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## Strong Seeds in a Fruitful Soil, yes, and<sup>1</sup> New Lights in Psychology

*“The soul is not physical, the soul is not meta-physical. It’s exists in a different way – it’s alive.”* (Vesna Ognjenovic, during the workshop)

I have been in Kulasi, near Banja Luka, Republika Serbska (Bosnia Herzegovina), together with my colleague, and friend, Elisabeth Clausen, to meet and work together with about 60 psychologists/teachers from this area, where there has been a war not so very long ago, and where nowadays the land is divided by a border (between Jugoslavia and BiH). Three people came from New York<sup>2</sup>, Lois Holzman, Karen Steinberg, Stanka Nestorovic. One person, Ulla Nerenst came, like us, from Denmark, but she has been living in Beograd for the last three years, working “in the field” for Danish Red Cross, supporting programs for schools (teachers and children and parents), together with some of the people from Zdravo da Ste<sup>3</sup> (Hi Neighbour), who had organised this meeting at Kulasi, now for the second time.

What did we meet in Kulasi? *Yes, and:* What did we learn? *Yes, and* how did we complete? *Yes, and* how did we not complete, yet? *Yes, and* how do we go on working together? These are the questions I will try to answer in this paper<sup>4</sup>.

Why Elisabeth and I appeared at Kulasi? *Yes*, the story is that we met Jovan Savic and Vesna Ognjenovic from Banja Luka and Beograd, both founders of Zdravo da Ste, in New York, earlier this year, where East Side Institute (ESI) held a wonderful conference “New Partnerships for a New Millennium”, where more than 600 psychologists, fund-raisers, artists and political activists gathered together. Vesna, Jovan and the two of us had participated in a “Social Therapy”-workshop, and while we were talking together in a lunch break, we started getting the idea that we should come to Kulasi later this year. I had been in New York for the second time, first time was at the “Unscientific Psychology”-Conference in 1997 (see Holzman & Morss, 2000), where I started to get to know these *revolutionary* readings of Vygotsky and Wittgenstein, by Holzman/Newman (see Newman/Holzman, 1993, 1996, 1997, Holzman, 1997, 1999), and where I met many similar, resembling and interesting “postmodern” approaches/people (e.g. Parker, 1998, 1999, Gergen, 1994, 1999, 2001, McNamee & Gergen, 1999, Shotter, 1993a+b, Burman, 1995, Morss, 1996), who

participated in the conference. Coming from Denmark<sup>5</sup> where although we read both Russian and Anglo-American theories do not practice revolutionary activity very much, and where academics in psychology are afraid of using the term “post-modern”, I have felt an affinity with these alternative readings of Vygotsky, Marx and Wittgenstein. So we were very curious about what to meet, to find, to see, to experience, to learn – coming to Kulasi, being together with Zdravo da Ste.

### ***What did we meet in Kulasi?***

*“The human capacity to perform, that is to be both who we are and who we are not at the very same time, is central to our practice. Performance is, we have come to believe, the revolutionary activity by which human beings create their lives (develop) – qualitatively transforming and continuously reshaping the unity that is us-and-our-environment.” (Holzman, L., 2000:82)*

We met energy, a desire to say hello to strangers, a warmth given to us by our hosts that was wonderful, powerful, *yes and* developing, for us, and the group we were experiencing being a part of.

Coming to Kulasi, being and working together with these psychologists from Zdravo da Ste expanded the meaning, I so far have had “about” performing a “head taller than you are”, “about” creating ZPD’s<sup>6</sup>, about creating a new emotionality.

Zdravo da Ste has existed since 1992, and their meetings with East Side Institute looks as a very fruitful support in, what Zdravo da Ste was/is very good at practicing. They try to find “new ways in psychology”, inspired by Vygotsky, and since 1996, the writings/practice<sup>7</sup> of Holzman/Newman. The key ideas are that we have to build a psychology, which does not distance itself from its subject, which is human life activity. That means that we cannot study our own activities, by looking at them through some a priori theoretical “glasses”. We have to act, together, we have to create (the meaning of) the moments we are in, together. We have to connect the histories we have lived (we are) with the history we are creating (we are becoming), in the here-and-now-activity, thereby creating a new form of life.

In this three days in Kulasi I have played like a child, again, - we have created wonderful performances, we danced, talked, sang, cried, painted together. The people from Zdravo da Ste showed, in their activities, a great understanding of what it means to show “respect”, what it means to “complete” each others contributions instead of negating them, and how such completion builds something, which is more than the sum of the groups elements.

So for me it looks like, that these psychologists from Zdravo da Ste have made the “seeds” from Gomel, Vygotskys hometown, and the “seeds” from New York, East Side Institute, grow. *Yes, and* it looks for me, that the soil, here in Kulasi, in Banja Luka and Beograd seems to be much more fruitful than we can imagine. It looks like their tree already has spread its own fruits, - and that there are growing small trees and bushes everywhere, where Zdravo da Ste walks.

How the trees spread their seeds? *Yes, and* Zdravo da Ste works with schools, that is they do workshops first with the teachers, short after that (and together with the teachers) with all the children, and last not least the parents.

How they work? *Yes, and* the way of working with schools and teachers/pupils/parents has similarities with what we did here, in Kulasi. The psychologists and social workers from Zdravo da Ste try to facilitate an environment, where the teachers/kids learn to trust, to feel safe, where they slowly begin to re-establish their abilities to play, to tell stories about their experiences, to dare to start dreaming about a future.

