



# What is the underlying theory of CAT ? From SORT to Metaphor

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ICATA Conference Helsinki 2023



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# According to Tony Ryle

'I proposed CAT as a formal psychotherapy model in the mid-1980s. I had developed the defining features of practice and the core theoretical principles, over the preceding three decades, during which I had worked largely on my own in general practice and in a University Health Service.

I had not completed a formal training in psychiatry or psychotherapy and had therefore experienced neither the support nor the constraints of established theories, therapies or institutions.'

Ryle A, Kellett S, Hepple J and Calvert R (2014) Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) at thirty. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* 20: 258-268.

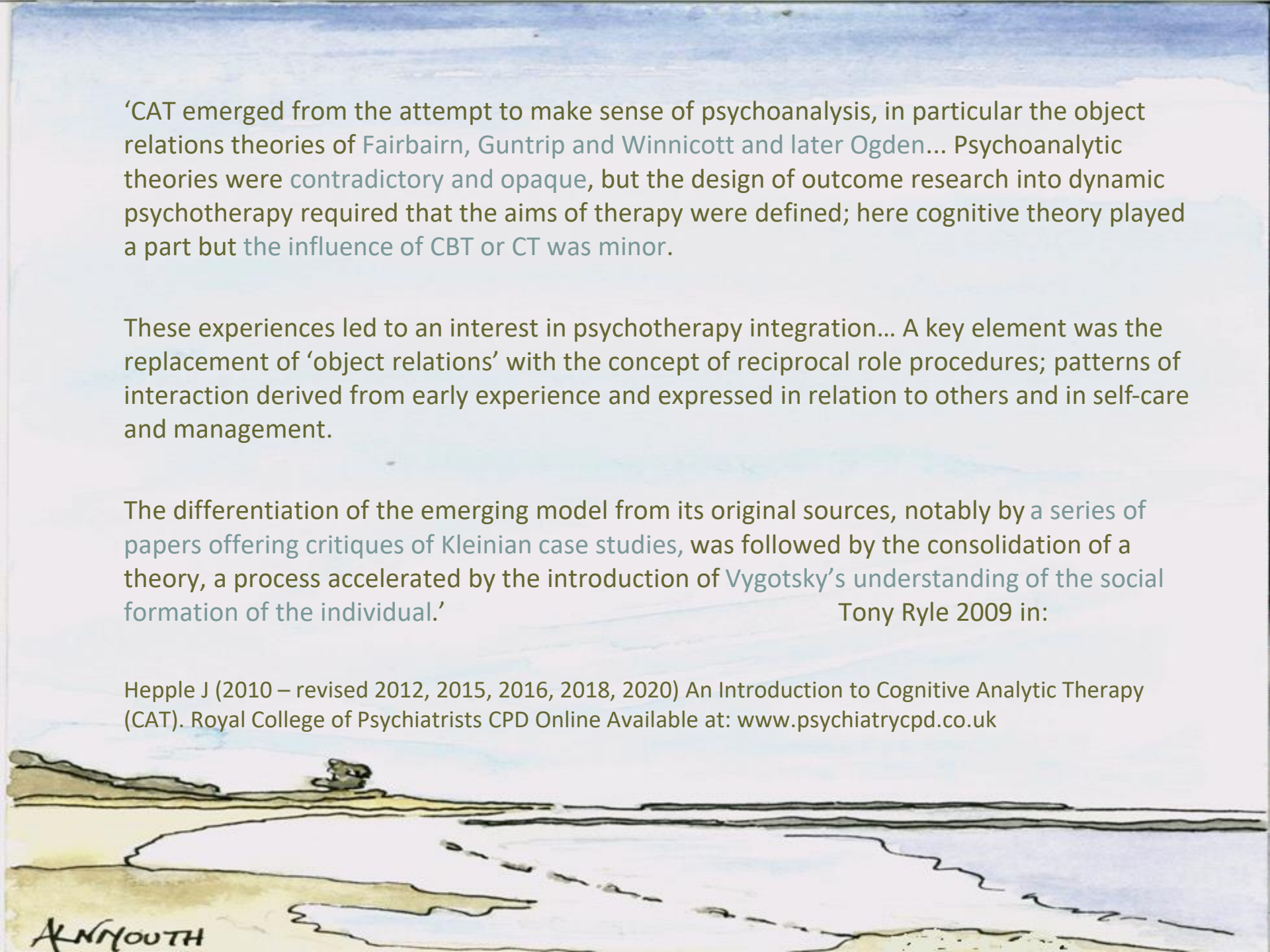
'CAT emerged from the attempt to make sense of psychoanalysis, in particular the object relations theories of Fairbairn, Guntrip and Winnicott and later Ogden... Psychoanalytic theories were contradictory and opaque, but the design of outcome research into dynamic psychotherapy required that the aims of therapy were defined; here cognitive theory played a part but the influence of CBT or CT was minor.

These experiences led to an interest in psychotherapy integration... A key element was the replacement of 'object relations' with the concept of reciprocal role procedures; patterns of interaction derived from early experience and expressed in relation to others and in self-care and management.

The differentiation of the emerging model from its original sources, notably by a series of papers offering critiques of Kleinian case studies, was followed by the consolidation of a theory, a process accelerated by the introduction of Vygotsky's understanding of the social formation of the individual.'

