



# WELCOMING THE OTHER, TRANSCENDING TRAUMA

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TRANSCENDENCE IN PSYCHOTHERAPY ONLINE CONFERENCE

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# HELLO!

- HOW ARE YOU?
- I WISH WE COULD TALK FACE-TO-FACE AS I HAVE SO MANY TIMES IN THE PAST 8 MONTHS
- ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF:
  - DR. CONRAD SICHLER
  - FAMILY PHYSICIAN IN PRIVATE PRACTICE IN BURLINGTON, ON AND FROM MY OWN HOME
  - PRACTICE ALMOST ENTIRELY IN MENTAL HEALTH, NAMELY ADDICTION AND TRAUMA
  - TREAT HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS IN RECOVERY
  - TEACH MINDFULNESS
  - DO SOME CEREMONY
  - WRITE AND PERFORM MUSIC
  - DO SOME OTHER THINGS

# FIRST, A STORY...

- BECAUSE DOESN'T EVERYTHING START WITH A STORY?
- “IT WAS A COLD AND RAINY NIGHT IN GARMISCH-PARKENKIRCHEN ... ”

# FIRST PRINCIPLES

- I LIKE DEFINING WHAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT, SINCE LANGUAGE IS SLIPPERY AND PRONE TO ASSUMPTIONS
- SO WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT HERE TODAY?
  - TRANSCENDENCE
  - TRAUMA
  - PARADOX
- I LIKE LOOKING AT WHAT WORDS REALLY MEAN

