

BEING TOUCHED BY THE ESSENCE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ALIVE

Phenomenological constellations with persons suffering from cancer

The idea behind this report is to communicate the knowledge and experience gained in 20 years performing constellations dealing with persons suffering from cancer, either in an individual or a group setting and to make public this information.

These experiences are of course subjective and, as with each person, who confided in me, always individual. This is not an attempt to try to theorize how cancer develops and/or the possibility of a healing of the cancer. I prefer to see this as an invitation or assistance in encountering persons with cancer and being able to meet them with an open heart in each and every moment.

The following relevant aspects of this subject should perhaps be mentioned, without going into any great detail:

Overall there are, at the time of writing, 223 different types of cancer.

Some facts from Germany, for example; for the year 2016

- there were approximately 500,000 new cases of cancer
- approximately 220,000 people died with or because of cancer
- approximately 1,6 million people who are alive for up to 5 years after the initial diagnosis

The occurrences of cancer will increase due to early cancer-screening and the increased life expectancy - the average age for a person's first exposure to cancer is 69.5 years (see literature list no. 9).

I don't want to be drawn into a discussion or a scientific assessment on the pros and cons of conventional medicine and the resulting treatment of cancer – operation, chemotherapy, radiotherapy with their effects and adverse reactions – although they considerably resonate or can indeed influence a constellation. Also not taken into account are the connections with neuro-scientific insights (see literature list no. 5), natural healing and other alternative healing methods. Any possible connection with psycho-oncologic practice, especially as a strategy to cope with stress due to the diagnosis and treatment, or psycho-traumatic healing method during the healing process will also not be taken into account.

At this juncture I would like to list a few of the many helpful constellation formats, which reveal themselves, either through the questions asked by, or the assignment made with, the client, and which I myself use in constellations. Their purpose is generally to strengthen the person's natural resources and thus to overcome the illness. There follows a small selection of constellation formats:

Client and ===> my lost breast

Client and ===> a traumatic event

Client and ===> feeling hopeless

Client and ===> that which weakens or strengthens my defense mechanism

Client and ===> my next step towards a cure

Client and ===> fear that the cancer will return

Client and ===> loss of confidence in my own body

Client and ===> my natural resources

Client and ===> my blind spot

Client and ===> the advantage I get by being ill with cancer

Client and ===> I am cured overnight! (imagine if a wonder were to happen)

Such constellation formats have shown their worth for the client in a therapeutic setting both during several sessions with a single person as well as with a whole group of people. They serve in understanding the illness, in overcoming the illness, in building up and strengthening the client's bearing and also in supporting the client.

Many people come to a constellation setting and want to be able to understand the logic behind the cancer or the cancer itself: "*What did I do wrong? Why me? What is the cancer? Have I got to die?*" The spoken, or often non-spoken, expectation: "*Please cure me! Get rid of it! Cut it out! I don't want it! I want to be healthy again!*" Sometimes the client communicates hidden assignments e.g. a confirmation of his assumptions, in order to be able to receive permission, to be allowed to die. This hidden wish often stands in stark contrast to other family members, who don't want to let him go.

The people come with "their" cancer: the cancer finds itself at varying stages, each person has his own abilities and possibilities concerning the physical and psychic ways of dealing with the illness and also his personal and medicinal history, his personality, whether he is embedded in a social network or family, his awareness of reality and his world pictures. Many clients show a post traumatic stress disorder due to the diagnosis and the resulting treatment of the cancer. These must be taken into account before the question of the "understand ability" of the illness can be looked at. It must also be taken into account that cancer is an illness which depends on many factors, which causally have not been explained and have many triggers, which need and also strengthen each other. Cancer, the uncontrolled growth of cells, exists or benefits from e.g. the disposition of genes, gene defects, the malfunction of the immune system due to toxic influences from the environment, physical and psychic trauma, poor diet, reactions to stress, misconduct (e.g. alcohol/nicotine consume), lack of exercise, influences of hormones on the body and other factors.

