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Socrates: His virtue is not free from blemish, owing to his having parted from the best guardian?

Adeimantus: And who is that guardian?

Socrates: Rational inquiry, blended with music; for this alone by its presence and indwelling can preserve its owner in the possession of life-long virtue.

Plato ca 410 BCE

" Man has no nature. What he has is… history. Expressed differently: what nature is to things…history is to man."

José Ortega y Gasset 1941

Our goal in this article is to consider the so–called systems–oriented family therapy and its history from ideological, or perhaps more, from philosophical points of view. We will pick up such situations and theoretical issues that feel important to us, when we want to understand the ideological powers that have been playing a role in the development of our practical and healing–oriented discipline.

When we look at systems-oriented family therapies (SOF) and their history, it seems to us that they can be conceptualized as constituting four partly separate and partly overlapping layers:

1. SOF as clinical practice
2. SOF as a theory
3. SOF as a critique of the current socio-political situation
4. SOF as a representation of socio-historical ideologies

In this article we are interested in the fourth layer. We consider how ideological views have molded systems-oriented family therapy in both theory and practice. So, we won't intend to consider family therapy as a whole. And that being said, we leave for example cognitive and psychodynamic family therapies out from our focus. Not because they are unimportant, but because those forms of family therapy have been developed in other contexts.

From our point of view systemic tradition of family therapy, both as a theory and practice, is like a multi–layered, multi–dimensional flourishing and diverse garden. The ideological bedrock is like a soil that has given the nourishing ingredients for the systemic family therapy to be born, to grow and to multiply. We feel that this kind of figurative way of seeing SOF enables us to understand how it has been inter-twined with ideological and socio–cultural processes from the 50's to the present. Naturally, we can only present a glimpse to this rich interactional discourse. And so, our aim is also to inspire our readers to reflect on the views, which we will present and hopefully to present their own views to the ideological or philosophical formation of our discipline.

We have decided to use the term systems-oriented therapy. We didn't want to talk about systemic family therapy because it would imply clearly to the so-called Milan model. On the other hand, we didn't want to use the term family systems therapy either because it would have carried connotations to earlier forms of family therapy (Låros, Bertrando & Ness, 2017). We wanted to be able to comment on the history of SOF as broadly as possible. This is the only way for us to be able to recognize the ideological currents beneath the surface of theories and practices of systems–oriented family therapy. And that is why we won't present a view on the historical development of systems–oriented family therapy. Instead, we comment on certain phases of the history of SOF. We have chosen specially such phases or eras that help us to underline the ideological currents in the

development of systems–oriented family therapy. It is natural that other commentators might have chosen other points of departure.

When we are discussing about systems-oriented family therapy, it might seem problematic without giving a definition of it. But that too is difficult. Systemic tradition of family therapy has not yet come to an agreement how to define itself. Few promising suggestions have already been made. For example, The Leeds Family Therapy Research Center has made a manual that is based on 11 competences of systemic family therapy. Still, commonly accepted definition is not yet available. We won't be aiming for a such a definition either. But instead, we follow a preliminary broad view that has often been presented during the history of systemic tradition. Brad Keeney and John Ross framed this position as follows:

> …systemic family therapy is a perspective that emphasizes treating the patterns that connect the problem behavior of one person with the behavior of other people.
>
> (Keeney & Ross, 1985)

We understand that our view to systems–oriented family therapy is simplified, general, insufficiently specific, and omits many important branches of family therapy. However, a simplified sketch of this kind enables us to comment on family therapy from a perspective of the history of ideas. We are also aware of recent claims that family therapy no longer exists or that it is nowadays in danger of dying out, at least in its classical form of therapeutic sessions conducted with both parents and their children. We leave this development outside of this article, while nevertheless believing that it too might consist of ideas and layers that could become understood via the history of ideas.[1] Broadly speaking, our approach resembles that of Claude Lévi- Strauss, who used the word "bricoleur" in his book La pensée sauvage (Lévi-Strauss, 1962/1966). The concept refers to

humans as myth builders, who use objects and words to create mythological structures. These ideological structures affect our ways of understanding the world. They are not theories. Instead, they form the bedrock on which specific theories and scientific explanations are built.

By underlining the importance of the different ideological layers we also expect to find reference points that lie outside of the theories of family therapy proper and partly also outside the traditional ways of contextualizing family therapy. We believe that viewing family therapy in this way will enable us to perceive something new in the ideological history of our family therapeutic endeavor. We do this by drawing on two specific concepts: a twofold concept of game and a twofold concept of human liberty. Together, partially separate and partially overlapping, these concepts facilitate a fresh look at the history of ideas in family therapy. Moreover, they create clarity on the one hand in the dichotomy between interventive and non-interventive therapies (Goolishian & Anderson, 1992; Låros, Bertrando & Ness, 2017) and on the other hand in attempts to reframe family therapy as an intervention in contrast to a process (Josephson, 2008, 2015).

The twofold concept of a game

We use the words play and game in this article to refer to situations that are impregnated by four components that are created for and in the process of playing a game: rules, goals, strategies and an alternative reality. Thus, we are not referring to play therapy or other forms of play, such as playing with young children. Instead, we are referring to a situation in which a *game* is being played. Our angle to games is like the use of the word gameplaying. In the context of computer games it refers on one hand to the plot, and on the other hand to the way the game is played.

