own, you must *use* them as well as explain them.

Revolutionaries should still try to trace the origins of the ideas which they pilfer (and part of this article will trace the origins of some questionable and useful ideas). Any such history is good since it shows how ideas continuously mutate into their opposite.

This will include a broad summary of some very complex ideas. Some of this discussion could be described as philosophical. But even this has a purpose – occasionally activists get stopped by not being able to give a philosophical base to their ideas.

To communicate our understanding of the complex subjects

in *Against Sleep And Nightmare*, we also use the multiple levels of human communication. We don't skip the hard dull details nor do we wade through them. Instead, we paint a picture which hopefully allows an entire situation to be grasped quickly as whole by those having either the background or the imagination. This strategy is intended to allow the reader to leap quickly into imagining new ideas and new worlds.

All of this is not meant to unveil some incomprehensible result. Instead, the metaphors we will be developing here are intended to show the unity of different actions and approaches which also make sense on their own.

The dynamic approach begins in the middle so as to pull the reader into the process that is happening. Part of this article is also to give a more complete, systematic picture of our language process. So we may find ourselves first leaping to a more subtle point, then developing the same point from a more general viewpoint.

NLP And Structuralism

Towards the end of his life, Karl Marx noted how he needed to preserve the useful aspects of the classical political economy which he had previously critiqued. This wasn't because he had found these theories more valid, but because the rise of "neo-classical economics" had replaced the original theories with an approach which simply buried all the political and problematic aspects of the original political economy.

The conditions of this society stand against people's immediate sensing of their total, continuously moving animal existence. Just as much, it stands against people's creating ideas that describe this experience of animal existence. The word "system" is engineering jargon describing a group of just about any object which interact more or less as a whole. Given the current world, this word is used extremely often. A "dynamic system" is a system that is constantly moving.

Thus, we take a similar position Marx. Now that "systems" has become omnipresent in this world, it is more the opponents of capital who have an incentive to bring these systems into view and to get some general understanding of them. This is the opposite approach to "postmodernism" theorists, which



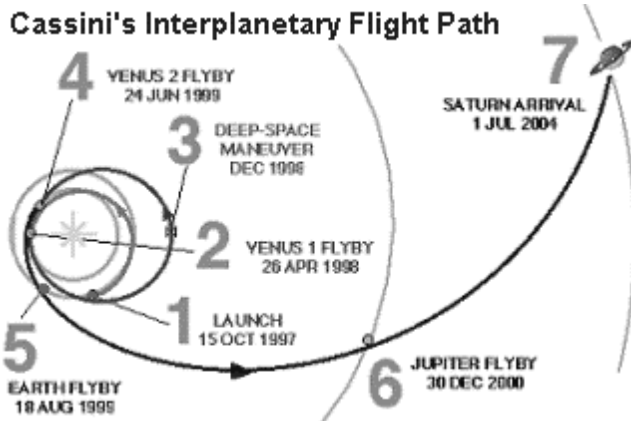
denies the validity of systems theory while accepting every system of today, from prisons to capital.

In the period after WWII, structuralism was a broad current oriented to using "systems theory" to recast a number of academic fields. It included Bateson, Chomsky, Norbert Wiener and many others. As well as using various mathematical approaches, the systems theory view involved moving from models where you have a single cause creating a single effect to models where each element affects the other.

The psychological framework and self-help movement termed Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) was the product of a "radical structuralism" that involved Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson. Richard Bandler and John Grinder were followers of Gregory Bateson at the University Of California Santa Cruz. Their effort produced an effective stab toward Bateson's "Ecology Of Mind." This methodology rolled together ideas from the previously mentioned structuralists while adding a different attitude. Like most structuralism, NLP is an ahistorical formulation. The questions of the origins and meaning of the unconscious are outside it's scope. Rather, it gives an interesting set of tools for utilizing language, tonality, posture, etc., to influence the structure of the relations between the human conscious and unconscious.

NLP has at least this in common with the Situation International - it was a project to bring some critical abstraction to a level where they could be used immediately and practically. It shared the attitude that instantaneous change is possible given the correct process and circumstances.

Guidance Systems



One of the simplest dynamic systems is a "feedback loop." A feedback loop is a system where any small change from a set, starting position causes an opposite reaction, thus moving the system back to this starting position. Feedback loops are found everywhere. A thermostat keeps an area at about the same temperature by raising the heat of the area if it gets too cool and lowering the heat if the area gets too warm.

