

Benjamin Taylor
ISSS mini-symposium
2024

**How can we engage positive dynamics
of differentiation and integration in developing
systems | cybernetics | complexity?**

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Introducing myself

Benjamin Taylor – @antlerboy on [LinkedIn](#) [Twitter](#)
[Mastodon](#) [BlueSky](#), [Threads](#), [Farcaster](#), etc

Systems community of inquiry: www.syscoi.com

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systems | cybernetics | complexity
business evolutionary | avid learner

[Learn with me in the RedQuadrant tool shed](#)

All my links at antlerboy.com



www.publicservicetransformation.org



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Or [#iss](https://slido.com)

What I want to cover

- Introduce a model based on ideas I draw from Barry Oshry, Stafford Beer, and Sandra Janoff, which seem to have general application for organisation in a human sense
- Explain the history of this model, what it is and what it does
- Talk a little bit about the connections between this idea and other (often system-related) concepts
- Open up the conversation for further connections and 'sensemaking'. I'm particularly interested in:
 - Implications for the question in our title:
How can we engage positive dynamics of integration and differentiation in developing systems | complexity | cybernetics?
 - Further connections and disagreement

Complementary essential patterns



DIFFERENTIATION AND INTEGRATION

Differentiation and integration

- Sandra Janoff following Yvonne Agazarian (with a host of systems influencers)
- A facilitation superpower is to sense and manage the flows from differentiation to integration and back again, and again
- Critical aspects:
 - When there is too much integration, differentiate
 - Look for and reinforce dissenting, different, divergent voices
 - Consider different aspects of the issue
 - When there is too much differentiation, integrate
 - Build blended groups and let them find their own integration
 - Look for commonalities and shared points – the deeper the better
 - When you're not sure where to go next, review the above

This is an interpersonal, group process and a transpersonal process

Two faces of differentiation and integration

	😊	☹️
Differentiation	to distinguish and classify (i.e. to group similar things together)	to isolate, ostracise and segregate
Integration	to make one or harmonize	to centralise or orchestrate

- Differentiate without excluding
- Integrate goals without forcing unity

Tricky task = holding on to your differences and integrating towards a result bigger than either!

Accept differences and integrate capabilities for the good of all.

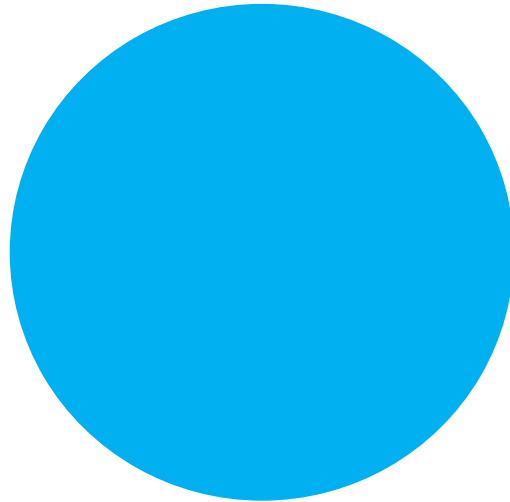
Some useful tools for differentiation

- Who sees what we are doing so far and has a completely different notion? Would you share it?
- Who has an idea that you haven't shared yet because it seems too different from the ones we are already considering? Would you share it?
- What about ideas that are different from these we are considering? Does anyone have something you think would work, even though it doesn't fit with these others?
- What do you see about ways to build something new out of these different approaches?
- How can these ideas (parts, plans, notions, visions) fit together to make something new?

Weisbord and Janoff

Note: other uses of integration and differentiation

- Janoff goes much further:
'systems develop through an ongoing process of recognizing differences as part of the whole'
- Lawrence and Lorsch: differentiation and integration in complex organizations (1967) – connects in my mind to Trist and contextuality etc
- Durkheim (The Division of Labour in Society, 1893)



THE BLUE DOT



PEOPLE AND FUNDAMENTALS

A tall, narrow stone sculpture composed of many human figures stacked vertically, set against a blue sky. The figures are carved in a realistic style, showing various poses and expressions. The sculpture is the central focus of the image, with the text overlaid on the right side.

Organisations
are made
up of
people



Some
times
it isn't
comfortable

- **History and hope**
- Power+Systems
- Systems **blindness** and systems **sight**,
reflexive action and **reflective** action

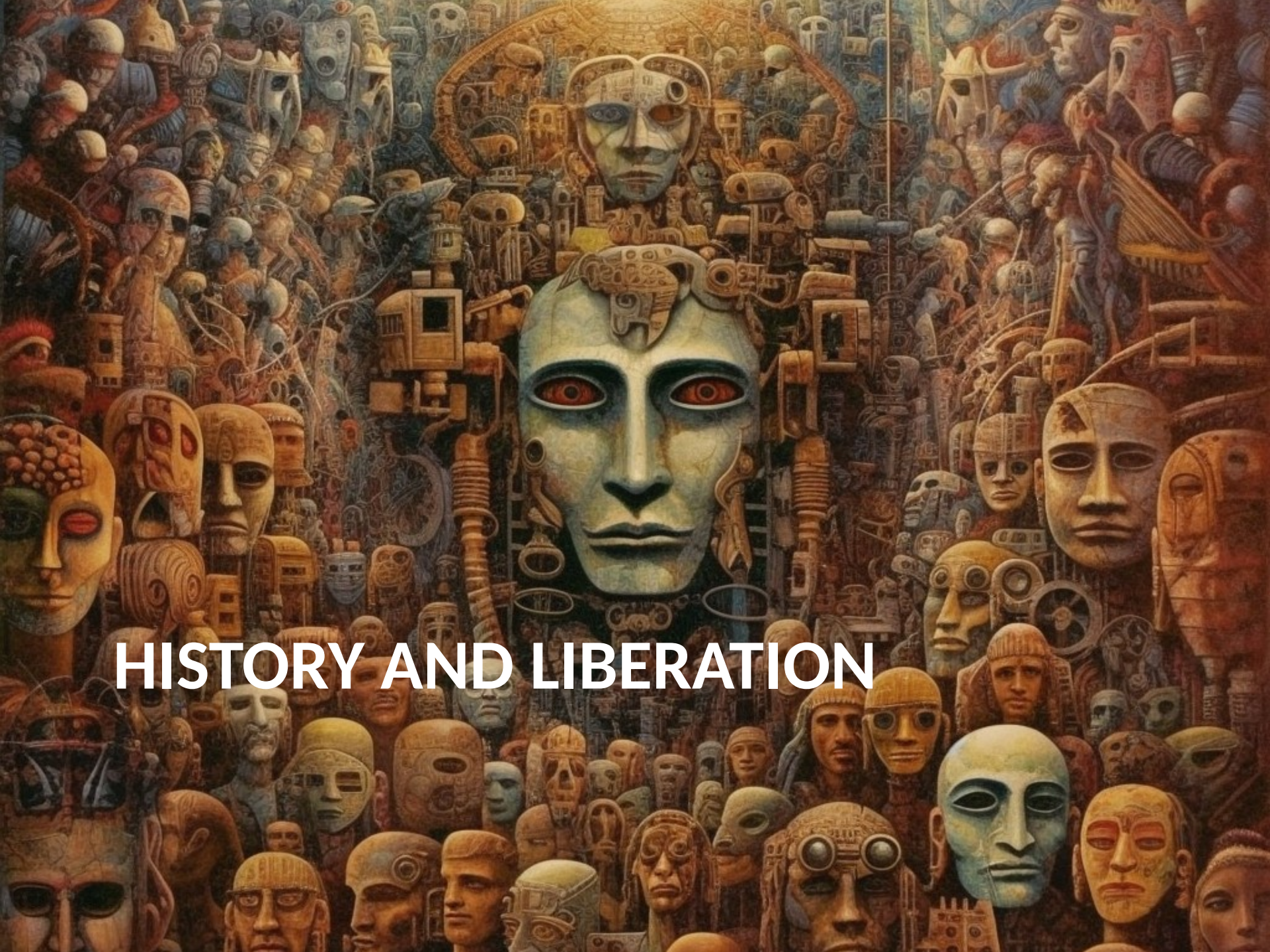
There Is No New Scientific Paradigm...Yet

(Toward a Most Practical Science of Social System Life)

by Barry Oshry

...despite the frequent references to paradigms and paradigm shifts in the management and organization literature, there are no new paradigms as Thomas Kuhn has described in his landmark essay... to make the case for the Oshry Power+Systems Framework being a legitimate candidate for paradigm status, one from which research extending, elaborating, testing, and applying the framework follows naturally.

'the only scientific paradigm of management systems so far?'



HISTORY AND LIBERATION

History and hope

- American working class Jewish immigrants in the 1930s
- The Holocaust (age 13 in 1945)
- PhD
- Tikkun Olam
- National Training Laboratories
 - Kurt Lewin et al
 - Betty Friedan (The Feminine Mystique)
 - Elaine Brown (A Taste of Power)
- The 60s
- The Power Lab
- The Organization Workshop
- When Cultures Meet / Encounters with the Other

Human possibilities

New Hope...



Have you seen any of these dynamics?

Turf warfare -> explosion



Functional teams know who the enemy is – THE OTHER TEAMS. Eventually the organisation will tear itself apart.

Everyone does everything



It's like 'schoolyard football' – wherever the ball is, there are 22 players there. Everyone is in everyone else's business, or are they? Nobody knows.

Every person for themselves!



Like desperate passengers leaving a sinking ship, everyone is simply doing their thing regardless of anyone else – or what might be needed.

Total groupthink



Welcome to the Borg. You will soon be absorbed and be part of us. We are the same. We are unified. We are completely undifferentiated.

Or just this?

Flat, boring – no productivity, no life





It requires four dynamics

**THERE IS A DEEP UNDERLYING
PATTERN OF SUCCESS**

Segment



Divide people into groups based on skills, interests, background to develop diverse specialised capabilities.

Blend



Come together to break bread. Share knowledge, learning and experiences. Understand commonalities and overlaps.

Empower



Empower each person to use their unique skills and perspectives and develop their unique talents and abilities.

Harmonise



Bring everyone together to work towards a common goal, unifying and aligning efforts around a shared mission and purpose.

You need a zestful balance of these dynamics

Segment



Divide people into groups based on skills, interests, background to develop diverse specialised capabilities.

Blend



Come together to break bread. Share knowledge, learning and experiences. Understand commonalities and overlaps.

Empower



Empower each person to use their unique skills and perspectives and develop their unique talents and abilities.

Harmonise



Bring everyone together to work towards a common goal, unifying and aligning efforts around a shared mission and purpose.

If one of these dominates...

Segment



Turf warfare



Blend



Everyone does everything



Empower



Save yourself!



Harmonise



Total group think



And it's the same when either one is weak – it's all in the BALANCE

So, once you know we need these four in balance...

Segment



Divide people into groups based on skills, interests, background to develop diverse specialised capabilities.

Blend



Come together to break bread. Share knowledge, learning and experiences. Understand commonalities and overlaps.

Empower



Empower each person to use their unique skills and perspectives and develop their unique talents and abilities.

Harmonise



Bring everyone together to work towards a common goal, unifying and aligning efforts around a shared mission and purpose.

You can do a lot with that! But first... what's it's not, and human needs

What I am not offering you

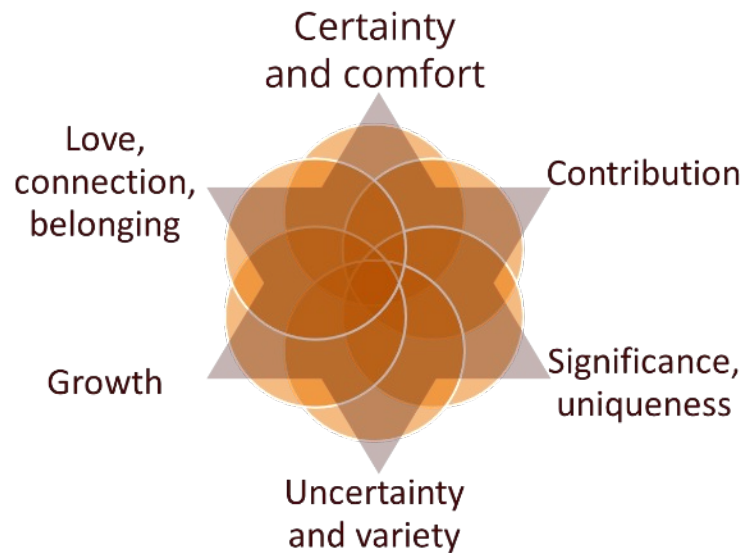
- A model where you pick a quadrant
(there are cultural models like this – they tend to normalise disfunction)
- A prescription for a ‘best way to work’
(that would be against the agile principles 😊)
- An approach for ‘teams’ or for ‘organisations’
It’s about both – human organisation

Not a framework for scaling agile... 😊

A black wooden chair stands in the center of a forest floor covered in fallen autumn leaves. The chair is surrounded by many other similar chairs that are lying on their sides, suggesting a scene of destruction or abandonment. The background is a dense forest of trees with bare branches, and the lighting is soft and diffused, creating a somber and contemplative atmosphere.

THE PATTERN MEETS HUMAN AND ORGANISATIONAL NEEDS

Human and organisational needs ...blue dot distribution and dance!



Core human needs	Organisational needs
Our need for	Is met by, and contributes to, the organisation's need to
<i>Certainty and comfort</i>	Homogenise and create stability
<i>Uncertainty and variety</i>	Differentiate and increase ability to adapt
<i>Love, connection, belonging</i>	Integrate, feed and support each other, moderate behaviours
<i>Significance, uniqueness</i>	Individuate and maximise autonomy

Creating such a context meets the final two human needs—learning/growth, and contribution to value in the world.

Core human needs

- Multiple sources – I re-developed this myself, but/and, it turns out it totally maps to the model used by Tony Robbins (<https://www.habitsforwellbeing.com/6-core-human-needs-by-anthony-robbins/>),
- Apparently originated by Chloe Madanes: <https://cloemadanes.com/2016/10/12/the-6-human-needs-for-fulfillment>.
- See also <https://pollackpeacebuilding.com/blog/conflict-6-core-human-needs/>
- and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Optimal_distinctiveness_theory

Organisational needs

- at a human dynamics level, from Barry Oshry's Organic Systems Framework: differentiation and homogenisation of the whole; and individuation and integration of the parts
- at a functional level, from Stafford Beer's management cybernetics: adaptability and stability of the whole; and autonomy and integration of the parts

A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a green zip-up jacket over a grey shirt, is smiling warmly at the camera. He is positioned in front of several shelves filled with numerous glass jars. These jars contain a variety of dried herbs, roots, and other natural ingredients, such as orange slices, white root-like pieces, and small brown seeds. The lighting is soft and focused on the man, creating a professional yet approachable atmosphere.

If you understand this deep pattern, you can use it to diagnose...
...and to fix!

