

**Extending the scope and  
meaning of ‘parallel process’  
into an organising principle for  
relational transformation**

**The Fractal Self**

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# Introduction to Parallel Process

- in SV: recognised the phenomenon of parallel process since 1950's (Harold Searles), more widely established since 1980's (Peter Hawkins & Robin Shoet)
- SV – rather than being an ethically necessary professional accessory – actually shows us one of the underlying, fundamental principle of our discipline
- parallel process can become an organising principle of psychotherapy for the 21st century



# Background Models:

- integrative psychotherapeutic spectrum
- 1. Parallel Process: Hawkins/Shohet, Searles
- 2. Transference/ Countertransference (including countertransference revolution)
- 3. Object Relations: Klein, Winnicott, Bion (including projective identification)
- 4. Character Styles: Johnson, Reich, functionalism
- 5. Integral Holarchic Systems Theory: Wilber
- 6. Chaos & Complexity Theory, Fractal Theory



# Extending and expanding the meaning of parallel process...

- *within psychotherapy*
  - *transference and countertransference as parallel process,*
  - *interpersonal and intrapsychic relationship as parallel processes - external relationship parallels internal relational positions (developmental patterns, scripts, character, RIGS or schemata)*
  - *body and mind as parallel process*
  - *past and present as parallel process (bodymind memory)*



# Extending and expanding the meaning of parallel process...

- *parallel process as the 'glue' that turns our perception of a heap of multi-dimensional fragments into a sense of the whole*
- *stream of therapist's consciousness gives us a myriad of fragments, relating to ALL levels of the complex system that is the therapeutic relationship*



# Extending and expanding the meaning of parallel process...

- *beyond* psychotherapy into all kinds of systems (as a key feature and principle of complex systems – complexity/fractal theory – see appendix)
- *into social systems generally (groups, organisations, etc)*
- *human neuro-bio-psychology (body-brain-mind systems)*
- *beyond human systems into biological systems generally, and beyond that into physical systems*



# The connection between transformation and parallel process

- We cannot make transformation happen, but ...
- transformation is more likely to happen the more levels of parallel process can be held in awareness here & now.
- If a relational dynamic (in a complex multi-dimensional system) can be held in awareness on sufficient levels of parallel process (past scenario, bodymind, internal dynamic, here & now relationship, etc), re-organisation will occur.



# The connection between transformation and parallel process

- Or, conversely: if certain levels of parallel process are unattended to (the container of multi-dimensional parallel process awareness is ‘leaky’), full and spontaneous transformation is unlikely.
- transformation can be *invited* by “gathering the fragments” and levels of parallel process into a whole, but it needs to happen spontaneously



# Preparation: internalisation

- how does the dynamic get carried from one system (therapy) to the other (supervision) where it then can get replicated ?
  - information gets carried and somehow communicated from one system to the next via the one common factor to both: the therapist.
  - usual explanation: therapist – having opened themselves to the dynamic with the client and been affected by it - has taken it in, has internalised it, largely subliminally and carries it across
  - this explanation is supported by the degree of non-verbal, right-brain communication which neuroscience has drawn our attention to, the myriad of messages which get registered subliminally every second and the speed and complexity of internal representation of the other that takes place (mirror neurons).
  - Family Constellations: ‘knowing field’ which helps representatives tap into the protagonist’s story and dynamics

