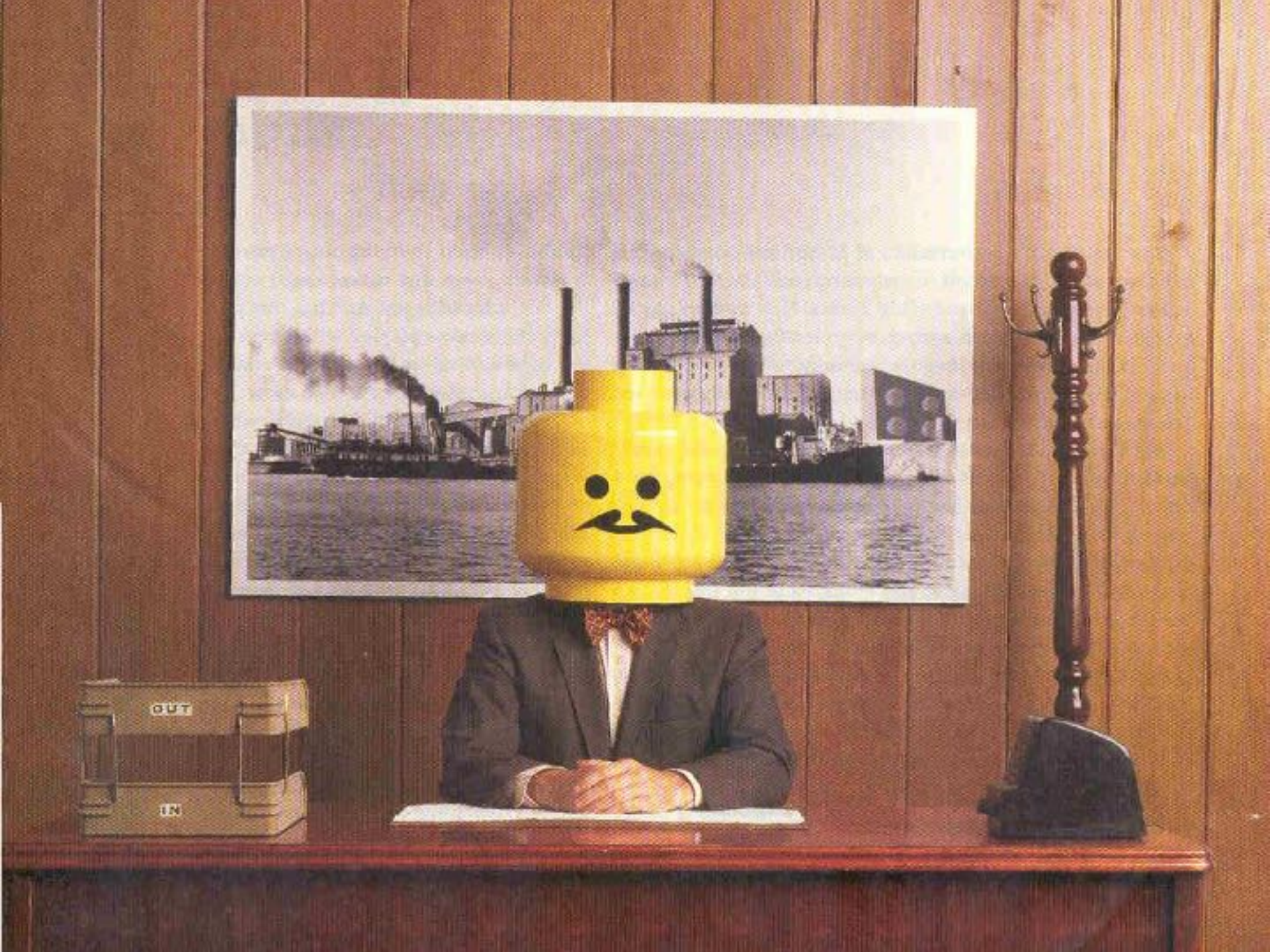
Inspirational Chaos:
Executive Coaching and Tolerance of Complexity

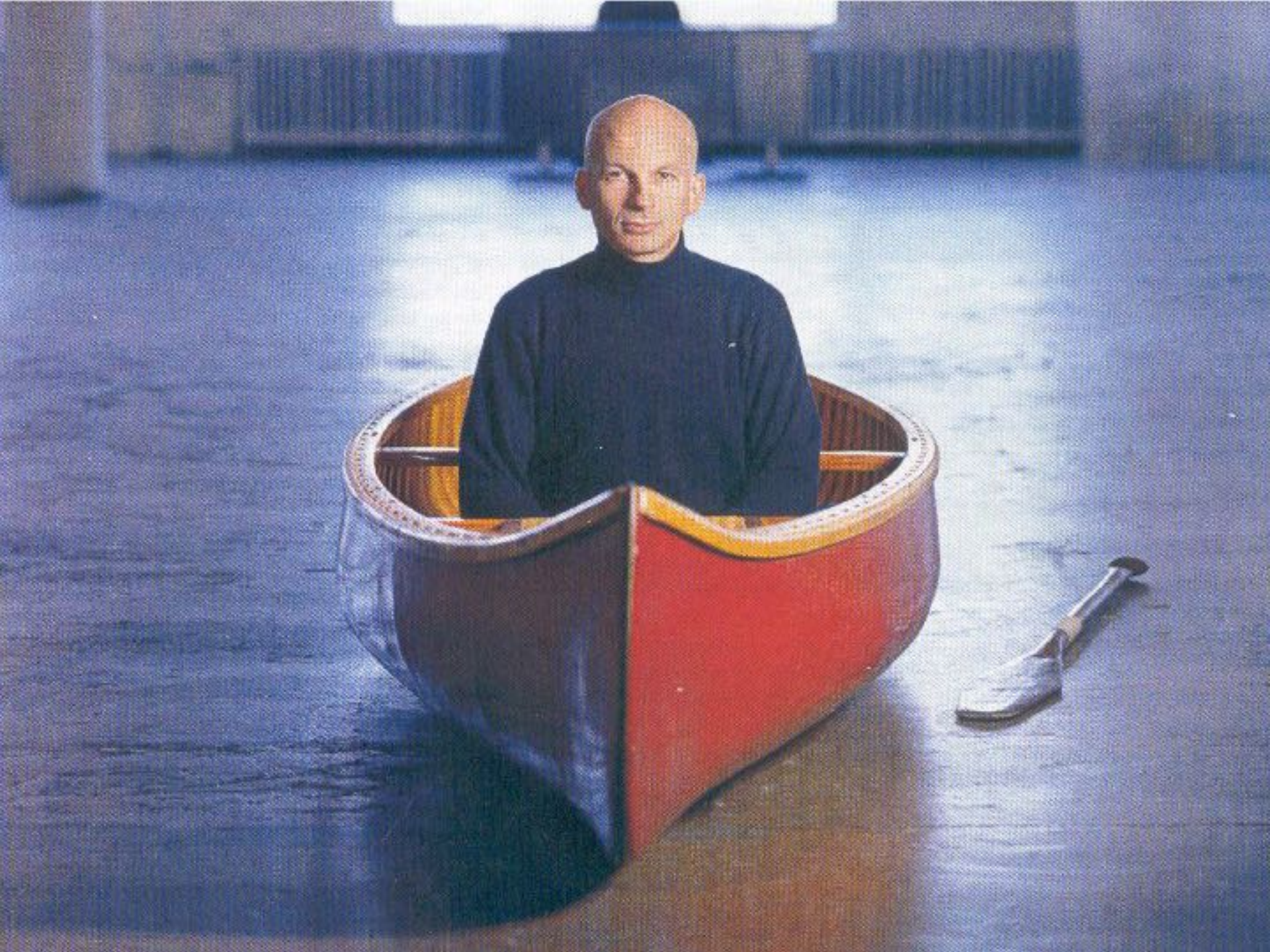
Peter Webb
Executive Coaching Psychologist

Evidence-Based Coaching Conference, University of Sydney, July 8, 2003

5
CHAOS


OUT
IN

WILDERNESS TOUR



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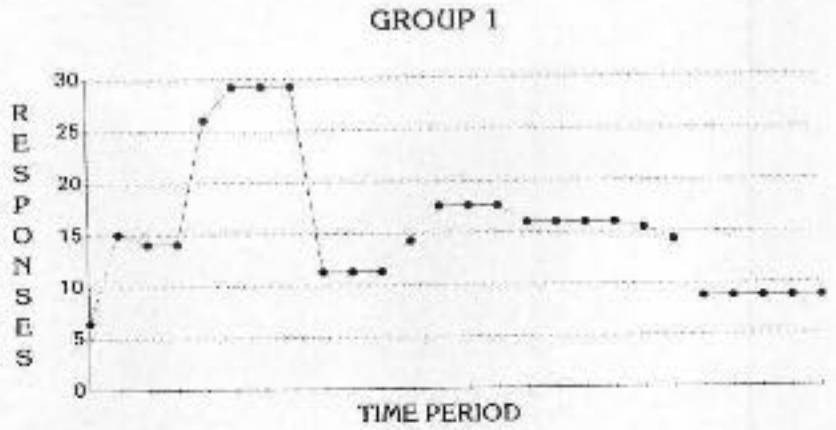
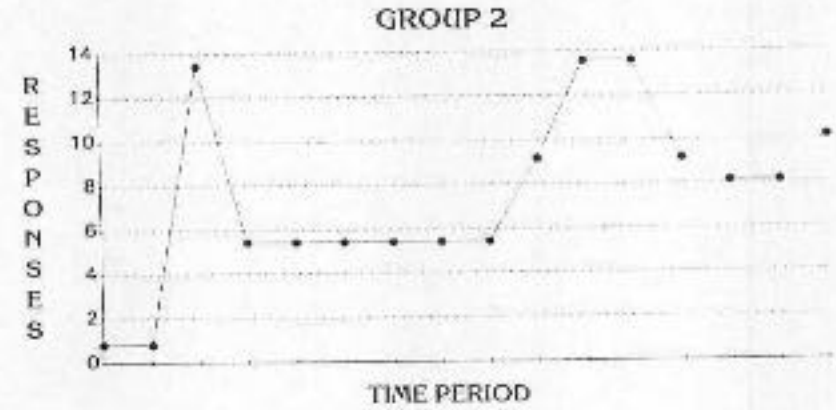
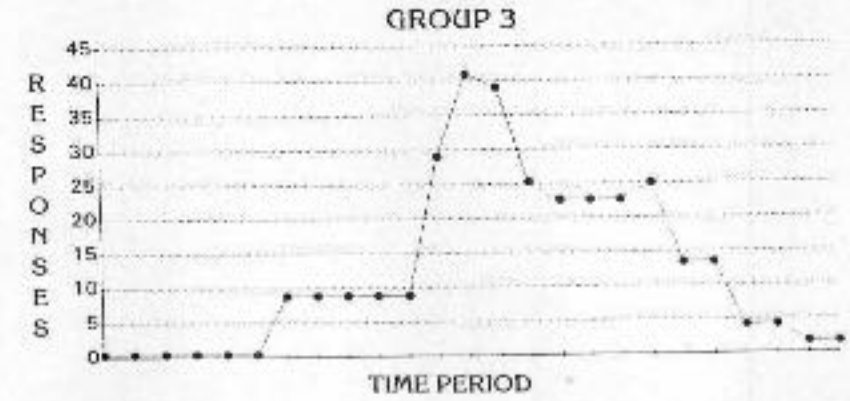




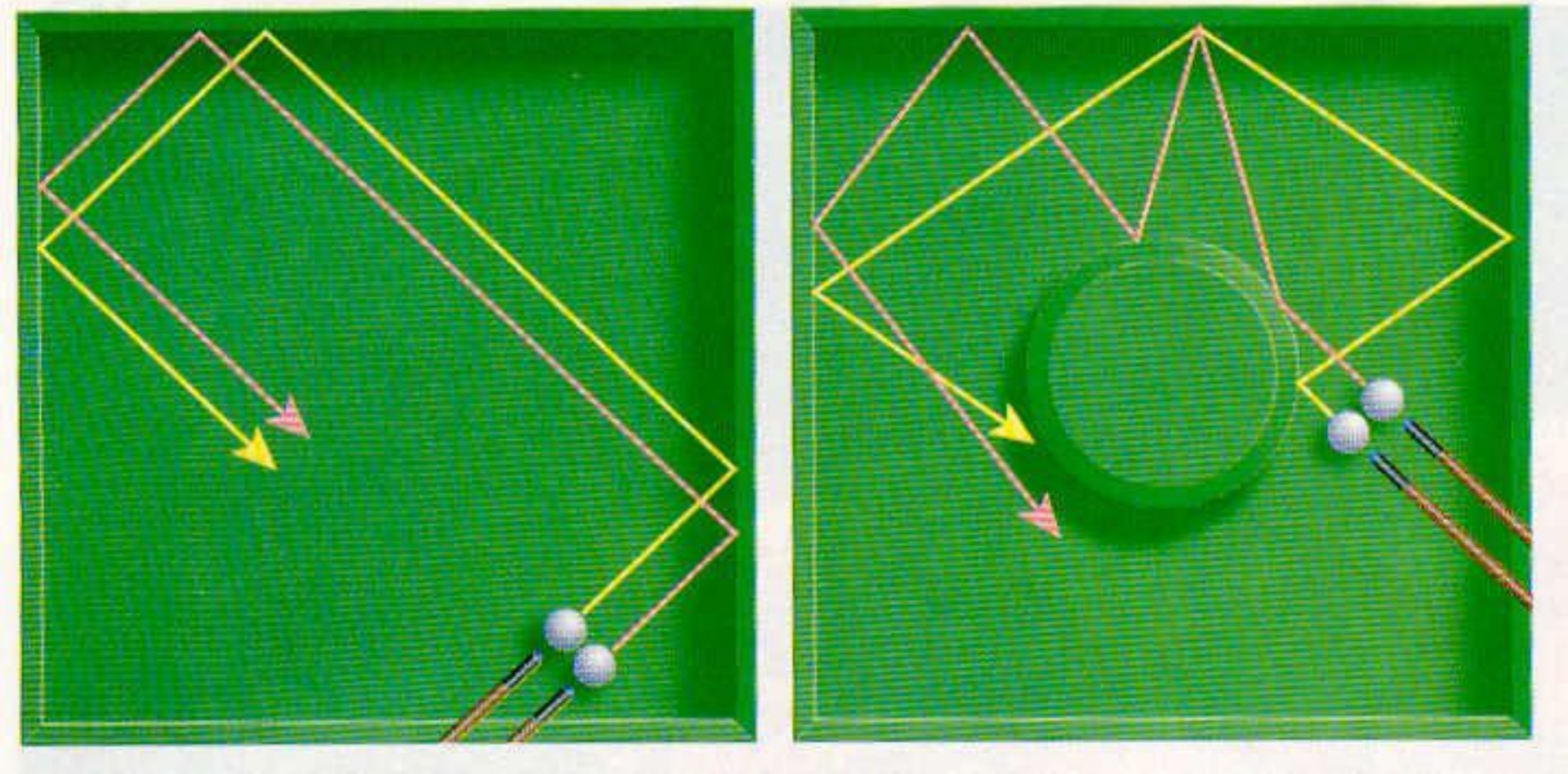


Group Discussion *Density* at 4-day Intervals

Guastello (1998)

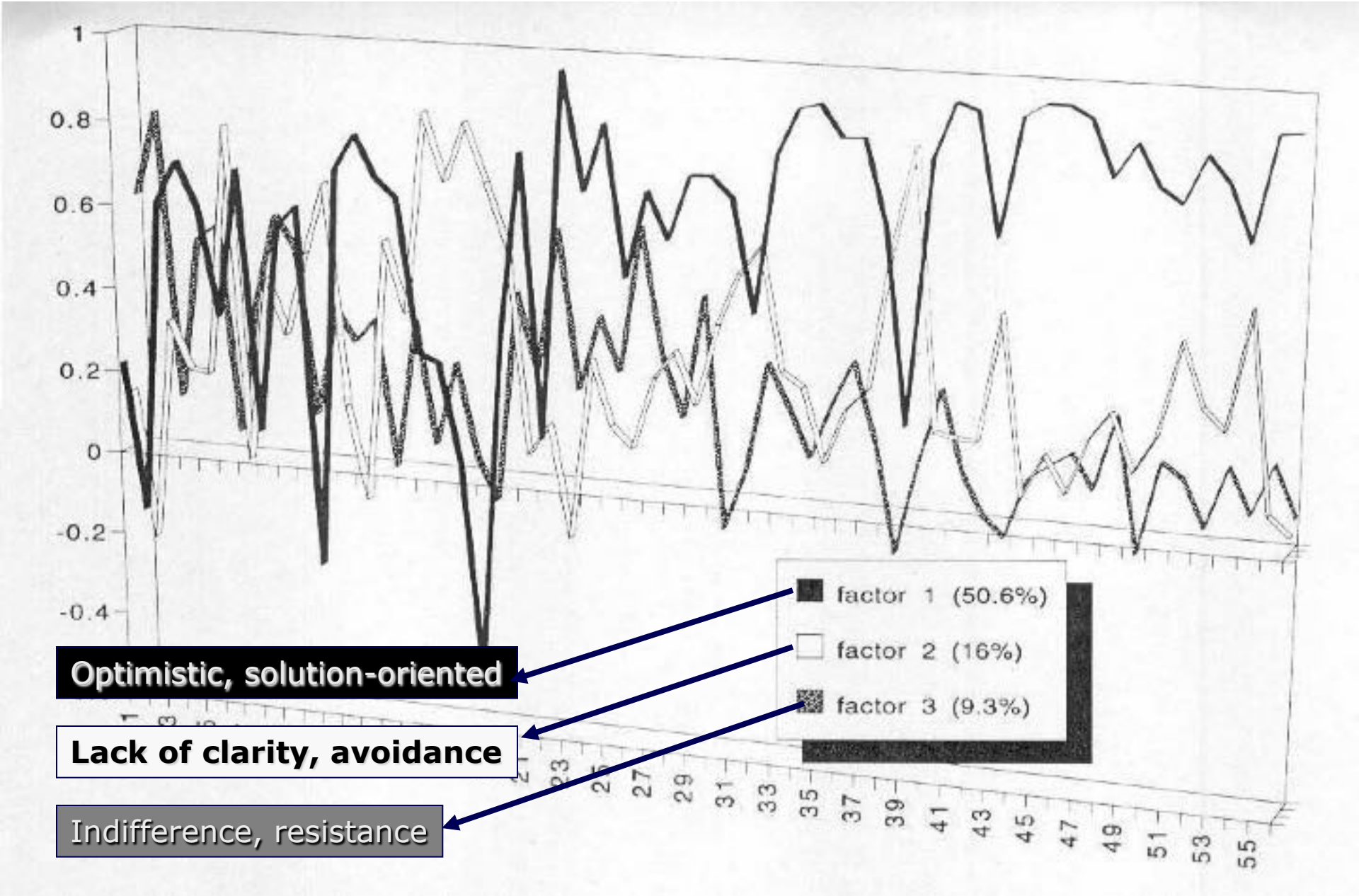
Sensitive Dependence
On Initial Conditions