Tony Ryle 2009 in:

Hepple J (2010 – revised 2012, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2020) An Introduction to Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT). Royal College of Psychiatrists CPD Online Available at: [www.psychiatrycpd.co.uk](http://www.psychiatrycpd.co.uk)



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## Tony Ryle addressing the analytic literature:

- Ryle, A. (1975) 'Self-to-Self, Self-to-Other: The World's Shortest Account of Object Relations Theory', *New Psychiatry*, Dec-13.
- Ryle, A. (1985) 'Cognitive Theory, Object Relations and the Self', *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 58.
- Ryle, A. (1991) 'Object Relations Theory and Activity Theory: A Proposed Link by way of the Procedural Sequence Model', *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 64, 307 - 316.
- Ryle, A. (1992) 'Critique of a Kleinian Case Presentation', *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 65, 309 -317.
- Ryle, A. (1994) 'Psychoanalysis, Cognitive-Analytic Therapy, Mind and Self', *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 11, 567 - 593.
- Ryle, A. (1994) 'Projective Identification: A Particular Form of Reciprocal Role Procedure', *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 67, 107 - 114.
- Ryle, A. (1996) 'Ogden's Autistic-Contiguous Position and the Role of Interpretation in Psychoanalytic Theory Building', *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 69, 129 - 138.
- Ryle, A. (1997) 'The Structure and Development of Borderline Personality Disorder: A Proposed Model', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 170, 82-87.
- Ryle, A. (1998) 'Transferences and Countertransferences: The Cognitive Analytic Therapy Perspective', *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 14, 303-309.

## Mikael Leiman's contribution

- Leiman, M. (1992) 'The Concept of Sign in the Work of Vygotsky, Winnicott and Bakhtin: Further integration of object relations theory and activity theory', *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 65, 209-221.
- Leiman, M. (1994) 'Projective Identification as Early Joint Action Sequences: A Vygotskian Addendum to the Procedural Sequence Object Relations Model', *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 67, 97-106.
- Leiman, M. (1997) 'Procedures as Dialogical Sequences: A Revised Version of the Fundamental Concept in Cognitive Analytic Therapy', *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 70, 193-207.
- Leiman, M. (2000) 'Ogden's matrix of transference and the concept of sign', *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 73, 385-397.
- Leiman, M (2002) 'Toward Semiotic Dialogism: The Role of Sign Mediation in the Dialogical Self', *Theory and Psychology*, 12, 221-235.
- Leiman, M. (2011). Mikhail Bakhtin's contribution to psychotherapy research. *Culture & Psychology*, 17, 441-461.
- Leiman, M. (in press) Semiotic object relations theory (SORT) as the basic CAT theory? In: *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Analytic Therapy*, Eds. L Brummer, M Cavieres, and R Tan, (online edn, Oxford Academic, 19 May 2022),

## Contributions from Ian Kerr and others

Kerr, I.B. (1999) 'Cognitive Analytic Therapy for Borderline Personality Disorder in the Context of a Community Mental Health Team: Individual and Organisational Psychodynamic Implications', *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 15, 425-438.

Bateman, A.W., Ryle, A., Fonagy, P. and Kerr, I.B. (2007) 'Psychotherapy for Borderline Personality Disorder: Mentalization Based Therapy and Cognitive Analytic Therapy Compared', *International Review of Psychiatry*, 19, 51-62.

Kerr, Ian & Finlayson-Short, Laura & McCutcheon, Louise & Beard, Hilary & Chanen, Andrew. (2015). *The 'Self' and Borderline Personality Disorder: Conceptual and Clinical Considerations*. *Psychopathology*. 48.

Ryle, A. and Kerr, I.B. (2020) *Introducing cognitive analytic therapy: principles and practice of a relational approach to mental health* (2nd edition). Wiley.



# Stages from TPPs to SORT +

TPPs (Traps, Dilemmas and Snags)

The Procedural Sequence Model – PSM (Aim, Belief , Action, Consequence)

The Procedural Sequence - Object Relations Model (PSORM) (Reciprocal Roles and Self-States integrated into procedures)

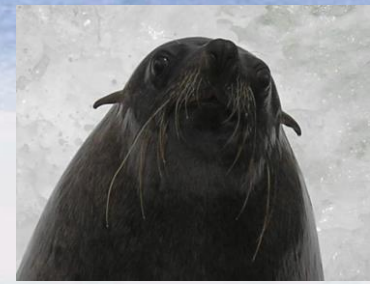
Semiotic Object Relations Theory (SORT) within PSORM (Introduction of the concept of Sign and Social /Cultural context of aims from Activity Theory\*)

Dialogical Sequence Analysis (DSA)

Back to SORT+ with emphasis on object directed activity mediated by signs in cultural contexts

\* "...a high-level, motivated thinking, doing and being of an individual in a given social context. "  
(Ryle 1991, p312)

## My response



In an invited response, Jason Hepple questions the need for an underlying theory of CAT based on the integration of semiotics with object relations theory and discusses how CAT theory has developed addressed to the dominant psychoanalytic and scientific discourses of the time and that CAT theory may best be described as a series of overlapping metaphors with their roots in dialogism, science and the arts.

Hepple, J., (in press) Invited response to: Leiman, M., Semiotic object relations theory (SORT) as the basic CAT theory? In: The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Analytic Therapy, Eds. L Brummer, M Cavieres, and R Tan, (online edn, Oxford Academic, 19 May 2022).



