

We have the world's future  
in our hands: Are we up to  
it?

Maureen O'Hara  
National University

► **Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better in the sphere of our being as humans, and the catastrophe toward which we are headed . . . will be unavoidable.**

Vaclav Havel 1992

# Main ideas

- ▶ Not an era of change but a change of eras. We are responsible for the planet's future
- ▶ Incoherence, uncertainty and anxiety are the new universal context
- ▶ Cognitive dissonance provokes pathological and transformational responses
- ▶ Meaning and psychological coherence are survival necessities and in short supply
- ▶ What can we do to take more responsibility for the long term future?

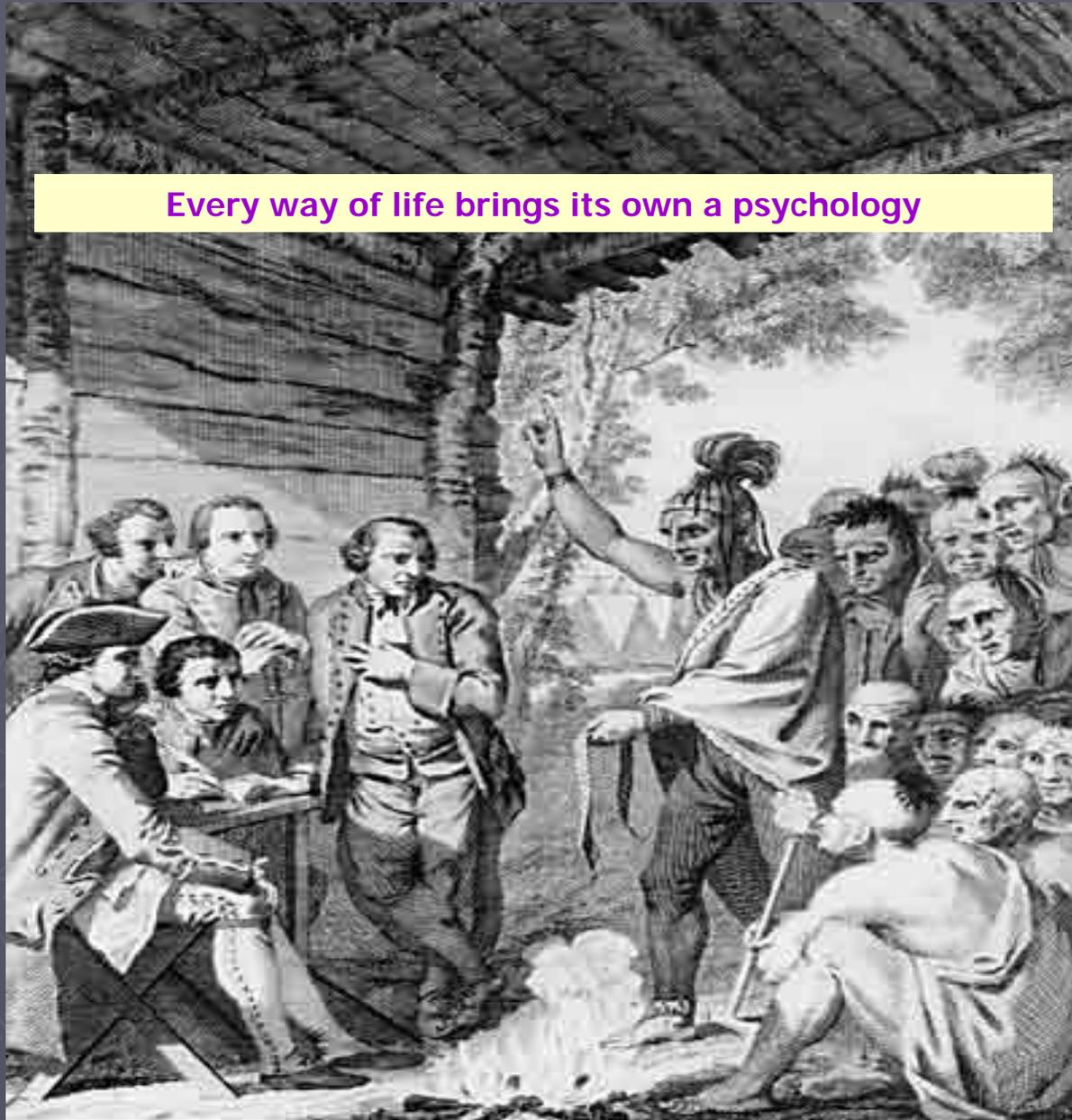
# Signs of trouble 2000-2007

- ▶ A billion people suffer some kind of serious mental distress
- ▶ One million suicides annually, and 20 million more try; (huge increase now in India)
- ▶ Alcoholism and drug use is up 67% in 15 years;
- ▶ Stress results in 40% of all disability claims in Canada
- ▶ Violence rates are up in all developed nations

- ▶ War trauma results in millions with PTSD
- ▶ Divorce rates up everywhere
- ▶ 750,00 Japanese men (hikimori) never leave home "can't cope"
- ▶ Russian, Japanese and Italian women are delaying marriage and refusing to bear children
- ▶ 35 % of African-American men will be incarcerated.
- ▶ By 18 y average US child has seen 200K acts of violence and witnessed 16K murders

