

# Perpetrators & Victims

## Psychodynamic of the Perpetrator–Victim–Splitting

Munich, 28th of October 2012



# „Perpetrator“ and „Victim“

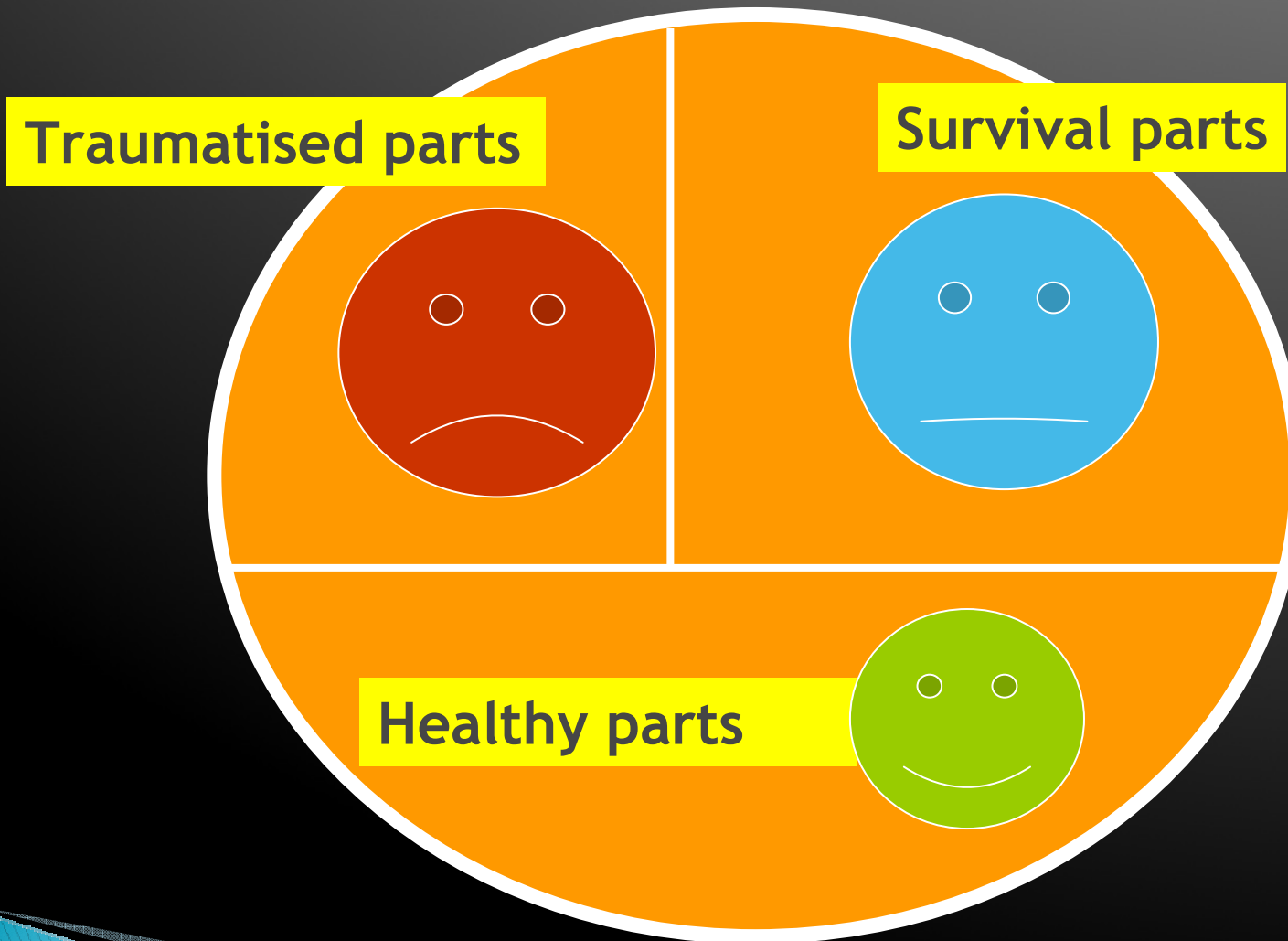
- ▶ Someone becomes perpetrator if he applies harm to someone else (by violence, murder, theft, betrayal, dishonesty, lack of love).
- ▶ Someone becomes victim by experiencing harm to his body and his psyche (from natural disasters, from other human beings).

