

Dr. Albrecht Mahr
ISAIL – Institut für Systemaufstellungen und integrative Lösungen
IFPA – Internationale Forum Politische Aufstellungen
Mittlerer Dallenbergweg 37 a
D- 97082 Würzburg
Tel. +49-931-7840100
Email: a.u.b.mahr@t-online.de

Transcript of a Lecture held at the MA Program for Peace Studies, University of Innsbruck on 19 August 2005.

Family and Systems Constellations as a Means for Resolving Inter-cultural, Inter-religious and Inter-ethnic conflicts.

Political Constellations and the Importance of Human Relations in the Political Field

Now, I am cooking down this long theme to the indeed very trivial focus of my presentation: Peace work is done by people.

We, you and me and our fellow peace workers are the very tool to facilitate change from destructive to constructive solutions in given communities.

So I will circle around the question how systemic constellation work (scw) can help us to become useful tools in the context of peace building.

Here is my list of content:

First I will briefly remind us of how we are not useful tools for peace building. I will then explain more in details what scw is and how it can help us to change personally and professionally by dealing with the following specific aspects of scw:

- The principle of radical inclusiveness
- The paradox of identity in its constructive and destructive aspects
- Dealing with the dead members of our families and communities i.e.
 how we can misuse them to justify blind and violent solutions, and
 how we can see them in their peace-supporting and healing essence
- And finally some considerations on how we perceive good and evil

Now let me just remind us briefly of **how we are probably not so useful tools for peace building.**

1. When we are caught in **deep unresolved conflict with our parents**, rejecting them because of their failures and love deficiencies, feeling us victimized by their violent, abusive or otherwise destructive behaviour – then we are in a prison which does not allow us to reach out for effective peace mediation.

In other words: as long as we reject, exclude or devalue parents or other members of our family, we are forced, whenever we enter other social fields, to repeat, to continue and to re-enact our struggle.

Think of a woman who has been sexually abused as a child and, now being a peace mediator, has to work with victims and perpetrators of rape and sexually acted out revenge: how far did she manage to accept her personal fate, to acknowledge what happened, to leave the guilt with her parents without judging them? Or: how much is she compelled to fearfully, angrily, perhaps even fanatically take the party of the victims in the conflict without relating appropriately to the vast complexity of the field including the fact that also the perpetrators are human beings?

Those considerations are not about becoming perfect, but this is a natural law: as long as we feel victimised, even subtly, and however good and justified our reasons are – we should not only solve our problems by becoming peace workers. It is a good advice to work patiently on our issues – and scw can help us a great deal in that – until our suffering and our traumata have transformed into specific qualifications to help others. You all know the notion of the wounded healer, and I think this is particularly true in the field of peace building.

John Paul Lederach puts it this way (“The Moral Imagination”, p. 165):

People who listen the best and the deepest to others [certainly one of the most fundamental qualities of peace workers] are those who have found a way to be in touch with their own voices.

(= when dealing with vocation which is very much developed through dealing consciously with own suffering.)

2. We are secondly not so useful tools for peace building when maintaining a narrow, dualistic and naïve **sense of identity**: when in a given field of conflict it is more important to be for example a Serb or a Jew than a human being and the other is in the first place a Muslim or a Palestinian and only then – if at all - a human being, then we are in dangerously intoxicated terrain. For example a Jewish settler saying this morning (15 August 2005): “The Palestinians are Arabs and the Arabs have 24 countries to live in - and they are all terrorists.” As long as we do not see our identity totally equivalent and deeply connecting us to the innumerable other possible identities of our human fellows – as long as we see identity mainly as a border between “us” and “them”, we are not so far from war.

A little later I will come back to this paradoxical issue of identity and how we can provide inspiration to enlarge our view and our range of useful influence in fields of conflict.

3. Thirdly, when it comes to the deceased members of our families,

we are poor tools for peace building when sticking to sorrowful, burdensome, tortured and hateful images of our dead ancestors however difficult their fates may have been. These distorted and yet very powerful images of the dead evoke ill loyalties in the living forcing them to sacrifice their own and their children's well-being as if the dead were honoured and satisfied by their descendant's self-sacrifice.

