

The 5 Knots

A guide to Being-Centred Therapy

How to undo the knots of your mind and rediscover Being

Claus Springborg, PhD

The 5 Knots

A guide to Being-Centred Therapy

How to undo the knots of your mind and rediscover Being

Sensing Mind Institute

Claus Springborg, PhD
Sensing Mind Institute
Copenhagen, Denmark

Copyright © 2024 by Claus Springborg

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, write to the publisher, addressed "Attention: Permissions Coordinator," at the address below.

Sensing Mind Institute
Rosenvænget 8
3520 Farum, Denmark
info@sensingmind.com
www.sensingmind.com

Ordering Information:

Quantity sales. Special discounts are available on quantity purchases by corporations, associations and others. For details, contact the publisher at the address above.

Title The 5 Knots: A guide to Being-Centred Therapy

ISBN 978-87-971771-4-3 (printed book), 978-87-971771-5-0 (e-book)

Content

| | |
|--|------------|
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1. BEING-CENTRED THERAPY | 3 |
| 1.2. THE 5 KNOTS | 5 |
| 1.3. DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS USED IN THIS BOOK | 8 |
| 1.4. THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK | 22 |
| 1.5. THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK | 23 |
| 2. KNOT 1: THE KNOT OF POSITIVE REIFICATION | 29 |
| 2.1. WHAT IS REIFICATION? | 31 |
| 2.2. UNDER WHICH CONDITIONS DO WE PERCEIVE BEING AS POSITIVE? | 34 |
| 2.3. THE 10 ASPECTS OF BEING (ESSENCES) | 37 |
| 2.4. ABSENCE VS. REDUCTION OF MENTAL OBJECTS | 42 |
| 2.5. THE KNOT OF POSITIVE REIFICATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THERAPY | 43 |
| 2.6. SENSING ABUNDANCE – HOW TO UNTIE THE KNOT OF POSITIVE REIFICATION | 68 |
| 2.7. EXAMPLES OF SENSING ABUNDANCE | 91 |
| 2.8. UNTYING THE KNOT OF POSITIVE REIFICATION THROUGH CONTEMPLATIONS | 98 |
| 2.9. SUMMARY | 106 |
| 3. KNOT 2: THE KNOT OF CONDITIONALITY | 109 |
| 3.1. TYPICAL CONDITIONS FOR REACHING THE 10 ASPECTS OF BEING | 110 |
| 3.2. CONDITIONAL VS. UNCONDITIONAL PHENOMENA | 113 |
| 3.3. THE KNOT OF CONDITIONALITY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THERAPY | 114 |
| 3.4. SENSING COMPLETION – HOW TO UNTIE THE KNOT OF CONDITIONALITY | 140 |
| 3.5. EXAMPLES OF SENSING COMPLETION | 213 |
| 3.6. UNTYING THE KNOT OF CONDITIONALITY THROUGH CONTEMPLATIONS | 221 |
| 3.7. SUMMARY | 228 |
| 4. KNOT 3: THE KNOT OF NEGATIVE REIFICATION | 233 |
| 4.1. WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDO THE KNOT OF NEGATIVE REIFICATION | 234 |
| 4.2. NEGATIVE REIFICATIONS OF THE 10 ASPECTS OF BEING | 237 |
| 4.3. THE KNOT OF NEGATIVE REIFICATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THERAPY | 241 |
| 4.4. SENSING TABOOS – HOW TO UNTIE THE KNOT OF NEGATIVE REIFICATION | 266 |

| | | |
|-----------|---|------------|
| 4.5. | EXAMPLES OF SENSING TABOOS | 319 |
| 4.6. | UNTYING THE KNOT OF NEGATIVE REIFICATION THROUGH CONTEMPLATIONS | 328 |
| 4.7. | SUMMARY | 337 |
| 5. | <u>KNOT 4: THE KNOT OF ALIENATION</u> | 341 |
| 5.1. | ALIENATION AND AUTOMATION | 342 |
| 5.2. | THE LAYERED PERSONALITY STRUCTURE | 346 |
| 5.3. | ALIENATION FROM THE 10 ASPECTS OF BEING | 350 |
| 5.4. | THE LOGICAL CATEGORIES OF LEARNING, AGENCY AND BELIEF | 352 |
| 5.5. | THE KNOT OF ALIENATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THERAPY | 361 |
| 5.6. | SENSING AGENCY – HOW TO UNTIE THE KNOT OF ALIENATION | 373 |
| 5.7. | EXAMPLES OF SENSING AGENCY | 423 |
| 5.8. | UNTYING THE KNOT OF ALIENATION THROUGH CONTEMPLATIONS | 434 |
| 5.9. | SUMMARY | 441 |
| 6. | <u>KNOT 5: THE KNOT OF FRAGMENTATION</u> | 445 |
| 6.1. | PERSONALITY PARTS AND PERSONALITY STRUCTURE | 446 |
| 6.2. | THE 10 STRANDS OF MIND | 449 |
| 6.3. | THE KNOT OF FRAGMENTATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THERAPY | 455 |
| 6.4. | SENSING UNITY – HOW TO UNTIE THE KNOT OF FRAGMENTATION | 484 |
| 6.5. | EXAMPLES OF SENSING UNITY | 518 |
| 6.6. | UNTYING THE KNOT OF FRAGMENTATION THROUGH CONTEMPLATIONS | 529 |
| 6.7. | SUMMARY | 549 |
| 7. | <u>TYING THE KNOT OF BEING</u> | 553 |
| 7.1. | REALISATION PRACTICES | 554 |
| 7.2. | ACTUALISATION PRACTICES | 560 |
| 7.3. | CHALLENGES TO ACTUALISATION | 567 |
| 7.4. | ACTUALISATION IN BEING-CENTRED THERAPY | 576 |
| 7.5. | MEMORY RECONSOLIDATION | 577 |
| 7.6. | COGNITIVE METAPHORS AND EMBODIED COGNITION | 599 |
| 7.7. | FINAL REMARKS | 616 |
| 8. | <u>REFERENCES</u> | 619 |

Content, detailed

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1. BEING-CENTRED THERAPY | 3 |
| 1.2. THE 5 KNOTS | 5 |
| 1.3. DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS USED IN THIS BOOK | 8 |
| 1.3.1. BEING | 8 |
| 1.3.2. ASPECTS OF BEING (ESSENCES) | 16 |
| 1.3.3. PERSONALITY PARTS | 19 |
| 1.3.4. PERSONALITY STRUCTURE | 20 |
| 1.4. THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK | 22 |
| 1.5. THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK | 23 |
| | |
| 2. KNOT 1: THE KNOT OF POSITIVE REIFICATION | 29 |
| 2.1. WHAT IS REIFICATION? | 31 |
| 2.2. UNDER WHICH CONDITIONS DO WE PERCEIVE BEING AS POSITIVE? | 34 |
| 2.3. THE 10 ASPECTS OF BEING (ESSENCES) | 37 |
| 2.4. ABSENCE VS. REDUCTION OF MENTAL OBJECTS | 42 |
| 2.5. THE KNOT OF POSITIVE REIFICATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THERAPY | 43 |
| 2.5.1. MISCONCEPTION 1: YOU SEEK MANY THINGS | 43 |
| 2.5.2. MISCONCEPTION 2: YOU ARE SEPARATE FROM WHAT YOU SEEK | 48 |
| 2.5.3. MISCONCEPTION 3: IDEAS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN DIRECT EXPERIENCE | 55 |
| 2.5.4. SUMMARY | 66 |
| 2.6. SENSING ABUNDANCE – HOW TO UNTIE THE KNOT OF POSITIVE REIFICATION | 68 |
| 2.6.1. STEP 1: RECOGNISE THE KNOT OF POSITIVE REIFICATION - POSITIVE ENTRY POINTS | 69 |
| 2.6.2. STEP 2: POINT TO BEING | 72 |
| 2.6.3. STEP 3: SUSTAIN AWARENESS OF BEING | 83 |
| 2.6.4. STEP 4: CORRECT MISCONCEPTIONS RELATED TO THE KNOT OF POSITIVE REIFICATION | 85 |
| 2.6.5. DEALING WITH DISTRACTIONS | 87 |
| 2.7. EXAMPLES OF SENSING ABUNDANCE | 91 |
| 2.7.1. SESSION 1: THE FOUNTAIN IN THE HEART | 91 |
| 2.7.2. SESSION 2: FINDING WHOLENESS | 94 |
| 2.8. UNTYING THE KNOT OF POSITIVE REIFICATION THROUGH CONTEMPLATIONS | 98 |
| 2.8.1. WHAT DOES MEDITATION/RELAXATION FEEL LIKE FOR YOU? | 98 |
| 2.8.2. WHEN HAVE YOU HAD POSITIVE AND UNCOMPLICATED EXPERIENCES OF X, AND WHAT DID THAT FEEL LIKE IN THE BODY? | 100 |
| 2.9. SUMMARY | 106 |

