

Trauma & Society

**What are the implications of a
Multi-Generational Theory of Trauma
for our view of society?**

Lecture, London 1 October 2010

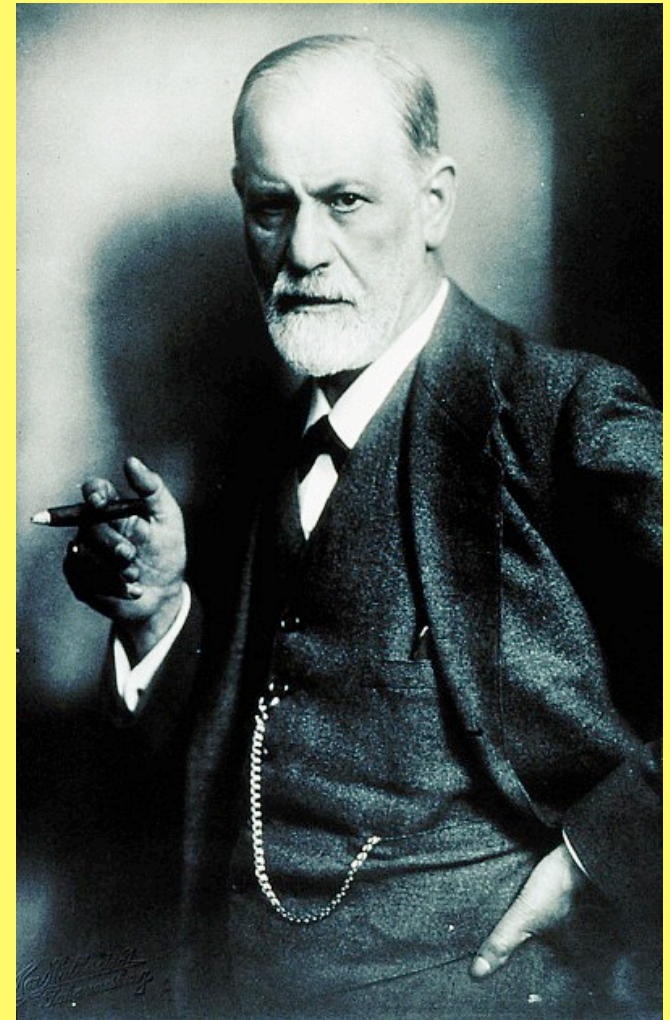
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Messages from Psychoanalysis

- Socialize the sexual and aggressive drives
- Transform sexual energy into culture
- Don't overprotect children