As I will describe a little later, we really do have the self-obligation to closely look at our own images and ideas of the dead in order to get in touch with their very essence which, I would say: with no exception, is generously and wisely peace oriented.

Particularly in peace building, only then we can support conflicting parties to find their way to their own ancestor's benevolent and generous souls, and their advise and support for us for reaching out to unexpected solutions.

This is, of course, far from being an exhaustive list of important qualities for useful peace building. But it is enough to turn to our next topic:

What is a family constellation?

Family constellations usually take place in groups of about 15 – 25 people. Often without providing any prior information a questioner sets up a person from the seminar group as mother or father, as a colleague, as his or her own heart, as the Japanese soldier who saved his father's life, as his native country, his faith or as the strangely dressed old woman in his dream of the last night. Virtually any element, any being or any process with an impact on the person and her or his family or group can be represented by a person. The representative "knows" in his or her bodily experience, in her emotions and in her emerging images and thoughts the inner condition of the represented person or element – very often in a surprisingly accurate and meaningful way.

This process is simple and – however dramatic it may be occasionally – it is as natural as breathing. We call this process representative perception. Representative perception does not require any professional knowledge, nor special training or a specially evolved intellectual, psychological or spiritual state. There are no experts for representative perception, but we do have the possibility to familiarize ourselves with this mode of perception so that it can appear with ease and naturalness.

Constellations do remind us of the fact that, without any effort, we can become for each other a medium of experiences we do not know of through conventional information.

We dispose of a special sense organ which mediates representative perception just like the eye mediates seeing. This sense organ disposes of a rich variety of functions in order to provide our participative knowledge of the condition and of the experiences of other human beings and of virtually every thing. In the first place it uses our “knowing body” in its rich perceptual capacities; furthermore it uses our feelings and emotions and our capacity to imagination and fantasy; and finally it uses our mental processes particularly our thinking.

Representative perception is non-local i.e. its action is not limited to spatial closeness of the persons involved: it is independent of the distance of those perceived. And representative perception is trans-temporal i.e. it includes events reaching far back in time and into the potential of future unfolding.

And it includes the deceased persons i.e. relatives we know of or people whom we never met or never heard of, who were deeply influential for the survival and well-being of our family and who’s life and fate, even way back over several generations, was crucial for us to be here today.

Representative perception thus reminds us that in addition to our linear experience of time we also live in a timeless space or in an all-times space – frequently unfolding in a family constellation as a quality of undoubted immediacy, simple Now-ness and pure Such-ness.

Systemic constellation work can be summarized as facilitating the natural tendency of any system to move, to change permanently, to loosen standstill and blockage. That is not in any way a *moral* movement to make things better in a moral sense but a most natural movement inherent in every system: allowing the natural flow to unfold and to go on.

Second Part of the Lecture

In the following I would like to speak about **4 aspects of scw which are crucial for developing our capacities for peace building** and which I have already mentioned at the beginning: radical inclusiveness; a large sense of identity; dealing wisely with our dead family members; and finally: how we can look at good and evil in a useful way.

1. Radical inclusiveness

Constellations are useful to remind us of the ever-new and ever newly forgotten experience that we fail in our attempt to exclude what we call evil. Both as individuals and as families, communities and as religious, ethnic or political groups we follow the reflex to keep the

strange, the unknown, the frightening and threatening away of our consciousness, whether it comes from within ourselves or from an outer source. And it is only a question of time that we have to recognize the natural law – according to Freud’s “return of the repressed” - that we become what we reject.

We ourselves and the systems we are part of, are extremely inclusive.

When for example we reject and exclude our violent and alcoholic grandfather, the systemic conscience of completeness and inclusiveness – one of the systemic natural laws – takes care of grandfather’s belonging to the system: the systemic conscience of completeness unconsciously forces a son, a grandchild or great-grandchild to fail and thus to become violent or alcoholic *like grandfather*.