Generally, the words game and play denote all the different ways in which we understand them and how we construct metaphorical multiverses with them. From this angle, the word game does not have a definite meaning. Instead, in the common usage those words imply to all game– like situations and interactive processes. We can talk about family games, political games, games in relationships, moves and countermoves in wars etc. In the same vein, when the idea about game– playing became to family therapeutic theories, it did so mostly as a metaphor, not so much as a definite theory. For Gregory Bateson, who was a main figure in applying the ideas of play and game to therapeutic processes. For him concept of play was a indispensable tool in understanding communication and specially metacommunication in human interaction. Playing is an example *par excellence* that shows how communication and metacommunication are intertwined in human culture.

Metacommunication tells us how communicational deeds are to be interpreted. Bateson developed his views of play and game as metaphorical principles that impregnate human interaction in two articles. First, in "Bali: the value system of a steady state" (Bateson, 1949/1972) and second, in "Toward a theory of schizophrenia" (Bateson, Jackson, Haley & Weakland, 1956/1972). So, for family therapists working mainly in psychiatry, play was mostly a metaphorical way of expressing multidimensionality of human interaction. But game theoretical research, compared to Bateson, has had a more explicit view to games when it concentrated realistically on certain rule–governed games, and how people are *de facto* playing them by pursuing goals, implementing strategies and experiencing the game–playing. These different views to plays and game–playing can be simplified into two distinctive traditions: play as *human culture* and play as a *logico-mathematical problem*.

Play as an essential dimension of human culture

The cultural understanding of a game began already before Bateson. Its starting point was the conviction that play and games are vital and organic ingredients in the development of all societies. The most important figures in this tradition were Johan Huizinga (1872-1945) and Roger Callois (1913-1978). Both saw play as an essential and unavoidable component of culture and social dynamics. The essential element in play is that it allows the creation of alternative realities. Huizinga calls these multiverses in which players dwell the magic circles of games. (Callois, 1958/1961; Huizinga, 1938/1984). The concept of the magic circle can be extended to situations beyond specific games to include other play-like situations where it can help to dismantle potentially dangerous and threatening social conflicts. Thus, the concept of the magic circle offers a way to understand different social conventions and processes. From this perspective, games are one form of carnival, as illustrated for example by Mikhail Bakhtin in his treatise *Rabelais and his world* (1965/1968). Another instance can be seen in *Sinuhe the Egyptian* by the Finnish novelist Mika Waltari, where the narrator vividly describes the Egyptians celebrating the so called "Day of the Wrong King", a day when many social power relations are reversed. Its aim is to ease social tensions, prevent instability, promote continuity and above all *strengthen a communal view of social life*. Both the cultural play research and Bateson share the same conviction, that play is an essential and penetrating part of human culture. Although, Bateson criticized Huizinga for being too literary and not understanding properly the distinction between communication and metacommunication as a basis for also understanding game and play. It can be said that Bateson gave a more specific and concrete meaning to the idea of magic circle of play.

Had the metaphor of play, when it began to saturate family therapy, been understood in the cultural and humanistic sense, it might have led to alternative ways of understanding interaction in families. Instead, as we see it, the interactional family game was approached from the mathematical and cybernetic points of view that prevailed in the game research after the second world war. It was

only later, with the advent of reflective family therapy and open dialogue, that the cultural understanding of play as a metaphor again could re-appear.

Games as mathematical problems

The mathematic-cybernetic interpretation of games made it possible to understand that interactive patterns represent a totality that is governed by existing but unarticulated rules and strategies. Thus, the chains binding earlier thinking, based on the individuality of the family members, were broken and family therapy started to develop in a new direction. The outcome was modern systems–oriented family therapy (SOF). At the same time, however, this new way of understanding family therapy also covertly brought in its train ingredients that started molding therapeutic thinking to fit the dominant cultural context and philosophy (Vygotsky, 1997). We don't imply that this concerns the totality of systems-oriented family therapy. We just want to emphasize how the ideological current was playing a role, when SOF was evolving.

Games became treated as examples of logico-mathematical problems and strategic dilemmas (Gibbons, 1992; Gross, 1987/1995; Neumann & Morgenstern 1944/1953). Game theory, especially, concentrated on risk-taking games. It was generally assumed that players are omniscient, intelligent, and ruthless agents solely pursuing their own benefit. This starting point created an alternative reality highlighting features of human interaction that manifested in highly simplified situations. The players presented in the early game theories are not humans as normally understood. They are more like theoretical agents. And it is only to be expected that the hypothetical nature of these models leads to difficulties when we try using them to understand the *totality* of human behavior in natural settings.

Applying game theory and its results to human interaction, especially in families and systems–oriented family therapy, has meant that these inherent suppositions about humanity and human interaction have also been imported into therapeutic settings. Thus, the original humanistic context of play has been denounced and a competitive, strategic, and ruthlessly egoistic way of being in the world has been underlined. As we will see later, this led to the transformation of systems–oriented family therapy that underlines psychotherapy as knowing, enforcing, and manipulating.