DIAGNOSIS AND PRESCRIPTION

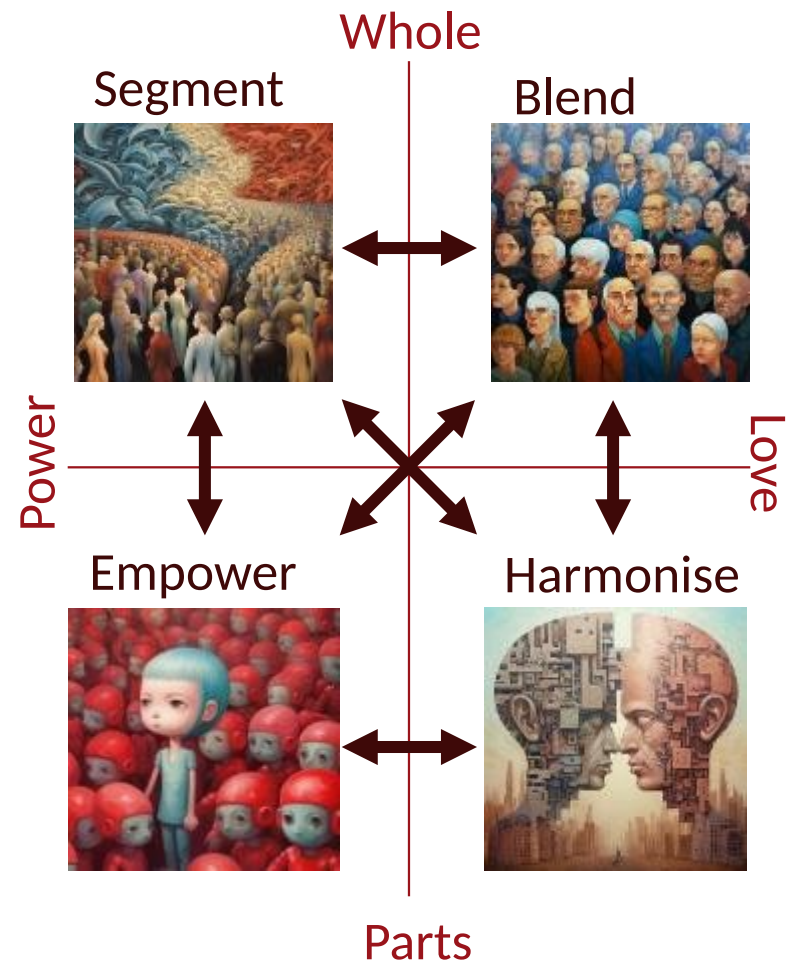
4. Diagnosis – how to see what’s wrong

Dynamic / identity	Too much	Too little	Imbalances
Segment I am... my group / profession / task	• Silos – even ‘UDI’ • Can’t see the bigger picture • Teams blame each other, don’t collaborate	• Not enough expertise • Too generalised • Unable to bring deep expertise to bear	• If Segment > Blend, even good blending can’t overcome separate sense of identity
Blend I am... an expert, dancing well with other groups	• Loss of unique perspectives • Overemphasis on consensus • Limited innovation and risk-taking	• Not able to share knowledge, communicate • No sense of community end belonging • Limited innovation capability • Fragmentation	• If Blend > Segment, even strong segmenting can’t overcome endless consensual decision-making
Empower I am me... a special snowflake, the main character	• Focus on individual goals, not aligned to organisation • Conflict between team members • No trust and respect	• Lack of initiative • Low satisfaction • Not empowered to take decisions and risks	• If Empower > Harmonise, even good harmonisation can’t get away from individuals’ destructive behaviour
Harmonise I am... part of something bigger	• Groupthink – focus on conformity • Suppression of dissent	• Lack of alignment • Fragmented culture • No sense of overall purpose or direction	• If Harmonise > Empower, even strong empowerment can’t overcome numbing focus on group harmony

Multiple forms of diagnosis and engagement recommended (more soon)

Prescription – how to fix what's wrong

- Too little of a dynamic? Introduce more.
- Too much of a dynamic? Reduce it.
- Imbalance? Balance it with the opposite dynamic.
- Advanced:
 - The diagonal dynamic also has an impact – like the left-right relationship but less strongly.
 - The up-down relationship is important too – and needs to be balanced

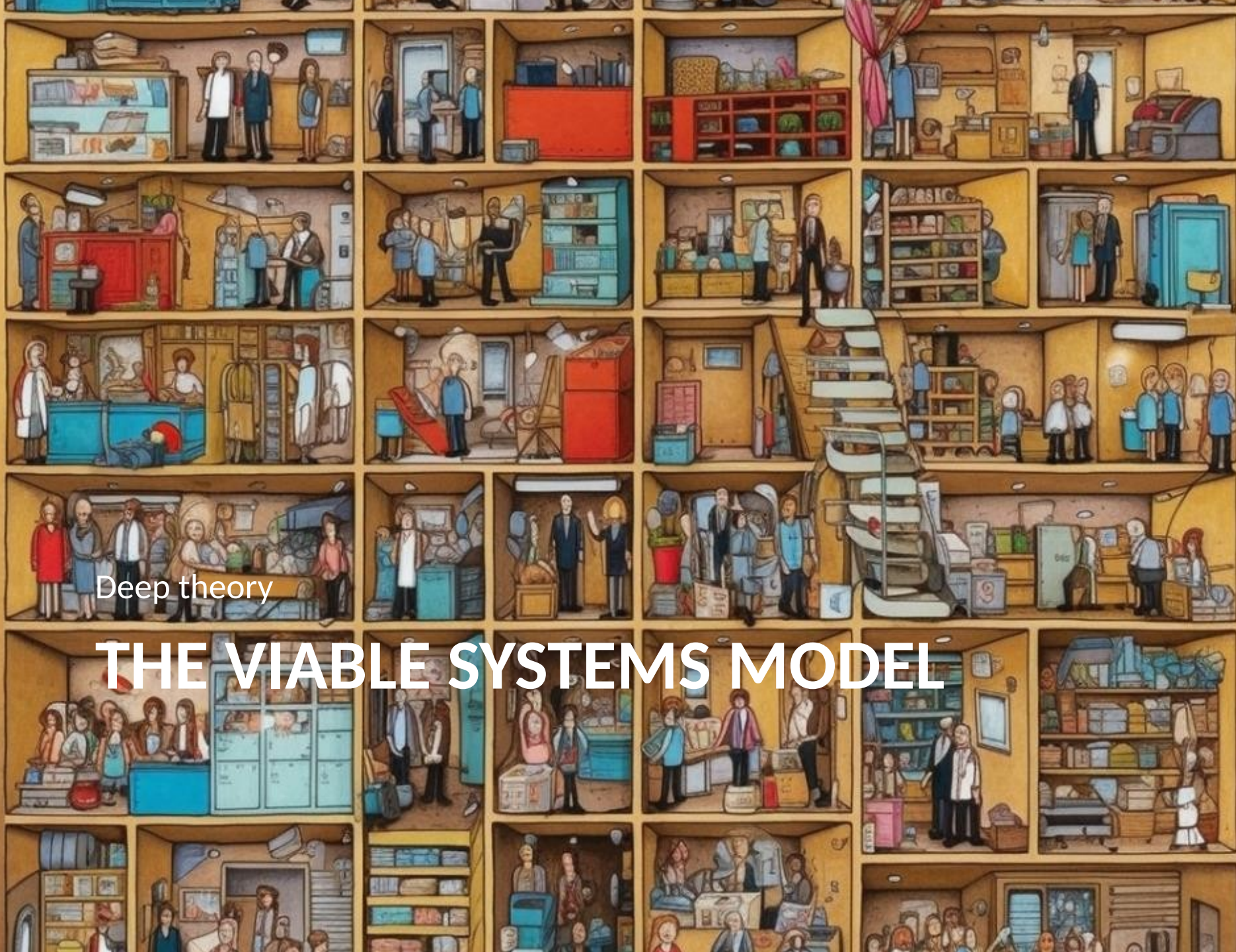


There's a deeper pattern here we don't have too much time to go into

How to apply this

- It's a different experience for different people, so there is no real substitute for **engagement** – this can be done explicitly with teams.
- **Weight maps** focus on the overall balance of what people experience across the four dynamics – quick, rough and ready, risk of 'static' picture.
- **Rhythm maps** focus on cadence – how much time is spent with what dynamic – takes more time, more likely to pick up symbolism.
- Can be used when **making changes** to focus on how to do work on each of the dynamics – necessary – in a way that *includes* the opposite dynamic. E.g. personal development aligned with company objectives, setting up a new team and building connection rituals to other teams from the start.
- Look out for **rebounds and squeeze-out effects** – too much of one thing can produce people rebelling into the opposite!
- **Constellations work** – dynamically moving around a space – can be used to good effect here.

Must not be limited to 'HR'! And it is a continual, ongoing process...



Deep theory

THE VIABLE SYSTEMS MODEL

Stafford Beer's Viable Systems Model

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION. Organizational effectiveness is a function of the balance maintained along two dimensions:

1. **Autonomy** of organizational units versus **integration** of the business as a whole.
2. **Stability** of operations versus **adaptation** to changing conditions.

NOTES

Too much **autonomy** of organizational units results in lack of overall purpose, loss of cohesion and synergy, loss of identity, and typically generates a demand for 'centralization'.

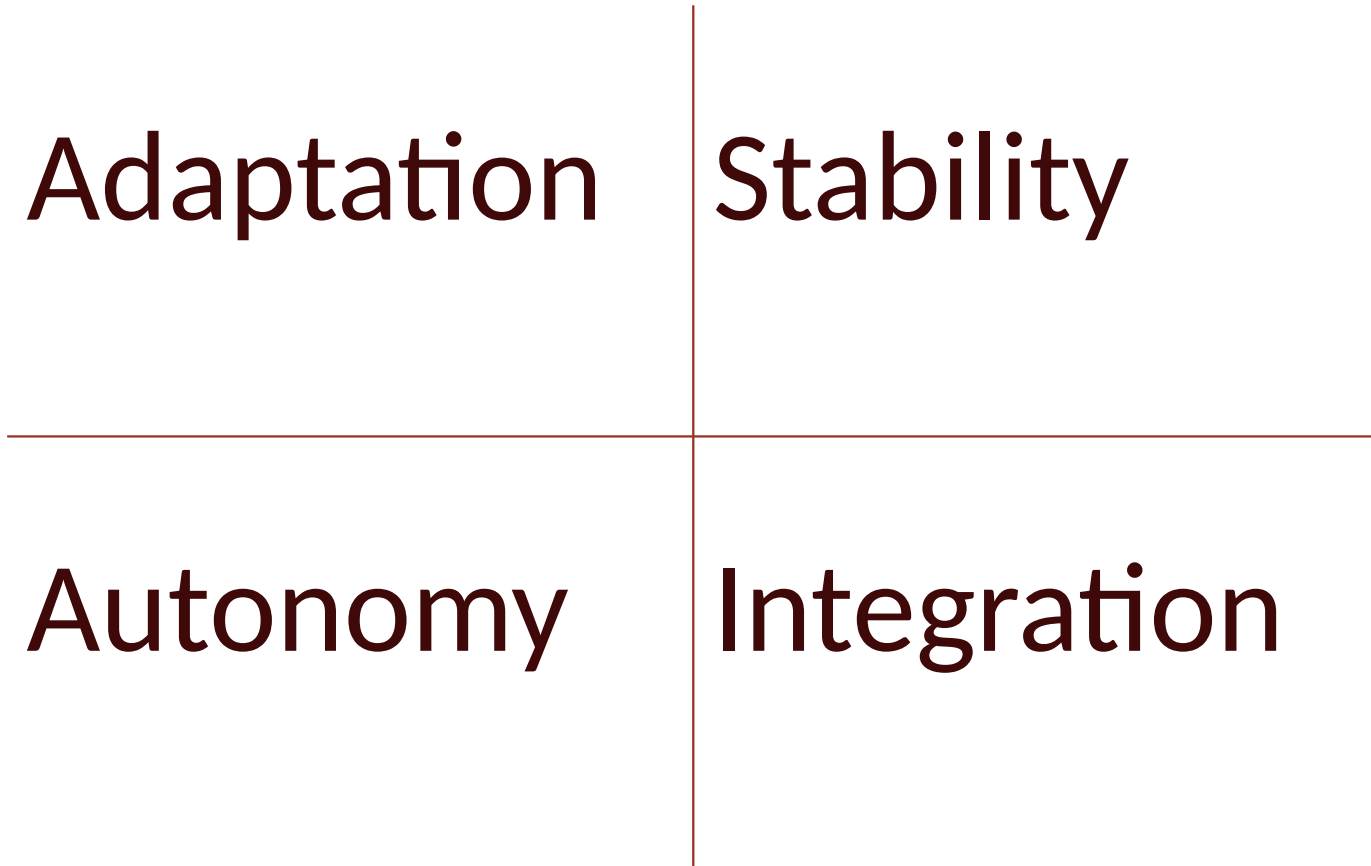
Too much **integration** results in loss of flexibility and initiative by the units, much red tape, loss of morale in the units, and typically generates a demand for 'decentralization'.

Too much **stability** results in an organization that is increasingly obsolete.

Too rapid a pace of **adaptation** results in chaos and massive inefficiency.

Cybernetics: A New Management Tool – Barry Clemson, 1984

Viable systems are those that balance



Stafford Beer, management cybernetics / the viable systems model



RITUALS AND PRACTICES

To **segment** for specialisation and expertise...

- Silos (teams, departments, projects) – NB grouping can be expertise or purpose-based
- Expertise directories
- Skills development
- Team or departmental meetings
- Mentorship, communities of practice
- Professions / Tribes
- Recognition in specialist categories
- Specialism-based feedback
- Acknowledgement of the needs of one group
- Carrying out tasks mandated by one specialist group
- The imposition of the needs of one group on another



At heart, allocation of responsibilities: (dis)empowerment

To **blend** for shared learning and working together...

- Cross-functional teams (but...)
- Hackathons, special short-term projects
- Lunch and learns / brown bag lunches
- Whole-organisation development
- Town Halls
- Team-based feedback
- Marketplaces
- Knowledge sharing platforms
- Group appreciation
- Cross-functional team building / social activities
- Recognition and reward of cross-specialism support
- The 'how' of whole-organisation strategy



See how much harder this one is? Building community: break bread

To **empower** to enable unique skills and perspectives...

- 360-degree feedback
- Coaching and mentoring
- Employee recognition (as individuals)
- Personal feedback
- Personal appreciation
- Flexible working
- Innovation and experimentation programmes (e.g. 20% of personal time, side hustles)
- Personal Development Plans and training programmes
- Good management and delegation, with clear boundaries and discretion



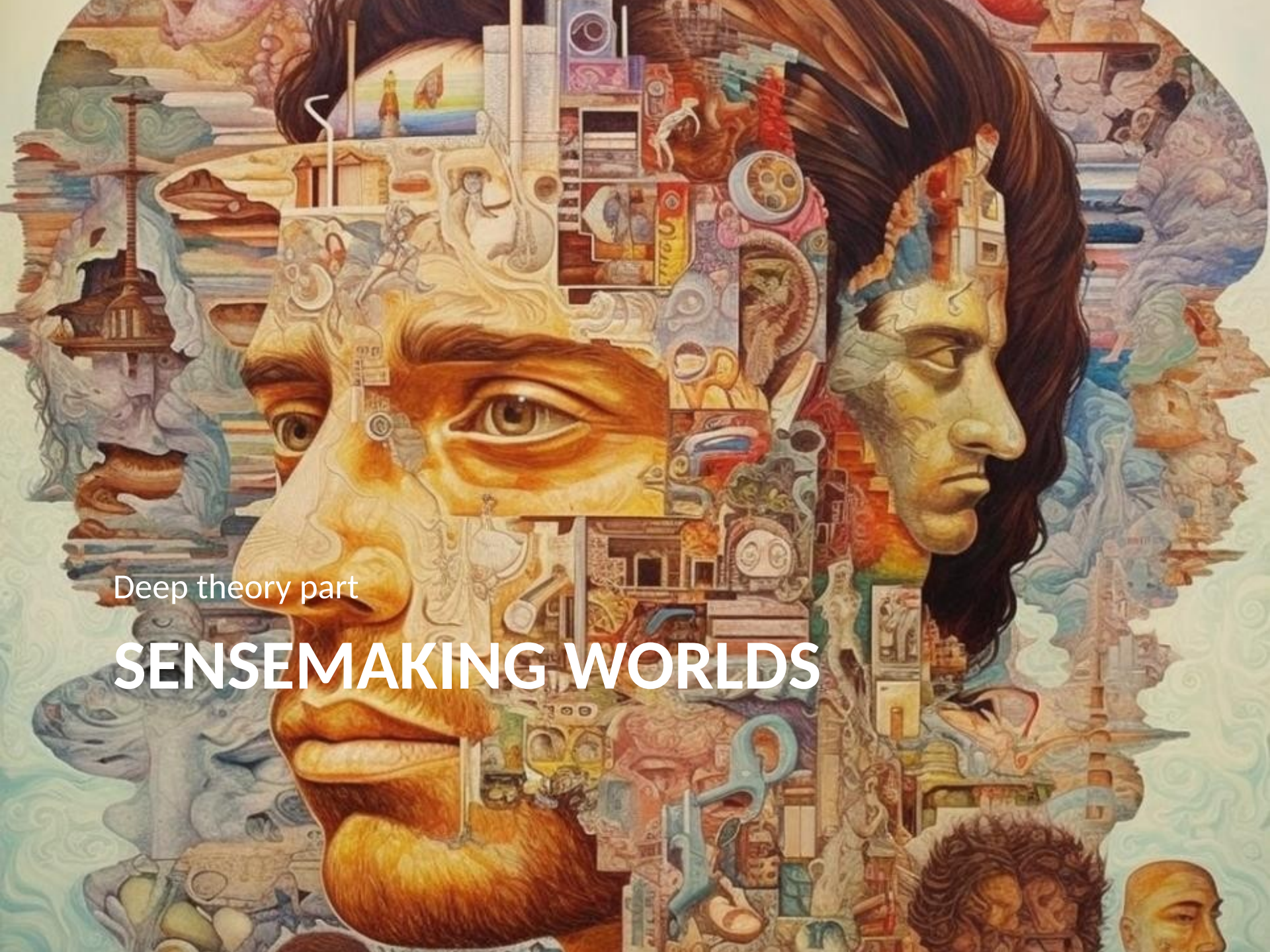
The most advocated – so why are we so bad at it?

To **harmonise** for focus on common goals, purpose...

