

Bert Hellinger, “Systemic Constellations,” and I – An Autobiographical Story

PRELIMINARY NOTE

This is the original version of an article I wrote for the 25th anniversary issue (September 2023) of *Praxis der Systemaufstellung*. The version published there was shortened.

The Turning Point

The high point was also the turning point. On May 3, 2005, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* devoted the entire page 3 to a single topic: Bert Hellinger and the 5th International Congress for Systemic Constellations in Cologne, which was to begin the next day — an event I had co-conceived, organized, and led together with Heinrich Breuer.

That afternoon, someone from the *Tagesschau* called: They wanted to broadcast an in-depth report on the congress in the *Tagesthemen* the following evening and send a film crew to Cologne. “Are we allowed to film?” they asked. I had no objection. So that same evening, a camera crew and a young journalist — if I recall correctly, she was a freelance contributor still earning her spurs — arrived at the Maritim Hotel, where the congress was taking place.

Hellinger was already there, and he had told me he was expecting a large package delivery; I was to let him know the moment it arrived. When the packages came, we went over to the stack, and he opened one. I was surprised: the great Bert Hellinger seemed as excited as a schoolboy. He pulled out an A4-sized red booklet with a white cross in the middle and handed it to me. I read the title: **“HellingerZeit”** in bold white letters on a black bar, and underneath on the right edge, small and italic: **“schrift.”** His — or more precisely, *their* — new magazine.

I opened it: again two bright red pages. On the inside cover, two open, giving hands holding a red rose blossom, with the words “für Dich!” (“for you!”) in white beneath; on the last inside page, the same image with the word “Danke!” (“Thank you!”); on the back cover, a full-page portrait of Hellinger; on the third page, again bright red, in large letters: **“Anniversary. I, Bert Hellinger, am celebrating my 80th birthday this year.”** And on page 4, also still red: **“Now I’m back...”**

Was he ever gone? I wondered.

In between were five thick pages of short excerpts from his books, two pages of something like an editorial about his experiences with National Socialism and the attacks against him — which bore no relation to the rest of the content — and four pages of advertisements for books and seminars. An esoteric advertising magazine.

I was shocked. One of my first thoughts was: *Hopefully the press doesn't get hold of this.* And I felt embarrassed. I saw Hellinger's pride and joy and at the same time thought: *My God, what is this*

supposed to be? But of course I couldn't say that to him. I don't remember what I actually said — I somehow wriggled out of the situation; after all, I had plenty to do.

Three weeks later, I wrote a letter to Bert and Sophie Hellinger sharing my thoughts on it. Here it is in full:

Dear Sophie, dear Bert,

I would like to give you some feedback on your magazine.

I'm not sure who it is aimed at, who the target audience is. Is it for constellation facilitators, our clients, or are you trying to reach entirely different people? Is it meant to be an alternative to *Praxis der Systemaufstellung*? It would be good if you clearly stated where this magazine fits within the field.

Formally and content-wise, I don't think the first issue has been successful yet. The overall impression is almost amateurish and comes across as rather esoteric. Is that intentional? It could end up making many of the accusations that have been unfairly made against you, Bert (guru, cult, etc.), seem retrospectively justified.

Specifically:

The title: *HellingerZeitschrift* — what does that mean? If it were simply *Hellinger magazine*, I would have no problem. But as it is, with the bold *HellingerZeit* (and the huge photo on the back cover), it really gives the impression of a personality cult.

The layout I find simply poor, leaving aside matters of taste (colors, cover, roses). At least three completely different typefaces, frequent switches between italics, bold and normal weight give no clear impression, more a jumble. Even the main font is unsuitable for a magazine — a serif font would be better. And it is also too large and too bold — it looks as if it is trying to fill space. The thick paper also feels more like a brochure than a magazine. Yet it costs a lot of money.

For comparison: *Praxis der Systemaufstellungen* offers about 200 pages of editorial text per year for €24.40. Your magazine, even at four issues, has less than half the text and costs more than twice as much.

The text contains many punctuation errors, plus grammatical errors, especially in the use of the genitive. Apparently there is no language-proof editor involved. That is particularly painful, because you, Bert, are otherwise so extremely careful with language.

As for the content: much of it is old and has already been published many times. And there's one thing I don't understand: "*Now I'm back.*" I have always experienced you, Bert, as being present — as a guiding figure and teacher. Perhaps you now want to express this with new content and forms. If you want to show more presence and make your contribution more visible, for example by offering trainings, that's wonderful. But as it is phrased here, it sounds as if you had been absent or had not filled these roles before. To me, you always have — in a unique and fitting way. This wording devalues what came before.

Dear Bert, I have observed the subtle at first and then increasingly open exclusion you've been subjected to in the constellation scene over the past two to three years, and I have taken a clear stand against it. I will continue to do so. I also don't want to interfere in what path you choose or how you go about it. I just want to tell you how the magazine comes across to me. In my eyes, you don't need to fight for anything.

Your work and your spirit have continued to grow, but this magazine, in form and content, does not breathe the spirit of openness, breadth, depth, and precision that characterizes your work. In its current form, it seems almost the opposite to me, and I fear it leads toward isolation. I have not met a single colleague who didn't shake their head, and I have only spoken with those who are connected to you with heart and soul. If you intend to move in a different direction and address a new field alongside the existing constellation work, I think it is important to state that more clearly. Even then, however, formal improvements would be urgently needed.

Of course, this assessment does not change my regard for you or for the work of constellations. I consider it a matter of friendship and respect to share this with you. If you like, we can discuss it in Neuchâtel — I'll be there with Birgid for the first two days.

Warm regards

In Neuchâtel, Switzerland, Hellinger shortly afterward held a course to which I had been invited. I met him while checking into the hotel. By that time, I had received no reply to my letter (and I never did). As I stepped out of our car, my wife said, "Now you're going to be excommunicated." But Hellinger was simply happy to see me, and when I mentioned the letter, he just said: "What you wrote is true, but that was only the first issue."

In the following days, during our evening gatherings, I noticed he seemed very uncertain, unsure of where his work was headed. To every question I asked him about it, he responded evasively — I did not know him like this. Only years later did it become clear to me: by this point, Bert Hellinger's work was no longer truly his own, but that of Marie-Sophie Hellinger. He had relinquished his own work and saw his sole task as following and supporting hers.

