

Working Reflexively:

A Lacanian Perspective

Philip Boxer and Carole Eigen

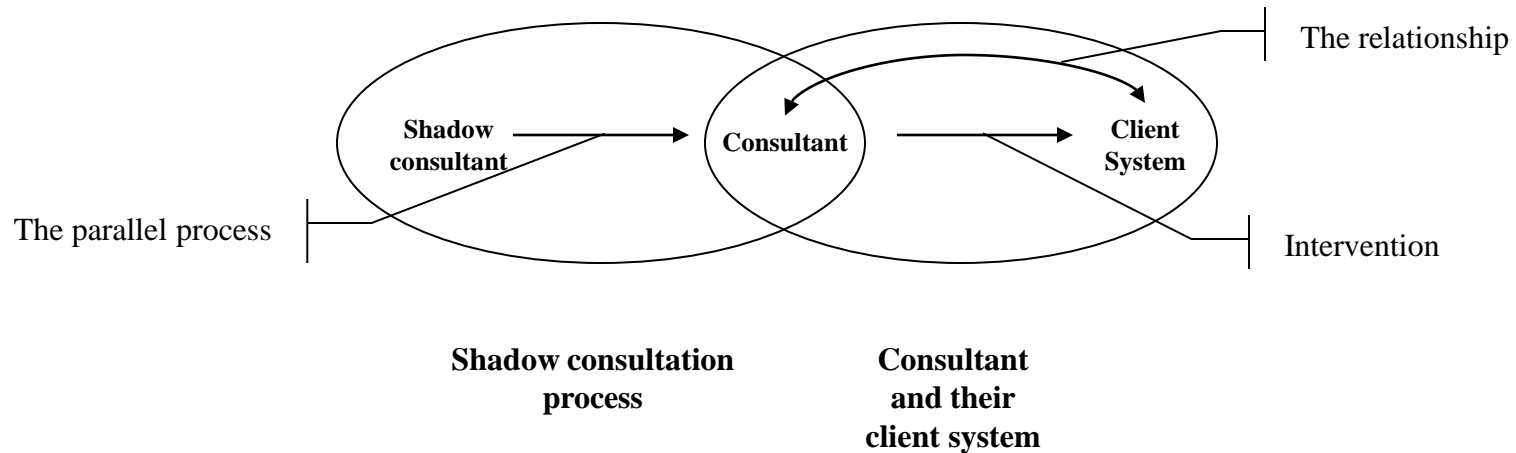
Presented at: ISPSO Regional Meeting

Reflexive Consultation Process

Reflexive Process: what does it require of the consultant?

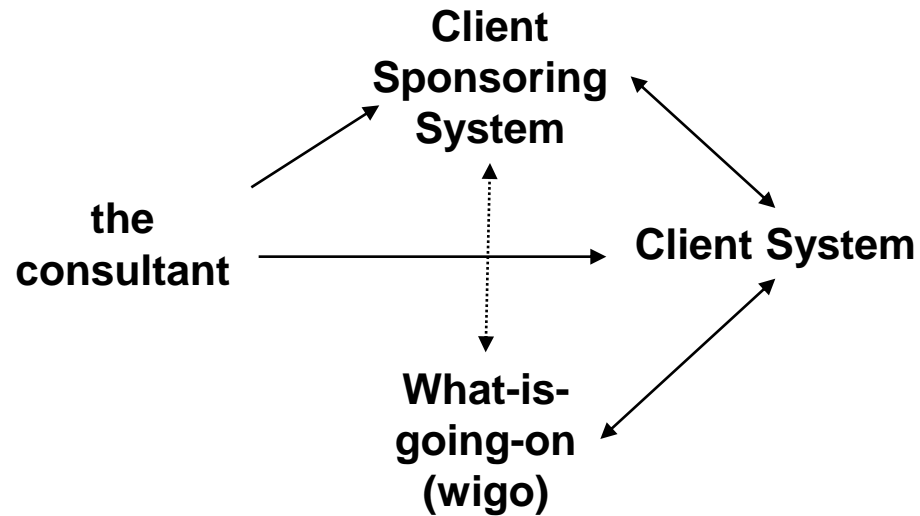
- What does it mean to work reflexively?
- Whose 'being' is being transformed?
- Levels of counter-transference
- Valency