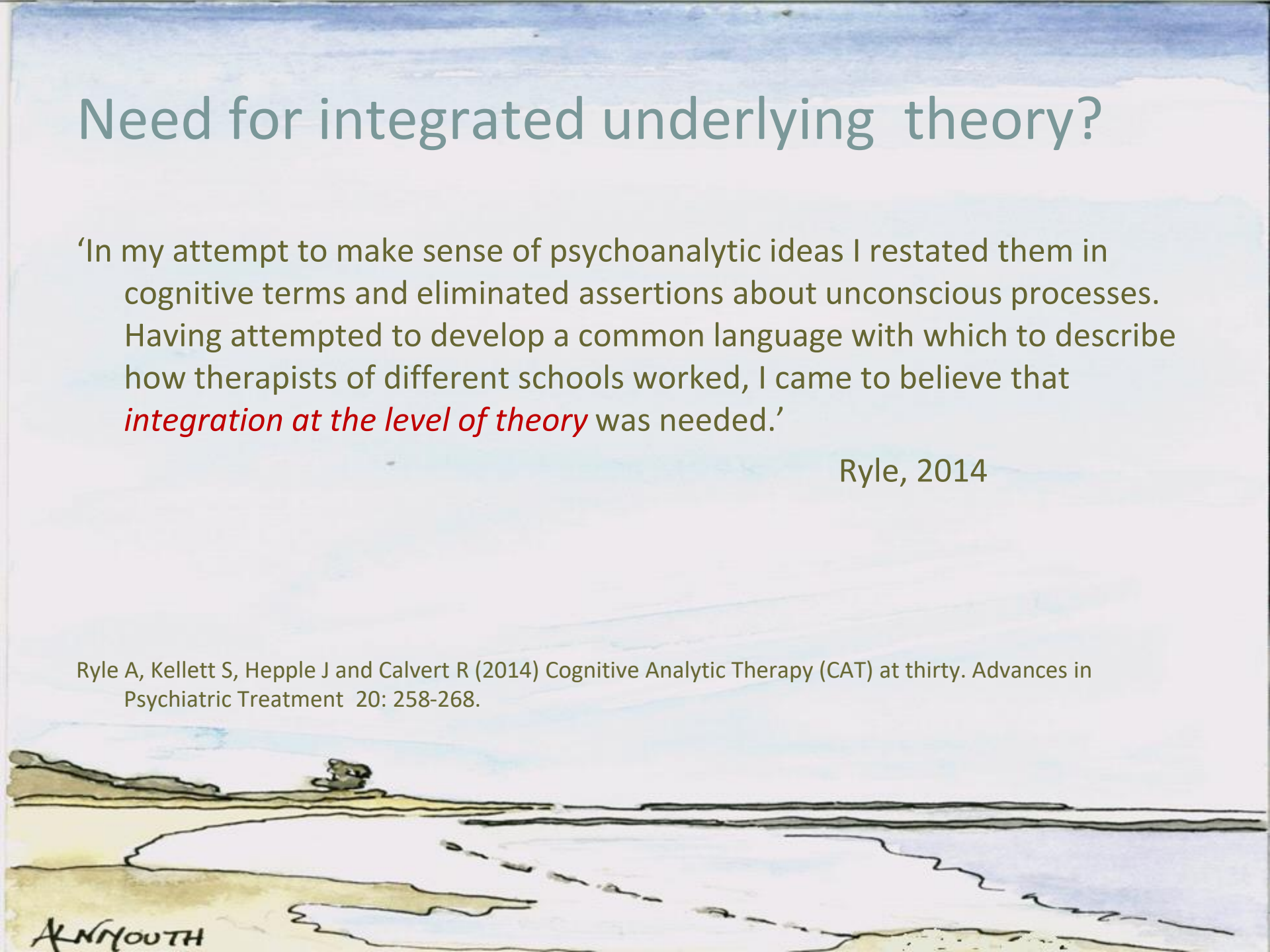


# Need for integrated underlying theory?

‘In my attempt to make sense of psychoanalytic ideas I restated them in cognitive terms and eliminated assertions about unconscious processes. Having attempted to develop a common language with which to describe how therapists of different schools worked, I came to believe that *integration at the level of theory* was needed.’

Ryle, 2014

Ryle A, Kellett S, Hepple J and Calvert R (2014) Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) at thirty. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* 20: 258-268.



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# Need for integrated underlying theory?

CAT's attempt to be taken seriously by the dominant schools of the time – psychoanalysis, the emerging CBT and latterly Vygotskian theories of social development, has complicated the history of the development of CAT theory and ideas

It is my view that psychotherapy theory does not need to be based on scientific method, as ideas and **metaphors** can evolve and overlap and their use is very particular to the therapist-client dyad and each socio-cultural context

*(This does not imply that scientific research can't be applied to look at the effectiveness of an established model)*

# Need for integrated underlying theory?

It may be that there cannot be a 'unified theory' for CAT or psychotherapy in general because of:

Kant's '**noumenon**' – the 'thing in itself' (German: 'Ding an sich'). We only have knowledge of things that we perceive through concepts in our mind about them – no direct knowledge of the 'thing in itself'. For me this includes: things in the world, our own consciousness and the cosmos itself...

Kant, Immanuel (1999). Critique of Pure Reason (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant). Cambridge University Press.



# Consciousness and the wave of Meaning-Making

It all seems  
real to me !