The congress itself was wonderful, a complete success. We had around 1¹, 300 participants from all over the world, outstanding speakers, and an atmosphere reminiscent of the first congress eight years earlier in Wiesloch. Bert Hellinger was more than satisfied — after leaving the Würzburg congress in 2003 early, this time he was thoroughly pleased and warmly thanked Heinrich and me both at a farewell dinner and again in a letter.

He had outsmarted the TV crew. They wanted footage of bows or kneeling to support the prevailing narrative of the authoritarian pseudo-therapist, but Hellinger simply did not conduct any constellations. The audience grew restless — all expecting him to begin the congress with the usual

¹ See also my article "Notes on the Orders of Love," <https://www.nellesinstitut.de/blog/anmerkungen-zu-den-ordnungen-der-liebe/>

demonstrations — but he just spoke and spoke. During a break, he said to me: “The TV people want to trick me, but I won’t oblige them. I’m not doing any constellations today.”

The responsible journalist was completely desperate. She needed footage for the *Tagesthemen*, and without it, her career would suffer. She begged me to provide her with recordings of constellations, but in the workshops she wanted to film, the participants refused to cooperate. It was only about capturing the right images for a pre-determined story; the television crew had no real interest in the congress itself. She could have interviewed Hellinger or our prominent guests from the U.S., South Africa, Israel, and other countries — including well-known figures from Germany — about Hellinger or systemic constellations, but the focus was solely on a particular narrative and the corresponding images. I learned a lot that time about how the news is actually made.

Farewell and New Beginning

In the year following the congress, it became increasingly clear that Hellinger was doing precisely the opposite of what he had always proclaimed as the “order” of the man-woman relationship: he now followed his wife in everything, not just personally but in his work as well. I was reluctant to accept it for a long time, but he no longer made his own decisions — and if he did promise something that she did not approve, it was overturned. This applied even to personal appointments he had made without prior consultation.

In the spring of 2006, when I met him with Heinrich Breuer at the 1st Asia Conference in Taiwan, and we spent a very good time together, rumors began circulating in Germany via anonymous faxes claiming that Heinrich Breuer and I had behaved “shamefully” in Taiwan and “betrayed” Bert. I confronted him again, and since he only responded evasively, I cut off contact. Later, I noticed that even letters he had signed were apparently not written by him personally.

For me, this was a deep disappointment. The personal aspect was not the issue. I had known Marie-Sophie before Hellinger did; in fact, she had met him through me. Since 1997, she had organized seminars for me in Spain, where she lived at the time with her partner, a German hotel owner, and ran a seminar center in one of his hotels, and at her second residence in Kössen, Austria. I was surprised in 2001 to discover that Hellinger had entered into an intimate relationship with her, but that was not my concern.

Systemic constellations, however, were my concern. In the public conflicts between the “systemics” and Hellinger, which between 2000 and 2005 were often conducted in a personally hurtful way against him, I had always stood by his side out of deep conviction, because I fully shared his phenomenological perspective and his way of working — the honesty and uncompromising manner in which he communicated his perceptions.

Even among fellow facilitators, this did not earn me many friends. Many thought Hellinger went too far, was too radical or “dogmatic,” and I was considered a dogmatic defender of the dogmatist. He certainly often expressed himself dogmatically, but in it lay — almost always — a truth. Beyond his incredible therapeutic clarity, I loved Hellinger’s sincerity, his steadfastness in standing by himself and his perception, and the directness of his statements, and I gained a great deal from it for my own work and personal development.

In fact, Hellinger was even less dogmatic than most of his critics among the facilitators (who rarely expressed their criticism openly — unless they separated from him, like Matthias Varga von Kibed). They expressed themselves more smoothly and gently, yet they rarely allowed their worldview to be shaken by what they observed or experienced. Hellinger, by contrast, was always open to new ideas and change.

As a side note, in the few instances when I considered his statements “wrong,” I always told him as openly as I did in the letter cited above, and he never took offense.

This stance, which Hellinger called “phenomenological,” was my deepest connection with him and his work. The “orders” played a rather secondary role; in some cases, I even considered them incorrect or only partially accurate. The “orders of love” are sometimes simply general social orders that have nothing to do with love, and sometimes they are childlike orders that belong to the child and — collectively — to the childlike consciousness of the group.¹ However, Hellinger, strongly shaped by his theological upbringing, had no sense of evolutionary processes or of the development of human consciousness. I sensed this at the time, but it took about ten years before I could clearly see that his “orders” correspond to a particular level of consciousness — namely, group consciousness.²

Hellinger’s phenomenological stance — the openness to the moment, the trust in one’s own perception, the courage to express it without reservation, even at the risk of being completely wrong — was what convinced me from the very first moment. That was the secret and the full force of his work, and what ultimately made him so famous. And regarding the constellation method itself, I already knew with absolute certainty when reading *Orders of Love* — and even more so after experiencing it myself — that this is a brilliant tool.

But brilliant as it is, it is still only a tool, not even a full-fledged method. I like to compare it to the invention of X-rays. For the first time, one could look directly inside the body. With constellations, one can for the first time look directly into the soul — though not like X-rays, because the soul is not a tangible object like the body, so the comparison is somewhat imperfect.³ Yet it still seems meaningful, because constellations can reflect the psychological processes of a client, a family, or even a culture. Constellations, for me, are a mirror of the soul.

But just as an X-ray technician must understand medicine in order to read and interpret the images and derive appropriate treatment, a facilitator must also understand the soul and psychology in order to use this tool effectively. Without a deep understanding of psychological processes and human consciousness, constellation work is not, as critics once claimed, “hocus-pocus,” but it becomes something akin to elevated entertainment — a moving theatrical performance where emotional engagement is mistaken for psychological depth.

² I first described the stages of human consciousness in my book: *Das Leben hat keinen Rückwärtsgang. Die Evolution des Bewusstseins, spirituelles Wachstum und das Familienstellen*, Köln 2009.

³ For my understanding of the soul, see: Wilfried Nelles, *Welt und Seele*, in: idem, *Im Namen des Fortschritts. Das moderne Bewusstsein und der Krieg gegen die Natur*, Nettersheim 2023, pp. 269–281.