In this process, a conflict between two meta-level perspectives on SOF started to evolve. The origins of this conflict, which can be located in the different views of Jay Haley and Gregory Bateson, was neatly illustrated by Harold Goolishian and Harlene Anderson in their paper *Strategy and intervention or non-intervention: A matter of theory* (Goolishian & Anderson, 1992). The disagreement was also inherent in the first version of Milan systemic family therapy. As Luigi Boscolo, Gianfranco Cecchin, Lynn Hoffman and Peggy Penn (1985) have noticed the conflict between Bateson's and Haley's views impregnate the book *Paradox and counter paradox* (Selvini Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin & Prata, 1978). At the end of the process, the cybernetic and mathematical paradigm had become stronger and, if we put it harshly and polemically, the systems–oriented family therapist was cast in the role of the one who knows and enforces changes in the families – to be more precise, enforces changes in the *rules of interactive games* people play in families. Jay Haley put this task beautifully in the discussion with psychoanalyst James Masterson and Rollo May, He said in the Phoenix conference of Psychotherapy in 1985 that "it is the therapist's job to change the patient, not to help him understand himself" (Shapiro, 1986). Our view is that this development reinforced the interest on the rules of the games people play and led to the neglect of semantics and pragmatics of game playing. Above all, this meant, that the subjective experience of game playing could not become to the focus of therapeutic action. It can be thought, indeed, that it is possible to *change people's behaviour* without understanding their subjective

experience. But there is not an opportunity to help clients *understand themselves* without hearing their experience of their lived experience.

Contextualizing the game-theoretical view

This development must be put into a larger context. After the second world war, the natural sciences took a huge leap forward. At the same time, economic growth seemed unbounded. Trust in technology and its possibilities to control natural processes through knowledge of the rules and principles that these processes follow had made it difficult to discern the limits to such expansion. It seemed obvious that technological and rational optimism would enable all social and natural challenges to be met. This rational project, linked to the Enlightenment, seemed invincible. There were no recognizable obstacles that could prevent these optimistic hopes from becoming reality. Of course, such optimism had its critics. Among others, the Club of Rome had warned about the limits to growth (Meadows, Meadows & Randers, 1972). Notwithstanding, the general atmosphere remained full of hope. The heavy criticism of Enlightenment rationalism voiced by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (Horkheimer & Adorno 1944/2008; Horkheimer, 1947/2008) had hardly any effect on the general cultural atmosphere, at least not in the United States. The same applies also to Sigmund Freud, whose pessimistic views to the dominant culture (Freud, 1930) didn't affect to the technologically optimistic cultural ideology after the second world war.

The prevailing optimism that problems could be solved by the human intellect made it difficult to cultivate other views on the human predicament. This was evident at the Macy conferences held in 1946-1953. The cybernetics section, especially, became important to family therapy and its future development. As Steve J. Heims (1991) has written, the atmosphere of the group was saturated by confidence in technological and economic progress. In the prevailing inspirational and reductionist environment, the machine analogy was the only way of seeing the human predicament. A concrete

example is the conflict over the position and role of the gestalt psychologist Wolfgang Köhler, which led to both Köhler and other humanists leaving the group (Montagnini, 2007). After the incident, the group focused even more closely on the ideas presented by Wiener and Neumann. This moment can be interpreted as the turning point at which the development towards interventive family therapies began to strengthen. The reductionist culture of the era formed fertile ground for molding systems-oriented family therapy based on the demands of control, power, and interventionism that also generally impregnated the culture of that era.

From rules of a game to rules of functional structures

We think that in the 1970s, the game metaphor was no longer the only way of understanding family therapy – perhaps it never was. Nevertheless, the rules, slightly modified, remained. They now formed the backbone of new concepts like function and structure. Thus, structural and strategic family therapy entered the stage with faith in hierarchical and sometimes, as it seems, patriarchal structures, rules, and functions (Minuchin, 1974; Haley, 1976, 1987). Healing was understood as a result of changing the rules or mending structures to better fit the needs and tasks of the family. We understand this implying, that systems–oriented family therapy was seen in different light than that proposed by Bateson. SOF was now resembling more an *interventive* healing activity, which seeks to restructure the family according to the hegemonic values and views. In other words, underlining the ideological view, power in therapy was used to strengthen and restore the dominant societal ideology, values and aims. The main goal was naturally to help families, and structural family therapy proved to be effective in doing this, but underneath this healing activity was flowing the ideological current that we are trying to identify and understand. A good example of these layers is to be found in the paper which Minuchin wrote in 1965. In the article "Conflict resolution family therapy" he describes in detail one way of doing family therapy with multi problem families. So, the article both entails the illustration of therapeutic practice, explication of the theory and hints of the

ideological connections that impregnate, at least according to our understanding, Minuchin's therapeutic thinking.

Naturally, structural family therapy was and still is a diverse and innovative therapeutic practice. What we would like to do here is to emphasize that we are referring to abstract ideological tone of the historical development, not necessarily the therapeutic practice as such. In our reasoning echoes the voice of psychotherapy research, that relies on so-called common factors (Wampold & Imel, 2015). From this point of view, effective psychotherapy isn't effective because of its theory. In the same way, we tend to think that structural family therapy has proved to be effective, but not because it is structural. Therefore, we think that it is possible to analyze also critically the ideological currents, that have affected to the *theory of structural family therapy* – without undermining its therapeutic value.

