Contribution of transgenerational, systemic and phenomenological approaches to the development of personal and collective health

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Since thirty years ago it has been observed that certain number of reactions, physical and psychic diseases as well as behaviors can be inherited from our ancestry. Some of those reactions are health problems that relate to the field of proficiency of the trained nurse.1

Two of the most important methods that allow to work with transgenerational inheritance are psychogenealogy2 and constellations3.

I am going to talk briefly about psychogenealogy since it is the most well known4 compared with the approach known as “constellations“. This poetic term wants to highlight that every single form of life in the universe has a unique place exactly as the stars5... And yet, if in the outer space, a star wouldn’t be in its place, that would be a “disaster“. When a “form of life“, human beings included from the embryo to the old man, are not in their place within a system, a family or a human group, that creates a “disaster“. In savants terms this form of human action within the systems6 known as “constellations“ is called: "Phenomenological and systemic approach in familial and business repositioning"7.

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1 BAL-CRAQUIN, Marie-Thérèse. “Comment et pourquoi initier une démarche éducative? ("How and why to begin an educative process?"). Lecture presented on July 3, 2003 to the students nurse at Bar-Le-Duc. Available at www.infiressources.ca
6 GRÜN, Anselm "Management et accompagnement spirituel". ("Management and spiritual support"). Éditions Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 2008, 270 pages. The author is a well known Benedictine. In chapter 5 of this book, he explains the systemic constellations method, its usefulness for health development, and healing relationships within business. This can give inspiration to use healthy practices at hospitals, pages 181 and next.
7 HELLINGER, Bert ; TEN HÖVEL, Gabrielle "Constellations familiales". ("Familial constellations"). Éditions Le Souffle D'Or, France, 2001, 210 pages.
The purpose of both methods is to free people and systems of bonds that alienate them and instead to build up connections that will set them free while respecting their ecosystem.

Psychogenealogy is based essentially on reasoning, researches the facts, the cognitive aspects in each person. The approach of constellations is open to unexplored territories of personal and collective human unconscious. It is a method that comes from antiquity: when a person showed problems related to connections, absence of projects or disturbed relationships with others, the ancient peoples brought together a group of volunteers and formed a circle, "the field that knows", and inside this space they represented the human or symbolic elements of a problem. Next, "those who were representing" the scene were allowed to feel what came naturally. It was observed that in the first place their movements and feelings were expressing one or several problems and second, the solving of the problem was put in place naturally. The process created healing. Today it all happens the same way.

During the seventies Virginia SATIR rediscovered this approach. It was employed by her during the familial systemic therapies of which she was one of the first specialists. Virginia SATIR lived in California in a time when the first peoples traditions began to be remembered. California was the territory of Amerindians, their legends tell that they were called “Angelo”, this is the origin of the name of the city Los Angeles. It is more accurate that this name was given by the missionaries that evangelized the region. Later, the constellations approach was structured by Bert HELLINGER a German priest, he was also a missionary, dean of a college in South Africa. He was inspired by the African healing methods which were close to those rediscovered in California.

Now a days there are three main courrents in people that work with constellations. Those who belong to the systemic school, those who belong to the phenomenological school and those who are inspired by both schools. I belong to the last group.

Constellations are not only focused on problems of the past, this is by far their goal. Their main purpose is to relieve the familial, community or business systems from "a-lienations", ruptures of bonds or dysfunctional build up of connections.

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If our life can be difficult to the degree of illness because of current or transgenerational problems, what is it that can cause an ailment in the system?, and of course, what is it that can cause an ailment in a person within the system?

1. Exclusions
2. Maledictions
3. Unbalanced exchanges
4. Complex/confusing situations
5. Non respect of the laws of life
6. Disorders
7. Disturbances in the bonding system
8. Disastrous paradigms (ways of thinking)

1. Exclusions. One of the detected rules in the analysis of genealogy is that all that is excluded (language, country, religion, ideology, artistic or intellectual skills, persons, children, etc) is called to be included again two or three generations later. This is among others the problem with secrets. There is a lot of possibilities of exclusion in problems of mourning, problems that come from shameful acts, incest, illegitimate births, adultery, suicide, murders, convictions by justice, mental illness, certain diseases such as tuberculosis, alcoholism, etc. Everything that hasn’t been linked by an acknowledgement, a word, a naming, risks to be wandering endlessly within the familial or business system under the form of a “phantom”, a “shapeless disturbance”.