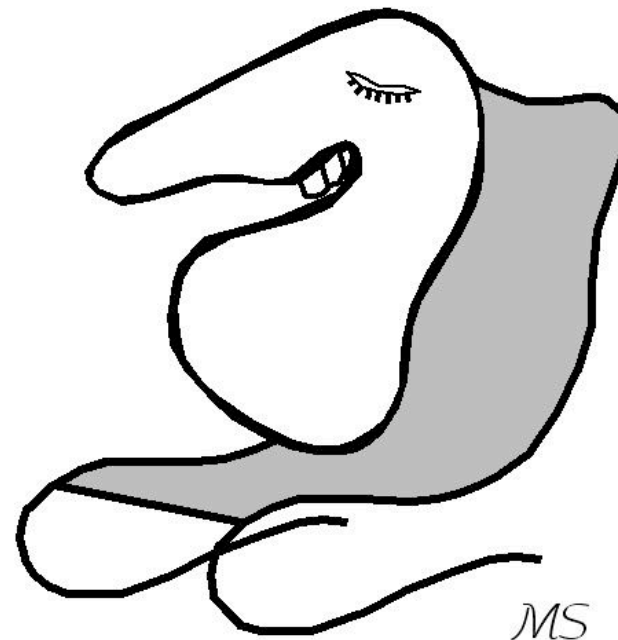


# Internalisation as a major feature of how human relationship works

- pervasiveness of projective identification
- object relations = internal relationships
- POP: 'dreaming up'
- mirror neurons (Gallese: shared intersubjective manifold = we are swimming in the soup of each others' body/mind representations)
- parallel process = dominoes of enactment



# Advanced Projective Identification



# Internalisation as a major feature of the human mind & relationships

- ‘countertransference revolution’ = the therapist’s internal experience contains information about the client’s inner world
- object relations and projective identification
- Searles proposed parallel process in supervision about the same time that Klein’s notion of projective identification was applied to countertransference



# Extend Hawkins/Shohet model

- *therapist-supervisor dynamic parallels client-therapist dynamic*
- *1. client-therapist dynamic parallels client's internal world (=internal object relations)*
- *2. the object relations dynamic in the client's mind (mental representations) parallels the dynamic in the body (and between mind and body)*
- *3. the interpersonal and body/mind dynamic in the 'here & now' parallels the dynamic in the formative past*



# Extend Hawkins/Shohet model

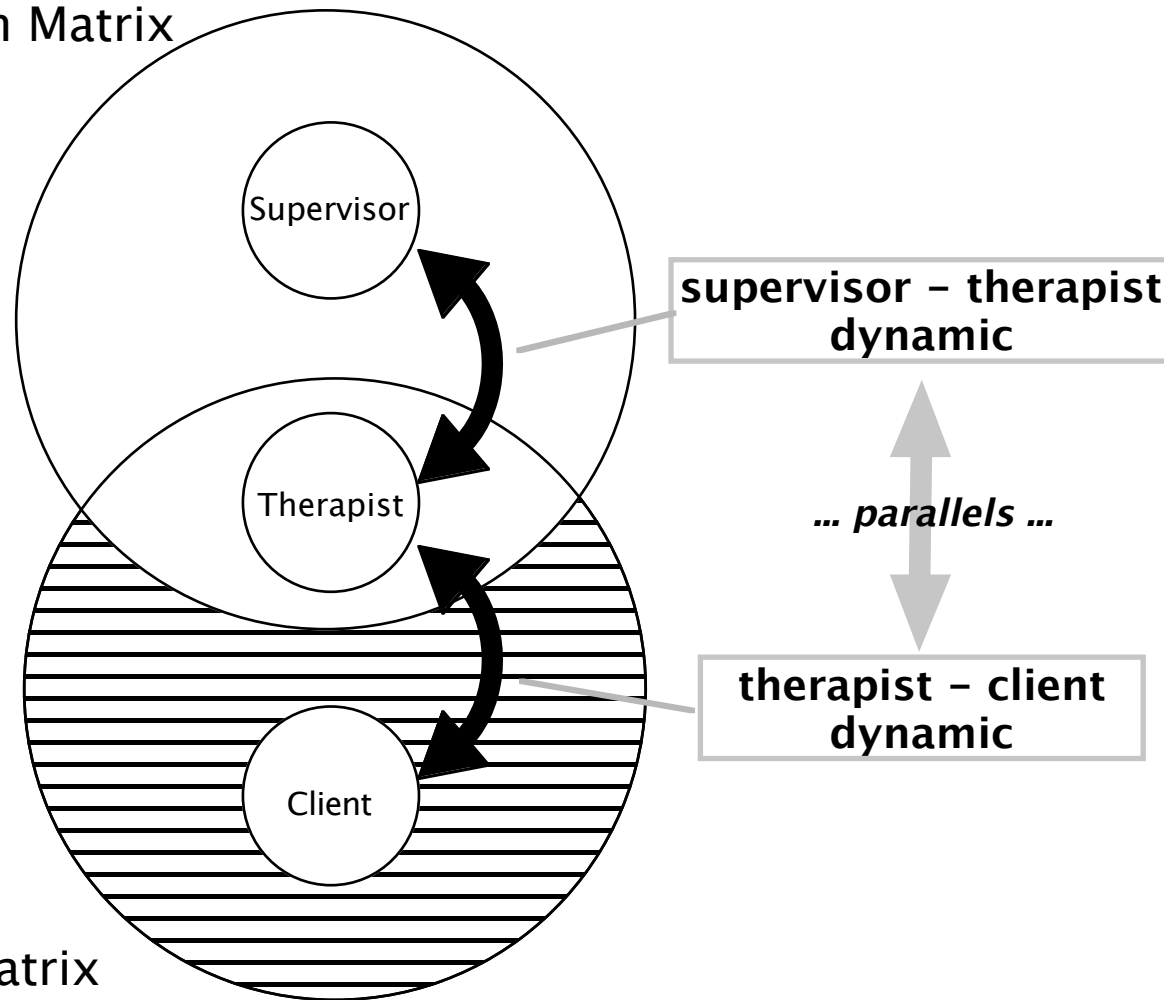
## Extending & expanding the notion of 'parallel process' ...

