

SENTIMENTALISM

NATURALISM

# A Few Artistic Modes

REALISM

THE ROMANCE

THE ABSURD

THE GROTESQUE

# There are *many* ways to categorize the narrative arts, including:

- by *form*: essay, autobiography; poetry, drama, short story, novel, film; tapestry, sculpture, painting, film; picaresque, bildungsroman, künstlerroman, etc.
- by *setting*: history, mythology; urban, rural; fantasy, sci-fi
- by *tone*: tragedy, comedy, satire, thriller, horror, crime, erotica, adventure, religious allegory, etc.
- by *depth of vision*: sentimentalism, realism, naturalism, romanticism, the absurd, the grotesque . . .

# Dig, We Must

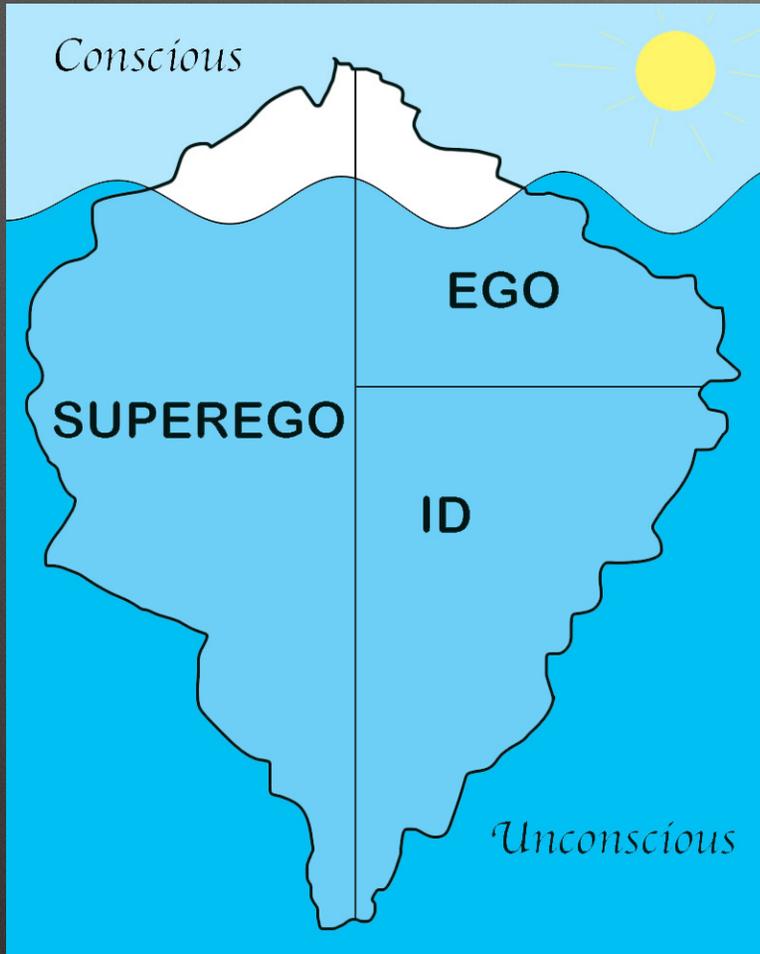
- “All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beneath the surface do so at their own peril.”  
(O. Wilde, Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*)
- “These questions are very profound [. . .] Only the trained diver can go down into those depths and explore them and come to the surface again.”  
(J. Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*)
- “The artist penetrates the concrete world in order to find at its depths the image of its source, the image of ultimate reality.”  
(F. O’Connor, “Novelist and Believer”)



