

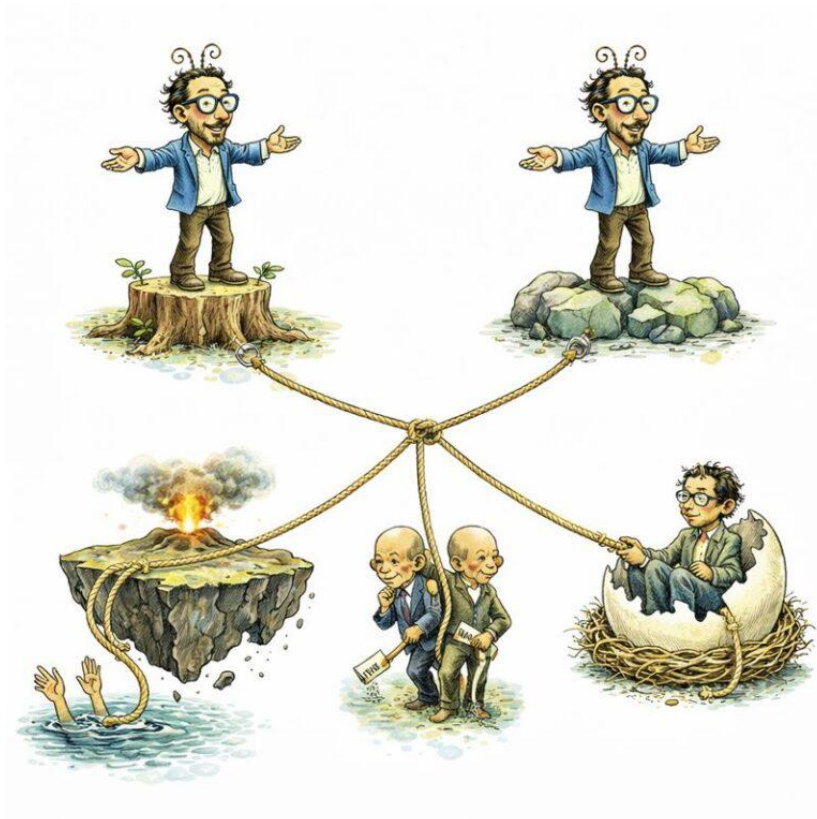
METAPHORS OF MOVEMENT

LEVEL 3

The Ground Work: Supports

TRAINING MANUAL

Level 3 explores how we support ourselves and how we interact within the metaphoric environment. It extends the generative change work introduced at Level 2 and develops a systemic approach in which the metaphoric structure is examined as a whole rather than as a collection of separate components.



Contents

Level 3 - The Supports

About Level 3

Systemic change and the structure of the course

Part 1 Context, Purpose, and the Metaphoric Environment

- 1 The Metaphoric Structure as a Whole
- 2 Embodied Cognition, Position, and Connection
- 3 Known, Unknown, Expectation, and Adaptation
- 4 Gaia - The Planet as Anthropomorphication
- 5 Supports and Foundations
- 6 Supporting Others and Being Supported
- 7 Containers and Growth
- 8 The Sphere of Experience
- 9 The Immersions and Other Lies

Part 2 Binds: To Whom and To What We Attach

- 10 Attachment Metaphor and Binds
- 11 Double Binds
- 12 Elevations, Obstructions, and Boundaries
- 13 Stage and Performance Metaphors
- 14 Stage, Persona, and Immersion
- 15 The Groundwork - Relationships Between Taxonomies
- 16 Archetypes and the Elements
- 17 Death and Immersion

About Level 3

Systemic change through the whole metaphoric structure

Level 3 explores how people support themselves and how they interact within the metaphoric environment. It builds on the generative change principles introduced at Level 2 by extending attention to position, support, foundation, movement, and the wider context in which metaphor occurs.

This systemic change can be brought about by examining the metaphoric structure as a whole rather than working with its components.

The sequence of topics is approximate. Level 3 is substantially shaped by the metaphors, questions, and experiences that emerge within the group, so the order in which the material is explored may vary.

Course Themes

Part 1	Part 2
Context, Purpose, and the Metaphoric Environment	Binds: To Whom and To What We Attach
Embodied cognition, support, position, and connection	Attachment symbolism, double binds, and containers
The Immersions and Other Lies	Fitting In, Putting on a Show, and Pleasing God
Crisis, boundaries, persona, transformation	Elevation, anxiety metaphors, stage/performance, archetypes

These themes overlap across the Level 3 material and should not be read as a fixed sequence.

PART 1

CONTEXT, PURPOSE, AND THE METAPHORIC ENVIRONMENT

1. The Metaphoric Structure as a Whole

At Level 3, attention expands beyond individual components of a metaphor to the organisation of the metaphoric environment as a whole. Position, support, foundation, movement, contact with the environment, and the relationships between different taxonomies become part of the same analysis.

The meaning of an individual feature cannot be established by taxonomy alone. Its significance depends on what it does within the landscape, how the person is positioned in relation to it, and what possibilities become available or unavailable because of that arrangement.

Metaphoric experience is **contextual** rather than **singular**. A person may have different metaphoric structures for work, relationships, identity, direction, or other areas of life. Some structures apply only while a particular position is occupied; others move with the person and may recur across contexts.

Position and Context

The position of the person is a central feature. The surface beneath the person provides the immediate context: road, stage, ground, pillar, ice, water, platform, or another form of support. The same object can have different implications depending on where it is located, what it rests upon, and what movement it allows.

Context-Specific and Portable Structures

A structure that depends on standing in a particular place may change when the person changes position. By contrast, something experienced as inside the body or physically attached to the body moves with the person. This difference helps distinguish highly contextual structures from structures that cut across several contexts.

Movement Through the Metaphoric Landscape

Movement is treated as meaningful information. Roads, paths, slopes, and journeys imply movement. Other contexts, such as a stage or an elevation, may restrict movement or organise behaviour within a fixed position. The possibility or impossibility of moving therefore forms part of the structure rather than being added later as an interpretation.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Outcomes

Movement through a metaphoric landscape also raises the question of what kind of outcome the person is moving towards. An outcome may be primarily intrinsic, primarily extrinsic, or contain elements of both.

An intrinsic outcome is organised largely within the person and does not depend upon external recognition or participation. An extrinsic outcome depends upon conditions outside the person and may require the involvement, response, recognition, or cooperation of other people.

The distinction is particularly relevant when examining direction, fulfilment, identity, and change. What the person is moving towards should not automatically be assumed to have the same form or value for everybody.

Taxonomies are descriptive rather than targets for elicitation.

Training exercises may deliberately focus on a particular taxonomy so that its qualities can be examined. Outside that teaching context, begin with the person's experience and allow the metaphoric structure to emerge from the response rather than attempting to elicit a predetermined category.

2. Embodied Cognition, Position, and Connection

Metaphoric experience is embodied. Posture, balance, muscular tension, movement, and physical contact with the environment participate in the organisation of the experience. When an idiom is physically embodied, these features can make visible aspects of the metaphoric structure that may not be apparent from the words alone.

Embodiment and Physicality

Embodiment does not necessarily appear as an obvious gesture or deliberate enactment. It may be expressed through posture, balance, small movements, muscular organisation, or other subtle physical adjustments.

When an expression is embodied accurately, the physical position may reproduce something of the experience associated with it. The purpose is therefore not to act out the words symbolically, but to examine the physical organisation implicit within the metaphor.

Walking on Eggshells and Walking a Tightrope

Expressions such as “**walking on eggshells**” and “**walking a tightrope**” contain an implied physical organisation. Embodying the expression can reveal the careful footing, restricted movement, balance, vigilance, and consequences associated with maintaining that position.

In one example, a woman experienced an infinite tightrope extending forwards and backwards. The structure permitted movement along only one narrow direction and required constant balance. When the height of the tightrope was examined, it was found to be only a short distance from the ground. The significant information was therefore not the tightrope alone, but the relationship between direction, balance, height, movement, and the surrounding environment.

The object itself should not be interpreted in isolation. What matters is the organisation of experience created by the object, the person's position, and the surrounding environment.

Out of Reach

When “out of reach” is embodied, people commonly extend the body, rise onto the toes, and reach with one or both hands while keeping the feet fixed. Taking a step may change the state completely. In some metaphors the object becomes reachable; in others it moves farther away as the person moves, revealing a different relationship between the person and the goal.

This also raises an important distinction: *does the environment remain fixed while the person moves within it, or does some part of the metaphoric structure move with the person?*

A metaphoric structure may remain fixed within physical space as the person changes position, or it may move and turn with the person. When the metaphor remains fixed in the surrounding space, it may be described as **geostatic**. This distinction cannot be assumed in advance and may vary with context.

Points of Contact

Contact with the metaphor is often through the feet, because the person is standing on or in something. Other contact points may also be present. An injury metaphor may involve a second point of contact at the chest or back. An internal burden may be contained within the body. An attachment may connect the person to another individual.

Points of contact indicate how the person is physically organised within the metaphoric structure and whether that structure is positional, internal, attached, or environmental.

