



Third Position in Supervision

“The Third Position”

An art-therapy technique used in supervision to help understand what is behind conditioned and reactive patterns

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Abstract. Real consciousness needs time and adequate space to develop and help us to stop automatic unconscious reactions in order to create awareness and presence. Feelings, thoughts and behaviour usually come from conditioned assumptions. In supervision our goal is to look “behind” those automatic assumptions, using techniques that help to connect to the real need, in order to find positive alternatives to automatic reactive patterns. When 60 to 80% from our behaviour is ruled by non-verbal information talking it is not enough. Art-therapy techniques will mirror not only conscious but also unconscious information. Our expression opens doors to an understanding of what is the reality behind our usual assumptions. The “Third Position” is a technique that I developed in which we create a space to give form to the situation we want to work with.

Keywords: Supervision; “Third Position”; Self-reflection; Awareness; Conscious behaviour.

[es] La tercera posición

Resumen. La consciencia real necesita tiempo y espacio suficientes para desarrollarse y ayudarnos a detener las reacciones inconscientes automáticas, con el fin de crear consciencia y presencia. Los sentimientos, pensamientos y comportamientos proceden habitualmente de suposiciones condicionadas. En supervisión nuestro objetivo es mirar “detrás” de esos supuestos automáticos, utilizando técnicas que ayudan a conectarse con la necesidad real, a fin de encontrar alternativas positivas a los patrones reactivos automáticos. Cuando entre el 60 y el 80% de nuestro comportamiento se rige por información no verbal, hablar no es suficiente. Las técnicas de arte-terapia reflejarán no solo la información consciente sino también la inconsciente. Nuestra expresión abre las puertas a una comprensión de lo que se halla detrás de nuestras suposiciones habituales. La “Tercera posición” es una técnica desarrollada por mí en la que se crea un espacio para dar forma a la situación con la que queremos trabajar.

Palabras clave: Supervisión; “Tercera posición”; Auto-reflexión; Consciencia; Conducta consciente.

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1. Introduction

When I speak about supervision, I am talking about a learning technique that focuses on improving self-reflection and finding alternative patterns of action in a professional context. My clients are professionals and students (therapists, teachers, managers) for whom relationships have an important influence on the success of their professional goals. In this article I will explain why and how to use one of the techniques I have developed in my work as an art therapist.

During 35 years of experience (1975-2010), along with my colleagues and hundreds of clients, we developed several new techniques. During that time I worked in a psychiatric clinic for young people diagnosed with Personality Disorders, Psychosis and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. Our work was based on the “Democratic Community Principles” developed by Maxwell Jones (Maxwell Jones, 1968). We participated in intervision-groups with three universities in Holland: Middeloo, Kopse Hof and Jellburg (MIKOJEL), exchanging our knowledge and experience to develop a new department in the university to teach Art-therapy.

I chose to work with creativity and art techniques due to the possibility to express emotions. At the same time I wanted to use an active and practical working form with much space for the client to experiment with a different approach. At the beginning, since the use of this kind of techniques in therapy was still very new, I asked my clients to collaborate in what I called “investigation on participation”. I suggested a working-structure and the groups of clients experimented with those structures. After evaluation we slowly defined a form that could help them to express themselves; to find a way to change their lives in order to free themselves from repeating negative patterns in relationship; and to avoid being ruled from emotional tension, negative perceptions and traumatic life events.

The basic rule was to express themselves without hurting others and at the same time to have more control over their feelings, thoughts and reactive behaviour. One of the techniques we developed was the “Third Position” which I still use in the context of therapy and supervision. In the “Third Position” we create a space in which we give form to the situation we want to work with. In this space we shape a form with “creative materials” that reflects our inner world, the situation we want to work with, and how we approach it.

The feedback of my clients (several thousands of them) was very clear: they achieved a much better understanding of themselves and their situation. While working with creative materials they found out how small movements or changes in the forms that they had created helped them to change their situations for the better. I didn't need to point out my interpretations or the meaning of their “constellation” displayed on the table. The “constellation” itself (Figure 1) gave them the information they needed to digest and integrate the experience in order to work with it.



