

Victims & Perpetrators

Psychodynamic of the Victim-Perpetrator- Splitting

Cork, 28th of June 2013 www.franz-ruppert.de



Agenda

- Victims and perpetrators – definitions
- Victim and perpetrator attitudes as surviving strategies
- The victim-perpetrator-splitting
- Ways out – illusionary and realistic

Victims

- Someone becomes victim by experiencing harm to his body and his psyche (from natural disasters, from other human beings).
- The harm can be small or big, stressful or traumatic.

Perpetrators

- Someone becomes perpetrator if he applies harm to someone else (by violence, murder, theft, betrayal, dishonesty)
- or does not give the necessary support to another person he is responsible for, (especially lack of contact, love and food).
- One can be a perpetrator consciously and unconsciously.
- One can also be a perpetrator towards oneself.

Harm as a traumatic experience

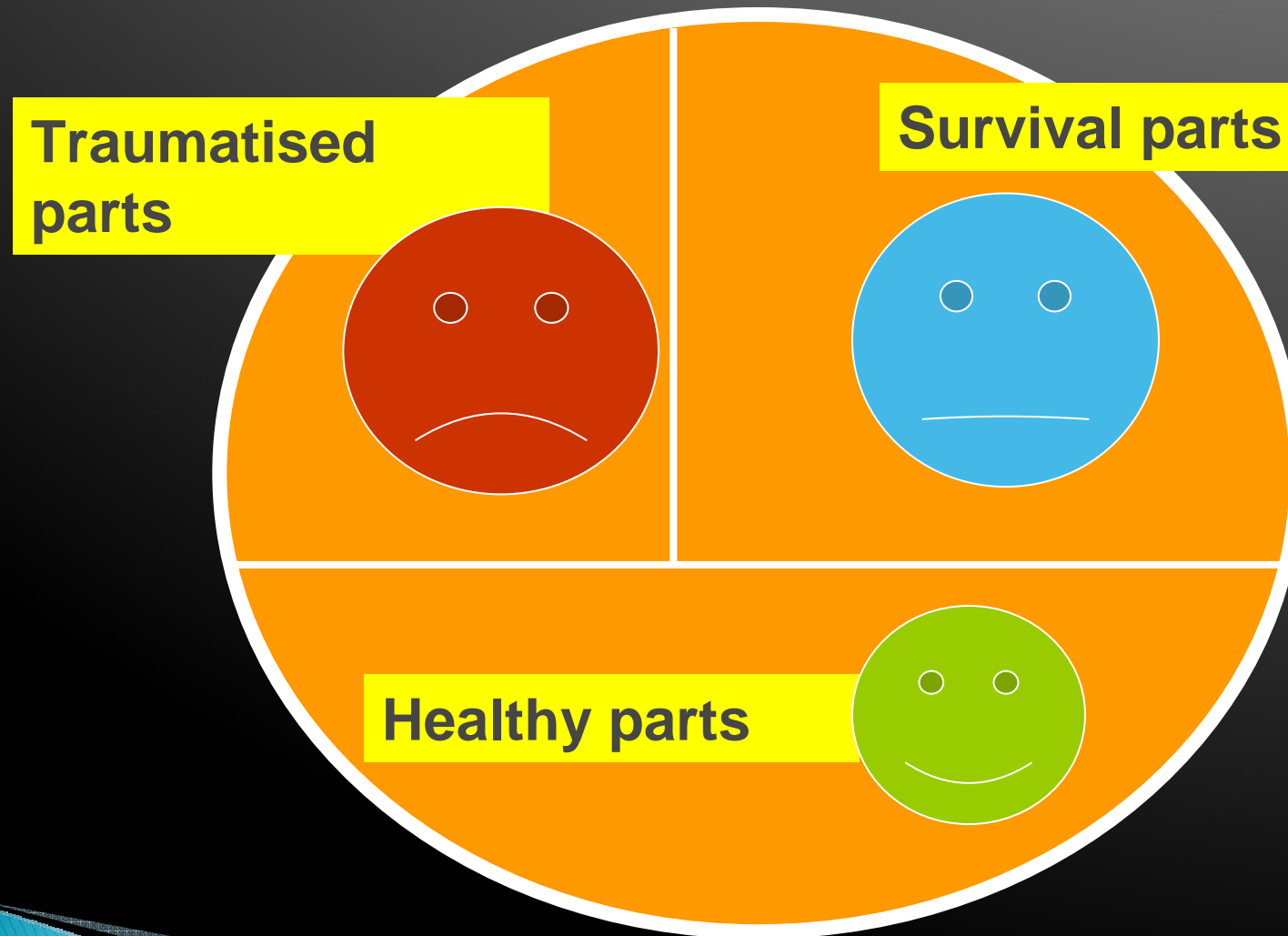
- The victim feels helpless and powerless
- His stress reactions (fight or flight) make the harm even greater
- Blocking, freezing, dissociating, splitting are psychic emergency reactions in order to survive
- It is not possible to reverse the harm completely.

Different types of Trauma

- Trauma of Existential Threat
- Trauma of Loss
- Symbiotic Trauma (pre-, peri-, postnatal)
- Traumatisation of a whole bonding system

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

Splits in the personality structure after a traumatic experience



Being a Victim

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

Victim Attitudes as a Trauma-Surviving-Strategy (1)

- Suppressing impulses to fight back or run away
- Submissiveness
- Denying being a victim
- Suppressing memories of the trauma
- Feeling guilty
- Feeling punishment as justified

Victim Attitudes as a Trauma-Surviving-Strategy (2)

- Suffering, lamenting, complaining without mentioning the real underlying reasons
- Chronic depression
- Chronic diseases
- Ideals of harmony and peace

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

- Not seeing perpetrators as perpetrators
- Clinging emotionally to the perpetrators
- Protecting perpetrators
- Identifying with the needs of perpetrators
- Disgust at ones own weakness
- Self destructive behavior
- Becoming a perpetrator oneself towards innocent others

Being a perpetrator as a traumatizing 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
- Naming victims as ill and insane persons
- Claiming an ideology that justifies perpetrator actions as a higher and socially justified duty
- Feeling satisfaction in destruction and aggression

Victim-Perpetrator Splitting (1)

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

Victim-Perpetrator Splitting (2)

- 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

Victim-Perpetrator Splitting (3)

- A vicious cycle sucking in more and more people
- A vicious cycle going on for generations
- Violence, murder, incest and sexual abuse become normality
- Consequence: Traumatization of whole bonding systems that are dominated by trauma

Victim-Perpetrator Splitting (4)

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

Illusionary attempts to find ways out of the victim-perpetrator-splitting

- 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
- Escaping into the realms of spirituality

How to overcome the victim attitudes?

- Acknowledging being a victim, i.e. feeling one's own trauma
- Perceiving and accepting the harm that has been done to oneself
- Feeling compassion for oneself
- Realizing one own's healthy strength
- Learning to protect the personal borders
- Acknowledging one one's perpetrator attitudes

How to overcome the perpetrator attitudes?

- 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 the Victim-Perpetrator Splitting (1)

- Learning to regulate one's feelings (fear, rage, love)
- Continuous contact with oneself, healthy autonomy, clear boundaries
- Self respect, growing ability to deal with conflicts
- Leaving systems that are caught up in victim-perpetrator-dynamics
- Learning to live in constructive symbiotic relationships
- Creating win-win- instead of win-lose-situations



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.