

# Beirut Ethics Colloquium



## **SELF-DECEPTION**

# What We Are

Terry Warner-The Arbinger Institute- 1986, 1999



- Marty was lying in bed, wrapped in the comfort of deep sleep. He was a young, ambitious businessman concerned about his career ladder and pre-occupied most of the time with corporate assignments. As he slept, his four-month-old baby began to cry in the nursery.
- Marty roused, lifted his head and looked at the clock. 2:30. His wife, Carolyn, lying next to him in her curlers and sleeping mask, wasn't stirring.

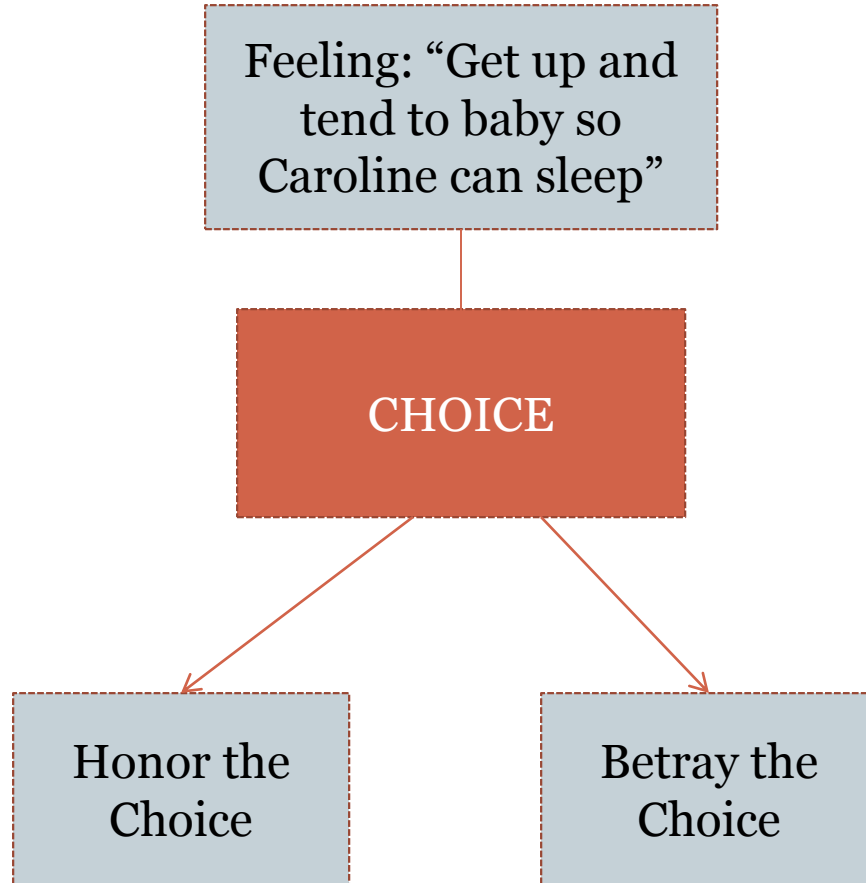
# Marty told this story...



- At that moment, I had a fleeting feeling, a feeling that if I got up quickly I might be able to see what was wrong before my wife would have to wake up.
- I don't think it was even a thought because it went too fast for me to say it out in my mind.
- It was a feeling that this was something I really ought to do. But I didn't do it.
- I didn't go right back to sleep either. It bugged me that my wife wasn't waking up.
- I kept thinking it was her job. She has her work and I have mine. Mine starts early. She can sleep in. Besides, I was exhausted.
- Besides that, I never really know how to handle the baby. Maybe she was lying there waiting for me to get up.
- Why did I have to feel guilty when I'm only trying to get some sleep so I can do well on the job?
- She was the one who wanted to have this kid in the first place.

# Self-Betrayal

An act contrary to what I feel I should do for another is called an act of 'self-betrayal'





## Blame & Justifications

It is impossible to betray oneself without seeking to excuse or justify oneself.

By excusing or justifying ourselves we must blame others

When I betray myself, I begin to see the world in a way that justifies my self-betrayal.

### How Marty Sees Himself

Victim  
Hardworking  
Important  
Sensitive  
Fair  
Good dad  
Good Husband

### How Marty Sees Caroline

Lazy  
Inconsiderate  
Unappreciative  
Insensitive  
Faker  
Lousy Mom  
Lousy Wife

Choosing to be a victim we are not responsible for what's going on because we are helpless in the face of what they are doing to us.