When a chronic schizophrenic aunt spends her life in a mental hospital while she seems strange and weird to her relatives and is shunned and forgotten by them - she will be remembered, i.e. made a member of the system again, by another member of the family. For example a niece, perhaps without any knowledge of the aunt’s existence, may become a peculiar, bizarre and solitary person caught repeatedly in feelings of de-realisation and desolate loneliness like her aunt.

We call this literally trans-personal process “dark belonging” or “dark loyalty”, “dark inclusiveness” or also “dark love”, because it is blind, unconscious and often extremely painful in its consequences.

The solutions for both grandfather and aunt are basically to consciously and respectfully acknowledging them as members of the family so that no other member of the family has to be identified with him/her unconsciously and to re-member them blindly. It is the healing movement from unconscious identification to conscious relation.

Thus the only healthy response to the radical inclusiveness of our systems and of life in general is to practise ourselves *consciously* the same inclusiveness. Which means the very rewarding effort to award everybody and everything its rightful existence, its space and its belonging. That is certainly not easy, and it means ongoing mindfulness and ongoing compassion with ourselves and with all others.

And there are beautiful surprises waiting for us along the way when, like in myths and fairy tales, - the annoying, the bad, the revolting and disgusting, the creatures of the dark and the horrifying transform into the most important sources of insight, support and compassion for us – once they are really looked at and included into our life.

Thus family constellations are an extremely useful transpersonal social education to care not only for the victims of damaging events but to turn also explicitly to those who in our everyday understanding have failed, are guilty, bad, evil, violent, abusing, hateful or mean.

How does all this relate to peace studies and education?

To consciously training radical inclusiveness is certainly very useful to enlarge the space of what we can allow to be, without prematurely judging or turning away from it. It is a training in widening our space of generosity and tolerance when facing the strange, unknown and frightening in ourselves and in other people and groups.

2. The second crucial aspect of scw is the paradox of identity in its constructive and destructive aspects.

As we all know, human development starts from the necessity to develop a clear identity on who and what I am resp. who and what I am not: this body, a woman/man, born in a certain family and country etc. – all this is crucial for our basic orientation in life.

AND: all these elements of “my” identity bear the readiness to fear, reject, demean, fight and eventually annihilate the “not me” and thus bear the seed for war.

Amin Maalouf in his book “In the Name of Identity – Violence and the Need to Belong” (Penguin Books, 2000. The much better title of the French original book is “Identités meurtrières”, murderous identities) suggests to give up the notion of “core identity” which originally has been crucial for our mental and social well-being and to replace it by the *process* of an ever enlarging identity: “I am a daughter, and a woman, and a wife, and a mother, and a black African, and a Christian, and an Arab, and a French, and an European, and a world citizen, and ... “

Here we enter the core of spirituality as shared by every religion (at least in its original mystical foundation), i.e. the identity with everybody and everything resp. the space of no-identity / all-identity.

See also the exercise in Vipassana training to state all identities we can think of i.e. woman, student, Japanese, sibling, flute player etc. - followed by the question “Am I that?” – in order to create healthy doubts in the sense of “yes, I am that, but there is more to who I am.”

Another Vipassana exercise: taking apart the body, the skin, the bones, the liver, the eyes etc.: – Am I that?...leading to: who *am* I really?

When allowing our identity to enlarge, on the social level we enter the space of non-separation and unlimited inclusiveness, see the Buddha saying “Killing someone is digging two graves.” Any kind of a restricting and excluding identity then becomes the devil of separation and exclusion. Karl Popper says in a letter to Ludwig Wittgenstein “Identity is the very devil”.

Identity has much to do with our **sense to belong** and with conscience:

“I am the daughter or the son of these parents, this is my family, my language, my community, my country, my religion, these are our shared values” etc. Our need to belong is

one of our strongest motives at all. It is protected by our personal conscience which helps us to know whether we are in accordance with or in conflict with our belonging to this family or group and the respective signals: good or bad conscience. So our conscience does tell us nothing about good and evil in general but it works as a social organ to serve our need to belong.

Now, the most puzzling fact is that we can do the most atrocious and destructive things with good conscience. As long as we act within the limits which are accepted and valued by our family and group we feel good and conscientious. And the same is true with our enemies: their torturing and killing our people is done in good conscience. E.g. the daily bombing in Iraq killing so many innocent people is of course done in good conscience.

