

Reconciliation through Remembering An Overview about the Methodology of Healing of Memories (HoM)

Revd. PhD Student Dieter BRANDES*

Abstract:

Healing of Memories (HoM) is a methodology which has been firstly developed in South Africa in order to help overcoming frozen history and “hi-stories” (story telling), putting emphasis on voices that were not listen, ignored and not acknowledged so far. HoM as a post-conflict multi-phase process joined the ranks of sustainable peace and reconciliation processes in the following order: Conflict Transformation, Transitional Justice, Healing of Memories and Culture of Remembrance. Ordinarily HoM is subordinated to the processes of Conflict Transformation and Transitional Justice and superordinate to the development of Culture of Remembrance. But depending on different contexts, the processes could overlap each other.

Originally Healing of Memories has been developed as a counselling process in pastoral care and in community reconciliation development. However, during the course of the HoM process in South-East Europe, it was quite soon clear that in dealing with tensions and painful experiences between religions and cultures it is very important to „deep historical streams” and to shape the identity of individuals as well as religions and cultures over a long time and to provide – mostly unconsciously- “in accumulated memories and attitudes also the paradigms and pictures for the interpretation and classification of present experiences”. Based on this perception, it was developed, within the scope of

* Dieter Brandes is Scientific Consultant of the United Evangelical Mission, Germany. He writes a doctoral dissertation in field of Healing of Memories under the coordination of Junior Prof Daniel Buda who gave his agreement for publishing this article.

the ecumenical foundation “Reconciliation in South East Europe” in Sibiu, a new methodology of Healing of Memories as a “society-oriented reconciliation process between Religions, Cultures, Nations and within communities”.

Keywords:

Healing of Memories (H of M); theological bases of H of M; conflicts transformation; macro and micro levels of H of M

1.The Christian Ministry of Reconciliation

1.1.The Ministry of Reconciliation according to 2 Corinthians 5:18

The history of mankind is depicted in history books mainly as the history of wars, conquests, oppressions and violence. The strongest men acquire, in the allegedly natural course of history, property and privileges of the suppressed. As they are brought down, defeated by even stronger men, the new “lords” again naturally take over possessions and privileges and oppress the “previous lords”.

The foundation of UN after the Second World War led to new, respectful approaches between cultures and nations in political world affairs. For the first time, governments from all around the world committed themselves to solving conflicts between nations peacefully and for the first time universal human rights were formulated. In the Christian world, the foundation of the World Council of Churches led to the declaration of a concrete ecclesial approach as responsibility for peace, justice and reconciliation in the world.

With the end of colonialism and the beginning of the peace movements in South America and Asia, some churches realized that throughout centuries they were sometimes agents of ethnic suppression, slavery and even genocide in the so called Third World.

At this point in time, the Christian community could finally confess that “the history of the Christian churches... has been marked by many beneficial experiences but also by schisms, hostilities and even armed conflicts” (Charta Oecumenica 3)¹ and they could confess that throughout history they created bad witnesses of the Christian message of reconciliation. In contrast – as it was confessed on the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz – “religions and churches themselves (became) part of the problem”. And it became clear: Christians who have experienced their own reconciliation and healing with God believe in what Paulus

¹ *Charta Oecumenica*, chapter 3 Moving towards one another, <http://www.cec-kek.org/content/charta.shtml>

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says in the 2 Corinthians 5,18 : “God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry for reconciliation”.

If Healing of Memories is a way of reconciliation, the “ministry for reconciliation and healing” is realized through HoM.

1.2. The secret of reconciliation is remembrance: Christians live on remembrance

In 1991, a student group from Germany visited the extermination camp of the National Socialists in Theresienstadt in the Czech Republic. They were welcomed by the Jewish guide Jiří² with the statement: “The secret of reconciliation is remembrance”.³ Every human society bases its identity on remembrance in historiography and cultural history. Remembrance connects to the present as well as to the previous generations.⁴ And during Eucharist Christians also break the bread and drink the wine “in remembrance of Jesus”⁵. In this way, the believe of the fathers and mothers became the creed of the sons and daughters in churches.⁶ Memories keep hold of the good experiences of cohabitation. But they also keep hold of painful experiences between humans, cultures and peoples which need healing, Healing of Memories (HoM).

