

The Bodymind Reality of 'Internal Objects' in the Transference

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How does a past scenario become manifest in the transference?

- parallels between transference and early developmental wounding**
- but why is that not more obvious to everybody (apart from denial and unconsciousness)?**

The mechanism that transfers past relationships into the present relationship are internal(ised) relationships, i.e.

object relations

- **Greenberg / Mitchell: Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory**
- **Lavinia Gomez: Introduction to Object Relations**
- **Cashdan: Object Relations Therapy**
- **Klein, Winnicott, Fairbairn, ...**

What can we learn from the fact that ...

a) transference is disputed and not obvious to everybody?

b) internal objects are not obvious to everybody?

↳ points to gaps and weaknesses in our theory, practice and meta-psychology

Why other approaches can remain unaware of transference

- attend to the story, narrative; content rather than also to *here & now relational style*
- counteract transference (usually unconsciously)
 - e.g. 'medical model' thinking and interventions
 - emphasise reparative, 'alongside' relationship
 - deny transference for 'ideological' reasons (authenticity / equality)

But also: other approaches remain unaware of transference because ...

- **internal objects as ‘mental representations’ ??**
- **interpretation ??**
- **developmental internalisation process ??**
- **extent of transference and enactment on non-verbal & subliminal levels ??**

Use the lack of support by other approaches to improve theoretical understanding of ...

- relevance of internal objects for transformation (sense of self)
- internal objects (and their relationships with each other) as bodymind processes
- *simultaneously* constellated (dynamic intrapsychic and interpersonal system)
- internalisation, transference and countertransference as parallel processes
- enactment via bodymind (third relational revolution)

**“Internal Objects –
myth, construct,
fact or useful
clinical notion –
discuss!”**

The Presenting Past

- **textbook: Michael Jacobs**
- **Malan: The Science of Psychodynamics**
- **triangles according to Jacobs**
- **triangles according to Malan**
- **principles of short-term psychodynamic work**

Basic example: the shamer and the shamed

**(superficial example especially useful for
illustration)**

- **presenting problem: procrastination at work**
- **coach's problem: client's high standards, lack of self-awareness, sense of entitlement and demands**
- **coach gets 'foggy', expects accusation**
- **roleplays client in supervision**
- **shamer ≠ procrastinator (blaming the victim – the client's version of the problem is the problem)**

Where ARE the internal objects?

- fantasies about past original scenario**
- countertransference as information about present relational style**
- but what evidence for presence of internal objects?**

three parallel relationships:

