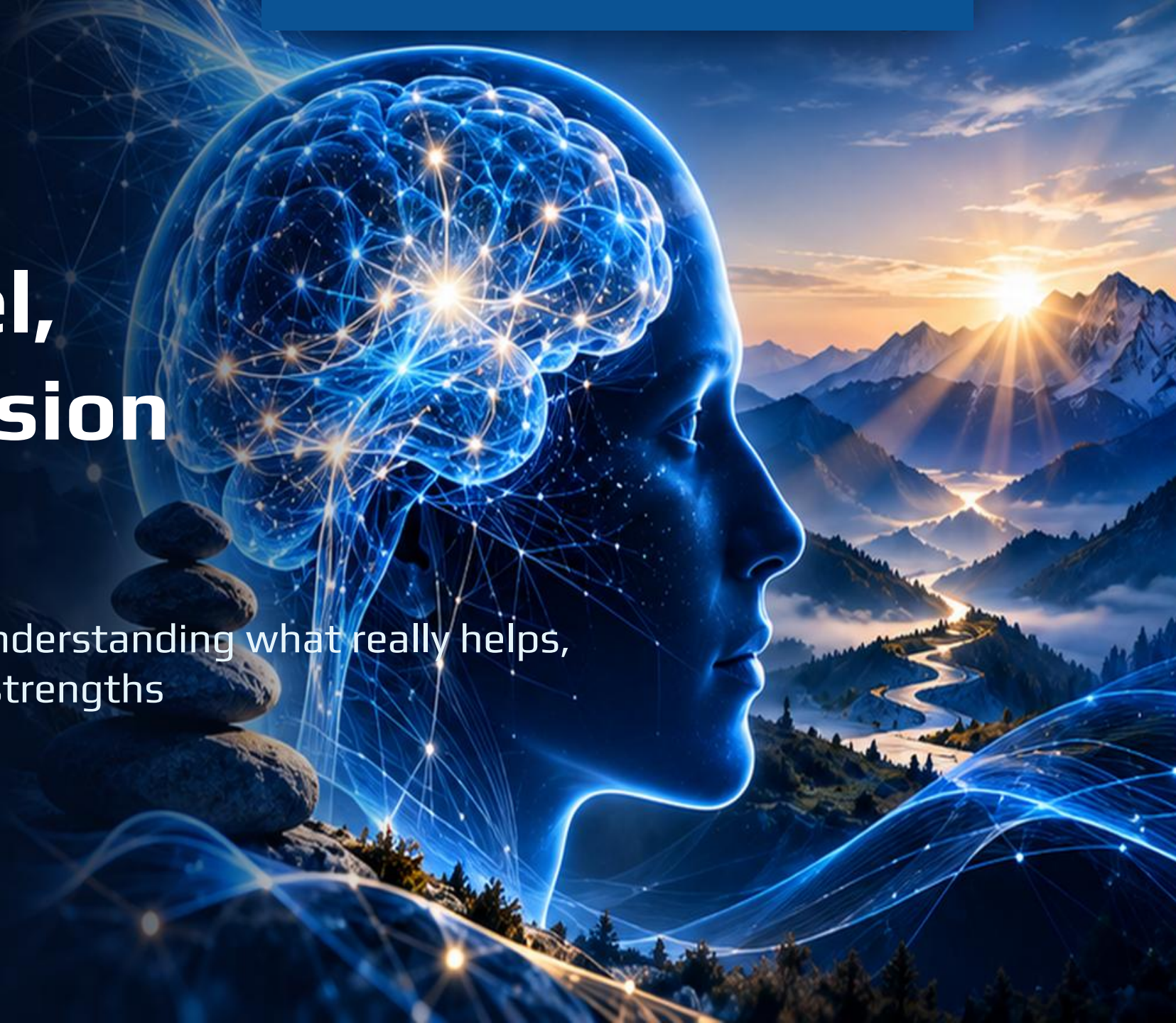


PRESENTATION ONE

Wrong Model, Right Profession

Rethinking mental health, understanding what really helps,
and the power of character strengths



PART 01

Challenging traditional assumptions

What if our model of mental health is incomplete?



The traditional model - Allopathic Medical Model

- Symptoms, diagnoses, and categories
- Individual pathology and disorder
- Treatment as correction of deficits
- Biological explanations as the default

Does Psychotherapy actually operate this way?

We deal primarily with symptoms, not signs

The constructs that define our diagnoses must be measured indirectly

The language tends to pathologize our clients

PART 02

What really helps?

The common factors of psychotherapy



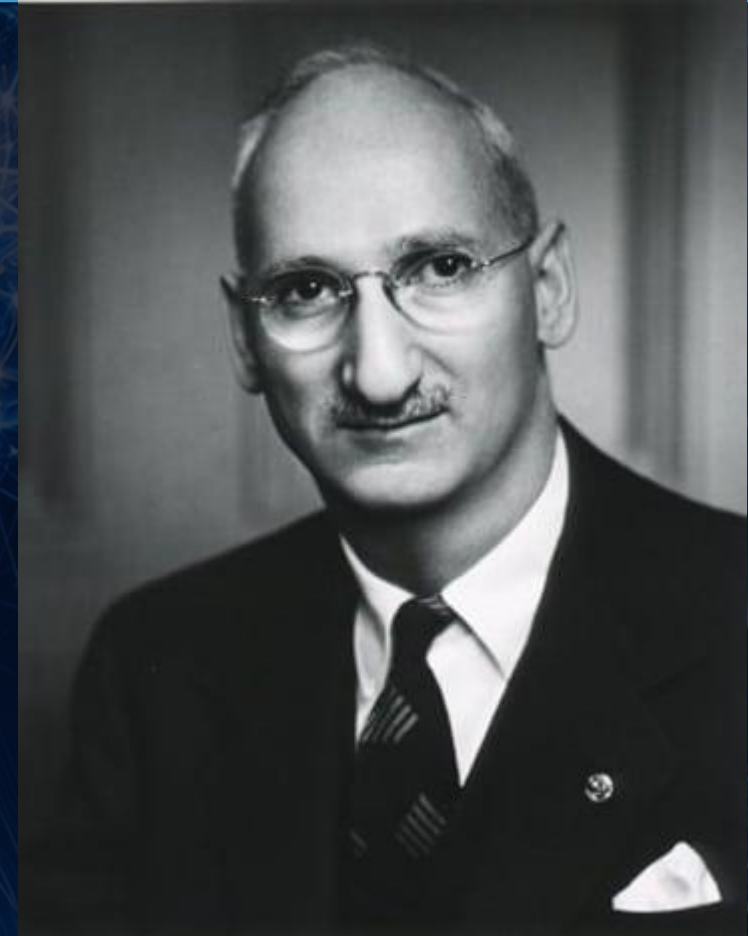
What the Dodo said:



Common factors in psychotherapy

Rosenzweig, S. (1936).
Some implicit common factors in
diverse methods of psychotherapy.
American Journal of Orthopsychiatry
6, 412-415.

“At last the Dodo said, ‘Everybody has won,
and all must have prizes’.”



Saul Rosenzweig (1907 - 2004)

Saul Ros

Questions about what works:

Rosenzweig wrote the following:

"What ... accounts for the result that apparently diverse forms of psychotherapy prove successful in similar cases? Or, if they are only apparently diverse, what do these therapies actually have in common that makes them equally successful?"