(Fig 1)

In this context it is interesting to look at Winnicott's transitional object concept. He and Melanie Klein were one of the first therapists that researched the value of the function of creativity and art/playing materials as a tool to personal development. For example, Winnicott (Winnicott D.W. 1953; Winnicott D.W. 1958) described how the baby spontaneously holds onto a little piece of cloth close to its body. The child projects his need for safety and closeness to his mother in order to build a bridge to overcome the distance when she is not there. Later when we develop the capacity to integrate experiences through memorising, we can make a bridge between the physical contact and our capacity to remember and imagine a past or future presence. Before we are able to mentalize we have already built "basic trust" that can influence us for the rest of our lives on a very unconscious way. In Winnicott's own words:

"Of every individual who has reached to the stage of being a unit with a limiting membrane and an outside and an-inside, it can be said that there is an inner reality to that individual, an inner world that can be rich or poor and can be at peace or in a state of war..... It is usual to refer to 'reality-testing', and to make a clear distinction between apperception and perception. I am here staking a claim for an intermediate state between a baby's inability and his growing ability to recognize and accept reality."

We can consider three kinds of reality: one that we name reality but it is just a reflection of our usual assumptions; the real need behind this reality; and the outside reality. The two last ones have to interact in a positive way in order to reverse our assumptions.

When we can overcome the distance between mental and physical reality with the help of a transitional object, we can also use this phenomena in reverse by creating a distance that allows us to be in a more objective position (in which we include ourselves) to transform inside and outside information. We can create a "form" that gives us the time to step out of "reactivities" which are basically ruled by old realities and inner conditioned patterns, to observe and experiment different possibilities.

2. Free will, judgements, perception of reality, awareness

There has been much controversy as to whether subjectively “free” decisions are determined by brain activity ahead of time. John-Dylan Haynes and his colleagues (Soon C.S. 2007) found that the outcome of a decision can be encoded in brain activity of prefrontal and parietal cortex up to 10 seconds before it enters awareness. This delay presumably reflects the operation of a network of high-level control areas that begin to prepare an upcoming decision long before it enters awareness. A difference of a few seconds is exceptionally large compared to previous research. Already thirtyfive years before that, Benjamin Libet (Libet B.1983) showed that between the actual tendency to lift a finger and the associated brain activity there were 300 milliseconds. Those investigations make doubt about the real meaning of the so-called free will of man. Evidently our brain can make fine decisions without our consciousness being involved.

Our behaviour, thoughts and feelings are not nearly as objective as we are often willing to believe. Probably the vast majority of our thinking and feeling consists of fixed “truths” based on old assumptions and experiences. Let’s look for example at a reaction to dangers, or imagined dangers unconsciously governed by, for example, anxiety stimuli. An initial primary reflex reaction to a danger stimulus (whether it is real or alleged) immediately triggers a whole series of physical, physiological, chemical and hormonal reactions in our body that put us in the fight of flight position. We can regulate this reactive state when we are conscious of it, or when we receive reassurance from the outside. In technical terms we would call this “reality testing”. We will recognize our self-confirmation or the confirmation of others as a reference to trust that everything is fine. We can thus relax again. Our normal creative faculties and the objective part of our brain can take over leadership.

Our need for certainty makes us confirm our assumptions of “true reality” and “true evidence”, logical reasoning or feelings of reassurance or fear. History is full of examples where “proven facts” ultimately turn out to be not as true as we initially assumed they were. It is very easy to create a tunnel vision through “burden of proof” that can seriously interfere with a higher awareness and creativity.

Another difficulty is our emotional reaction. The firm conviction of, “It is true because I feel it!” can be deceitful. Our body and brain are loaded with stored memories. The synapses which have been created in our brain will not only lead us to a particular thought pattern, but will direct our entire organism towards stored “memories” which will be activated automatically. This can happen in any association that is linked to an alleged danger, and I am not only talking about Posttraumatic Stress Disorders (although it is the same process), but about primary less prominent events that we all have experienced such as fear of losing love, shame, guilt, isolation or loss of self-control.

