

AN ECOSYSTEMIC APPROACH TO PSYCHODRAMA: AESTHETICS AND PRAGMATICS

by

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SUMMARY

This study propagates a move away from the dominant practices of psychodrama with its emphasis on catharsis and insight as the main components of a therapeutic experience.

It proposes a systemic orientation to psychodrama where protagonists may encounter the circularity of the systems in which they are embedded and through this process encounter new meaning.

Case studies are presented which exemplify an evolutionary process of creating what the author refers to as "ecosystemic psychodrama". This ecosystemic psychodrama is based on second-order cybernetics and what is aimed for is that as a therapy it should present something of the balance between the aesthetic and pragmatic views of therapy that Keeney (1983a) describes as complementary.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Psychodrama was offered as a therapeutic technique over six decades ago (Moreno, 1923). Since then many forms of psychodrama have proliferated like the hydra's many heads. It is now for the most part practised from a psychodynamic orientation with catharsis and insight considered to be the main components of a therapeutic experience. "It is built on the 'ventilation theory' which involves the idea that the expression of one's feelings is beneficial, especially of anger and hostility" (D'Amato & Dean, 1988, p. 308).

In this sense psychodrama seems to have become a kind of "Theatre of Expression" in which a purgatory domain is created where protagonists can freely act out their emotions. This is then conceived to be the path back to equilibrium and repose. As such, the focus of therapy is on revelation-through-enactment and the protagonists' full subjective one-sidedness or "truth", is supported and lifted into the realms of theatre and art. The techniques or pragmatics of psychodrama are then conceptualised to be vehicles in the service of revelation and emotional expression.

It is the contention of the author, however, that catharsis and insight are not in themselves sufficient to propel necessary therapeutic change. Rather it is possible that the procedure of psychodrama could evolve into repetitive acts of emotional expression and revelation where protagonists are allowed to create their own epic entitled "More-of-the-Same". As such, the therapy procedure could become part of a protagonist's problem-causing solutions where change remains no more than a phantom noun in this domain of revelation-for-revelation's-sake. What is implied here, following Williams, (1989, p. 77) is that:

if psychodrama is to be used as therapy rather than as revelation, theology, or epic representation (perfectly good uses for psychodrama, mind you, but not necessarily therapy), they may need to take into fuller account the systemic nature of the problem's maintenance, and the ways in which new solutions, including the intervention of therapy itself can lead the client into more trouble than the original problem ever did.

A main postulate within this thesis is that for a procedure to be called "a therapy", new meaning must emerge from it, that is, following Bateson (1972), what is needed is "news of difference... that is a difference that makes a difference". What is called for is orthogonal interaction with a system, since "it is only through creating new realities that people can truly emerge from their difficulties" (Bateson, 1972). What is important in any therapeutic process, therefore, is new learning, yet in psychodrama protagonists are often encouraged to enact their definitions of the problem repeatedly with the expectation that the 'magical' process of catharsis and insight will lead to change.

As such, the author propagates a systemic approach where the focus would no longer only be on expression and revelation but also on "patterns that connect" (Bateson, 1972). Even though protagonists then one-sidedly interpret their distress as produced by the system, what will be striven for is that protagonists would also encounter the circularity of the systems in which they are embedded and through this process encounter "news of a difference" (Bateson, 1972).

Towards this goal, a set of techniques deriving from a systemic orientation is incorporated as further contributions to the field of psychodrama. The stance is taken, following Williams (1989) and Remer (1986), that systemic concepts and techniques, in demanding from the director a more systems-responsive awareness, could enhance therapeutic effectiveness of the psychodrama procedure by providing a more diverse perspective and a more varied repertoire

of interventions.

The proposed techniques have developed out of what has been called the first-order cybernetic approach. What is propagated in this thesis, however, is an 'ecosystemic psychodrama', based on "second-order cybernetics, or rather "both-and" (Auerswald, 1971), in other words, a view that includes both first- and second-order cybernetics as two sides of a complementary pair" (Keeney, 1983a, p. 76).