| | | |
|-------------|--|------------|
| 3. | <u>KNOT 2: THE KNOT OF CONDITIONALITY</u> | 109 |
| 3.1. | TYPICAL CONDITIONS FOR REACHING THE 10 ASPECTS OF BEING | 110 |
| 3.2. | CONDITIONAL VS. UNCONDITIONAL PHENOMENA | 113 |
| 3.3. | THE KNOT OF CONDITIONALITY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THERAPY | 114 |
| 3.3.1. | MISCONCEPTION 4: WHAT YOU SEEK MAY COME AND GO | 115 |
| 3.3.2. | MISCONCEPTION 5: WHAT YOU SEEK IS CREATED OR ACQUIRED | 119 |
| 3.3.3. | MISCONCEPTION 6: YOU GET WHAT YOU SEEK BY DOING SOMETHING | 121 |
| 3.3.4. | MISCONCEPTION 7: YOU GET WHAT YOU SEEK BY FULFILLING CERTAIN CONDITIONS | 126 |
| 3.3.5. | MISCONCEPTION 8: FULFILLING CONDITIONS IS A GOAL IN ITSELF | 130 |
| 3.3.6. | SUMMARY | 138 |
| 3.4. | SENSING COMPLETION – HOW TO UNTIE THE KNOT OF CONDITIONALITY | 140 |
| 3.4.1. | THE MECHANISM OF SENSING COMPLETION | 142 |
| 3.4.2. | STEP 1: RECOGNISE THE KNOT OF CONDITIONALITY – URGENT DESIRES | 149 |
| 3.4.3. | STEP 2: POINT TO THE FELT SENSE THE CLIENT IS ULTIMATELY REACHING FOR | 156 |
| 3.4.4. | STEP 3: CORRECT MISCONCEPTIONS RELATED TO THE KNOT OF CONDITIONALITY | 184 |
| 3.5. | EXAMPLES OF SENSING COMPLETION | 213 |
| 3.5.1. | SESSION 3: FINDING STABILITY THROUGH A PARTNER | 214 |
| 3.5.2. | SESSION 4: BREAKING THINGS AND BOSSING PEOPLE AROUND | 217 |
| 3.6. | UNTYING THE KNOT OF CONDITIONALITY THROUGH CONTEMPLATIONS | 221 |
| 3.6.1. | WHAT ARE YOUR IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO CREATE OR ACQUIRE X? | 221 |
| 3.6.2. | WHAT WOULD IT FEEL LIKE IF YOU WERE 100% SUCCESSFUL? | 226 |
| 3.7. | SUMMARY | 228 |
| 4. | <u>KNOT 3: THE KNOT OF NEGATIVE REIFICATION</u> | 233 |
| 4.1. | WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDO THE KNOT OF NEGATIVE REIFICATION | 234 |
| 4.1.1. | PERCEIVING BEING AS ALL-PERVASIVE AND EVER-PRESENT | 234 |
| 4.1.2. | GAINING INCREASED INNER FREEDOM | 235 |
| 4.1.3. | BECOMING LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO EXTERNAL CONTROL AND MANIPULATION | 236 |
| 4.2. | NEGATIVE REIFICATIONS OF THE 10 ASPECTS OF BEING | 237 |
| 4.3. | THE KNOT OF NEGATIVE REIFICATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THERAPY | 241 |
| 4.3.1. | MISCONCEPTION 9: SOME INNER STATES ARE NEGATIVE AND SHOULD BE AVOIDED | 242 |
| 4.3.2. | MISCONCEPTION 10: TWO POSITIVE STATES CAN BE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE | 251 |
| 4.3.3. | MISCONCEPTION 11: FEELING AN ASPECT OF BEING CAN HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT | 254 |
| 4.3.4. | MISCONCEPTION 12: AN ASPECT OF BEING CAN FEEL TENSE AND UNPLEASANT | 258 |
| 4.3.5. | SUMMARY | 262 |
| 4.4. | SENSING TABOOS – HOW TO UNTIE THE KNOT OF NEGATIVE REIFICATION | 266 |
| 4.4.1. | THE MECHANISM OF SENSING TABOOS | 269 |
| 4.4.2. | STEP 1: RECOGNISE THE KNOT OF NEGATIVE REIFICATION - NEGATIVE ENTRY POINTS | 276 |

| | | |
|-------------|--|-------------------|
| 4.4.3. | STEP 2: DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE FELT SENSE OF AND REACTIONS TO THE STATE | 288 |
| 4.4.4. | STEP 3: SEPARATE THE FELT SENSE FROM NEGATIVE INTERPRETATIONS | 298 |
| 4.4.5. | STEP 4: CORRECT MISCONCEPTIONS RELATED TO THE KNOT OF NEGATIVE REIFICATION | 311 |
| 4.4.6. | THE ROLE OF THE THERAPIST'S AWARENESS OF BEING | 318 |
| 4.5. | EXAMPLES OF SENSING TABOOS | 319 |
| 4.5.1. | SESSION 5: LACK OF LOVE AND PURPOSE | 319 |
| 4.5.2. | SESSION 6: ANGER, STRENGTH AND LEADERSHIP | 323 |
| 4.6. | UNTYING THE KNOT OF NEGATIVE REIFICATION THROUGH CONTEMPLATIONS | 328 |
| 4.6.1. | WHAT ARE YOUR NEGATIVE IDEAS ABOUT X? | 329 |
| 4.6.2. | HOW CAN YOUR NEGATIVE IDEAS ABOUT X BE EXPLAINED BY THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAYS YOU TRY TO ACQUIRE OR PRODUCE X? | 332 |
| 4.6.3. | WHAT WOULD IT FEEL LIKE TO FAIL VOLUNTARILY AND DELIBERATELY? | 334 |
| 4.6.4. | DESCRIBE THE FELT SENSE OF X, USING NEUTRAL AND SENSORY WORDS | 335 |
| 4.6.5. | WHAT IF X WAS A GOOD THING? (FRAME EXPERIMENT EXERCISE) | 336 |
| 4.7. | SUMMARY | 337 |
| 5. | <u>KNOT 4: THE KNOT OF ALIENATION</u> | <u>341</u> |
| 5.1. | ALIENATION AND AUTOMATION | 342 |
| 5.2. | THE LAYERED PERSONALITY STRUCTURE | 346 |
| 5.3. | ALIENATION FROM THE 10 ASPECTS OF BEING | 350 |
| 5.4. | THE LOGICAL CATEGORIES OF LEARNING, AGENCY AND BELIEF | 352 |
| 5.4.1. | THE THEORY OF LOGICAL TYPES | 353 |
| 5.4.2. | LOGICAL CATEGORIES OF LEARNING | 354 |
| 5.4.3. | LOGICAL CATEGORIES OF AGENCY AND BELIEFS | 359 |
| 5.5. | THE KNOT OF ALIENATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THERAPY | 361 |
| 5.5.1. | MISCONCEPTION 13: NOT FEELING A POSITIVE STATE MEANS THAT IT IS ABSENT | 362 |
| 5.5.2. | MISCONCEPTION 14: CIRCUMSTANCES DIRECTLY CAUSE NEGATIVE STATES | 366 |
| 5.5.3. | MISCONCEPTION 15: AGENCY AND RESPONSIBILITY ARE INDEPENDENT. | 369 |
| 5.5.4. | SUMMARY | 371 |
| 5.6. | SENSING AGENCY – HOW TO UNTIE THE KNOT OF ALIENATION | 373 |
| 5.6.1. | STEP 1: RECOGNISE THE KNOT OF ALIENATION | 376 |
| 5.6.2. | STEP 2: SUGGEST AGENCY | 381 |
| 5.6.3. | STEP 3: ELUCIDATE AGENCY (DECONSTRUCTING THE “NATURAL” STATE) | 387 |
| 5.6.4. | STEP 4: UNDERSTAND MOTIVATION | 413 |
| 5.6.5. | STEP 5: CORRECT MISCONCEPTIONS RELATED TO THE KNOT OF ALIENATION | 422 |
| 5.6.6. | THE SEQUENCE OF STEPS IN SENSING AGENCY | 422 |
| 5.7. | EXAMPLES OF SENSING AGENCY | 423 |
| 5.7.1. | SESSION 7: OPPRESSION AND VICTIMISATION | 423 |
| 5.7.2. | SESSION 8: MOTHER'S ANXIETY | 430 |