1	supervisor-therapist dynamic parallels therapist-client dynamic
2	countertransference dynamic parallels transference dynamic
3	transference dynamic parallels client's internal dynamic (object relations)
4	internal dynamic in client's mind parallels dynamic in client's body
5	client's internal dynamic parallels client's past (developmental) dynamic



# Parallel Process between therapy and supervision

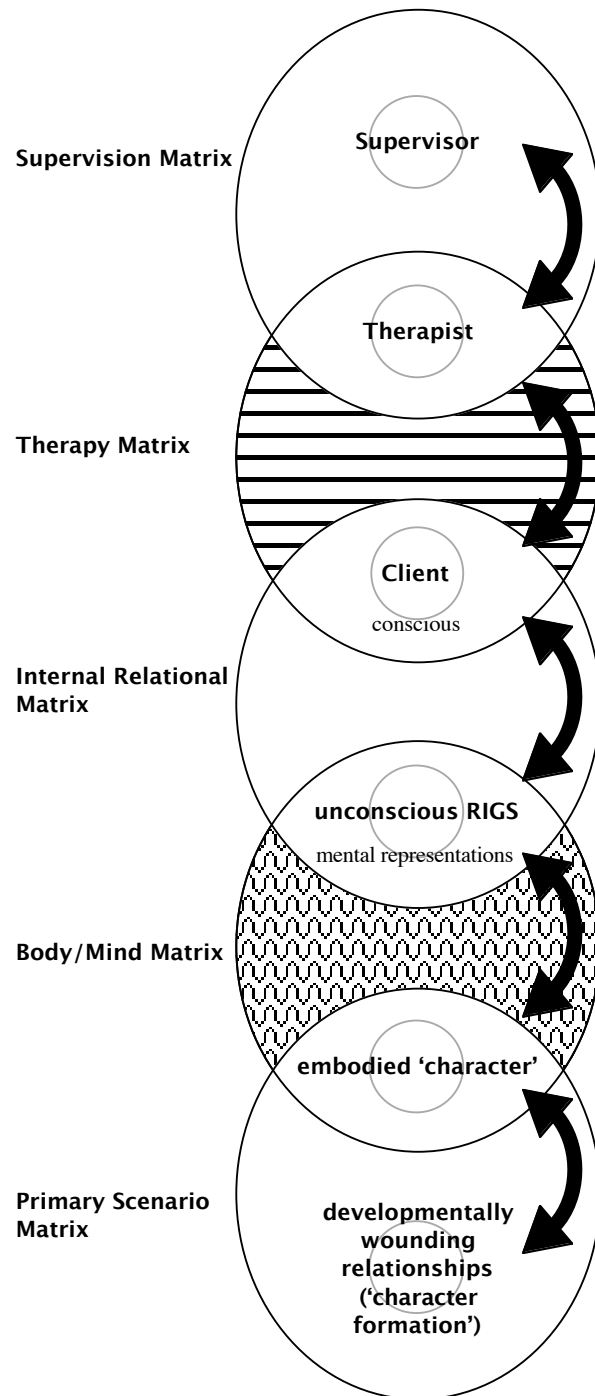
Supervision Matrix



Therapy Matrix

From Hawkins, P. & Shohet, R. "Supervision in the Helping Professions", p. 57





supervisor-therapist dynamic