Bert Hellinger and “the Systemic”

Bert Hellinger understood psychology — and he understood it in a very different way from the mainstream of the time, and differently from colleagues in “systemic therapy,” with whom he had essentially no connection. The conflation of Hellinger’s work with systemic therapy was “broken” by Gunthard Weber, who gave his book *Zweierlei Glück*, the first book about Hellinger’s work, the subtitle *The Systemic Psychotherapy of Bert Hellinger*. As Weber later admitted, that was a mistake. Coming from the systemic tradition himself, and remaining there his whole life, he was impressed by the power of Hellinger’s work and moved by what he had discovered and taken away about himself. He wanted to build a bridge — and he did — but in doing so he also, in a sense, attempted to appropriate Hellinger for systemic therapy, which was not welcomed by all systemics⁴ — and Hellinger himself never crossed that bridge.

Some systemic therapists, like Weber, were fascinated by Hellinger’s work and saw in it a power missing from their own practice, but very few could fully embrace it, and over time most distanced themselves from Hellinger.⁵ Fully engaging with Hellinger’s approach would have meant leaving the systemic-constructivist home behind, and no one was willing to do that — not even Gunthard Weber. Hellinger, in fact, had nothing to do with “systems,” “systemic therapy,” or the underlying system theory. He knew almost nothing about the latter.

I had the — not very extensive — pleasure of studying (sociological) system theory in depth during my sociology degree. It was even one of my examination topics for my master’s degree and for the viva. In 1973 or ’74, I witnessed Niklas Luhmann and Jürgen Habermas dueling over the topic at the German Sociological Congress. That this system theory would later, more than twenty years afterward, appear in psychology as the latest trend surprised me greatly. That this abstract theory, rooted in cybernetics and experienced by me in sociology as something purely technical, should contribute to healing wounded souls or to inner, psychological growth seemed quite absurd.

The same applies to Hellinger — he had nothing to do with it, as I said, and never engaged with it. About the “systemics,” he once said to me: “What they say, no one understands. They call my work esoteric, but in reality they are the esoteric ones.” When he occasionally used the term “family system,” it was always in an everyday sense. However, this was one of Hellinger’s weaknesses: he was sometimes imprecise with terms. But anyone observing him or reading his books could see clearly: Hellinger’s concern was always the soul. And the soul — like the “spirit” — is not a systemic concept. One can consider a family as a system, but then it is no longer a family, no longer a naturally grown and continuing community.

A system is something entirely different: a theoretical construct describing relationships between a whole and its parts. It understands the whole not from the parts, but rather considers the parts in their function for the whole. This construct is then superimposed on social or psychological realities

⁴ Fritz Simon, the most prominent of Hellinger’s systemic critics, has elaborated on this extensively and without personal attacks on Hellinger in *Praxis der Systemaufstellung*: Fritz B. Simon, “My Hellinger,” *Praxis der Systemaufstellung*, 2/2015.

⁵ Wilfried Nelles, *Hellinger and Systemic Therapy: Is Reality Found or Constructed?*, in: idem, *Die Hellinger Kontroverse*, Freiburg 2005, pp. 52–88.

like a transparent layer to observe certain patterns. This works well for artificial systems. But for the fact of growth — and thus for anything natural and living — system theory has no sense. It has even less understanding of consciousness, spirit, or soul.

From a systemic-constructivist perspective, there is no distinction between the living and the artificial, between human and machine; everything follows the same mechanical laws. The key concepts are structure and function; even all living processes are subsumed under these. A mother, for example, is, from this perspective, not a natural being but a function — and the practical consequences of this can be seen today. Because this framework struggles to explain change, especially sudden qualitative transformations such as the emergence of life or consciousness, the concept of “autopoiesis” was introduced — a Greek term that has the advantage of being largely incomprehensible. It is the “Deus ex machina” of system theory. In German, it means “self-creation,” yet how something that does not exist could create itself remains entirely unresolved.⁶ The theory has had enormous effects, as modern humans now genuinely believe that they can — or even must — create themselves.⁷

Systems can “learn” mechanically (like a computer), but they are not self-generated and they cannot grow. This “learning” is purely a technical process and has nothing to do with consciousness or the soul. Yet consciousness and the soul are exactly what psychology — and humans in general — are about! System theory is an abstract, materialistic enterprise, and anyone who looks at psychological processes, at human beings, or at human groups from this perspective (through a systemic lens) automatically sees them as soulless and spiritless.

Even nature is reduced to something purely mechanical from the systemic viewpoint. The very concept of “system” excludes all things natural, and therefore all things human, from the outset. Once our thinking is programmed this way, it inevitably leads to the actual elimination of all that is human. Artificial intelligence, artificial gender, artificial sexuality (pornography, sex machines or “toys,” Viagra, etc.), artificial relationships (algorithmic dating), artificial families — all are logical consequences of systemic thinking.

The practical effects of the constructivist-systemic worldview (because that is what it is, not merely a scientific theory) are evident in today’s debates about what constitutes a family. Families are increasingly treated as artificial systems, in which the “functions” — father, mother, child — can be performed by anyone, even irrespective of natural sex (from a systemic perspective, machines could even fill these roles). Laws now allow men to be mothers, women to be fathers, and children can have multiple mothers. Families no longer grow naturally; they are assembled (constructed, after the old, natural family has been deconstructed). Children are no longer born naturally, beyond the parents’ control; they are no longer “gifted” to them, as it was once said, but planned and artificially produced as thoroughly as possible.

⁶ A philosophically (and biologically-evolutionarily) grounded critique of constructivism (including its systems-theoretical variant) can be found in Christoph Türcke, *Nature and Gender. Critique of a Delusion of Feasibility*, Munich 2021.

⁷ See also my new book: *Im Namen des Fortschritts*, op. cit., as well as my son Malte’s book: *Malte Nelles, Gottes Umzug ins Ich*, Munich 2023.

In modern consciousness, “family” has become nothing more than a construct of roles — or, in systemic-theoretical terms, of structure and function. This is constructivism applied to real life, a consequence of theoretical constructivism and the sociological and systemic appropriation and reshaping of natural — and also psychological — processes. Systemic therapy carries this perspective a priori and is thus blind to what this means for the soul. In my view, it is no longer psychology, nor the study of the soul. Anyone calling their work “systemic” should recognize this clearly.

Systemic Constellations

This brings me to the “systemic constellations” and their practice, which gave this journal its name. I was among the first authors, but I was not involved in the founding, so I cannot be entirely sure whether my interpretation is correct. I believe the name *Praxis der Systemaufstellung* was more pragmatic than theoretical. At the time, it had been discovered that constellations could depict not only inner family processes but also those in companies and organizations — artificial, “made” (as opposed to naturally grown) social groups and institutions for which the term “system” is appropriate. “Systemic constellation” was simply the broader term compared to “family constellation,” and since many hoped that constellation work would expand into business and administration — and that one could make significant money from it — it was natural to use that name.

