

Systemic Solutions Bulletin

A black and white photograph of a snowy mountain peak, possibly Mount Everest, under a cloudy sky. The mountain is covered in snow and has a dark, rocky base. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds. The overall tone is serene and majestic.

Issue 5, December 2004

Price £10

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

Taking over the Editorship of the Bulletin has been a challenging task and I want to begin by offering my heartfelt gratitude to Barbara Stones for the grace with which she has handed it over in a quietly supportive way, standing aside to allow me to find my place as Editor. As the Bulletin moves forward from here, in a way mirroring the progress of the wider field of the constellation work, I foresee many changes over the next few years, as the work evolves and develops. Honouring Barbara and Jutta ten Herkel as the founders of this Bulletin in the same way as Bert Hellinger continues to be honoured as the founder of the constellation work, for me forms an important background to this forward movement. It was their vision and courage to launch the Bulletin and their subsequent tenacity and hard work which has brought us to this point.

This issue marks a transition, as next year there will be some major changes. The Bulletin will be re-named and will be issued twice a year to encompass the mushrooming of the work outside Germany.

Already in this issue, we see two major new developments in this work. The first is explored by Bertold Ulsamer, who examines how the trauma work of Peter Levine can further the work in constellations, with great benefit. Ed Lynch's constellation piece provides a graphic illustration of the kinds of traumas that can emerge with clients, whilst Albrecht Mahr takes the issue of trauma to the wider field of Genocide and the horrors of Rwanda in this, the tenth anniversary of the atrocities there.

The second development is a trend towards individual constellation work, which is reflected by two pieces: Helena Arkoudis-Konstantara's

article about the use of figures in individual work and Vivian Broughton's review of two major books on the subject and a discussion of her views on the effectiveness of this approach.

With Colette Green's article on Addiction and Eva Madelung's exposition on Merleau-Ponty's concept of embodiment, we see two moves to make links between the constellation work and other aspects of both psychotherapy and philosophy. Colette's in-depth article provides an integration of object relations and constellation work. She includes a detailed case example as evidence of the efficacy of this combined approach to an affliction which affects an increasing number of people each year. Through the work of Merleau-Ponty, Eva makes a radical attempt to find one possible philosophical foundation for the process that all of us who have been representatives in constellations have experienced – that strange physical phenomenon of 'oneness'.

At the cutting edge of the constellation work is the discussion on "Bowing" between Hunter Beaumont, Eva Madelung, Wilfried de Philipp and Jakob Schneider. This highlights how people can get into difficulties with their understanding and interpretation of the language of the constellation work and the role the superego plays. I imagine there will be further debate about this and other allied issues linking into the role of the superego in constellation work.

In sharp contrast, no debate is needed when we see how these archetypal movements can touch us at that deeper level of the soul, as illustrated in the newspaper article submitted by Bubula Lardi.

In almost all the articles, we see the importance of the body and the role it plays in holding the

memories of our personal and systemic experiences in the form of illness, addictions and trauma and how that memory can be called forth when we stand as representatives in constellations or work with individual clients.

From the articles appearing in this issue, it is hard to know what will happen to the constellation work. It is clear that it is changing and evolving and at the same time, the discussion on 'Bowling' in particular, illustrates the potential range of interpretation and application of the work and the ever-present risk of it becoming yet another ideology or set of moral dictums. In her Editorial in the previous issue, Barbara Stones wondered about the possibilities of the work becoming distorted through long, accredited trainings or people taking it lightly and not honouring that 'knowing field' named by Francesca Mason-Boring in her article in the same issue.

In recent times, Bert Hellinger has come under a lot of criticism and attack for his approach, particularly in Germany. Whilst some of this is healthy and constructive and may be necessary for the development of the work, it is hard to differentiate it from the task, also necessary, of deposing someone who has been revered for the enormous contribution he has made. This can be seen throughout history and as Bert said at the International Constellations Intensive held at ZIST last year, "It's just a movement."

Having attended Bert's workshop on 'Working with Psychosis and Schizophrenia' in Holland a short while ago, I saw a change in him from the previous occasion at ZIST. True to his own philosophy about life and the constellation work, Bert continues to evolve and we all need to take care not to 'fix' him in a particular spot any more than the work. Some of his recent thinking on the subject of illness can be found in the two pieces contained in this issue, which have been extracted

from a series of short lectures he gave in Mexico in 2003. We can see the development of his ideas and observations in these two pieces and at the same time, the essence of his approach remains unchanged and is beautifully captured by Jen Altman's poem 'The Art of Healing' which she wrote after his supervision workshop in London in 2003.