Our body is a large chemical factory that works like an orchestra, which immediately starts playing a tune when it recognizes fear. Often, the amygdala is the conductor that activates the response. All these physical, hormonal, physiological or otherwise chemical reactive patterns evoke sensations that confirm our idea that “something is not right”. It can be even trickier when there is no alarm response. Instead of being critical we stay in our comfort zone, telling ourselves that “nothing is wrong” so that our alarm system no longer bothers us. There are times when this may have a certain function; for example, the adolescent does not feel the danger in order

to have the courage to extend his/her boundaries or the soldier that needs courage to survive in an impossible situation. But it certainly should not become a permanent condition. Such behaviour is much closer to us than we often realize. We tend to ignore many of our destructive tendencies that affect our behaviour and relationships. For example, our eating habits, the negative tendency in the way we deal with others, including our dear ones, with our environment, etc. You can therefore determine without exaggeration that real consciousness is not characterized by what we believe we “know”. Real awareness is characterized by conscious behaviour based on respect for others and ourselves.

Joseph LeDoux has published numerous research papers, reviews and books (<https://joseph-ledoux.com/>) about how the brain and the chemical process of the body reacts and builds re-active conditions on fear (LeDoux J.E. 2000; LeDoux J.E. 2002; Rodriguez S.M. 2004; Johansen J.P. 2011; LeDoux 2015). He explains that the amygdala may release hormones due to a trigger (such as an innate reaction to seeing a snake), but “*then we elaborate it through cognitive and conscious processes.*” He differentiated between the defence system, which has evolved over time, and emotions such as fear and anxiety. He points out that even simple organisms such as bacteria move in response to threats: “*It’s in the brain to allow an organism, whether it be a bacterium or a human, to detect and respond to danger*” “*It’s not in the brain to create feelings like fear and anxiety*”.

In direct contact and direct confrontations or judgments it will be almost impossible not to fall into a reactive mode. An amount of verbal and mostly non-verbal triggers will bring us easily into a reactive pattern of behaviour, feelings or thoughts; we can call this our “conditioned self”: nothing new or creative will come out of that. We are talking about reactive behaviour which repeats a past reality, addiction or fear. The good news is that we have the capacity and the possibility to develop a sense of recognizing the truth deep within us when we are present and in contact with our inner-being, inner-self, inner-sense or intuition. Somehow we know when we are governed by reactive patterns, negativity or what we may call half-truths, but this inner knowledge is unfortunately mostly over-ruled by our reactive self, or by what Kabir Helminski (Helminski K.E. 1992) and Idries Shah (Shah I. 1994) call the “false-self”, “commanding self” or “dominant ego”.

A friend of mine, Jefferson Cann (Cann J. 2017) who works for company leaders puts it like this: ACT is the positive alternative for re-act. To act instead of react, means that you are able to consciously choose how to act in a positive way to achieve a positive result in your purpose. The word ACT is an anagram standing for Awareness (in the present moment to be aware of yourself, the other person and the circumstances you are in); C for real Connection that leads us to T= Transformation, or what I call a creative co-action.

The state of transformation can also be defined as a “state of flow”. The Hungarian psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (Csikszentmihalyi, M. 1996) is one of the leading researchers on creativity and the state of flow. “*The insight presumably occurs when a subconscious connection between ideas fits so well that it is forced to pop out into awareness, like a cork held underwater breaking out into the air after it is released.*” “*Don’t assume that you already know what these things are all about, or that even if you knew them, they wouldn’t matter anyway. Experience this once thing for what it is, not what you think it is. Be open to what the world is telling you. Life is nothing more than a stream of experiences - the more widely and deeply you swim in it, the*

richer your life will be.” “*It is not the hearing that improves life, but the listening.*” “*Entering any relationship entails a transformation of the self*”, are some of his comments.

