

Psychotherapy for Psychosis



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The History of Psychotherapy for Psychosis

The Woman Whose Cat Planned to Murder Her

The History of the Diagnosis of Schizophrenia

Genes versus Trauma

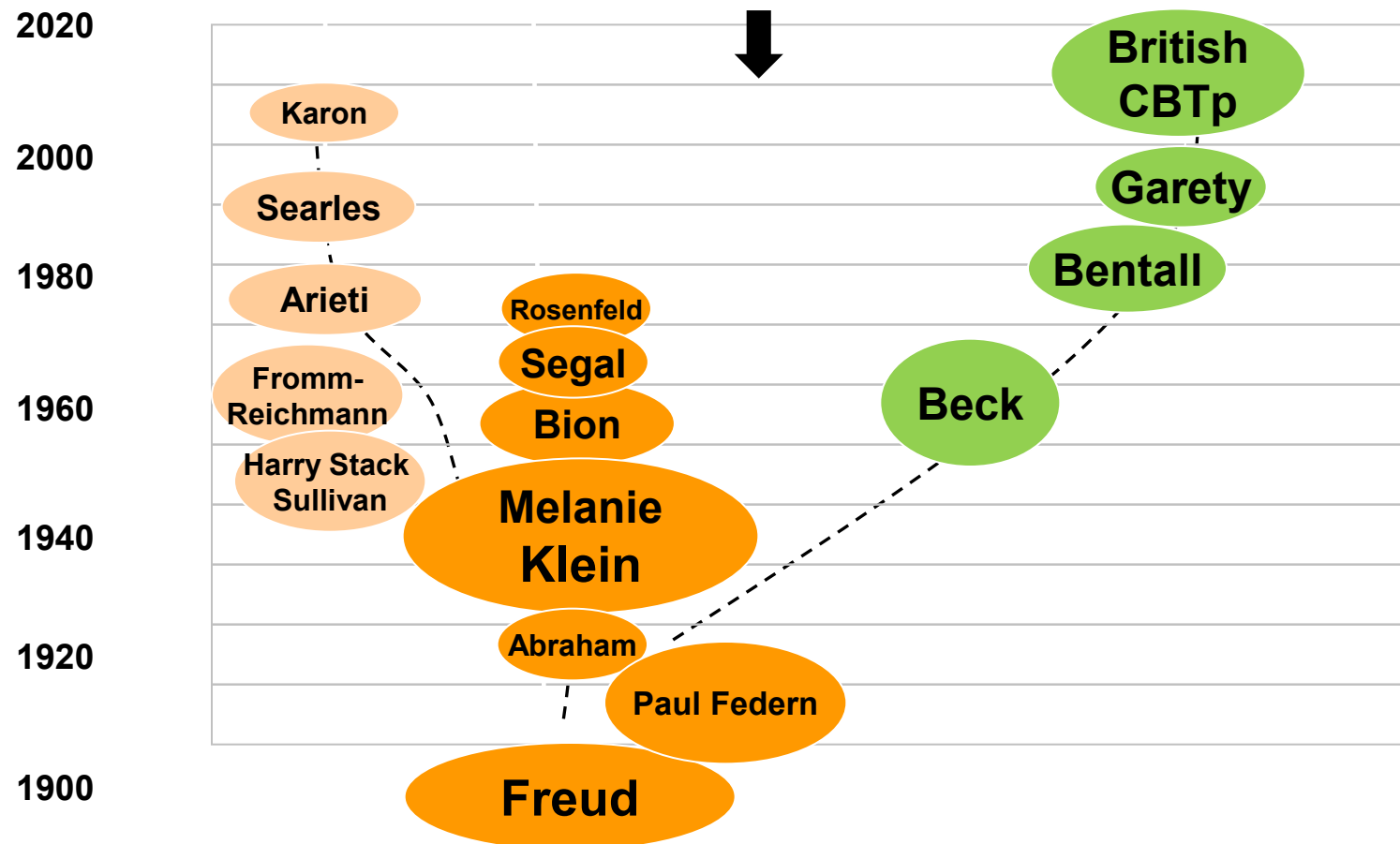
Three Streams that Compose Psychosis

Biologically Derived Hyper-salience & Projection

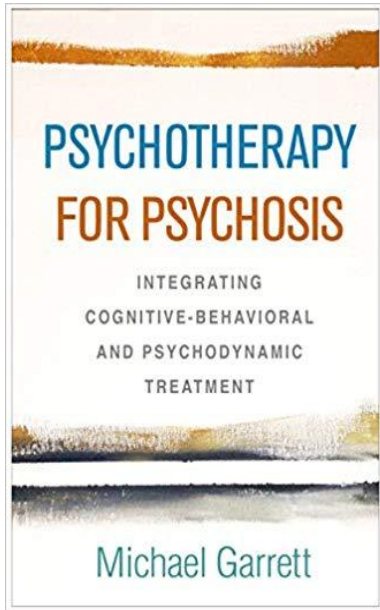
Psychotherapy for psychosis

Psychodynamic Psychotherapy
for Psychosis

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
for Psychosis (CBTp)



Integrating CBTp and psychodynamic treatment



In psychosis, rather than believe that psychotic symptoms are psychological residuals of actual life experiences, the patient believes his or her problem is caused by agents who exist not in their mental life, but in the outside world.

- 1 **Listening Attitude** Listening with an intent to understand the meaning of psychotic symptoms.
- 2 The therapist may use classic CBTp techniques early in treatment, to establish the **literal falsity** of the delusion, to raise doubts about the problem being located outside the boundary of the self.
- 3 Then use a psychodynamic approach, according to the patient's needs and capacities, to understand the **figurative truth** (schema)

This approach is useful with many patients, but not all. This model does not exhaust all possible approaches to treatment.

The woman whose cat planned to murder her

- A 40 y.o. woman who was physically and sexually abused as a child
- She had a stable relationship with another woman for 15 years
- She became suicidal when she concluded her that her cat was planning to murder her.
- **First session:** “How does the cat plan to kill you?” “They bite the jugular, like the lions do on TV! She will kill me some night while I am sleeping.”
- Therapist: “Where is your jugular?”
“Your cat will have only one chance to bite you before you wake up.”
- **Second session:** “I still believe my cat plans to kill me, but I no longer believe she has the means to do it.”
- **Backstory and Psychodynamic meaning:** Her partner had changed jobs 4 months prior, about the time she became depressed.
- Her partner was reluctant to talk on the phone at her new job
- When did she begin thinking about the cat? Clues to the cat’s intent?
- At night the cat snuggled up in the bed between her and her partner. This had happened many times before. Now, in her terror, the cat was *coming between* them (concrete metaphor/persecutory object)

Story Lines

rages to riches
coming of age
the other woman
spiritual journey

This is the classic
“other woman” story.

The woman whose cat planned to murder her

Story Lines
the other woman

What is the psychological purpose of the story?

- She avoids blaming her partner by blaming the cat.
Blaming the cat preserves hope that the relationship can be salvaged.

What do you say when you are breaking up with someone?

“It’s not you. It’s me.”

- The story has three main characters: the patient, the partner, and the cat.

In the plot line of the story, which one of the characters is feeling murderous?

the cat

Who is in a murderous rage in real life?

the patient

Genes and Schizophrenia (SCZ)

Both genes and environment play a role, but childhood adversity is a primary driver of psychosis.

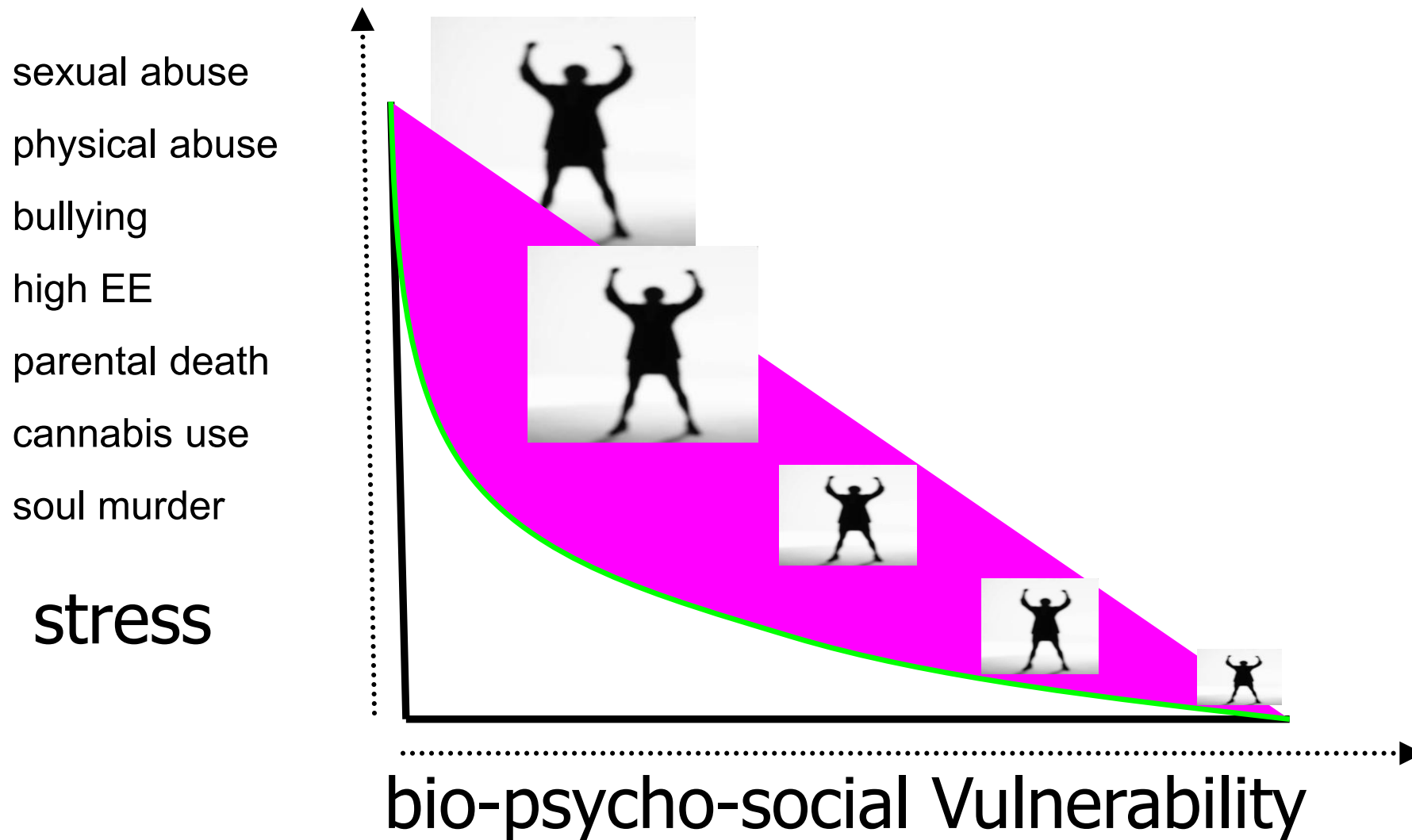
- No pathognomonic sign, symptom, or biological marker of “schizophrenia” has ever been identified that can independently validate the diagnostic concept of “schizophrenia.”
- 1% incidence in general population- 10% in first degree relative - 50% in monozygotic twins
- Most people who develop a psychotic illness do not have a familial history of SCZ
- Sir Robin Murray: the concept of “schizophrenia” has been “fatally undermined”

