

The law should ensure peaceful coexistence

Psychotherapy has the same responsibility

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1. Is our legal system failing?

Frequently, the news report alleged breaches and infringements of the law. However, law regulations are often interpreted in different ways: They seem to be unclear or ambiguous. Additionally, they are usually considered from various perspectives – everyone understands them the way they serve their interests best. Suitable laws and regulations can be found for any opinion and represented with the matching arguments. Contrary parties and political opponents accuse one another of illegal actions. Contracts are breached and agreements ignored by partners. Quarrelling unions, employer and employee organisations insist on almost war-like confrontations and show little willingness to use diplomacy in finding a consensus.

It is obvious that they all want to be in the right and enforce what they see as their right, without being told what to do or being limited in their actions. It affects the population – they sense their quality of living is being impaired, they feel helpless and they begin to express discontent. The financial damage is enormous. Where does this all lead to? It seems that society is destroying its own livelihood.

2. The responsibilities and functions of the legal system

The responsibilities and functions of the legal system have obviously been forgotten. Hardly anyone seems to know or care what they are about anymore. The legal system and its regulations were invented to solve arguments in reasonable and fair ways, promoting peace and providing solutions that satisfy everyone involved sustainably, thereby replacing conflicts that seem reminiscent of vendettas or duels with civilised actions. The law should ensure justice and legal security. Above all, it should protect human livelihood and promote safe and secure coexistence – just like traffic regulations.

3. The orientation of psychotherapy

Psychotherapy and teaching contribute to successful social coexistence and appropriate conflict resolution in the same ways that the legal system and diplomacy do. Psychotherapists

are experts in human character traits and problems, and they can supply the appropriate solutions. They are familiar with the qualities of human nature, and what keeps humans from developing and applying the personal skills and talents that are required to benefit all humankind. These obstacles are largely produced by physical, emotional and mental damage caused by other people. Psychotherapists can offer valuable support through applying useful healing methods.

The work they do is essentially what St Francis of Assisi (1181/1182-1226) formulated in one of his prayers: He asked for God's assistance to act in constructive ways when helping others.

"Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console,

To be understood as to understand,

To be loved as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life."

This prayer is one of St Francis of Assisi's most famous. It shows what it takes to liberate humans from the despair they have experienced throughout their lives, over and over, for thousands of years. St Francis should probably be worshipped as one of the pioneers of psychotherapy, as many psychotherapists do just what is described here:

They try to approach people with a positive attitude, rather than with hate, they try to forgive and understand, rather than blame and offend, to bond and reconcile where conflicts rule, provide valuable and reliable information to the helpless and misled, offer confidence and clarity where there is doubt, share hope, faith and courage where there is misery and a lot more – all as described above!

4. The orientation of psychotherapy corresponds to the teachings of Jesus, fundamental and human rights and the German Grundgesetz

St Francis of Assisi's general approach is based on the teachings of Jesus, who was also a healer. They are almost identical with the contents of fundamental human rights: Every human being should add to an optimum benefit of others, peaceful coexistence and meeting others needs appropriately: Ergo, to the 'pursuit of happiness', corresponding to a part of the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America (1776). Accordingly, the preamble of the German Grundgesetz states that the nation of Germany is inspired by their will to serve global peace as an equal member in a united Europe.

5. Juridicial and psychotherapeutic approaches – parallels and differences

One thing legal advisors and psychotherapists are said to have in common is the fact that they operate between conflicting parties and, from this position, try to find a consensual solution as agents, mediators or diplomats.

One of the differences is that a legal advisor's search for solutions is principally based on the valid legal system of a government while psychotherapists base their results on the characteristics and personality traits of the involved individuals. They both search for a consensus that complies with the valid legal system. In this respect, both legal advisors and psychotherapists complement one another well and should cooperate.

As long as conflicting parties are prepared to reach agreement, and they are still in a position to communicate reasonably and objectively without insuperable difficulties separating them, agents and mediators have a good chance of success. If, however, they are outright hostile, or their relationship has suffered to an extent that misunderstandings and accusations make communication impossible, often the only way to end the conflict is by court order. In this case, the conflicting parties usually do not reach a consensual agreement. Then, contact is prohibited to enable recess, pacification, reflection and to avoid further impairment. Under these conditions, psychotherapists can help the conflicting parties to process the relationship and conflict history, including the involved damage and accrued aggressions, so that they can calm down gradually, ease their minds and restore inner peace.

The circumstances described in Item 1 of this article are produced by lawyers and other legal experts that do not strive for peaceful solutions but are belligerent and hungry for power. They do not care for impartiality and political independence, for objectivity and an unbiased attitude, for fairness and justice. During their education, they were obviously not taught what the fundamentals of law really are about. The antique goddess *Justitia* is often shown with the scales of justice in her left hand – a symbol of objectivity and balance, equality and consent – which is fundamental to perfect forms of cooperation and harmony between people, and towards their natural environment.

There are too many lawyers (and theologians) that take sides for their clients, no matter what, and represent and enforce their interests with all available means and without having second thoughts. It is an efficient way of earning much money and fame. Many individuals that become lawyers or theologians often have surprisingly similar psychological profiles –they have frequently experienced injustice and therefore long to be untouchable and invulnerable – they want to feel superior. The alleged papal infallibility implies that he is a person who makes reliable statements one can actually count on.

On the other hand, the biography of many people who become psychotherapists is different: They often feel that they are failures and second-rate, inferior, insufficient and needy, vulnerable, helpless and weak. It is why they try to become as skilled as possible. A good way to achieve this goal is to help other people deal with their problems the best they can and make a career as a problem-solver, i.e. a counsellor or life coach. By finding solutions for

others, you often help yourself, too. Psychotherapists foster their personal growth (competence) by supporting others. Working as a psychotherapist belongs to the most satisfying jobs there are. By practically improving the general wellbeing of others, invaluable insights to personal development are gained.