A different expression to define awareness is mindfulness. Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment, through a gentle, nurturing lens. It also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them, without believing, for instance, that there’s a “right” or “wrong” way to think or feel in a given moment. Research from people like Chiesa (Chiesa A. 2009), Irving (Irving J.A. 2009), Davidson (Davidson R.J. 2015), Tang (Tang Y.Y. 2016) and many others show that the practice of mindfulness is effective both in healthy population and in a therapeutic setting. Mindfulness ensures a higher quality of life and brings positive changes in cognitive and neurobiological functioning. Several studies show that mindfulness brings about positive changes in a large number of different mental disorders and medical conditions.

It is necessary that we create a certain distance that helps us to observe ourselves without being ruled by reactive patterns. Awareness will make us conscious of the present reality and gives us the possibility to correct our behaviour.

3. Supervision

In order to achieve a state of real awareness we need time, silence and a certain distance. To develop a more conscious state of being as well as to get a better feeling for situations and how to handle things, creative techniques can be a big help. The techniques we preferably choose depend on the different states of the supervision process.

The first state that we want to achieve in supervision is self-awareness in order to reflect on ourselves, and to be conscious of our thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

The second step is to be aware of others.

The third step is to be aware of the circumstances.

The fourth step is to be able to open for- and experience alternative behaviour.

The fifth step is to transform and to realize this in our daily practice.

In a face-to-face verbal conversation the physical distance between the supervisor and the client is relative small. In that situation the available time for processing information is therefore very short. This applies to two difficult aspects in communication: the contact permanently transmits unconscious non-verbal signals, and the verbal communication/words are in essence abstractions.

The interpretations we make can be very diverse and finally the relationship between supervisor and client can easily become dominant because of neurotic patterns (transference and counter-transference phenomena as we know from the psycho-therapy concepts). Even the colour of your eyes, a short mimicry or a subtle body posture can activate a whole range of associations.

This very human aspect is a great risk for a proper division of roles and task perception between supervisor and client. Too much attention can easily be placed on how one feels and what one wants to achieve in that relationship on a personal level. “Does that person think I am ok? Do I give him a correct impression? What does he or she think of me? etc.”. Here again we see an impetus for all kind of reactive

patterns. These are usually not very helpful in the process of developing self-steering and reflective skills for the client. Not only the feelings of the client play a role here, but also the feelings and ideas of the supervisor intervene easily in the relationship. The supervisor is there to support and to create conditions to self-reflection, he is not “the material” (see Figure 1).

4. Instructions to create the Third Position

In practical terms, the Third Position means that after a short introduction to specify on which topic the client wants to work on, he/she gives form to that situation on the table. We give the client materials to make little figures, which represent the people involved and put them on the table in which he concretizes his situation and in which they are included. They choose the colours for each person that is involved in the situation, give them a form and a posture, they can be standing, sitting, arms up, kneeling or lying down.

- The client cuts some under-layers out of paper to position the different figures on.
- There can be one or more under-layers to group the forms into “circles” of people that are closely connected to each.
- There can also be a special place to place a person that’s not directly involved but has a big influence on the situation.
- For the figures I recommend plasteline in different colours. Plasteline is a modelling flexible pasta, which is easy to work with, and offers the possibility to change the posture and expression of the figures when necessary.

5. The position of the observer

With the Third Position we create a very clear point of reference to focus on. Now the supervisor and the client can make an agreement about their purpose and their intention. This way we not only create a clear focus but also enough time and distance to observe without directly reacting, influencing or changing things.

- The instruction the supervisor gives to the client is to observe very carefully to see if the composition is correctly constructed.
- The supervisor is standing or sitting a step behind the client and never in front of him/her. In order to measure his observations accurately the client has to take some time and to move the figures until they recognize that the design mirrors the situation as precisely as possible.
- At this point the client can explain the situation, though I recommend not to talk too much or too fast. Let the “picture” do the work with the client and give it time to be integrated. This also gives the supervisor the time to get a good feeling for the dynamics.