What is needed to heal exclusions is to return what has been excluded, at least in a symbolic manner.

2. Maledictions. “Speak evil” of one’s own self or somebody else leads to a long or short term manifestations in the body of the “speak ill of”, in oneself body or the body of one of the descendants. Somebody can be “damned” if he is told or he has felt: “it is your fault that I married your father”, “if you were not born, I would have succeeded my career”, “if your father is gone, it is because of you”, “you are like your uncle, you like him will finish at the retirement home”, “and then, in the first place, you are not a desired child” or another version “it is an accident” speaking of a child (the conception of a child, is never an accident, it is a mystery: life has chosen those parents in particular so that they can become the parents of that specific child). Or when an accident took place one child is dead, and it is said to the child that has survived: “I would prefered that it was you who were dead”... and all other forms of maledictions. There are a lot of maledictions in problems related to

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15 NACHIN, Claude "À l'aide, y a un secret dans le placard !". ("Help, there is a secret in the closet!"). Éditions Fleurus, Paris, 1999, 200 pages.
bonding and separation, it is just enough to mention divorces! A subtle form of malediction is to tell the child so many bad things about his father or mother that the part of him that comes from that parent “is damned” and is going to be lived in a absolute bad way. All those forms of maledictions kill\textsuperscript{18} and a lot of work of constellations consists of changing from maledictions to blessings: “tell good”. As Luc BIGÉ\textsuperscript{19} proposes: going from something bad to what the soul desires.

What is needed to heal maledictions is to change from maledictions to blessings\textsuperscript{20}... but it is a must to express the resentment of the loss in order to accomplish this.

3. Unbalanced exchanges. It is one of the sources of troubles within familial and business systems. Example: ask people to work without being payed or exploiting them. Make fortune by means of slave dealing\textsuperscript{21}. To take advantage of an spoliation\textsuperscript{22}. Or in a family one of the children makes a sacrifice in order to raise the others. Or at the moment of inheritance, one of the children has privileges at the expense of the others (it is the heir that risks more). Or when one person is honored and the other dishonored. In a couple, one of them works and the other not and what he or she does at home is not recognized as having any value. In a couple one of them has a lot of academic degrees and the other hasn’t any. A huge imbalance of exchanges is the one related to goods between the north and south hemispheres, the tragedies that it causes are evident.

What is needed to heal unbalanced exchanges is to restore the balance, frequently this is delicate because the “repairs” are difficult when there have been important spoliations. This is self evident considering the problems generated by inheritances and sharing of estate. But this is the price to be payed to free the familial system from its debts\textsuperscript{23}, these are a heavy weight for future generations. It happens the same way concerning macro economics.

4. Complex/confusing situations. Very frequently these situations are the result of old problems. These are the type of situationes where the identity of a person is related to the one of another person such as: an ancestor, a dead child, a torturer, a victim, a missing person, an accident victim, a person who caused an accident, a hero, a mental ill person, a dead twin, etc. As we can