While having done this, it became plausible for us to think that structural and strategic family therapy (as versions of SOF) surprisingly resembled another scientific theory of the era, Talcott Parsons's (1971) functional theory of human societies. It is well-known that Salvador Minuchin, the founder of structural family therapy, was interested in Parsons's theory especially as presented in his book *Family: socialization and interaction processes* (Gremillion, 2003; Parsons & Bales, 1956). In contrast to Minuchin's explicit interest in Parsons, we would highlight the implicit ideological effects that Parsons had on both Minuchin and structural family therapy generally (like it did also generally in the sociological and societal thinking of the era).

Parsons's functional sociology was a very influential sociological theory in the mid-20th century, as it also had a clear societal function. It is being suggested that its ideological mission was to safeguard the social status quo in a cultural atmosphere that was saturated with optimism and trust

in continuous progress (Huaco, 1986; Lipset & Ladd, 1972). Functionalism has since been criticized as conservative and failing to understand the historical and highly individualistic nature of social structures (Turner, 1986). We think that the same criticism also might be applied to structural family therapy. Like Parsons, structural family therapists believed that the problematic behavior of a given family member is due to structural inadequacies in the family. This belief was accompanied by a strong tendency to believe that health promoting structures are ahistorical and general, even if this is not a logical and necessary consequence of the theory. The criticism leveled against structural family therapy from the feminist and social constructionistic standpoints can be similarly understood. Rather than critiquing structural therapeutic techniques as such they target the sociological functionalist foundation of structural family therapy (Avis, 1985; Kassop, 1987; Farquhar, Comaroff, Appadurai & Gremillon, 2003) In other words, the critique is levelled against functionalistic understanding of family life in general, not specifically against certain therapeutic traditions.

Systems-oriented family therapy was originally both a modern and a revolutionary therapeutic practice. It helped families and individuals whom other therapeutic practices had failed. It was connected to the American interpersonal tradition, and it took a clear communal stance on human suffering (Minuchin, Montalvo & Guerney, 1967). Although we feel that SOF distanced itself from its own radicalism in the 1970s and became a part of the conservative project aiming at preserving the societal status quo. For example, in the dispute between David Riesman and Talcott Parsons on the American mentality, systems-oriented family therapy seems to have, at least how we understand the development, implicitly positioned itself close to the conservative interpretation of the American mentality and atemporality of social structures. This development did not take place explicitly, but we think that it was a by–product due to adopting the parsonsian basic view as a backbone of systems-oriented family therapy.

Already in the 1950s, Riesman and Parsons had started a debate on the historicality of being an American. The dispute was sparked by Riesman's argument that a profound change was taking place in the perception of what it means to be an American. In contrast to Parsons, Riesman was ideologically close to the new left, and was strongly influenced by Erich Fromm and Hannah Arendt among others. Riesman was also familiar with the writings of Marx and Freud. Riesman suggested that a change was taking place in the American mentality. It was shifting from being internally to externally driven. The pivotal concept in his theory is consumerism, which defines an individual's social position. It also dictates how an individual is perceived in his/her community (Riesman, Glazer & Denney, 1950). Parsons rejected this. Remaining faithful to his own ahistorical functionalism, he could not interpret Riesman's observations as a manifestation of a paradigmatic change in the American mentality. For Parsons, it was important to adhere to the notion of historical coherence in Western civilizations; hence traditional values and structures *were not* in the process of historical change.

We want to suggest, that from the ideological point of view, systems-oriented family has assimilated to itself elements from the conservative agenda of Parsons' sociology. As critique levelled against parsonsian views has often contended, belief in atemporal societal structures has often been a way to resist movements seeking social change. We would like to suggest that perhaps without explicitly realizing it or aiming towards it, ideologically SOF ended up representing implicitly conservatism and universality, although, given its history, it could equally have positioned itself ideologically as a movement aligned with liberalism, contextualism and the development of the Frankfurt School. We find it interesting that historically systems-oriented family therapy developed like this. We are not suggesting that other paths might have been better.

And indeed, some therapeutic tools might not have developed if the ideological positioning had been different. Anyway, our interest here concerns the philosophical development as such.

Nevertheless, at the end, systems–oriented family therapy chose another path. Ideologically, the idea of a game had been simplified to following rules and restoring social structures. Rules and structures, as we see it, were conceived as atemporal, universal and aiming at accommodation to the dominant social world. We find it plausible that systems–oriented family therapy was transformed exclusively to a corrective practice and the philosophical critical and communal voice had weakened. It had become more efficient and more sophisticated. But we think that at the same time, when it had improved as a healing practice, it had also become, at least to some extent, close to an ideologically conformist societal movement of the era, that was not driven by emancipatory but by technological or instrumental interests (Habermas, 1976). Thus, the history of SOF up to the 1980s was impregnated with the views inherited from mathematical game theory and cybernetics. Both strategic and structural therapies were steeped in this same tradition and philosophy. At this point we want to make clear, that our stance that might sound too critical and even unfair, concerns only the ideological undertone of the structural family therapy. If we considered the therapeutic practice, it would show the therapeutic value of structural and strategic family therapy, how they can effectively relieve pain and support liberty and well-being in families by re-organizing and re-structuring the relational patterns. But still, and regardless of this value, we find it important to pay attention to the *ideological current*, that was a part of SOF:s history, and that was connected to its close relationship with functional sociology of the era.

