(Bridging) the Gap between Research and Psychoanalytic Theory and Practice or Psychoanalysis and Interdisciplinary Research

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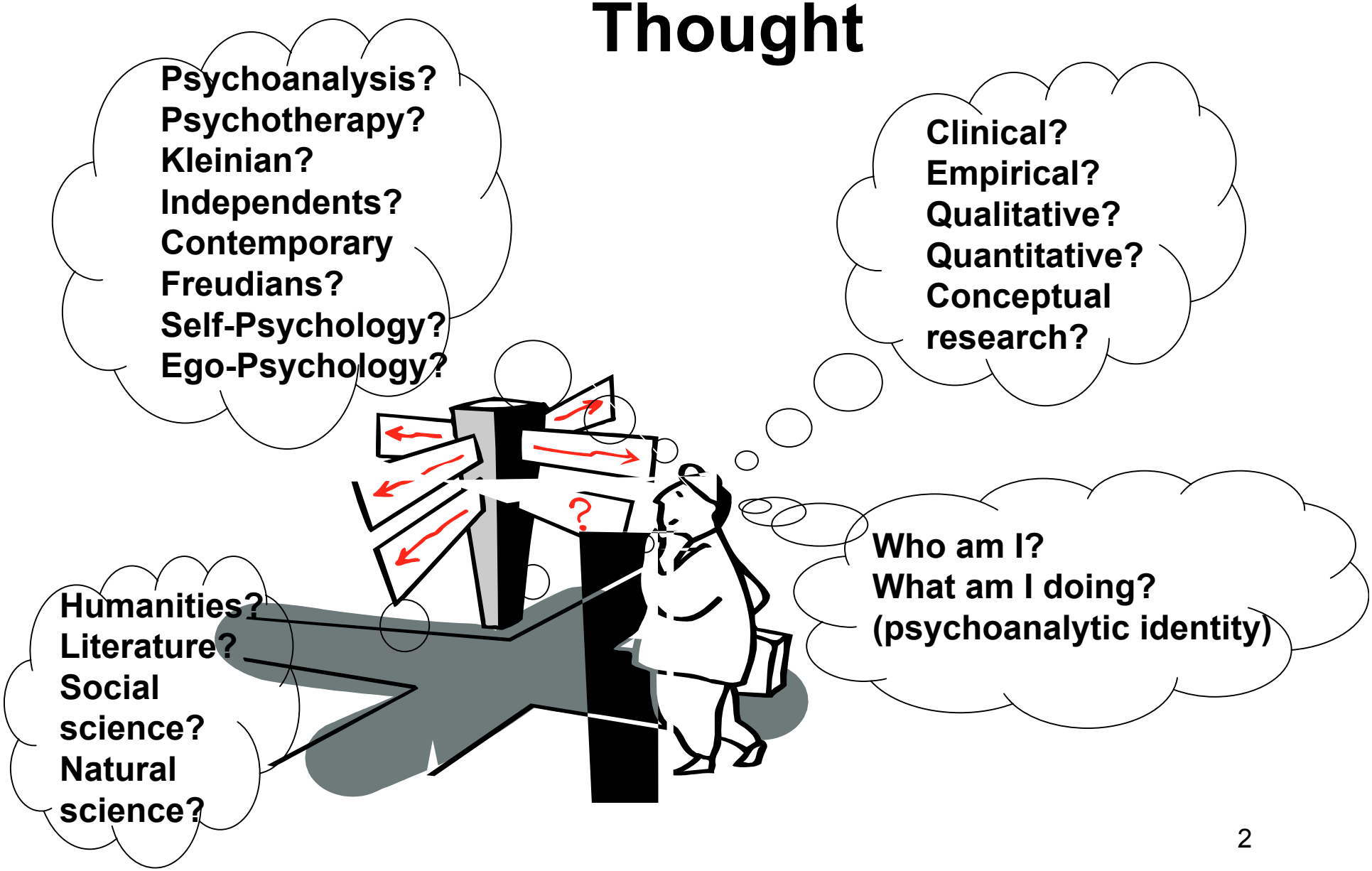
Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought



The psychoanalytic Tower of Babel

- Same words are used to refer to different concepts
- Identical concepts have been given different names
- There is a number of concepts that can be validated only within the context of a given theoretical framework

Conceptual clarification is needed

"Different axes of research – **historical, epistemological, and methodological approaches** – belong within [the conceptual research] domain"

(Widlocher, former president IPA)