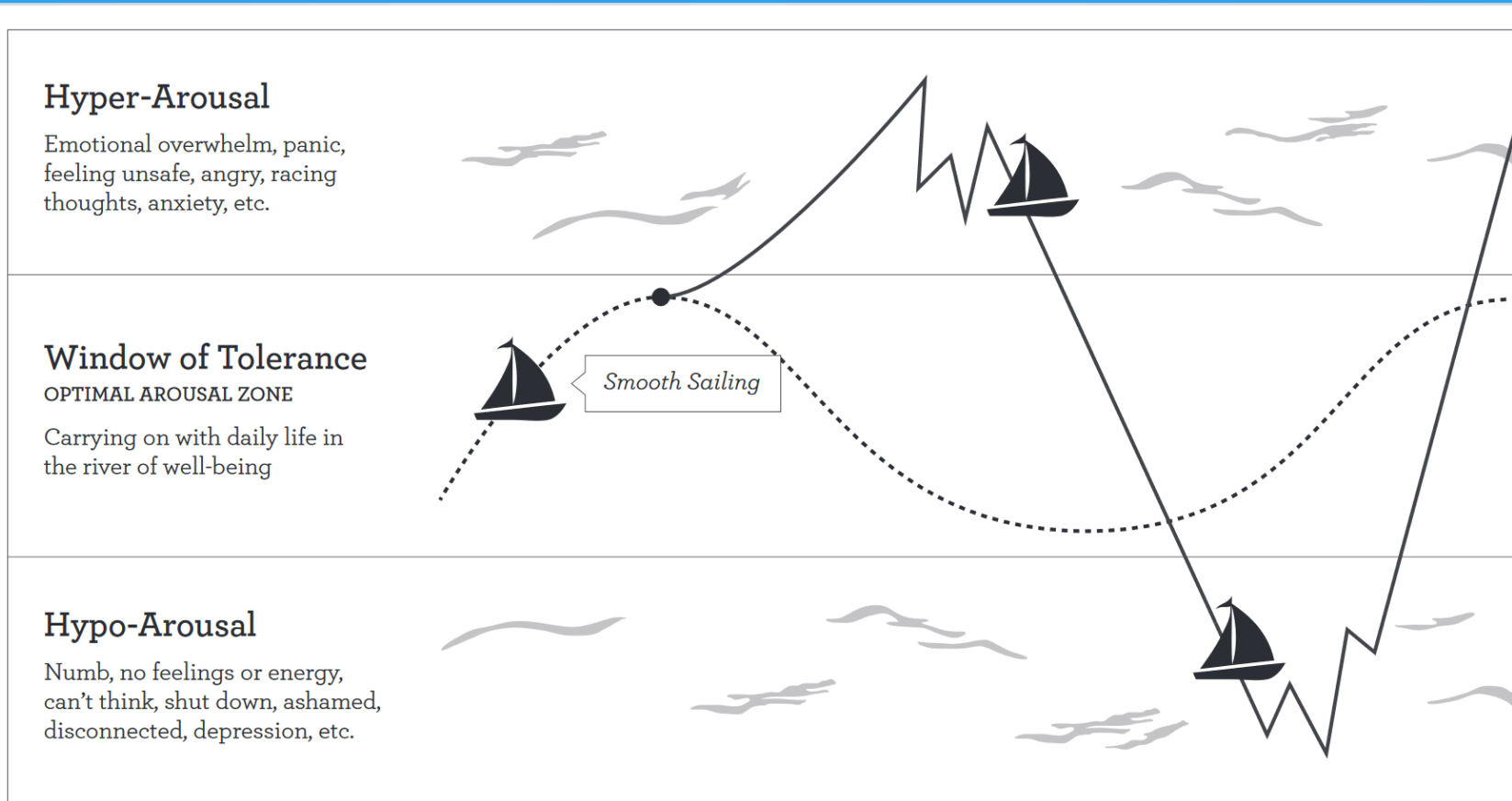
# TRANSCENDENCE

- DICTIONARY DEFINITION: A SURMOUNTING, A RISING ABOVE, BECOMING PRE-EMINENT OR SUPREME, A GOING BEYOND ORDINARY PERCEPTION, A GOING BEYOND THE MATERIAL, HUMAN EXPERIENCE, ETC.
- YOU GET THE IDEA
- ETYMOLOGY: 'TRANS' = BEYOND; 'SCANDARE' = LATIN FOR "TO CLIMB"
- SO THEREFORE, "TO CLIMB BEYOND"

# TRAUMA

- THE IMPACT OF EXPERIENCES ON THE BODY/MIND/EMOTIONS/SPIRIT THAT OFTEN INVOLVE FEELING TRAPPED AT THE TIME AND THEN IN TIME, AND THAT CANNOT BE INTEGRATED INTO EXISTING FRAMEWORKS OF MEANING
- COMES IN LARGE AND SMALL VARIETIES
- DISTINCT FROM 'HURT' WHICH IS USUALLY SOMETHING THAT CAN BE MORE READILY AND RAPIDLY RECOVERED FROM
- OFTEN INVOLVE STATES OF PERSISTENT NERVOUS SYSTEM HYPERACTIVATION AND/OR HYPOACTIVATION

# THE ZONE OF TOLERANCE



# A WORD ABOUT FRAMEWORKS OF MEANING

- REMEMBER THAT TRAUMA BLOWS THE DOORS OFF OF THESE EXISTING FRAMEWORKS OF MEANING
- SOMETIMES THIS HAPPENS WITH EXPERIENCES THAT MOST PEOPLE WOULD LIKELY FIND OVERWHELMING
- SOMETIMES, HOWEVER, THE FRAMEWORK MAY BE FAULTY OR INACCURATE
  - EG. THE “TRAUMA” OF A 97-YEAR OLD PERSON DYING



# LET'S TAKE A VERY BROAD VIEW

- WHEN WE ARE BORN, WE COME INTO THIS WORLD, A WORLD OF POLARITIES
- NONE OF US WOULD EXIST WITHOUT A FEMALE AND MALE (MOSTLY THE FEMALE) CREATING OUR BODIES
- WHEN WE ARE BORN, WE KNOW THAT WE WILL DIE
- LIFE/DEATH IS ONE OBVIOUS A COMMON POLARITY, ALONG WITH LIGHT/DARK, PLEASURE/PAIN, ORDER/CHANGE, HOT/COLD AND SO ON
- WE EXIST IN THIS WORLD, AND WE NEED TO CONTEND WITH IT, WHETHER WE REALIZE IT AND ACCEPT THIS OR NOT
- ALSO, WE WILL ALL EXPERIENCE CHALLENGES THAT WE CAN USE TO GROW AND LEARN AND MEET OURSELVES

# EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT THERAPY AND LIFE I LEARNED FROM GOLDBLOCKS

- LET US CONSULT WITH THE AUGUST PHILOSOPHER GOLDBLOCKS
- WHAT DID SHE TEACH US?
- BREAK AND ENTER IS ONE WAY TO TRANSCEND BOUNDARIES THAT ARE HOLDING US BACK FROM WHAT WE WANT
- MISS, MISS, HIT
- THE MIDDLE PATH
- BUT HOW?

# ANOTHER MODEL – LEVELS OF THE TEMPLE/MIND

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Literal

Symbolic

Paradoxical

Creative

Literal - This is this.

Symbolic - This stands for or represents that.

