



**ÇAĞ UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY of ARTS &  
SCIENCES  
PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT  
PSY 313 FUNDAMENTAL  
CONCEPTS IN  
PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY  
COURSE  
WEEK 15**

# **Contemporary Freudian Revisionists**

# Contemporary Freudian Revisionists

Freud's theories have been revised and transformed by contemporary analysts. Between orthodox Freudians who preserve Freud's concepts and those who replaced them entirely are the revisionists: Otto Kernberg, Roy Schafer, Hans Loewald, and Jacques Lacan.





# Freud's Intellectual Vacations



## Mapping the Unconscious

Freud's primary work focused on mapping the unconscious and building models of mental processes.



## Speculative Theories

He allowed himself brief "intellectual vacations" from clinical work to develop grand, speculative theories.



## Totem and Taboo

In this work, Freud developed an anthropological fantasy about the origin of the Oedipus complex in human society.



# The Primal Horde (herd) Theory



## Primal Father

One powerful male dominated the group, possessing all females and blocking young males from power and sexuality.



## Collective Murder

Sons murdered the primal father to gain access to power and females.



## Guilt and Expiation

Primitive religious rituals emerged as symbolic reenactments of and expiations (redemption) for this patricide.

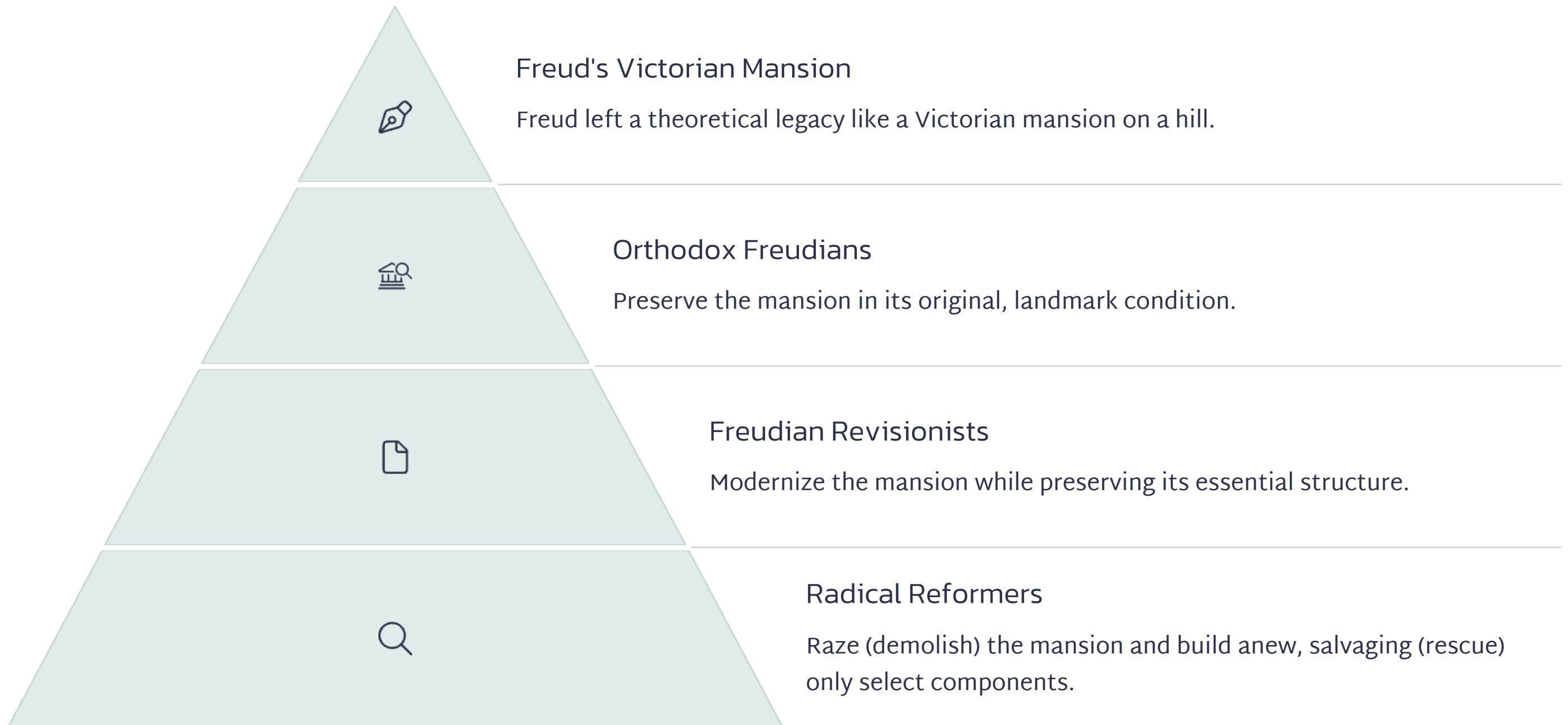


## Psychological Inheritance

The Oedipus complex in each person recapitulates (repeat) this original murder.