- ▶ 1 in 4 European teens have diagnosable mental illness
- ▶ Only 18% of US 9th graders will graduate from college
- ▶ Teen on teen homicides increasing every year
- ▶ 1 in 4 US grade school children use drugs
- ▶ Increase violence in under 7 including murder of younger sibs because "have seen it on TV"
- ▶ 15 million Brazilian "street children"
- ▶ World wide child soldiers kill and rape, and are raped by other child soldiers

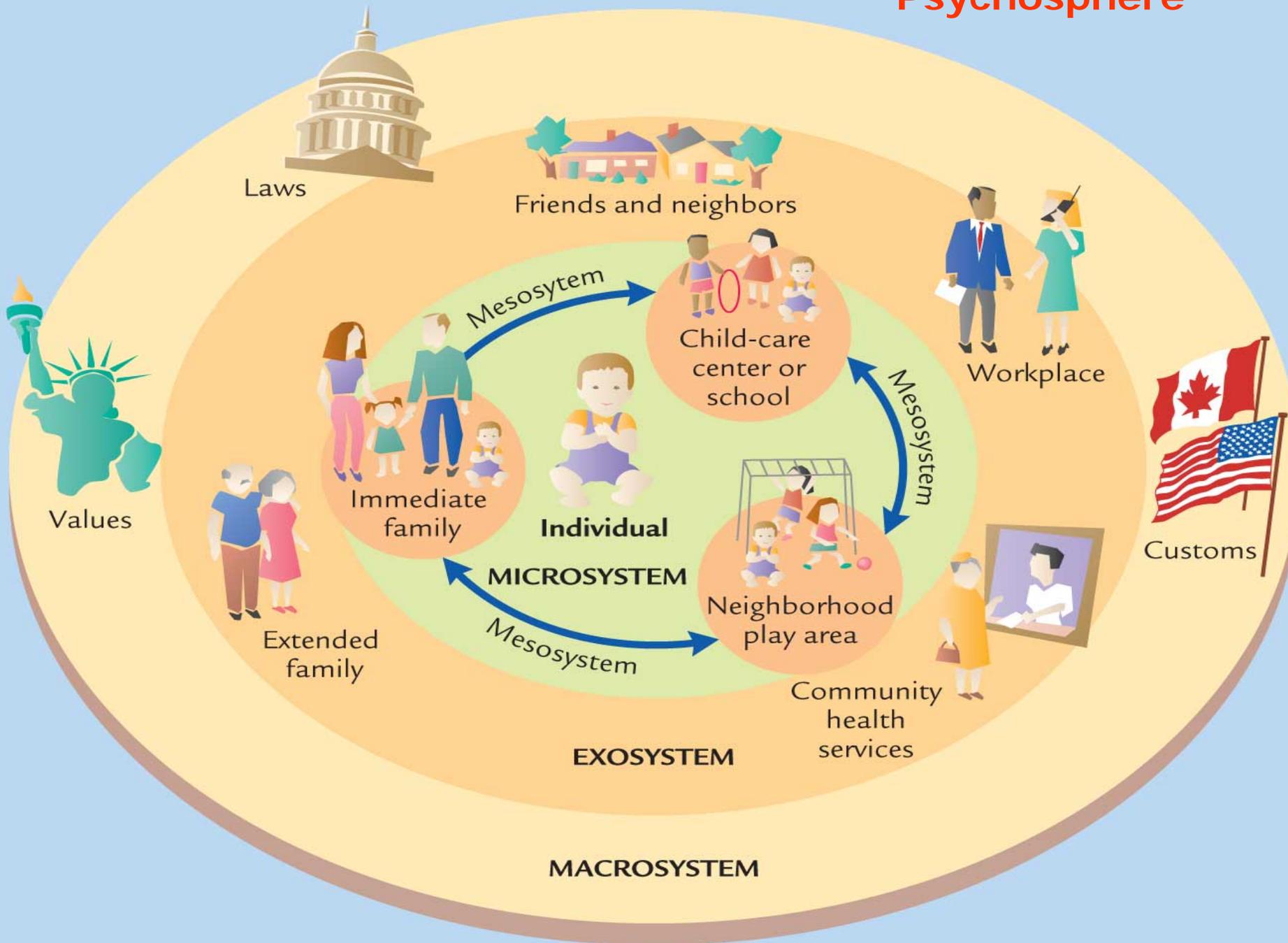
Every way of life brings its own a psychology



# Psychosphere

- ▶ Definition: The holistic, interconnected, interpenetrated system of narratives, symbols, images, representations, language, metaphors, patterns of life, values, epistemologies, cognitive habits, rituals, religions, sports, forms of commerce, metaphysics, art, technologies that together provide the raw materials of identity and the psychological context of life. O'Hara, 2007