Chaotic Behaviour as Exponential Divergence

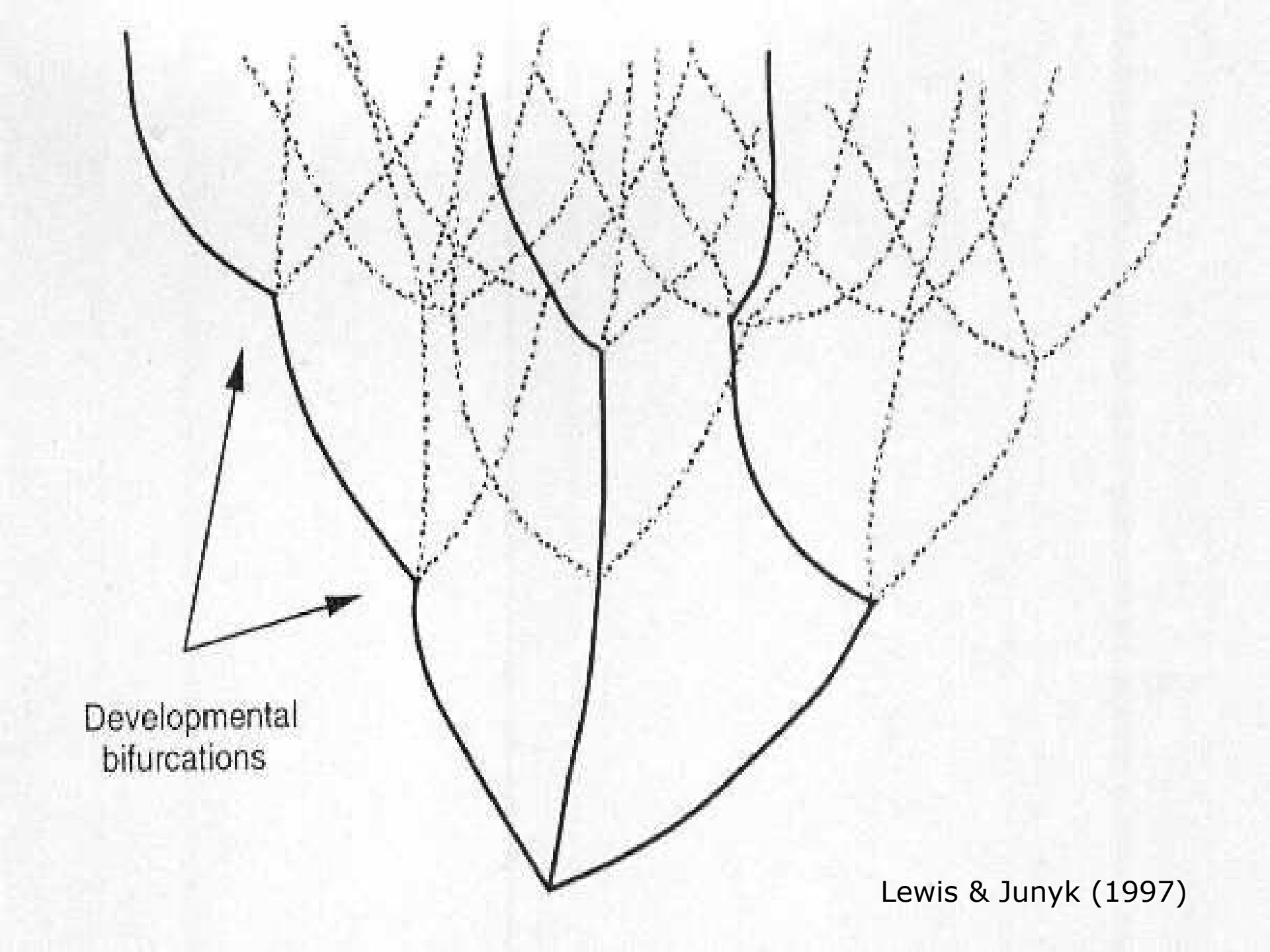


Time Course of 3 factors over 56 Psychotherapy Sessions

Tschacher & Scheier (1997)

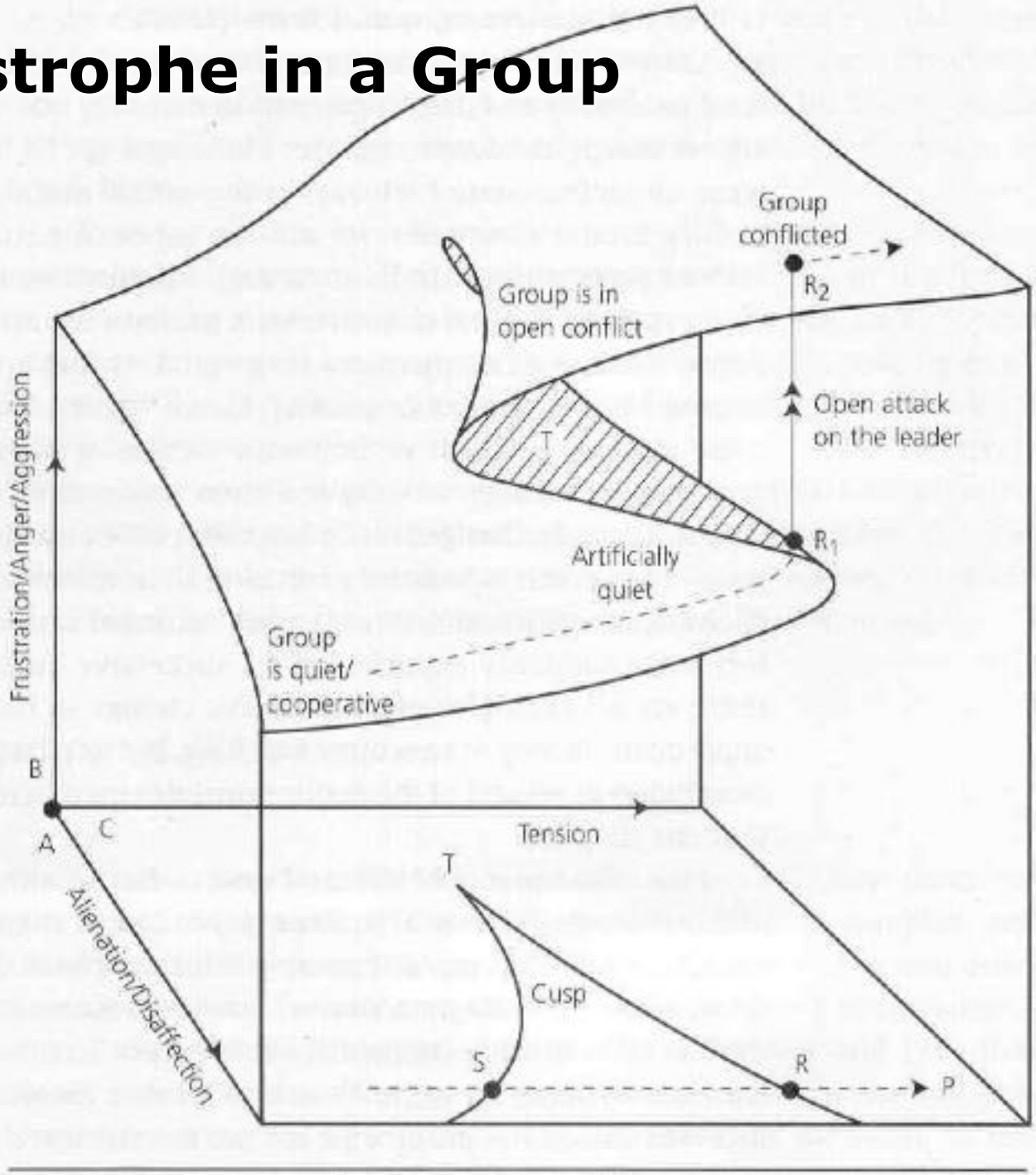


Bifurcations

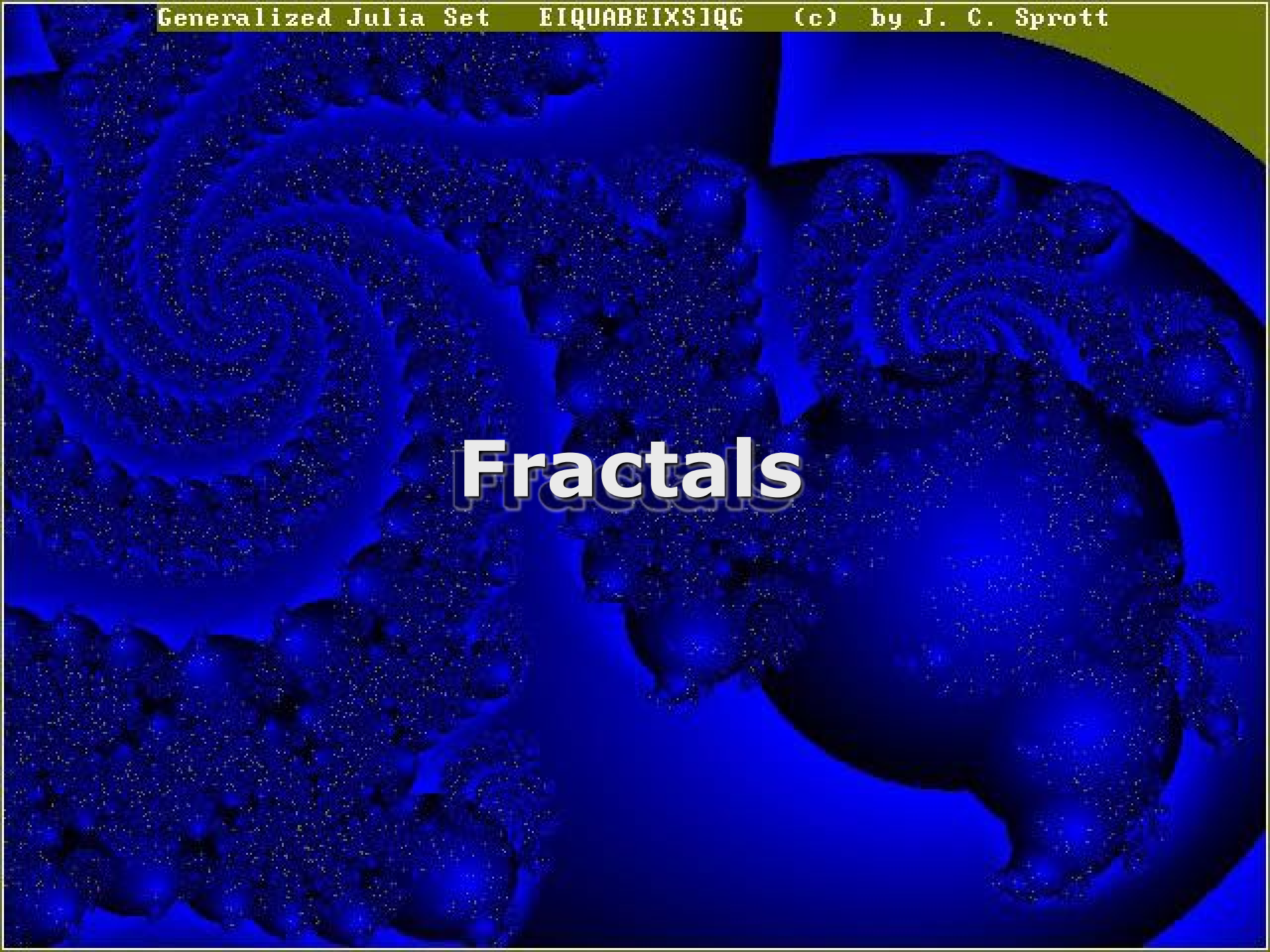


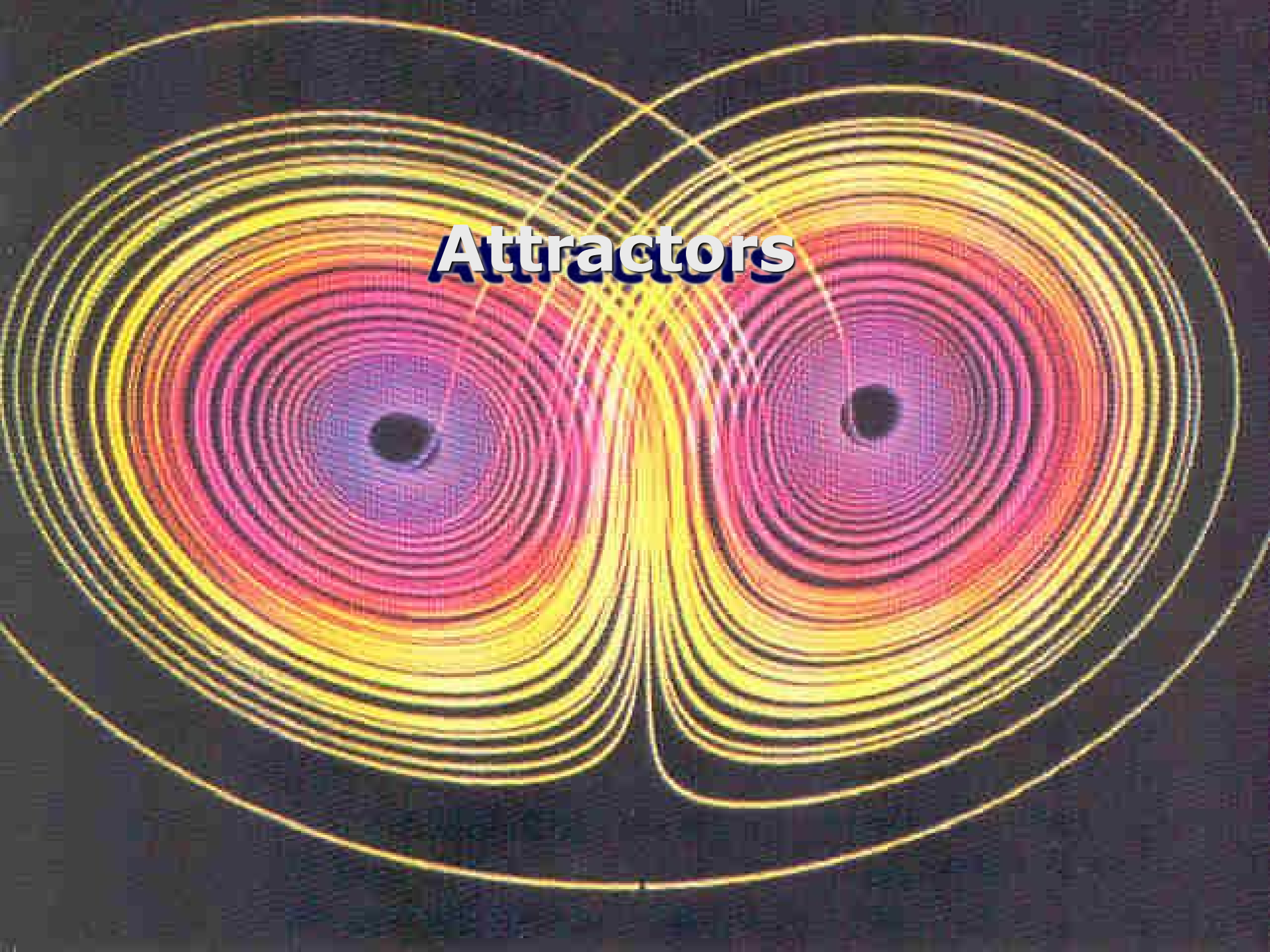
Lewis & Junyk (1997)

Cusp Catastrophe in a Group

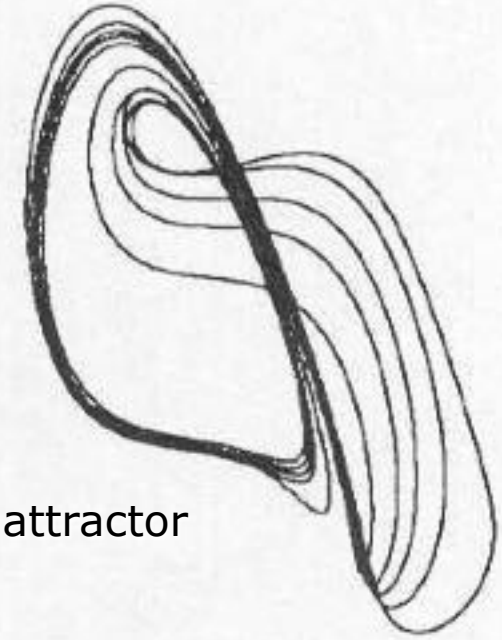


Kilburg, (2000)