So let us remember again: in large group conflict such as inter-ethnic killing both parties kill with good conscience – they do the right thing from their families' and their groups' perspective.

At the latest here we can understand better what Karl Popper meant by stating “identity is the very devil”: when the development of our identity stops at the level of belonging to a specific family and group, we are condemned to a very poor, narrow and potentially dangerous understanding of ourselves and of others.

And that means in turn: what has been a necessary and a useful identity in the initial phase of our lives has to be transcended in order to gain a more inclusive perspective.

We have to give up our exclusive sense of belonging only to this family and need to dare the belonging to greater contexts which include eventually the whole of humanity – a very challenging and rewarding task!

Falling short of that larger identity leads to a very limited capacity to facilitate conflicts between different groups who all claim to serve the one good purpose exclusively.

Here is a little excursion **on the perversion of spiritual needs in large group conflict** which is a particularly intriguing aspect of identity and belonging. It points to the fact that our desire to belong and to be imbedded in and related to a truth transcending our own limited understanding makes us vulnerable to the exploitation by charismatic leaders.

Collective blindness and destruction is very often most powerfully incited and maintained by the leader's spiritual key message: to act in the service of a larger purpose, to purify the threatened nation, to save a higher developed race from the intoxication and destruction by primitive evil forces, to being chosen, both as leader and his people, by fate and by providence, by God's own will. To join the movement and to exclude and fight the others becomes sacred. To fully give and sacrifice oneself without any question becomes the greatest common good etc.

The deeply troubling fact is that it seems quite easy to take our best spiritual intentions such as the longing to serve the greater good, the readiness to sacrifice own advantages while helping others and to become one with the Divine, and abuse these intentions for harmful purposes. And this permeability for evil intentions in spiritual disguise regularly increases under the pressure of collective threat and conflict.

After this little excursion let me give you **an example** on how these dynamics can unfold in constellation work:

Around 1998 a 30 year old Serbian woman from former Yugoslavia did a constellation because of her diffuse chronic pain, fatigue and heavy depressions. She had managed to leave Yugoslavia and come to Germany before the full outbreak of the ethnic conflicts in her home country, leaving her parents and most of her relatives back in Yugoslavia. There she had lived in a mixed community with Muslim neighbours and many close Muslim friends. Some of them had been killed already and she knew also of Serbs being killed out of revenge.

In the constellation there were only representatives for herself and for Yugoslavia. Facing her home country Yugoslavia very soon she (i.e. her representative) started to sway, lost balance, felt pain all over her body and fell to the floor.

To abbreviate a longer process: the woman felt deeply connected to her people – both her Serb family and her Muslim friends, and she felt guilty not to share their painful and violent fate. She felt guilty to live in safety as if she had abandoned her people, so that she could not look into their eyes anymore. She deeply felt that she would not deserve to enjoy the protection and the advantages of her host country Germany which she disliked and rejected – for example she spoke a relatively poor German compared to the time she had had to learn it. Her condition – physical restrictions and depression – was clearly the expression of her personal conscience binding her to the idea: I have betrayed my family, so I have to pay for it by suffering and by not enjoying my better possibilities.

Now, let us ask: does this solution of her conflict serve anybody? Does it help her people back in struggling Yugoslavia in any imaginable way?

Of course not, it makes things worse. This is a typical example of how the need to belong and the corresponding identity blinds our consciousness and restricts our development to self-destructive solutions.

The constellation invited that woman to practice a much better solution: to be grateful for the protected situation in her hosting country Germany (which later in the constellation was included), to gratefully take its good offers and to creatively and joyfully start to think of possibilities to help her people in a constructive way. She was a trained school teacher and after the end of the constellation she started to think aloud to join some special training for

working with traumatized children. She had earlier heard of that training but had responded with negativity to it like “ I am not capable for that, I am too weak, too depressed..”