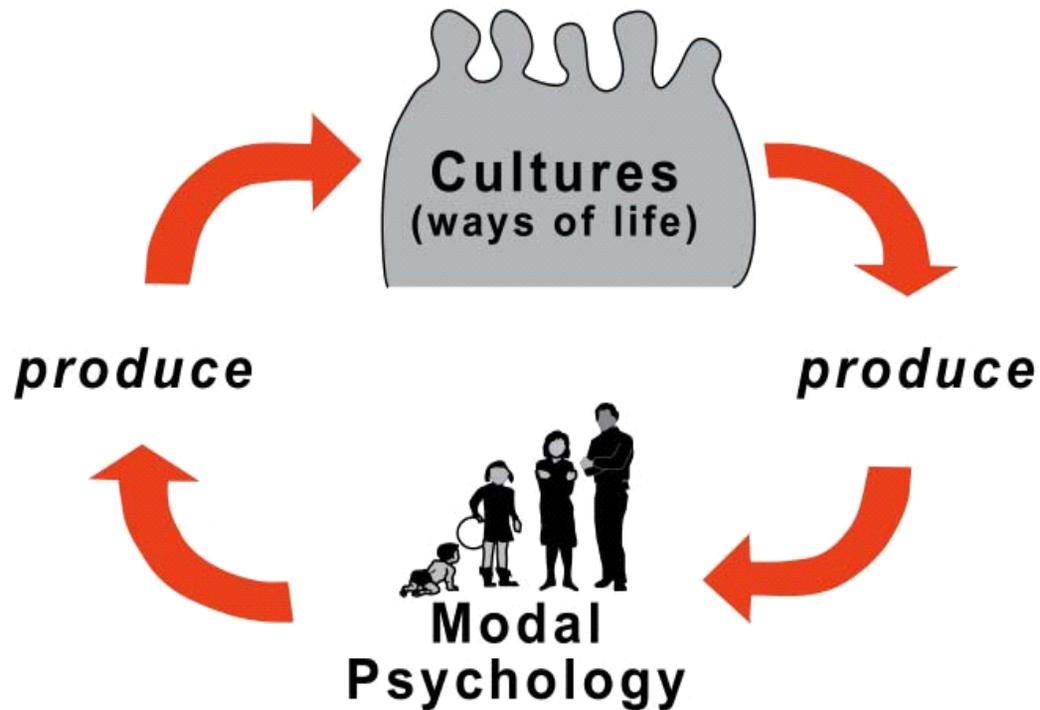
# Psychosphere



# Coherence and stability

- Members of any stable society or group share a coherent psychosphere
- Psychospheres simultaneously express, sustain and reproduce the group's psychology
- Coherent and stable societies share common stories on how things should be organized, what is valued, what is to be resisted, what the future should be and why
- When the dominant narratives change. social and psychological distress increases

**Psyches create psychospheres which nurture the psyches that created them**



# Psychological plasticity

- ▶ Different psychospheres produce diverse psychologies. These guide and frame
  - Brain structures and emotional responsiveness
  - Identity, both self structures and processes
  - Perception (what is seen)
  - Motivation (what we strive for)
  - Moral judgement
  - Meaning making (what we understand and value)
  - Cognitive and emotional strategies and rules for using accumulated information (what we consider wise).









# Diseases of the Digestive System

## The esophageal lining

The esophagus is the passage in the digestive tract between the pharynx and stomach. The esophageal tract consists of a thin layer of muscle, the esophageal wall, and an outer layer of all underlying connective tissues. A typical layer of esophageal cells is composed of the gastric esophageal junction. The esophageal junction consists of a highly muscularized layer of smooth muscle and is highly resistant to damage.