| | | |
|-------------|---|------------|
| 5.7.3. | A COMMENT ON SESSIONS 3 & 5 | 434 |
| 5.8. | UNTYING THE KNOT OF ALIENATION THROUGH CONTEMPLATIONS | 434 |
| 5.8.1. | HOW DO YOU CREATE NEGATIVE STATES? | 435 |
| 5.8.2. | HOW DO YOU AVOID POSITIVE STATES? WHAT DO YOU PAY ATTENTION TO INSTEAD? | 438 |
| 5.8.3. | WHAT ARE THE HIDDEN BENEFITS OF YOUR SUFFERING? | 439 |
| 5.9. | SUMMARY | 441 |
| | | |
| 6. | KNOT 5: THE KNOT OF FRAGMENTATION | 445 |
| <hr/> | | |
| 6.1. | PERSONALITY PARTS AND PERSONALITY STRUCTURE | 446 |
| 6.2. | THE 10 STRANDS OF MIND | 449 |
| 6.2.1. | LINKING PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES TO ASPECTS OF BEING | 450 |
| 6.2.2. | TEN LANGUAGES FOR TEACHING | 452 |
| 6.3. | THE KNOT OF FRAGMENTATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THERAPY | 455 |
| 6.3.1. | MISCONCEPTION 16: YOU HAVE A SINGLE SELF | 457 |
| 6.3.2. | MISCONCEPTION 17: CLIENTS CONTAIN INNER ENEMIES AND OBSTACLES | 464 |
| 6.3.3. | MISCONCEPTION 18: YOU MUST FREE YOURSELF FROM PROBLEMATIC PARTS | 470 |
| 6.3.4. | MISCONCEPTION 19: REJECTION LEADS TO FREEDOM FROM THE REJECTED. | 474 |
| 6.3.5. | MISCONCEPTION 20: YOU CANNOT HAVE IT ALL – YOU MUST CHOOSE | 478 |
| 6.3.6. | SUMMARY | 480 |
| 6.4. | SENSING UNITY – HOW TO UNTIE THE KNOT OF FRAGMENTATION | 484 |
| 6.4.1. | STEP 1: RECOGNISE THE KNOT OF FRAGMENTATION | 487 |
| 6.4.2. | STEP 2: MAP THE SYSTEM OF PARTS | 495 |
| 6.4.3. | STEP 3: SELECT A PART TO WORK WITH | 504 |
| 6.4.4. | STEP 4: INVITE OTHER PARTS TO SUSPEND JUDGEMENT | 506 |
| 6.4.5. | STEP 5: CORRECT MISCONCEPTIONS RELATED TO THE KNOT OF FRAGMENTATION | 509 |
| 6.4.6. | PITFALLS OF PARTS WORK | 516 |
| 6.5. | EXAMPLES OF SENSING UNITY | 518 |
| 6.5.1. | SESSION 9: DON'T LET THEM OFF THE HOOK | 518 |
| 6.5.2. | SESSION 10: SWEET SOLIDITY AND SOLID SWEETNESS | 524 |
| 6.6. | UNTYING THE KNOT OF FRAGMENTATION THROUGH CONTEMPLATIONS | 529 |
| 6.6.1. | WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO X? | 530 |
| 6.6.2. | WHAT ARE YOUR (CONTRADICTIONARY) IDEAS ABOUT X? | 533 |
| 6.6.3. | WHEN DO YOU FEEL X? WHEN ARE YOU X? HOW ARE YOU LIKE X? | 540 |
| 6.6.4. | HOW DO YOU BLOCK OR AVOID X (A TRAIT YOU SEE AS NEGATIVE)? | 543 |
| 6.6.5. | WHAT IF YOU HAD BOTH SIMULTANEOUSLY? | 545 |
| 6.7. | SUMMARY | 549 |

| | | |
|-------------|---|------------|
| 7. | TYING THE KNOT OF BEING | 553 |
| 7.1. | REALISATION PRACTICES | 554 |
| 7.1.1. | MEDITATION | 554 |
| 7.1.2. | CONTEMPLATION | 555 |
| 7.1.3. | SELF-INQUIRY | 557 |
| 7.2. | ACTUALISATION PRACTICES | 560 |
| 7.2.1. | ETHICAL LIVING | 560 |
| 7.2.2. | SELFLESSNESS | 562 |
| 7.2.3. | PRESENT-MOMENT AWARENESS | 564 |
| 7.2.4. | AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT | 565 |
| 7.3. | CHALLENGES TO ACTUALISATION | 567 |
| 7.3.1. | CHALLENGE 1: KNOTS OF CONDITIONALITY | 568 |
| 7.3.2. | CHALLENGE 2: ESPOUSED THEORIES VS. THEORIES-IN-USE | 568 |
| 7.3.3. | CHALLENGE 3: IMPLICIT MEMORY | 572 |
| 7.3.4. | CHALLENGE 4: CHANGING PATTERNS CAN BE UNCOMFORTABLE | 574 |
| 7.4. | ACTUALISATION IN BEING-CENTRED THERAPY | 576 |
| 7.5. | MEMORY RECONSOLIDATION | 577 |
| 7.5.1. | MEMORY RECONSOLIDATION AND THERAPY | 578 |
| 7.5.2. | MEMORY CONSOLIDATION AND ACTUALISATION | 583 |
| 7.5.3. | WORKING WITH MEMORY RECONSOLIDATION IN BEING-CENTRED THERAPY | 585 |
| 7.5.4. | WHAT WOULD YOUR LIFE BE LIKE IF YOU COULD FEEL X AT ANY TIME? | 588 |
| 7.5.5. | WHEN ISSUES RE-EMERGE (THE REBOUND) | 590 |
| 7.5.6. | HOW EXPERIENCES OF BEING EXPOSE BELIEFS PREVENTING AWARENESS OF BEING | 592 |
| 7.5.7. | TWO TYPES OF ISSUES | 593 |
| 7.5.8. | WORKING FROM BEING VS. WORKING FROM SYMPTOMS | 598 |
| 7.6. | COGNITIVE METAPHORS AND EMBODIED COGNITION | 599 |
| 7.6.1. | ACTUALISATION THROUGH GROUNDING CONCEPTS IN THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING | 603 |
| 7.6.2. | WHAT DOES X MEAN IF IT IS THE FELT SENSE OF A PARTICULAR ESSENCE? | 606 |
| 7.6.3. | THE KNOTS AND INVERSIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS | 610 |
| 7.6.4. | WORKING WITH SENSORY TEMPLATES VS. WORKING WITH OTHER BELIEFS | 614 |
| 7.6.5. | WORKING WITH COGNITION VS. WORKING WITH BEHAVIOURAL MODIFICATION | 616 |
| 7.7. | FINAL REMARKS | 616 |
| 8. | REFERENCES | 619 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|-----|
| FIGURE 1: THE 5 KNOTS MODEL | 5 |
| FIGURE 2: THE 10 ASPECTS OF BEING (ESSENCES) AND RELATED POSITIVE REIFICATIONS | 39 |
| FIGURE 3: LOSS OF AWARENESS OF IMMEDIATE EXPERIENCE THROUGH CONCEPTUALISATION | 57 |
| FIGURE 4: TWO DIFFERENT MODELS OF THE WORLD | 60 |
| FIGURE 5: THE SENSING ABUNDANCE PROCESS | 69 |
| FIGURE 6: THE SENSING COMPLETION PROCESS | 142 |
| FIGURE 7: FULFILMENT OF DESIRE CAUSES POSITIVE FELT SENSE | 143 |
| FIGURE 8: LINK BETWEEN FULFILMENT OF DESIRE AND AWARENESS OF BEING | 144 |
| FIGURE 9: THE ACCESS PROCESS | 191 |
| FIGURE 10: THE NON-DOING PROCESS | 201 |
| FIGURE 11: THE COUNTERPRODUCTIVITY PROCESS | 207 |
| FIGURE 12: THE NON-URGENCY PROCESS | 213 |
| FIGURE 13: HOW TWO POSITIVE REIFICATIONS OF BEING CAN APPEAR TO BE IN CONFLICT | 252 |
| FIGURE 14: THE SENSING TABOOS PROCESS | 268 |
| FIGURE 15: SENSING TABOOS VS. SENSING COMPLETION | 271 |
| FIGURE 16: ADDING VS. DISSOLVING LAYERS OF PERSONALITY | 348 |
| FIGURE 17: THE SENSING AGENCY PROCESS | 375 |
| FIGURE 18: AN UNORGANISED STRING OF EVENTS | 394 |
| FIGURE 19: ORGANISING THE STRING OF EVENTS INTO SEQUENCES | 394 |
| FIGURE 20: ALTERNATIVE WAY OF ORGANISING THE STRING OF EVENTS INTO SEQUENCES | 395 |
| FIGURE 21: SPECTRUMS TO PLANES | 402 |
| FIGURE 22: FLIPPING SPECTRUMS | 404 |
| FIGURE 23: PARENTAL SURROGATES PROCESS | 421 |
| FIGURE 24: THE 10 STRANDS OF MIND | 450 |
| FIGURE 25: THE SENSING UNITY PROCESS | 487 |
| FIGURE 26: FOUR MANIFESTATIONS OF THE KNOT OF FRAGMENTATION | 487 |
| FIGURE 27: UNCOVERING HIDDEN PARTS | 501 |
| FIGURE 28: UNCOVERING HIDDEN PARTS UNDERPINNING INNER CONTROVERSIES | 502 |