The idea of complementary pairs is central to this thesis. Cybernetic epistemology proposes that we embrace both sides of any distinction that an observer draws. One way of acknowledging both sides of these distinctions involves viewing them as parts of cybernetic complementarities which can be described as reframings of the distinctions people draw. The distinction then of first- and second-order cybernetics is seen as such a cybernetic complementarity.

"Second-order cybernetics enables us to speak of the autonomy of whole systems, while first-order cybernetics gives us the view of a system in context of the inputs and outputs of various systems" (Keeney, 1983a, p. 100). As Varela (1978) has demonstrated, each view provides a different but complementary perspective. What is therefore proposed in this thesis, is that a therapist should attempt at all times to encompass a vision which enables him or her to see both the autonomy and connection of discrete parts.

Furthermore, these techniques are not seen merely as added tools for application. The point is made repeatedly that they call for a different world view which involves, first of all, moving away from the dominant practices of psychodrama with its main premises reflecting a way of thinking which emphasises the notions of linear causality, reductionism and the search for an "objective truth". Beyond this however, it also involves moving away from the first-order cybernetic position with its emphasis on the therapist as outside agent, as power broker. It entails making the epistemological shift towards a

way of thinking dominated by the notions of circularity, complexity and constructivism - with its emphasis on including the observer in all descriptions.

It is in this sense that the current techniques in psychodrama with their embeddedness in the psychodynamic tradition of catharsis and insight, while they need not be discarded, will also be re-conceptualised to encompass an awareness of the circularity of systems. Also, their function as vehicles for expressible experiencing will be extended to include the endurance of new meaning. It is the opinion of the author that therapists need to embody a cybernetic epistemology of patterns that characterise living and mental processes, "otherwise we treat ourselves and our context of living as though they were heaps and bricks subject to locomotion" (Keeney, 1983a, p. 96)

However, the both-and view propounded in this thesis admits to the fact that at times there may be value in a reductionistic view of the world consisting of discrete parts. In essence the second-order cybernetic position taken in this thesis entails a dialectic (rather than a choice) between the two juxtaposed patterns, first- and second-order cybernetics: (i) the director moving in a reductionistic and specific direction when guided by ecosystem pragmatics and (ii) moving in a holistic direction when concerned with ecosystem aesthetics.

Another theme, then, is that any therapy should be responsive to both pragmatics and aesthetics, that is, the pragmatic should be juxtaposed with the aesthetics. What will be aimed for in ecosystemic psychodrama is that it will, as a therapy, represent something of this balance between the aesthetic and pragmatic views of therapy which Keeney (1983a) describes as complementary.

Introducing a new set of techniques to the field of psychodrama is, therefore, not an attempt to reduce the therapeutic artistry of psychodrama to packageable techniques that can be explicitly taught and evaluated. That would be contrary to the view of the complementary balance between pragmatics and aesthetics. "A concern for technique and pragmatics without any regard for the broader

aesthetic content may lead to vulgarization of technique and pragmatic effort" (Keeney & Sprenkle, 1992, p. 16). Similarly though, what needs to be kept in mind is that, "any attempt to be in the context of art without sufficient technique can lead to free-associative muddle" (Keeney & Sprenkle, 1992, p. 17). Psychodrama is currently at risk to be interpreted to mean a gushing out of unconscious process. This is not art, and these techniques are introduced as a way of avoiding the possibility of a psychodrama emerging as free-associative muddle. Following Keeney (1982, p.431) "art emerges when head and heart becomes part of a cybernetic system capable of ecological self-correction".

What is called for in psychodrama, as in all therapies, is a "green-thumb therapist":

Green-thumb therapists speak of respecting their client's intentions (often unconscious) and see their work as mobilizing the client's own resources. They do not impose packaged cures on them. Furthermore, they see the client as activating the therapist's own growth and evolution (Keeney & Sprenkle, 1982, p.14).