### Achalasia



### Hilal hernia



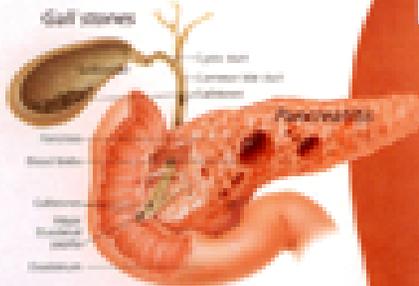
### GERD



### Esophagitis



### Barrett's



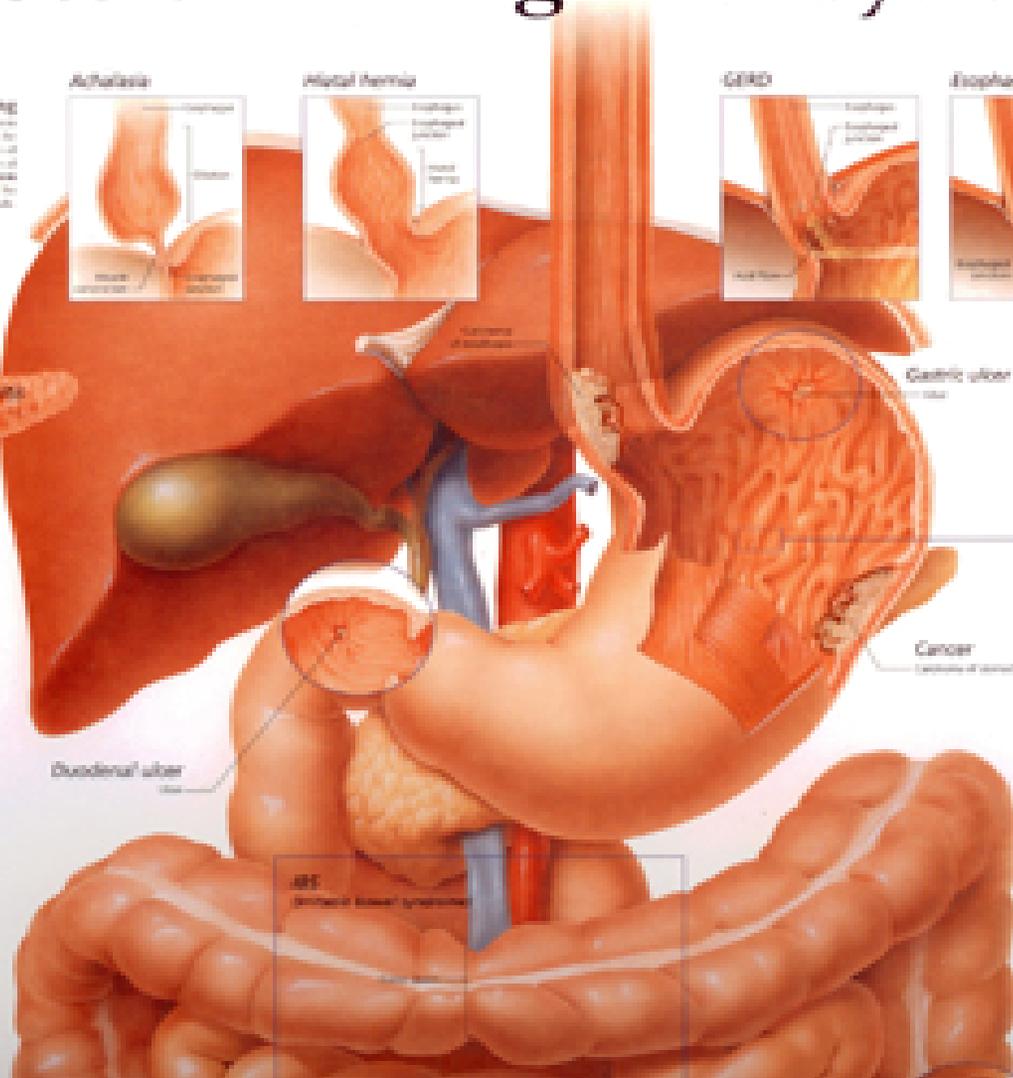
## Liver, pancreas & gallbladder

After eating, the stomach, liver, pancreas, and gallbladder work together to digest food. The liver produces bile, which is stored in the gallbladder. The pancreas produces enzymes that help digest food. The gallbladder stores bile until it is needed for digestion.

The digestive system is a complex system. It consists of the mouth, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, and rectum. Each part has a specific function in breaking down food and absorbing nutrients.

## Small intestine

The small intestine is the longest part of the digestive system. It is divided into three parts: the duodenum, jejunum, and ileum. The duodenum is the first part, where most digestion occurs. The jejunum is the middle part, and the ileum is the last part, where nutrients are absorbed.