Over 1000 genes are weakly correlated with SCZ

- 22q.11 copy number variant – 1:4, but < 1% of the variance
- The TCF4 gene set tops gene cluster lists, but as with the 22q11.2 allele, this polygenic set explains only .6% of the variance.
- 15% of the general public report trauma versus 50-85% with psychosis. Trauma markedly increases the risk of psychosis (average 2.78 increase in risk)
- Relational trauma requires the relational treatment that psychotherapy provides.

The Stress\ Vulnerability Model

Zubin & Spring (1977)



>100 genes + immigration + poverty + urban living + Dutch Hunger Winter 1944 + advanced paternal age + Vitamin D deficiency + atypical craniofacial morphologies

Adverse Life Events Predispose to Psychosis

Scott, J., D. Chant, et al. (2007). Association between trauma exposure and delusional experiences in a large community-based sample. *Br J Psychiatry* 190: 339-343. n=10,641

		delusion		relative risk (RR)
no trauma	4537	100	(1.9%)	
Trauma & no PTSD symptoms	5725	306	(5.2%)	2.03
trauma plus PTSD	379	72	(17.9%)	6.37

Relative risk (RR) of delusions with trauma + PTSD

rape + PTSD = 18
combat + PTSD = 11.5

'dose effect'	
	(RR)
1 or 2 traumas	2.51
3 or 4	2.93
5 or more	9.54

L. Zhou et al. What do four decades of research tell us about the association between childhood adversity and psychosis: an updated and extended multi-level meta-analysis? Amer J of Psychiatry 2025 Vol. 182 Issue 4 Pages 360-372

overall odds ration increase **2.80**

Defining Trauma – CTQ-SF

Emotional abuse.

- Called names by family.
- Parents wished was never born.
- Felt hated by family
- Family said hurtful things.
- Was emotionally abused.

• **Physical abuse.**

- Hit hard enough to see doctor.
- Hit hard enough to leave bruises
- Punished with hard objects.
- Was physically abused.
- Hit badly

Sexual abuse.

- Was touched sexually.
- Hurt if don't do something sexual.
- Made to do sexual things.
- Was molested.
- Was sexually abused.

• **Emotional neglect.**

- Felt loved.
- Made to feel important.
- Was looked out for
- Family felt close
- Family was source of strength.

• **Physical neglect.**

- Not enough to eat.
- Not taken care of.
- Parents were drunk or high.
- Wore dirty clothes.
- Got taken to the doctor.

Defining Trauma

The meaning of event(s) render them traumatic rather than the event(s) per se.

An event is traumatic when an individual cannot hold the event in *consciousness* and *integrate* its meaning into their prior sense of self and conception of the world.

- Symbolic trauma
 - Strain/cumulative trauma
 - True versus false self
-
- Symbolic trauma; e.g. the stolen laptop
 - Strain/cumulative trauma & true versus false self; e.g. the man who feared John Wayne Gacy

Trauma Can Never Be Entirely Forgotten

The BIOLOGICAL NECESSITY of remembering

- Physical survival

The PSYCHOLOGICAL NECESSITY of remembering

- **The authenticity of our identity requires our remembering.** Our history is our identity. A life history that excludes our sorrows is an inauthentic story. People do not want to go to their grave having lived a lie.
- **One must remember one's trauma before speaking of one's sorrows to another person.** Authentic living requires a witness to affirm the reality of one's experience. Attachment to others is our primary source of comfort, but we cannot access this comfort if we cannot recall our trauma and speak of it. Abused children cannot speak of their trauma. Their only way of speaking when they become psychotic adults is a dramatic enactment of disguised reminiscences of their trauma represented in psychotic symptoms.

Psychological Symptoms Are Forms of Remembrance

- Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud (1895) *Studies in Hysteria*
“Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences.”
- Freud’s case of Frau P (1896)
- The case of “Little Betsy” Can Babies Remember Trauma? Symbolic Forms of Representation in Traumatized Infants Coates,SW (2016) *J Am Psychoanal Assoc*
- Psychotic symptoms are also disguised reminiscences of trauma that cannot be integrated into a person’s sense of self.

Karon and Vandenbos (1981) *The Psychotherapy of Schizophrenia. The Treatment of Choice.*

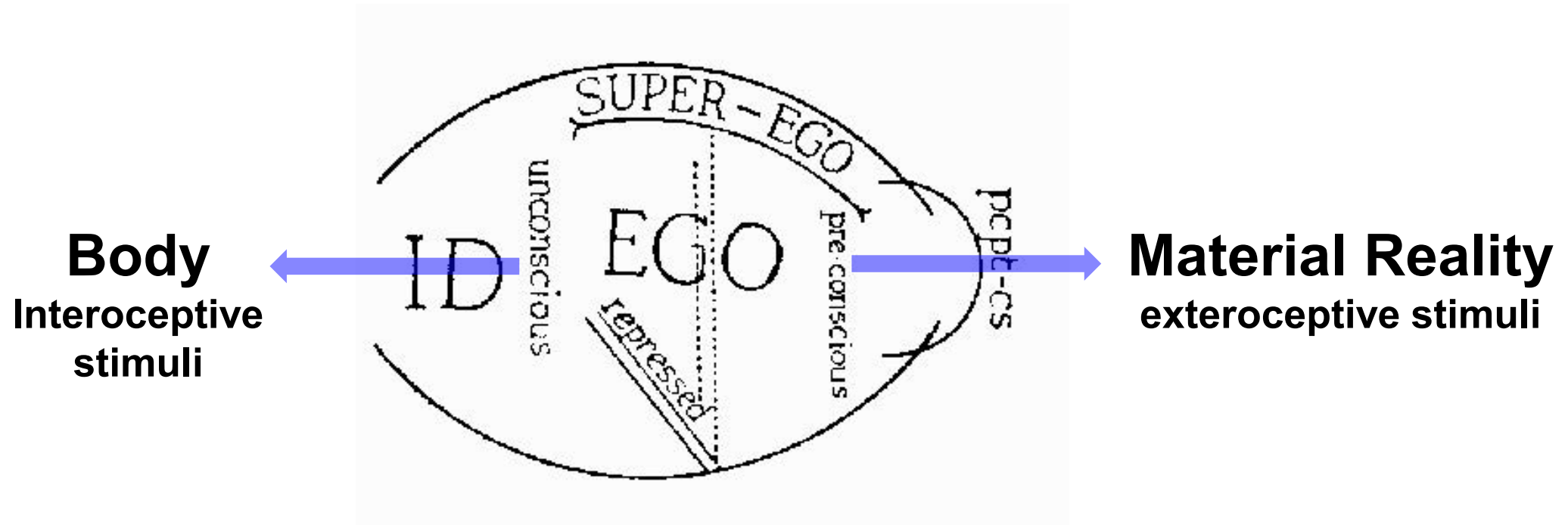
- A man institutionalized in a psychiatric hospital for 10 years was prone to seemingly unprovoked violence against other people in the hospital. He would creep up behind other patients and choke them, then drop his victims to the ground when he had rendered them unconscious.
- When the patient was a little boy, his mother, for minor offenses like not finishing his dinner, would put a cloth around his neck and choke him. After the patient had revealed this piece of history to the therapist, he stopped choking other patients.

non-declarative implicit behavioral memory

Research: trauma is represented in psychotic symptoms

- **Beck and van der Kolk (1987)** 26 patients hospitalized with intractable psychosis. 12 had history of incest. 5 of 12 had sexual delusions versus none in the control group. One believed that her body was covered with ejaculate and another that she had had sexual relations with public figures. 2 of 5 patients were also compulsively sexually active.
- **Read & Argyle (1999)** 100 consecutive admissions to an acute psychiatric inpatient unit. 17/22 patients exhibited one or more psychotic symptoms, including a high frequency of auditory hallucinations, particularly command hallucinations to kill oneself, and paranoid ideation among inpatients with a history of abuse. 50% of symptoms included content associated with trauma.
- **Hardy et al. (2005)** 75 participants with non-affective psychosis
 - 12.5% similar themes and content to their trauma
 - 45% the themes were the same but not the content
 - 42.5% had no identifiable associations between hallucinations and trauma.
- **Reiff, M., et al. (2012).** 30 respondents. Constructed a measure of nine categories of symptom content found to occur among individuals reporting child abuse. This “trauma-relevant content score” was higher among abused than non-abused respondents. Additionally, there were parallels between interpersonal relationships described in hallucinations and delusions and those experienced in the context of childhood trauma.
- **Corstens & Longden (2013)** 100 persons who reported hearing voices – 89% reported trauma in 94% of the trauma cases the investigators were able to identify underlying emotional conflicts (low self-worth, anger, shame and guilt) contributing to the symptom. In 78% they were able to formulate representations of the voice’s identity (disowned aspects of self, a family member, an abuser)

Psychoanalytic Model of the Mind



Freud's Structural Model

New Introductory Lectures

The EGO mediates between instinctual drives and reality.
The ego strives to create an objective model of reality relatively free from distortions introduced by affect.