**motivation matters**

**and motivation is a  
very *messy* matter . . .**

# Popular Models of the Layered Life

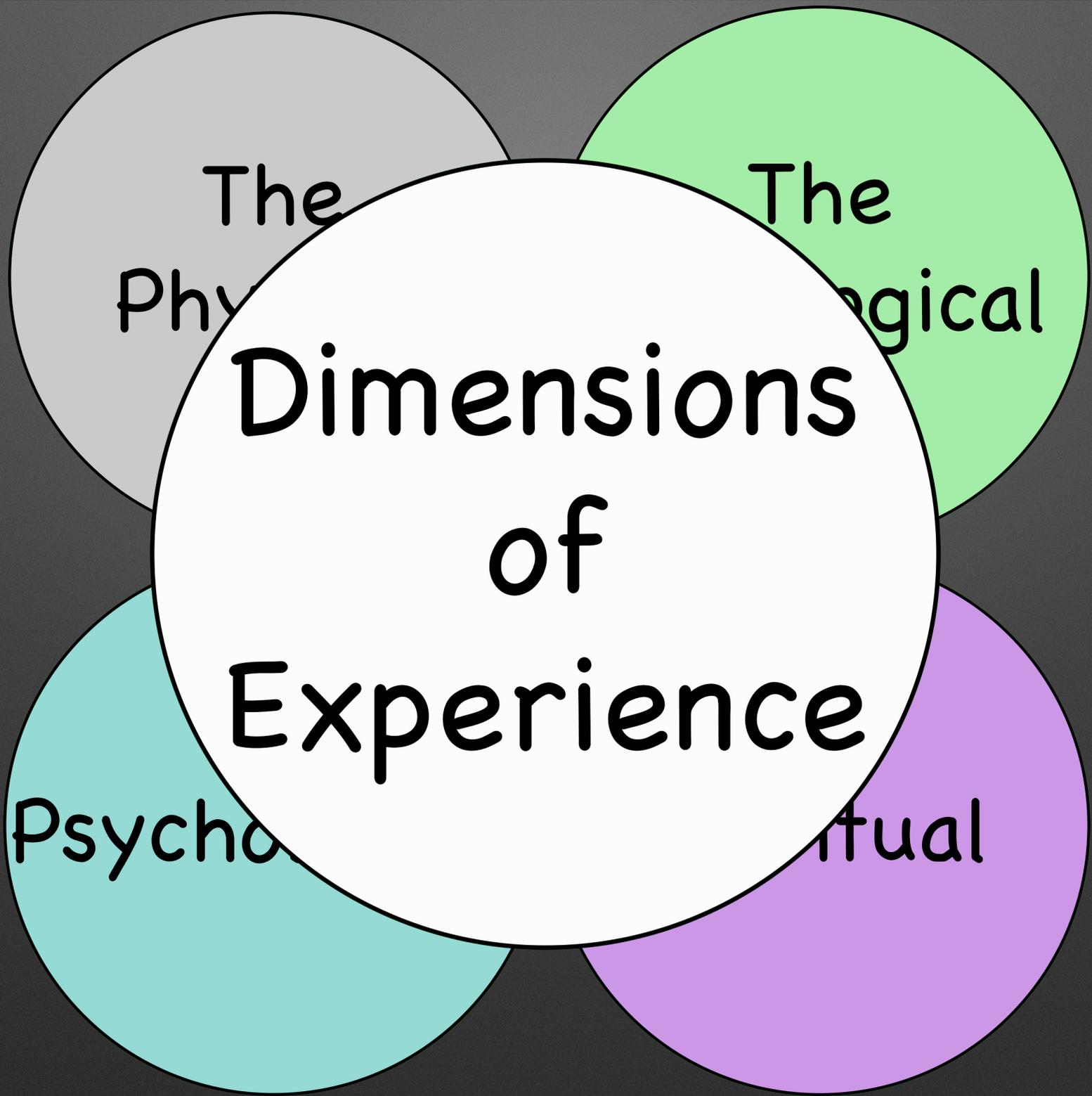


**Sigmund Freud**  
*The Unconscious*



**Abraham Maslow**  
*Hierarchy of Needs*

# **An Alternative Model**



**Dimensions  
of  
Experience**

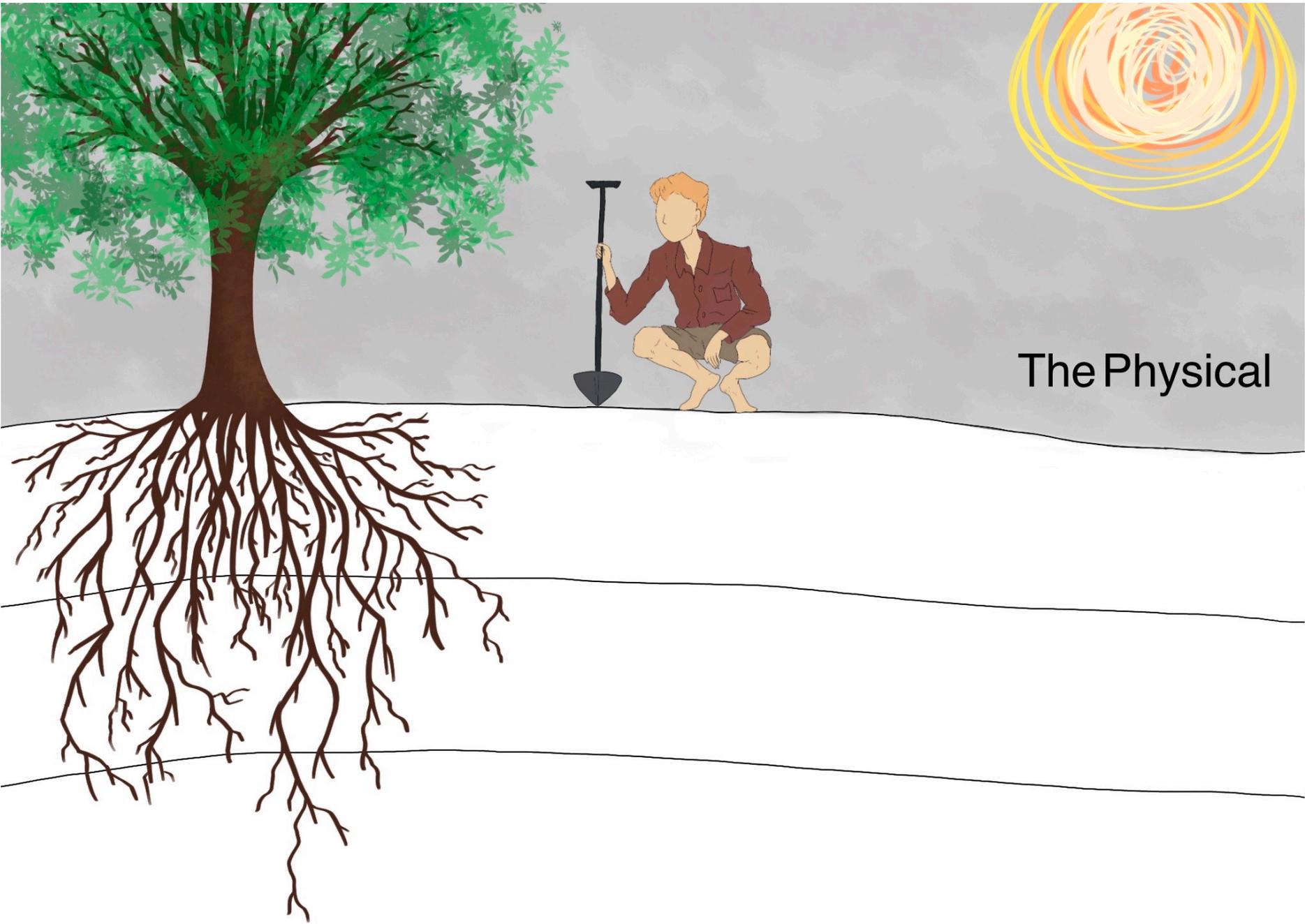
The  
Physical

The  
Logical

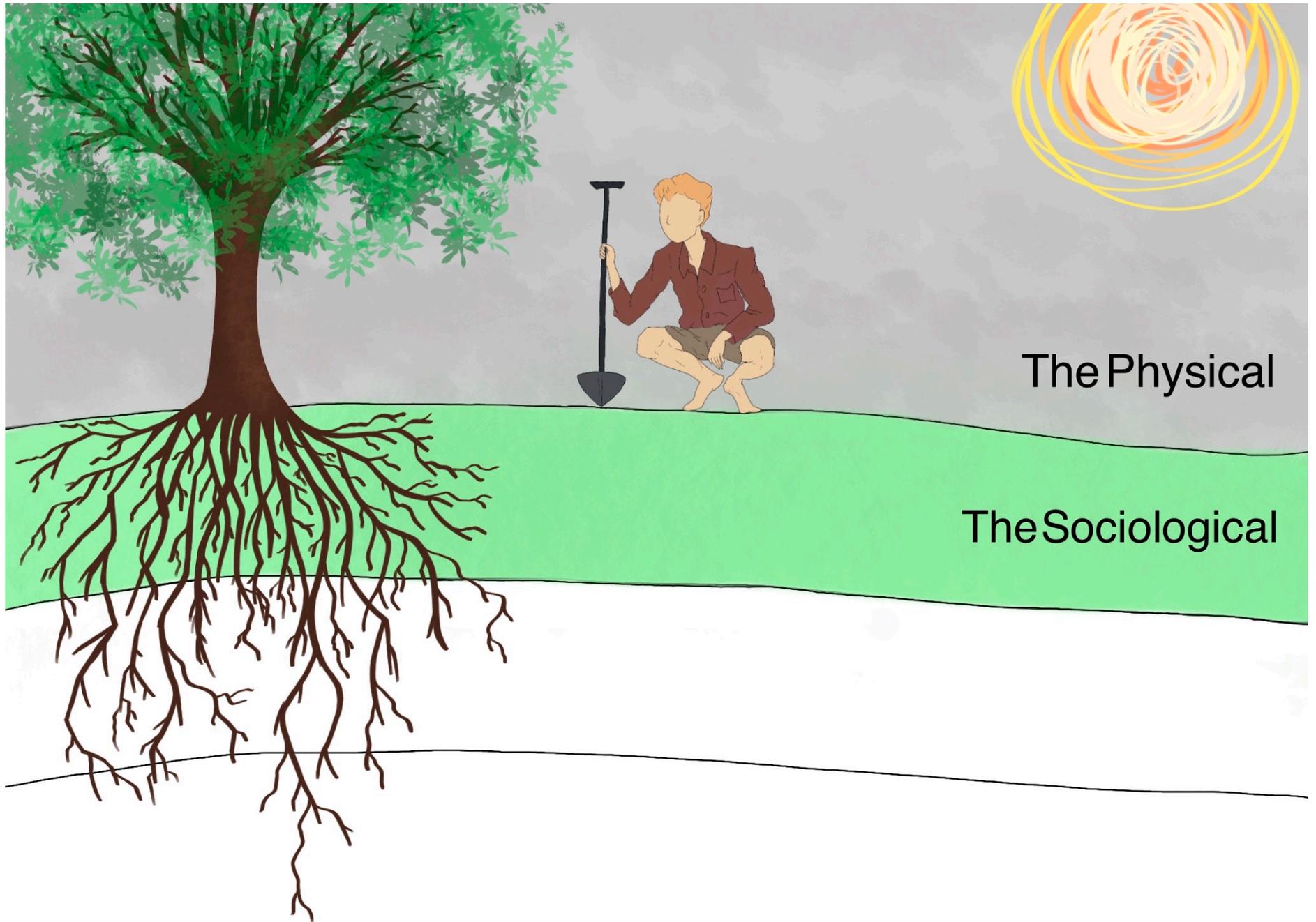
Psychological

Spiritual

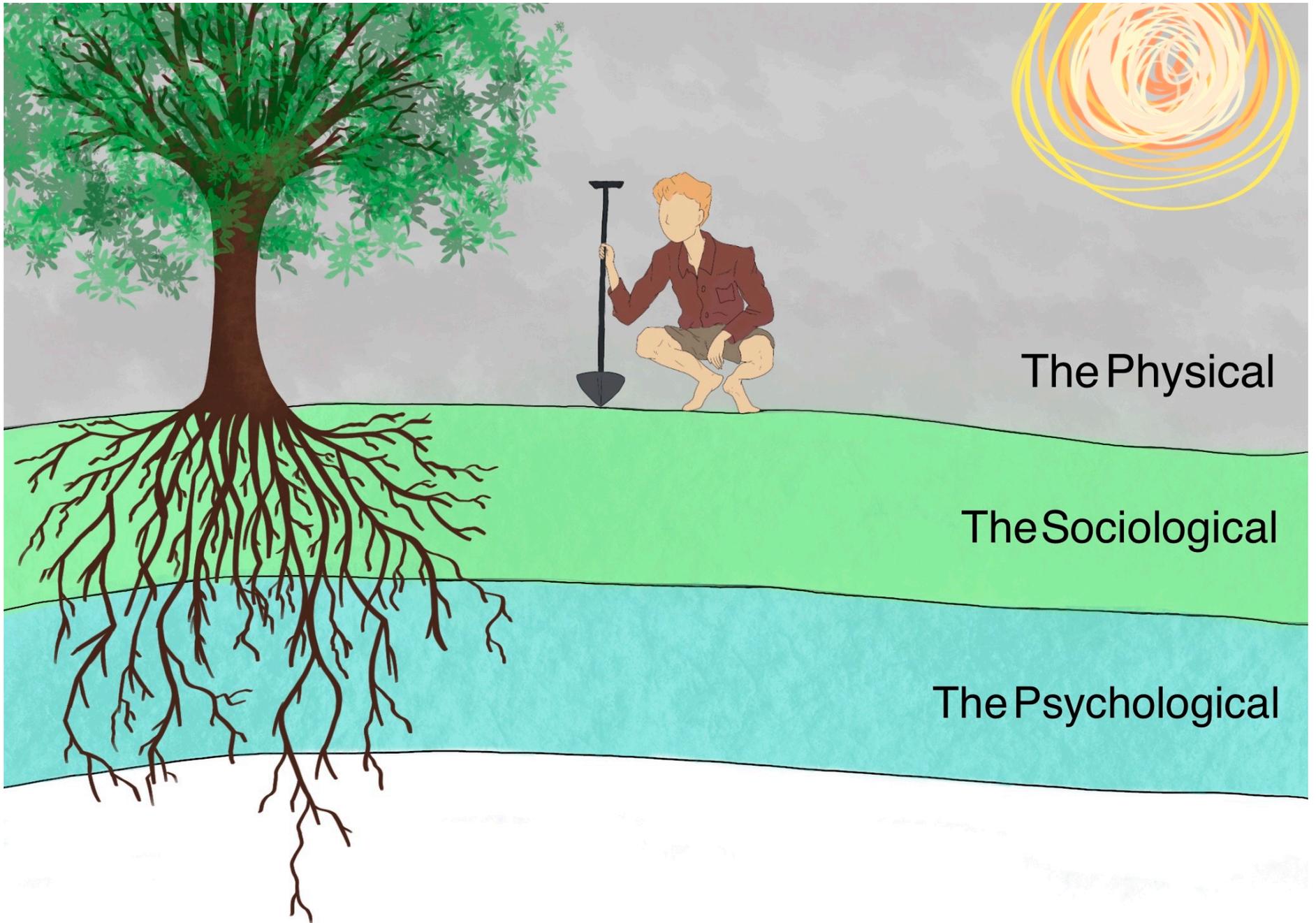
THE CONCRETE: SENSUOUS, MEASURABLE STIMULI (VISUAL, AURAL, ETC.)



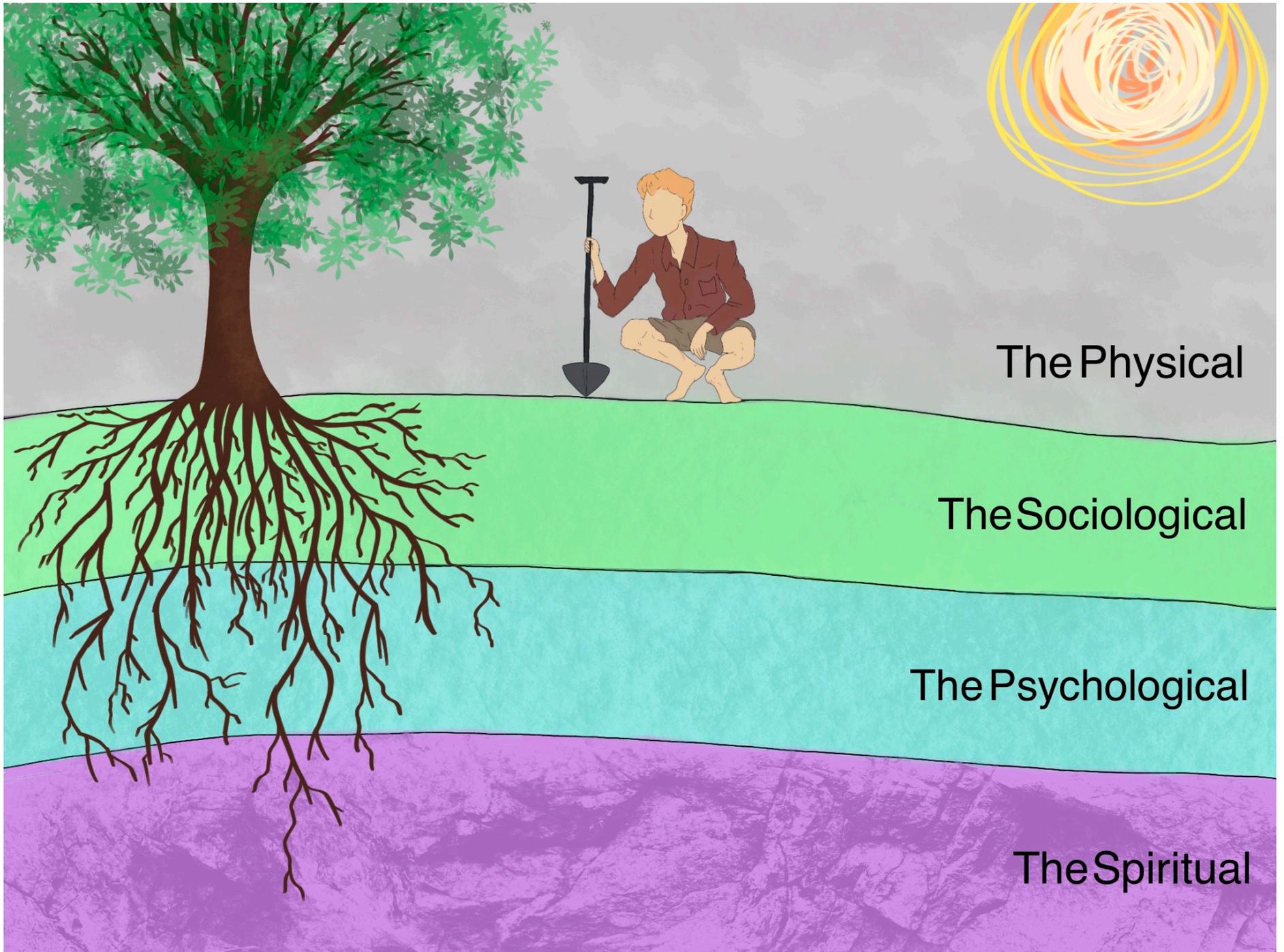
# THE SOCIOLOGICAL: INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS, GROUPS, SOCIAL JUSTICE