## The stomach

The stomach is a muscular organ that stores and mixes food. It has a thick wall and is highly resistant to damage. The stomach lining is made of a special type of tissue that can regenerate itself.

## Types of Gastritis

Inflammation of the stomach wall



## Gastric ulcer

Ulcer

## Cancer

Cancer of the stomach

## Duodenal ulcer

Ulcer

## IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome)

## Dysbiosis (Inflammation of the gut)



IBS

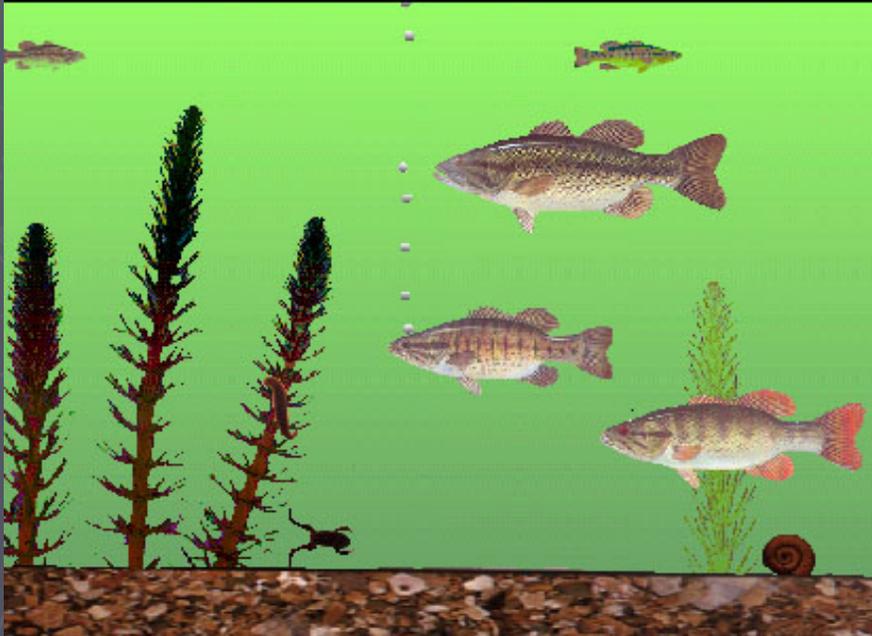


particreate



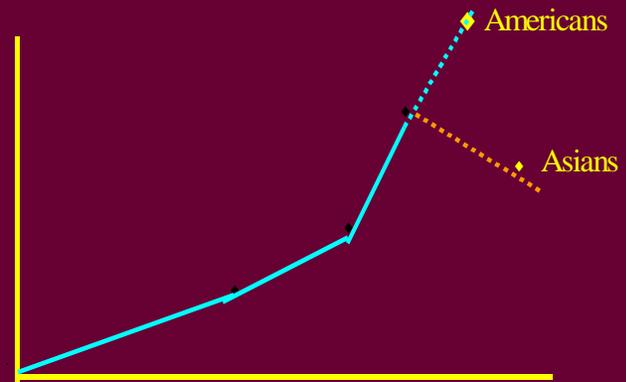
# Geography of psychology

**WESTERNERS AND EAST ASIANS DESCRIBE THIS SCENE IN DIFFERENT WAYS**  
(SOURCE: THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH)



## Expectations

Next Point?