How they facilitate a developmental environment? *Yes, and* the way of working with a school, with the children and the adults, is done in a very careful way. The psychologist/social worker does not act as a knowing expert, who with the “right” diagnosis can direct the “right” cure. They try not to differentiate, that is they do not try to divide the groups they work with into individuals with special needs and wounds. They try to see the people they work with as a group. The intentions of Zdravo da Ste’s inquiry is to facilitate, to re-establish peoples capacity to help each other, to give joy to the ones who feel hurt.

How they do that? By facilitating small plays, where building a “magic circle”, where everybody feels safe to contribute, is the main point, established through activities like building stories, painting pictures, singing songs – together, thereby creating a circle, which is able to take care of it’s members.

What is their method? I will call it a historical-materialistic-dialectical search for a groups “tomorrow”, which is a very careful way of re-constructing life-space, and thereby the groups consciousness, morality and their dreams.

I feel, that the trees I imagined at Kulasi were even more powerful than the ones we try to keep alive in Denmark and New York City and the rest of the rich Western society.

What gives me that impression? That is kind of difficult to explain, but my feeling about “Social Therapy” in the United States (or systemic family-therapy and – supervision, I used to work with) compared with what we did in Kulasi includes a difference, even though there are mostly family resemblances between the two activities. The rules are the same: building the group, completing/not negating, creating *plays with language*<sup>8</sup>, not doing diagnosis, not focusing on the individual and/or a target-group, but on the activities of the whole group, experienced as an unit, which is not be divided or reduced.

The difference was the real-ness, the whole-ness by which people participated in the creation of the situation/the group. It was not only conversations with words coming out of our mouths. Language was transformed, completed by bodily expressions, non-verbal communications, which made our dialogue, our creation of a ZPD even more human, even more social. The difference is that Zdravo da Ste communicates in a more “warm” (emotional) way, where the conversations in a Social Therapy group could be experienced as a more “cold” (cognitive) way<sup>9</sup>.

*Yes, and* we made jokes, and fun, and joy, and we laughed a lot. *Yes, and* we worked with loss, pain – the war. *Yes, and* I did not experience the creativity and playfulness as a “defence” against memories from the “dark”. *Yes, and* creativity always ended our conversations, our performances “about” troublesome issues, - taking each others hands, creating a circle – and giving strength, and warmth and hope into the group. So, for me, it was much more than completing thoughts/words. It was completing life activity, - completing even small non-verbal, but social, dreams in a continuing and creative process, practiced as joint-activity as it constantly evolved by often lovingly performed contributions by the members of the group.

*Yes, and* what I mean is: we were not only connected as formal adults, as psychologists or as professionals to each other, but we did, sometimes just for a second, connect in a more magic way as whole persons, as whole souls, as whole, but “naked” social beings – on mother earth.

I mention “mother earth”, because sometimes post-modern psychology gets mixed up with relativism. *Yes, and* Marx, and Vygotsky following him, did “know” that even if we human beings can create our culture and thereby the meaning of who we are, we are nature, that is: we are biological, at the same time personal, at the time social. And even if the higher functions are social and organising all other levels, the biological and personal levels are the necessary constituents of al life activity (Leontjev, 1979, Katzenelson, 1989). Human life, the life-space (Lewin, 1935, 1951, here from: Madsen, B. 2000), is the meeting of nature (fylogenesis) and culture (socio- and ontogenesis). Human culture, our need to collaborate with other human

beings, our need for love, companion- and friendship, our capacity to create “ZPD’s” is the cultural-natural component, which is its own *casa sui*.

In other words: we are born as human beings who can develop while they are playing/creating/performing with one another. We are born to do “social construction” together, *yes, and* a “drive” to joint-construct with one another is already written into our souls, as needs we share with all other human beings. Our cultures, our social constructions, have to be in harmony, in peace with not only “mother nature”, our planet and the solar system, but also with our nature, which is that we are born to be social beings. We are constructed, *yes, and* this construction has been going on now for about 4 million years (Jaynes, 1976, Katzenelson, 1989). This article is not the place to go with this argumentation, but I hope to continue this dialogue another time – perhaps with you, reading these lines?<sup>10</sup>

And here I felt that the activities in Kulasi, and the eyes of the children I saw at a school, which had trained with Zdravo da Ste, showed that their activities, like e.g. building the “magic circle”, did come in contact with parts of our “souls”, that are deep, deep – down at the bottom of our life, where we are like naked, where we are pure but social beings<sup>11</sup>, where we “understood” emotionally (non-verbal), perhaps more than our understanding (and later on our confusion, too) was cognitive (verbal)<sup>12</sup>.

Zdravo da Ste has learned to create hope during the dark years, when their country was the “scene” of a war (or two). In situations where no light could be seen, they experienced that the only thing to do was to create, to perform new forms of life with the people, who were/are (left). Clinical Psychology<sup>13</sup> seemed in these dark years not to offer the tools needed, because nobody wanted to measure “pain” and “traumatic disorder”. Because that was/is not the problem, the problem was/is not individual, but shared with all other citizens around, young and old ones, poor and rich, sick and physically healthy. And diagnoses and other inquiries like that would actually create more problems by dividing people into separated groups of harmed a little, harmed a lot, and traumatized. Instead of trying to give help to individual persons they help people around to be able to help themselves as a group, as a community, as a democratic society. Thoughts that you can find again in a paper about a Danish Red Cross psychosocial program for schoolchildren (who works partly together with Zdravo da Ste):

*“Being with children with similar experiences and backgrounds gives the child a possibility for developing a more positive self-image, as this might make it clear that the individual child's reaction is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. Working with groups of children might therefore diminish the child's feeling of isolation, increase social competence and strengthen relationships. The dynamic in the group generates new recourses and*