However, terms are never innocent; they always carry a worldview, a perspective, a standpoint, and a view determined by that standpoint. With the term “systemic constellations,” such a perspective was thus established, whether intentionally or not. It also reflected a split that has accompanied constellation work from the very beginning, resulting from the fact that many of Hellinger’s earliest and most important “students” were systemic therapists, who brought their very different (systemic-constructivist) perspective into Hellinger’s work.

The aforementioned Gunthard Weber was certainly the most influential among them; he played a decisive role in turning Hellinger into a “star” within the scene, later even beyond it. Weber was something to Hellinger like Ouspensky was to Gurdjieff: both made the master famous, while simultaneously modifying and softening him. The “systemic constellations” are Weber’s creation, not Bert Hellinger’s. At the same time, Weber, as I perceived it, had a deep loyalty — indeed, even love — for Bert Hellinger. His book *Zweierlei Glück*, which made Hellinger famous, was a completely selfless work, a service in which he held back his own views entirely. The same applies to the international Hellinger congresses, which Weber initiated and of which I co-directed the last two with Heinrich Breuer. I know how much work that entailed, but also the joy it brought and how inspiring it was for me. These congresses are undoubtedly among the highlights of my professional life.

“Systemic-Constructivist” versus “Phenomenological”

I still maintain that “systemic-constructivist” and “phenomenological” cannot be reconciled. I will not go into this at length here; I have done so in several articles in this journal and particularly in my books. Phenomenology is something entirely different from what most facilitators understand it to be. It means allowing oneself to be moved by the phenomena, by the appearances of the world and of life. Also by oneself, by one’s being, what and how one is (rather than following an idea of how

one wants to be). In this process, every notion of self dies, especially the modern idea of “autonomy” and self-determination, which guides the systemic-constructivist perspective and shapes the entire modern consciousness — even that of most “systemic facilitators.”

There is no “a little of this and a little of that.” Either I believe I should and must have control over the world (my life) — or, in family therapy, that the autonomous members of a family must negotiate how the family system is structured, how it and the roles of its members (“system parts”) should look — or I allow myself to be moved, I allow myself to be affected by how this family actually is, how it has shaped me, and how it works within me. Either I believe I must “work through” my life, my childhood, my family history, and resolve entanglements — or I am ready to allow myself to be worked on, worked through, penetrated, and purified, ultimately consumed. The latter would mean, to use the title of one of Hellinger’s books, “Acknowledging What Is” (which I adapt in my work to “Seeing What Is”). Nothing else — no doing, no making, no self-work, no resolving of entanglements. That is the phenomenological stance, the exact opposite of the constructivist one.

Bert Hellinger himself did not always adhere to this approach, and perhaps he never fully understood it. There were phases when he did almost nothing, when it was genuinely a matter of simply observing and letting things unfold, and other phases when he followed an idea or sought to “resolve entanglements.” This was particularly true up until around 2000, during the so-called “classic family constellations,” when he even entertained the idea that family constellations could heal cancer and nearly all other diseases — provided the clients followed his insights into the dynamics at work in the illness. Whether he truly believed this, I cannot say, but the video series and books he published on the topic certainly make it appear that way.

Regardless of what Hellinger actually thought: phrases like “I follow you” or “I go for you” and the “dynamics” derived from them regarding illness and death are, in my view, among the most problematic aspects of his work. They often carry the implication of guilt, or of having caused one’s own illness or other problems. Whether this was the case with Hellinger himself, I would tend to deny; he was deeply convinced of the inevitability of fate. Yet in his interactions with clients, especially in the so-called “resolution statements,” something often emerged that clients and many observers could understand as implying that they — or their ancestors — were to blame for the problem, and that they held the solution in their own hands.

This perspective seems widespread among many facilitators, even if they do not articulate it as sharply or explicitly as Hellinger. It entails not only the presumption that an individual is responsible for a disease and therefore could have avoided it by “acting correctly,” but also the notion that the therapist can show the patient the “correct solution” and that, if one acts properly, the patient could eliminate the disease. And constellations, one believes — and Hellinger sometimes seemed to give this impression — reveal what is right; they show the “good solution.”

If that solution does not materialize, the client has done something wrong. Hellinger constantly used the word “presumption,” for example when children tried to help their parents or relieve them of burdens, but he rarely recognized the presumption inherent in trying to “resolve” something. When, however — which became increasingly common from around 2000 onward — he refrained from attempting to resolve, saying, for example, “There is nothing I can do here” (unfortunately, he often

said “one” instead of “I,” which could rightly be called dogmatic), other therapists and many facilitators often reacted angrily. For me, these were the moments when he was strongest — the moments when he was truly working phenomenologically, without intention. Much of his work was simply contradictory.

Here we see a weakness running through Hellinger’s entire work: he never engaged in deeper theoretical reflection on the processes revealed in constellations. He largely remained with immediate observation and ad hoc explanations, which were then, partly by him and partly by other facilitators, codified as “orders” or “family dynamics.” For example, if someone looked at the floor or out the window, it was interpreted — whether many still follow this today, I do not know — as “He is looking at a deceased person” or “She wants to leave life.” From this, the aforementioned “dynamics” (“I follow you,” etc.) were derived.

This may occasionally be accurate in individual cases, but it cannot be upheld as a rule, let alone a “law.” Every movement or posture of a representative in a constellation has its own unique meaning, valid only for that case, that context, and that moment. It is not phenomenological insight, but an interpretation that is then generalized. One cannot fault Hellinger for this; one cannot do everything. What might be criticized is that he never sought dialogue about this — or, in fact, actively avoided it. This likely had personal roots, which I will address below — he simply was not capable of it by nature.

However, those who adopted the method should have addressed this. The *Praxis der Systemaufstellung* could have provided the forum for such a discussion, and in the early days, it did. But with Hellinger’s withdrawal, the increasing drive for societal and academic recognition, and the almost exclusive focus on “the systemic,” the momentum was lost. I was a member of the editorial board in the last year of the print edition, but my ideas found no resonance, so I withdrew after a year. That does not mean I would have done better than those who took over; probably it was simply someone else’s turn.