But family therapy has never remained the same for long. Gradually, the ethos started to change, aligned with the revolution in the social sciences generally. By the end of the 1980s a new tradition emerged known as linguistic, postmodern, narrative, reflective or constructionist family therapy had

emerged (Berger & Luckman, 19661994; Gergen, 1985; Andersen, 1987, 1991; Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; Hoffman, 1992; White, Epston, 1990). Thomas Kuhn (1962/1994, 1974/1997) would likely have recognized this as a paradigmatic change. The change can be illustrated with a help of the concept *expertise*. The hierarchical definition of expertise that had been emphasized in structural and strategic therapies gradually transformed into a more horizontal and democratic one focused less on psychological facts and more on the therapeutic process, on the strengthening of social embeddedness and sense of agency than on reducing symptoms as an expert, who knows and can induce a change (Hoffmann, 1992; Anderson & Goolishian, 1992; Anderson, 1997; Laitila, 2004; Chenail, Reiter, Torres-Gregory & Ilic, 2020).

Postmodern turn and an idea of two liberties

The postmodern turn made explicit two distinctively different views on humanity and ways of being in the world. At the same time, the development of both the theory and practice of systems–oriented family therapy changed the ideological location it had occupied in Western ideological history. From our point of view this becomes obvious if we consider SOF in the context of two types of liberty, and if we interpret it as a project aiming at broadening human freedom. Although, postmodern family therapists themselves did not contextualize the new paradigm in this way, we think, that connecting postmodern family therapy to theories of liberty creates a conceptual bridge that renders visible its historical and philosophical continuum. And so, as we suggest, postmodern systems–oriented family therapy becomes a recognizable part of the history of human liberty within the Western political philosophical tradition.

In 1958, Isaiah Berlin gave a lecture in which he referred to two separate ways of understanding human liberty. He called these distinct views negative and positive liberty. We are aware that Berlin's distinction is far from self-evident. Nevertheless, it seems to us that in almost every theory

on political liberty since Berlin his notion is somehow taken into consideration. It seems to us that Berlin has succeeded in conceptualizing something essential and intuitive about the human predicament.

Negative liberty

In his explication of negative liberty, he refers to Thomas Hobbes' book *Leviathan* (Hobbes, 1651/2010). Hobbes describes primitive human society as a chaotic anarchy threatened with destruction by fiercely competing impulses, needs and passions. The only solution is for citizens to give limitless and uncontrolled power to a statal agency that can manage and punish without any binding restrictions or rules whatsoever. Hobbes calls this agency Leviathan. Hobbes's terminology is interesting. The Leviathan was originally a monstrous sea creature in Canaan mythology that was believed to eat the sun at the end of the world. Hobbes could see but two monsters: Leviathan and limitless human freedom. Both are destructive.

Mathematical game-theory and its systems–oriented family therapeutic applications understand human nature in the same way. The players of these games are ruthless and individualistic, aiming at the greatest possible amount of negative freedom and personal utility. In other words, from time to time in systems–oriented family therapy, human liberty has been interpreted as an opportunity to engage in destructive behavior that family therapy attempts to eradicate. It is as if human interaction created monstrous systemic conglomerates that family therapy could defeat. This became most clearly evident in the work of the second Mara Selvini Palazzoli team, who communicated this thought using expressions like dirty *game* (L'imbroglio) or *systemic harpoon* – a rather handy weapon to hunt a monstrous sea creature! (Selvini Palazzoli, Cirillo, Selvini & Sorrentino, 1989; Prata, 1990). But we think that this same approach or view to certain aspects of human

communication was also applied in strategic and structural family therapy – even without using these concepts. The underlying understanding of expertise seemed to be the same

Positive liberty

The second version of human freedom is called positive liberty. It is rooted in Athenian democracy. Positive liberty is not freedom in the unlimited sense. Instead, it refers to the opportunity to live an authentic life as a distinguished member of the society. By authentic we refer to the Greek understanding, that a man's essence is such that good life is possible only interactively with other people, in the community. The Greek did not have an idea of individuality as we do. Berlin's view owes much to Benjamin Constantin, who was the first to suggest the possibility of two incompatible notions of liberty. In 1819, in his lecture entitled *The Liberty of the Ancients and the Liberty of the Moderns* Constantin contrasted the modern and ancient ways of comprehending the concept of liberty.

In Athenian democracy, the freedom of the citizen referred to political freedom and was closely intertwined with the social life of the city state of Athens. It required active participation in democracy and hence a lot of time and resources. In Plato's *Republic,* social withdrawal is viewed as a pathological behavior stemming from either family or social dynamics. Refusing to take part in social life or being inactive in the democratic political arena means a refusal to live authentically. Positive liberty meant living as a fully empowered citizen of a city state, living in the community in interaction with others, and sharing common values and goals. In Athens, liberty meant freedom to obey the laws that had been formulated by the community. Positive liberty meant participation in the community, not the maximization of one's own negative liberty. As Hannah Arendt (1961) reminds us, liberty in Athens was a wholly political and communal concept. We want to add that the democracy in Athens wasn't an ideal model for communal living. The democratic rights were

guaranteed only for a few, and otherwise the execution of power was as brutal as anywhere. But Athens needs to be mentioned because it can also be seen as a utopia that tells something about an ideal communal life that cannot as such never become realized.

The two concepts of liberty cannot be neither mutually assimilable nor dualistic manifestations of some higher unity. In Berlin's words:

> . These are not two different interpretations of a single concept, but two profoundly divergent and irreconcilable attitudes to the ends of life. It is well to recognize this, even if in practice it is often necessary to strike a compromise between them. For each of them makes truth claims. These claims cannot both be fully satisfied … the satisfaction that each of them seeks is an ultimate value which, both historically and morally, has an equal right to be classed among the deepest interests of mankind.
>
> Berlin 1958/1969, 51-52.