Questions about what works:

- (1) the operation of implicit, un verbalized factors, such as catharsis, and the as yet undefined effect of the personality of the good therapist;
- (2) the formal consistency of the therapeutic ideology as a basis for reintegration;
- (3) the alternative formulation of psychological events and the interdependence of personality organization as concepts which reduce the effectual importance of mooted differences between one form of psychotherapy and another.

Finding what works:

Jerome Frank's work from 1961 - 1991 established the fundamental "common factors." Four features shared by all effective therapies:

- 1) an emotionally charged, confiding relationship with a helping person;
- 2) a rationale, conceptual scheme, or myth that provides a plausible explanation for the client's symptoms and prescribes a procedure for resolving them;

Finding what works:

- 3) a ritual or procedure that requires the active participation of both client and therapist and that is believed by both to be the means of restoring the client's health;
- 4) a healing setting.

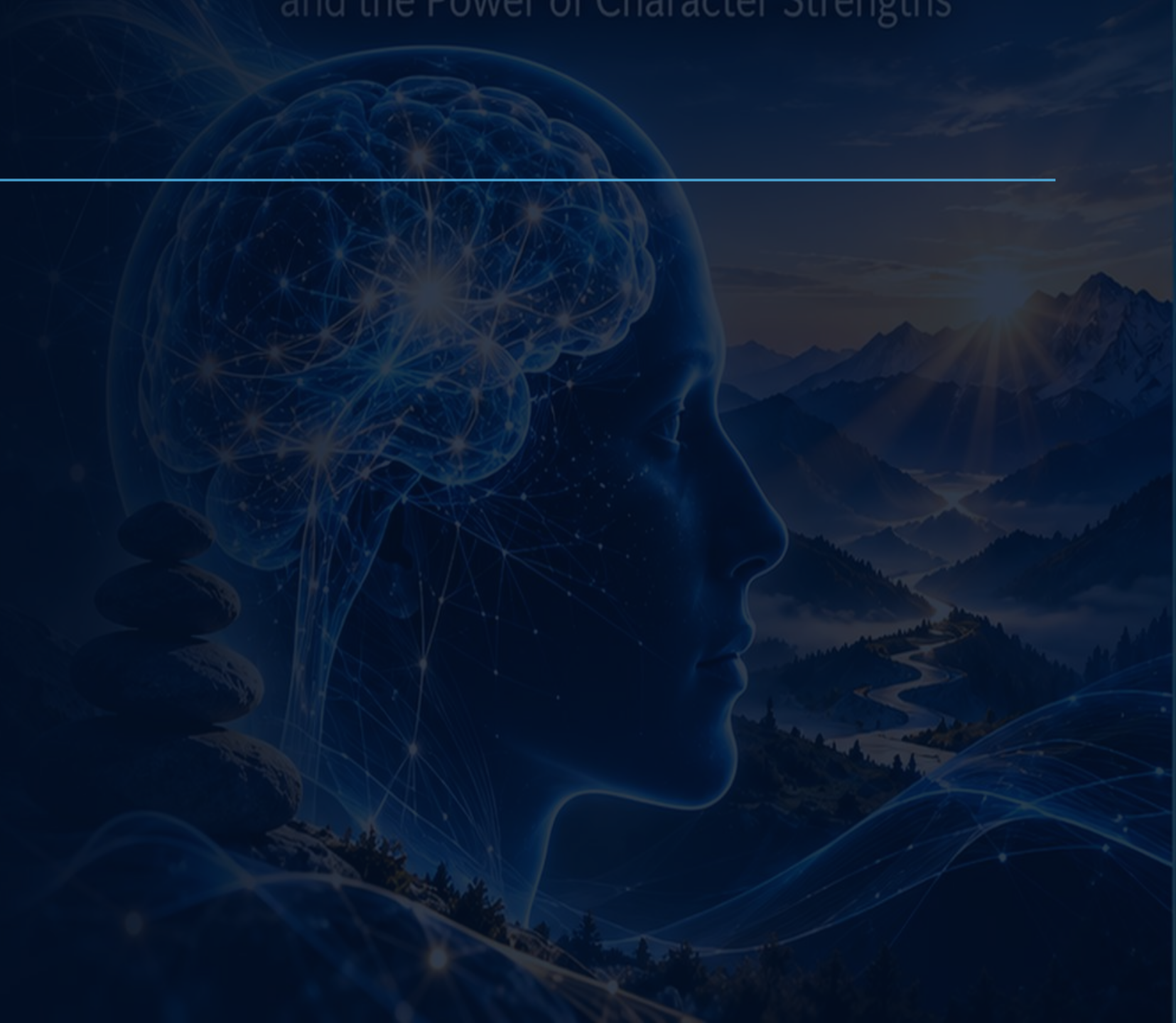
Common Factors

The Therapeutic Alliance

A Theoretical Framework

Techniques

A Secure Environment



Common Factors

The Therapeutic Alliance - A relationship based on mutual vulnerability

A Theoretical Framework

Techniques

A Secure Environment

Common Factors

The Therapeutic Alliance - A relationship based on mutual vulnerability

A Theoretical Framework - An understanding of how people work

Techniques

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Common Factors

The Therapeutic Alliance - A relationship based on mutual vulnerability

A Theoretical Framework - An understanding of how people work

Techniques - Procedures derived from the theoretical understanding

A Secure Environment

Common Factors

The Therapeutic Alliance - A relationship based on mutual vulnerability

A Theoretical Framework - An understanding of how people work

Techniques - Procedures derived from the theoretical understanding

A Secure Environment - Where risks can be undertaken with trust

Specificity

Some interventions have meaningful disorder-specific advantages and common factors are not an exhaustive explanation of treatment outcomes.

What needs to be avoided is a simplistic one-diagnosis = one-treatment model.

From criticism to reconstruction

Instead of understanding the therapist primarily as someone who applies a corrective procedure to a malfunctioning psychological system, consider the therapist as a participant in a process that facilitates change.

Contrast two conceptions:

Traditional Medical

- Identify Pathology
- Select Corrective Intervention
- Apply Treatment
- Reduce Symptoms
- Repair Dysfunction

Broader Counseling Conception

- Understand the person in context
- Establish Conditions for change
- Collaborate in a developmental process
- Promote adaptation and well-being
- Mobilize existing capacities

PART 03

Character strengths and virtues

Peterson & Seligman's classification



Scientific Models Determine What We See

The map is not the territory ~

Scientific models are not themselves reality. They are conceptual structures that organize observations and help make predictions.

A model may be useful and successful while remaining incomplete.

Our assumptions about psychological change are inseparable from our assumptions about the nature of human beings.

Oxford University Press 2004

The Values in Action Project

Character Strengths & Virtues:
A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

Character Strengths & Virtues A Handbook & Classification

Christopher Peterson
&
Martin E. P. Seligman

Oxford University Press, 2004

Oxford University Press 2004

The Values in Action Project

Character Strengths & Virtues:
A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

When those in the mental health field talk about mental health, wellness, or well-being, they often mean little more than the absence of disease, distress, and disorder.

This handbook focuses on what is right about people and specifically about the strengths of character that make the good life possible.

Oxford University Press 2004

The Values in Action Project

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

Peterson and Seligman's project grew out of the emerging positive psychology movement. They recognized that psychology had sophisticated classifications of psychopathology, such as the DSM, but lacked a comparable systematic vocabulary for describing what is right with people.