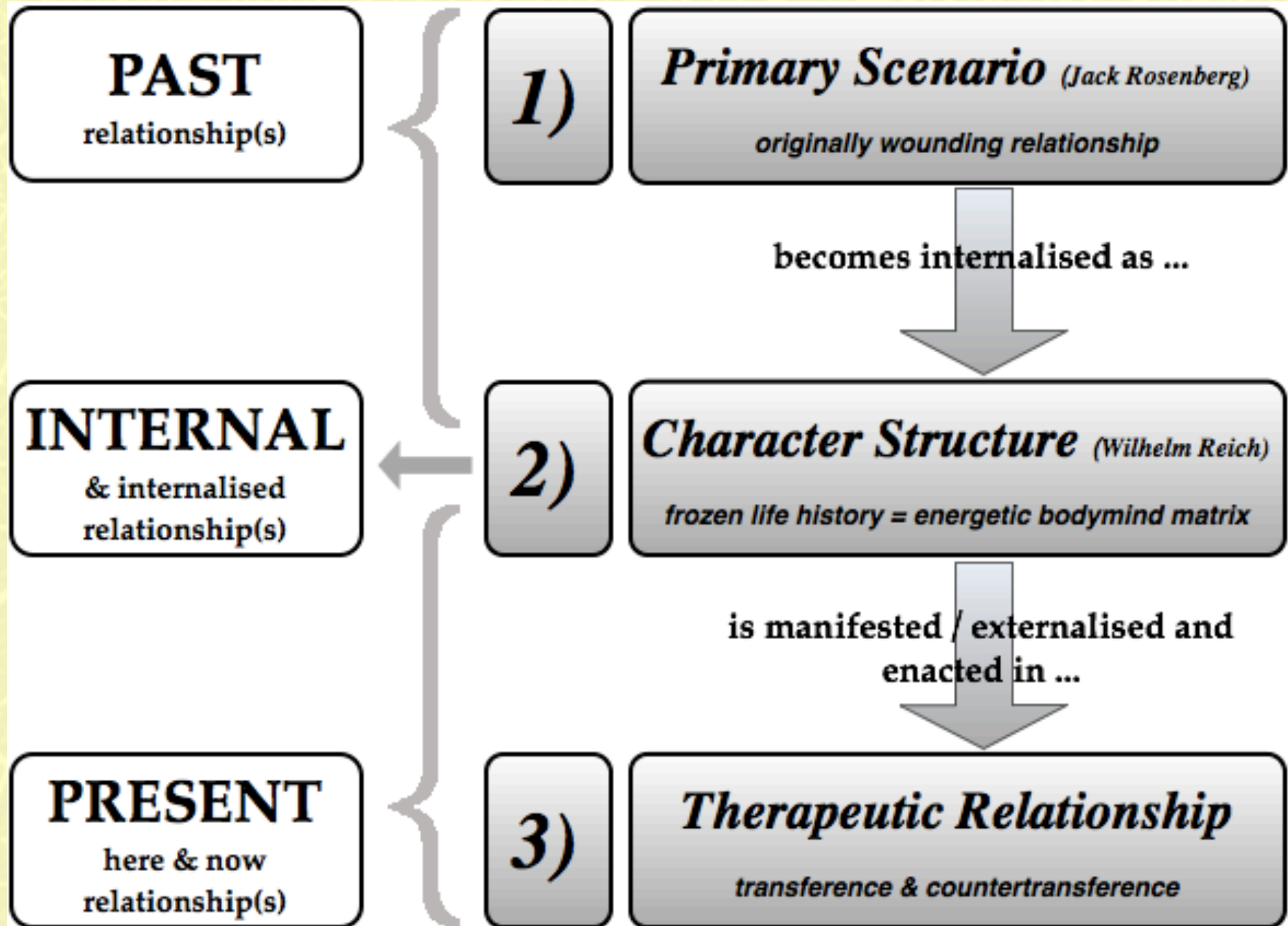
- **PAST: originally wounding relationships**
- **PAST & PRESENT: internal(ised) relationships**
- **PRESENT: (re-)externalised here & now relationships (transference)**

☞ hand-
out:

three parallel relationships
– what do we use in practice?

- **PAST: historical interpretation**
- **INTERNAL OBJECTS: ?????**
- **PRESENT: mutative (here & now transference) interpretation**


three parallel relationships



Character Formation: internalisation as a bodymind

process

- **Wilhelm Reich (1934): Character Analysis**
 - **Stephen Johnson (1994): Character Styles**