List of Tables

| | |
|---|-----|
| TABLE 1: ESSENCES AS THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING CONTRASTED WITH VARIOUS PROPERTIES OF MIND | 41 |
| TABLE 2: MISCONCEPTIONS AND CORRECTIVE PRINCIPLES RELATED TO THE KNOT OF POSITIVE REIFICATION | 66 |
| TABLE 3: HOW UNDERSTANDING THE KNOT OF POSITIVE REIFICATION CHANGES THE QUESTIONS GUIDING THERAPY | 67 |
| TABLE 4: ESSENCES AND RELATED FELT SENSE AND CONCEPTS | 104 |
| TABLE 5: CONDITIONS PEOPLE FULFILL TO CREATE OR ACQUIRE POSITIVE REIFICATIONS OF THE 10 ASPECTS OF BEING | 111 |
| TABLE 6: MISCONCEPTIONS AND CORRECTIVE PRINCIPLES RELATED TO THE KNOT OF CONDITIONALITY | 138 |
| TABLE 7: HOW UNDERSTANDING THE KNOT OF CONDITIONALITY CHANGES THE QUESTIONS GUIDING THERAPY | 139 |
| TABLE 8: NEGATIVE REIFICATIONS OF THE 10 ASPECTS OF BEING (ESSENCES) ARISING FROM THE PURSUIT OF THE SAME ASPECT | 239 |
| TABLE 9: NEGATIVE REIFICATIONS OF THE 10 ASPECTS OF BEING (ESSENCES) ARISING FROM THE PURSUIT OF A DIFFERENT ASPECT | 240 |
| TABLE 10: THE IDENTITY OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE STATES | 248 |
| TABLE 11: MISCONCEPTIONS AND CORRECTIVE PRINCIPLES RELATED TO THE KNOT OF NEGATIVE REIFICATION | 263 |
| TABLE 12: HOW UNDERSTANDING THE KNOT OF NEGATIVE REIFICATION CHANGES THE QUESTIONS GUIDING THERAPY | 264 |
| TABLE 13: SENSING COMPLETION VS. SENSING TABOOS | 273 |
| TABLE 14: ALIENATION FROM THE 10 ASPECTS OF BEING (ESSENCES) | 351 |
| TABLE 15: MISCONCEPTIONS AND CORRECTIVE PRINCIPLES RELATED TO THE KNOT OF ALIENATION | 372 |
| TABLE 16: HOW UNDERSTANDING THE KNOT OF ALIENATION CHANGES THE QUESTIONS GUIDING THERAPY | 372 |
| TABLE 17: MISCONCEPTIONS AND CORRECTIVE PRINCIPLES RELATED TO THE KNOT OF FRAGMENTATION | 482 |
| TABLE 18: HOW UNDERSTANDING THE KNOT OF FRAGMENTATION CHANGES THE QUESTIONS GUIDING THERAPY | 482 |
| TABLE 19: SYMPTOMS TYPICALLY RESOLVED BY EACH OF THE 10 ASPECTS OF BEING | 596 |

1. Introduction

Mystical traditions teach us that the essence of our Being is an innate and boundless state of joy, peace, and fulfilment. Yet, when we observe the world around us, as well as our inner landscapes, we are confronted with suffering. This stark contrast raises a profound question: How can a reality of inherent bliss coexist with the suffering that permeates human experience?

To resolve this apparent contradiction, some dismiss the wisdom of the sages as comforting fairy tales divorced from reality, while others dismiss suffering as illusory and seek to transcend it by withdrawing into spiritual practices. Both perspectives, however, present significant issues. The first is problematic because it places unnecessary limits on the human potential for fulfilment. The second is problematic because it can lead to spiritual bypassing or escapism, preventing the individual from dealing with life.

The central thesis of this book is that human suffering, on the individual as well as societal level, is largely a consequence of people having lost awareness of Being and seeking to remedy the ensuing sense of loss through misguided strategies informed by widespread misconceptions about reality. This view is, thus, a middle way that acknowledges the reality of both Being and suffering. According to this view, the key to dissolving suffering is to understand the habits and patterns that cause us to lose awareness of Being, and through such understanding to regain this awareness. This approach forms the foundation of the Being-Centred Therapy outlined in this book.

The central thesis of this book is not new. It lies at the heart of many philosophical and spiritual traditions, from the non-duality teachings of Advaita Vedanta and the mindfulness practices of Buddhism, to the mystical insights found in Sufism and Christian contemplative practices. However, throughout history, it has been crucial to present knowledge of Being in a language that resonates with the people of the time.

In the 21st century, there are two major factors to consider when seeking to give the timeless teachings about Being a contemporary expression.

The first factor to be taken into account is that we are currently facing what can legitimately be called a mental health crisis. Statistics shows that at the start of the 2010s, rates of mental illness sharply increased, and this trend has continued since. Diagnosis of depression and anxiety among college students in the US doubled in the 2010s. Self-harm increased by 188% for teenage girls and 48% for teenage boys, and suicide increased by 167% for pre-teen girls and 91% for pre-teen boys. These numbers come from the US, but similar trends can be found in other Western countries, highlighting the urgent need for effective therapeutic interventions. In this context, I believe that it will be fruitful to integrate teaching about Being into therapeutic work, since cultivating awareness of Being can address not just the symptoms, but the root cause of psychological suffering. Furthermore, the prevalence of the mental health crisis can serve as motivation to engage with teachings specifically aimed at discovering inherent joy, peace and fulfilment. For this reason, I believe that therapeutic work is a particularly suitable vehicle for introducing these teachings, making a practical guide on incorporating awareness of Being in therapy both relevant and timely.

The second factor to take into account when adopting teachings of Being for the present-day context is the firm establishment of science.

Since the Enlightenment, the scientific method has become a fundamental tool for advancing human knowledge and prosperity. Science, both as a mode of inquiry and a body of knowledge, is deeply ingrained in modern society. It would be unwise and counterproductive to present teachings on Being in a way that requires people to reject science. Doing so would not only alienate many people but would also impoverish the teachings themselves by severing them from the vast repository of knowledge developed through scientific inquiry. Therefore, the Being-Centred Therapy presented in this book explicitly draws on scientific research and addresses common objections that may arise from a scientifically informed mindset, by highlighting how spiritual and scientific traditions when properly understood share much in terms of both knowledge and method.

In bringing this approach to light, my intention is not to dismiss traditional spiritual practices, but to integrate them into a contemporary framework that speaks to both our modern mental health challenges and our scientific sensibilities. By doing so, we can make the wisdom of Being accessible, practical, and effective for those navigating the complexities of 21st-century life.

Before diving into the principles and practices of Being-Centred Therapy, I will briefly introduce Being-Centred Therapy and the 5 Knots, define some key concepts and outline the structure of the book.

1.1. Being-Centred Therapy

In this section, I will describe, in more detail, Being-Centred Therapy's view on how suffering arises and what we can do about it.

The four key claims I will make in this section are:

- Being is all pervasive, and it is boundless joy, peace and fulfilment, but we do not notice this because we contain automatic processes which direct our attention away from Being towards behaviour aimed at dealing with our environment.
- The result is a sense of loss which we seek to remedy in ways that worsen it because *any* action we engage in takes our attention away from Being.
- When the sense of loss deepens, we tend to believe that we have not done enough – rather than recognising that it is precisely the acts we engage in to remedy the sense of loss that creates it.
- We can, therefore, dissolve suffering by becoming aware of both Being and the mechanisms that take our attention away from Being.

Being-Centred Therapy assumes that Being is, indeed, all pervasive and boundless joy, peace and fulfilment. Thus, Being is what anyone will experience if they focus their attention on the present moment rather than on various external or internal activities. In other words, boundless joy, peace and fulfilment are, in principle, available to anyone at any time.

However, we all contain a multitude of automatic and unconscious processes, which we, over time, have developed to deal with our environment, and many of these processes take our awareness away from Being in the present moment. Thus, if you are unable to disconnect your awareness from these processes, the joy, peace and fulfilment may be there, but you will not be able to notice it.

If you, for example, grew up in a family with parents who had severe mood swings, you would learn that it is important to constantly monitor your parents' mood and do certain things (or refrain from doing certain things) to keep them happy. To deal with this kind of family environment, you are likely to develop a tendency to continuously pay attention to your parents' moods and how their moods are affected by your behaviour.

Since how much you can be aware of at any given time is limited, the more awareness you spend on your parents' mood, the more you will lose awareness of Being. The result will be a deep sense of having lost something precious.

When you feel this loss, you will develop ideas about what caused it and how to remedy it. However, the ideas you develop are often wrong and will make you seek to remedy the loss in ways that worsen it.

For example, you may develop the idea that your sense of loss is caused by seeing your parents unhappy. According to this belief, the way to remedy your sense of loss would be to monitor their moods even more closely and modify your behaviour to keep them happy. However, it is precisely doing this that took your awareness away from Being in the first place. Thus, this strategy will not only fail to remedy your sense of loss – it is bound to deepen it.

To make matters worse, you are unlikely to discover that your explanation for why you feel a sense of loss is wrong, because your belief in this explanation creates the illusion that the explanation is correct.

If you believe your sense of loss stems from seeing your parents unhappy, you are likely to interpret the persistence of the feeling of loss as evidence that you have not done enough to make them happy – rather than as evidence that your beliefs about what causes and what would remedy your sense of loss are erroneous.

To understand how a belief in a particular explanation for a particular experience can make us unable to discover when our explanation is wrong, it can be useful to look at some everyday examples.

Imagine that you see yellow leaves on one of your houseplants (a particular experience). Imagine that the appearance of yellow leaves is just part of the plant's natural growth cycle (true cause), but that you assume it is due to lack of water (your explanation). Consequently, you will seek to remedy the situation by watering the plant. This may lead to overwatering and more yellow leaves. However, when you see more yellow leaves, you are likely to interpret this as evidence that the plant is still not getting enough water leading to even more overwatering, and so on.

Similarly, imagine that you run an online store and the sales begin to decline (a particular experience) due to a temporary market downturn (true cause), but that you assume the decline in sales is due to having an outdated webpage (your explanation). Consequently, you may try to remedy the situation by updating the webpage and adding fancy new features. This, in turn, may confuse and alienate

your regular customers, causing further decline in sales. However, you may not see the further decline in sales as evidence that updating the webpage is a bad strategy but rather as evidence that you have not modernised the webpage enough, and so on.