... parallels ...

therapist's countertransference dynamic

... parallels ...

client's transference dynamic

... parallels ...

client's internal dynamic

... parallels ...

client's body/mind dynamic

... parallels ...

client's family dynamic

Supervision

Therapy

Internal Relational

Body/Mind

Formative Scenario

# three parallel relationships:

similar to: Michael Jacobs “The Presenting Past”

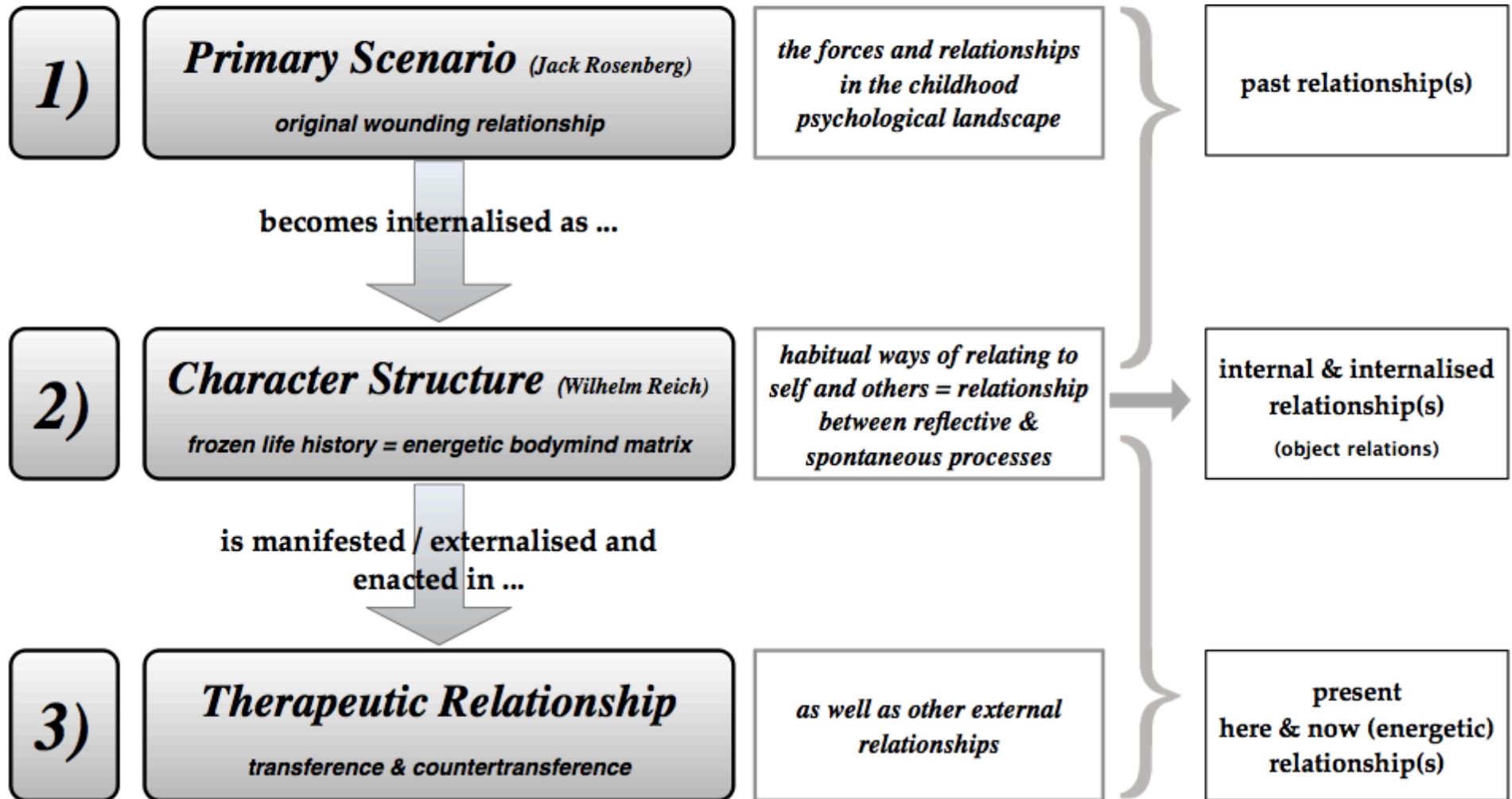
- past originally wounding relationship
- internal(ised) through character formation
- (re-)externalised in here & now  
(transference)