The Values in Action (VIA) project was intended to provide such a classification. The project lasted approximately three years and involved a team of about 55 social scientists. (viacharacter.org)

The Values in Action Project

Five Major Stages

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

1. They began with historical and cross-cultural sources rather than contemporary psychological theory alone. Peterson, Seligman, and their collaborators examined philosophical, religious, and cultural traditions extending across roughly 2,500 years. Sources included traditions associated with Aristotle, Plato, Confucius, Lao-Tze, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, along with more modern formulations of desirable character from sources as diverse as Benjamin Franklin, psychological theorists, and civic organizations.

The Values in Action Project

Five Major Stages

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

The guiding question was essentially: Across very different cultures and historical periods, what qualities have human beings repeatedly regarded as constituting good character?

Oxford University Press 2004

The Values in Action Project

Five Major Stages

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

2. They looked for convergence across traditions and identified six broad virtues. Despite substantial cultural differences, they concluded that six broad categories appeared repeatedly enough to be regarded as widely, and perhaps universally, valued:

Wisdom and Knowledge • Courage • Humanity • Justice
Temperance • Transcendence

The Values in Action Project

Five Major Stages

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

This was an important methodological decision. They were not claiming that every culture described these virtues identically. Rather, the historical and cross-cultural review revealed sufficient conceptual convergence to justify treating them as broad universal virtue categories.

Oxford University Press 2004

The Values in Action Project

Five Major Stages

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

3. They then identified observable psychological characteristics through which those abstract virtues could be expressed. A virtue such as courage is too abstract to measure easily. Peterson and Seligman therefore sought more specific psychological characteristics that could represent different pathways to a virtue.

These became the character strengths.

The Values in Action Project

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

Five
Major
Stages

For example:

Temperance

- forgiveness
- humility
- prudence
- self-regulation

The Values in Action Project

Five Major Stages

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

4. Candidate strengths had to survive a fairly demanding set of criteria. Peterson and Seligman did not simply include every positive personality characteristic they encountered. Candidate strengths were evaluated against a set of criteria.

The Values in Action Project

Five Major Stages

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

Among the important criteria were whether the proposed strength:

- appeared across cultures;
- contributed to fulfillment and a good life;
- was morally valued in its own right, rather than merely because it produced some desirable outcome;
- did not diminish other people when exercised;
- had an identifiable undesirable opposite;
- behaved sufficiently like a trait, appearing with some consistency across time and situations;
- could be distinguished from other proposed strengths;

The Values in Action Project

Five Major Stages

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

- could potentially be measured;
- was represented by recognizable paragons - people regarded as exemplary for possessing it;
- sometimes appeared precociously in prodigies;
- could be conspicuously absent in some individuals; and
- was supported by social institutions, customs, or rituals designed to encourage its development.

Not every strength had to satisfy every criterion perfectly. Rather, these criteria operated as conceptual screens for determining whether a candidate belonged in the classification.

The Values in Action Project

Five Major Stages

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

5. The process eventually yielded 24 character strengths organized beneath the six virtues. The candidate list changed during development. It did not begin neatly with 24, and eventually settled on the now-familiar set of 24 strengths.

Character Strengths & Virtues

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

Virtues are the core characteristics valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers:

wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence.

Peterson & Seligman argue that these virtues are universal.

Character strengths are the psychological ingredients - the processes or mechanisms that define the virtues.

Character Strengths & Virtues

Wisdom & Knowledge

Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge.

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

Creativity [originality, ingenuity] - Thinking of novel ways to do things.

Curiosity [interest, novelty seeking] - Finding topics and subjects fascinating; exploring and discovering.

Open-Mindedness [judgment, critical thinking]

Love of Learning [Engagement in content without immediate benefit]

Perspective [Wisdom]

Character Strengths & Virtues

Courage

Strength to exercise the will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, either external or internal.

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

Bravery [Valor]

Persistence [Perseverance, industriousness]

Integrity [Authenticity, honesty]

Vitality [Zest, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]

Character Strengths & Virtues

Strengths of Humanity

Positive traits manifest in caring relationships with others.

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman
Love

Kindness [Generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, "niceness"]

Social Intelligence [Emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]

Character Strengths & Virtues

Strengths of Justice

Regarded as broadly interpersonal, relevant to the optimal interaction between the individual and the group or the community.

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

Citizenship [Social responsibility, loyalty, teamwork]

Fairness [Equal treatment]

Leadership [Mission directed, cohesion directed]

Character Strengths & Virtues

Strengths of Temperance

The positive traits
that protect us
from excess.

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

Forgiveness and mercy

Humility and modesty

Prudence

Self-regulation [Self-control]

Character Strengths & Virtues

Strengths of Transcendence

That which allows individuals to forge connection to the larger universe and thus provide meaning to their lives.

Character Strengths & Virtues: A Handbook & Christopher Peterson & Martin E. P. Seligman

Appreciation of beauty [Awe, wonder, elevation]

Gratitude

Spirituality [Religiousness, faith, purpose]

Hope [Optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]

Humor [Playfulness]

