

Reaction to an ambivalent object

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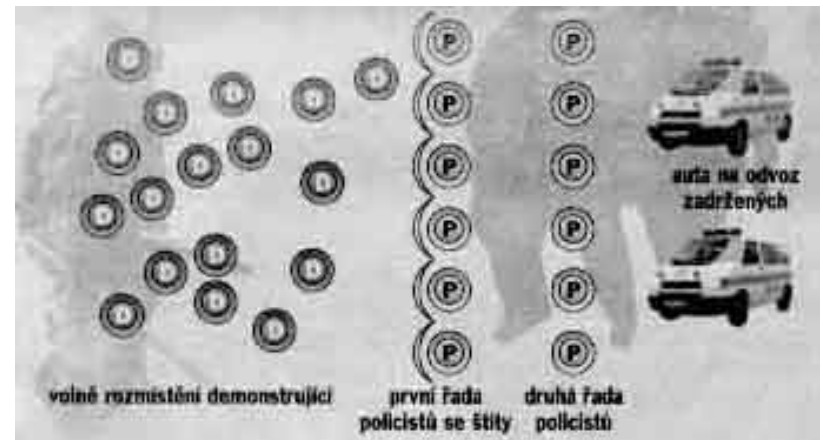
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Previous experience – a lecturer of police psychology

Behavior of demonstrators and police tactics at demonstrations



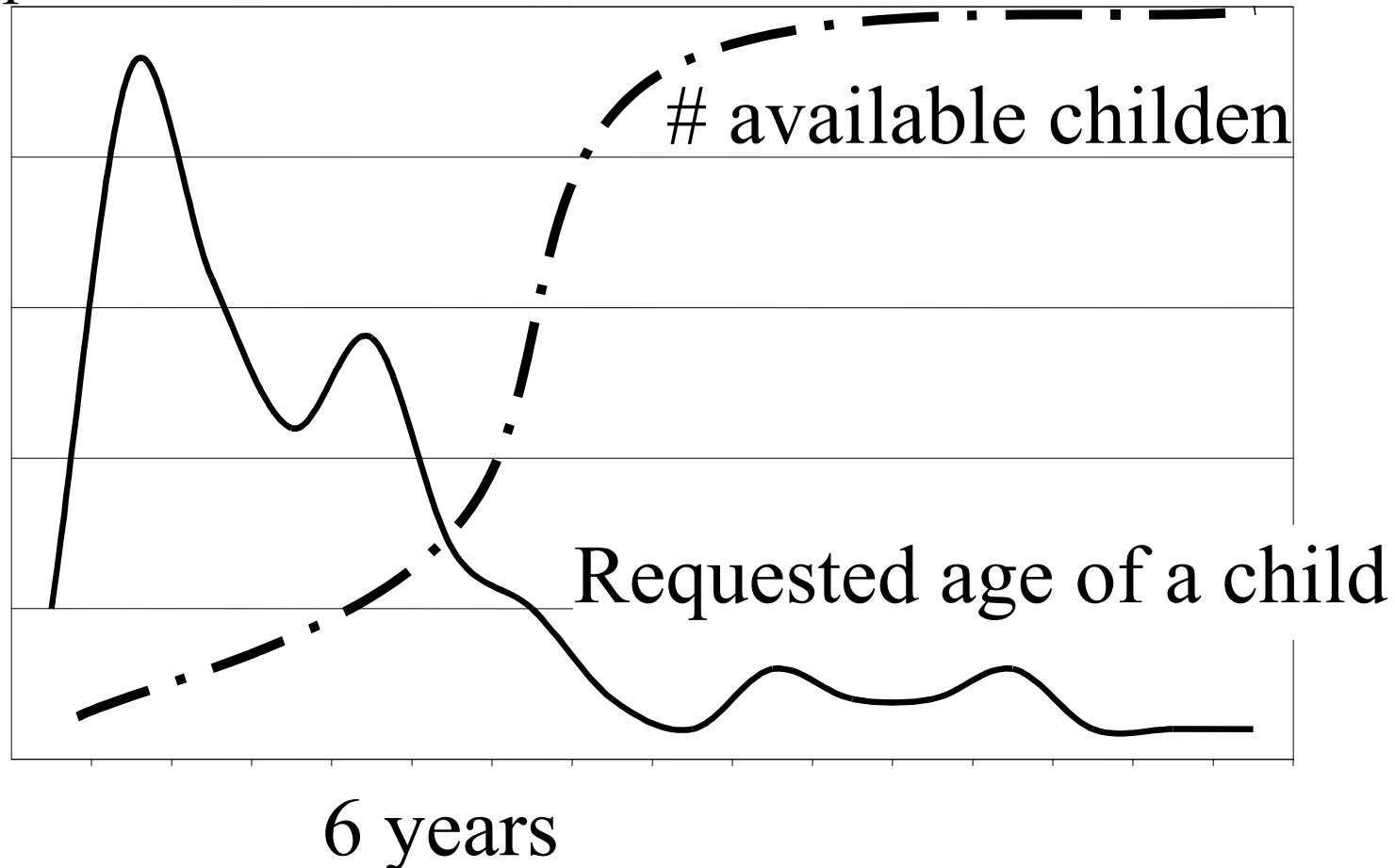
Manipulation versus communication
Domestic violence (Emergency help line)

Previous experience - clinical reports for adoptions

Diagnostics of pair dynamics

Psychopathy dissimulation

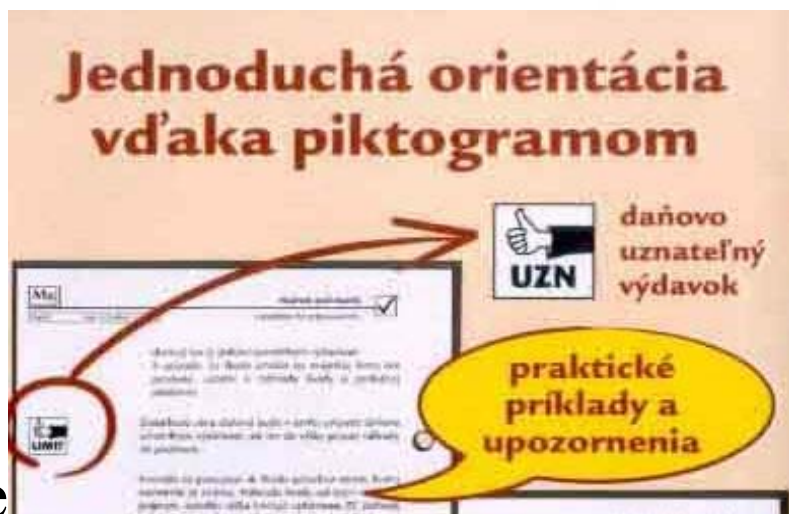
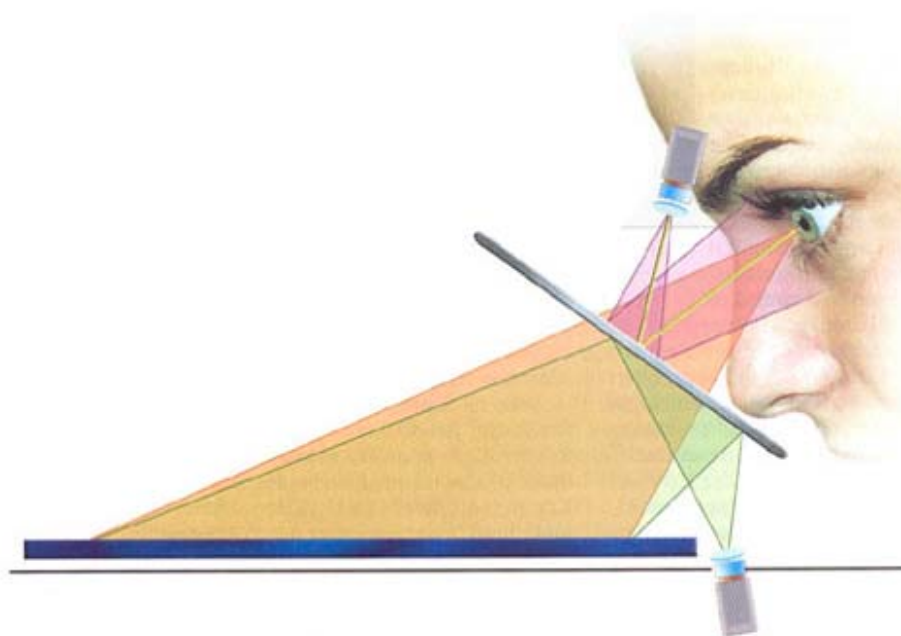
Manipulation



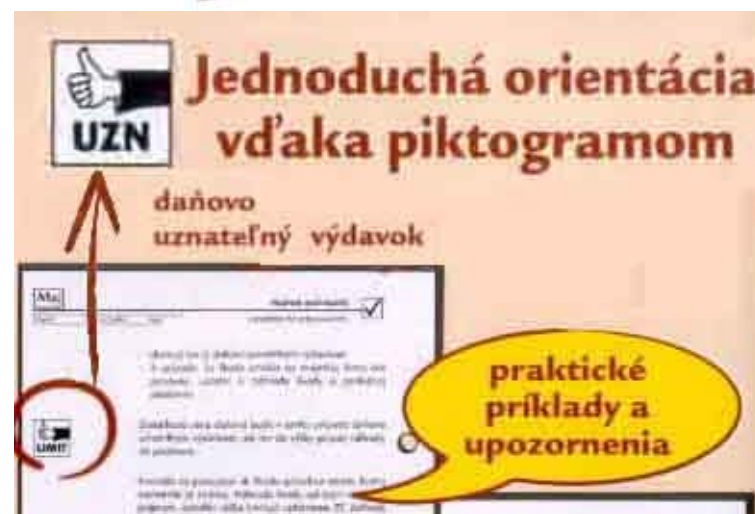
A real child is truly an ambivalent object for future parents

Eye-tracking research of commercial materials (now)

A gaze analysis to improve readability of leaflets and ads



before



after

Content

- ❖ Definition of an ambivalent object and importance of defensive reactions
- ❖ Theory of preferential curves
- ❖ Manipulations
- ❖ Fantasy figures or imaginal others
- ❖ Remarks about research
- ❖ Discussion

Definition of an ambivalent object and importance of defensive reactions

An ambivalent object is a person (but not only a human), who activates in a subject two opposite or antagonistic emotions or needs.

- Not a psychoanalytic approach
- The subject's defensive reaction to an ambivalent stimulus might be much more dangerous for him/her than how dangerous the ambivalent object itself is.
- Examples are: Herod the Great, surgery, stress and drawing panic reaction.

Example: Herod the Great and Mariamme

Herod the Great, who is known as the slaughterer of the children of Bethlehem, had ten legal wives: Eight of them gave him children (nine sons and five daughters), but he only truly loved the Jewish Mariamme. Herod was a plebeian of Idumeic origin, but Mariamme was the last of the royal Hasmoneans.

"She was," says Josephus Flavius (JF), "in most respects sensible and faithful to him; yet in her nature she had something that was as feminine as it was cruel, for she treated him contemptuously, as befitting the enslavement he was under by his passion for her."

The more he loved her the more she hated him. Finally, after some stage-managed trial, he let her be decapitated. "Mariamme herself went to her death with a calm demeanor and without a change in the color of her face, and so, even in the last moments of her life, made clear to those looking on the nobility of her lineage." (JF)

However, once she was dead, the king's desire for her burned even more strongly than before. He would frequently call out for her and frequently lament for her in a most indecent manner. He tried to think of everything he could to divert his mind from thinking of her; he arranged feasts and parties for that purpose. But nothing would help. This caused all to suspect that their misery was brought upon them by the anger of God for the injustice that had been done to Mariamme.