My thanks go to all the Contributors for this issue, without whom the publication would not exist. Thank you also to the Translators and Editorial Team for all their hard work and to the Advisors for being there in the background. A special thank you to Carol, my Associate Editor, for her dogged persistence and last but not least, to the inventors of computers and email!

I hope you, the reader, will find much that inspires you.

Barbara Morgan

Editor

Postscript

The constellation work has shown us that our bodies and our families are all much like icebergs: there is a lot more hidden under the surface than is visible to us. This is captured by the cover picture, which was inspired by a photo posted by Ginny Vinson on the international e-mail discussion group on constellation work, set up by Chris Walsh in Australia. This lively forum demonstrates another aspect of the growth of constellation work, providing a space for on-going exploration of problems and ideas.

If you are interested in joining this group go to www.constellationflow.com and click on the link "Register here for ConstellationTalk"

Dimensions of Illness and Health

One of the great experiences of this work is that many illnesses are connected with something which has happened in the family. In illness an unresolved issue is demonstrated. I have had another insight recently and that is that an illness represents an excluded person; the illness is in love with an excluded person. If it can bring in the excluded person the illness has served its purpose.

Two years ago in Hong Kong there was a woman who had eleven illnesses and we set up the eleven illnesses in a circle around her and they all behaved like people; some falling to the ground with great pain, others crying. The person who had the illness looked at all of them and took them into her heart. One year later she came to another workshop and she felt much better. She said she wanted to tell me something about her family, what had happened. Her parents gave away about five or six of their children. They sold them because they were too poor to bring them up. They had also aborted several children. I asked how many altogether and she said eleven. Then we set up all these children, the eleven children and we placed them in a circle again and placed the parents outside. She was standing in the middle like before and she looked at each of her brothers and sisters and there was deep emotion between them – a very deep love. The parents were standing outside and weeping. We opened the circle, the parents entered with the client; they held each other's hands, looked at one another and were united with deep love.

We can look at illnesses in this way. Our body is not just a body, it is united to our soul and the soul is united with all the members of our families. If there is the order of love in our soul, our body can find its proper order and become healthy. Beyond the body and the soul there is something else and within the body we can observe that it follows certain laws; they are given to the body and we have to observe them. We can also say that we have to tend to the needs of the body in the proper way. The basic order in the body cannot come from the body, it comes from outside. Therefore we look at the soul; the soul which is actually the life force within the body, and that soul also follows certain laws. For instance, the soul does not tolerate that any member of the family is

excluded. Now, these orders in the soul do not originate in the soul; they come from outside, from another force that does not follow certain laws; this force makes the laws. This is a creative force and we participate in this creative force with our minds. The mind is above the soul and it has abilities far beyond the soul's. For instance with the help of our mind, we can be present anywhere in the nick of time; there are no distances for our mind but also our mind follows certain laws. We can only think according to certain categories. Some of these are, for instance: space and time or cause and effect. We cannot think otherwise; when we think, we follow logical laws, we cannot do otherwise. So also our minds are subject to something else.

Now what is above all this we may call Spirit. It is just a name. What can we call it? The term Spirit comes closest. We can see that there are conflicts within the body, within the soul, between the soul and the body, conflicts in the mind, conflicts between the mind and the body, and between the mind and the soul. Very often what we think, is in conflict with what is good for our body and for our soul.

Now, what does that mean? The Spirit, the creative force is in charge of the conflict. It wants the conflict; the conflict is necessary for the evolution. Without conflict there is no growth, but when we identify in a way to this creative force, for instance by consenting to everything as it is, without the wish that anything should be different from how it is, then we come to a state, a state of mind where everything is reconciled. Perhaps we can understand this better if we imagine a wheel; there is something outside the wheel and there is the centre of the wheel. Everything which is outside is connected with the centre and in the centre all becomes one. Outside if the wheel is turning there are ups and downs – constantly, but in the centre everything is united, is still. Therefore when we deal with conflicts, and also with the issues of health, the safest place to deal with all this is the centre. When we help ill people, in the end we lead them to the centre. There at the centre, the creative Spirit is working, active, constantly in motion but at the same time still.