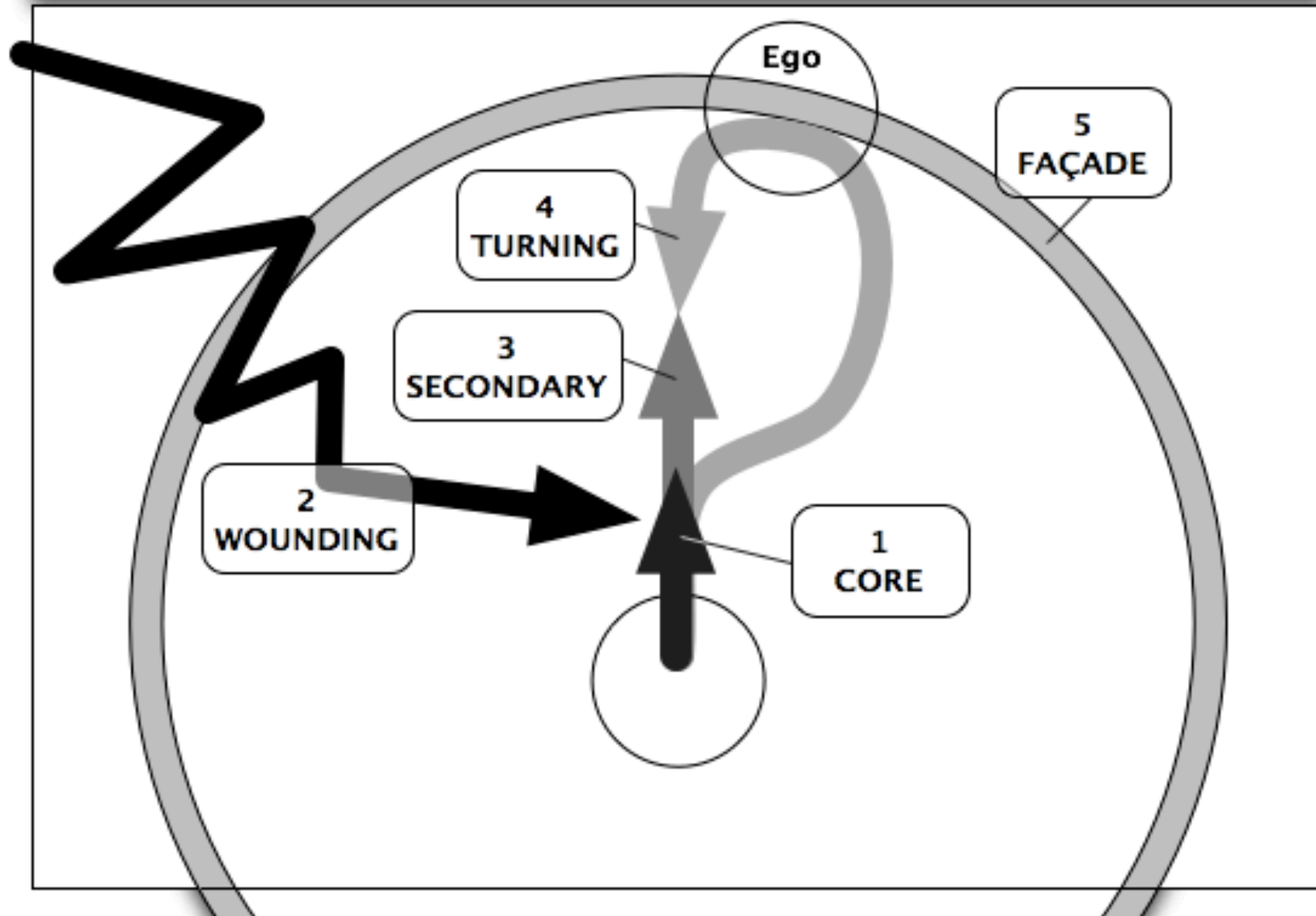
 - **turning against the self = internalisation**
 - **internalisation on ALL bodymind levels
(physiological, muscular, breathing, emotional,
imaginal, mental)**
 - **fixated development (Freud: “repressed does
