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# THE INTROJECTION OF THE AGGRESSOR:

*A perspective on  
psychotraumatic  
mechanisms*

Psih. Maria-Magdalena  
MACARENCO, PhD



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# WHAT IS AN INTROJECT?

- “Introjection and Transfer” (S. Ferenczi), 1909
- A psychological process through which external objects, ideas, or attitudes are internalized into the individual's psyche;
- A normal process of psychological development;
- Proposed in contrast to 'projection'—internal conflicts or emotions are **externalized** / displaced onto the external world (Freud).



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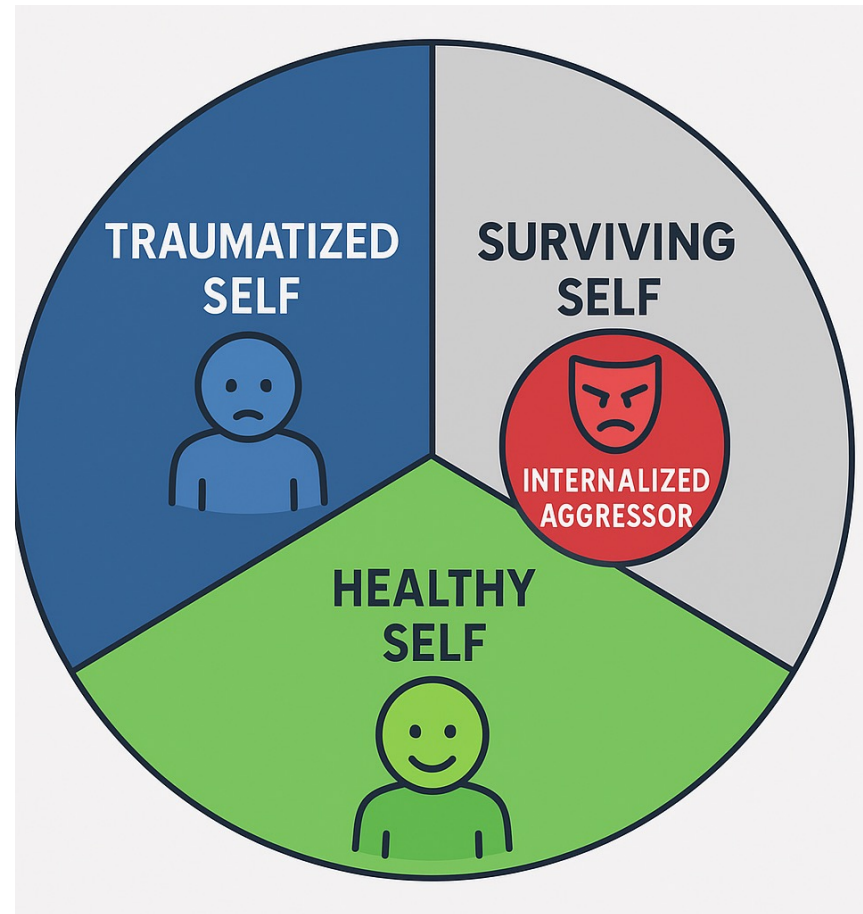
## WHAT IS THE INTROJECTION OF THE AGGRESSOR?

- *Confusion of Tongues*, S. Ferenczi, 1933
- The abused children adopt the beliefs and attitudes of the aggressor as a survival strategy
- Suppression of personal will and internalization of violence
- Internalization of perpetrator's guilt (self-blame)
- *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence*, Anna Freud, 1936
- Melanie Klein, Otto Kernberg, (...) Ralf Vogt, & Franz Ruppert

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## INTERNALIZED AGGRESSOR: A SURVIVAL STRATEGY -THE IOPT PERSPECTIVE-

- The individual suppresses their own suffering and adopts the behaviors of the aggressor;
- The victim loses empathy for themselves, resulting in a self-perception of being "bad" or "unworthy";
- A constant repetition and oscillation between self-aggression and the aggression toward others.