Idioms, Language, and Common Knowledge

Embodied metaphors are often encountered through idiomatic language. Expressions such as “put my foot in it,” “take a step back,” “put my best foot forward,” or “out of reach” contain physical relationships that can be examined literally through position and movement.

Not every idiom necessarily represents an autogenic metaphor. An idiom may function simply as a conventional figure of speech, may reflect an autogenic experience, or may be projected rather than directly experienced. The distinction emerges through elicitation rather than from the expression alone.

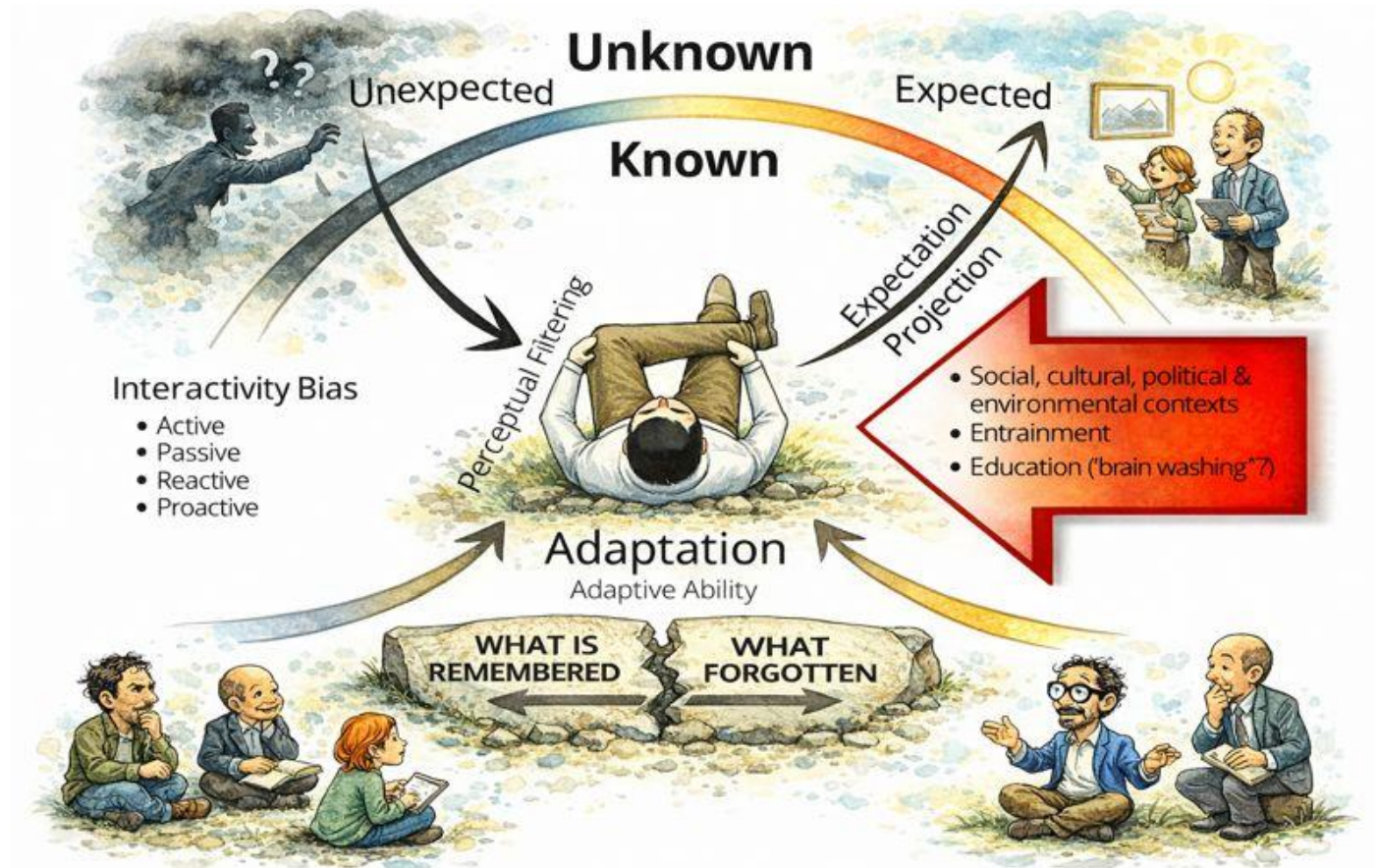
Idioms also belong to language and culture. Their use and meaning may vary across languages, geographical regions, and periods of time. An expression that functions as common knowledge in one group may require explanation in another. The language itself should therefore be understood within the context in which it is being used.

3. Known, Unknown, Expectation, and Adaptation

Experience can be understood as movement along a continuum from what is presently known into what is not yet known. The known includes what is immediate, familiar, recognised, or accessible within current experience. Beyond this lies what has not yet been encountered and can only be anticipated or predicted. There is no fixed boundary between the two; as experience moves further from the familiar, uncertainty increases.

Where the familiar begins to give way to the unknown will differ between individuals. The transition is therefore better understood as a continuum than as a fixed boundary that occurs at the same point for everyone.

Known is not the same as safe, and unknown is not the same as dangerous.



Known, unknown, expectation, perceptual filtering, and adaptation.

Expectation and Projection

Expectation and anticipation are projected into the unknown. They are shaped by previous experience and by what has been learned through family, culture, education, the social environment, and other people. They create a prediction of what is likely to happen, but that prediction is not the same as direct knowledge of future experience.

As events unfold, incoming experience may correspond with what was expected or arrive as unexpected. The difference between expectation and what actually occurs creates the conditions in which adaptation becomes necessary.

Movement and Time

Movement through metaphoric space also carries a temporal dimension. Moving forwards through the landscape represents progression into experience that has not yet occurred, while what has already been passed becomes part of what is known, remembered, or forgotten.

The relationship between movement and time should therefore be considered alongside the structure of the landscape. A metaphor that implies movement may organise experience differently from one in which the person remains still, waits, or is unable to move.

Perceptual Filtering

Both expectation and incoming experience are filtered. What is noticed, overlooked, emphasised, remembered, or forgotten influences how experience is organised. The way a person projects expectations into the future does not necessarily operate according to the same rules as the way they receive and interpret incoming information.

Resources, Expectation, and Experience

The person's response is influenced by the relationship between the resources available to them, what they expected to occur, and what actually occurs. When experience differs significantly from expectation, existing resources may no longer be sufficient and adaptation becomes necessary.

Adaptation

Adaptation is the capacity to respond to changes in experience and to the difference between what was expected and what actually occurs. This may involve changing behaviour, strategy, expectation, or position as new information becomes available.

The ability to change position when an existing position is no longer effective is one expression of adaptability. At the opposite extreme, a person may change position so frequently that others cannot establish where they stand.

Interactivity and Influencing Factors

Interactivity refers to the way a person engages with and responds to the world around them. It is described through four broad orientations: active, passive, reactive, and proactive. These terms describe different patterns of engagement with the environment rather than fixed personality types. Their relevance lies in how the person typically interacts with events, responds to change, and adjusts when experience differs from expectation.

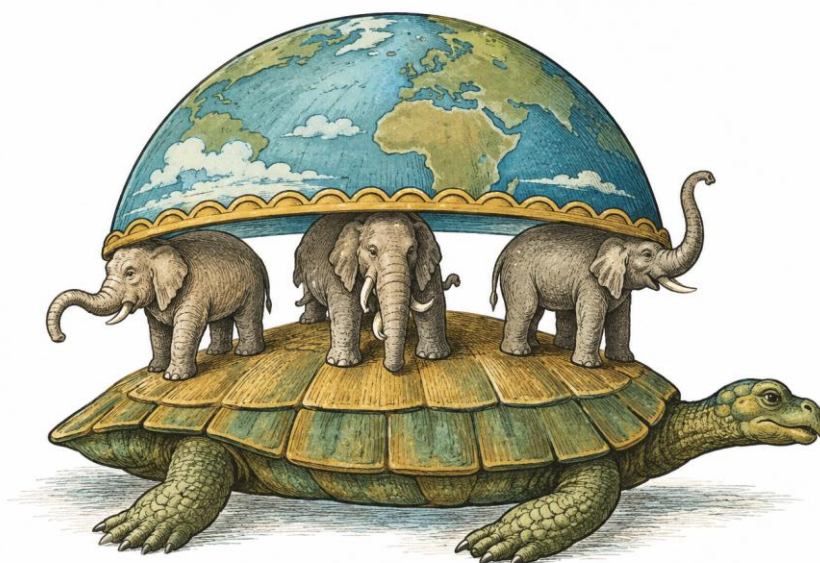
Interactivity also operates within shared physical, social, cultural, emotional, psychological, and political spaces. Other people may have different expectations, perceptual filters, metaphor

structures, and ways of interacting, so these patterns may align or conflict within the same environment. The person's metaphorical organisation therefore operates within environments also occupied by other people whose expectations and organising structures may be different.

Remembered and Forgotten

As experience passes, some information is remembered and some is forgotten. Memory is not necessarily a complete or neutral record of what occurred; it is also shaped by perception and filtering. What is retained contributes to later expectations and influences how new experience is interpreted.