Three Dimensions of Psychotic Experience

biology shapes
consciousness



Changes in Perception of the External World

- hypersalience (Kapur)
background stimuli appear to have personal significance
- stimuli intrude into the foreground of perception

ideas of reference

“I can tell by the way people look at me that I am under surveillance.”

Changes in Consciousness and Self-Experience

- diminished sense of the self as the first-person “I” at the center of experience
- hyper-reflexive self-awareness

1st rank symptoms

“My thoughts are not my own. They are being put into my head by others.”
The “voices” comment on what I am doing (in the 2nd person). They say, ‘Now he is walking’.”
“I am dead.”

adverse life experiences activate primitive internal object-related fantasies that shape mental representations of the self and others

3 psychology

The Narrative Content of a Psychosis Is An Autobiographical Play Staged in the Real World

A cast of characters based on internal objected-related fantasies tell a story that expresses psychological themes and regulates mental life.

“I am the Bride of Jesus.”
“A dog sees my puny body through my clothing and mocks me.”
“I will be arrested at work.”
“PsychoGirl reads my mind”
“My sister smoked my soul.”

Altered Perception of the Outside World

Ideas of reference

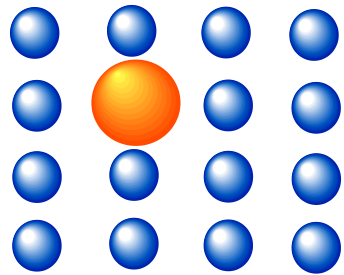
The passerby gave a penetrating glance, he could be a detective.

...Something must be going on: the world is changing, a new era is starting. ...The child is like a monkey. People all look unnatural. The house signs are crooked, the streets look suspicious... The dog scratches oddly at the door. “I noticed particularly” is the constant remark these patients make, though they cannot say why they take such particular note of things nor what it is they suspect.

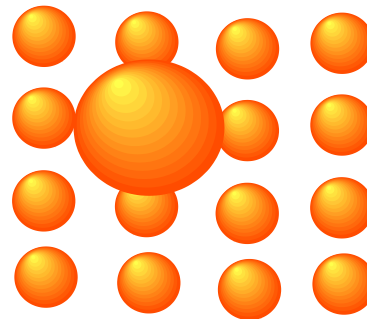
Karl Jaspers (1930s) *General Psychopathology*

delusions of observation: spied on or gossiped about (paranoia)
delusions of communication: mundane events directed to the self

Re-organizing Experience - Delusion Formation

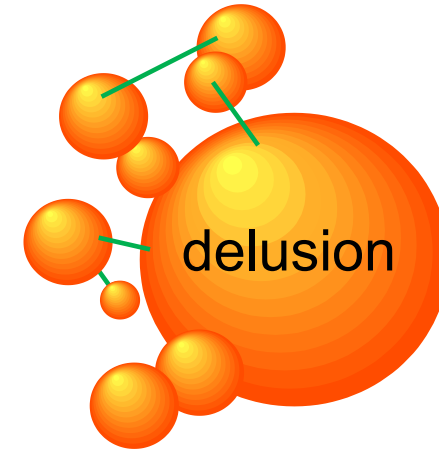


**Background frames
the foreground in a
meaningful gestalt**



dopamine

**Hyper-salience ...
Everything becomes
foreground.**



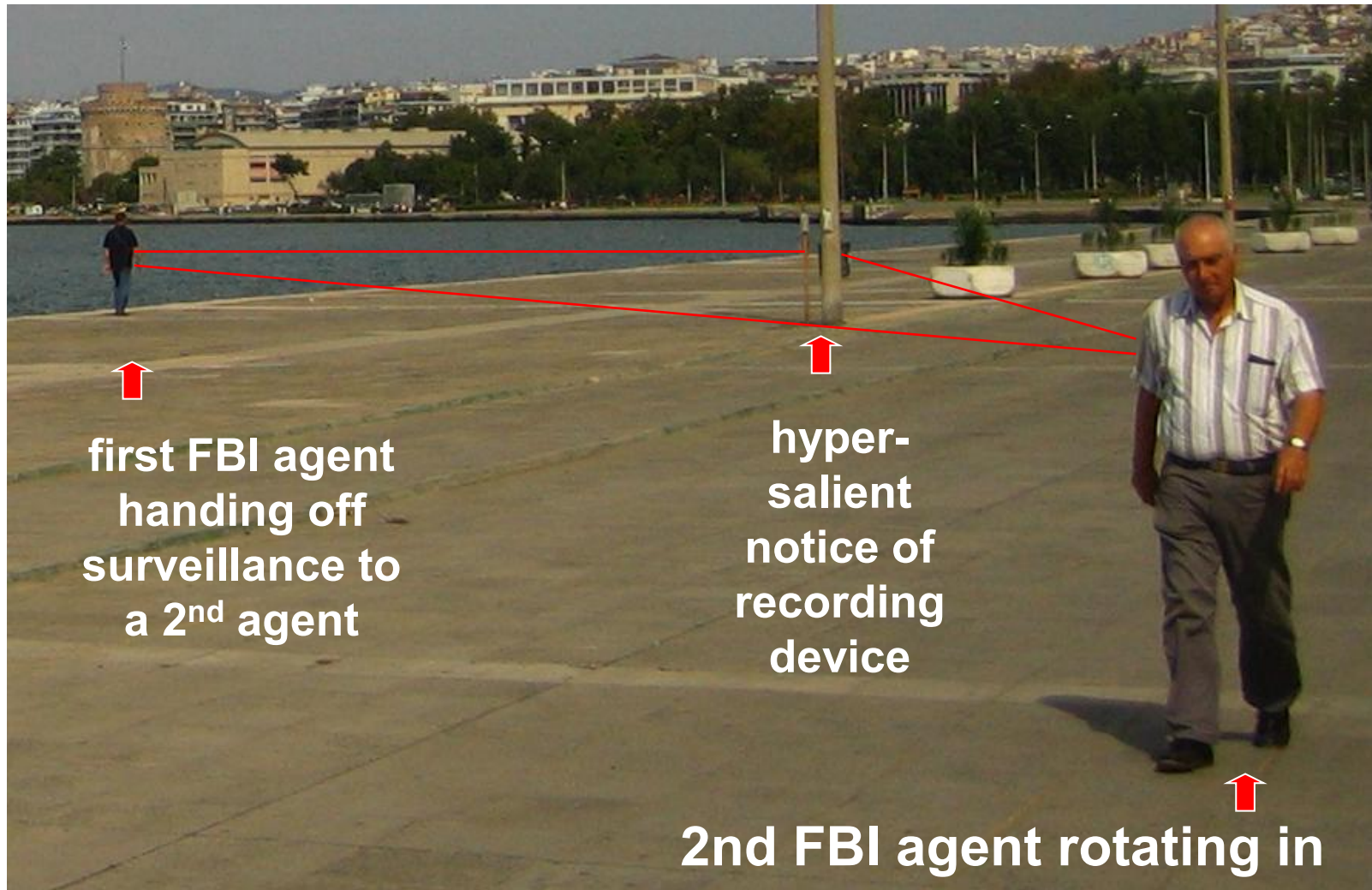
The delusion
reorganizes experience in a
new gestalt of “perceived”
meaning supported by an
evidentiary chain

Karl Jaspers, *General Psychopathology*. trans. J. Hoenig and M.W. Hamilton
(Manchester\Chicago: Manchester University Press\University of Chicago Press,
1963).

S. Kapur, 'Psychosis as a State of Aberrant Salience: A Framework Linking Biology,
Phenomenology, and Pharmacology in Schizophrenia', *Am J Psychiatry*, 160
(2003), 13-23.







We see what we expect to see and hear what we expect to hear.
Bayesian Predictive Processing

The Man Who Thought a Dog With Xray Vision Could Look Through His Clothing

His father abandoned the family when he was 15 y.o.

He had hoped to lead his family out of poverty

Younger brother died in a drug related slaying

Blamed himself

First psychotic episode in the Navy

Mother brought him to the hospital because he was staying in his room and not eating.

Anomalous perception of a dog in his neighborhood.



A dog, who could see his puny body beneath his clothing, mocked him with his eyes.

Inside the Self

I failed my brother.
I am no good.

Outside the Self



Inside the Self

**I am a total failure!
I am no good!**

condensation displacement



My body is no good!