Past, Entanglement, and Resolution

At first, like all colleagues, I was deeply impressed by the apparent ability to explain the present through the past and how profoundly that past could influence a person. But doubts soon arose. The claim that I, the first son of a woman whose father had died in a fatal accident before her birth, should “represent” my unknown grandfather — about whom even my mother knew nothing — seemed somewhat plausible; as an adult, I indeed sometimes behaved as the “older” figure toward her. My own sons did the same toward me and their mother in times of conflict — they defended her. I felt that this was appropriate for young men and did not see it as an “entanglement.” That I was supposed to take on this role out of love for the distant grandfather, however, seemed rather contrived. Honestly, I never felt that love. Of course, my mother always missed her father, and sometimes she sought male support; when my father was absent, I was the next available source. I simply wanted to give her everything she needed. This was — and remains — a deep, childlike need, and one I also owe to Bert Hellinger.

The past is never the cause of the present.⁸ My ancestors were all uneducated. My parents were both intelligent and could calculate and write far better than a high school graduate today, but they had only elementary schooling. As far as I can trace, none of my ancestors ventured far beyond the Eifel region. They were small farmers, forest workers, or craftsmen. One grandfather was a mason with a side business using an ox cart; another worked on the railway tracks, with a small plot of land supporting a goat, a cow, a pig, and chickens. The idea that I would earn a doctorate, write books, and give lectures around the world would surely have seemed insane to them. It cannot be deduced at all from my family history.

However, if one follows the methodical idea in constellations that the cause of present problems lies in the past, and traces back to find “entanglements” until one discovers something, then this idea appears confirmed. But it is nothing more than an artifact. When I once witnessed Hellinger — in Japan — explaining a participant’s maternal conflict as a “murder” in the eighth generation before her (derived from a representative in the constellation falling), I definitively abandoned that notion.

The concept of entanglement through the past and its resolution is also an idea rooted in doing. At its core, it embodies the notion of freeing oneself from one’s history — whether personal or familial. This is the same idea that underpins “Humanistic Therapy.” Strangely enough, in relation to Bert Hellinger, it is a youthful idea: the idea of liberation from the family and from the past in general.

However, Hellinger effectively reversed this idea by insisting that resolution can only occur through love, whereas in Gestalt therapy and other humanistic approaches, the parents were symbolically “killed.” In doing so, he positioned himself directly against the *zeitgeist*, which viewed liberation as rebellion against the parents, as defiance, as claiming superior knowledge, and as the tearing down of the old — and today, more than ever, still does. His statement, “One must see where the love (of the child) flows,” is, for me, one of the most important and powerful insights in all of psychotherapy. And the insight revealed in constellations — that a child’s love always flows toward their biological parents — was a slap in the face to the *zeitgeist* and to contemporary psychotherapy, a shock many were not ready to accept and still are not.

Because I found this insight so important, I titled my first book on family constellations *Love That Resolves*. At the same time, it must be clear that this love cannot be forced. In this regard, Hellinger may have gone too far at times — for instance, when he applied pressure on clients to bow or kneel. Yet he generally did not do this, and I always defended him against accusations that he required it from all clients. He simply saw how beneficial it was for their souls and suggested that they bow or kneel. If they refused, the constellation ended. Certainly, some pressure existed when performed in front of a large audience, but it was never obligatory.

In the theory of entanglement and resolution, the idea of liberation or release from the past is always present, though the path is different. There is an illusion in this: one can only take one’s history as it was, but never truly separate from it. Physically, we are our history; it is embodied in us. Our body — including the mental body, that is, the mind, and the emotional body — is nothing but the present

⁸ See my book *Im Namen des Fortschritts – Das moderne Bewusstsein und der Krieg gegen die Natur*, especially the essays “Das Leben, die Welt und der Mensch” and “Damals und jetzt: Über das Erinnern und das Vergessen” Nettersheim 2023 (*InnenAnsichten*).

manifestation of the past, in the form in which I was conceived and born, and which has then continued to develop through my life story. No one can separate from this, unless they die. One cannot separate from one's parents or one's childhood; parents remain our parents, exactly as they were (and not as they are sometimes "made" in constellations, not as they could have been if all their traumas had been resolved), and one cannot change a single detail of childhood — it always remains the exact childhood we truly experienced.

We are free only in spirit. In matter, in nature, and in all that is physical, pure necessity prevails. Spirit, however, is always free; it does not need to free itself, to separate from anything, or to be freed (by facilitators). These are fantasies of redemption! One only needs to recognize this — recognize that the spirit is free and always has been. The child was — and is — never free (and does not wish to be) and cannot be freed. The adolescent wishes to free themselves and fails — but must try, otherwise they remain a child. When they come to the realization that there is nothing from which one can free oneself, that everything is as it is, and that the only freedom lies in spirit, they become an adult. To be adult is to recognize that one is free. At the same time, one is alone.

If constellation work — and psychotherapy in general — recognized this, it would also be mature. It seems to me that Hellinger simultaneously saw this and overlooked it, often simply doing something else, and most facilitators after him adopted primarily this "something else." Resolution then occurs when one leaves the past as it was, completely untouched. Then it can — just as it was — be over. One carries it within, yet, by agreeing to it, is simultaneously free of it.

The Act of Will

In the statement, "One must see where the love flows, and then express it," something else, deeply unsettling, is also contained: the realization that one has, in one's innermost stance, willed what has happened, that one has internally consented to it. This has enraged many — especially regarding sexual abuse — and provoked criticism of Hellinger, being interpreted as victim-blaming. No, it is the transformation of the victim into an acting person. In the statement, "I willed it this way" or "I will it this way," the victim is no longer a victim. Only through this insight does one gain power and become capable of action. Moreover, in a specific sense, it is the truth.⁹

This applies beyond abuse, beyond events of the past. I — this is now a very personal statement — recently received a very serious medical diagnosis. Am I a victim? One could see it that way, but in that perspective I remain powerless and fundamentally incapable of action. I then hand over responsibility to others, whether to doctors or to fate. But if I come to the realization that I will the illness, perhaps even called it forth, or at least accept it as something I say yes to, I suddenly become capable of acting.

Then, however, the entire responsibility lies solely with me. But isn't that always the case, even if one delegates it to a doctor, to "medicine," or to "science"? Or, as sometimes occurs with facilitators, to a constellation? The consequences must always be borne by me. The difference is only that, if I do not

⁹ Looking even deeper, one discovers a connection to the ritual human sacrifice, in which the "sacrifice," who was at the same time the chosen one, was sacrificed for the welfare of the community. This was a sacred act; human sacrifice is the original form of every religion and thus one of the most primordial and profound movements of the soul. However, there is no indication that Hellinger was aware of this.

respond myself, I leave the response to another, failing to meet my own responsibility. Non-response is also a response, but one I do not take to heart.

