

# Reconciliation with Nature as a Foundation for Reconciliation between People(s)

Presentation made at the Congress  
“Collective Intelligence in Large Group Conflicts – Challenges and Solutions”  
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## Team Origin

“What can systemic constellation work contribute to the relationship between humans and nature?” This question brought us together in 2003 at the International Congress “Passion and Responsibility” in Wuerzburg and was the beginning point for a rich and instructive period of practice and research together. The members of our team come not only from various countries – from Holland, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States – but also from different professions. We bring together different capabilities, knowledge, experiences, focuses and sensibilities in our perceptions of reality. Our diversity has enriched our work together. At times it has been a significant challenge to maintain our mutual tolerance and has forced us to be direct and clear with one another. But again and again we have found our differences to be a source of humor and joy in our work. What we have in common is a professional involvement in Systemic Constellation work and a personal biography reflecting a deep relationship to Nature.

## The Conflict with Nature

The title of our presentation begins with “Reconciliation with Nature...” The theme of this conference is the application of collective wisdom to resolution of conflicts between

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<sup>1</sup> The German version of this text was published in the November 2006 issue of *Spirit Connection* magazine.

groups of people. Our common life in the last several centuries here in the West has been very focused on the society of people, with the human experience. We talk about and concern ourselves almost exclusively with the desires and problems of human beings.

*But it can be that the greatest conflict that each one of us carries within us, and from which we suffer – whether we want it or not, whether we feel it or not – is the conflict between us and nature, with the earth – the planet which is our home. And this conflict is also with our own personal nature – with our own physical bodies – because we **are** nature; we **are** a part of nature.*

## **Nature, Crisis, and Membership**

We live in a time of deep crises. In Chinese the written word “crisis” is constructed from the symbols for “danger” and “opportunity”. The danger, the destructive potential, and the level of destruction that has already occurred and with which we live in our time are greater than ever before. This is one reason that we seek to escape our situation through numbness, through not feeling, because we are afraid that when we opened ourselves to the actual situation in our world, it would overwhelm us.

There is a collective suffering in the world that connects us all, even when we speak of it ironically as “Weltschmerz” (World-pain). We usually look for the causes of this suffering in our personal biography or our families. But the suffering arising from what we have made of the natural world cannot be ignored if we want to collectively move forward beyond the danger we have ourselves created.

The other aspect of this crisis includes a creative power to find new solutions, new possibilities. Bringing together these two sides – painful awareness of what we have made of our world and the creative power for a new solutions – can, surprisingly, lead us to quantum jumps in our consciousness: from an experience of separated and struggling separate beings, competing against one another, to a living community caring for the earth, for all beings, and for each other.

A lot has been said and written concerning the possibility of a quantum leap in human consciousness. In our work we experience directly the tension and the resolution of this process, giving us the support we need to accomplish our own personal transformation.

For this transformation to take place we need the capability to feel deeply, to be in direct relationship to what is, and to trust the wisdom that surrounds us. This is the experience of membership. We all know the fundamental, liberating value of membership for our lives.

We appear as a species to have reached a critical decision-point: we need more than ever to experience membership in something greater than our family, social, ethnic, religious, or national systems. The choice that we see is to take our place as members of the system of Nature itself, and in proper relationship to the source of life itself. Systemic constellation work which includes elements of nature – what we refer to as Nature Constellations - is an excellent approach to support this step, as it enables us to experience and know this membership directly in our own bodies. Again and again we have seen in our work that the living experience of our membership as a part of nature and of connection to the original source of life gives us power and enriches us in a way similar to the way in which the experience of membership in our families and

connections to our ancestors empower us. Conversely, the absence of the experience of membership in nature and connection to the source of life has devastating effects on us – and on nature – that are similar to the disempowerment and dis-ease that occurs when we are cut off from our families.

In constellation work we can experience Nature as “our greater family”. Just as in a tree, where the individual leaves in the crown are connected through the twigs and limbs to the same single trunk; or in a family tree where we are connected through our families and ancestors back to a beginning; *just so are we as living beings connected with all other living beings back to our common origin in water. We all come from water.* (The pioneering work of Masaru Emoto documented in “Messages from Water” is relevant in this connection.)

### **Collective Wisdom**

In family constellation work we observe that serious problems that arise when a family member is excluded or expelled. We can ask then “What effects do we see when we attempted to exclude Nature from the human system?” Consider the following quotation from a German newspaper<sup>2</sup> from 10 January 2005 reporting on the flood catastrophe in south Asia under the title, “The Sixth Sense”:

“I believe animals can feel catastrophes coming. They have a sixth sense,” said the vice-director of the Nature Protection Administration of Sri Lanka. Volunteers who had searched for victims of the flood in Yala National Park in the southeast part of the country reported to him that they had found no dead animals. Other eyewitnesses stated that many animals became uneasy and had taken flight before the arrival of the flood waves. Normally tame elephants broke loose from their bindings and ran in panic to higher ground and into the hills.