# Generational Succession in Psychoanalysis



# Interdisciplinary Influence

## Classical Freudian Era

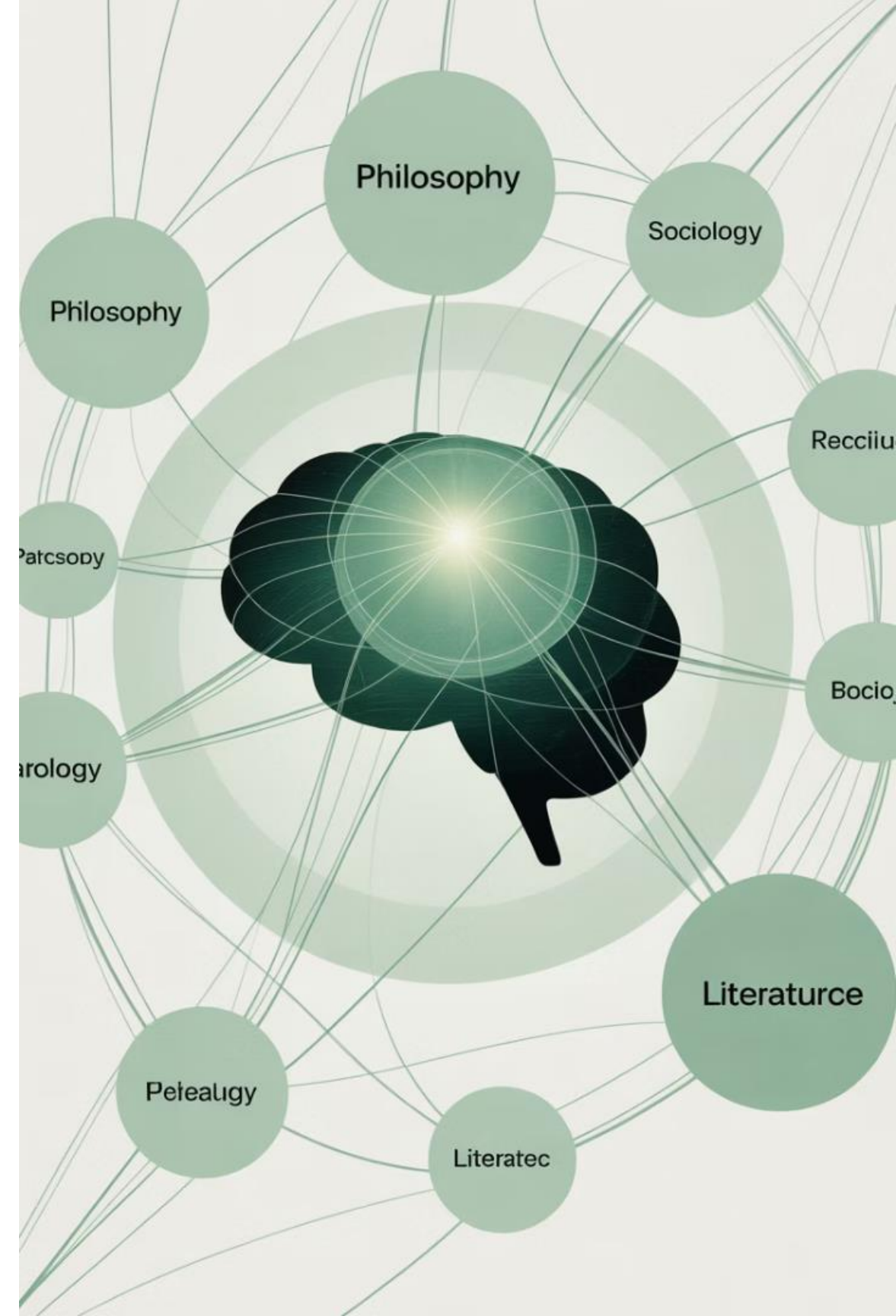
Psychoanalysis influenced literature, anthropology, mythology, visual arts, history, philosophy, and sociology through Freud's biologically grounded drive theory.

## Contemporary Era

The most productive interdisciplinary ideas now come from contemporary psychoanalytic authors, many taking revisionist approaches to basic Freudian concepts.

## Ongoing Evolution

Understanding psychoanalysis in modern thought requires looking beyond Freud to how his ideas have been transformed by current analysts.



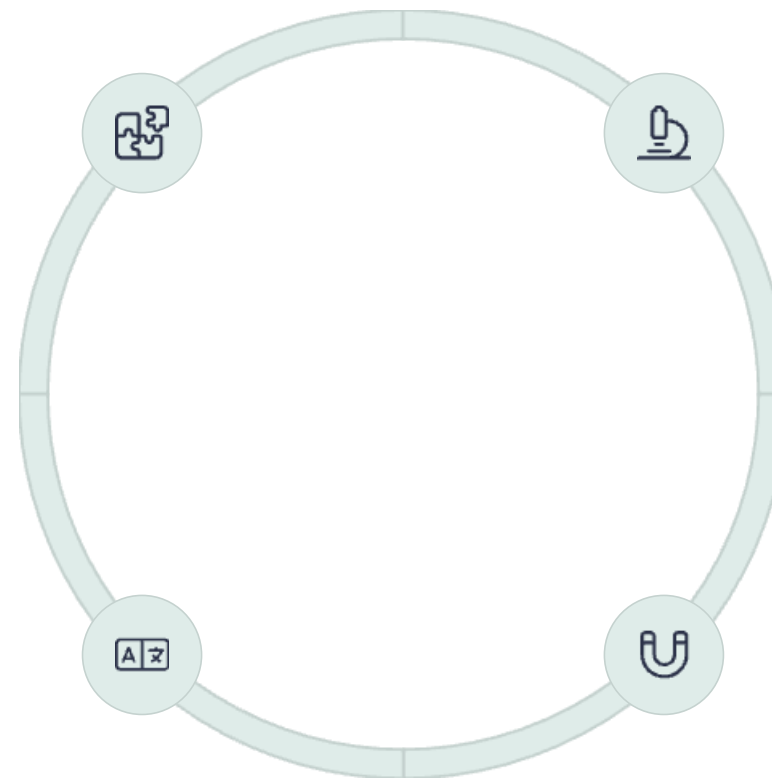
# Otto Kernberg: The Great Synthesizer

## Comprehensive Integration

Integrated Freudian instinct theory, object relations theories, and developmental ego psychology.

## Interpretive Approach

Maintained commitment to interpretations as central to meaningful change.



## Clinical Focus

Addressed detailed clinical problems of severely disturbed patients.

## Theoretical Depth

Explored abstract dimensions of metapsychology.

# Kernberg's Hierarchical Integration



## Freud's Drive Theory

We are born with bodily impulses that unfold (develop) sequentially.

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## Jacobson/Mahler's Development

Psychological birth occurs gradually through separation from mother.

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## Klein's Emotional Polarities

We struggle to reconcile (harmonize) love and hate throughout life.



# Kernberg's Developmental Model



## Early Infancy

Infant sorts experience by affective valence (value), moving between pleasurable and painful states.



## First Task: Self-Object Differentiation

Separation of self images from object images. Failure leads to psychotic states.



## Second Task: Overcoming Splitting

Integration of good and bad affects. Failure results in borderline pathology.



## Third Level: Neurotic Conflict

Classical Freudian structural conflict with intact boundaries and integrated images.



newborn

6 months

2 years

# Drive Formation in Kernberg's Theory

**Good Experiences**  
Pleasurable interactions with gratifying others consolidate over time.

## Libidinal Drive

These good experiences form into a pleasure-seeking drive.

**Aggressive Drive**  
These bad experiences form into a destructive drive.

## Bad Experiences

Unpleasant interactions with ungratifying others consolidate over time.



# Kernberg vs. Freud on Character Types

## Freud's Classification

Based on libidinal fixation points:

- Oral character
- Anal character
- Phallic character
- Genital character (ideal)

Character determined by bodily-based metaphors from predominant libidinal phase.

## Kernberg's Classification

Based on developmental level of internal object relations:

- Psychotic level (self-object boundary failure)
- Borderline level (splitting of good/bad)
- Neurotic level (integrated but conflicted)

Character determined by quality of internalized relationships.

# Kernberg on Love and Sexuality

## Psychotic Level

Unable to maintain stable boundaries between self and other.  
Experience relationships as either nonexistent or terrifying merger.

## Borderline Level

Unable to integrate good and bad object relations. Sexual desire often tied to perverse (deviant) or violent scenarios separate from tender feelings.