Not many days passed before he fell into a dangerous illness himself. There was an inflammation and pain in the back of his head, joined with madness. No remedies did him any good at all; instead, they had the opposite effect and finally brought him to hopelessness. Five years after her death, Herod remarried. His new wife was the beautiful daughter of a priest. Her name was Mariamme.

<http://members.aol.com/FLJOSEPHUS/Mariamme.htm>

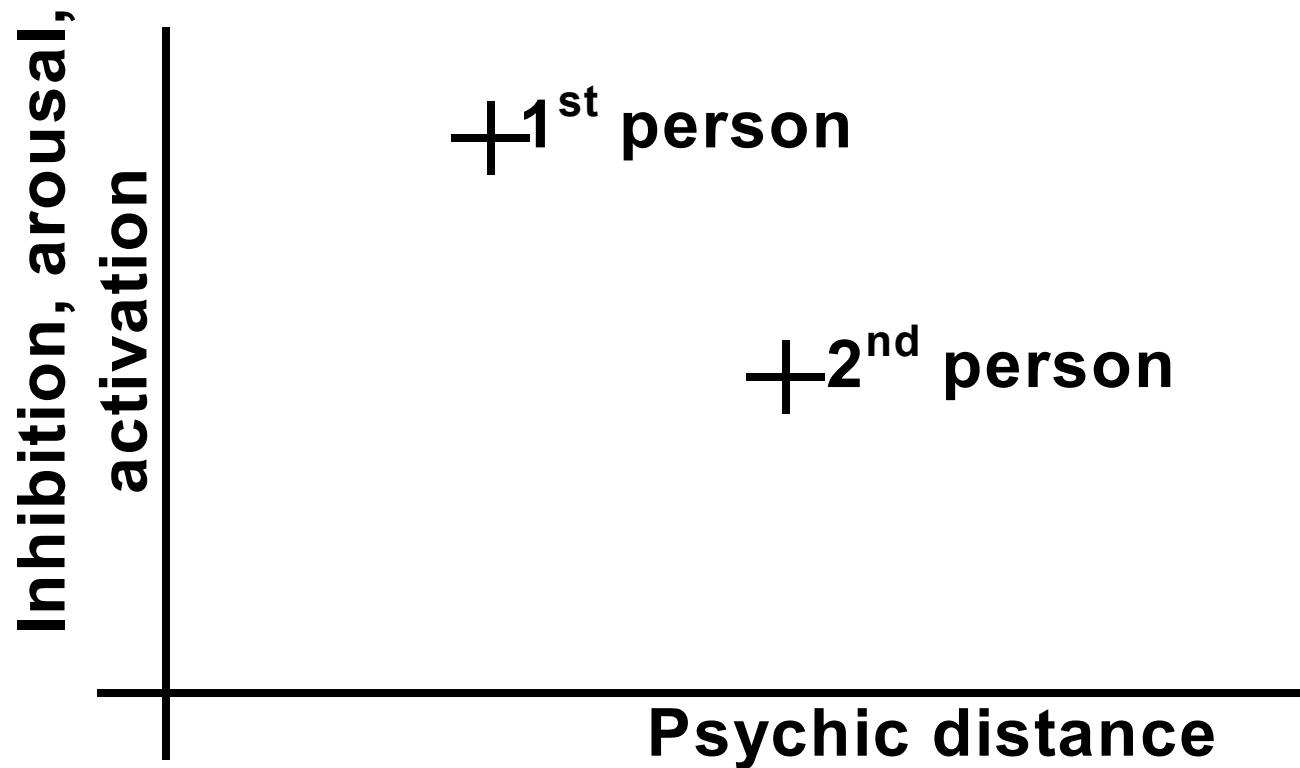
Example of a destructive defensive reaction

Vinař (1969, p. 6): "At the beginning of the fifties, the surgery was slowed down by an interesting fact. The patients died after technically very successful operations not because of the operative intervention, but because of the exaggerated defensive reaction of the organism against the surgery intervention. That meant that neither the surgery intervention nor pathogenic noxa, but the exaggerated defense was the cause of the death of the patient. Physicians used to even support the defensive reaction of the organism at that time. So say, e.g. when the losses caused hypotension, then the physician served sympaticomimetics to return the blood pressure to the norm. But in that way, he even stirred adrenergic reaction, by which the organism reacted at the trauma, and this lead to the death."

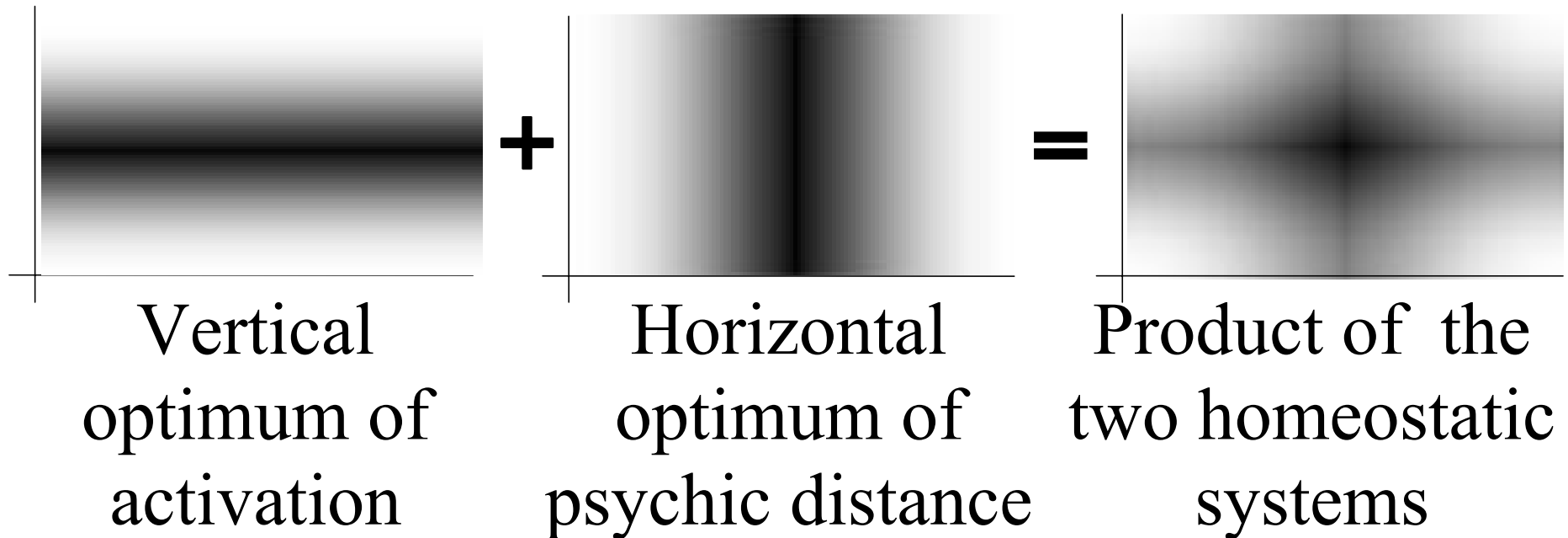
Theory of preferential curves

There are two homeostatic systems, two variables:

- 1) Activation (inhibition)
- 2) Psychic distance

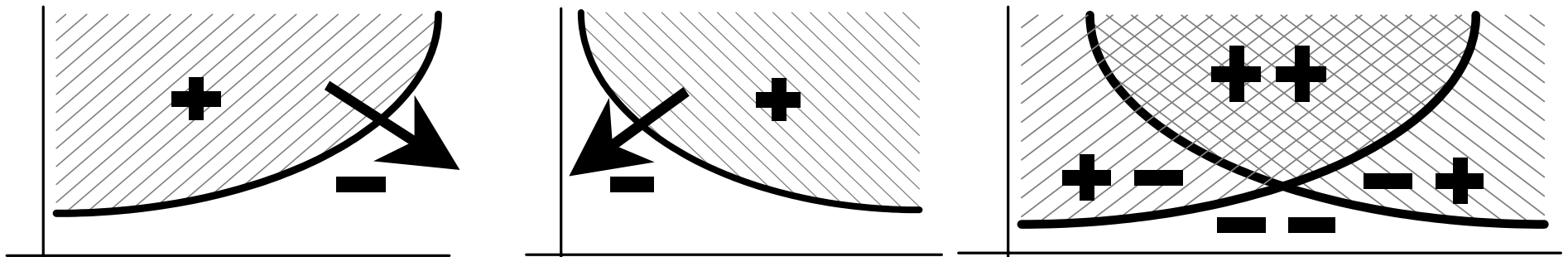


Product of the two homeostatic systems



- Homeostatic forces seek the optimal activation or optimal arousal, which lies somewhere in the middle.
- The product of the two systems has a diamond shape.

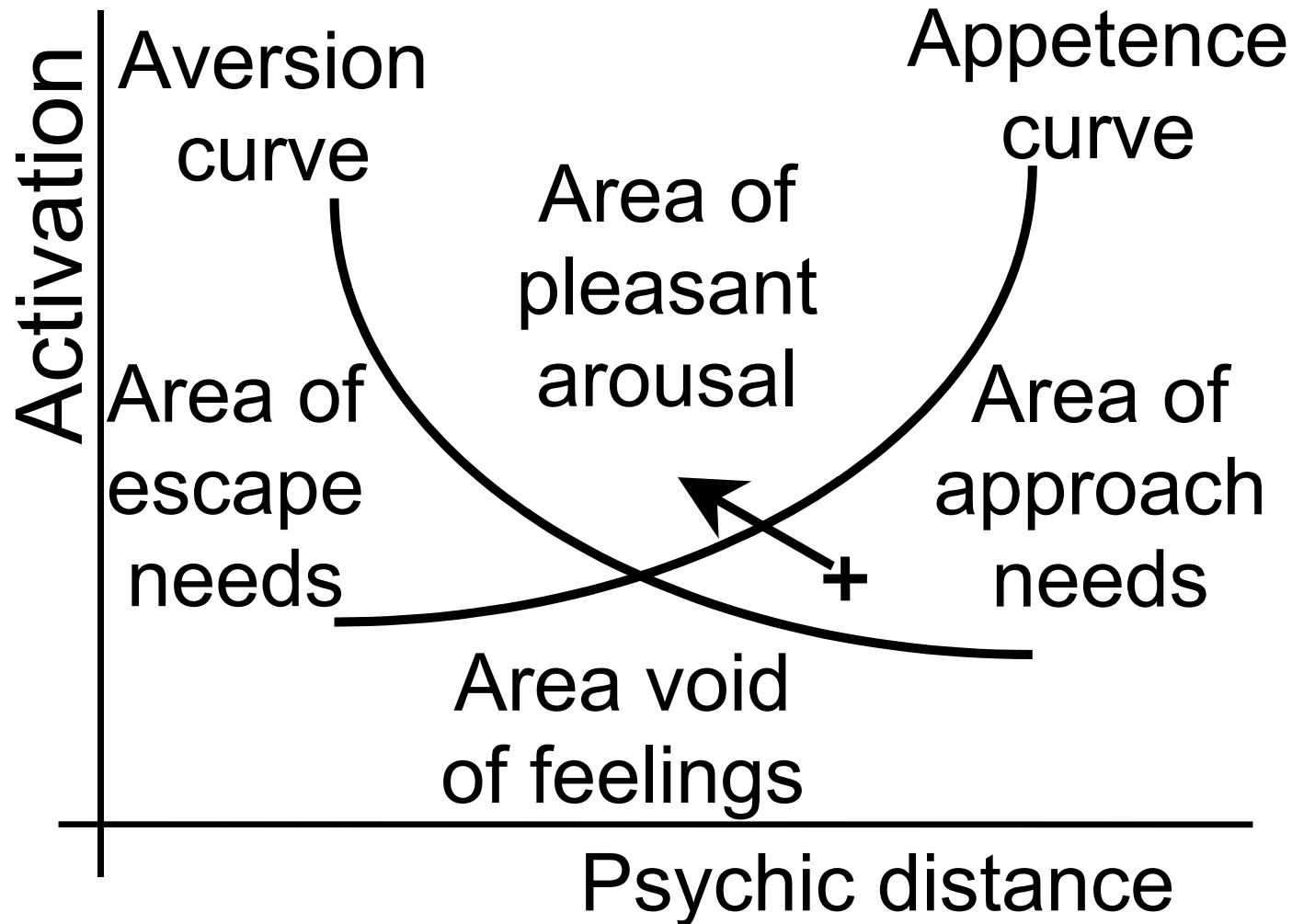
Probable shape of preferential curves



Appetence + Aversion = Ambivalence

- A movement away from the optimum (arrows) causes negative feelings.
- A person realizes a switch of polarity in his feelings at some moment. These turning points are depicted by curves of appetence, aversion (and arousal).