Outside the Self



Inside the Self

**I am a total failure!
I am no good!**



My body is no good!

projection

Outside the Self

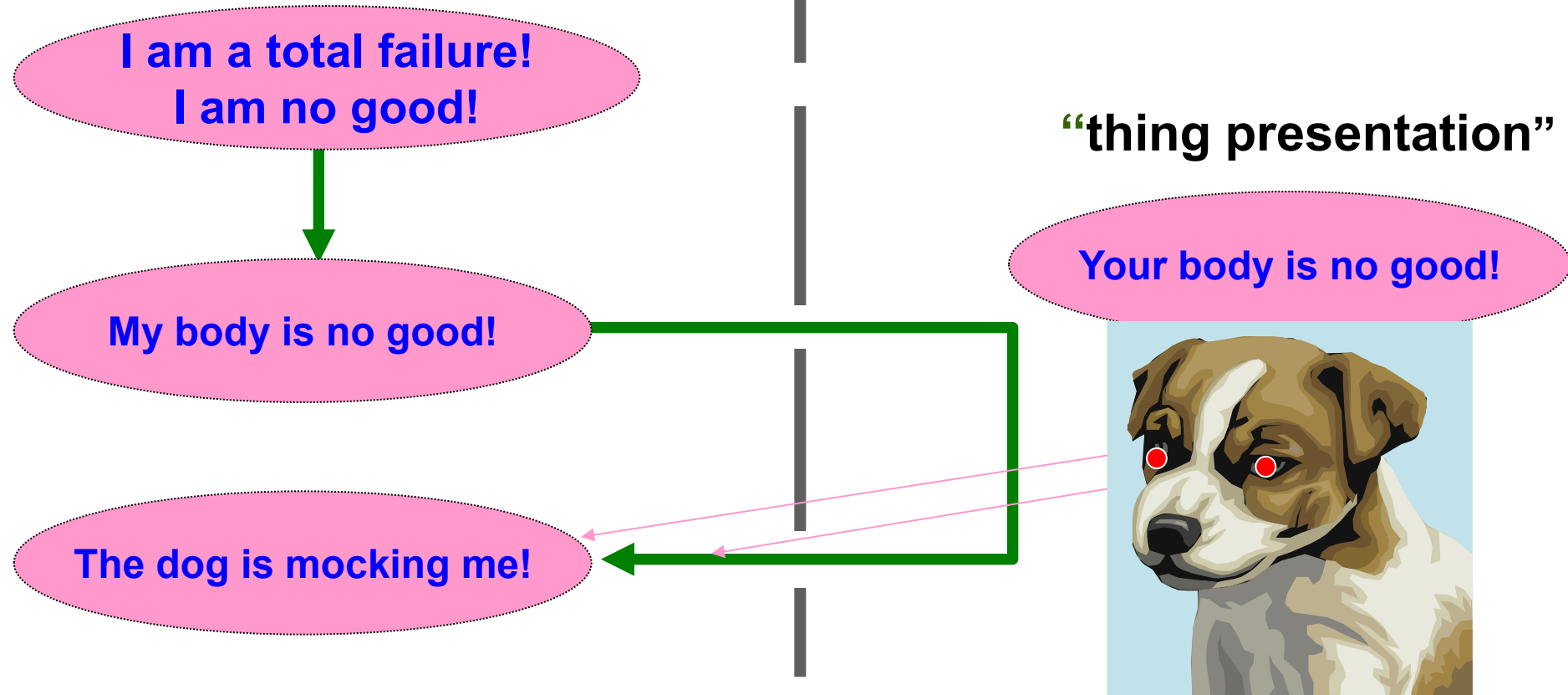
**his self hatred is projected into
the mind of the dog**

Your body is no good!



Inside the Self

Outside the Self

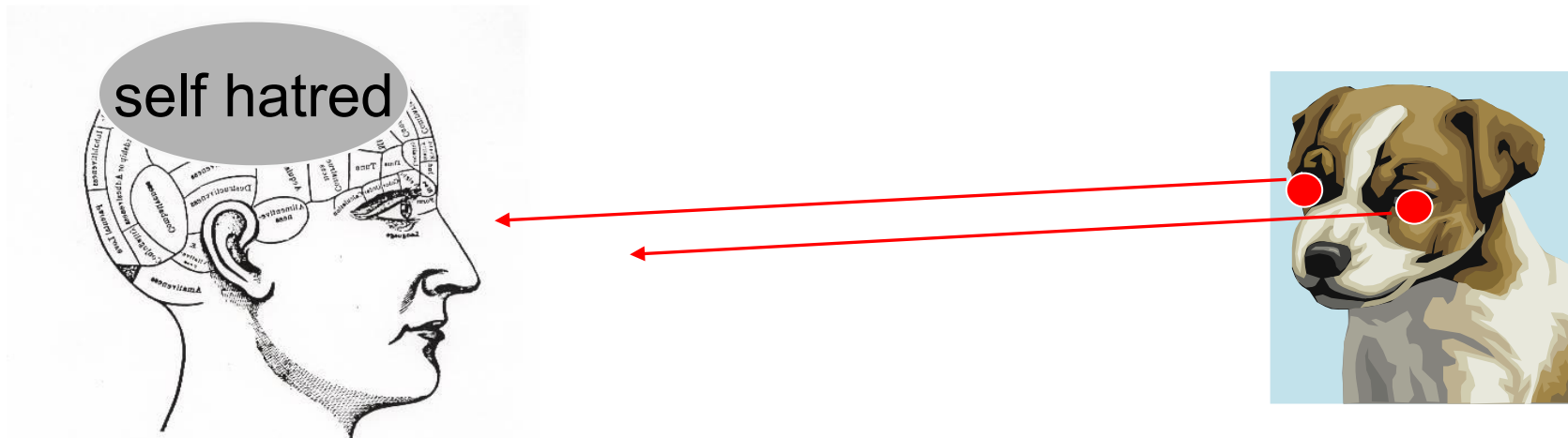


- ▶ His self hatred has gone missing from *his* mind, reappearing in the mind (eyes) of the dog.
- ▶ Avoid the dog, avoid self hatred.
- ▶ Intra-psychic pain becomes a problem with the outside world.

His self-hatred appears in the eyes of the dog

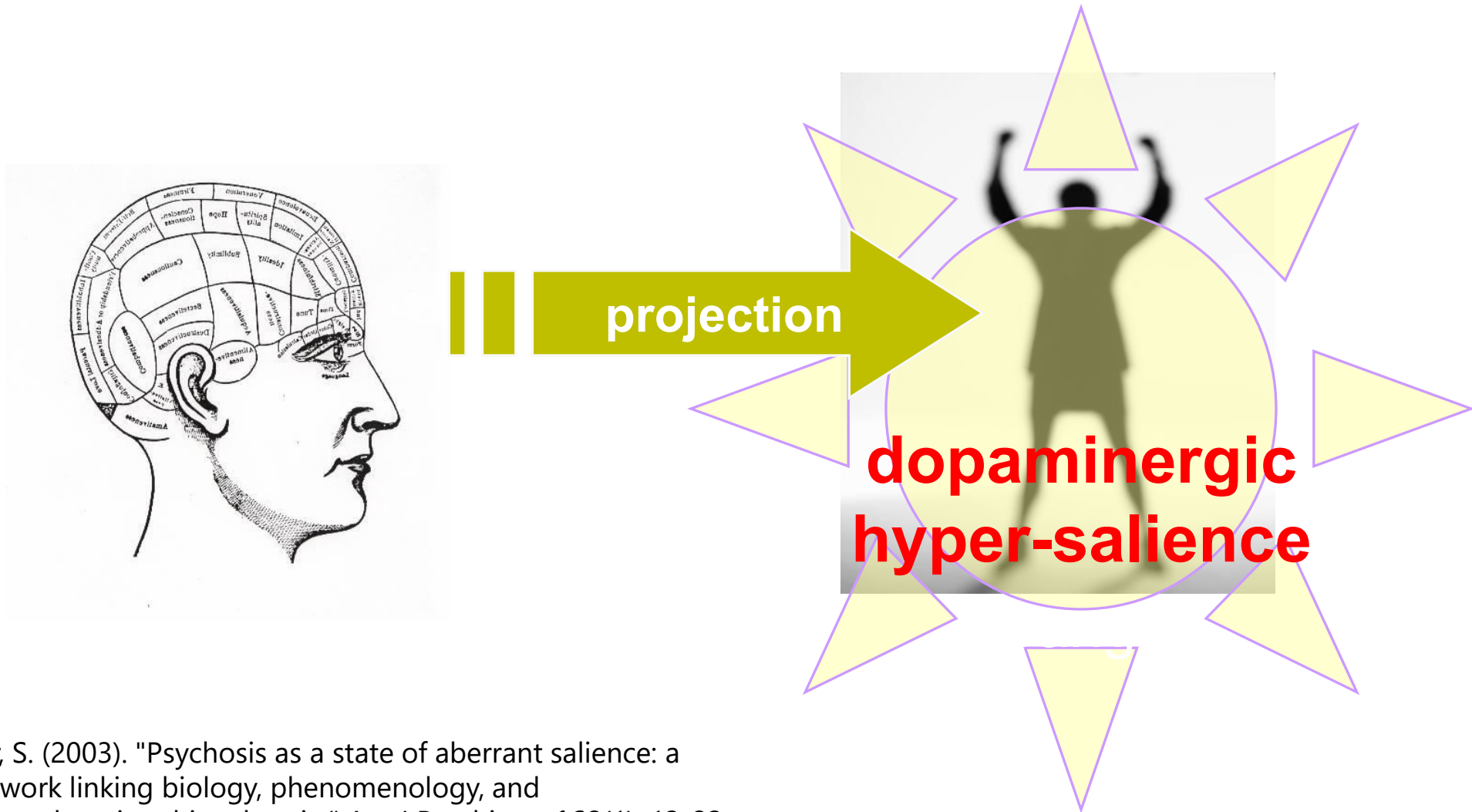


In psychosis a person's mental life appears as an altered ***perception*** of the outside world rather than a thought or a feeling experienced within the psychological boundary of the self.