So we see how life can guide us into challenging situations where our familiar identity becomes a much too narrow skin to unfold further. The never ending and ever expanding of our familiar space is certainly one of the best movements to add to our peace-worker qualification.

3. The third crucial aspect of scw for peace workers is **how to deal wisely with our deceased family members or **how the image of the dead can be abused, and how it can support healing.****

The readiness for collective destruction in large group conflict is typically fueled by powerful negative images of the dead who have suffered in previous political, inter-ethnic or racial conflict. The dead are usually seen as chronically miserable and tortured, in eternal agony and hate and only to be healed by revengeful actions of their descendants against the descendants of their former enemies. The conviction to be obliged to killing on behalf of the dead can be extremely powerful i.e. amongst the Serbs in former Yugoslavia: see for example in 1989 the 600th anniversary of the Kosovo battle (1389) and how Milosevic conjured and raised the dead when he said (not quoted literally):

We, the Serbs will never ever again be defeated by the Muslims as it happened 600 years ago. It is said that those of us who will not rise their arms against the Muslims to rightfully defend our people, their fertility shall die out and they will have no more descendants. And their fields will fall dry and infertile so that theirs will be no more fruit to live from.

Thus when it comes to peace building, memorial sites are very important places. The way how the dead are seen i.e. in memorial sites influences heavily the readiness to seek violent solutions in collective conflict because we do not distinguish our images of the dead – mostly the demands of our personal i.e. group bound conscience projected on the dead – from what might rather bring peace to them.

See the example of Murambi in Ruanda:

For the vast majority of Rwandans, the memory of those murdered during the genocide in 1994 is very understandably associated with feelings of horror, unbearable guilt, profound sadness and debilitating depression as well as rage and a desire for revenge. At the memorial place of Murambi, following a massacre in which more than 50,000 people were killed, 200 bodies had been taken to an abandoned school building, coated in white lime and displayed, frozen in the throes of death, with agonised gestures, cries and desperate attempts at self-

defence. Such memorials have an overwhelmingly powerful effect which, in my experience, makes it difficult for the living *and* for the dead as well, to find peace.

Because they are dead and they cannot speak directly to us, we can use and abuse them in many strange ways according to our own images and their projections.

Systemic constellation work has taught us important new lessons on what the dead, perpetrators and victims alike, have to tell us beyond our imagination. It is basically this: they are only honored and deeply satisfied when eventually being allowed to become strong sources of reconciliation and life support for all parties involved in the given conflict.

See also what a young Israeli said a few days ago (15 August 2005) shortly before he had to leave his settlement in the Gaza strip:

All my people have been killed in the holocaust – now I am expelled and driven out by force again” – as if he owed to his people to fight for them a struggle which they lost many years ago.

He certainly does *not* see his killed ancestors, he rather looks at his images of them. In fact he disrespects them by making them the source of further suffering.

This blindness means sacrificing our own future and our own children for the “unacceptable fate” of our ancestors – binding them in their unresolved state many decades or even generations ago! The very same attitude is active amongst the Palestinians when they justify destructive actions by the alleged demands of the Palestinian victims.

So let us remember to be very cautious of how we do include our ancestors into our self-image, into our identity and into our motives for building peace.

4. Here is the fourth central aspect of scw crucial for peace education: how we perceive good and evil.

Perhaps you know the story “Satan” by Khalil Gibran, which comments on the question of good and evil.

Father Samaan was well known in North Lebanon and most appreciated even in the remotest villages for his untiring preaching and curing people from the spiritual disease of sin, and saving them from the horrible trap of Satan. Father Samaan was in constant war with Satan.

The story tells how Father Samaan on his way through a lonely valley finds a deadly wounded stranger who turns out to be Satan. In his very first reaction Father Samaan feels horrified and disgusted and turns away determined to let Satan die and to finally extinguish his existence and all evil from earth for ever.