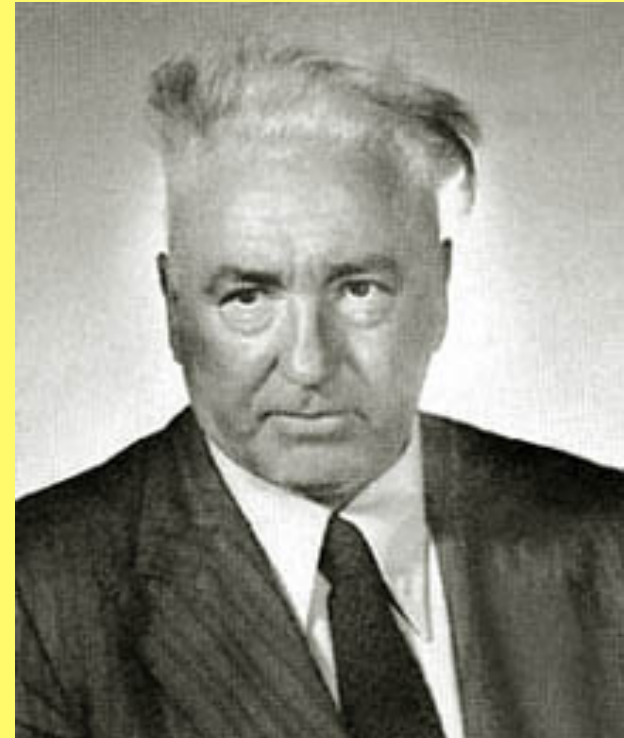


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Sigmund Freud 1856 - 1939

The antithesis of Wilhelm Reich

- Free your sexuality
- Break through the protective shield of your body



Wilhelm Reich 1897 - 1957

The wisdom of Behavioural Psychology

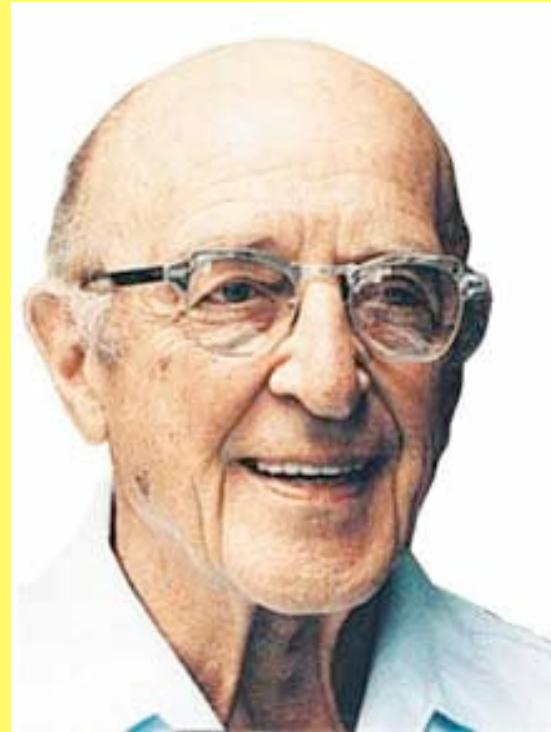
- Shape behaviour
- Reinforce the behaviour of others
- Manage your own behaviour



Burrhus Frederic Skinner 1904 - 1990

The message of Carl Rogers

- be empathetic
- be authentic
- actualize yourself



Carl Rogers 1902-1987

Multigenerational Psychotraumatology (MPT)

- Trauma is seen as the cause of psychological disorders, many physical illnesses and most of the conflicts in relationships that cannot find good solutions
- Traumata of parents are prolonged as symbiotic trauma into the psychological structure of their children
- Traumata do not heal themselves, they only produce new trauma

Two “classical” types of trauma



- caused by life threatening events (e.g. natural catastrophies, war, accidents, rape)
- caused by loss of a person (e.g. early death of parents, loss of children, early seperations)

The symbiotic entanglement of traumatised people then produces two new types of trauma