The Relational Matrix  
of Meaning

Action

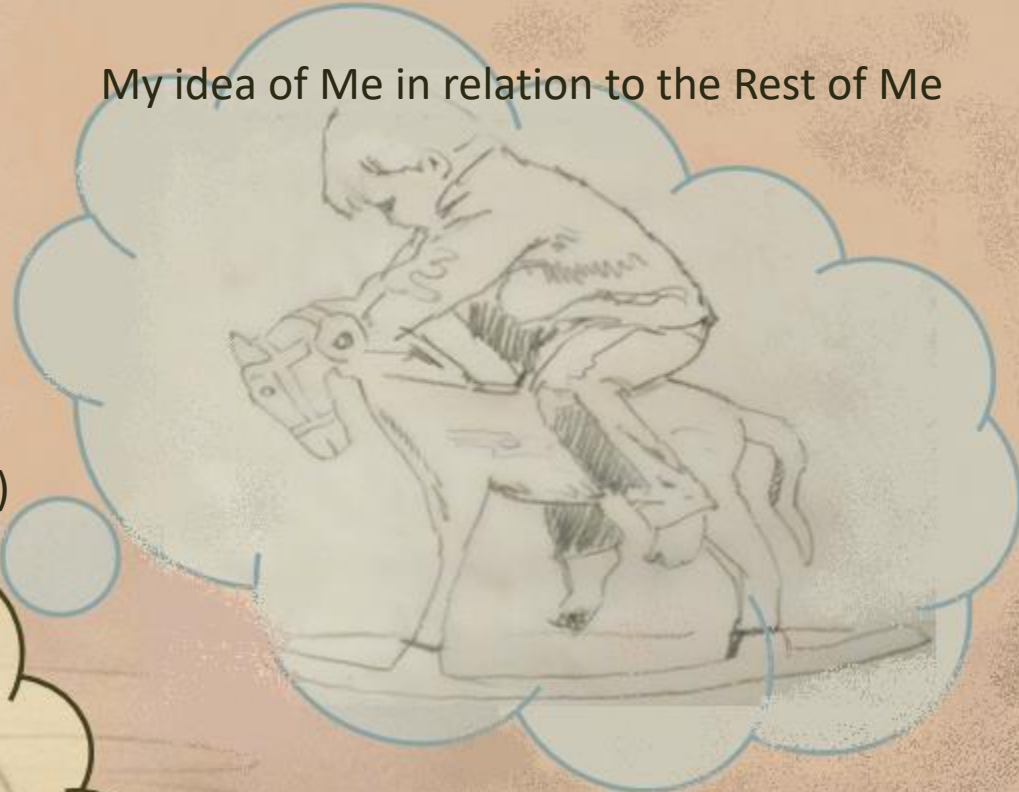
The  
World

Perception

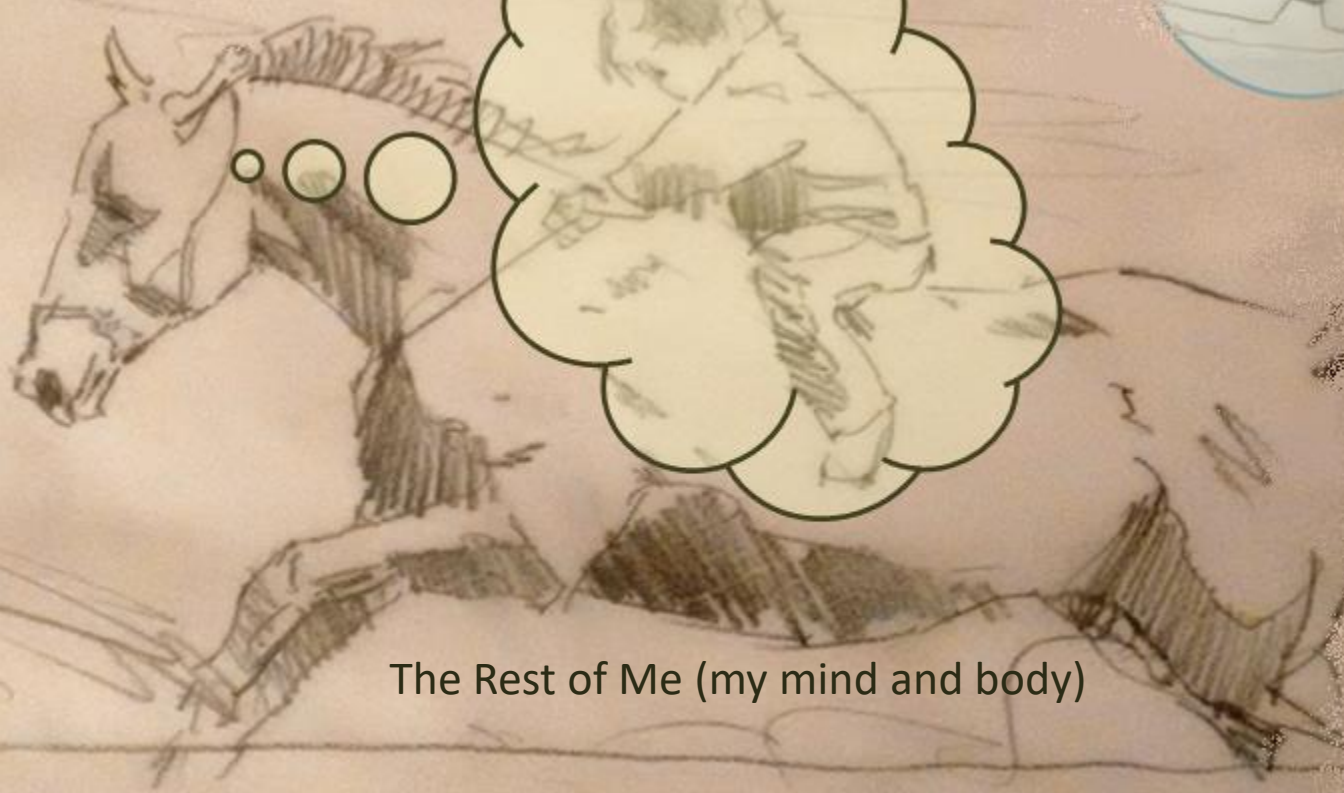
The Body & Brain  
Genetics  
Epigenetics  
Dialogical past  
Collective knowledge

# The Whole of Me

My idea of Me in relation to the Rest of Me



Me (consciousness)



The Rest of Me (my mind and body)

Many thanks to  
[www.stuartjpearce.com](http://www.stuartjpearce.com)

# CAT theory for clinicians

Most clinicians are not researchers / scientists or philosophers

Clinicians need tools (metaphors) to share with their clients that can be used flexibly

This is a pragmatic rather than analytic / scientific stance






So what are the metaphors?