Over 200,000 people lost their lives in this catastrophe!

Why have we cut ourselves off from the collective wisdom of our greater family? We have no simple answer to this question. But we can report that constellations with nature show us again and again, often in surprising and moving ways, that animals, plants, and even geographic locations have an interest in human beings and seek to communicate with us. Often they offer support and help, and are sad when we do not recognize or choose to ignore their offers.

*Collective Wisdom functions through our innate capability to experience contact with other beings and our environment **directly**, absent any technical assistance or intermediary mechanism.* It appears that this capability belonged originally to all of us human beings but through successive cultural development it has been more and more overlaid and thereby is no more available to most of us. Consider the Australian Aborigines: they have a deep connection to the land in which they live; they are able to orient themselves in the desert; they are able to find food; not only can they survive, but they can plan and meet other Aborigines at a particular place, at a particular time, without anyone having used a telephone to organize the meeting! It appears that

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<sup>2</sup> Sueddeutschen Zeitung

human beings, as originally constructed, were able to communicate between each other directly without mechanical aides or time delays.

This level of communication is the level of attentive feeling and intuition. Experience is direct and immediate. These perceptions are potentially available to everyone and in a particular way also valid for everyone. When we observe children, we see that they often have this capability of direct communication, sometimes to a significant degree, just as animals and plants do. The foundation element for such communication is the opening to direct experience, without judgment, of what is now present. In our constellation work we have explored this realm of experience - this world of direct and unmediated perception – and have come to treasure it more and more.

### **How do we experience our membership in the Greater Family of Nature?**

We have had many enriching and often surprising experiences over our years of working together as a team in constellations with nature and the environment. When one has the privilege to stand as the representative for a tree, a dolphin, a mountain, or a river, sensations arise that expand our perceptions of the world.

The representative for a river in a constellation says: “I will be happy when humans drink from me once more.” When have you gone swimming in a river, much less taken a drink from a river?

In another constellation the representative standing for a 1,000 year old linden tree in the middle of a city says: “I am here for all of you.”

We can experience the wisdom of a Maternity Hospital as a *being* that uses all of its capabilities to support a specific difficult birth process.

In a constellation that included two dolphins the constellation facilitator asked one of the dolphins in a specific context. “What do you think?” The two dolphins looked at each other and said, in unison, “What do we think?” For the representatives of the dolphins as well as all those present the synchronization of the movements of the dolphins in the constellation, as well as their communications, provided access to an experience of deep communal connection.

These and many other similar experiences have had a lasting effect on our relationships to and awareness of our natural environment. The habit of American Indians to speak of “Brother Wolf” and “Brother Eagle” now has for us a new meaning: these are reminders of our actual connection with the natural world. They are no longer metaphors but have become a direct body experience that is more certain with each repetition.

By trusting these experiences more and more we gradually win back a capability that is very important for us but that had been submerged and lost. When we bring this capability into use in our daily lives, and learn to trust it, we have the chance for real reconciliation. To quote the Tibetan Lama Gendun Rinpoche: “Where there is trust, there are blessings.”

For example, when we find ourselves in a conflict and trust ourselves to ask for the help of the 1,000 year old linden tree that had said, “I am here for all of you”, as we would ask for help from our ancestors, an enormous treasure of knowledge and wisdom opens for us.

Constellation work shows similar possibilities again and again. For example, one sits as a representative under the branches of a large old beech tree and experiences the presence of the tree as a shower of motherly blessings. After such an experience the beech tree on the edge of the forest, with a bench under it for those weary from walking, takes on a suddenly new deeper meaning. In contrast one experiences that oak trees have the effect of helping one find one's center, and clarity. It is not surprising then that in older times trials were conducted under oak trees and their centering clarifying energy.

Trees are often experienced as close relatives in spirit due to their vertical orientation and for their symbiotic and symmetric relationships to air: we breath in and use what they breath out and they breath in and use what we breath out. In one constellation this relationship was especially clear: at the end of the constellation the representatives for Tree and Human Being danced together in a joyful expression of their shared symbiotic life.

In constellations we often experience that family pets are part of the family system and carry or take onto themselves diseases, entanglements, and soul duties in a way similar to that of children for their parents or other family members.

### **The Constellation of the Birthplace**

The location of a person's birthplace is literally the foundation contact point between that person and the earth. As such, for each of us our relationship to this place affects the path of our life to a significant degree. We were not only born into a specific family, we are "children of a place", and came into physical contact with the earth for the first time at a specific place, with the specific characteristics of the landscape, with its specific energies, and its specific light. With our first in-breath we took into ourselves the air of our birthplace, which reached us even in the sterile atmosphere of a hospital.