Therefore, HoM is a process to deal with current injuries after oppression, violence, wars and genocide as well as to overcome centuries old and passed down injuries between peoples and cultures. Desmond Tutu, inspired by a visit in the concentration camp Dachau-Munich, quoted in his book “No future without forgiveness”⁷ George Santayana with the following words: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”⁸

² “Der trennende Zaun ist gebrochen – Zur Verständigung zwischen Tschechen und Deutschen“, edited. by Evangelische Kirche der Böhmisches Brüder and Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland EKD Leipzig 1998, p. 58

³ The provenance of this cognizance may be traced to the Jewish scholar Israel ben Eliezer/ Baal Shem Tov (1698 or 1700-1760), the constitutor of the Polish Hasidism : “The exile exists in a long duration to forget. But in remembering exists the secret of salvation.”

⁴ See Dieter Brandes “Zur Methodologie von Healing of Memories und Bezüge zur ethnischen, kulturellen und religiösen Identität” in *Reconciliatio nr. 2 : Die Geschichte der christlichen Kirchen aufarbeiten*, 2nd edition, edited by. Dieter Brandes and Olga Lukács, Leipzig 2011, p. 23-39, here p. 26

⁵ “Participation in God’s Mission of Reconciliation – A Resource for Churches in Situations of Conflict” – Faith and Order Paper 201, World Council of Churches , Geneva 2006, p. 52 (nr. 148)

⁶ See Dieter Brandes “Zur Methodologie von Healing of Memories und Bezüge zur ethnischen, kulturellen und religiösen Identität”, l.c. p. 27

⁷ Desmond Tutu “No future without forgiveness”, Doubleday, 1999

⁸ George Santayana “Reason in Common Sense”, volume 1 of “The Life of Reason” 1905, cited from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Santayana

2. Steps of peace and reconciliation processes

“Healing of Memories” (HoM) is a developed methodology which has been firstly implemented in South Africa with the purpose to deal with personal, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions and conflicts from the Apartheid period.

HoM as a post-conflict multi-phase process joined the ranks of sustainable peace and reconciliation processes :

- Conflict Transformation
- Transitional Justice
- Healing of Memories
- Culture of Remembrance

These are international terms used as such by the UN.

2.1. Conflict Transformation (CT)

“Conflict transformation is to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflicts as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures and respond to real-life problems in human relationship.”⁹ Conflict Transformation (CT) complements military strategies, which contain actual violence in conflicts, and a dispute resolution approach (mediation, for example), which addresses the question of disputes behind the actual violent behaviour.

CT starts with the understanding that violent disputes, conflicts and intra- or inter-state wars, often take place within a structure of interaction, which could be transformed into a more peaceful direction. CT investigates the causes behind the actual conflicts.

John Paul Lederach defines the following three-stage-process :¹⁰

- The „Conflict Analysis “ investigates the deeper structures of injustice and inequality to understand the origins of the conflict.
- The “Development of a joint vision” includes focusing on a changing vision and achieving of key elements for a broad conflict transformation strategy”.
- The Operationalization Phase of CT realized the joint conflict transformation strategy in view of realistic aims and expectable outcomes.

The performance targets of CT are on the one hand to account the past and to overcome violence and deep tensions between the conflicting parties. But on the other hand, CT intends the important steps to change the political, social and economic structures, which created the tensions and conflicts.¹¹

⁹ John Paul Lederach: Defining Conflict Transformation, <http://www.restorativejustice.org/10fulltext/lederach>

¹⁰ See John Paul Lederach “The Little Book of Conflict Transformation. Intercourse“, Good Books 2003, p. 20.

¹¹ The methodology of Conflict Transformation is explained application-oriented in “Conflict Analysis – Participants’ Guide – Phase 1“, Utrecht 2009, edited by Irma Specht and Paul Dijk – a special summary is written under p. 5-7.