- ▶ One can be a perpetrator consciously and unconsciously
- ▶ Harms can be small or big
- ▶ One can also be a perpetrator towards oneself

# „Harm“ as a traumatic experience

- ▶ The victim feels helpless and powerless
- ▶ His stress reactions (fight or flight) make the harm even greater
- ▶ Blocking, freezing, dissociating, splitting are psychic emergency reactions in order to survive

# Splits in the personality and identity structure after a traumatic experience



# Sorts of Trauma

- ▶ Trauma of Existential Threat
- ▶ Trauma of Loss
- ▶ Symbiotic Trauma
- ▶ Traumatisation of a whole bonding system

Every sort of trauma can produce  
a specific perpetrator–victim–dynamic

# Being a Victim

- ▶ Having undergone a traumatic experience
- ▶ Surviving it by splitting
- ▶ Being a victim stays present in the psychic structure
- ▶ Trauma-surviving strategies become necessary

# Victim Attitudes as a Trauma-Surviving-strategy (1)

- ▶ Denying being a victim
- ▶ Suppressing memories
- ▶ Suppressing impulses to fight back or run away, submissiveness
- ▶ Feeling guilty
- ▶ Feeling punishment is justified
- ▶ Disgust at one's own weakness

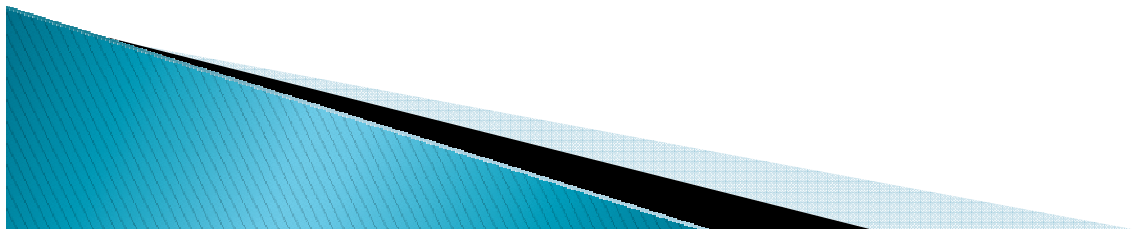


# VictimAttitudes as a Trauma-Surviving-Strategy (2)

- ▶ Not seeing perpetrators as perpetrators
- ▶ Clinging emotionally to the perpetrators
- ▶ Protecting perpetrators
- ▶ Identifying with the needs of perpetrators
- ▶ Ideals of harmony and peace

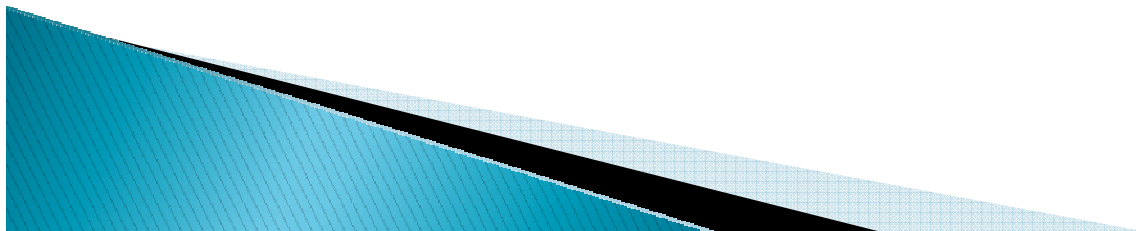
# Victim Attitudes as a Trauma-Surviving-Strategy (3)

- ▶ Suffering, lamenting, complaining without mentioning the real underlying reasons
- ▶ Self destructive behavior
- ▶ Chronic depression
- ▶ Chronic diseases



# Being a perpetrator as a traumatic experience

- ▶ Bad conscience
- ▶ Massive feelings of guilt
- ▶ Huge feelings of shame
- ▶ Panic of being socially despised



# Perpetrator Attitudes as a Trauma-Surviving-Strategy (1)

- ▶ Not percieving the harm that has been done to another person
- ▶ Denying deeds and facts
- ▶ Not feeling guilty, feeling righteous and just
- ▶ Demonstrating a good conscience in social situations and in public

