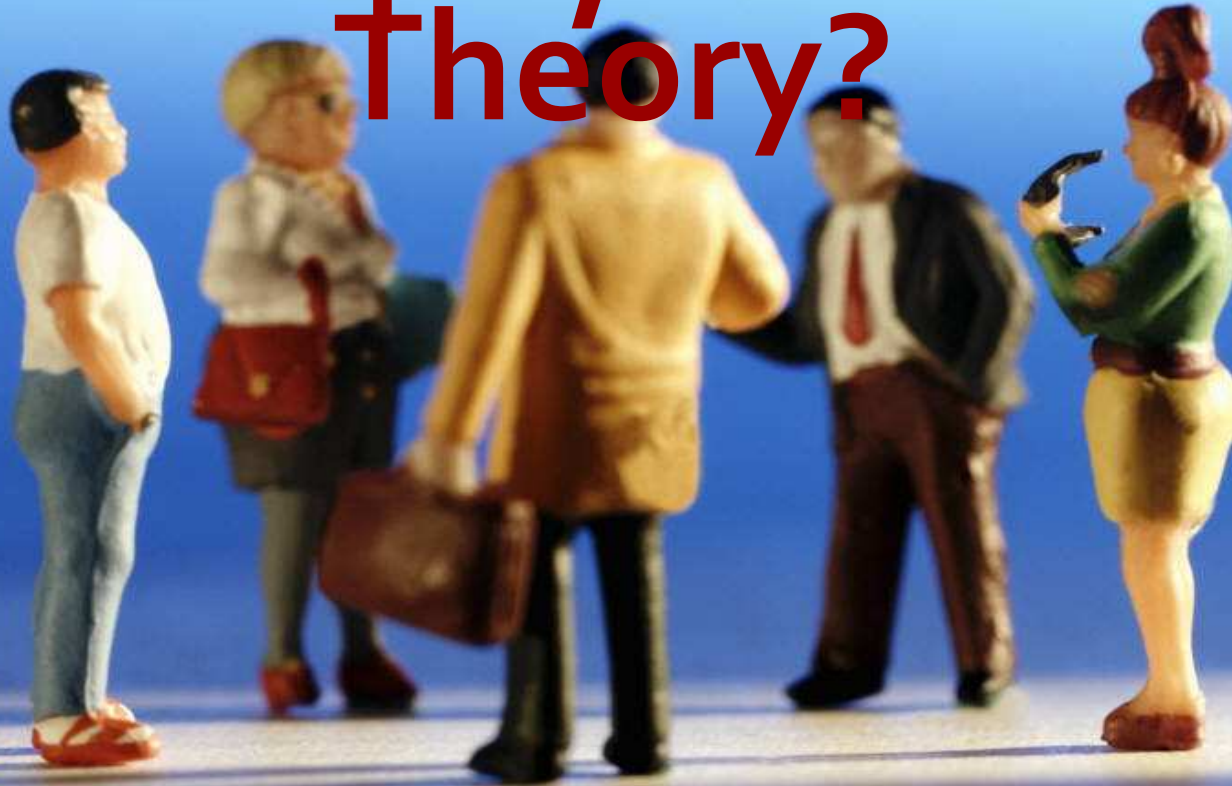


# “Constellations” – Technique, Method or Theory?



**Munich, 27th of October 2012**

[www.healthy-autonomy.de](http://www.healthy-autonomy.de)

# Agenda

- What is the meaning of “Constellations“?
- Bert Hellinger and “Family Constellations“
- Further forms of Constellations
- “Constellation of the Intention“
- “Family Constellations“ and “Constellations of the Intention“.  
A comparison
- Validity of Constellations
- Conclusions

# What are “Constellations”?

- A way to express spiritual **ideas** or to apply scientific **theories**?
- A **method for** spiritual development, for changing systems, for healing physical/mental illnesses or gaining profound self-knowledge?
- A set of **techniques** and **rules**?

