

# The Trauma of Identity

Basics of an Identity oriented  
Psychotrauma Theory and Therapy  
(IoPT)

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# Some Questions to reflect on

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- Who am I?
- Do I know what is mine and what is not?
- Do I live my own life, or do I fulfil the expectations of others?
- How good am I at setting boundaries with others?
- Was there a moment when I lost myself?
- Is it possible to become fully myself again?



# Agenda

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- Identity
- Identifications
- Attributions
- Identity and Trauma
- Basics of Identity-oriented Psychotrauma Therapy (IoPT)

# Identity means: | = |

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- A healthy 'I'
- With my own free will
- With all my senses
- In contact with my body
- With my own feelings
- With my own words
- In all my relationships



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# True Identity

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- Is the sum of all my conscious and unconscious life experiences
- Including my beautiful days as well as my trauma
- I can't leave anything out without denying myself
- As many clients show, there is a urgent inner need to feel whole and regain wholeness

# Development of Identity

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- The child exists immediately after conception as a unique body with her own psyche
- The child develops as a subject in her own space
- She is an Individuum (not divided), as long as she does not become traumatised
- The child learns through his own actions that 'I' can influence things
- He has a felt sense of being I and becomes increasingly self aware, even before birth



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# Development of Self awareness

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- Initially the 'I' of the child develops in relation to the 'I' of the child's mother
- If a child can develop healthily, after two years he will already have a distinct and conscious self-concept
- When the child is four years old, she is able to use personal pronouns correctly, like 'me', 'mine' etc
- If the 'I' of his mother is not clearly perceptible for the child, this will cause identity disorders for him



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# Identification: I = You, I = We

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# Processes of Identification

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- The development of 'I' is embedded in the development of 'we' and 'us'.
- The first 'we' is "I and my mother".
- Further entities of 'we': "I and my father", "I and my brother/sister", "I and my family", "I and my friends", "I and my colleagues", "I and my husband/wife", "I and my children", "I and my country" ...

# Processes of Identification

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- Offers to become 'we' and 'us' initially come from outside.
- The child normally accepts those offers without question.
- Only later in life can we freely choose between different offers of 'we'.

# Symbiotic Necessities

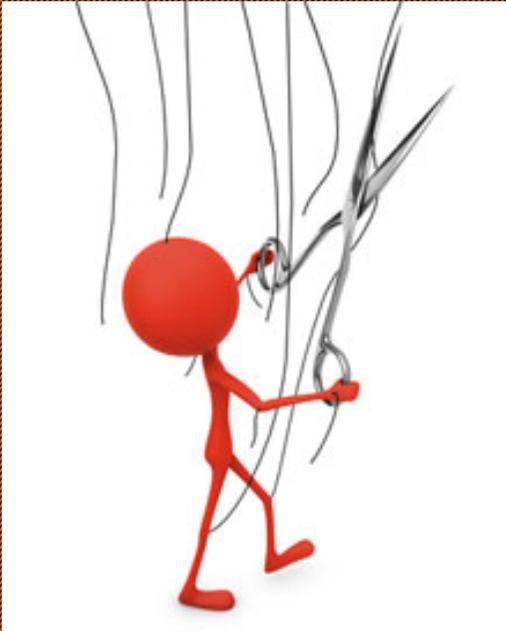
- being nurtured
- being kept warm
- having body contact
- being held
- having eye contact
- being understood
- being supported
- belonging exclusively to another person
- being welcomed



**... support the child's identification with the 'we'**

# Desires for Autonomy

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- perceiving, feeling, thinking for yourself
- to be independent
- to find your balance in yourself
- to rely on your own ability to act
- to be free
- to decide by yourself

... supports the child's separation from the 'wè'

# Identifications we choose...

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- with the sports team from your home country
- with the region in which you live
- with the company in which you work
- with stars from sports, movies and the music industry
- with self imagined fantasy figures or values



# Identifications we choose...

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- Do such Identifications support or hinder our Self development?
- Do they cause a distraction from developing our own healthy Self?