- Company-wide engagement
- Strategy work on the 'what' and 'why'
- Company vision, mission, and values... but
- Whole-organisation celebrations (can work in each dynamic)
- All-hands meetings
- Rewarding overall contributions
- Community service projects which reflect mission and values
- Symbolism, belonging, identity, story, true rituals (always at work in each dynamic)
- Alignment of individual and team objectives with organisational strategy and priorities, regular tracking and reporting on progress and outcomes



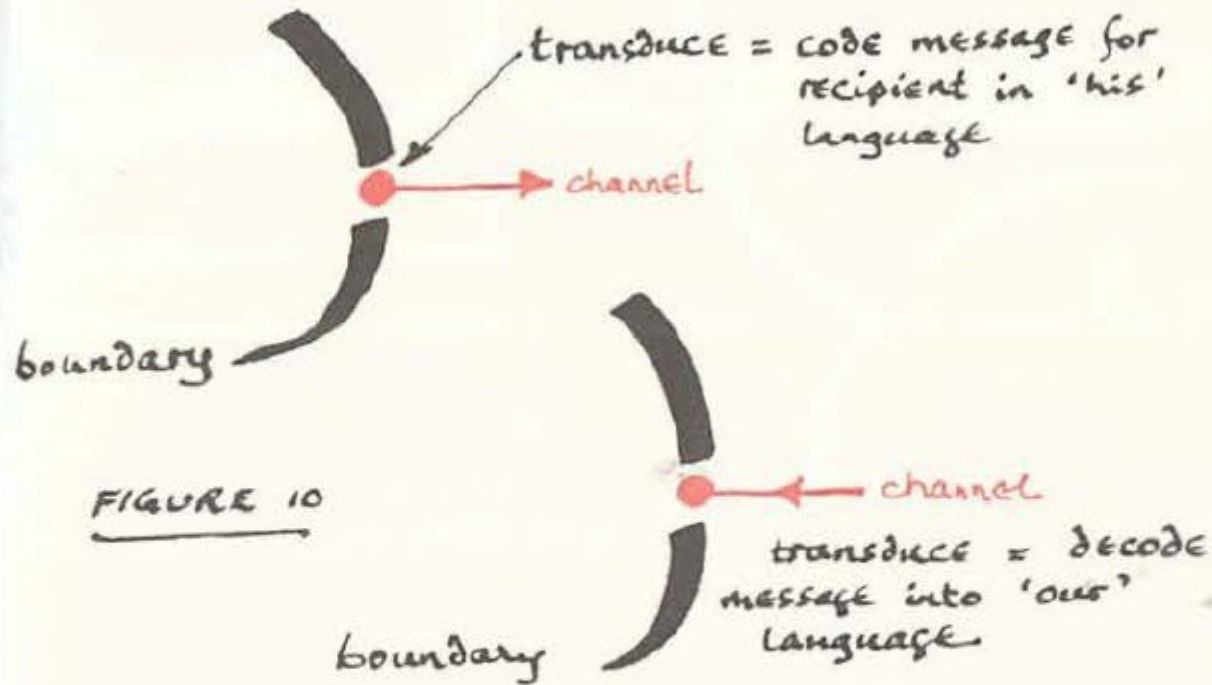
Think carefully about symbolism, and relationship to 'blending' dynamics



Deep theory part

SENSEMAKING WORLDS

TRANSDUCTION is the word we need: 'leading across'. Each red blob is a *transducer*, and it has this function:



The Third Principle of Organization

Wherever the information carried on a channel capable of distinguishing a given variety crosses a boundary, it undergoes transduction; the variety of the transducer must be at least equivalent to the variety of the channel.

STAFFORD **BEER**



**DIAGNOSING THE
SYSTEM**
FOR
ORGANIZATIONS

What the Frog's Eye Tells the Frog's Brain*

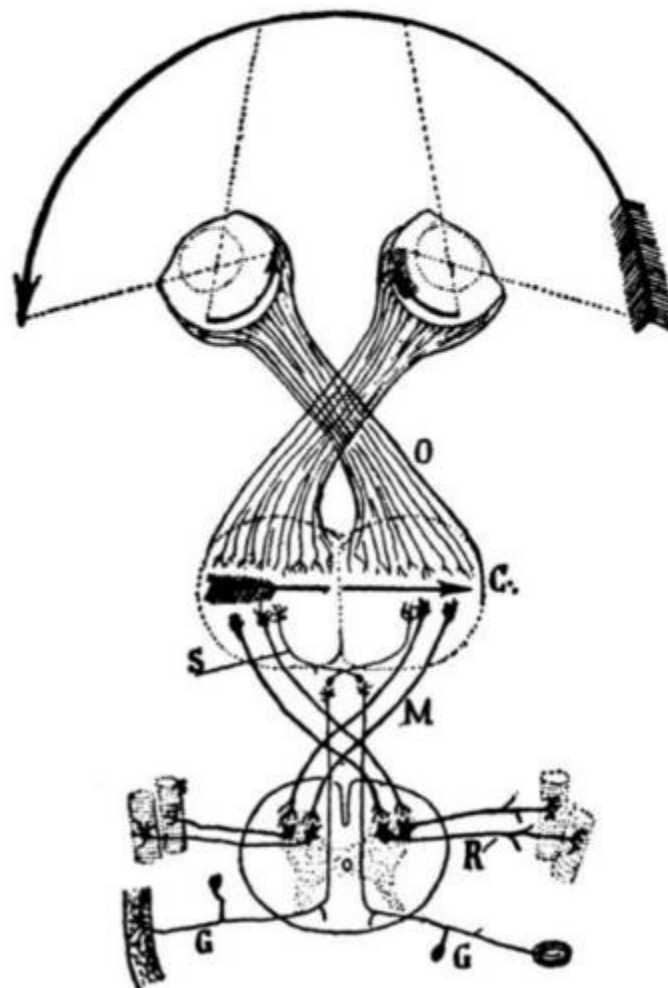
J. Y. LETTVIN[†], H. R. MATURANA[‡], W. S. McCULLOCH^{||}, SENIOR MEMBER, IRE,
AND W. H. PITTS^{||}

Summary—In this paper, we analyze the activity of single fibers in the optic nerve of a frog. Our method is to find what sort of stimulus causes the largest activity in one nerve fiber and then what is the exciting aspect of that stimulus such that variations in everything else cause little change in the response. It has been known for the past 20 years that each fiber is connected not to a few rods and cones in the retina but to very many over a fair area. Our results show that for the most part within that area, it is not the light intensity itself but rather the pattern of local variation of intensity that is the exciting factor. There are four types of fibers, each type concerned with a different sort of pattern. Each type is uniformly distributed over the whole retina of the frog. Thus, there are four distinct parallel distributed channels whereby the frog's eye informs his brain about the visual image in terms of local pattern independent of average illumination. We describe the patterns and show the functional and anatomical separation of the channels. This work has been done on the frog, and our interpretation applies only to the frog.

INTRODUCTION

Behavior of a Frog

A FROG hunts on land by vision. He escapes enemies mainly by seeing them. His eyes do not move, as do ours, to follow prey, attend suspicious events, or search for things of interest. If his body changes its position with respect to gravity or the whole visual world is rotated about him, then he shows compensatory eye movements. These movements enter his hunting and evading habits only, *e.g.*, as he sits on a



Report

How *Much* the Eye Tells the Brain

Kristin Koch,¹ Judith McLean,¹ Ronen Segev,²
Michael A. Freed,¹ Michael J. Berry II,²
Vijay Balasubramanian,³ and Peter Sterling^{1,*}

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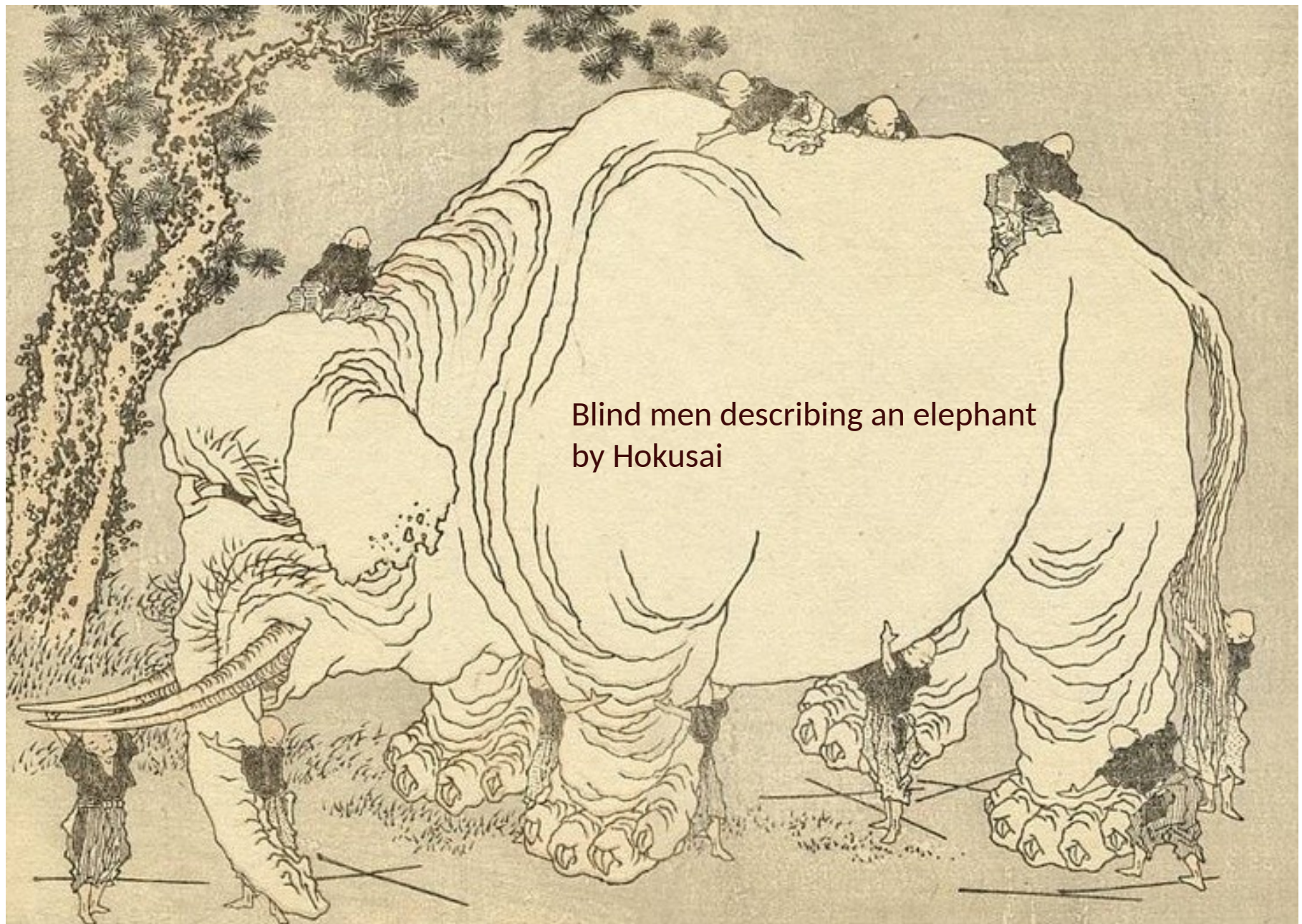
Summary

In the classic “What the frog’s eye tells the frog’s brain,” Lettvin and colleagues [1] showed that different types of retinal ganglion cell send specific kinds of information. For example, one type responds best to a dark, convex form moving centripetally (a fly). Here we consider a complementary question: how *much* information does the retina send and how is it apportioned among different cell types? Recording

motion, and fixational eye movement. For these stimuli, the intensity distributions and the spatial and temporal spectra differed strikingly from white noise (Figure 1). Instead, like the distributions typical of natural images, they were skewed toward low intensities and low spatial and temporal frequencies.

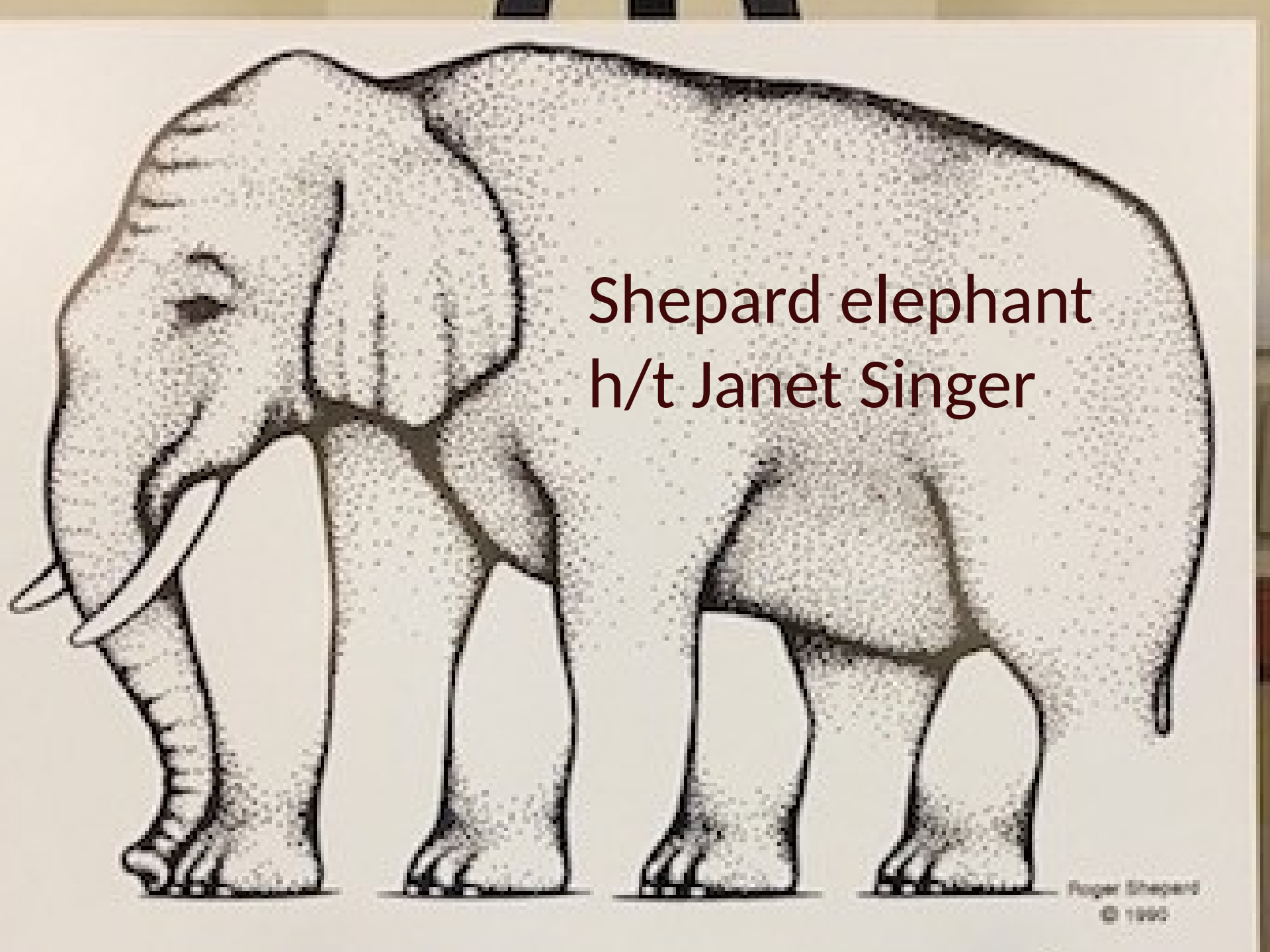
Responses Depended on Cell Type

Various cell types were recorded simultaneously on a multi-electrode array [7] or singly with a loose patch electrode [2] and identified by their characteristic reverse correlograms and autocorrelograms (see Figure S1 in the Supplemental Data available with this article online) [8–10]. Comparing responses to a given stimulus across seven cell types, we found a characteristic response pattern for each type (Figure 2). For example, in response to the saccade stimulus, brisk-transient cells (both ON and OFF) fired spike bursts that peaked high in the PSTH ($>300 \text{ spikes} \cdot \text{s}^{-1}$), whereas brisk-sustained cells (both ON and OFF) peaked lower ($\sim 150 \text{ spikes} \cdot \text{s}^{-1}$) and fired for longer periods (Figure 2). ON-OFF direction-selective cells fired with low jitter in spike timing across trials, whereas local-edge cells fired with considerable jitter (Figure 2 saccade, standard deviation of