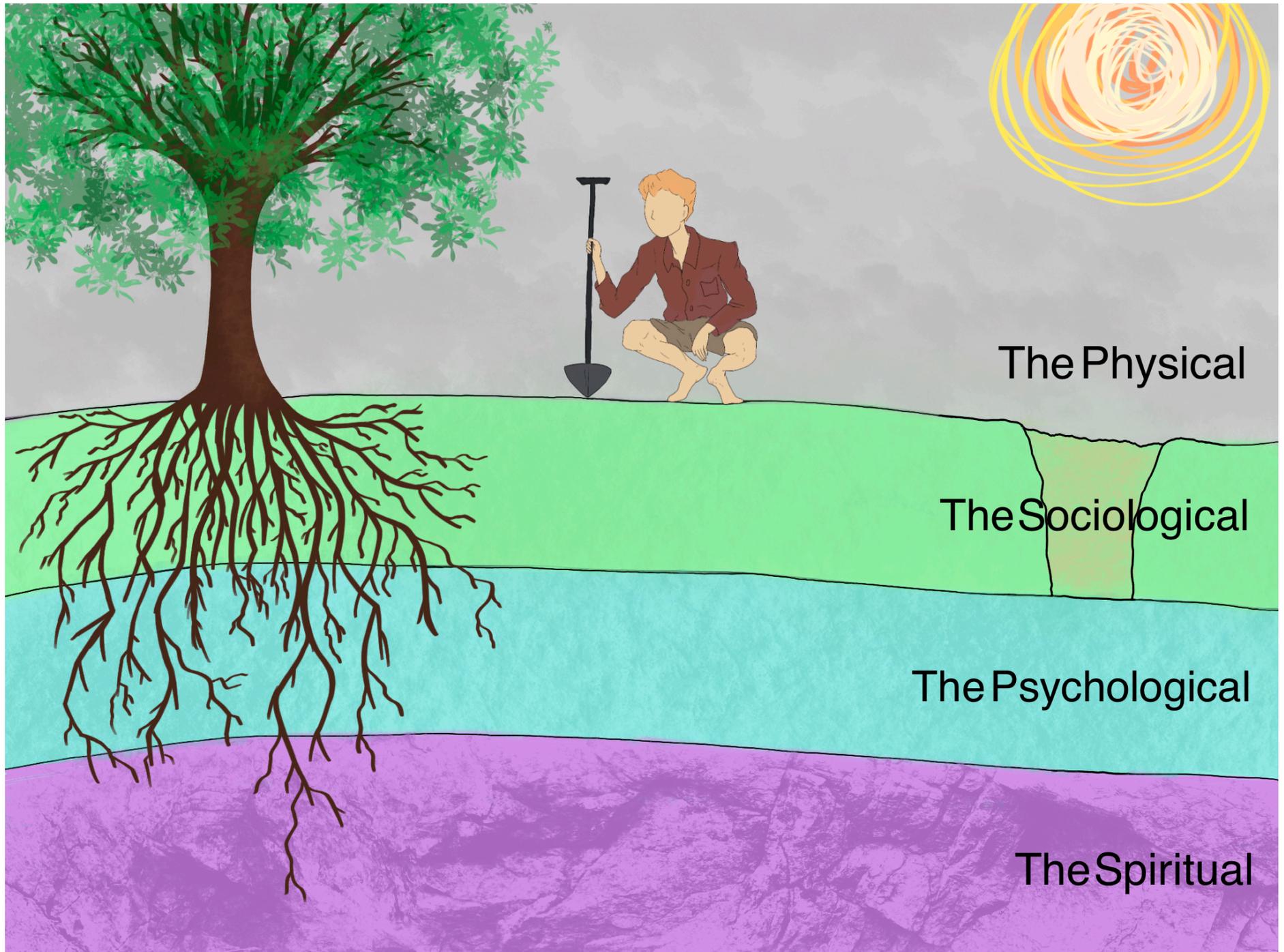
# THE PSYCHOLOGICAL: MEMORY, DESIRE, FEAR, SHAME, THE UNCONSCIOUS



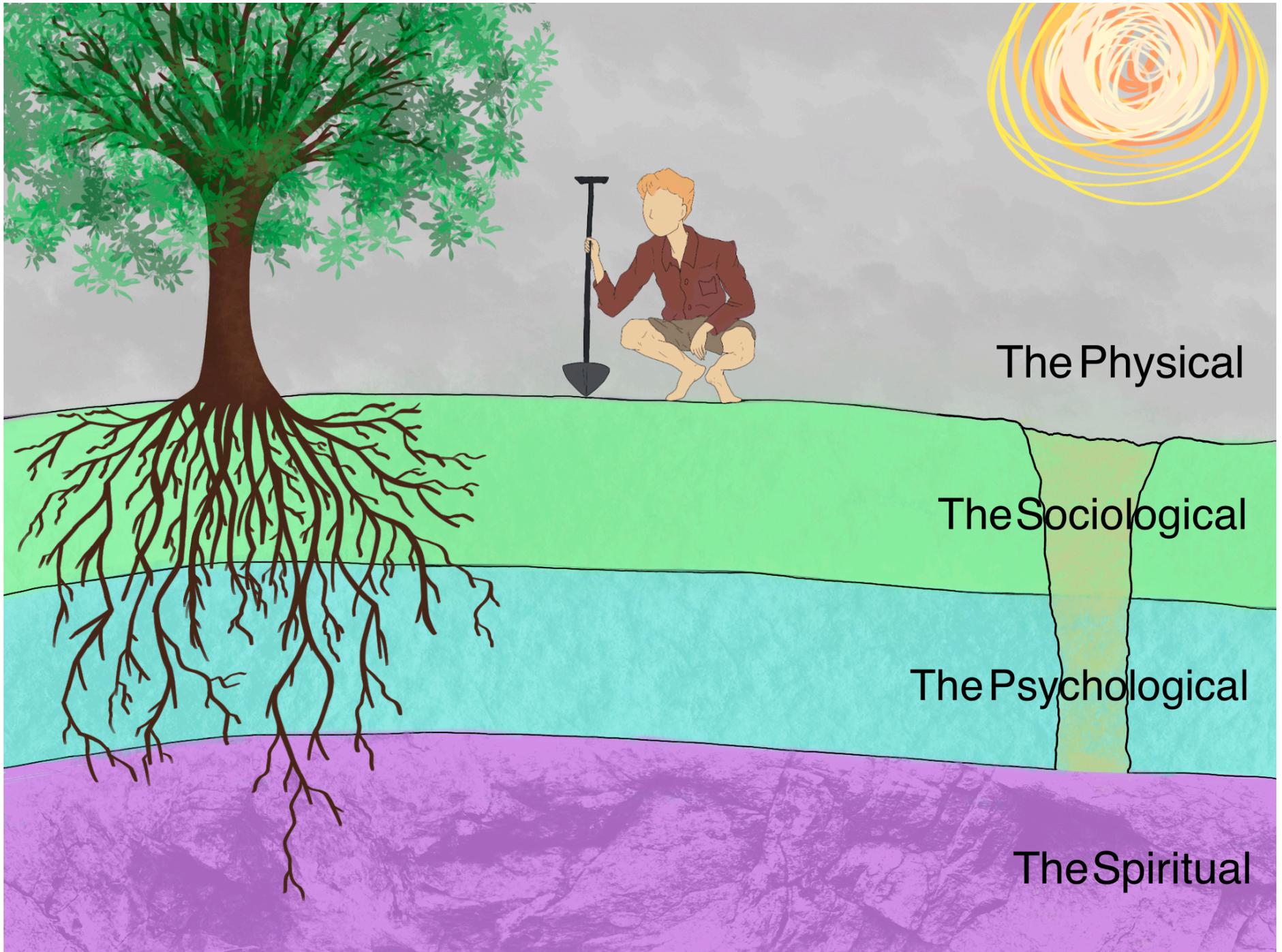
# THE SPIRITUAL: SOUL & SIN, GOD & GRACE, FROM GUILT TO JOY, "MYSTERY"



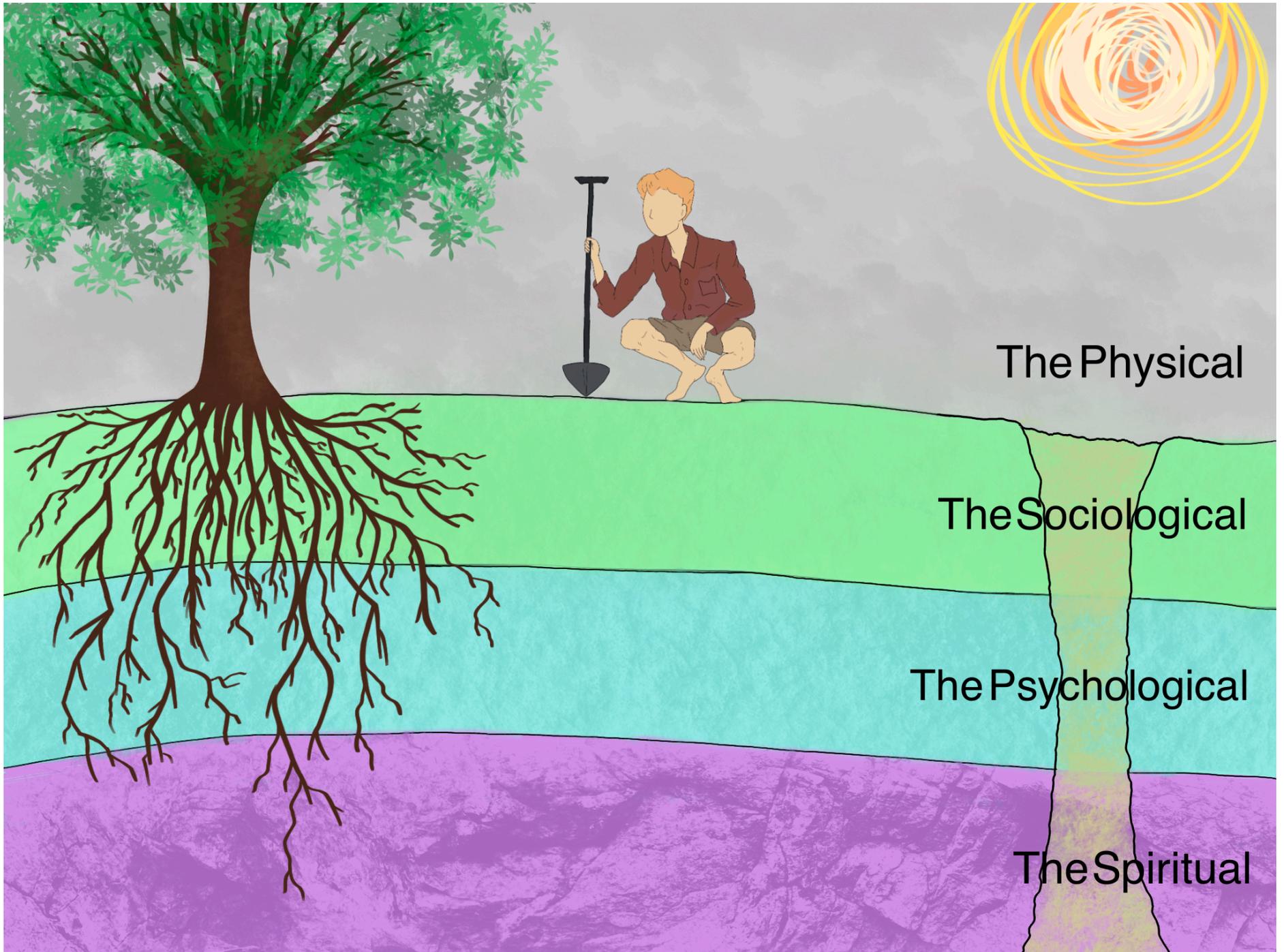
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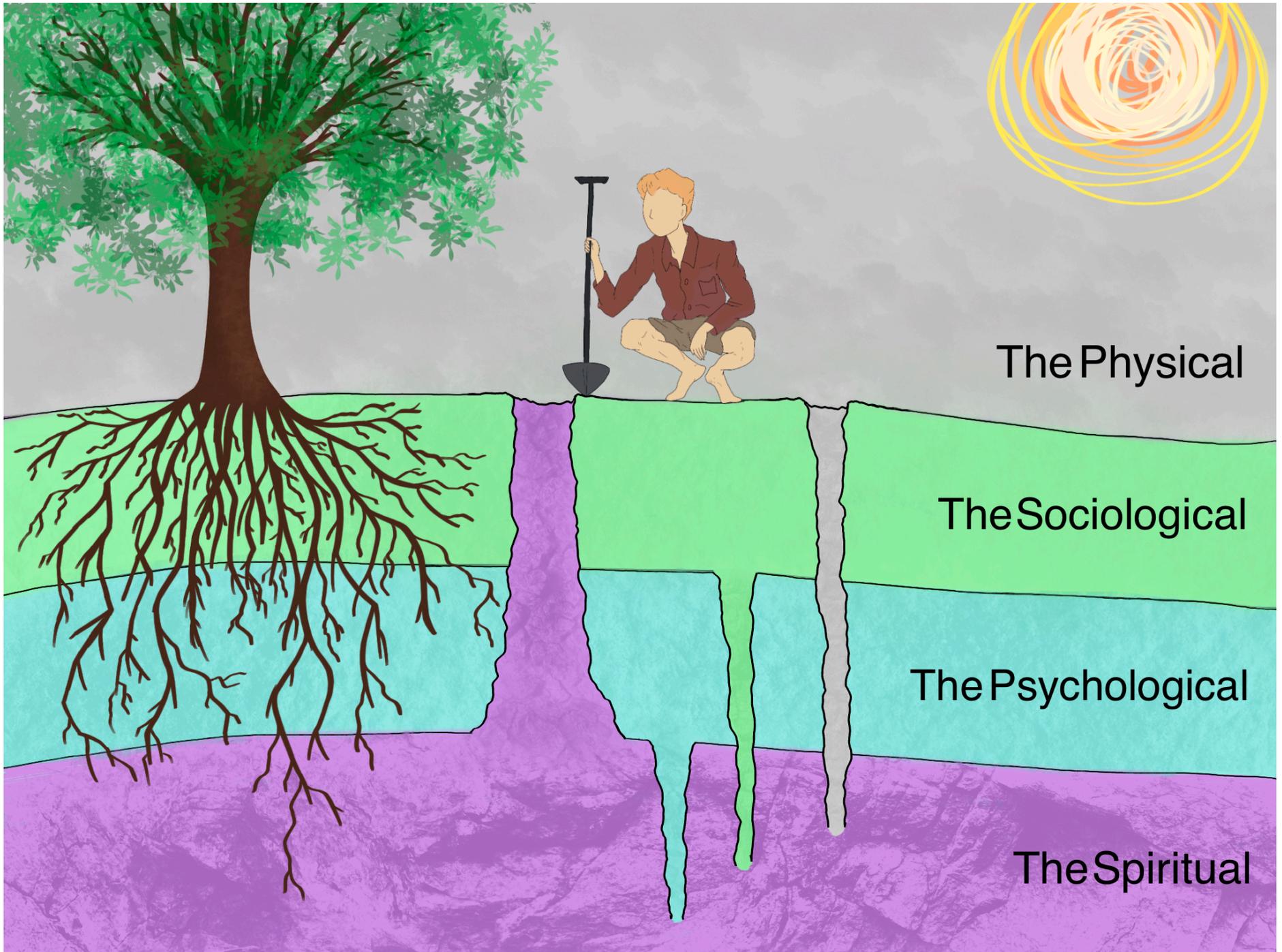
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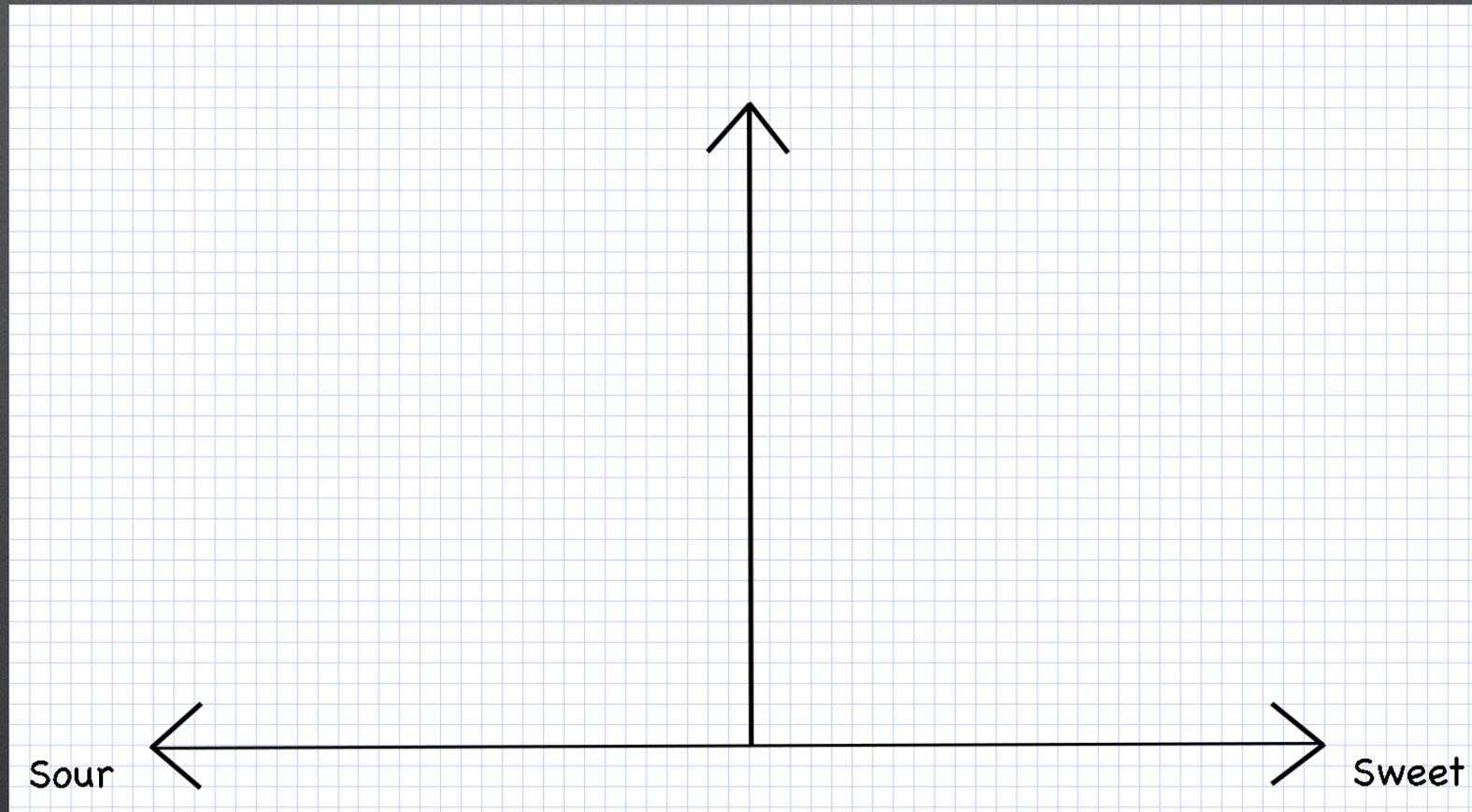
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# SYNERGIES: EACH LAYER INFORMS THE OTHERS