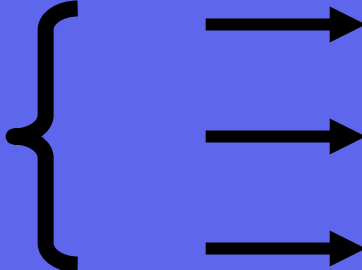
***The client's internal conflict as a relationship pattern (Parallel Process)*** © 1996 Michael Soth

some underlying assumptions of Reichian Body Psychotherapy, Gestalt & psychodynamic developmental theory (object relations)

***Three Parallel Relationships: Past - Internal - Present*** (similar to: Michael Jacobs: 'The Presenting Past')



# five parallel relationships

- original, past relationship
- internal(ised)  spontaneous conflict  
in conflict  
conflicted ego
- (re-)externalised in here & now  
(transference)



# five parallel relationships

## FIVE PARALLEL RELATIONSHIPS:

past  
relationship(s)

### 1) PRIMARY SCENARIO

the conscious and unconscious forces in the  
childhood psychological landscape (family myths)

**original r'ships: how my emerging 'body/mind-self' was related to in early development**

becomes internalised as ...

### 2) CHARACTER (FROZEN LIFE HISTORY)

habitual patterns in energetic body/mind matrix =  
unfinished vasomotoric cycles

**internal r'ship 1: how my spontaneous processes are spontaneously conflicted**

is manifest as ...

### 3) BODY/MIND CONFLICT

habitual relationship to Self  
"I relate to others as I relate to myself."

**internal r'ship 2: how my reflective processes relate to my spontaneous processes**

is reflected as ...

### 4) 'INTERNAL DIALOGUE' = CONFLICTED & POLARISED EGO

habitual (dualistic, either-or) ways of thinking /  
self-image versus ego-ideal

**internal r'ship 3: how my reflective processes oscillate between opposing polarities**

is re-externalised in the transference as ...

here & now  
(energetic)

### 5) RELATIONSHIP TO THERAPIST

habitual ways of relating

**external r'ship: how I relate to others / the therapist**



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Lowen](#)

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Johnson](#)

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# integral-relational model

- five parallel relationships between client and therapist
- + SV
- = six parallel processes

