***Wednesday 7th of September 4.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m., in Gallus Hall***

**The development of resonances in Europe, around the work of Mony Elkaïm**

I would like to thank you for the opportunity you gave me to talk about Mony Elkaim.

It is an honor to be at this round table and have the possibility to share with you my 30 year connection with Mony.

This invitation though puts me in a tight spot since, as it is an honor to talk about him, I become very emotional at the same time.

In my Psychological path Mony has been my mentor and he has had a tremendous impact in my work and in my life.

I first met him in 1987 outside a conference room in Athens where he was presenting his work. I immediately asked him about his books and he provoked me with a question that directly addressed my core conflict; the feeling that *I didn’t fit in a scientific context* and my great effort to belong at the same time.

I had become a Psychotherapist and I had abandoned my family’s successful business in beauty parlors and cosmetics.

I was shocked and thought to my self “this man is **clairvoyant**”, I was intrigued because he immediately knew what was going on inside me, and he had made a strong connection with my hidden truth.

After this event I decided to train with him, so I invited him and organized a Family therapy supervision course in Athens.

Mony Elkaim visited Greece for the next 10 years and trained in depth more than 50 psychotherapists and psychiatrists.

At the beginning of the training I thought he was a **magician** as I saw the grace with which he could transform a problem to become a solution, as many new options and recourses came to light and were welcomed by the family members or the trainees.

In his training he told us stories of his life and his family therapy practice vividly, as metaphors in an effort to experientially describe what he proposed, and at the end, he would be smiling and acting surprised, even though he knew very well that he had made a deep therapeutic point, a strong intervention.

I often thought to my self “ he is like a Hotza. His teaching style reminded me of the stories we read as children by Hotza the Turkish priest teacher, who knew the law and settled peoples differences in a very fair for all way. As I found later, Mony was a Peace delegator politically and also a fantastic problem solver in family disputes and in organizing E.F.T.A.

Mony taught Family Systems Theory and Therapy and in my opinion,

his great contribution is that he put in the center of his theory the individual and the emotion. There was a void as theory dealt with strategies, constructions and systemic functioning until then. I think the emphasis on the individual, the emotion and change had to do with his predisposition as a person.

He loved every body, he had space in his heart to understand and see the world through the eyes of the other. In families he never lost the big picture, the way the system functions or the function of the symptom in the family. He connected with each and every voice and every feeling, honoring it and making it heard and with great excitement and moving in the room in the end, he would present the paradox that he had discovered.

Blessed with extreme empathy he entered the person’s subjective reality and spoke with understanding for him, from the other persons place. He lived the person’s inner conflicts, hidden pains and needs without exposing, confronting, or criticizing but with his soft voice he accepted the reality, the difficulty and in this way he comforted the pain.

Mony had a kindness that is rare, he loved the whole world, he wanted everybody to be happy and fulfilled, very often he went out of his way if there was need.

People he met in Greece loved him, it was great fun to see him hug the owner of the tavern we ate during the trainings while both of them shouted “Hello my brother good to see you again” and looked each other in the eye.

Very often in the trainings he would open his arms and say “I am a mother” and we all felt safe in his embrace.

When in Greece I would drive him around and we would eat together as he was my guest.

Between the sessions we rarely spoke, Mony was very quiet and relaxed only to go back to work effortlessly for long hours after.

During the trainings I was a student and an observer, I didn’t interrupt his thoughts and asked very few questions, I absorbed as much as I could and it took me a while after to restructure myself. This new Information was so dense in meaning and very intriguing in so many levels, cognitively, emotionally, and experientially. This training, this new understanding grew in me and became an inseparable part of me.

My training with Mony absolutely changed my way of thinking, in family therapy and in supervision. Working with resonances is central in my supervision sessions, as I have found it to be a therapeutic and developmental tool in training.

The emphasis placed on the connection of the therapist to the client, the emotions that emerge and block the therapeutic process, when amplified and explored, play a very substantial role for the evolution and the mastery of the therapist as they signify something important coming up for the therapist. So I ask: “How is this case touching something in you?”

My training with Mony also influenced the way I do couples therapy.

I explore the couple’s perception of the world, the hidden contracts, how each one sculpts the other’s behavior, and how they are tangled in a paradox. As this information comes to light piece by piece, a new context emerges that offers a new way to approach the family.

Mony was a great collaborator he loved doing things with others while at the same time he never lost his strong determination to fulfill his own dreams and plans.

Mony had the dream to develop Family therapy, to connect Systemic Family therapists in Europe and create an institution strong enough to support this work. Since the creation of EFTA, Family therapy became known and appreciated in Europe. The EFTA conferences were instrumental so that Family therapy has now a special place among other leading approaches thanks to Mony’s strong influence, his hard work, and contribution.

All these years since I met him I shared and supported his dream to unite therapists of a Systemic background in Europe and all his efforts to create E.F.T.A. From his visits in Greece EFTA subscribed almost 160 EFTA CIM members. Mony also played an important role in the creation of Systemic Associations in Greece, and strongly supported the Greek representation in the Boards of EFTA and in the Presidency.

Mony is the reason all of us met and feel I owe to his memory to remain actively connected to EFTA and to promote our professional goals and ethics.

I have the feeling that he will suddenly appear and say with his happy, energetic voice: “My dear friends, what a pleasure it is to see you”. Connecting us all with his friendship, as he would open a new conference or a new meeting.

The most important thing that I want to share with you is that Mony Elkaim was, more than anything else, my friend. He was a true friend from the beginning until the end.

Personally he taught me how to be free and to express myself. To liberate my self from the constraints of the environment, the wishes and obligations placed by others, to find the courage to design my own path and support it.

He taught me that one can be part of a system and at the same time be able to observe how the system functions and to differentiate from it by placing emphasis on oneself. I found that I had to answer clearly the questions: “What do I want?”, “What do I feel now?”, “What do I need for myself?”, “What do I want to create?”, “Where do I want to be?”

To be free, to respect other’s freedom and accept one’s life.

In my most difficult times, when life-changing events happened, he was one of the first to call and ask if I needed something, offering his support and true friendship. Mony had my back and I am grateful and blessed to have been his friend.

Mony was an amazing personality; he dedicated his life to the service of others. At times he could be funny and playful and then dead serious and focused, goal directed and very hard working. He was a fantastic storyteller, a dreamer, a mother, a father, a brother, an actor, a writer, an expert, a scientist, a teacher, a president, an ambassador but most of all a true friend. I will never forget him and he will always be in my heart as friend and as a symbol.

I would like to finish with his words, something that he would say in our trainings.

“Life is a paradox: from the moment we are born we are condemned to die. As Sophocles said it would have been better not to be born, but now it is too late!

The way we live our lives is totally found in this paradox and from which we cannot escape. We are born but we must also die. So we are not sterilized beings, we live in a world full of paradoxes, broken hearts and opposites. But we are able to do whatever is possible so that these paradoxes, in which we have been caught and in which we capture others also, to lead in many different paths or choices and not only to one. Our jail exists in that we see only one choice opening in front of us, while freedom can be expressed as the opening to other possibilities and our human obligation is the rise to acquire freedom.”