Addiction, Scars of Attachment Souvenirs of Love:

FROM OBJECT RELATIONS TO THE FAMILY SYSTEMS THERAPY OF BERT HELLINGER

OBJECT RELATIONS AND ADDICTION

Object Relations is a school of psychotherapy emerging from Freudian rather than Jungian roots. Its basic premise is:

"...that the need for relationship is primary, and that the self is made up of internal relationships at both conscious and unconscious levels." (Gomez 1997)

Paradoxically, while Object Relations focuses its attention on individual experience, it defines the essence of this experience as beyond the individual:

"Our completeness is identified with our incompleteness; our unity with our disjointed nature." (ibid, p.212)

It defines addiction as an attempt to recapture skin contact with the mother through primitive feelings of warmth and tingling. Rosenfeld's (1992 in Seinfeld 1996) object relations view is that indiscriminate drug use, sexual promiscuity, and frantic life-activity are a manic defence against feelings of being abandoned, alone and separate. Seinfeld adds that a substance is used as a substitute for the caregiver and that by using an inanimate substance, the client is attacking the parent/caregiver by rejecting them. At the same time, the use of the substance enables the patient to avoid loss and separation. It is better to allay the hunger of the 'psychic void' with bad objects than touch nothingness, for this nothingness is experienced as the terror of limitless space. (Bick 1968) Substances which represent exciting but frustrating aspects of the object, are greedily incorporated to fill the void.

INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a new contribution to the understanding of the dynamics of addiction, by linking object relations theory to Bert Hellinger's family systems approach. Hellinger brings to awareness the part of addiction, which is the result of a dis-ease within the family: an unconscious, inter-generational dynamic operating out of blind love and loyalty and calling attention to a loss or exclusion within the family system.

The paper starts by defining addiction and its issues through the language of Object Relations. It discusses Hellinger's empirical findings, his observations on addiction and his methodology and how they contain the issues of an oral stage disruption. This is followed by a case example of a family constellation of a couple whose son struggles with addiction. The case demonstrates the effect of hidden dynamics and Hellinger's particular contribution in noting the importance of the absence of the father within the addict's family dynamic.

The paper concludes that Hellinger's descriptive analysis of our being in the world, his insights and his powerful use of the constellation as methodology contain features that have been cited as important in recovery. While his work does not, in itself, provide a means of interrupting the cycle of active addiction, it makes a significant contribution, which may be of profound value to those in recovery from an oral stage disruption, to their families and to those working in this field.

They excite need and provide the temporary illusion of satisfaction, subsequently leading to the creation of a greater need. As the substance loses its effectiveness, it may thereby become the representative of the caregiver who was unable to effectively contain the child.

In this oral stage disruption Shoham et al (1984) maintain that the drug preference of the addict is related to the type of subjective experience he had. This is based on the Kleinian premise that:

"The oral stage is critical in the formation of behavioural patterns, which are influential throughout life." (ibid, p.297)

The oral stage task is trust and the issues emerging from an oral stage disruption relate to attachment. In a previous study by the author (Green 1999) these issues were found to be: secure base, merging, introjection, loss/separation, primitive violence and transitional objects. Addicted people use unconsciously, in the belief that their very early attachment needs will be met. (Ainsworth 1969) There is often an inability to form stable relationships stemming from a sterile emotional environment in early life, which inhibited the possibility of curiosity, exploration and risk taking.

ARTICLE CONTRIBUTOR: COLETTE GREEN

Where no secure base exists there may have been merging, but not the positive merging which leads to the natural process of separation and individuation. (Mahler 1963) In the case of a disruption of the secure base, the person resorts to self-protection and defensiveness. This may express itself as internal splitting (Klein, M. 1957) with the incumbent primitive anxieties and defences of the paranoid-schizoid position. The function of splitting is to minimise the pain of loss or separation and by manipulation, to create a pseudo-secure base. (Mooney 1997)

"All of us from the cradle to the grave, are happiest when life is organised as a series of excursions, long or short, from the secure base provided by our attachment figures." (Bowlby 1988 p.62)

During the symbiotic phase, the infant is in a merged relationship with the mother and feels what she feels. (Mahler et al. 1985), (Almaas 1988), (Stern 1998)

In a previous study by the author (Green 1999), maternal losses showed themselves clearly in the year prior to the addicted child's birth and up to 4 years after. Many of the mothers had been touched by death during this time through miscarriages, loss of children, parents and partners. Fathers were often absent. There were fathers who worked away from home, died whilst children were very young or lost contact with their children when separating from the mother. Violence seems to be another factor. Green (1999) found violence at home, at school and in the outside world and people inflicting violence upon themselves in the form of their addictions:

"Violence seeks to recover a part of what should have been love and this gives rise to aggression in the true sense of the word, the most

refined forms of which are sadism and masochism; addiction is one of the ways in which aggression is directed back against the self." (Bergeret 1981, p.11)

Despite its death-dealing potential, the object (substance) is always invested as a good object by some part of the mind. It is endowed with the magical quality of enabling the addicted person to dispel mental conflict and fill the psychic void, even if briefly. The soothing substance has to be continuously sought in the external world, usually in increasing quantities.

