

**An Attempt to Formulate a Theory on Therapeutic Work with Traumatized Refugees.**  
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*No man is an island, entire of itself;  
any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind,  
and therefore  
never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.  
John Donne (1572 – 1631)*

*In the beginning is the relationship.*

*The basic word I-You can only be spoken with the whole essence of a human  
being.  
The inner concentration and merging together into a whole being can never take  
place through me and never without me.  
I come into existence in relation to the You; in the moment I say You.  
All real life is encounter.  
Martin Buber (1878 – 1965)*

Man is born twice; at first as a biological being and then as a social one.

Nobody knows the exact point in time for the birth of a human being; it can only be estimated. When the child is ready for the big change of coming out into existence, it will let itself be born. The power that makes dare to change, grow and develop can be called spontaneity.

The child is then born into a society; into a network of human relationships and practice. The long dependency of childhood shapes the human being that the child will become. Finally, this person or personality appears in its context but it is impossible to pin point exactly when it happened.

In this coming into existence the child receives and gives images of itself and others and lives in an ongoing process of communication. This communication is not only verbal and non-verbal; it is also intuitive. The child learns to interact with its surrounding at a level that is beyond words and gestures. (The scientists have recently discovered something that they call mirror neurones and which is a measurable function in the brain and has to do with empathy.)

In order for two people to be able to participate in a common activity in a group setting (or a cultural setting) there must be a balance, not only within each of them but also *between* them.

The distance is a necessary condition for closeness; without the distance the persons would “drown” in one another. The distance both separates us and connects us.

Through this threads of affinity are woven between people. A cement is created that will keep societies, groups and families together. The affinity needs a space to develop. If the persons are too tightly glued together or too far away from each other, the affinity can not be developed. (To activate the mirror neurons the persons must be able to see each other. In order to do that one must be at least 20 centimetres apart and within view.)

Within psychodramatic theory there is an important concept called “tele” (from the Greek word for distance). I want to use the tele concept as a starting point for this search for a theory about our work with traumatized refugees.

Tele is not the same as empathy which is a one way emotion. Tele is a two way communication of feelings and experiences and a mutual feeling into the real persons who the people in the encounter are.

The Freudian concepts of transference – countertransference are also mutual but they are a pathological variation of tele.

Tele exists in a relationship and arises in the encounter between two. It has to do with the capacity for empathy with the situation and perspectives of each other. The mutual feeling into one another – tele – is what holds relationships and groups (societies) together.

(In the countries from which our refugees come, tele and the mutual feeling into one another have been torn to shreds. Therefore, these countries are in a state of falling apart.)

Tele needs a catalyst to be activated. This catalyst could be spontaneity, that is the inner will to live, grow, learn.

(In many of the countries from which our refugees come, spontaneity is put aside or is being fought.)

Mutual tele in the therapeutic relationship, when both the patient and the therapist sees the other such as he or she is, with his story, his burdens, his joy and his pain, with both his strong and his weak sides, is a kind of love. Tele can be developed to appear like a sixth sense.

The time in which tele and spontaneity exist is the moment. Therefore is presence in the moment an important quality in this therapeutic work.

In real tele there must be a dimension of reverence, friendship and some kind of love. Curiosity about and love for life and human beings go a long way.

The power of tele break the boundaries for interaction that our culture and our upbringing have drawn.

Here we come closer to the concepts within NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming. Virginia Satir who is close to psychodrama, was one of the models for the development of NLP.) Within NLP it is said that nobody lives directly in the reality; we all live in our image or map of it. When a person comes to his or her therapist with trouble, it often has to do with that person's map is too bad and doesn't contain the solution to the problem. Whereas the solution can be found in the reality outside the map, if only the person can transcend his or her boundaries.

If friendship and human warmth arise between the therapist and the patient, the therapist can become the guide and the companion of the patient when he or she goes into unknown territory. The enormous power that lies hidden in every human being; the striving for reaching out and exchanging feelings, can be seen as positive energy.

Here we can also mention Rollo May, a contemporary existential and creative psychotherapist. He proposes that the freedom of man can be found in the space between our destiny and how we relate to it.

Freud and the psychoanalysis talk about the ego. The core of the ego is the body. The founder of psychodrama, Moreno, prefers like the sociological schools, to talk about the self instead of the ego. The ego is in the body, whereas the self is interpersonal and transcends the own body. The self doesn't have its place of birth in the body but in the interpersonal, in the interaction. Accordingly, Moreno means that tele arises in the interpersonal relationship.

(The concept of the self dates back to philosophy. Within social philosophy the concepts started to be used particularly by the so called Chicago school and George Herbert Mead.)

The dividing line between the body and the self is very clear. The self, as opposed to the body, can be its own object. The parts of the body can easily be separated from the self. We can lose a part of the body without this being a serious threat to the self.

Mead proposes that it is the ability of human beings to become an object to themselves that separates them from the animals. It is also a condition to be able to be intelligent and rational.

Mead says that a human being can become an object to himself only by looking at himself from outside, from the perspectives of others and within a social context. The communication between people is of great importance.

According to Moreno the place of the self, its *locus*, is spontaneity. When spontaneity is on a zero level, then so is the self. When spontaneity decreases, so does the self. And vice versa: when spontaneity increases, then the self grows as well. The self is like a river that emerges from spontaneity.

