



A Closer Look at Constellations

An Interview With Bert Hellinger

German psychotherapist Bert Hellinger (<https://www.omega.org/workshops/teachers/bert-hellinger>) is best known as the developer of family constellations therapy, which deals with the connective roots of our lives and addresses difficult issues on an energetic and soul level. In this interview, he discusses his constellations philosophy with journalist and author Martin Buchholz.

Martin: First, a question concerning the expression coined by you, “the orders of love.” What does this mean?

Bert: Order is that according to which something develops. A tree for instance develops according to an order. Otherwise it will not be a tree any longer. And yet every tree is different. Order isn’t something static. It is a living principle.

Love, of course, means here the relationship between humans. It also succeeds according to certain orders. When we know about these orders, our relationships succeed better.

Martin: How do you know which orders are given to us?

Bert: I do not know them in the sense that one can think about them and then one has them. This is not possible. These orders reveal themselves. I’ll go back to the example of the trees. The appearance of the tree shows according to which order it grows. Thus a fir tree grows differently than an oak. They follow different orders. I can see these orders and distinguish among them. It is similar with human relationships. When they heed certain orders love fares better.

Martin: When you describe sometimes that, out of the blue, a reality has shown up, I wonder if you experience yourself as a kind of medium. Who is it who brings this to light?

Bert: Here we need to keep something in mind. Everything happens through representatives. We can observe that the representatives suddenly feel like the persons they represent. So they are in connection with something greater and in this field they feel something. When I lead something like this, I am also in connection with this field. I receive information from there, for as long as I expose myself. I go with this information. But if I think, “What do I have to do now?” then I am no longer in contact with this field. This contact is only possible through utmost containment. Exactly because I do not have any special intention or wishes, I am in contact with something greater, and I am being led therefore.

By this greater something. We can say by this field—some call it a field. I call it a shared soul. Plato already knew that to make communication possible at all, for instance, between you and me, something has to be in between us for me to understand you at all. He calls this soul.

Martin: Sometimes you speak of something for which you use a number of terms. I took some notes: the encompassing ultimate, the great model, the greater whole. It is obviously something that is hard to describe. But what do you mean?

Bert: I don't mean anything. It is quite clear that we come to limits of our comprehension, but here we have a sense, there is something else that is at work. But we cannot grasp it.

Martin: The concept of soul that you use, it is a language we usually know from philosophy or from theology. In traditional psychotherapy, one would probably be cautious about using the concept.

Bert: That's generally the case with such concepts, very much so.

Martin: That's a complaint people have. Please be so kind as to define what you mean by that.

Bert: I can define it, not in the sense that I identify it precisely, but one can describe the soul through the effect it has.

Wherever we see the soul at work, it has two basic functions. First, it unites something. Our body, for instance, is held together by a power that coordinates all the bodily functions. One wonders what kind of power that is. It is the soul.

Second, the soul steers us into a definite direction. But the soul is not limited to our body or to us as an individual. The family also has a soul. Therefore the family members all respond according to defined laws that are set by the soul. Entanglements and communities of fate only exist for that reason. These family members have a common soul. And beyond that there are larger connections still.

So, there is something that has an effect. I call it the soul. But I am not saying I know what it is. Yet I haven't found a better name. Well, in China, I found a better one: the Dao.

The Dao is a power that directs and controls everything. And here, too, in the *Dao de Ching*, the essential book, attributed to Lao Tse, it says: the Dao that can be named is not the Dao. But everyone senses that there is such a power. The word Dao is more general and eschews the grasp of definition more easily than the word soul. In China I use the word Dao. It is closest to me anyhow.

Martin: Are the important things about family constellations according to Bert Hellinger related to psychotherapy, or matters of faith, or with a basic attitude that is nearly religious?

Bert: Neither. Many come to family constellations even though they are not ill. For them family constellations have nothing to do with illness or with psychotherapy. And they are not psychologically disturbed people. They are people whose path in life has come to a standstill in some aspects. This is a generally human matter.

Now one searches for a way out perhaps, and a solution. In this regard family constellations are closer to philosophy. It is a knowing about life.

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