# Reality Becomes Distorted

When I see the world in a self-justifying way, my view of reality becomes distorted.

I inflate my own virtues and inflate the faults of other.

I inflate the value of things that justify my self-betrayal

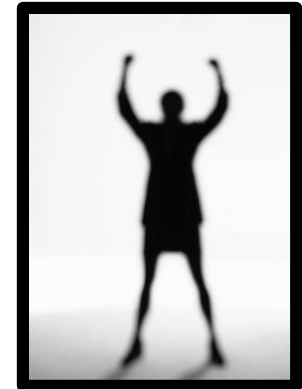
Blame, Blame, Blame

## We Enter 'THE BOX'

How Marty Sees  
Himself



How Marty Sees  
Caroline



We are deceived by this hypocrisy because it and the self-betrayal are the same event

# Collusion

Self-justifying images create a defensive posture against attack.

My blame invites the other to be in the box

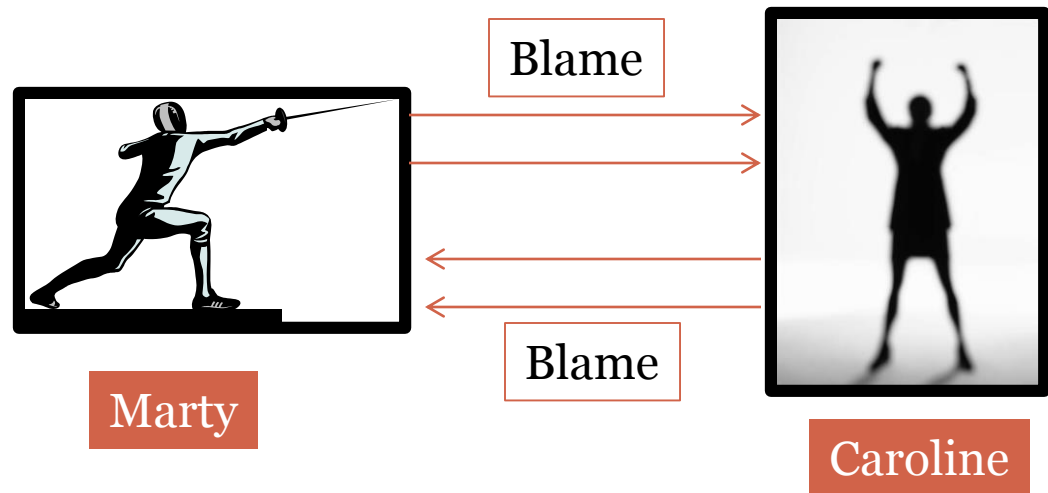
I feel their blame is unjust...

So they blame me even more...

By being in the box I provoke others to be in the box...

and in response they invite me to stay in the box

Accusing the other means making ourselves out to be their victim.



Blame begets Blame...  
It's self-fulfilling

# We have to have 'proof' that someone, possibly everyone and perhaps even God, has treated us unfairly.



- My former fiancée, Julene, loved to dance, but I felt un-masculine on the dance floor. One night she wanted to go dancing with some other couples. I didn't feel like going but said I would just to make her happy.
- Throughout the evening she kept insisting that we dance when no one else was out on the floor. I did it because I didn't want to make a scene but it embarrassed me. It seemed to me that she was using me, that she wasn't being herself- you know, too bubbly and all that.
- On the drive home she said, 'Something is bothering you.' I had decided not to say anything, because I don't like to hurt people's feelings. But since she brought it up I decided to be straightforward about what was on my mind.
- So I told her I thought she didn't care about other people's feelings, but only about her own.
- She got very angry. Her eyes were wet and she looked at me hard. I was a cold selfish person, she said, very loud.
- After her fit had kind of died down, I put my arms around her to show I forgave her for her cruel words. I felt I was a better person than she was. I think that is when I started being less interested in her.





## Accusing Attitudes

What is even more astounding is that by our blaming attitude we provoke the very behaviors we find most offensive.

Others react to our accusing attitudes with accusing attitudes of their own and feel they are being provoked to do so.

Both our suffering and their wrong-doing give us proof that they are **WRONG** and we are **RIGHT**.

He was only trying to 'straighten her out' ...  
She didn't appreciate it...