Generalized Julia Set EIQUABEIXSIQG (c) by J. C. Sprott
Fractals


Attractors

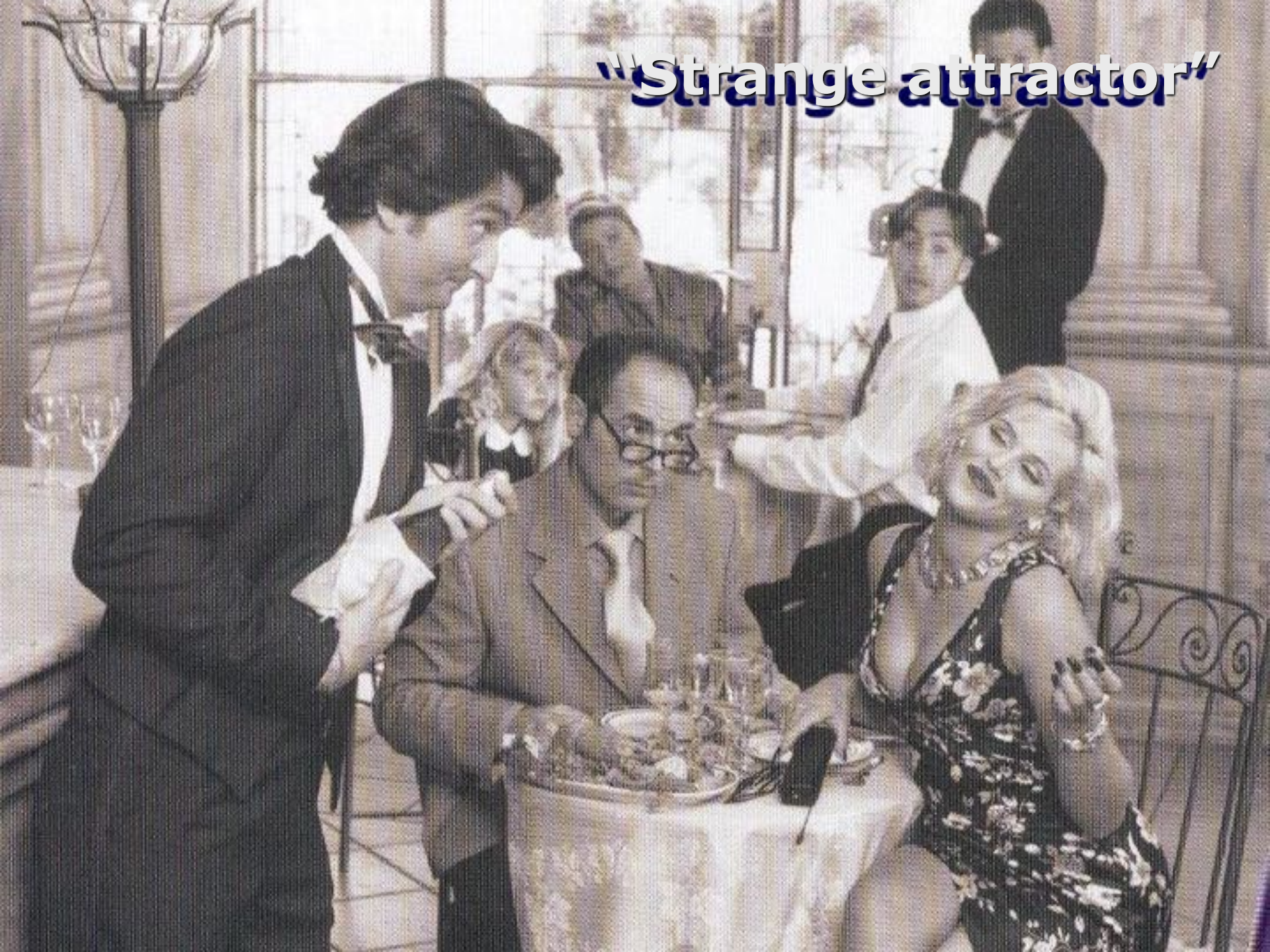
Fixed-point attractor

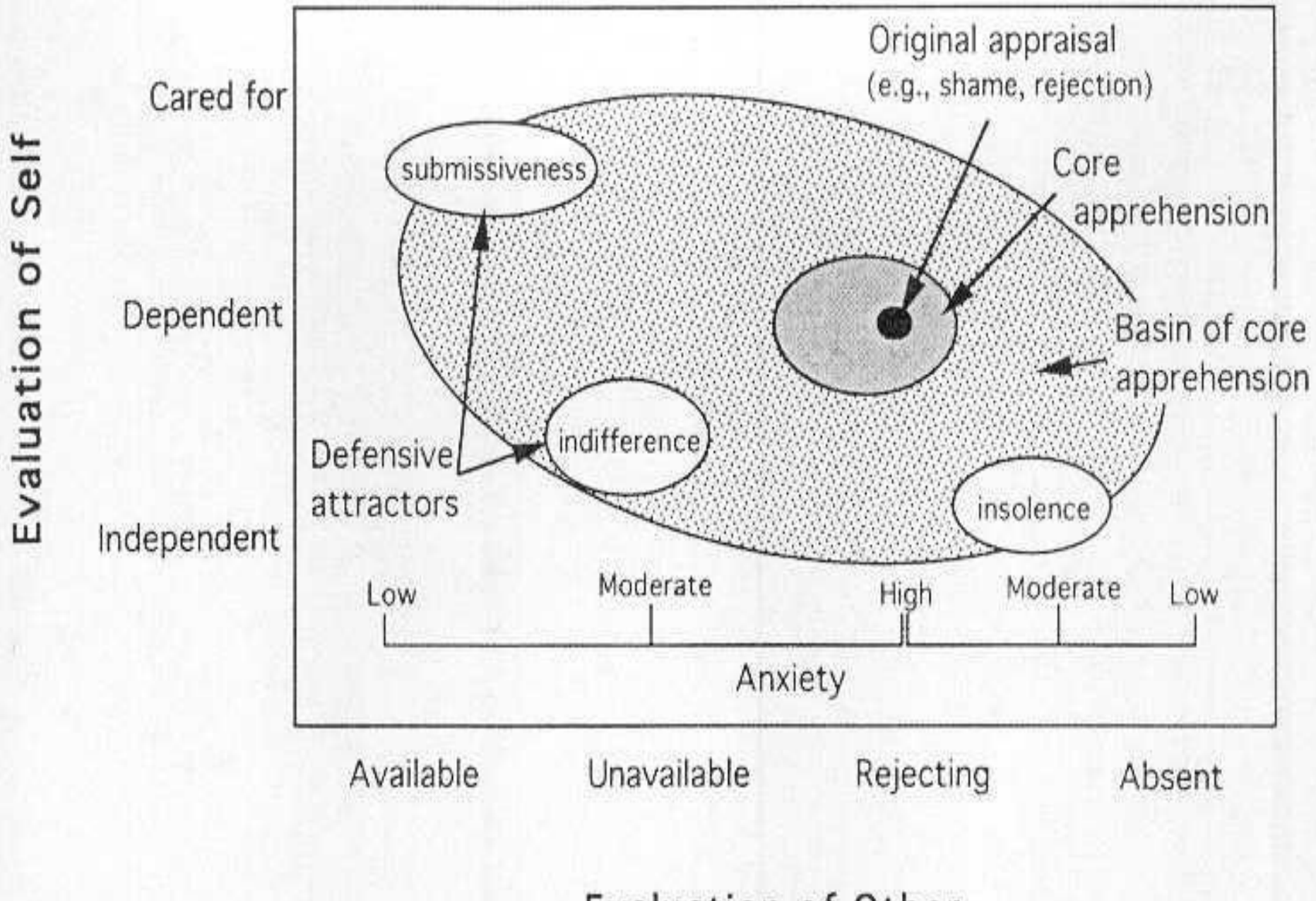


Limit-cycle attractor

Strange attractor

BÜtz (1997)


"Strange attractor"



Lewis & Junyk (1997)

Implications of Chaos Theory For organizations

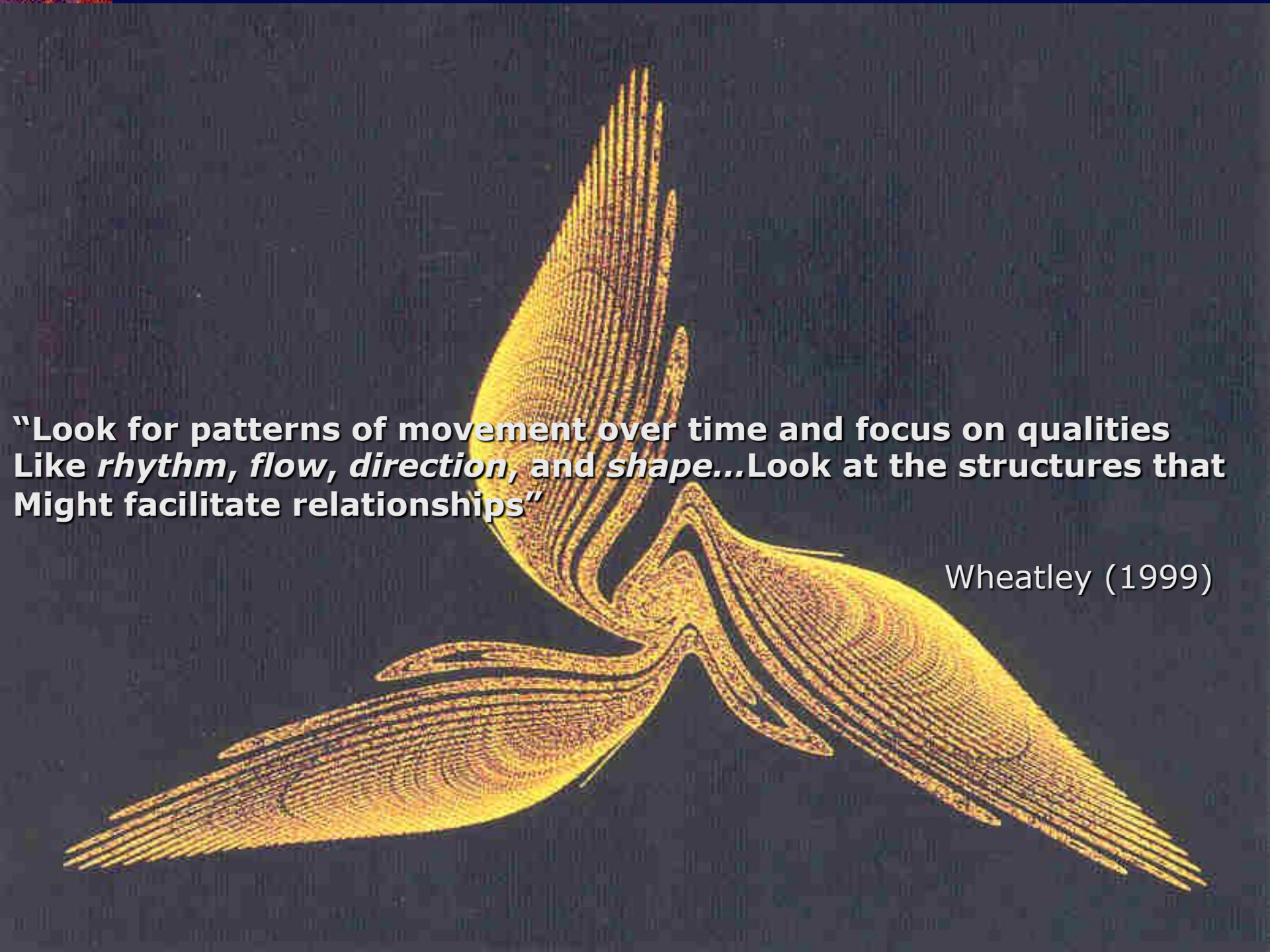
Levy (2000)

Long-term planning is impossible

Dramatic change can occur unexpectedly

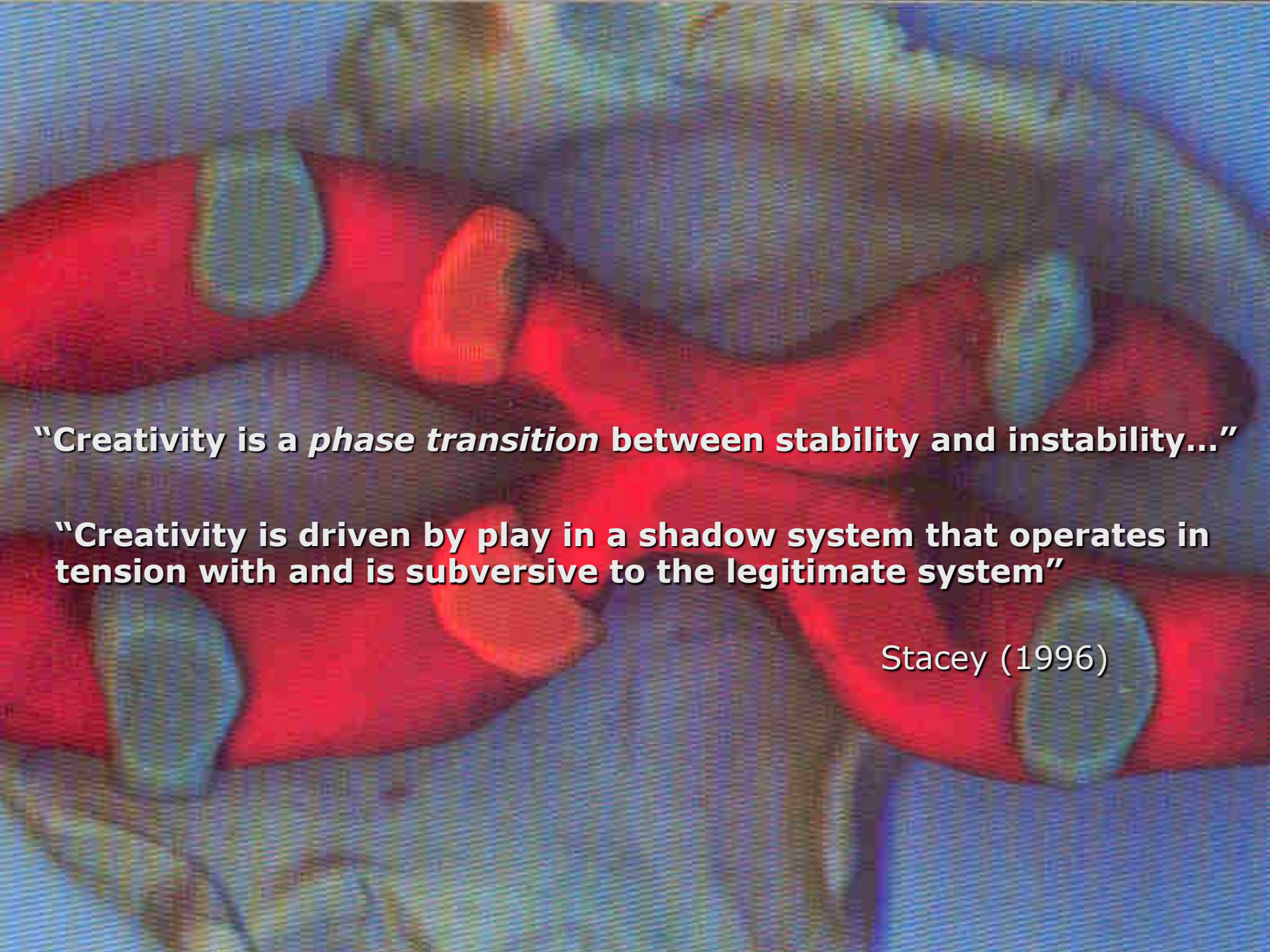
Complex systems exhibit patterns and short-term predictability

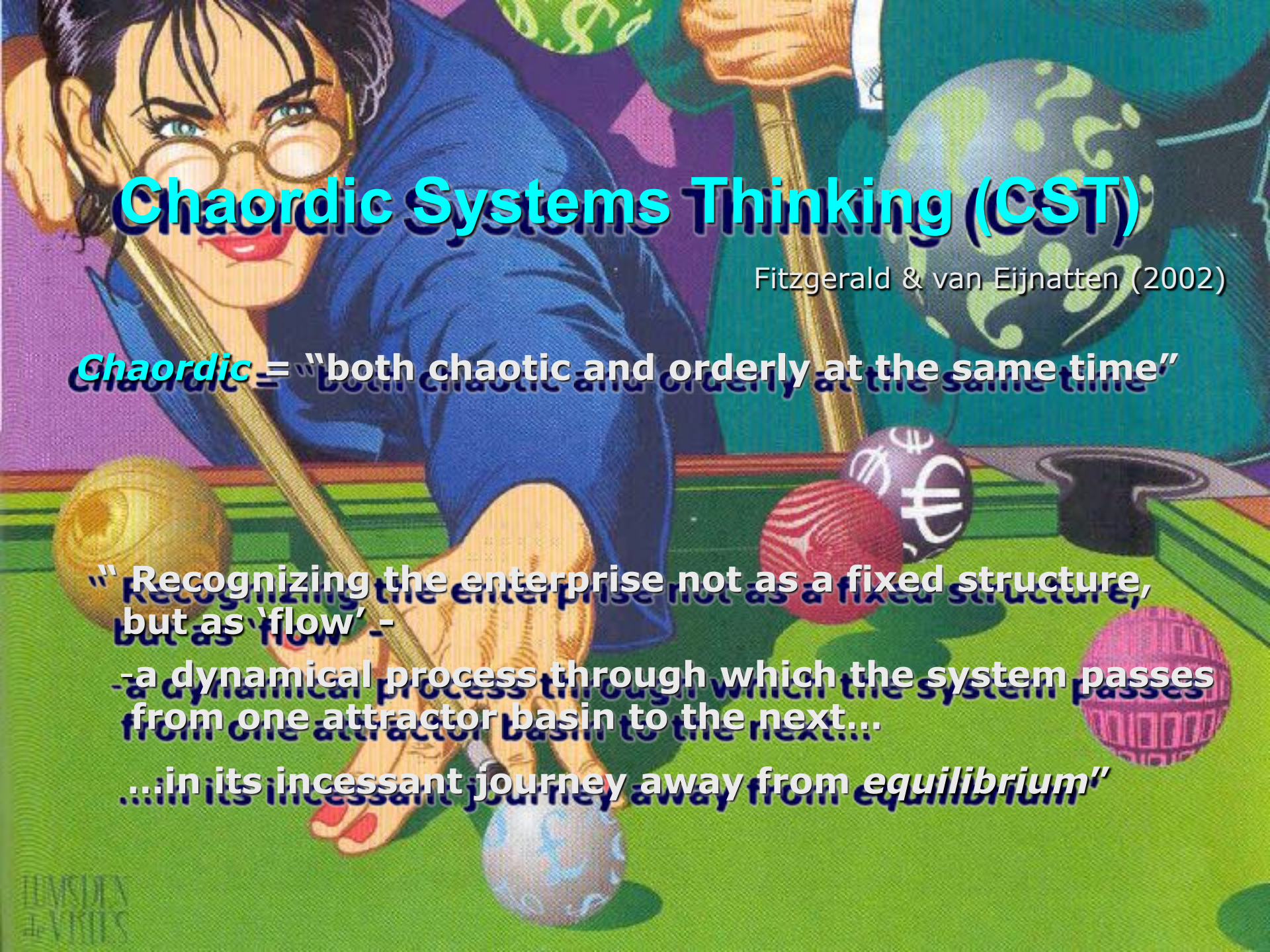
Organizations can be tuned to be more innovative and adaptive