*possibility for development. Further more the individual suffering should not be privatized within therapies but should be seen in as part of the social, political and cultural context. ...Working with undivided groups of children: It is necessary to emphasize the importance of not segregating these vulnerable children; on the contrary their integration with other children is part of the healing process, of re-establishing their networks, and of reconciliation. (Nerenst, 2000:2)*

The problem was/is that life space and history were destroyed and loved ones were killed. In these days the members of Zdravo da Ste realised that in such times of hopelessness, the only solution was that everybody tried to contribute to the development/growth of the group, with large engagement from “deep down in their hearts”, because they had nothing else to offer, because they consciously decided to work in a not-knowing (not an expert) way (see Newman & Holzman, 1997) of helping, because they decided to meet people with nothing else than: “*Please, would you play (sing/dance/clap) with me*”.

These “findings”, it seems to me, have similarity not only with Vygotskys words, but also to his life. He, too, tried to build a new method for a new Science, Psychology, in the middle and after a war, where children and others were the visible proof for the fact, that there were/is a need for *new ways in psychology*<sup>14</sup> – if we shall help people and ourselves to create growth and development, and not disaster.

### **Yes, and: *What did we learn?***

*“... Ich werde das Ganze: der Sprache und der Tätigkeiten, mit denen sie erworben ist, das „Sprachspiel“ nennen. ...Und eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorzustellen. ... Das Wort „Sprachspiel“ soll hier hervorheben, daß das Sprechen ein Teil ist einer Tätigkeit, oder einer Lebensform. ... Alle Erklärung muß fort, und nur Beschreibung an ihre Stelle treten. (Wittgenstein, 1949.§7;§19; §23; §109)*

Wittgenstein, and when Newman/Holzman (1996, 1997), and Gergen (1994, 1999), Shotter (2000) and other postmodern psychologists write about him, use(d) the term „language-games“ and „forms of life“ simultaneously. Trying to understand that “language-games” can be “about” nothing, that words are not “about”, but that the using of words in a joint-activity (Shotter, 1993) is simply the creation of our life, has always sounded nice in my ears, but at the same time it was still kind of difficult to understand. In my first draft of this article I used “language-games” in different ways and simultaneously, thereby confusing the meaning of the term. In the following, when I use the term “language-games”, I mean forms of life, ways of communicating,

which is what a language is made of, that is thousands of small local language-games, where the words get their meaning while/because they are used. I will use the term “plays with language”, when I describe various ways of working together. A “play with language” is e.g. when we send words or sentences around in the circle, or when ESI does Social Therapy. But “plays with language” are not the same as “language-games”. I think that doing “plays with language” can make us conscious about the “language-games”, we usually are part of, or they can show us, that playing, performing, and here “plays with language” can create new connections between people, new relations between friends and that these plays can expand our potentialities. Meeting this people and friends again and again, where we “play with language”, can create a new form for life, a new “language-game”<sup>15</sup>, a new language. Yes, and in Kulasi I experienced how a group of people were able to create “plays with language”, plays that made it possible to create moments where the group as a group develops while participants in the group are contributing, thereby themselves growing. A process, an activity where something appears, which has not been visible and which has not been in the room/group/situation before. Is this that something, hermeneutics and Gestalt-psychologists have talked about, when they say: *The whole is more than the addition of its parts?* Or maybe best understood when thinking of Vygotskys talk about unity, the dialectical unity of meaning-making, the dialectical unity of being and becoming? (Maybe best “understood/explained” in Newman/Holzman, 1993)

One of the reasons, I believe, that our “plays with language” worked was that we were able to use language not as representational, as explanations, but as a common, “joint-activity” (Shotter, 1993b) where we described what we were doing while we were doing it. It was even possible to experience that “plays with language” can be played without words, that meaning-making is possible while you are painting, dancing and singing<sup>16</sup>. “Plays with language” can be played with our hands, touching each other when situations “cry” for more bodily expressions of communality, can be played while you are at dinner, can be played while you are *only* talking with your eyes.

I do not know if my experience is strange (in a transforming way), because I was participating in this workshop with a foreign, though nicely translated<sup>17</sup>, language. Or if this being sometimes seconds before or after the other participants dialogue, who were talking their “own” language, gave me a meta-perspective, where it was possible for me to catch, while playing “plays with language”, what language-games are about? Or is the reason, that these 60 people have been practicing “plays with language” for quite some time now (since 1992), that means, that they were very good in practicing “plays with language” and “building the group”, and thus I therefore felt kind of transforming in relation of my understanding what “building

forms of life” are about? These four days with many inspirations of what to do in the beginning of and during a building (a group) process, was a very big step for me as a psychologist and as the person I am. What we did together was revolutionary activity which means that we sometimes “ended” where we in the “beginning” never thought we would “end” – very nice knowing, even if we do not like “to practice to know” while we practice, that “*Life is not somewhere else; life is where we are. There is no end*” (Ognjenovic, 2000:212). The next and future times I will work with children, students and others I will try to implement “the magic circle”, the “plays of language”, I learned in Kulasi (and read about in Newman/Holzman’s books), in to my own work, in to my own way of meeting “the other”.