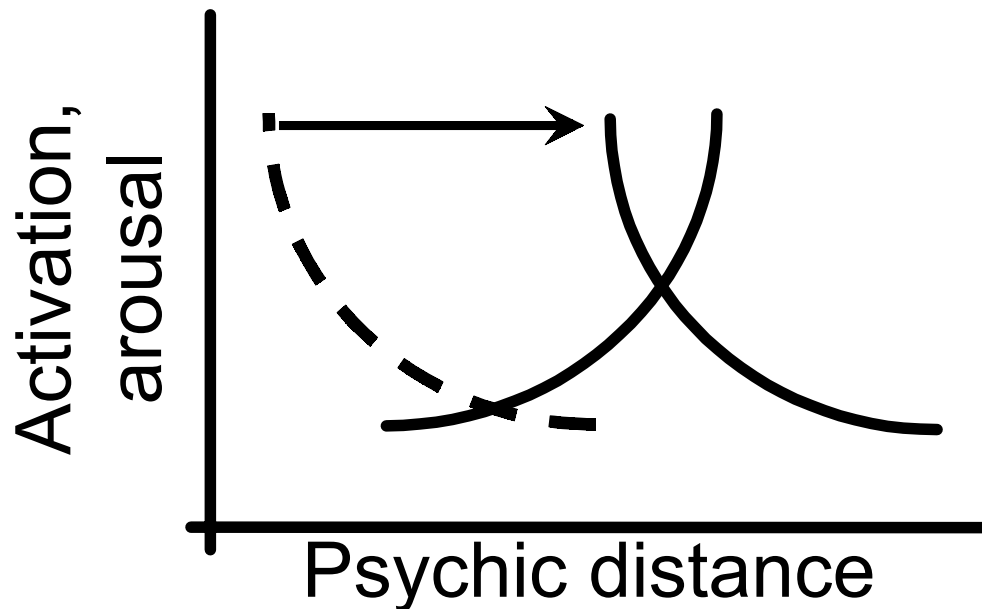
Names of four areas of feelings



A subject (the cross) shows urgent tendency to enter the area of pleasant arousal.

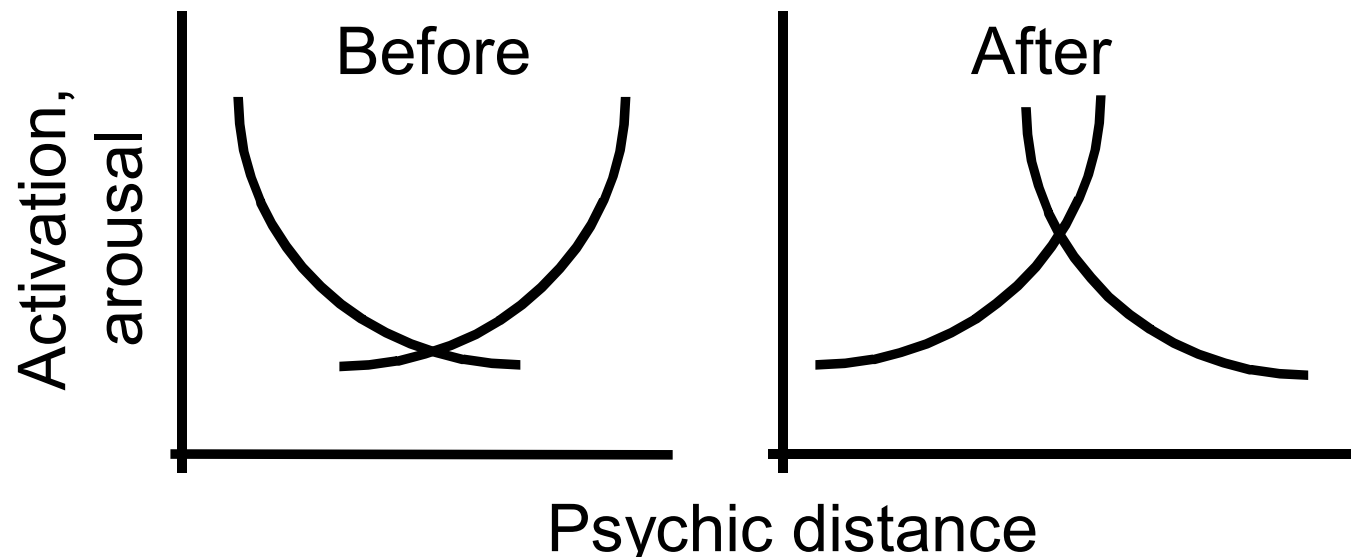
Movement of a subject and the curves

- A subject is moving fast over the areas according to his interactions.
- The subject strives to return into the area of pleasant feelings using various reactions in reality or fantasy.
- The curves are also not stable in time, but they move much more slowly (e.g. during therapy) than the subject himself.



Example: a mime – child interaction.

The child is watching a mime actor with a white face at the street. This actor activates in the child a lot of curiosity (appetence) and fear (aversion) at the same time, and therefore he is an ambivalent object to the child. The distance from which the child observes the mime is the balance point at the crossing of the two curves. Suddenly, the mime frightens the child by some unexpected gesture. The child runs away and stops at some bigger distance. The balance point has moved. It means the curves have temporarily changed too:

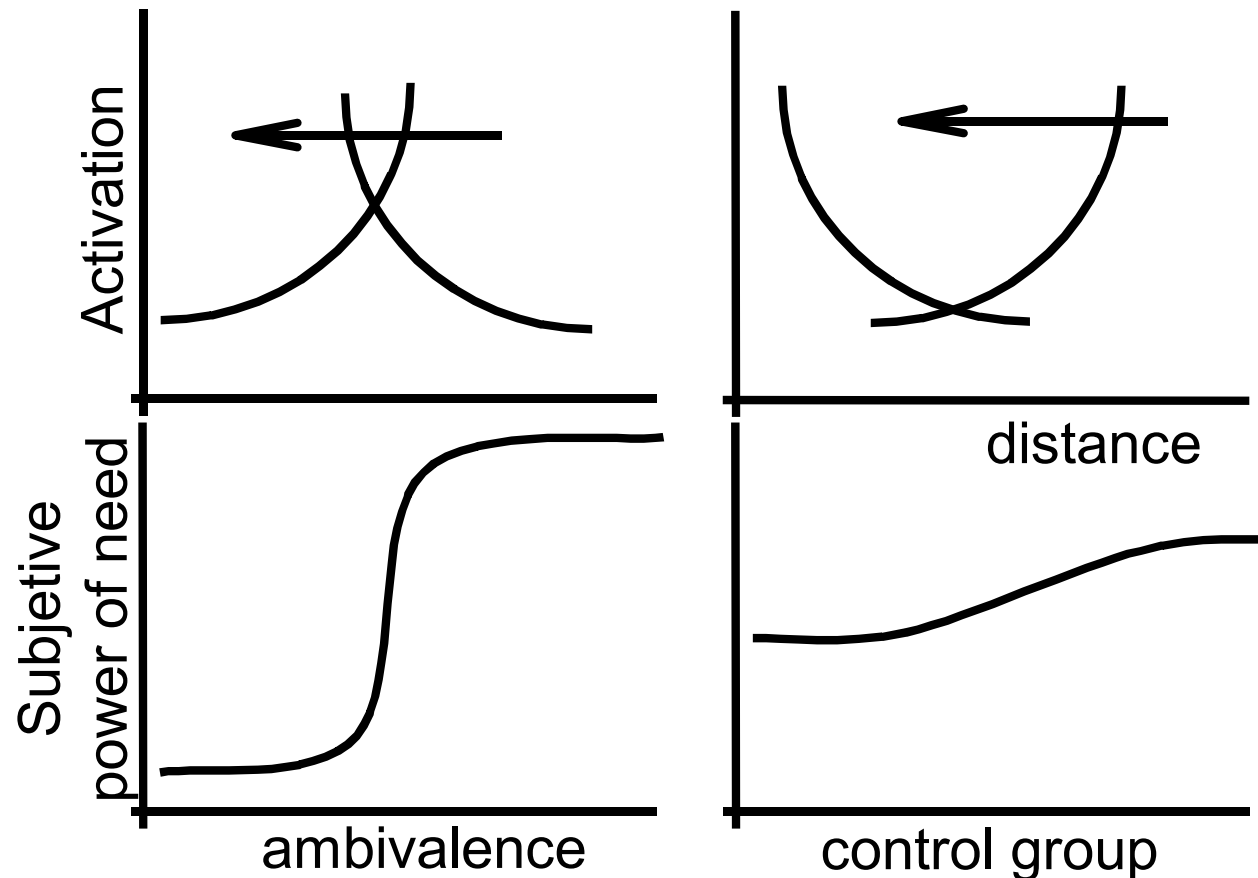


Basic consequences of a narrower area of pleasant feelings (mime – child)

- The child is much more concerned with the mime.
- The child pays much less attention to other people and things around him.
- The child is more emotionally aroused to keep his well being.
- The child feels well only at a narrow precise distance from the mime, he can go neither closer nor farther.

An ambivalent object draws our attention much more than common objects, and we might feel much more attracted to them. Interactions with an ambivalent object lead to a narrowing of the spectrum of interests, losing friends and social contacts, and to some general simplification of a subject's personality. As such emotional arousal is not maintainable for a long term, chronic ambivalent interaction leads to a feeling of nothingness most of the time. People affected by interactions with ambivalent objects lose their flexibility. They are unable to establish and keep a firm partner relationship; they manipulate and force others to be in their smaller area of pleasant feelings.