These examples illustrate how a belief in a particular cause for something you experience can make it difficult to realise when your belief is wrong because the consequences of acting on your belief can be interpreted as evidence that you have not done enough – rather than evidence that you are doing the wrong thing.

Being-Centred Therapy seeks to cut through this kind of blindness and correct the mistaken beliefs that prevent clients from becoming aware of Being.

1.2. The 5 Knots

There are five different kinds of pattern that take our awareness away from Being and at the same time make us interpret the resulting sense of loss as evidence that we need to do something that further deepens our lack of awareness of Being. I call these five patterns The 5 Knots because their flawed circular logic is like a knot that must be untied.

Below is a brief introduction to each of the five knots, how each directs people's awareness away from Being, and how the knots relate to each other. The first four knots form a vicious circle, leading to an ever-deepening loss of awareness of Being. The fifth knot relates to the system of mental, emotional, and behavioural patterns produced by the first four knots (see Figure 1).

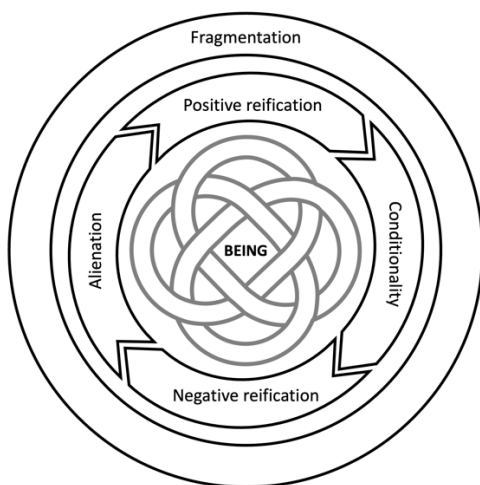


Figure 1: The 5 Knots model

- **The Knot of Positive Reification:** When people experience Being, they tend to perceive it as an experience of a (rare) positive thing, such as joy, connection, peace or love. Seeing Being as a positive thing will direct peoples' attention away from the experience itself and towards ideas about this thing.
- **The Knot of Conditionality:** Once people think about Being as a positive thing, they start developing strategies for how to create or acquire this thing. The implementation of these strategies monopolises peoples' awareness, making them less likely to become aware of Being.
- **The Knot of Negative Reification:** Seeking to create or acquire Being as if it were a positive thing leads to failure because Being is not a thing that can be created or acquired. Over time, the pain of such failures causes people to see experiences of Being as something negative they should avoid, making them actively turn their attention away from Being.
- **The Knot of Alienation:** Over time, the patterns that lead to the loss of awareness of Being become automatic and unconscious, leading to the sense that the absence of Being is the normal state, and the experience of Being is the exception. This creates a fertile ground for perceiving experiences of Being as the experience of (rare) positive things, i.e. the formation of the Knot of Positive Reification. This closes the vicious circle of the first four knots.
- **The Knot of Fragmentation:** The continuous development of the first four types of knots leads to a system of mental, emotional, and behavioural patterns that can be described as a system of entities pursuing Being through different and often mutually exclusive strategies. The result is a fragmented personality structure at war with itself. The inner conflicts monopolise the individual's awareness, leading to further loss of awareness of Being, which in turn intensifies the pursuit and, consequently, the level of conflict in the individual.

Since the five knots occupies our awareness, untying these knots frees up our awareness and enables us to become aware of Being, and because the true cause of so much suffering is the loss of awareness of Being, becoming aware of Being will dissolve a great portion of human suffering. In other words, becoming aware of Being is highly therapeutic.

Using awareness of Being in a therapeutic setting is common. Many approaches to therapy emphasise the importance of developing the capacity to be in the present moment and becoming aware of Being. These approaches promote many useful exercises that can help people do so. For example, in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction people are invited to do body scans, pay attention to their

breathing and to chew a raisin while paying attention to all the different sensations involved in this action. In Gestalt Therapy people are invited to focus on current thoughts, feelings and emotions. In Ego State Therapy people are invited to visualise a safe place in ways that engage all their senses. In some Trauma therapies, therapists will invite clients to identify a certain number of things they can see, touch, hear, smell and taste. All these exercises aim to bring people's attention into the present moment and help them experience Being.

In many of these approaches to therapy, the patterns that prevent us from resting in the present moment and experiencing Being are called "ego" or "personality structure", and the techniques for turning one's awareness towards Being are often conceived as techniques for bypassing, overcoming or dismantling this ego or personality structure. In such cases, the details of the structure the therapy seeks to overcome are generally given limited attention.

Being-Centred Therapy, on the other hand, seeks to use a detailed understanding of the specific patterns that prevent a client from noticing Being as a means to point his/her attention towards Being. In other words, the very structures that take the client's awareness away from Being are used as signposts that point that awareness towards Being.

The reason this is possible is precisely that many of the patterns that take our awareness away from Being have been developed to remedy the sense of loss of Being. They are motivated by both a deep longing and a deep love for Being and they, therefore, contain intimate knowledge of Being.

Understanding The 5 Knots can greatly help therapists listen to their client's personality structure in such a way that this structure changes from being something merely preventing the client from becoming aware of Being to something guiding the client to develop this awareness.

In short, The 5 Knots model offers a way of listening to the ego that transforms it from an obstacle to a guide.

1.3. Definitions of key concepts used in this book

In this section, I define the following key concepts that I will use throughout the book.

- Being
- Aspects of Being (Essences)
- Personality Parts
- Personality Structure

These concepts have been employed in various ways by different authors. Thus, to avoid any confusion it is important to take some time to clarify, how I intend to use them.

Rather than following any particular therapeutic or philosophical tradition, I seek to define the above concepts in ways that are compatible with multiple traditions. I do this to allow therapists from as many different traditions as possible to benefit from and effectively experiment with the tools presented in this book without having to adopt any unnecessary metaphysical ideas.

The definitions provided in this section will be brief, offering an initial orientation. Each concept will be explored in greater depth in dedicated sections later in the book.

1.3.1. Being

One central concept that I use throughout the book is “Being”. This concept has been discussed in philosophy for millennia. Consequently, there are many ways of understanding it. In this book, I will use the following definition:

Being is the experience of unhooking one’s attention from habitual thoughts and emotions.

It is worth noticing that the above definition says nothing about what the experience of Being is – only that it occurs when attention is unhooked from habitual thoughts and emotions, such as mind-wandering, rumination and habitual associations.

The advantage of defining Being in this way is that it is compatible with multiple metaphysical perspectives, and therapists are, therefore, not required to subscribe to any particular metaphysical ideas to adopt the Being-Centred approach to therapy presented in this book.

The metaphysical assumptions found among therapists can be grouped into three broad categories:

- **Optimistic reductionism:** Some therapists believe there is nothing beyond the physical. They will, therefore, believe the experience of Being can be explained fully by referring to physiological states in the brain and body.
- **Naturalistic dualism:** Other therapists believe that physical matter and consciousness are two separate and equally fundamental aspects of reality. They will, therefore, believe that the experience of Being should be understood as a state of consciousness – not a physical state.
- **Mysticism:** Yet other therapists believe in the existence of an all-pervasive divine or spiritual presence. They will tend to see the experience of Being as the direct experience of this presence.

Below, I describe these three perspectives in more detail and comment on how therapists operating from each may relate to the above definition of Being.

Optimistic reductionism

Some therapists believe that there is nothing other than physical states. From this point of view, any conscious experience including the experience of Being as defined above can, at least in principle, be fully explained through understanding the physical mechanisms of the brain (and potentially other physiological processes) that gives rise to this experience. This view is sometimes referred to as materialism or optimistic reductionism (Chalmers, 1995, 2010).

The main argument for optimistic reductionism is that because there is a tight correlation between certain physical brain-states and certain conscious experiences, then the brain-states must *cause* the experiences. If every single time an individual experiences a certain colour, there is the same activity in the same areas of this individual's brain, then (it is assumed) this activity in the brain must be what causes the experience of the colour.

For optimistic reductionists the definition of Being as what you experience when your attention is not occupied by thoughts and emotions, can be taken to mean that Being is the experience one will have when certain brain processes are inactive.

An optimistic reductionist may, for example, view thoughts and emotions as part of the body's regulatory system. Being can then be seen as the conscious experience that occurs when the organism is in homeostasis (a balanced state of internal physiological stability). In other words, the brain can be seen as a tool for

self-regulation, and when there is no need for self-regulation because all regulated parameters are well within the acceptable boundaries, the brain can take a break, resulting in an experience of profound well-being – and that is Being.

Experiencing this state frequently may, furthermore, have profoundly transformative effects on the individual's experience of themselves and their environment.

Thus, optimistic reductionists can see therapy that focuses on becoming aware of Being as a therapy that focuses on learning how to think and feel in ways that enhance (rather than hinder) homeostasis.

Naturalistic dualism

Other therapists believe that consciousness is something fundamentally different from physical matter. This view is often referred to as naturalistic dualism (Chalmers, 1995) since it sees consciousness and physical matter as two equally fundamental types of phenomena in that neither can be reduced to an effect of the other.

From this point of view, the experience of Being is a state of consciousness, not a physical brain state. Thus, even though it is possible to observe certain brain states in experienced meditators when they have conscious experiences of Being, these brain states do not explain or cause the experience of Being.