In some older cultures the place of birth was a place of reconnecting with one's roots as well as the entry into life on the earth<sup>3</sup>. For some Australian Aborigines it was forbidden for a person to eat the plants or animals of the birthplace. During his or her life the person would return periodically to honor and care for the birthplace. In contrast, in modern western society we often live at some distance from our birthplaces and seldom if ever visit them. Often we are cut off from an energetic relationship to our birthplace due to traumatic experiences associated with birth or the place of birth, or simply from never having opened to the good that it can do us.

In our team we have developed a specific form of work which we call a "Birthplace Constellation."<sup>4</sup> The birthplace constellation is just one example of a potentially infinite number of variations on "Nature Constellations", but it serves as a good example of what nature constellations are and why they are important, so we will describe it in more detail, with some examples. In addition, we as a team have made the experience of a

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<sup>3</sup> Lawlor, Robert, *Voices of the First Day*, Inner Traditions, Rochester, Vermont, 1991

<sup>4</sup> The birthplace constellation was jointly developed by Chrisjan Leermakers of Holland, Christine Robert of Germany, and Berchthold Wasser of Switzerland of the Sixth-Sense-In-Service Team in January of 2004 and documented in the German journal *Systemische Aufstellungs Praxis* in issue 2, 2005, by Berchthold Wasser

birthplace constellation for each person a basic part of some of our longer format public workshops, and team members have held public workshops dedicated to just this form.

In a birthplace constellation, a person chooses four representatives: the personality of the person, the soul of the person, the place of birth, and the person's "energy in life". The person places the four representatives in relative positions that seem intuitively right, then steps back and sits down. With help as needed from the constellation facilitator, the representatives open to their internal sensations and perceptions of the element for which they stand. They then move or speak as their inner perceptions guide them. It is customary toward the end of a constellation for the individual to step into the constellation in the place of their personality to experience directly the relationships and their qualities. In this constellation and its movements our fundamental relationship to the earth, to our soul, and to our energy in life are made visible. We can see where we are connected, and where there are gaps or antagonism between elements. We can see where there is joy, and where there is sadness. And almost always there is the chance to experience a narrowing of the gaps, a step or two towards wholeness, a reunion with who we really are.

In birthplace constellations the connection of the individual to the birthplace can be experienced as a deepening and widening of membership – a closer connection to our origins, to our countries, to the earth, and to nature. This experience grounds us and enables us to more easily find a harmony with what was and what now is, bringing this connection into our lives. Every birthplace constellation is unique. But they all show us new ways in which the birthplace offers us in the most literal sense foundation energy and direction for our lives.

Sometimes it is far from easy for a person to come into contact with the place of their birth, particularly when there have been traumatic events there. For example, a woman's birthplace was located in an area that had previously been part of a NAZI concentration camp. Some years before her birth many persons had died there. The woman's thoughts about her birth had always been difficult and associated with a sense of guilt. So, in addition to the representative for the birthplace, we placed a representative in the constellation for the persons who had died in the prison camp. The constellation was done as a part of an individual session, so we did not have people to stand for each of the positions. Instead the woman herself stood in each position. It was a powerful but healing experience for the woman to stand in the position of the dead concentration camp inmates and feel their goodwill and blessings for her and her birth in this place. Again and again we see in birthplace constellations that the birthplace itself, as place, is in its deepest level unaffected and its power is not disturbed by such events, when we have the courage to look deeply and open ourselves to connect with its energy. It was that way in this constellation. At the end of the constellation the representative of the birthplace and the representative for the concentration camp inmates stood as resources at the woman's back, and she herself looked forward into life.

Another woman had the following to say after her birthplace constellation:

"Earlier I always focused on the difficult aspects of my childhood and what I had missed. Now I have remembered that I belong to that landscape, to the Baltic Ocean and its smells, to the sun and wind. I feel the ocean in my body. How could I have forgotten it

for so long? I have not lived there for a long time but the sun and the ocean nourished me. I carry them in me, even now. I was baptized as a small child with water from the Baltic Ocean. My father insisted on it, overcoming the resistance of the priest. As a young man at the end of the Second World War my father fled from the advancing Russians across the frozen Baltic Ocean and had always considered it as his savior. Suddenly I realized that I was also a present for my parents: my birth and my presence had made it easier for them to come into relationship with their new living place.”

Can we imagine what an effect this realization has on the life of the woman, of her parents, and also on the Baltic Ocean?

The rediscovery of our membership in the greater family of nature and the ending of our self-imposed exile - the return to the lap of Mother Earth – can be a source of great and sustained joy. We then have the opportunity and the permission to share in the deep knowledge of nature. This knowledge is available to us a present, without effort, to our benefit and to the benefit of the whole. We are allowed to open to the common origins of life and experience them directly in our own bodies. In truth these are blessings available to us that we have never really forgotten. And when we have forgotten them, the great spirits among us have always sought to remind us. For example from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe:

*It is so pleasant,  
to research nature and our own selves,  
doing no harm to the spirits of either one,  
rather using their soft interaction together  
to bring them into balance.*