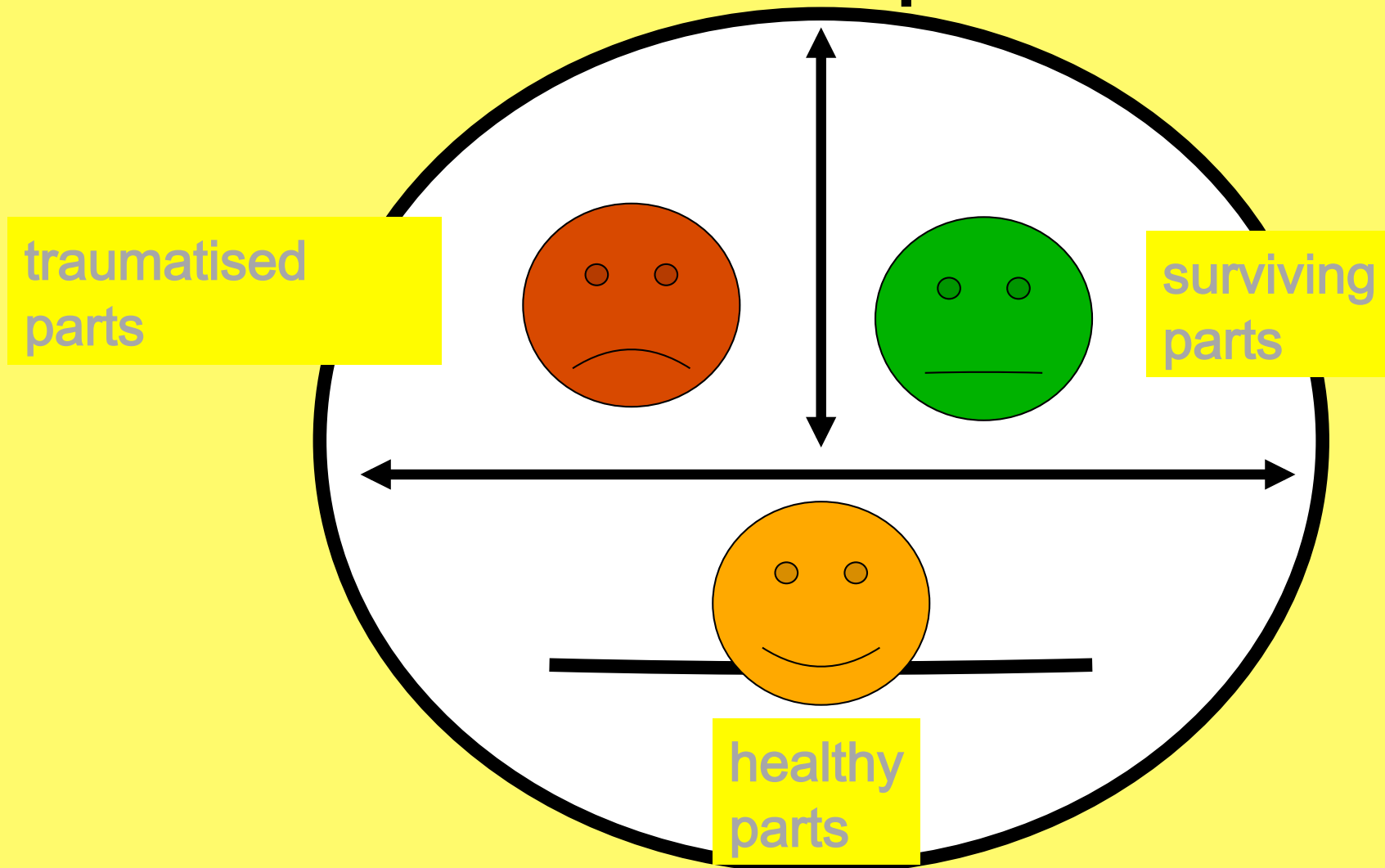


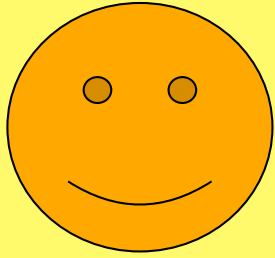
- **Symbiotic Trauma (being rejected and hurt by the person one needs to bond to)**
- **Trauma of confusion in a bonding system (caused by murder, sexual abuse, incestuous relationships within the bonding system)**



**When traumatised
we freeze,
dissociate
and our
personality splits
in order for us to
survive.**

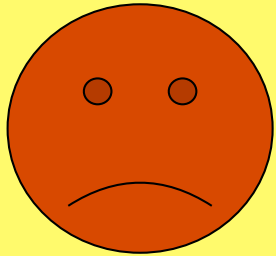
Split in the personality structure after a traumatic experience





Characteristics of the healthy parts of our personality

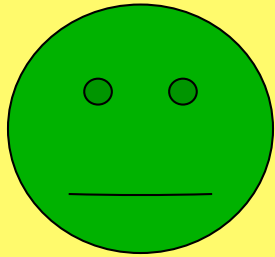
- **capable of regulating feelings**
- **genuine empathy**
- **ability to make safe bonds**
- **ability to resolve bonds if necessary**
- **ability of self-reflection**
- **self-responsibility**
- **love of truth**
- **realism**
- **optimism and basic confidence**
- **Strength to confront traumatic experiences**