To quote Pirsig in Zen and the Art of Motor Cycle Maintenance:

The real cycle you're working on is a cycle called yourself. The machine that appears to be "out there" and the person that appears to be "in here" are not two separate things. They grow toward Quality or fall from Quality together. (1974, p. 319).

What follows in this thesis has been divided into three sections: in the next section (chapter 2) an overview of the literature is presented, starting with Moreno as the originator, through to contemporary advocates of psychodrama such as Greenberg and Yablonsky, to more recent developments such as proposed by Williams and Remer. Chapter 3 then deals with the core ideas and clinical application of an ecosystemic approach to psychodrama wherein a move

from linearity to circularity, an alternative paradigm for health and pathology, and a Taoist position is advocated. In chapter 4 descriptions of the case studies conducted for the purposes of this study are given in such a way as to exemplify an evolutionary process.

Finally, this thesis can be described as an evolutionary journey towards an alternative way of thinking in which the author chooses psychodrama as her vehicle of choice. It is a journey which takes both the author and the field of psychodrama (and hopefully a few unsuspecting readers) through epistemological labyrinths towards what can be called an ecosystemic psychodrama.

"When you wake to the reality of life, there is not one particular thing which you can point to and say "this is it".

(Shodoka, in Roshi, 1973, p. 38)

"Man lives in the meanings he is able to discern."

(Polanyi and Prosch, 1975, p. 91)

CHAPTER 2

AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Moreno, The Father of Psychodrama

Biographical Background

The origin, development and meaning of psychodrama is intrinsically part of the life history of Dr J.L. Moreno (1889 - 1974), a Rumanian psychiatrist born in 1892 who received his medical degree from the University of Vienna in 1917.

Moreno began to devise a form of role playing between 1909 and 1911, and he became involved in group psychotherapy while still a young man. "In fact he is said to have originated group therapy, and to have coined the term" (Williams, 1989, p. 9).

He maintained that he chose "the course of theatre instead of founding a religious sect, joining a monastery or developing a system of theology" (Moreno, 1947, p. 3). His life and work embodied a confluence of magic, aesthetics and religion. Like the shamanistic healers, he depended on his 'magical' powers of intuition and creativity to fashion a representational dramatic reality within which a protagonist could expel his demons.

In 1921, the date Moreno recorded as the beginnings of psychodrama, he developed a project in Vienna, Die Stegreiftheater (Theatre of Spontaneity). The first actors in his company were children, but gradually they were replaced by adults. Moreno (1923) persuaded these adult actors to play scenes without

prepared scripts or rehearsals but rather to improvise and to act themselves in their chosen roles. They were urged to return to some kind of original, dynamic innocence where striving for pragmatic perfection could be rejected in favour of being-in-the-moment-of-creation. In this way Moreno's Theatre of Spontaneity became for many a place where they could have the opportunity to act out their deepest dreams, frustrations, aspirations, moods of aggression, and love - in brief, the whole range of their human emotions.

This then was the "eureka" experience out of which psychodrama crystallised in 1921 and Moreno began to apply the transcendental ideas and insights gained from expressed spontaneity in the theatre to therapy.

"It is interesting to remember that Moreno lived in Vienna during its 'golden era' (1895-1920), a time when it was one of the cultural capitals of the world" (Blatner & Blatner, 1988, p. 19). He associated with the intellectuals of the city, especially writers and philosophers such as Franz Kafka, the theologian, Martin Buber, and the existential philosopher, Max Scheler.

In 1925 he emigrated to America, changing his name from Levi to J L Moreno, which meant "chief rabbi". He continued to develop psychodrama and group psychotherapy, opening his own private mental hospital in Beacon, New York in 1936. This hospital became the focus for development and training in psychodrama until its closure in 1982.

In America he also met and married a woman called Zerka Toeman, who co-authored volumes II and III of Psychodrama with him. As Zerka Moreno, she had a profound influence on the psychodrama movement.

Moreno favoured a "horizontal" social systems approach to psychodrama, while Zerka Moreno favoured a "vertical" approach that concentrated on primal past experience. This latter cathartic approach provided the training basis for the modern generation of students, and is today considered "classical" (Fox, 1987, p.