\textsuperscript{18} VAILLANT, Maryse "Il m’a tuée". ("He killed me"). Éditions de La Martinière, Paris, 2002, 284 pages.
\textsuperscript{19} BIGÉ, Luc "Petit dictionnaire en langue des Oiseau: Prénoms, Pathologies et Quelques Autres". ("Small dictionary of bird’s language: Names, Pathologies and some other"). Éditions de Janus, Collection Systèmes du Monde, France, 2006, 240 pages
\textsuperscript{20} GRÜN, Anselm "Vous êtes une bénédiction?". ("You are a blessing?"). Éditions Salvador, France, 2006, 157 pages.
\textsuperscript{22} ROSNAY, Tatiana de "Elle s’appelait Sarah". ("Her name was Sarah"). Éditions LGF, Collection Littérature étrangère, France, 2008, 403 pages.
\textsuperscript{23} CANAULT, Nina "Comment paye-t-on les fautes de ses ancêtres: L’inconscient transgénérationnel". ("How we pay the mistakes of our ancestors: the transgenerational unconscious"). Éditions Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 2007, 167 pages.
see, a confusing situation is caused by the disappearance not acknowledged of somebody, so that a bereavement is impossible. In this case the confused person behaves awkwardly. This person knows his/her behavior as well as the others. It is as if the person takes the responsibility of living what another person has lived, the person is trying to represent what has imposed his/her malediction, exclusion, discredit, or non acknowledgement. These persons can built what is called multiple personalities. We can find this type of confusing situations behind heavy mental pathologies such as: schizophrenia (confusion with one or several murderers), manic-depression (confusion with one or several victims or torturers), melancholia (confusion with a dead twin ⁴⁴, even a dead embryo). Working with constellations is one of the few ways of dealing with these situations.

What is needed to heal confusing situations is to find the person with whom someone is confused and through a representative, to give back what it was thought one should carry in the place of the person who did originally the action... because of love, but that doesn't belong to the other.

5. Non respect of the laws of life. For life to develop, a certain number of laws are required. These are the laws of physics, biology, etc. As well as ethical and moral laws. We don’t know all the laws, but the cultural patrimony that our ancestors have left us allows us to approach them. The foundation of the laws of life, besides the laws that come from physics, biology, etc. is: “Do not do to the others what you don’t want them to do to you”. When one of those laws is not respected ⁵⁵, we are not punished; we suffer the consequences of this non respect. For instance: if somebody throws himself off the eighth floor of a tour, he dies. He wasn’t “punished”, he suffered the consequences of the non respect of one of the laws of life: gravity. Of course there are reasons for this non respect! If somebody kills one person in a car accident, even if his responsibility is not involved, he is not punished, but he suffers the consequences. And those consequences are that from that moment on, there is a link of destiny between the family of the person that caused the accident and the family of the person that was killed. If he killed voluntarily or not it seems that he exposes himself as well as members of his family to consequences reaching several generations.

Transgenerational work is not strictly speaking a work to set moral order, but an approach that allows assuming as far as possible the consequences of one acts. So that the person or his descendants don’t suffer ⁶⁶: the children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc.

Later on I am going to make clear how one can inherit of the ancestors.

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⁵⁵ GRÜN, Anselm "Qu’est-ce que j’ai fait pour mériter ça?". ("What did I do to deserve this?"). Éditions Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 2006, 191 pages.
What is needed to heal the non respect of the laws of life is to recognize its consequences and assume them, even to repair them, to avoid that they become maledictions on the descendants.

6. Disorders. The familial and business systems display a certain order. So the eldest children come before the younger. The man is placed at the right side of the wife and the children are placed at the left side of her… Disorders appear when one person is not placed in the proper location. For instance: when parents have divorced, the eldest daughter believes that she is forced to take the place of her father in consideration to her mother. This is one of the origins of women’s homosexuality and it is a desperate position from the point of view of sexuality. Another example: a teenager is anorexic-bulimic until the day when her parents’ work on constellations showed that there has been an abortion that had a direct link affecting her place with the other brothers and sisters. Or the case of a first couple that decided to have an abortion. Then the woman forms again a couple with another spouse and she has three children. This “third” child believes unconsciously that he has to take the place of the first dead child, his elder brother, to who he is linked because of the place he holds as the fourth child from the line of his mother. He plays Gothic, he mutilates himself, he is almost always victim of the others and a few times the torturer, unless he identifies to those who “killed” his elder half-brother: the first husband of his mother and herself. In this case this child a breaker, he becomes violent, even a killer. Constellations allow emerging of these dead ends that can be very dangerous that can lead the “disturbed” persons to the psychiatric hospital, to prison or to be homeless.

The reconstruction of the system and its representation allow restoring the order and to ease tensions and even heal pathologies caused by disorders.