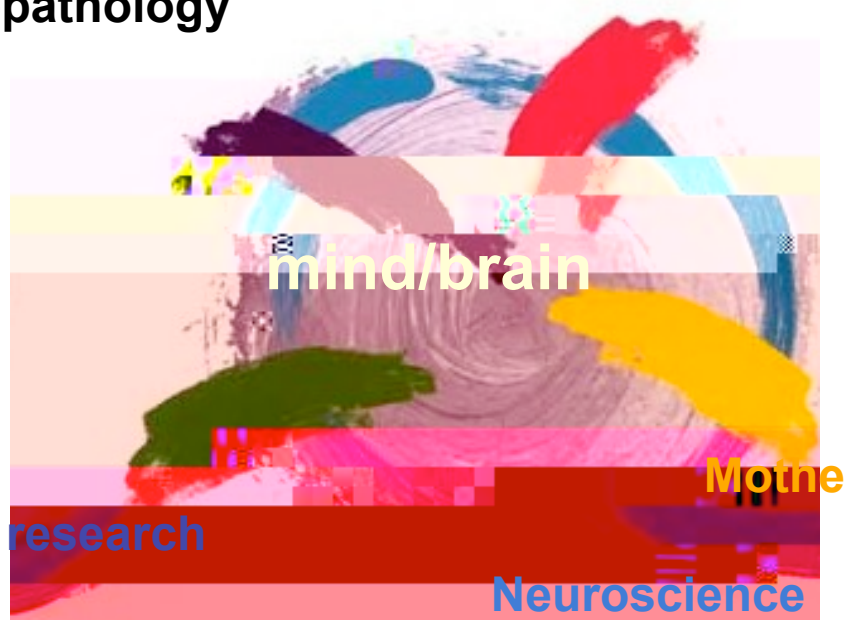
Beyond this definition…

- Conceptual research is ***also*** the intellectual effort to articulate psychoanalytic knowledge with knowledge stemming form allied disciplines: process and outcome research, mother-infant research, neuroscience, developmental psychopathology, etc.
- Basic assumption: ***the mind remains the mind, whether on the couch or in the laboratory*** (perspectivistic realism)

The Problem, the Task: Conceptual Research as Interdisciplinary Work

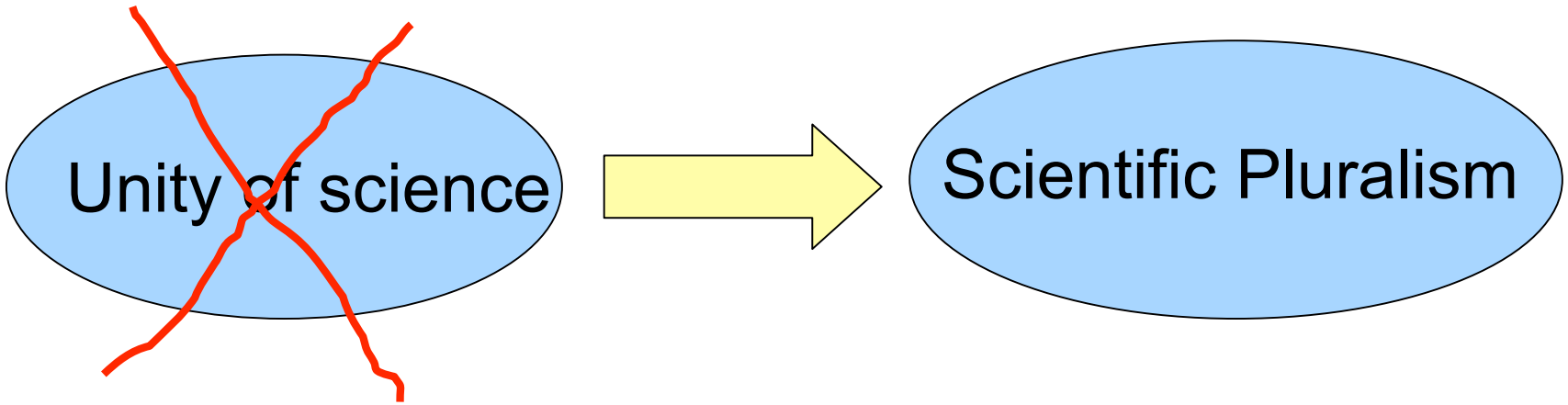
Psychoanalytic theory of mental function

Developmental psychopathology



One mind/brain, different perspectives…

The need for a new philosophical framework
A changing epistemology…



A new intellectual framework for Psychiatry (and Psychoanalysis): Integrative Pluralism

1. **Psychiatry is irrevocably grounded in mental, first-person experiences (primacy of subjecivity)**
2. Substance dualism and epiphenomenalism are false
3. **Brainγmind and mindγbrain causality**
4. Psychiatric disorders are etiologically complex
5. Explanatory pluralism is preferable to monistic approaches, especially biological reductionism
6. From “battle of paradigms” towards **an approach that embraces complexity**
7. “Patchy reductionism” with **the goal of piecemeal integration**

Kendler KS (2005) Toward a Philosophical Structure for Psychiatry. *Am J Psychiatry*; 162:433-440

Working as a psychoanalyst in the field of psychiatry or a programme of interdisciplinary research

- How to move from sterile, ideologically driven debates toward critical, creatively conceptualized empirical questions?
- How much real explanatory power is provided by the many possible etiological perspectives on a given psychiatric disorder?
- How can we begin to understand how the various explanatory levels interrelate with one another?
- How to understand a psychoanalysis “between hermeneutic and science”?
- How to move beyond the clumsy and outdated baggage left us by Cartesian dualism, without thereby rejecting our fundamental roots within the unconscious and psychosocial spheres or succumb to the temptations of simplistic reductionist models?
- **Integrative pluralism means to make active efforts to incorporate different levels of analysis**

A Widening Horizon: The Integration of Neurology, Psychiatry, and Neurosciences in the 21st Century

- Proposal by Joseph Martin, Neurologist, former Dean, Medicine Faculty, Harvard University

Am J Psychiatry 2002, 159:695-704