not change over time”)**
-  **hand-out:**

5 Steps of Character Formation

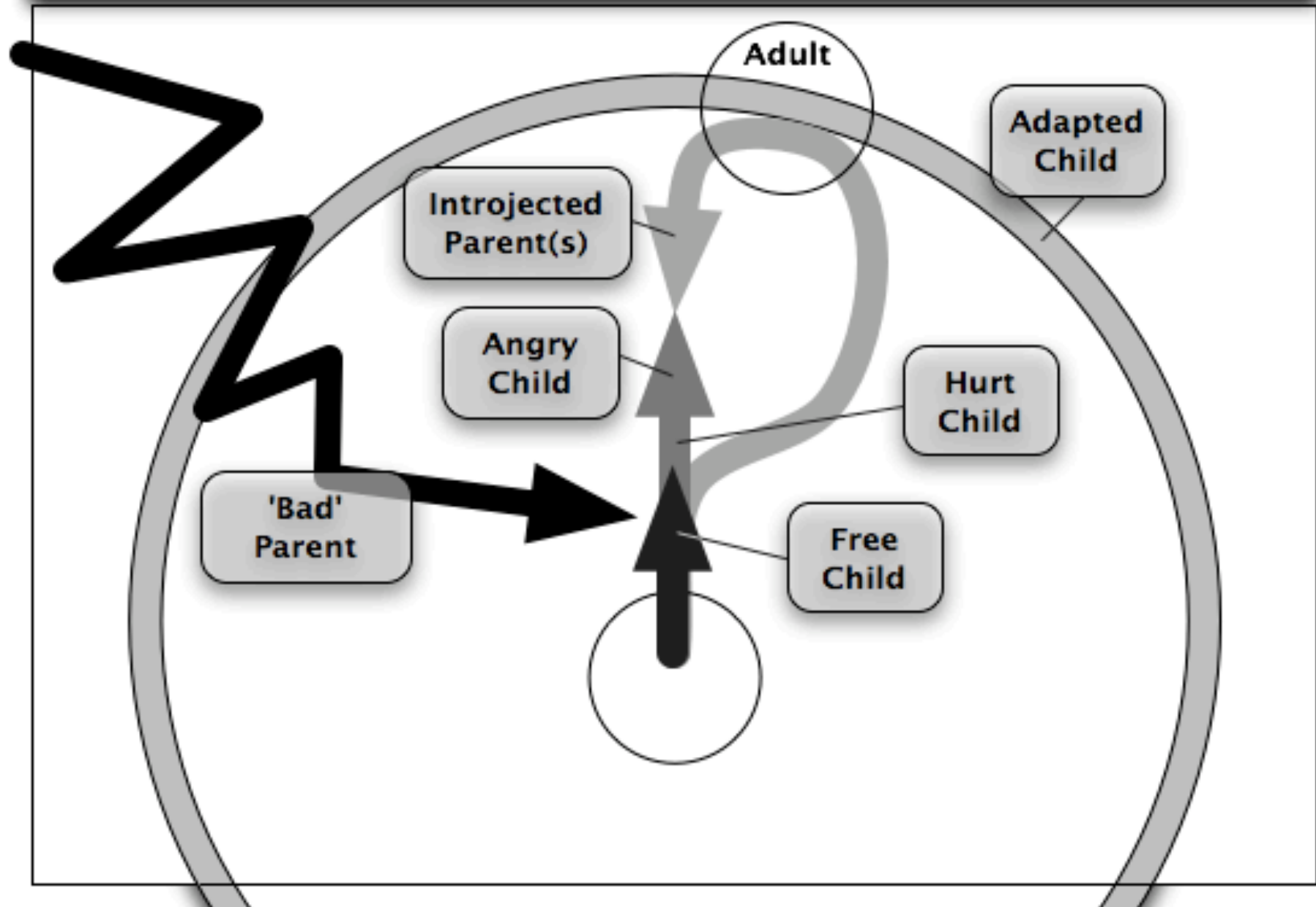
based on Johnson, S. (1994) "Character Styles" and Reich, W. (1934/1974) "Character Analysis"