23).

Moreno appears to have been a remarkable and striking man, often described as a "dynamo of action, always on the go, full of plots, plans and procedures" (Greenberg, 1974, p. 384). The influence of these characteristics on the mode of therapy he chose to initiate and develop, cannot be overlooked. Psychodrama with its emphasis on action, on spontaneity and on total involvement on the part of the individual, can be seen to be a reflection of Moreno's personality.

"He was not a person to aim low in his therapy, as some of his titles suggests: Words of the Father, or Psychopathology and Psychotherapy of the Cosmos, or Ave Creator" (Williams, 1989, p. 13). The opening words of Who Shall Survive are: "A true therapeutic procedure cannot have less an objective than the whole of mankind" (Moreno, 1953, p. 1). Moreno had intended to do no less than transform human society into a less repressed, more humane world.

Although quite widely celebrated in his lifetime, Moreno never received the recognition for which he yearned.

He is now remembered, if at all, as part of an early classic period of social psychology. This is in sharp contrast to his development of the group therapeutic method of psychodrama, which is still practised in the manner he initiated" (Hare, 1986, p.90).

At most, bits and pieces have been stripped of Moreno's genius, and applied in clinical settings as "action methods", adjunctive techniques to other ways of doing therapy - a point that will be extrapolated upon later in this thesis especially with regard to the field of general systems theory and family therapy.

Moreno taught and wrote prodigiously until his death in 1974. His epitaph was chosen by him in advance: "Here lies the man who brought laughter back into psychiatry."

Essential Philosophy

For Moreno, the conception and birth of psychodrama was inextricably bound up with his overall view of the human condition. From the outset he was deeply concerned with the philosophical and spiritual roots of our social being. Moreno expressed his philosophical stance thus:

My position was threefold: first, the hypothesis of spontaneity-creativity as a propelling force in human progress, beyond and independent from libido and socio-economic motives - which does not deny the fact that they are frequently interwoven, but which does not deny the contention that they are merely a function and a derivative; second, the hypothesis of having faith in our fellowmen's intentions - outside of obedience resulting from physical and legalistic coercion - the hypothesis of love and mutual sharing as a powerful, indispensable work principle in group life; and third, the hypothesis of a superdynamic community based upon these principles which can be brought to realization through newer techniques. (Moreno, 1947a, p. xv).

The techniques he refers to were, of course, those inherent to psychodrama, his proposed vehicle through which this superdynamic community could become less of a dream and more of a fixed reality. The techniques that Moreno consequently developed was based on the notion "that normal everyday behavior is dramatic and that when the ability to play one's everyday roles spontaneously has been curtailed, then the proper means of restoring healthy functioning is through drama" (Landy, 1987, p.72). As such his techniques were in the service of the expressible experiencing of spontaneity. However, "he always sought to transcend mere techniques and to widen the goals and potentials of his work beyond the boundaries of professional discipline" (Blatner & Blatner, 1988, p.15).

In 1947 Moreno wrote:

I suffer from an *idée fixe*... (it) became my constant source of productivity; it

is proclaimed that there is a sort of primordial nature which is immortal and returns afresh with every generation, a first universe which contains all beings and in which all events are sacred. I liked that enchanting realm and did not plan to leave it, ever.

The primordial nature Moreno writes of is a basic attempt to describe a class of meta-archetypal processes, basic patterns of creative action that give impetus to the relationships we call the laws of nature. "This metaphysical intuition reveals a theme that connects his work with Jung, Rank and some esoteric philosophies of the past, especially the neoplatonic ideas within the Kaballah, the Jewish mystical tradition" (Blatner & Blatner, 1988, p. 18).

Moreno intended to remain in contact with this "enchanting domain" because it was his profound belief that the essential creativity available there has the power to enliven our existence, further our growth, and connect us with our spiritual source. He experienced this domain as being close to the essential nature of divinity, of his conceptualisations of God as a creative force. Furthermore, he consistently maintained that the highest value of spontaneity and creativity is a totally spontaneous being, the "godhead". For Moreno the godhead was not just a distant creator but an active principle expressed through the beingness and spontaneity of all creatures.