# General Model

- Symptoms of suffering show that something goes wrong
- Theory has to find explanations „why?“
- Methods are the way to change the assumed reasons for the symptoms
- Techniques are standardized ways to make the change happen

# General Definition

- „Constellations“ are a procedure to visualise conscious and unconscious psychic structures by using humans as “representatives”
- „Constellations“ are used in purpose to reach the goals that are derived from the theory behind
- The techniques to deal with constellations depend on that goals

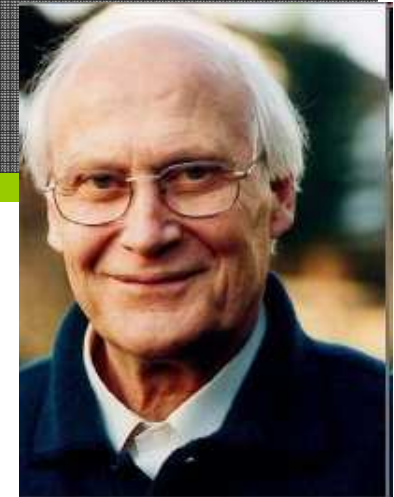
# General Definition

- „Constellations“ can be used for different purposes and goals
- Normally constellations take place in a group
- Objects and visualisations can partly substitute for human representatives

## Other methods using representatives and role players

- Psychodrama (Jacob Moreno)
- Family Sculpture (Virginia Satir)
- Role play

# Bert Hellinger and Family Constellations



- Hellinger made „Family Constellations“ worldwide known
- Hellinger quotes his sources: “In the years of 1970 ... I was four weeks in the United States and have participated in a big seminar about family therapy with Ruth McClendon and Les Kadis. ...They have done impressive Family Constellations. ...
- Before I had done two courses with Family Constellations at Thea Schönfelder.” (Hellinger 1994, S. 502 f.)



# Developments in Hellinger's work

- “Classical” Family Constellations (since 1980)
- “Movements of the Soul” (since 1999)
- “Going with the Spirit Mind” (since 2005)  
Hellinger Scientia<sup>®</sup>

# Theoretical basics of Family Constellations

- Parents are ranked before the children
- Elder children are ranked before younger children
- The individual conscience and the family/We-conscience
- Unconscious identification
- Feelings are differentiated as primary, secondary and those taken over from others
- Those excluded from the family have to be included and honoured
- Inevitable honouring of parents and ancestors

# Method for Family Constellations

- Client sets up representatives for her family and for herself.
- She then goes back to her seat and watches the constellation.
- The facilitator interprets the picture. She is looking for the hidden dynamics in the family.
- The facilitator proposes to take in further representatives in (e.g. a stillborn child).
- The facilitator tries to find a new picture for the family on the basis of the “Orders of Love”. Therefore she rearranges the representatives asking them if this is better for them, or not.
- If she thinks she has found the right picture she places the client into the constellation.
- She offers the client sentences to say in order to find the right place in her family.

# Techniques of Family Constellations

- Honouring the parents for the gift of life (ritual of bowing in front of them)
- “Interrupted reaching out movement” towards the mother (embracing the mother)
- Honouring the excluded and the dead members of the family by speaking directly to them
- Establishing orders of ranking by rearranging the representatives
- Constellation of ancestry lines

# „Movements of the Soul“

- Representatives can freely express what is coming up inside them
- The facilitator doesn't intervene at all or comments their expressions on the background of his theory or personal belief system

- „The new consciousness leads to an inclusive love. It leads us to a creative love in which the boundaries between I and You come to an end, and even the boundaries between creator and creature, so the boundaries between the power from which everything has its being, and that which this power called into being. Through this consciousness we are guided in every way into an accord with this creative power, into unison with our source.“
- <http://www2.hellinger.com/en/home/family-constellation/where-do-these-new-family-constellations-lead-us/new-paths/15.10.2012>

## Further forms of constellations

- Systemic Constellations (Heribert Döring-Meijer)
- Structural Constellations (Insa Sparrer, Mathias Varga von Kibed)
- Organisational Constellations (Gunthard Weber)
- Free Constellations (Olaf Jacobsen)
- Trauma Constellations (Franz Ruppert, Freda Eidmann)
- Constellations of the Intention (Franz Ruppert)