This “I” in the statements, “I will the illness” or “I willed to sacrifice myself for my mother/father,” is not the ego. It is not a personal will or intention — it is the soul (or love). In Hellinger’s terminology: the Greater, which guides me. It is this Greater that sends me the illness or has made me receptive to it, which, to borrow Hartmut Rosa’s resonance theory, resonates with what vibrates in the soul as illness. By saying “I” and “I will,” I fully own the event — whether abuse, some other childhood experience, or something current like an illness. I also fully take ownership of my soul’s will. If, by contrast, I say, “My soul wills this,” it remains outside; I am, in a sense, still a victim and cannot act. Only with “I will” do I fully unite with the soul (the Greater). In this union lies healing.

Belonging

Another area where Hellinger, for me — this time not occasionally but generally — went too far was his statement that every child has “a right to belonging.” This “right to belonging” is the central aspect of his “Orders of Love.” To be clear: there are no rights in life! Such notions may be politically declared (human rights), and that may be useful and important there, but psychologically it is nonsense. We have no right to life, to safety, to health, to love — no right to anything at all.

Something deeply personal plays into Hellinger’s work here. I would not write about it if he were still alive, but it is important to see this — not only in relation to Bert Hellinger, but for each person in relation to themselves. Our theories are always an expression of our personality, and what most deeply occupies and moves us in psychological work always contains something of ourselves, something deeply personal.

Anton — this was Bert’s baptismal name; “Bert” is the worldly-sounding short form of his religious order name, “Father Suitbert” — Hellinger was the child in his family who had no place, who, as it must have seemed to the little boy, was not allowed to belong. The fact that, after leaving the order, he did not reclaim the name given by his parents but transformed the archaic, religious Suitbert into the casual, modern “Bert” is telling. I doubt he would have allowed a client to do the same.

Little Anton was four years old when his parents moved from Leimen to Cologne. His older brother and younger sister could go with them; he had to stay with his grandparents. I think I need not elaborate on what kind of pain this would have caused a four-year-old. Two years later, however, he had to join his parents in Cologne, because, according to the laws at the time, a child had to attend school where the parents were registered. He later revealed, very late in life, that the time in Cologne was full of almost daily beatings from his father.

It was, as he emphasized in all discussions about his life story, a great relief for him when, four years later, at the age of ten, he was sent far from home to a boarding school in Lahr near Würzburg. For a child in a “normal” family, this would always have been deeply painful. I myself, as an “external” student — meaning I lived at home with my parents and commuted daily — attended a monastery school with many boarding students; for me, being left there by my parents would have been the ultimate punishment. But for Bert, according to his own account, the boarding school was the happiest time of his childhood.

In short: Anton Hellinger never had a place in his family — more precisely, never the place a child deeply longs for. His entire work grew out of the lifelong search for this place. The “right to belonging” was his deepest longing — not strictly the “right,” but the genuine feeling of belonging. The idea that no one may be excluded, and that those excluded must be given a place, also belongs here. What he could not see: he always belonged, just not in the way he wished. The healing sentence would have been simple: “I belong.” To clarify, one might add: “... whether you (the parents) like it or not, whether you want me or not.” But this can only be seen as an adult; it is an adult realization, not a child’s.

Hellinger drew the strength for his great work from this trauma of not belonging. Certainly, it was also compensation; the inner child’s pain does not disappear. Those who came close to him experienced a man who was deeply shy and insecure. The confidence he radiated in public, especially in his work in front of large audiences, stood in sharp contrast to this inner insecurity. I will share a brief anecdote.

At the Cologne congress, Heinrich Breuer and I spontaneously asked him to offer a short-notice workshop in which facilitator colleagues could question him about the changes in his work, particularly the “movements of the soul,” the differences from his earlier approach, and the conclusions he drew. We wanted to meet a need that many colleagues felt at the time. When we proposed this, he said, “One of you must be there with me.” I sensed that he needed protection, which surprised me greatly at the time. I took on that role and moderated the workshop so that Bert only had to answer the questions.

It was the shortest workshop I have ever experienced. Hellinger turned the very first question around. Instead of answering, he interpreted it psychologically and ascribed a personal motivation or psychological problem to the questioner. Without being asked, he treated the person like a client coming to him with a problem, rather than a colleague or grown-up student seeking an exchange and a professional answer. After that, no one asked another question.

This revealed Hellinger’s deep inner insecurity, which I noticed at the time but quickly forgot (or repressed), and only years later could fully see. The therapist role, in which he could engage with people and allow closeness without it becoming personal and without having to open himself, the large stage, and “going with the moment” were, strangely, a protective space and lifeline for him. He could always refer to what “appeared” to him, and there was nothing to discuss, because whether it appeared to him or not, only he could know. Here, he could fully surrender; he could completely trust his perception in the moment.

With slightly more inner security, he could, of course, have allowed questions — even critical ones — about what appears to him, in what way, and how he deals with it, and he could have answered them. In this way, he would have fulfilled the role of a teacher (which he initially deliberately avoided and only claimed for himself under pressure from his new wife from 2005 onward). But he simply did not have that security. Even open discussions with well-meaning colleagues about fundamental aspects of his work seemed, from my impression, already dangerous to him.

The “Objective” is Entirely Subjective

Trauma often has two sides: it drives great achievements and simultaneously carries and deceives one over the inner pain. The greatest artists, writers, or theorists — even, and especially, those who devise entirely abstract theories — are often deeply traumatized and work through their trauma in their creations (more precisely: they distract themselves with it, so that they do not have to confront and feel the trauma itself). The personal is then hidden behind or within the grand theories or works, appearing as something objective, when it is only a transformation of something deeply subjective. In most cases, the person involved is unaware of this. I do not claim this for Bert Hellinger; he probably saw it. But he did not show it outwardly — it remained largely contained within him.

I do not mean to suggest that a therapist should expose the personal or even intimate aspects of their life. But I do consider it very important not to hide one’s vulnerability behind the therapist role. The more one shows oneself, the more the client will reveal their own wounded sides; the more they will trust you. And the process is also healing for oneself. This is why it is so important for therapists to learn to see themselves and to have the courage to present themselves to the client as a human being, with all their weaknesses.