The feedback loop is everywhere in the living and non-living worlds. Human activity in particular involves many, many feedback loops within each other. This leads to interesting effects. One thing that can happen in a feedback

loop is that a system can become miscalibrated. We can see this in a person with Parkinson's disease. Their basic system for movement has been damaged to the point where their body goes back and forth uncontrollably when they simply make an effort to reach a particular goal.

In the early twentieth century, F.M. Alexander described how the development of civilization produced a miscalibration of the basic human balance reflexes. The miscalibration of the head and the neck balance produces a poor "use of the self" – poor posture and many of the joint-disorders around a person simply wearing out through this poor use.

Expanding our view to a "dynamic system" in general, we can look at anything from a person throwing a rock to a rocket being sent to the moon. The analogy of a space craft might seem complex and removed from us. But the space-ship analogy simply allows us to step back and notice the complexity of even a simple feedback process such as the aiming required to throw a stone. A person tossing a rock can seem so simple that the complicated processes involved maybe forgotten.

Balance and goal-getting are both natural human reflexes. They happen without a person's awareness, and on many levels, at the same time. If you see something you want down the street, you can move towards your goal while unconsciously maintaining your posture, your breathing and all those unconscious aspects of a coherent self.

Of course, a person's total activity certainly involves even more complex feedback than simply what is needed to allow a person to move or walk with elegant balance. But just considering this, shows how we should assume that many things are happening outside conscious awareness.

So to make things explicit, consider again our satellite orbiting the earth. If we want to move the satellite to the moon, what forces would we have to use to get it there? Speaking loosely, we must understand the existing orbit and fire our rockets at exactly the point when the satellite will be already aimed at the moon. We would then keep firing our rockets to maintain our aim at the moon, more and more using the moon's gravitation to take us there as well. A more complex path might actually involve circling the earth several times, each time firing rockets to make one orbit more elliptical.

Now what we will be doing is taking this idea and expanding to systems much richer than simply the orbiting planets frame. We can use this analogy for just about any change that we might want to make to a complex dynamic system. The approaches involves the following:

- 1) Understand existing dominant forces, understand your motion in terms of the forces which guide you.
- 2) Concentrate your force in such a way that it brings other forces into play. Use existing favorable forces to escape the pull of existing forces.
- 3) Once change happens, allow favorable forces to guide you to your destination, fine-tuning as necessary.

The ecology of a region, the health of a person, the growth

of micro-organism, and the behavior of an economic system all have this same continuous, interactive dynamic quality. And human actions, from walking to throwing a stone to making love, have this feedback built-in. Obviously revolutionaries can take a hint in terms of organizing our activities so that we can a maximum effect in an elegant manner.

To get a little closer to these rich systems, we can generalize our "space short" analogy. We look at the "configuration space" of physics. Beginning with Descartes, mathematics and physics have defined space with coordinates. The set of "tuples" (x, y) can be used to describes all the points in two dimensional space. To create a configuration space, we take any set of values and group it to form a multi-dimensional space. This involves grouping the coordinates of each object together into tuples and considering these to be the coordinates of the points in a multidimensional space.

The movement of two objects in 3-dimensional space is can be taken as the movement of one point in 6-dimensional space by combining coordinates. Combining even more, the entire condition of a system can be seen as a single point circling in space. Even further, a configuration of say, rope suspended in space is described by infinite dimensional configuration space if we height the height of each infinitesimal section of the rope to be a single coordinate. Generally then, we can view any system as a point oscillating within a many dimensional ball. This is the underlying process we will be implicitly refering to as we speak of complex phenomenon "moving in space" or "orbiting" around a "point."

Metamodel

NLP is a system for looking at the way that language and dynamic systems interact. The NLP "meta-model" system is a useful tool for sorting language to determine whether an expression has full meaning. By attacking "deletion, distortion and generalization" within language, the meta-model reveals structural the limits of person's "model of the world."