CAT explores the question:

Why ?

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# Survival Strategies

We learn ways to survive our childhoods (also adult trauma)

These ways or procedures can have negative consequences

**Reformulation, Recognition, Revision**





# Symptoms and what is beneath them

‘Symptoms and symptom complexes such as eating disorder or obsessive–compulsive disorder are seen to originate in the need to replace or avoid forbidden or feared reactions to unmanageable experiences. The role of many symptoms is illustrated by a story – I think a Buddhist one – of a drowning man who was saved when a raft drifted by. In recognition of his gratitude he strapped the raft to his back and carried it for the rest of his life.

Many symptoms can be relieved by the recognition and modification  
of the avoided procedure.’ Ryle, 2014

Ryle A, Kellett S, Hepple J and Calvert R (2014) Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) at thirty.  
Advances in Psychiatric Treatment 20: 258-268.



# Anticipation

We expect the world (other people) to respond to us in certain ways and *anticipate* this in our procedures...



# Target Problem Procedures

## Recent definition (Ryle, 2014)

**Traps**, where underlying negative assumptions are reinforced by outcomes.

**Dilemmas**, where possible modes are restricted to polarised alternatives.

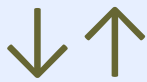
**Snags**, where desired outcomes are avoided because they provoke, or are felt to provoke, forbidden or dangerous outcomes.





# Reciprocal Roles

Other



Self

Self



Other

Self



Self

# Two self-states - Gareth

Superman

Admired



Admiring

Loserman

Contemptuous  
Rejecting



Contemptible  
Rejected  
Shamed

# As a dilemma

Either



Admired Superman

OR



Despised Loserman





SUPERMAN



LOSER MAN

SHAME

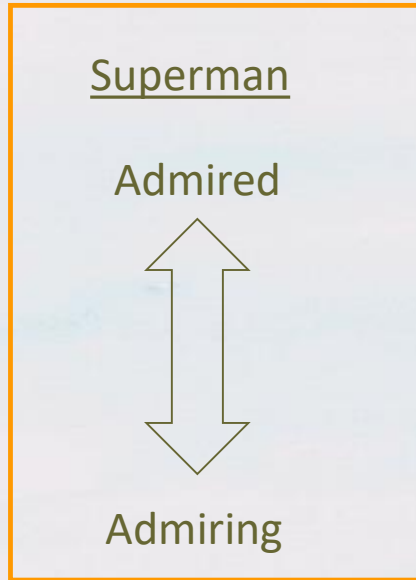


# As a trap

Feeling despised and alienated and unloveable, I try to fit in by being admired and looked up to. I try to be Superman. After a while I realise that people are taking advantage of me and have no real respect for me as a person. This makes me angry and I can treat them with the contempt I feel they deserve. People back away and laugh at me. I feel bad and guilty. Back to being Loserman again.

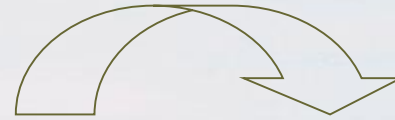
Action  
Try to be Superman

# Linked by Reciprocal Role Procedures



Consequences

Taken advantage of  
Disillusioned



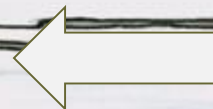
Belief

Need to be special / admired



Aim

To prove I am loveable





# Maps

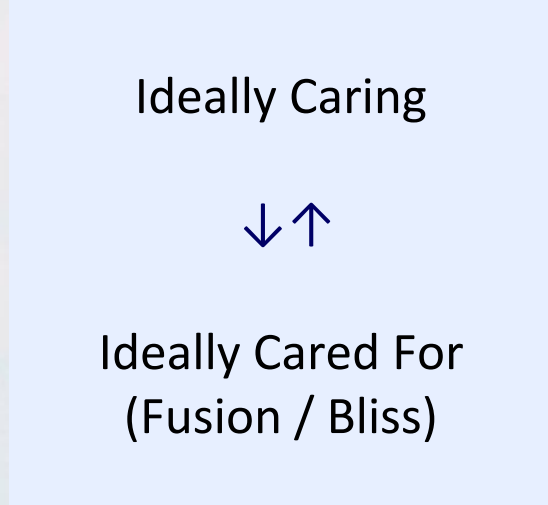
## Self-states and guide maps

Hepple J (2019) Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT), obsessions and overvalued ideas. Developing a model and a method. *International Journal of Cognitive Analytic Therapy and Relational Mental Health* 3, 51-68.