Sitting in Denmark, remembering these four days in Kulasi, I feel, I miss this group of people with that incredible amount of positive energy I have seldom met before. Living in the desert, emotionally and professionally speaking, here in “rich and alienated Europe”, I feel that Zdravo da Ste is building a community in their own country/ies, which can have importance also for others, that means I hope Zdravo da Ste will write about their manifold activities, so people other places in the world, fighting “alienation”, can learn and grow because of Zdravo da Ste giving them a(n) reason/example, that makes it possible to create hope and joy in both dark and more friendly times. I believe psychologists and schoolteachers all over the world could benefit by hearing more about this wonderful organisation. Psychology as a science is in need of voices, which can show “New Ways in Psychology”. Most of the participants of Zdravo da Ste are educated in traditional psychology, and if they articulate their reasons for not finding traditional, clinical psychology useful in situations like they have been in, it would be, I believe, a scientifically fruitful contribution into a direction of bringing psychology back to the peoples’ needs, not only here, but other places in the world. Because choosing postmodern directions here in former Yugoslavia/Yugoslavia, is not a fancy “trend” as it could be seen in the US or in Denmark, but was/is simply a way to survive.

The soul, or the “psyche” is not the brain, or in the brain, which is what modern psychology in these days tries to make us, and the populations, believe. *Yes, and* in Kulasi we learned that the human “psyche” is created and re-created through human life activities, through joint-action, through human interaction/transformation.

So the completion goes on. This book is fortunately the first step. Europe, the continent is in need for voices of psychology, which are not born to speak English/American. 90 % of all psychological literature in the world is “made in USA”. The work, the activities I learned about in Kulasi (you are reading about here, in this book) cast a light on a not very illuminated science here on the continent, where voices that had something to tell, directions to show, are very seldom heard, since

World War II, where many psychologists left Europe. Perhaps it is continuing the often misinterpreted Wundt, who already 1913 asked for: “*Folk-Psychology, that is the real psychology, [which] is a cultural, social, historical and moral science, that has room for culturally based, holistic perspectives on/about human life, issues the experimental psychology not (could) work(ed) with*” (Katzenelson, 2000:336, my translation).

### **Yes, and how did we complete?**

*„Completion is among Vygotsky’s most revolutionary – and postmodern – concepts. ... Vygotsky posits that thinking/speaking are the dialectical unity in which speaking completes thinking: “The structure of speech is not a simple mirror image of the structure of the thought. ... Thought is restructured as it is transformed into speech. It is not expressed but completed in the word” (Vygotsky, 1987, p.251) (Newman/Holzman, 1993:101)*

Completion is one of these words, which is so beautiful to learn to understand, and I feel it is what we did, especially that Saturday and into the night, when we were able to complete each other’s contributions, even about matters of loss and pain. Completion it was when we were able to follow each other’s expressions, when our active listening as a group completed the speech of the contributor. *Yes, and* such a process of building a better reality to be in, to become in, is the key for growth, all the psychologists and Elisabeth and I, will try to take with them/us home, to that little office, to that little school, that shall get inspired by a joyful psychologist, who just has been in Kulasi (again), - to be a child, to drink the water of life, which is what the completion (here the coming together, and working together) does mean.

It seems to me that these days, where Zdravo da Ste met/meet, are a kind of “Gasoline-station” for all the different members, where it is possible to “fill up” with new fuel that can give energy in the days, and weeks, and months to come, where playing and creating and completing is not - as naturally as in Kulasi - part of the groups one works with. For the psychologists, social workers and teachers of Zdravo da Ste it is not always easy to navigate in their work with governmental people in charge, with e.g. Danish Red Cross program CABAC<sup>18</sup> (Children Affected by armed Conflict), where it is important to be not too revolutionary, because words like “postmodern, revolutionary, socialism” and others like that could mean that the people in charge, or the organisations contributing with financial support, could get “cold feet”. It is important to show that this work inspired by Vygotsky and others is a way to go further *with* the science of psychology, *with* the work of helping people in need, *with* and through already established systems - it is not by saying no to the

institutions in a society, which is in its re-construction. Ulla Nerenst (2000:1) does express it like this:

*“The school is an important institution in most children's lives, with its well known structures. In conflict and post-conflict areas it becomes of particular importance that the school system is functioning. During a time where the community is negatively influenced by chaos and instability, the school can represent continuity and stability in a child's life, as this is a relatively secure and known place to be. In this respect one might view the school as a counterbalance to the war and its consequences.”*

So I experience that the “culture” here in the former Yugoslavia could be in a need of expressing the words, we do call “unscientific” (Newman/Holzman, 1996) in the USA, something else. And here Vygotsky is a very good help, because he wanted, with his thoughts and writings, to bring us closer to a science of psychology we could be proud of. One more reason I see, why it could be the right time that Zdravo da Ste starts writing, in English, about their work, their view of seeing themselves as part of “them”, who want to go new ways in psychology.

Psychology is a science *yes, and* perhaps always it will be a science becoming a science. Human beings are always becoming, therefore, a science about human beings and their psyche has to “be there”, in life-space, if it wants to keep going on performing being a science about human beings. That is beautiful, because there will be constantly something new to study. *Yes, and* it is beautiful, because it will always be about family resemblance and difference at the same time. What an amazing world.

### **Yes, and, how did we not complete, yet?**

*„Denke auch daran, wie man das Gesicht eines Menschen nachahmen kann, ohne das eigene dabei im Spiegel zu sehen. ... .. Wenn Einer in der Hand Schmerzen hat, so sagt's die Hand nicht (...), und man spricht nicht der Hand Trost zu, sondern dem Leidenden; man sieht ihm in die Augen.“ (Wittgenstein, 1949, § 285; 286)*

But aren't the trees growing into the heaven? By that I think about Sunday, where we experienced that the completing-process was somehow disturbed. Some people were unhappy, some were angry, some where confused. What was happening, that Sunday afternoon where we, while trying to build a learning environment, suddenly experienced misunderstanding, hurt feelings and other disturbing emotions take place?