Blind men describing an elephant
by Hokusai





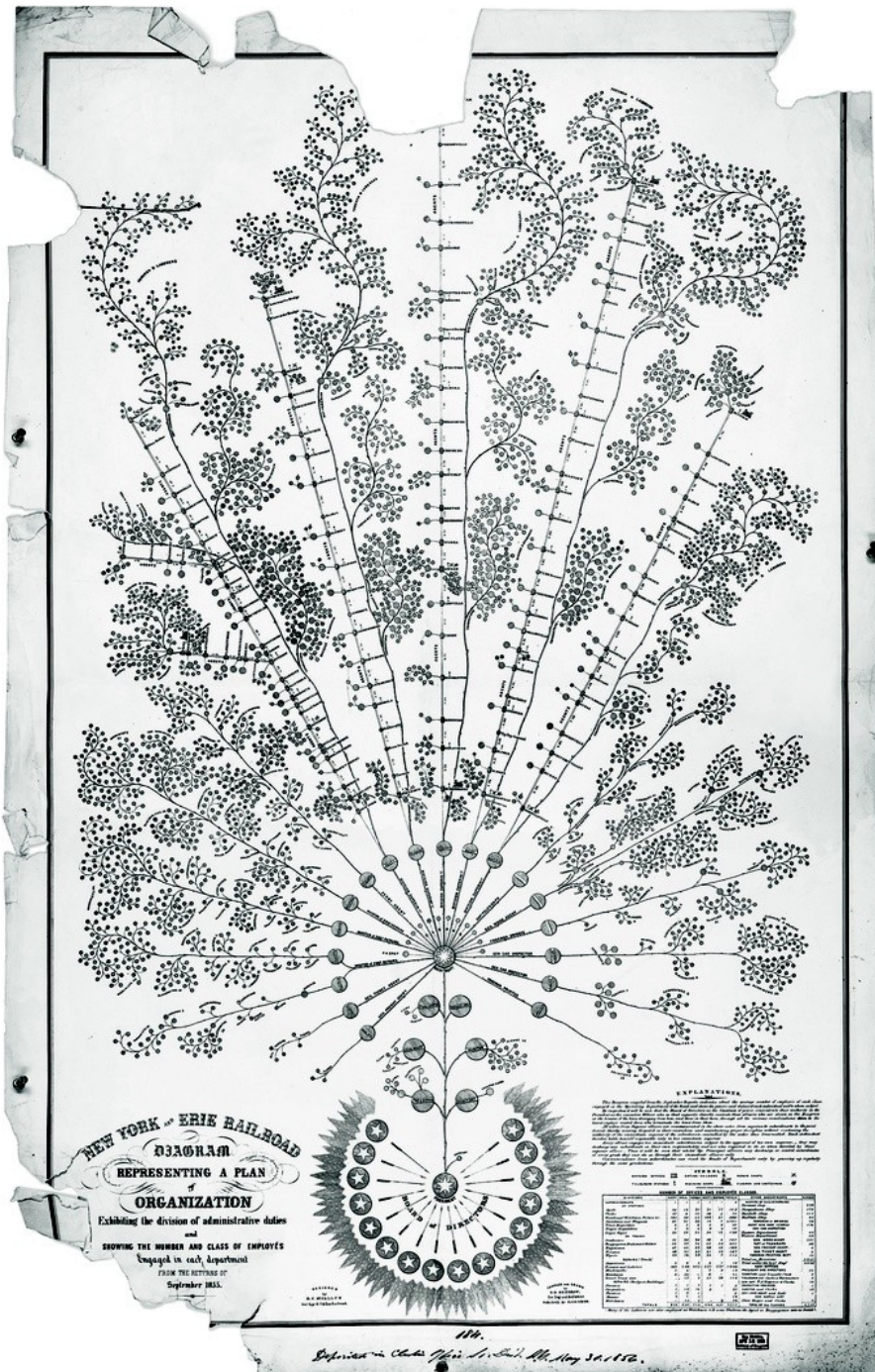
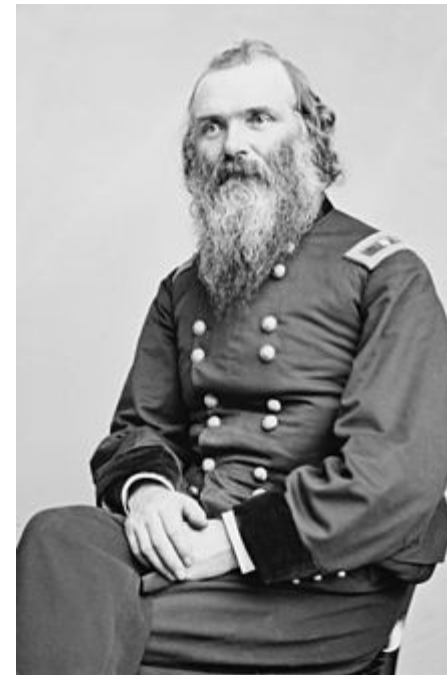
Shepard elephant
h/t Janet Singer



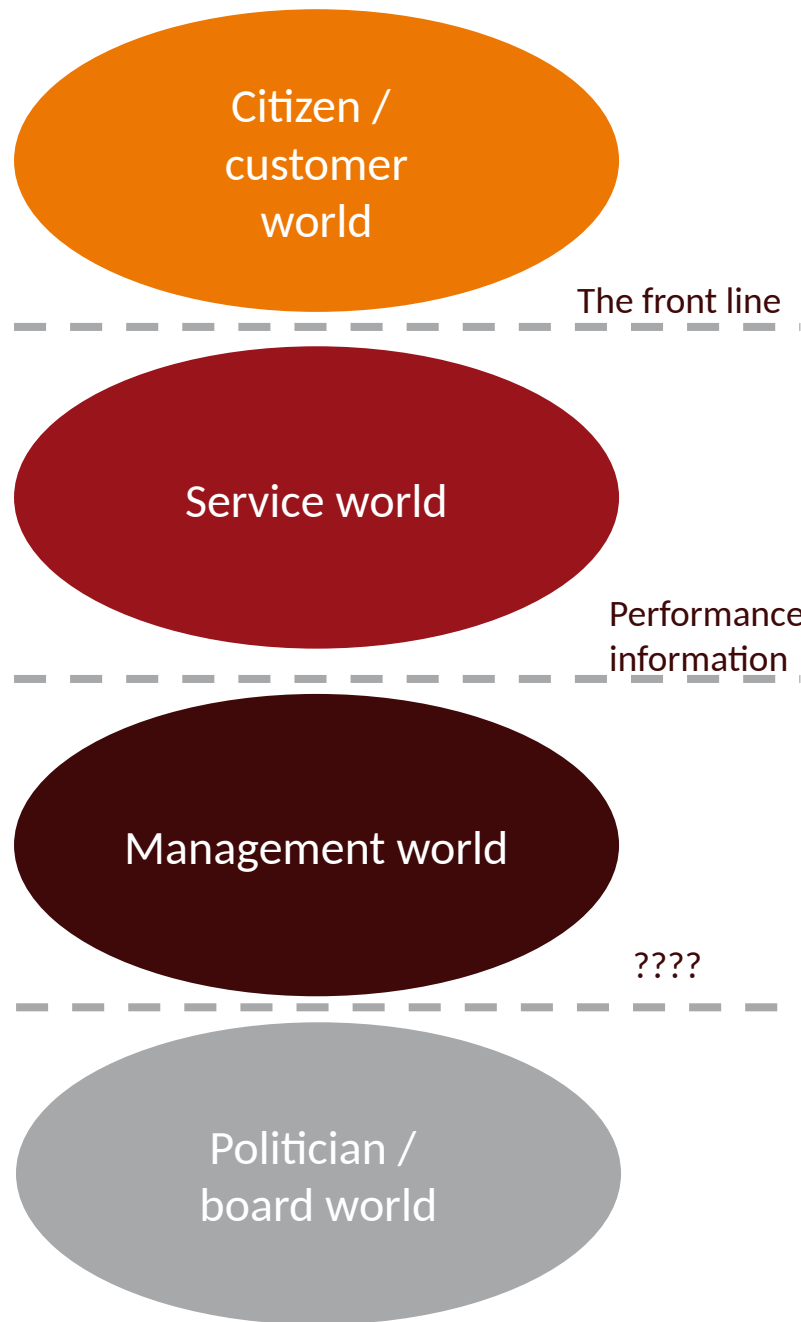
'a plan of organization'
Daniel McCallum
general superintendent
New York and Erie Railroad ('the Erie')
1855

six principles:

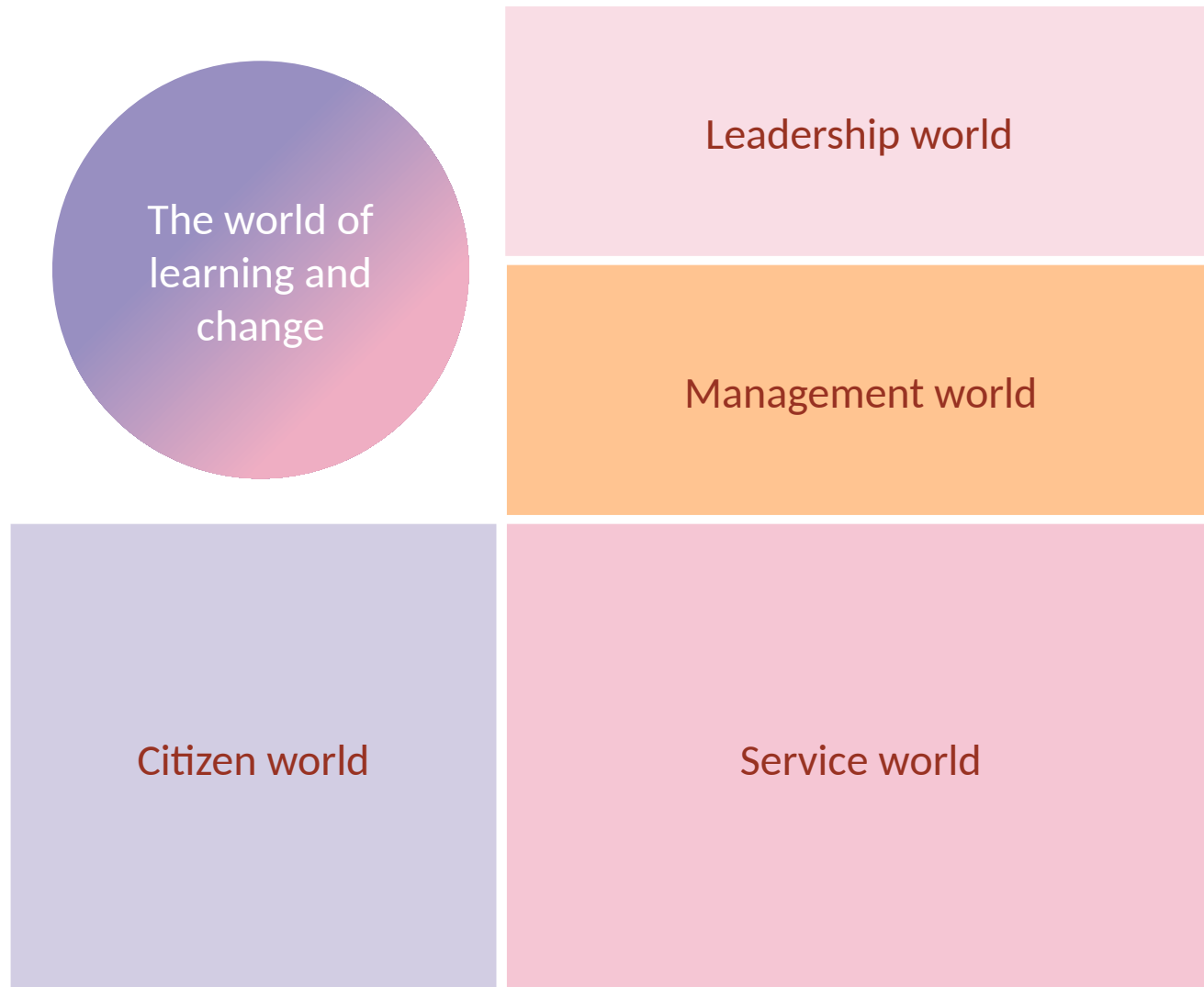
1. A well-defined structure of responsibilities.
2. Strategic and sufficient assignment of power to managers so that they may dispose of their duties.
3. A method of tracking if duties are carried out on time or not.
4. An emphasis on reporting any breakdown of discipline or dereliction of duty so that it may be immediately corrected.
5. A method of obtaining reports that will neither diminish nor overpower managers down the value chain.
6. A method for helping managers identify both errors and delinquents.

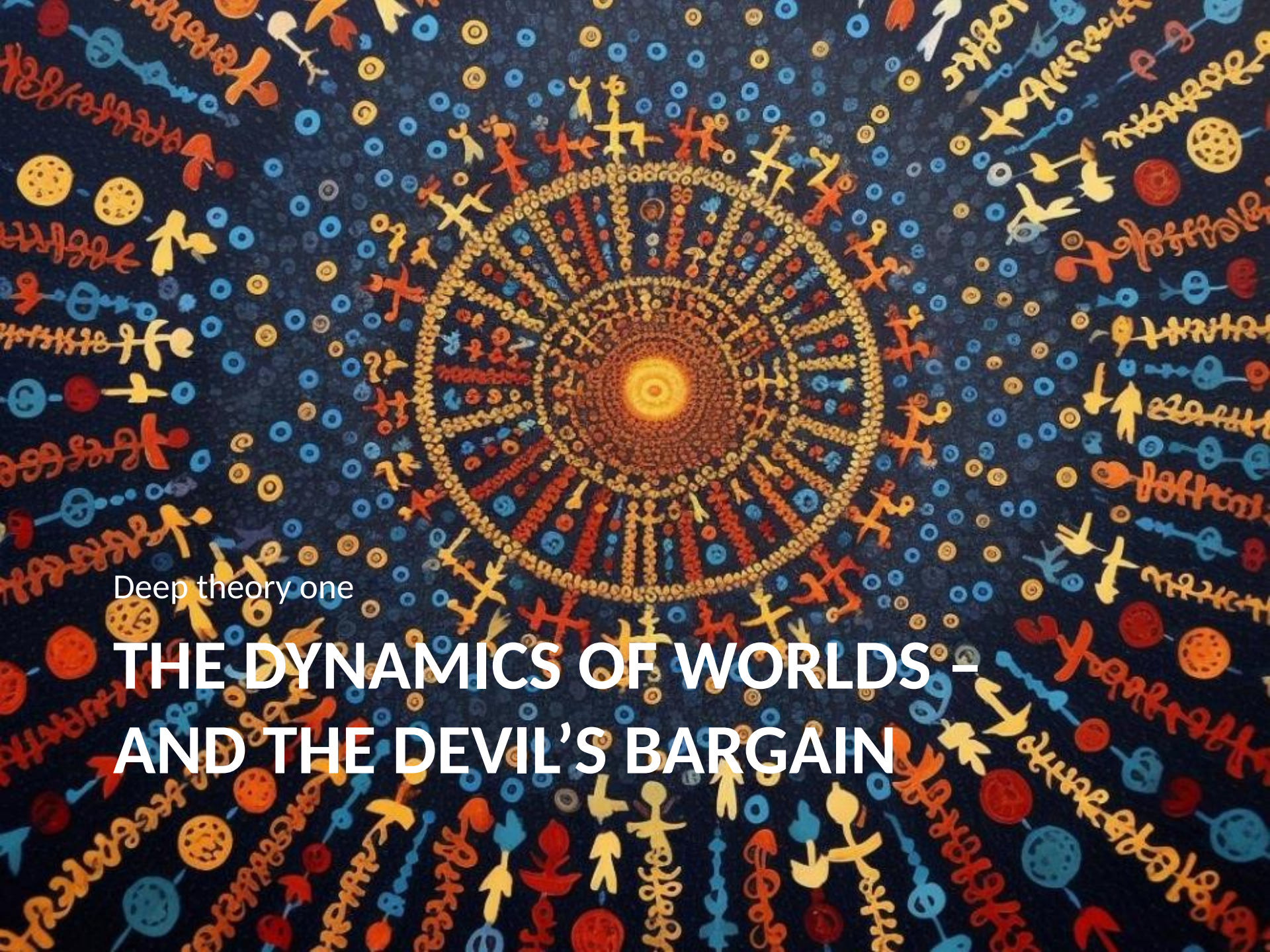


Worlds matter



Five worlds





Deep theory one

THE DYNAMICS OF WORLDS – AND THE DEVIL'S BARGAIN

Customer



Customer



Top

Middle

Bottom

Customer



Customer



In an organisation, we
don't know what is
happening in other
people's worlds



First rule of organisational life:

'Stuff' happens!!!