Character strengths and virtues

Peterson & Seligman's classification

A Manual of the Sanities



A question for our profession

**Are we just reducing symptoms,
or helping people thrive?**

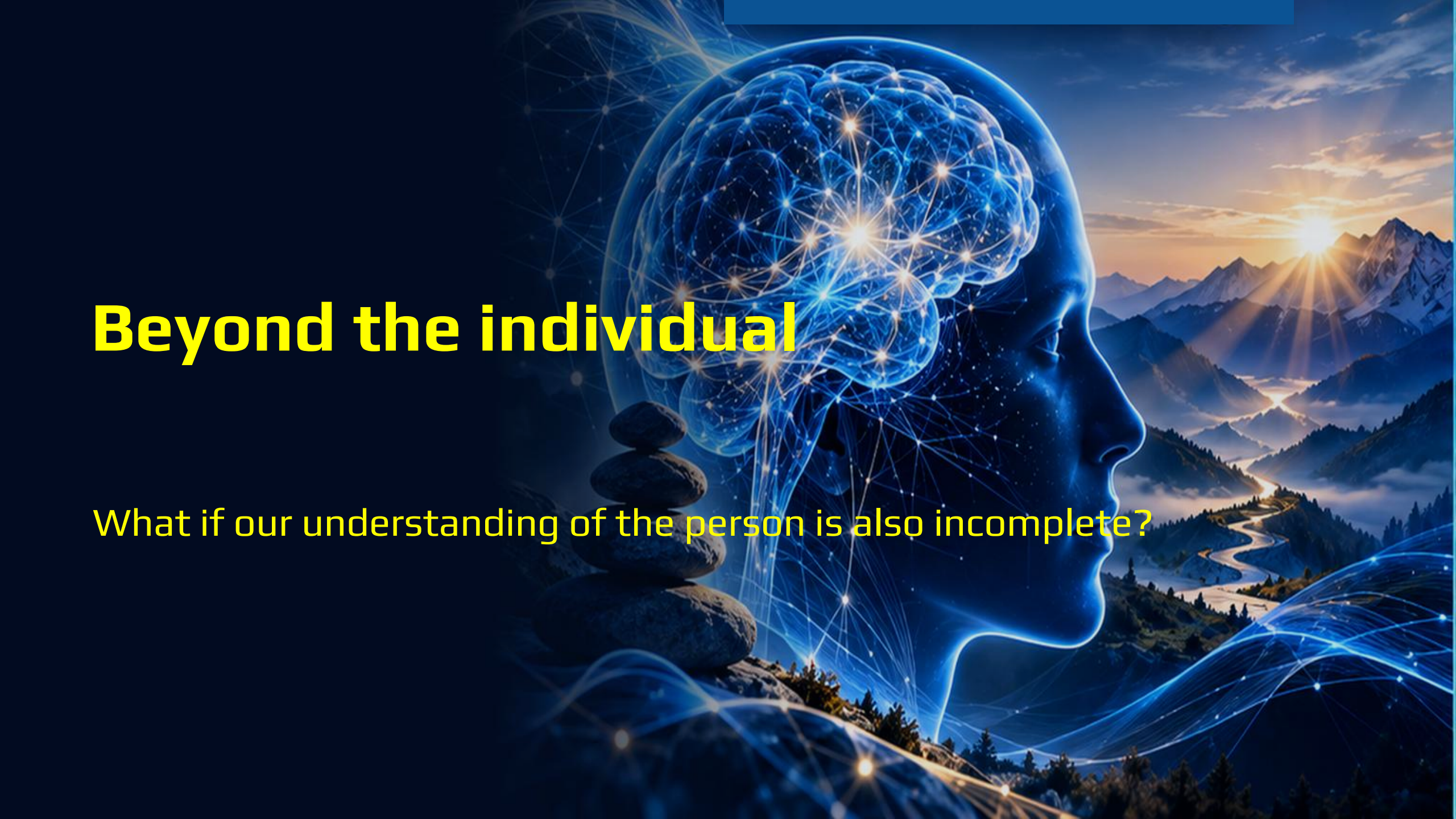
Eudaimonia

What is our therapeutic target?



Beyond the individual

What if our understanding of the person is also incomplete?



PRESENTATION TWO

Rethinking Who WE ARE...

From separate selves to a more complete understanding
of consciousness and connection



PART 01

Assumptions can be wrong

Scientific revolutions and changing explanatory models



When the familiar model becomes inadequate

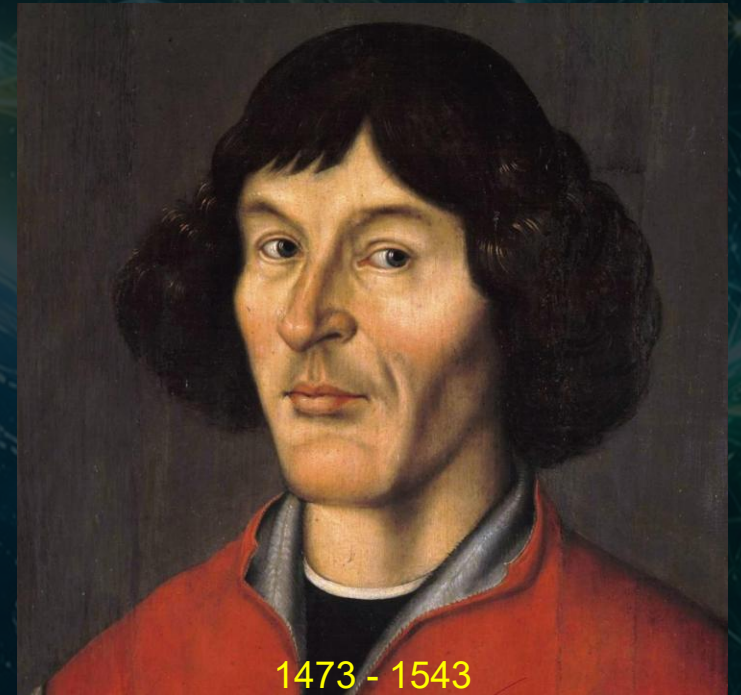
How do we recognize that a familiar explanation of reality may be incomplete?

When the familiar model becomes inadequate

How do we recognize that a familiar explanation of reality may be incomplete?

Nicolaus Copernicus

Publication of *De revolutionibus*. A heliocentric model challenges the established Earth-centered picture of the cosmos. (1543)



When the familiar model becomes inadequate

How do we recognize that a familiar explanation of reality may be incomplete?

Georges Lemaître

An expanding universe and the primeval-atom hypothesis challenge the assumption of an eternal, static cosmos.



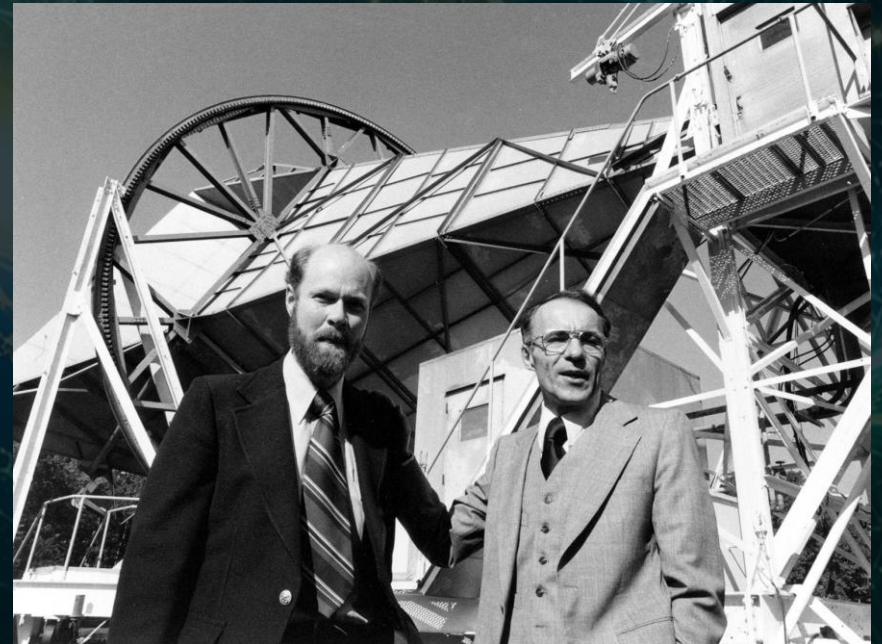
1894 - 1966

When the familiar model becomes inadequate

How do we recognize that a familiar explanation of reality may be incomplete?

Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson

The discovery of the Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation in 1964. Nobel Prize for Physics (1978).



When the familiar model becomes inadequate

How do we recognize that a familiar explanation of reality may be incomplete?

The question is not whether an idea challenges established science.

The question is whether it explains observations better, generates useful predictions, and survives serious attempts to disprove it.