# Theoretical basics for “Constellation of the Intention”

- “Psyche” as a mean of getting access to reality
- Bonding processes are fundamental in psychological development, Risk of symbiotic trauma
- Trauma as the main reason for physical and mental illnesses
- Transfer of trauma from one generation to another through the symbiotic entanglement in the mother-child-bonding and also partially in the father-child-bonding
- Distinction between healthy, traumatised and survival structures in the psyche



# Methodological Structure of “Constellations of the Intention”

- Client finds and formulates her intention
- Client chooses a representative for her intention
- Therapist watches and interprets the interaction between client and her intention
- Therapist supplements the context of the problem by proposing to add other representatives
- Therapist intervenes in order that the client is able to gain more healthy structures in her psyche

## Techniques for the “Constellation of the Intention”

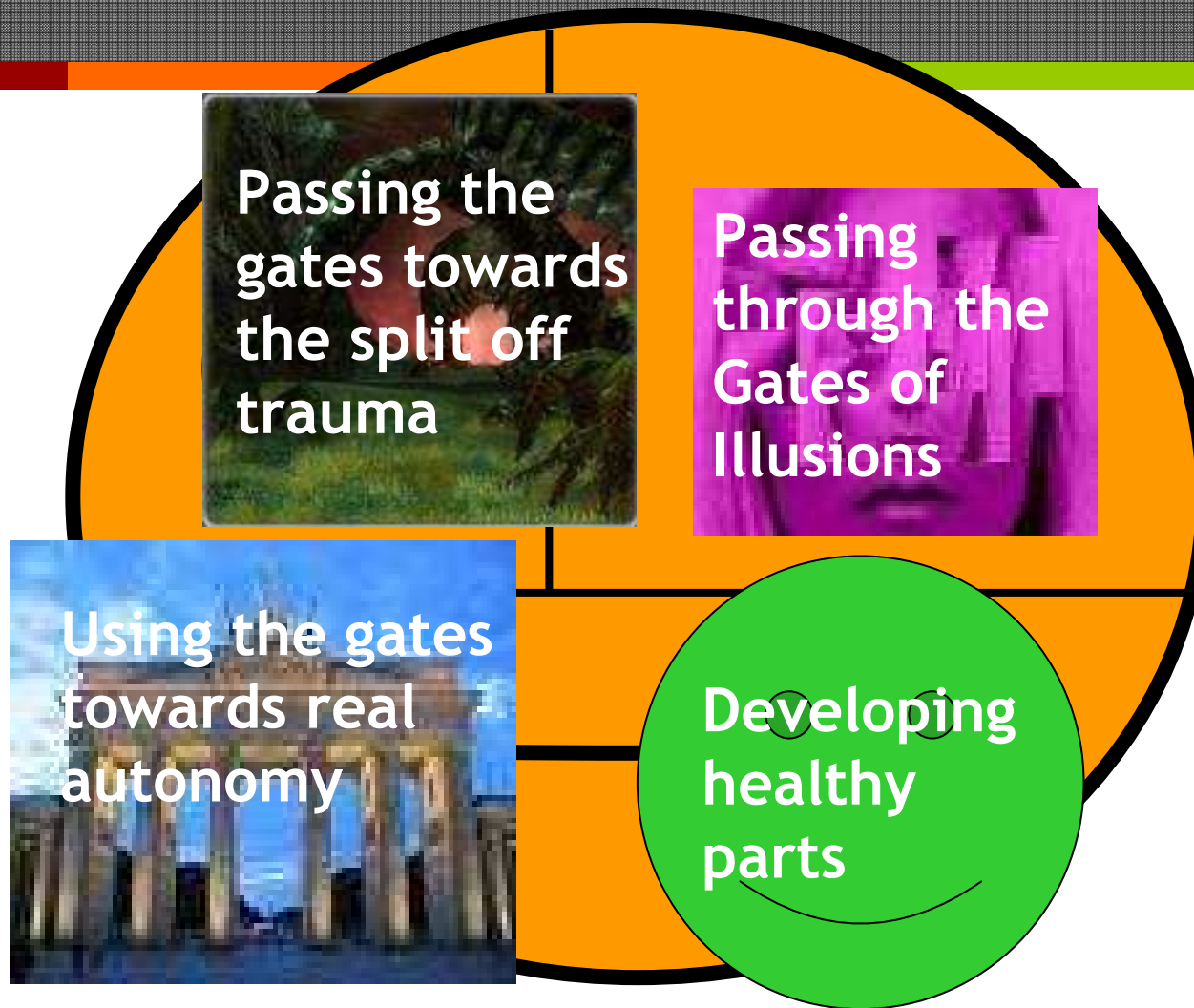
- Offering the client space for self-exploration
- Being aware of trauma in the background of the client and her family sometimes going back four generations
- Making traumatising realities visible by adding representatives
- Minimal interventions during the constellation process
- Helping the client to understand her constellation