"While it is in fact playing the part of a transitional object of early childhood, it is not a true transitional object, or if we believe it to be one, then it is an extremely pathological one." (McDougall 1989, p.97)

HELLINGER AND HIS VIEWS OF ADDICTION

Freud gave us the Father, Jung gave us the Great Mother and Hellinger emphasises the importance of recognising the bond between the Couple so that then children can be in their right place, separate and healthily connected. In addiction-endangered families, he has observed a deep longing for the father:

"The father is discounted, demeaned and disrespected so that the children's emotional access to him is blocked." (Beaumont 2000, 1:4)

In a system where the child understands the hidden message which says: *'I do not respect your father'*, the child learns from the mother that it is only permissible to take from her and this may lead to self harm – out of loyalty to Dad. The balance of giving and taking between the parents is not in harmony (Hellinger 2001) which often stems from an early

interrupted movement by one or both parents towards their own mother or father which, through projection, is playing itself out in the present and drawing in the child. The masculine may be absent physically or emotionally or may be seen as not providing for, or protecting the system. So, in Hellinger's language, the feminine does not honour the masculine and thus it follows that the masculine does not then serve the feminine. (Hellinger 1999) Through a systemic lens, when this is the case, then love, intimacy and children get hurt. (Beaumont 2000)

Winnicott (1971) talks of the male element of 'doing' and the female element of 'being'. 'Being', he says, is about union, continuity and caring. The experience of 'doing' is about individuality, drives and assertion. Fairbairn (1946) says that the object-relating of the male element to the object pre-supposes separateness. The male element 'does' while the female element 'is'. Balance between masculine and feminine is needed. Without this the child learns to prefer soft female comfort and is unable to deal with the hard difficulties and dangers of life because he is lacking the counterpart strength of the masculine, whose will is the stuff of separation/individuation and the ability to say 'No'. In the unconscious 'no' does not exist, and there is no distinction between contraries. (La Planche & Pontalis 1973) Negation is only introduced by the process of repression (Freud 1925). If the hidden dynamic says: *'I cannot take from my father'*, the child must dismiss 50% of his/her DNA. As one parent vilifies the other, the child must hide that part of itself which is the vilified parent, along with a deep longing for that same parent. In this situation there is the danger that boys become emasculated, castrated men and girls

grow into women with a sense of superiority over men.

For optimum health, Hellinger has observed that there are certain movements, which seem necessary. Both boys and girls start with their mothers. Daughters seem to fare better if they move to their father's sphere of influence for a few years and then return to their mothers and the realm of women. With sons, there is a similar movement from mother to father but then they remain there, in the realm of men. Honour and respect then follow automatically and both genders can leave their parents and be fully available for adult partnerships. Without these movements, it is difficult to create healthy bonds in adult relationships. (Hellinger, Weber & Beaumont 1998) Within Hellinger's systemic order, the underlying dynamics of addiction can be linked to where and when these movements have been interrupted in the family, who is missing or absent. Then we observe the compulsive filling of the longing for the missing person with whatever it is we use to fill that emptiness. We now have another understanding of the compulsive self-medication for the pain involved in remaining loyal and in this way, staying connected to the absent person:

"Until the process of inclusion, acknowledgement and honouring is completed within the addict's family, the members will remain enmeshed in the hidden dynamics of that family system; unable to withdraw, separate healthily and accept life." (Beaumont 2000,1:6)

When someone has been excluded, the Greater Soul calls down through the generations, *"Somebody please remember me."* It is seeking balance so that love can flow. The systemic conscience is activated; the whole system reverberates and an innocent child's soul responds, heart wide

open, full of loyal love, *"I will remember you... sacrifice myself and even die for you."* What Hellinger's work points out is that the Greater Soul, which is beyond good and evil, understands the workings of innocence and guilt within the family's conscience and may not demand blind love's ritual sacrifice. What it does require, however, is that the consequences of life's different destinies be left with the person to whom they belong. We can see this clearly in the case presented below where addiction and the scars of attachment are the souvenirs of love. When the invisible loyalties (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark 1973) and the unconscious dynamics that have been driving the system come to light, it becomes possible for a movement of the soul to take place whereby the whole system can relax.

THE CASE EXAMPLE: ADDICTION AS A SYMPTOM: THE EFFECT OF A HIDDEN DYNAMIC OPERATING WITHIN THE FAMILY SYSTEM

This case is the family constellation of one of the participants of the object relations study (Green 1999) four years on. The parents, Mike and Mary have three children: two sons and a daughter. Their concern is for the eldest son. He is very bright but does not seem to be able to sustain himself in life; he has been unemployed for two years. They describe him as very angry and aggressive with abusive behaviour; for years he has used a lot of drugs and alcohol. They are very concerned for his mental state.