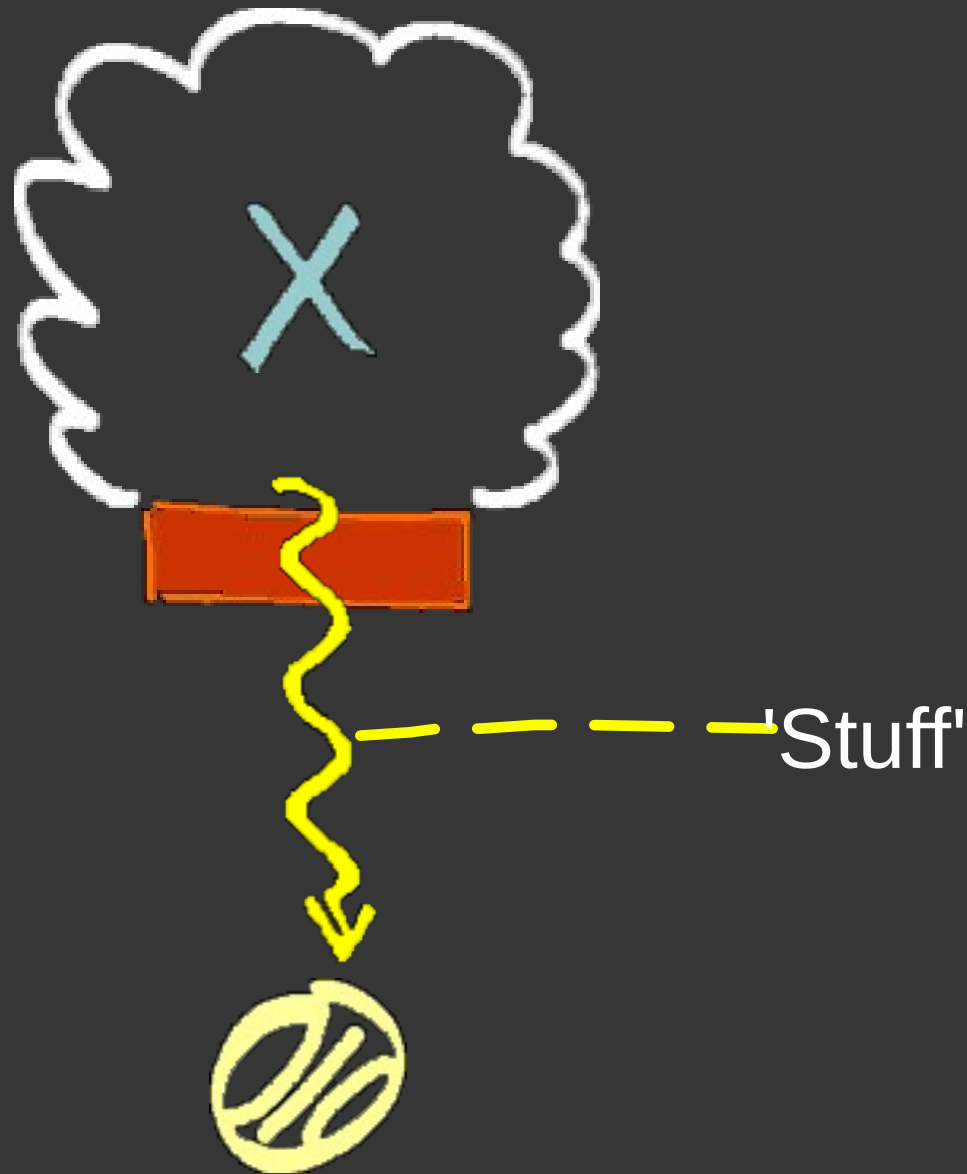
sometimes **good**
stuff...

sometimes **bad**
stuff...

sometimes
mysterious stuff...

sometimes **bad and**
mysterious stuff...

sometimes nothing:
minus stuff...



When **stuff** happens, we **react**:

+ Make up a story
Evaluate the others

Malicious

Insensitive

Incompetent

Take it personally

React

Get mad

Get even

Withdraw

Lose focus

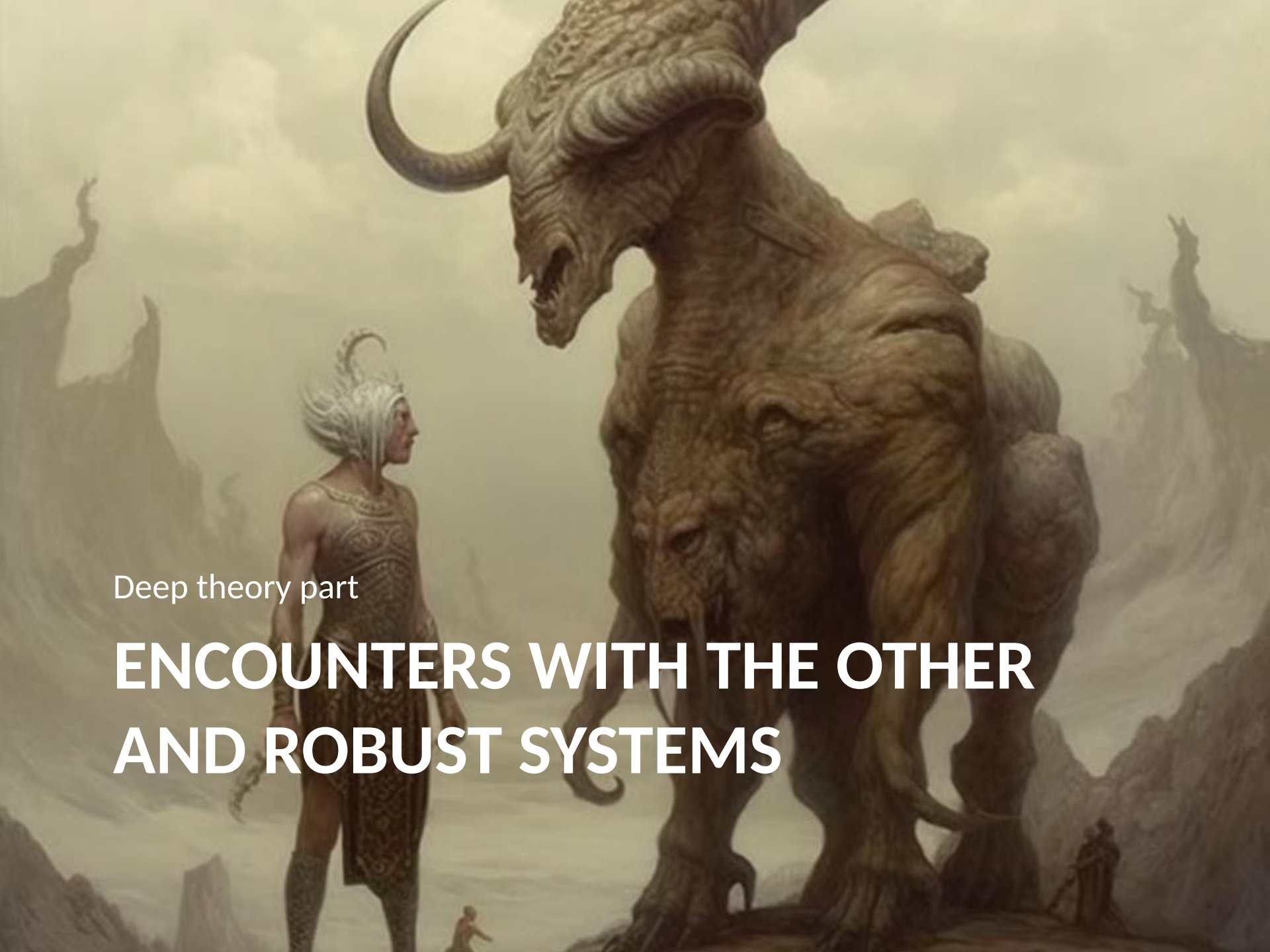
Partnership

(What role do we give
ourselves in our stories?)



The side show is predictable,
but not inevitable.

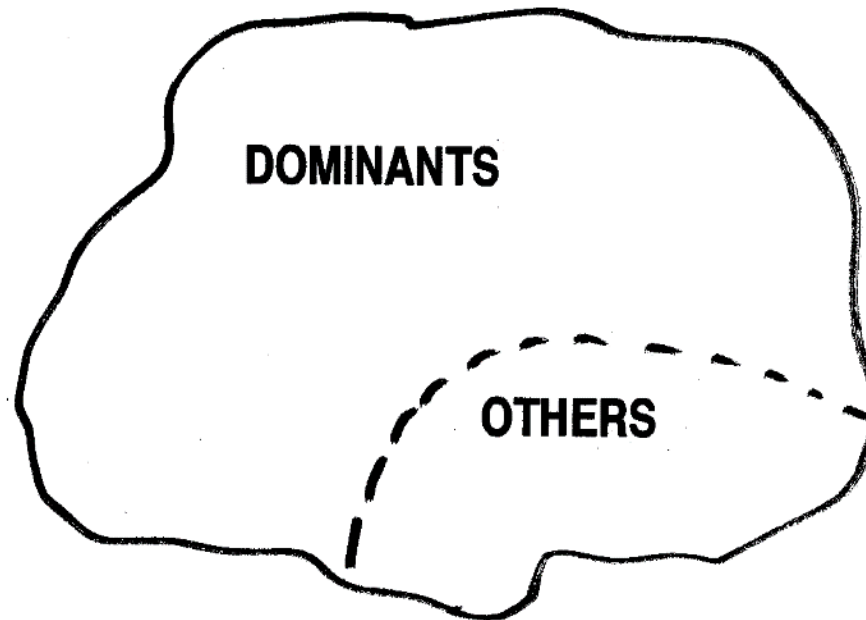
The center ring is not predictable,
but it is a human possibility.

A dramatic illustration of a man in ornate, dark, patterned armor and a tall, spiky helmet standing in profile, looking up at a massive, brown, scaly creature with large curved horns and a dragon-like head. The creature is standing on a rocky outcrop. The background is a desolate, hazy landscape with jagged rock formations and a cloudy sky. The overall tone is epic and fantastical.

Deep theory part

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE OTHER AND ROBUST SYSTEMS

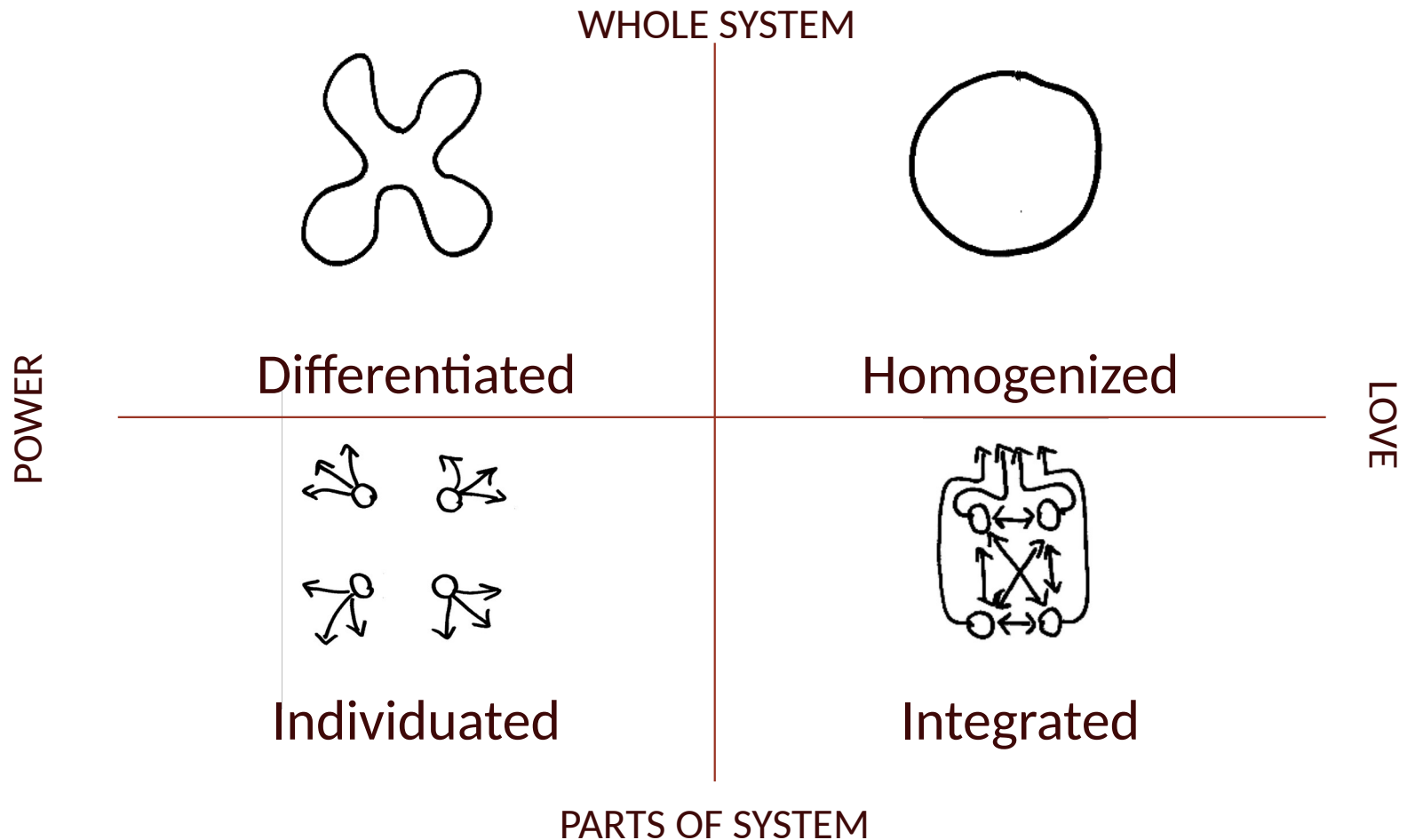
The dominants and the others



The predictable condition – the predictable response – the familiar disempowering experience... arguably even worse consequences

DOMINANCE SYSTEMS Tension of preserve/protect and allow/adapt. Both ultimately sterile.	• evaluated • feared • defended against • controlled
ROBUST SYSTEMS Dynamic balance of adaption, stability, autonomy, and integration	• studied • welcomed • valued • utilized

Robust systems are those that balance



Barry Oshry, Organic Systems Framework



Differentiate

- Use the strengths of the differing cultures.



Homogenize

- Actively learn about one another's cultures.
- Share knowledge, best practices.
- Incorporate aspects of one another's cultures.



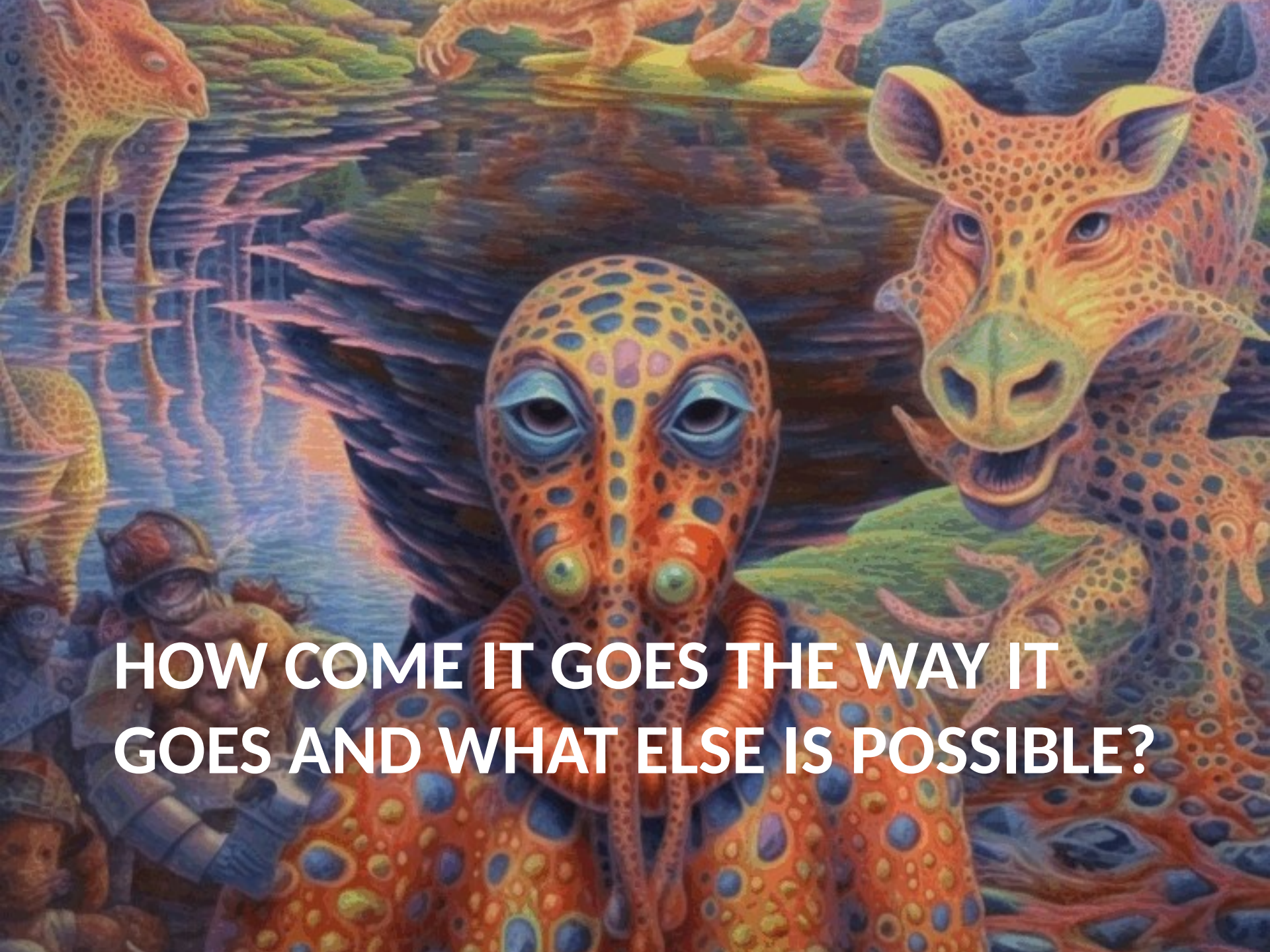
Individuate

- Put your unique talents on the line.
- Identify and encourage the full use of all members' gifts and talents.