## "Constellations of the Intention"



- supports the development of healthy autonomy
- reveals symbiotic illusions
- reduces the risk of retraumatisation
- helps to integrate psychic processes
- creates real love beyond symbiotic entanglements

# The process of Change



## My basic assumptions

- There is no neutral or impartial „phenomenological“ perception of “what is” in a constellation process.
- Facilitation is conditioned by theories and hypotheses.
- The outcome of a constellation is the result of the facilitator’s theories and his personal development.

## Family Constellations

## Constellations of the Intention

- Phenomenology, Orders of Love
- Longing for family roots/place in the universe
- Finding one's own place within the family/universe by changing attitudes
- Reconciliation with the parents
- Excusing parents/perpetrators
- Rituals
- Supporting symbiotic survival strategies
- Spirituality

- Bonding and Trauma theory
- Finding the truth of one's own childhood
- Integration of split off psychological structures
- Self acceptance
- Naming perpetrators clearly
- Individual processes
- Naming symbiotic illusions
- Reality

# Spirituality as Surviving Strategy

- Attempts, to deal with the reality of the abandoned child by looking for a home in the realm of „the Spirit“
- Trying to compensate the reality of feeling worthless und powerless as a child by fanatasies of being allmighty and superior
- This reinforces the splitting off of trauma feelings
- The assumption of a nameless „higher force“ disguises real structures of perpetrators and victims
- Irrationality, the destruction of real spirit, is the prize one has to pay for that

# Are constellations a valid method?

- Immediate Validation: client confirms the behaviours and the statements of the representatives during her constellation
- Validation after a constellation: facts from a constellation prove to be correct afterwards
- Reliability: Different representatives show the same/similar behaviours in consecutive constellations of a client



# Limits of Validation

- You can't do the same constellation with different representatives and different facilitators
- Facts can be denied even if they may be correct

## What supports making constellations a valid method?

- Maximum autonomy for all those involved (client, representatives, facilitator, group)
- Client finds her own intention
- Client are in the process all the time
- Client decides what to take out of her constellation and what not to

# Potential errors a facilitator can make

- Deciding/‘knowing’ the clients real intention
- Selecting representatives herself and manipulating them for her own goals
- Ignoring signals of disagreement from the client
- Forcing the client to do something she does not agree with
- Ignoring realities and supporting illusions

## Representatives as a potential source of errors

- Representatives try to play therapists
- Representatives behave according to the expectations of the facilitator
- Representatives behave according to the expectations of the client

# How can Constellations function?

- „Morphogenetic Fields? „Knowing Field“?
- Quantum physics?
- Mirror Neurons?
- Empathy?
- Natural sciences alone cannot explain psychic processes
- Acknowledging not-knowing protects from spiritual speculations

# What is realistic?

- Constellations of the Intention can serve as a good method for psychotherapy
- Constellations of the Intention can continuously accompany and support processes of human development and healing
- Constellations of the Intention can help traumatised humans to come again into contact with themselves and with reality

# Risks

- Risk of symbiotic entanglement between therapist and client
- Risk can be reduced if therapists work on their own traumas and continuously improve their theories

# My personal conclusions

- Dealing with constellations since 1994 has deeply influenced my view of the world and how I perceive human beings
- I now have a completely new understanding of myself and of “psychological disorders” and “mental illness “ based on the theory of Multigenerational Psychotraumatology
- Applied in a correct manner constellations of the Intention are a very efficient method for psychotherapy and counselling
- Working with constellations of the Intention is a technique that can be learned where there is a high personal engagement by the facilitator free from symbiotic illusions





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