Systemic Shadow Consulting

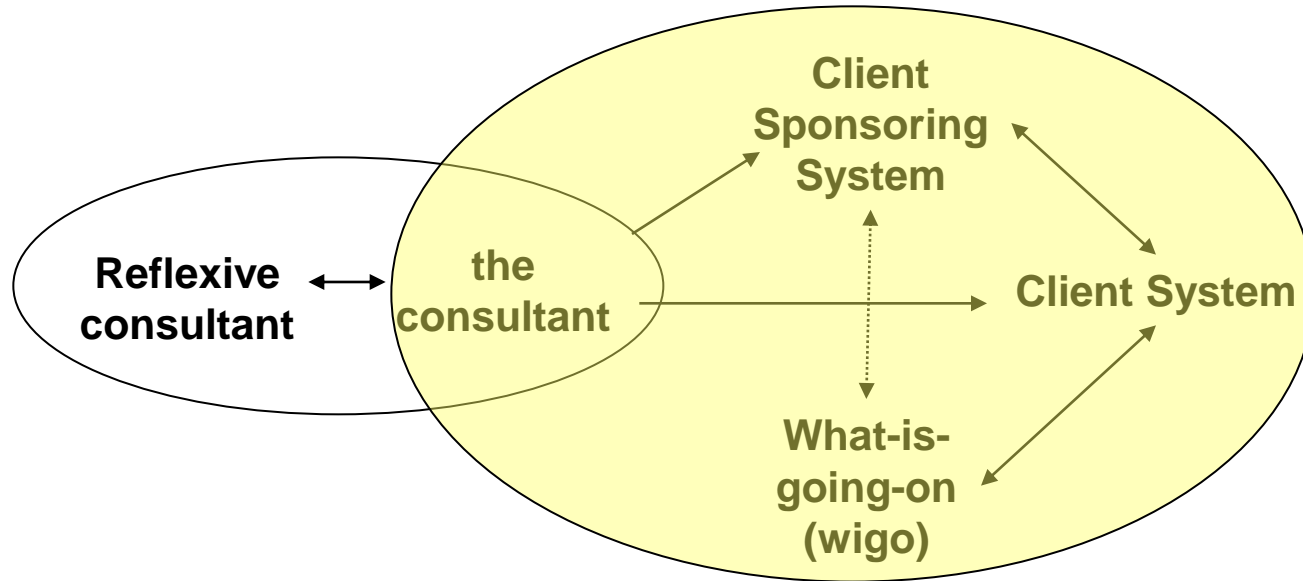


Source: Systemic Shadow Consultancy, Dr Peter Hawkins, 1998

The Quadripod

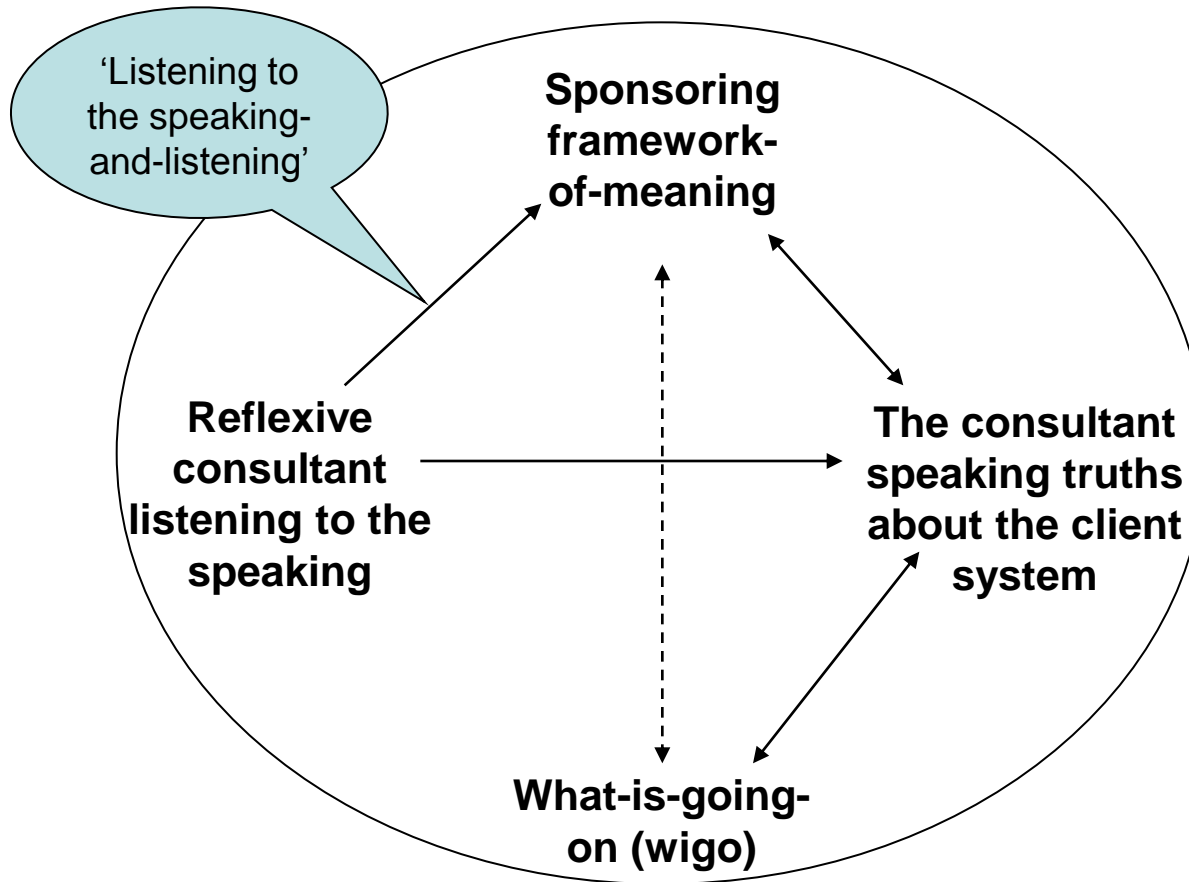


Structure of Reflexive Consultation Process₁