A lot of NLP is done as standard therapy. One use of the "meta-model" comes if a client makes a statement like "I can never feel good." In actual fact, the client probably has felt good at some time in his life, if not sometime in the recent past. But the effective meaning of this statement appears when we project it down into an unconscious emotional dynamic. The client may actually generate an internal dialogue that pulls him or her into that state of "not feeling good." NLP's "meta-model" shows how by challenging the "never" in the statement "I can never feel good," a therapist can make the client's unconscious dynamic explicit and thus open to change for the patient.

The metamodel can be extended to a wide range of situations. For example, despite its claim of going beyond structuralism, postmodernism's basic structure actually can be easily deciphered with structuralist NLP (though we will give only a simple overview here). Phrases such as "discourse",

"embodied", "problemacize," "situated," and so-forth exhibit a standard deleted-indirect-object formula. This deletion universalizes the phrase. We can then observe that this universalism projects unconsciously into the very specific realm of the artistic/academic trendiness. The meaning of the statement appears when an object will added to the deletion. "Embodied discourse" both means some discussion of something that involves things with bodies, implies that no one will ask what the implications of these bodies are, and prepares a particular assault on various perceived powers in the academic realm - modernists and such.

In the context of the global marketplace, we can translate just about any statement into a configuration of immediate material interests. Just as Microsoft, IBM and AOL/Time Warner extend their interests from the price of oil to the definition of freedom. Indeed, those which make no reference to material forces or deny their power simply represent the most bald interests and most complete mystifications - religions are most obvious for this.

In ASAN #5, we describe how the dynamics of race and morality unconsciously express and reinforce capitalist relations. A word that has no logical meaning can become the center for a powerful unconscious resonance. Race is an idea that has little clear meaning, yet for racists it ties together an entire edifice of nation, blood and soil. Like deconstruction, what is most powerful is what cannot be said: God, country, race and a host of other terms have extremely fuzzy and distorted meaning for people - and simultaneously have tremendous unconscious impact.

Milton Model

Language as process can be seen in the way the mind creates some effect for any sentence it hears. This is a source of much poetry. In this sense, even meaninglessness is a meaning. We take language to have infinite dimensions of logical, mathematically definable meaning. And the mind searches for meaning far beyond the literal meaning of a sentence.

NLP and dialectics agree that our concept of meaning does not spring full-blown, but instead arises out of the entire process of a person living. The ordinary idea of language looks primarily at the logical meaning of a sentence. Beyond from this, we will be expanding our idea of a dynamic system by moving in what we could call "the space of possible meanings."

The Hypnotist Milton Erickson, who was studied in depth by Bandler and Grinder, developed the "embedded command" to add hidden suggestions to his speaking. By saying "you can **touch your nose**" with the emphasis on "**touch your nose**," he would send a signal to a person's unconscious mind for the person to immediately touch their nose.

Such methods open up many questions concerning different ways that speech might be broken-up and vast number of complex hidden meanings that might or might not actually

reach different levels of a person's unconscious. Rather than looking at the complex details of these techniques, we would look the total system such techniques are a part of. Basically, our ideas arise out of the same process as our activity. We create our ideas in the process of changing or maintaining our entire model of being.

NLP developed the "Milton model" to describe the effects of many kinds of partial communication. The metamodel and the Milton model are describe as being the opposite. Violations of the metamodel allow communication to access thought systems outside the critical, logical processing system.

The limits of a person's communication model are like the planets which a person orbits around. Highly "deleted" words such as "democracy," "freedom" "responsibility" or "patriotism" organize a person's thoughts without the resulting logic being explicit or subject to debate. For "freedom" the metamodel could easily ask "free to do what?" If democracy is "the people ruling," the metamodel could ask "which people ruling what how?"

Beyond this undefined discourse, though, the Milton model describes the tendency of terms like democracy or responsibility to be associated with change of conscious state, with a person thinking often switching logical deduction to a feeling. States of mind can be categorized by the dominant sensory system: by auditory, visual, or kinesthetic, or by the contrast of trance-like versus rational. The process of spontaneous trance is common to many non-western cultures and this points to a greater fluidity in pre-capitalist and pre-civilized societies. Still, considering that trance states are presently associated with buying frenzies or television, we can't see trance as automatically friend or foe. Instead, following NLP, will encompass trance within our description of dynamic human activity.