Paradoxical - This is both this and that, its opposite

Creative - This can be this, that, or anything / everything

# WHAT IS PARADOX?

- **DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS:**
  - A SITUATION WHERE TWO THINGS SEEM TO CONTRADICT ONE ANOTHER
  - A STATEMENT WHERE IF ONE PART IS TRUE, THE OTHER CANNOT BE TRUE
  - A STATEMENT THAT SEEMS CONTRADICTORY, UNBELIEVABLE, OR ABSURD BUT THAT MAY, IN FACT, BE TRUE
  - OR HOW ABOUT “SOMETHING SIMULTANEOUSLY CONTRADICTORY AND TRUE”?
- **ETYMOLOGY: “PARA” = BEYOND OR OUTSIDE OF; DOX FROM GREEK *DOKEIN* = TO APPEAR, SEEM, THINK; TO CAUSE TO ACCEPT OR BE ACCEPTED**
- **HENCE, PARADOX GOES BEYOND WHAT APPEARS, SEEMS TO BE, OR IS THOUGHT; BEYOND CAUSING TO ACCEPT OR BE ACCEPTED**
- **PARADOXUM/PARADOXOS = LATIN/GREEK – OPPOSED TO EXISTING NOTIONS**

# I SUBMIT TO YOU ...

- ... THAT MANY OF THE STUCK PLACES OF OUR PATIENTS ARE ROOTED IN PARADOX
- AND THAT MANY OF THE SOLUTIONS FOR THEM (AND OURSELVES!) MAY ALSO REST IN PARADOX
- LET'S LOOK AT THIS MORE CLOSELY

# ONE TREE, TWO MAIN BRANCHES

- LET'S LOOK AT ONE PAIR OF OPPOSITES:
- WISDOM AND IGNORANCE - PICK ONE!
- THEN MAKE IT A PROCESS RATHER THAN A THING, AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS
- YOU MAY LEARN THAT THESE ARE ACTUALLY INSEPARABLE

# CULTURAL BLIND SPOTS – WORTH TRANSCENDING?

- THINGIFICATION OR REIFICATION
  - EMBEDDED IN ENGLISH, WHICH HAS CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ACCOUNTING LANGUAGE
  - NOUNS PREDOMINATE
  - VERBS LESS SO
  - THEREFORE, FALLBACK IS TO SEE THINGS > PROCESSES, INCLUDING NATURE, INCLUDING OURSELVES
- CONTROL
  - MAY ACTUALLY BE AN ILLUSION OF THE MIND
  - ESPECIALLY TRUE WHEN MANY PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED, OR ANYTHING MORE COMPLEX THAN SIMPLE PHYSICAL ACTIONS
  - DON'T BELIEVE ME? HAVE YOU EVER TRIED TO LOSE WEIGHT BY AVOIDING 'BAD' FOODS?

# CULTURAL BLIND SPOTS II

- ABSTRACTION – PREFERENCING THE MENTAL OVER, SAY, THE PHYSICAL
  - EG. THINKING WE UNDERSTAND AND THAT UNDERSTANDING IS ENOUGH OR A SUBSTITUTE FOR ACTION, EG. “I’M OVER THAT!”
  - MOST HUMAN ATROCITY AND HARM HAS SOME CONNECTION TO SEEING OTHERS (HUMAN AND NON-HUMAN) WITH LIFE AS IF THEY DID NOT HAVE LIFE
  - STRONGLY RELATED TO ‘THINGIFICATION’
- SOLIDITY – ESPECIALLY OUR BODIES
- BANALITY



# BUDDHIST ANTIDOTE TO SOME OF THE PREVIOUS

- THICH NHAT HANH TEACHING:
  - ANY THING IS COMPOSED ENTIRELY OF NON-THING ELEMENTS
  - APPLY TO YOU – YOU ARE COMPOSED ENTIRELY OF NON-YOU ELEMENTS
  - APPLY TO A FLOWER – ENTIRELY COMPOSED OF NON-FLOWER ELEMENTS
- COULD WE APPLY THIS, FOR INSTANCE, TO TRAUMA?
  - THIS TRAUMA IS ENTIRELY COMPOSED OF NON-TRAUMATIC ELEMENTS? MAYBE NOT, BECAUSE TRAUMA IS AN ONGOING PROCESS. PERHAPS REMEMBERING THAT WE, AS TRAUMATIZED PEOPLE, ARE MOSTLY MADE OF NON-TRAUMATIZED ELEMENTS
- MY NUN PATIENT’S TEACHING – “OOH, BUT NOTHING IS ITS NAME!” – AN ABSTRACTION ANTIDOTE
- MEDITATION = “MIDDLE PATH”; TAKE APPROPRIATE MEASURE, CONSIDER, REFLECT

