

Reports on Conferences & Intensives

Annual Intensive, Kloster Bernried, Germany May 2015



A Constellation with Horses

I am not 'into' animals. I do not have dogs or cats. I have never had an interest in owning a pet. When asked about animals I often answer: "For me children were enough!" Further I have always enjoyed the freedom of going on holidays without having to find someone to mind the pets.

As regards horses I know that Ireland breeds some of the finest horses in the World, but I would never count myself as one of those 'horsey' people. I have

never stood in any enclosure before, during or after a race. I have never been to a gymkhana. While my people were small farmers from the West Coast of Ireland I had no experience of horses in my lifetime. I have never ridden a horse.

In fact three years ago someone offered a workshop at The Intensive in Bernried, Germany on constellations with horses and I chose not to attend. For me the thought of horses communicating

with humans seemed more linked to Mister Ed – a talking horse in a comedy show from my childhood.

When Ruud and Muriel introduced us to working with horses as part of the 2015 Intensive something in me changed. I was fascinated to be told that horses, for over 65 million years, think only of the herd. Everybody has a place. I remember being told that they scan their surroundings through the best part of 360 degrees all of the time,

that they notice the slightest movement of the body and process it in an instant. I was reminded of my own professional observations that 'at risk' children could scan a room and determine what was safe and unsafe in the twinkling of an eye. This might be interesting.

When the two horses were brought to meet a group of about 40 participants at the Intensive I was really interested as they maintained obvious contact with three horses in a nearby meadow. I was standing at the back of our large group, but somehow was aware not just of the two horses before us, but of the three others off in the distance. I looked at these three horses and somehow allowed that I had seen them and that I felt that they had seen me. For me it was not just about seeing a horse. I felt we had made contact.

I then turned my attention to the two horses in the enclosed area before us. Working with Ruud, Lutz Bessel, who has been involved for fourteen years as Manager of The Intensive, was doing his own personal constellation with the horses. It was fascinating for all to watch as the horses went through a process that seemed to connect them to Lutz as he dealt with his own story.

As Lutz worked I connected in some way with one of the horses. She looked at me and I looked at her. I was to learn later that both of the horses had Irish names – Peggy and Maura (Peigí and Máire in Gaelic). Maura was in fact 100% Irish. I find it hard to describe my sense of connection with Peggy. I only know that I felt in contact at a soulful level with her from very early on. Even as I write I imagine my 29-year-old youngest son saying in disbelief: "Ah come on Dad!"

When Lutz finished his work ten of us were invited to enter into the enclosed area to be with the horses. We were asked to bring in whatever issue we might like to bring and allow whatever might unfold. As I have been doing research on suicide for some time I decided to 'be with' the horses about my issue. I was the only man and there were nine women.

We were asked to notice our contact with each other as we worked.

As I entered the enclosure I decided I did not want to 'push' my presence or issue in any way. One of the horses (Maura) was off to the left and the other (Peggy) was off to the right. I walked between them and continued until I felt out of their way. I made eye contact with a woman from Canada and noted that she was from far away. I noticed a woman from Hungary and thought about Eastern Europe. I saw Guni Baxa, the leader of the Intensive. Then I noticed Judith Hemming and acknowledged internally that, over time, she had much to do with my formation in constellation work.

Internally I started to remember and name young people I knew who had taken their own lives. I found myself thinking that everybody has a place. I wanted them to be included in the work. I thought of my mother who was a deeply spiritual woman. As a boy I had learned from her about order and belonging, about giving and taking and about including the excluded ones.

I moved very slowly towards the fence on my right. I saw the vast open meadow before me. I thought of my people, of the land and of the sea. I was still at some distance from the horses, but I was aware of their presence. I was much closer to Peggy and noticed some of her tiny movements. She moved one hoof as if to begin a step and then stopped. I mimicked her and raised my heel and waited. I knew she could see me. I looked beyond her and noticed that the three horses in the nearby field had left. I thought of them and somehow included them in my awareness. I thought of spaciousness as I touched the fence and gazed into the distance. Ruud called to me saying there was a big world out there. I was aware of my own journey in constellation work. I felt in a good place with good possibilities.

After some time Peggy turned and very slowly came to be with me. Somehow I knew she would and was not surprised. I was unsure how to

touch a horse, but I was not uneasy either. I stroked her around the neck as she looked into my eyes. I spoke to her in Gaelic. This is the language that connects me most to my people and to my home. Through it I connect with life. Here in this place I connected with Peggy. The Hungarian lady was nearby and had made contact with me as she leaned gently on my shoulder. She too moved towards the horse who licked her hand. I kept feeling we all had a place in this unfolding process.

Ruud told us we would be finishing in a few minutes. I looked around and noticed an American lady who seemed to be in a commanding position, but a little outside the main group. I moved towards her wanting to include her. I noticed a Croatian lady near the fence on the other side. I wanted to include her too, but did not wish to invade her space. Somehow we all moved towards the side where we were to exit. I made final contact with Peggy as I left.

As I sit and reflect on all that happened I can only say that I had a wonderful experience where I connected with myself, with my family, with my people, with others who were present, with the horses, with my work and with the world. I felt the wind in my face. With others on a farm in Bernried I was in contact with Being. I had my first constellation with horses. I learned that Mister Ed was not far from reality – horses can talk! In fact they can even speak Gaelic! Thank you Ruud and Muriel.

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