I do not know? But I would like to share my thoughts about it, in this article about the four days in Kulasi, with a hope to help to complete<sup>19</sup>, and not to give someone the

feeling of being hurt by my words. My intention with this article is to learn, and to write about what I learned.

My impression is that Zdravo da Ste has grown as a group, as a group who “knows” how to do revolutionary activity. *Yes, and* therefore it felt kind of strange, that Sunday became the day, where Zdravo da Ste seemed to have a tremendous need for working out, on their own, how they themselves want to work, with pain, suffering, and issues they themselves want to define how and when they feel ready for, while the people from ESI wanted (were asked to) introduce some of their methods?

Our three friends from New York tried to “give”, *yes, and* the group in Kulasi was, in my eyes, in their “zone for proximal development”, where there was not very much room for not leading the process, not creating the tools-and-results by themselves. I do not know, do not want to criticise, but I do not believe it had something to do with not being able to talk about painfulness. It was a kind of Babylonian experience, where the words were sounding strange and where nobody seemed to understand, but where everybody misinterpreted the meaning of each other’s expressions.

In this situation, which somehow felt emotionally disturbing, some members remembered how they work, “in the field”, when things look hopeless. They started the “magic circle”, that is they acted, in a funny, in a singing, in a clapping way, thereby getting others to join, and thereby creating a new reality, the “magic circle”, where the dream of peace and harmony is the healing factor. One can say, that they did not discuss or tried to explain what happened, but they did succeed, in the moments the “magic circle” was intact, changing the subject that is they succeeded in re-constructing safety and security in the group. Most of the people in Kulasi joined this circle, that Sunday afternoon.

So, confusion and frustration found it’s way in to the experience we all had about what happened. The setting, the three people from ESI “in charge” of the workshop, *yes, and* most of us not recognising that the ongoing “play with language”, but not our relations, went in a kind of wrong direction, gave me/us a strange experience.

It felt like they, the people from Zdravo da Ste (and Elisabeth and I tried to be it, too), were the teenagers, who did not like that the parents (our friends from ESI) lead the play. And perhaps *the parents* sometimes forgot that they themselves could stop being “in charge”, and be/become a child again, while the group was stamping, jumping and singing?

Is it about the difference of working with “cold” (cognitive) or “warm” (emotional, conative) ways of expressing, while saying the same words? Is it that our American friends choose not to get emotional involved, when playing “plays with language”,

because they see life and forms of life as plays, too?<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the words, the characters in a “play with language”, here social therapy, are not meant to be hurting a certain person, a certain group, when our friends from ESI do social therapy. They want to change epistemology, that is, they want to give people a chance to develop by changing their way of understanding language.

The situation, living in the USA, living in Republic Serbska, Yugoslavia or Denmark, is quiet different. Therefore attitudes, ways of talking, kissing/not kissing, shaking hands and joking are “acted out” in different ways. “Luck”, “happiness” and “joy” can mean something different, and therefore the “help” one is able to give in the USA is different than what we would do in Denmark or here around Kulasi. But it would be wrong to judge different roads to “development”, because the realities, where these roads should lead to, are quiet different. USA is a tough and “cold” business country, Yugoslavia is a wild and sometimes too wild “warm” country and Denmark is like a half-warm cup of tee, somewhere between cold and hot. Therefore our attitudes when doing “building the circle” have to meet the people where they are, and they can therefore be experienced as “strange”, when used in a different context. What an opportunity to learn, for all of us involved! Because we know that nobody wanted to hurt with intention. *Yes, and* misunderstandings, even if they are not meant to be, can hurt. *Yes, and* it helps though knowing that feeling hurt can be de- and re-constructed by changing our own understanding about the misunderstanding.

Zdravo da Ste works, as far as I can see, in a different way. They smile, they play, they feel, they “play with language”; long time before they start conversations about e.g. hurting issues. The pain is shared, but the sharing is practiced in a more warm, non-verbal and emotional way.

So, for me, it looks like the confusion, that Sunday, shows us, that we, who live in different places in the world, live different “forms of life”, that is we use words, or we do not use words at different occasions, in a different way.

There are many ways one could try to explain why what happened.<sup>21</sup> But, as Wittgenstein said, all explaining has to vanish and to give place to just and simple describing. For me it looks more and more like the confusion, which resulted in hurt feelings and frustrations among the participants of the workshop had to do with misunderstanding, with understanding something different when saying a word or a sentence.

What was happening? What was the confusion about? Let med describe: the three people from ESI wanted to show the workshop participants how to practice “social therapy”, which is one of the ways ESI works with groups of people, at home in the

USA. This form for therapy is actually a non-therapy, or anti-therapy, where not one person, or problem, is in the centre of a session, but where it is always the activity of the whole group, which is the subject for an intervention by the social therapist. They see, as far as I can tell (see Newman/Holzman, 1993, 1996, 1997), the activity of a social therapy group as a play at a theatre. The social therapist acts not as an expert in psychological matters, but more (like) a play-director. The goal of this often few interventions during a session is to correct the whole groups performance, in to a, for the group more developmental way of performing, as a group.