How Larry Sees  
Himself

Victim  
Self-Sacrificing  
Doing his Duty  
Fair  
Sensitive  
Helpful  
Forgiving



How Julene Sees  
Larry

Selfish  
Inconsiderate  
Drag – Buzz Kill  
Insensitive  
Inconsiderate  
Unfair  
Pompous

### False Expectation of Appreciation

*"Oh thank you darling for pointing out this shortcoming to me. I only want to improve myself so I can be a better companion to you..."*



## Self-Betrayal Self-Deception

Neither considers  
himself unfair or hostile

Each is just trying to  
defend himself

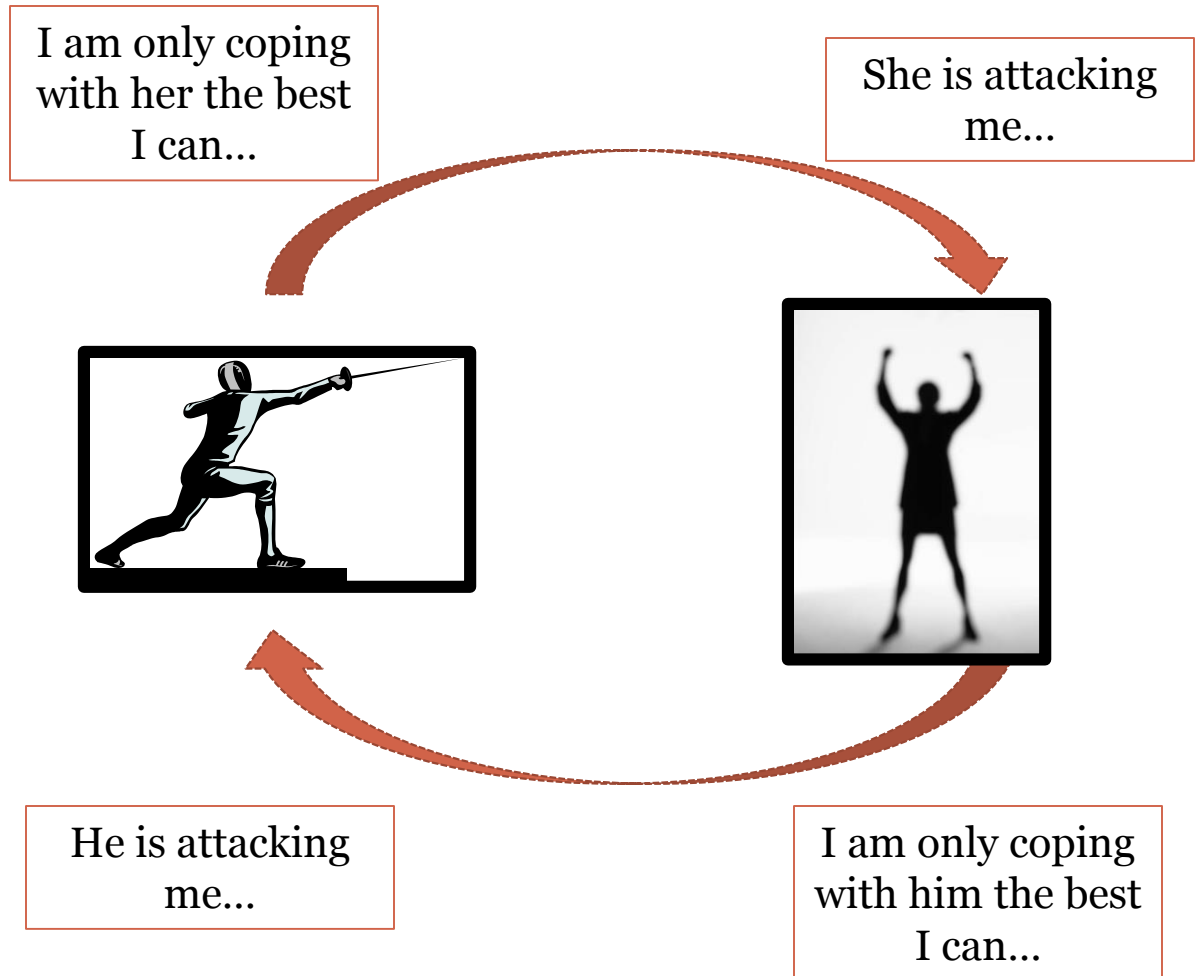
Both thought they were  
doing the best they  
could to deal with the  
problems being thrown  
at them.

Their views of the  
situation are worlds  
apart

They are ALIENATED  
from each other

Their hearts are at WAR

### Defensively we give validation to the lie...





## Personal Example

Imagine a recent scenario where you felt frustrated with a significant other in your life.

What happened when you betrayed that choice and found yourself in conflict?

