

# Life Integration Process

A New Way of Working with the Representation Method

by Wilfried Nelles

In the summer of 2007 I travelled in my car to the Lake Balaton in Hungary where I would have a one-week training. Before I would stay for a week in Bavaria near the Austrian border and play golf. While driving on the motorway for many hours I was in a kind of trance. When I passed a town where an old friend of mine lived I remembered many talks that we had in the eighties about levels of spiritual maturity and growth. Suddenly a very clear picture popped up in my mind, it was as if a window had opened by itself and I could see the landscape of human consciousness. From my CD player I heard the Beatles and I heard and saw that their music reflected and invoked the breakthrough of a new level of human consciousness, the youth consciousness that became the dominating consciousness in modern societies from the sixties. So many ideas with a never felt clarity and power jumped into my mind that I had to stop and write them down every hour. This went on for the next two weeks. During my golf week as well as during the training in Hungary I used to wake up every night and needed to write down some new insights. After two weeks I had a complete map of the evolution of human consciousness and there was no question that I would have to write a book about it.

The book was published in 2009 with the title „Das Leben hat keinen Rückwärtsgang. Spirituelles Wachstum, die Evolution des Bewusstseins und das Familienstellen“ (Life Has No Reverse Gear. Spiritual Growth, The Evolution Of Consciousness, And Family Constellation). There I describe seven steps of the evolution of human consciousness parallel to seven steps of growth in our biological life. In the latter the steps are:

- 1) The fetal state in the mother's womb
- 2) childhood
- 3) youth
- 4) adulthood (until the children leave the house or until menopause)
- 5) early old age (until retirement)
- 6) old age (retired)
- 7) death.

The respective levels of human consciousness are:

- 1) Unity
- 2) Group consciousness (We consciousness)
- 3) Modern consciousness (Ego consciousness)
- 4) Consciousness of connectedness
- 5) Vision
- 6) Wholeness
- 7) Nothingness

Family Constellation mainly works on level 2 and level 4. The need of belonging as well as conscience belong to the group consciousness or, in other words, belong to the child. If we ask “Where is my place in my family of origin” we raise a child question, and if we try to answer that question for a client we serve his child consciousness. Actually for an adult person it doesn't matter what his place in his family of origin is or was because that is past. Only the child in him still has that longing and cannot come to peace without finding an

answer to that question. The same is true for the desire of reconciliation, it belongs to the child in us. Peace in an adult perspective is something different, it means for example to agree to the conflicts in our family or, in Hellinger's words, to that what is no matter how it is. Adult consciousness means being centered in our hearts and looking with love at that what is. And the place one had was always the right one. But the child cannot see and feel this, and this remains in our unconscious. So we have to find ways to bring the (inner) child's and the adult's consciousness together.

In Hellinger's work one can see a development from work on level 2 to level 4 (or further). But usually there is no mediation, no dialog between the child and the adult consciousness. And most facilitators are not aware on which level they work. Working with the consciousness stages I came to understand that we have to create a bridge between the adult person and his inner child. And, moreover, it became very clear that Hellinger excluded an important part of our life: the youth and the youth consciousness. That is a big lag in his work and a big failure because it means the dominating consciousness of today, the modern consciousness, has no place in it. The level 3 of the evolution of consciousness, the modern consciousness, is almost totally excluded in Hellinger's work – or, if he addresses it, he does it in a negative way and blames all it's expressions (like rebellious or revolutionary movements or the respective behaviour of individuals) including the therapeutic approaches that have their origin in modern consciousness. This exclusion is one of the reasons why family constellation is so strongly rejected by many psychotherapists and by the media who feel themselves as guards of modern consciousness.