The main argument for naturalistic dualism is that correlation is different from causation. Thus, observed correlations between brain states and conscious experience cannot be taken as evidence that the physical states cause the experience¹. Furthermore, researchers have been unable to provide any explanation of how and why a physical state would bring about a conscious experience.

For naturalistic dualists, the definition of Being as that which you experience when your attention is not occupied with thoughts and emotions, can be taken to mean that Being is a particular state of consciousness.

A naturalistic dualist may, for example, differentiate between different states of consciousness, such as dreaming, rumination, flow and awareness of Being. Research has shown that the default state of consciousness while awake is

¹ Observing that A and B correlate does not tell us whether A causes B, B causes A or A and B are both caused by something else.

rumination² (Mason et al., 2007). In this state of consciousness, the individual's awareness is following strings of associated thoughts and emotions. Thus, naturalistic dualists can understand the above definition of Being as referring to the state of consciousness where the individual's awareness is still and not following these strings of thoughts and emotion.

Research has also shown that human beings are significantly more unhappy in rumination than in other states of consciousness. For example, people are happier when their attention is wholly absorbed in what they are currently doing (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Similarly, people are significantly happier when (for example during meditation) they are in the state of awareness of Being (Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010). Furthermore, frequently experiencing awareness of Being has positive impacts, even when not meditating (Brewer et al., 2011). Such research supports the notion that helping clients enter into the state of consciousness called awareness of Being will have profound therapeutic effects.

Thus, naturalistic dualists can see therapy that focuses on becoming aware of Being as a therapy that focuses on learning how to shift one's state of consciousness from rumination to awareness of Being, which has profoundly positive effects on the individual's well-being³.

It is worth noting that seeing consciousness as something different from physical matter does not automatically imply that there is anything supernatural about consciousness. Matter and consciousness are merely two fundamental properties of reality. To understand this, one can think about time and space, since these are also properties of reality that cannot be reduced to effects of physical matter⁴.

² This state is also referred to as mind-wandering or the monkey mind.

³ This would be analogous to learning to get better sleep since good sleep is another state of consciousness which has a profoundly positive impact on the individual's well-being – even when the individual is not asleep.

⁴ There are physicists working with quantum field theory who challenge whether space is a fundamental property, by suggesting that it might be an effect of quantum entanglement – a property of matter. But for the purpose of illustrating how consciousness can be considered a fundamental property of reality the comparison with time and space suffices.

Mysticism

Some therapists are influenced by various mystical traditions⁵. While different mystical traditions differ in their beliefs, they often share certain core assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge and what it means to live a good life.

- Mystics generally believe there is a divine or spiritual presence permeating and connecting all things and that this presence is what is real⁶.
- Mystics generally believe that true knowledge or enlightenment comes through personal, direct experiences of this presence.
- Mystics generally believe that life's deeper purpose relates to spiritual growth through cultivating awareness of the divine presence, since this enables living life guided by true knowledge – rather than misconceptions.

For therapists who operate from these beliefs, the definition of Being as what you experience when your attention is not occupied by thoughts and emotions can be taken to mean that Being is the experience of the divine presence that permeates everything.

It is common to find definitions of the divine presence in mystical traditions that mirror the definition of Being used in this book. For example, in Advaita Vedanta (a mystical tradition within Hinduism) pure consciousness (a name for the divine presence) is defined as “not this”, meaning that anything that can be defined as an object is not pure consciousness. Thus, according to this definition pure consciousness is precisely that which is not only beyond physical objects, but also beyond thoughts and emotions. Pure consciousness is not an object but rather that to which all objects appear.

⁵ Mystical traditions influencing various approaches to therapy include Sufism (Islamic mysticism), Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism), Christian mysticism, Hindu mysticism (Including Advaita Vedanta and Bhakti traditions), Buddhism, Taoism, various forms of Shamanism, Gnosticism (early Christian and pre-Christian mystical thought) and Theosophy to name a few.

⁶ Different traditions have different names for this Divine presence, including Allah or the Divine Essence (Sufism), Ein Sof or the Infinite (Kabbalah), God, the Holy Spirit, the Divine Presence, The Christ Consciousness or the Divine Light (Christian Mysticism), Brahman or Atman (Hindu Mysticism), Dharmakaya or Buddha-nature (Buddhism), the Tao or the Way (Taoism), the One or the Divine Principle (Greek mysticism), the Great Spirit (some Shamanistic traditions), the Pleroma or the Fullness (Gnosticism), the Absolute or the Universal Soul (Theosophy), the Jiva or the Pure Soul (Jainism), Source, Universal Energy, or Divine Light (various New Age traditions).

Similarly, it is common to find approaches to therapy which directly state that the therapy brings about experiences corresponding to what mystics call the mystical experience. For example, Richard Schwartz, the founder of Internal Family Systems states that IFS is “a conceptual framework that seems to fit well with most of the world’s spiritual traditions and it provides access, often much more rapidly than those traditions would believe [possible], to a kind of core essence in people that a lot of systems see as enlightenment” (Schwartz, 2018, Chapter 2). Similarly, Connirae Andreas, the founder of the Core Transformation Process, writes “One of the intriguing effects of the Core Transformation Process is that it taps directly into spiritual states” (Andreas & Andreas, 1994, p. 222).

To mystics, a therapy that focuses on becoming aware of Being is, thus, a therapy that focuses on creating circumstances under which clients may experience the divine presence directly and be transformed by this experience. Such transformation is therapeutic because it brings about knowledge that corrects the misconceptions about the world and the self that are the root cause of the client’s suffering. This may include knowledge about the fundamental interconnectedness of all things which resolves psychological issues such as separateness, isolation and loneliness. It may include knowledge about the universality of unconditional love which resolves psychological issues such as low self-worth, self-hatred and feeling unloved. It may include knowledge about the impermanent nature of all phenomena, which resolves psychological issues such as greed, fear of loss, obsessive behaviour and anxiety about the future.

It is worth noting that to mystics the experience of Being is ineffable. Both the experience itself and the knowledge it brings is beyond ordinary language. For this reason, direct experience is necessary as the knowledge that comes with such experience cannot be fully communicated through language. The chemist and philosopher Michael Polanyi (Polanyi, 1969, 1974) writes that when seeking to communicate personal knowledge⁷ through word, the words will only make sense to the people who already know.

Thus, therapists who are influenced by mystical traditions can see therapy that focuses on becoming aware of Being as a therapy that focuses on bringing about

⁷ Polanyi wrote about personal knowledge arising from experience in general – not specifically about knowledge arising from the mystical experience. Nevertheless, his point is highly relevant in that context.

transformation of consciousness and attainment the knowledge that will resolve psychological issues and allow the individual to live a more fulfilling life.

Translating between perspectives

Throughout the book, I will use different concepts and phrases which at first glance may seem to be exclusive to the perspective of mysticism. I may, for example, write about “the divine”, “the true nature of mind” or “the essence of the human being”. Such phrases are, indeed, borrowed from mystical traditions. However, there is nothing preventing readers from translating such phrases into their preferred perspective.

For example, reductionists will generally reject accounts of encounters with the divine as superstition. However, it is possible to regard such accounts as poetic descriptions of the subjective experience of states of physiological homeostasis. Reductionists may even acknowledge that it can be necessary to resort to poetry to accurately capture certain subjective experiences. For example, for the purpose of communicating a subjective experience of watching a beautiful sunset, poetry may be far superior to a description of the physical processes involved, such as how photons with certain wavelengths affect the retinas and create electric impulses in certain regions of the brain. In the same way, the subjective experience of a state of homeostasis may be best described as “divinely pleasant” and the effects prolonged exposure to this state has on our subjective experience of ourselves and our environment may be best described as “divine blessings”. Thus, therapists who prefer the reductionist perspective can read accounts of encounters with the divine as poetic descriptions of how certain physiological states *feel* to us in our subjective experience. Reductionists may regard such descriptions as valuable insofar as they, properly understood, can enable individuals to use their subjective experience to “monitor” their physiological states. Without the help of machines, it is difficult to point to a state of homeostasis. It is, however, possible to point to the subjective experiences that correlate with such a state. Thus, descriptions of the subjective experiences that correlate with homeostasis can establish a feedback mechanism that allows individuals to learn how to better self-regulate.

Similarly, naturalistic dualists will typically reject notions of divine love or an all-pervasive great spirit as supernatural. However, it is possible to understand such notions as referring to particular states of consciousness rather than to anything supernatural. Divine love can be understood as referring to a particular state of consciousness where the individual feels a profound sense of being both loved

and loving. Similarly, the great spirit may refer to a state of consciousness where the individual acutely experiences the interconnectedness of all things. Having names for different states of consciousness that reflect the related subjective experience can be of great help when researching them.

Finally, mystics often reject the reductionist's focus on physiological states. However, it is possible to understand the reductionist's description of physiological states as descriptions of either the physiological effects of the mystical experience or the physiological prerequisites for attaining the mystical experience. Stanislav Groff, a prominent figure in transpersonal psychology, likens the brain to a radio receiver that enables humans to "tune in to" the divine presence. In short, much of what reductionists have to say about the correlations between subjective experiences and physiological states remains valid and valuable regardless of whether it is assumed that one causes the other or vice versa. Mystics also tend to reject the naturalistic dualist's notion of dualism, since many mystical traditions are monistic, meaning that they believe everything is made up of a single substance⁸. However, it is possible to engage with what naturalistic dualists claim about the antecedents and effects of experiencing different states of consciousness without agreeing on whether matter is created by consciousness or not.