PART 02

Continuity and connection

Relationships, fields, and interdependence



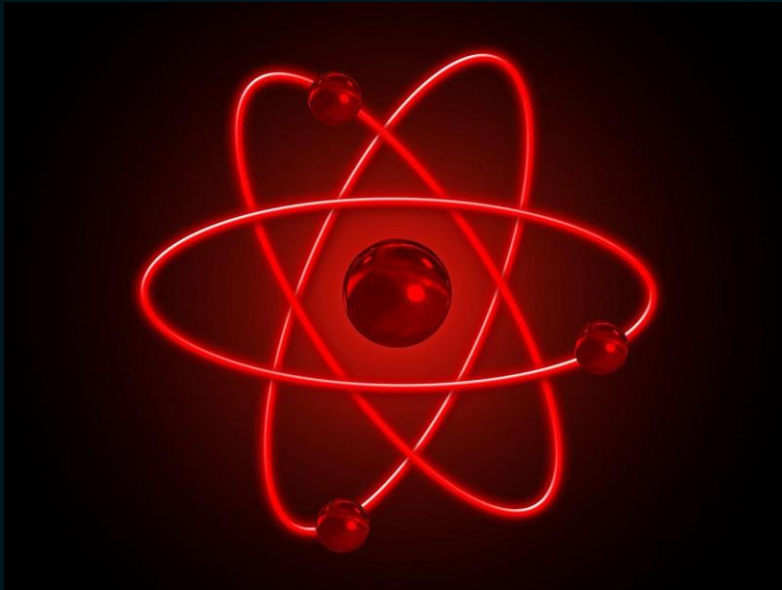
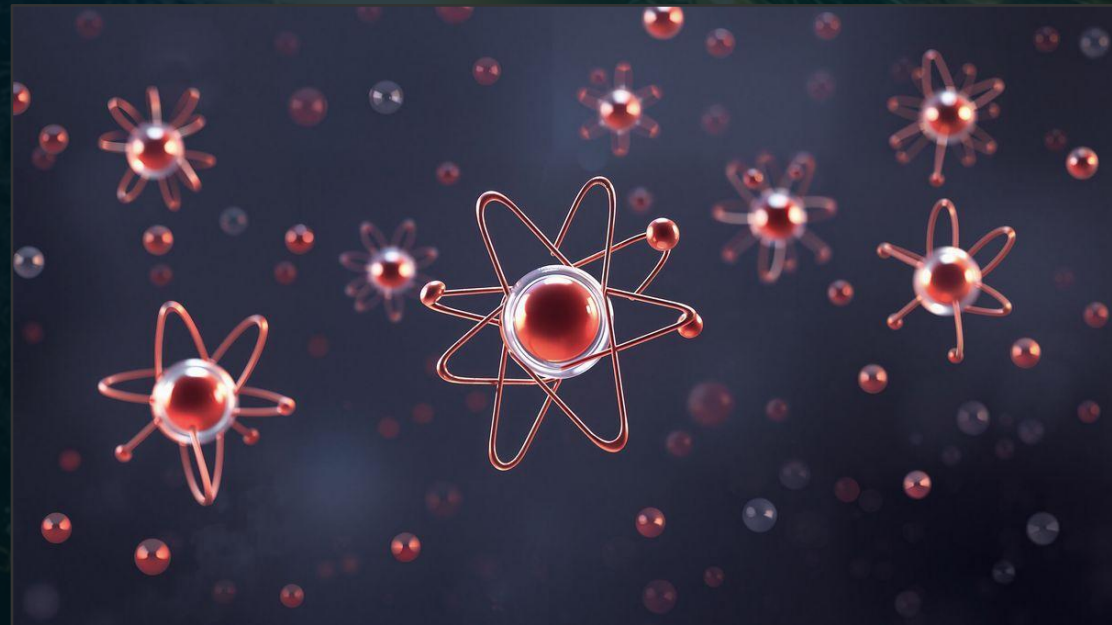
The central question:

**Are the objects we
perceive as separate
actually fundamental,
independent pieces of reality?**

The mechanical universe and the classical atom.

Mechanical Universe - Isaac Newton's influence & worldview

The atom as we were taught:



Fields

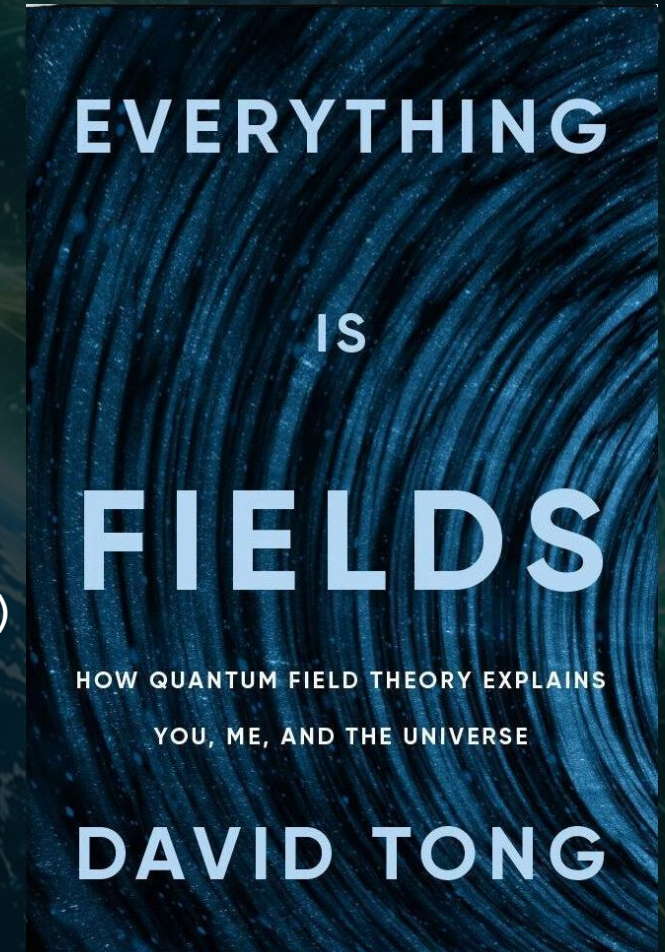
David Tong, Ph.D.



Professor of Theoretical Physics
Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics (DAMTP)

University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Tong explains how quantum field theory provides our most fundamental current description of physical reality.



Fields

Fields are fundamental. What we perceive as particles are excitations of quantum fields.

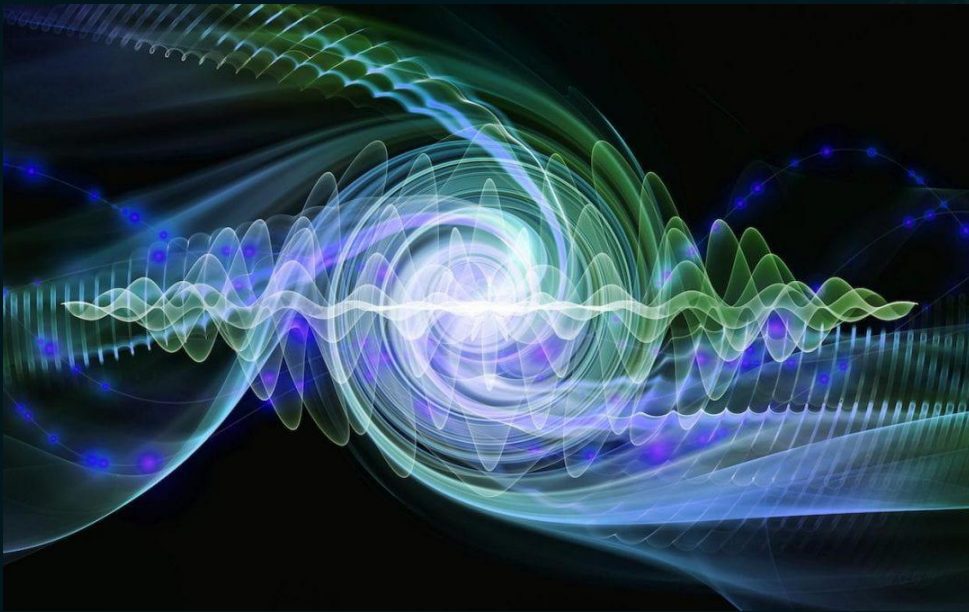
Fields extend throughout space. Electrons, for example, are excitations of the electron field rather than fundamentally independent little objects.

Forces arise through field interactions. Electromagnetism and the nuclear interactions are understood through quantum fields.

Empty space is not truly empty. Even a vacuum possesses quantum properties.

The history of scientific discovery matters. Tong explores how Faraday, Maxwell, Dirac, Feynman, Higgs, and others contributed to this radically different understanding of matter.

"Everything—matter, light, even you—are just waves on a restless sea known as a quantum field." David Tong



A new perspective, reconsidering assumptions

Physical reality need not conform
to our intuitive picture of separate, self-
contained objects.