# SO HOW DO WE GET INTO TROUBLE?

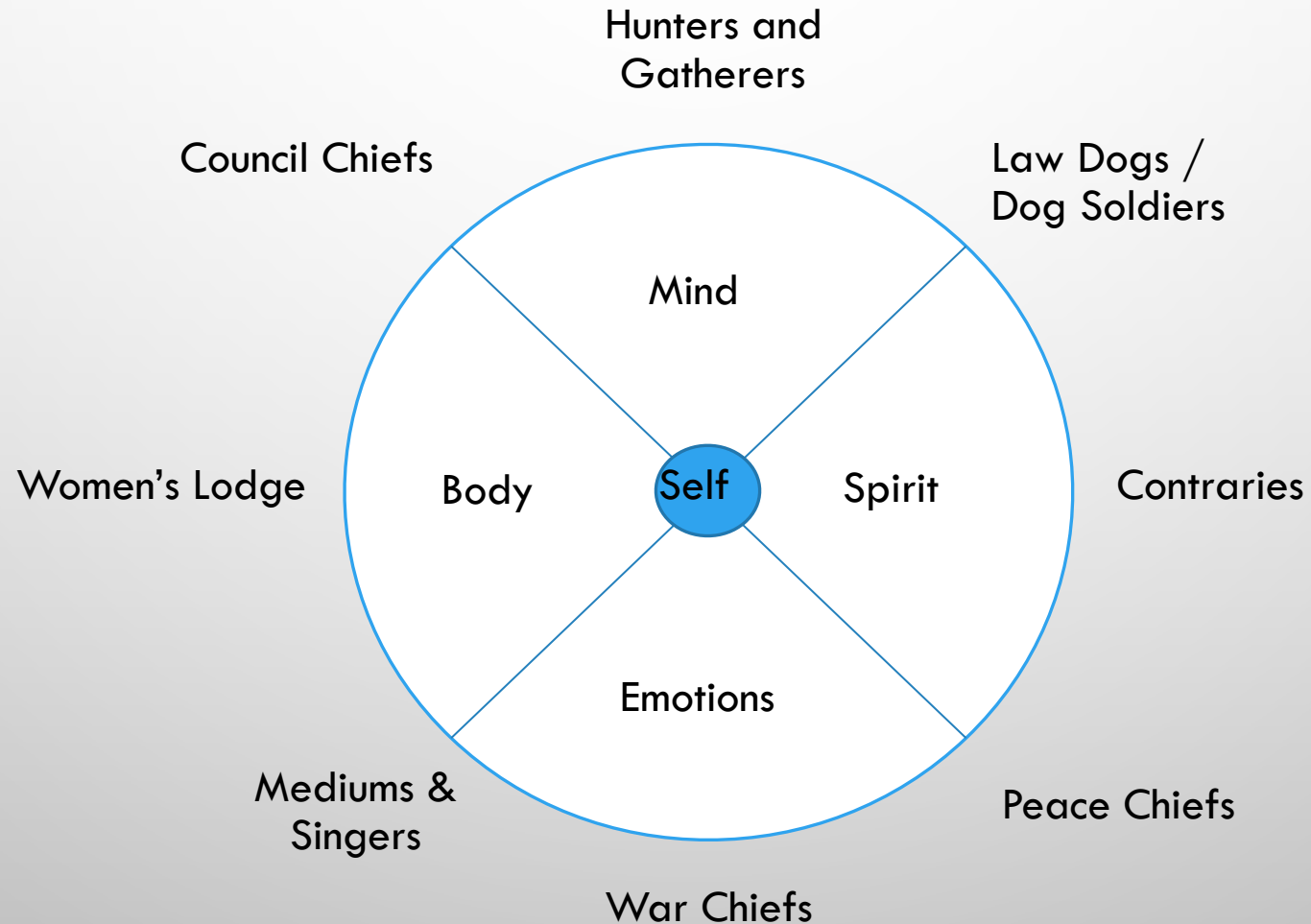
- PERHAPS BY BECOMING POLARIZED
- THIS IS ACTUALLY IN THE GENESIS STORY
  - FULL NAME OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE?
  - WHAT IF IT IS SAYING AS SOON AS WE KNOW WHAT IS GOOD AND WHAT IS EVIL, WE FALL OUT OF PARADISE / CONNECTEDNESS?
- CONSIDER THE MONSTROSITIES PERPETUATED BY THOSE WHO WERE CERTAIN THEY WERE DOING GOOD
  - RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS, AS ONE EXAMPLE OF MANY

# ANTIDOTES – MY FRIEND KEN

- DON'T-KNOW MIND – ACTUALLY QUITE POWERFUL
- MY SWEAT LODGE SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS
- HIS OWN LIFE
  - “I AM SURE THAT I DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE MOST IMPORTANT MOMENTS OF MY LIFE.”
- RESPONSE TO MY QUESTIONS DURING CEREMONY