It became one of Moreno's main contentions (1958) that everyone can portray his own version of God through his actions and so communicate his own version to others. His aim with psychodrama was to help people recover something of their primary selves, their lost godhead. As such he often referred to psychodrama as: "a therapy for fallen gods" (Greenberg, 1974, p. 34).

Moreno had a vision of millions of I-gods co-creating the universe. Leave out the sense of a single godhead and one comes close to the ideas of Gregory Bateson, who regarded the 'self' "as only a small part of a much larger trail and error system which does the thinking, acting and deciding; "it (the self) is... a false

reification of an improperly delineated part of this much larger field of interlocking processes" (Bateson, 1972, p. 331).

"Moreno's concept of the fully functioning person was based on the idea of the multirole personality - a person who was flexible and adaptive, who could act appropriately in whatever situation life served up" (Williams, 1989, p. 12). He conceptualised relative health as the ability to choose different positions of self, to behave according to more than one script, one style - to sing different songs. This, for Moreno, was the spontaneity/creativity that is the central ingredient in the process of psychodrama and of healthy living. "His own definition was that spontaneity is a new response to an old situation or an adequate response to a new situation. "In addition he called it 'a non-conservable form of energy'" (Blatner & Blatner, 1988, p. 64). Moreno was also at pains to point out that spontaneity was an adaptive human characteristic, and that "it was brought forth by of act of will" (Moreno, 1953, p. 37), and that it should not be equated with emotional, irrational and impulsive behaviour.

"His focus on the group, on intense encounter, and on action was much more revolutionary in the psychiatric world of the 1920's and 1930's than it appears to us now" (Williams, 1989, p. 12). "Action was synonymous with interaction; since role flexibility was the goal, and since roles are nearly always interpersonal, psychodrama was established essentially as an interpersonal therapy" (Williams, 1989, p. 13).

Moreno (1946) conceptualised role as the essential "unit of culture". He argued that "role precedes self and that the self is not an inborn, genetic construct but develops socially and emerges from the roles one takes on" (Landy, 1987, p. 71). "The function of the role is to enter the unconscious from the social world and bring shape and order to it" (Moreno, 1946, p. 73).

Moreno did not emphasize the unconscious in his theory; social and behaviour factors were of greater significance. However, because his theory was based so

firmly on artistic, expressive experiencing, he did look at intuitive, non-observable processes. "One of these, 'tele', represented the relationship between client and therapist, and more generally, between all human beings of a group" (Landy, 1987, p. 71). The fundamental process of "tele" was reciprocity.

The following poem which Moreno wrote himself captures his ideas of the concept "tele":

A meeting of two: eye to eye, face to face.
 And when you are near I will tear your eyes out
 and place them instead of mine
 and you will tear my eyes out
 and place them instead of yours
 then I will look at you with your eyes
 and you will look at me with mine. (Fox, 1987, p.4).

Moreno insisted that the individual and the group can never truly be separated except by artificially ignoring one or the other. Moreno (in Guldner, 1982, p. 48) in the third volume of Psychodrama stated: "Husband and wife, mother and child are treated as combine rather than alone, often facing one another and not separate, because separate from one another they may not have any tangible ailment". What Moreno was implying here is that the family is an organisational system and that without understanding the nature of that system one cannot understand or work with family pathology. Thus Moreno approached the individual from the perspective that one cannot be understood outside or with disregard for one's context and this brings him close to the ideas inherent in the school of systems therapy.

