

Dierolf, K. (2015). Found in Translation. In M. Vogt, Wolf F., Sundman P., & Dreesen H. N. (Eds.), Encounters with Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg. Inside Stories of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (pp. Pos 579-615). London: Solution Books.

In 2001, I was mainly doing Inner Game trainings and coachings for managers as part of a small consultancy in Freiburg. I was interested in attending a post-conference workshop with Timothy Gallwey, the founder of Inner Game, at the 2001 coaching conference in Grindelwald. Luckily, the organiser of the pre and post conference workshops, Peter Szabó, agreed to have me translate another workshop and swap the fee for Gallwey's. My first degrees were in theology and linguistics and I had taken the exam as a certified translator for English, but I did not have a lot of experience in simultaneous translation. Therefore, the preparation consisted of listening to the workshop leader's tapes. What I heard on the tape was a friendly (and luckily slow) Asian- English voice and a content that wowed me to the point that I forgot that what I really wanted to do was prepare for the translation. The people I was to translate for three days were Insoo Kim Berg and Louis Cauffman. Why was I so wowed even by just listening to the "A tap on the shoulder" tape and by reading Interviewing for Solutions (De Jong & Berg, 1997)? I had always been interested in all things "mind" and also very interested in helping people lead the kind of lives they want to lead. Yet, at this time, all attempts to pursue this interest had been thwarted by the weird ways people usually went about this endeavour. I had tried pastoral counselling and was told I would have to examine my own family history before being able to help anyone (this did not follow at all for me), so I did not enroll in that class. All my fellow students who did enroll became very odd – interpreting people's behaviour in very strange and disrespectful ways. I still remember someone running away from a philosophical argument that I was winning with the words, "You have such father issues!" So, I had given up trying to be helpful to others and had downgraded my interest in all things mind to a curious pastime, and engaged in it only by reading philosophy and linguistic texts with a passion. You can imagine how things started to click when I translated for Insoo and Louis. Here was an approach that was looking at the surface of helping people and also gelled really well with what I had learned about post-structural linguistics and philosophy of mind (not that I was conscious of this at the time, but this is how I now explain the "click"). Somehow I did not seem to have botched up the translation too much and was therefore invited to translate for Insoo and also for Steve, both at Peter Szabó and Daniel Meier's coaching school and at other places in Switzerland and Germany. Most of what I know about Solution Focus started as small insights during these translations. The first time I had to translate a Solution Focused interview with a live client in Winterthur, for example, I translated consecutively, like I had been taught. The client spoke, I took notes, and when she had finished, I translated for Steve. He did not like that . . . actually, it didn't work well at all. The client kept talking about her problem (which at this point I thought was really normal and the way a therapy session should work) and since he didn't understand, Steve couldn't interrupt or react in any way. It later dawned on me that an SF session is truly based on therapist and client "doing something together", co-creating the conversation. The more traditional model of communication, sender-receiver (or in our case sender-translator-receiver), wasn't appropriate here and did not work. So I started translating sentence for sentence, realising how Steve was picking up certain words and not others, trying to reproduce what he was doing in English in German and what the client was doing in German in English. It was very challenging, but reminiscing now, I realise how wonderful this opportunity was. I also translated for Insoo and Steve during workshops. Sometimes people would ask questions of the form, "Does Solution Focus work with *insert favourite diagnosis*?" I would dutifully translate into English and

Steve would simply look puzzled and say, "I don't understand the question". At this point many eyes were on me, the translator. Of course, this bugged me and I began to research why Steve would so stubbornly refuse to answer and started reading all his books and collecting his articles. Slowly, with every workshop, I got nosier and started asking Steve questions, trying not to get on his nerves too much. I think I was quite shy at this point and, guess what, sometimes he answered. We talked a little bit about Wittgenstein and the relevant philosophical arguments: rule following, different usages of the word "to be" and "to know", family resemblances and then more about cooking (which I was also interested in . . . but not so much . . . but as I said, I was shy). Insoo was much easier to talk to at dinners and driving her from workshop A to B – but our topics were more daily life and chatty and she would shrug off any mention of philosophy as something Steve was interested in (and I never quite believed her). What I owe most to Insoo and Steve is that I regained hope that people could be helped by conversations and that these conversations could be respectful and unintrusive. I also regained confidence that there can be an understanding of "mind" that is consistent, based on science and that makes sense. For me, this journey was started when I got to know Insoo and Steve. I was really happy when *More than Miracles* (de Shazer et al., 2007) came out as it so beautifully summarises and illustrates this nexus of philosophy and therapy. I'm very grateful for my rekindled enthusiasm for discovery and research into the questions of "how can we help people respectfully to develop into the direction of where they want to go?" and "how can we conceptualise how people use their minds so that it makes sense?" and "how can both answers fit together consistently?"

References

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