But Satan, step by step, makes him hesitate and think again when reminding him with words like these: “I, Satan, was, and I still am, the source of your tranquillity and happiness, because you live and prosper in the shadow of my being. ... You have adopted my existence as an

excuse and weapon for your career, and you employ my name in justification of your deeds.... Do you not realize that you will starve to death if I were to die? What would you do tomorrow if you allowed me to die today? What vocation would you pursue if my name disappeared? For decades you have been roaming these villages and warning the people against falling into my hands. They have bought your advice with their poor dinars and, as a payment, with the little products of their land. What would they buy from you tomorrow, if they discovered that their evil enemy, Satan, no longer existed? Your occupation would die with me, for the people would be safe from sin....Consider that the monk who prays in the silence of the night to keep me away from his bed is like the prostitute who invites me to her chamber.... I am the father and mother of sin, and if sin were to vanish, the fighters of sin would vanish with it, along with their families and structures. ...I am the heart of all evil and of all aspiration for peaceful life. Would you wish for human motion to stop through cessation of my heartbeat? Would you accept the shining result after destroying the dark cause? *I am* the cause! --- I am Satan, everlasting and eternal”, which he repeated strongly for several times.

Eventually he asks Father Samaan “Would you allow me to die in this deserted wilderness? Do you desire to cut the bond that exists between you and me? Answer me, clergyman! ... you may do as you please. You may carry me to your home and treat my wounds, or leave me in this place to die.”

And Father Samaan finally understood that Satan was his most intimate *raison d'être*, and that the existence of satanic evil was the precondition to knowing and loving the good. And so he came to the conclusion to respond to Satan: “You must live, for in your life is the salvation of humanity from evil and sin.”

Thus father Samaan rolled the sleeves of his robe and lifted Satan to his back and walked towards his home. In the midst of those silent valleys Father Samaan walked towards the village with his back bent under the heavy burden. His black robe and long beard were spattered all over with blood streaming from above him, but he struggled forward, his lips moving in fervent prayer for the life of the dying Satan. –

The story tells us that we need Satan not only because we are perhaps professional Satan-fighters. We need him in the same way he needs us as the core motive which makes us move on, being creative, inventive, compassionate and loving in the very presence of its contrary i.e. destruction, annihilation, and non-existence. So we meet again the age-old mystery of how disastrous the final victory of good over evil would be: in Khalil Gibran's respectively Satan's words, their would nothing thrive but “the pitiless thorns of virtue”.

In the last years, under the impression of the enormous man-made destruction particularly in the last century up to the present days with constantly around 20 active wars on our planet, I often asked myself the question: how would it be if the many beautiful initiatives and

conferences on scw, on conflict resolution and peace building would expand more and more and would finally succeed: major violent conflicts, wars, genocides, persecution for ethnical, racial or religious reasons would totally disappear, and all human beings would equally share resources, a sound juridical system, freely accessible health care and find equal chances for education and professional development. How will it be when the goals for which we work and struggle really become true?

As Khalil Gibran suggests with his story we would be confronted with the age-old paradox that happiness can only be enjoyed when experienced and held in the awareness of its contrary. The only-good-world would be a strange graveyard of still-stand and deadly fulfilment.

If you agree more or less to this statement you would have to ask yourself if it is true that “war is the father of all things” as Heraclites states and continues:

God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, abundance and hunger.
Because it is the disease which makes health so pleasant, good can only appear when measured against evil, repletion against hunger, peace against agony.

Here is another **example** which confronts us with the complexity to find our way across the paradoxes of good and evil.

I remember a woman in her fifties who’s father had been a high ranking Nazi and responsible for the deportation and the killing of many Jews. When in the constellation the father faced his victims being represented by 4 persons in front of him, there was a strong and palpable tension and a strongly burdened silence in the room. For a long time seemingly nothing happened. Surprisingly one of the victims started to move a little bit towards the perpetrator, the clients father, with a compassionate expression in his face which caused the until then frozen-stiff perpetrator to get confused, to sway, to stagger and eventually to fall down to the floor feeling deep desperation and pain. The one victim slowly bent to him and timidly touched him very carefully, always with the expression of compassion. The father started to cry and to grasp the feet of the victim, which allowed the other 3 victims to calmly become focused on the 2 persons on the floor. The client, until then equally frozen while observing the constellation from the outside also started to cry and after a while she said very moved and pensively “there is something behind both my father and the victims” while indicating the space beyond father and victims. She was asked to choose someone for “what is behind them” found herself a woman and placed her in the space beyond the representatives. The woman representing “what is behind perpetrator and victim” grew into and radiated an enormous dignity, great clarity and, in contrast to the beginning, a now awe-inspiring silence. She opened both her hands towards the persons in front of her and said very calmly to the perpetrator / father “you are in my right hand”, and then to the victims “and you are in my left hand - and I am One”. The atmosphere in the room had now become light and transparent.

