

## **BOB (Belonging, Order, Balance): The Orders of Love**

Systemic constellations are a phenomenological practice that reveals and to some extent clarifies the functioning forces in human systems that are otherwise challenging to understand. These same forces are visible in all living systems especially in nature. An example of these forces can be seen in everyday mysteries such as the synchronized swooping of flocks of birds. (Sheldrake R. 2003) If the coordination observed in this flight pattern was based on the birds perceiving each other through their normal senses, then their change of direction would be staggered, looking like dominoes falling. Instead they move as one entity with no delay.

Systemic constellations also reveal our shared strength and vulnerability with family members. They enable us to experience our links with the rest of humanity and life on this planet. The work allows us to feel the complex web of interconnection reaching into our present from generations past, providing a springboard into the future. It is now commonplace to find books and documentaries referring to these ideas of interconnectedness. They are appearing in many fields including environmentalism, quantum physics, psychology and spirituality. It is, however, a rare jewel that allows us to experience this interconnectedness so directly. The systemic constellation process is such a rare jewel.

“Orders of Love” is the term first used by Bert Hellinger, German psychotherapist and developer of systemic constellations, to name these powerful forces of connectedness that guide and influence our lives. Through many years of observation, Hellinger noticed that love moved through family systems and adhered to three primary principles which he called “the orders of love”. These “orders of love” function as the unspoken forces which cause families to shape themselves and move through generations of time in the same mysterious ways a flock of birds may move synchronistically through the air.

The first and most important order of love is that everyone belongs and has the same right to belong. No one in the family system can be excluded, including aborted children, stillborns, miscarriages, children who have been given up for adoption, or earlier partners whom we reject now, with whom we want no further contact. All who have come into the family through a blood or marriage bond belong.

Wherever and whenever someone is excluded, the whole family is affected. There is a family conscience whose function is to ensure that everyone in the family has an equal right to membership. It operates

beneath the conscious level; we don't feel it like we do personal conscience. If someone is cast out of the system, or is unacknowledged in some way, someone else (often in a later generation) will feel systemic pressure to represent the excluded person. Both living and dead members have their own rightful position in the family soul.

Family members don't usually make an intentional effort to exclude someone; the exclusion usually happens because of grief, guilt, and/or tragic circumstance. Excluded family members may be represented by other members of the family -- for instance, by children.

As an example, there are parents who lovingly care for their daughter, and yet the daughter is always angry with the father, and he does not know why. In a constellation it may come to light that she represents her father's earlier wife whom the father rejected. Once this woman is included again, with respect, the daughter can be a child again. Here we can see that family constellations are a movement towards reconciliation, so that what was separated can come together again. This is the first basic order: All who belonged will always belong and have the same right to be acknowledged.

The second principle guiding the flow of love is the order of rank. All who belong must be given their place. It is important that we find our right place in the order of rank, our exact place. Many problems that parents have with a child come from a disorder of rank, for the child does not know where his or her place is. Most of us who think we are the first or the second or the fourth or the fifth, stand in a wrong place. Those who have died may have been excluded, and younger siblings moved into their place.

The third principle that guides the flow of love is the need for balance. The greatest flow of love is from parents to children. In essence, parents give and children take. A child feels deeply obligated to his or her parents because children receive so much and are able to give so little in return. Because children cannot give enough to the parents to bring about a balance, he or she eventually feels uncomfortable in the family. This is one of the reasons why children approaching adulthood long to leave their families.

One way to satisfy the systemic demand for a balance of giving and taking is for the children to start families of their own, and pass on to their children what they have received from their parents. This passing on of the good relieves the burden of obligation and allows the grown children to face their own parents as equals. This feeling of obligation to one's parents provides the impetus and support for parenting children of one's own. There's a lovely harmony in this flow from generation to

generation. Taking from the parents and passing it on, and adding the love of the partners for each other, ensures love for the children.

All members of a family are deeply bonded to each other in love and loyalty. While the orders of love are simple and basic, they are often lost or confused because of the deep loyalty created by the bonds of our love. For example, when partners separate and each remarries, the new partners must acknowledge that the children from the earlier relationship have priority over the new love. A man who has children from a former relationship is first and foremost a father to this children, and second, a spouse for his new wife. If the new wife is jealous and demands to be put first, before his children, the systemic order is disturbed and the relationship will suffer.

In an unconscious attempt to restore balance to our family systems, the orders of love may cause us to invite disease, suffering, depression, relationship struggles, and even suicide into our lives in order to make visible the truth of our connections. The dynamics of our larger family systems typically lie beyond our awareness, yet their effect on our lives is profound.

These larger family dynamics come to light and are made visible In a constellation workshop. In these workshops a sacred space is created where deep (often unspoken) truths about our families are acknowledged and honored. Participants describe an issue or problem they want to solve along with some factual information about their family. A simple description of what they know about the family (even if that is not much) and what they experience as the problem is enough information. They choose workshop participants to represent themselves and family members, living or dead, and physically place the chosen representatives in relationship to each other according to their heartfelt inner image of their family system. This creates an energy field in which the representatives experience physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts related to the family member they represent.

Constellations look like a living tree or genogram, but the experience is not role-playing; representatives simply report what they experience. We carry our families with us like a hologram. In the workshops, we externalize an aspect of the hologram and, for a brief moment, have a glimpse into deeply unconscious patterns in the system.

The workshop leader facilitates an unfolding process where painful losses, information treated as family secrets, and previously unseen connections are revealed and honored. Once the unconscious system is revealed, it can be restructured into a more balanced system where love and energy flow freely as experienced by the people representing family

members. Participants leave with a more nourishing family picture that inspires freedom, clarity, and love.

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Sources:

Basic Orders of Love—Bert Hellinger Official Home Page

Family Constellations and FAQ—Center for Ancestral Blueprints

Foundations of Systemic Constellations: Introduction—International Systemic Constellations Association (ISCA)

Supporting Love: How Love Works in Couple Relationships: Bert Hellinger's Work with Couples—By Johanness Neuhauser, published by Zeig, Tucker, and Theisen, 2001.