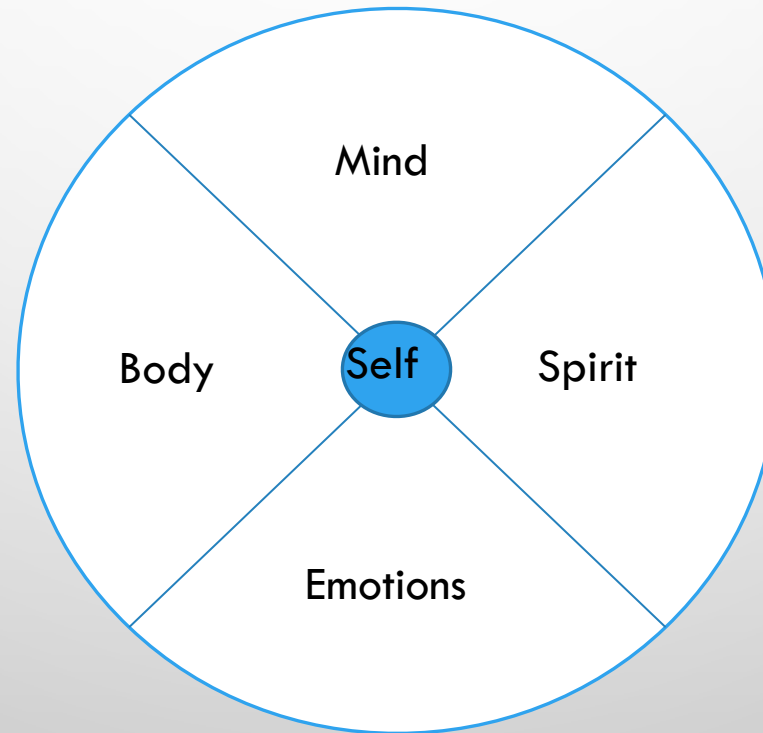
# A MEDICINE WHEEL OR TWO – CIRCLE OF LAW PLUS SELF WHEEL SUPERIMPOSED

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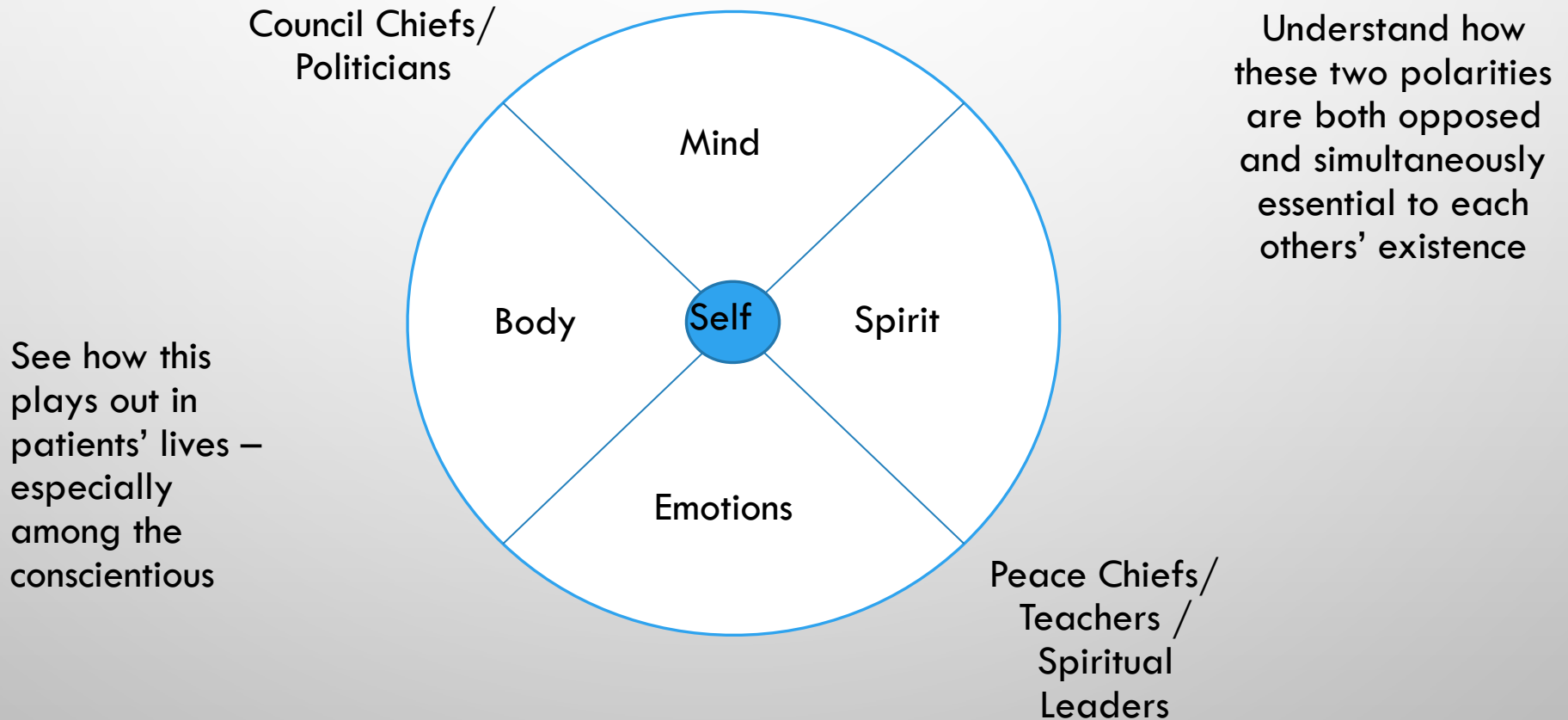
# JUST ONE MEDICINE WHEEL – SELF WHEEL

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# ONE PART OF THE OTHER WHEEL ON TOP – DIALECTICS!