Integrate

- Create a compelling system mission.
- Feed and support one another.
- Modulate behavior in the service of the whole.



**HOW COME IT GOES THE WAY IT
GOES AND WHAT ELSE IS POSSIBLE?**

Tops... live in a world of complexity and accountability.

How will inputs likely be received in top world?

As more **complication**.

And how are we likely to react?

By **falling out of partnership**

Middles live in a world where they are **torn** between top and bottom.

How will inputs likely be received in middle world? **More tearing**

And how are we likely to react?

By **falling out of partnership**

Bottom world is a world of **vulnerability**.

How will inputs likely be received in bottom world?

As more **'being done to'**.

And how are we likely to react?

By **falling out of partnership**

Customers live in a world of neglect.

How will inputs likely be received in customer world?

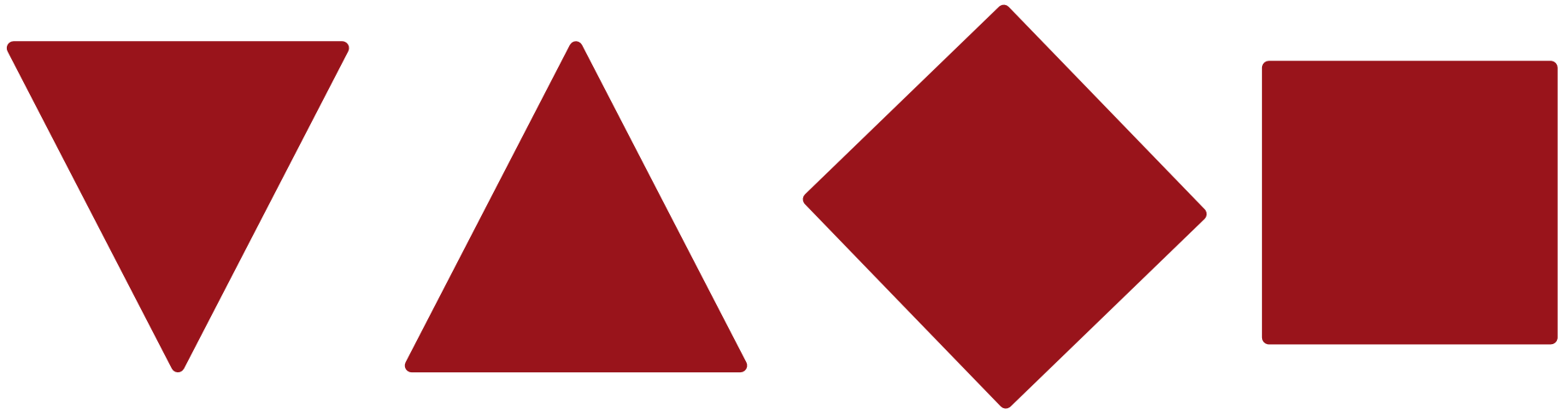
As **an irrelevant insult**.

And how are we likely to react?

By **falling out of partnership**

These are relational not role-based

Which pattern of top/middle/bottomness is your life usually in?



But of course roles shape patterns of interactions!

How come it goes the way it goes?

Predictable condition	Predictable response	Familiar realities	Leadership stands
Top overload	 Suck it up	Burdened by circumstances	Be a top who creates responsibility throughout the organisation
Bottom disregard	 Hold them responsible	Oppressed by them	Be a bottom who takes on responsibility not only for your condition but for the whole thing
Middle crunch	 Slide in between and get torn	Torn between them and them	Be a middle who maintains your independence of thought an action
Citizen neglect	 Stay aloof and hold it responsible	Righteously screwed by the delivery system	Be a citizen who gets in the middle of delivery processes and helps them work for you
Helper ignorance and multiple expectations	 To be of immediate value as expert of servant	Abused and misused	Say no to being of immediate value. Develop a co-learning relationship

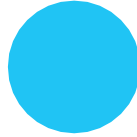
And what else is possible?

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The space of service

Predictable Condition	Predictable Response (DOOR A)	Familiar Disempowering Experience	DOOR B
Ignorance (There is much about this system that I do not understand.) Multiple Expectations (There are likely to be lots of different people with lots of different agendas.)	To be of immediate value as either: ‘Expert’ (I am the solution to your problems, the answer to your prayers.) Or ‘Servant’ (You ask, I do.)	Abused and Misused	Say no to being of immediate value. Develop a co-learning relationship with the Customers. (Using your separate areas of expertise.)

Is the blue dot stuck in one place?



In the dance of responsibility, look out for the old familiar patterns.

Am I feeling:

Overwhelmed? Am I being Top – taking on all the responsibility and disabling the system?



How can I change the responsibility dance?

Disappointed, angry, resentful at 'them'? Am I being Bottom – holding them responsible, holding myself outside the system?



How can I make this a project I can take on?

Unsupported? Am I an End and holding the Middle responsible for solving the problem I have with the other End?



How can we do it ourselves?

Can't please anyone? Maybe I'm a Middle, taking responsibility for THEIR problems?



How can I maintain my independence of thought and action, and help them to sort out their problems?

Unfairly judged? Am I taking responsibility for making the Customer happy?



How can I involve them more in their delivery process?

Neglected and done to? Righteously screwed? Have I abandoned all personal responsibility for getting the service I want?



How can I get more involved in helping the system give me what I need?

The background of the slide is a complex network diagram. It features numerous nodes of various colors (orange, green, blue, yellow, red, and grey) and sizes. These nodes are interconnected by a web of thin, brown lines, creating a dense, interconnected pattern that fills the entire frame. The nodes are stylized, some with small circles above them and short vertical lines below them, resembling simplified human figures or data points. The overall effect is one of a highly connected system.

SEEING THE SYSTEM

The possibility of a systemically informed approach

If you can see the system, three levels of systems intelligence are possible:

1. Tactical
understand their world, don't take it personally, emotional intelligence
2. Strategic
make your request such that it makes their world easier
3. Systemic
make the future relationships between your worlds better in future

Reflection:

- What is the appeal of the side show?
- What are the system consequences of the side show?
- What do we have to give up, let go of in order to move from the side show to the center ring?

Why isn't it easy?



Stafford Beer's Viable Systems Model

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION. Organizational effectiveness is a function of the balance maintained along two dimensions:

1. **Autonomy** of organizational units versus **integration** of the business as a whole.
2. **Stability** of operations versus **adaptation** to changing conditions.

NOTES

Too much **autonomy** of organizational units results in lack of overall purpose, loss of cohesion and synergy, loss of identity, and typically generates a demand for 'centralization'.

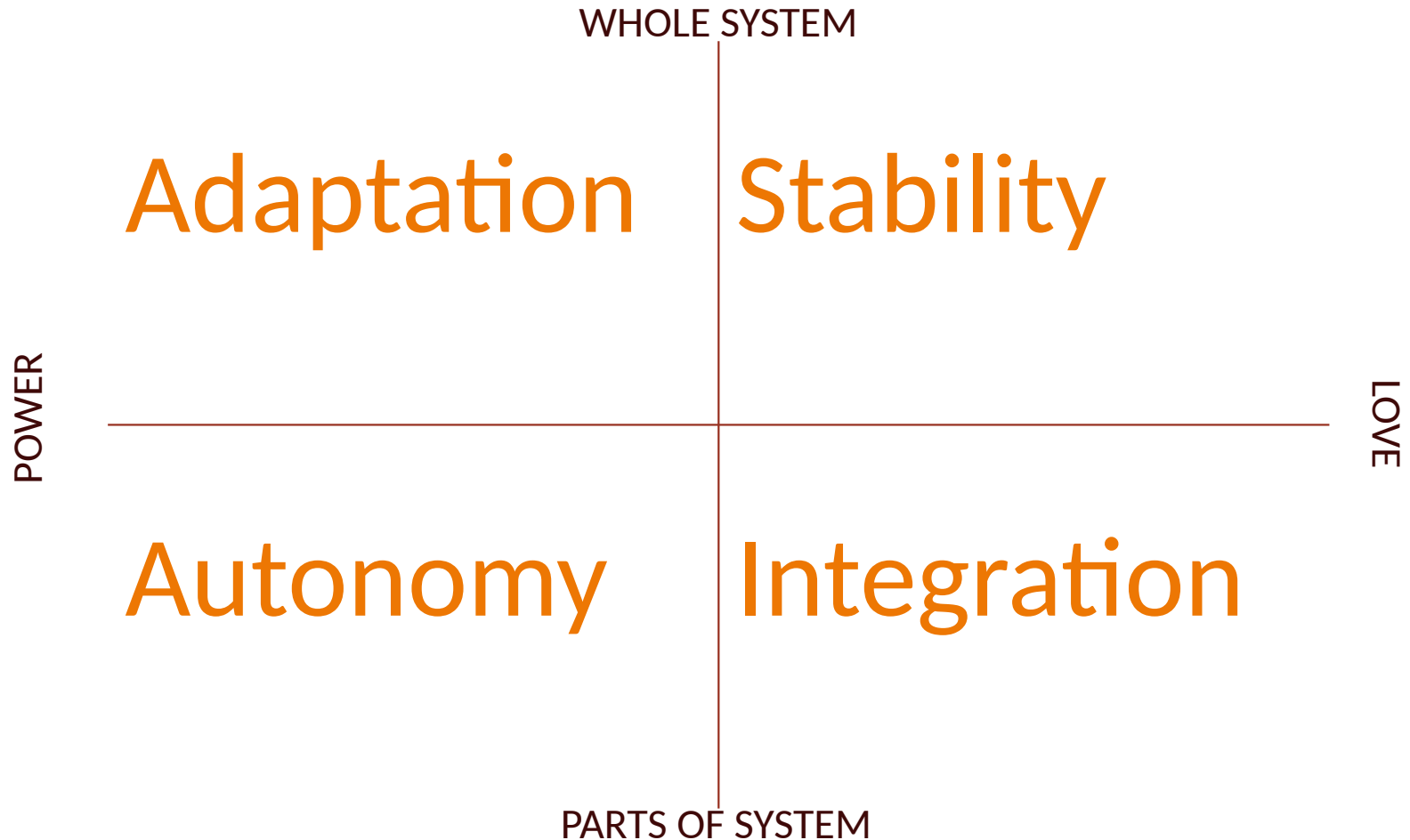
Too much **integration** results in loss of flexibility and initiative by the units, much red tape, loss of morale in the units, and typically generates a demand for 'decentralization'.

Too much **stability** results in an organization that is increasingly obsolete.

Too rapid a pace of **adaptation** results in chaos and massive inefficiency.

Cybernetics: A New Management Tool – Barry Clemson, 1984

Viable systems balance



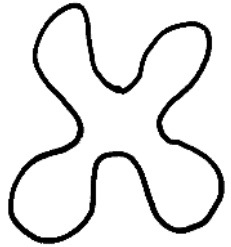
Stafford Beer



MY ORIGINAL MODEL

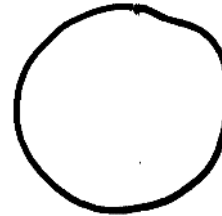
Four things you need to do to create a robust system

Differentiate: increase ability to adapt



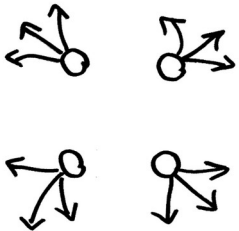
Use the different strengths and capabilities of the different cultures and organisations.

Homogenise: increase stability



Actively learn about all the cultures and organisation. Share knowledge, best practices. Incorporate aspects of one another's cultures and practices.

Individuate: increase autonomy



Put your unique talents on the line. Identify and encourage the full use of the talents of all.

Integrate the system as a whole



Create a compelling system mission. Feed and support one another. Modulate behavior in the service of the whole.

Barry Oshry (Organic Systems) and Stafford Beer (Viable Systems)