## Neurotic Level

Established self-object differentiation and overcome splitting.  
Difficulties concern conflicts over impulses rather than dissociated versions of self.





# Kernberg vs. Kohut

## Kernberg's View

- Central struggle between love and hate
- Aggression is primary
- Narcissist is contemptuous and devaluing
- Analyst should interpret hostility

## Kohut's View

- Striving for self-organization
- Aggression is secondary to narcissistic injury
- Narcissist is protecting brittle (vulnerable) self-esteem
- Analyst should empathically reflect self-experience

## Impact of Debate

Kohut thought the analyst should empathically reflect the narcissist's self-experience so that a more consolidated, more robust self could develop. Kernberg believes the analyst should interpret the narcissist's underlying hostility so that more integrated object relations could develop. The tension between these approaches has invigorated (energized) psychoanalytic theory and broadened clinical options for practitioners.



OTTO KERNBERG  
1928–



HEINZ KOHUT  
1913–1981



# Roy Schafer: The Problem of Agency



## Freud's Dispersed (diffused) Agency

Freud depicted the conscious self as a puppet controlled by unconscious forces and agencies.



## Population Explosion

Klein and object relations theories added more unconscious quasi-agents: internal objects, introjects, part objects.



## Schafer's Response

Schafer sought to reassemble the subject and clarify who was doing what to whom.

# The Analytic Process According to Schafer

1

## Initial Position

Patient believes "I am damaged because my father crushed me; the world is dangerous."

?

## Analytic Exploration

Patient discovers these "facts" are actually created by her.



## Insight

Patient realizes she derives secret satisfactions from these beliefs.



## Reclaiming (regain) Agency

Patient recognizes herself as the agent of her world, not its victim.



# Schafer's Critique of Freudian Language



## Hydraulic Metaphors

Freud described mind using language of primitive bodily processes like urination and defecation.

Drives build up autonomously "inside" the mind, pressing for discharge. If they are not discharged, they become dammed up and grow toxic.



## New Language

Schafer proposed translating from forces and structures to agents and intentions.



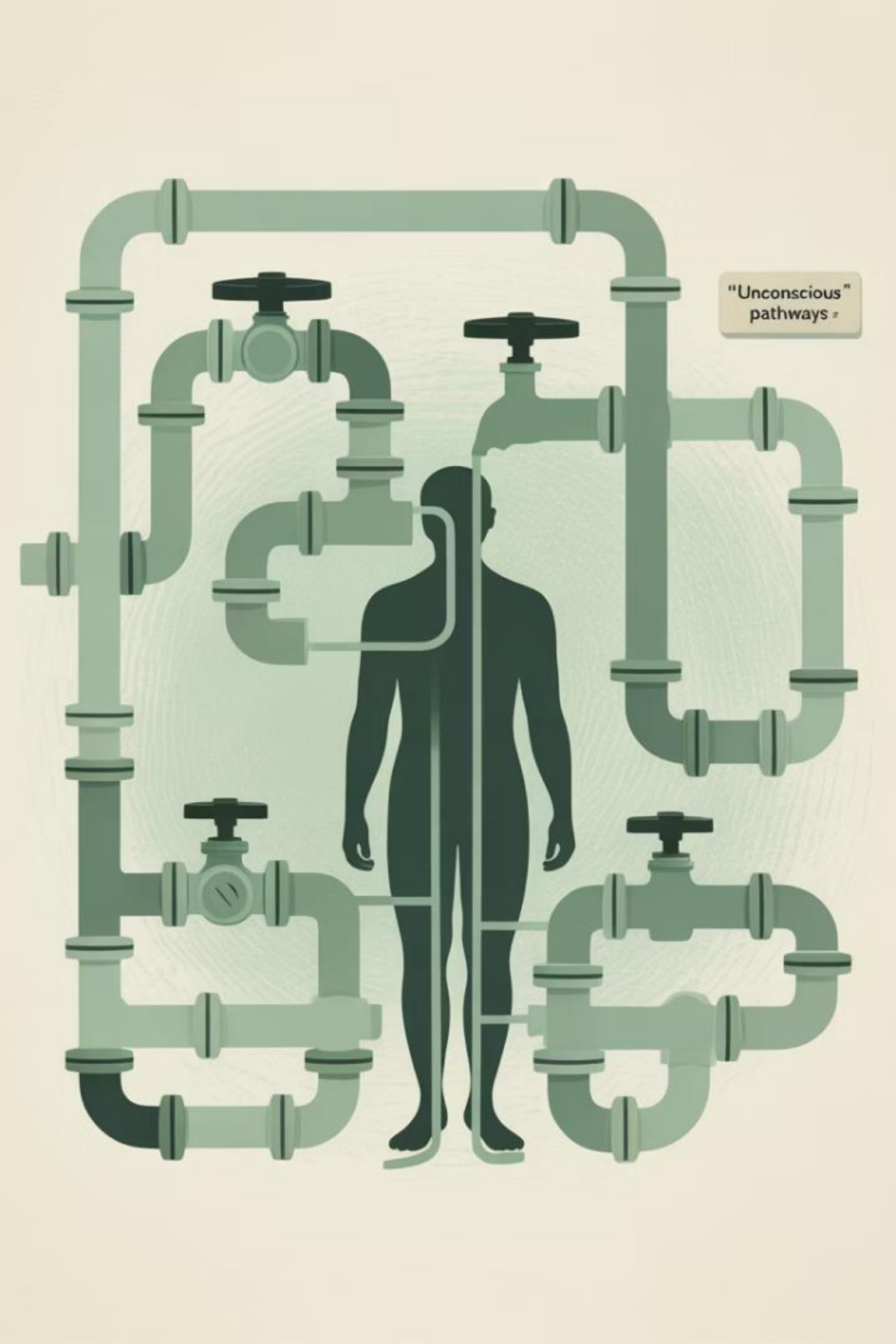
## Container Metaphors

Mind depicted with clear boundaries, interior spaces and substances.



## Missing Agent

The most widespread omission is the person as agent, the central focus of clinical practice.