Characteristics of the traumatised parts

- store the **memory** of the trauma
- are always the **same age** as when the trauma occurred
- are still **engaged** with the traumatic experience
- can unpredictably and suddenly be **triggered**





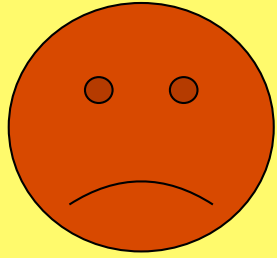
Characteristics of the surviving-parts

- **constructing and guarding the split**
- **denying and suppressing the trauma experience**
- **avoiding**
- **controlling**
- **compensating**
- **producing illusions**
- **producing new splits**



“Symbiotic trauma”

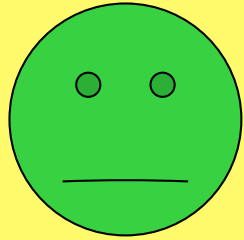
The child is helpless and incapable of getting a stable and safe emotional contact with his mother.



Characteristics of the traumatised part in a symbiotic trauma

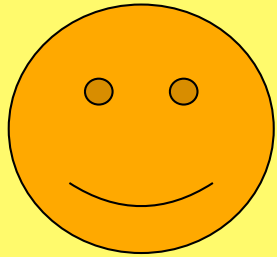
- **despair because there is no love from the mother**
- **deep loneliness**
- **fear of dying**
- **suppressed anger**
- **suppressed sadness**
- **tendency to give up**





Characteristics of the surviving parts in symbiotic trauma

- **idealising the mother**
- **fighting for contact with the parents**
- **repressing and denying one's own trauma**
- **identification with the survival mechanisms of the mother**
- **identification with the traumatised parts within the mother**



Healthy parts of a Child

- **Has own power to live**
- **Has own will to live**
- **Healthy basic needs and desires**
- **Enjoys moving, playing and learning**
- **...**

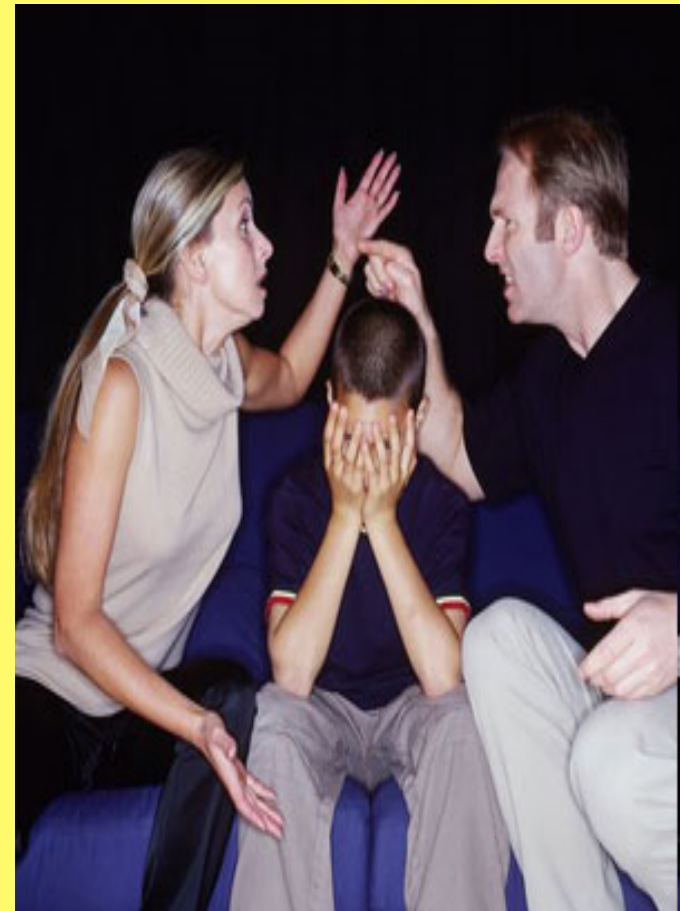
Consequences of symbiotic trauma for a child

