

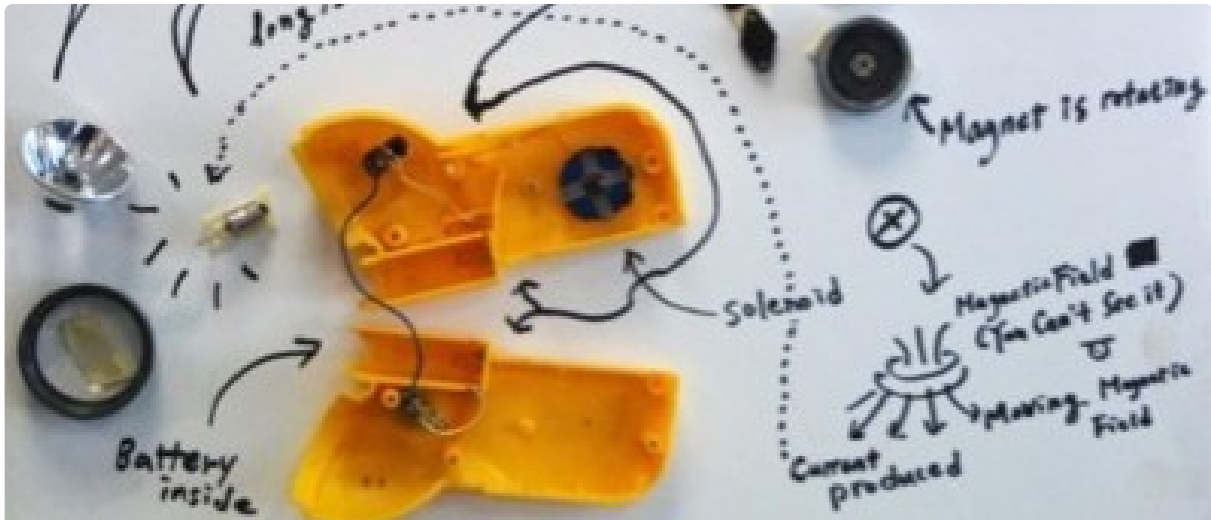
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## Taking the Whole Apart

Lincoln Stoller, PhD, 2016

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## The Whole

Why do we think of ourselves as a whole person? If we were not whole people, then would we recognize our different selves? What does it mean to entertain different opinions, and where do changes of mind come from if not from different parts of us?

Like the Grey Sisters of Greek mythology the family of our mind shares one eyeball, passing our sense of self from one personality to another. Living a "Being John Malkovitch" life we are animated by who ever happens to drop in at the moment. How do we pull off the appearance of sanity, or is disintegration just part of our definition of it?



## The Parts

Parts Therapy is a twist on the therapeutic goal of making a person whole. In Parts Therapy you first take a conflicted person apart in order to find out who they are, and to explore their conflict. We often speak from the voice of a different opinion, but rarely do we speak the voices of several opinions at once. Do your points of view actually speak to each other? If you think carefully, I believe you will admit that the answer is "maybe."

Parts therapy is the Observer Effect -- in which the observer influences what is observed -- as it applies to us looking at ourselves . Parts therapy says we are not one person of different minds, but different people inhabiting one mind. Our cherished "self" is a puppet operated by black-clothed puppeteers invisible against the shadow of our thoughts. As a director convenes actors to discuss a production, so the hypnotist asks the people inside us to introduce themselves to ourselves.... and they emerge, and they usually do speak. Their voices are familiar but they are not you.



Parts Therapy begins with a problem and asks us to give voice to each side of the conflict. More than that, it asks us to conjure separate people representing the poles of our internal conflict. The hypnotist calls out each part in turn, asks them to identify themselves and state their point of view so that the other parts may gain a better understanding of the whole. With the issues on the table, and the

vested interests at the table, we broker an agreement.

The two sides of your issue rarely understand each other, and often refuse to work with each other. Does this sound familiar? If you've ever felt like this, you'll recognize those who emerge as different people with stubborn, irreconcilable attitudes. These "people" do not seem entirely like you. They don't appear to recognize that there is any "you" apart from them. If you are them, and they disagree, then is there someone else inside you who sees a bigger picture than either side individually?