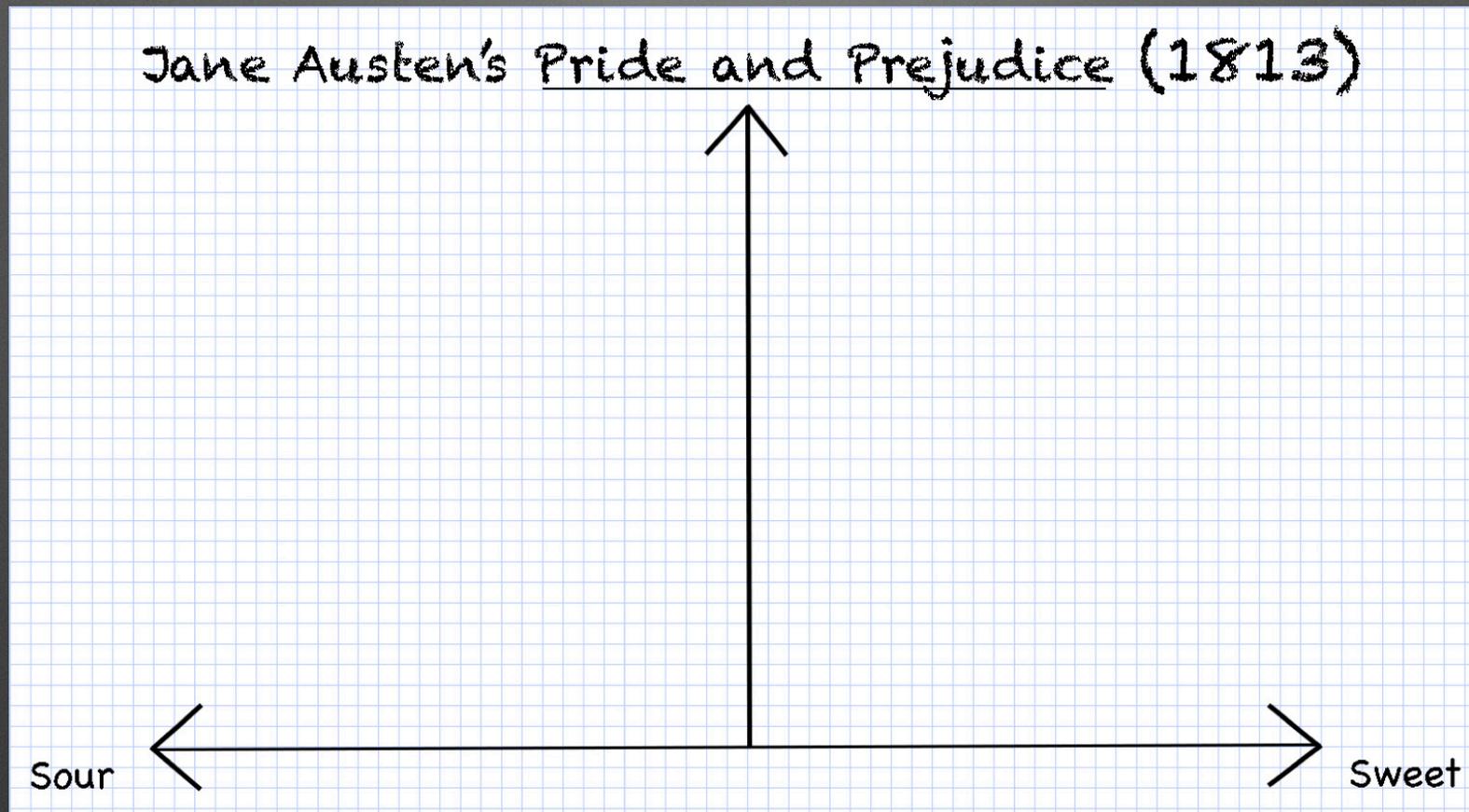


# x-axis: “flavor” (tonal range)



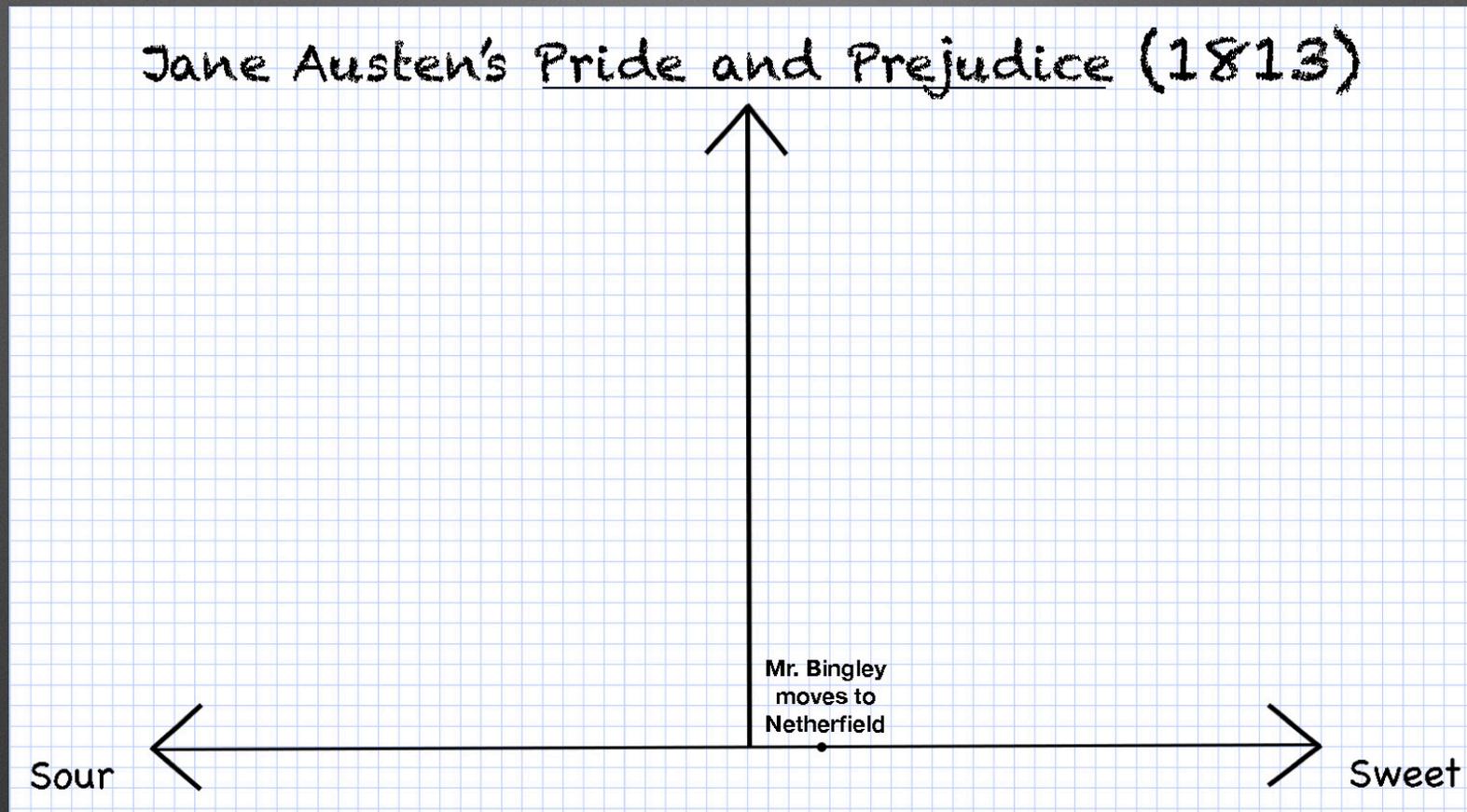
- ▶ “flavor” determined by relative extremities in which characters find themselves
- ▶ such circumstances will be a product of both character choices and environmental factors