The structure of the self is for Moreno like a bunch of private and collective roles. The self reaches outside and beyond the individual, to the interpersonal area.

To reflect on one self, the way others see me, gives me an idea about who I am and how I am. In other words, it answers my question of identity.

Hanna Arendt was a philosopher with existential orientation. She proposes that in the western society, the *action* which is public and political, to a great extent has been replaced by *behaviour* which originally belonged in the private sphere, characterized by force, hierarchy and necessity. At the same time, private life which among other things had to do with the economic housekeeping in ancient Greece, in modern society has spread uncontrollably at the expense of the public life. Today the word political has lost its original content and means nothing else than economic house keeping.

From a Morenian perspective we can say that when our action in the world changes into behaviour controlled by authorities, then both spontaneity and the tele factor sink drastically, as well as the freedom to choose ones acts and to be responsible for them.

The prerequisite for being able to have an identity is to be able to be seen from a number of different perspectives. This is true not only for the human being but also for the public world. "The common world disappears", Arendt writes, "when it is seen only from one aspect, it

only exists from a multiple perspective.” And the multiplicity of perspectives requires that the human being acts, steps out into the public arena.

When we have tele in the public space, we are open to all these different opinions and these various sociometric choices. We receive our identity, we become recognized through daring to stick our neck out, through standing out against the others, and it absolutely leads to reactions from others.

With that we are back to the function of tele to create or give identity.

In her reasoning about the public and the private sphere, Arendt describes the distance as a necessary condition for identity and individuation. Only when we have a certain distance to each other, can we have a mutual feeling into the situation of each other.

A certain distance is also a necessary condition for us to be able to talk about tele. This intermediate space can, however, not be too large when it is impossible to reach each other. Then the relationship is at risk to cease.

There is a dialectic relationship concerning distance and closeness between people. Without a certain distance, the closeness is transformed into symbiosis and pathology, and the individual identity is threatened. The distance is also necessary for an encounter to take place.

In the distance is large and the will to meet is strong, a great life giving tension can arise. The spark must travel between distant planets to connect them. (Interestingly enough, in ancient China it was said that poets flew between the worlds of the heaven on trails of dragon smoke when they were creating their great masterpieces.)

In the Christian tradition it is told how Jesus was challenged to answer to the question when the kingdom of God would come. In one translation the answer is: “The kingdom of God is between (in the middle of) you”. When a genuine encounter occurs, we can catch a glimpse of the kingdom of God. It is now always there, but in the encounter something may happen, something that means a glimpse of the manifestation of the kingdom of God.

In Morenian terminology we could say that then both the tele and the spontaneity factors are at a high level.

In our modern world there are usually very clear obstacles to communication. With Moreno we could say that tele is missing and also that the spontaneity is very low, in some cases non-existent.

When tele arises, these obstacles to communication can be reduced to a certain extent. It gives us an image of the origin and goal of mankind; an existence without barriers for communication, a heavenly state.

In the Christian doctrine it is often said that the calling of man is to become the person he is intended to be. It means that he can meet his God, his fellow human beings and himself just as the unique being he is without having to play the part of somebody else, or in Hanna Arendt's terminology, without having to behave himself.

Virginia Satir was a world famous family therapist, whose working methods had a lot in common with psychodrama. (Satir was also as mentioned above one of the therapists who were studied when NLP was developed.) Here is one of her poems:

*I believe  
the greatest gift  
I can conceive of  
having from anyone  
is to be seen by them,  
to be understood  
and touched by them.  
The greatest gift  
I can give  
is to see, hear,  
understand,  
and touch another person.*

*Virginia Satir (1916 – 1988)*

A loving fellow human being sees the positive and the potentials for development in another person. That is exactly what Anton Antonovsky's theories which he calls Salutogenesis, are about. Instead of focusing on and study the problematic, he wants to move the attention to the strength that can preserve health.

Antonovsky has also created a concept that he calls SOC, a sense of coherence. People can endure the greatest sufferings if they have a sense of belonging and meaningfulness (or perhaps we could say tele with their community or with mankind). That is exactly what torture and ethnic cleaning operation aims at; the destruction of a person's feeling of worth, relationships and belonging to mankind, and the violence is also unpredictable and seemingly coincidental.

Through truly encountering the persons who carry with them such a suffering and building a relationship with them within which tele can arise, belonging and meaning can be recreated. The human being who has been made to feel worthless, needs to rediscover his strength and his good sides which actually have made her survive up until now.

A man is more than himself; he also belongs to mankind as a whole. The first step to reach his belonging to mankind is to experience a belonging to another human being.

Here we can mention a British driving spirit, Camila Bathmanghelidj, who founded the organization Kids Company in London. She works with London's most exposed children who otherwise could have developed into being criminal and violent. A great deal of the children have had traumatic experiences. The treatment Camila offers them she describes herself with the words "love, care, peace and quiet". She has a piece of advice to Swedish authorities: "Invest properly in the immigrants, or else you may have problems."

Earlier we said that tele thrives in the space in between people where there also should be balance. Man has another dimension of tele to establish; the spiritual that is the relationship to the divine. In that space there is often imbalance with the people who have been exposed to persecution and atrocities in the name of religion.

Very brief summery: In the encounter between people can that which wishes to break down mankind and the human worth and destroy communication, be neutralized. The human being can become free to be the person he was meant to be.

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