I mention this to give a little impression of how my model of the evolution of human consciousness can help us to understand therapy in general and family constellation in a wider perspective and in its inner and outer dynamics. And it is the background or the soil from which my new work with family constellations and my new approach for life integration, the Life Integration Process (LIP) started to develop. After my book had been published I became more and more able to see to which level of consciousness which behaviour belongs and which solution would serve the growth of the client's consciousness. My work became clearly rooted in the adult consciousness and at the same time respected all aspects of the child and the youth consciousness. When I was teaching this in a training last summer suddenly an idea for a "little exercise" (that's what I thought it would be: a little exercise) came up. In order to make it understandable I said to the group "I will show you how it goes". I placed seven sheets of paper in a circle on the floor for the seven levels of consciousness and stood myself on level 4 (adult consciousness). Then I chose three representatives for myself as (1) the unborn child in the mother's womb, (2) the child in the family, and (3) the adolescent or young man. I asked them to stand on the respective place holder (paper sheet). They would be allowed to move (sitting or laying down, turning, stretching or bending or bowing down) but not to leave their place. I myself was standing on (4) as the adult person that I am. The idea for the exercise was that everybody should just look at the three former periods of his life as an adult and from his heart. Then I would ask the representatives how they feel.

When I stood there and saw myself in the three former stages of my life it hit me like a Zen stick. What the three representatives expressed by their movements and words was not less then the basic program or, this may be the better expression, the inner vision of my whole life. It really shattered me – but in a very positive way. I saw that I came into this world with a very clear inner vision, potential, and charge, and I could see how this conflicted with my family and with the society and which strategies I unconsciously applied as a child and a young man to remain true to myself on the one hand and meet the requirements and prejudices that came from the social bodies around me (family, school, peers, etc.) on the

other hand. It was overwhelming. I clearly realised what I have to do in my life, what the challenges and the fears are and where they came from. And it was absolutely clear: That was not just an exercise, that was a new way of working with constellations that would be no more family constellations.

Family constellation is almost always concerned with relationships. According to academic disciplines it is as much applied sociology as psychology. The so called “Orders of Love” are in fact not orders of love but orders of social life. That’s why constellation work can be applied to all social systems and not just to families. The “order of time” or “order of balance” basically have nothing to do with love, they are social orders that regulate our everyday life, for example in the cue at the bus stop (order of time) or in our economic and justice systems (order of balance). What Hellinger found out is just that these orders are not simply suspended by love (as modern thinking tends to believe) but are at work in love and family relationships too.

A classical family constellation makes the hidden social dynamics and orders in a family visible. And it reveals how deeply these orders are rooted in our souls, that they are part of the human soul, and as such they are also objects of psychology. But even if our focus is more on the soul than on the social issues constellation work is mainly about relationships to others – our parents, ancestors, love partners, children or other meaningful relationships. In the Life Integration Process (LIP) – that’s how I call my new approach – it is different. Here we don’t look at relationships, here we only look at ourselves. We use the representation method to see how we deep in our unconscious mind felt as an unborn child, as a child and as an adolescent. And we do not work on changing anything, we just watch (from our hearts!) and take it in. We are not concerned with the troubles and pain in these stages of our lives, we are concerned with the essence. The troubles show up, one can see them clearly and one has to take them and to acknowledge them but the focus is always on the essence.

If, for example, one has had a vanished twin in the mother’s womb I don’t take a representative for that twin (like I do in a family constellation). If the pain of loosing him shows up we simply see and acknowledge that. By this being seen in his pain the unborn child feels recognized and appreciated, and that’s all he needs. But in order to be able to just watch that from his heart and take it in it seems necessary that the client has already worked with those traumatic issues before. Otherwise the trauma doesn’t allow him to really see the child. That’s why I only take people for the LIP who have worked with family constellation or, if there is a trauma in their soul, other deep trauma work before. The process looks very simple but is not easy at all. If for example the child is in pain the adult person (the client) often looks very sorrowful at him and may become identified with the child’s pain that has been his own pain as a child. But that doesn’t help at all. The child wants and needs to see that as an adult we have overcome that pain and have left it behind. It belongs to him and not to the adult, and when we leave it with him with love he will feel proud, seen, and released. So the process is really about seeing, acknowledging, and taking in everything that has been in our lives exactly as it was without any change. That’s the challenge for the client, and that exactly means to be adult.