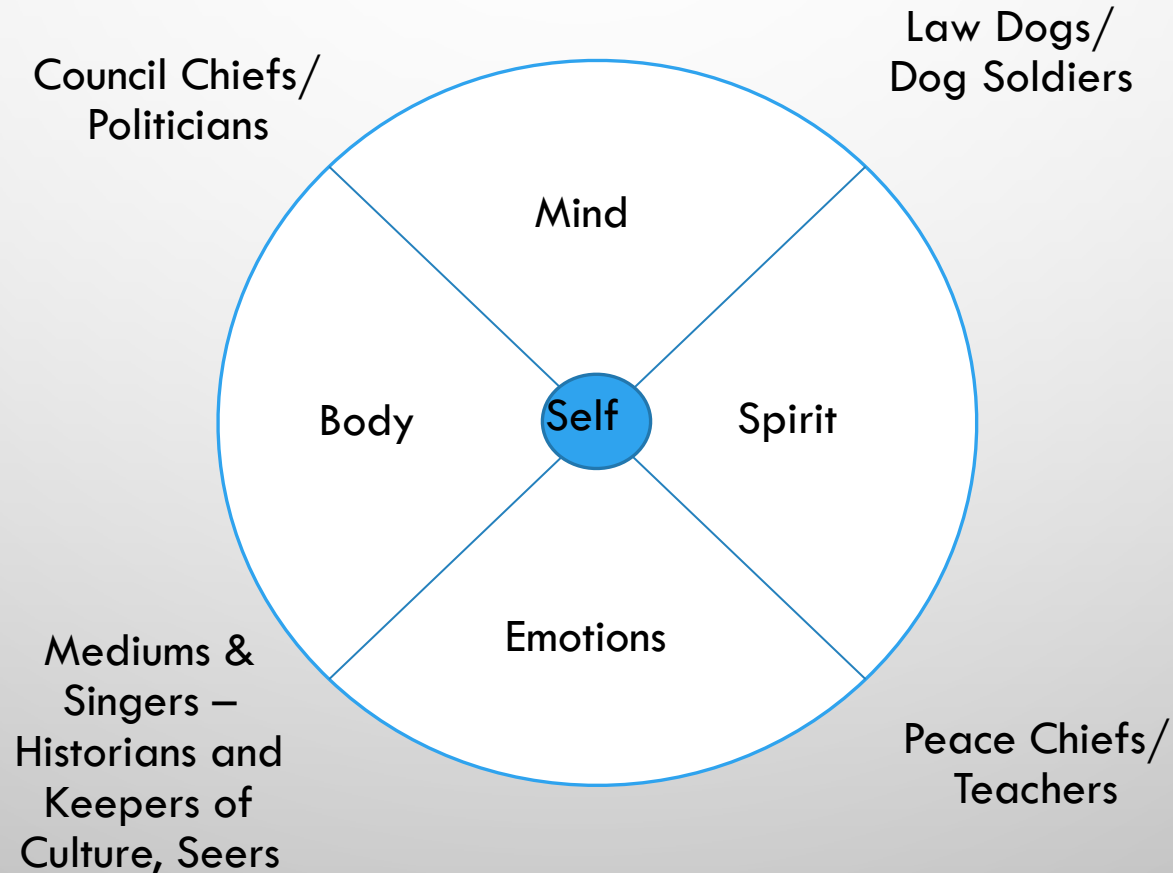
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# ANOTHER DIALECTIC

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Understand how these two polarities are both opposed and simultaneously essential to each others' existence



# HAVE YOU NOTICED THAT THERE IS A WEE BIT OF POLITICAL POLARIZATION OCCURRING THESE DAYS?

- ALAN WATTS IN HIS BOOK “THE BOOK: ON THE TABOO AGAINST KNOWING WHO YOU ARE”
- P. 122-123:
  - THE POLITICAL AND PERSONAL MORALITY OF THE WEST ... IS A MONSTROUS COMBINATION OF UNCOMPROMISING IDEALISM AND UNSCRUPULOUS GANGSTERISM ... NO-ONE CAN BE MORAL – THAT IS, NO-ONE CAN HARMONIZE CONTAINED CONFLICTS – WITHOUT COMING TO A WORKING ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN THE ANGEL IN HIMSELF AND THE DEVIL IN HIMSELF, BETWEEN HIS ROSE ABOVE AND HIS MANURE BELOW ...