4. Gaia - The Planet as Anthropomorphification



Gaia is the personification of the Earth in Greek mythology and one of the primordial deities. She is described as the great mother of all: a primal Mother Goddess associated with the Earth and the generation of the wider cosmos. In the mythology, the heavenly gods, Titans, and Giants arise through her union with Uranus, the sky, while the sea-gods arise through her union with Pontus, the sea. Her Roman equivalent is Terra.

The name was later revived by James Lovelock in his 1979 book *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*, with the **Gaia hypothesis** also associated with the work of Lynn Margulis. The hypothesis proposes that living organisms and inorganic material form parts of a dynamic system that shapes the Earth's biosphere and contributes to maintaining conditions suitable for life. In some interpretations of Gaia theory, the Earth is described in organism-like terms, with self-regulating functions.

Relevance to the Metaphoric Environment

Gaia introduces a shift from examining isolated objects to considering the environment itself as a meaningful whole. A metaphoric landscape may contain individual objects, people, supports, obstacles, boundaries, and routes, but these exist within a wider environment whose qualities also form part of the structure.

The environment may be natural or constructed, stable or unstable, supportive or hostile, depleted or abundant, organised or chaotic, open or enclosed, familiar or unknown. The meaning of an individual feature therefore depends partly upon the wider environment in which it occurs.

Some metaphorical taxonomies appear as individual components within a landscape, while others may organise the landscape itself. An ocean, desert, container, or stage-like environment may therefore define the conditions of the whole experience rather than simply appear as one object among many.

This broader systemic perspective becomes particularly important when examining containers, immersions, stages, and the sphere of experience, where much of the structural information is carried by the wider environment rather than by any single component.

Contexts Within Contexts

Every metaphoric environment exists within a wider context. A family or container, for example, exists within a broader social and cultural environment, and that environment is itself part of still larger contexts.

Where the boundary is drawn depends upon what level of experience is being examined. Looking beyond the immediate metaphor may reveal wider influences acting upon the person or upon the environment in which the metaphor occurs.

WHAT TO CONSIDER

- What kind of environment contains the person?
- Is it natural or constructed?
- Does it appear stable, hostile, protective, depleted, abundant, organised, chaotic or alive?
- What changes if the person changes position within it?

5. Supports and Foundations

A support is the structure that holds the person in the position or context they occupy. The support and the foundation are not necessarily the same thing. A support may itself depend upon another structure beneath it, so the basis upon which the support rests also forms part of the metaphor.

A support may provide immediate stability, protection, elevation, or a context for behaviour while itself resting on an unstable foundation. A platform over a swamp, for example, may adequately support the person locally while the structure beneath it remains insecure. The durability, ownership, maintenance, availability, and basis of the support may therefore all carry relevant information.

A support asks what is holding the person in their present position; the foundation asks what that support itself depends upon.

Standing and Position

Support also raises questions about the position the person occupies and what the position represents.



WHERE DO YOU STAND?

Current position.



WHAT DO YOU STAND FOR?

Values, principles, or position.



WHO DO YOU STAND FOR?

Allegiance, support, or representation.



WHO OR WHAT DON'T YOU STAND FOR?

Rejection, opposition, or limits.



HOW DO YOU STAND?

The manner or quality of the position.



ARE YOU IN GOOD STANDING?

Status, acceptance, or legitimacy.

Considerations for Support

Feature	Information examined in the metaphor
Foundation	– Is the support itself a foundation, or does it require another foundation? – If so, what supports it? – Does the position ultimately have a secure basis, or is it without foundation?

Feature	Information examined in the metaphor
Behavioural context	– Does the support provide a context for behaviour, or does it remove the person from one? – What behaviours or possibilities does the support permit or restrict?
Construction	– Is it natural or man-made? – What are the implications of its material and construction?
Ownership	– Who owns it? – Who provided it? – Is the position dependent on somebody else?
Maintenance	– Who maintains the support? – What is required for it to remain available and functional?
Cost	– Is there a cost for occupying or using the support?
Durability	– Is it built to last? – Will it stand the test of time?
Shared use	– Is the support shared with other people? – Is access limited, and can the resource become depleted? – Does its use require cooperation with others, or is there competition for access? – What interests or claims do other people have in the support?
Security	– Can the support be damaged through use or misuse, either by the person or by others? – Can it be stolen, removed, shared, or safeguarded?
Necessity	– Is the support actually necessary? – Was it requested or desired, or is it being relied upon because it was already available or previously offered?
Load	– Is the support sufficient for the load placed upon it?

Behavioural Context

Different supports imply different behavioural possibilities. A stage provides a context for performance. A road provides a context for directional movement. A pillar elevates the person but may narrow behavioural scope. A pedestal may create a position supplied and maintained by others rather than owned by the person who occupies it.

Given, Inherited, and Assumed Positions

A support may represent a position that the person created for themselves, but it may also be something they were given, inherited, or placed upon by other people. The fact that a position is available does not mean that it was chosen or that it is appropriate for the person who occupies it.

Consider whether the support is actually fit for purpose. A person may be attempting to organise their life from a position that was provided for them, expected of them, or simply assumed, while the structure itself is unsuitable for what they require.

Idioms Associated with Support

- a pillar of strength
- moral support
- a tower of strength
- back me up
- someone to lean on
- supporting you through thick and thin
- lift or raise someone up
- carry someone through life
- hold someone in high regard
- everything is on top of me
- a lot to carry
- provide the support for my family
- need a lot of support
- a burden on the system
- a system of support
- I'm a lifelong supporter
- I expect you to support me

6. Supporting Others and Being Supported

Support is relational as well as structural. When another person is involved, attention extends beyond the support itself to the relationship between the people, their respective positions, and the way the support connects them within the metaphoric environment.

The direction of support is also important. Supporting another person creates a different arrangement from being supported by them. In either case, the practitioner examines how the relationship is organised, what each person is relying upon, and what consequences arise from that arrangement.

Supporting Other People

1. **Do other people lean on the person for support?** How do they connect with the person's body in the metaphor? Is counterbalancing required?

2. **Does supporting the other person affect the supporter's own position or stability?** Is there a possibility of being pulled down with them?
3. **Was the support offered, requested, or simply assumed by the other person?**
4. **Does the support enable the other person to change position, or does it contribute to keeping them where they are?** Does the arrangement create dependency or obligation?
5. **How long can the support continue?** Is there an understood limit or duration? What happens if no limit is defined and the support continues indefinitely?
6. **Does the other person function as a burden or responsibility that cannot be put down?** If so, where could that burden be placed within the metaphoric environment? Are the surrounding environmental conditions suitable for it?
7. **Is the support sufficient for the load placed upon it?**

External Support Within the Metaphor

A support within the metaphoric landscape may represent another person, but it may also represent an external structure, expectation, opportunity, cultural influence, or way of organising experience that has been assimilated into the person's own metaphoric world.

A road, building, platform, tree, or other apparent object should therefore not automatically be treated as merely an object. Its function may derive from relationships, social structures, culture, or ideas that originated outside the person but now form part of how their experience is organised.

Being Supported by Other People

1. **Is the support necessary?** If so, what would need to happen for it to become unnecessary?
2. **Was more suitable support available but declined?** Has more suitable support since been offered?
3. **Was the support offered, requested or simply assumed?**

Situational-Relational Positioning

In all instances, consider the situational-relational positioning of the people involved. Their relative positions, the way they are connected, and the implications of that arrangement form part of the metaphoric information.

These questions are points for consideration rather than a fixed sequence; their wording and relevance will depend upon the structure and context of the particular metaphor.

7. Containers and Growth

Container metaphors represent the context or structure within which the person is positioned. They may relate to family, social institutions, cultural structures, or other organised systems that define what is inside and outside, what is permitted, and what is expected. In many cases, the family provides the earliest container through which wider social and cultural expectations are communicated.

When a container relates to family, its qualities represent the person's experience of that family and should not be assumed to describe the experience of other family members in the same way.

Protection, Restriction, and Filtering

A container may be protective as well as restrictive. It may provide enclosure, safety, familiarity, or separation from what lies outside while simultaneously limiting movement, growth, visibility, or access to the wider environment.

The container may also function as a filter through which the person experiences the world. What can be seen, reached, understood, or encountered from inside the container may therefore differ from what exists outside it.

Qualities of the Container

The container may be natural or constructed, open or closed, rigid or flexible, fragile or durable. The material, size, dimensions, openings, internal space, and relationships to the outside environment all contribute information. Where the outside can be perceived or accessed, its qualities also form part of the wider structure.

Partial and Total Containers

A container does not have to enclose the person completely. Some containers are total, while others restrict only part of the person or only certain possibilities for movement. The location and extent of the restriction therefore matter.

For example, a restriction around the legs creates different possibilities from a restriction around the hands. Establish what part of the person is contained or restricted, what movement remains possible, and what the restriction prevents.

Growing Within the Container

Growth affects both the person and the container. Some containers accommodate growth, while others restrict it, resist it, or are altered or broken by it. An open container may allow growth beyond its original limits, whereas a closed container may increasingly constrain the person as they develop.