Drop down curve in realized needs

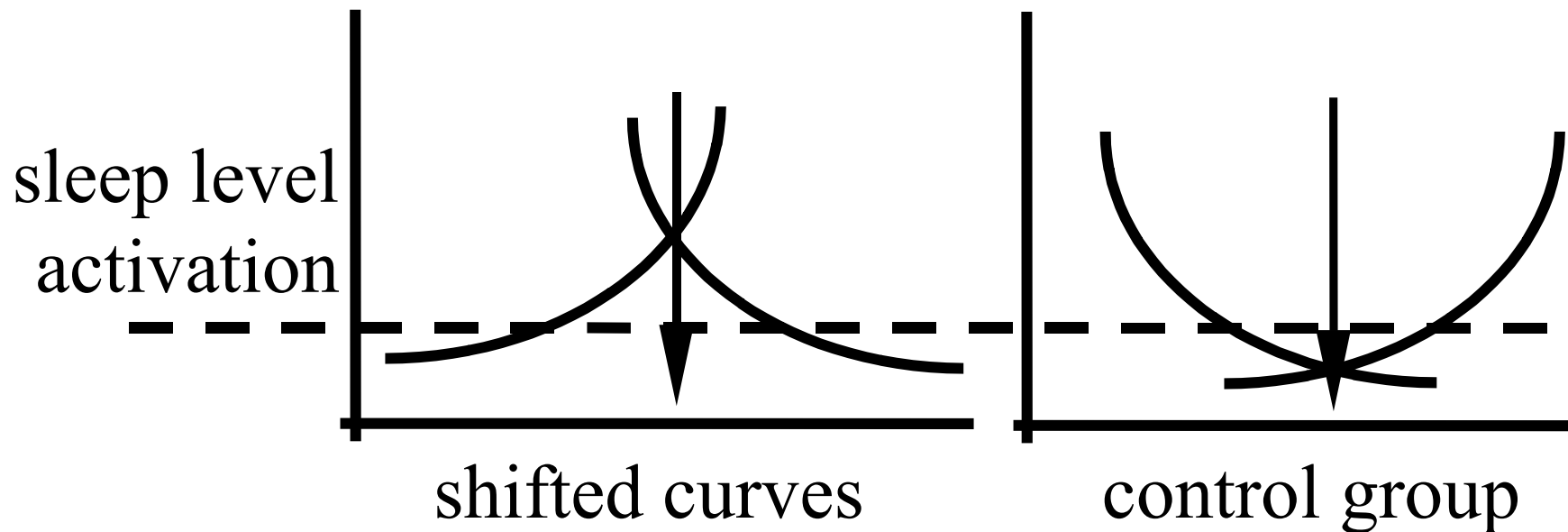


Topiar, Fládr (1983, p. 107) found deterioration of sexual life of hysterical women with length of marriage, bigger than can be explained by a temporary marital drop down, or by sensory specific satiety.

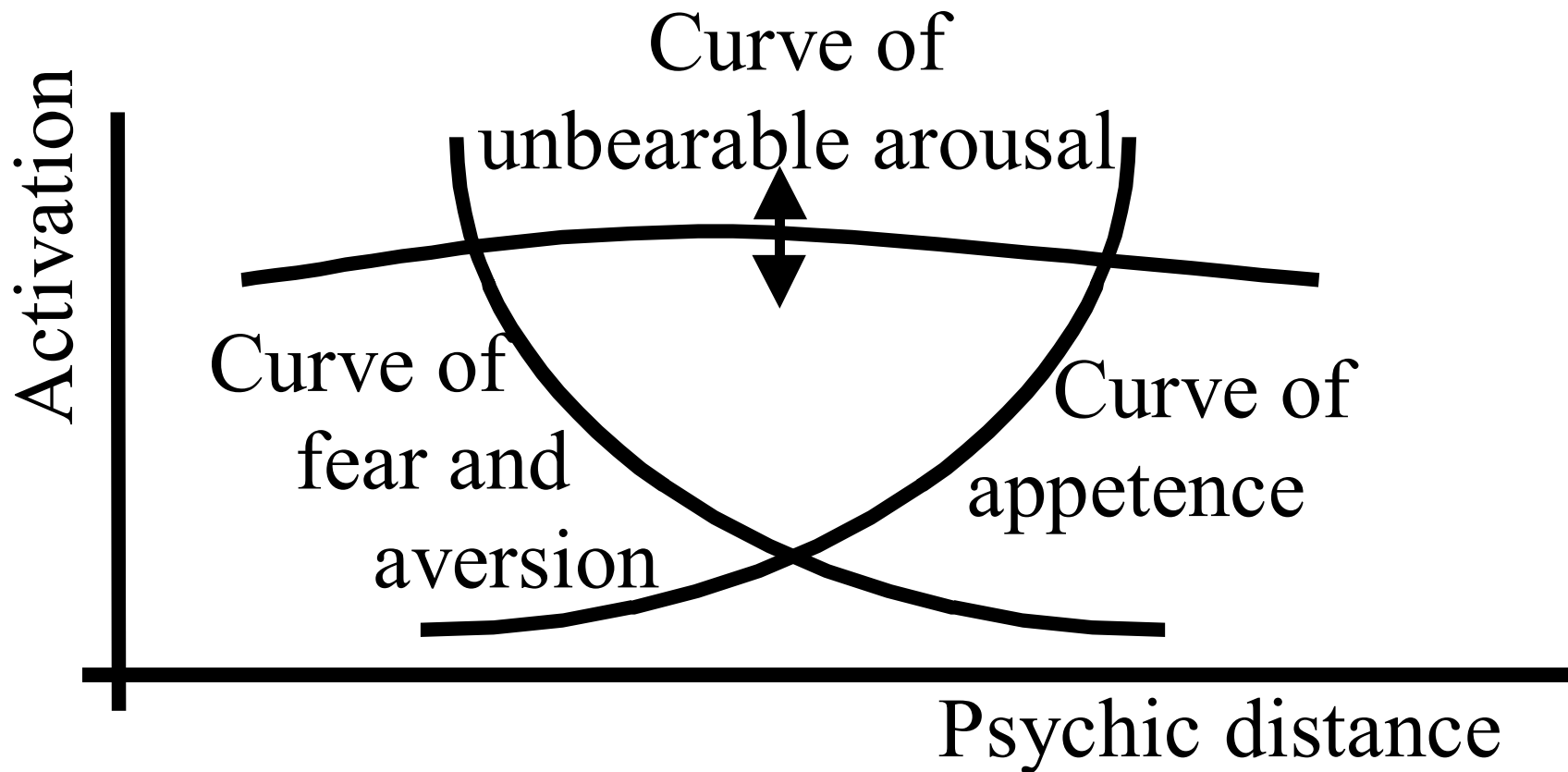
Downfall might be fast – seconds, minutes.

Reluctance to go to sleep and relax

Various researches confirmed the inability of a neurotic population to explore the use of relaxation methods. Their tendency to avoid sleep is also well known. We can find the explanation in shifted curves, as then they have to move over an area void of feelings.