Our view is that this historical distinction helps us to understand the paradigmatic change from modern to postmodern in the history of systems–oriented family therapy. We feel that it is a way of contextualizing family therapy in the Western history of ideas that might generate further ideas in addition to those that have sprung from earlier formulations. We refer to different ways of interpreting reflective family therapy and to the treatment program for first-episode psychosis that was developed in Western Lapland in Finland by Jaakko Seikkula and his collaborators as the outcome of a process that started with the idea of need-adaptive treatment for psychosis (Aaltonen, Seikkula & Lehtinen, 2011; Alanen, 1993). This approach was subsequently further developed and became known as open dialogue or dialogical practice (Seikkula & Olson, 2003; Olson, Seikkula & Ziedonis, 2014), and began to be more generally applied in contexts other than psychotic crises.

Positive liberty in family therapy: Reflective family therapy and open dialogue

Reflective family therapy

Reflectivity *per se* has always been a part of systems–oriented family therapy, both as individual introspection and as the sharing of experiences in therapeutic interaction. As a distinct concept, reflective family therapy started in 1985, when Tom Andersen and his colleagues modified the classic setting in Milan family therapy. Originally, the therapeutic team first listened to the discussion between the interviewing therapist and the family and then decided on the feedback the family should be given. In reflective therapy, the team's discussion is made open and public in a way that it allows the family members to listen, comment, and reflect on it (Andersen, 1987; Friedman, 1995). The discussion itself was both the feedback and intervention received by the family. This meant destructuralization, which democratized the therapeutic function, turning it into a task that is shared by both the therapeutic team and the family. This new practice was called the reflective or reflecting team and was subsequently further developed. The reflective function took place naturally during the conversation without imposing clear changes in speech turns.

To us, this development seems to show, that family therapy was contextualized as a non-interventive practice. As mentioned earlier, Harlene Anderson and Harold Goolishian, among others, have stated that the technique and essence of family therapy has followed two distinct traditions with different philosophies. One is interventive and the other noninterventive. The authors located the origin of these two different paradigms or mentalities in the views of Gregory Bateson (1972, 1976) and Jay Haley (1976).

As we understand it, Haley's conceptualization of therapeutic interaction was rooted in the institutionalized role of the therapist as an expert and involved the use of power and strategic thinking. In contrast, Bateson saw the concept of power as corruptive, epistemologically unsound, and morally degenerate. To him, ideas of power, strategic thinking and manipulation reflect a deep

misunderstanding of human nature and the logic of interaction in human systems (Bateson, 1972, 1976). Anderson and Goolishian think that this misunderstanding lies in the foundations of our thinking and thus is a purely theoretical question that cannot be resolved by more thorough empirical research. Neither is it is a question of different dimensions. Instead, we face a philosophical dilemma that can never be resolved. It can either be said that the bedrock of humanity is essentially a philosophical construction, or we can follow Anderson and Goolishian in thinking that if the dilemma cannot be resolved, it can nevertheless be dissolved (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). W e see philosophical problems generally as puzzles that can't become solved, but which can become thought again in new historical and ideological contexts. It seems to us, that a part of all psychotherapies is to be understood in the similar way.

According to our view, the interventive tradition of family therapy is also an example of Berlin's concept of negative liberty. Interventionism is based on the idea that illness, symptoms, interactional problems, etc., are obstacles that prevent negative freedom from being realized. Thus, it is natural to try to remove these obstacles by one-sided, strategic, and expert-driven means. Here Haley's positive attitude to the use of therapeutic power also becomes understandable. We see therapeutic interventions comparable to revolutions, engineering, and modern medicine. And it is precisely here that Haley's and Bateson's views are incompatible. This is also the disagreement described by Goolishian and Anderson as the conflict between interventionism and non-interventionism. Our view is, that Berlin's notion of two kinds of liberties offers a more exact and profound explication of these incompatible views on the human predicament. To trace this conflict back to its original historical starting point, the question is not solely about systems–oriented family therapy or psychotherapy in general; instead, it is about a genuine philosophical conflict that cannot be resolved either by thinking or by empirical research.

Whereas negative liberty is inherent in the interventive interpretation of SOF, positive liberty is inherent in its non-interventive interpretation. We conclude this from to characteristics of so–called postmodernism. We don't intend to define postmodernism, but instead, we would like to underline two aspects in it:

1. Postmodernism refuses the rational concept of truth that is based on correspondence between knowledge and the external world. Instead, truth is seen as a product of locally determined social construction. By doing so, postmodernism brings communality to focus.

2. Postmodern views often underline the rights of such groups that are somehow dis-empowered in their communities and whose voices have been pressed down. In a way, and as also philosopher Stephen R.C. Hicks has mentioned, postmodernism seems to accept the epistemological stance of the sophists in ancient Greek (for example of Thrasymachus with whom Socrates was having a dialogue in Plato's *Republic*). But at the same time, it turns it morally upside down. Sophists concluded that if truth and morality are relative, the only possibility is that truth is truth of the strong and moral is moral for the powerful. Postmodernists, on the contrary, concluded that if truth and morality are relative, it means that all the voices are equally important and need to become heard.