You will notice that some little changes on the table can have a big impact on the situation. It is important to wait until the client’s feelings towards the situation becomes more and more clear. We need to realize that before we can do anything

positive we have to recognize and accept the reality of the situation. Only when we are able to do so and add something positive we can change the whole picture giving it a positive direction. It is like the final touch of make-up a woman gives her eye-brows, which changes her whole face.

Questions we can ask the client:

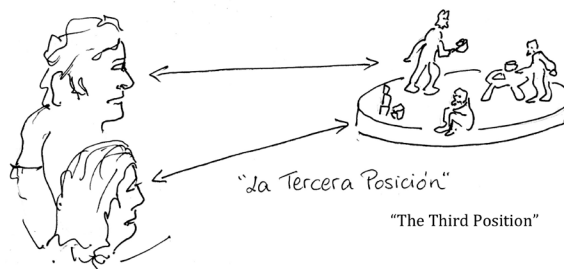
“Do you have a clear picture of the situation and of yourself in this situation?”

“Can you connect to yourself and see how you act and feel your needs?”

“Are you aware of the different dynamics that are involved in this situation?”

“Can you accept this reality and the fact that the only thing you can change is what you do?”

From here on, we can start to experiment with some small changes in the attitude, posture or position in this situation. We experiment as long as necessary until we find an action that we feel could have a positive impact on the situation. Some changes may be desirable but not realistic for the moment. There are many possibilities, but they need to be worked on. The supervisor can give some suggestions but the client is the one who has to feel if it is possible for him to respond to that suggestion. When the client feels he is able, there is a big chance that the transfer to the situation will be successful.



(Fig.2)

The basis of this form of work is the representation in images that we can also call the “aesthetic illusion” (Grabau, 1987)

Winnicott (Winnicott D.W. 1971) explains that the capacity of the imagination of the child is (still) insufficient to adequately hold the illusion of closeness. In order to be able to bear the reality of distance between mother and child, the child projects his inner need for closeness in an object. These objects are chosen by the child and “recognized” as a representative of, for example, the mother, her warmth, safety and so on.

This ability to transform needs, ideas and feelings into a form can be observed in the further development in play, creativity and art. Our ability to design makes it gradually possible to show an inner world in the outside world. Here we come to an-

other phenomenon that is directly connected to this, namely the mirroring. Because of our ability to mirror, we are able to integrate the outside world into our inner world and, as it were, to develop inner senses.

Here I like to refer to the research of the neuroscientist Giacomo Rizzolatti (Rizzolatti G. 2006) on his text titled *Meeting the minds* published in November 2006:

“Subsets of neurons in human and monkey brains respond when an individual performs certain actions and also when the subject observes others performing the same movements. These “mirror neurons” provide a direct internal experience, and therefore understanding, of another person’s act, intention or emotion. Mirror neurons may also underlie the ability to imitate another’s action, and thereby learn, making the mirror mechanism a bridge between individual brains for communication and connection on multiple levels”

6. Let’s look at different aspects of this technique

A picture or concrete form on the table are perfect means to observe, they will not move “by themselves”, thoughts and feelings will move all the time.

In verbal communication the constant changes of perceptions and feelings are permanently present. This allows the focus to easily “drift” or draw conclusions.

When you give form to a situation the fact that feelings, thoughts or judgments change constantly does not affect the image that you made to start off with. So we can let all these feelings and thoughts pass by while we observe them without directly affecting the situation that we have in front of us. An image is very “patient” and therefore it gives us all the time we need to feel, to think and to look at it from different perspectives without changing our objectives.

We can, and must, first of all, consciously choose our distance and position towards the object.

To achieve a state of awareness and presence we need to create a certain distance and feel secure so we can experiment in an environment that we can control. It is important that we can have the necessary distance from unpredictable inputs from outside. Therefore we need the factor time and silence.



