

## **The (Un) Logic of the Perpetrator–Victim–Rescuer Dynamic**

There is a treacherous logic in interpersonal relationships, namely the perpetrator-victim-rescuer dynamic. It is probably the worst thing that can happen to you in a relationship, in a family, in an institution or on a society-wide level. It is pure psychotrauma. The dynamic basically works like this: I, as the perpetrator, inflict severe damage on you, the victim. Then I come along and present myself as your rescuer and let you reward me for being your saviour.

There are countless examples of this:

- A parent may punish their child because of the child's sheer liveliness and joy. The mother or father then goes on to offer that the child does something in order to make up with them again. I experienced a nearly unbelievable example of this in a therapy session: The client had in her childish joy and curiosity played with a bottle of her mother's perfume and had ended up spraying it over the wardrobe. When her mother saw what had happened she flipped out and stuck her daughter in a bath of scalding hot water. Then she offered her daughter, who was covered in burns, the opportunity to crochet some oven gloves with her so that mummy could feel happy about something again.
- When a father sexually traumatises his daughter he tells her that if she were to tell anyone no one would believe her. So she should be happy that she has him otherwise she would be totally alone.
- A husband beats up his wife and then comforts her and then offers that if she sleeps with him then everything will be all right again.
- A psychiatrist declares that a person who is suffering from psychological problems is mentally sick and then he sells him drugs for his recovery. But these drugs then cause the patient further psychological and physical problems, for which the psychiatrist then offers him more medicines to buy.
- A doctor, because of his interventions, destroys a pregnant woman's own confidence in her innate ability to give birth. The doctor then delivers her child and says that he has saved both her and her child's life. This of course costs a little bit more than a completely normal birth.
- One ruler declares war on another ruler, and in this way massively threatens the life and health of his people. He then demands that his people, for their own protection and in gratitude for his leadership, concentrate all their energies on this war and sacrifice their health and their lives for his sake.
- A security service spies on everything. It then sets up a company that gets paid handsomely to protect countries and businesses from being spied on. At the same time, it incorporates code into the protection software it offers, that delivers all of its customers' confidential data free to its door.
- A food company undermines the population's health with its sugary drinks and high-fat food products. It then sets itself up as a pharmaceutical company and offers the solution to these health problems with its drugs.

- A supposedly impartial world health organisation declares that there is a virus pandemic. It dismantles entire societies and then offers its aid programmes to save humanity. It then receives handsome rewards from those societies for the vaccines and medications it has developed.

The curious thing about this psychological dynamic is that the perpetrators manage to be perceived by their victims as their benefactors.

In these kinds of situations, as long as a person accepts that the damage wreaked by a perpetrator is natural and inevitable, then that person is only concerned with trying to compensate for the consequences of the damage caused, and for the consequences of that, and for the consequences of that, and so on for ever. In private, as well as in public or political life, a phase of ceaseless activity then begins, and anyone who takes part then becomes trapped in this perpetrator-victim-rescuer system, and becomes exhausted in this endless fight against the symptoms. And it's possible that this can go on for someone's entire life.

The only way can we find an exit is by looking at the logic of the whole system. What is actually going on here? Who is playing what cruel game against whom?

In my experience it is not possible to get out of the perpetrator-victim-rescuer dynamic if the victim is currently trying to battle with the perpetrator. It is enough to recognise and name them for what they are. This is possible if I pay attention to my intuitive emotional reactions, if I bring my common sense into play and if I am in contact with my basic needs. I can then immediately see, feel and recognise what is going wrong and who means the best for me and who means me harm. In this way, I no longer put myself at the mercy of others as a naive, unsuspecting victim who lacks his own I and will.

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