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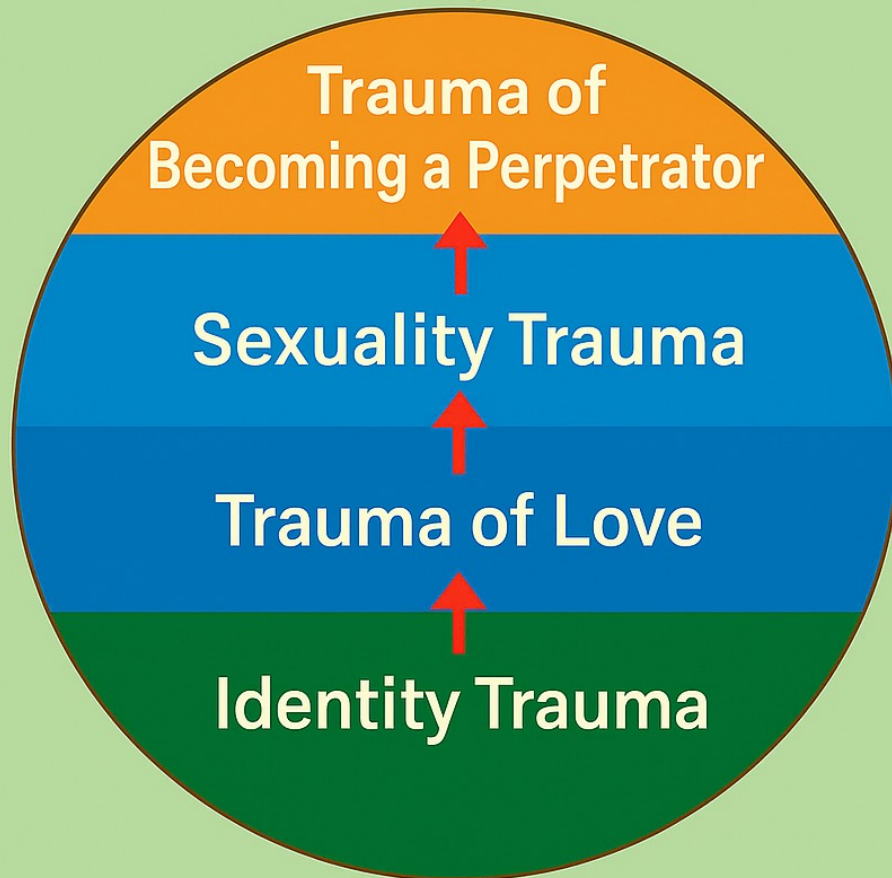
# HOW DO WE RECOGNIZE THE PERPETRATOR INTROJECT?

Lack of empathy

Lack of compassion

- Self-contempt, chronic guilt and shame
  - Self-punishment (e.g. self-harm, abusive relationships, chronic failure)
  - Repetition of abusive dynamics (victim-aggressor roles)
  - Rejection of compassion and support
  - Aggression toward the vulnerable;
  - Justification of the abuser, unconscious complicity
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# THE TRAUMA BIOGRAPHY (according to IoPT)



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Trauma of becoming a Perpetrator  
= a natural consequence of Trauma  
Biography

HOWEVER..

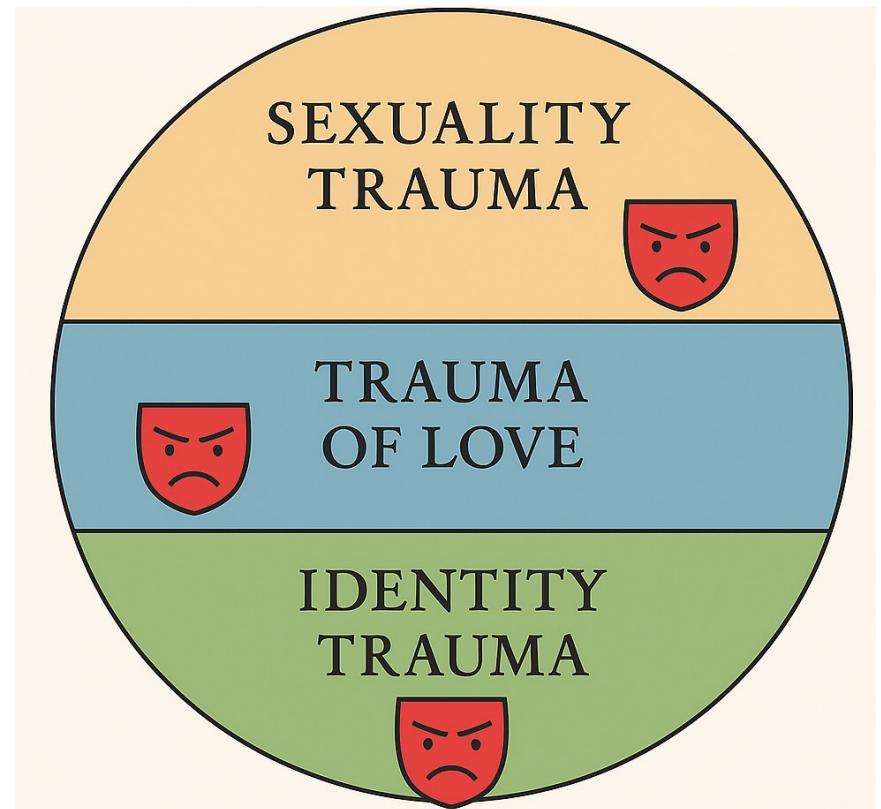
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## A NEW ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE TRAUMA BIOGRAPHY

...the Trauma of Becoming an Aggressor can actually be found at all levels, beginning already with Identity Trauma, when the child internalizes the NO of the mother.