# European vs Asian psychology

## Western Psychology

- ▶ Greek lineage
- ▶ Written language alphabetic
- ▶ Atomist--sees world of separate whole objects
- ▶ Individualist/egocentric
- ▶ Ethics & logic based in rules, aims at general principles
- ▶ Decisions based in quantification
- ▶ Reason favors abstraction, analysis and theory

## Eastern Psychology

- ▶ Tao/Confucian lineage
- ▶ Written language ideographic
- ▶ Holistic--sees part-whole relationships
- ▶ Relational/sociocentric
- ▶ Ethics based in cases and aims at harmony
- ▶ Decisions based in pattern recognition
- ▶ Reasonableness favored over reason. Synthesis and concrete cases favored







Source: The Guardian, summer 2007

Shouldn't there only be four?

# Pressure

Violence

Opportunity  
with risk

Teamwork

Biotechgenics

Litigation

Paradigm

Dominant  
IT

Changing rules

Techn

Capacity gap

Life - work  
imbalance

Downsizing

Health

Market  
uncertainty

Diversity

Overwork

Global

Relocation

Terrorism

Speeding  
up

Me

Pressure from  
incoherent  
external world

Racism



Uncertainty

Cultural  
collisions

From  
"compliant"  
"entrepre

Changing

Sex and gender

# The World is *Very* Confusing Place...



Courtesy of GBN

Cyberpunks

Biotech genetics

Pollution & shrinking natural resources

Population pressures

Violence

World internet

Market uncertainty

Tribal warfare

Terrorism

Gay rights

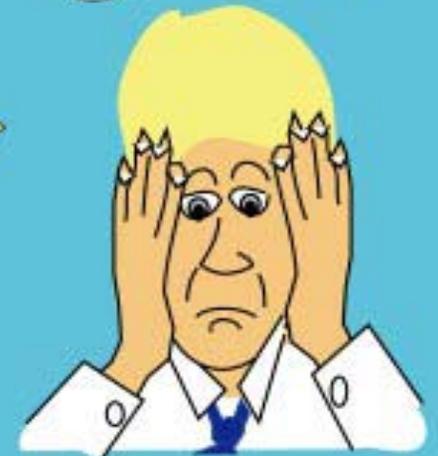
Info-revolution

Gender bending

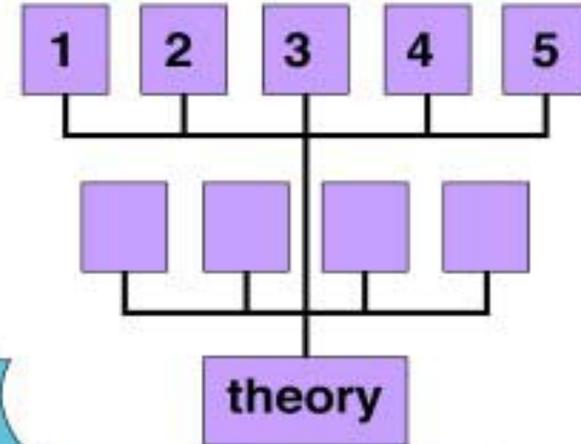
Virtual reality



can not be handled with

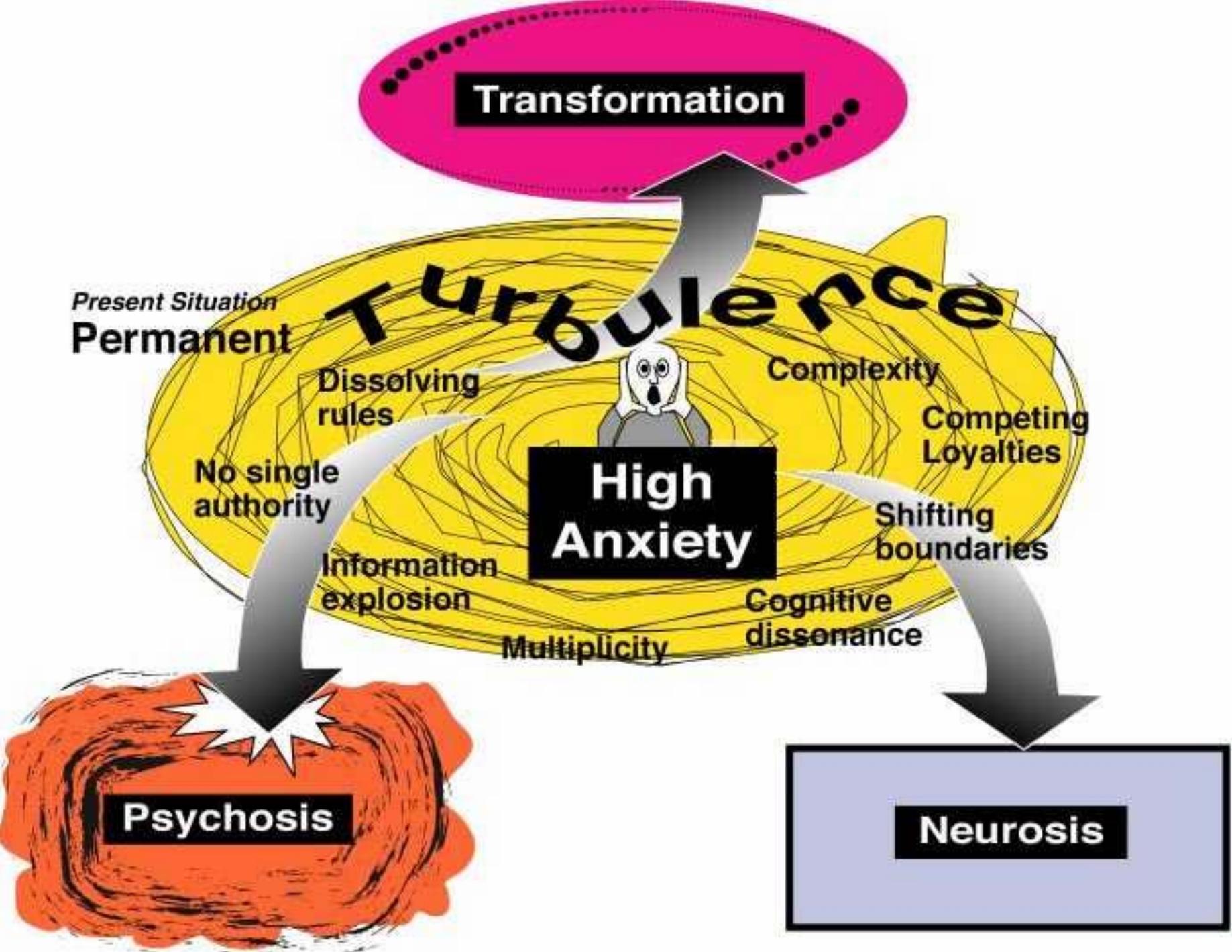


Truth, certainty, order  
predictability



# Psychospheric disruption

- ▶ All “received” psychologies are outdated-some more than others
- ▶ Long-held cultural and cognitive anchors are unraveling everywhere.
- ▶ No one is a “native” or ever will be: many are “refugees”
- ▶ “Culture shock” and cognitive dissonance is pandemic, bewilderment normal—and dangerous
- ▶ Psychological and cultural coherence based in single view of the world is now maladaptive and becoming more so
- ▶ Cognitive dissonance means diminished capacity to deal with looming problems especially in moral realms
- ▶ Mental health is deteriorating everywhere.
- ▶ Adds up to a global conceptual emergency