1	self-affirmation rooted in instinctual / 'object-seeking' need	CORE (Reich's PRIMARY)
2	negative environmental response = the wounding, 'not good-enough' response (abandonment, invasion, rejection, etc, etc)	
3	organismic reaction = protest against (2) = functional response to / against frustration	SECONDARY (Reich's term)
4	self-negation = turning against self = i.e. turning against against both (1) and (3) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- involves internalisation of the 'wounding object' on all levels across body / mind spectrum (through imitation, introjection and identification with the object)= unconscious attachment to internalised frustrating / suppressing 'bad' object- defined by what is <i>denying</i> and / or <i>suppressing</i> ('anti-libidinal')	
5	adjustment process (compromise) = habitual 'unnatural' accommodation to avoid pain whilst maintaining contact <ul style="list-style-type: none">- defined by compensation mechanisms (what is <i>exaggerated</i>)	FAÇADE

Reich's diagram of 'turning against self'



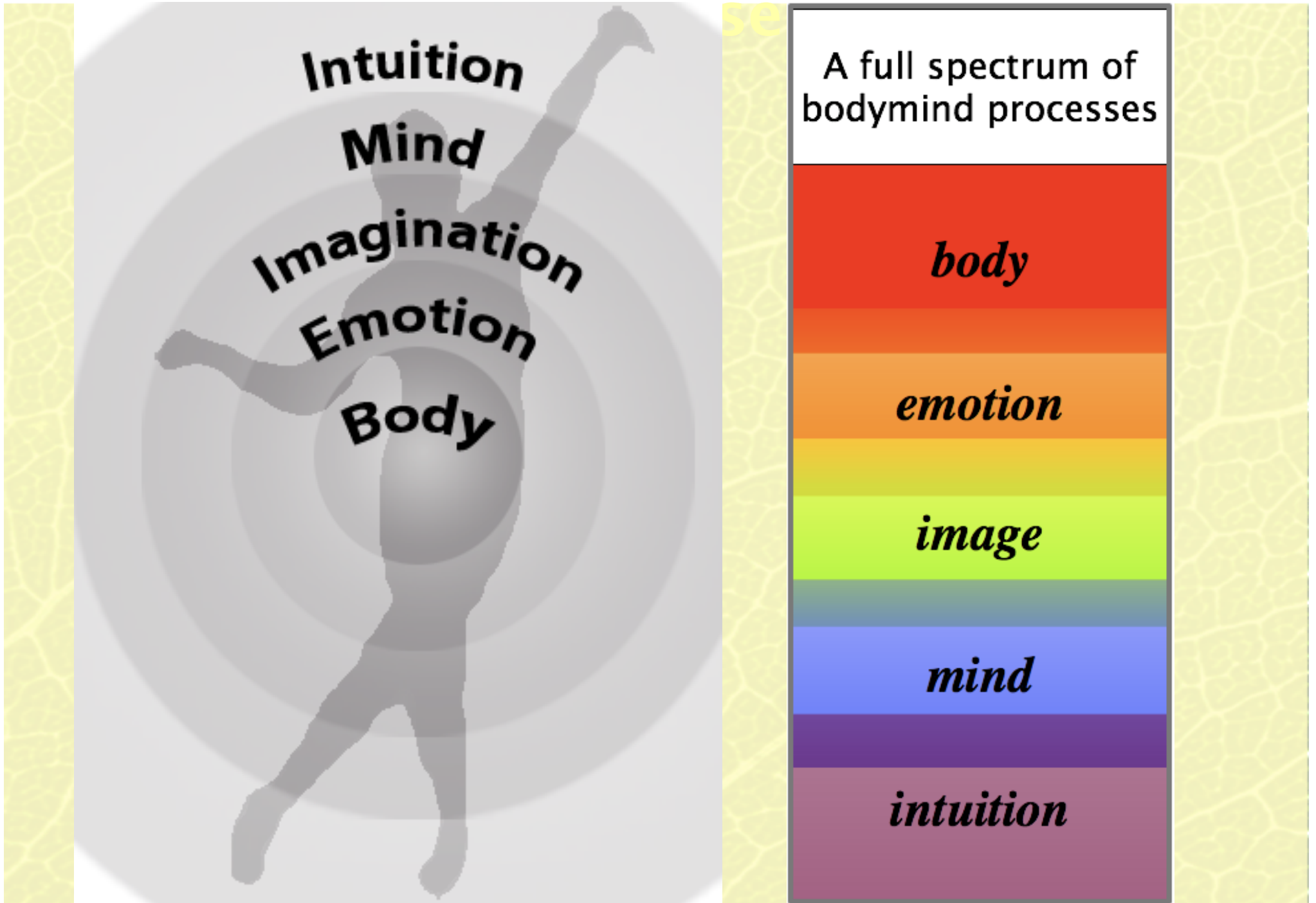
Reich's diagram with TA terms



Internal Objects as bodymind processes

- are whole flesh-and-blood figures - working with 'felt sense' across whole bodymind spectrum
- *one* bodymind fragment contains the whole story /dynamic
- conflict between spontaneous experience and reflective map
- client's ego has fragmented awareness of fragmented bodymind experience

A full spectrum of bodymind



processes

👉 hand-out:

<i>A full spectrum of bodymind processes</i>	
● physiological and biochemical processes (the interlinked hormonal, neurological, endocrinal and immune systems, also vegetative & metabolic systems)	<i>body</i>
● autonomous nervous system (sympathetic & parasympathetic) regulated processes	
● energetic perception	
● sensations, proprioceptions	
● vitality affect / "felt sense"	
● inner movements, excitation, trembling etc.	<i>emotion</i>
● impulses (manifesting instincts/drives or object-seeking needs)	
● spontaneous gestures / outer movements	
● raw emotion	
● breath	
● complex feelings	<i>image</i>
● right-brain hunches and perceptions - simple intuition	
● images, fantasies, dreams	
● mental: concrete-operational thoughts (language)	<i>mind</i>
● mental: formal-operational thoughts (including voices, internal dialogue)	
● self-reflexive thought / meta-level thinking	
● left- and right-brain synergistic thinking - complex intuition	<i>intuition</i>

Therapist's internal process:

- **oscillations in working alliance (rupture – repair)**
- **scan for when the ‘wound enters’**
- **enactment of the wounding relationship**
- **scan for relational positions involved**
- **images of figures in character formation**
- **energetic perception of body–mind conflict**