2.2. Transitional Justice (TJ)

At the end of the nineties of the 20th century when the apartheid system in South Africa as well as the dictatorships in South America and East Europe came to an end as after the Genocides in Rwanda, Sri Lanka and Cambodia, Transitional Justice (TJ) was established in several regions of the world.¹²

The UN defines TJ as “the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation.”¹³ TJ involves judicial and non-judicial mechanisms (with differing levels of international involvement, or none at all) to rebuild an independent justice system. TJ also includes individual prosecutions, reparations, truth-seeking, institutional reform, vetting and dismissals, or a combination thereof.¹⁴

Aspects of TJ are implemented for instance in the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in South Africa, Namibia, Bosnia Herzegovina etc. and in the International Criminal Court.

In the meantime also traditional processes of conflict management like the Gacaca Courts in Rwanda¹⁵, the Community Reconciliation Processes in East Timor¹⁶ or also the „Mato Oput“-Ceremonies Uganda¹⁷ are combined with TJ.

2.3. Healing of Memories

Healing of Memories (HoM) is a methodology to help overcoming frozen history and “hi-stories” (story telling) by putting emphasis on voices that were not heard, ignored or not acknowledged so far.

Healing of Memories is a process to deal with current injuries after oppression, violence, wars and genocide as well as to overcome centuries old, passed

¹² See Anne Krüger “Transitional Justice, Version 1.0“ in *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 25.01.2013, http://docupedia.de/zg/Transitional_Justice?oldid=85576.

¹³ Quoted by “Governance – Social Development – Humanitarian – Conflict (GSDRC)” : <http://www.gsdrc.org/go/topic-guides/justice/transitional-justice>.

¹⁴ Compare the website of the International Centre for Transitional Justice New York : <http://www.info@ictj.org>.

¹⁵ Translated : „justice amongst the grass“; compare for instance Gerd Hankel “Wir möchten, dass ihr uns verzeiht. Die Anfänge der Gacaca-Justiz in Ruanda“ in *Nach Kriegen und Diktaturen*, edited by Alfons Kenkmann and Hasko Zimmer, Erfurt 2005, p. 141-153.

¹⁶ See Peter Burgess “A New Approach to Restorative Justice. East Timor’s Community Reconciliation Processes“ in *Transitional justice in the twenty-first century. Beyond truth versus justice*, edited by Naomi Roht-Arriaza and Javier Mariezcurrena, Cambridge 2006, p. 176-205.

¹⁷ See Barbara Meier “Mato oput – Karriere eines Rituals zur sozialen Rekonstruktion in Norduganda“ in *Nach Krieg, Gewalt und Repression*, Reihe AFK Friedensschriften, edited by Susanne Buckley-Zistel und Thomas Kater, Augsburg 2011, p. 185-203

down injuries between peoples and cultures. In this way HoM is an interdisciplinary approach to deal with deeply rooted painful, frozen history on cultural, religious and ethnic level and within personal relationships.

Ordinarily HoM is subordinated to the processes of Conflict Transformation and Transitional Justice. With reference to different target groups, two levels of HoM processes are mainly developed:

- Healing of Memories as Counselling Process in pastoral care and community reconciliation development;
- Healing of Memories as society-oriented reconciliation process between Cultures, Religions, Nations, within communities

Both levels of process have textual and substantial relations to the methodologies of intercultural mediation, psychodynamic psychology and client-centred psychotherapy.

2.4. Cultures of Remembrance (CoR)

The general understanding of historical Culture of Remembrance (CoR) includes all possible forms of conscious and non-conscious remembering events, personalities and developments/achievements of individuals or of religious, cultural and ethnic groups. That is:

- historical and trans-historical memories, like myths, gossip, fairy tales, in the form of collective memories, as long as they have left traces in general public and local community
- memorials (genocide memorial for instance), buildings (king's palace e.g.), festivities, pictures, literature, movies, research, indigenous names and words
- history books about the historical events, and also structures that show the past and possible future visions

Culture of Remembrance (CoR) also means in a broader sense all kinds of „collective memories“ as far as it leaves marks on the public view.¹⁸

Centres of remembrance like Yad Vashem in Jerusalem and the Kigali Genocide Memorial combine two forms of memory : the comprehensive commemoration (of the Genocide) and in special rooms for personal memories of the individual victims.