What would have happened if you had honored that choice?

How did you first feel?

**CHOICE**

If you honored that choice?

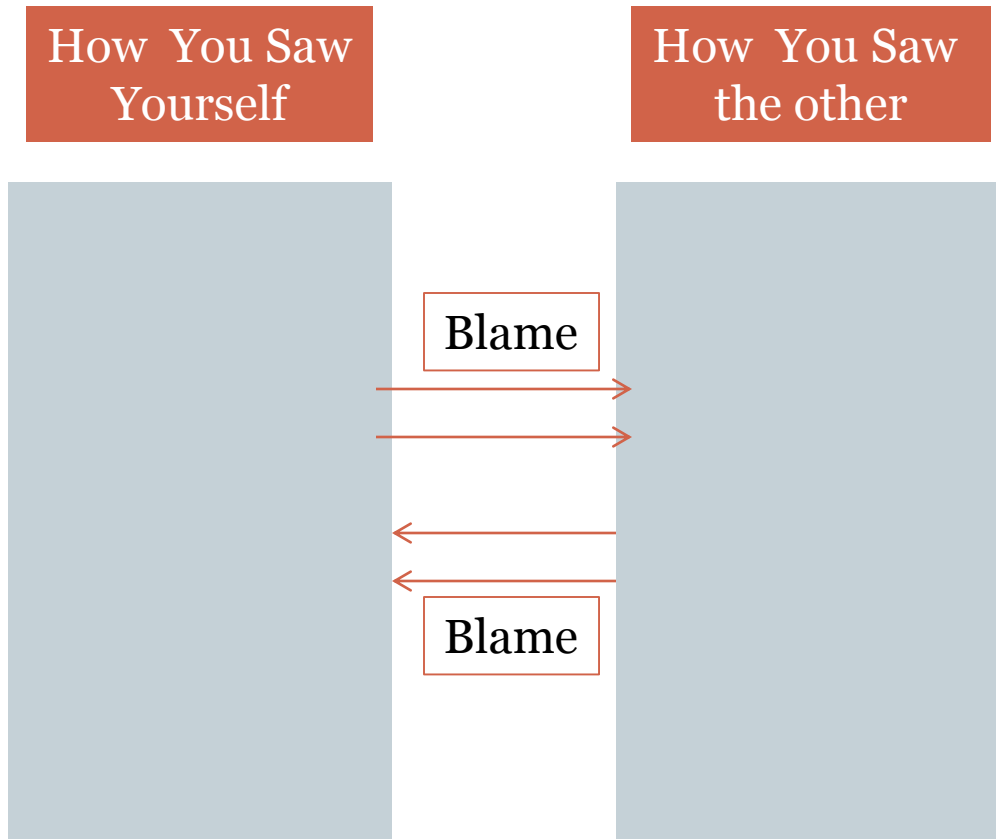
If you betrayed that choice?



# Cycle of Blame & Justification

Jot down how you saw yourself at that moment

How did you see the other?