Re-calibrating

The situation described by F.M. Alexander, of a civilized person holding their body involves the conscious mind, goal-seeking over-riding the natural balance processes and producing a habitually held, fixed posture. Ironically, a person holding their body in a rigid, down position thus often believes that they are "hold themselves up" or "holding themselves straight." Telling someone to hold themselves straight thus often result in a person pulling their head and neck down and back. Alexander evolved the verbal directions "free your neck, allow your head to move forward and up, allow your back to lengthen and widen, allow you back and neck to move back, and allow knees to move out and away from your body" as an antidote for a person's usual situation of their intentions getting in the way of their movement.

Within this society, the range of personal miscalibrations is

huge. It ranges from awkward postures to sexual misery and confusion to fear and uncertainty about a person's position in society and beyond.

Many miscalibrations fall into the problems described by Alexander. These involve a person seeing themselves as a fix, rigid object to be moved or manipulated according to some rational conception. Just as much, miscalibrations often form fixed ideas in the conscious mind which do not follow a person's natural dynamic process of total change.

Marx described "Bourgeois Ideology" as a narrative which sees all activity as essentially the product of a conscious narrative. The development of the United States is described as being based on "the development of the ideal of freedom." This ideology can be seen as a product of the fixated internal processes, the miscalibration, which citizens under capitalism experience. Thus, we can describe "miscalibration" as calibration to capitalism.

Change

When we talk about utilizing these ideas to inspire actions for creating a new way of living, we describe both situations which offer someone people a chance to undo their manifest miscalibration as well as situations which offer people a chance to change their ideas.

Both approaches are important yet neither can be compared to the other. We will be imagining change in terms of people's total dynamic rather than simply imposing a set of new ideas.

Showing the meaninglessness of key phrases today is one useful tactic. Still, revolutionaries call for "authentic life" as contrasted to the "impoverished existence of supermarket society." But one can easily tag deletions and generalizations in this statement by asking "Authentic in what way? False in what way? Do you mean ALL society is the society of the supermarket?" The expression is certainly incomplete, but we

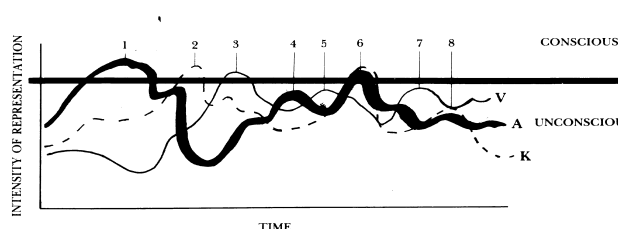
would use it because it points the way towards a different dynamic of existence.

Moreover, the term "authentic" may be incomplete but it does not conceal an entirely different dynamic in the way that a term like race, nation, or God conceals hidden

interests. All of these are incompletely specified. But since much language is incomplete, we need to also look at the total social dynamic to see what terms are useful for us to use.

This appears when we look at the complete dynamics of how meaning is created. Physicist speak of "emergent properties". These are properties that appear out of the operations of a system on itself. To see the system as it is, emergent properties are very useful. Invariants are an important emergent property - invariants are values that stay the same as a system changes.

When a person makes a statement, their full behavior goes



into creating a stream of information. A person stands closer or further away, speaks louder or more softly etc.. The process of speaking is unconsciously balanced with processing of breathing, and so-forth. And the listener's unconscious impulses are constantly readjusting themselves. This readjustment may or may not move it in the direction of speaker's explicit message.

Now the feedback processes of the unconscious can be modeled as our finite dimensional configuration space (see above). Thus our logical language **projects** down to become a force affecting a particular complex feedback system. Roughly, we can imagine speech having an effect determined by the existing forces in a person's mind. Moreover, since a person's unconscious is strongly connected with that of those around them, language can have an effect based on total social forces.

We can look at how the structure of an expression determines the force this expression exerts on the total unconscious dynamic. Some complex descriptions come from NLP but many things are fairly obvious given this framework.

NLP regards beliefs as being formulated and re-formulated continuously. It is not continuity of beliefs that results in the continuity of the world. Rather, it is the continuity of the world that results in the continuity of beliefs. Although this isn't the impression of people today, a person's whole being is constantly orbiting within the space of language and meaning.

NLP models communication as happening simultaneously on multiple logical levels. And each level involves a feedback loop which implicitly references objects further outside the immediate circle of communication.