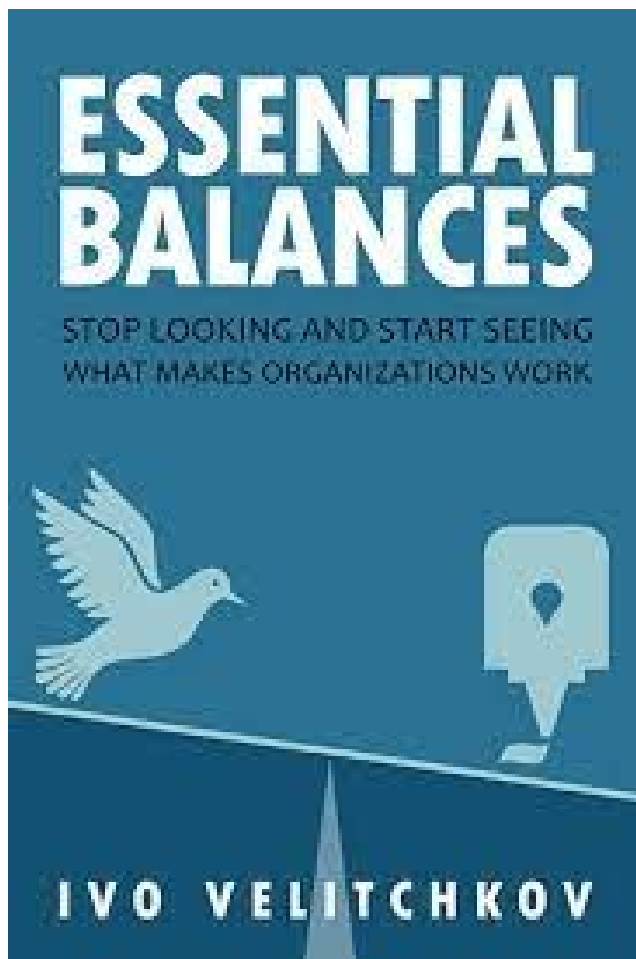


Deep theory annex

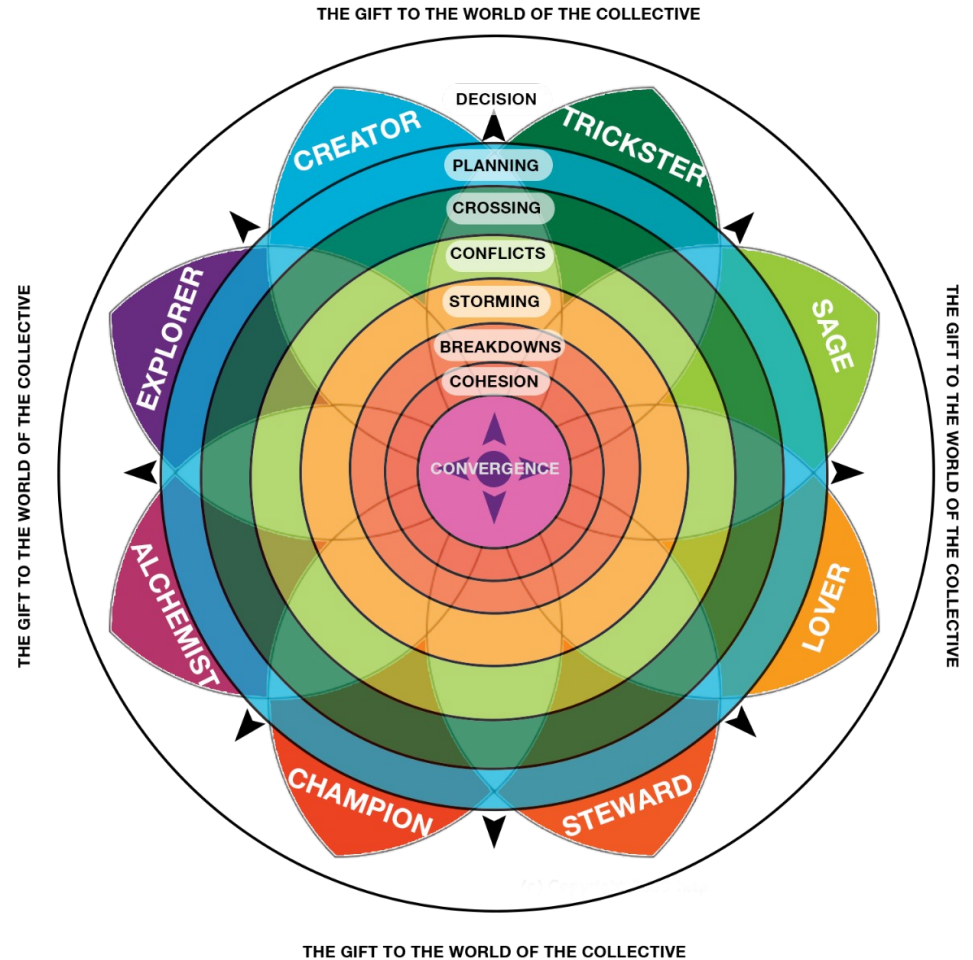
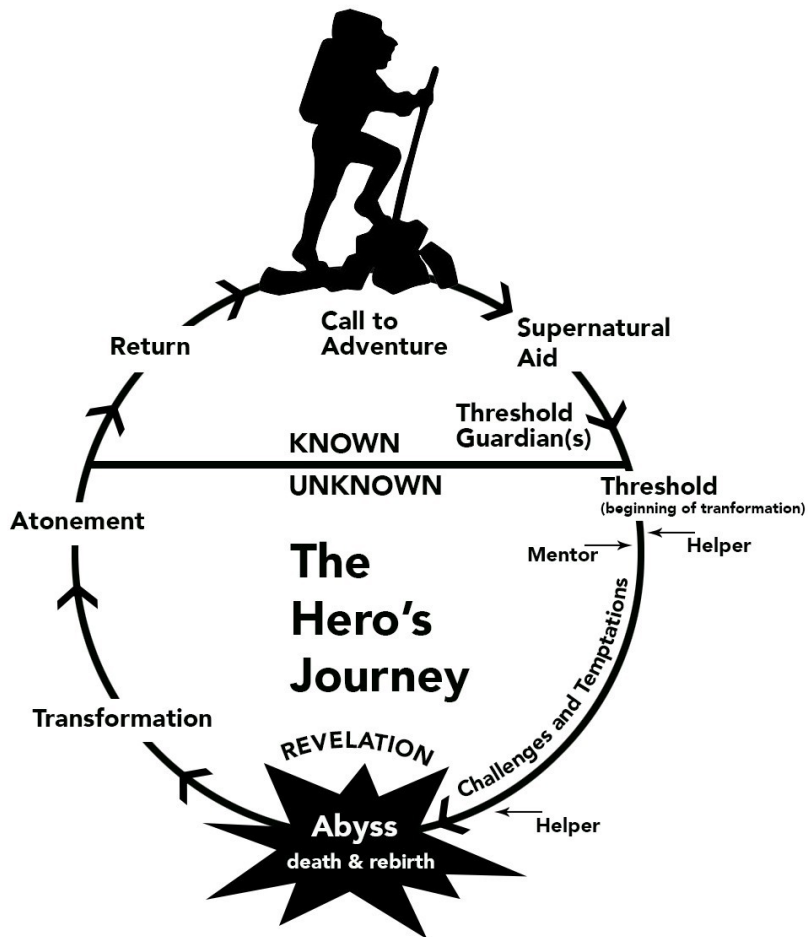
AFFINITIES AND DIFFERENCES

POTENTIAL FURTHER RESEARCH

Essential Balances



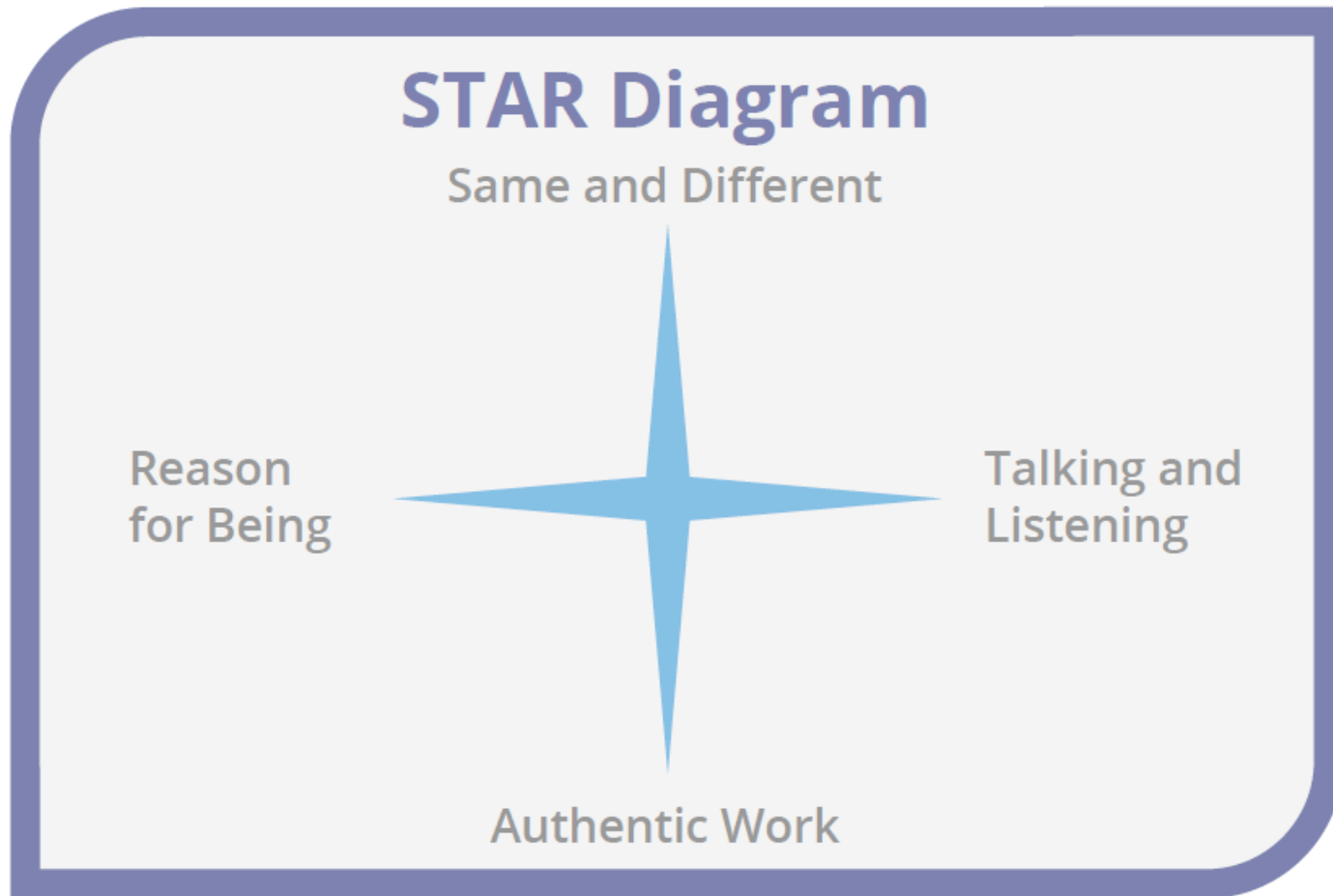
www.essentialbalances.com



See <https://blog.collectivejourney.com/why-is-this-happening-d1287d5ee4ee>

© Maya Zuckerman 2016
 From: <https://medium.com/regenerative-narrative/transformational-media-from-the-heros-journey-to-our-collective-journey-246780b42bcd>

Brenda Zimmerman's STAR model

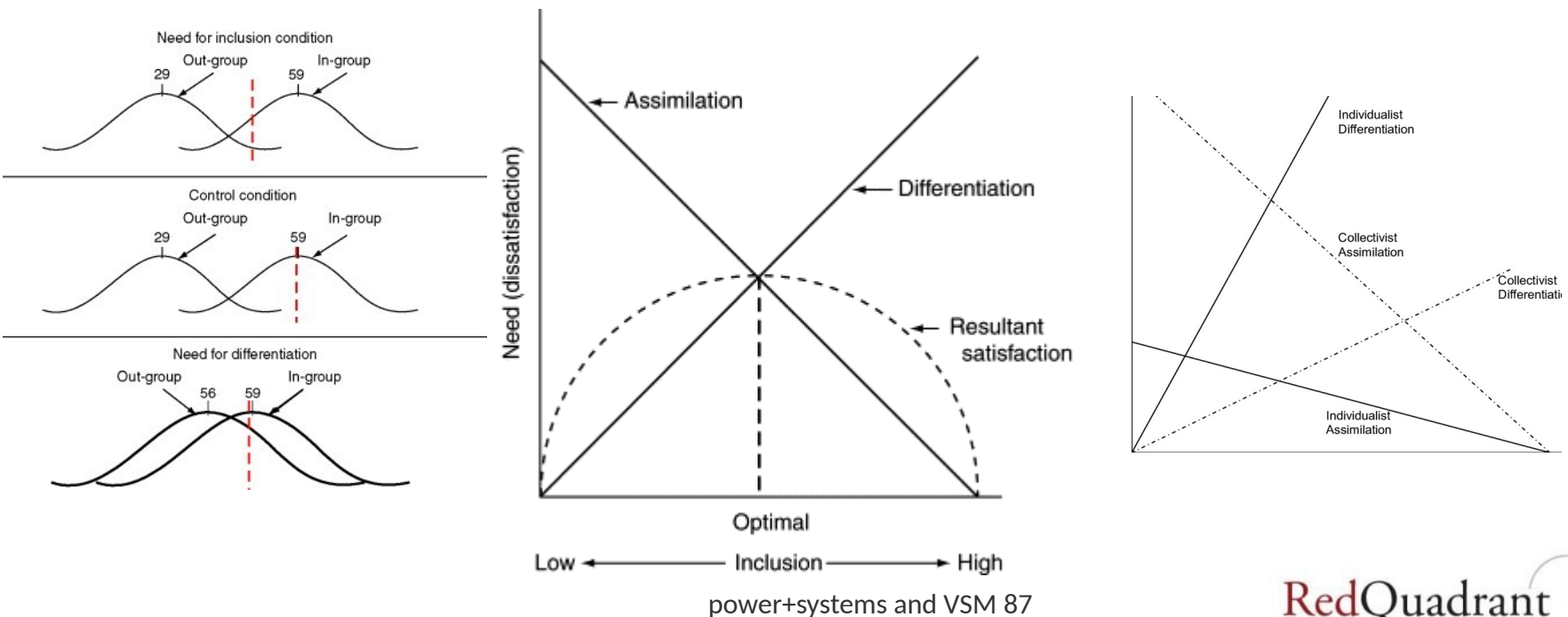


As developed in Liberating Structures liberatingstructures.com/26-generative-relationships-st/

Optimal distinctiveness theory

Level of self	Motivational pole	
	Differentiation	Assimilation
Individual	Uniqueness	Similarity
Relational	Autonomy	Intimacy/interdependence
Collective	Separation	Inclusion/belonging

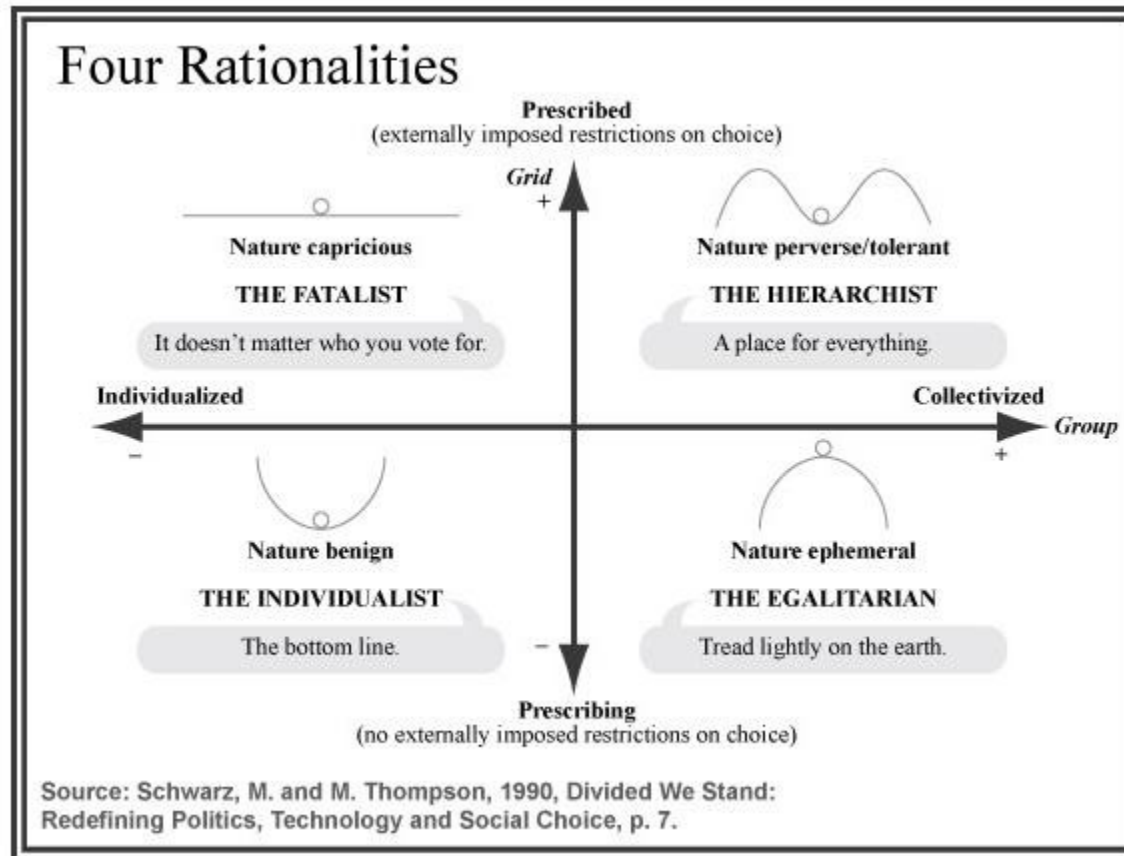
Adapted from Brewer and Roccas (2001; Table 12.1, p. 223).



Other connections

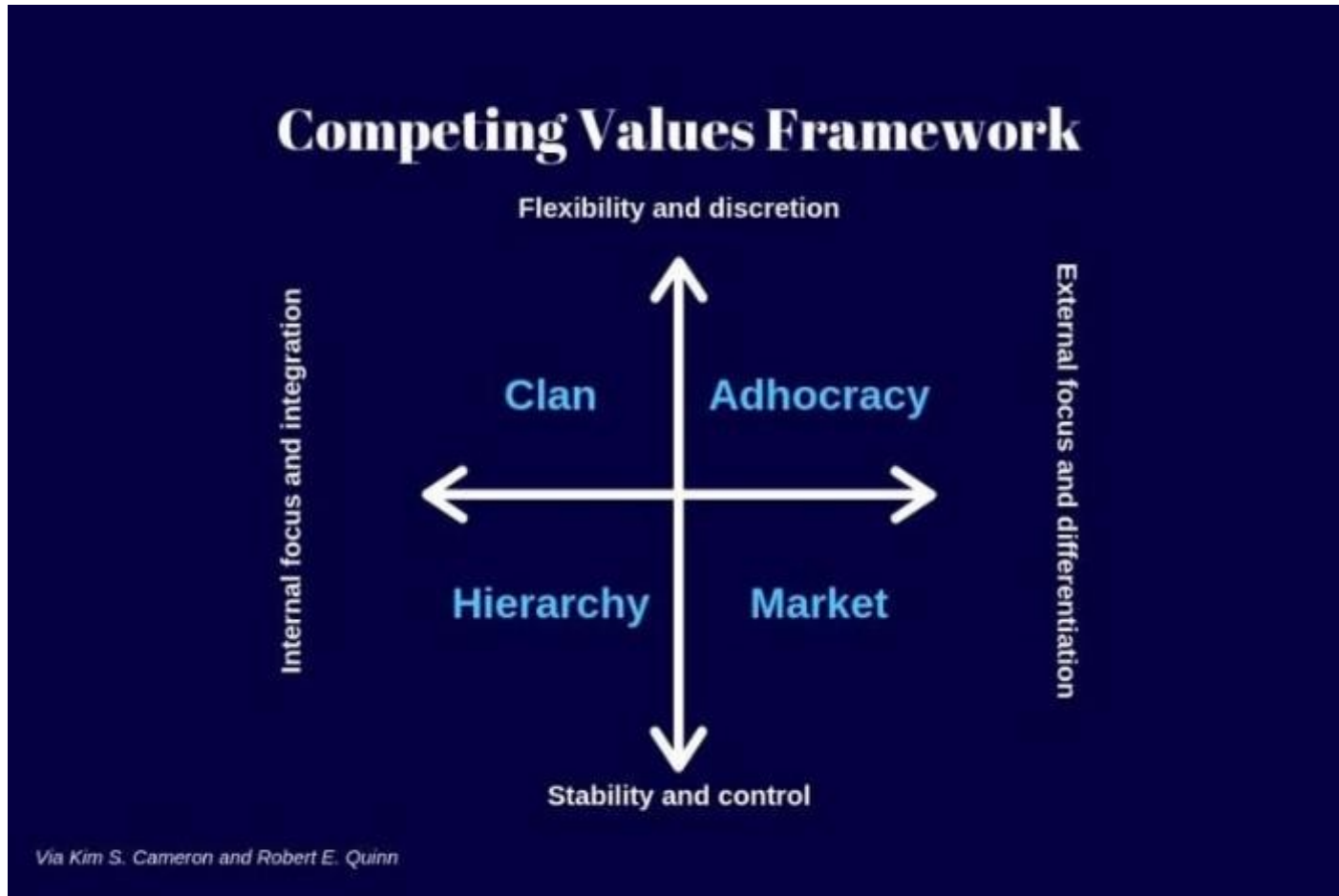
- Group dynamics in ORSC and Systems Centered Training etc etc
- Theory of Living Human Systems - Avgazarian