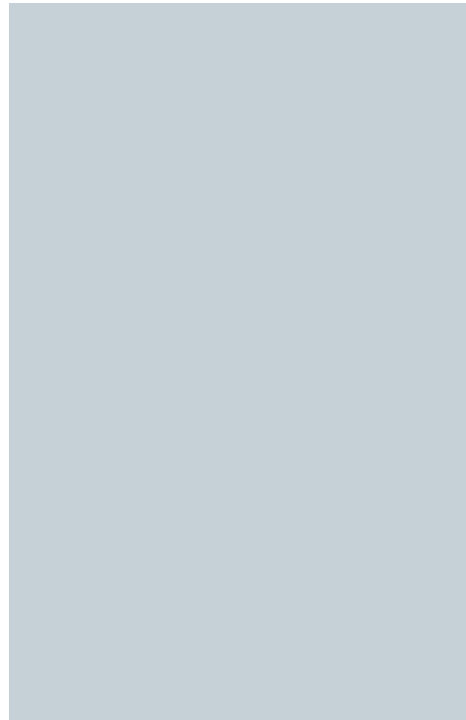




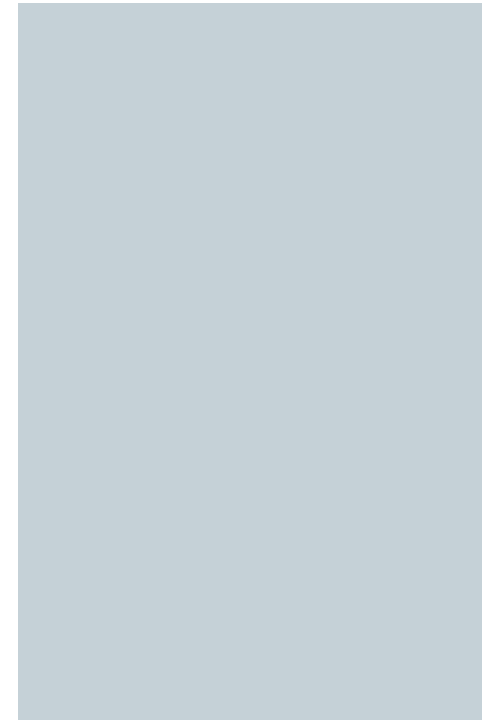
## How did the other see you

Now try to imagine how the other person honestly viewed your behavior at that moment

How You Saw Yourself



How the other Saw me



# False Morality



- **Dominant Fiction:** We are not responsible for our emotions- they are caused *in* us by events *outside* our control.
- Accusing emotions are *performances* we engage in
- *Patterns of emotion* evolve as do *patterns of rhetoric*
- We invoke them whenever we *compromise ourselves*
- Ex: We're angry because someone makes us angry

# The Moral Dilemma of Victim Motivation



- In our mind our outward *behavior* is under our control but not our *motivations*
- **REACT:** Either we try to control expressing and acting in the emotion- “*Keep our feeling in*” Or we act out in anger– “*Let our feeling out*”
- **JUSTIFY:** Either way we believe it’s the *blameworthy behavior* of the other that put us in this trap- so its not our fault
- **BLAME:** No self-betrayer *accepts responsibility* for the moral traps in which he finds himself since he must continue to support his conviction that he is not at fault.

# Patterns of Emotional Bondage are hard to break...



- Self-Betrayal and Self-Deception are Habitual...
- Once we see our world in an accusing, victimized, self-protective manner, our options are laid out for us in such limited patterns.
- Restricted to these patterns we are deluded about how to deal with unwanted emotions
- Ex: If we are acting childish, we think we *should* control ourselves but without authentic conviction, we only succeed in being perceived as 'self-righteous' instead
- The only authentic emotional change we can undergo is abandonment of our accusing feelings.



# Liberation



- Emotional problems are what we are *doing*
- Whatever we think of *to do* is going to backfire
- We can only *give up* these emotions altogether and their false picture of the world
- A '*Heart at Peace*' ceases to make accusations
- Emotional honesty requires a consciousness about patterns of self-betrayal and collusion
- With consciousness we can *CHOOSE* whether or not to engage
- Can we '*yield to our hearts*' wholly to the truth?