The patient evacuates his self-hatred into his mental representation of the dog.

Psychology interacts with biology



Kapur, S. (2003). "Psychosis as a state of aberrant salience: a framework linking biology, phenomenology, and pharmacology in schizophrenia." Am J Psychiatry **160**(1): 13-23

Alterations of self-experience

Diminished ipseity and hyper-reflexive self-awareness

Upon reflection years later, I think the main warning signal was my identity – the safety of knowing that I was an “I” – was starting to crumble. I became increasingly insecure about whether or not I really existed, or if I was only a character in the book or a being someone had made up. In my diary I replaced “I” with “she” and after a while I started thinking like this as well; “She was walking to school. She was sad and wondering if she was going to die.” And some place within me, something was questioning if “she” was still “me,” and it found out that that was impossible, because “she” was sad, and I, well, I was nothing. Just gray. pg 5

Arnhild Lauveng (2012) *A Road Back From Schizophrenia*

The Developmental Psychology of Psychosis

The Work of Melanie Klein

the paranoid and schizoid positions

**Primal Fantasy in Ordinary Children, Fairy
Tales, and Delusions**

Concrete Metaphor

Normal Development

- As development proceeds, consciousness moves beyond sensory images of somatic perceptions to increasingly complex mentalized forms of experience, allowing for symbolic representations in images, verbal thought, conscious and unconscious fantasy and story telling.
- By age 4 most children understand that their thoughts are private and that their experience of the world may be different than other people. The capacity to lie.
- **mentalizing**
- “I can tell the difference between imagination and reality. I can use my imagination in fantasy and play to regulate my emotions. e.g. the attack of the coyotes; fairy tales

Fonagy, P. and Target, M. (1996) Playing with reality: I. Theory of mind and the normal development of psychic reality. Int J Psychoanal. 77 (Pt 2):217-33

Implicit
relational
knowing

Pre-verbal object-
related fantasy
*Psychic equivalence
mode*

Fantasy that can be verbalized
Pretend mode
The narrative self.

Infant - 18 months

18 months – 3 years

3 years – 6 years

6 years – young adult

unconscious mental processes and mental representations

Primitive Pre-verbal Unconscious Phantasy

- At one year and eight months a pre-verbal speech delayed child was terrified of her mother's shoe with a loose sole.
- At two years and 11 months, she asked about the shoe. Her mother reassured her that the shoe had been disposed of. "That (shoe) might have eaten me right up!" Isaacs (1948) pg 85

The frightening shoe



Infant - 18 months

18 months – 3 years

3 years – 6 years

6 years – young adult

unconscious mental processes and mental representations

The attack of the coyotes ...



the monster
under the bed



Infant - 18 months

18 months – 3 years

3 years – 6 years

6 years – young adult

unconscious mental processes and mental representations

The Language of Unconscious Fantasy

The concrete vocabulary of unconscious object-related fantasy

Karl Abraham & Melanie Klein

Very young children ground their conceptions of what happens between people in body-based phantasies.

oral “taking in” - incorporation, identification

oral “expelling” - projection, splitting, denial

anal “expelling” - projection, splitting, denial

anal “retention” - incorporation, identification

“I had to swallow my pride.”

The underlying object-related fantasy: “When one’s pride is endangered, it can be orally incorporated, like something you eat and have inside you. I didn’t completely surrender to the other person. I held on to my self esteem by swallowing it, keeping it hidden in an interior body space where it remained intact. I can safely bring it out again when the persecutory object has left the scene and the inter-personal coast is clear.”

Unconscious Fantasy In Ordinary Mental Life

Near delusional perception in ordinary mental life when unconscious fantasy intrudes into reality experience.

- Over-reacting to a life event

Hansel & Gretel and Psychosis

oral deprivation & cannibal mothers

the
abuser



cannibal witch = bad mother = trauma

*primal unconscious
fantasy erupts in
psychosis*

The man who when he
was a child could not
swim in the kiddy pool.
"My wife is a cannibal."



Infant - 18 months

18 months – 3 years

3 years – 6 years

6 years – young adult



unconscious mental processes and mental representations

The developmental psychology of trauma-related psychosis

Developmental fails in adolescence with the onset of psychosis

Individuals at risk, ill-prepared for the developmental challenges they face as adolescents and young adults, construct a delusional narrative in which they variously attribute their sorrows to:

- 1 their own unmitigated worthlessness “I deserve to die”
- 2 a persecutory object arising from unconscious fantasy, in which psychic pain is inflicted from outside the self rather than arising internally from the person’s inadequacies (Klein’s persecutory object)
- 3 a grandiose internal object appears, in denial of the person’s inadequacies and dependency needs



Melanie Klein 1882-1960

Normal Developmental Psychology

3 years
to

6 years

A three-person psychology
(the Oedipal period)

3 years
to

1 ½ years

The two-person psychology of attachment the
the depressive position

1 ½ years
to

birth

The one-person psychology of the primal self
the paranoid-schizoid position

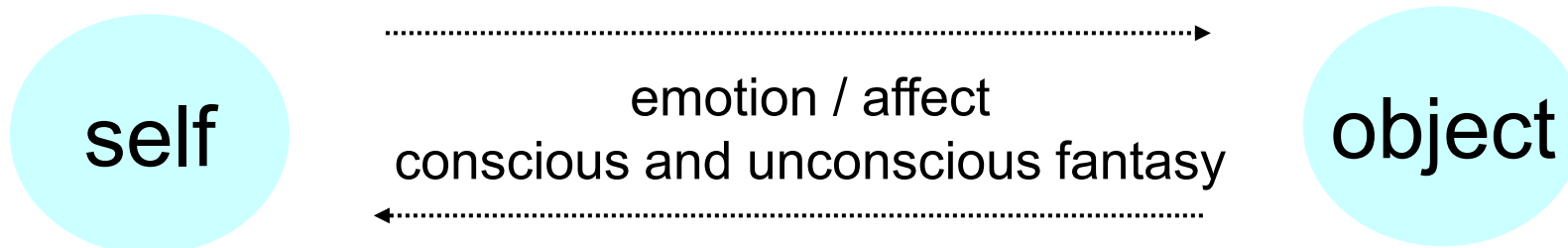
Mental Life Is Experienced in Object Related Terms

“The analysis of very young children has taught me that there is no instinctual urge, no anxiety situation, no mental process which does not involve objects, external or internal; in other words, object relations are at the center of emotional life. Furthermore, love and hatred, fantasies, anxieties, and defenses are also operative from the beginning and are from the beginning inevitably linked with object relations.”

Melanie Klein (1952)

Klein: internal object relations theory

- In the first year of life projection forms the basic psychological structure of the human mind, when a 'self representation' is connected to an 'object representation' with an emotional valence.
- A “psychological object” is a mental representation of another person or thing outside the mental boundary of the self, an object in which the person is emotionally invested.
- Affects (emotions) are experienced as an integral part of an interpersonal relationship between internal objects.
- The in fantasy the self is doing something to the object or the object is doing something to the self.



Klein: internal object relations theory

When the “good object” fails to arrive

In the face of mounting destructive tensions, in order to preserve the pristine pain-free self, the psyche splits into two internal objects, the “good self” with which the person identifies, and a “bad object” experienced as outside the self that is causing the pain.

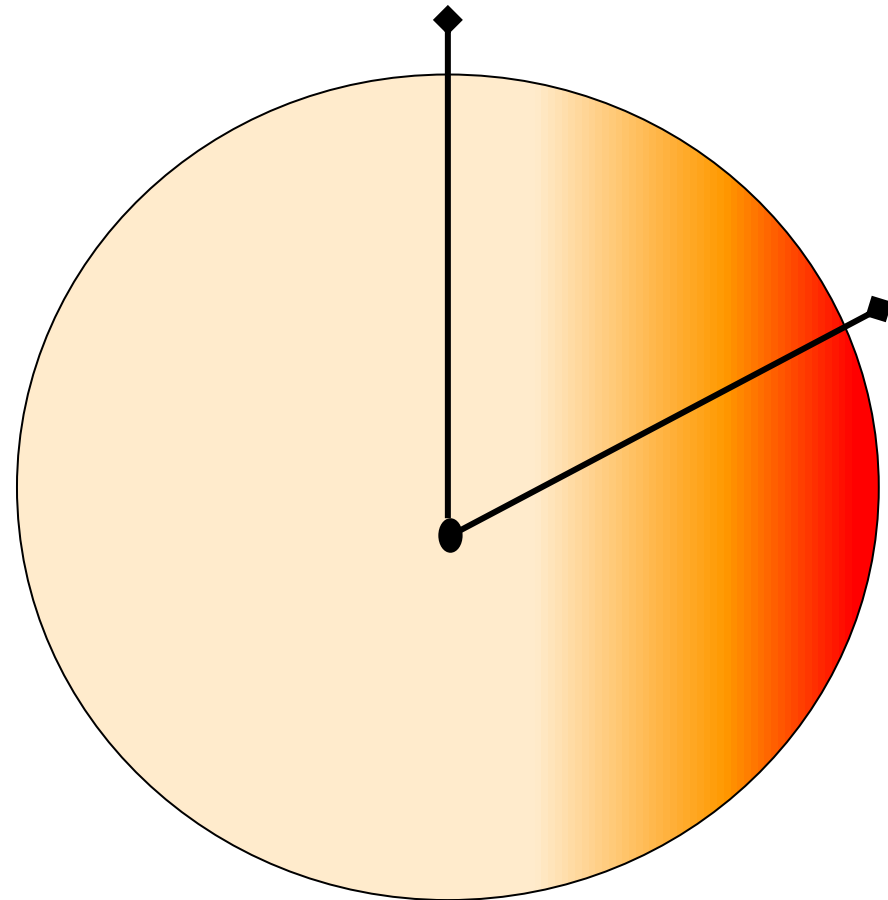
the mind dissociates

- The psyche frees itself of mounting aggressive tensions by projecting its aggressive impulses outside the boundary of the self into the mental representation of the “bad object,” which Klein referred to as **a persecutory object !!!!**