The couple sit with the facilitator. They describe the history of their relationship. The couple had been involved. Mike had had to go away and Mary was supposed to follow him later, but he didn't contact her. She then went away herself, met someone else, fell pregnant and had an abortion, after which they

separated. She met Mike again on her return to England and they were later married.

FROM THEIR FAMILIES OF ORIGIN

Mary reports: an angry father, mother with mood swings and a family tendency towards drink. She is the second living daughter of six children, two late miscarriages (boys). She has two sisters and one brother. Mother is alive; father died sixteen years ago from a heart attack. There has been a significant loss of children on both maternal and paternal sides of the family.

Mike reports: father alive, a weak man, mother from better family – she had the power and the wealth. Eldest brother is dead. Sister was a heroin addict aged eighteen, fine now. Mother died, five or six years ago, from cancer.

Facilitator asks them to set up their present family.

Mike chooses representatives and sets up constellation.

Facilitator asks Mary if she would make any changes.

Mary moves children only slightly.

Facilitator's Movements:

i) Checks how representatives are feeling

Eldest son: "A feeling of rage towards my brother...He's in the way."

Daughter: "I feel strongly connected to Dad but I don't understand him. I feel very identified with Mum but ambivalent about being physically close to her."

ii) Asks about significant previous relationships

Mary: "One."

Mike: "None."

iii) Sets up previous man and aborted child

Mary is brought in to do this work instead of representative. She has previously worked on this.

Facilitator checks to see that the child of the second relationship has not identified with an unacknowledged, previous partner or the aborted child.

Mary takes responsibility for her part of the abortion and lets the child go.

iv) Checks the effect on the present family

Eldest son: "I am facing away from the family towards an empty space near the window. I felt considerable relief when my mother's previous partner was brought in. Before that, it seemed like she was turning to me. I began to relax as he and the termination were acknowledged and I could look on my mother more warmly...I still feel very separate from my father."

v) Brings Mary's rep. back in and works between Mike and her previous lover

There is no movement from Mike; he is very amused.

Mike: "I feel strong bubbly energies within me which are shielding me from my surroundings and from others. I feel only an aesthetic and cerebral interest in others; I feel nothing in my heart and body. In this place I am bemused by others, especially by Mary's former boyfriend. Their connection is nothing but entertainment for me. I just feel like laughing."

Mary to Mike: "You need to take all this seriously. When you (Mike) are disconnected from me like this, I can't reach you, but I need the connected type of energy the other man has."

vi) Brings Mike's rep. over to eldest son

Mike's rep.: "I feel afraid and overwhelmed. I can't feel anything for him, even though I know he needs me."

Son: very angry and sad – wants connection.

Daughter: "I want to scream at my Dad: 'Please take him in and be close to him'."

Facilitator: "We need to do something else first."

vii) Checks with Mary if Mike is actually this boy's father

Mary confirms that he is.

viii) Puts children to the side safely

Second son: "I feel a bit out of it, no particularly strong feelings."

Daughter: "Standing near my brothers makes me confused and afraid of my brothers' pain."

ix) Brings in Mike's father and places him in front of Mike

Father: "I feel a little uneasy and puzzled by the free-floating laughter."

Mike visibly has little reaction, but reports, "Facing my father is equally difficult and overwhelming. The bubbles have gone and I am becoming increasingly tired; I feel nauseous."

Eldest son feels more connected to his Dad, Mike, when Mike looks at his own father.

x) Brings in Mike's mother; asks Mike what happened in her family

Mike's mother gets very agitated; hands over her head swaying.

Mike says he can remember nothing. Then: "Oh my God! Yes, there was an aunt, my grandmother's sister. They put her in an asylum when she was very young and she died there. She was never spoken of with us. My sister just discovered this recently. They said she went 'meshuga'." (A Jewish slang word meaning: crazy; senseless)

xi) Mike's great aunt is brought in

Mike's great aunt: (head and arms hanging) "I am not mad, I am innocent. I am in the wrong place; I

am not crazy but somehow the system has put me there."

Mike's rep. is unaware of the aunt being placed next to him. His head droops forward and he can barely stand.

Eldest son feels more connected to his father, when the great aunt is included.

xii) Asks Mike's mother to look at her aunt

Mike's mother continues to sway and cannot look.

Facilitator says to Mike's mother, "You must look at her; no one else could."

Slowly she does. Mike's great aunt is placed behind his mother.

xiii) Takes out Mike's rep. and brings Mike in

Mike is very interested and drawn to his great aunt; he looks through his mother at her.

Daughter: "There has been such madness here."

Second son: "Now things are back in the right order."

xiv) Mary's rep. is brought over to Mike

They look together at parents and great aunt.

xv) Mary's rep. is taken out and Mary brought in beside Mike

They honour and leave his parents and great aunt. They are then brought over to meet their children.