7. Disturbances in the bonding system. In order to summarize let’s say that: “Bonding is the vital need that all living beings have to create closeness with another being”. Closeness is in the first place physical and then, in human beings it becomes symbolic. The bonding system consists of four main stages: linking, maintaining the bond, differentiation, and bereavement. If there was significant breaks in one of those stages, the person is shocked and as a result individual and transgenerational problems arise that concern constellations. For instance: a woman never overcame the loss of her husband in the 1914-1918 war. Four generations later, her great-granddaughter can’t get married. Every time she succeeds in beginning a relationship, she abandons the man as if she was sending him back elsewhere. When working in constellations with her, it showed that she was searching a husband for her foremother and not for her. Another example: a man felt that somebody pushed him beneath a train by somebody that was trying to kill him. The other passengers managed to catch him just in the right moment. Nobody has really pushed him. This man had lost

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27 BAL-CRAQUIN, Marie-Thérèse "Attachement, séparations, deuils, dépressions : ouvertures transgénérationnelles". ("Bonding, separations, bereavement, depressions: transgenerational openings"). Lecture presented on October 5, 2007 in the city of Déols”. Available at: www.infiressources.ca
his twin brother\(^{28}\) when his mother was in the third month of pregnancy. He couldn't differentiate of the dead child and for this reason he didn't had the means to speak about his emotions and to go through bereavement. In addition, he was born while his mother was grieving her lost child. This disturbed the connection with his mother. The dead child became a threatening phantom. When working in constellations allowed to name the little dead, to include him in his lineage, to bless him within the culture of his ancestors and the syndrome that threatened the living twin disappeared. This case was referred to us by the Psychiatrist.

Constellations allow connecting a person living in the present with the traumatic event to set him/her free.

8. Disastrous paradigms (ways of thinking). These are ways of thinking that only lead to the worst scenario. It can be caricatural but a person that thinks: “Because my past has been terrible, my present has to be bad and my future even worst!” could be an expert in the art of adversity\(^{29}\) and this person won't be able to accept happiness in his life\(^{30}\). It is the same with people that think that bad things that have been done to them condition their level of despair or stress. \textbf{It is not the bad things that have been done to you that condition your adversity, but what you do with them.} \(^{31}\)

The ways of thinking that generate adversity should be worked delicately with people that think they are real, these persons are not conscious of this.

Now the question is asked: How does somebody inherit from his/her ancestors?

The first observation is that somebody inherit from his/her ancestors by \textbf{skipping over one generation}. Your children inherit more of your own parents than from you. Previous experiences show that when grandparents lived traumas without being “assimilated” (we can say worked out), parents work on the trauma in a “psychological” way, and their children have a somatic reaction to it. This causes troubles more or less serious and more or less accessible to treatments, one of which is psychotherapy\(^{32}\). This is not inevitable, every generation has work to develop and transformation\(^{33}\) to accomplish.


For example: it is usual to see a child carrying the anger of his grandfathers, even that of his great-grandparents that is, the parents of his grandparents. This can cause hepatic disturbances\textsuperscript{34}, unexplained allergies, even diabetes (conflict between two grandmothers). Multiple sclerosis may correspond to a “fight to the death” within the lineage of men. Some anorexias have a coincidence with the mass murders dating from the 1789 revolution in France! Infertilities very often are reactions to stop life when there is a death risk\textsuperscript{35}. Manic-depressions and schyzophrenias have already been mentioned.

Also, a person can inherit from his/her ancestors depending on the rank he/she has within the siblings. All conceptions (miscarriages, abortions, failures in vitro fertilization, ectopic pregnancies) should be taken into account while considering the siblings. That’s why it is senseless to make “holes” within the siblings as it would be the case of surrogate mothers! That is why it is so serious to take certain decisions as the placental reduction.

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The elder son/daughter is registered within the lineage of the father. The loss of an elder son/daughter is a “more serious” wound for the father than for the mother, because it is a wound within his lineage. Symbolically the elder child represents the house fundaments. He/she is more interested about the grandparents than the parents.

