

If we see the other only as the perpetrator, we dehumanise him and his fellow human beings. It gives us a license to kill. That is justice gone wild.

Speaker

**Monique
Cuppen**

Pesso trainer and supervisor



European
Peace
Conference

Striving towards “inclusive justice”

Monique Cuppen on finding ways to unite inner polarities

*We are excited to announce **Monique Cuppen** as a speaker on the unification of polarities at [the European Peace Conference on Perpetrator-Victim Dynamics in Amsterdam, 2025](#).*

Monique Cuppen

Monique Cuppen is training and supervising Pesso therapists in the Netherlands. She used to be a trainer in Germany, Denmark and the Czech Republic. She is retired from a long career in mental health (GGZ) and is specialised in personality disorders and complex trauma. Oscar, the founder of the [Peace Conference](#), knows Monique as his supervisor in body-oriented Pesso therapy and from his board role on [the Dutch society of body-oriented Pesso-psychotherapy](#).

What do you mean by “inclusive justice”?

“I first heard about “inclusive justice” from Albert Pesso. He is the founder of PBSP, the body-oriented therapy method I work with. Pesso distinguished between two types of justice: “exclusive and inclusive justice”.”

“Exclusive justice is the undoing of injustice done to myself, my people and my loved ones. Even if that is at the expense of others. I can do evil while feeling that I am actually doing good. Hamas, for example, carried out a horrific attack on Israeli, but is convinced that it is setting a historical injustice against its own people right. In the same way, the Israel government believes it is doing the right thing by “eliminating Hamas, the enemy”, even if that means killing thousands of innocent civilians.”

“Who is the perpetrator, who is the victim, if both sides are convinced that they are “fighting for the good”?”

“Inclusive justice” means justice for everyone. As long as we strive for “exclusive” rather than “inclusive” justice, we will not achieve peace, but will fuel existing conflicts.”

Where does “exclusive justice” find its origins in?

“There are three powerful driving forces in our lives: the survival of the self, the survival of the species, and an innate drive to make things whole, to do right. When we are confronted with injustice at a young age, or hear stories about injustice, part of us, often unconsciously, does everything it can do to right the wrong. The energy that is actually needed to fulfil basic developmental tasks is too early invested in resolving the suffering we are confronted with. In order to grow into a well-adjusted adult, it is necessary that basic developmental needs are met in a safe environment and that all aspects of our being are respected and allowed to exist.”

“In an environment that is not attuned to our developmental needs, it becomes difficult to manage the underlying instinctive forces, that drive us: aggression and sexuality. This can later lead to them breaking free and unchecked under certain circumstances, sometimes out of a conviction that you want to right a wrong, regardless of the suffering it causes others. That is the dark side of doing justice. It is the side that let us think in terms of us and them, of friend and enemy, of good and bad.”

As long as we strive towards exclusive justice, rather than inclusive justice, we will not achieve peace, but fuel existing conflicts.

Why is integrating polarities important?

“From Pessoa's point of view, one of the five developmental tasks is to internalise and unify polarities. Healthy development is therefore based on recognising and harmonising the opposites that are inherent in our existence. Could the answer to a world with less conflict be a healthy living environment for our children? The evolutionary opposites that each of us must balance are:

1. Genetic: the gene pool of the father and the gene pool of the mother
2. Neurological: left and right hemisphere
3. The sensory and motor system
4. Behaviours connected to input and output organs
5. Symbolic maleness and femaleness

“The social and cultural environment has a major influence on this process, because it assigns meaning and qualifications to these different aspects. For example, boys are expected to be tough and girls to be gentle and sweet. This can lead to you rejecting certain characteristics that are part of who you are and alienating yourself from part of yourself –and even condemning that part in others.”

The social and cultural environment can lead us towards rejecting characteristics that are a part of who we are. We alienate ourselves from these parts and we may even condemn those parts in others.

How do polarities relate to perpetrators and victims?

“A polarity is a fixed position. When we label someone as perpetrator or victim, we dehumanise that person in a sense. I prefer to speak of perpetrator and victim dynamics. If I do not recognise the perpetrator energy in myself, I lay the foundation for “the bad is in the other person”, and “I am the good one”. How can I ever develop empathy for someone who expresses anger or cruelty, or understand that person, if I deny the aggression (even subtle aggression) within myself?”

“From the perspective of my work as a Pesso psychotherapist, healing lies in experiencing how it feels, from the perspective of the child you once were, when all aspects of yourself are seen, known and validated. When everything about you is allowed to be, you can experience how it feels when you move beyond good and bad, for and against.”

“In the best case scenario, such an experience can help you to remain open and curious in the future and be less likely to get stuck in a ‘fixed position’. After all, when we feel what we have missed when we were younger and feel how it should have been, this can activate the ability for inclusive justice.”

Publications

Cuppen, M., & van Buuren, A. (2023). Werken vanuit het lichaam in de psychotherapie. *Tijdschrift voor Psychotherapie*, 49(2), 119.

*If we live in
harmony with
all the different
aspects of the
self, it will be
easier to be
open and
accepting to
the “other”.*

Want to learn more? Join us in person or online.

European Peace Conference on Perpetrator-Victim Dynamics

"We are not at war, but not at peace either," said the new NATO Chief, Mark Rutte. "If you want peace, prepare for war." Is Europe at a crossroad towards more polarisation, identity politics, and war? Reflections on our human nature may help us find a sensible way forward.

At this year's peace conference, the first of its kind, an international group of scholars, experts and practitioners, will seek ways to explore how perpetrator-victim dynamics run through our lives, families, business and politics.

With guest lectures, workshops, personal and group reflections, we seek to embody the latest expertise from the research on war and peace.

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