PART 03

Consciousness in a larger context

Established findings and open questions



PART 03

Consciousness in a larger context

Central question:

Where does an individual mind begin and end?



Multiple perspectives on consciousness

Rene Descartes

Res Extensa - the realm of the physical

Res Cogitans - the immaterial, consciousness, the intellect

Multiple perspectives on consciousness

Bernard Baars, Ph.D.
SUNY Stony Brook

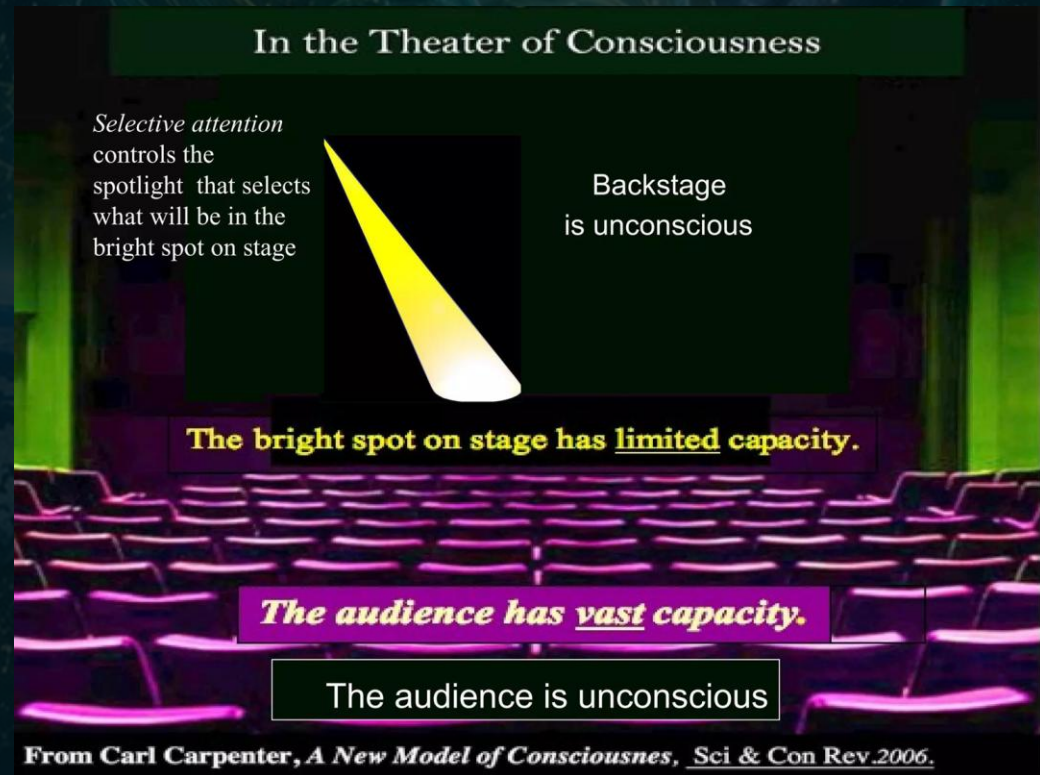
Cognitive scientist, psychologist, and
consciousness researcher



Global Workspace Theory (GWT) is a prominent scientific theory of consciousness developed by cognitive psychologist Bernard J. Baars in the 1980s. It attempts to explain how information becomes consciously accessible within the human brain and how conscious experience coordinates otherwise separate cognitive processes.

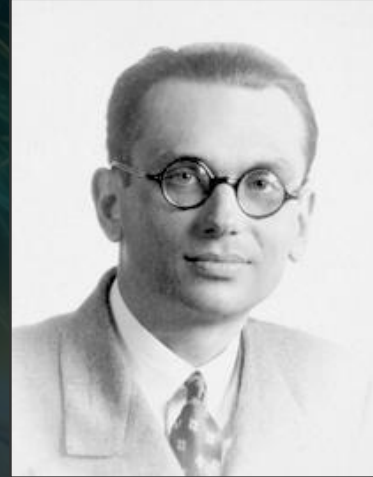
Multiple perspectives on consciousness

The central proposition of Global Workspace Theory is that consciousness functions as a global information-sharing system, making selected information available to numerous specialized, largely unconscious processes throughout the brain.



Multiple perspectives on consciousness

Kurt Gödel -
Logician, Mathematician



"Matter and mind are two different things. It is a logical possibility that the existence of mind separate from matter is an empirically decidable question. The mere possibility that there may not be enough nerve cells to perform the function of the mind introduces an empirical component into the problem of mind and matter."

Multiple perspectives on consciousness

Kurt Gödel

Gödel attempted to do for neurology and biology what he had done for logic. Construct a theory that demonstrates the insufficiency of the materialist approach.

Gödel speculated that there are simply not enough neurons in the human brain to provide sufficient storage capacity for all the mind's operations.

Multiple perspectives on consciousness

David Chalmers, Ph.D.

University Professor of Philosophy and Neural Science,
New York University (NYU)



Chalmers is especially influential for three ideas:

1. The Hard Problem of Consciousness: Why and how do physical processes give rise to subjective experience?
2. Naturalistic Dualism: The proposition that consciousness may be a fundamental feature of reality that cannot be fully reduced to physical processes.
3. The Extended Mind: Developed with Andy Clark, the argument that cognitive processes can sometimes extend beyond the brain into the environment.

Multiple perspectives on consciousness

Rupert Sheldrake, Ph.D. Biochemistry
Clare College, Cambridge University, UK



Morphic Resonance -

Living things are connected through invisible 'morphic fields'
These fields store shared memory and habits of nature
Minds may access memory from beyond the brain
Suggests learning and behavior can spread non-locally
Highly controversial — challenges mainstream science

Multiple perspectives on consciousness

What if the individual is not always the most useful unit of analysis for understanding psychological experience?

PART 04

Beyond the discrete self

From separate pieces to connected systems



The phenomenology of human connection

**What changes when we think
of ourselves as connected,
rather than isolated?**

Ordinary relational experience

A therapist perceiving an emotional shift before the client articulates it.

Long-term partners recognizing subtle changes in one another.

Parents responding to an infant's distress before it becomes overt.

Individuals experiencing unusually strong interpersonal attunement.

Measurable interpersonal synchrony

Behavioral Synchrony:

The tendency of individuals to coordinate their observable actions, movements, gestures, speech rhythms, and postures during interaction. Examples include people unconsciously matching one another's walking pace, facial expressions, or conversational gestures.

Measurable interpersonal synchrony

Behavioral Synchrony:

William S. Condon — An early pioneer who studied the precise temporal coordination of body movements and speech during interpersonal communication. His work helped establish interactional synchrony as a research topic.

Frank Bernieri — Investigated behavioral synchrony in social interactions, including its relationship to interpersonal rapport and social judgment.

Tanya Chartrand and John Bargh — Demonstrated the chameleon effect, in which people unconsciously mimic the postures, gestures, and mannerisms of others.

Sebastian Kirschner and Michael Tomasello — Investigated how coordinated movement and music-making contribute to prosocial behavior in children.

Measurable interpersonal synchrony

Emotional Coordination:

The process through which individuals' emotional states influence and become aligned with one another. Through empathy, emotional contagion, and mutual responsiveness, people may begin experiencing similar emotions or develop complementary emotional responses that facilitate interpersonal connection.

Measurable interpersonal synchrony

Emotional Coordination:

Elaine Hatfield, John Cacioppo, and Richard Rapson** — Major contributors to research on emotional contagion, describing how emotions spread between individuals through expressive and physiological processes.