⁸ Pre-Socratic Greek philosophers believed that all was made of a single substance. Different philosophers proposed different substances, including water (Thales of Miletus), fire (Heraclitus), air (Anaximenes), the infinite (Anaximander) or atoms (Leucippus and Democritus). Others believe that all is made of consciousness. Theistic traditions can be seen as proponents of this view since they generally hold that the physical universe was created by God or the Gods. Yet others believe that both the physical and consciousness are empty in the sense that neither would exist without the other. This is the view held by scholars in the Madhyamika tradition (Tibetan Buddhism), such as Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti.

In short, it is not necessary to subscribe to a particular metaphysical perspective to benefit from the tools presented in this book. The only assumptions one would have to accept are:

- That when you unhook your attention from thoughts and emotions, you can have a particularly interesting type of experience.
- That the lack of this experience underpins much of the psychological suffering that makes clients seek therapy.
- That having this experience has profoundly positive effects on the individual beyond the duration of the experience itself.

It is my hope that the system presented in this book can provide a basis for respectful and mutually enriching dialogue between different perspectives on therapy. Far too often, such dialogue is prematurely terminated due to differences in assumptions – even when such assumptions are not strictly central to the topic of discussion.

Next, I will introduce the concept of Aspects of Being or Essences, which will help account for variation in individual experiences of Being.

1.3.2. Aspects of Being (Essences)

Another concept that I use throughout the book is the concept of Aspects of Being (or Essences), which I define in the following way:

Aspects of Being are the qualitatively different ways in which individuals experience Being.

To understand why Being would be experienced in qualitatively different ways we can draw on a common metaphor for Being, namely space.

Drawing on this metaphor, we can see thoughts and emotions as analogous to physical objects and Being as analogous to the space that contains these objects. Switching one's attention from thoughts and emotions to Being is analogous to switching one's attention from physical objects to the space that contains them⁹.

While space does not have any properties of its own, it can be experienced as having properties when compared to physical objects. For example, space is

⁹ It is common to distinguish between “mind” and “consciousness” using this same metaphor, so that “mind” refers to the content of consciousness, including thoughts, emotions and sense impressions, and “consciousness” refers to the space in which this content appears – or as *that* to which this content appears. This distinction sees “consciousness” as synonymous with “Being”.

lighter than any physical object, since space has no mass, whereas any physical object does. Space is also more stable than any physical object, since any physical object eventually deteriorates, whereas space does not.

In the same way, Being does not have any properties of its own, but it can be experienced as having properties when compared to different thoughts and emotions. For example, because judgements are thoughts and Being is defined as that which is beyond thoughts and emotions, Being is by definition non-judgemental. Similarly, because concerns and worries are thoughts, Being is by definition care-free. Because disturbances belong to the realm of thoughts and emotions, Being is peaceful.

Many approaches to therapies seek to harvest the therapeutic potential of what spiritual traditions refer to as “mystical experiences” and what here is referred to as the experience of Being. These approaches to therapy often contain classifications of the distinct characteristics of this experience.

For example, Core Transformation (Andreas & Andreas, 1994) operates with the qualities of wholeness, oneness, peace, love and OKness. Internal Family Systems (Schwartz, 1995) operates with the self-energies of compassion, curiosity, clarity, creativity, calm, confidence, courage and connectedness. The Diamond Approach (Almaas, 2002) and Diamond Logos operate with multiple Essences, such as freedom, grounding, vitality, peace, compassion, and joy. Such classifications are often inspired by a combination of client reports and classifications from spiritual traditions, such as the *Latifa* in Sufism, the *chakras* in Hinduism and the seven heavenly virtues in Christianity.

In this book, I will operate with a classification system consisting of ten aspects of Being. I will call these aspects of Being “Essences” and use colours to name each Essence¹⁰:

1. Unconditional Support, Grounding and Confidence (White Essence)
2. Unconditional Strength, Courage, Passion and Vitality (Red Essence)
3. Unconditional Peace, Power and Intimacy (Black Essence)
4. Unconditional Compassion and Loving-Kindness (Green Essence)
5. Unconditional Appreciation and Acceptance (Pink Essence)
6. Unconditional Joy, Happiness and Curiosity (Yellow Essence)
7. Unconditional Unity, Bonding and Surrender (Gold Essence)
8. Unconditional Nourishment, Satisfaction and Fulfilment (Cream Essence)
9. Unconditional Clarity, Intelligence and Guidance (Blue Essence)
10. Unconditional Freedom, Openness & Receptivity (Clear Essence)

This is not an exhaustive list of how people can experience Being. However, ten categories are enough for the purpose of this book. I will expand on these ten qualities of Being in Section 2.3 The 10 aspects of Being.

In the remainder of this section, I will explain why I use the qualifier “unconditional” in front of the words used to name each Essence.

The qualifiers “conditional” and “unconditional” can be used to distinguish clearly between situations where a word refers to a state of thought/emotion and situations where this same word refers to a quality of Being, which is beyond thought/emotion.

For example, “conditional peace” refers to a particular mental/emotional state that arises when an individual perceives their environment as not containing anything that would cause agitation. Conversely, “unconditional peace” refers to the fact that Being cannot contain agitation because agitation is a

¹⁰ This classification system is an adaptation of the system used in the Diamond Approach/Diamond Logos tradition, which in turn is an adaptation and extension of the Sufi lataif system. Essence 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 corresponds to the five lataif of God’s Command and are labelled with the same colours used in the Punjab tradition within the Naqshbandi order: Qualb is yellow, Ruh is red, Sirr is white, Khafi is Black and Ikhfa is green (Almaas, 1986, pp. 142–143; Shah, 1971, pp. 145, 334, 340, 430). Essence 5 and 7, 8, 9 and 10 correspond to the essences used in Diamond Approach/Diamond Logos. However, Essences 8, 9 and 10 are labelled using colours different from those used in the Diamond Approach/Diamond Logos to keep a consistent practice of labelling.

mental/emotional state and Being is defined as that which is beyond thoughts and emotions.

Similarly, a person can be “conditionally non-judgemental” in the sense of actively suspending their judgements. Being “unconditionally non-judgemental” on the other hand refers to the fact that the experience of Being cannot contain any judgements because judgements are thoughts and emotions and Being is beyond thoughts and emotions.

I will expand on the distinction between conditional and unconditional phenomena in Section 3.2.

In this book, I will use “Essence”, “aspect of Being”, unconditional phenomena and the colour relating to each Essence interchangeably. Thus, I may refer to the first Essence in the above classification as “White Essence”, “the White aspect of Being”, “unconditional grounding” or simply “White”.

1.3.3. Personality Parts

Several different approaches to therapy use the concept of “personality parts”¹¹.

Generally, the concept of personality parts is used to refer to distinct aspects or sub-personalities within an individual’s overall personality, each with its own unique traits, behaviours and roles. These parts can influence thoughts, emotions, and actions, and can either be in conflict or work in harmony.

However, there are also differences between how the concept of personality parts is used in different approaches to therapy and by individual therapists. Some approaches operate with a fixed set of predefined personality parts, such as the super-ego, ego and id of the psychodynamic approaches. Other approaches to therapy operate with a potentially limitless number of personality parts which they classify according to their function, such as the managers (protective parts), firefighters (reactive parts) and exiles (parts carrying wounds) of Internal Family Systems or the parent, adult and child ego-states of Transactional Analysis. Yet other approaches to therapy, such as Gestalt Therapy, operate with an exploratory attitude towards both the number of parts and the function of these parts. Furthermore, some therapists will see the notion of personality parts as a

¹¹ For example, psychodynamic therapies, Transactional Therapy, Gestalt Therapy, Internal Family Systems Therapy and Relational Focusing.

metaphorical way of describing what is going on in the psyche, while others will consider personality parts to be actual entities operating within the individual.

In the interest of giving the tools in the present book the broadest possible appeal, I define a “personality part” as:

A cluster of mutually supportive/reinforcing mental, emotional and behavioural patterns in the service of a single agenda.

Let’s look at an example to illustrate how this definition works. Imagine an individual who has a mental habit of interpreting certain behaviour in other people, such as being late for meetings, as a sign that these people do not value him. This may give rise to feelings of insignificance or inadequacy. This emotional pattern may lead the individual to behave in ways that will give other people the impression that it is ok to be late for meetings with him. At the same time, if the individual feels insignificant and inadequate, he may be more likely to interpret other people’s lateness as evidence that these people do not value him. These patterns may serve the purpose of avoiding abandonment by others by creating and maintaining a sense of low value which prevents the individual from asserting himself in ways that may lead to disruption of relationships with others. Such a cluster of mutually supportive and reinforcing mental, emotional and behavioural patterns in support of a particular agenda is what I refer to as a personality part. I will expand on this notion of personality parts in Section 6.1.

1.3.4. Personality Structure

A concept that is closely related to the concept of “personality parts” is “personality structure” or simply “personality”. In this book, I define “personality structure” as:

The total system of all of an individual’s personality parts.

Below, I draw on the definition of personality parts to make two (relatively uncontroversial) claims about personality structure and propose that it follows from these claims that personality structure can be used as a guide to become aware of Being.