Special kinds of Genocide Remembering are the “tripping stones” (germ. “Stolpersteine”) in several West Europe countries. Tripping stones remember the torture and the shocking murder of individual victims of the German Holocaust. Jews, Gipsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, mentally handicapped, political prisoners and

¹⁸ In this case the term “Cultures of Remembrance“ is most widely synonymous to the term “Historical Culture“

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other victims are remembered on metal stones with full name, dates of birth, place and dates of their homicide.¹⁹

3. Ways to overcome passed wounds and misunderstandings between churches, cultures and religions through „Healing of Memories“

For the first time „Healing of Memories“ (HoM) was implemented by churches in South-Africa. From there on, it found its way into other countries of Africa such as Ruanda, Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia.

In Australia, churches began a process of HoM in relationship with the Ab-origines who have become a small minority because of systematic genocide. In Asia, processes of HoM from historical injuries and genocide are starting little by little. In South America, the liberation theology paved new ways for respect towards indigenous people in connection with the rehabilitation of their historical identity and the encouragement of cultural tolerance as well as mutual respect (“Connivance“).

In Europe, HoM was firstly implemented in Northern Ireland and Norway (church and Sámi) and finally found its way to South-East Europe, which is a religious and cultural border-region between Western and Eastern European religions and cultures.

In the meantime “Healing of Memories between Religions, Cultures, Nations and within communities” have achieved in 2 levels :

- Micro Level : Healing of Memories as Counselling-Process in pastoral care and community reconciliation development

- Macro Level : Healing of Memories as society-oriented reconciliation process between Religions, Cultures, Nations and within communities

(1)Micro Level : Healing of Memories as Counselling Process in pastoral care and community reconciliation development

Healing of Memories as Counselling Process is a “process of the generations” that includes:

(a)Process Part A: “walking together through history”

(b)Process Part B: “sharing the pain of others”

(c)Process Part C: “preparing the future together”

(2)Macro Level : Healing of Memories as society-oriented reconciliation process between Religions, Cultures, Nations and within communities.

Healing of Memories as society-oriented reconciliation process is realized in 4 steps:

¹⁹ See “*Vor meiner Haustür: ‘Stolpersteine’ von Gunter Demnig. Ein Begleitbuch*“, edited by Joachim Rönneper, Gelsenkirchen 2010.

- (a) Interdisciplinary searching of the history of the Nation, Cultures and Religions and/or Communities
- (b) Training of regional facilitators of Healing of Memories
- (c) Realizing local Seminars of Healing of Memories (Micro Level)
- (d) Finding Nation, intercultural/interreligious and/or community processes in common responsibility to create the future together

3.1. Micro Level : Healing of Memories as Counselling Process in pastoral care

and in community reconciliation development – realized in local seminars

The implementation of local seminars on Healing of Memories in regions which are co-moderated by trained participants of the courses held before has the goal to promote mutual attention and ecumenical/interreligious co-operation between people from different confessions, religions, ethnic groups and cultural traditions on a local level by “becoming deeper acquainted with” and more respectful towards the cultural and historical identity of the others.

In this way different traditions will not be left out, but things in common like language, traditions, religion and tasks in the community will be particularly stressed. The aim for the involved participants of the seminars is to “notice the fact that acting together over the borders of religions, cultures and languages strengthens also the own identity and is an advantage for all (‘win-win result’).”²⁰

Healing of Memories as Counselling Process is a “process of the generations” that includes:

- (a) Process part A: “walking together through history”
- (b) Process part B: “sharing the pain of others”
- (c) Process part C: “preparing the future together”²¹

3.1a. Process part A : “Walking together through history”²²

“Walking together through history” is implemented as an interdisciplinary research in cooperation with faculties of theology, history and sociology. Part A

²⁰ See Dieter Brandes “Human identity and Healing of Memories between Churches, Cultures and Religions” in *Reconciliation nr. 4 : Telling Stories of Hope – Reconciliation in South East Europe compared to world-wide experiences, Festschrift in honor of Rev. Dieter Brandes to his 65th Birthday*, edited by Olga Lukács, Vasile Grăjdian, Cluj Napoca – Leipzig 2010, p. 77f