Hellinger always tried to keep the personal out of his work, rarely spoke about himself. That approach does not work; it sneaks in from behind. Many a hurtful remark that occasionally slipped from him, despite all his dedication to the work — for example toward women — probably reflected his mother. I also noticed that around the time of his divorce, he would quickly comment on couple problems with phrases like, “That’s over,” or “It’s no use,” or something similar. And the aura of authority surrounding him, which made adults shrink and hesitate to contradict him, is not truly beneficial for therapeutic processes, especially not for inner growth. One had to be fairly strong to withstand him. But then one received his full attention and recognition, and one could truly grow from that.

There is no objectivity — in science, there is none, and in therapy, certainly not. We always act as subjects, and the more openly we do so, the more aware we are of this, and the more willing we are to let ourselves be touched, even to show our own vulnerability, the more distance we can maintain from our own issues and the better we can see the client. At the same time, working with clients can also be healing for our own wounds.

Only the Pain Heals

In insisting on the right to belonging, Bert Hellinger was responding to the needs of little Anton. He did not see the boy — himself — but looked from the boy’s perspective (identified with him) and made his deepest desire, the innermost need of this excluded child, a key point of his therapy. In doing so, he gave this childlike need a place and highlighted how crucial it is for a child, thus helping countless clients. However, I suspect that the childlike wound is only covered up once, after many clarification processes in a constellational work, the child finally receives its place.

Instead of asking and searching for the causes of parental coldness or anger, and attempting to make compassionate and loving parents or couples out of them — through surrogate therapy of parents, grandparents, and so on — who would then turn to the rejected child fifty years after its

actual childhood (in a constellational work!), it goes much deeper to simply see the facts, such as the indifference or even rejection of the parents, and leave them as they are — and as an adult fully take in the associated childlike pain.

It is always the pain that heals. A child cannot do this; it must repress, cover up, ignore, or avoid the pain in some way, otherwise it would perish. Only the adult can do this, when they observe the reality experienced by the child without resistance. In this way, the childlike wound reopens, and the childlike pain hits the adult feeling with full force — but now in the adult experience. If this is done consciously, the wound is healed.

Hellinger also overlooked that every child already has this place, and that it is entirely futile to demand it. A child always belongs to the family; this is a fact. Parents can ignore this, send the child away, or deny it, but they cannot take away the belonging. The adult later must simply see this fact, must simply see that he belongs to this mother, this father, and all the others by mere existence. Then one stops searching for or demanding something that one will never receive. But this is a challenge only an inner adult can face. It requires the painful insight that life does not conform to our wishes, however understandable. Constellational work, which first “resolves entanglements,” does not meet this reality.

How the parents deal with this fact is an entirely different matter. For the child, from the child’s perspective, it is existential; for the later adult — the client in therapy — it is no longer so. He survived, even without the parents, which the child could not know. Once he sees this, childhood, along with all its pain, can be over. Maintaining the demand for belonging, on the other hand, is completely powerless and ineffective. One may spend a lifetime searching for a woman (or man) who makes one feel important. Most often, this fails.

The Ontologization of Hellinger’s Statements

When I say, “Hellinger overlooked this,” that is not entirely correct. One must distinguish three levels in Bert Hellinger. The first and most important is his work with clients. Many of his statements, which later were more or less ontologized, codified as a kind of law or rule, or criticized as such, stem from the immediacy of that contact and must always be understood in this context. The moment they are stripped of this context and appear as bare statements, they acquire a completely different meaning.

This is precisely what happened through the publications. Even when often presented as transcripts with constellation diagrams, it does not have the same effect as the immediate experience. For example, bodily reactions such as clients’ facial expressions, tonal modulations, or subtle perceptions through silent eye contact cannot be conveyed in writing — unless one incorporates them into a narrative, which Hellinger did not do.

The diagrammatic steps in his books from the 1990s do not in any way convey the living reality of the constellational work, and even in the videos, much of what happens in live contact is imperceptible. I once told him that I could not follow most of his interventions from the videos; I could see that they had an effect, but not why or what led him to a particular statement. His answer: “Neither can I.”

When, at the end of a book, the so-called “solution sentences” are summarized, as in *Orders of Love* — and, as I heard at the time, had to be memorized and recited in many training courses — a rigid set of rules is created, which does not do justice to Hellinger’s practical work. Yet he also contributed to this himself, after all, these are his books and he is the author.

Thirdly, he relativized this again in interviews and conversations, pointing to the immediate and flowing nature of his work — which, however, did not exclude the fact that on the next occasion he could present it as a fixed rule or “order.”

What the vast majority of facilitators mainly picked up on is the second level: statements and quasi-teaching sentences — whether these were repeated and made the basis of “constellations according to Hellinger,” or whether they were criticized as dogmatic statements or the like.

What I am writing here refers to all three levels: how I experienced Hellinger in practical work and personal conversations, as well as in his publications. It is therefore my interpretation. In individual cases, one could probably find counterexamples to most of his statements.

Hellinger and Youth

Bert Hellinger had, due to the war, no real youth. When he returned, he immediately joined the order, returning to the place that had given him the greatest — perhaps the only — support in his childhood. The order was likely his substitute family. There was no room for youth, experimentation, or gathering life experiences. Only when he left the order, at over 40 years of age, did he leave this substitute family — but not in the manner of youth, of liberation, but in a way that, for his age, perfectly fit: after a very rapid and goal-oriented therapeutic apprenticeship and with a marriage, he entered adult life.

This also strongly shaped his work; he never understood the adolescent’s need to separate from parents, nor what youth in general entails. Yet there was a strength in this: he could observe the modern program of rebellion and the supposed liberation from parents — which also dominated therapy and is a youth program — from the outside and recognize it as a dead end.

Systemic practitioners, by contrast, followed this program, and it seems to me that this is also the prevailing attitude in the constellation scene, at least among those affiliated with the DGfS. Most, unlike Hellinger, have hardly any distance from contemporary trends. They may critique certain issues, e.g., artificial insemination by anonymous donors, but they do not see the general spirit behind it — the modern obsession with feasibility. On the contrary, most facilitators are subject to the same fantasy of unlimited feasibility. The uncritical immersion in the spirit of the times is also evident in the fact that both on the DGfS website and in *Praxis der Systemaufstellung*, gendered language is predominantly used. In a medium or association that adopts this, a Bert Hellinger, I am one hundred percent certain, would have seen no place for himself — this applies even to the period when he still published in *Praxis der Systemaufstellung*.