The size and material of the container also affect the experience of growing within it. A large container may provide considerable internal freedom before its limits are reached. A small container may restrict growth much earlier. A rigid material may require greater effort to overcome, while a fragile material may introduce the possibility of damage or hurt as growth occurs.

Container Considerations

- What is the container made of?
- Is it naturally occurring or constructed?
- Is it open or closed?
- How much internal space is available, and how much freedom of movement does that provide?
- What is outside the container?
- Can the outside environment be seen, reached, or accessed?
- What happens to the person as growth occurs?
- What happens to the container as the person grows?
- Does growth require effort, create pressure, or risk damage?
- Is there an exit, and what are its qualities?
- Is the person completely enclosed, or is the container partial?

Container as Context

A container is more than a physical enclosure within the metaphor. It can function as a context, framing, or meta-structure around the person. Social and cultural institutions can continue to exist independently of the individuals who occupy them, creating organised structures into which people enter, grow, and from which they may later move beyond.

This makes container metaphor especially useful for examining the relationship between the individual and the social structures within which their experience has developed.

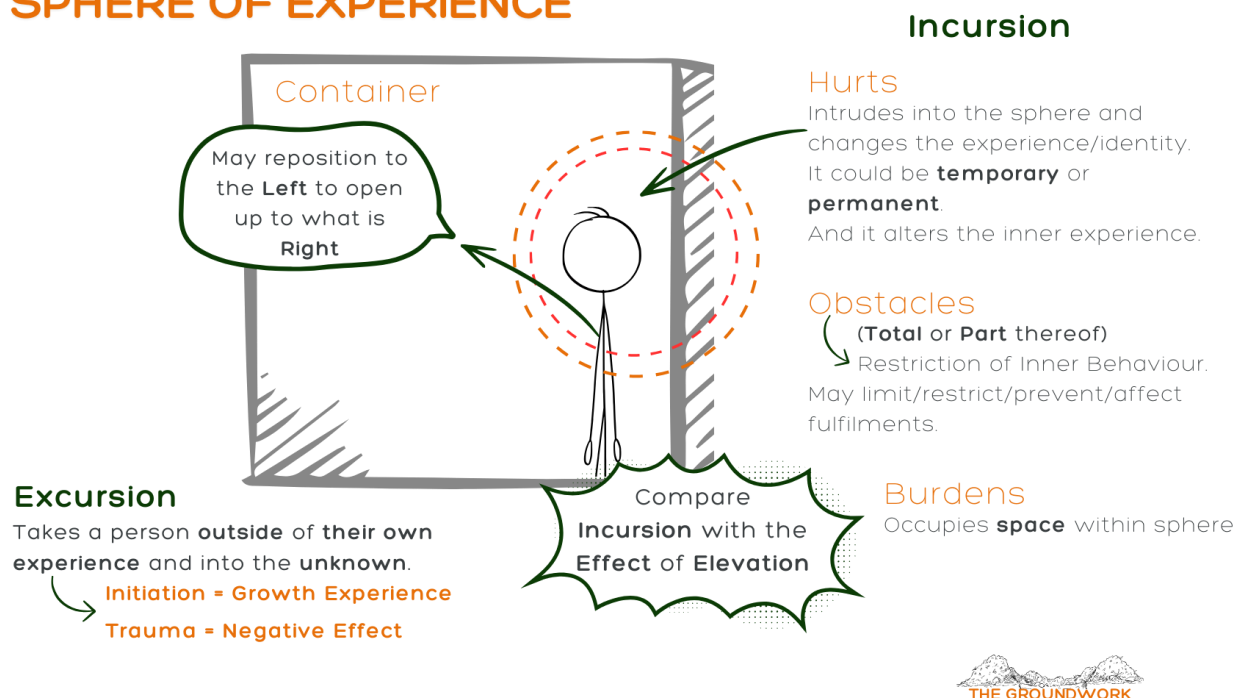
8. The Sphere of Experience

The Sphere of Experience describes the perimeter of the person's immediate experience and the relationship between the person and the surrounding environment. It includes what is presently experienced as part of the person's world and raises questions about where the boundary of self is located and how far experience may extend beyond the body.

The boundary is not necessarily limited to the physical body. Objects, relationships, or environments may become experienced as extensions of the person. A familiar vehicle, for example, may become sufficiently integrated into experience that changes within it are noticed almost as though they were changes within the self.

The perimeter of the Sphere of Experience is therefore also related to identity. What is experienced as part of "me" or "mine" may extend beyond the physical body into objects, relationships, places, or other parts of the surrounding environment. The extent of this sphere may differ between people and between contexts.

SPHERE OF EXPERIENCE



Sphere of Experience: container, incursion, excursion, hurts, obstacles, burdens, and elevation.

Incursion

Incursion occurs when something enters the person's sphere of experience. The source may be another person, the physical environment, or a wider system. What enters may be expected or unexpected, wanted or unwanted, and may alter the person's experience temporarily or more persistently.

An incursion is experienced from the person's own organisation of events. The fact that something is experienced as an injury, intrusion, or hurt does not necessarily mean that another person intended or experienced the interaction in the same way.

Excursion

Excursion describes movement out from the person's current sphere or context and into experience that lies beyond it. Leaving an established container may create access to possibilities, relationships, and forms of fulfilment that were not available within the previous structure.

Excursion may also be associated with initiation and growth experience, but movement beyond the familiar can carry risk. When the excursion is traumatic, the experience may have negative effects and may alter how the person subsequently relates to the wider environment.

Structures Within the Sphere

Different metaphorical structures may occupy or affect the sphere in different ways. A burden occupies experiential space and may have to be carried. An obstacle restricts movement or behaviour and may interfere with fulfilment. A container establishes a wider context around the person, while elevation changes the position from which the person relates to that context.

The Sphere and the Container

The Sphere of Experience and the container are not necessarily the same size. A person's immediate experience may fit comfortably within the existing container, or it may extend beyond what the container provides. When the sphere extends beyond the limits of the family or social structure, the person may begin to experience the container as insufficient and seek movement beyond it.

Leaving a Container

When the sphere of experience extends beyond a container, the person may experience possibilities that are not available within the existing social structure. Leaving or growing out of the container then introduces questions of where the person stands, what they stand for, and what position they occupy outside the previous context.

Outside the previous container, the person may need to establish a position for themselves rather than simply occupy the position provided by the earlier structure. Questions of where they stand, what they stand for, how they stand, and where they go become part of organising experience outside the previous context. Social, cultural, familial, or educational influences may continue to exert pressure concerning where the person is expected to stand.

Considerations for the Sphere of Experience

- What is presently inside the person's sphere of experience?
- Where does the person experience its boundary?
- What is entering the sphere?
- What is leaving or moving beyond it?
- Does the sphere fit within the existing container, or extend beyond it?
- What becomes possible or unavailable when the person moves beyond the current context?

9. The Immersions and Other Lies

Immersion metaphors are associated with crisis situations in which the person experiences little or no control or influence over what is happening. The experience commonly combines high levels of stress with a sense of helplessness. Examples may include divorce, redundancy, prosecution, persecution, or other circumstances in which events appear to be operating beyond the person's immediate control.

Within an immersion, coping may become organised around enduring the situation rather than changing it. The person may wait for rescue, detach from what is occurring, or maintain that everything is “*fine*” while the metaphor itself indicates significant stress.

Wet and Dry Immersion

Type	Typical form	Structural feature
Wet Immersion	Ocean or large body of water	The person is immersed in an environment without an immediate means of survival, escape, or useful navigation.
Dry Immersion	Desert or desert-like environment	The person is surrounded by conditions in which no immediately available means of survival, escape, or useful navigation is apparent.

The term “**immersion**” therefore refers to being completely immersed in the conditions of the environment rather than to water itself. A **dry immersion** may be **just as complete** as a **wet one**.

Different Routes into Immersion

Wet immersion is associated primarily with overwhelm arising from circumstances experienced as externally mediated, where the person has little or no capacity to influence the outcome.

Dry immersion is associated with circumstances in which the person's own actions, habits, choices, or recurring patterns have contributed to the situation, but by the time the immersion is established the person likewise experiences little or no control over the outcome.

Boundaried and Unboundaried

Form	Description
Boundaried	– The environment has an identifiable limit, such as a swimming pool, pond, or lake. – The presence of a boundary does not by itself determine whether the structure functions as an immersion. – Consider whether escape, survival, or movement beyond the situation remains realistically available.
Unboundaried	– The environment appears to extend indefinitely in all directions, such as open ocean, desert, ice, concrete, or another uniform landscape. – Where the person cannot realistically survive, adapt, navigate, or escape, the structure has the defining qualities of an immersion.

What Makes an Immersion?

Being surrounded by an environment does not by itself make the structure an immersion. The important question is what possibilities remain available to the person within that environment.

A person on a functioning boat in the middle of an ocean, for example, may still have shelter, survival, movement, and navigation available. This differs structurally from being unsupported in open water with no apparent means of survival or escape. Likewise, being situated within a difficult but localised environment is different from an environment that appears to remain the same in every available direction.