all the same dynamic

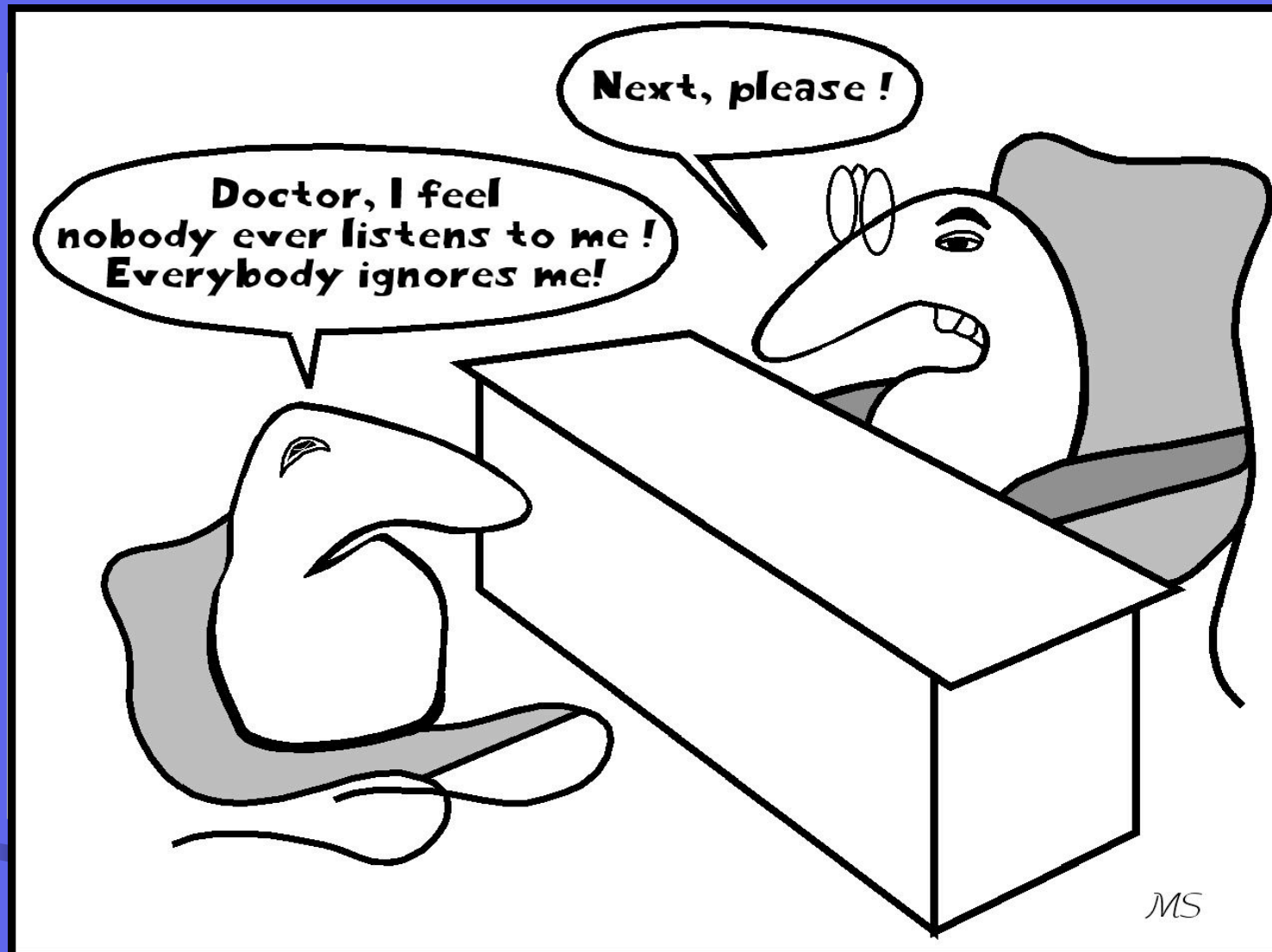


# enactment = parallel process as the crucial concept in relational work

- the internalised wounding relationship can be enacted BOTH ways in the transference



enactment = central principle of  
psychotherapy = pervasive parallel process



# How to work with enactment?

- *becoming aware of it: distinguish content and process*
- *becoming aware of it: noticing parallel process*
- *interpretation (is possible from expert position)*
- *entering enactment (bodymind relational surrender)*
- *gathering the fragments & parallel process levels*
- *resting in paradox until spontaneous transformation occurs*



# Resources:

- *integral mind*
- *neuroscience / biology (Schore)*
- *holarchic, epigenetic theory (Wilber)*
- *parallel process across holarchic levels:*