²¹ See Dieter Brandes “Human identity I.c. p. 62-77; compare also Johnston McMaster, Dieter Brandes “Healing of Memories / Healing through Remembering” in *Reconciliation nr. 1 : Healing of Memories in Europe - A Study of Reconciliation between Churches, Cultures and Religion*, edited by Dieter Brandes, Cluj Napoca – Leipzig 2008, p. 3-12

²² This part of the Healing of Memories methodology is described in detail in Dieter Brandes, *Human identity I.c. p. 73-74*.

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elaborates a synopsis of the different views on history by different denominations, religions and cultures.

The first part of the process of Healing of Memories has been accomplished for example in several South-East European countries (Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine, Hungary, Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina) from 2004 to 2010 and several documentations in different languages were compiled²³.

“HoM part A - Walking together through history” includes the following sub-steps:

- a) Listening to the story of each other
- b) Mutual confirmation of the perception
- c) Repeating the presentation of the others with one’s own words

a) Listening to the story of each other

“Telling the own history to each other” is an intensive and sometimes stressful step for the participants involved. By presenting myself as well as by listening to the others, I accept not only that the other one sees history in a different way than I do, but I also respect his/her views on history as an important part of her/his identity.

b) Mutual confirmation of the perception

“Mutual confirmation of the perception” may be the most sensitive and sometimes most painful step. It implies understanding the uttered pain of the other and saying: „I understand why you are hurt“(and I don’t count my own injuries up against it).

- c) Repeating the presentation of the others with one’s own words

Only when I repeated the others’ view on injury and suffering with my own words and confirm them publicly as an understandable view and understandable suffering, I can say: „We did not only go through parallel historical epochs each on his own, but we went through history together“.

3.1b. Process part B : “Sharing the pain of others”

The second step – “sharing the pain of others” stresses the responsibility of communities for dealing respectfully and sensitively with the painful feelings of the individual parts of society. Ruth Elias, a survivor of the Nazi-concentration camp Theresienstadt in Czech Republic writes: „It’s haunting me, it left deep

²³ See for instance “Healing of Memories indecarea Memoriei între biserici, culturi i religii în România”, edited by Dieter Brandes and Olga Lukács, Cluj Napoca 2007, *German translation: Reconciliation nr. 2 : Die Geschichte der christlichen Kirchen aufarbeiten*, ibidem

scars. I can't get rid of it, it keeps coming back".²⁴ This holds for survivors of persecution in the days of fascism as well as in the days of communism.

3.1c. Partial process C: "Preparing the future together"

The fact that one has not only to recognize but to actively engage in preparing the way towards a reconciled society is a new step of Healing of Memories: "Preparing the Future together".

"Preparing the future together" can be realized in local projects for local needs. Representatives of the different conflict parties, involved in prejudices and misunderstandings are invited to search together for common responsibilities to start healing on a practical way. That may be a common responsibility of properties, of communal social needs, of ecological environments etc.

3.2. Macro Level: Healing of Memories as society-oriented reconciliation process between Religions, Cultures and Nations and within communities

From 2004 to 2010, the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) mandated the development of a methodology of Healing of Memories between Churches, Religions and Cultures for South-East Europe. During the process, it was soon clear that in dealing with tensions and painful experiences between religions and cultures, very important is to recognize that „deep historical streams” shape the identity of individuals as well as religions and cultures over a long time and provide – mostly unconsciously- accumulated memories and attitudes, paradigms and images for the interpretation and classification of present experiences. Based on this perception, it was developed, within the scope of the ecumenical foundation "Reconciliation in South East Europe"²⁵ in Sibiu, a new methodology of Healing of Memories as a "society-oriented reconciliation process between Religions, Cultures, Nations and within communities".

3.2a. Interdisciplinary Research of the History of the Religions, Cultures, Nations and/or Communities

At the same time when in Sibiu it started the developing of the macro level of Healing of Memories, WCC supported a processes of Healing of Memories in Northern Ireland. ²⁶ It was clearly recognized that in the reconciliation processes on the society level the search of „deep historical streams” is very important for overcoming "frozen history".