Blaming others for our own failings

The Mind as a Self-Organizing System

Mark Solms



Seeking

Rage

Fear

Lust

Care

Panic/Grief

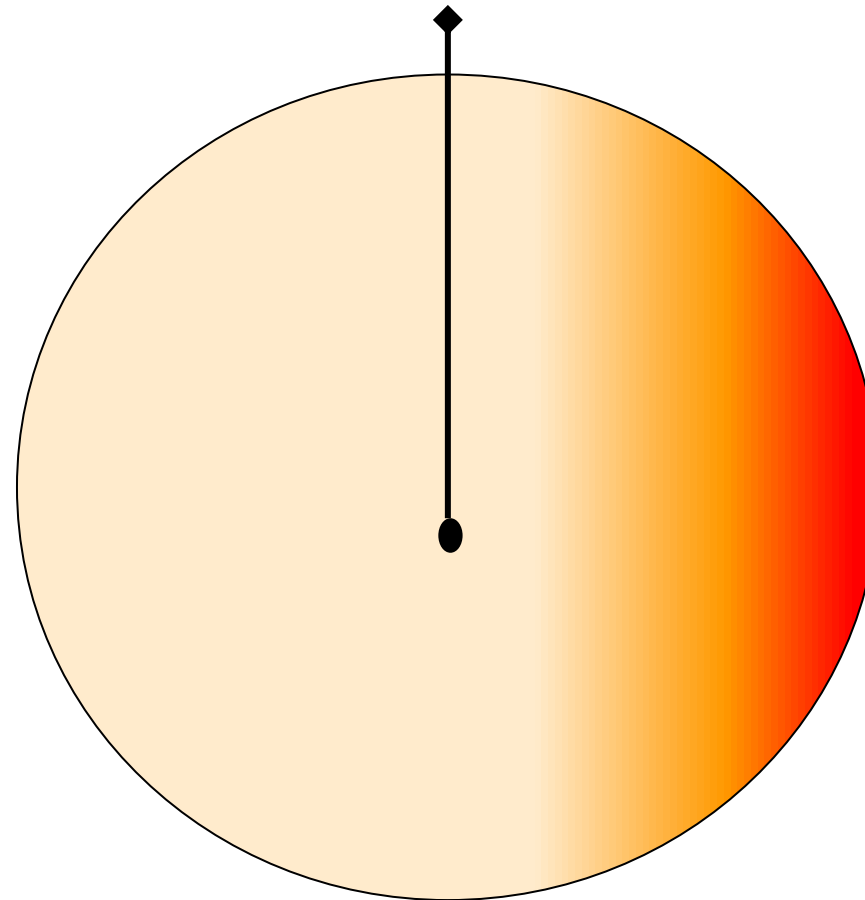
Play.

Jaak Panksepp

affective alert

The Mind as a Self-Organizing System

Mark Solms



Seeking

Rage

Fear

Lust

Care

Panic/Grief

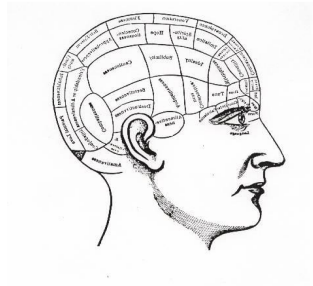
Play.

Jaak Panksepp

affective homeostasis

The Developmental Psychology of Psychosis

Primitive object-related phantasies



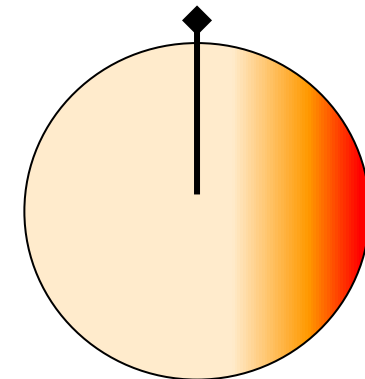
shame



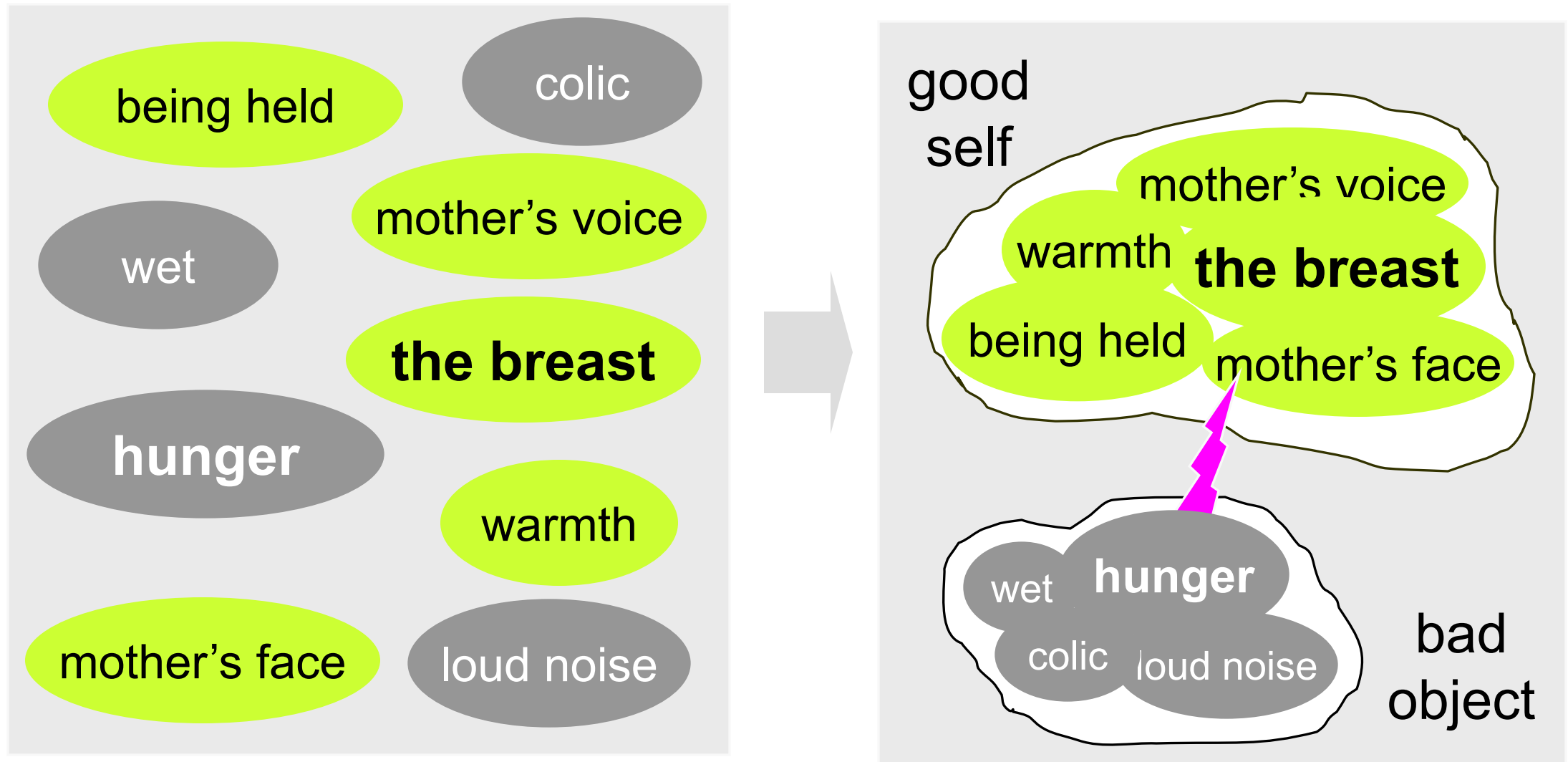
punitive superego

A weakened self is attacked by a fragment of the patient's punitive superego that has been projected into his mental representation of a dog.