"Look for patterns of movement over time and focus on qualities Like *rhythm*, *flow*, *direction*, and *shape…*Look at the structures that Might facilitate relationships"

Wheatley (1999)


"Creativity is a *phase transition* between stability and instability…"
"Creativity is driven by play in a shadow system that operates in tension with and is subversive to the legitimate system"
Stacey (1996)



Chaordic Systems Thinking (CST)

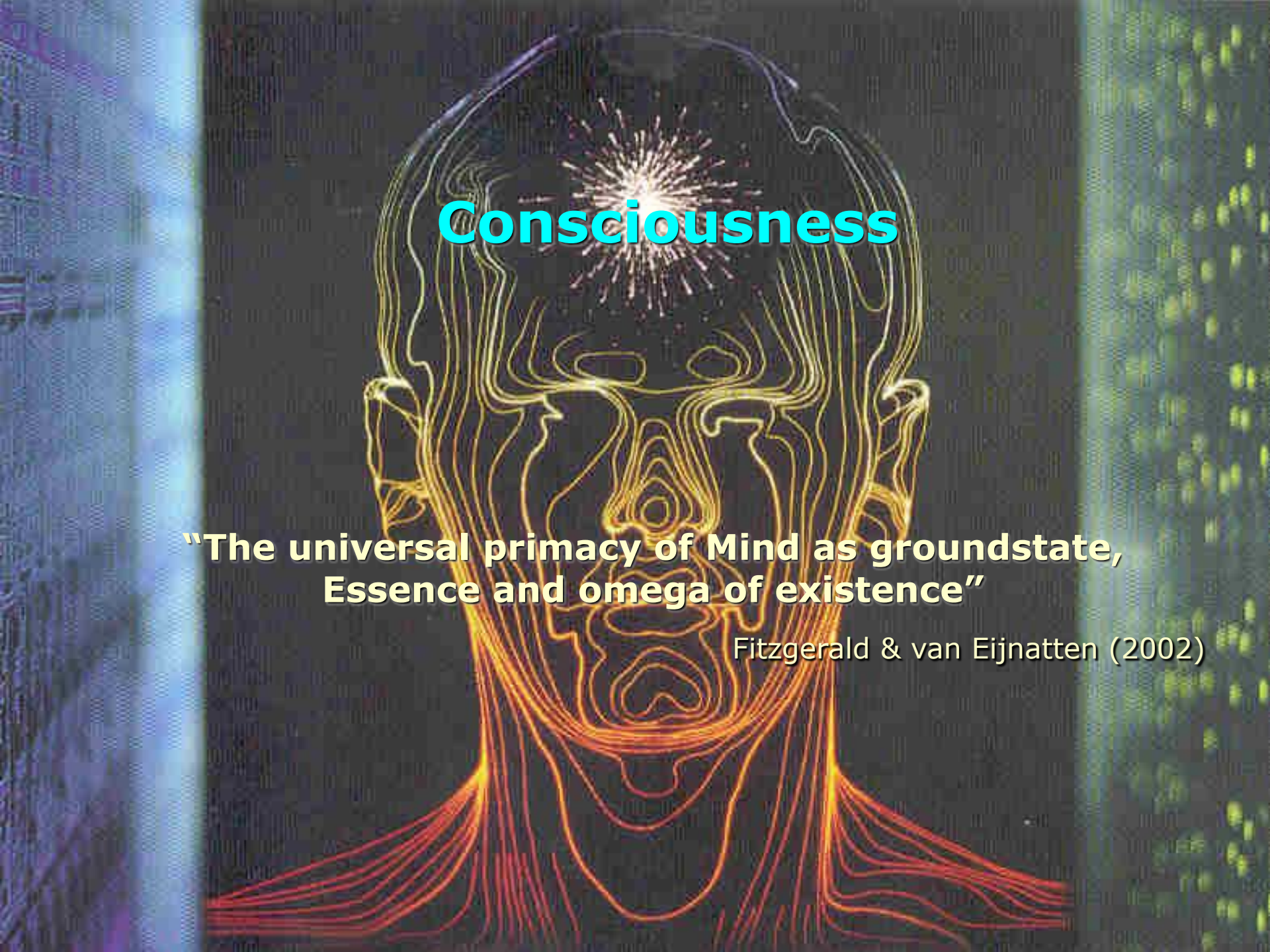
Fitzgerald & van Eijnatten (2002)

Chaordic = "both chaotic and orderly at the same time"

" Recognizing the enterprise not as a fixed structure, but as 'flow' -

-a dynamical process through which the system passes from one attractor basin to the next...

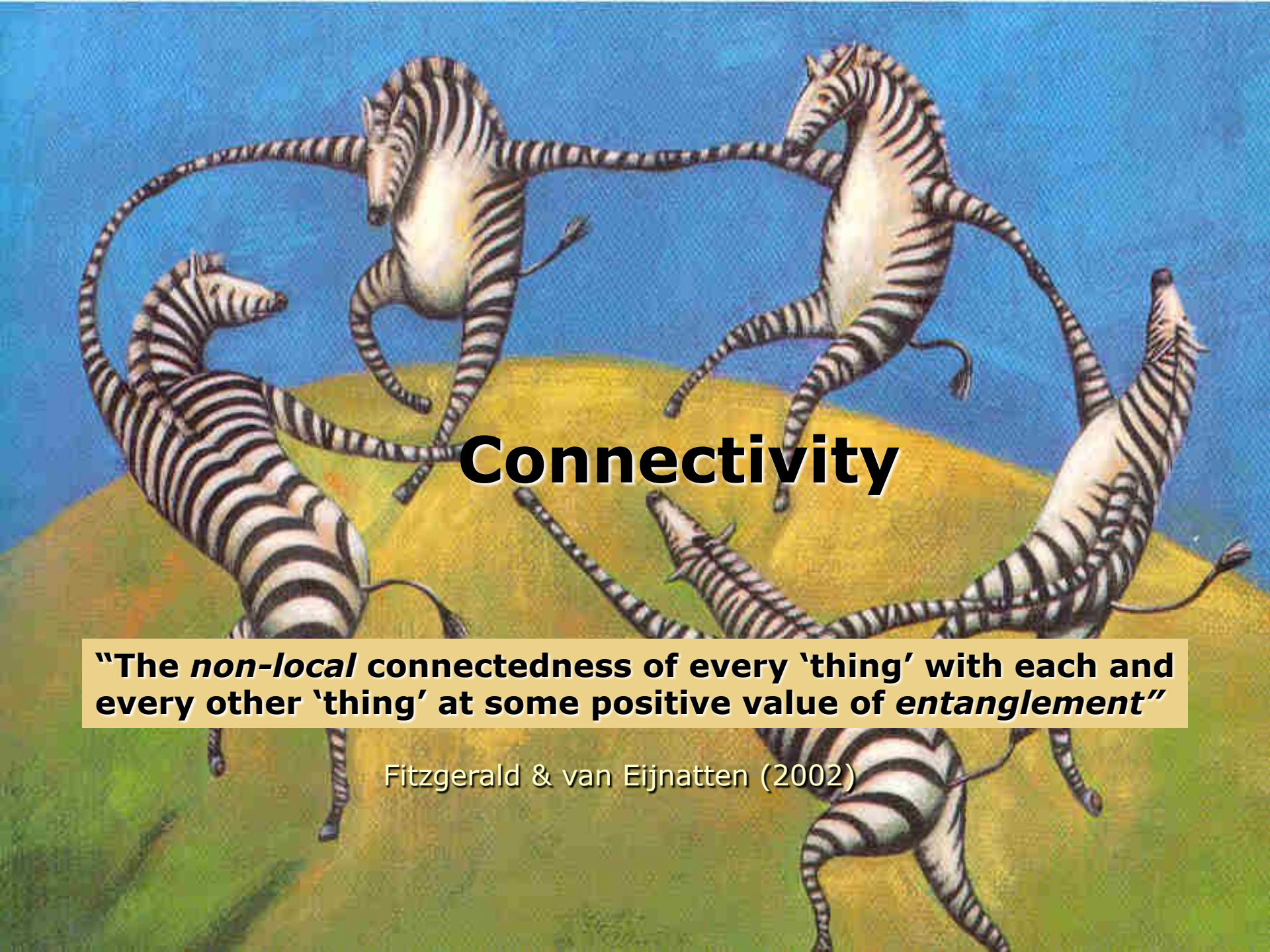
...in its incessant journey away from *equilibrium*"



Consciousness

"The universal primacy of Mind as groundstate, Essence and omega of existence"

Fitzgerald & van Eijnatten (2002)



Connectivity

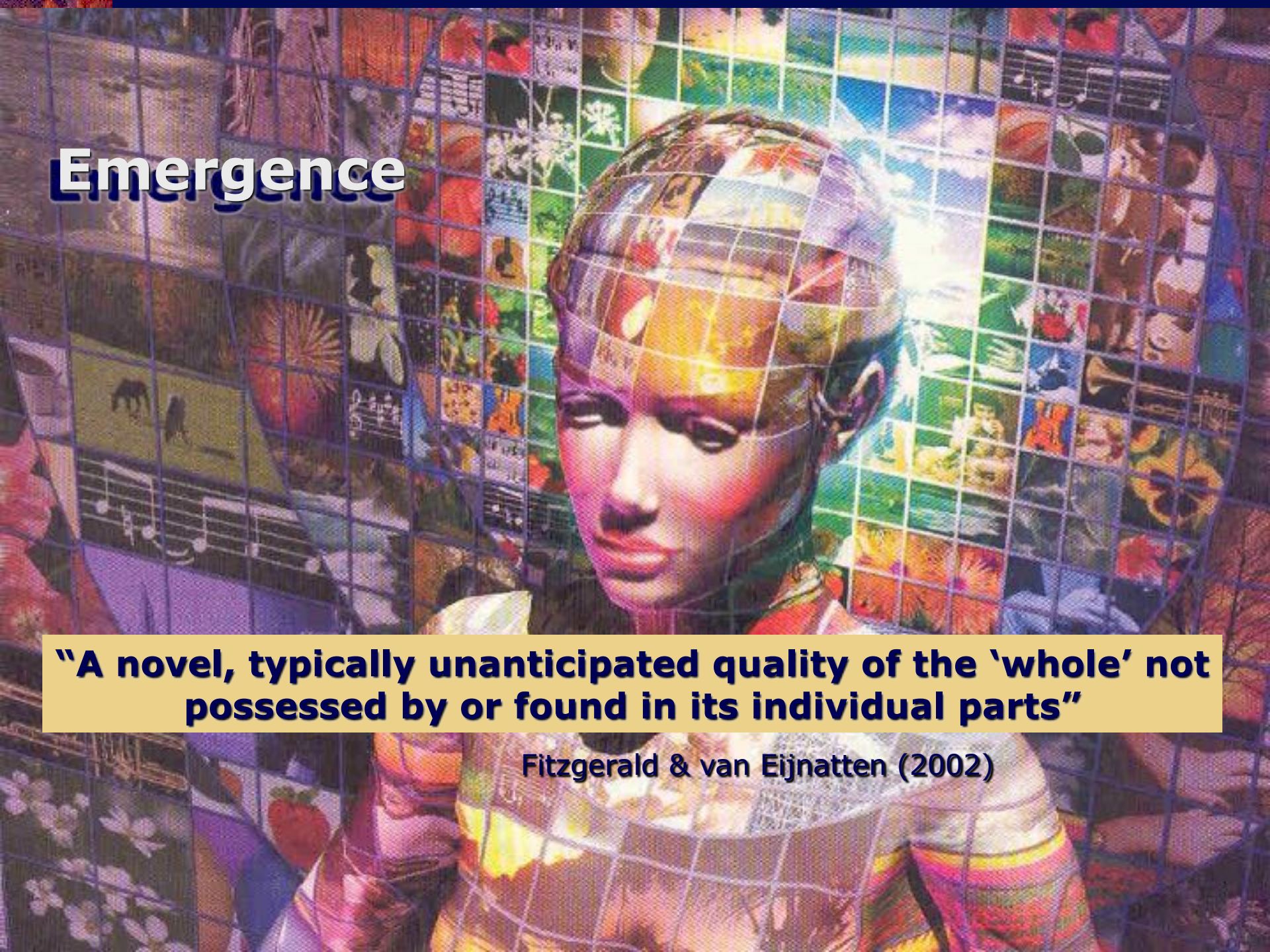
"The *non-local* connectedness of every 'thing' with each and every other 'thing' at some positive value of *entanglement*"

Fitzgerald & van Eijnatten (2002)

Indeterminacy

"The non-linearity of cause and effect"

Fitzgerald & van Eijnatten (2002)



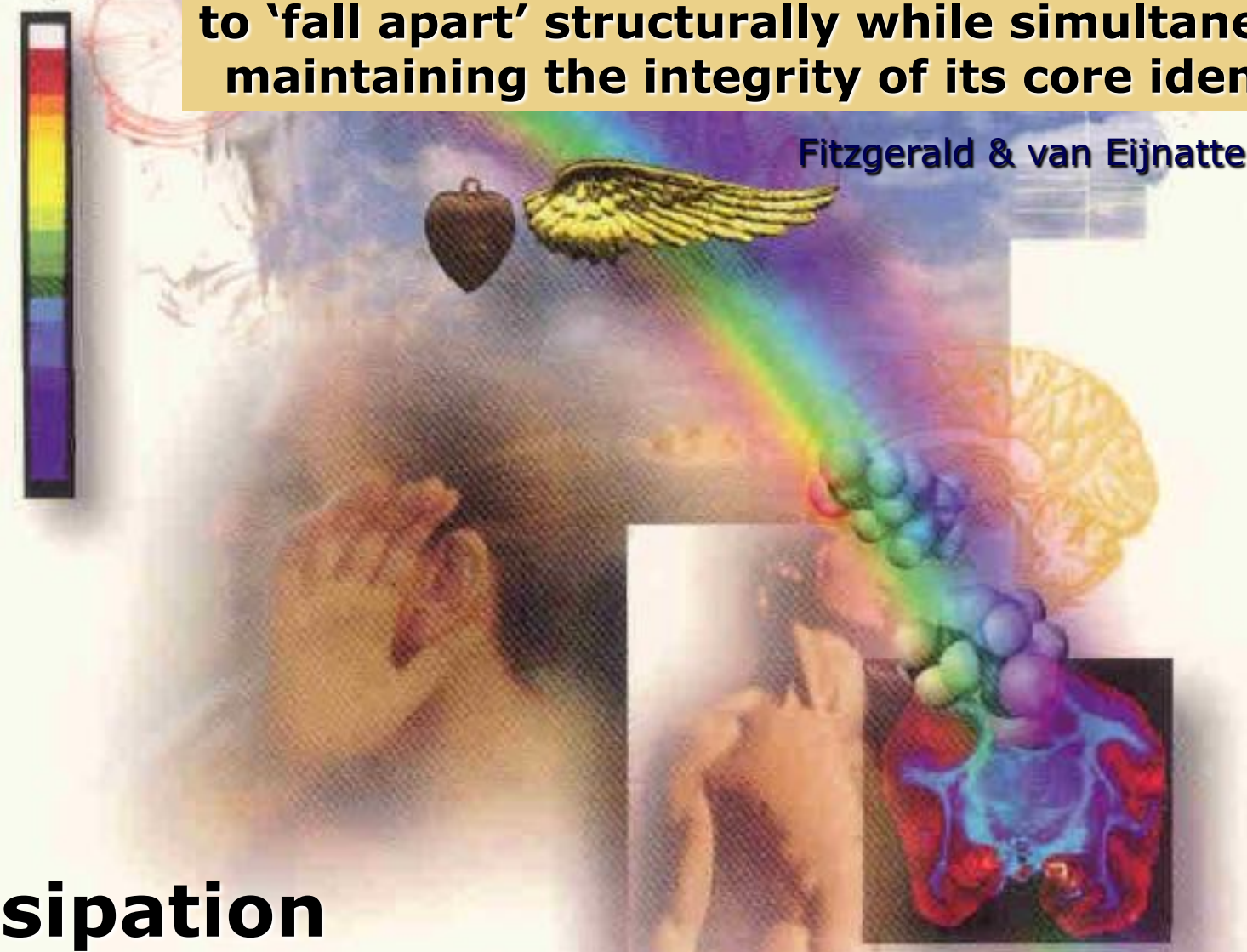
Emergence

"A novel, typically unanticipated quality of the 'whole' not possessed by or found in its individual parts"