But this message, that the “play” was not about something, or one person’s destiny, got never clear for the participants of the workshop. And that one of the three people from ESI is a person, who left Yugoslavia 1992 (she had left the country in the middle of the war<sup>22</sup>), started the session by being in focus, made the understanding of what we actually were trying to play with, even more confusing. The intentions of the play, practicing Social Therapy, were mixed up, were not clearly introduced that day, and were unfortunately mixed up with memories, nobody had asked for to be blamed for – even if nobody wanted to blame. But it was, like I said before, a Babylonian experience, that is that the words one said were often not the words the “other” heard. A situation we in a postmodern world have to get used to, therefore I hope and believe that misunderstandings between friends have the potentiality for development, that will lead to an invitation to look critical on ourselves and each other in a mutual relationship.

This Sunday can be seen as a kind of paradox.

*“Was ist ein philosophisches Problem: Ich kenne mich nicht aus“*, says Wittgenstein (§123), somewhere in his philosophical investigations.

ESI has written thousands of words about not distancing themselves from the subject they study/work with. Anyway it felt this afternoon as if there was a distance, i.e. there were different worlds in the world, which sounded and were heard as different tunes in the same room, at the same time – and not all the time “in tune”. The tune that for one person was “just a reflection” was for another person something that touched, which went deep down, inside.

Because of this “out of tune”-experiences strange things seemed to happen in some peoples’ eyes, while others still could take it easy. Others, like me, like to see the learning capacity of this paradoxically situation.

I have tried to describe some of the most important issues, where I find Zdravo da Ste and ESI have a lot in common, and some of the issues, where I mean to see important differences. *Yes, and* both roads I feel are fine roads toward creating developmental

environments in the present and future worlds, - no question about that. This collection of similarities and differences is not at all sufficient, but nothing than a first attempt to paint a picture about this two wonderful organisations and their relations.

Both movements/communities/approaches are very important for people, who suffer, in the countries these movements live in. Both represent a fresh, new look on psychology and the way we as psychologists meet (or not meet) peoples need. They do not use diagnosis; they try not to create a distance between the educated “helper” and the people in need. It is more about giving groups of people back their own capacity to heal wounds, to create life and joy. They are both inspired by Vygotskys writings, and they both participate in a worldwide dialogue with “postmodern” psychologists, and others, who share a critical attitude toward mainstream positivist psychology.

Are there differences? Yes, as far as I can see are there some differences, some of them I have talked about a bit in this article, when talking about misunderstanding because of each other being used to be part of a different social/societal environment. The difference is not very visible, when we compare what both approaches write and say about working with groups in need. The difference is caused by that the two movements do live and work in different surroundings, where meaning, fun, love and happiness are socially constructed, and therefore societal constructed different.

Playing, playfulness, joking, performance means something else for a mother of three kids, or a, during the war fired, headmaster of a school, than for a feminist adult woman, living on Manhattan, where life demands different things, different activities, different emotions for to survive. Language, written and talked, seems to be poor, when two cultures try to learn, during a misunderstanding, from each other. The differences between Zdravo da Ste and ESI and us from Denmark are cultural differences. Our meetings in Kulasi, in New York are showing that we wish to meet, wish to grow and learn together, thereby perhaps creating “plays of language”, which can lead us to new ways of meeting one another, even if we are different.

The confusion, we experienced, can be seen as our common “relational responsibility” (McNamee/Gergen, 1999), that we can build on. Many issues we can work with, which are about that we, while we succeed in what we are doing, can remember that we haven’t found the key, though we do know how to do revolutionary activity, at least sometimes. The tools (-and-results) of tomorrow are not created yet. We can try to build them by continuing an ongoing dialogue, *about* our new ways to psychology, and *about* the human life as/while it is lived and practiced.

## **Yes, and how do we go on working together?**

“You must bear in mind that language-game is so to say something unpredictable. I mean: it is not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there – like our life” (Wittgenstein, 1969, nr. 559)

So the question is: How will learning, growing and completion go on – now the days of our Spring-gathering in Kulasi are our history? Some conversations are going on, some will, we all hope, never end.

Friendships and partnerships do grow, and often they grow strong while experiencing crisis and misunderstanding. The need to go on – being in contact, keeping the conversations alive is, I believe, this “practicing the method”, Vygotsky in his writings is talking about.

Zdravo da Ste has grown up. New forms of partnerships will evolve; old friendships will stay alive, but change. This group’s “inner speech”, this group’s conversations with other people/groups in New York, in Denmark and many other places, I do believe, can make us all grow. Therefore I do hope that the book this article is part of will be seen as a first step into the direction of creating “*New Ways & New Partnerships in Psychology*”. I think psychology is in a strong need for new stories, for new histories about how to create joy, fun and forms of life, even if the world around us, sometimes, feels completely “alienated”.

*Yes, and* the eyes of the children who have met Zdravo da Ste know how to smile, again.

PS. I would like to thank stud. psych. *Emilie Baggesen*, The Danish University of Education; *Elisabeth Clausen*, Jydsk Highschool for Education; *Lois Holzman*, East Side Institute; *Jørgen Lyhne*, The Danish University of Education, *Ashley Mulford*, musician and songwriter; *Ulla Nerents*, Danish Red Cross; *Vesna Ogjenovic*, Zdravo da Ste and *Jovan Savic*, Zdravo da Ste for reading and making comments on earlier drafts of this article.

A very special thank to *Lois Holzman*, *Vesna Ogjenovic* and *Jovan Savic* for supporting me as a young psychologist, and for making the world a better place to be in.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Yes, and*: In a workshop, where we tried to learn to complete, not to compete, by building on each others contributions (sentences), did we use the words *yes, and* at the beginning of each contribution, thereby trying to avoid words like *but*.