# Brain research, pre-frontal Cortex and Identity

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- As self control is a process organized in the pre-frontal cortex, the conclusion is that there are also internal images of the 'I', and similarly internal pictures of others.
- The development of a 'felt' I or self, and an inner image of another, has to take place in the brain of the baby, and these two processes are interwoven from the beginning. (Bauer 2015, S. 48 f., translated by F.R.)



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# Attributions: You = I; You = We

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# Different forms of Attributions

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- Giving names to children: Ann, Peter ...
- Attributing attitudes to children ('good', 'nice', 'naughty', 'innocent', 'my child')
- Religions: baptising child as Christian, Moslem, Jewish...
- Nationalities: Declaring someone as German, British, Norwegian, Turkish, Russian ...
- Political attributions: You are an ally, enemy, terrorist ...
- Diagnoses: You are mentally ill, borderline, psychotic ...
- ...

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# Attributions create Role Expectations

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- Ann should obey her parents
- A Muslim has to go to Mecca
- A British citizen has to pay taxes to his government
- A NATO ally has to prepare for war against Russia
- A mentally ill patient should take his medications

# Forced Attributions...

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- Include and exclude
- Support the need for belonging to a group
- Put pressure on human beings
- Enforce idealisation and devaluation
- Increase competition
- Create pictures of enemies
- Limit the space for developing one's own healthy identity



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# what does Trauma do to our Identity?

# Splits in the Identity

## Structure after a traumatic Experience

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**Sector 2:  
Traumatised  
Parts**



**Sector 3:  
Surviving Parts**



**Sector 1:  
Healthy Parts**



**Traumatisation by Violence**

**Traumatisation of Sexuality**

**Traumatisation of Love**

**Trauma of Identity**

# The Trauma of Identity means ...

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- Having to give up one's healthy 'I'
- in order to survive extreme and permanent violence and rejection by the child's mother
- at a very early stage of development
- most often already before birth



Immediately stop following me!

HÖREN SIE SOFORT AUF, MIR NACHZULAUFEN.

But I love you!

ABER... ICH LIEBE SIE.

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# The Trauma of Identity produces the need and habit for...

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- identifying with perpetrators (e.g. with the violent mother or father)
- accepting attributions without question
- looking for substitute identities (e.g. a professional role)

# The Trauma of Identity produces the need and habit for...

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- clinging to another person's life (e.g. to a partner or one's own child)
- hiding behind a 'We' (relationship, family, company, 'system', nation etc.)

# The more extreme the Psychotrauma is, the more urgent is the need for...

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- re-defining oneself (e.g. 'It didn't affect me!')
- self-denial (e.g. 'I was not beaten / sexually abused!')
- disengaging the 'I' from the body (e.g. 'My body is sick!' 'My body is already dead!')
- dissolving the 'I' (e.g. through drug usage or withdrawing into a state of confusion)



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# Not having an Identity means...

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- Being self absorbed and full of insecurities
- Feeling strange in one's own body
- Not being able to feel one's own pain and anxiety
- Being stressed in groups of others who are stressed
- Being caught up in the contradictions of one's mind
- Still feeling very alone even in company of others
- Fighting against the rest of the world



# The Trauma of Identity turns ...

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- individuals into split personalities, who experience this as normal, and as their human nature
- People who see themselves (e.g. their body) as objects rather than as subjects in their life
- Men and women into functioning machines serving the purposes of traumatized communities



# Identity oriented Psychotrauma Therapy (IoPT)

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- Helps one's true identity to grow
- Makes one's surviving strategies conscious
- Dissolves entangled identifications
- Questions attributions