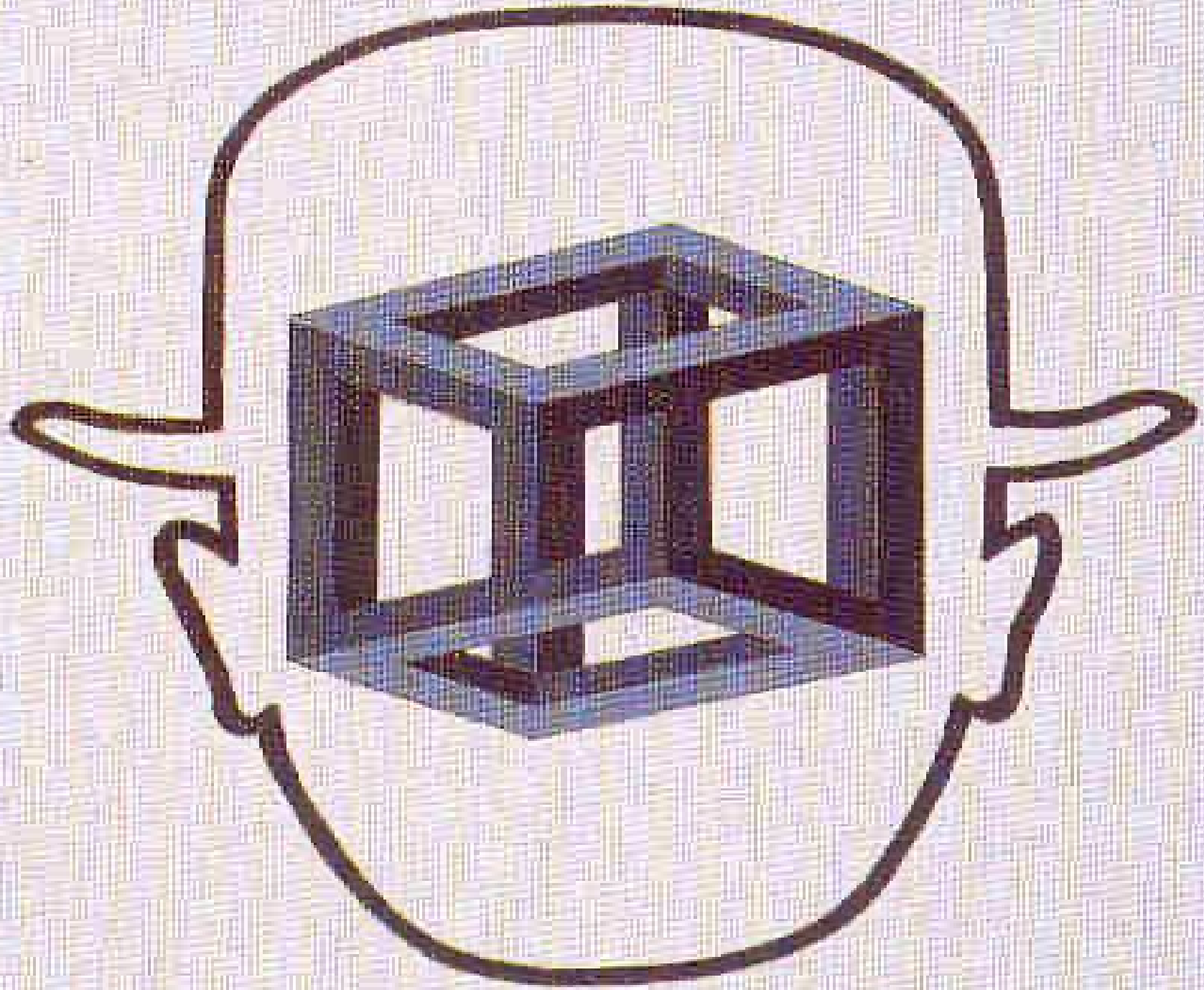
Fitzgerald & van Eijnatten (2002)

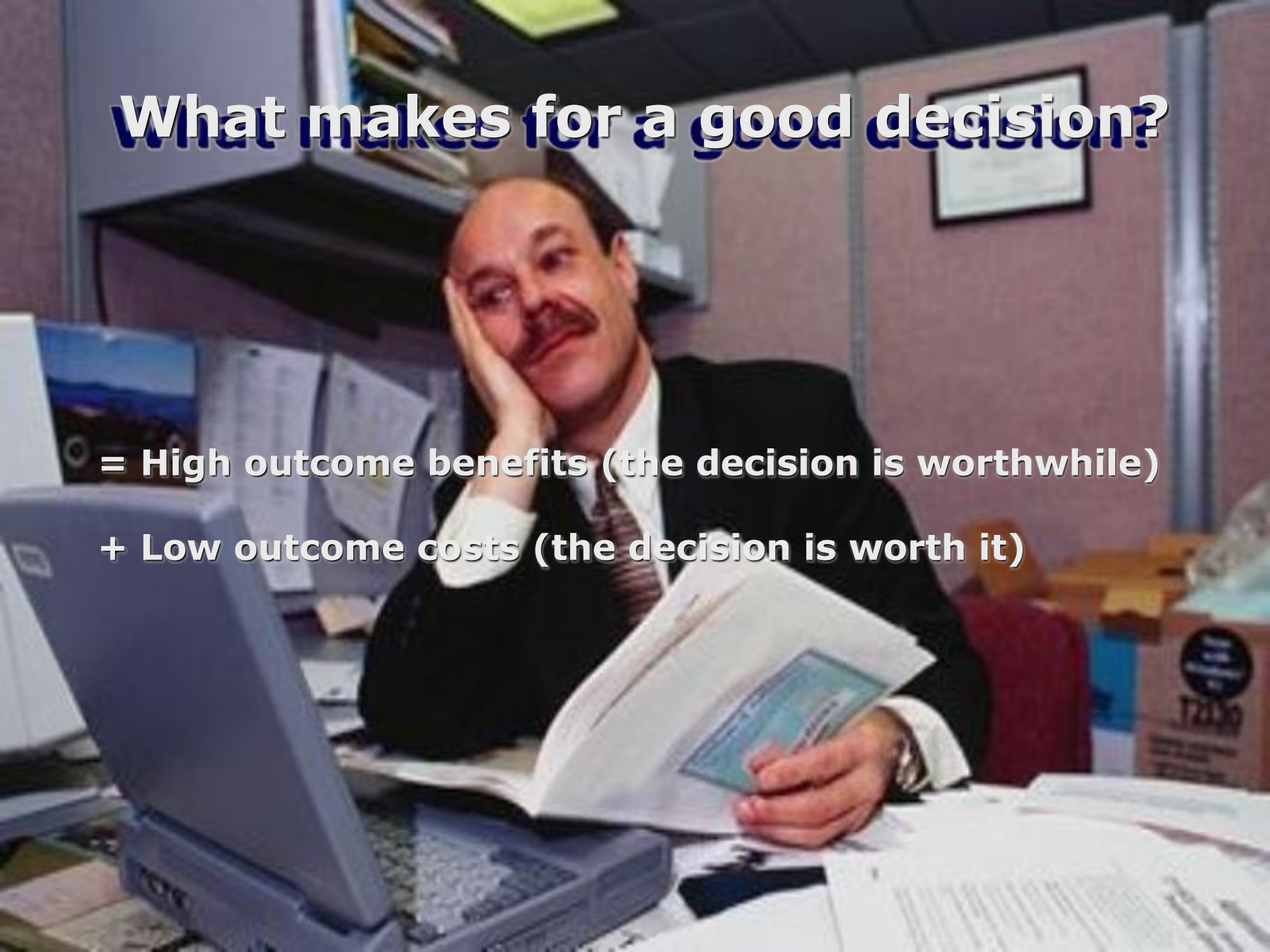
"The capacity of a *chaordic system* in *Far-From-Equilibrium* (FFE) conditions to 'fall apart' structurally while simultaneously maintaining the integrity of its core identity"

Fitzgerald & van Eijnatten (2002



Dissipation





What makes for a good decision?

= High outcome benefits (the decision is worthwhile)

+ Low outcome costs (the decision is worth it)

Vigilant Decision-making

Johnston, Driskell & Salas (1997)

A systematic, organized information search

Thorough consideration of all available alternatives

Devotion of sufficient time to evaluate each alternative

The re-examination and review of data before making a decision

Hyper-vigilant Decision-making

Johnston, Driskell & Salas (1997)

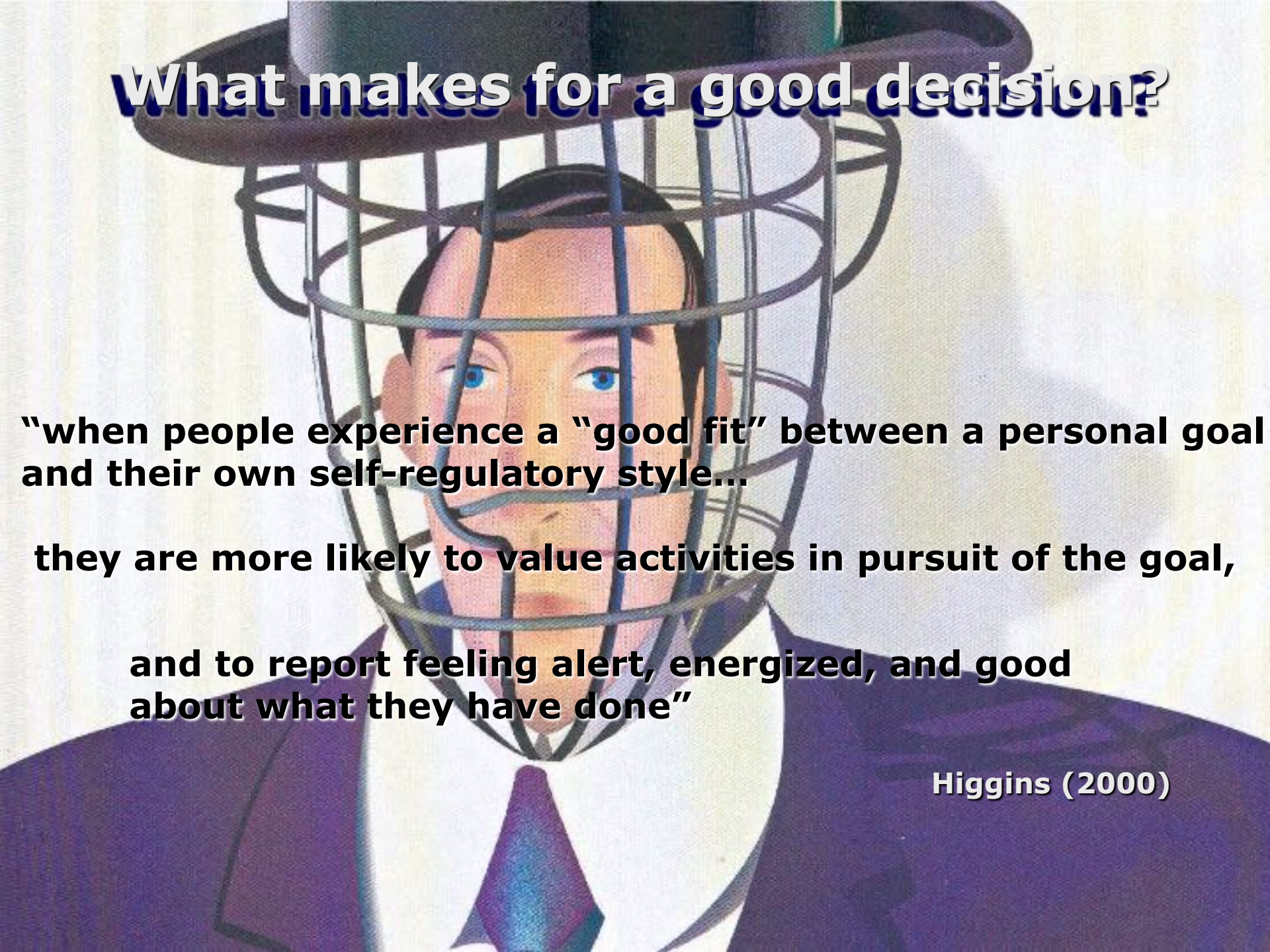
A nonsystematic or selective information search

Consideration of limited alternatives

Rapid evaluation of data

Selection of a solution without extensive review or reappraisal

What makes for a good decision?



"when people experience a "good fit" between a personal goal and their own self-regulatory style…

they are more likely to value activities in pursuit of the goal,

and to report feeling alert, energized, and good about what they have done"

Higgins (2000)

How Managers Experience and Adapt to Complexity and Uncertainty

Ball (2000)

Accepting complexity and uncertainty as the way of the world

Establishing guiding principles for setting priorities and making decisions

Making timely decisions

Managing the information flow

Nurturing and sustaining relationships

Acknowledging and processing emotions

Being a continuous learner

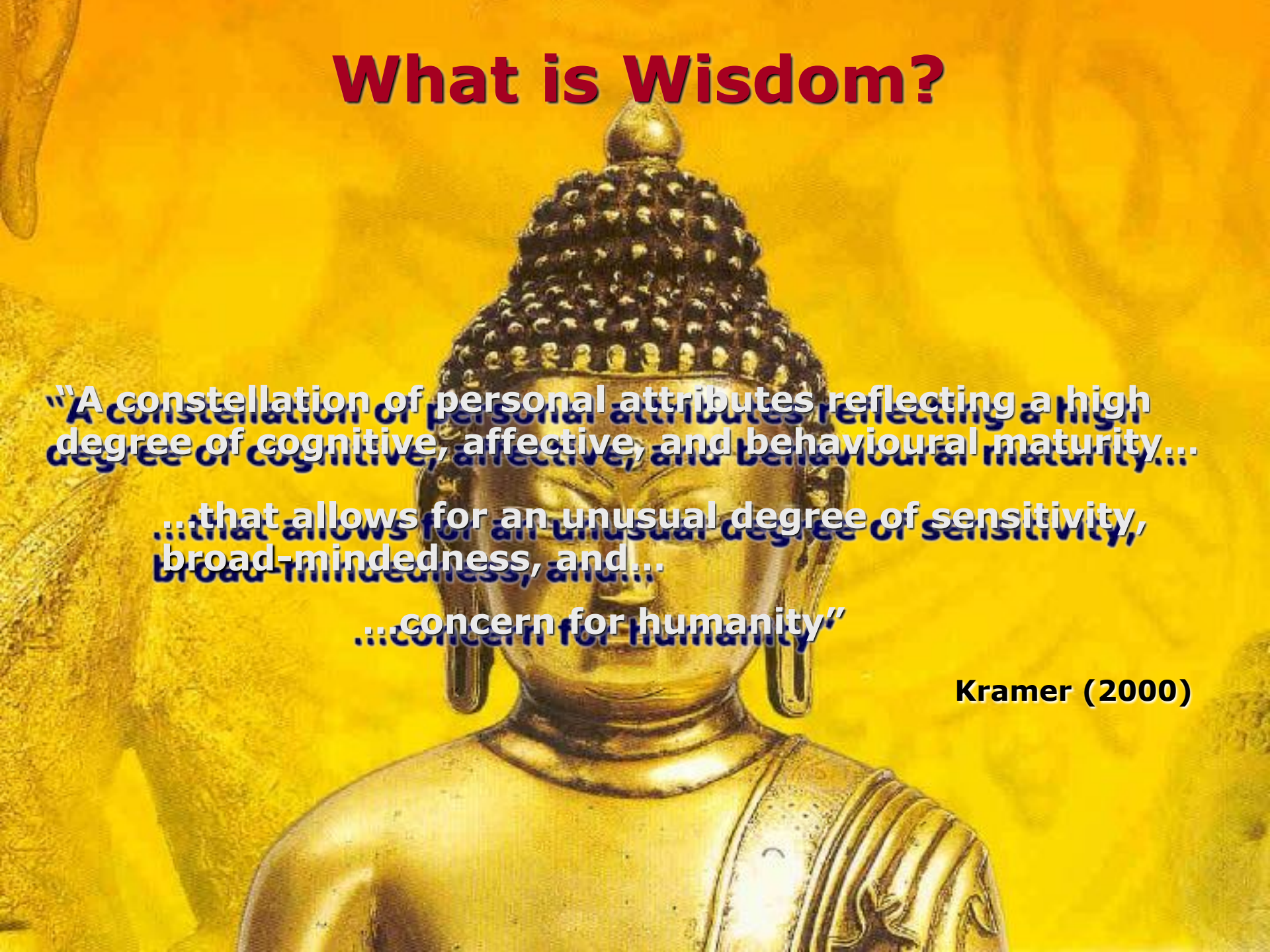
Powerhouse Museum
presents
STAR WARS
THE MAGIC OF MYTH

What is Wisdom?

"Expert knowledge and Judgment about important, Difficult and uncertain questions associated with the meaning and conduct of life"

Baltes & Kunzmann (2003)

What is Wisdom?