## WATTS II

- “IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT THIS BE UNDERSTOOD BY THOSE CONCERNED WITH CIVIL RIGHTS, INTERNATIONAL PEACE, AND THE RESTRAINT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. THESE ARE MOST UNDOUBTEDLY CAUSES TO BE BACKED WITH FULL VIGOUR, BUT NEVER IN A SPIRIT WHICH FAILS TO HONOUR THE OPPOSITION, OR WHICH REGARDS IT AS UTTERLY EVIL OR INSANE.”
- “IN ANY FORESEEABLE FUTURE, THERE ARE GOING TO BE THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WHO DETEST AND ABOMINATE NEGROES, COMMUNISTS, RUSSIANS, CHINESE, JEWS, CATHOLICS, BEATNIKS, HOMOSEXUALS AND “DOPE FIENDS.” THESE HATREDS ARE NOT GOING TO BE HEALED, BUT ONLY INFLAMED, BY INSULTING THOSE WHO FEEL THEM, AND THE ABUSIVE LABELS WITH WHICH WE PLASTER THEM – SQUARES, FASCISTS, RIGHTISTS, KNOW-NOTHINGS – MAY WELL BECOME THE PROUD BADGES AND SYMBOLS UNDER WHICH THEY WILL RALLY AND CONSOLIDATE THEMSELVES.” (THINK! “DEPLORABLES” ETC.)

## WATTS III

- “IF WE WANT JUSTICE FOR MINORITIES AND COOLED WARS WITH OUR NATURAL ENEMIES ... WE MUST FIRST COME TO TERMS WITH THE MINORITY AND THE ENEMY IN OURSELVES AND IN OUR OWN HEARTS, FOR THE RASCAL IS THERE AS MUCH AS ANYWHERE IN THE “EXTERNAL” WORLD – ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU REALIZE THAT THE WORLD OUTSIDE YOUR SKIN IS AS MUCH YOURSELF AS THE WORLD INSIDE. FOR WANT OF THIS AWARENESS, NO-ONE CAN BE MORE BELLIGERENT THAN A PACIFIST, OR MORE MILITANTLY NATIONALISTIC THAN AN ANTI-IMPERIALIST.”

# CANADIAN RECONCILIATION

- I WISH I REMEMBER THE ORIGIN OF THIS QUOTE FROM AN INDIGENOUS MAN WHO WAS CITED IN THE GLOBE & MAIL AS BEING FED UP WITH THIS LATEST ROUND OF “RECONCILIATION”:
  - “DOES CANADA WANT RECONCILIATION? DO YOU WANT RECONCILIATION? IF YOU DO, WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO IS FIRST LOOK INWARDS AND RECONCILE WITH YOURSELF.”
- IF WE DON'T DO THAT, THE HIGH RISK IS OF PEDDLING OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES, I.E. THE SAME OLD COLONIALISM WITH A PRETTY FACE AND PRETTIER WORDS
- THE RISK IS MORE AN ONGOING TRAUMA



# OH, YES – THIS IS A CLINICAL CONFERENCE, ISN'T IT?

- WHY DO THIS?
  - MAYBE BECAUSE WHEN WE SEE WHAT IT IS, WHAT WE DO ABOUT IT BECOMES OBVIOUS
- 

# CLINICAL BINDS

- "SO WHY DO YOU SMOKE POT?"
- HOMER SIMPSON'S BIND AROUND BEER
- SO ANXIOUS THAT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO CONFRONT THE SOURCE OF THE ANXIETY, WHICH MAY MAKE IT DIMINISH
- A SEEKING OF SAFETY SO PROFOUND THAT THE INDIVIDUAL'S SYSTEM GROWS INTO HAVING LESS AND LESS TOLERANCE FOR ANY RISK

# PARADOXICAL UNBINDINGS

- ESCAPING PAUL BERNARDO, HOMEOPATHICALLY
- HELPING A PATIENT ANGUISHED ABOUT INFERTILITY AND COMING TO THE END OF THE ROAD – AND HOW THAT WAS SIMULTANEOUSLY NOT OK BUT ALSO OK
- SOMEONE APPRECIATING HER ADDICTED PARTS, WHICH WERE ALSO FUN PERFORMERS, TO THE POINT WHERE RELATIONSHIP WAS BUILT AND SUPPRESSION / REPRESSION WAS NOT NEEDED
- SOMEONE IMAGINING HERSELF RELAXING WITH PART OF HERSELF WHO WAS CARRYING THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD (THOMAS MOORE – THANK YOU FOR THE ASSIST!)
  - ACCOMPLISHING A LOT WITHOUT DOING VERY MUCH AT ALL (ALSO FOR ME AS THERAPIST!)