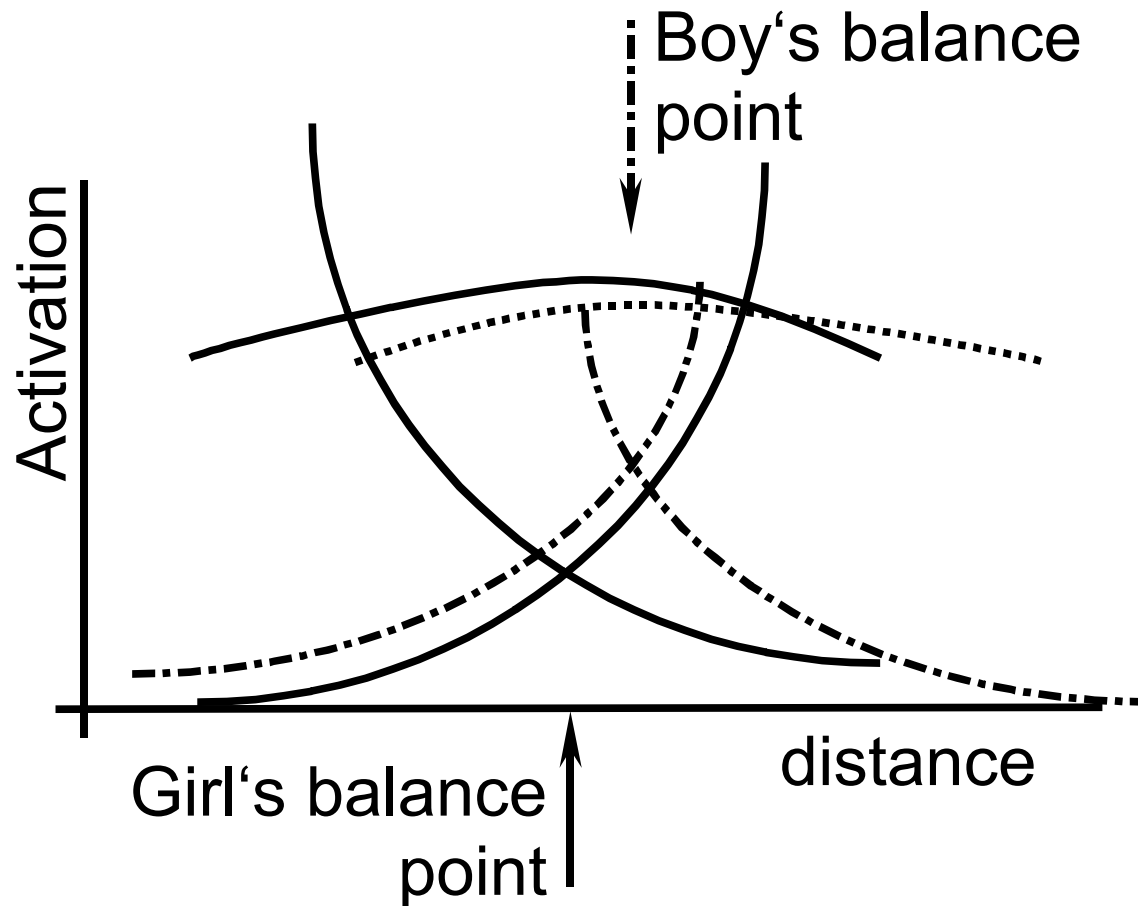


The third curve – arousal

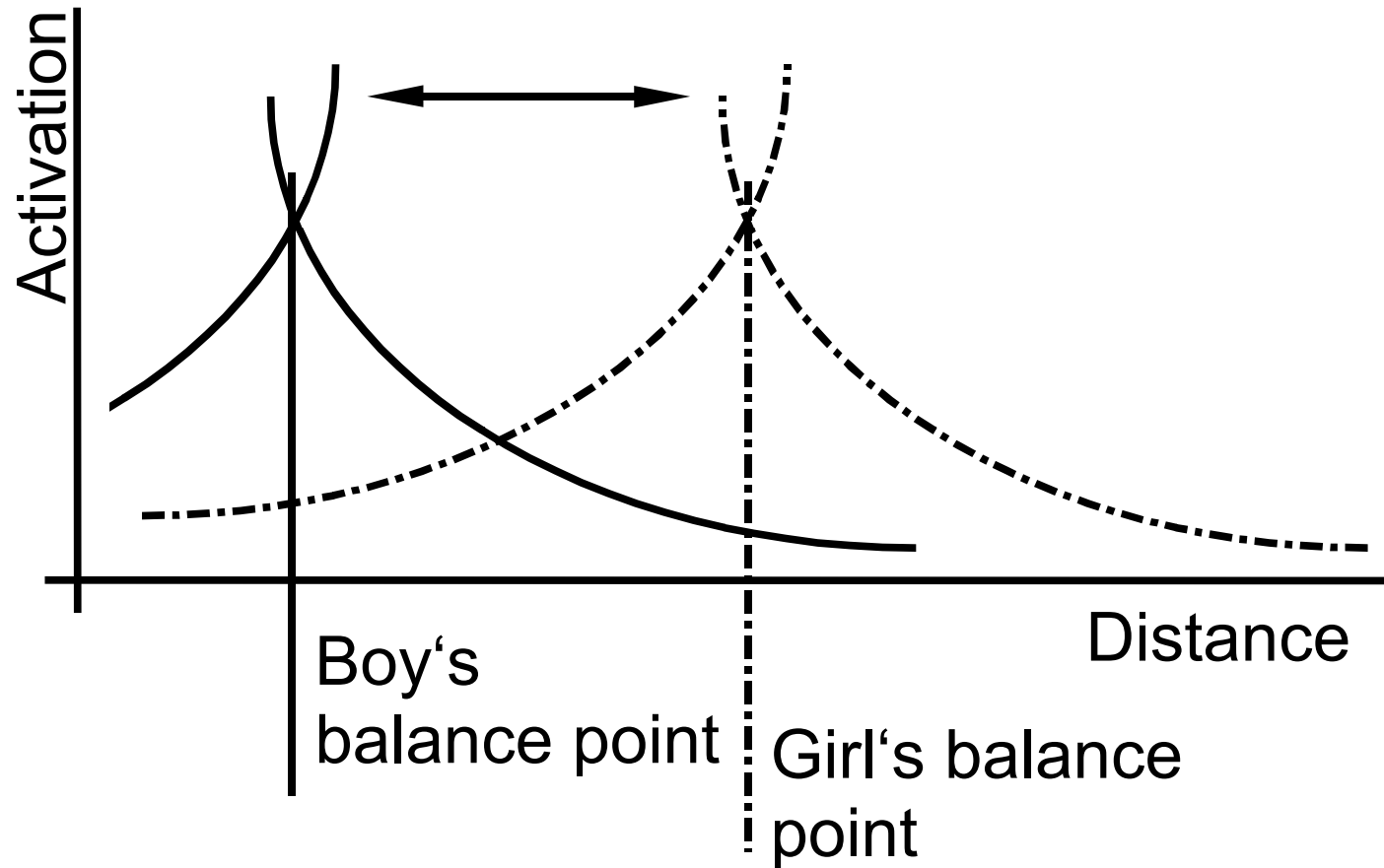


- Curve of unbearable arousal is a boundary where the person realizes that he is too aroused; there are too many new things...
- The unbearable curve can also move up and down (arrows).

Partnership – stable type



Partnership – type tension

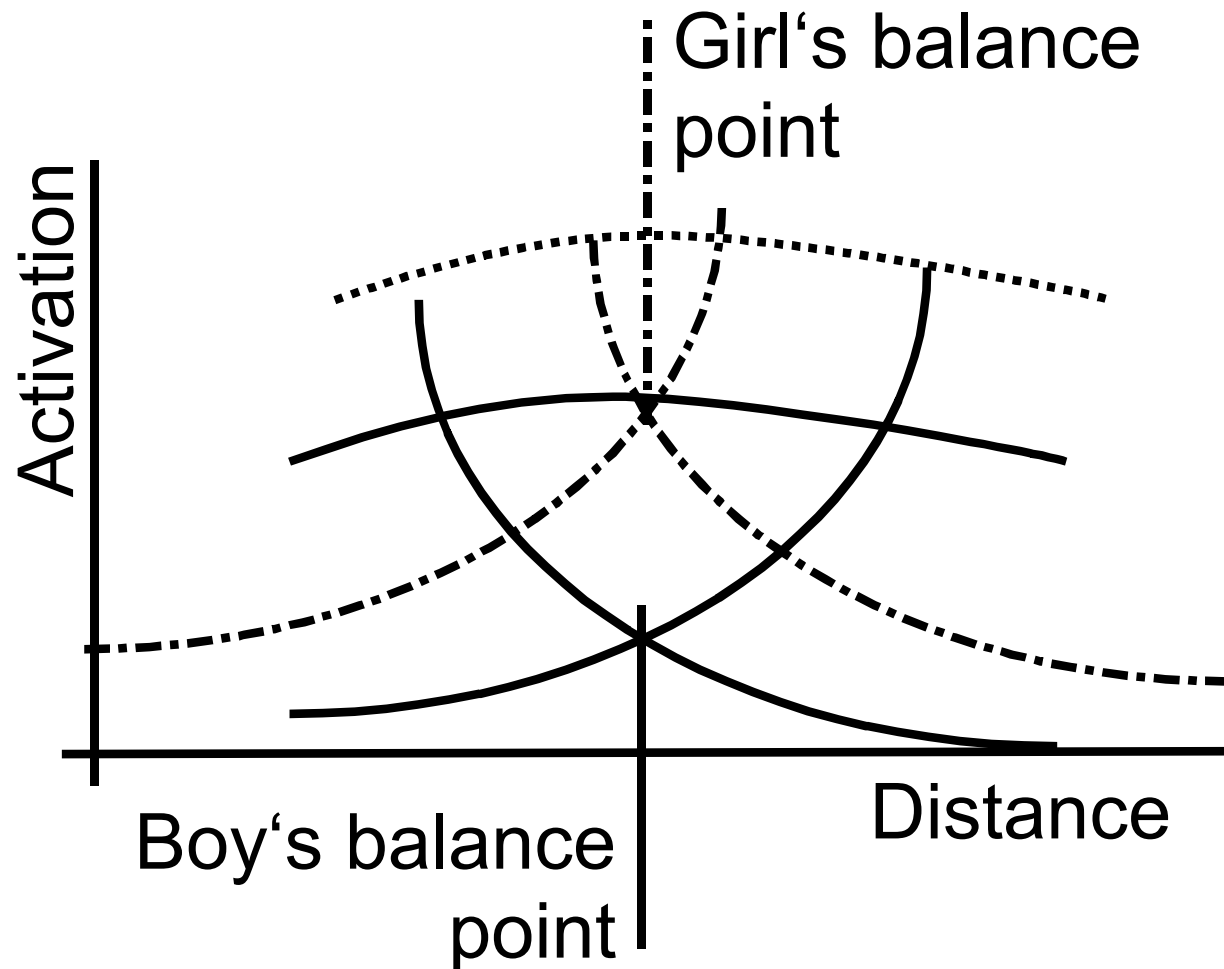


This configuration has few arguments, but a lot of ubiquitous tension and reproaches.

Mirror-like split rhetoric

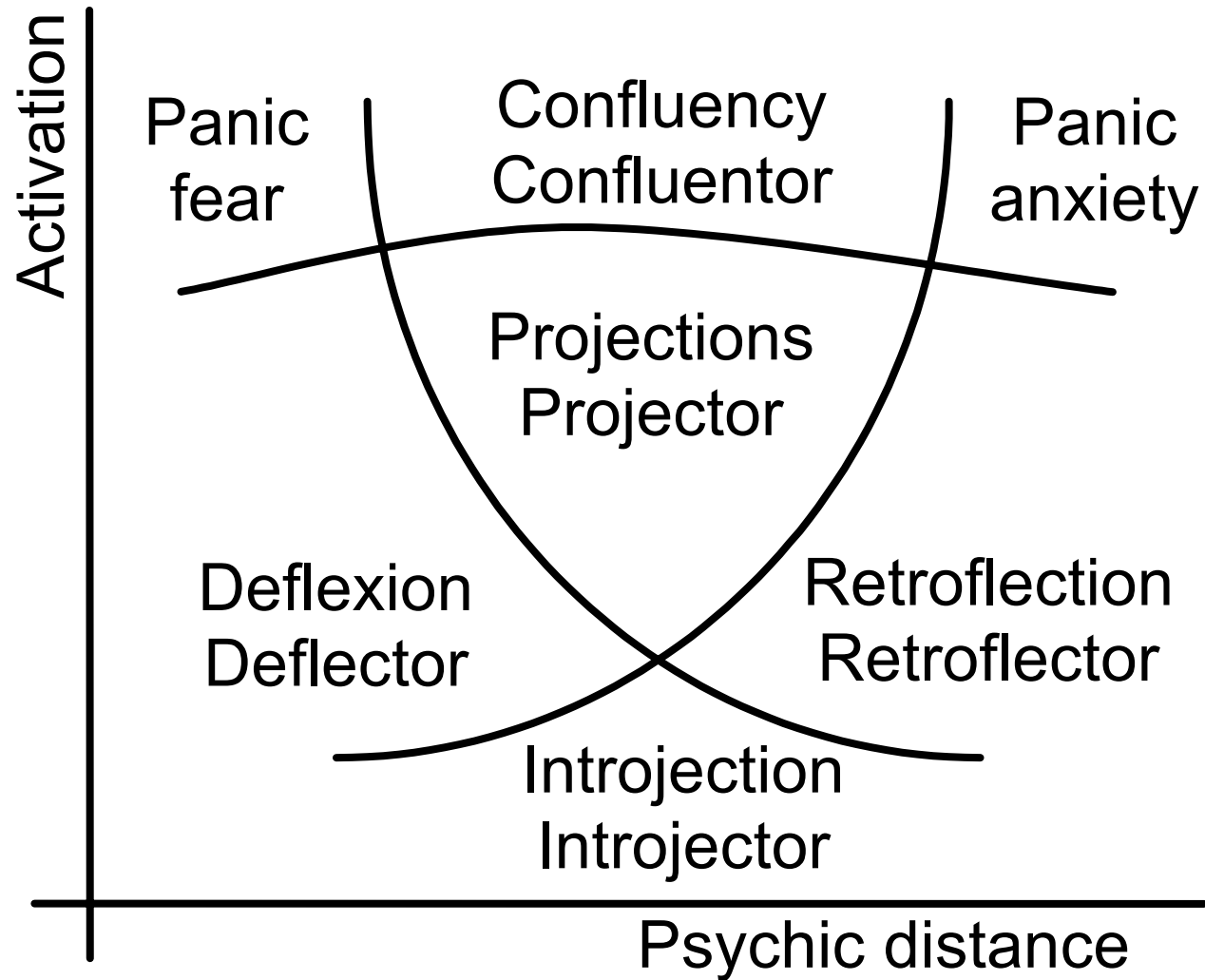
<p>Escape need – girl Mariamme</p>	<p>Approach need – boy Herod</p>
Feelings of aggression to him	Tender feeling to her
No jealousy	Jealous of almost everything
Unconcern, disinterest	Urgent love
Feelings of being trapped by the boy, he has demands on her body	Lack of reciprocal love, feelings we live alongside but not together.
Losing opportunities because of the relationship. Other boys are more attractive.	Uninterested in other people and activities. Unable to reach full efficiency until he is accepted.
No interest in sex, aversion to kissing, foreplay, etc.	Higher attractiveness of the girl, his feelings cannot be satisfied, needs to touch her often.

Partnership – type arguments



This configuration has a lot of explosive arguments for no reason.

Seven fields of typical defensive behavior



Deflector

The aim is to **increase the psychic or proximity distance from the object.**

Proximity incongruence, bending eye aside, manipulation by irony, confusion.

Aversion to sex

Absent or diminished jealousy

Retroreflector

The aim is to **decrease the psychic or proximity distance from the object.**

Searching and prolonging of eye and body contact, common activities, manipulation by reproaches.

Fantasies about sex

Aptitude to jealousy



Confluencior

Confluency is any activity that is aimed at reducing the amount and power of experiences and stimuli – preference of order, solitude, and aversion to unpredictable changes, defensive inhibition.

Introjector

The aim of an introjector is to get rid of boredom, emptiness, and “depression”. People are a means to reach a higher amount of activation and arousal. Such people are adventurers, sensation and conflict seekers, and they may manipulate with quarrels.