These two characteristics of postmodernism lead quite naturally, at least we feel that way, to seeing non–interventive and postmodern therapies as being aligned with the concept of positive freedom. But we would like to remind again that we are talking about theories and ideologies. For example, the work Salvador Minuchin and his colleagues did for the families of the slums was "morally postmodern" in this sense, but their *theories and embedded ideologies* were not.

This is most clearly shown in the understandings of the essence of reflective therapies of Arlene Katz and John Shotter (Katz & Shotter, 1996; Shotter, 1993). In family therapy, according to Katz and Shotter, new social reality is evolving but it is not strategically constructed. Thus, as we

understand the situation, therapeutic interaction calls a double subject into being. The therapists and patients are not the only subjects of the therapeutic process. Therapeutic interaction creates a "therapeutic third", as described by Thomas Ogden and Jessica Benjamin (Ogden, 2014; Benjamin, 2017). This co-created therapeutic third is the real, *intersubjective and communal* subject of the therapeutic process. The concept contrasts with the individualized and win-oriented subject of the game theory of the 1950s and the systems–oriented family therapy of the era.

Katz and Shotter refer to the metaphor of a *new poetic picture* coined by the French architect and philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1994). In his book *Space of poetics,* he writes about the phenomenological imagination, which creates new mental images, new poetic pictures, that touch our souls and lead us to new worlds and terrains. The poetics of the soul are processed in a peaceful space free from interference by goal-oriented aspirations. The images that evolve are not rational, clear or conceptionally defined. Such images could only lead us to "alien habitations". Participation in the reflective team is communal, like going to an art exhibition. The team together with its clients stands before the artwork, it touches their hearts, and they allow their evolving poetic images to lead them to new terrains and landscapes (Sampolahti, 2020).

Thus, it seems to us, that reflective family therapy belongs to the frame of positive freedom. It represents the idea of positive liberty. Its aim is not to remove obstacles but to mend a broken social connection and reintegrate the experience that has been dispersed. According to this view, the goal of the game is not simply to win, and the purpose of any therapy is not simply symptom reduction. ~~From this standpoint, reducing symptoms is absolutely not the main goal~~. Instead, the aim is restructuring the community and living an authentic communal life. This brings us back to the idealism of Athens democracy, where so called good life always meant life as a member of community.

We think that systems–oriented family therapy can be understood in two ways. In its innermost realm is a rift that cannot be repaired. SOF has two faces, both of which must be considered if we are to grasp its totality. Neglecting one or another will only lead to distortion. As systems–oriented family therapists, we seek to enlarge and support human liberty, but in doing so we also submit ourselves to the incoherencies that stem from the dualistic philosophical underpinnings of this concept. It is the same conflict, that Anderson and Goolishian put so eloquently as a conflict between the interventive and non-interventive voices in therapies.

Open dialogue at Keropudas Hospital

Reflective family therapy and the Keropudas model were developed in close relationship with each other, although the Keropudas model has a longer history. Both therapeutic applications were topics in family therapy congresses in northern Scandinavia, among other contexts. They do not represent two separate therapeutic schools. Instead, they represent two highly original variants of the same basic approach to systems–oriented family therapy (although, it can be contested if they still represent SOF. It seems clear to us, anyway, that they have been evolving in systems–oriented tradition). In both variants reality is seen as socially constructed and both variants are distanced from medical, diagnostic and intervention-centered approaches to human suffering.

Both reflective family therapy and the Keropudas model have developed in the same direction. Interventiveness has diminished and dialogicality is being transformed into an existential view of human life and suffering. Being in dialogue is a recapitulative process, where isolated experiences are brought back into communal dialogue; back into human interconnectedness and brotherhood. As the psychoanalyst Robert Stolorow said about relational psychoanalysis, quoting Lawrence Vogel (1994):

We are only brothers and sisters in the same darkness. If we didn't understand this, we would be only technicians. (Stolorow, 2019)

Jaakko Seikkula pointed to the same human starting point when he interpreted healing dialogues as acts of love, not as a mode of treatment (Seikkula, 2020; Seikkula & Trimble, 2005). We conclude, that if systems–oriented family therapy is understood in this way, then it might be difficult to conceptualize it as an interventive practice, as simply another mode of treatment designed to remove obstacles, symptoms so to speak, to maximize Berlin's negative liberty.

The two liberties and treatment in human suffering: A practical consideration

Although, the divide between negative and positive liberty and between interventive and noninterventive interpretations of SOF is purely theoretical, we think that it is not without practical and clinical repercussions. Two recent academic dissertations have investigated patients' narratives of their sickness and care after participating in treatment programs based on one of the two understandings of human liberty. Tomi Bergström (2020) explored the dialogical and need-adaptive psychotherapy of psychosis in his thesis *Life after integrated and dialogical treatment of first-episode psychoses: long-term outcomes at the group and individual level*. Åsa Slåttes (2019) explored the narratives of anorectic patients after a more traditional treatment program in her thesis *Varför vård? Om anorexi, diagnose och moralisk förståelse (Why treatment? On anorexia, diagnoses and moral understanding)*. The patients in these two studies narrated their experiences in distinctively different ways. The patients receiving dialogical treatment did not dwell on their years of sickness or the treatment they received. Instead, they viewed their experience as a crisis in the communal flow of life that they had left behind. In contrast, for the patients who received the more traditional medical treatment, their illness was a central event in their life around which they were still organizing their lives today.