# Fusion State Map

Attach

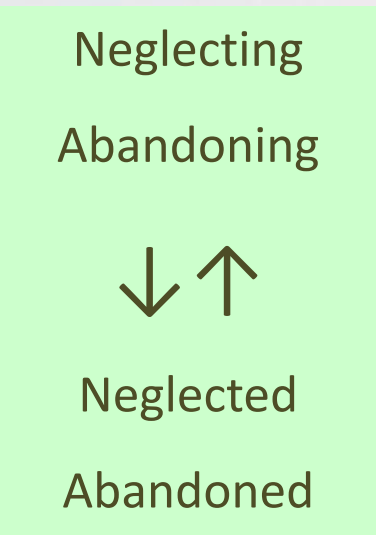


Seeking rescue  
Jealousy



Anger, Revenge

Flight



Fight - active

Freeze



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# Mirror State Map

Grandiosity  
Pride



Shame / Doubt

Admired  
Alone  
↓↑  
Admiring  
Reflecting  
(No needs)

Attach to real or  
imagined mirror  
relationship



Disillusion

Neglecting  
Abandoning



Contemptuous  
Disgusted  
↓↑  
Contemptible  
Shamed

Envy, Contempt  
and Rage

Fight (passive)

Neglected  
Abandoned

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# Obsessional State Map

## External relationship

Client

↓↑

Others / therapist

Exhaustion

## Formative relationship

Parent

↓↑

Child

Draining  
Controlling  
↓↑  
Striving  
Drained

Self-absorbed  
Neglecting / Uncontaining  
↓↑  
Neglected / Uncontained  
No needs met  
Fearing annihilation  
(dread)

## Internal relationship

OCD (protector / tyrant)

↓↑

Client (slave)

Submit

Flight

Create internal  
container

Freeze



# Positive Group – Compassion Exits

Loving  
Containing



Loved  
Contained

Accepting  
Validating



Accepted  
Validated

Freely Giving



Gratefully Receiving

(Gratitude)

# Dialogical influence on the self

Reformulation of survival strategies in their social / cultural context has always been central to CAT

Signs in the noumenon – moving away from the ungraspable to:

**Internalisation of complex psychological tools** (ways of thinking and being or 'cultural resources') from others in a cultural setting

The social interactions in development – reciprocal roles and procedures





# Vygotsky and the ZPD

Humans have been more successful than animals due to use of tools

Complex psychological tools (EG: language, symbolic play, art, writing) are acquired from others through cultural interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Once internalised (via symbolic play) the psychological tool becomes our way of thinking

Vygotsky, L. S. and Michael Cole. "Mind in society : the development of higher psychological processes."  
(1978).

# Re-Enactment in CAT

The chicken and the egg of transference and counter-transference

Hepple J (2011) The chicken and the egg. Reformulation 37: 19-21.



# Traditional CAT: Division of CT in CAT

## Identifying and Reciprocating

‘ A person enacting one pole of a reciprocal role procedure may either:

1. (Empathic) Convey the feelings associated with the role to others (including the patient), in whom corresponding empathic feelings may be elicited or
2. (Reciprocating) Seek to elicit the reciprocating response of the other.’

Ryle and Kerr, 2002, p. 104.

‘The therapist’s job here is simple – not to join the dance.’

Ryle, 1998.

Ryle, A (1998) Transferences and Countertransferences : the Cognitive Analytic Therapy perspective. British Journal of Psychotherapy 14 : 303-309.



# Enactment in CAT

CAT restates T/CT as a relationship

$T \leftrightarrow CT = E$  or just Enactment

Enactment is a general relational concept applied in a therapeutic setting

Enactment in CAT can allow integration of T/CT

‘Top’ and ‘Bottom’ roles

Personal / Professional

Reciprocal Role mapping creates a sign to ‘slow down’ and reflect on the enactment





# The Witness and the Judge

‘... the event of existence as a whole (unfinalised) becomes completely different because a new and major character in this event appears... the witness and the judge.’

Notes made in 1970-1971 in: Bakhtin, M., M. (1986) *Speech Genres and other late essays*. ( trans. V.W. Maghee, eds. C. Emerson and M. Holquist). Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press. P.137.

Hepple J (2005) *The witness and the judge*. *Cognitive Analytic Therapy in later life*. The case of Maureen. *British Journal of Therapy Integration* 2(2): 21-27.



# The role of the witness in psychotherapy

## Beside

The witness is there beside the client (often when the client is 'beside themselves').

The witness unconditionally accepts the predicament of the client, the mixture of feelings of anger, grief, guilt or self-loathing.



# Empathic and Reciprocating counter-transference

The witness also shares these feelings, experiencing them authentically both for himself and for the client.

‘How the client makes you feel in the session is usually the client’s business’ – Tony Ryle 2003.

Someone else has finally noticed what happened and has reacted to it from their own perspective with, for example, horror, fear, sorrow, contempt or anger...



# The other

The witness sees the scene from a different viewpoint – that of an other.

The witness will give a different account of the story to others; the witness notices things that the client gives little significance to; the witness sees the client in the context of the scene from the *outside*:

‘The ever present excess of my seeing, knowing and possessing in relation to any other human being, is founded in the uniqueness and irreplaceability of my place in the world’.

Bakhtin, M., M. (1990) Author and hero in aesthetic activity. In: M. M. Bakhtin, Art and answerability: Early philosophical works by M.M. Bakhtin, ed. M.Holquist and V.Liapunov, trans. V. Liapunov. Austin Texas, Texas University Press.





# The judge

The witness may be able to have a view about the story.

‘That should never happen to a child’

‘All children deserve love and protection’.

# Outsideness and Insideness

Hepple J (2010) A little bit of Bakhtin - from inside to outside and back again.  
Reformulation 35:14-15.



# Outsideness or 'Excess of Seeing'

'... this other human being whom I am contemplating, I shall always see and know something that he... cannot see himself: parts of his body that are inaccessible to his own gaze (his head, his face and its expression), the world behind his back, and a whole series of objects and relations, which in any of our mutual relations are accessible to me but not to him.