"A constellation of personal attributes reflecting a high degree of cognitive, affective, and behavioural maturity…

…that allows for an unusual degree of sensitivity, broad-mindedness, and…

…concern for humanity"

Kramer (2000)

Wisdom: The Art of Problem Finding

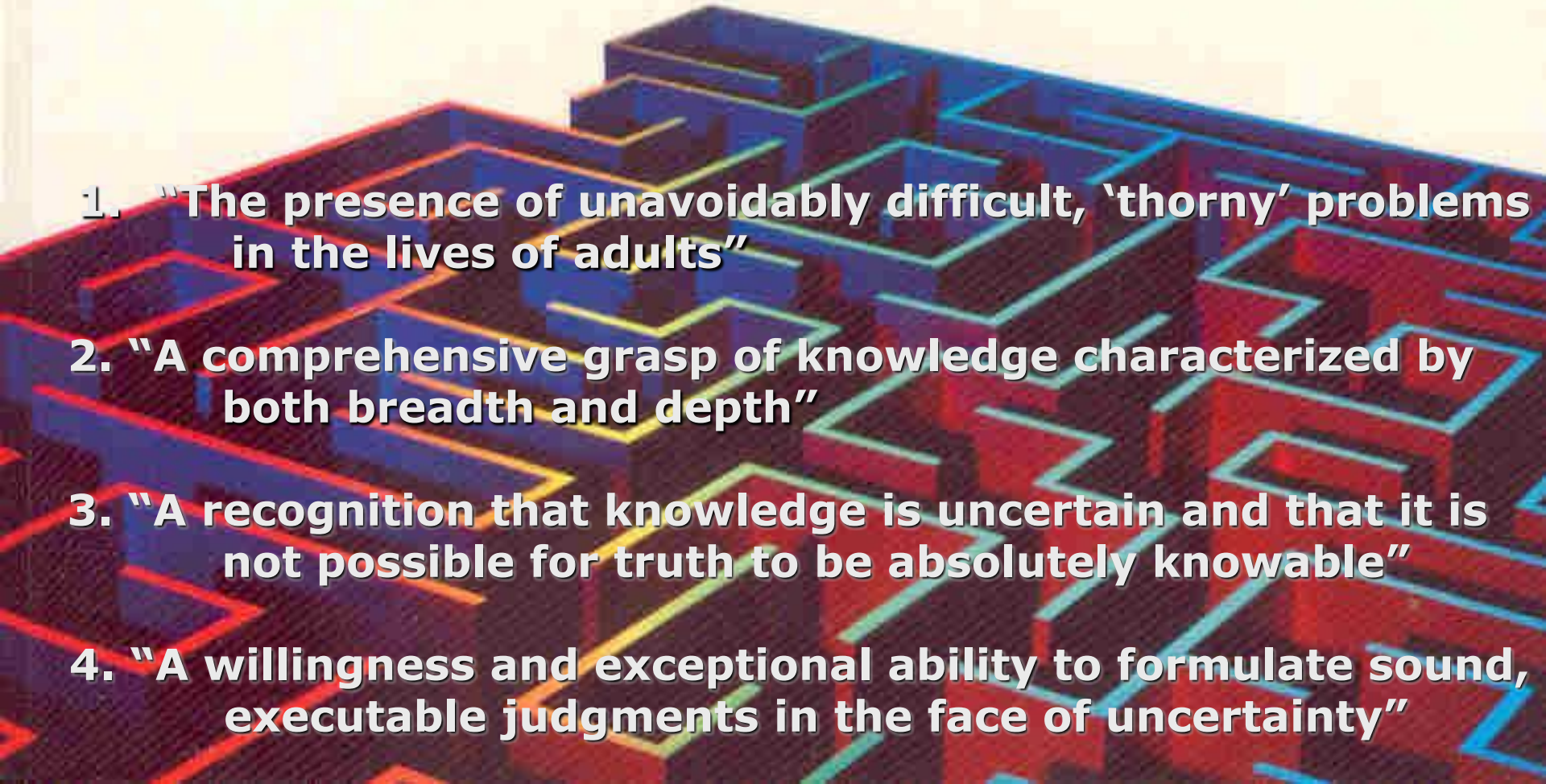
Arlin (1990)

1. "The search for complementarity"
2. "The detection of asymmetry"
3. "Openness to change"
4. "A pushing of the limits"
5. "A taste for problems of fundamental importance"
6. "The preference for certain conceptual moves"

Wisdom and Reflective Judgment

Knowing in the face of uncertainty

Kitchener & Brenner (1990)



1. "The presence of unavoidably difficult, 'thorny' problems in the lives of adults"

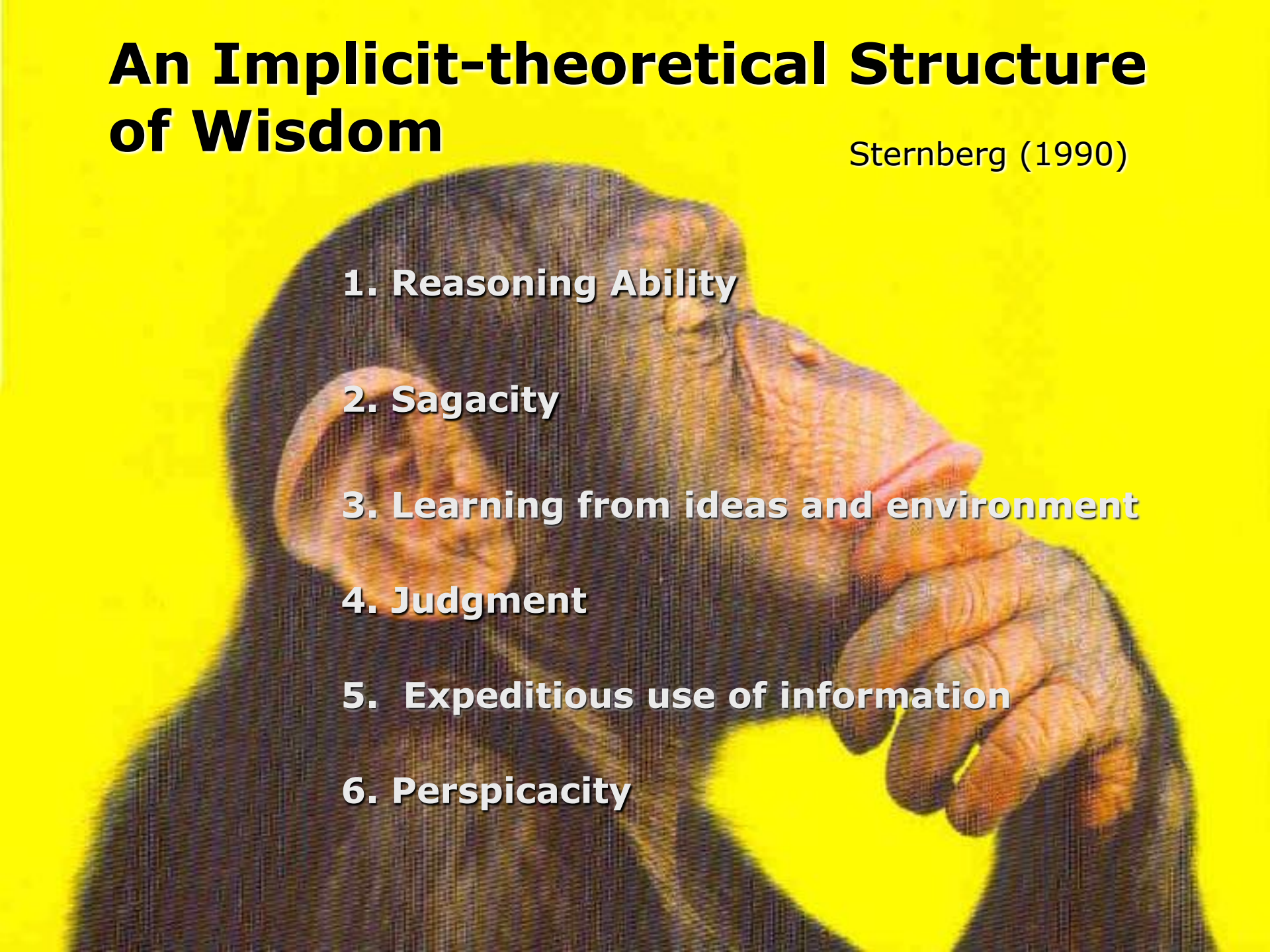
2. "A comprehensive grasp of knowledge characterized by both breadth and depth"

3. "A recognition that knowledge is uncertain and that it is not possible for truth to be absolutely knowable"

4. "A willingness and exceptional ability to formulate sound, executable judgments in the face of uncertainty"

An Implicit-theoretical Structure of Wisdom

Sternberg (1990)



1. Reasoning Ability
2. Sagacity
3. Learning from ideas and environment
4. Judgment
5. Expeditious use of information
6. Perspicacity

An Explicit-theoretical Approach to Wisdom

Sternberg (1990)

Knowledge:	Metacognition (knowledge about knowledge)
Intellectual Processes:	Resists *automatization of thought*
Intellectual Style:	*Judicial* style of mental self-government
Personality:	Tolerant of ambiguity
Motivation:	Deeper understanding of phenomena
Environmental Context:	Dialectic limitation on "correctness"

Implicit Beliefs about Wise People

Baltes, GlÜck, & Kunzmann (2002)

Factor 1 Exceptional knowledge about wisdom acquisition

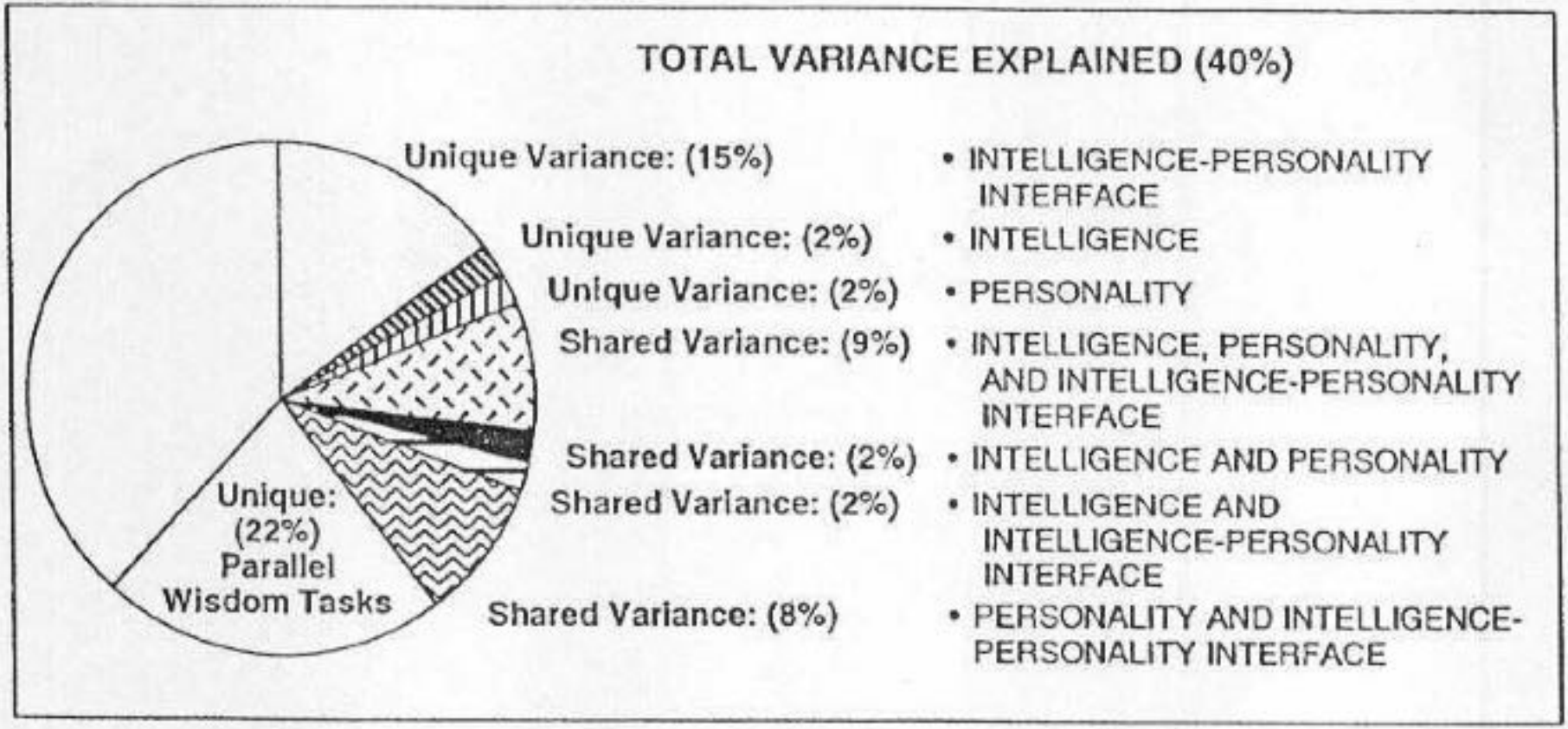
Factor 2 Exceptional Knowledge about use of wisdom

Factor 3 Exceptional knowledge about context of life

Factor 4 Exceptional personality and social functioning

Psychometric Location of Wisdom-related Performance

Staudinger, Lopez, & Baltes (2000)



Self-Assessed Wisdom Scale (SAWS)

Webster (2003)

Experience

I have experienced many painful events in my life
I have experienced many moral dilemmas

Emotion

I am good at identifying subtle emotions within myself
I am very good at reading my emotional states

Reminiscence

Reviewing my past helps gain perspective on current concerns
Remembering my earlier days helps me gain insight into important life matters

Openness

I do not like being around other people whose views are strongly different from mine
I like to read books which challenge me to think differently about issues

Humor

There is nothing amusing about difficult situations
At this point in my life, I feel it hard to laugh at my mistakes

The Berlin Wisdom Paradigm

Baltes, & Kunzmann (2003)

(a) ***Factual*** knowledge about life and lifespan development

(b) ***Procedural*** knowledge about strategies of life development

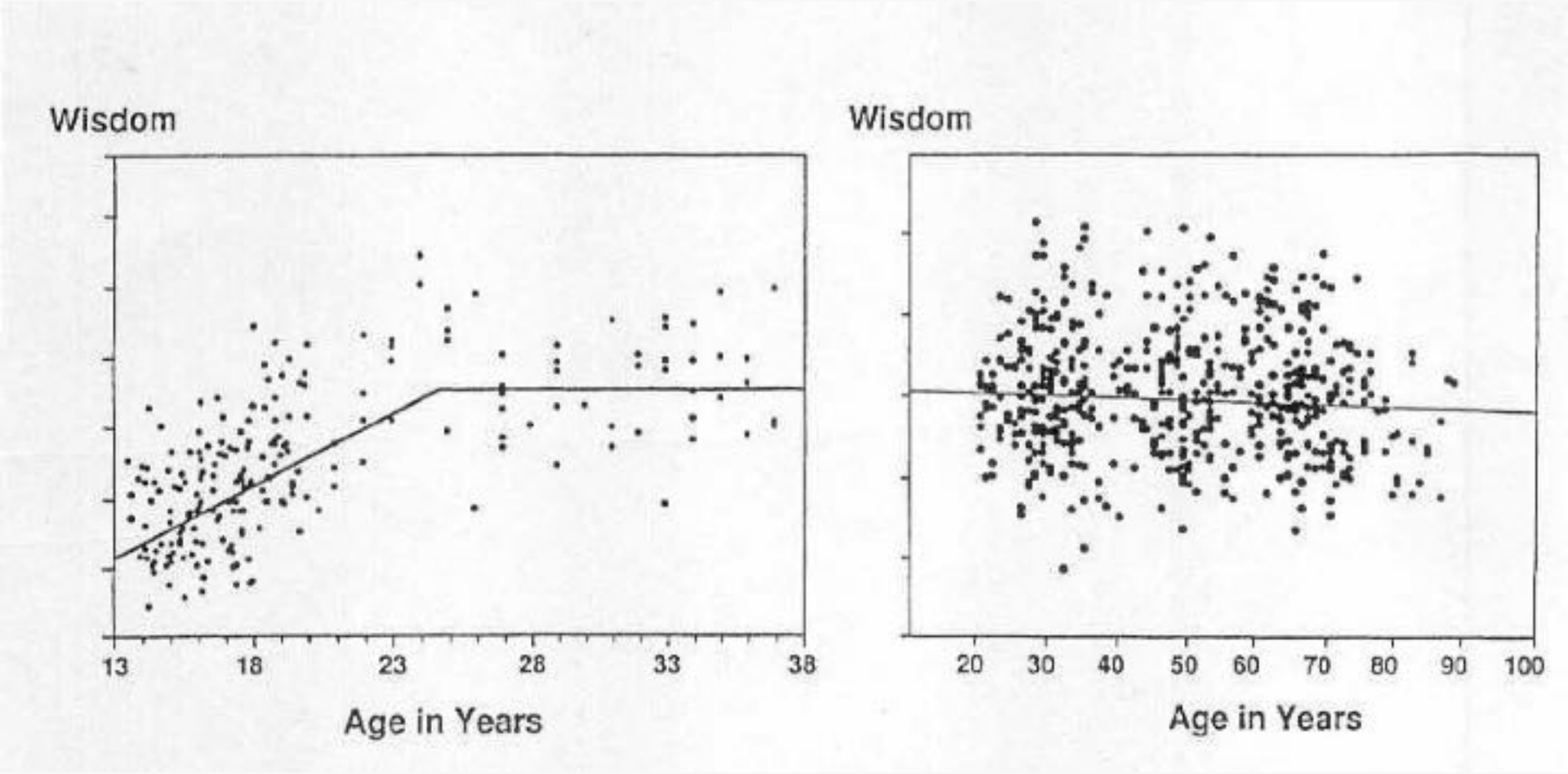
(c) Knowledge about the ***context*** of lives and their dynamics