Mike's father is brought in behind him; he feels calm and benevolent now he and his wife's aunt have taken their places in the constellation. Mike and eldest son are looking at each other. The eldest son is pleading, with tears flowing down his face. Mike makes the movement towards him and holds his son.

xvi) Facilitator checks within the system

Mary says to their son, "I leave you in your father's sphere of influence; it is the right place for you. I am also here, but you already know that."

Daughter speaks, eyes full, "There is no one behind my mother. I'd like her to have some support." Someone is brought in.

Mary: "You don't have to worry about me, that's my business. I have my mother behind me and now you can lean on me as your mother." The daughter nods softly and Mike agrees.

Daughter: "I feel joyous and relieved now everything is in order."

Facilitator: "We will leave it at that."

The constellation is over. A movement has taken place.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE CONSTELLATION

In this case we have seen addiction as a family system symptom. The constellation revealed a family secret and the effects of exclusion in one generation reverberating across subsequent ones, as the symptoms erupted again and again. The following information was revealed later:

Generation 1: Great Aunt's sister (Mike's grandmother) had an eating disorder

Generation 2: Daughter (Mike's mother) had an eating disorder and claustrophobia

Generation 3: Daughter (Mike's sister) had an eating disorder and was a heroin addict and the son Mike was also claustrophobic with food issues

Generation 4: Mike and Mary's daughter does not like enclosed spaces, tube trains etc. and the son struggles with addiction

This was a secret that was so well

kept, the family had been unable to find any reference to the great aunt by name, but now her great nephew can acknowledge and honour her and his son does not have to remember her by being institutionalised. Her fate can now be left with her.

The father was unable to connect to anyone in his present family, because he was unconsciously holding a loyal connection to his excluded great aunt with whom he was cross-identified. (Ten Herkel 2003) As the strangulated effect moved down the generations, we met the son's compulsive struggle for trust and belonging with all its anxieties and defences. He stayed connected to his Dad, by carrying the anger and pain his father could not access. This was the major entanglement, although the constellation had revealed a connection between the son and his mother's previous lover and a lack of connection between Mike and his own father. Within this constellation, we see Hellinger's two basic concepts of his therapeutic work: systemic entanglement and the interrupted reaching out movement. (Weber & Beaumont 1998 and Franke 2003)

CONSTELLATION POSTSCRIPT

In the week after the constellation there was a lot of positive activity within the system, set off by the eldest son making contact with both parents. Six months later he is working and some of his life force seems to be freed up. The father is now available within the whole family and has given a loving space in his heart to this eldest son which was not there before and, at the same time, he is paying more attention to and honouring his own ageing father. The mother moves back more and is more grounded in her place beside her husband and trusting in their relationship. Her husband comes first now and the children next. This is a fundamental change in position in this family.

CONCLUSION

The constellation is not a model for recovery from addiction, but it often reveals a fundamental change in the way we see ourselves and the world in which we live. This can be a transformative and spiritual experience in which consciousness is expanded and insight gained. It reveals denial in one generation becoming the symptom of another and speaks of issues bequeathed to succeeding generations. Hellinger's work goes beyond the genogram and the socio-genogram (Schützenberger 1998) and becomes a living socio-genogram. We experience:

"holy theatre; the theatre of the 'Invisible-Made-Visible',"
(Brook 1968)

as we witness the unconscious movements towards experiencing the missing inter-generational pieces of reality.

This work offers one of a variety of ways in which self and other can be integrated on a person's map. (Klein, J. 1987) It has the potential to take us through a psychological birth process, moving from symbiosis to the sense of being a separate individual inhabiting our right place, as in a holistic and systemic way we can see our relatedness to our primary love object. It is an opportunity for a maturational process that can provide a developing readiness for the pleasure of independent functioning. (Mahler 1985)

The vital importance of emotional access to father, and connection with male essence is confirmed again as a clear support for individuation and separation. Hellinger's observation of absence of father in relation to addiction offers new insight and may be noted as a key to hidden family dynamics within the field of addiction. The family systems theory and constellation work of Bert Hellinger can move

addicted people towards the type of surrender involved in ceasing the frantic ego activity of defending against the spectrum of anxieties experienced in an oral stage disruption. It has the capacity to alter states of consciousness and the state of internal objects – this time with a different substance.

Acknowledgements: Special thanks to my father Liam; to the family who have allowed me to use their constellation as a case example; to Mary Doyle, Karen Hedley, Breda

Perrem, Carmel Hamel and the Hellinger Institute of Ireland; the Hellinger Institute of Britain; the HIB first professional training group and to my husband, Sebastian.