Rooted in Identity Trauma, which is prenatal, the Trauma of Becoming an Aggressor is, therefore, also prenatal.

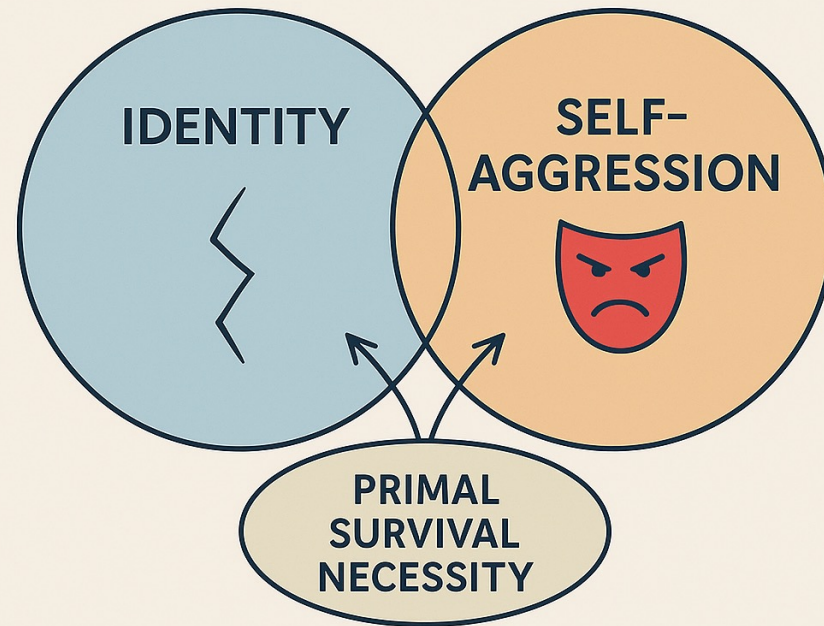


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# THE INTERNALIZED AGGRESSOR ACROSS THE TRAUMA BIOGRAPHY

- **Identity Trauma** → The unwanted baby introjects the mother's rejection ("No!") and turns it against itself.
  - **Love Trauma** → The victim-aggressor dynamic becomes relational and emotional.
  - **Sexuality Trauma** → The victim-aggressor dynamic manifests through bodily and intimate violations.
  - **→ The perpetrator dynamic is not merely a late-stage/separated phenomenon; it exists latently from the very beginning and progressively shapes the individual's internal world.**
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Identity and self-aggression co-emerge  
from the same primal survival response.

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PRENATAL  
INTROJECTION OF THE  
AGGRESSOR:

PSYCHOTRAUMATIC  
MECHANISMS



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# 1. EXPOSURE TO MATERNAL DYSREGULATED AFFECTS

- The fetus lacks a differentiated Self
  - Maternal affects become part of the fetus's internal environment
  - The unborn baby **perceives them as states of its own body**
  - Destructive affects are introjected as persecutory internal parts.
  - *„If I cannot escape the danger, I become the danger”*
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## 2. INTROJECTION OF THE AGGRESSOR THROUGH „IMPLICIT DIALOG“ WITH MOTHER

- Maternal emotional tone, heart rhythm, and physiological shifts caused by fear or anger
- Unwanted pregnancy:
  - The fetus senses maternal hostility: *"I am a threat."*
- First manifestations of self-aggression:
  - *"I cannot be wanted."*
  - *"I am guilty for my mother's suffering."*
- Early signal of aggressor introjection:
  - *"I should not have been born."*

The persecutory message is introjected through nonverbal/implicit communication

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# HOW DO WE INTERVENE?

## THE ROLE OF THE THERAPIST IN IOPT

1. Recognize the mechanism and establish safety (emotional awareness, non-permission for aggression)
  2. Use clarifying questions (and a resonator) to uncover the internalized perpetrator:
    - a) Client separates from the introject OR
    - b) Client resists and remains in aggression:
      3. Set firm, non-confrontational boundaries
      4. Interrupting the process to prevent further self-aggression (empathically)
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# RECOVERY OF IDENTITY

A process of deconstructing unconscious loyalties and reconstructing the authentic self



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- SELF-APPRECIATION
  - AUTONOMY
  - PERSONAL VALUES



# CONCLUSIONS



- Introjection of the aggressor is a survival strategy born within Identity Trauma
- Trauma of Becoming an Aggressor is a transversal manifestation that begins prenatally
- Each layer of trauma in the biography contains the perpetrator dynamic
- IoPT reflects and deepens the understanding provided by the classic and contemporary literature
- IoPT supports the healing and recovery of our authentic identity



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...and healing begins with an Intention

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