As we gaze at each other, two different worlds are reflected in the pupils of our eyes.'

Bakhtin M. M. (1990) Author and hero in aesthetic activity. In: M. M. Bakhtin, Art and answerability: Early philosophical works by M.M. Bakhtin, Eds. M. Holquist and V. Liapunov, Austin Texas, University of Texas Press. (V. Liapunov Trans.) p.23.



# Insiderness

‘Insiderness’ presumes that there is such a thing as common humanity, that there is an essential similarity between any two human beings regardless of how great the differences between them might be ... we can potentially know other people from our ‘interior’ knowledge of ourselves.’

Rachel Pollard, 2008

Pollard, R. (2008) Dialogue and Desire: Michael Bakhtin and the Linguistic Turn in Psychotherapy by Rachel Pollard. UKCP, Karnac series. *Reformulation*, Winter, pp.10-11.

Hepple, J., (2009). (Review of) Dialogue and Desire: Michael Bakhtin and the Linguistic Turn in Psychotherapy by Rachel Pollard. *Reformulation*, Winter, pp.10-11.





## Insiderness

The same

Empathy

Subjective

Empathic counter-  
transference

Common humanity

Embodied /felt

Interior knowledge

'Relationship practitioner'

Uniquely the same

Being with

## Outsiderness

Different

Perspective

Objective

Reciprocal counter-  
transference

Unique individuals

Observed / thought

Exterior knowledge

'Scientist practitioner'

Uniquely different

Being to

# Doing with - Play

“It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self.”

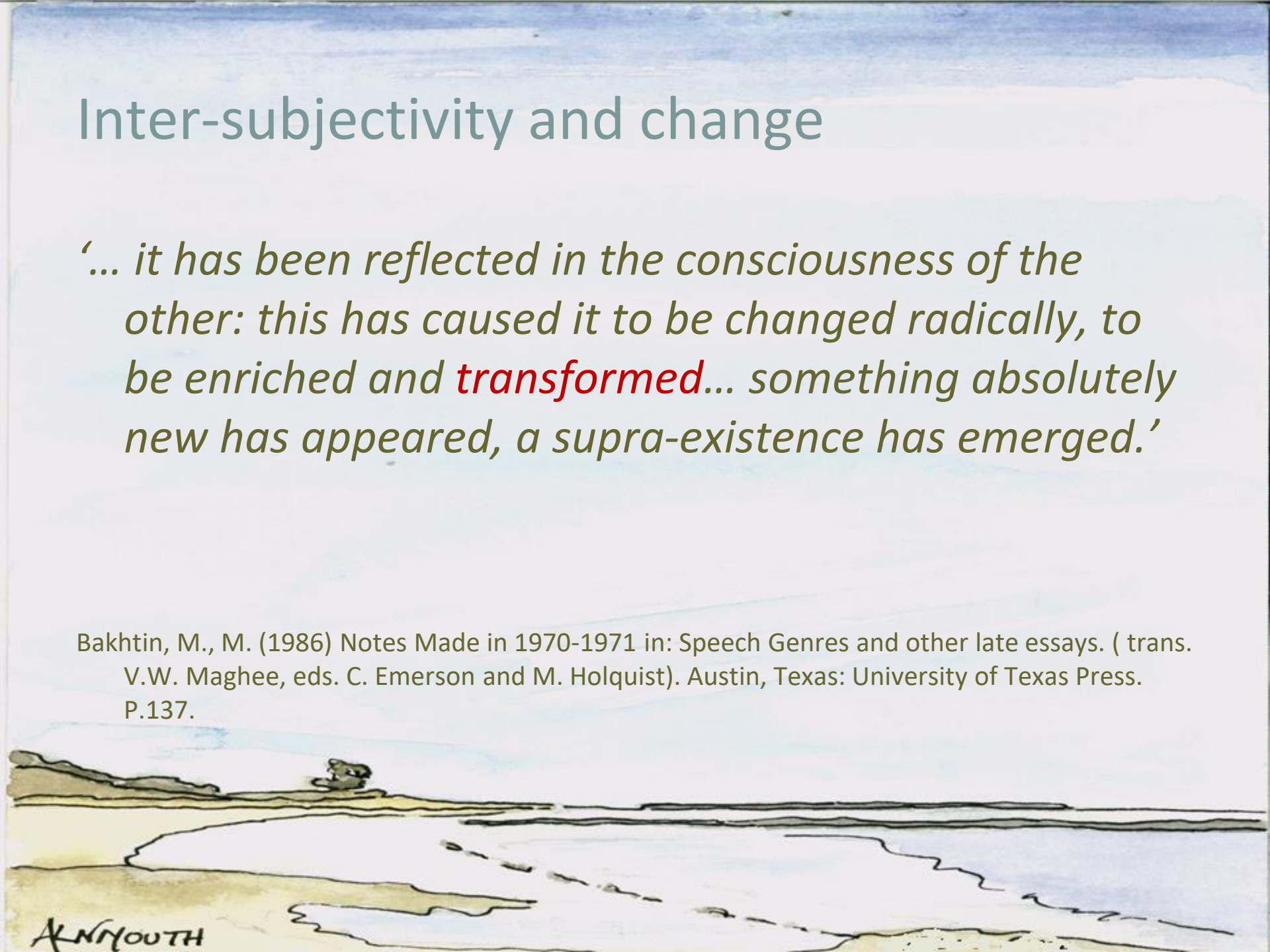
Winnicott, D. W. (1971). *Playing and Reality*. London: Routledge. P.54.