# APPROACHES

- DR. BRADFORD KEENEY – TOLD “YOU’RE TOO GOOD” TO TEACH BY AN INDIGENOUS TEACHER IN THE SOUTH-WESTERN USA. HAD TO GO AND SMOKE, DRINK, AND GAMBLE FIRST!
- VANDANA SHIVA AND HER TREMENDOUS ENERGY. WHY? “TOTAL COMMITMENT AND TOTAL NON-ATTACHMENT”
  - DOES ACTUALLY RELEASE THE ENERGY BOUND UP IN THOSE INNER POLARITIES
- INFORMAL RECOVERY SAYING: “I’M NOT OK AND YOU’RE NOT OK, AND THAT’S OK.”
- WE ARE EACH MAGNIFICENTLY IMPORTANT AND ALSO SIMULTANEOUSLY COMPLETELY INSIGNIFICANT

# WHAT DOES THIS DO?

- IT SEEMS TO OPEN UP A SPACIOUSNESS WITHIN US AND AROUND US WHEN WE CAN PULL IT OFF
- THEN WITHIN THAT SPACE, INTERESTING THINGS SEEM TO HAPPEN
- IF YOU WANT A MORE COMPLICATED EXPLANATION, I AM AFRAID THAT I MAY HAVE TO DISAPPOINT YOU



# INTERNAL FAMILY SYSTEMS

- ONE APPROACH THAT INCORPORATES (OR CAN) THE ABOVE
- OVERLAPS BETWEEN RICHARD SCHWARTZ'S SELF-LEADERSHIP MODEL AND THE MEDICINE WHEEL I SHOWED YOU
- AIM IS TO TRANSCEND POLARITIES IN THE INTERNAL SYSTEM OF THE PSYCHE
- EG. BOB AND WANTING / NOT WANTING HIS EX. CONFLICT! TURMOIL! DRAMA! RERUNS!
  - IN THE END, WHEN THE POLARITIES WERE ACKNOWLEDGED GENTLY AND DROPPED THEIR INTENSITY A BIT, BOTH VANISHED AND WHAT WAS LEFT WAS AN AWARENESS OF A 4-YEAR OLD BOY WHO MISSED HIS MOTHER

# HOW DOES IT WORK?

- PROTECTORS AND EXILES
- CORE SELF
- STRENGTHENING THE SELF TO PART CONNECTIONS
- ASSUME THAT ALL PARTS ARE WELCOME, I.E. AS OPPOSED TO “GOOD” PARTS AND “BAD” PARTS (BACK TO GENESIS AGAIN)
- JUST AS IT FEELS LOVELY FOR US A OUR ENTIRE SELVES TO BE SEEN, HEARD, ACKNOWLEDGED AND VALIDATED, THE PARTS OF US WITHIN US ALSO FEEL QUITE HAPPY ABOUT THIS
- MODEL IS NON-VIOLENT, NON-CONTROLLING – TRANSCENDS THESE!

# STRUCTURE / UNSTRUCTURE

- “CHILDREN STRUCTURE THEIR MINDS AND WORLDS IN ORDER TO LEARN.”
- ”ADULTS HAVE TO UNSTRUCTURE THEIR MINDS IN ORDER TO LEARN.”
- INTERNAL FAMILY SYSTEMS CAN AND DOES ASSIST WITH UNSTRUCTURING THE MIND IN A PEACEFUL WAY, INCLUDING TOWARDS MORE WAR-LIKE ELEMENTS IN THE MIND

# GROWTH

- COULD BE A BYPRODUCT OF SELF-ACCEPTANCE, RATHER THAN STRIVING
- CAREFUL ABOUT MENTAL OR SPIRITUAL BYPASS!

# A COUPLE OF EXERCISES

- BODY-MIND HACK – OPEN, GROUNDED, CENTRED
- SITTING IN BETWEEN SOME POLARITIES IN YOURSELF – SIGNIFICANCE / INSIGNIFICANCE
- A WEE BIT OF PARTS WORK
  - BUILDING RELATIONSHIP WITH RATHER THAN TRYING TO FIX OR SOLVE (CAREFUL ABOUT THAT THINKING MIND!)



# FINALLY, BACK TO TRANSCENDENCE

- WHAT IF WE TRANSCENDED THE NEED FOR TRANSCENDENCE ITSELF?
  - WHAT IF THE MOST HOLY IS THE MOST ORDINARY?
  - WHAT IF THE MOST BANAL IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL? HAVE YOU EVER STOPPED TO TRULY LISTEN AND WATCH AND LEARN?
  - WHAT IF WE COULD FIND A LITTLE BIT OF TRANSCENDENCE BY EMBRACING OUR NON-TRANSCENDENCE?
  - WHAT IF OUR TRANSCENDENCE IS ENTIRELY COMPOSED OF NON-TRANSCENDENT ELEMENTS?
- 