Edward Tronick — Developed the Still-Face Paradigm, demonstrating the importance of emotional responsiveness and mutual regulation between infants and caregivers.

Ruth Feldman — Studied parent–infant synchrony and the coordination of emotional, behavioral, and biological processes during attachment.

James Coan — Developed Social Baseline Theory with colleagues and investigated how supportive relationships influence emotional regulation and neural responses to threat.

Measurable interpersonal synchrony

Physiological Synchrony:

The coordination or correlation of biological processes between individuals, including heart rate, breathing patterns, skin conductance, and autonomic nervous system activity. Research has documented such patterns among romantic partners, parents and infants, and therapists and clients, particularly during emotionally significant interactions.

Measurable interpersonal synchrony

Physiological Synchrony:

Ruth Feldman — A leading researcher on biological synchrony, particularly between parents and infants, including coordinated physiological responses and the role of oxytocin.

Beatrice Beebe — Investigated mother–infant interaction, including moment-to-moment coordination of behavior and physiological processes.

Wolfgang Tschacher — Studied synchrony in psychotherapy, including movement coordination and physiological relationships between therapists and clients.

Drew Marci — Investigated physiological concordance between therapists and patients, especially changes in skin conductance during psychotherapy.

Emilio Ferrer — Developed and applied statistical approaches for examining interpersonal physiological dynamics, including synchrony in couples.

Measurable interpersonal synchrony

Interpersonal Neural Coupling:

The phenomenon in which patterns of brain activity across two or more individuals become temporally correlated during shared experiences or social interactions. Studies using EEG, fMRI, and other neuro-imaging techniques have identified neural coordination during conversation, cooperative activities, teaching, and shared attention.

Measurable interpersonal synchrony

Interpersonal Neural Coupling:

Uri Hasson — A central figure in research on brain-to-brain coupling during communication. His work demonstrated correlations between speakers' and listeners' neural activity during natural storytelling.

Greg Stephens — Collaborated with Hasson and Lauren Silbert on influential research demonstrating speaker–listener neural coupling.

Lauren Silbert — Contributed to foundational studies of neural alignment during natural verbal communication.

Simone Dikker — Studied interpersonal neural synchrony in classrooms and social settings, including relationships between brainwave coordination and engagement.

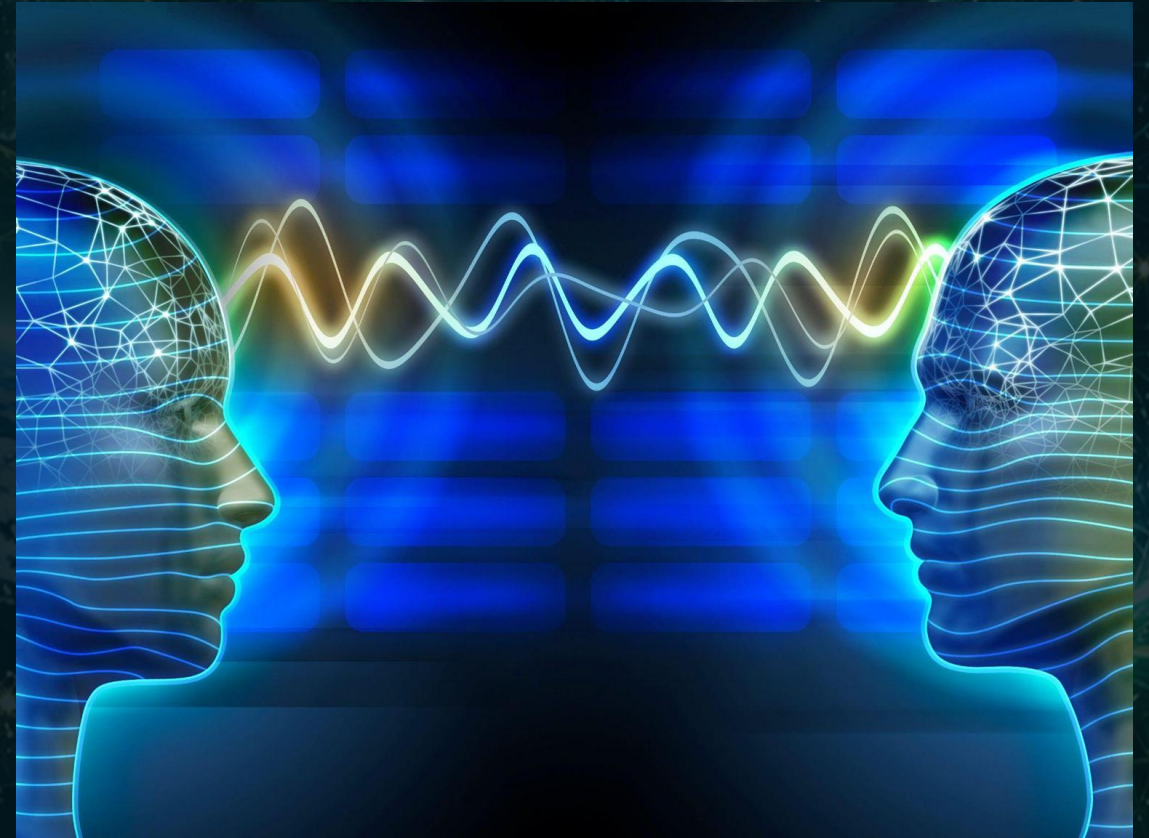
Guillaume Dumas — A pioneer in EEG hyperscanning, investigating synchronized brain activity during reciprocal social interaction.

Joy Hirsch — Advanced functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS) hyperscanning research examining brain-to-brain coordination during face-to-face interaction.

Interpersonal Synchrony

Findings of synchronization can be consistent with ordinary communication, shared environments, mutual attention, and established social mechanisms.

We can observe profound relational coordination without knowing whether all of its manifestations are fully explained. Rather than assuming a particular mechanism, what if we began by developing a theory of the relational phenomena themselves?



PART 05

Introducing Relational Field Theory

A proposed theoretical framework



Relational Field Theory (RFT)

A theoretical proposition that human minds participate in relational fields extending beyond strictly individual psychological boundaries.

Relational Field Theory (RFT)

RFT begins with the observation that human psychological functioning is profoundly relational, and asks whether some aspects of interpersonal experience may be better conceptualized as processes occurring within a relational field rather than exclusively within separate individuals.

Relational Field Theory (RFT)

The relational field is a hypothesized domain of interpersonal organization in which psychological processes may exhibit patterns that cannot be adequately understood by examining individuals independently.

Relational Field Theory (RFT)

I propose five provisional propositions:

1. Human psychological functioning is inherently relational.
2. Interpersonal relationships can produce coordinated patterns of experience, emotion, attention, and physiological activity.
3. Some relational phenomena may be better described at the level of the interacting system than at the level of isolated individuals.
4. It remains an open empirical question whether any relational phenomena require mechanisms beyond established sensory, behavioral, neural, and social processes.
5. Relational fields, if they represent something beyond a descriptive metaphor, must eventually be defined through distinguishable, testable predictions.

Relational Field Theory (RFT)

What RFT does not claim:

- Consciousness is transmitted through quantum fields.
- Minds exchange information through morphic resonance.
- Therapeutic relationships involve a previously undiscovered physical force.
- Nonlocal consciousness has been scientifically demonstrated.

Relational Field Theory (RFT)

How could RFT be investigated?