# holarchic epigenetic theory = transcend and include

- spontaneous emergence of new complexity (new level, or holon)
- something qualitatively new = quantum leap = dependence on initial conditions
- each level emerges from & through the previous one (established structure)
- each level therefore, carries the marks of previous ones, but can also transcend and compensate (maybe an example: Goethe: flower metamorphoses)
- destruction and creation
- latent capacities = manifest identity
- over-determined = symbol = meanings on *all* levels
- sense of self developing Wilber - Fonagy/Target



# Conclusion

- we want to make the therapeutic space an instrument that is sensitive and impressionable to parallel process: allowing myself to be constructed as an object by the client's unconscious
- the closer you get to the heat, the more likely you are lost in parallel process
- it happens, anyway, but if we do not notice = no unfolding of the deeper levels



# Experiential:

- find the most charged fragments
- find the most charge relationship dynamic in the field, including its bodymind fragments
- first: past, internal, present
- then conflicted ego in conflict with spontaneous conflict
- work with two representatives ?
- perceive the dynamic (unfocussed perception)
- difficult supervision scenario = demonstration



# web:www.soth.co.uk

## Michael Soth

**Integrative Body Psychotherapist (UKCP) - Consultant**

*- Trainer & Supervisor*

*- Group Facilitator*

*- Consultant*

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### Events Coming Up

**Knowing Me, Knowing You**

Bridge Pastoral Foundation Annual  
Conference

Derbyshire with Michael Soth

Mon.  
25  
July  
2011

**Extending the scope and meaning of  
'parallel process' into an organising  
principle for relational transformation**

London with Michael Soth

Fri.  
29  
July  
2011

**The bodymind reality of 'internal  
objects' in the transference**

an evening workshop at CONFER

London with Michael Soth

Mon.  
12  
September  
2011

**How To Work When Therapy Isn't  
Working?**

Embodied Pathways Towards Resolving  
Impasses, Breakdowns and Enactments

Bristol with Michael Soth

Sat.  
17  
September  
2011

# Appendix: Extending and expanding the meaning of parallel process... beyond psychotherapy:

- into body-brain-mind
- into social systems & organisations
- into biological systems
- into physics, cosmology



# Extending and expanding the meaning of parallel process...

- *parallel process as a general feature of multi-dimensional complex systems*
- *information transferred between the various levels and sub-systems of whole system*
- *key feature of all change and transformation: critical mass of parallel process initiates non-linear change (complexity theory – butterfly effect)*



# Extending and expanding parallel process ...

- **into neuroscience – body-brain-mind**
- the brain as a complex, self-organising system (orchestra without conductor)
- what kind of capacities does a brain need in order to be capable of recognising parallel process ?
- in neuroscience: the brain = multiple systems (many brains) = capacity for ‘parallel processing’
- maybe neuroscience’s parallel processing and our parallel process have more to do with each other than just sharing the same term ?
- left brain naming an object, with a one-to-one relationship between the name and the object; this is just one kind of thinking, and it’s NOT process thinking, it’s NOT relational thinking which depends on the perceiving of relationship dynamics



# Extending and expanding parallel process ... mind/matter

- into cosmology – fractal reality
- *parallel process as key principle of system transformation*
  - fractal reality of a multi-dimensional holographic universe (each part carries the whole, yet the whole is more than the sum of its parts): patterns and dynamics are replicated at all levels of scale or organisation: parallel process is the glue, the mechanism, the principle that allows that replication across levels
  - parallel process as one basic principle of an ‘informational, fractal, holarchic paradoxical universe’;
  - beyond psychotherapy, beyond *psyche*, in a formulation which transcends the mind-over-matter split: information is tied to matter, but neither defining it nor defined by it – how does information get carried and replicated from one system to another ?
  - Jung’s psychoid unconscious and synchronicity can, for example, usefully be formulated as parallel processes



# *cosmological - fractal - quantum*

- how does replication happen ?
  - matter
  - energy
  - information