# Self-Awareness

Perception is not the truth – its only one side of a shared truth

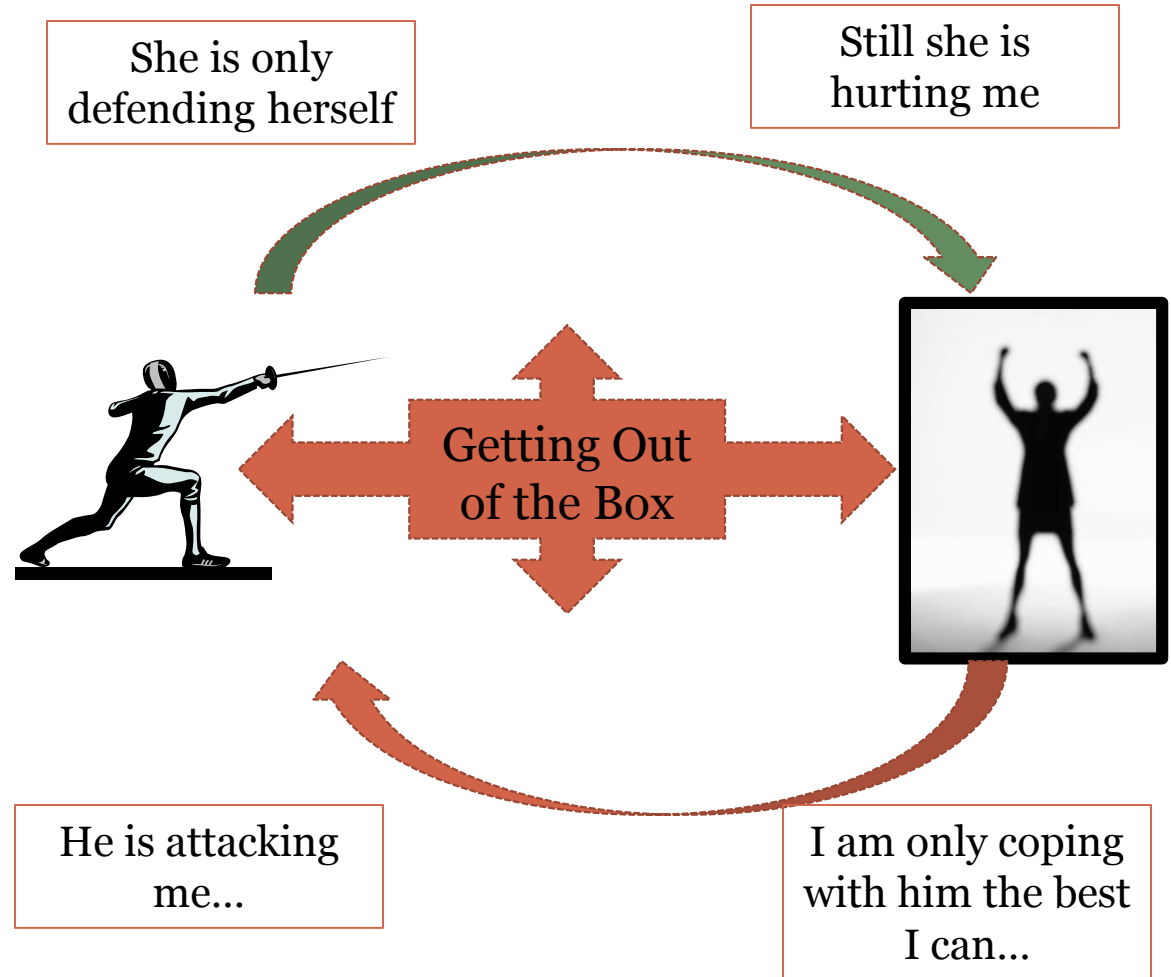
Become aware of the accusing attitude

See the other as not hurtful to you but as hurting herself

Notice how your heart changes

Feeling of anxiety give way to compassion

Your heart goes out to her- you walk forward





## Remaining open and patient

When we are compassionate we expect others to do what they themselves know is right and to perform up to their ability

And we genuinely – not indulgently – desire to help them help themselves

We will refuse to collude again no matter how enticed or provoked

## Yield to Our Hearts...

No longer provoked = No more need to defend



How to respond to honest expectations and love?

## Opportunity to Grow

Simply giving up our own negative attitudes is the best thing we can do to help others give up their negative attitudes and grow

When others give up their negative attitudes in response to us, they become free to turn and affect other people in the same way.

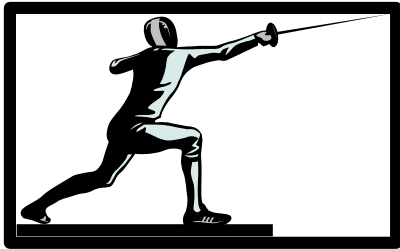
In this way we are liberated from self-concern and open the way for others to give back to us with love...

Though there is no guarantee people will respond in kind- its amazing how often they do...



A positive cycle that is motivated by care creates a society that responds to care and is in turn motivated by care...