# Schafer's Narrative Approach



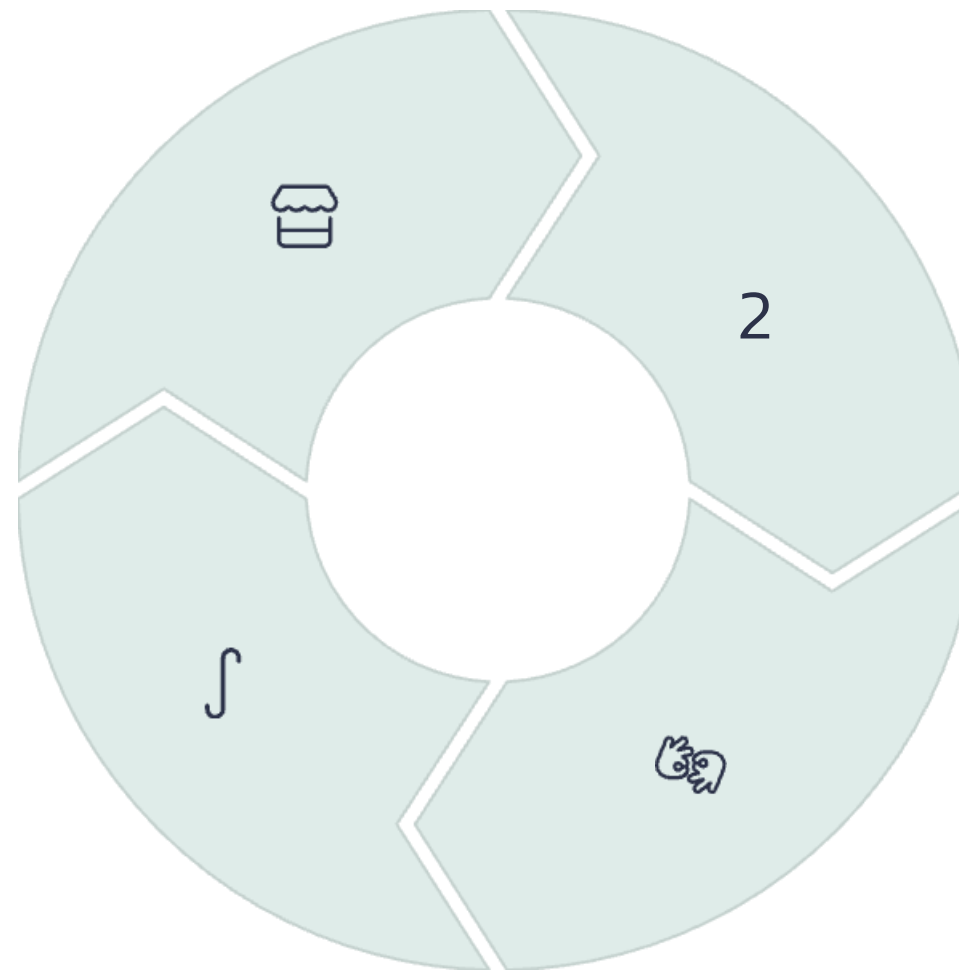
Roy Schafer (1922-2018)

## Mind as Narrative

Mind is generated by and organized according to narratives.

## Integration

This approach allowed Schafer to incorporate self psychology and Kleinian theory.



## Person as Narrator

The agent of actions becomes the narrator of stories.

## Interpretive Storylines

Psychoanalytic concepts viewed as interpretive frameworks, not scientific principles.

# Case Study: Ronald's Blob Dream



## The Dream

Ronald dreams of a blob (mass) that devours everything, temporarily taking the shape of objects before consuming them.



## Traditional Interpretations

The blob could be seen as anal sadism, true self, structureless interior, or aborted (failed) self development.



## Schafer's Approach

The dream is a creation, a narrative construction organized for specific purposes.

Ronald often felt as if the depression and deadness he had felt as a child were the only real things about him, as if everything else was simply playacting.



Ronald's depression, which had originated and seemed closely bound up with his relationship with his chronically ill mother. She had suffered with cancer throughout his early childhood and had been hospitalized many times. Ronald's father, a prominent politician, dealt with his wife's illness by withdrawing from her and hiding the family's difficulties from the community. Outside the home he was charming and outgoing. Inside the home he was either remote or enraged. Ronald, an only child, felt abandoned by both parents

# Schafer's Narrative Interpretation

He had felt his father's public personality was a fake and a lie, that the shameful, secret reality of his mother's illness and the family's problems was the ultimate truth about his parents and about himself. He felt he had been damaged severely by the emotional deprivation of his childhood, which he, by imitating his father, had learned to cover over in public.



## Key Question

What purpose does it serve for Ronald to represent himself to himself as a blob?

The blob was his depression, shapeless, formless, menacing.



## Borrowed Imagery

Ronald has borrowed anal imagery and bodily metaphors to represent his destruction of value.



## Value of Interpretation

For Schafer, the value of an interpretation of a dream lies not in its objectivity or correctness, but in its potential for opening up new forms of experience and allowing the dreamer to claim a deeper and broader sense of his own activity.

## Possible Purposes

Maintaining tie to sick mother, defeating father's model, preserving fantasy of infinite potential.



# Schafer's Recontextualization of Freud

1

## Scientific Framework

Freud's scientific underpinnings are no longer persuasive.

2

## Hermeneutic (explanatory) Reset

Freud's work is reset into a contemporary interpretive framework.

3

## Enhanced Power

This reset reveals Freud's interpretive power more fully.





# Loewald's Scholarly Style

## Dense Yet Evocative

Loewald's writing is scholarly and closely reasoned, yet describes experiences that are extraordinarily rich and deeply sensual.

## Revisionary Reading

His interpretation of Freud appears unconventional and fresh, contrary to American ego psychology mainstream.

## Consistent Focus

Struggled with the same central problems for nearly forty years, examining fundamental assumptions of psychoanalytic theory.

# Loewald on Language Development

1

## Preverbal Experience

Child embedded in idiosyncratic (unique) world of personal experience with powerful but exclusive connections to others.

2

## Developmental Bridge

Language acquisition forms crucial bridge between personal and social worlds.

3

## Verbal Experience

Child enters social world of consensual (agreed) experience with generalizable communications and connections.





# Contrasting Views on Language Development

## Sullivan's View

Language is an unmitigated blessing that allows escape from isolation into clarity and shared experience.

## Stern's View

Language is a mixed blessing; clarity gained but sensual richness of preverbal experience sacrificed.

## Loewald's View

Conventional language use is debased (corrupted); true health requires connection between primary and secondary process experience.