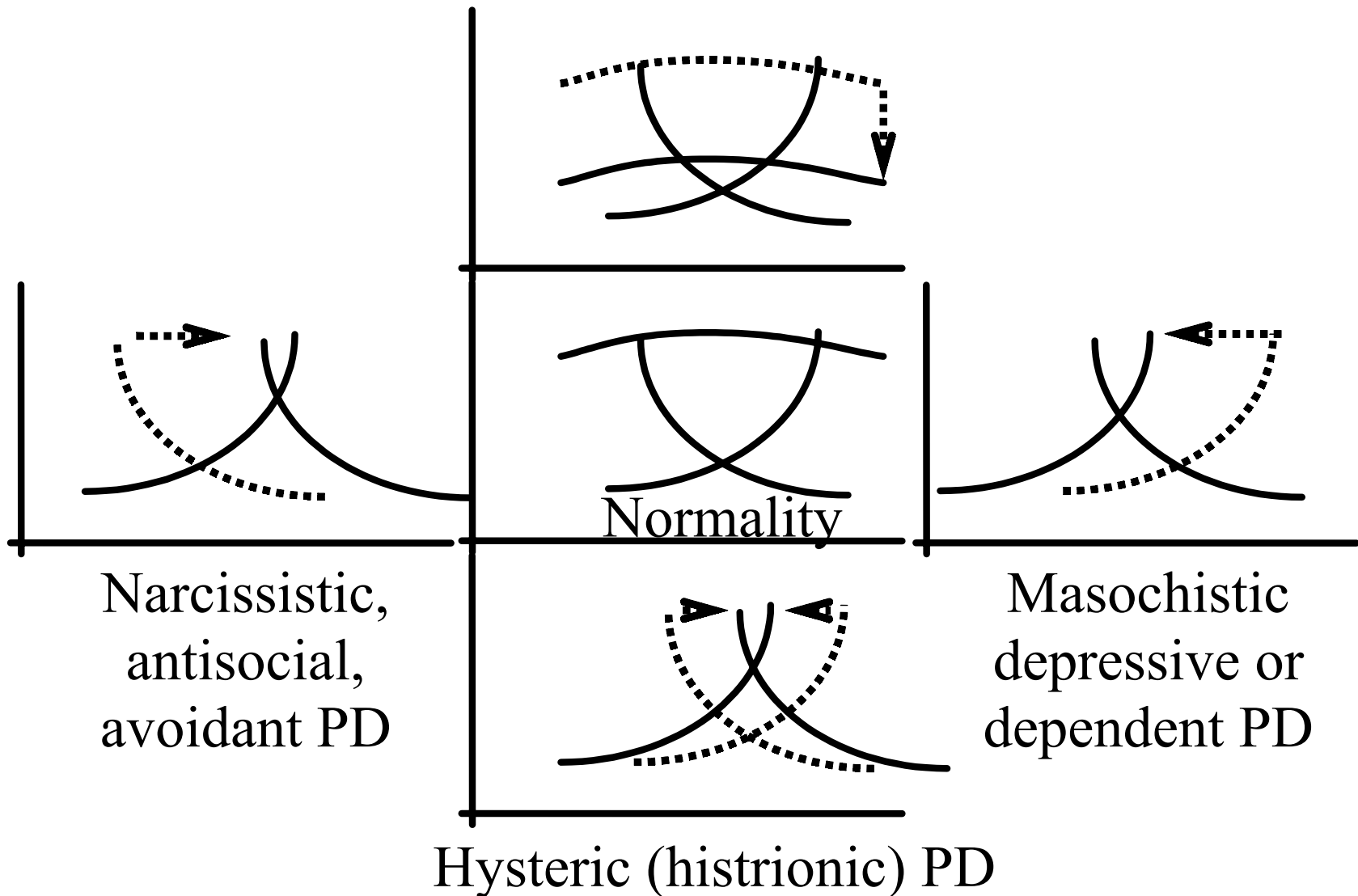
Psychopathy – aptitudes typology

According to a move of a particular curve, we can divide people with prevailing aptitudes (disorders by ICD-10):

- 1) **Aptitude to escape** (move of aversion curve) - Dissocial (F60.2), or anxious [avoidant] personality disorder (F60.6), also narcissistic, antisocial
- 2) **Aptitude to adhere** (move of appetite curve) - Dependent personality disorder (F60.7), also masochistic
- 3) **Aptitude to excitation** (move both aversion and appetite curves) - Histrionic personality disorder (F60.4), also hysteric
- 4) **Aptitude to inhibition** (sink of unbearable arousal curve) - Anankastic personality disorder (F60.5), also depressions

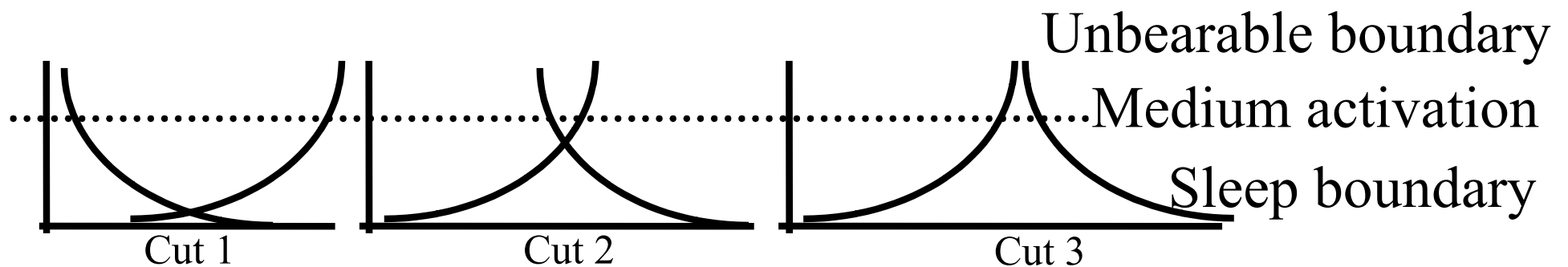
Psychopathy – aptitudes typology chart

Anankastic PD

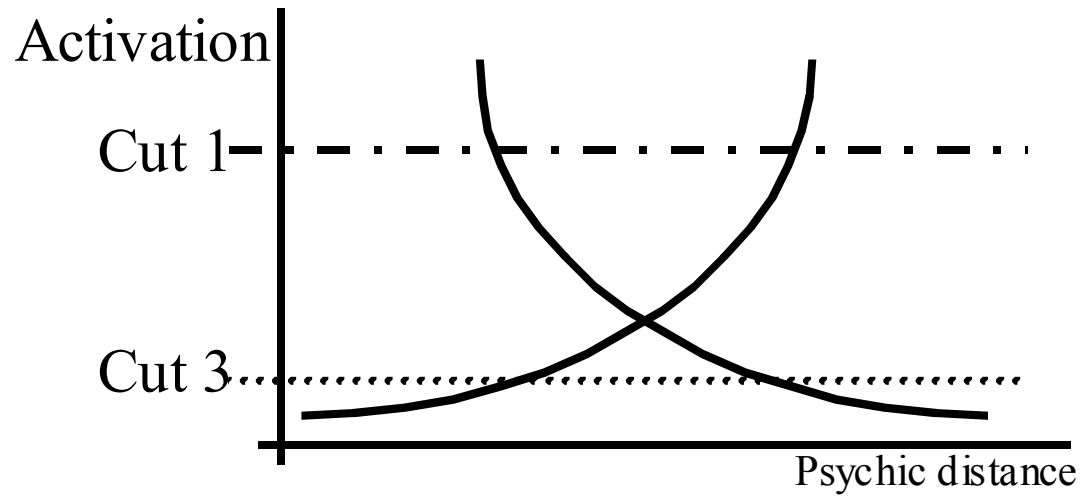


Disjunctive structure: Either – Or

(May be known also as splitting or dichotic thinking)



Average activation cuts the curves at different configurations. Each of these three people would have different thinking, experiences, and rhetoric.



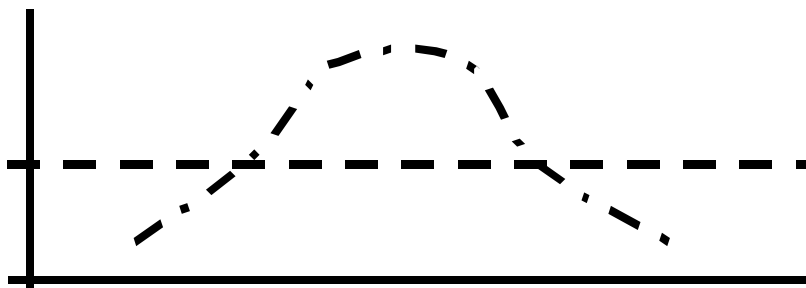
Cut 1 – Many pleasant solutions

Mood:

Good

Neutral

Bad



Cut 3 – unstable disjunct structure

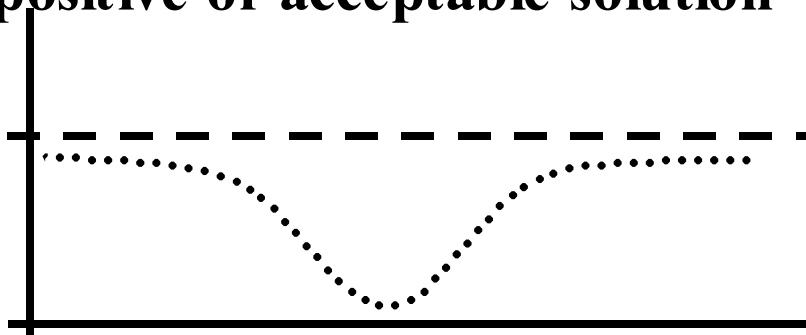
– no positive or acceptable solution

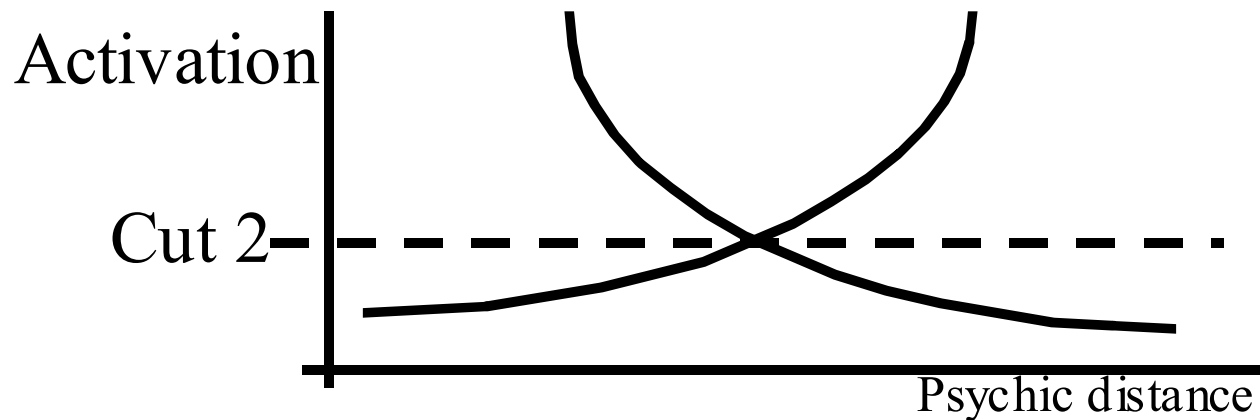
Good

Neutral

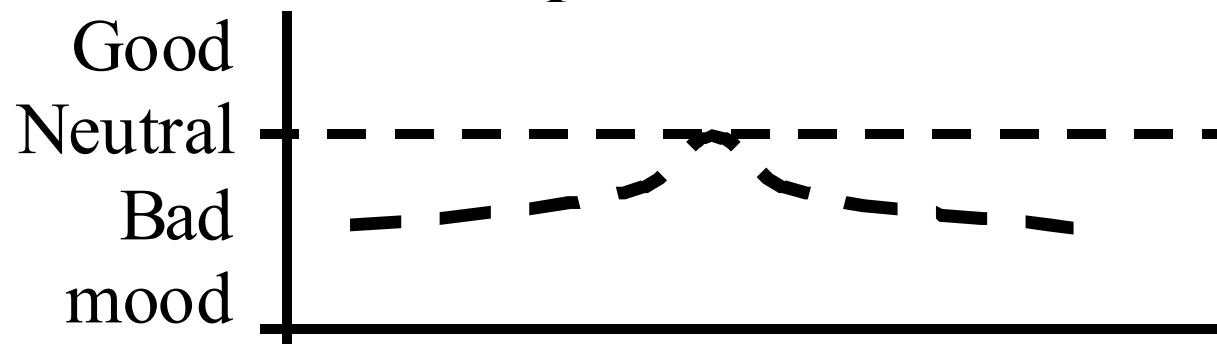
Bad

mood





Cut 2 – Just one acceptable solution



- Contrasting experience is caused simply by different configurations of curves.
- Cut 2 is typical with a lot of rigidity, lack of flexibility, and sometimes workaholism.