²⁴ Ruth Elias, "Die Hoffnung erhielt mich am Leben", München 1988 p. 7.

²⁵ The first president of the Foundation was His Eminence Metropolitan Dr. Laurențiu Streza.

²⁶ See "Reconciliation nr. 1: Healing of Memories in Europe" loc. cit. the reports from David Stevens, Kieran McEvoy and Geraldine Smyth, p. 115-170.

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As the way of sharing experiences reaches its maturity, it is clear that concrete processes of reconciliation have to include a sensitive interdisciplinary, a common walk through each other's views of history (and misunderstandings about history) regarding culture, ethnicity, language etc. on the society level as well as between religious communities and cultures.

Johnston McMaster (North Ireland) says: Reconciliation can be a successful disagreement. The conflict is a non-successful disagreement.

Therefore the first step of Healing of Memories regarding the Macro Level starts with an interdisciplinary team of historians, sociologists and church historians to search and publish in a common way different and non-different views of the history of society or/and community.

3.2b. Interreligious training in intercultural communication, pastoral care and mediation

In South-East Europe this part of Healing of Memories was developed in an ecumenical and interreligious way by educating priests, pastors, imams, teachers, journalists and other responsible representatives.

The aim of these ecumenical courses were, on the one hand, to train "multipliers" for regional Healing of Memories processes and, on the other hand, to implement these courses at the level of cultural and religious education centres and to exert influence through intercultural and interreligious communication and mediation.

The courses are implemented as formation in two parts:

(a) Intercultural identity and empathy

- Healing of Memories" as a Challenge for the Churches
- Life stories and Identity
- Basic Principles of Communication in Church and Society
- Intercultural and Interreligious Identity and Perception
- Practicing Group Leadership in Interreligious and Intercultural contexts

(b) Intercultural Communication, Pastoral Care and Mediation

- Healing of Memories in the Intercultural context
- Identity and Foreignness in Interpersonal relations
- Mediation and Mediating techniques for Acquiring Mediation Skills
- Solution-focused Moderation and Communication techniques
- Life Stories related to one's own and the others' Cultural and Religious Identity

Identity

- Practice in Interreligious and Intercultural context as well as in Moderation techniques within Intercultural Groups

3.2c. Local Seminars on Healing of Memories (Micro Level)

Local seminars on Healing of Memories are organized in cooperation with the trained “Healing of Memories Multipliers”.²⁷

The Charta Oecumenica of European churches reminds us in section 3: “Moving towards one another ... is important to acknowledge the spiritual riches of the different traditions²⁸, to learn from one another and so to receive these gifts”.²⁹

Participants of the different religious and cultural communities, involved in conflicts, prejudices and misunderstandings, are invited to engage in mutual dialogue and, as a follow up, in organizing inter-religious and inter-cultural activities between conflicting parties.

3.2d. Finding „nation, intercultural/interreligious and/or community processes“

in common responsibility to create the future together

The fact that one has not only to recognize but to actively engage in preparing the way towards a reconciled society is a new step of Healing of Memories: “Preparing the Future together”.

“Creating the future together” is achieved when representatives of conflicting parties in different cultures and religions are able to overcome the prejudices and misunderstandings in a common way, for social or ecological needs of society.

In South-East Europe, for instance, several common projects were initiated:

- a common project of Christian and Jewish communities on the Holocaust in Bucovina
- a common project of Christian churches and Roma communities on intercultural education (Muslim and Christian)
- an interreligious project of Healing of Memories in Sarajevo that is in the stage of development.

²⁷ These seminars require “very sensitive pastoral care” and need a very large process depth. Therefore this part of the process will be co-moderated by professionally educated priests and teachers of the churches involved in the process.

²⁸ In the original text it is written “Christian traditions” according to the topic of Chapter 3 of remembering the church’s task of reconciliation between each other

²⁹ Charta Oecumenica, chapter 3 Moving towards one another, <http://www.cec-kek.org/content/charta.shtml>

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Appendix: A Short Bibliographical list on the implementation of the Methodology of Healing of Memories :

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