- no capacity to distinguish between own feelings and those of the mother
- not living one's own identity
- mental illness such as hyperactivity, depression, psychotic episodes
- repeating symbiotic entanglement in other relationships



Characteristics of a symbiotic entanglement

- clinging and merging
- hiding one's vulnerability
- anger, hate and violence in relationships
- no real self-esteem
- always looking to others
- illusions and delusions in love situations



In society there are people and institutions that support trauma theories, and others that neglect or deny trauma and its many consequences.

Consequences of MPT for Health Care Systems

- Acknowledging of trauma as the main cause of mental and physical illnesses
- Diagnosis of causes instead of symptoms
- Therapy with the causes instead of the symptoms
- For example, therapy with the parents instead of the children
- Prevention of trauma in families, schools, in business and in society



Consequences of MPT for the economy

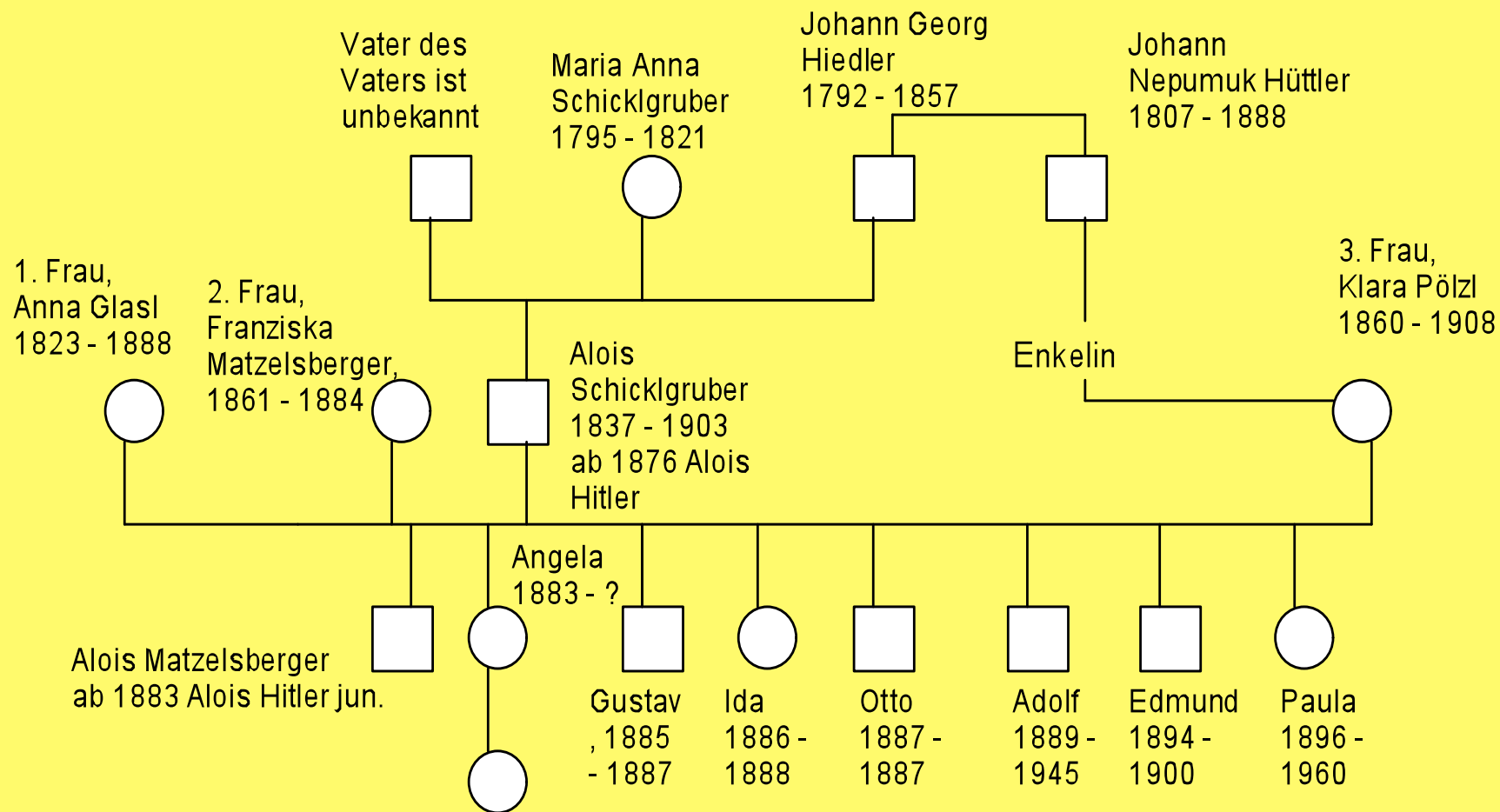
- Seeing the difference between an economy that results from survival strategies (“more”, “bigger”, never enough ..) and an economy that comes from healthy parts
- Healthy relationships instead of relationships that foster illness
- Money serves life and not the other way round