The second child is registered within the lineage of the mother. The loss of a second son/daughter is a “more serious” wound for the mother than for the father, because it is a wound within her lineage. Symbolically the second child represents the house walls (he/she is an inward child. The first child is a child of depths). The second child is more interested about his parents and very often is the one that suffers more when his parents divorce than the rest of the children.

The third son/daughter is the child of change. He has to do things “in a different way”. He/she represents the house roof, completion, protection, and also renewal. He/she is interested about his/her brothers and sisters. The loss of a third child shows there is impossibility for useful changes for life, it is a suffering “more serious” for the brothers and sisters.

The fourth child is registered within the lineage of the first, which is that of the father.

The fifth child is registered within the lineage of the second, which is that of the mother.


The sixth child is registered within the lineage of the third, so he is a child of change, etc.

This scheme is intended only to be a map with different possibilities and it is not a method to restrain people. It allows understanding of certain reactions so there can be a faster identification of transgenerational heritage.

A third transgenerational constant important to consider is: a person gets married with a spouse whose family is a reflection of his/her family\textsuperscript{36}: like a mirror effect with the hope to free the system.

When reading all these examples a question arises: what is the foundation of those affirmations? These are only working hypothesis validated by results. Mainly results. It is by observing them that we can deduce without doubt what was the problem within the lineage. Because the very fact of representing a situation, allows people and system healing, they feel better, free from what was strangling them. Research continues aimed to better determine processes and their effects.

In conclusion, it is a must not to be limited to psychological approaches\textsuperscript{37} when health or any diseases are concerned. However working with constellations gives at least a chance to step out of failure scenarios, a chance to be born to life. It gives too a chance to prevent children from carrying the problems that belonged to grandparents and to grandchildren to prevent from carrying the problems that belong to their parents.

\textsuperscript{36} CYRULNIK, Boris "Les nourritures affectives". ("The emotional nourishment"). Éditions Odile Jacob, Paris, 2000, 252 pages.

\textsuperscript{37} SONTAG, Susan "La maladie comme métaphore". ("The disease as metaphor"). Éditions Christian Bourgeois, France, 2005, 111 pages.
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Under her initiative were created the Expert Clinician Nurses in France and she presides their Association: the French Society of Expert Clinician Nurses and Clinician Consultant Nurses. She was one of the founder members of the Free European University in Nurse Sciences whose President of honor was Virginia Henderson, and for more than twenty five years she has been Dean of this University. During this time she has invited to France the best lecturers in the world in Nurse Sciences.

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Summary in 250 words

Without being conscious our life is influenced by feelings and behaviors that do not belong to us, because we are linked to the familial system by secrets, drama, and unconscious loyalties that come from our past. All this is reflected on the present by seriously disturbing it. Very often, conflicts, serious diseases, drug addiction, accidents, suicides, infertility, divorces, professional breaks, school failures, etc. are repeated and multiplied since and during several generations. Different approaches can be employed in order to get out of those repeating patterns, to heal our “familial roots”, and reconcile with the ancestors, those are the subject of this lecture.

It is important for the audience to understand and see the usefulness of the transgenerational, systemic and phenomenological approaches as well as their contribution to health development. For this, it will be shown how decisive it is to take into account transgenerational aspects for health recovery and development. Specific cases on health disturbances will be considered in their biological, psychological, social, spiritual and environmental dimensions. Usable strategies will be explained and the results obtained of group therapy.

It will be taken into consideration the elements that cause “diseases” and the actions that “heal” the familial, community and business systems. Protocols that produce health recovery will be proposed. It will be discussed how to be trained on those methods as well as setting valuation of results.
After explaining the method, a series of questions-answers can be exchanged. The text of the lecture will be available to attendees.

**Summary in 50 words**

How systemic, phenomenological and transgenerational approaches of familial and business repositioning can lead to personal and collective health development? What is it that causes disease within systems? What is it that heals them? How to proceed, to be trained and to evaluate? Those will be the subjects discussed in this lecture.