# Primary vs. Secondary Process



## Primary Process

Embedded, embodied mode of experience; sensual, global, dense

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## Connection

Health requires open channels between levels of organization

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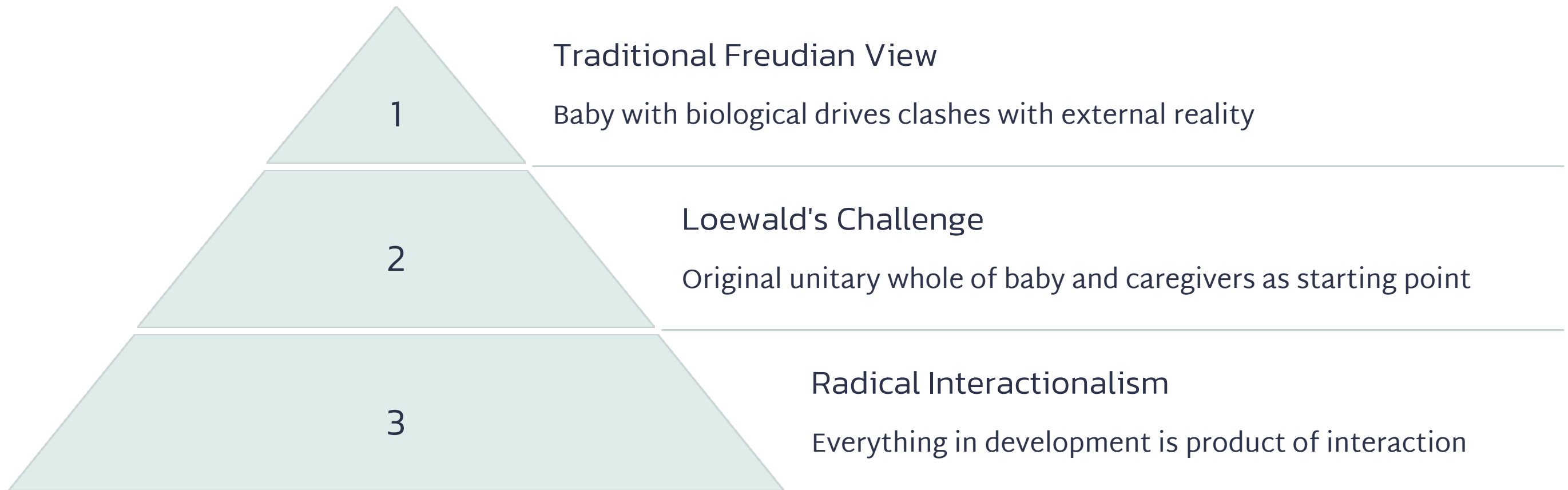
## Secondary Process

Generalizable, differentiated mode; abstract, clear

For Loewald, pathology occurs when these processes become split. Mental health depends on reconciliation between sensual and abstract dimensions of experience.



# The Unitary Whole: Loewald's Radical Departure



Loewald challenges traditional premises, positing no distinction between self and other, ego and external reality, instincts and objects at the beginning of life.



# Loewald's Reinterpretation of Freud's Drive Theory

1

Pre-1920 Freud

Drives as discharge-seeking, based on hydraulic metaphors

2

Post-1920 Freud

Introduction of Eros as connection-seeking drive

3

Loewald's View

Drives as products of adaptation and interaction, not biological constants

# Loewald on Past and Present

Childhood Experience  
Early loves and experiences form  
foundation

Enrichment  
Past properly "buried" provides  
guidelines without dominating



Integration

Experiences released from  
repression, accepted and worked  
through

Adult Experience

New loves both new and old, with  
resonances of past experiences

# Loewald on Symbolism and Sublimation

## Traditional View

Symbol is substitute (replacement) for symbolized (snake for penis). Interpretation unmasking disguise. Symbol collapses into symbolized.

## Loewald's View

Symbol and symbolized in mutual transformation. Symbol creates novel experience. Culture re-presents childhood experience on enriched level.





# Loewald's Vision of Culture



## Not Disguised Drives

Culture is not merely camouflaged equivalents of infantile impulses



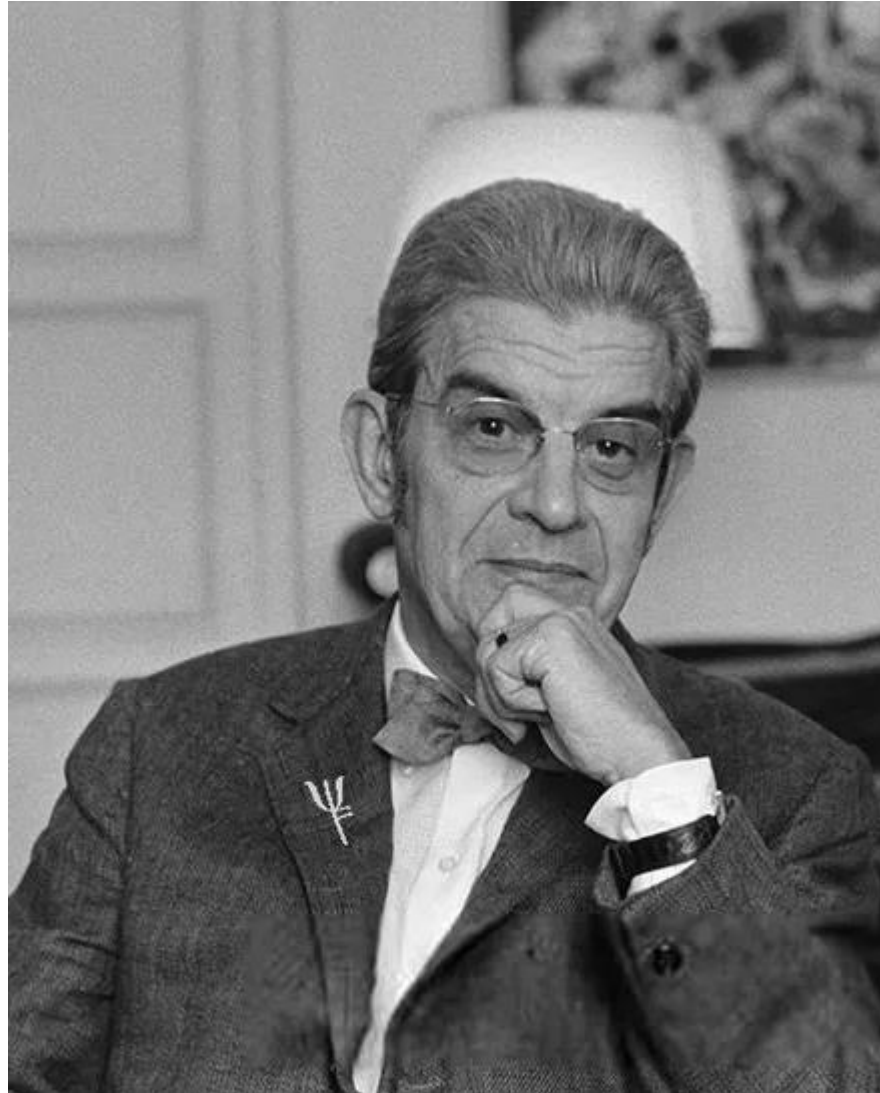
## Reconciliation

Higher-level processes always connected to, never reducible to, primitive experience



## The Sea Remains

Infantile experience enriches rather than detracts (diminish) from adult experience



# Jacques Lacan: The Enigmatic Revisionist



## French Intellectual

Central figure in French psychoanalysis and broader intellectual life



## Controversial

Regarded as brilliant by followers, obscurantist by critics



## Global Influence

Dominant in European and South American psychoanalysis, influential in academia

# Lacan's Unusual Path and Style

## Unique Background

Entered psychoanalysis through medicine and surrealism. Associated with André Breton and surrealist painters and writers.