- Possible studies include therapist–client physiological synchrony, longitudinal relational attunement, and experiments examining information transfer under carefully controlled conditions.
- The crucial requirement is that studies test predictions distinguishing RFT from existing explanations.
- For example, synchrony research may help characterize relational phenomena, but by itself cannot establish a novel field mechanism. More discriminating experiments would need to rule out ordinary sensory communication, shared stimuli, expectation effects, and other known sources of coordination.

Relational Field Theory (RFT)

From theoretical proposition to clinical application:

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Relational Field Theory

How might human minds participate in relational processes?



PROPOSED CLINICAL APPLICATION

Field-Relational Psychotherapy

How might understanding these processes improve therapeutic practice?

Field-Relational Psychotherapy: Implications

Working definition:

Field-Relational Psychotherapy (FRP) is a proposed relational approach derived from Relational Field Theory, emphasizing the therapeutic relationship as an interactive process in which psychological change may emerge through patterns of interpersonal attunement, coordination, shared meaning, and responsiveness.

Field-Relational Psychotherapy: Implications

The clinical propositions:

Therapeutic presence: The counselor's attentional and emotional participation in the therapeutic encounter.

Relational attunement: Sensitivity to shifts in the client's emotional and interpersonal experience.

Reciprocal influence: Recognition that therapist and client continuously influence one another.

Emergent meaning: Understanding that insights and interpretations can develop through interaction rather than being generated independently by either participant.

Intentional relational conditions: Exploring how safety, responsiveness, trust, and shared expectations facilitate change.

Field-Relational Psychotherapy: Implications

What would FRP explain or predict that existing relational therapies do not?

- *The therapeutic relationship, client expectations, shared meaning, and therapist responsiveness provide an empirically grounded starting point for developing the clinical framework.*
- *The critical importance of gatekeeping and the necessity of having healthy therapists.*
- *It would explain how trust boundaries are successfully navigated when working with 1st responder and military populations.*

Character, connection, and human potential

The six virtues described by Peterson and Seligman identify capacities of individuals, but many of their manifestations are fundamentally relational.

Humanity involves love and kindness.

Justice involves fairness and cooperation.

Transcendence includes meaning, gratitude, and appreciation of experiences extending beyond immediate self-interest.

Human flourishing involves not only the development of individual capacities but also the quality of the relational contexts in which those capacities are expressed.

~

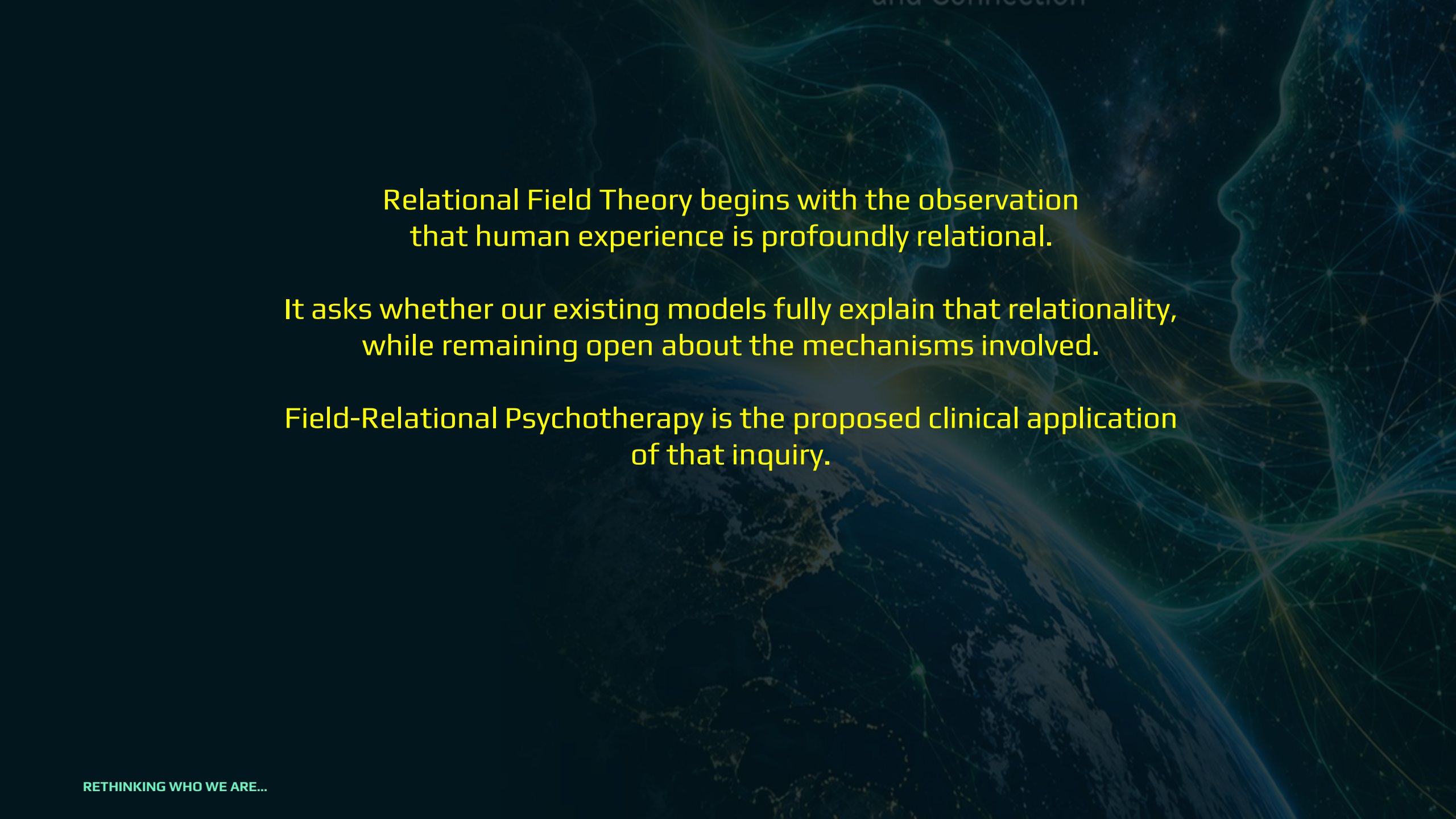
We may be distinguishable individuals
without being psychologically self-contained beings.

Final Thoughts:

First: The effectiveness of psychotherapy does not necessarily validate all the theoretical explanations we use to describe it.

Second: Human beings are not adequately understood only through pathology, diagnosis, or isolated biological processes. Our strengths, relationships, expectations, and capacities for adaptation are essential to understanding who we are.

Third: Scientific knowledge evolves. Contemporary physics has already required us to abandon some familiar assumptions about matter. Consciousness remains an important unresolved problem, and intellectual humility requires openness to new explanations without abandoning standards of evidence.

The background features a dark blue space-themed aesthetic. It includes faint, glowing outlines of human profiles facing each other, overlaid with a complex network of thin, light blue and yellow lines that suggest a global or neural network. A portion of a planet's horizon is visible at the bottom.

Relational Field Theory begins with the observation
that human experience is profoundly relational.

It asks whether our existing models fully explain that relationality,
while remaining open about the mechanisms involved.

Field-Relational Psychotherapy is the proposed clinical application
of that inquiry.

Perhaps we are less separate than we imagine

A reflection on physical, psychological, and interpersonal connection—without assuming they share a single mechanism.



Relational Field Theory

A framework for asking whether the relational processes that shape human experience extend beyond conventional individual psychological boundaries.



What are we?

Not simply what are we made of, but how are we connected, and what might those connections mean for our understanding of consciousness, psychotherapy, and human flourishing?