Overall, the DGfS and PdS have lost the revolutionary force that emanated from Bert Hellinger at the beginnings of constellational work. One is now “recognized” and therefore harmless and toothless. This, however, is not unusual and should not be blamed on those who are involved; it is the fate of all associations. As long as an open culture of debate exists internally — which is the case in both

associations, otherwise this article could not appear — the narrowing of debate spaces dictated by contemporary trends (what can be said without consequence) is resisted. I find this remarkable, which is why I still feel connected.

My Path

I return to the beginning of my article. What was initially a pain and a great disappointment turned out one or two years later to be a blessing. Thanks to the distance from him, which Hellinger forced upon me with his behavior, I was now able to see the weaknesses of his work more clearly. Not those of the so-called “New Family Constellations.” I wrote an article on that in *Praxis der Systemaufstellung*, and that was then settled for me. I only caught the blending with the “Cosmic Power” approach — a form of esoteric practice that Marie-Sophie Hellinger (then still “Erdödy”) had already learned in the early 1990s from a Vietnamese teacher, and which she had tried to connect with family constellations even when attending and organizing my courses — only peripherally.

The first thing I noticed was that Hellinger had no understanding for the adolescent’s process of separation from the parents, which could also take the form of rebellion and radical rejection. This was certainly because, as mentioned, he himself had no youth in this sense and, upon returning from South Africa to Germany in 1968, was shocked to realize that the then student movement, in its expressions (and not only in this but also in some content), shared certain aspects with the SA and SS, which he had experienced as a child. I had already written him a long letter about this in 2001, but I am not sure whether I sent it. Only with the newly gained distance could I examine his bias on this topic more clearly and then dared to express it in my book *Life Has No Reverse Gear*, which appeared in early 2009.

Youth simply did not exist in Hellinger’s work; he either worked with the inner child or the adult. When speaking directly with a client, he almost always remained on the adult level (if someone behaved childishly, one of his infamous lines came: “I cannot work with children. You may sit down again.”). In the constellations, the childlike dominated (which could be seen in the fact that both participants and observers often wept heart-wrenchingly). The old “final picture” of a constellation, in which children stand in full line and order before the parents, is a childlike image, more precisely: a childlike wish image. The path to one’s own life, leading away from the parents, did not appear in this work, nor did sexuality have a place in family constellations. Yet these are precisely the issues of youth; youth simply does not exist in family constellations.

At the same time, these are exactly the issues with which our societal consciousness — the modern world — is fully identified. If they are not seen, psychology and therapy are blind to what is happening in the soul today. The so-called “autonomy” or “self-determination” is the holy grail of our time. We take it for granted as something given or to be pursued, and modern psychology sees its task in strengthening this autonomy. In reality, it is pure illusion: in life there is no autonomy; we determine nothing ourselves.¹⁰ Autonomy or self-determination is a youth project, born from the necessity of youth to separate from parents. The desire for self-determination is confused with reality.

¹⁰ Wilfried Nelles, *The World We Live In. Consciousness and the Path of the Soul*, Cologne 2020.

Psychotherapy, if it follows this and aims to support clients in becoming autonomous, serves a completely empty image, which accounts for the neurosis of our time.

Unfortunately, this neurosis is, in my impression, not recognized even by systemic facilitators, because they themselves — like almost all of contemporary psychology — live within it, because their consciousness occupies the vantage point from which it observes the so-called psychological problems. Wolfgang Giegerich, a Jungian therapist and, in my view, the finest and deepest psychological theorist of the present, has thoroughly analyzed this “neurosis of psychology,” which he sees as the “metaphysical disease” of modernity¹¹. Psychology, which owes its emergence to neurosis and supposedly addresses it, has itself become neurotic without realizing it. In the 1990s, Bert Hellinger read Giegerich’s first two books (*The Psychology of the Atomic Bomb*)¹² and was deeply impressed — but he did not pursue it further.

For me, reading Giegerich was a revelation, leading to a new understanding of psychology and a different approach to constellation work. Today, constellations continue to play a central role in my work as a tool, but they are embedded within a psychology that considers the consciousness of our time and sees the individual always in the context of this consciousness. Occasionally, when appropriate, I still conduct family or symptom constellations (without resolving entanglements; I simply let everything be observed), but in the life-integration process — which is what I have called my work since 2011 — it is no longer about the client’s relationships with other people or their place in the family (in a “system”), but about the relationship to oneself, about seeing oneself and saying yes to oneself as one is. But that is a separate topic and not the focus here.

I met Bert Hellinger again in the summer of 2013. I was conducting a training course in southern Czechia, and shortly before, my local organizer informed me that Hellinger had been in Prague the weekend before. Since I had always wished to see him one last time and to say farewell in friendship, I traveled two days early. When I arrived on Sunday, the lunch break had just ended. I entered the hall; Marie-Sophie was seated on the podium, but Bert was nowhere to be seen. She began the session with the following words: “In the last constellation, you made it so hard for Bert that he was completely exhausted and had to lie down.” My first impulse was to leave immediately. But then I thought, “Since you’re here anyway, you might as well observe how she works.” I had already noticed that the previous client, or her constellation, had been blamed for Hellinger’s exhaustion. It continued with the next client: first, she was made to feel guilty. Shortly afterward, she appeared completely dissociated to me. Now Sophie had her under control. It was so manipulative that, after barely ten minutes, I left the hall; I could not endure it any longer.

When I reached the foyer, Bert Hellinger came toward me. He saw me, a radiance spread across his face, and he said, “Wilfried!” while opening his arms. After a warm hug, he said, “Let’s forget the old stories.” I replied, “Everything was fine for me; it helped me find my own path.” He said, “I have to go in now.” I said, “And I have to keep going.”

¹¹ Wolfgang Giegerich, *Neurosis. The Logic of a Metaphysical Illness*, New Orleans 2013.

¹² Wolfgang Giegerich, *The Atomic Bomb as Psychic Reality. An Essay on the Spirit of the Christian West*, Zurich 1988, as well as *Dragon Fight or Initiation into the Nuclear Age*, Zurich 1989.

It is the same with the work: he followed his path, and I followed mine. The connection remains — the connection in the heart as well as in the mind. I continue his work, that which constitutes the innermost core of this work for me, in my own way.

Wilfried Nelles, 11 Dec 2023