avoid the dog

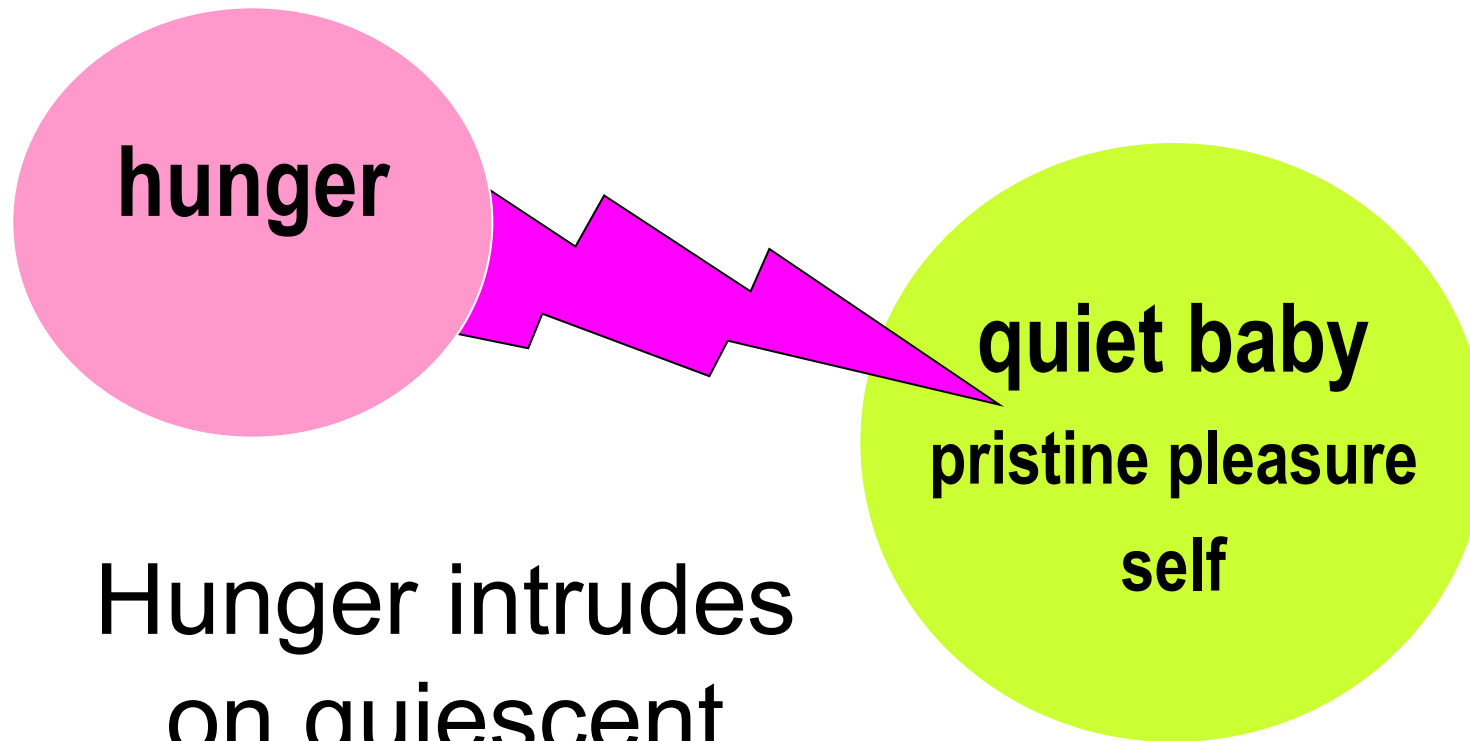


Klein: internal object relations theory



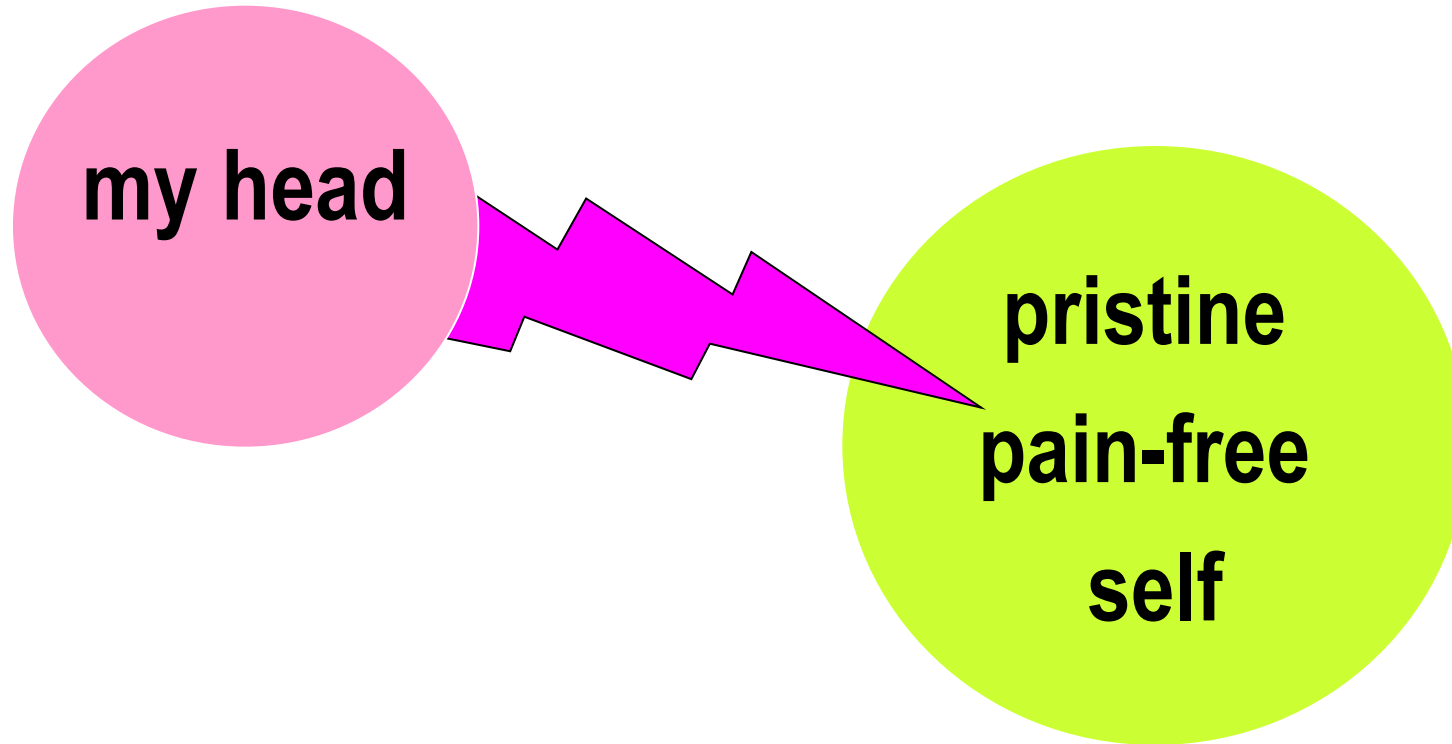
Associative links are established between experiences which have either a positive or a negative affective valence, which then split into a mental representation of the “good” self being attacked by a “bad” persecutory object.

The Pristine Pleasure Self



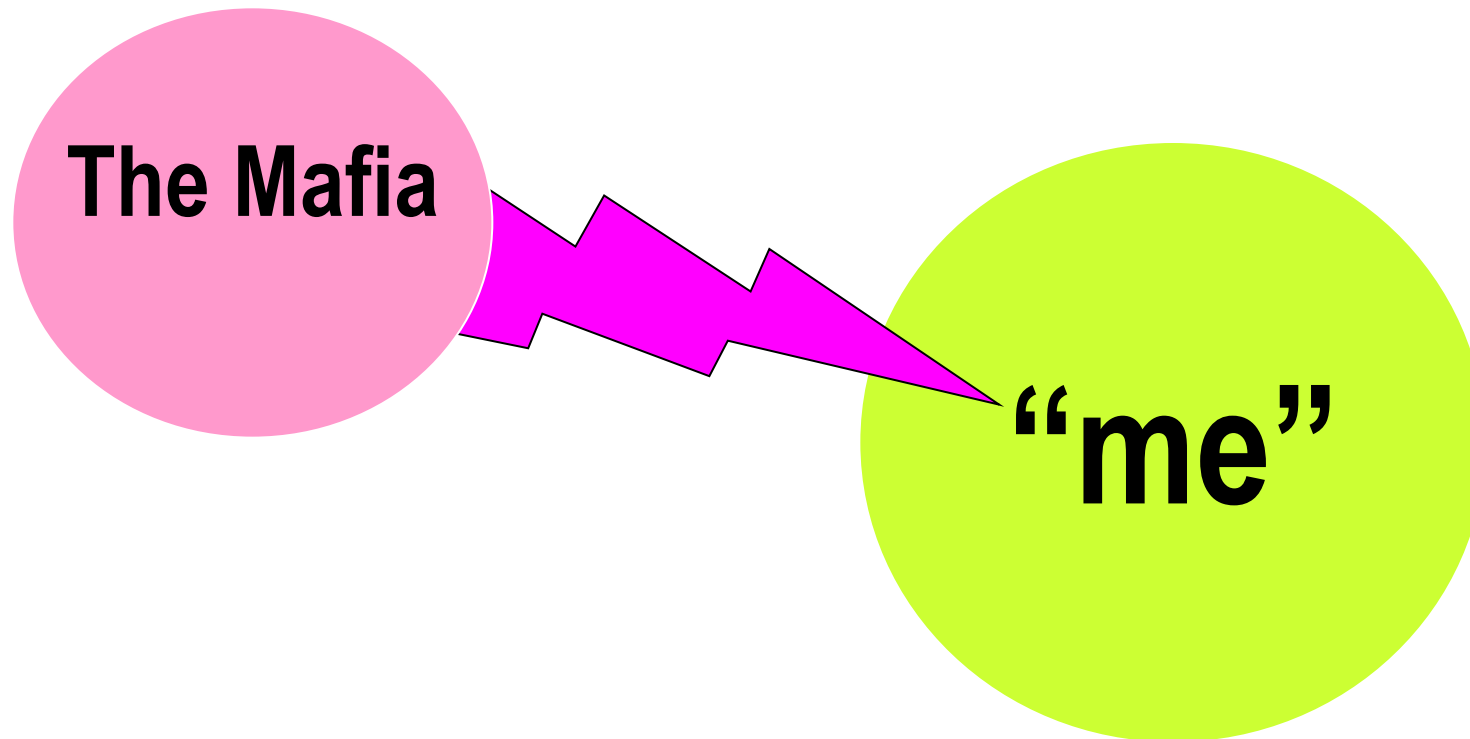
Hunger intrudes
on quiescent
Paradise!