## Deliberate Obscurity

Deliberately elusive (puzzling) and provocatively difficult. Style connected to his teachings about the unconscious.

## Surrealist Influence

Presentations designed to embody the surrealist/Freudian unconscious, breaking conventional thought patterns.

# Lacan's "Return to Freud"

## Pre-1905 Freud

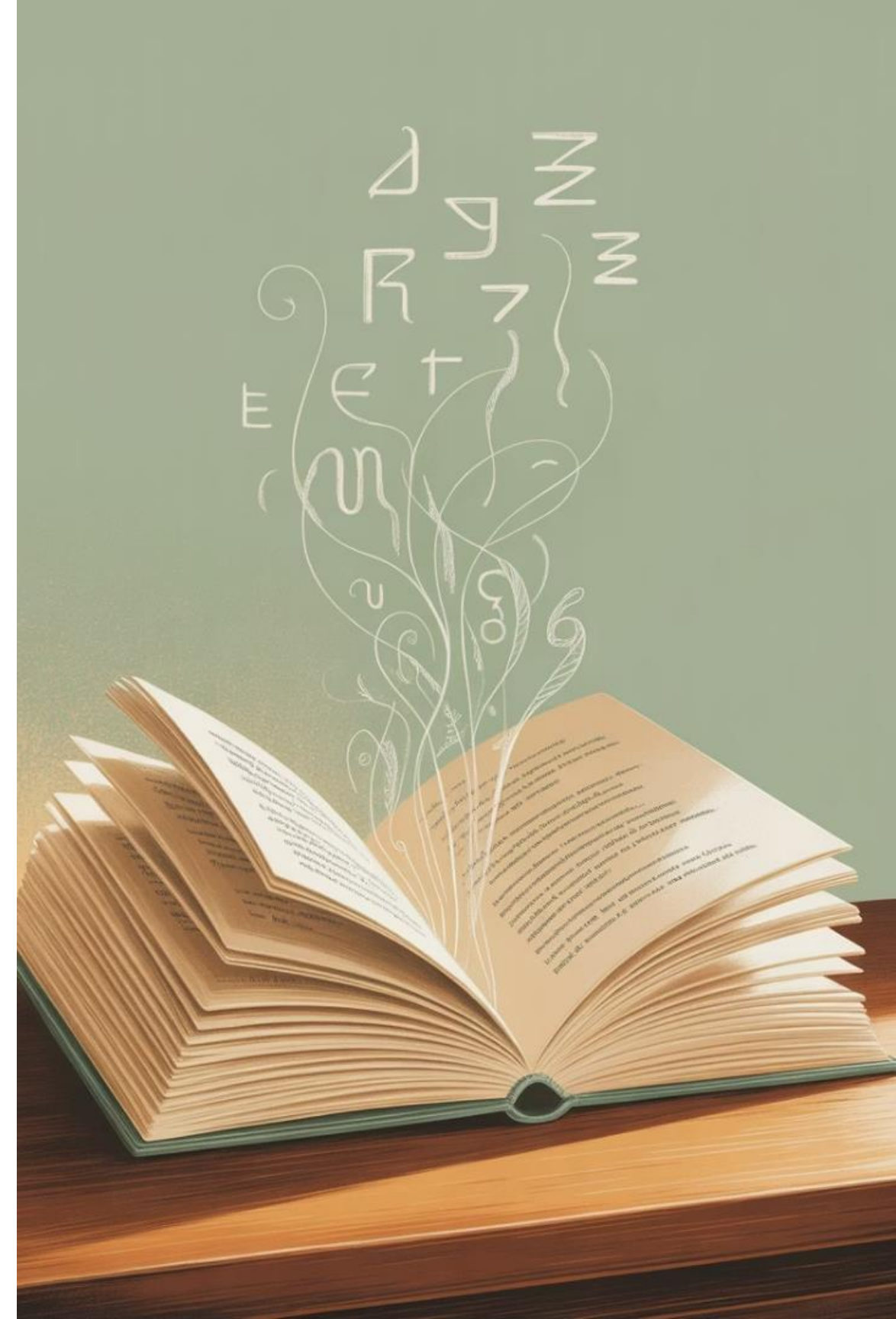
Lacan focused on early Freud's work on dreams, symptoms, and slips.

## Linguistic Revolution

Claimed Freud's essential contribution was a revolutionary understanding of language.

## Critique of Other Schools

Rejected ego psychology and object relations as fundamental misreadings of Freud.



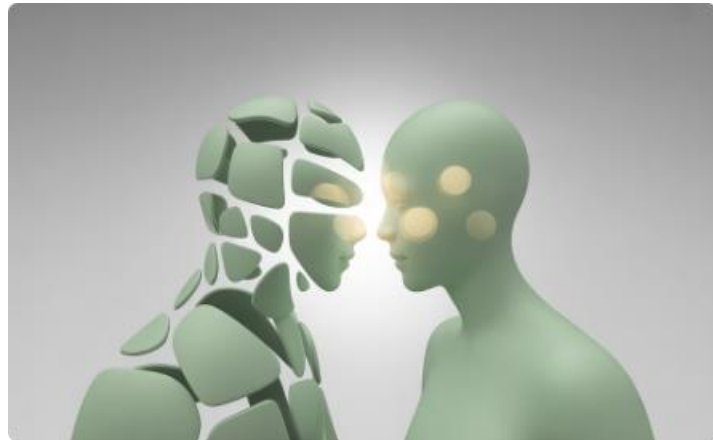


# The Mirror Stage and the Imaginary



## Mirror Recognition

Child between 6-18 months becomes captivated by mirror image, seeing a whole, integrated self.



## Idealized Image

Mirror provides idealized version of self, becoming core of ego formation.



## The Imaginary

Life organized around mirages and illusions, reflections of reflections.