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Merleau-Ponty and the Phenomenon of 'Embodiment' in Family Constellations

CONTRADICTORY METAPHORS FOR THE BODY

Over time, a variety of contradictory metaphors for the body have arisen in different cultures and religions. It has been seen as both the Temple of God and the source of all evil, instantly evoking a sense of sin in Christianity and other spiritual traditions. Saint Francis had an impatient and contemptuous attitude towards his body, seeing it at various moments as the seat of the devil. Yet, the Renaissance, as well as the period of Enlightenment and the Classicism of the 19th century, began to contribute to the development of a greater respect for the body.

In more modern times, psychoanalytic therapy sees the instinctual drive of the body as part of a physically and mentally healthy expression of the person, whilst other therapeutic approaches view it as the seat of an inner wisdom.

By contrast, orthodox medicine often treats the body like a chemical factory, needing a certain kind of input/output, or like an engine in need of regular service and repair.

THE BODY IN PHILOSOPHY

The body is rarely the focus of Western philosophical contemplation; it is as if it were inconsequential. The German philosopher Kant, in his 'Theory of Categories' pointed towards the limitation of our faculties of perception but never quite named the body explicitly. Yet, the French philosopher Merleau-Ponty (1966) sees it as the basic instrument of all discernment, integral to our perception of the world.

In systemic constellations work, as developed by Bert Hellinger, we experience concrete bodily sensations. These sensations suggest that at the level of the body, the individual is connected to relational Orders that regulate our existence. As embodied creatures we are not independent individuals, but part of a greater connection which Bert Hellinger calls 'The Greater Soul'.

WORLD, BODY AND 'I' – INTER-TWINED

Belonging to the phenomenological school, he pays full attention to the body as the fundamental prerequisite to knowledge. He sees perception of the external world and perception of the body as two aspects of the same act and thereby intimately connected.

"The subject that I am, is inseparable from this body of mine and from the world I perceive." (1945 p.467)

After extensively studying the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, where he read of an interchange and a synthesis of world, body and 'I' (self), he develops the view that we are simultaneously merged with and differentiated from all matter and therefore with the world, just as we are both merged with and differentiated from our bodies.

"Matter and world are given to me like the different parts of my body." (1966 p.241)

With this insight, he builds on the Kantian view, that it is only by accepting the limitations of our ability to perceive, that our knowledge of the world as a whole increases. He expresses this through an interesting metaphor:

"A dove dividing the air in free flight and feeling the resistance of it could imagine that in an airless space she could do even better." (1966, p.IX)

Descartes saw the body as the sum of parts without an inner core, and the soul as an independent existence. For him body and soul are distinctly separate. The word 'to exist' in a Cartesian sense means quite clearly: existence either as extended matter (*res extensa*) or as consciousness (*res cogitans*).

Merleau-Ponty in contrast says:

"The experience of our body presents us with an existence which is ambiguous. It is 'matter' as well as 'consciousness'. Functions of the body such as: vision, motor movements and sexuality are interlinked, not by cause and effect but in mysterious and dramatic ways within and with the world outside. The body is therefore no material thing ... and my consciousness of my body no thought." (p.234)

And:

"Sensing (perceiving) is literally a communion. I experience this sensing/ perception as modality of a general existence which penetrates me without me being the instigator." (p.249)

TRUTH OR REALITY AS AWARENESS THROUGH EMBODIMENT

Merleau Ponty re-affirms the possibility of recognising a truth, which was put into question by Kant. He refers to a truth or reality that is firmly rooted in the concept of embodiment, a relational truth that shows itself in the constellation work, not as an 'absolute' truth but, as one embedded in embodiment.

In another passage Merleau-Ponty describes the quality of awareness that serves the search for truth:

"On the basis of a communality with nature which I share in 'being', I am able in particular moments of existence, to discover meaning in 'being' without having attributed it myself beforehand." (p.254)

Just as Bert Hellinger has flash-like sudden awareness of the truths of relationships outside of time, Merleau-Ponty emphasises a sense of meaning which stands outside time.

"In the experience of awareness we neither think of something, nor think that we think of something.... It all unfolds on a primordial stratum of awareness. Devoid of all judgement, I enter into unity with the subject and a sensory experience of things as they are. I do not think about things in the manner in which reflective analysis and science does." (p.279)

This seems to me to be an exact description of Hellinger's state of 'being' during a constellation, from which flow moments of 'seeing' or intuition.