Consequences of MPT for the Judicial System

- Understanding trauma as a phenomenon that can result in illegal acts
- Understanding splits in the personality as the basis for criminal actions
- Supporting the healthy parts of people who break the law instead of fighting with their survival strategies





Geli Raubal
1908 - 1931

Genogramm of the family of origin of Adolf Hitler (form: Der Spiegel 28/2001)

Consequences of MPT for politics

- Traumatized politicians can entangle the whole of society in their unresolved personal problems
- Can end up with perpetrator-victim-dynamics with an inability to create new dynamics.
- If we understand trauma dynamics we would not conserve and cultivate social traumas but try to dissolve them.
- We could learn to distinguish between social survival strategies and more constructive ways of living in a community.



Consequences of MPT for the Media

- trauma in films and games would not be celebrated
- We would offer realistic information about trauma and the short- and long-term consequences



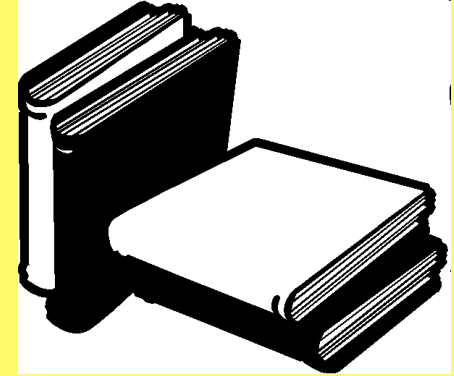
Basic Questions

- Do I traumatise others through my own behaviour?
- Do I entangle others in my own trauma?
- What can I do to solve a given trauma?
- What can I do to prevent new trauma occurring?

Messages of the MPT

- Don't traumatise others
- Realise your own traumas
- Avoid entanglement with others who are traumatised
- Cultivate your healthy parts, free your traumatised parts and minimize your surviving strategies

Literature



- **Franz Ruppert (2003). Verwirrte Seelen. Der verborgene Sinn von Psychosen. München: Kösel Verlag.**
- **Franz Ruppert (2008). Trauma, Bonding & Family Constellations. Understanding and Healing Injuries of the Soul. Frome/UK: Green Balloon Publishing.**
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- **Franz Ruppert (2010). Symbiose und Autonomie. Symbiosetrauma und Liebe jenseits von Verstrickungen. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta Verlag.**