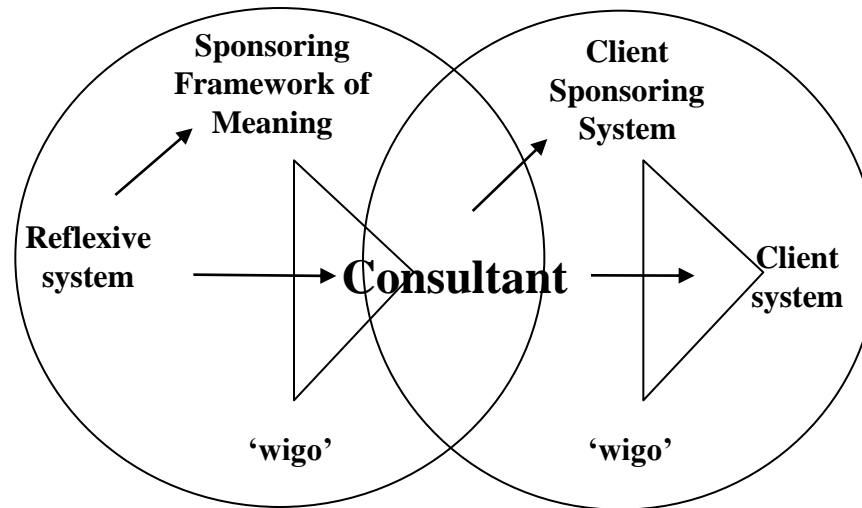


**Consultant and their
client organization**

The Reflexive Consultation Process₂



Parallel Process



**Reflexive
consultation process**

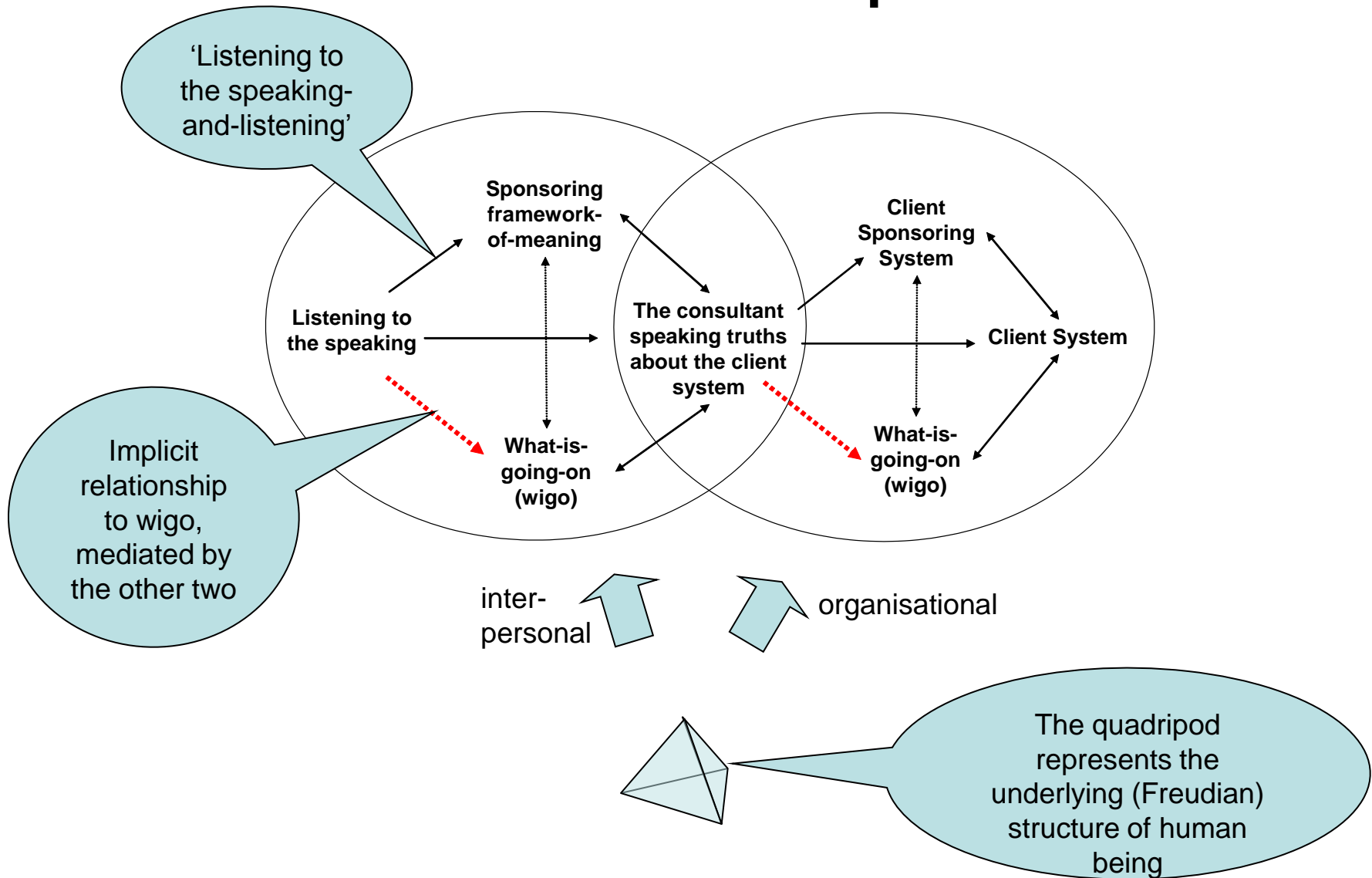
**Consultant and
their client system**

Implications

- Hypothesis: Understanding organisations as 'driven'
- How does Reflexive Consultation Contract differ from psychotherapy>
- From Reflexive supervision to Reflexive consultation to Reflexive intervision.

What is Lacanian about that?