Of course, it is not possible to draw firm conclusions based on only two studies on very different groups of patients. However, we might, at least preliminarily, ask: Is it possible that the difference between the findings of the two studies is also partially due to the different treatments received by the participating patients? It might be that if illness is understood as a malfunction and disturbance, it leads patients to view their illness and treatment not as a part of constant flow of life but instead as factors that heavily mold and transform their ways of talking about themselves and their lives. Perhaps, we think, that this type of unintegration is one possible result of an interventive psychotherapeutic treatment, where the aim has been to control suffering in a rationalistic way without simultaneously taking the dialogic and communal dimension of psychic suffering into account. Of course, another question is whether the two treatment philosophies yield different results from the symptomatic point of view. This question, however, remains outside in the scope of this article.

On contemporary family therapy and its position

Above, we illustrated one line of development in systems–oriented family therapy that ended up far removed from attempts to conceptualize psychotherapies from the perspective of negative liberty. However, other voices, often stronger ones, have been criticizing this kind of understanding of SOF. For example, it has been suggested that we should give up family therapy as we know it today. Instead, it should be transformed into family interventions that emphasize effective symptom-reducing techniques tailored to specific syndromes and social problems (Josephson, 2008, 2015). We think that this approach is often, but not always, aligned with evidence-based medicine (EBM) The argument has usually been built on three premises:

1. Psychiatry and its social and economic environment have changed. Demands for special, effective evidence-based treatment methods have increased.

2. At least a few syndrome-specific treatment methods exist that are unanimously more effective than others.

3. Medicine and society should prioritize such treatment methods.

Our preliminary hypothesis is, that although the argument seems simple and one-layered, it can be argued for that something more lies below its surface. That something is an ideological tone that favors the implementation of negative liberty in the theory and practice of psychiatry. Research on the efficacy of family therapy has also strengthened the tendency to design interventive treatment technologies in family therapy that do not acknowledge its formative ideological starting point. It is for these reasons that broader historical and philosophical considerations are important. Our view is that without them it is impossible to notice the covert formatting powers that influence our ways of thinking. As we claimed earlier in this article: ~~its~~ ideological metaphors inevitably influence our thinking. For example, when Lev Vygotsky (1997) analyzed the conflictual situation of psychology in the beginning of the 20th century, he contended that concepts are not simple or innocent. On the contrary, words entail whole universes. Moreover, when we borrow foreign concepts, they penetrate our conceptual structures. Thus, it is inevitable that the analogues and metaphors that have been important and heuristic in systems–oriented family therapy are not only useful but also harmful. They are not only creative but also misleading. They interfere with SOF's project of developing as a unique branch of science, assuming our aim *is* to preserve the scientific status of systems–oriented family therapy. Metaphors and analogies can be indispensable tools in creating new and heuristic ways of understanding, even if therapists, who use different analogies, metaphors and figurative modes of thought, are not necessarily aware of their ideological nature and formative power. As Vygotsky (1997) declared: psychologists in the 1920s did not always understand that their ways of thought reflected the philosophical contradiction between introspective and causal psychologies.

The present situation in the systems–oriented therapies resemble that of psychology a hundred years ago. Today it is no longer the conflict between introspective and causal psychologies that is difficult to recognize, but as we see the present situation, the conflict between interventive and non-interventive meta-theories of SOF. It is the same dilemma that seems to stem philosophically from the conflict between negative and positive understandings of human liberty. Hence, we conclude, that theories of psychotherapies not only need creative metaphorical thinking and empirical research but also more rigorous conceptual work if we are to claim that our discipline has practical, critical, and scientific value.

Conclusion

We would sum up our stand as follows: first, ideological powers mold our thinking through metaphors and philosophical ideas even if we are not necessarily aware of this transforming activity. Second, it is not possible to rate some metaphors or views as good and others as bad. Systems–oriented family therapy itself is a result of a many-faceted molding process, and it cannot be purified from these influences. This is how, as an organic whole, SOF is constituted. But if we want to family therapy to be considered as a science, a part of science or an application of science, we should also be able explain why we have chosen to use certain concepts and how we interpret them. And third, viable systems–oriented family therapy and related research must acknowledge their philosophical underpinnings and try to understand how these have influenced both their theories and practice.

The rift between positive and negative liberty means that when we try to discuss SOF in its totality, we become distracted. The development of family therapy in recent decades illustrates this conflict. On the one hand it has been seeking its place in effectivity thinking and economic considerations, in line with the view of negative liberty, while on the other hand it has continued the tradition

stemming from Bateson, in line with the idea of positive liberty. Thus, both the idea of negative and the idea of positive liberty have played a role in the development of our discipline. Systems– oriented family therapy shares the same conflict, which lies in the depths of our thinking, as human liberty. SOF is an activity that reaches out to enlarge and deepen human freedom – in both meanings of the concept. The postmodern turn in family therapy can been seen as a linguistic turn or as an embodiment of social constructionism. But it can also be conceived as a process in which the conflictual idea of positive and negative liberty has been transformed systems–oriented family therapy as both practice and theory. We feel that it is not so that the ideas of negative and positive liberty have been molding our discipline. We have been suggesting instead that the divide between these two basic views has been doing it.

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