Immersion is defined by the person's relationship to the environment and the possibilities available within it, not simply by the appearance of the landscape.

The Person as an Anomaly in the Environment

A defining feature of immersion is that the person is not adequately supported by the environment in which they find themselves. The person is the anomaly within the environment rather than the environment itself being anomalous.

Where survival, adaptation, or escape is realistically available, the structure may instead contain elements of a container, obstacle, or another taxonomy. In a more complete immersion, adaptation to the environment is no longer sufficient or feasible. The environment will change the person unless a more fundamental change in position or circumstance occurs.

How Did the Person Get There?

An important question is how the person arrived in the immersed position. What sequence of events made it possible for them to enter the situation without recognising where it was leading until the crisis had already developed?

This brings the earlier material on expectation, perception, and adaptation back into the analysis. Consider what the person expected to happen, what was noticed or overlooked as the situation developed, and whether the same behavioural patterns occur across different areas of the person's life.

Rescue and Repetition

Consider what support or rescue the person expects to receive. Has the same form of support been expected in previous situations, and how often has this occurred? Repeated expectations of the same support may indicate a recurring pattern that extends beyond the immediate immersion.

Considerations for Immersion

- What conditions define the immersion?
- Is it wet or dry?
- Is it boundaried or unboundaried?
- What possibilities for movement, navigation, survival, or exit are available?
- How did the person arrive in this position without recognising it earlier?
- Does a similar pattern occur across other contexts?
- What support or rescue does the person expect?
- Has the same support been expected previously?
- Is the person an anomaly within the environment, and is adaptation realistically possible?

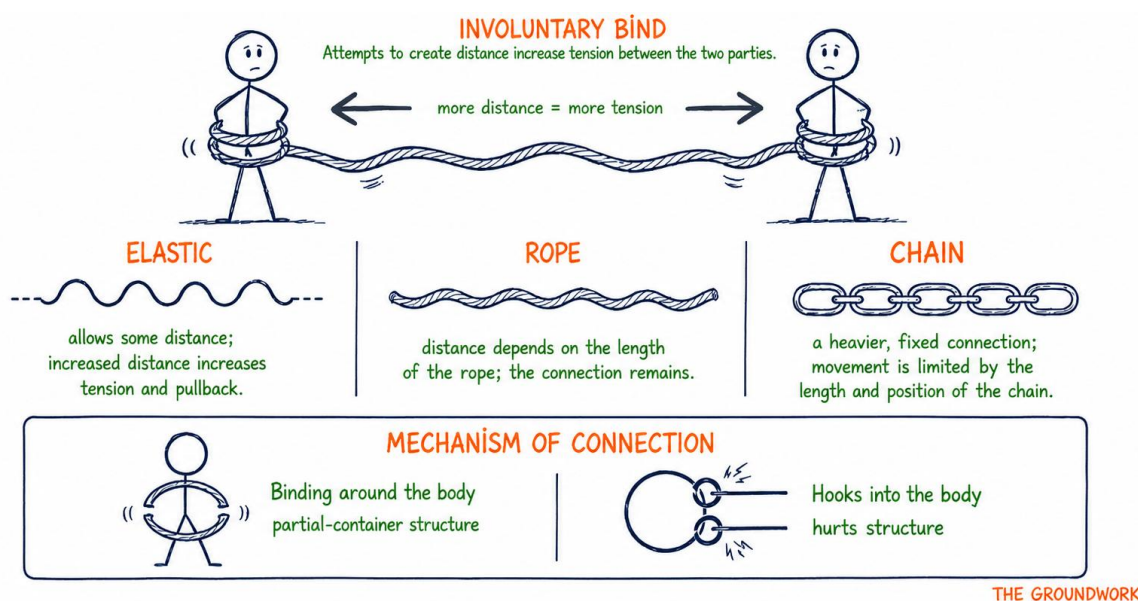
PART 2

BINDS: TO WHOM AND TO WHAT WE ATTACH

10. Attachment Metaphor and Binds

Attachment metaphors represent relationships through physical connection or binding between people. The attachment may restrict movement, determine the distance that can exist between the parties, or create tension when one person attempts to move away.

The main features to examine are the material of the attachment, the distance between the people, the tension within the attachment, and the mechanism by which each person is connected.



Binds and attachment: material, distance, tension, and mechanism of connection.

Material

Attachment commonly appears as elastic, rope, or chain, although other materials may occur. The material is not simply a descriptive detail; its physical properties determine what movement and distance are possible within the relationship.

Material	Structural quality
Elastic	Allows some distance, but tension increases as the people move apart and creates a pull back toward the relationship.
Rope	Allows distance only within the available length and does not stretch in the same way as elastic.
Chain	Similarly limits distance according to its length and the arrangement of the connection.

Distance and Tension

In an involuntary bind, attempts to create personal space may increase tension between the people. The farther one person attempts to move away, the greater the tension may become, particularly where the attachment is elastic.

The available distance is therefore part of the structure. Consider how far apart the people can move, what happens as the distance changes, and whether movement away produces tension, resistance, or a pull back toward the previous position.

Mechanism of Connection

Examine how the attachment connects to each person. The mechanism may differ at either end of the attachment and may reveal relationships with other metaphorical taxonomies.

Three mechanisms are especially relevant:

- **Binding around the body** — may function as a **partial container**.
- **Hooks or something entering the body** — introduces a **Hurts** structure.
- **The other person holding on** — the attachment is maintained through the other person physically holding the connection.

The mechanism should be examined at **both ends**. How the person is attached may not be the same as how the other party is attached.

Voluntary and Involuntary Control

The mechanism at each end may also reveal who has voluntary control over the attachment. One person may be physically bound, hooked, or otherwise unable to release the connection, while the other person simply holds the attachment and can let go.

This creates an important asymmetry within the relationship. Examine who can release, loosen, maintain, or alter the connection and who has little or no choice over it.

The Other End May Be Unattached

An attachment does not necessarily connect two people. One end may be attached to the person while the other end is loose, trailing, or attached to something in the environment. Establish what, if anything, exists at the other end rather than assuming that another person must be present.

A loose or trailing attachment creates a different structure from a mutual connection and should be explored according to what the person experiences it as doing.

Context of the Attachment

The attachment also exists within a wider metaphoric context. Examine what the person is standing on and what surrounds them, as these features establish the context in which the attachment operates.

One Person's Metaphor

An attachment metaphor represents the person's organisation and experience of the relationship. It should not be assumed that the other person experiences or represents the same relationship in the same way.

If the other person were to describe the relationship metaphorically, their structure might be completely different. The attachment therefore provides information about the experience of the person reporting it, not direct evidence of the other person's experience, intention, or position.

From Attachment to Double Bind

An attachment may represent more than physical connection between two people. Where the relationship contains conflicting demands and the person cannot create sufficient distance or leave the relationship, the attachment may also represent the structure of a double bind.

A double bind is not simply a difficult choice or two contradictory instructions. The contradiction occurs within a relationship in which the demands cannot be satisfactorily resolved and escape from the situation is restricted. Repeated exposure can make the structure increasingly familiar and expected.

Considerations for Attachment Metaphors

- What is the attachment made of?
- What is the distance between the people?
- What happens to the tension when that distance changes?
- How is the attachment connected to each person?
- What is the mechanism of attachment — binding around the body, hooks or something entering the body, or somebody holding on?
- Who, if anyone, has voluntary control over the attachment?
- What, if anything, is at the other end?
- What is the person standing on, and what is the surrounding context?

11. Double Binds

The concept of the double bind was developed by Gregory Bateson and his colleagues in their work on communication and relationships. A double bind occurs when conflicting demands operate within a relationship in such a way that responding to one demand conflicts with another, while the person is also unable to resolve, challenge, or escape the situation.

A double bind is therefore not simply a contradiction or a difficult choice. The relationship, the conflicting injunctions, the restriction on escape, and the repetition of the pattern are all important parts of the structure.

Structure of a Double Bind

1. A Relationship Containing Unequal Positions

A double bind occurs within a relationship involving at least two people. The relationship contains an unequal positioning in which one person has greater influence over the conditions of the interaction while the other is required to respond within them.

The significance lies not simply in disagreement between two people, but in the fact that the conflicting demands operate within an established relational structure.

2. A Primary Negative Injunction is imposed.

The first injunction establishes a rule, prohibition, or demand concerning what the person must or must not do. There is an implied or explicit consequence for failing to comply.

The injunction therefore creates one of the conditions under which the relationship operates and establishes what is expected of the person.

3. A secondary Injunction That Conflicts With the First

A second rule or demand conflicts with the first at a different or more abstract level. It does not necessarily have to be stated directly or verbally. Responding appropriately to one requirement therefore creates a violation of the other.

The person is placed in a position in which there is no straightforward response that satisfies both demands. The problem is not simply that two rules exist, but that the rules require incompatible responses.

For example, a person may be told not to interrupt someone while simultaneously being expected to deliver urgent information. Interrupting violates one instruction; failing to deliver the information violates the other.

4. A Tertiary Injunction Prevents Escape

Conflicting demands alone do not necessarily create a complete double bind. The person must also be prevented, practically or relationally, from simply leaving the situation or stepping outside the relationship in which the contradiction operates.