From the observations I made so far (I am working with the LIP since summer 2011) my impression is that the more the client has integrated his childhood already the clearer his true potential and inner vision comes through. If he is still occupied with some loss or heavy destiny in his childhood or before birth this may be in the foreground of the LIP too. Usually however his potential comes to the fore, especially in the first stage (before birth). A client who just made the process for the second time wrote me: “My first LIP-constellation last year

felt much more dramatic, and I was much more emotional and at some points went into some kind of regression. This time I felt much more adult, in a healthy distance and connected with my heart. Maybe because my little child seemed less hurt. (...) I always knew that I am a dancer but to see this from level 4 and to see the joy and happiness of my inner child in all the three stages with an open heart was an unbelievable joy and bright bliss, like the sound of an off-tune singing bowl that after a long deep cleaning sounds in it's original tune."

This woman has been working as a Five-Rhythms-Trainer for many years but never was really successful. Seeing in the LIP that dancing has been her inner vision even before she was born gave her a tremendous impulse and revealed to her that there is no way around, that she has to bring the dancer inside herself fully into existence. Similar feedbacks I received from other participants. For some it was that clear already in the first process, others like her had to do it a second time because in the first process they were still too much concerned with their problems and couldn't see their potential so clearly.

Somehow from the very first moment of our existence we seem to know what our life is meant for or what is going to happen to us. "Knowing" in this context of course is not something mental, something that happens in our conscious mind. It is a knowing without knowing. The representatives are connected to that unconscious knowing, and when they express it we can recognize it as something that belongs to us if we are not too much occupied with our problems or our suffering. In the LIP it becomes obvious that our parents help us to come into this world but are not our creators or our origin. They are the gate through that we come but not the source.

Quite often we carry something with us that is strange to our parents, that goes beyond their experience, their capacities, their values, and their understanding. The child's deep desire to be understood by his parents often becomes disappointed because the child's inner vision and talents are so strange to the parents that they simply cannot understand him. Family constellation by its very approach treats the family as if it would be our source, as if everything that we are comes from our family. Even when Hellinger occasionally said that there is something unique in everybody apart from his family heritage he never gave attention to that something. His sentence "You are your parents" makes a point and may have been important to make clear that we cannot simply get rid of them and of our family in general but nevertheless it is wrong. Parents and family are important but not that important. Our inner vision seems to be completely independent from them, at least in many cases. We come from beyond, not from them. But we come through them and into this very family. Our mother is the first container who provides us with everything we need, and our family is the second container in which we can grow up and learn how to exist in the world. For a certain while they are our world. The mother (or her womb) is our world before birth, the family is our world as children. When we go to school the world gets larger but school is like a foreign country whereas our family is our homeland. As adolescents we start to realize that sooner or later we have (and often want) to leave our homeland and step into the world at large alone. When we really have understood that we become adult. And then the question again comes up: What am I here for? Who am I? Who am I apart from the conditionings in my family and its history?

Looking at the earlier stages of our lives as they are represented in the LIP can help us to connect to our inner vision again which is independent from all the family stuff. Just by the way it can also bring more peace into our family relationships because we clearly see and feel that the parent's influence on our own destiny is very limited. They accompany us for a while in a more or less helpful way, and if they were not helpful or even destructive they themselves

very often were simply helpless. And what we experience as pain or suffering, as being rejected, reduced, or restricted might have been necessary to clean and strengthen our inner vision. Before the diamond can shine in its pureness it has to be cut and grinded. For the stone that must be utterly painful.

It is the acceptance, the agreement to and the integration of that what we are and that what happened to us that brings peace to our inner child and enables us to become really adult and let our further growing happen.

**Bio:**

Wilfried Nelles is born in 1948 and has an MA and PhD. After working for 12 years as a researcher and University-Teacher in Political Science and Sociology he started to work with Bioenergetics during the eighties. Since 1996 he is a fulltime family constellator and gives workshops and trainings all over Europe and in East Asia. Together with Heinrich Breuer he organized and chaired the big International Conferences 2005 and 2007 in Cologne and founded EURASYS (European Academy for Systemic Constellations) that is one of the most important training institutes for family constellation. He has written many books that have been translated into ten languages. In the last years he is widening the framework of family constellation towards a general Phenomenological Psychology.