The Quadripod



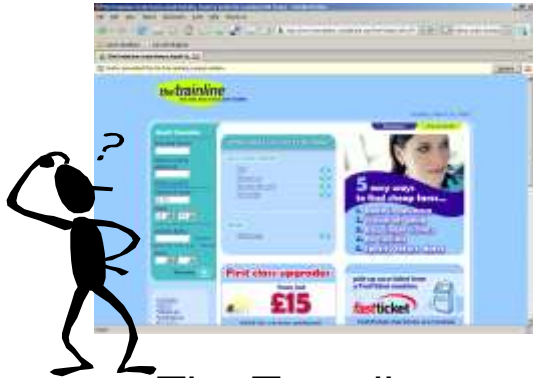
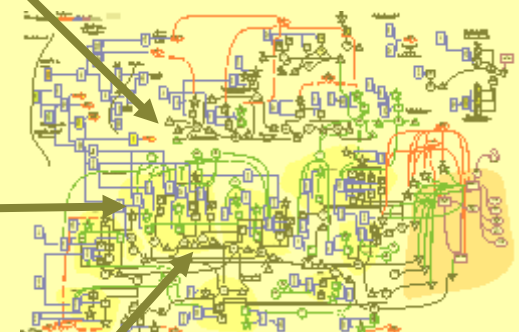
The Railway Metaphor for human being