I  
O  
P  
T

# Identity oriented Psychotrauma Therapy (IoPT)

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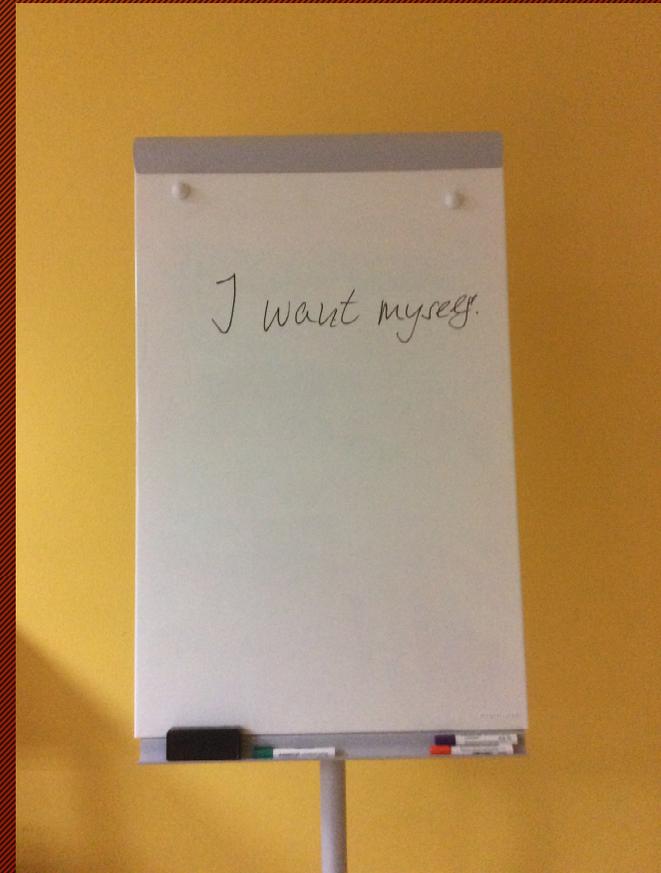
- Makes one's own trauma conscious
- Empowers the healthy 'I'
- Supports the encounter of the healthy 'I' with the traumatised 'I' without splitting again

I  
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# Basic Method of Identity oriented Psychotrauma Therapy

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- A free space for...
- Self Encounter...
- by exploring the sentence or picture of intention...
- word by word...
- with the help of points of resonance from outside (other people or objects)



Picture of  
an Intention  
of a client  
suffering from  
HIV-infection



1. Conception
2. Attempt of abortion
3. Surviving state

# How can we recognise a 'healthy I' in a Self Encounter Process?

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- It is present but not dominating
- It is flexible
- It behaves realistically
- It is able to accept surviving parts
- It helps to contact traumatised parts
- It is assisted by a free will

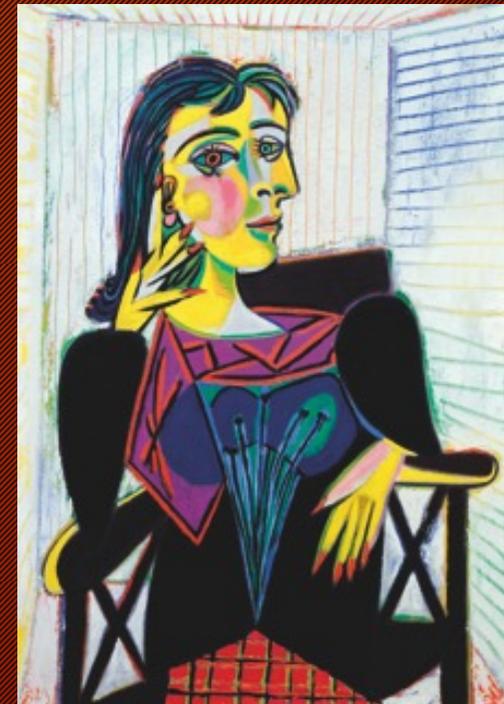


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# Invitation

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- 3rd International Conference  
“Love, Trauma and I“
- 21-23 October 2016 in Munich
- The Sentence of Intention as a  
new Way to Encounter Yourself
- [www.healthy-autonomy.de](http://www.healthy-autonomy.de)



Pablo Picasso „Porträt of Dora Mar  
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