"Phenomenological-systemic" look at cancer and what happens during a constellation

Apart from the above, there are still questions to be answered concerning constellation work:

What shows itself when the client and his cancer are deployed? What does the person representing the cancer feel? Is it the cancer? Is it the reason behind the cancer? What

percentage comes from the person representing the cancer and conversely, what percentage from the cancer itself? How "good" are his introspective abilities? What percentage comes from an assessment made by the person representing the cancer and conversely, what percentage comes from the phenomenon, that mirrored processes and stored information from the system show themselves?

How helpful or obstructive is it, if the figures in the constellation are constantly questioned? (The danger of being misled by their answers or movements is a further hindrance to facilitator of the constellation. What and how does the facilitator perceive? What perception does he have of the world and of human beings? What assumptions does the facilitator have of reality in terms of how he looks, initiates, accompanies and intervenes, during the course of a constellation.

What happens in his conscience **before, during and after** the constellation? When does the leader of the constellation lead and when does he let the developing process in the constellation take its own course? What is his understanding of the method, how many tools of the trade does he have, how many subconscious assumptions or also conscious and subconscious "Hellinger-like" doctrines shine through?

My "subjective" study

I have conducted over 1,000 constellations with people suffering from cancer approximately 400 of those in an individual setting, in which I myself took on the role of the "cancer". From the very beginning my main focus was on the movement which lay behind the notion represented by the symptom tumor/metastasis, the word "cancer" or the diagnosis e.g. Mama CA (breast cancer). In order to be comprehensible, I must stress at this point, that my main access to and comprehension of the constellation work – since 1993 - is in a "phenomenological" approach. I see myself as the facilitator, who senses the present moment, without deliberately, cognitively interpreting that which can be felt, without looking for a happy end. This is for me a very important feature of my work.

In order to receive an answer to my question regarding the movement behind the cancer, I always started with the same basic constellation. The client represented himself and I his cancer. As in a normal constellation, the client was then requested to position himself and his cancer. There followed a period of 10-15 minutes during which the two of us found ourselves in our relative positions, considered which impulses, which inner feelings were showing themselves and which movements could be taken as a reaction to these feelings. According to my instructions, no word was to be spoken during this constellation. Afterwards, we each described the experiences we had had, being very careful in just speaking in a descriptive manner, without any apportioning of blame to anyone. At this juncture my clients were often able to see and feel the cancer through the person representing the cancer in terms of pictures, memories and experiences in the mind which could be tallied to their own system. After this period of exchange I sometimes did a constellation concerning the present family of the client or his birth family, an organization or some other aspect of the client's past, including a traumatic experience.

Condensed experiences

The **first** rule of thumb is that the feelings I experienced as the cancer (e.g. sadness, fear, bodily symptoms, thoughts coming to mind) were repeated in the following constellation as the client or as an event in exactly the same way! To this day nothing has changed.

The **second** rule of thumb is that no experiences, as the cancer, were ever repeated. It is always a unique, incomparable experience as the cancer, always an individual, never the same experience as a member of the family or an event, which shows itself.

The **third** rule of thumb is in the nature of. The perception of the experiences as the cancer, is received as a weakening not only in the body itself but also in the emotions and the life-force.

The past, both in the sense of conscious and unconscious experiences, is still very much alive in the client. We can differentiate here between annoying personal body issues and other problems, such as the feeling that something is missing, something has not reached its conclusion. These are often thought upon as things which don't belong to us, are foreign but on the other hand strangely familiar.

To sum this up in the "constellation view", we regard this as an involvement with a dead person or a link to our ancestors, or to a person or persons with whom our ancestors were in contact e.g. a feeling for the victims. These are feelings or actions which were not allowed to reach their conclusion, either from the client or transferred from the forefathers. They reflect separation from other family members, break-up of a relationship, hurt incurred by others, loss, defenses put up by others and consequently the connection the person has with such matters and much more. Also stored in the core of someone's being are life experiences either one's own or transferred information which could not be completed, were cut off abruptly, have accumulated over time, have not been processed, have been pushed aside or have been warded off because they were too hard to bear, too distressing, too hurtful or too threatening.

Can a constellation provide a basis for the healing of cancer?

At this point in time, despite the help of scientific models, it is not feasible to determine whether a constellation helps in the healing of cancer, or at least supports the healing process. This can only be accomplished by other methodical investigations, such as e.g. "Forschen, erfahrungsbasiert" / "Research, based on experience" (see bibliography number 3).