Headache & the Persecutory “Head”



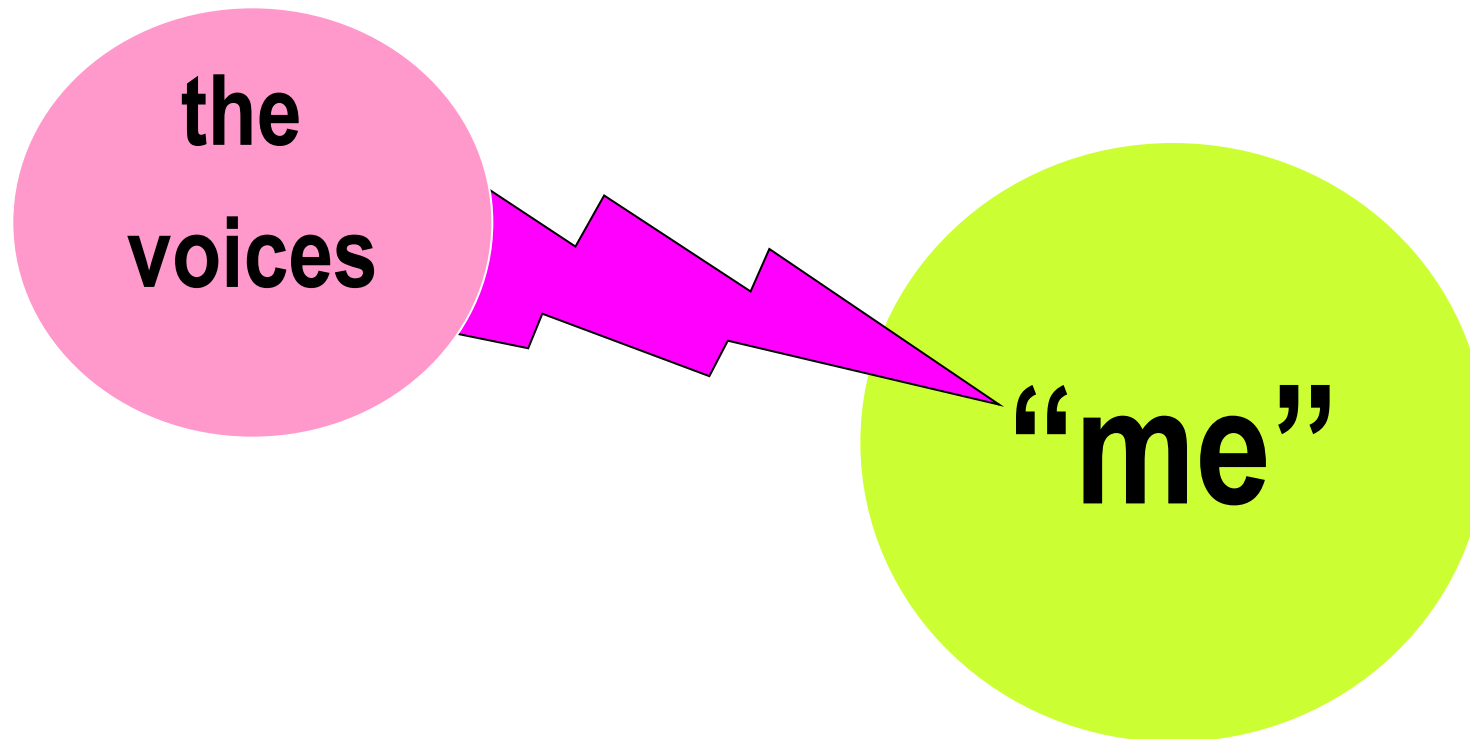
When we have a headache we may say,
“My head is killing me!”

Persecutory Objects



“The Mafia are out to kill me!”

Persecutory Objects



“The voices threaten to kill me!”

The Paranoid-Schizoid Position

- the primary anxiety regards the survival of an integrated self
- mental representations of other people consist primarily of disavowed parts of the self projected into mental representations of other people
- self and object representations tend to be all good or all bad rather than nuanced mixtures of good and bad traits
- “good” and “bad” objects must be kept separate in the mind for fear of the bad object destroying the good object
- an idealized perfectly good object is the mental antidote to the persecutory bad object
- if the idealized self-object is perfect, it has no flaw, no fault, no portal through which the bad object can conceivably attack the mental representation of the self

The Paranoid-Schizoid Position

Characters cast in the paranoid-schizoid position

Superman and Lex Luther



Engaging the patient: people with psychosis may fear being influenced by the therapist, may fear taking the therapist into their mind, may fear the therapist is a persecutor in disguise.

The patient: “Stop talking. Listen to me, be of my same mind, and do what I ask you to do.”

Depressive Position

- the primary anxiety regards the fate of the object
- other people are seen as complex individuals with both good and bad qualities, who have minds of their own
- objects with mixed qualities are regarded with mature adult ambivalence
- loss, grief, guilt, reparation, and forgiveness are all possible in relationship to the valued object

Paranoid-Schizoid Position and Depressive Position in Ordinary Mental Life

Example: an argument with one's significant other

- “I can't believe you didn't remember we are going to my sister's tonight! You ***never*** listen to ***anything*** I say.”

paranoid/schizoid position

- Brave thoughts: “Why do I have to put up with this!” Fleeting fantasies of divorce. Self-righteous indignation.
- Silent treatment
- Mundane small talk that does not offer forgiveness.
- Your dependent needs reassert themselves. “I am sorry. I over reacted.”

depressive position is re-established

Ordinary Figurative Metaphor

“America is a melting pot.”

X is like **Y**

Figurative metaphor requires an awareness of similarities *and* differences.

X is like Y in some regard,
but X is fundamentally different than Y in other ways.

Concrete Metaphor

- In psychosis the differences between X and Y fade.
X becomes the same as Y
- Equating X and Y leads to delusional conceptions and delusional claims.
- Paleologic (predicate thinking)

Silvano Arieti *Interpretation of Schizophrenia* (1974) Basic Books

“The President lives in a white house.

I live in a white house.

Therefore, I am the President.”

Concrete Metaphor

- Early in treatment a psychotic man insisted that his statement that people are sheep was a literal fact, drawing no associative meaning from the figurative metaphor that the age of modern technology has turned people into herds of sheep. Later in treatment while sitting outdoors for a psychotherapy session, the same man gathered up a handful of leaves, saying “These are people. This is how completely cast off, forgotten, and useless some people, including me, feel themselves to be.”

Harold Searles

Zone 5

Concrete Metaphor



Psychosis

Zone 4

Non-consensual metaphor
where no apparent connection can be found.

Zone 3

Non-consensual metaphor
where idiosyncratic connections can be made.



creative imagination
figurative metaphor
poetry
jokes

Zone 2

Consensual metaphor and puns.

Zone 1

Ordinary speech

Zones of Metaphorical Thinking

Atheism is ...

Psychosis

Zone 3

Non-consensual metaphor
where idiosyncratic connections can be made.



creative imagination
figurative metaphor
poetry
jokes

profit vs prophet

In Never Promised You a Rose Garden J Greenberg

“I am a Japanese soldier.”

“When the Second World War had come, making of the names of Pacific Islands another language of hell and magic to Americans, the *Collect* had said to her, “They hate these Japanese as they have always hated you,” and Anterrabae, in the urbane falling-smile, Bird-one, said “You are not of them”. She had remembered hearing the fragment of some speech on the radio. “Those who aren’t with us are against us!” And the *Collect* had cried out, “Then you must be this enemy they fight!” On a certain night before falling asleep, Deborah had been reborn as a captured Japanese soldier.”

Predicate logic: They hate the Japanese. They also hate me.
Therefore, I am the Japanese.

Concrete Metaphor

- Imagine a moment that you believe called for courage where you did not act bravely but instead took the safe course.
- In this affectively charged state of mind, instead of thinking “I behave like a coward at times, but bravery is sometimes foolish, and I have other redeeming features,” you double down hard and conclude, “I am ***in essence*** a coward.”
- “In ***essence a coward***...” means that although you may be aware of having some positive traits, you feel these traits do not offset, and merely disguise, the true essential nature of the cowardly bad object which lies at the core of your being.
- “I am a coward, like Benedict Arnold” **X is like Y**
- “I am Benedict Arnold.” **X=Y**
delusional concrete metaphor

Concrete Metaphor and Delusional Narratives

The content of a psychosis is an autobiographical play staged in the person's mind, body, and/or real world.

- Mental representations of the self and others coalesce into concrete metaphorical identities that become the cast of characters that populate delusions.
- These concrete metaphorical identities are woven into stories that are meaningful expressions of the psychotic person's life history and current mental life.
- Personal example: sketch comedy at university

Inside the Self

Outside the Self

“I am hungry and angry!”



conflict of angry affect with
defensive grandiose

Bride of Jesus
self representation



“You sorry assed bitch!”



New Psychodynamic Possibilities

I am the Bride of Jesus. My roommate did not save me a plate of dinner. I was angry, but I couldn't curse her because I am a Christian woman and I am the Bride of Jesus. But then I heard God's voice. God said, "You can curse that sorry assed bitch! And God told me what to say."

The background of the image consists of numerous vertical stripes of varying widths and shades of blue and green, creating a textured, marbled effect. The colors range from deep navy blue to a lighter, almost lime green.

session marker