*The
'Symbolic'*

*The
'Imaginary'*

Φ Emergent Organising Principle

The Booking System



The Traveller

Traveller's consciousness



The Railway Network



*The
'Real'*

The Railway Metaphor for human being

*The
'Imaginary'*

*The
'Symbolic'*

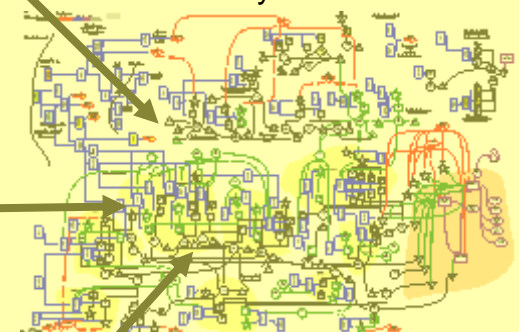
fundamental
fantasy

Φ

Emergent Organising
Principle

The Booking System

ω -system



'booking' = word
representation

'pleasure/pain' = experience of journey



The Traveller
\$

Traveller's
consciousness

'journey' = thing
representation

The Railway Network

Ψ -system



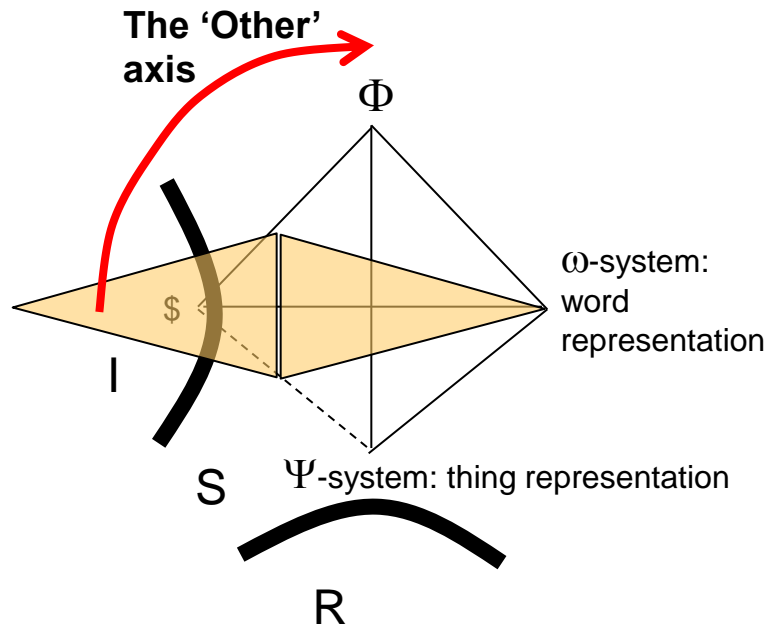
*The
'Real'*

Lacanesse concepts

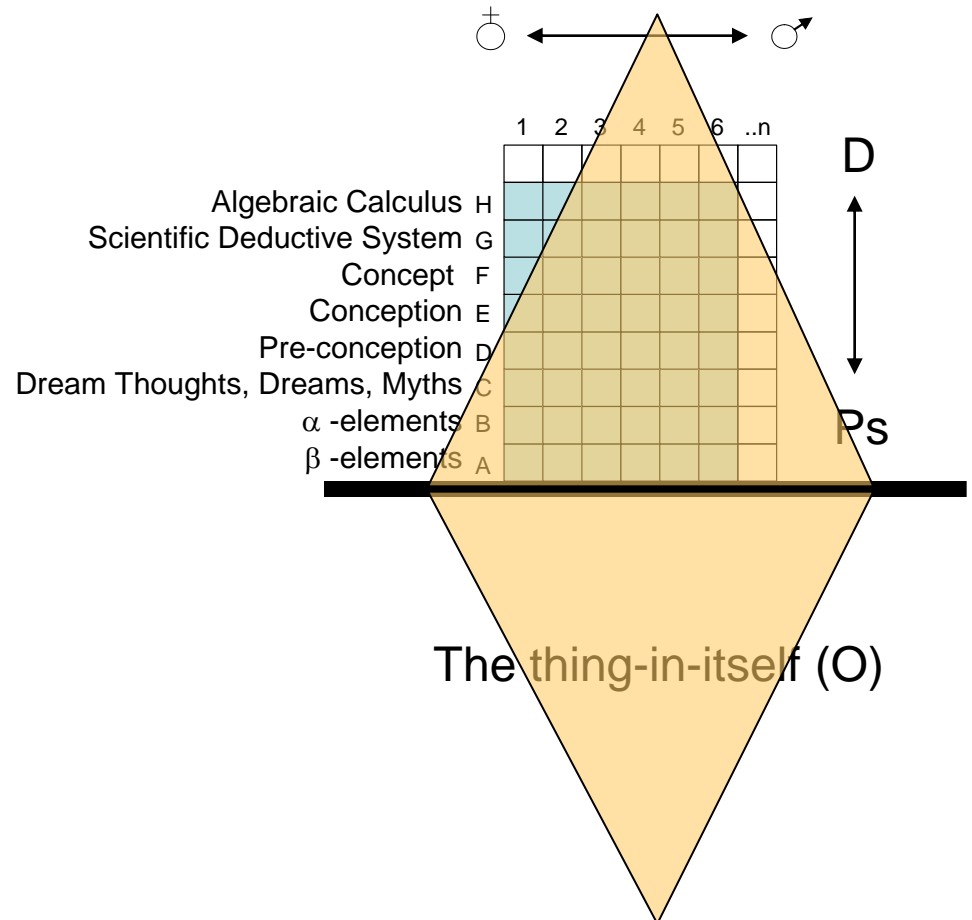
- Real, Symbolic and Imaginary
- Divided Subject (\$)
- The 'Other' (Big 'O'/'A') vs the other (little 'o'/'a')
- Drive
- *Objet petit a*
- Desire

What difference does Lacan make?

Lacan: Being true to desire:
 what you want (lack) is necessarily
 asymmetric to what you know (it is always
 'Other')



Bion: Approaching the thing-in-itself:
 knowing and O can be symmetric



The Exercise

a model that attends critically to the 'speaking-listening' dynamic

Part I: Presenting a Problem

- Speaker role
Task: presents a problem in his/her work role which s/he currently experiences as problematic
(5 minutes without interruption)
- Listener role
Task: asks clarifying questions to which the speaker replies, in order to make sense of what is problematic
(5 minutes of dialogue)
- +1 role (listening to the listening)
Task: creates a metaphor to describe the problematic nature of the situation as it has emerged from the speaking-and-listening process
(3 minutes without interruption)