five parallel relationships

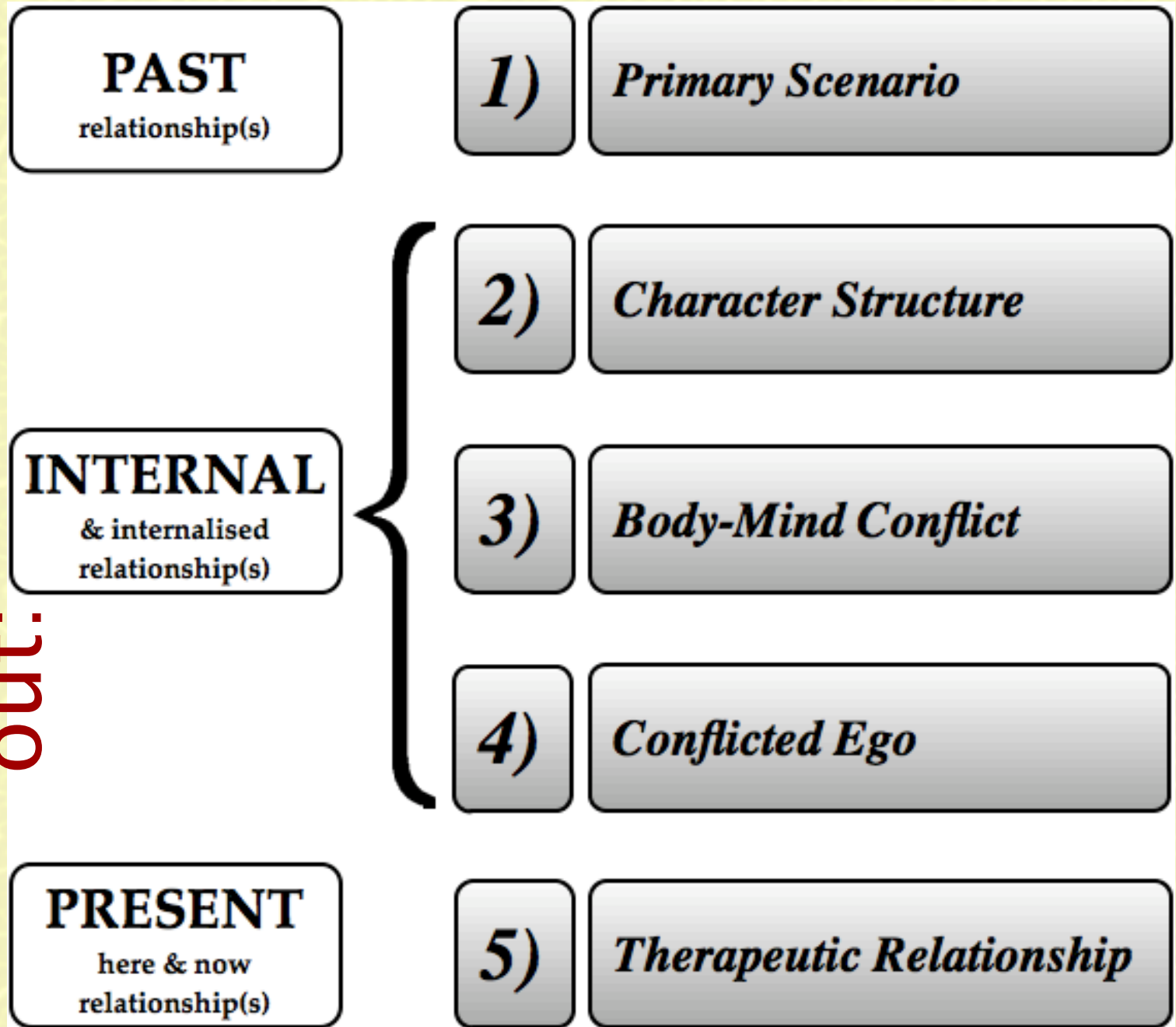
- **PAST: original, past relationship**

- **internal(ised)** 
 - **conflicted ego**
 - **in conflict with**
 - **spontaneous conflict**

- **PRESENT: (re-)externalised in here & now (transference)**

Five parameter relationships

hand-
out:



Summary 1: internal objects ...

- are bodymind processes, not only representation in the unconscious mind
- can be perceived and worked with as spontaneous out-of-awareness experience
- are whole flesh-and-blood figures – working with ‘felt sense’ across whole bodymind spectrum
- constitute sense of self: transformation of bodymind relationships between internal objects
- = BODYMIND INTEGRATION (Dan Siegel)

Summary 2: enactment

- **transference and countertransference as parallel processes**
- **parallel relationships constitute dynamic bodymind system (past – internal – present)**
- **it is ALL here & now, being enacted subliminally**
- **which internal object *receives* our therapeutic response? which internal object *processes and responds* in turn?**

Further Learning & Practice:

- maximise your chances of turning therapeutic impasses and stuckness into productive engagement
- survive challenges to your therapeutic position non-defensively and creatively
- confront the client's resistances, avoidances and manipulations effectively
- challenge 'acting out' and other attempts to undermine the therapeutic frame
- access the unconscious and pre-reflexive roots of your clients' relational style as well as other patterns, schemas and scripts

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