# Perpetrator Attitudes as a Trauma-Surviving-Strategy (2)

- ▶ Blaming victims
- ▶ Feeling oneself as the victim
- ▶ Insulting victims
- ▶ Claiming an ideology that justifies perpetrator actions as a higher and socially justified duty
- ▶ Feeling satisfaction in destruction and aggression

# Victim–Perpetrator–Splitting

- ▶ Split off victim experiences create perpetrator attitudes as survival–strategies
- ▶ Numbness towards oneself becomes unempathetic behavior towards others
- ▶ Victims become perpetrators and are not aware of their victim and perpetrator attitudes

# Consequences of the Victim–Perpetrator–Splitting (1)

- ▶ Pendulum swings between victim– and perpetrator attitudes
- ▶ Alternating feelings of powerlessness und rebellious fury
- ▶ False atonement
- ▶ Revenge against innocent others
- ▶ Aggression and depression as normality in relationships
- ▶ Illusions of love as a fragile basis for living together with others

# Consequences of victim–perpetrator–Splitting (2)

- ▶ A vicious cycle sucking in more and more people
- ▶ A vicious cycle going on for generations
- ▶ Violence, murder, incest and sexuall abuse become normality
- ▶ Conssequence: Traumatisation of a whole bonding system that is dominated by trauma



# Consequences of victim–perpetrator–Splitting (3)

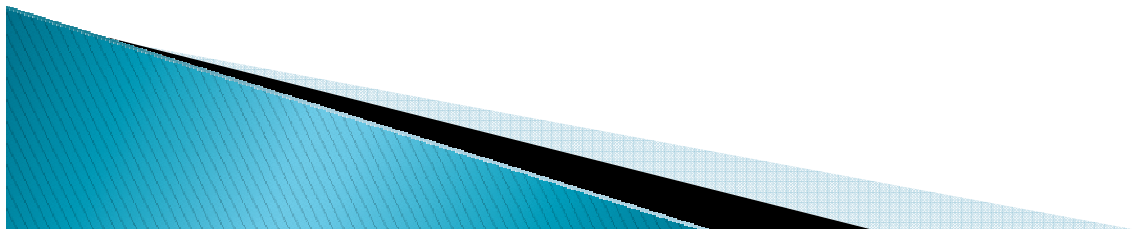
- ▶ Personality disorders, Psychosis, Schizophrenia, Delusion, Self destruction, Dissoziative Identity Disorder,, Suicide
- ▶ Chronic diseases, e.g. autoimmune diseases,cancer
- ▶ Criminal behaviour

# How to overcome the victim attitude?

- ▶ Acknowledging being a victim, i.e. feeling one's own trauma
- ▶ Perceiving and accepting the harm that has been done
- ▶ Feeling compassion for oneself
- ▶ Claiming compensation from the perpetrator
- ▶ Renouncing the need for revenge

# Illusionary attempts to find solutions

- ▶ Revenge: Wanting to destroy the perpetrator
- ▶ Rebellion: fighting blindly against the perpetrator
- ▶ Forgiving: Trying to take away guilt and shame from the perpetrator
- ▶ Reconciliation: Ideals of harmony without integrating one's own victim or perpetrator trauma
- ▶ Going into the realms of spirituality



# How to overcome the perpetrator attitude?

- ▶ Acknowledging facts and deeds
- ▶ Accepting guilt and responsibility
- ▶ Feeling the shame
- ▶ Feeling empathy towards the victim
- ▶ Offering compensation, making appropriate amends
- ▶ Renouncing the need for lifelong atonement

# Living beyond victim–perpetrator attitudes

- ▶ Leaving systems that are caught up in perpetrator–victim–dynamics
- ▶ Healthy contact with oneself, healthy autonomy, clear boundaries
- ▶ Self respect, ability to deal with conflicts
- ▶ Living in constructive symbiotic relationships
- ▶ Creating win–win– instead of win–lose– situations
- ▶ Finding out what healthy anxiety, rage and love are



# Literature

- ▶ Ruppert, F. (2008). Trauma, Bonding and Family Constellations. Frome (UK): Green Balloon Publishing.
- ▶ Splits in the Soul (2010). Frome (UK): Green Balloon Publishing.
- ▶ Ruppert, F. (2012). Symbiosis and Autonomy. Frome (UK): Green Balloon Publishing.