Part II: The consultation process

Switch persons in speaker and +1 roles

- Speaker role
Task: Presents 2nd *problematic* from his/her own experience that relates to the metaphor from Part I
(5 minutes without interruption)
- Listener role
Task: asks clarifying questions to which the speaker replies, in order to make sense of what is problematic
(5 minutes of dialogue)
- +1 role (listening to the listening)
Task: creates a second metaphor to describe the problematic nature of the situation as it has emerged from the speaking-and-listening process
(3 minutes without interruption)

Part III: Parallel Process

- Similarities and differences in the two metaphors
- What is not being said/heard: what is being ignored

In Conclusion

- The reflexive consultation process
- Lacanian thinking
- The exercise with the '+1'

End

Reflexive Process: what does it require of the consultant

- The willingness:
 - To tell what I am struggling with instead of what I figured out
 - To recognize that there is something problematic about the way I am engaging with the problem
 - To question the very frameworks of meaning that determine what I assumed to be true
 - To be committed to tolerate and explore this disquieting impasse in behalf of the client's task

What does it mean to work reflexively?

- To work reflexively is to examine the framework of meaning* through which you are making sense of the problem being presented by a client system.
- To accept this challenge is to put into question the ideology that is rooted in one's being, that is, one own unconscious phantasy.
- Now you are personally at stake because you are committed to looking for what is in your own blind spot.
- You are faced with the challenge of how you recognize what you have never seen before.

** The framework of meaning that is emergent and implicit in your being as a divided subject*

Whose being is being transformed?

- The **block of marble** needs **Michelangelo** in order to express the potential beauty it contains

the **psychoanalyst*** needs the **patient*** in order to transform her own unconscious drives into a potential alliance for mutual learning.

the **organization** needs the **consultant** to transform itself into what it is unconsciously driven to become in order to meet the demands of it's clients.

- The Organization is willing to subject itself to the uncertainty of such a process only when the symptoms of its distress begin to chisel away at the viability of its current form of interaction.