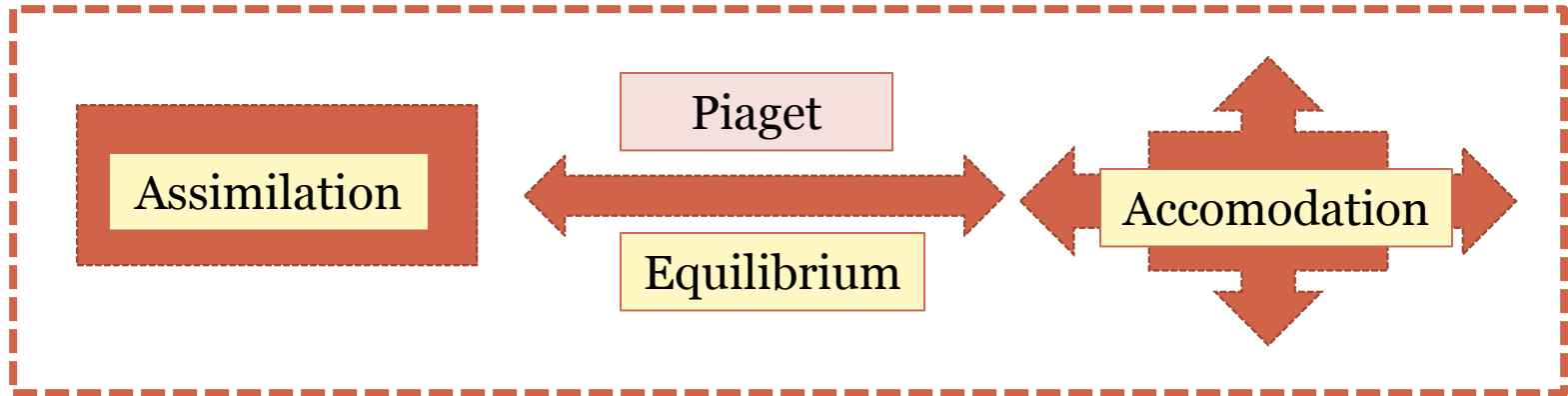
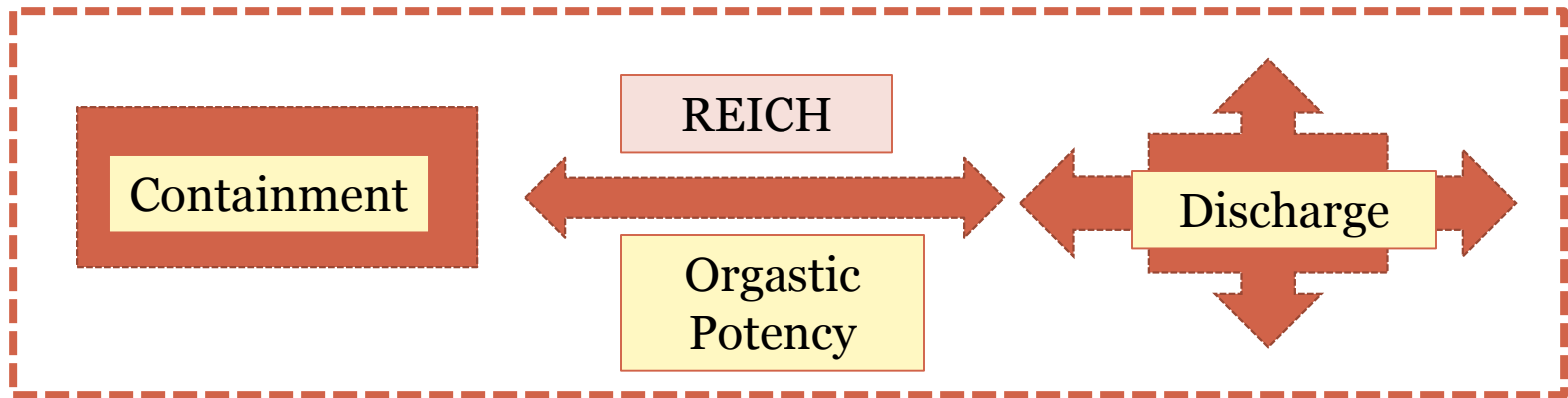
# Heart at War vs. Heart at Peace