Now understanding the total system of conscious-unconscious communication generates a number of techniques to enhance a "full-spectrum" communication process (embedded commands and such). But the actual dynamic of each person's conscious and unconscious is what allows a total communication to successful or not.

The energy of planets is determined by a complex formula involving their location and motion. But it is also simple and useful because it stays the same over time (except with outside intervention). The Marxian categories of "mode of production" or "relations of production" show invariant of societies under the transformation of rulers or flavors of ideologies. Chomsky's theory of language is based on transformations of sentences which preserve the meanings of those sentences.

Consider again the term "impoverished existence." By streamlining and minimizing the alienated labor going into each product, capital makes certain that each commodity only minimally satisfies the need for which the consumer buy it. Thus impoverishment is roughly a quality that remains constant through-out the entirety of this society.

In the case of the term "authentic life," we see the term as part a different dynamic from the dynamic of the present system. The idea of a "more real" existence is intended to tune-

into an existing dynamic of negating this society of endless calculation and impoverishment.

Stepping Beyond - Belief Change Dynamics

If deleted phrases are a force which maintains a person's connection with the present system, what happens when a person's position is undermined?

Saying "The society of the supermarket is the society of the death camp" provokes an immediate reaction. Certainly, there is a logic behind this reaction. But it also a matter of person's immediate unconscious reaction to an image. Many people have had the experience of changing their beliefs on a way that is beyond words. This includes religious experiences, communing with nature, and falling in love.

"Beyond words" certainly suggests directly experiencing a feedback system. Our "moon shot" analogy can illuminate this kind of experience. A belief or value can be seen as a stable point within a person's mind. So normally a person's thoughts "orbit" around their usual values - they move away from the value and then back towards it. If some event or some image moves the person's thinking far enough away from their starting point, they may suddenly find their thinking settling into a completely different routine.

On one hand, a person's activity may be motivated by particular beliefs or values. At the highest logical level, these ideas are usually stated in a deleted fashion. The power of these conscious values comes from unconscious forces.

When a person goes outside of a stable point, they reach a place where systems of anticipation breakdown. The process of a person moving from one stable state to another often involves stepping back from the reasons a person's conscious generates for acting and instead allowing the unconscious to test the feelings generated by the possibility of new behavior.

Congruence

A Berkeley Food Not Bomb activist recounted his experiences serving in Oakland, CA. Paraphrasing him, "When Food Not Bombs first began, we would serve food a little bit in Oakland. When we did, people would ask who we were and why were serving there. As white activists, serving in a black area, we had no real answer for who we were and so felt uncomfortable. We eventually left. Later, once we became comfortable serving People's Park, we began serving again in Oakland. At that point, we could simply saying 'we're a bunch of freaks from Berkeley.' At this point, having an idea who we were, people could accept us."

To mobilizes forces to create fundamental change we must use both conscious and unconscious resources. It is common for conscious revolutionaries to retain an unconscious attachment to the operations of this system. Just as much, it is common for folks who are acting in an unconsciously revolutionary way to retain a conscious attachment to this society.

Congruence is an NLP term describing a person's conscious and unconscious functioning harmoniously together. The many internal process of a person generate a communication which is either

congruent (supports the explicit message) or incongruent (contradicts itself). To claim personal strength in a weak voice contradicts the claim of strength. A speaking voice that validates its conscious message is a powerful tool for taking people towards the speaker's viewpoint.

Communication in any medium can be congruent or incongruent. For example, it may be incongruent to speak through the representatives of capitalism while claiming you oppose capitalism. On the other hand, those who can act shamelessly, those who make no apologies for who they are, are at the point of congruence (though whether they are congruently revolutionaries is another matter).

Those using the system against itself can use "anti-media sound-bites" (what could be called anti-art, when art was a serious proposition). This can include anything from video parodies of cheap puppets hitting each other to altered cartoons. These are sound-bytes which serve to undermine the legitimacy of the media-form itself. Since the media is part of the whole system, you can only congruently speak of the whole system by illustrating that you understand the conditions of the discussion. This means only by pacing ongoing reality. Also, this is a result of the concept "system" itself being generating by our dynamic perception rather than by logical argument. Workers can see capitalism as a system when they revolt and their bosses respond to them.