These positions taken by Moreno, characterised by a sensitivity for holism and complexity, are motivated by aesthetics, "in the sense that an aesthetic view comes to grip with relations" (Keeney, 1982, p. 450). The argument in this thesis is, however, that a therapy should be responsive to both pragmatics and

aesthetics, in other words, the pragmatic should be juxtaposed with the aesthetics. If pragmatics then can be seen as the "nuts-and bolts of therapeutic technique" (Keeney, 1982, p. 429), the problem with Moreno's striving towards a supradynamic community, a primordial nature and attempting to recover the lost godhead within ourselves, was a pragmatic one - what to do in therapy to attain these aesthetic goals. The difficulty within psychodrama seems to lie in keeping the aesthetics of change married to the pragmatics of change - the specific techniques to bring it about. While Moreno's psychodrama must be given credit for possessing an extensive set of pragmatic methods the question that needs to be asked is whether these techniques, being in the service of expressible experiencing of spontaneity, could in fact propel necessary therapeutic change or did they merely provide a domain for the enactment of old meanings?

Moreno's vision was essentially a theological one (Kraus, 1984) which was translated into therapy and is now practised as such, but can it always be called 'therapy'? In order to answer this question, the next chapter will focus on the pragmatics of psychodrama as vehicles for therapeutic change.

It is the contention of the author that for a procedure to be called a therapy new meanings must emerge from it - that is - following Bateson (1972), what is needed is "news of difference". "News of a difference" is Bateson's axiom (1972) for the idea that differences are the "food of perception": "what we perceive is difference, it is difference that makes a difference."

Contemporary Developments in Psychodrama

The Theatrical Cathedral

Literature on the subject of psychodrama is extensive. It seems to reflect a growing interest in the field as the number of books on psychodrama have increased in the last 20 years (Blatner & Blatner, 1988; Greenberg, 1974; Holmes

& Karp, 1991; Starr, 1977; Williams, 1989, 1991; Yablonsky, 1976). Moreno himself published over 80 articles and books that are an overview of therapeutic strategies in psychodrama (Corsini & Putzey, 1957).

In his books and articles, Moreno explicitly argued implicitly that psychodrama was a therapy allowing clients to work through conflicts by acting them out (1923, 1947, 1958, 1987). "However, since its introduction, there has been a clear dichotomy between believers and non-believers in psychodrama's methods" (D'Amato & Dean, 1988, p. 305).

Staunch advocates of psychodrama, like Greenberg (1974, p. 30), state quite implicitly that

There are ... many people who cannot see their problems clearly because - naturally enough - they are so involved in them as participants. The answer to the question of how to present the problem and how to gain an objective view of it, is psychodrama.

Yablonsky (1976, p. 274) explained that Moreno's goal in psychodrama was to "develop a 'theatrical cathedral' for the release of the natural human spontaneity and creativity that he believed existed naturally in everyone". As such "most psychodramatists today claim that the 'theatrical cathedral' becomes a way to purge oneself of whatever is preventing one from reaching adjustment" (D'Amato & Dean, 1988, p. 306).

Furthermore, "proponents of psychodrama claim it to be different from any other form of group or individual psychotherapy" (D'Amato & Dean, 1988, p. 307). Psychodrama therapists stress that conflicts are not retold, as in traditional therapy, but relived (Greenberg, 1974; Moreno, 1923, 1987). "They suggest that by acting out a difficulty, the problem in living is crystalised. It is re-experienced, and can be dealt with more effectively" (D'Amato & Dean, 1988, p. 307).

It is in this sense that psychodrama is built on the "ventilation theory", which involves the idea that the expression of one's feelings especially of anger and hostility is beneficial (D'Amato & Dean, 1988). Theorists contend that if feelings are regularly ventilated, they come out harmless and reduce tension, but, if repressed, there is a greater chance of explosion of feelings. Therefore the assumption is that through assuming the "sick" role the protagonist can release aggressive tendencies, for instance, and regain a sense of equilibrium and repose.

The rationale behind the various existing techniques in classical psychodrama today then is to create a forum for the deeply felt reliving of relevant past experiences. "Protagonists' perceptions of themselves and others are acted out so that they may experience outwardly the truth they experience inwardly" (Williams, 1989, p. 6). The aim is to find the forms, the colours and the light of what is enduring in people's lives - the very truth of their existence as it appears to them. The act of creating or recreating reality in terms of one's inner vision is conceived to be essentially a self-affirming act, an act of psychological healing.