(fig.3)

6.1. The time-halt factor

We already talked about the need of the time factor. In the process that enables us to open to the present moment and to be aware of ourselves and of others we need to stop conditioned-behaviour-reactive-patterns. For example, when we look at a person that does not “fit into our concept”, let us say someone with a body deformation, our first reaction will be to look away. When we take the time to really look at that person, the fear-reaction will quiet down and we will start to be aware of a whole world behind that “appearance”. A first reaction reflecting on fear, judgments and rejections will slowly diminish and we can start to connect to that person. We might feel empathy and become aware of their pain, fears, needs and beauty as well. This is what I call to learn to “embrace the monster”. Only through real love and acceptance we can connect to the inner being of another person. Being present with “what is” will enable us to develop something positive in order to change for the better. Like one of my teachers once said: *“Only the positive has the capacity to grow; the negative can make a lot of noise but has no potential and will always parasitize on the positive”*.

6.2. Silence

In my opinion silence is the most important part in the process of awareness. *“If you speak it aloud, it is gone”*. Silence...

I can give a whole theoretic account of silence, but I suggest you try it out. Two people take a paper 50x60 cm. They sit opposite each other on one side of the paper and start to draw spontaneously. You fill the paper together but you don't talk. After this you can share your experiences, or not, and just repeat this with the same, or a different person. Look at what happens. You will be surprised.

Silence gives us the opportunity to listen to our inner world as well as to the outside world. For many people this is not easy. But also here the composition we have made while working in the “Third Position” will help us. This image will give us enough input to connect to a certain orientation. We will not be driven towards the feeling of emptiness and chaos. Eventual negative thoughts and fears will not be given space. When we get used to silence we will appreciate the point of serenity and inner-connection towards ourselves and to our environment. We will learn to focus and make valuable connections. It is a fact that when we start to speak softly we learn to listen better.

6.3. Patience

“Do you have the patience to wait till your mud settles and the water is clear? Can you remain unmoving till the right action arises by itself?” Lao Tzu

In Holland we say: *“Don't try to pull on the tulip to make it grow faster. Instead place it in the sunlight and water it.”* If the tension is too high to do this work, or there is still too much inner excitement, try first to regulate the breathing, have a drink and take a walk in nature. Sometimes you have to take *“a short vacation from yourself”* until you feel a little bit calmer.

7. Unconscious knowledge in our expression

Preferably, we work with creative materials that are flexible and not formed, in contrast to the pre-formed figures like for example Playmobil. Thus the forms are the result of spontaneous creativity will mirror information coming from the unconscious. The choice of colour, shape, how big the different figures are and the position they occupy is part of that. These creations have nothing to do with an artistic capacity. As a matter of fact the artistic capacity can also cut off some spontaneity of expression in this case. In more than 45 years of experience I am still surprised about how perfect the “picture” mirrors and symbolizes important personal aspects of the clients.

I would like to advise the supervisor that it is contra-productive and very important not to reveal the client’s unconscious issues. As supervisor our role is to accompany the client until they themselves are ready to “see” and use what they discover in a positive way. Otherwise we can hurt the defensive system of a person and they will start to believe in our interpretations instead of in their own capacity to develop awareness in their own time. Certain things remain in the unconsciousness for a reason. Maybe it is not yet the right time for that person to integrate certain aspects of himself or herself.

Working with the Third Position will help the client to reflect until the right time comes to recognize and integrate the issue they are working on.

Don’t take over. Guide them, ask questions that you feel will help them understand and develop their capacity to go in a positive creative direction. Stand by them.



(fig.4)

Play and creativity are not taken very seriously in our education. Astonishing if you realize that playing is one of the most effective forms of learning. But it may also be a blessing that this is so. Imagine you suggest that education deals with play and creativity in the same way as the usual method of reproducing expected and desired answers that the school prescribes: the still existing sanctuary of spontaneously playing and creativity would thus come under considerable pressure from fulfilling the expectations of others.