Manipulations

Manipulation (utilitarian, instrumental approach to others) is any **tendency to handle other people like inanimate things**, such as tools or instruments, and to ignore their will and/or consciousness. (Etymology: manus = hand in Latin)

The narrower the area of pleasant feelings is, the more difficult it is to keep other people and us in it, because at least two conditions must be satisfied – arousal and distance. Tendency to manipulate is a safe way to extreme loneliness in a world where there are no people but only inanimate things.

1) Manipulation of other people

- a) direct, by force (ignoring another's will)
- b) indirect, tactic (ignoring another's consciousness)

2) Manipulation of feelings and experiences

An urgent need gives rise to manipulations

Let us imagine a hysterical woman who needs a very high amount of attention. Such an amount of attention is not natural and not sustainable all the time, and therefore her need forces her to use manipulation to increase a man's natural amount of attention. She arranges arguments, gives him occasions for jealousy, etc. and the man's attention is suddenly much more concerned with her as she had wished. No man would provide her such attention voluntarily in a common situation. He is forced to do so by her manipulation. He is just a thing or instrument for her to get what she needs.

There are many ways of manipulation, but the most common ones are reproaches, needless arguments, intrigue, and machinations. All these serve to increase emotional arousal or to adapt psychic distance from a chosen object.

An urgent need gives rise to manipulations

Utilitarian approach to others does not include gratitude. Manipulator thinks other people ought to fulfill his/her needs:



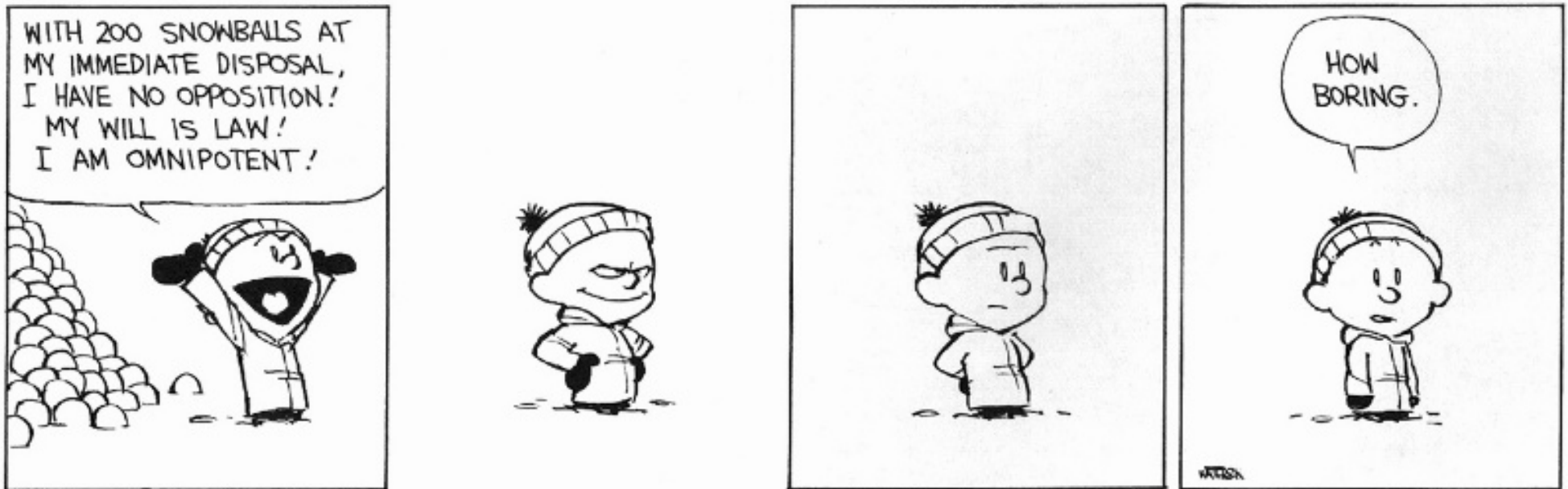
**Terrible, right? I would get rid of him a long time ago,
but he produces oxygen for me.**

Triumphant feelings in manipulations

Manipulations are mostly prepared in the imagination and take a tremendous amount of a subject's energy.

He believes he has a right to reach the target of manipulations, so he seldom or never feels gratitude or sympathy.

Successful manipulation



Short period of triumphant feelings, followed by disappointment.

Failure of manipulation

Downfall of feelings: Amelie turns into water and splashes against the ground. (Amelie, director Jean-Pierre Jeunet)



Manipulation failure leads to a sudden loss of mood

Some rules of manipulation

Partners in dyadic interaction may follow these rules:

1st rule: The manipulative rules are not written, not spoken.

2nd rule: The name of the game is to be stronger than the other.

- **The deceived one is worthy of disdain, not the deceiver.** Only someone weak can trust another's promise. The cuckold is a deceived partner and not the deceiver. The one who waits at a date is called a weak "sucker", not the one who voluntarily did not come.

- **The stronger one should not give more than the other.** Nothing is gratis or free. **Only the weaker one voluntarily withdraws and offers a compromise.**

- **Weakness, vulnerability, and sickness are all culpable and reprehensible.** In Milgram's experiments, people who give electric shocks to their victims said: They were "so stupid that they deserved the shocks."

- **Only the weaker one loses his temper**, and is puzzled by a situation.
- The **universal answer to a request or wish of another is "No!"**
The “stronger” one should do exactly the opposite of the other’s need.
- **The stronger one first expresses a rejecting attitude.** E.g. children who called me at the emergency help line expressed their need to talk by flooding me with swearwords and vulgarisms. They felt like the stronger one, because they told me first: "Fuck off!"
- **The weaker one shows (especially positive) emotions**, apologizes, expresses need, weakness or sympathy, asks for help...
- Because manipulation rules are not spoken, the triumphant feeling of the stronger one is in no way lessened by the casual fact that the loser does not know he has lost right now. The weaker loser should have known the rules.

Guilt distribution

Deflector – retroreflector asymmetry is often driven by reproaches, which determine guilt distribution:

Who is the bad one, who is the good one.

A boy and a girl go to their date, but they did not meet. Why? Because he has written in his diary: *Wed, 7 pm by the tower*, but she has: *Wed, 6 pm by the tower*. Why they could not meet is clear.

But a dissonant tension appears at this moment, and someone might try to reduce it by a statement: „It is your fault anyway, you wrote it wrong.“ From this moment on, it is clear who is the **guilt distributor**, and who is **guilt carrier**.

- Guilt distribution is independent from real moral guilt, e.g. abused and neglected children feel guilty, but are in fact innocent.
- A deflector is often a carrier; a retroreflector is a guilt distributor.

Fantasy figures, introjects or imaginal others

A fantasy figure is such a mental representation, by which the subject has a feeling that it behaves like a real person – with its own will and consciousness. For a subject, it is as if a fantasy figure autonomously reacts and responds to him.

- Etymology is from Henry Corbin (1972): *Imaginal* is something between imaginary and real.
- FF can explain the mechanisms described above of ambivalent interactions through the term of *mental representation*.

Mental interactions with fantasy figures include:

Soliloquy (self talks)

Projections

Erratic anticipations

Answer the questions



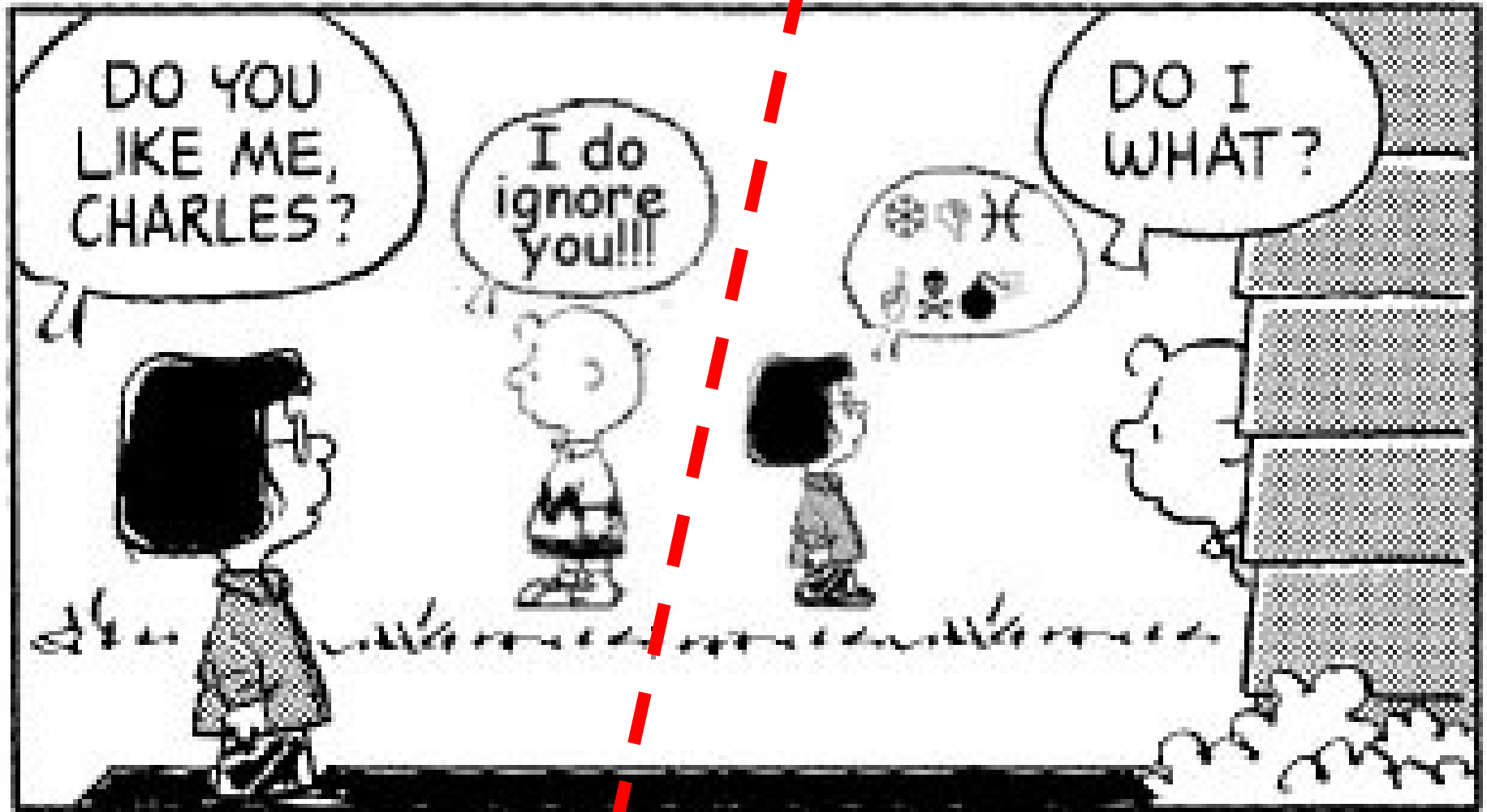
Who is Lucy is talking with?