First claim: The personality structure is a layered structure

The purpose of any personality part is to reach a certain goal. Sometimes the way one personality part seeks to reach its goal will create problems, and another personality part develops around the goal of solving this problem. For example, an individual’s personality structure may contain a personality part that seeks to

produce the feeling of being connected with other people by going along with whatever other people want. However, a problematic side effect of following this strategy could be that the individual will disregard their own needs. Therefore, another personality part may develop which seeks to deal with this problem. This personality part may seek to create space for the fulfilment of the individual's own needs keeping other people at a distance. Following this strategy will, in turn, create other problems, and other personality parts may develop to deal with these problems. Consequently, the personality structure is a layered structure where many personality parts are reacting to problematic consequences of following the strategies of other personality parts. I will expand on the layered nature of the personality structure in Section 5.2.

Second claim: The goal of the personality structure is Being

Because the purpose of any personality part is to reach a certain goal, once the goal is reached the personality part becomes dormant, since it is only needed as long as the goal has not been reached. Consequently, one can say that all personality parts ultimately seek to make themselves redundant. Since personality parts consist of "pre-programmed" thoughts and emotions, one can further say that all personality parts ultimately seek the state beyond such thoughts and emotions. In other words, all personality parts, and by extension the entire personality structure, ultimately seek Being. I will expand on this idea in Section 2.5.1.

The personality structure can be used to become aware of Being

These two characteristics of the personality structure are important because they enable us to use the personality structure as a tool to become aware of Being.

Because all personality parts ultimately seek Being, it is possible to use a client's personality parts as tools to direct the client's awareness towards Being. We can do so by exploring what each part is ultimately reaching for since this will be Being. Because the personality structure is layered, we can also become aware of Being by repeatedly directing our awareness towards that which any personality part is reacting to. In other words, we can become aware of Being by exploring what is at the core of the layered personality structure. By exploring what precedes the activity of any personality part, we can discover what is beyond thoughts and emotions. In some approaches to therapy, this is captured in the metaphor of seeing therapy as the activity of peeling an onion.

In the above, I have briefly introduced and defined some key concepts used in this book, namely Being, Aspects of Being (Essences), Personality Parts and Personality Structure. I have sought to define these concepts in such a way that they are compatible with as many approaches to therapy as possible.

I will now briefly comment on what purpose I hope this book can fulfil.

1.4. The purpose of the book

As mentioned above, there are many approaches to therapy which directly or indirectly seek to harvest the therapeutic potential of what spiritual traditions call mystical experiences and what in this book is called experiences of Being.

However, the techniques employed by these approaches to bring about direct and personal experiences of Being may appear rather different. One of the reasons for this is that these different techniques focus on resolving different types of blocks that prevent clients from having experiences of Being. In the language of this book, different approaches focus on untying different knots.

The ambition of the present book is to compile and organise practices for bringing about experiences of Being in a comprehensive and detailed model.

Such a model can serve several purposes.

First, I see the potential for using the 5 Knots model to classify different approaches to therapy that work with experiences of Being according to which knot(s) they primarily work with. This can help illuminate advantages and limitations of different techniques for bringing about experiences of Being.

Second, the 5 Knots model can help therapists extend and develop their techniques by having a clear understanding of the knot the techniques are untying and comparing their own techniques with others that work with the same knot.

Third, the 5 Knots model can help therapists develop appreciation for techniques, which aim to untie knots that cannot be untied using the therapists' current techniques. In other words, the model can illuminate how different techniques for developing awareness of Being can be complementary.

Fourth, it is my hope that the 5 Knots model can support therapists and seekers from *any* tradition in harvesting the therapeutic potential the direct and personal experience of Being has to offer.

Fifth, it is also my hope that the 5 Knots model can offer a common language that can facilitate productive dialogue between not only practitioners in different

therapeutic communities, but also between therapists, scientists, psychologists and mystics.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I give an overview of how the book is structured.

1.5. The structure of the book

The book is structured in seven chapters: One introductory chapter, five chapters outlining the 5 knots and how to untie them and a final chapter on how to integrate the experiences from Being-Centred Therapy in everyday life.

In Chapter 1, I have introduced the idea that lack of awareness of Being underpins many of the issues clients bring to therapy and that developing awareness of Being, therefore, can have great therapeutic effects. I have also outlined the purpose of the book as providing a model that can support therapists in harvesting the therapeutic potential of experiencing Being and facilitate dialogue between different approaches to therapy, and between therapists, scientists, psychologists and mystics. Finally, I have defined some key concepts I will use throughout the book.

In the following five chapters, I will describe five distinct mechanisms that prevent clients from developing awareness of Being and five therapeutic processes that can counter these mechanisms and help clients develop such awareness. Furthermore, I will describe the misconceptions underpinning the mechanisms and comment on how direct and personal experience of Being can replace these misconceptions with true knowledge.

In Chapter 2, I discuss how giving the experience of Being a positive name encourages individuals to perceive Being as an object and develop ideas about this object rather than letting their awareness dwell on the experience of Being. If this move of attention away from the direct experience towards ideas becomes automatic and pervasive, it will lead to loss of awareness of Being. Losing awareness of Being by conceptualising it as a positive thing is the Knot of Positive Reification. This knot lays the ground for all other knots. The Knot of Positive Reification is untied by encouraging the individual to move their awareness from the positive concept back to the underlying felt sense. This process is called Sensing Abundance.

In Chapter 3, I discuss how the things we seek in life are proxies for Being and how seeking these things will further take our awareness away from Being, thus exacerbating the sense of loss we seek to remedy through our actions. This is the Knot of Conditionality. This knot is untied by raising awareness of the felt sense the individual is ultimately seeking through their pursuits of various objects (external as well as internal). This process is called Sensing Completion.

In Chapter 4, I discuss two mechanisms through which the experience of Being can come to appear to us as something negative we must avoid. We can come to see Being as something negative when we, in our pursuit of one aspect of the experience of Being, dismiss another aspect of Being as irrelevant or as an obstacle. We can also come to see Being as something negative when we blame Being for the suffering created by the misconceived ways in which we seek it. Seeing Being as something negative will lead us to actively avoid it, thus exacerbating the sense of loss we feel when we lose awareness of Being. This is the Knot of Negative Reification. This knot is untied by exploring the felt sense of that which we avoid while setting aside our judgements. This process is called Sensing Taboos.

In Chapter 5, I discuss how the habitual and automatic nature of our acts of interpretation makes it difficult for us to recognise how these acts create the suffering we experience. Instead, we ascribe our suffering to external factors. However, seeking to deal with the external factors we believe are the cause of our suffering takes our attention away from Being, thus exacerbating the real issue. This is the Knot of Agency. To untie this knot, we must become aware of the acts of interpretation underlying our suffering. This process is called Sensing Agency.

In Chapter 6, I discuss how internal conflicts can be seen as the result of different personality parts seeking different aspects of Being in conflicting ways. Seeking to resolve such inner conflicts, whether by choosing one part over the other or by developing a compromise, will occupy our attention and draw it away from noticing Being. This will only deepen the sense of loss that each personality part seeks to remedy and, consequently, intensify the conflict. This is the Knot of Fragmentation. This knot is untied by the simultaneous experience of the two aspects of Being our conflicting personality parts are seeking. This experience will reveal that while the strategies the personality parts employ may be in conflict, what they are seeking are not, since what they seek are two aspects of the same. This process is called Sensing Unity.

Chapters 2-6 each have five main sections.

The first section contains a general description of the knot and of any theoretical concepts needed to understand the knot.

The second section contains a description of the misconceptions that lead to the formation of the knots. For each misconception, I describe how it arises from other misconceptions, the implications understanding the misconception has for therapy and how these implications can be summarised in a corrective principle that can guide therapy.

The third section contains a process for untying the knot. Each process starts with techniques for recognising the knot followed by techniques for untying the knot by using the dynamics of the knot to make the client aware of Being. The section ends with follow-up processes that use the experience the client has gained from the main process to correct the misconceptions outlined in section two.

The fourth section provides examples of how to untie the knot in one-to-one sessions. It contains transcriptions of sessions that exemplify the process for untying the knot. Each session is written out with two columns. One column contains the dialogue between client and therapist and the other column contains commentary describing the observations and reasoning underpinning the therapist's questions and interventions.

The fifth section contains examples of how to untie the knot by using contemplation exercises, which students can engage with on their own or in couples. This is particularly useful when working with groups.

In Chapter 7, I focus on how to support clients in integrating and embodying the realisations gained by experiencing awareness of Being, so they can live their lives in accordance with these realisations. Many mystical and philosophical traditions refer to the process of becoming aware of Being as "realisation" and process of integrating and living from this awareness as "actualisation". In Chapter 7, I offer a fresh perspective on the process of actualisation. I propose that actualisation is the process of using conscious experiences of Being to alter the embodied grounding of one's conceptual systems in such a way that it becomes easier to sustain awareness of Being during interactions with the environment outside any therapeutic context and, thus, to live in accordance with such awareness and the knowledge it brings. This view on actualisation is derived from newer research relating to memory reconsolidation, Cognitive Metaphor Theory and Embodied Cognition.

26 The 5 Knots

And now, let's explore the first of the 5 Knots: The Knot of Positive Reification.