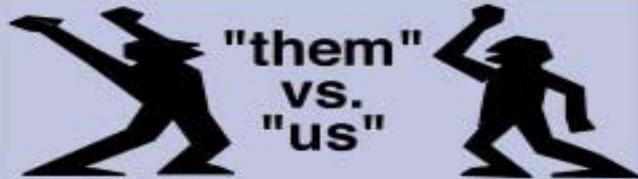


# Reaction and Denial

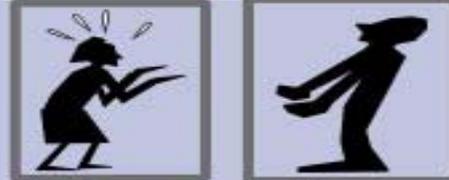


Repression

## DEFENSIVE COPING



Win-lose games



Competing stories

Boundaries tightly controlled



Simplification and rigidification

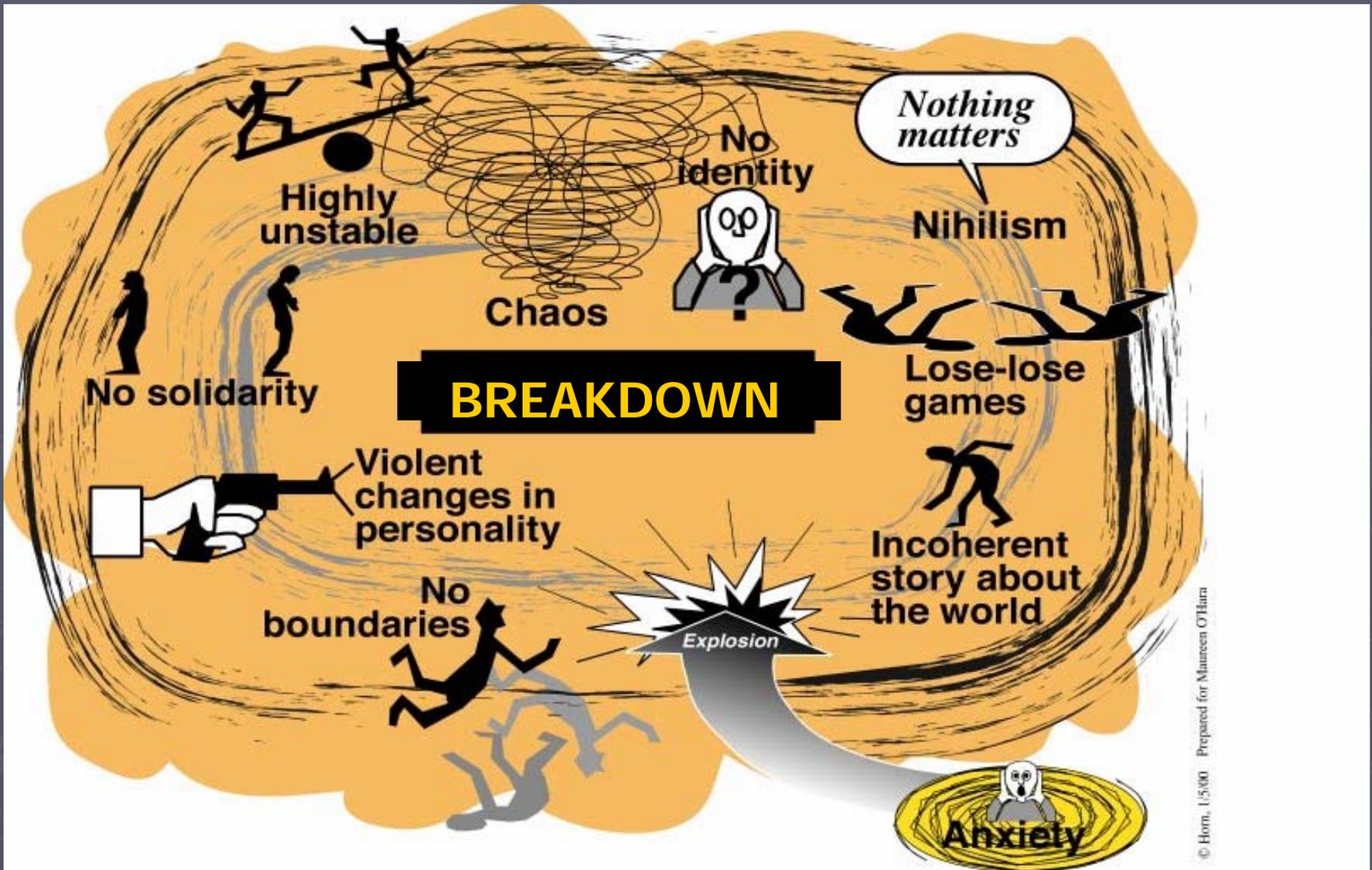


Fundamentalisms

Fragmentation



# Chaos



# Inflection point

- ▶ **Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better in the sphere of our being as humans, and the catastrophe toward which we are headed . . . will be unavoidable.**

Vaclav Havel 1992

# Signs of hope

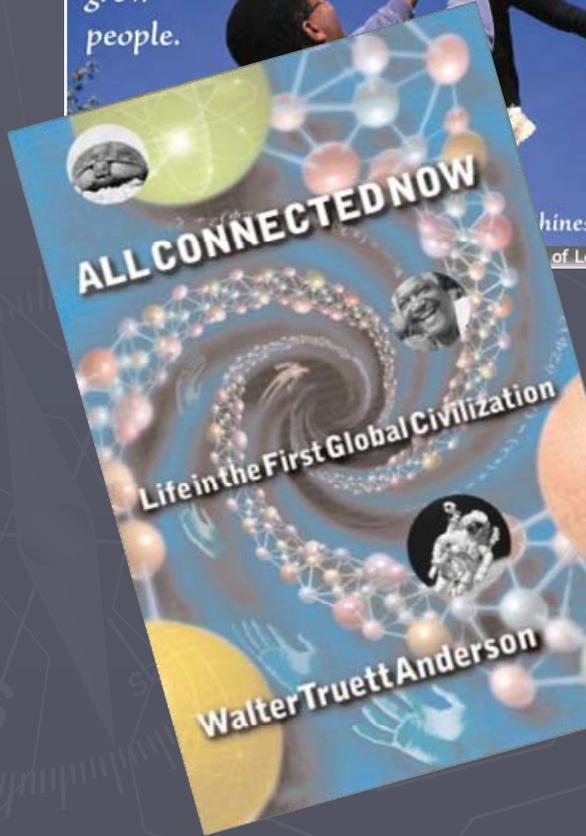
- ▶ There are signs that a new consciousness is indeed emerging.
- ▶ Socializing processes for new kinds of minds already exist and more can be developed.
- ▶ Innovation is currently going on in the informal spheres-on the street, spiritual practices, psychotherapy, workplace training and change management activities, videogames, but it is haphazard and may needs a guiding mythos
- ▶ Should we and can we design the psychosphere for a new consciousness ?
- ▶ If so, who is “we”?