This creates a further condition around the first two injunctions: the person must remain within the relational field while being unable to satisfy its conflicting requirements.

The restriction on escape is what turns conflicting demands into a bind.

5. With Repetition, the Structure Becomes Expected.

When the same relational pattern occurs repeatedly, the person becomes increasingly familiar with it. The double bind is no longer experienced only as an isolated contradiction; it becomes part of what the person expects the relationship to be like.

Over time, the person may begin to anticipate the bind and organise their responses around it before the entire sequence of conflicting injunctions has been explicitly repeated.

Metacommunication

An important feature of the double bind is that the person cannot resolve the contradiction simply by commenting upon it. They may be unable to question the messages, clarify which level of communication should take priority, or point out that the demands conflict.

The inability to step outside the communication and discuss the contradiction helps maintain the bind.

Conflict of Rules and Double Bind

Two conflicting rules do not automatically constitute a double bind. If the person can refuse participation, step outside the situation, or leave the relational field, the structure remains a conflict of rules.

A double bind develops when the conflicting injunctions operate within a relationship in which the person is also restricted from escaping or resolving the contradiction.

12. Elevations, Obstructions, and Boundaries

Elevation, obstruction, and boundary structures all affect the person's position and movement within the metaphoric landscape, but they do so in different ways. An **elevation** changes the level from which the person relates to the environment, an **obstruction** interferes with movement, and a **boundary** marks a transition between one context or territory and another.

Elevation

Elevation changes the person's position relative to the surrounding environment. Pillars, pedestals, platforms, stages, and other raised structures may create distance, visibility, status, or protection, while also limiting the person's movement or making their position dependent upon the structure beneath them.

An elevated position should not automatically be interpreted as superiority or self-importance. Being elevated may also involve feeling **exposed, vulnerable, unsupported, unsteady, or on edge**. The qualities of the elevated position and the support beneath it therefore need to be examined together.

Elevation should not be considered as an **isolated object**. An elevated position may also be associated with anxiety, particularly where it involves exposure, instability, or dependence upon the structure beneath it. Examine the wider context: how high the person is, what they are elevated from, what the elevated position protects against, what becomes possible or unavailable from that position, and whether there is a corresponding container or social structure. Consider whether the elevation is naturally occurring or constructed. A hill creates a different structural relationship from a pillar, pedestal, or platform, particularly in relation to ownership, maintenance, stability, and who or what sustains the position. Also consider what would happen if the elevation were no longer present.

Obstruction

An obstruction is something **that limits, prevents, or interferes with movement within the metaphoric landscape**.

Obstructions are closely associated with **rules** and **negative injunctions**. Expressions such as “**do not**,” “**shall not**,” “**won't**,” and “**no**” may organise experience in ways that restrict what the person can do, where they can go, or how they can respond.

A rule may therefore function metaphorically as an **obstacle by restricting the range of available behaviour or movement**.

Boundary

A boundary **marks a transition** between one area, context, or territory and another. **It is** not necessarily **an obstruction**.

Within the metaphoric landscape, a boundary may appear as a river, road, change of field, change in terrain, or another noticeable change in the environment. Its function is to indicate that one context ends and another begins.

Boundary and Obstruction

A boundary and an obstruction may appear similar within the landscape, but they perform different functions. A boundary marks a change of context; an obstruction restricts or prevents movement.

Boundary	Obstruction
Marks a transition between contexts	Restricts or prevents movement
May be crossed	May require something to change before movement is possible
Indicates where one area ends and another begins	Limits the available direction or behaviour
Does not necessarily interfere with progress	Functions specifically through restriction

A boundary may also become an obstruction if it prevents the person from proceeding. The distinction depends on whether the person can cross it, rather than on the type of object that represents it.

Relationship to Supports

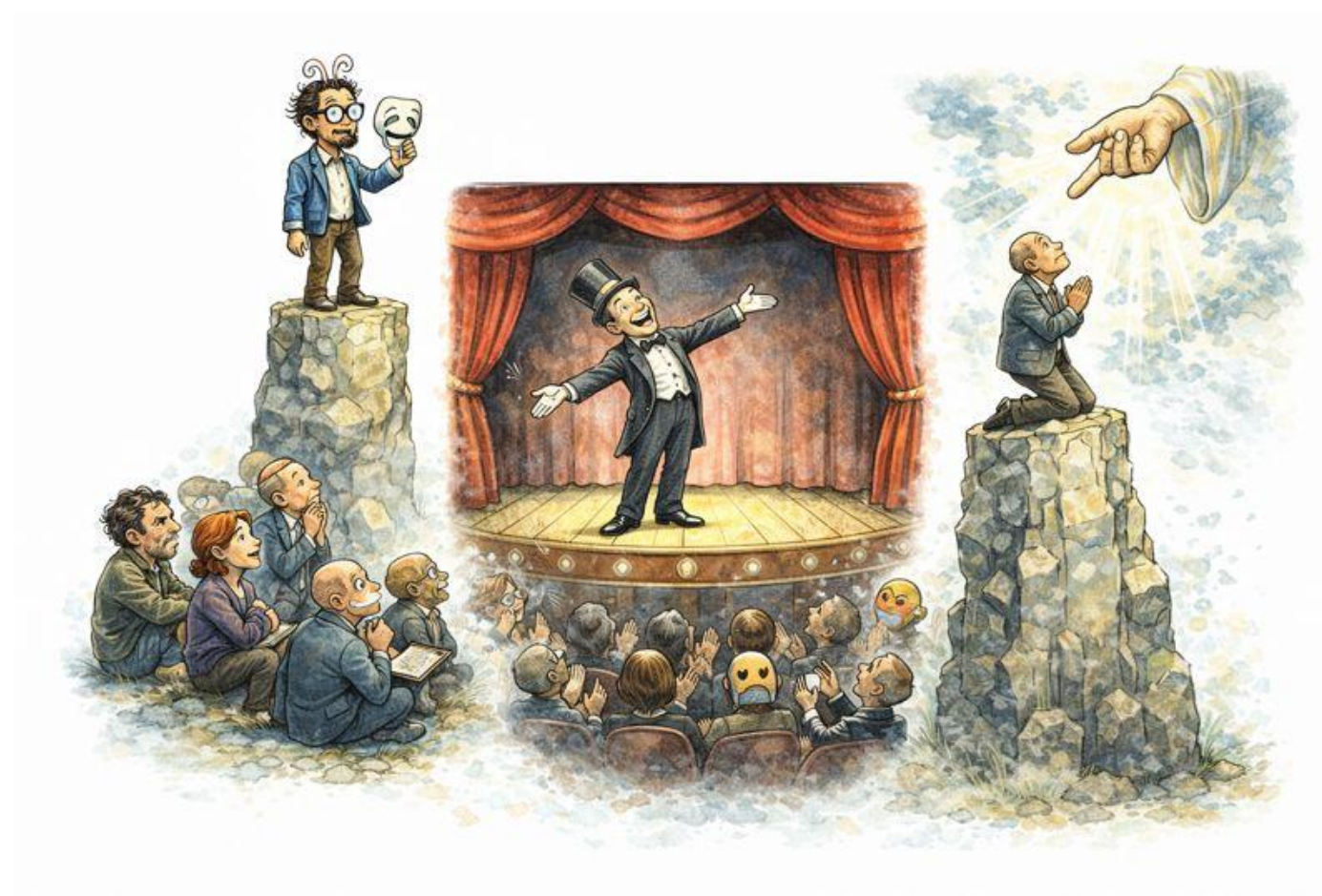
Supports, elevations, and obstructions may operate together within the same metaphoric structure. A support may make a particular position possible while simultaneously narrowing the range of movement or behaviour available from that position.

An elevation depends upon what supports it. Consider whether the support is itself a foundation or whether it depends upon another structure beneath it. The apparent stability of the elevated position may therefore be different from the stability of the foundation upon which it ultimately rests.

Different supports also create different behavioural possibilities. A stage provides a context for performance, whereas a pillar may elevate the person while restricting the range of movement available to them. The function of the support is therefore as important as its physical form.

An elevation may provide distance from one context while creating dependence upon the structure that maintains the elevated position. The same structure may therefore provide support while also creating elevation and restricting movement.

13. Stage and Performance Metaphors



Stage, audience, elevation, persona, and social/religious performance

Stage metaphors represent an environment organised around **performance, presentation, and observation**. Unlike metaphorical structures that appear as individual objects within a landscape, a stage may provide the context within which the entire experience occurs. Other structures such as elevations, obstructions, burdens, or relationships may then appear within that stage environment.

The Stage Structure

A stage metaphor contains a delineated area for performance and a delineated area for an audience. These areas are distinct from one another. An audience does not necessarily have to be visibly present; the structure may still contain an audience area even when the person cannot see who, if anyone, is watching.