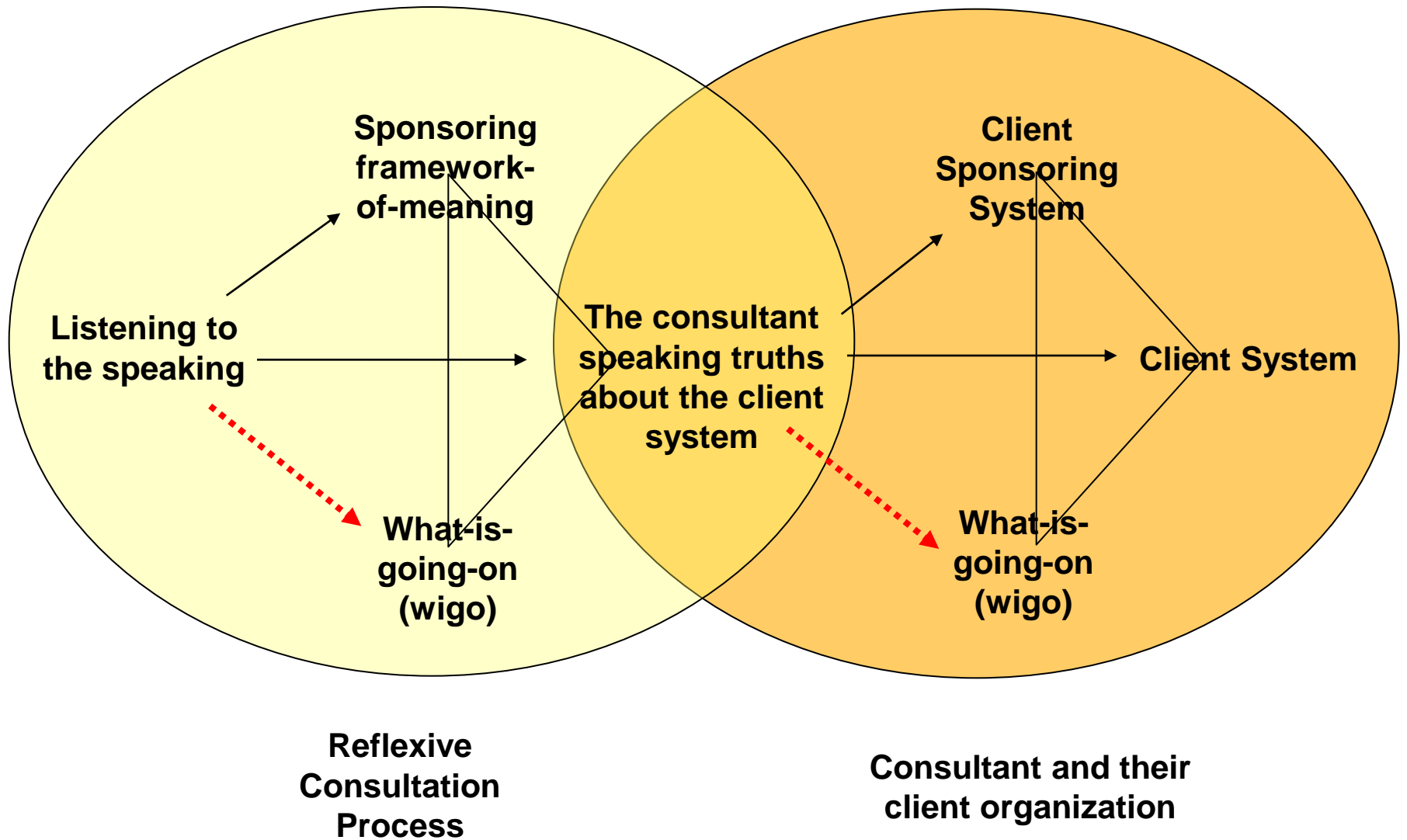
Levels of counter-transference

1. You experience a strong emotion that is not matching the affect of the client
2. You sense that a feeling has been induced in you that replicates client's own feeling towards (e.g.) a parent.
3. You recognize a feeling that you had within your own family that matches your habitual way to take up membership at work or in community.*

** third level is induced by being inside the system and is present in concept of **'the organization in the mind'**.*

Valency

- An uncanny attraction to client dynamics that match our own is recognized as our valency for pulling specific patterns of behaviours stimulated by the anxiety which surfaces during the process of our work.
- In a psychoanalytic contract it is taken for granted that the therapist's self-reflexive method is necessary for the identification and successful working through of destructive defences against anxiety.
- But how do consultants gain access to these reflexive dynamics and develop the skills to use ourselves when we are working in a transformational process?



Exploring the Reflexive Model of Consultation

- Hypothesis: if an organization is driven in the same sense that man is driven, then a particular organization derives its own unique structure based on the unconscious dynamics of those stake holders who form its sponsoring system.
- - H1: if an organization is driven in the same sense that man is driven, then it may be possible to work psychoanalytically using transference as a tool to reveal the underlying drive structure
 - H2: If an organization is a system of interacting unconscious structures then as an entity it may show symptoms of dysfunction in ways similar to a family system.
 - H3: If the systemic dysfunction is made present by an articulated wish to change a repetitive pattern, accompanied by an uncanny consistency in maintaining the pattern, then it may be possible to engage in an in depth exploration of the unconscious processes by forming a reflexive shadow team to determine what is driving the symptom.

Reflexive consultation contract differs from psychotherapy in these ways:

1. There is an outside client on whose behalf both associates are working.
2. The transference available for analysis is the transference to the work itself.
3. Personal valency will be used as a tool to understand what is driving the client system. Therefore, the task is to identify and make use of the counter transference to the work as it emerges in the process of deciphering 'what is going on'
4. Interpersonal transferences will be identified for discussion in order to recognize one's personal valency and make it available for the work task.

The Exercise

a model that attends critically to the ‘speaking-listening’ dynamic

We use metaphors to loosen the over-determined way the system defines itself and tries to conserve it's identity. But this does not go far enough because it doesn't allow us to simultaneously listen to our own way of hearing so that we are at once challenging our own system of meaning as we attempt to intervene in the client system.

This model allows us to attend to ourselves as we listen to the particular way we hear what is being presented, in order to discover how to listen with the analytic third ear that always finds evidence of something more that is being offered by the literal meaning.

The aim of this exercise is to organize our learning around attending to what is not being said/heard and what is being ignored