# x-axis: “flavor” (tonal range)



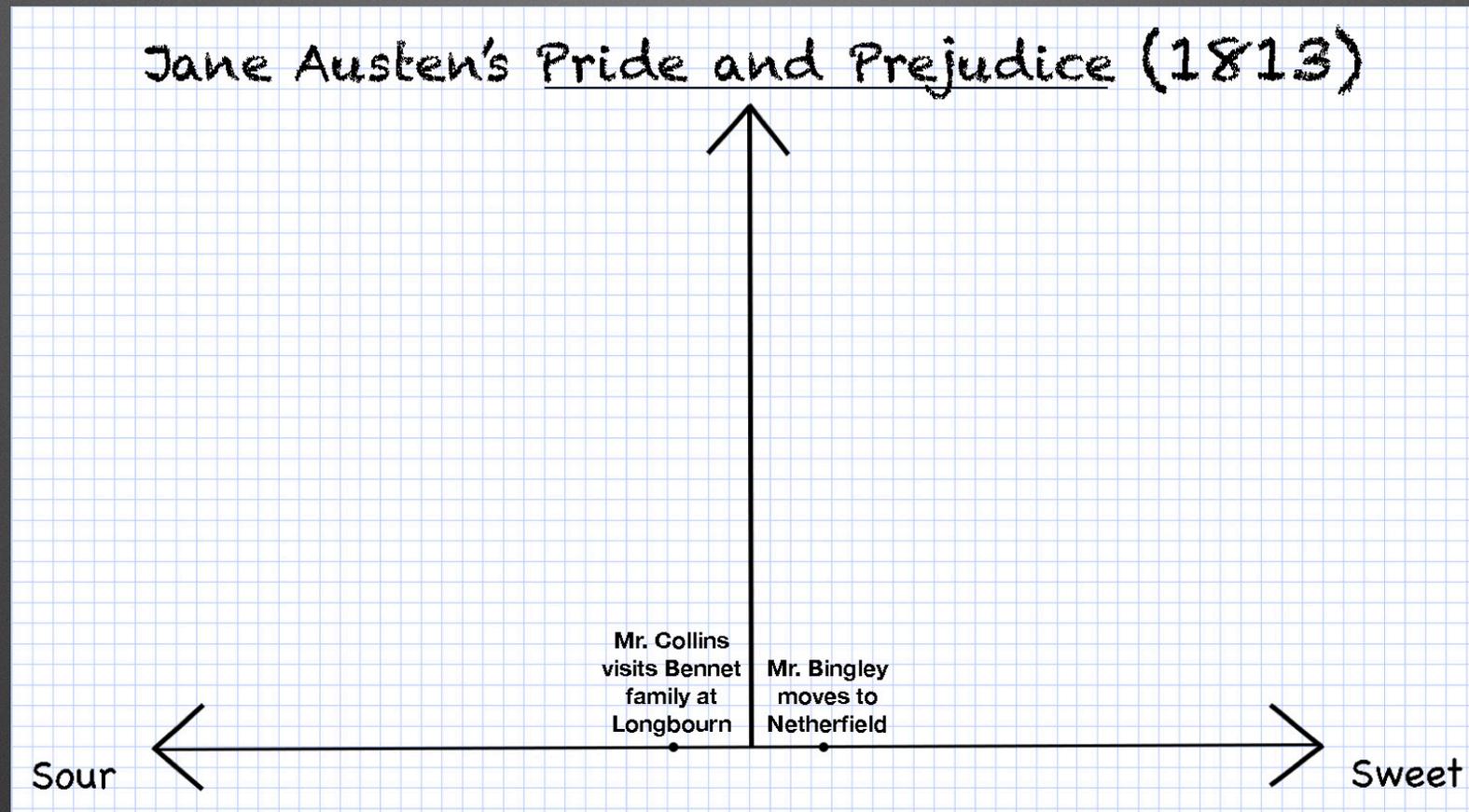
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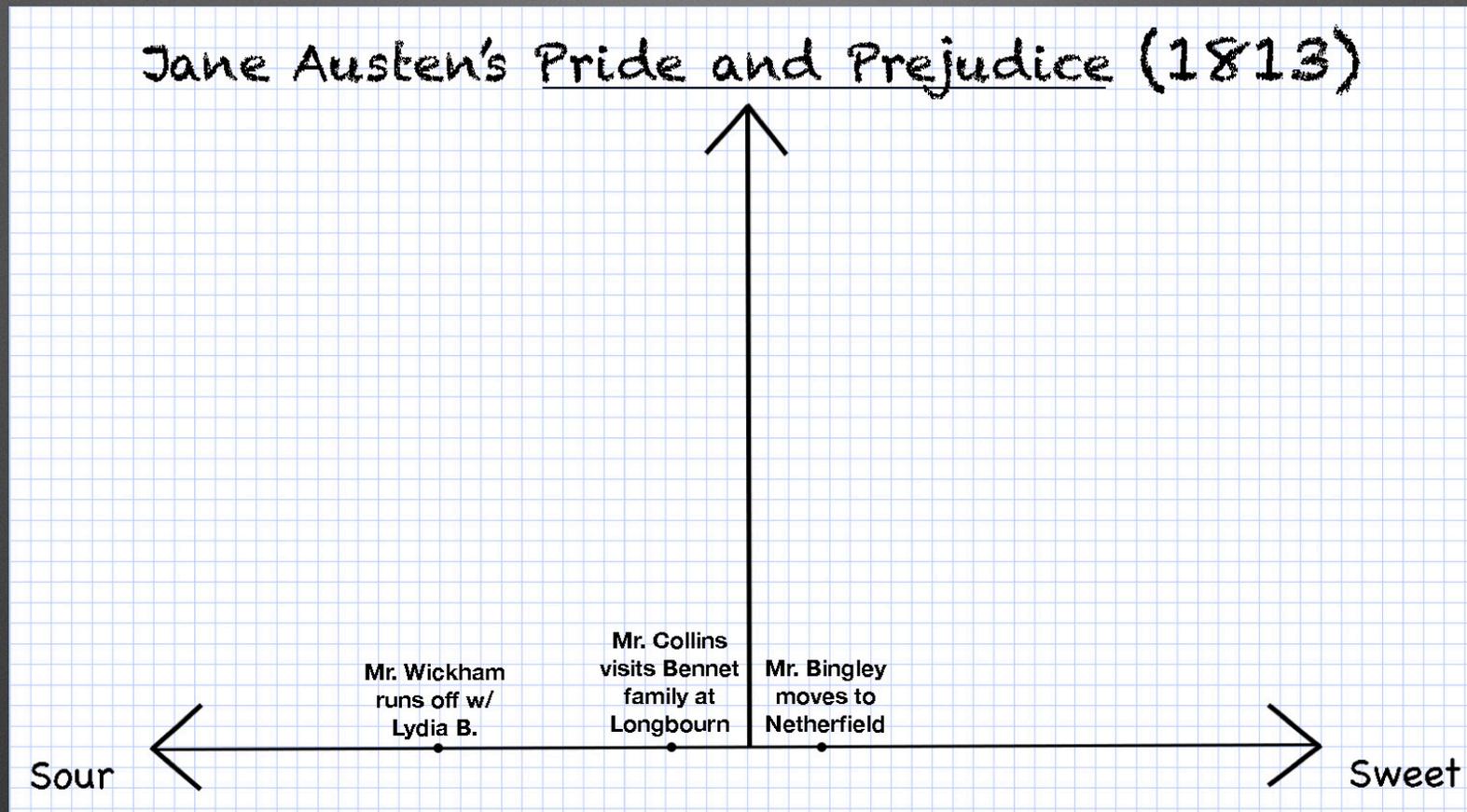
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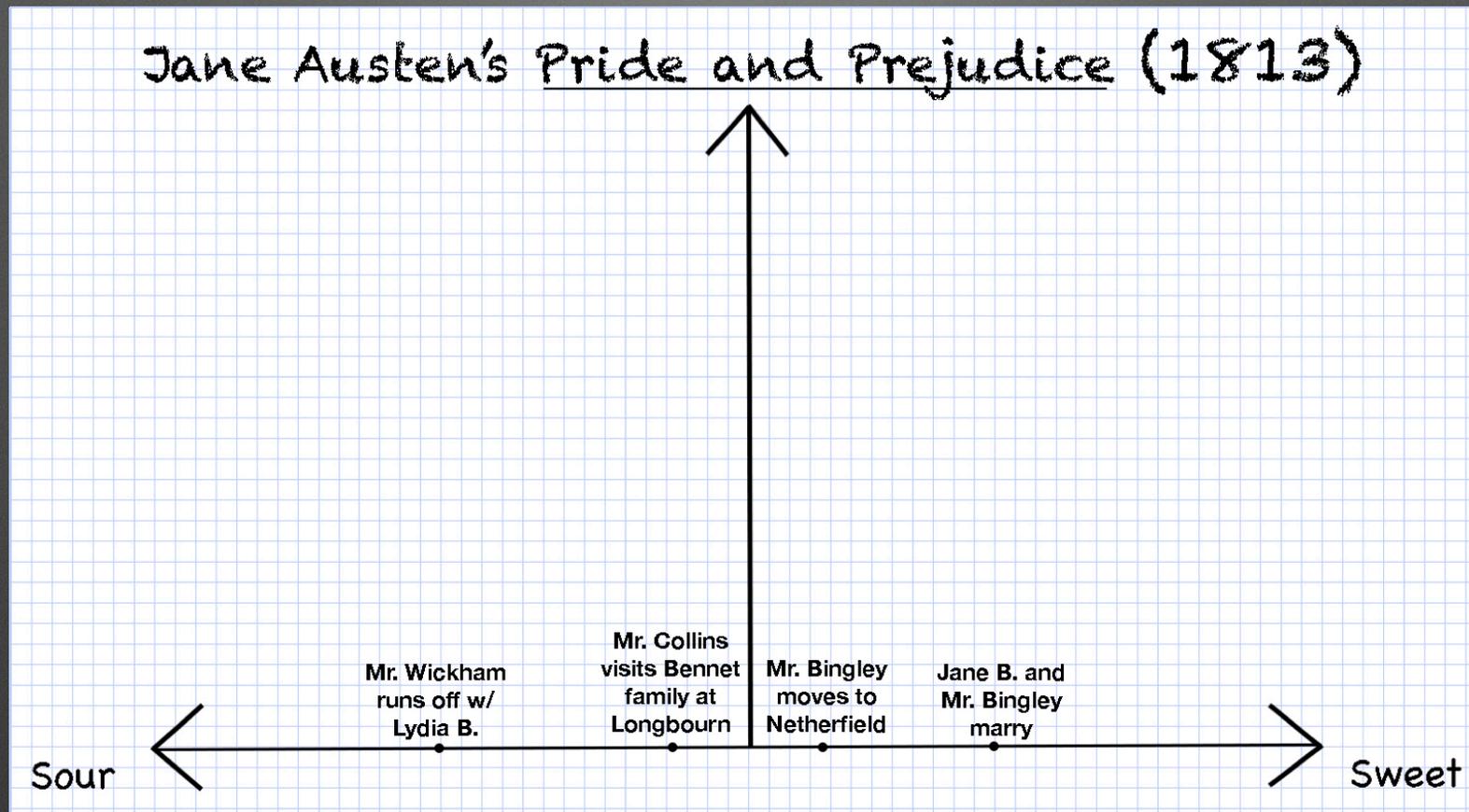
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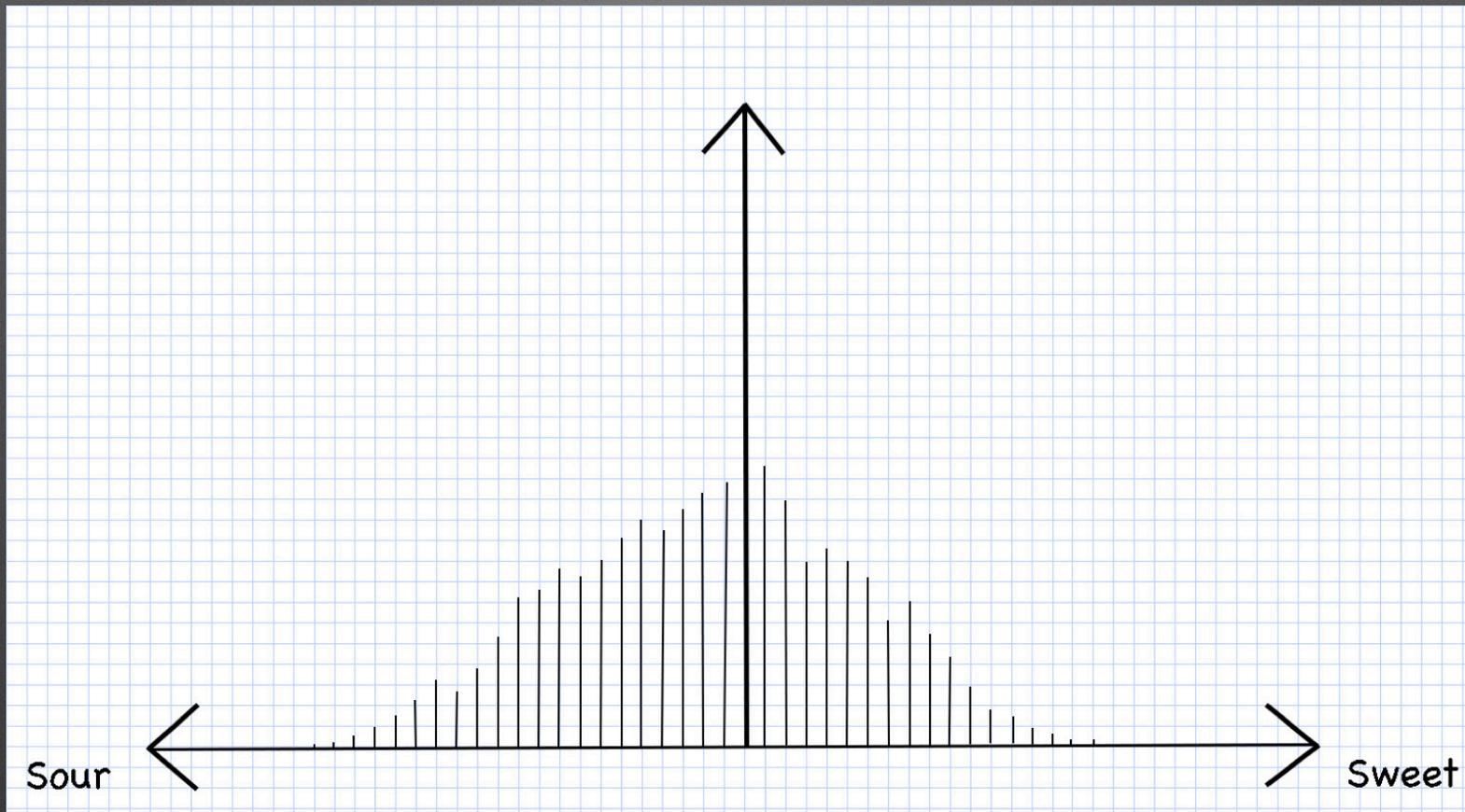
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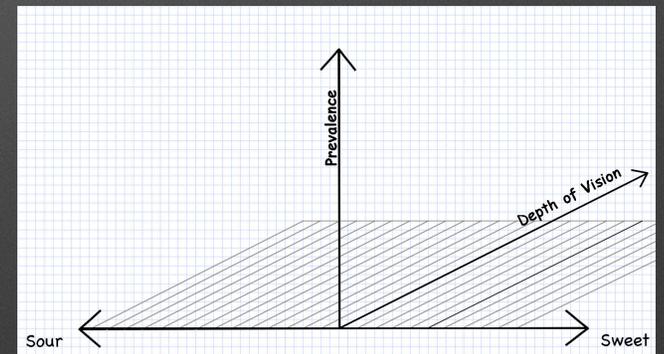
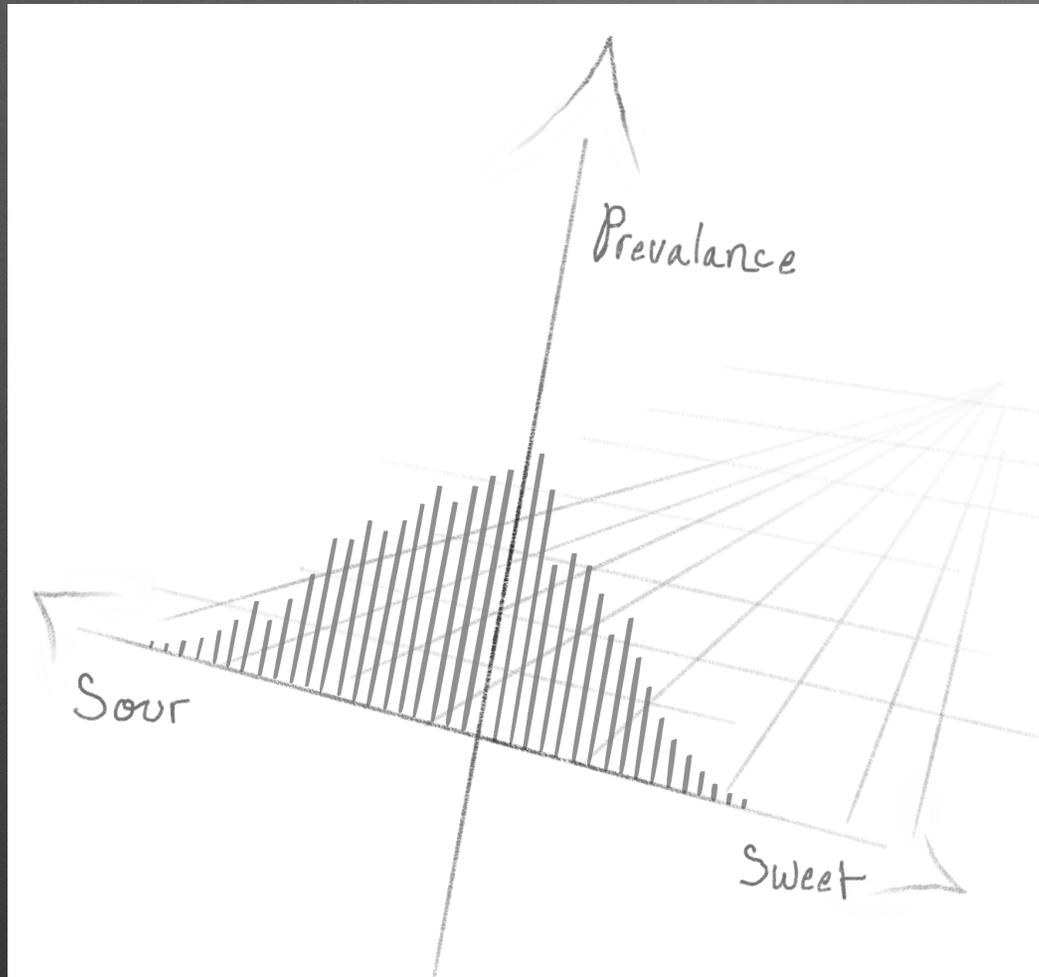
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# y-axis: prevalence