Several features help establish the stage structure:

- a **delineated performance area**
- a **delineated audience area**
- a **backdrop** or rear structure that limits or defines retreat from the performance area

- **significant structures** to the left and right, such as wings, curtains, doors, drops, people, or other features that restrict or organise movement away from the performance position
- **artificial illumination** directed towards the performance area, such as a spotlight or stage lighting

The person does not necessarily need to be standing on a conventional theatre stage. What defines the structure is the organisation of performance, observation, illumination, and restricted movement. A sports arena, platform, elevated position, or another environment may function as a stage when these structural features are present.

Artificial Illumination

Artificial illumination is a defining feature of the stage metaphor. The light must be present and switched on. It may appear as a spotlight or another form of artificial lighting directed toward the performance area.

The lighting may also affect what the person can perceive. A person may be fully illuminated while being unable to see the audience or the surrounding environment because of the intensity of the light. The absence of a visible audience therefore does not mean that the audience structure is absent.

Darkness and Not Knowing

When the person cannot describe what lies beyond the illuminated area, establish why they cannot see it. There is a structural difference between being unable to see because the artificial illumination is so intense that it obscures what lies beyond it, and being able to look beyond the illuminated area but finding that the surrounding environment is itself dark.

In the first case, the limitation is produced by the illumination. In the second, darkness is an additional feature of the metaphoric environment and should be explored in its own right rather than assumed to be an inevitable property of the stage.

A stage metaphor does not have to look like a conventional theatre. What identifies the structure is the organisation of the performance area, audience area, backdrop, artificial illumination, and the surrounding stage features.

Stage, Audience, and Elevation

The stage and audience occupy **distinct positions within the metaphoric environment**. Consider the relative elevation of each area, whether the performer is above, below, or level with the audience, and what this positioning makes possible within the experience.

The audience may be clearly visible, only partly visible, heard but not seen, or represented simply by a designated audience area. The important feature is the presence of a place from which the performance may be watched, rather than the number or visibility of the people occupying it.

Elevation may intensify the separation between performer and audience. It may increase visibility while also contributing to exposure, instability, or restricted movement. The stage should therefore be examined both as a **performance context** and as a possible **elevated support** within the wider metaphoric structure.

Considerations for Stage Metaphors

Feature	Questions to Consider
Performer and Audience	How are the performer and audience positioned relative to one another? What is the relative elevation and distance? Is an audience actually present?
Visibility and Illumination	What can the person see from the performance position? What is illuminated and what is dark? Is visibility restricted by the brightness of the artificial illumination, or by darkness beyond it?
Movement and Retreat	What exists to the left, right, and behind the performer? What restricts movement, retreat, or leaving the performance position?
Exits	Where are the exits and what are their qualities? Are they normally available or reserved for emergencies? If they are emergency exits, what constitutes an emergency?
Script and Production	What is the script? What kind of production is taking place - tragedy, comedy, drama, or something else? Who wrote the script? Does the story develop or change? How does it end?
Setting and Scene	What is the setting or scene? Who created or arranged it?
Actors and Roles	Who are the actors? Have they learned their lines? Do they change character? Do different actors occupy the same role over time?
Lead and Motivation	Who is the lead actor? What motivates the actors?
Behind the Scenes	What is happening behind the scenes?
Audience Motivation	Why is the audience there? What are they expecting, and what motivates them to watch?

Stage Idioms

Common expressions associated with performance, stage, experience, and identity.

THE SHOW

- Putting on a performance
- It's all a bit of an act
- Walking off
- Making a comeback
- The show must go on
- A show stopper
- Stealing the show
- It takes two to tango

IDENTITIES

- Drama queen
- A bit of a diva
- A proper showman
- The class clown
- A leading light
- An armchair critic

THE STAGE

- Setting the stage
- Setting the scene
- Take the stage
- At a difficult stage
- Taking centre stage

THE EXPERIENCE

- Stage fright
- Exit stage left
- Under the spotlight
- Being in the limelight
- Singing your heart out
- Having your name in lights
- Treading the boards
- Waiting in the wings
- It will be all right on the night
- Life is not a rehearsal
- Getting upstaged / upstaging someone else

14. Stage, Persona, and Immersion

Stage as Adaptation

A stage metaphor may represent an adaptive response to social expectations and consequences. The person learns ways of presenting themselves, behaving, and responding that allow them to function within particular environments. Over time, these responses may become organised into a social script or persona.

The stage can also be understood in relation to earlier container experiences. The social structures in which a person develops provide rules, expectations, and behavioural contexts to which the person learns to adapt. The resulting performance may therefore represent a way of functioning that developed in response to those earlier conditions.

Persona and Social Script

The persona is the social face presented to other people. It may include learned roles, behaviours, expectations, and ways of responding that help the person navigate different contexts.

A persona may initially be protective and adaptive. Difficulties can arise when the script that previously worked is no longer appropriate for the situation in which the person now finds themselves. The person may know how to perform within familiar circumstances but have no suitable script when the context changes.

The content of the script should not be assumed from the presence of a stage metaphor. It may concern family, education, work, relationships, status, belonging, or something specific to the individual. Establish what the script contains and what function the performance serves within the person's metaphoric structure.

When the Persona No Longer Fits the Context

A stage metaphor may become particularly significant when the person's established way of presenting themselves no longer meets the demands of the current situation.

A person may have different scripts for different social contexts. Difficulty may arise when those contexts overlap, when the expected performance changes, or when the person can no longer maintain the role that previously allowed them to function successfully.

What was once adaptive may therefore cease to be adaptive when the surrounding conditions change.

Stage and Immersion

Stage and immersion can be understood as closely related structures.

Stage concerns the performance or persona used to meet the demands of the environment. Immersion concerns the point at which adaptation to the environment is no longer sufficient and the person experiences little or no effective capacity to alter the situation.

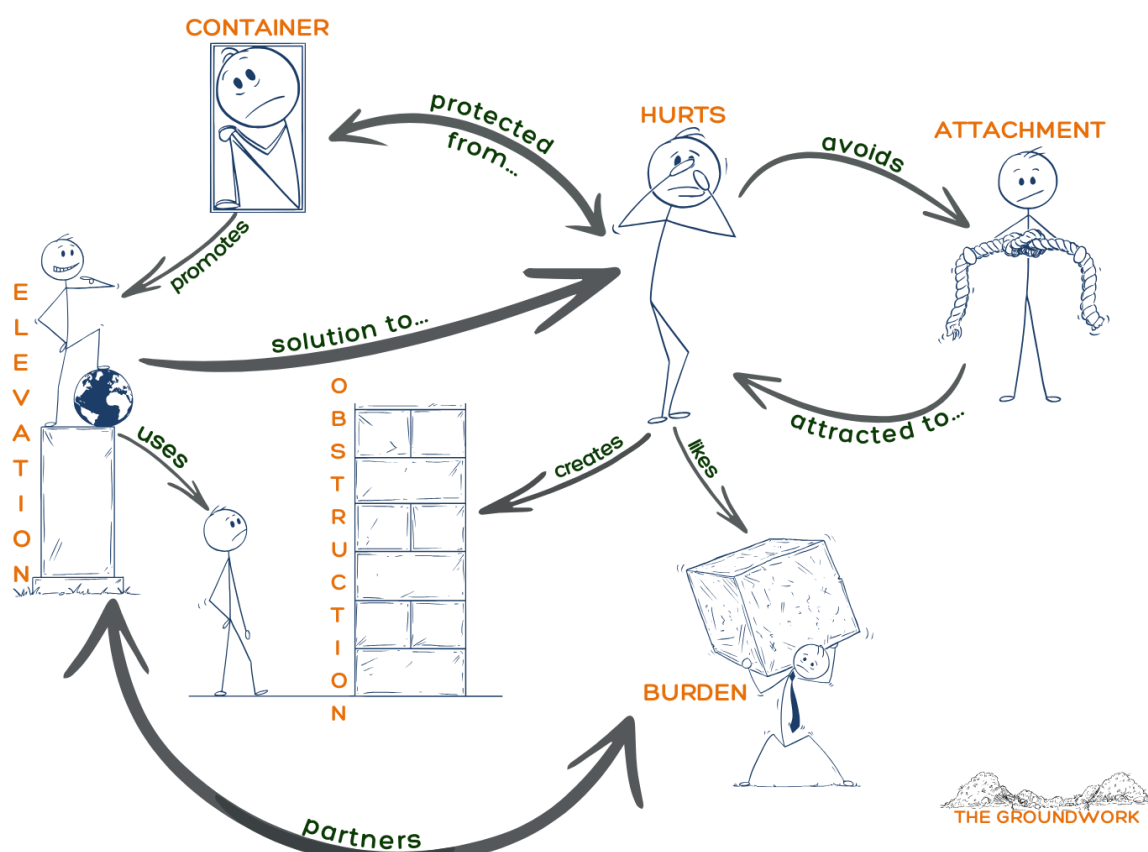
Where an immersion is present, consider whether there are also contexts in which the person experiences themselves as having to perform, maintain a persona, follow a script, or present themselves in a particular way.

Likewise, a stage metaphor may provide information about how the person is adapting to the conditions of the wider metaphoric environment.

15. The Groundwork - Relationships Between Taxonomies

The different Metaphors of Movement taxonomies should not be understood as isolated categories. A person's metaphoric environment may contain several structures at the same time, and the relationship between them may provide more information than any individual taxonomy considered alone.