Can Charles forget the question: “Do you like me, Charles?”

Who can then?

Who is aware of a mental figure of Charlie in Lucy’s mind?

Answers: Imaginal conversation



The subject has a feeling that a fantasy person has independent reactions.

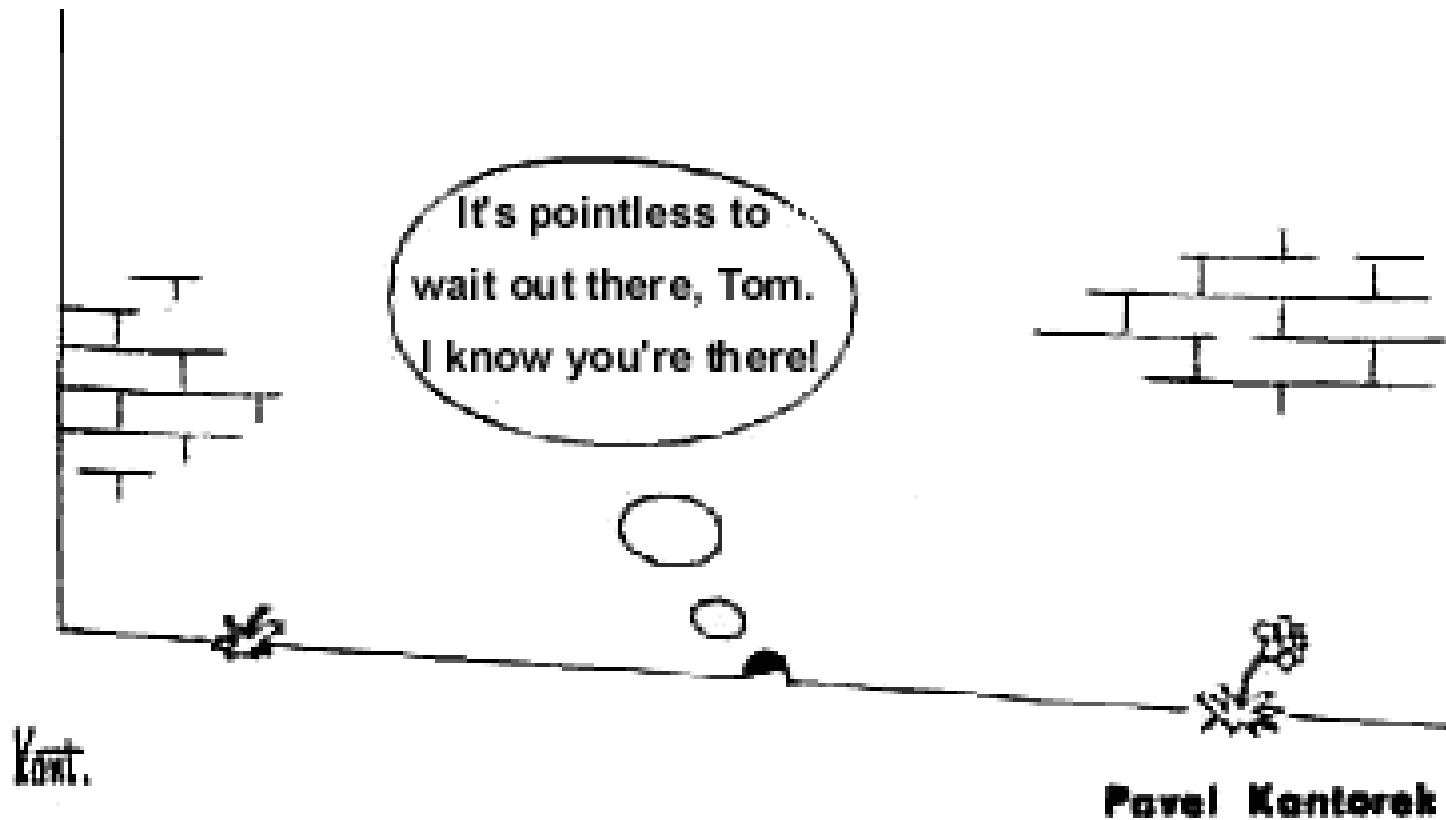
Other attributes of fantasy figures (statements)

Fantasy figures (FF) have many attributes in which they differ from their real counterparts:

- Externalization
- Activation of fantasy figures
- FF share the memory, abilities and inclinations of their subject
- Different proxemics of FF from real people
- Personification of FF through psychosomatisation
- Contribution of FF to paranoid thinking: “deliberate behavior”
- FF cannot escape the mind of the subject by his will.
- There might be more imaginal counterparts of one real person.
- Behavior of FF is schematic, rigid and programmed.
- Spontaneous and directed self talks, soliloquy as preparation for future real interactions. Big and small FF in self talks.
- Projection of self hatred into FF and short durations of pleasant feelings.

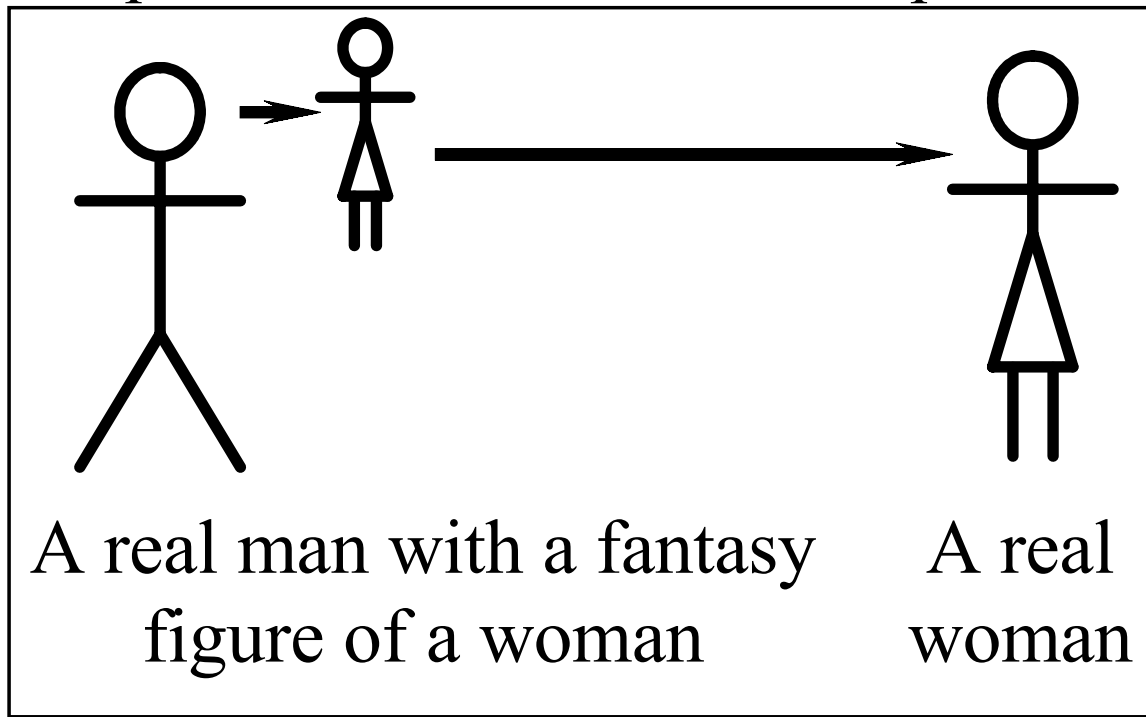
Activation of fantasy figure

Activation of a fantasy figure is independent from the real counterpart:



Externalization – FF belongs to nobody

People are not able to discriminate between the behavior of a real person and his/her mental representations or fantasy figure.



Deceiving man projects his own tendency to infidelity onto his wife, and consequently he is extremely jealous.

There are three people involved in this interaction: Real man, real woman, and mental woman, as a mental representation of the real woman in the man's mind.

FFs exploit the resources of the subject

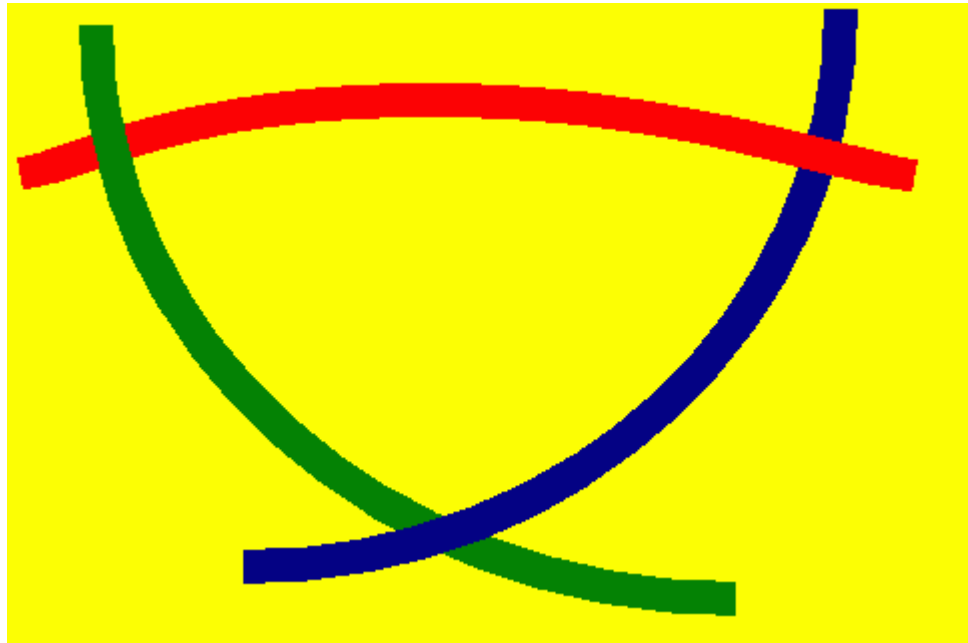
This causes the symmetry, mirroring of mental contents, e.g. direct proportion of mental states between FF and the subject in dreams and screenplays.



Ambivalent object theory explains further

- ❖ Psychic and social instability
- ❖ Tendency toward autostimulation, psychomotor unrest
- ❖ Reluctance to sleep or relax despite tiredness
- ❖ Manipulation and its rules
- ❖ Rigidity, extremism and fear of a change
- ❖ Eroded ego and self-destructive tendencies
- ❖ Dysthymy, feelings of emptiness, and boredom
- ❖ Partnership - inability to enter a close relationship, polarization of attitudes, partnership typology, losing e.g. sexual needs in partnership
- ❖ Either-or structure, black & white approach and consequences: Fixation on one person and contempt of others at the same time, Oedipus complex, etc.)

Thank you for your attention



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