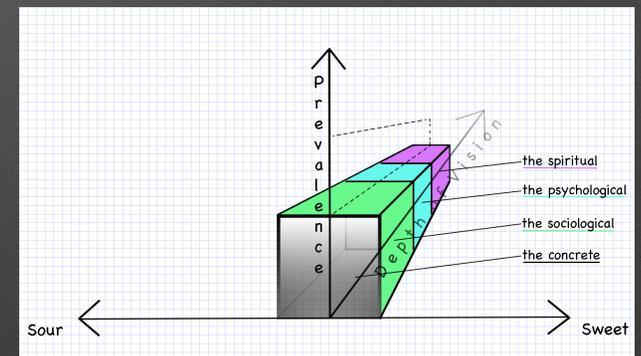
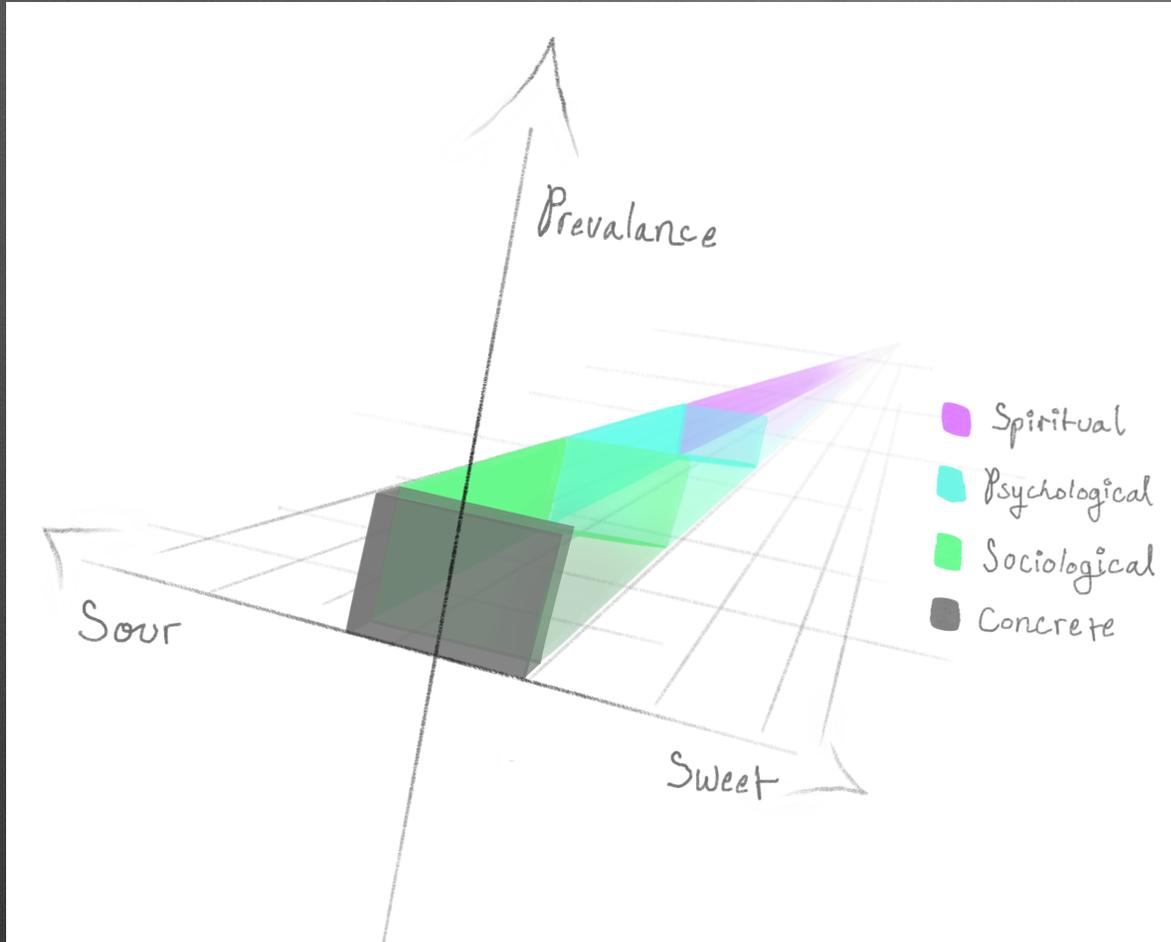
- ▶ “prevalence” determined by the *amount* of textual material marked by a given degree of sweetness or sourness
- ▶ most tales will contain more familiar, low-key material than they will extremely sweet or sour material, thus approaching a bell curve

# z-axis: depth of vision



- ▶ "depth of vision" determined by an artist's relative interest in that which cannot be easily measured, relative to that which can
- ▶ depth begins at the quantifiable, concrete surface, and moves through interpersonal, psychological, and spiritual concerns

# z-axis: depth of vision



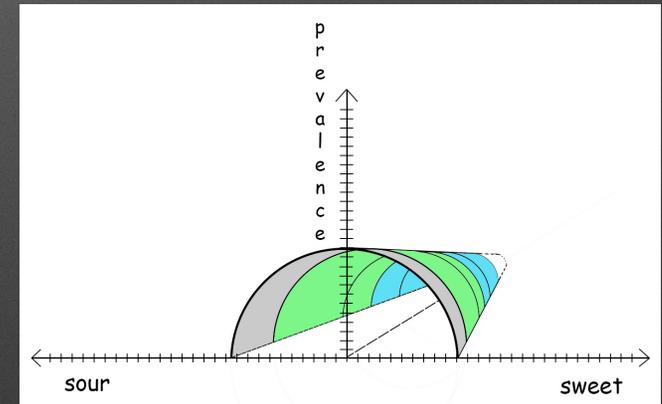
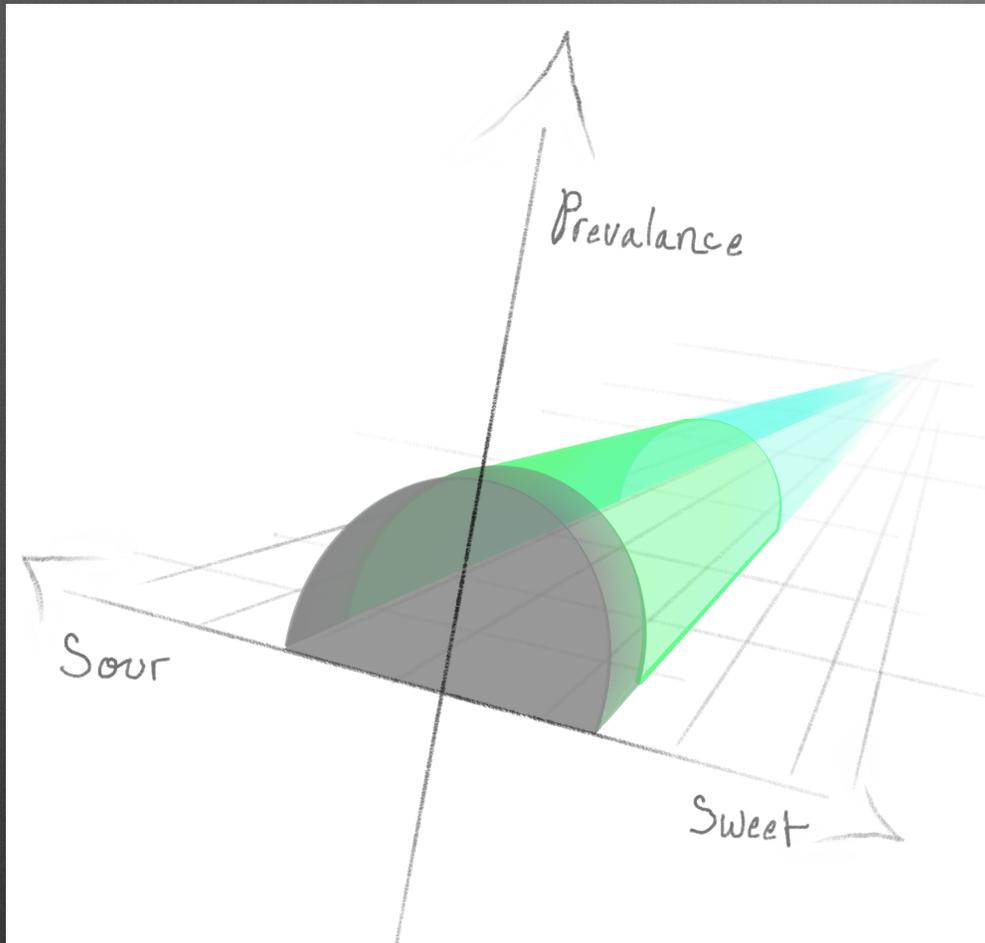
- ▶ the concrete: the physical/sensuous; quantifiable, empirically verifiable
- ▶ the **sociological**: relational dynamics among individuals and groups
- ▶ the **psychological**: memory, desire, anxiety, shame, the unconscious
- ▶ the **spiritual**: from guilt to joy; sin and the soul; God and grace; mystery

# REALISM

“let us always have men ready to give the loving pains of a life to the faithful representing of commonplace things—men who see beauty in these commonplace things [. . .] There are few prophets in the world; few sublimely beautiful women; few heroes. I can’t afford to give all my love and reverence to such rarities: I want a great deal of those feelings for my every-day fellow-men, especially for the few in the foreground of the great multitude, whose faces I know [. . .]”