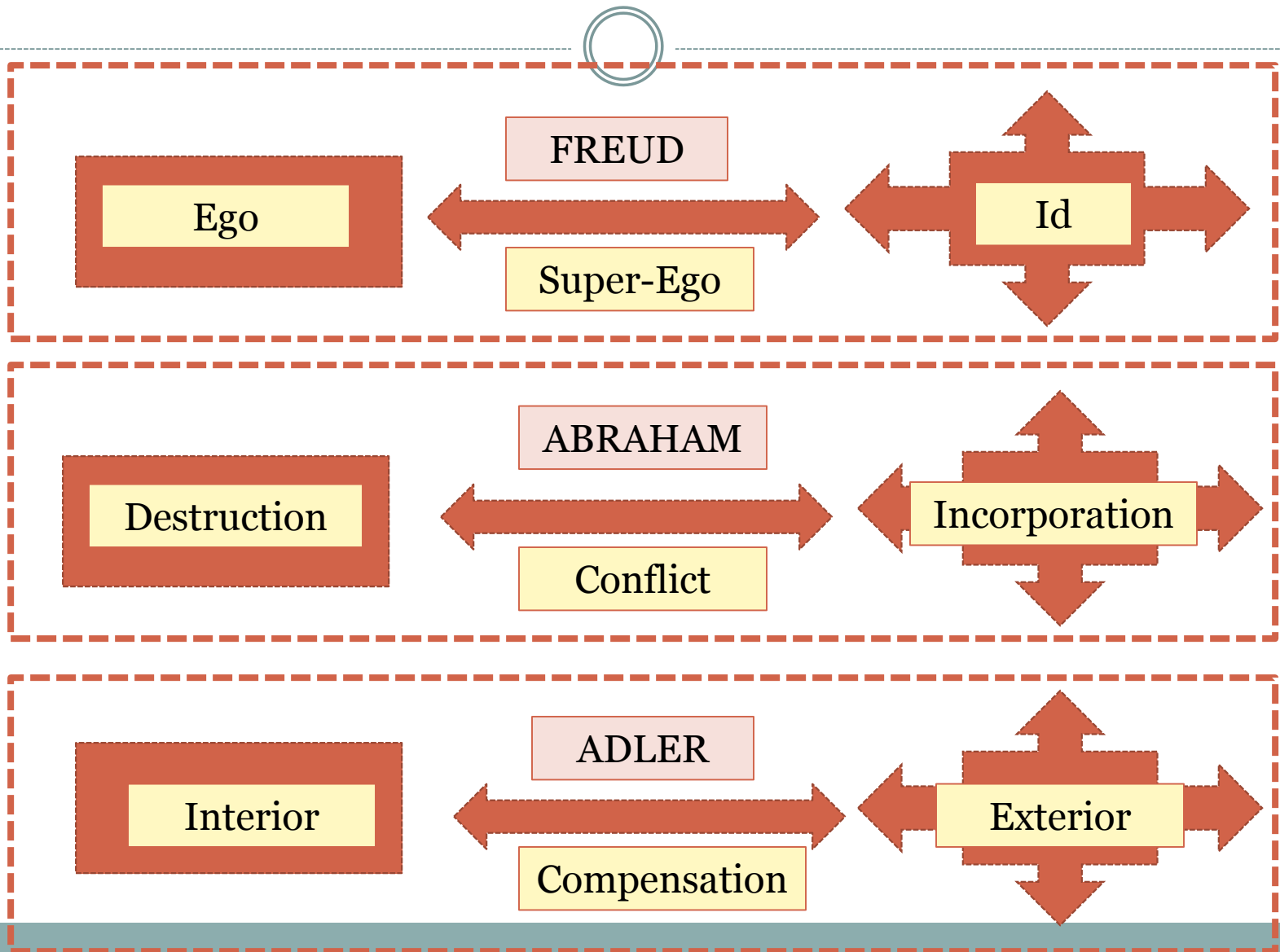
In the Box  
A Closed Mind  
Assimilate Existing Patterns  
Objectify  
Categorize  
Act Defensively

Out of the Box  
An Open Heart  
Accomodate New Learning  
Make Meaning  
Discover  
Become Curious

# Somatic & Cognitive Duality



# Where have we seen this before?



# CHOICE in Our Way of Being

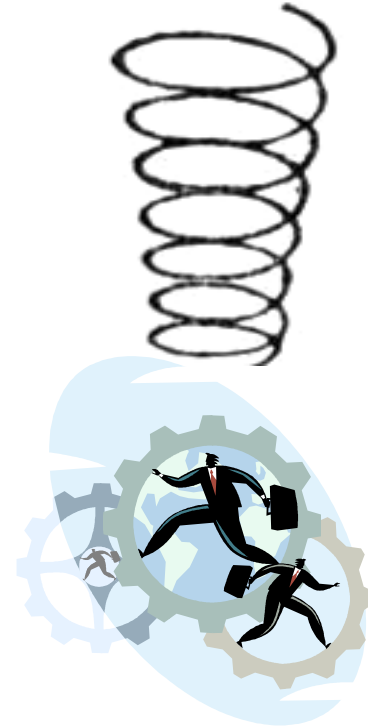


**Deficiency  
Motivation**



It's the life force  
and how we  
figure into it-

Robert Kegan



**Growth  
Motivation**



# How Does this Relate to Ethics?



- **Ethics is Dynamic**
  - It's the way a subject will or will not consent to life- Vasse
- **Ethics is Relational**
  - Human nature is fundamentally relational
- **Ethics depends on Anthropology**
  - First have to understand what it is to be a human being
- **Ethics should take the Unconscious into account**
  - 80% of our instincts, drives and motivations are unconscious
- **Ethics is about Language**
  - Every word is a Social Reality
  - Language is always a sign of being in relation to one another



## The Last Word from a Woman of Wisdom

If you can't love  
me at my worst...

You don't deserve  
me at my best...