And later the client said: “Despite all enlightenment, I had always carried along the image of God being the good Lord as opposed to the many evil forces threatening His wonderful creation. Now I have touched the truth that He is it all. Also the evil is God, God’s dark side. And I do not yet really understand, but in some very real way, God has also been with my father, when my father did what he did. There is a deep relief in that, I can feel it.”

Later in a letter the woman wrote me that in a book on Jewish mysticism she had found the words “Good and Evil are the right and the left hand of God.”

To further circle around the question of good and evil here is another **example** which I came to call **“the blessing of the perpetrator:”**

A woman in her fifties suffered for many years from inner restlessness and depression. Now living in a Scandinavian country her family came from Lithuania and could escape from the Russian invasion during WW II. Her father had served in the German army and had committed crimes amongst Lithuanian civilians. He also escaped to the Scandinavian country, lived with the family and died at the age of 55.

The constellation took place in the beginning phase of constellation work in Germany i.e. around 1994 and I followed our assumption at that time that people who had committed severe crimes like murder would lose their right of belonging to their family system. The representative of the father was thus sent out of the room and we closed the door behind him which symbolically would indicate the loss of his membership in this family. In the constellation the rest of the family including the client gained some stability and reassurance so that we concluded the constellation assuming that we had reached a sufficiently complete solution.

The strange thing was, that the representative of the father could not disengage from his role but remained agitated, restless and angry for the next 1 ½ days. We had no choice but to take up the constellation again where we had ended it. This time we asked the father (or rather his representative) to stay in the room near the door by which he had left in the first constellation, and the rest of his family stood at a distance from him in the centre of the same room. For a few moments the father silently looked at his family and then he said calmly: “I know that I have done wrong and that I cannot stay with you and share life with you as if nothing had happened. But please know that I am not that bad that you could deny me my wishing you well and my blessing you.” Now all his agitation had gone, there was a soft and gentle expression in his face, and his daughter, the client, could relax with his blessing and with this human image of her father.

I have since encountered the blessing of the perpetrator several times in constellations and each time I have found in it a particular humanity, humbleness, and even tenderness.

Or: What happened yesterday night (August 16, 2005) when Frère Roger, the founder of the Taizé community was murdered by “a mentally disturbed Rumanian woman” who stabbed the more than 90 years old man in his back when he was celebrating a mass in front of 2500 young people. Think also of Ghandi’s or Rabin’s murder – what are the trans-personal forces taking persons into this dark service to kill other persons who have done so much good? –

For all people actively involved in peace building here is the strong recommendation for a book by James Hillmann “**A Terrible Love of War.**” (Penguin books 2004). Listen to the introductory passage:

One sentence in one scene from one film, Patton, sums up what this book tries to understand. The general walks the field after a battle. Churned earth, burnt tanks, dead men. He takes up a dying officer, kisses him, surveys the havoc, and says. ‘I love it. God help me I do love it so. I love it more than my life.

We can never prevent war or speak sensibly of peace and disarmament unless we enter this love of war. Unless we move our imaginations into the martial state of soul, we cannot comprehend its pull. This means ‘Going to war’, and this book aims to induct our minds into military service. We are not going to war ‘in the name of peace’ as deceitful rhetoric so often declares, but rather for war’s own sake: to understand the madness of its love.

Good and evil is of course a much too big issue to be dealt with in a subchapter of my lecture. My very limited intention is to support alertness and cautiousness when, in a given conflict, we feel ourselves pushed to be convinced and to know too quickly what and who carries the good part and what and who the evil part.

Thank you for listening (resp. reading) so patiently.