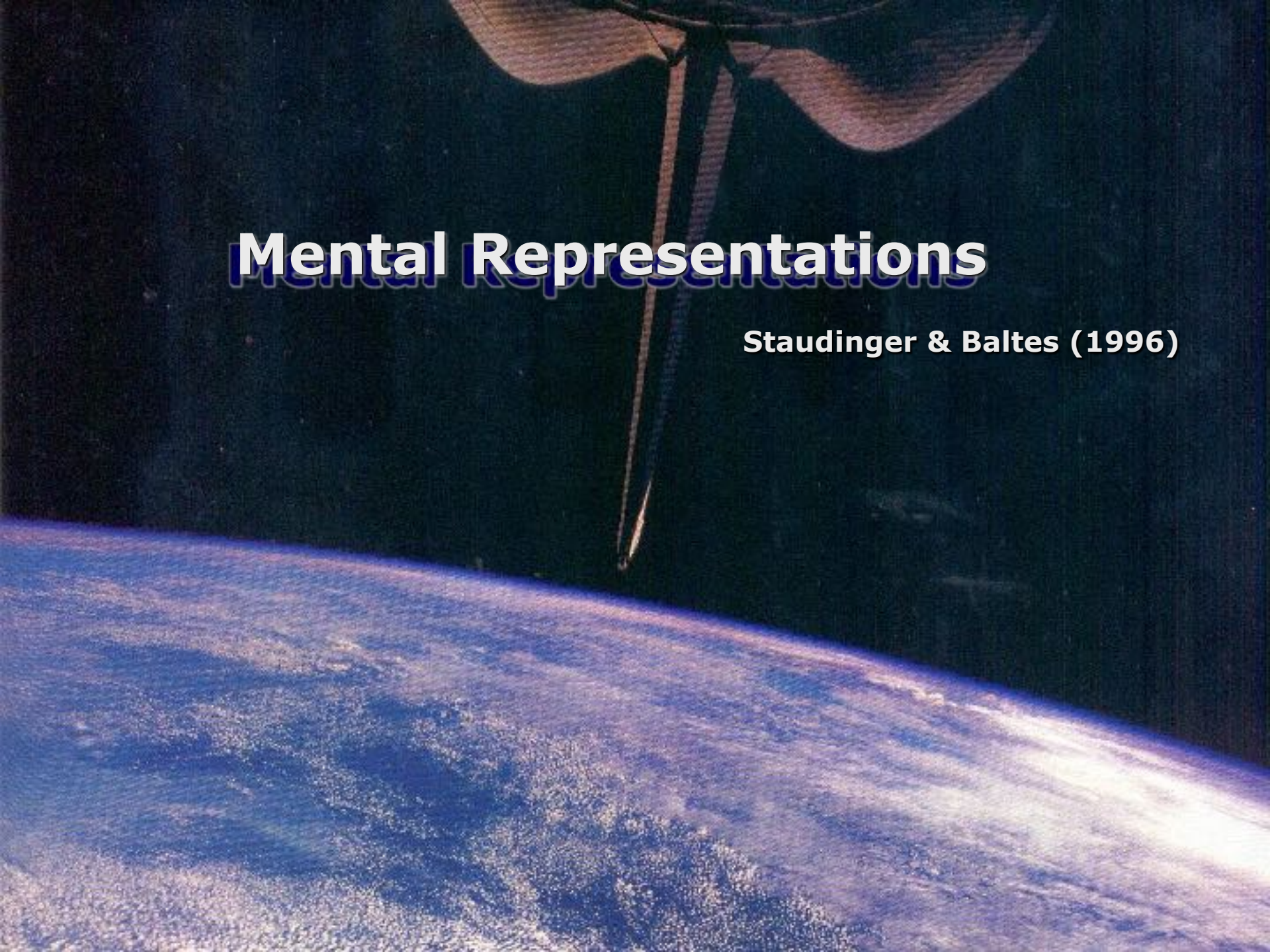
(d) Knowledge about value ***relativism*** and ***tolerance***

(e) Knowledge indicative of the awareness and management of ***uncertainty***

Wisdom-related Performance by Age

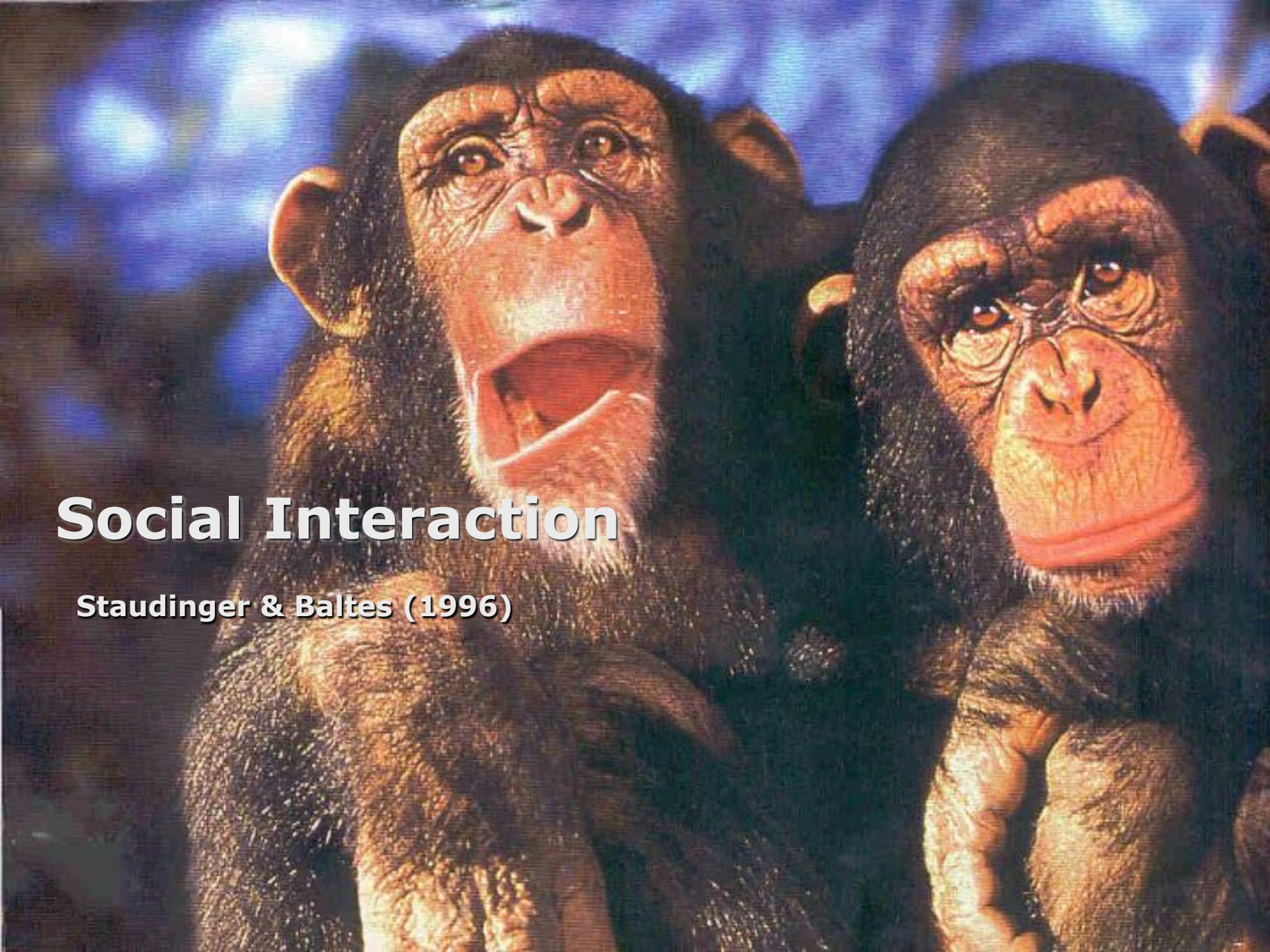
Baltes, GlÜck, & Kunzmann (2002)





Mental Representations

Staudinger & Baltes (1996)

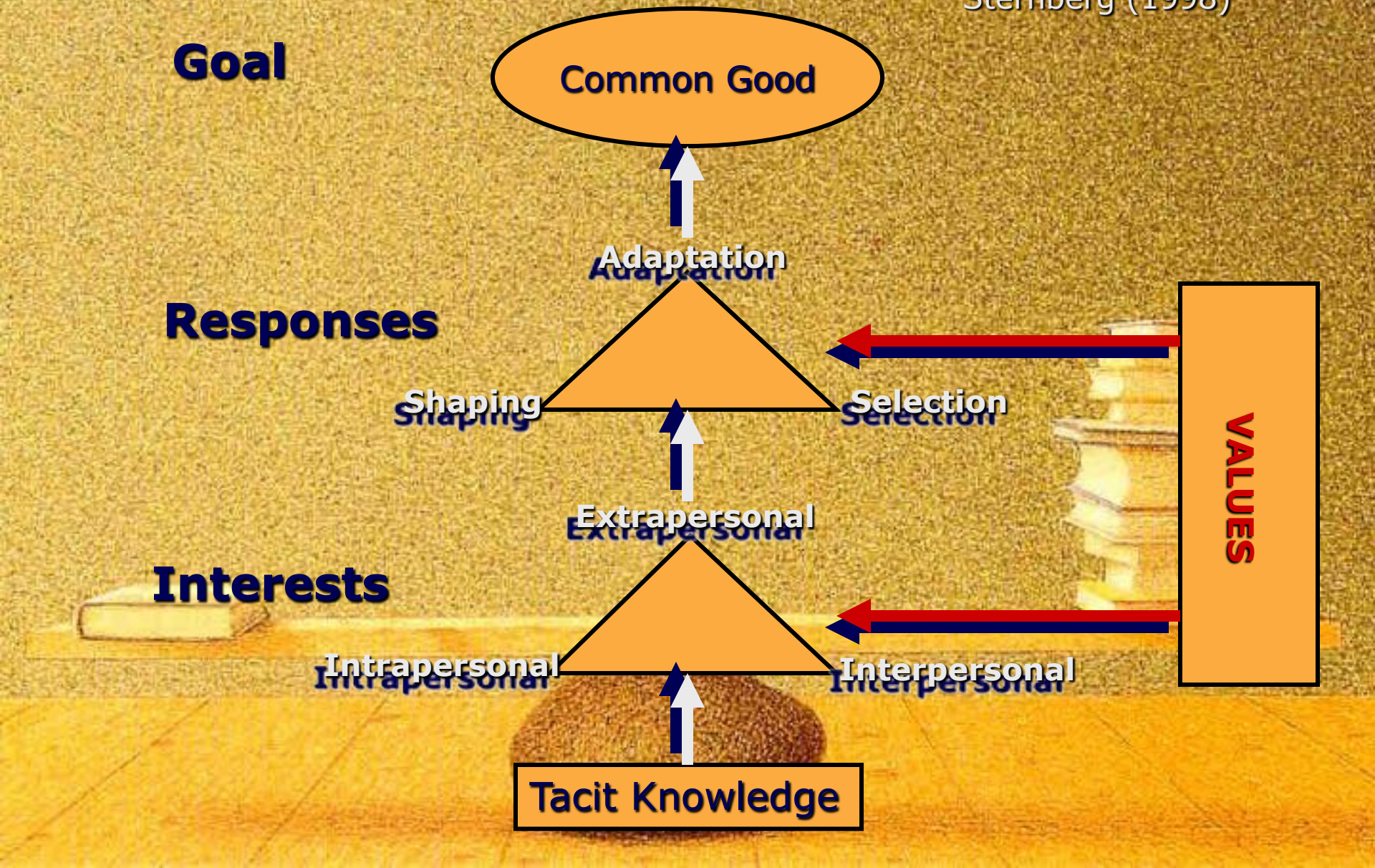


Social Interaction

Staudinger & Baltes (1996)

A Balance Theory of Wisdom

Sternberg (1998)

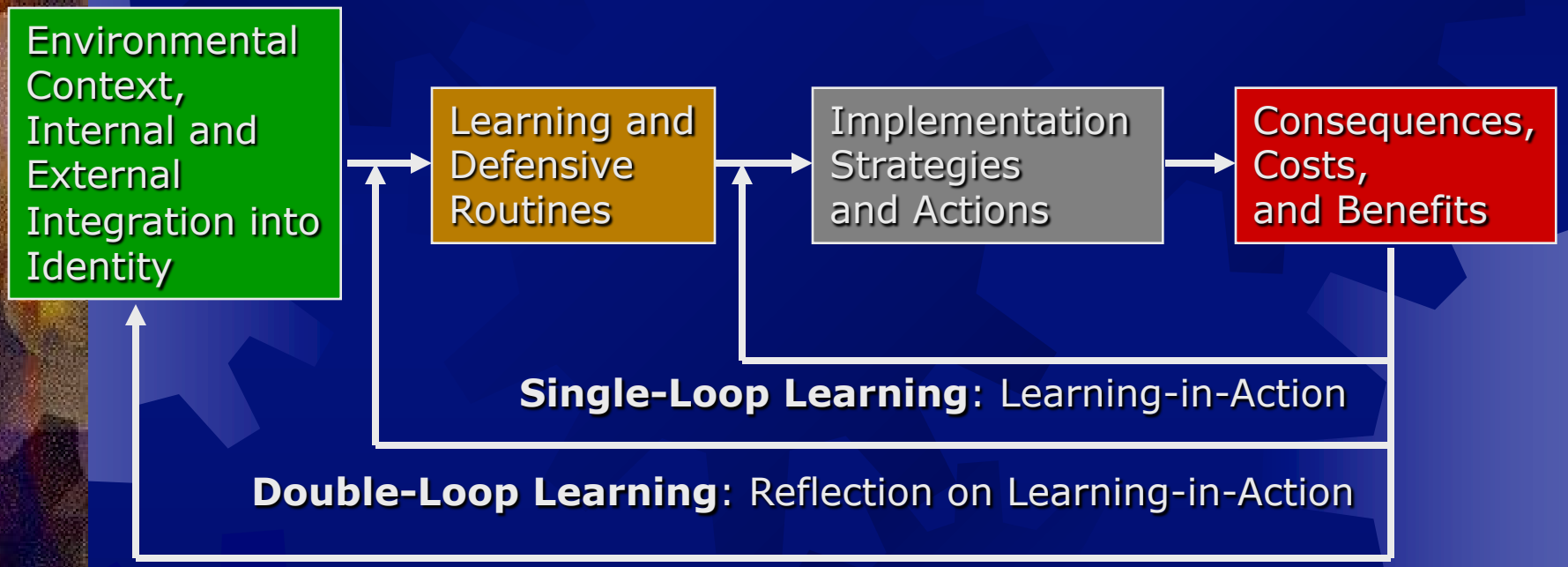


Teaching for Wisdom

Sternberg (2001)

1. Demonstrate how wisdom is critical for a *satisfying life*
2. Teach the usefulness of *interdependence*
3. *Role-model* wisdom
4. Recognize *self-interests*, those of other people, and institutions
5. Learn to *balance interests*
6. Teach that the *"means"* do not justify the *"ends"*
7. Learn the roles of *adaptation*, *shaping*, and *selection*
8. Encourage the formation, critique, and integration of *values*
9. Encourage *dialectical* thinking
10. Encourage *dialogical* thinking
11. Teach how to search for and try to reach the *common good*

Action Learning

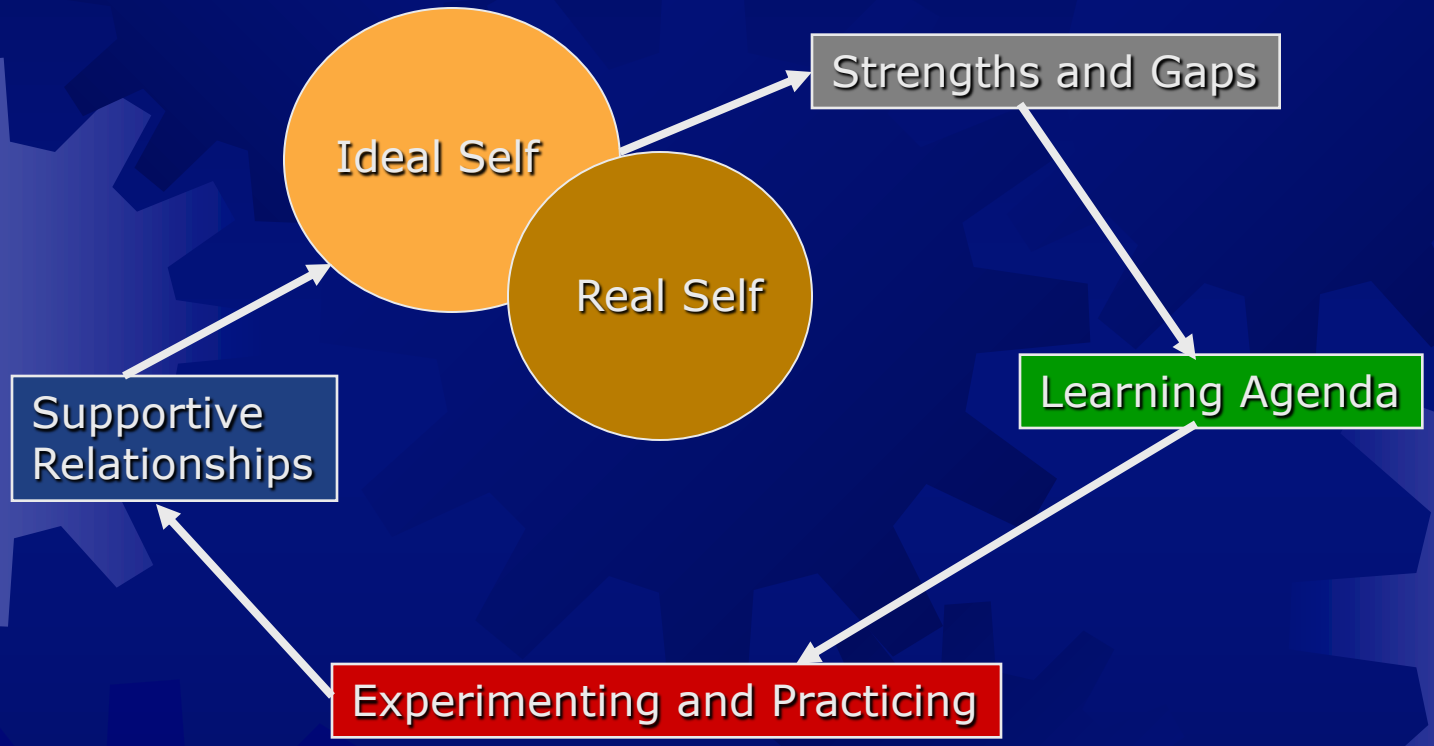


Triple-Loop Learning: Reflection on Reflection on Learning-in-Action

Argyris, C. (1993); Schon, D.A. (1987)