<sup>2</sup> They come from East Side Institute for Short Term Psychotherapy (ESI), near Greenwich Village, in New York. They do “social therapy”, performance, theatre, talent shows with/for inner city kids, and much more, defining themselves as “postmodern” alternative to mainstream scientific psychology, as a “revolutionary movement” creating “Zone for proximal development”, (see note 6) where people can grow as a group, where people can develop “beyond” who they are. ESI does a wonderful work for and with “Inner City Kids”, minorities and much more. Some of their best known activities is “All Stars Talent Network Show”, “Social Therapy”, “Performance of a Lifetime”. They had been in contact with Zdravo da Ste, as far as I can see, since 1996, where they met at the 100-year-celebration-conference for Vygotsky (and Piaget?), held in Geneva. Since then some members of Zdravo da Ste have visited ESI, and ESI has been in Kulasi three years ago. (see: <http://www.eastsideinstitute.org>)

<sup>3</sup> The organisation started in the beginning of the war, 1992, to organize, or to re-organise how to help children and adults, who suffered by the circumstances, they often did not had the opportunity to change. Their primary focus is to help schools to find new ways of working with the children and their parents, by initiating creative growth activities with help of art, music, dances and “language-games”, thereby teaching teachers and children to learn, and last not least, to enjoy life, again.

<sup>4</sup> This article is somewhere between theory and praxis, is somewhere between being an essay and/or a personal letter. My English is my third language –therefore some ideas/thoughts/meanings are expressed in between the lines. I hope you will “catch” them in spite of my not very good English.

<sup>5</sup> Here in Denmark there is a big difference, between the clinical psychology practiced in the “health-system” (which is mostly cognitive therapy in cooperation with medicinal treatment) and the academic psychology, practiced and presented at the university. Academic psychology has been/is, at least theoretically, revolutionary in that sense that the universities in Denmark have given space to a lot of different approaches: both to the ones doing empirical laboratory research, and to the many researchers, who see psychology as a humanistic and/or socio-cultural enterprise, the part of psychology Wundt (1913) called “Völkerpsychologie”. In Danish Psychology does “general psychology” play an important role, trying to define and describe what the “human psyche” is, thereby defining the subject of our science. (see Katzenelson, 1994b, 2000, Engelsted et al., 1989, 1993). The only, but very active researcher in Denmark, who writes about postmodernism and psychology, is Professor Steinar Kvale (1992, 1996, 2001) from the Psychology Department at Aarhus University, where he although is the director of the “Centre for qualitative method development”.

<sup>6</sup> ZPD that does mean “Zones for proximal development”, a term Vygotsky (1982) has given name to. It is about the learners tomorrow, it is that what one can do today together with a more experienced person, and tomorrow can do alone. The zone is an environment, where the social surrounding supports the learners activities as someone, who is becoming the one who she/he is not (yet). (nicely explained in Newman/Holzman, 1993, Holzman, 1997)

<sup>7</sup> My colleague, Jørgen Lyhne, said to me after reading my first draft, that he disliked my use of / between two terms/words/expressions. I choose to do that very often, in this article. And I ask the reader to understand it in a postmodern way that is *there is always more than just one way of reading a sentence*. Here in the case of saying Newman/Holzman do both write and practice the meaning of / is a dialectical one, thereby saying that writing and practicing are both important, and that this two are in the case of Newman/Holzman in a successful dialectical relationship.

<sup>8</sup> I say “plays with language” instead of “language-games”, because I want to use the term “plays with language” for these activities, we plaid together, where “language-games” will be used while I talk about Wittgenstein’s definition of, what language is. I will later in this article talk more about how I choose to understand the term “language-games”.

<sup>9</sup> In a email-conversation with Lois Holzman about this article she expresses: “*In our efforts, we work to help create environments that support development. A by-product of that might be feeling close but that is not our objective. It's a wonderful objective -- it's just not ours. I'm wondering if for you development and feelings of closeness are more connected than they are for me*”. What I mean with cold (=cognitive) is, that I see ESI doing therapy without necessarily “touching” each other, that is they make conversations “about” emotional expressions without getting emotionally involved in the other. Emotional expressions are “just” lines in a play, which is, as I understand it, what Social Therapy is about. The meaning of *Playing with language* (doing Social Therapy) can be to learn that language games are “worlds”, where the words do not have to have a representational meaning. To discuss this issue more could be very interesting, and I will later in this article try to discuss the differences between Zdravo da Ste, ESI and my views some more. But a more deep discussion about if therapies and other forms for inquiries have to be “warm” and/or “cold” I hope to be part of some later time. ESI does though some activities, which are warmer; especially “performance of a lifetime” is a form of working with people, where bodily expressions have a great part in it.

<sup>10</sup> The benefits and the danger of talking about a socio-genetic impetus to build culture is in fact an issue, which could cast light on the dynamics of group and/or movement building processes.

<sup>11</sup> “To trust your “next”, to be open-minded towards others/new experiences, to be curious etc., is not the result of nurture, society-influence or cultural regulations, but comes from “trust”, from “openness” itself as *causa sui* or as fundamental-ontological *a priori* of human interdependence.” (Katzenelson, 2000:304, my translation)

<sup>12</sup> This article does not look closer to the benefits and dangers a primary emotional or cognitive style toward others can lead to. For me it looks like both attitudes should not stand alone, *yes*, and a combination of both could lead to minimising the dangers (being too emotional → fanatic, aggressive; being too cognitive → intellectual (not real), cold, distanced).