Mary Douglas's group-grid h/t Myrdene Anderson



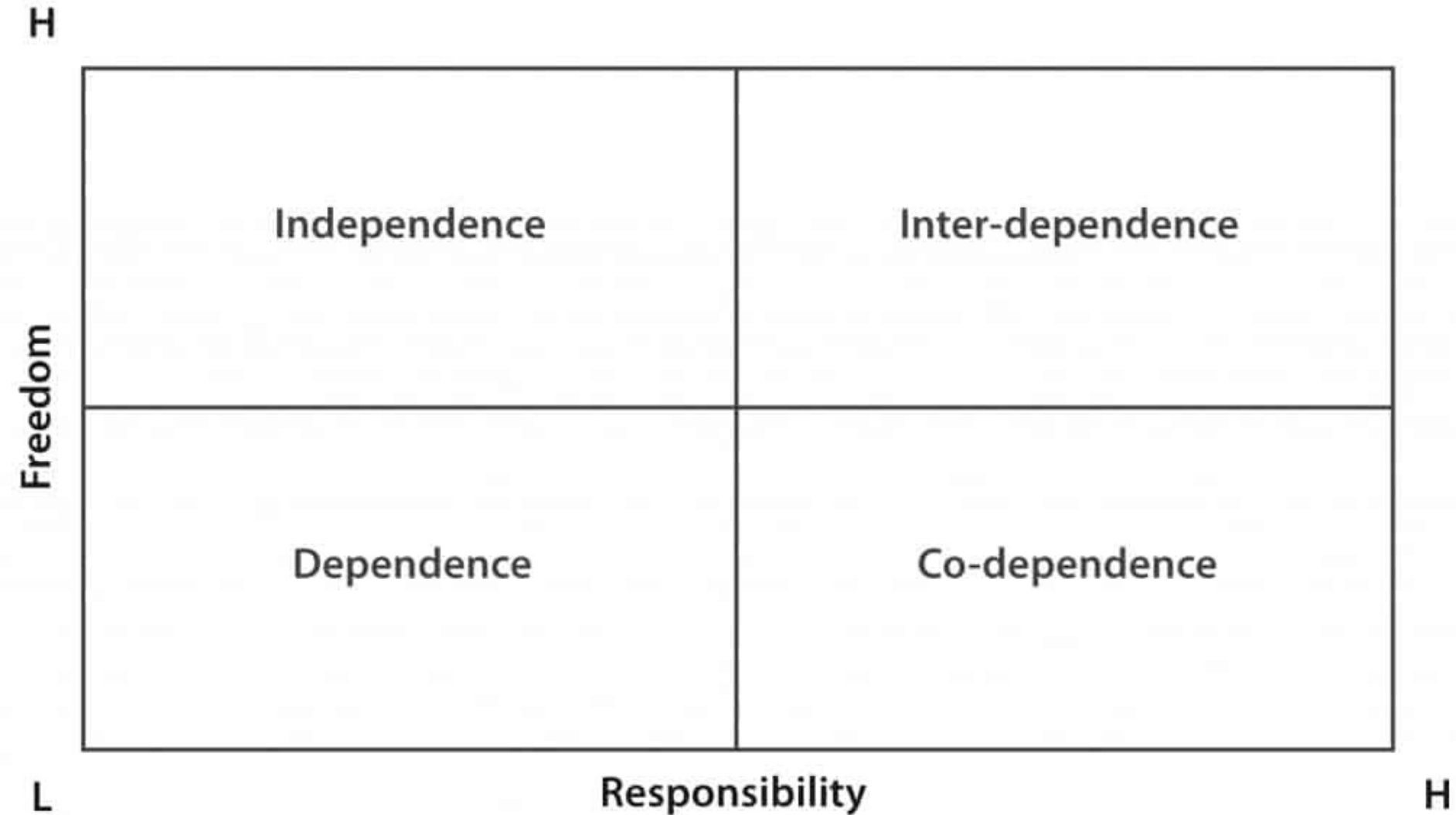
(I don't think this is straightforwardly compatible)

It's not this – a more definitive, fixed model



Definitely some alignment but this isn't about being in a box!

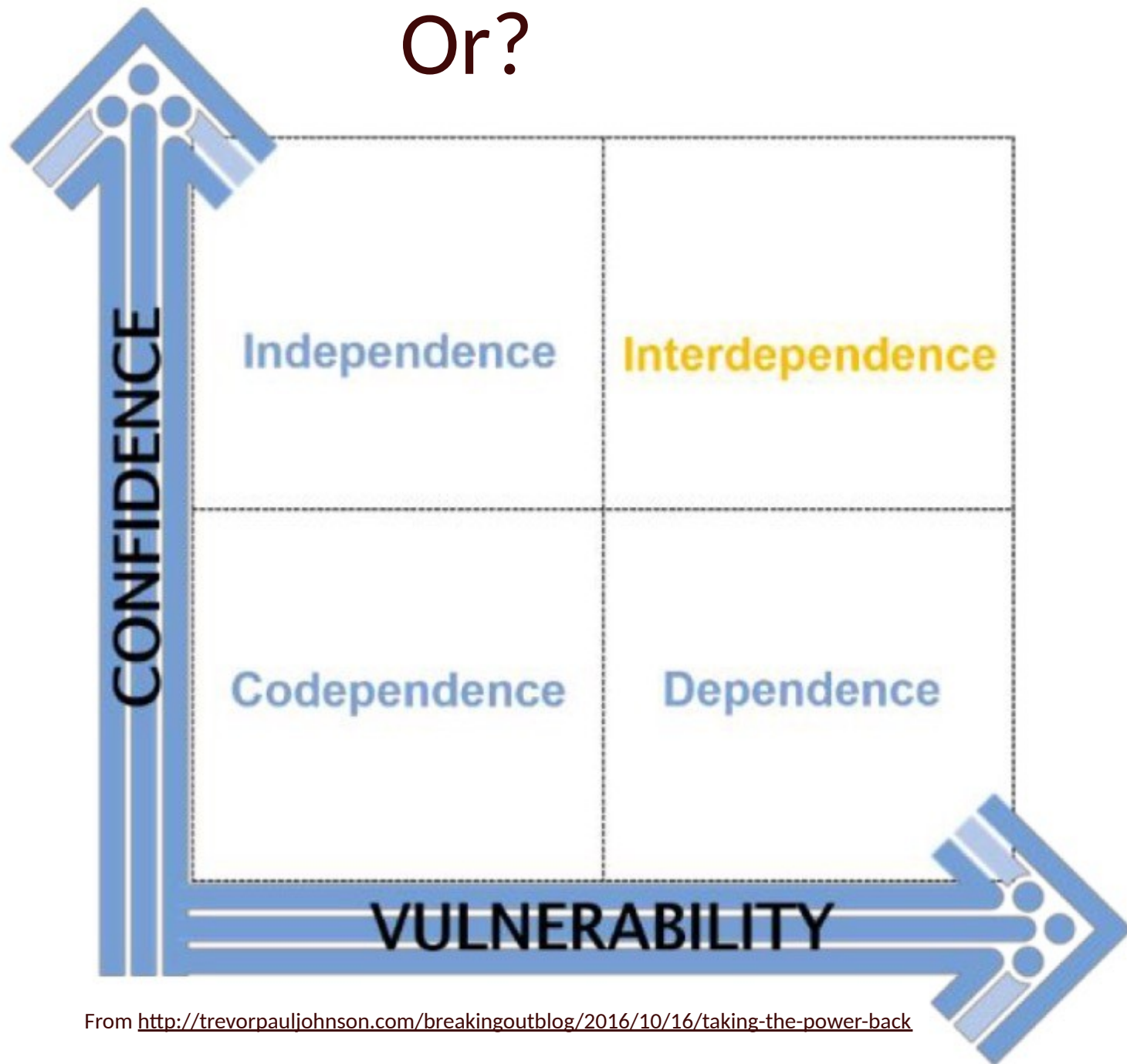
Or is it...?



From <https://trustedexecutive.com/the-deeper-facts-from-dependence-to-interdependence/>

A definition of inter-independence that I like <https://streamsystems.com/2020/09/03/interindependence-a-new-concept-in-relationships-feminist-reprise-by-dianne-post/>

Or?



From <http://trevorpauljohnson.com/breakingoutblog/2016/10/16/taking-the-power-back>

Tibor Scitovsky – The Joyless Economy: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Human Satisfaction and Consumer Dissatisfaction

- That our happiness and our learning are conditioned by two interacting factors:
 - The amount of comfort we receive; and
 - The amount of stimulation we receive

COMFORT

‘Redundant information’ – the fact that music, or a social interaction, fits into a framework that we are familiar with

Basic gratification of our physical needs

Repetition and familiarity

STIMULATION

‘Novel information’ – new variants or completely new information that we are not familiar with

Challenges to us physically or environmentally

Novelty

Dynamics

Learning a new framework allows you to quickly become familiar with the way systems work in organisations

Stimulation

lots of comfort, little stimulation

Boredom, *ennui*, lack of purpose, but any stimulation may be seen as too much of a challenge

high comfort and high stimulation

The ideal learning situation – familiarity allows us to take on and manage new information
Small risk of overwhelm!

This means you can take on and understand more useful information about how to work in partnership – without being overwhelmed

little comfort or stimulation

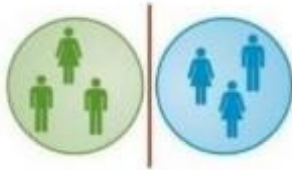
Frustration, a desire for any input whether familiar or unfamiliar, boredom, anxiousness.

high stimulation, little comfort

Classic stress situation – too much to deal with.
High stress, anxiety, unhappiness

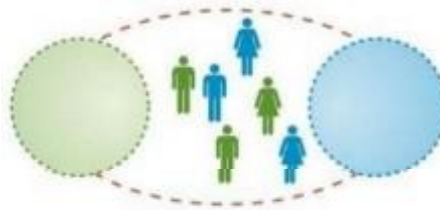
Help the system to become high-performing

Grouping for specialisation



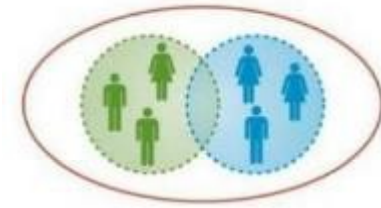
Strengthen boundaries
for safety and security

Blending of groups



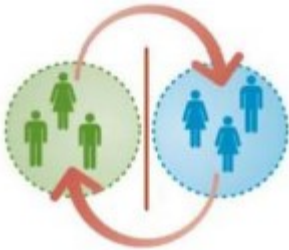
Suspend boundaries
for confidence and trust

Unification (and remixing...)

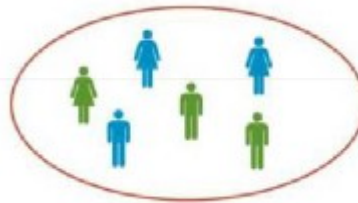


Cross-over boundaries
for interdependence and
collective learning

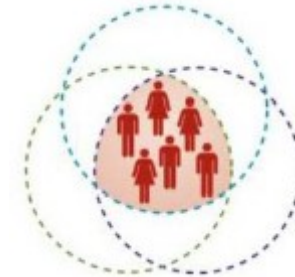
Personal empowerment throughout



Understand boundaries
for awareness and respect



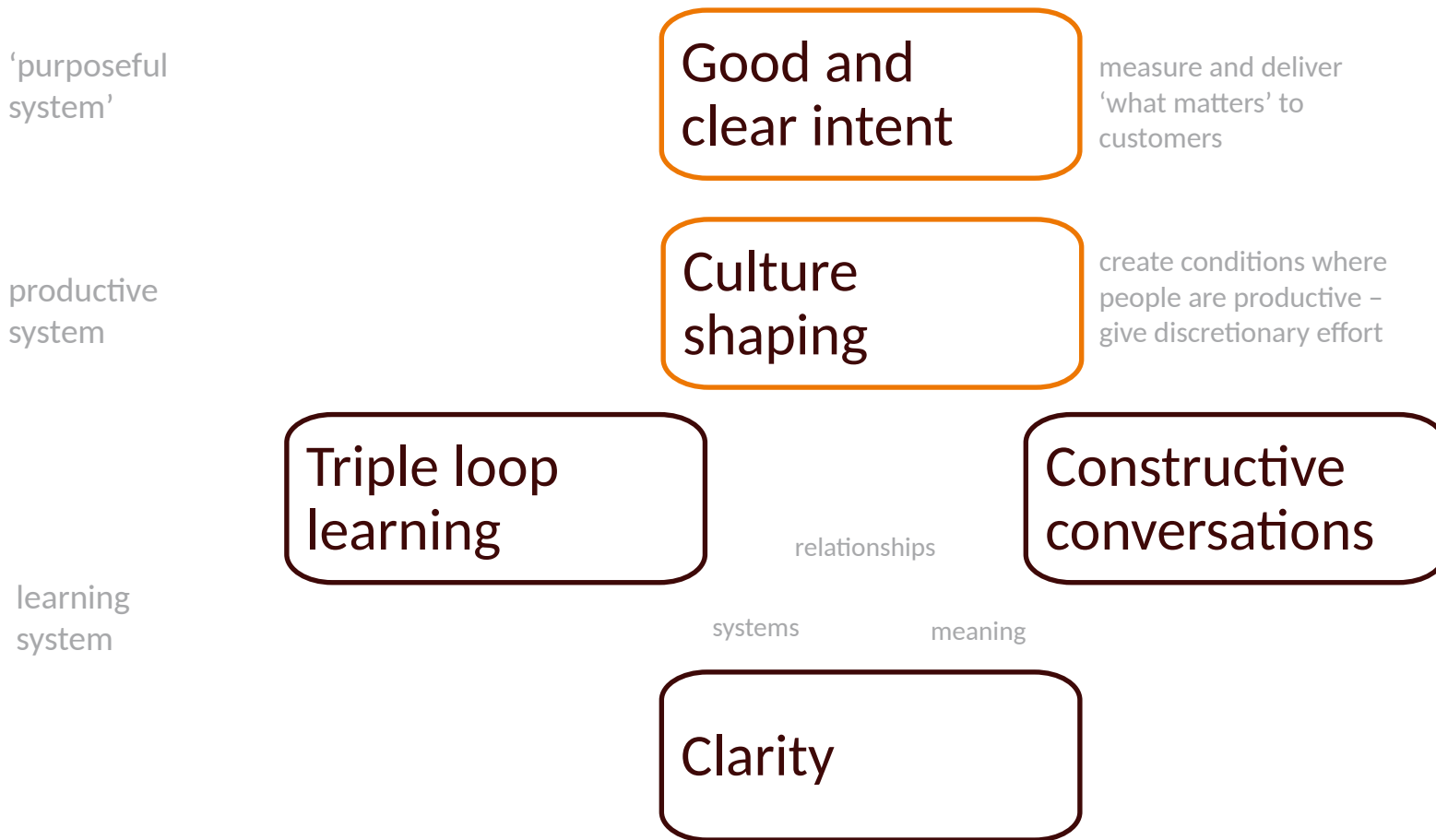
Reframe boundaries
for shared ownership
and accountability



Change boundaries
to reinvent or find
alternative futures

From the Centre for Creative Leadership

Core management and leadership practices



Address danger / confusion / conflict / deficit / development as they arise

Introducing myself

Benjamin Taylor – @antlerboy on [LinkedIn](#) [Twitter](#)
[Mastodon](#) [BlueSky](#), [Threads](#), [Farcaster](#), etc

Systems community of inquiry: www.syscoi.com

Blog: chosen-path.org / antlerboy.medium.com

systems | cybernetics | complexity
business evolutionary | avid learner

[Learn with me in the RedQuadrant tool shed](#)

All my links are at antlerboy.com



www.publicservicetransformation.org



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Or [#iss](https://slido.com)