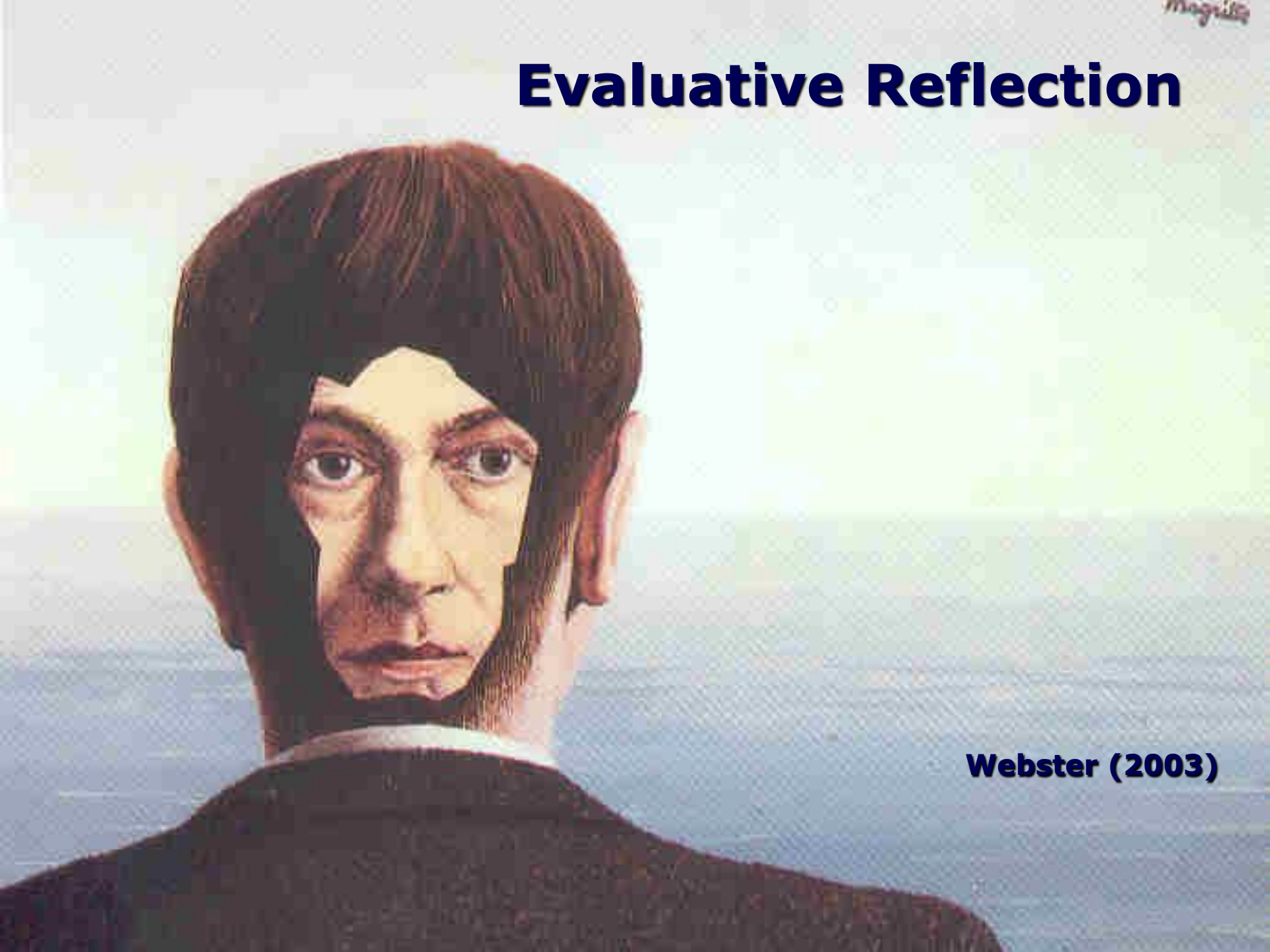
A Corporate Curriculum for Learning in Complex Environments
Kessel (1996)
"Developing reflective skills and metacognitions...
...conducive to locating paths leading to new knowledge...
...and means for acquiring and applying this asset"

Self-Directed Learning



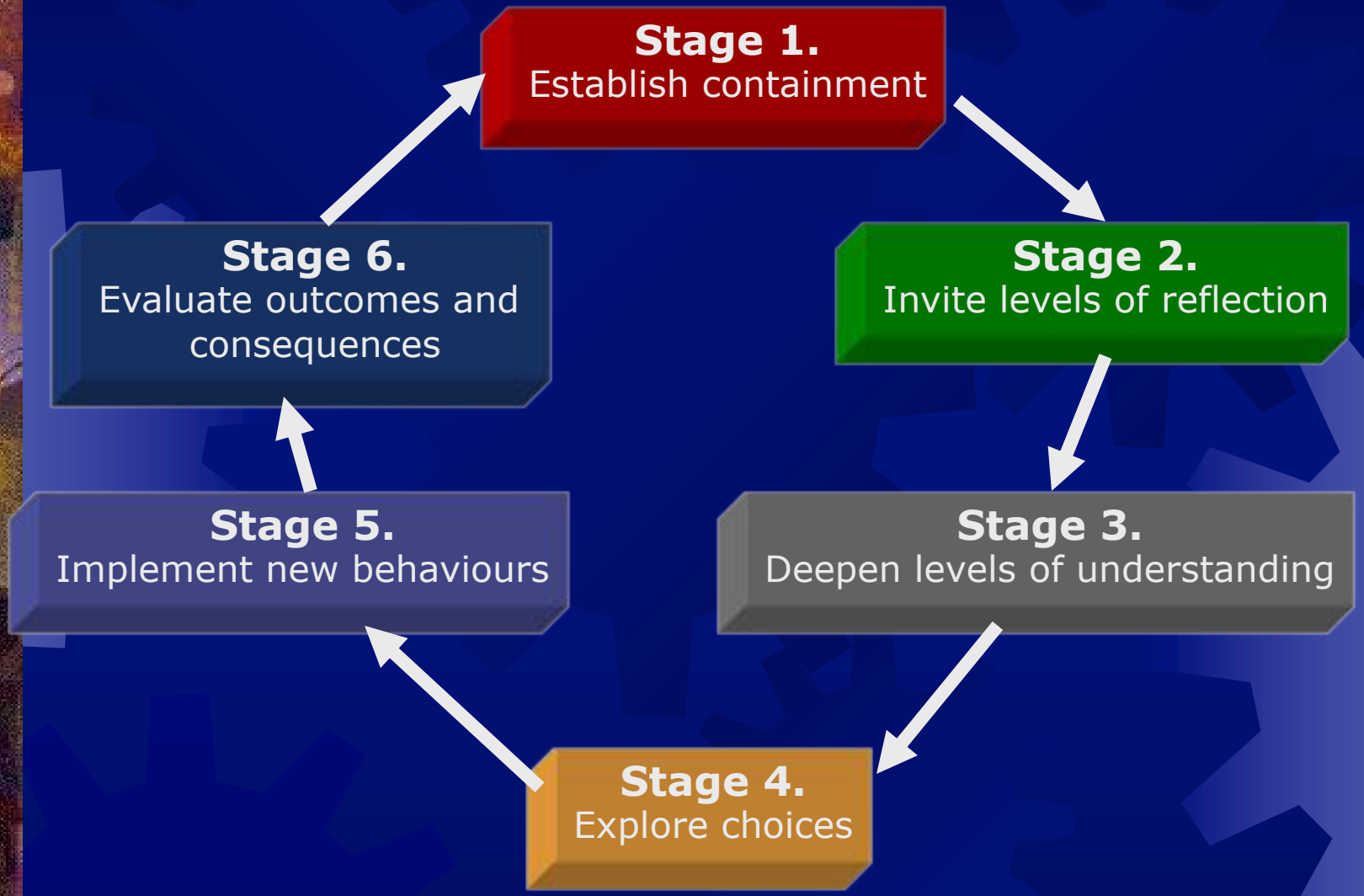
Boyatzis, R.E. (2001); Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R.E., McKee, A. (2002)

Evaluative Reflection

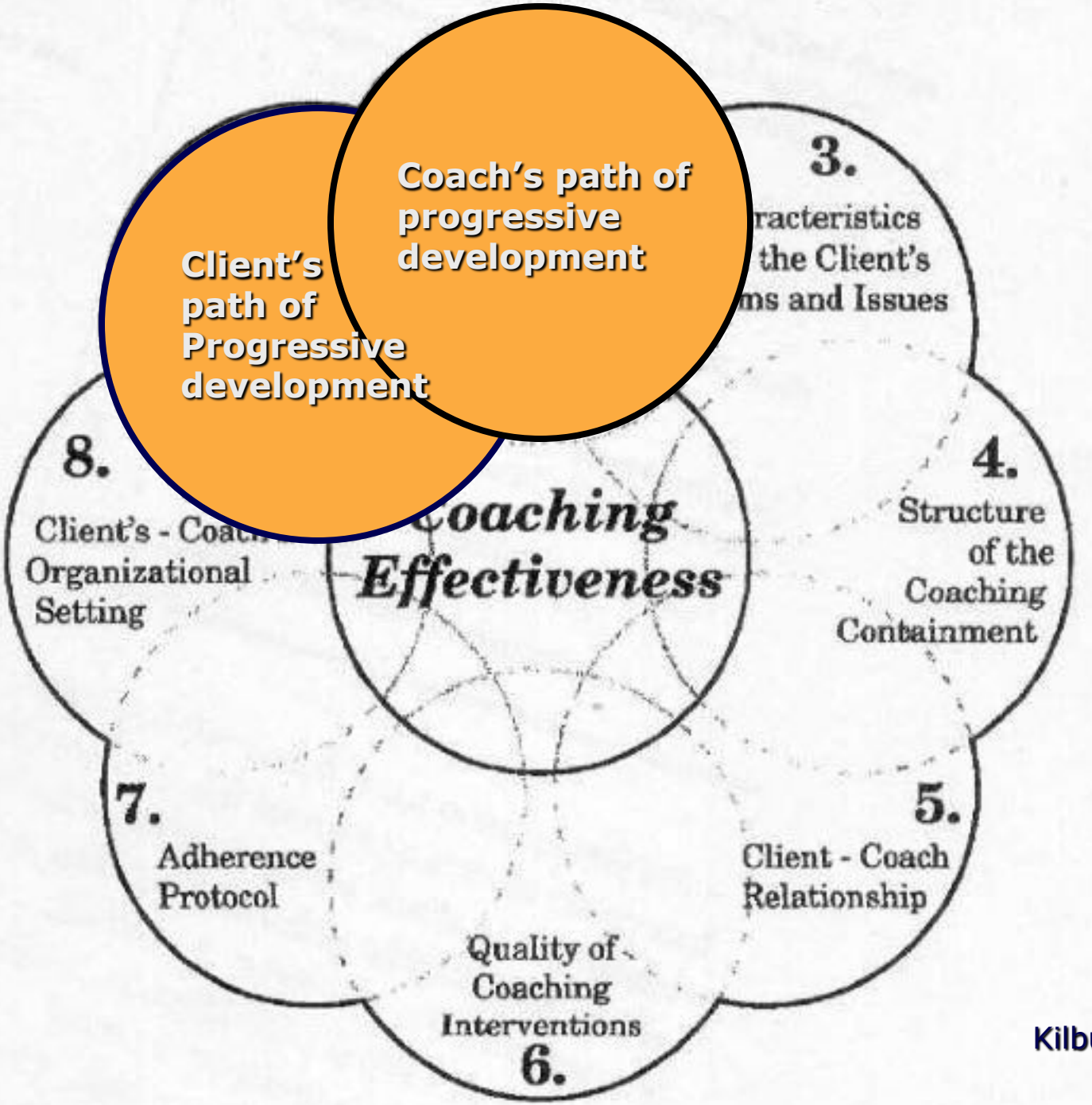


Webster (2003)

Circle of Awareness



Kilburg, (2000)



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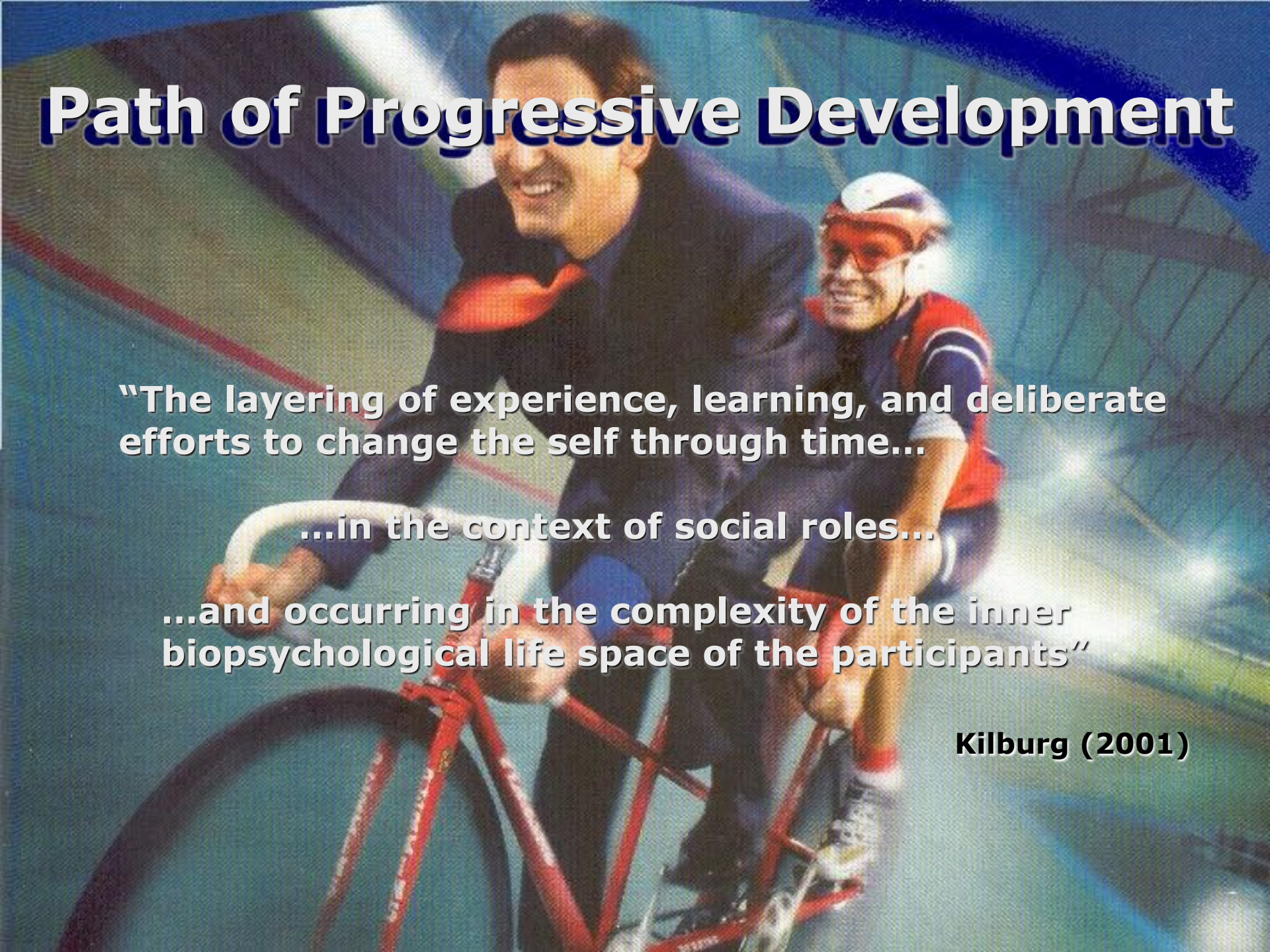


Path of Progressive Development

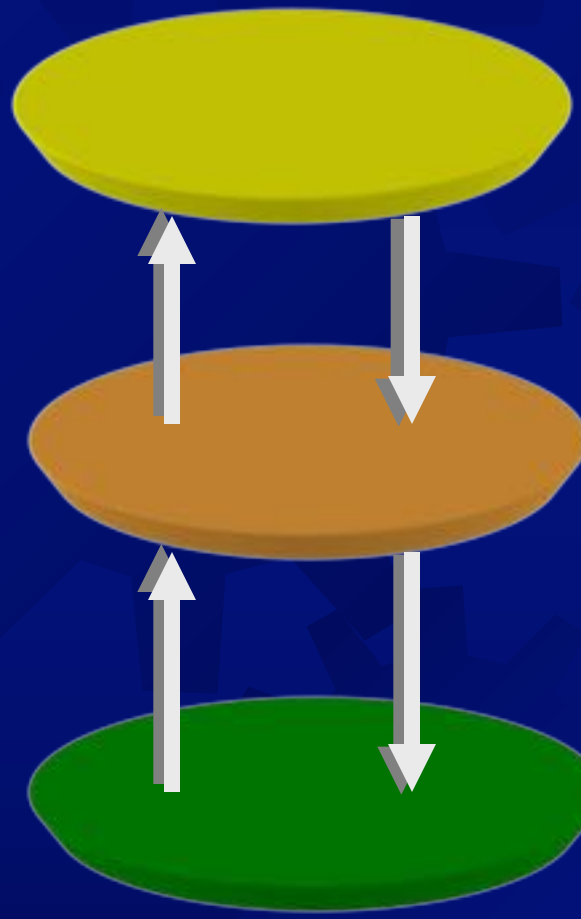
"The layering of experience, learning, and deliberate efforts to change the self through time…

…in the context of social roles…

…and occurring in the complexity of the inner biopsychological life space of the participants"

Kilburg (2001)

Executive Coaching Levels



Wisdom — Common Good

Strategy — Persuasion/Influence

Relationships — Behavioural Skills

Coaching for Wisdom

1. Promote *dialogical* thinking

2. Promote *dialectical thinking*

3. Stimulate the articulation, critique, and integration of *values* into thinking

4. Emphasize critical, creative and practical thinking in relation to the *common good*

5. Serve as a *role model* of wisdom

6. Activate mental representations of wisdom-related knowledge through guided *imagination* strategies

7. Stimulate evaluative *reflection*

8. Explain and integrate the concept of *progressive development*