# Inter-subjectivity and change

*'... it has been reflected in the consciousness of the other: this has caused it to be changed radically, to be enriched and **transformed**... something absolutely new has appeared, a supra-existence has emerged.'*

Bakhtin, M., M. (1986) Notes Made in 1970-1971 in: Speech Genres and other late essays. ( trans. V.W. Maghee, eds. C. Emerson and M. Holquist). Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press. P.137.



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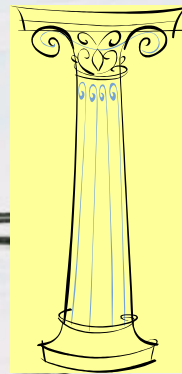
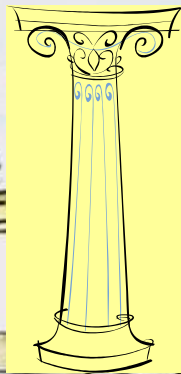
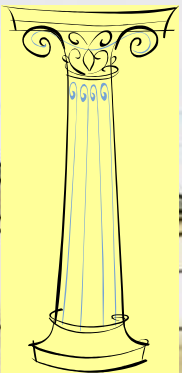
# The pillars of change

Positive regard  
Being with

Responsive  
understanding  
Being to

Joint Activity  
Doing with

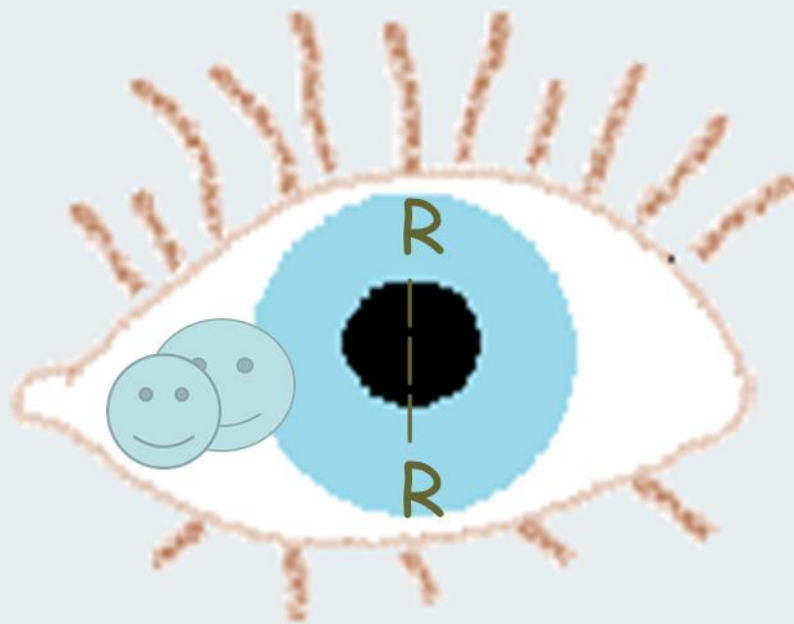
Encounter and  
transformation  
Hope



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# The Observing Eye



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# Metaphors / Tools in CAT

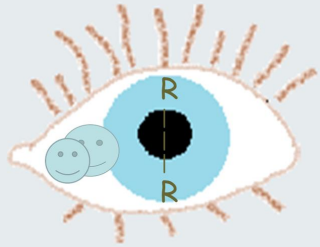
## The Three R's

Reformulation of  
*symptoms*

# Why ?

## Reciprocal Roles

Other to Self, Self to Other, Self to Self



Anticipation

Maps and Self-states

Zone of Proximal  
Development

## Survival Strategies

Target Problem Procedures  
Traps, Dilemmas and Snags

Internalisation of Complex Psychological Tools

## Reformulation in a social / cultural context

Being with, Being to, Doing with (play)

The Chicken and the Egg  
Re- Enactment in CAT

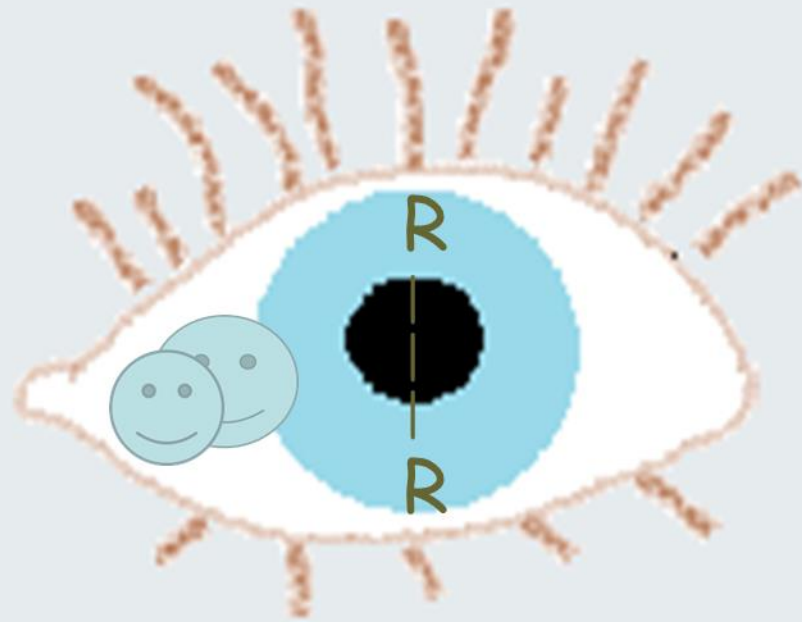
The Witness and the Judge

Inside / Outside

Transformation through Inter-subjectivity

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Thank you  
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# Discussion