FAMILY CONSTELLATIONS AND THE BODY

Bodily perception plays a significant role in this way of working. The Greater Soul therefore speaks to us through our body if we are in tune

with it. Here are two Biblical stories, as told by Bert Hellinger, to illustrate the difference between objectifying the body and being in tune with it:

'STUBBORN BROTHER DONKEY' AND 'BALAAM'S DONKEY'

The picture evoked by Francis of Assisi of the Ass as an animal to be driven (in the service of man) is a frequent metaphor for the objectifying relationship between the 'I' and the body. As is documented from the writings of this saint, he repeatedly had to encounter the stubbornness of his 'Brother Ass'. It was not within his grasp to recognise the wisdom hidden behind the stubbornness. 'Brother donkey' collapsed at a relatively young age under the furious discipline of his master.

What happened to Balaam was very different; his donkey saved his life as it recognised the Angel who barred his path – seemingly an intervention of a higher order. Eventually Balaam was able to recognise the stubbornness of his donkey as wisdom. He himself was blind to the extreme danger in front of him until the donkey spoke and God opened his eyes so that he could see the angel who cautioned him with the words:

"Why did you beat your donkey now for the third time... I myself barred your path as you have strayed. Your donkey saw me and turned away three times. You are indebted to her on account of your life, because if you had continued, I would have killed you."

THE BODY AS INSTRUMENT OF SYSTEMIC AWARENESS

In view of the importance of body awareness in family constellation work, it could be linked to body-orientated therapies. However, there is an important distinction from other body-orientated methods, whether cathartic like

bioenergetics, or awareness-focused like Feldenkrais. In these therapies the body is seen as a store of early memories or as representative of an 'inner wisdom' showing the path to healing. By contrast, with family constellations the body becomes an 'instrument of systemic awareness', that is, not just inner wisdom in relation to one's own person, but also an instrument for sensing the given Orders of relationships, to which we seem bound.

Some practitioners who were involved in the very early days of constellation work, will remember how precisely Bert Hellinger kept to body experiences of the representatives before he even became aware of the hidden Orders. He then went on to develop a more interventionist style, which frequently led to a quicker solution. Nowadays, Bert Hellinger again tells the representatives in a constellation to follow the intuition of their bodies without intervention from his side. He seems to be returning to the beginnings of constellation work.

THE BODY AS REPRESENTATIVE OF A NATURAL ORDER

Through the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, we have learnt about the 'merging' of world, body and 'I'. The contemporary philosopher Gernot Boehme points towards another aspect of embodiment when he names the body:

"us as nature." (Boehme in Surkamp p.77)

Similar thoughts appear in Merleau-Ponty, for example, in sentences such as these:

"My own body is in the world, as my heart is in the organism." (1966, p.239)

Bert Hellinger, in an interview in which he was asked about Orders, pointed towards this aspect in saying:

"Order is something pre-

determined. A tree, for instance, develops according to an order. It cannot become a tree otherwise. So a human being develops according to an order. This order is given to us." (Hellinger 2/98, p.12)

From the point of view of family constellations, the body proves also to be representative of a natural order to which humans, animals and plants are equally subjected. It is at the same time, the instrument for awareness and the representative of that which is perceived. That is to say, in relationship to the body, a basic human structure of existence can be perceived: the body is the observer from whom that which is to be observed cannot be separated.

Through the medium of family constellations we experience profoundly that our body is not a unit confined by itself, but tightly bound into a structure that transcends the personal. On the one hand, we remain with the experience of being an individual within our own skin. This provokes us to find personal answers to our fate. Yet, in the experience of embodiment we find ourselves being embedded in the transpersonal and at the same time confronted with the task of finding our personal path, to continue on it and to bear the consequences for our own actions – as long as we belong to *'the community of those who live in a body'*. (Leonard Orr)

In conclusion, Family Constellation work relies on the body as an instrument of systemic awareness. Merleau-Ponty's perspective on the 'inter-linking' of 'I', the body, and the world, offers one possible philosophical foundation for family constellations.

Editor's Note: The article has been extracted and translated from a lecture by Eva Madelung at the Wiesloch conference "Verkörperungen" (Embodiments) Wiesloch 2000. It is published in the book of the same title, edited by Guni-Leila Baxa Astrid Habiba Kreszmeier as: "Eigenwilliger Bruder Esel. Der Körper als Instrument systemischer Wahrnehmung". (Stubborn brother donkey – the body as instrument of systemic perception). Carl-Auer Systeme Verlag Heidelberg 2002.

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The Art of Healing

Sit and wait,
wait in stillness
for what is
to emerge from the soul.

The soul is slow,
its voice comes from depths
below the surface
troubled by thoughts.

Sit in stillness
with open heart and quiet mind.
Then you may hear the voice
that speaks the truth
of what is.

Let the movement it reveals
Unfold.

Jen Altman

*Written after Bert Hellinger's workshop
'The Art of Helping', 25-26 October, 2003*