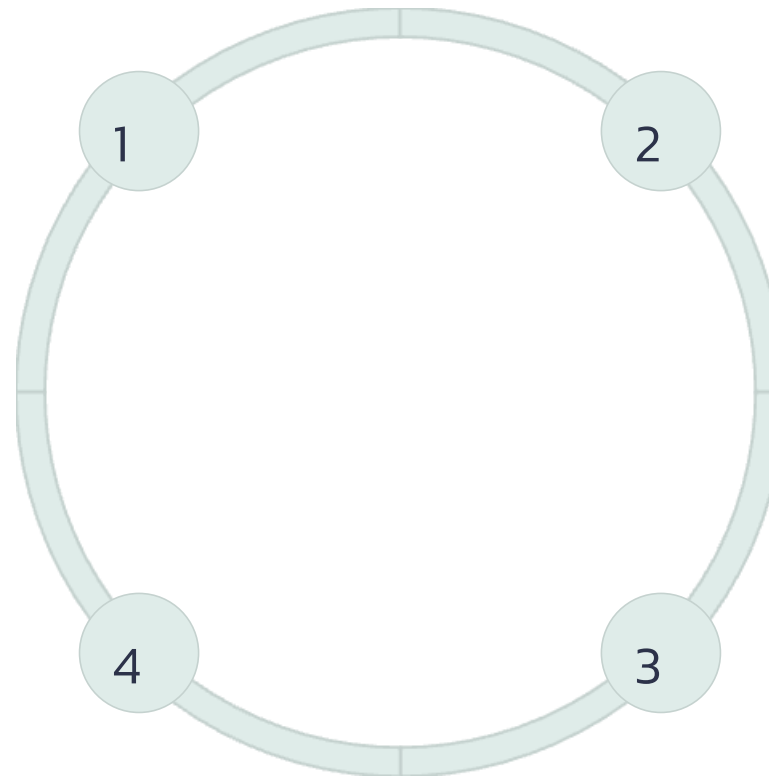
# Desire in Lacan's Theory

## Beyond Needs

Desire differs from needs; it is more encompassing (embracing) and ultimately ungratifiable (not approvable).

## Fundamental Uncertainty

Object relations infected with uncertainty as objects are only graspable as mirages.



## Desire of the Other

Child wishes to be everything for the (m)other, to be the object of the other's desire.

## Alienation

We strive to be characters we are not, with needs toward characters who also are not.

# Lacan's Critique of Other Psychoanalytic Schools

## Ego Psychology

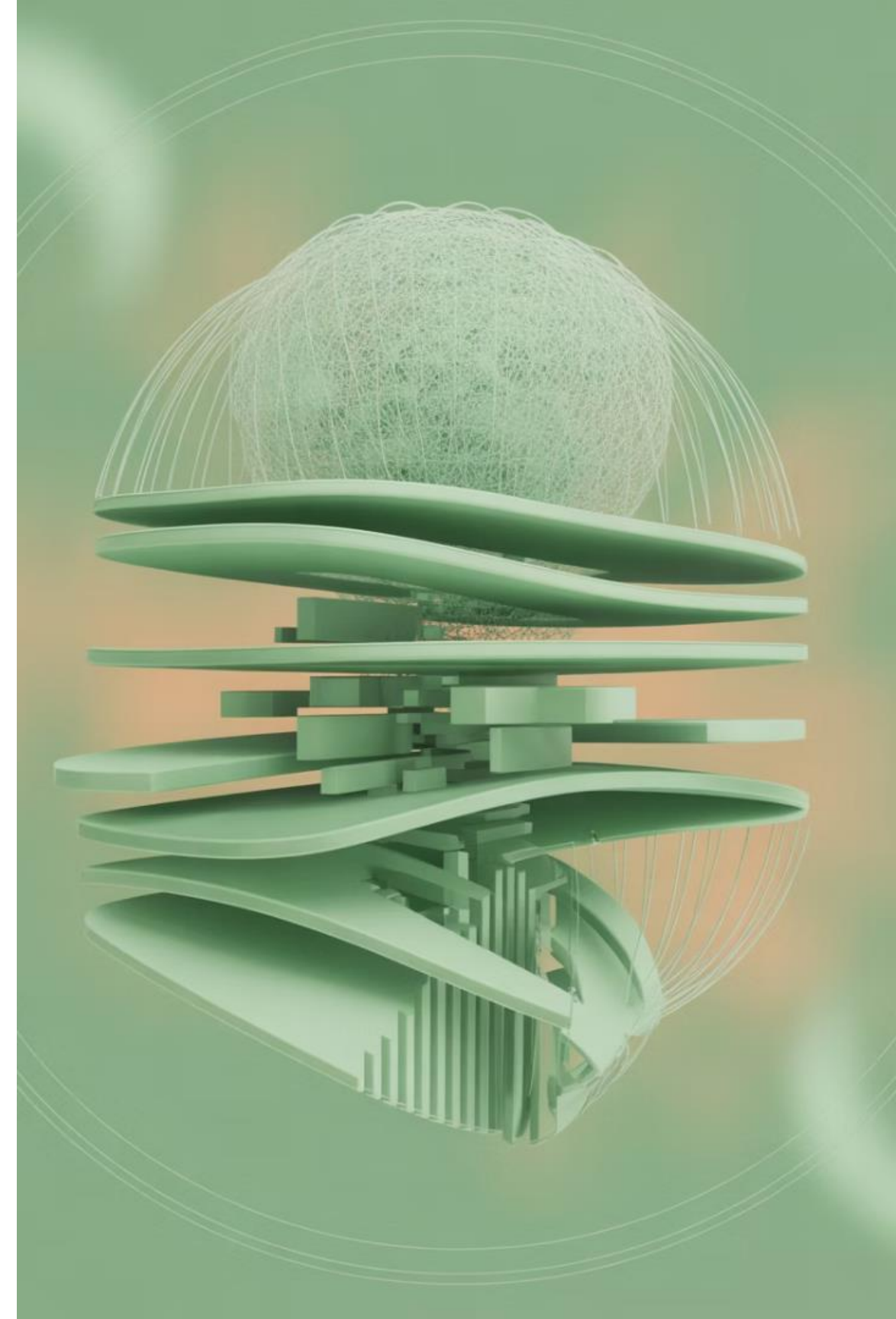
Takes the imaginary to be real; focuses on a social construction mistaken for reality.

## Object Relations

Psychology of interpersonal fictions; focuses on relationships between illusory constructs.

## Lacan's Alternative

Subvert (demolish) ordinary subjectivity to connect with the transpersonal, linguistic unconscious.



# Language and the Subject in Lacan's Theory



## Born Into Language

Language predates (precedes) and shapes individual experience.



## Illusory Subject

Ordinary subject of experience is wholly illusory.