George Eliot’s (Mary Ann Evan’s) *Adam Bede* (1859), chp. 17

# REALISM: an arch



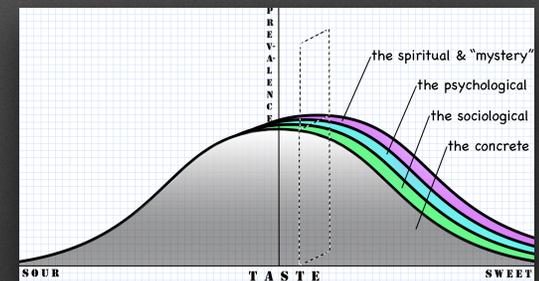
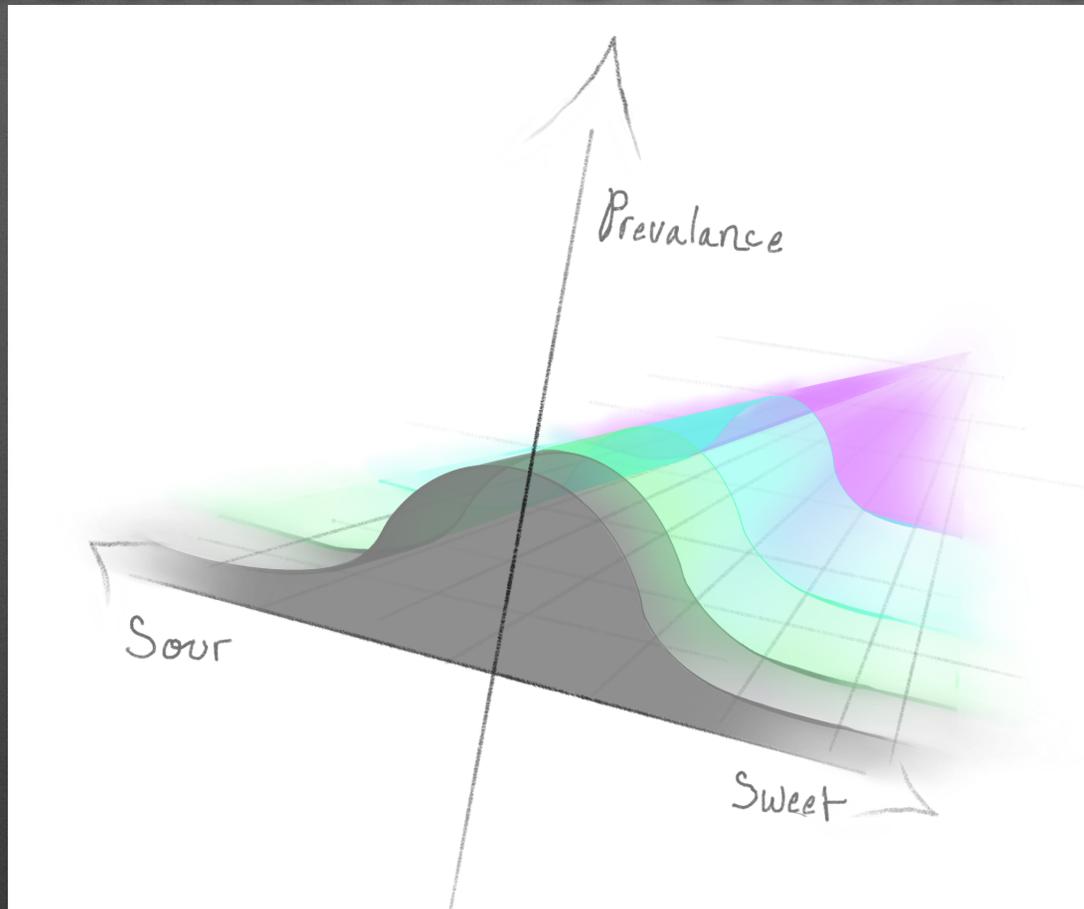
- ▶ approach: *objective* & quantifiable; scientific empiricism
- ▶ focus: the familiar & *representative*; the "normal"
- ▶ action: avoids extremes of event & character; sympathetic narrator
- ▶ socioeconomic preoccupation: middle class

# ROMANTICISM

**“I wished to tell the truth, for truth always conveys its own moral to those who are able to receive it. . . . the case is an extreme one, as I trusted none would fail to perceive; but I know that such characters do exist, and if I have warned one rash youth from following in their steps, or prevented one thoughtless girl from falling into the very natural error of my heroine, the book has not been written in vain.”**

from the Preface to the second edition of  
Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848)

# ROMANTICISM: bell curve



- ▶ approach: allows for *extraordinary* incidents, & sometimes the fantastic
- ▶ focus: both "normal" and "abnormal" characters and events
- ▶ action: grounded in the familiar, but reaches towards extremes
- ▶ socioeconomic preoccupation: none

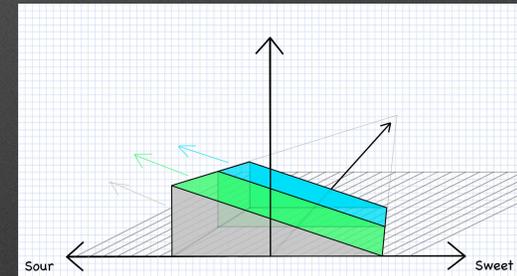
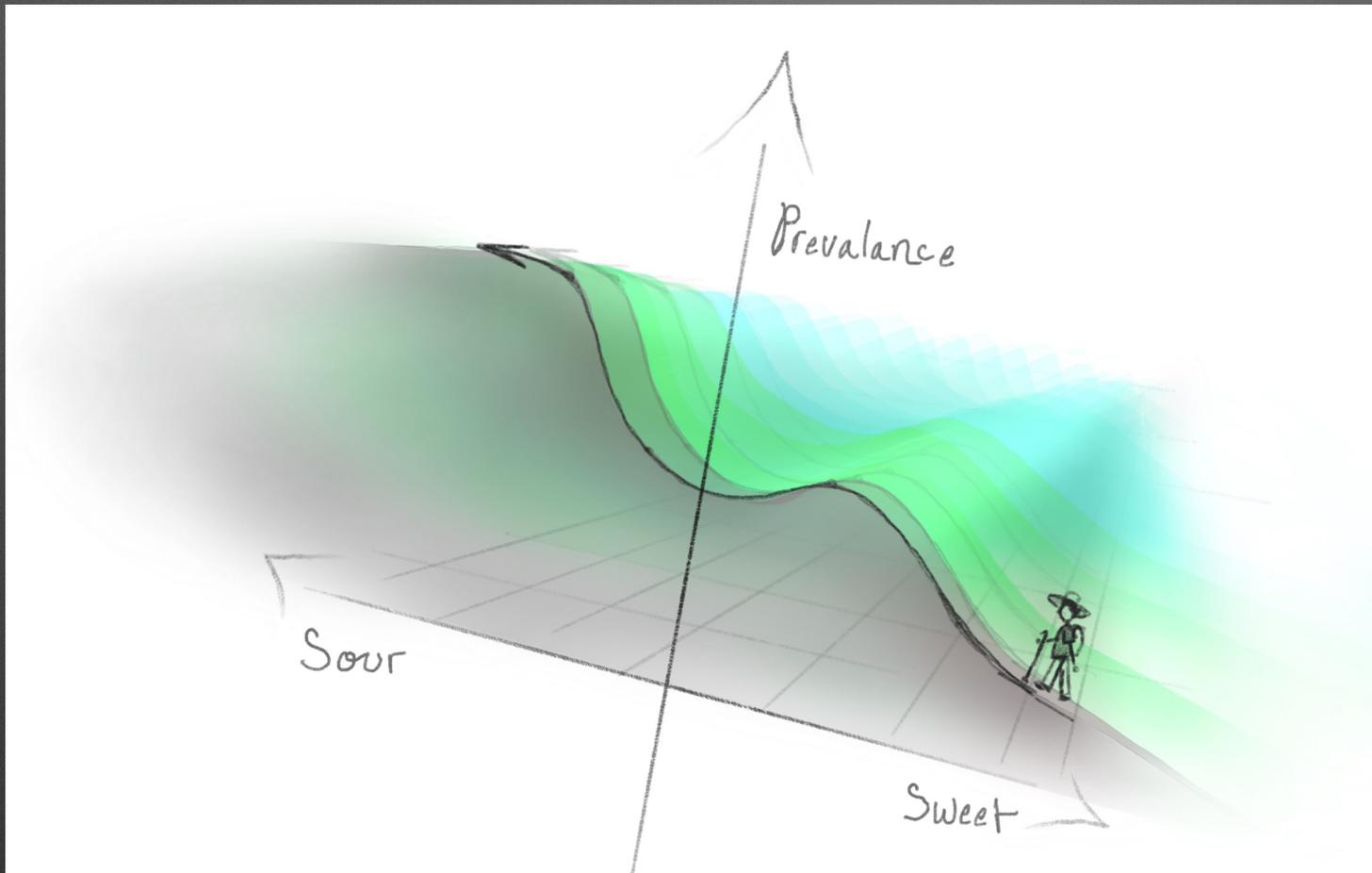
# NATURALISM

**“[Lily] was so evidently the victim of the civilization which had produced her, that the links of her bracelet seemed like manacles chaining her to her fate” (9).**

**“she felt herself more strangely confronted with her fate. The sensation made her brain reel, and she tried to shut out consciousness by pressing her hands against her eyes. But the terrible silence and emptiness seemed to symbolize her future—she felt as though the house, the street, the world were all empty, and she alone left sentient in a lifeless universe” (312).**

**Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905)**

# NATURALISM: triangle w/ trajectory

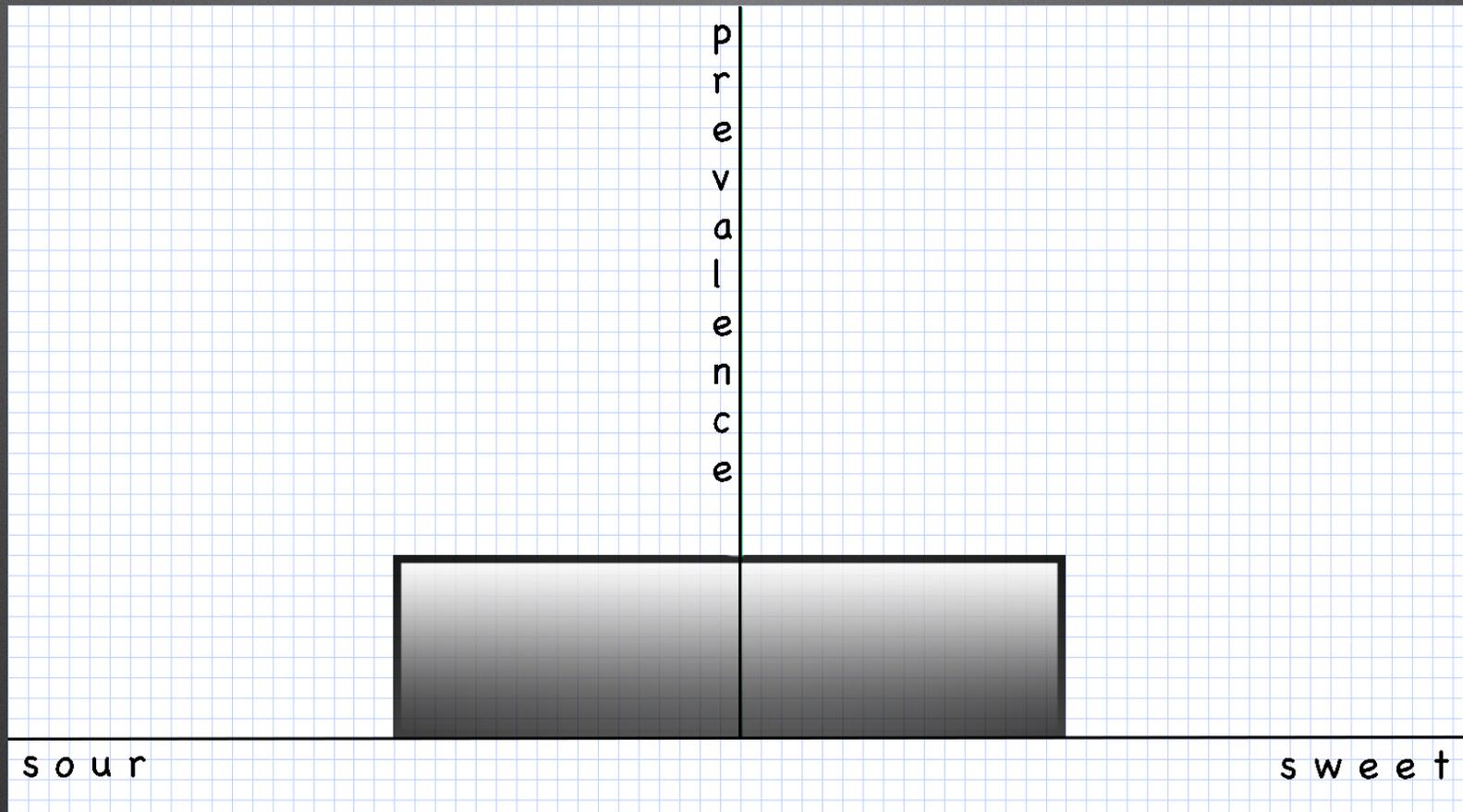


- ▶ approach: *dark*; shaped by Social Darwinian struggle for survival
- ▶ focus: pain and suffering which overwhelm glimpses of hope
- ▶ action: moves towards inevitable sorrow, angst, or tragedy
- ▶ socioeconomic preoccupation: the working classes & poor

# SENTIMENTALISM

“When her term of mourning had expired, Madeline gave her hand and fortune to Nicholas; and, on the same day and at the same time, Kate became Mrs Frank Cheeryble. [. . .] The money which Nicholas acquired in right of his wife he invested in the firm of Cheeryble Brothers, in which Frank had become a partner. Before many years elapsed, the business began to be carried on in the names of ‘Cheeryble and Nickleby,’ so that Mrs. Nickleby’s prophetic anticipations were realised at last. The twin brothers retired. Who needs to be told that *they* were happy? They were surrounded by happiness of their own creation, and lived but to increase it.

# SENTIMENTALISM: rectangle



- ▶ approach: whatever the plot, culminates in happy ending
- ▶ focus: positive events balance negative ones
- ▶ action: redemption w/o struggle or change; tied up too neatly
- ▶ socioeconomic preoccupation: none

# THE ABSURD

“Nature has forgotten us.”

“Nothing is funnier than unhappiness, I grant you that.”

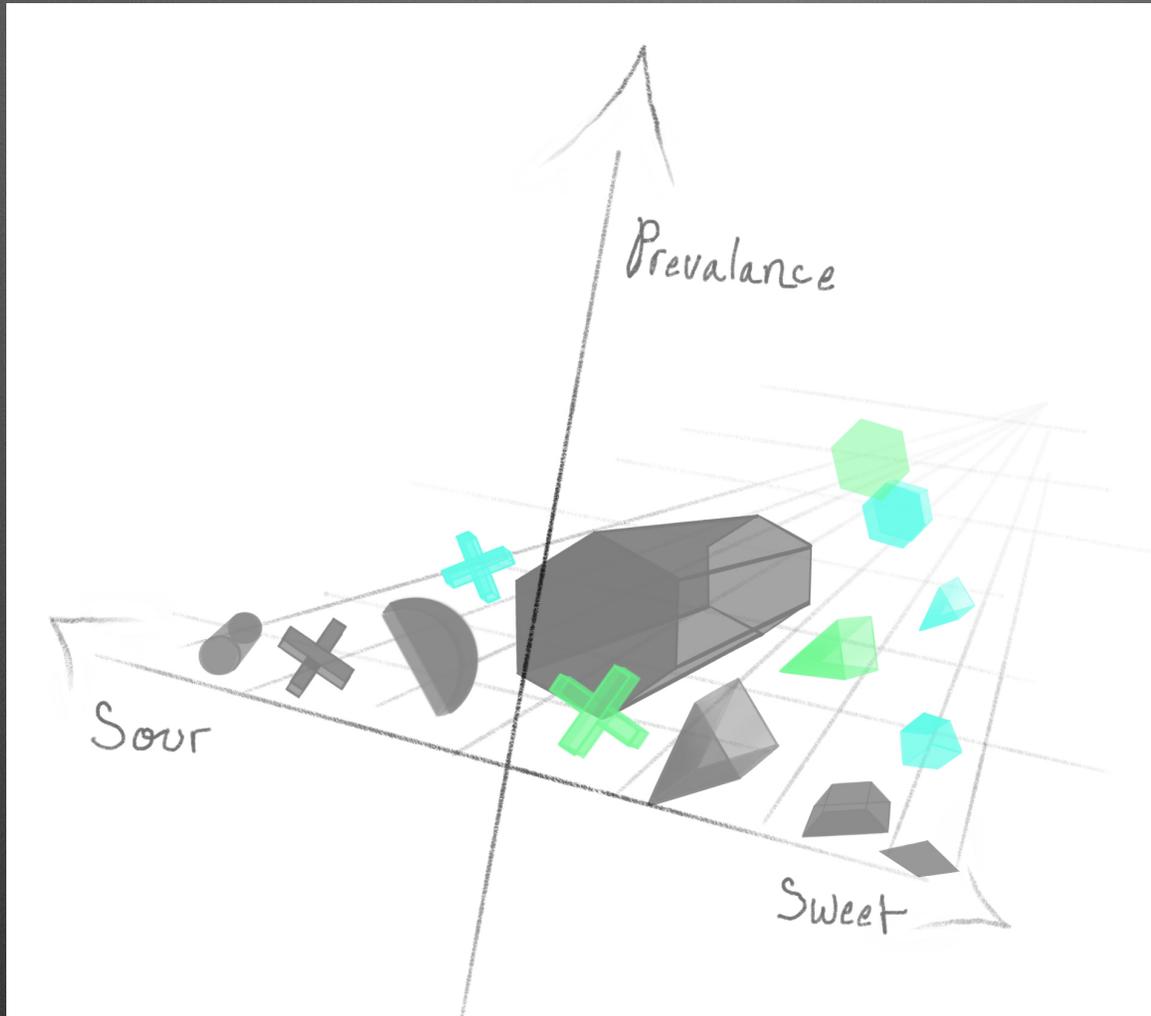
“you’re on earth, there’s no cure for that!”

“The end is in the beginning and yet you go on”

“it’ll never end, I’ll never go.”

Samuel Beckett’s *Endgame* (1957)

# THE ABSURD: unconnected shapes



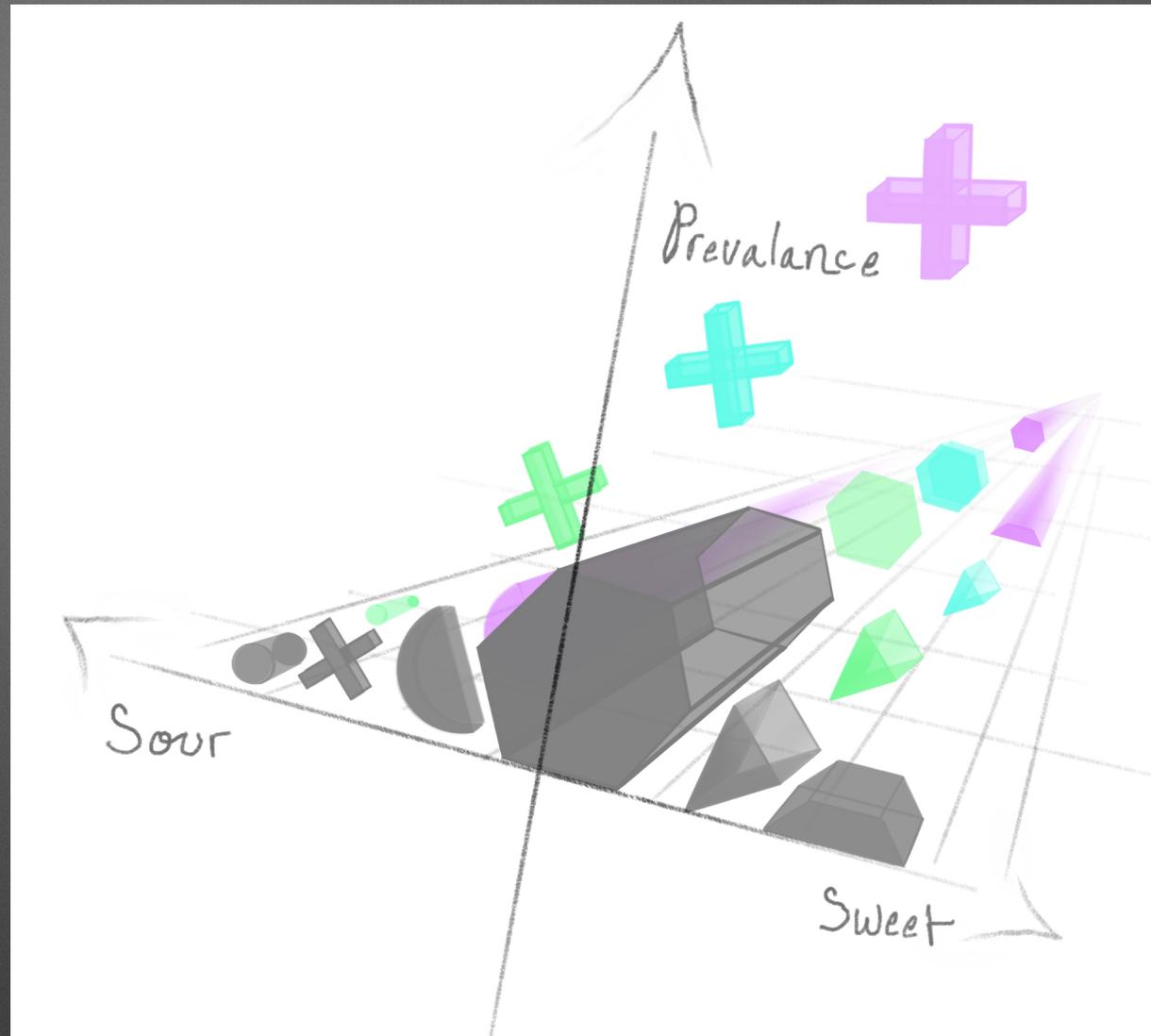
- ▶ approach: discursive; circular; parodic; shaped by existential crisis
- ▶ focus: pain and suffering w/ darkly comical spin
- ▶ action: moves in haphazard fashion, looping back upon itself
- ▶ socioeconomic preoccupation: none

# THE GROTESQUE

“Henry James said that in his [realistic] fiction, he did things in the way that took the most doing. I think the writer of grotesque fiction does them in the way that takes the least, because in his work distances are so great. He’s looking for one image that will connect or combine or embody two points; one is a point in the concrete and the other is a point not visible to the naked eye, but believed in by him firmly, just as real to him, really, as the one that everybody sees. [. . .] the look of this fiction is going to be wild [. . .] is almost of necessity going to be violent and comic, because of the discrepancies that it seeks to combine.”

Flannery O’Connor’s “Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction” (1960; 1965)

# THE GROTESQUE: echoes & reflections



- ▶ approach: finds divine grace at work in the natural, sensuous world
- ▶ focus: blends low-key w/ comic & violent; characters face own sin
- ▶ action: "skips & gaps" in action & character—imagination required
- ▶ socioeconomic preoccupation: none

# The Grotesque . . .

- lacks the linearity and detail of realism, and presses beyond its self-imposed, psychological boundary
- contains the unsettling, extraordinary events of romanticism, and expands upon its vision of mystery
- often reflects the darkness of naturalism, but gestures emphatically towards hope and light
- shares with the absurd an awareness of the capricious, the angsty, and the downright disturbing
- shares sentimentalism's desire for happy endings, but maintains they must be earned via struggle