I have often observed in therapies the “method” or habit to interpret all sorts of perceived meanings in the work like a drawing or sculpture a client has made. If a client asks me: “Can you analyze my work and tell me what my problem is and what kind of person I am?” Then I answer that after more than 40 years of working with clients and their creative work, I have some ideas about that, but that this is more a

hobby, in the context in which we work, I am a professional and it is not my function to tell them about my interpretation. I am there to help them understand and find out for themselves through experience.

The purpose of our relationship is to develop the ability to become aware of ourselves and to find suitable solutions to help us develop in a positive direction. This purpose will be undermined if I would post my projections of their work as if it were “the truth”. I can do some suggestions about how they could improve their own reflections and their perceptions by suggesting they could do some experimenting by little changes or movements in their work/objects. This allows them to consciously perceive differences as well as their reaction to those differences.

8. A safe environment to experiment

Before we jump into the “deep waters” it is much safer to experiment in the environment of our supervision sessions. Like the moon reflects the light of the sun to let us see in the dark, the picture of the Third Position reflects a reality in which we can investigate and experiment without blinding us from direct sunlight. Projection is a human ability to look at something from a distance. The client is mostly perfectly able to measure his own capacities and his abilities to act in a particular way in his own situation. Our mirror neurons will give us the information we need when we connect this to our inner-sense or intuition.

We can suggest: “Please try to look and feel very carefully: can you do this?” In general we need to talk about small changes that are possible, such as changing our position and attitude.

To want to be “someone else” is not a very useful point of reference. Yes of course we can try to imitate some attitudes we admire in others, that can be very useful in a learning process. But you can’t become someone else so it’s better to focus on what you can do! Little changes have a big effect on our relationships. When a particular action is not possible for us at a given time, we can reflect on how to work on it and find a way to develop the capacity that we need to grow and achieve our goals.

9. Epilogue

Great researchers like Freud, Jung, Adler, Mahler, Kernberg and so on, gave us a wealth of information that helped us to better understand the human mind and behaviour. Great people like Berne, Naqhsbandi, Pearls, Peterson, Klein and many others developed therapeutic techniques or rules for life, that help us to transform knowledge into practical methods that can be applied to our work as supervisors, teachers, therapists or just as self-help tips. All this knowledge and these methodologies are invaluable. Humans are the only “beings” who have the capacity to observe themselves and to be conscious of their reactive and conditioned selves. In this way, we are able to give “destiny” a turn. But without the recognition of our reactive nature, however clever we may think we are, we will be unable to direct our thinking, feeling and acting. Without developing the ability to observe ourselves in silence and to create a situation in which we can look and feel from a certain distance that gives us the time to open up, separated from our usual reactions. It is very difficult or maybe

impossible to develop real consciousness. That means to create a situation that enables us to look in honesty at ourselves, how frightening or ugly this may seem at first. When we can help as supervisor or coach to guide people to a form of awareness with acceptance, respect or love towards our “being” this person can move on. Move forwards to fulfil a positive purpose that takes him/her a step further to better themselves, their relationship or any positive result they want to achieve.

The first step, the step to be really present is not possible when we are moved by all kinds of expectations, judgments or goals. It’s only possible in sincere honesty with the courage to see and feel your selves. From my experience, the way to help or clients to make this possible in the context of supervision, but also as a teacher or therapist is to be present, with love and acceptance. To encourage and have confidence in the power that is in every person. We can encourage him or her to take responsibility of her situation. Not in guilt, shame or fear but in love and trust to go a step further. Techniques such as the Third Position can help to take the step towards real awareness and acceptance of reality and will help us release the old reactive and conditioned patterns.

The Third Position can be helpful in many professional situations. I use it with success not only in supervision but also in family constellations, working with difficulties in relationship, team or business situations, teaching role models, therapy, coaching as well as for our own personal problems as a means for externalizing inner parts of ourselves such as the “inner child”, “the adult” or other inner “voices”.

“We don’t have a problem, we have a situation and we look how we can take care of that.” Omar Ali Shah (Sha O.A. 1991)

10. References

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