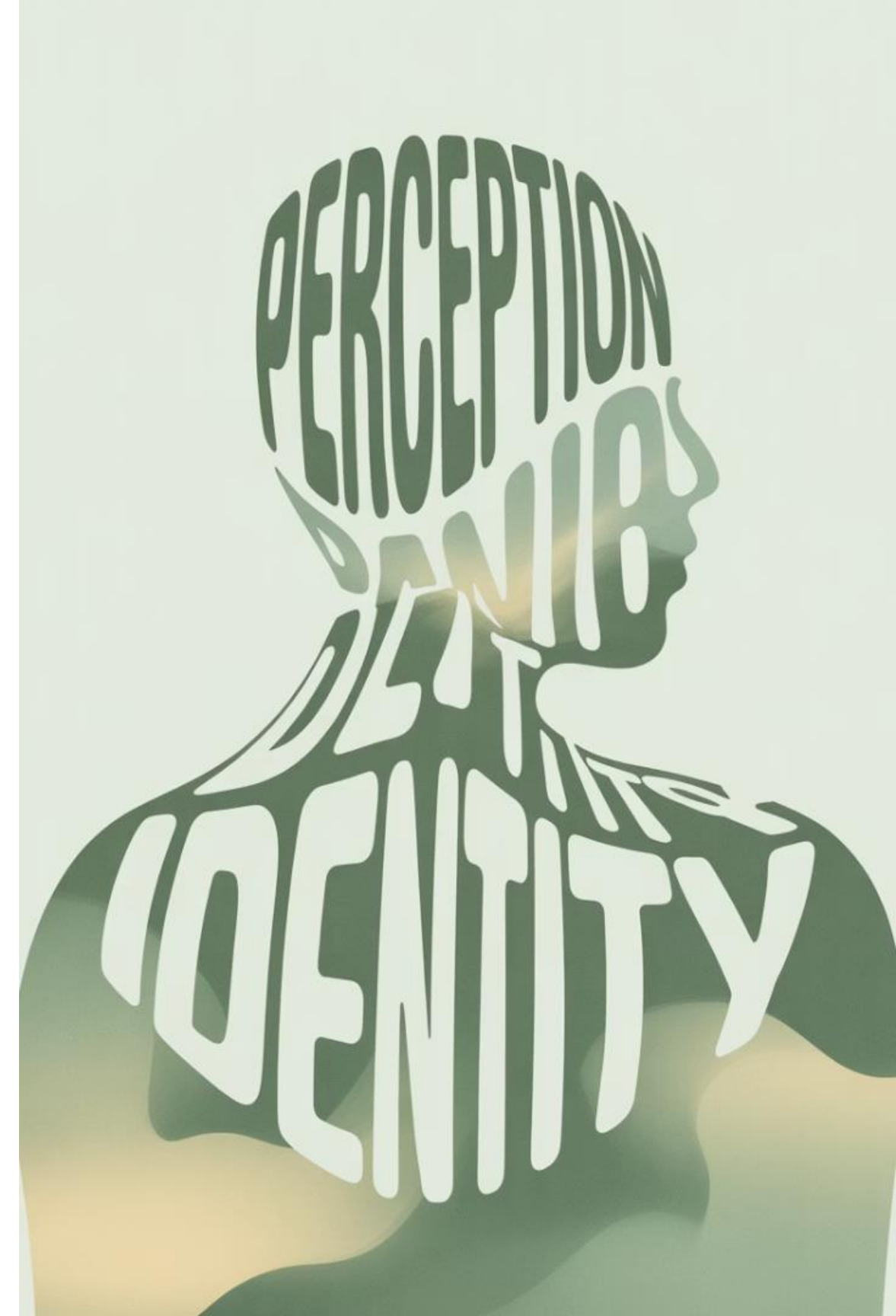
## Empty vs. Full Speech

Analysis moves from intended content to deeper symbolic structures.



## The Other Speaks

Something deeper than ordinary awareness finds its voice.







# The Oedipus Complex and the Symbolic Order

1

## Original Unity

Infant's paradisiacal (heavenly) state with mother, mediated through gratified needs.

2

## Primordial Discord

Awareness of separation creates fundamental gap, giving rise to insatiable (greedy) Desire.

3

## Father's Intervention

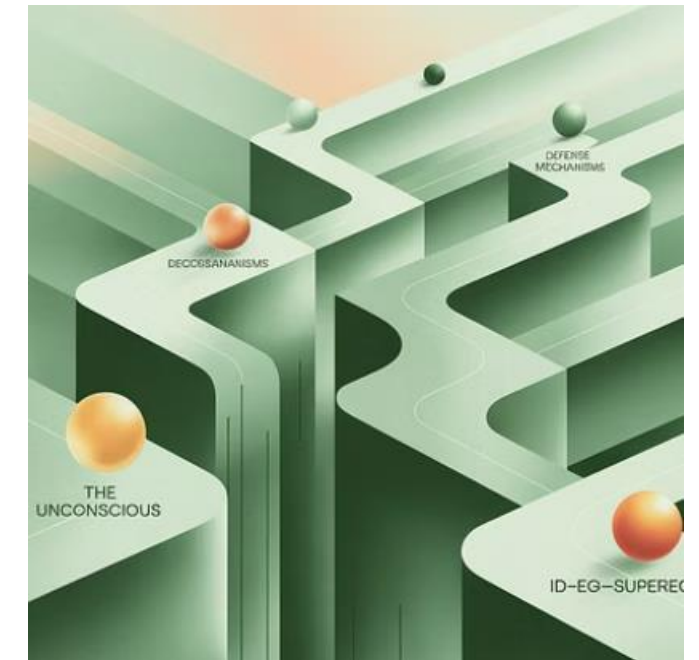
Father lays claim to mother; child cannot be mother's phallus and is "castrated."

4

## Name of the Father

Mother's naming of father ruptures (break) imaginary union, establishing symbolic order.

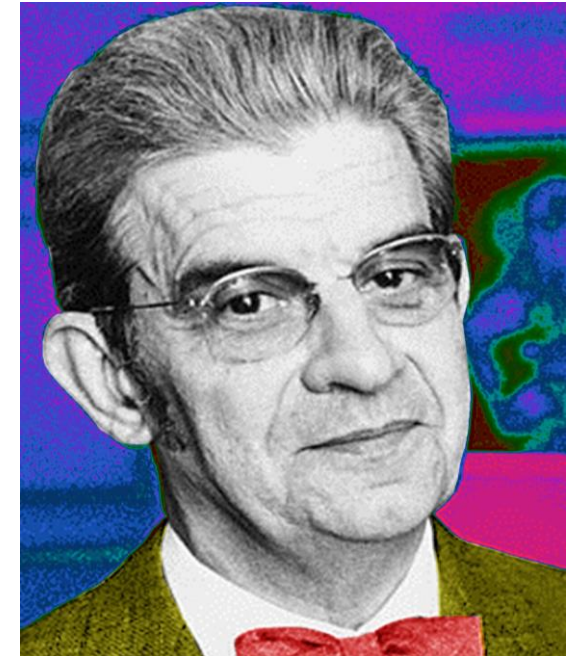
# Varieties of Freudian Revisionism



Loewald and Lacan each developed unique strategies for revising Freud. Like heirs discovering a benefactor's secret passion, they redefined Freud's system to reflect what they saw as its true purpose: for Loewald, an intricate (complex) theory of object relations; for Lacan, the linguistic nature of the unconscious.



# The Legacy of Freudian Revisionists



Kernberg, Schafer, Loewald, and Lacan each found unique ways to preserve Freud's insights while fundamentally altering his concepts. Their work bridges classical psychoanalysis and contemporary practice, ensuring Freud's legacy remains vital in modern psychological thought.