The subjective assessment of many persons, that the constellation helped in coming to terms with the illness or definitely helped in the process of recovery or that it was in fact the cause of the healing, remains a **valuable individual (!!!)** experience – sometimes as an inner assurance – which cannot be proven. Here I would like to reference reports made by persons, who have documented the results and experiences of their constellations during their illness (see bibliography number 11). It should be noted at this juncture, that all the persons involved also had many other coping strategies at their disposal, so that it would only be fair to facilitate the inclusion of all these methods and also their interaction with each other before an evaluation can be reached. From the point of view of the psycho-oncological aspect, just the fact that someone has looked at the possibility of a family constellation is a part of his way of coming to terms with

the illness. It is also worth noting that a spontaneous remission is not in fact spontaneous, but is the result of changes in feeling, thinking and the actions of a person. All of these spontaneous remissions have occurred outside academic medicine. (Kelly Turner made investigations in the USA into 1500 scientific reports of spontaneous remissions. Unfortunately in not one of these cases was the person involved asked, whether he had undertaken other forms of healing alongside or instead of academic medicine.

Which effects can be preceived?

During the constellation process, that which brings out the perception in the persons, in various roles in the constellation, is effective on different levels of our being.

When the client already knows, that which he perceives, or recognizes it again, there is a cognitive realization, a possibility to understand, which also among other things, delivers a meaning and a way of accepting the illness or a deep-lying acceptance of the fact that death is just around the corner and is unavoidable.

In the constellation process **emotions** are rediscovered or seen and felt for the first time, and are connected to persons or events. Consequently they can then be sensed, accepted, transformed and thus brought to a conclusion.

Furthermore, in cases where an emotional transfer from the forefathers has occurred, this can lead to a **differentiation** and a **dis-identification** with these alien feelings. The **main effect**, parallel to the cognitive realization and the emotional side effects, is a disassociation of the conscious or subconscious connective experience or happening, e.g. the sensing of a dead person and the unavoidable feeling the person has of him being led to death.

These are all observations. They should not and must not be the causation of the cancer. It is enough at this point that there have been happenings, experiences and feelings, which after a solution has been experienced, during or after the constellation, no longer weaken the body, the immune system or the mental experience.

A family constellation, which reaches a person in his personality of being, seems to strengthen the immune system. On the other hand, these reinforced defenses provoke in many cases a decreasing of the symptom "tumor" or a dissolution of metastases. As a matter of interest: metastases and tumors always have a different constellation reference – these are, in constellation terms, two completely different movements, which need to be considered.

Opening a healing zone

It can be sensed that between the constellation leader and the client an intimate process is being unraveled. It is an engaging in something, which lies very deep within the person, with which he is perhaps unavoidably connected, and where his entanglement or his deep love is leading him to. Standing with him on the inner boundary, sometimes slightly further, offering ourselves together to the truth, being open and letting ourselves be led, is like saying a silent prayer to life, or in equal measure to death.

It is, to the core, a human experience – assist, hold, empathize, without deliberately trying to bring about a healing, although this wish is ever-present. I am very pleased about the positive transformation, which takes place after one of my constellations, in many persons suffering from cancer, especially with children. I am still in touch with lots of these persons, in some cases well over fifteen years.

Similarly, I feel a very close bond with those, who are gone. For me all these encounters are more than a gift – it is life, very close, without the mask.

How can a healing zone be prepared?

Healing takes place often in a different way to that which we think or feel. A female client sent me such an example. Four years ago, she had a very moving constellation to do with a brain tumor, which has since receded. When she first contacted me to set a date for the constellation, I was in Varanasi in India and was therefore not able to offer her a constellation until I returned. I did however, tell her that I would symbolically offer a sacrifice for her in the form of a light on a palm leaf, which I would place on the river Ganges, and promised her a constellation on my return. Recently I met her again, for the first time since the constellation. She told me that she was still free of tumors. She said, that the constellation had helped her a lot and somehow even more she thought of the picture I had given her of the light on the palm leaf on the Ganges, something someone had done **for her**. During the whole process of the illness this picture had carried her and held her, and was doing it even to this day.

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