## **Wiser Minds**

My friend's issue was not simple. It was the conflict between meaning and safety. We spent an hour talking it down to a basic conflict. I led my friend into a deep state of trance and I called for him to speak from the voice of safety.

Truculent, suspicious, and somewhat fed up a voice came and introduced itself as "Remain Safe." We spoke at length about the issues Remain Safe takes care of. How he deflects and protects my friend from other points of view. I asked him if he'd stay and listen as I called others to come and speak, and he agreed.

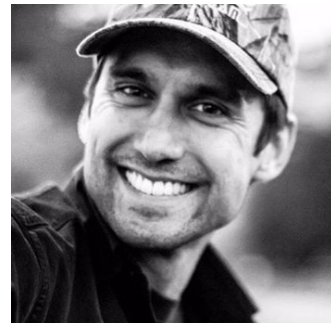
I called for the voice of meaning, and a voice came and identified itself as Love. He said simply that he pursued truth and fulfillment. This required my friend to have faith in himself and to undertake new ventures and risks. There was love to be gained but Love said that Remain Safe did not understand.

Thanking Love, I asked him to wait and turned again to Remain Safe. What did he think of what Love had to say, what did he need from Love, and what could he offer in return? Remain Safe was clearly frustrated and frightened of something. He refused to further engage in this conversation.

"Is there someone else here who can help resolve this conflict? Please indicate your presence to us," I asked and then we waited. After a while a third voice spoke and called itself Wiser Mind. Wiser Mind explained that what Love and Remain Safe were doing was part of the whole that was my friend, but that neither understood the needs of the other.

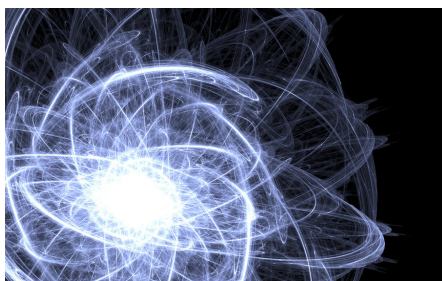
Wiser Mind put into words what Remain Safe could not, and said it in a way that Love could understand. Wiser Mind explained to Love that Remain Safe harbored unadmitted fears. It was Wiser Mind, not I, who opened a path toward reconciliation. After an hour of conversation between the four of us Love and Remain Safe reach a working agreement.

To conclude the session I asked all parties to return my friend to one mind, to affirm their alliance and reintegrate. Love embraced Remain Safe while Remain Safe preferred to shake hands. We walked back through a body scan, past a mindful meditation, to the normal "street scene" of consciousness, alert, aware, and awake.



## Prevail

After a couple of days my friend reports the process was very helpful saying, "The parts seem to be working together well at the moment and this is playing out nicely in my relationships in the world so far."



What is happening here? Are we really an assembly of parts whose invisible joinery reflects our self ignorance? Or are we more like an atom whose electrons we conjure into existence by shining a light on them? Are we both or neither, or both and neither?

In Past Life Regression we raise our state, aiming to encounter and merge with a higher state of mind. In Parts Therapy we turn up the contrast on our view of the ordinary, calling personalities from backstage to resolve their differences. We then resume the show. If Past Life Regression is an integration across time, then Parts Therapy is an integration across space. Both are dimensions of ourselves that we call into existence by looking for them.

As outside so within. Our worldly experience reflects the world inside ourselves. The experience of our own life, together with the schema of our ancestral family, creates the people we imagine ourselves to be, and the people we imagine we live among.

If I am a figment of my imagination held together by spit and baling wire, then other people are held together by even less. We do not know each other, or ourselves, until we have met the whole family, but who is "we," and how many generations does this family span?



*Abbot and Costello*

*Abbott: "I'm telling you. Who's on first, What's on second, I Don't Know is on third..."*

*Costello: "You know the fellows' names?"*

*Abbott: "Yes."*

*Costello: "Well, then who's playing first?"*

*Abbott: "Yes."*

*Costello: "I mean the fellow's name on first base."*

*Abbott: "Who."*

*Costello: "The fellow playin' first base."*

*Abbott: "Who."*

*Costello: "The guy on first base."*

*Abbott: "Who is on first."*

*Costello: "Well, what are you askin' me for?"*

The "[Who's on First](#)" skit from Abbot and Costello, 1953.

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