Challenging people and interrupting expectation is important for several reasons. It casts you as someone who won't put up with BS and thus casts you as someone worthwhile. It is aimed to inspire folks to begin challenging things about their lives as well. The aim of revolutionaries isn't simply to get people to swallow whole an idea, but to get people to begin to take more power over their entire lives. Being challenged by someone can inspire action even if the person challenged doesn't immediately accept the intellectual framework put forward. Still, using challenges that present a high-level perspective of the system can be an important part of the whole system.

Anti-media is at least as old as the Dadaists. The effectiveness of self-critiquing media is so power that it is a large part of mainstream media itself - from Monty Python to advertising. But those fundamentally opposed to this system have the most potential to do this fully, that is congruently.

The Uses Of A Vision

A common problem among activists is finding the balance of tactics. On the one hand, pacifists makes a fetish of non-violence. On the other hand, those who reject pacifism can code a fetish of violence into a term like "armed struggle". Those who focus on dictatorial nations make a fetish of direct democracy and consensus. Those who see the idiocy and paralysis of consensus make a fetish of determined action by militants. This list could go on endlessly. It shows the weakness of focusing on tactics.

When you try to sort through an action tactic by tactic, one has trouble finding points of balance. If instead you let yourself focus on the final result, then the balance of tactics can open effortlessly. And balance is key in dealing with the spectacle.

A part of the structure of maintaining or disrupting stable states is understanding how these involve anticipation. Many techniques do not need clever calculation. Instead they involve imagining the condition which you wish to inspire, going into that state and inviting others to follow.

Again using the space-shot analogy, the unconscious can sense the existence of potential stable "orbits". An empowered collective may not yet exist but a potential state which we can leap or aim for.

Given this, the vision of an empower community is a more powerful force than a series of improvements negotiated from the

perspective of the present order. Effective language involves imagining a new world. Communist tactics involve projecting our imagination of a new society so as to allow people to leap into this new stable state.

To do this congruently, we must advocate and take actions which have the potential to change the fundamental dynamic of this society. The process then is a sequence of double-or-nothing actions, each of which can go further but which are seldom guaranteed to go further - a wildcat strike, an occupation of a street or an act of vandalism all have the potential for igniting further action.

Acts that involve increasing collective power can be a part of such tactics. Making a strike committee reflect the collective will of strikers is an important tactic and brings one closer to an entire society which reflects the will of the dispossessed. Thus increasing democracy through things like worker's councils can be important at a critical moment.

But this is entirely based on looking at the exact situation. In a situation of mass takeovers, say France in May of 68, committee democracy might bring total collective control closer. But this doesn't mean it's a generically "good tactic" which can be applied to any situation. Union-created "Workers Councils" intended merely to increase the productivity of an average factory worker quite likely are something for workers to fight against.

Our general method moves from the position of the individual dispossessed person and the choices they face to the conditions of a collectivity and the choices of the collectivity. Thus tactics which create a potential collectivity can be incredibly strong. An example is when an instance of property damage changes the concept of development from being thought of as a process beyond collective control to one which might be under collective control. Although this an individual act, it creates an understanding the collective power is possible and thus creates a different idea of collective power.

This is also dialectics. Rather than imagine some separate system, you imagine that you are of the system. Rather than imposing a blueprint, you attune to and aim existing forces in a way that allows the embryo of the new world to grow to maturity.

Conclusion - Dialectics

All of the really cool tools we mention are useful for recapturing the action of informal subversion. Marx intended his materialist framework to elucidate the existing activity of communist workers. NLP describes how language touches a person's total process (rather just their rational logic). If we look at this with radical eyes, we will see that this analysis also rediscovers how the language of informal existence already does this. The question "how's it going?" is beautiful for expressing life as a continuous living process rather than a dead sequence of choices.

We are using sequential language to describe a system whose elements interact simultaneously. Hegel is notable for confronting this dilemma. Hegel's philosophy could be described as a narrative describing a natural progression of ideas. Rather than a single guiding idea starting and ending a discussion, the "dialectic" results in one idea developing organically from another.

Marx reversed this by looking at the way a material world worked. Marx maintained Hegel's conception that you could look at each stage of historical development as an answer to the question asked by the previous stage but material processes as the askers and answerers of the questions.

None of these methods replace political economy. Instead, they may give insights into exactly when and how eruptions beyond capitalist economics may happen. Political economy describes the stable points of our system and thus is the most reliable guide.