<sup>13</sup> My textbook in Clinical Psychology had the “saying” title: *Abnormal Psychology* (Rosenhan/Seligman, 1990), - a book about diseases, diagnosis and treatment, - nothing about development, about how great and beautiful human life is, nothing about how to change un-developmental situations and environments into “Zones” for growth and flowering. I nearly got ill by reading it. I was lucky that I had read Vygotsky, Rogers, and yes, even Jung, at that time. That gave me just an idea that the view, clinical psychology sees the world, human life, relations and the psyche in, is not the only way to go. For me, I already imagined as a student, learning about clinical psychology, that I had to go other ways, if I wanted to be proud of being a psychologist.

<sup>14</sup> New Ways in Psychology was the title of the panel discussion, at the University in Banja Luka 26. 3. 2001, Jovan Savic thought about before it happened. Saying “in psychology” keeps the doors open for everyone, and does not, beforehand, exclude persons, who do believe in the enterprise of scientific psychology. “In” means for me, that “Zdravo da Ste” and other post-modern theories/activities are transforming not eliminating what was before. Tomorrow will be the Synthesis of the thesis (yesterday) and the anti-thesis (today).

<sup>15</sup> About this issue I had/have a fruitful conversation with Lois Holzman, ESI. Here some of our replicas: Volker said: *“I understand Wittgenstein's language-games useful both in a "positive" and in a "negative" way. The negative way gives me the understanding that our realities are build of language-games, where some are more "in power" than other "forms of life". It is kind of the way I understand what you say in your letter. Language-games as a tool to deconstruct the language-games we meet in our daily live. It is a kind of Marxist-reading and using the term. The "negative" use of "language-games" is to be conscious of the possibility of getting "caught in a game", being defined by it, and so on. It is a deconstructive use of the term. The "positive way" I understand the term is as "reconstructing" forms of life, after we have turned the foundational "games" down. Here I thought that playing in a circle, doing social therapy, doing performance of a lifetime were activities, where we both put in question the forms of life "in power", and where we at the same time create "new forms of life", new forms of conversation, which will grow, as I understand it, into new forms of life, new "language-games"”*. Lois said: *“Many people (and I think you) understand language game to mean "a game one plays with language." Here is the confusion or difference with Fred and me, perhaps. We think a language game is not a game you play with language, but "using language as a game." This is a very different thing! Using language as a game is like poetry -- it's less rule-governed (and less discursive and descriptive and prose-like). I also think the word game is problematic because it tends to reify the activity. Now I'm thinking that language play is a better way to say it. I'm also remembering that in Lev Vygotsky: Revolutionary Scientist we bring Vygotsky and Wittgenstein together on this, because Vygotsky's conception of play as (what Fred and I termed) rule and result as opposed to rule for result is needed to de-reify Wittgenstein's game”*. – The conversation goes on.

<sup>16</sup> Two things are very important here: (1) The participants have to be able to listen actively, in a supporting way, (2) the participants have to show deep respect, like they did at Kulasi, where we painted three paintings in three groups, while not talking, but listening to our creation of the painting. That was a kind of respect for each other and for the group, that I have seldom seen.

<sup>17</sup> All the words said at the conference were translated well by a student, one from Banja Luka, Alexandra, and one young psychologist, Dandra, from Beograd. We would like to thank them very much, making it possible for us to follow the ongoing conversations.

<sup>18</sup> From the definition of the CABAC concept: A School based Psycho Social Support Program, written by Ulla Nerenst, Dansih Red Cross, Beograd): *As facilitators for the training of our teacher-Red Cross volunteers we are working in close collaboration with national NGO's whose staff consist of highly educated psychologists and specialized pedagogues from within the national educational system and who have specialized themselves in working with groups of traumatized citizens. This is a point of immense importance to the local school authorities, which may not wish "foreign" influenced inside their schools. The facilitating NGO's are: Federation BiH: Mali Korak led by Ms Maja Uzelac, Republika Srpska: Hi-Neighbour led by Dr. Jovan Savic ,Yugoslavia: Hi-Neighbour led by Ms Vesna Ognjenovic*

<sup>19</sup> As Bojana, a psychologist/researcher from Beograd, said during the “circle-workshop”: *“It makes a difference – how big a group is, how many people there are in a group, and how the amount of members will affect the groups possibility*

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to act democratically or to behave as "followers" going into the direction, the few have pointed out." And this, I will go on with her words, has influence on how we, as a group, and we, as individuals feel: as "us" or "them", as "we" and "you", or alone and confused – while we were touching emotional themes of very private character. The strange thing was that a distancing process happened in front of our eyes, and that while the theories we try to follow actually talk about not distancing ourselves from the topic, we study/work on. What works one day does not have to work the next day. Every time we meet again we have to "work it out", again. It helps to know that we used to do this and that, and so on. But surely the practice and the theory of tomorrow can grow out of such paradox. A paradox, where the activity of the ones practicing is not in tune with what we said we want to do, what we say is our philosophy of life. In such situations the thesis (our theory) meets his antithesis (the situation now), preparing us for the synthesis (the future). So we have not to be afraid, not to feel misunderstanding. We are at a point of history, where history calls for new ways, where we through our common activity create our way of working together, today and tomorrow.

<sup>20</sup> Elisabeth, Vesna, Jovan and I experienced to be part of a Social Therapy (with Bette Braun) session in New York, which were a rather cold (intellectual talk not about something), but interesting experience, too.

<sup>21</sup> Since the days at Kulasi ESI, Zdravo da Ste and I have an ongoing and very constructive dialogue (articles, email) about the issues, these days made important to communicate about.

<sup>22</sup> The why, and the why not leaving are very delicate, and emotional issues.

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