# Change is already here

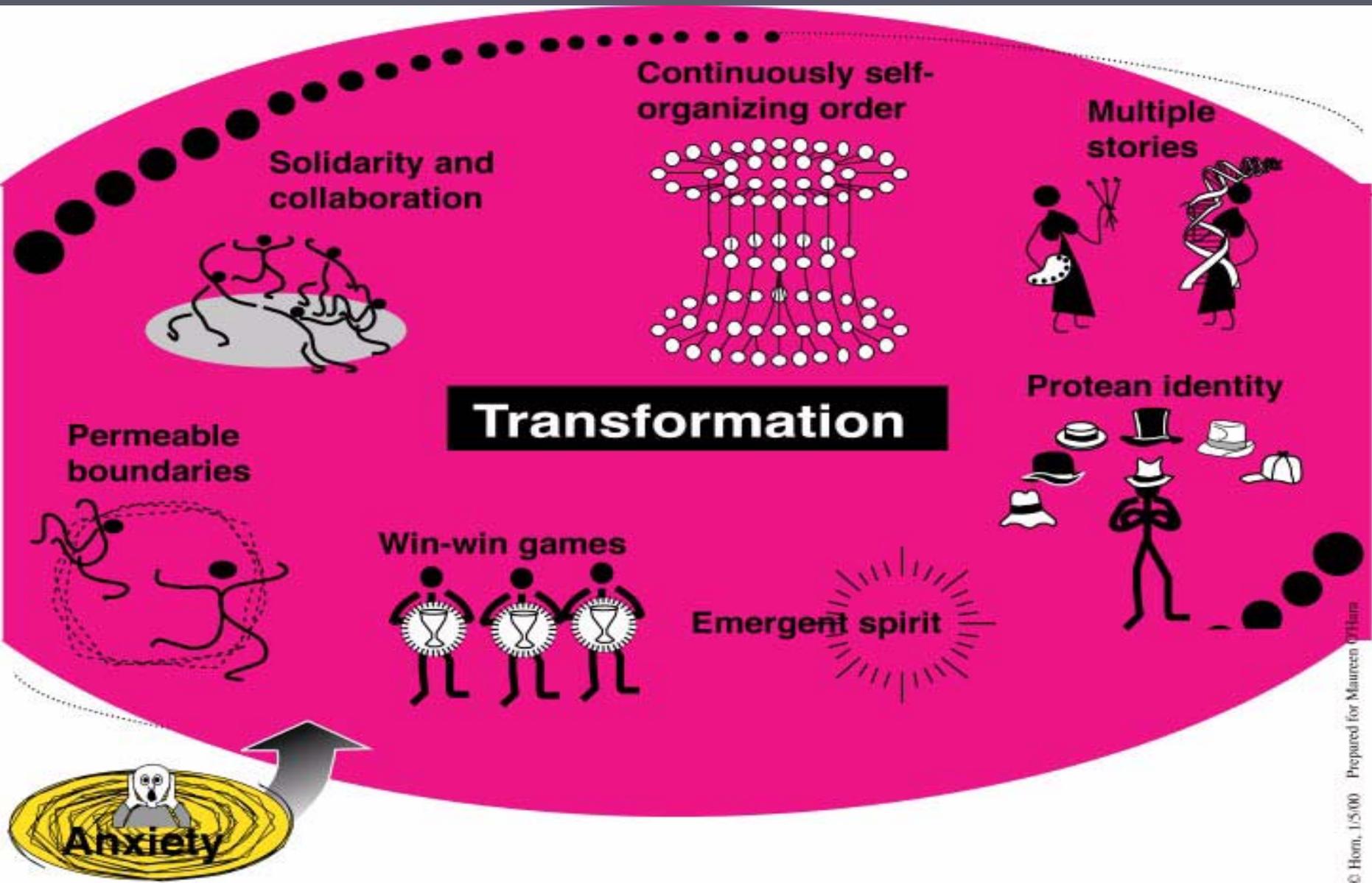
If you want 1 year of prosperity, grow grain.  
If you want 10 years of prosperity, grow trees.  
If you want 100 years of prosperity, grow people.



Chinese P  
of Leslie



# Emergent consciousness?



# Emerging “hybrid” psychology

- Rational
- Focused
- Exclusive-- differences
- Clear boundaries
- Objectivist
- Particular (sees the part)
- Individualistic or self-centered
- Analytic
- Certain enough to act
- Intuitive/extrarational
- Holistic and wide angle
- Inclusive-- similarities
- Fluid boundaries
- Relational
- Integral (sees patterns of the whole)
- Community/group centered
- Synthetic
- Uncertain enough to learn

# New schools for new minds

- ▶ New curriculum: content to process
- ▶ New pedagogy: experiential—whole person
- ▶ New modes of inquiry—qualitative

# New programme

- ▶ Content “open system” constantly updated in response to feedback from changing world
- ▶ Information literacy, visual communication, bricolage become key skills for everyone
- ▶ Globalized world requires globalized curriculum framed in new global story.
- ▶ Making room for love, emotions, spirituality, art, aesthetics
- ▶ Awareness of the short, medium and long term future
- ▶ Always scanning for what's next

# New organization for the academy

- ▶ Blurring of traditional disciplinary boundaries
- ▶ Collaborative research
- ▶ Emphasis on wisdom not expertise
- ▶ Emergence of new configurations  
“transdisciplinary” studies
- ▶ Diversification of faculty categories
- ▶ More nimble faculty involved in innovation

# Changed meaning of education

- ▶ In new economy what can be automated will be automated.
- ▶ From mastery of content to processor and generator of new knowledge
- ▶ Preparation for leadership at every level.
- ▶ Human beings will be needed not for how they can resemble machines, but for how they resemble full human beings--their capacity to care—in other words for their humanity
- ▶ We are talking about cognitive and emotional capacities-- in other words **consciousness**

**We are all immigrants**



***21st Century - this way***

**Hell, no**

**Let's go!**