Each taxonomy describes a different aspect of experience. Containers organise context and enclosure; elevations alter position; obstructions restrict movement; burdens concern what is carried; Hurts concern injury and interpersonal positioning; attachments organise connection and distance. The same metaphoric environment may therefore contain several of these relationships simultaneously.



*The Groundwork — relationships between metaphorical taxonomies.
The diagram illustrates possible interactions between structures and should be used as
a map for exploration rather than as a fixed set of rules.*

Taxonomies in Relationship

One structure may create, support, restrict, protect against, or interact with another.

For example:

- a **support** may make an elevated position possible while also restricting movement;
- an **elevation** may create distance from another context while depending upon the structure beneath it;

- an **obstruction** may express a rule or restriction operating within a wider context;
- an **attachment** may contain features of Hurts or partial containment depending upon how the connection is made;
- a **stage** may organise performance and persona while relating to the conditions represented by an immersion.

The important question is therefore not simply “**What taxonomy is this?**” but also:
“**What is this structure doing in relation to the rest of the metaphoric environment?**”

Relationships Are Not Fixed Rules

Relationships between taxonomies should be treated as patterns for investigation rather than as predetermined interpretations.

The presence of one taxonomy does not automatically establish the meaning of another. Similar structures may serve different functions for different people, and the same combination of taxonomies may occur within very different contexts.

Where a relationship appears, explore it within the person’s actual metaphor rather than imposing an expected sequence or interpretation.

Taxonomical Biasing

Some people may repeatedly organise aspects of experience through particular metaphorical taxonomies. This recurring tendency can be described as taxonomical biasing.

A bias should not be inferred from a single metaphor simply because a particular taxonomy appears. Repeated structures across different experiences provide stronger information than an isolated example.

Darkness is treated within the Hurts material as a particularly strong indicator associated with Hurts biasing. Other forms of taxonomical biasing do not have an equivalent single defining feature and should therefore be approached through recurring metaphoric patterns rather than assumed from one sign alone.

The Groundwork

The Groundwork brings these relationships together as a systemic view of the metaphoric environment.

Rather than working with containers, elevation, obstruction, burden, Hurts, attachment, support, stage, or immersion as separate objects, examine how they organise the person’s position, movement, relationships, possibilities, and responses within the whole structure.

The significance of a metaphoric feature depends not only upon what it is, but upon what it does within the wider metaphoric environment.

16. Archetypes and the Elements

Archetypal material provides a wider symbolic context for understanding metaphor, story, language, and recurring patterns of human experience. At this level, its purpose is primarily to deepen recognition and understanding rather than to introduce another technique for working with metaphor.

An archetype should not be confused with the particular image, character, symbol, or story through which it is expressed. A story, metaphor, allegory, or symbol may express an aspect of an archetypal pattern without being the archetype itself.

For this reason, archetypal patterns are often better understood by comparing multiple representations rather than assigning a fixed meaning to a single symbol.

Archetypes and Metaphoric Structure

Archetypal stories may contain many of the same structural relationships identified through the Metaphors of Movement taxonomies. Characters may carry burdens, encounter obstructions, occupy elevated positions, enter containers, experience Hurts, form attachments, or move through immersion-like environments.

The value lies not simply in identifying an individual symbol, but in observing the sequence and relationship of structures within the story.

This provides another way of examining how different taxonomies combine to form larger patterns of experience.

The Four Elements

The classical four elements provide one symbolic framework that can be used when examining archetypal material.

They should be understood here as conceptual or alchemical categories rather than literal physical elements.

Element	Symbolic Domain
Earth	Physical and material experience; embodiment and manifestation
Water	Creative, emotional, and relational qualities
Fire	Will, action, determination, and dynamic change
Air	Concept, intellect, thought, and ideational structure

These correspondences provide a vocabulary for exploring qualities within a metaphor or story. They are not fixed interpretations and should not be used as a mechanical system for translating a person's metaphor.

Elemental Qualities Within Metaphor

The elemental framework can also draw attention to what appears dominant, diminished, absent, or unable to move within a metaphoric environment.

For example, an environment dominated by water, fire, earth, or air may invite consideration of the qualities symbolically associated with that element. The purpose is not to conclude automatically what the metaphor means, but to create additional questions about balance, movement, possibility, and change.

The metaphor itself remains primary. Elemental correspondence is a way of expanding observation rather than replacing elicitation with interpretation.

Archetypal Stories and Taxonomies

Stories can be examined for the order in which metaphorical structures appear.

A character may begin inside a container, encounter an obstruction, carry a burden, move through an elevation, enter an immersion, or emerge into a different context. Another story may contain a similar sequence while using completely different characters, settings, and imagery.

Recognising these structural similarities can deepen understanding of how taxonomies operate beyond individual metaphors and across wider cultural narratives.

The Hero's Journey



The Hero's Journey — one familiar example of a recurring narrative structure rather than a complete map of archetypal experience.

The Hero's Journey is one familiar example of an archetypal narrative map. It illustrates how stories may be organised around departure, challenge, transformation, and return.

It should not, however, be treated as a complete model of archetypal structure. It is one narrative pattern among many and is most useful when considered alongside other stories, symbols, and recurring structures.

Working With Archetypal Material

Archetypal study extends the practitioner's ability to recognise relationships between structure, content, symbol, and story.

The aim is not to impose archetypal interpretations upon a person's metaphor. It is to develop a broader understanding of the patterns that may be expressed through metaphor, language, imagery, and narrative.

The person's actual metaphor remains the primary source of information. Archetypal frameworks provide additional context for understanding it, not a substitute for exploring it.

17. Death and Immersion

Death as Change of Identity

A death metaphor can represent an experience that changes the person so significantly that life cannot simply continue in its previous form.

Death metaphor is associated with the ending of a persona or personality organisation. The person anticipates that something is going to change them whether they want that change or not, and that life afterwards will not be the same as it was before.

The change may be largely internal. An unexpected or life-changing event can disrupt plans, roles, expectations, and the person's previous understanding of who they are.

The central issue then becomes **adaptation**: how the person reorganises themselves in response to circumstances that cannot simply be returned to their previous state.

Living Death

Living death is a related but distinct metaphor.

It may appear following a significant loss or life-altering event when the person experiences their previous life as having ended while they themselves remain alive.

Typical expressions may include:

- "My life ended that day."
- "I'm a shadow of my former self."
- "I'm a ghost of my former self."
- "I'm as good as dead."
- "I don't have a life anymore."

Metaphorically, the person may experience themselves as buried, inside a coffin, or existing as though life has already ended.

Within this framework, living death represents a **failure of adaptation to changed circumstances**. The person continues to organise experience around the life, identity, expectations, or future that existed before the change rather than adapting to the conditions that now exist.

Immersion and Unavoidable Change

Immersion introduces a related problem of adaptation.

In an immersion, the person is in an environment that they cannot adequately control and to which their existing resources or strategies are insufficient. The environment therefore becomes the dominant condition, and the person must respond to it rather than expecting the environment to return to what it was before.

A common difficulty is the attempt to recover the previous self and resume the previous way of living. When the conditions that produced the crisis remain unchanged, restoring the person to exactly who they were before may simply recreate the same pattern.

Adaptation Rather Than Restoration

Following a major disruption, the aim is not necessarily to restore the previous organisation of life. The more useful question is:

How does the person live forward from the position they are now in?

This may require changes in behaviour, expectations, identity, relationships, or the way the person understands their position within the environment.

Where an existing persona or strategy is no longer adequate, simply strengthening that same strategy may not create adaptation. What worked previously may no longer be fit for the conditions that now exist.

Death, Persona, and Immersion

Death, stage, and immersion therefore meet around the issue of **adaptation**.

A stage metaphor concerns the persona and the way the person has learned to perform within particular circumstances. An immersion may appear when the person's existing way of functioning is no longer sufficient for the environment. Death metaphor concerns the possibility that the previous organisation of self can no longer continue unchanged.

The common question is not how to return to what existed before, but what must change for the person to adapt to what exists now.

Further Reading

Core Reading

- **Gregory Bateson** — *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*
- **Paul Watzlawick, Janet Beavin Bavelas & Don D. Jackson** — *Pragmatics of Human Communication*
- **Frank Farrelly & Jeff Brandsma** — *Provocative Therapy*
- **Ivan Illich** — *Deschooling Society*
- **Ivan Illich** — *Limits to Medicine*
- **R. D. Laing** — *All works*
- **Callista Roy** — *Roy Adaptation Model*

Archetypes and Symbolic Structure

- **James George Frazer** — *The Golden Bough*
- **Aleister Crowley** — *The Book of Thoth*
- **Aleister Crowley** — *777 and Other Qabalistic Writings*
- **Aleister Crowley** — *Magick*
- **Stephen Skinner** — *The Complete Magician's Tables*

Narrative and Comparative Reading

- **Robert A. Heinlein** — *Stranger in a Strange Land*
- **Blake Snyder** — *Save the Cat!*
- **R. Buckminster Fuller** — *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth*
- **Sudhir Venkatesh** — *Gang Leader for a Day*