As Blatner (1973, p. 1) stated: "Through psychodramatic enactment, the impulses and their associated fantasies, memories and projections are made consciously explicit, which serves to express these feelings while simultaneously developing the individual's self-awareness."

As such, the focus of therapy is on revelation-through-enactment and the client's full subjective one-sidedness or "truth" is supported and lifted into the realm of theatre and art. Protagonists are encouraged to discover their inner spirit and to embark on a journey of passion and enchantment within psychodrama's quest for expression of pent-up emotion, for providing a moment of epiphany and soul.

Although many forms of psychodrama have proliferated, it would seem that psychodrama's main orientation today lies embedded within this psychodynamic tradition of catharsis and insight (Blatner & Blatner, 1988). The reason for this can

be greatly attributed to Zerka Moreno who has had a significant influence on the development of the psychodramatic method beyond Moreno's written description of it (Fox, 1987; Williams, 1989). Zerka Moreno went on to play a decisive role in training the modern generation of students in this cathartic form of psychodrama, with its emphasis on insight, that is today considered classical (Fox, 1987).

While current proponents of the psychodramatic tradition still place the emphasis in psychodrama on action and the fact that it is a psychotherapy based essentially on the importance of spontaneous behaviour, some of Moreno's notions on the interdependence of social systems, such as the concept of "tele", seem to have become subordinate to the idea of catharsis and insight as the main components of a therapeutic experience. An overview of the literature on the subject suggests that psychodrama's systemic potential has for the most part remained an understudy in a soulful drama of expressible experiencing, with catharsis and insight as the main actors.

Moreno himself described Zerka Moreno as a "Muse of high order" (in Greenberg, 1974, p. 213) and as far as current practises is concerned, it would seem to be a reflection of her spirit ruling supreme as the higher muse of contemporary psychodrama.

Towards a Theory of System

Williams, a family therapist, is currently propagating a systemic orientation in psychodrama, initiating a movement away from the dominant practice of psychodrama with its main premises embedded in catharsis and insight. He is the author of two books on the subject: The Passionate Technique (1989) and Forbidden Agendas (1991) in which he expands psychodrama's potential by combining it with a systems approach to psychotherapy. In The Passionate Technique he makes the statement that psychodrama's systemic orientation has for the most part remained embryonic and underused:

Most dramas are interactional and systemic at least to the extent that people take part in them and that the protagonist's difficulty is thought to be interactional. This conception is nevertheless short of a thoroughgoing systemic view, though it does leave room for it: simply to populate a therapy with characters does not imply a theory of system (Williams, 1989, p.78).

Williams then goes further by introducing principles from the strategic school of family therapy to psychodrama, taking the stance that "systemic concepts can be used as a way of keeping clients and families in place and avoiding the disruption, randomness and spontaneity, that characterises so much of what goes on in psychodrama" (Williams, 1989, p. 82).

Williams (1989) calls his adaptation of psychodrama "strategic", meaning that the sessions are aimed at highly specific goals rather than at serving as a vehicle for emotional inspiration or generally personal exploration. His purpose with psychodrama is to unmask rigid, dysfunctional interpersonal systems, and psychodrama is his vehicle of choice both for exposing an existing system and for experimenting with new ones.

To be sure, "many psychodramatic techniques have already been adapted to, combined with, or incorporated in family therapy approaches (e.g. statue building, role playing)" (Remer, 1986). "Satir was the first to incorporate Moreno's action sociogram into family therapy, relabelling it family sculpture" (Williams, 1989). Although she was utilising a psychodrama technique, her conceptualisations differed in the sense that the goal of her therapy was not merely catharsis and insight. Rather, Satir (1967) used family sculpting for purposes of highlighting the interdependence of systems. She specifically focused on issues such as closeness and distance of family members, always emphasising recursiveness in social relations.

Another family therapist, Minuchin (1981), also placed high emphasis on

enactment. However, for Minuchin enactment in itself was not the main therapeutic vehicle. He used it more for information gathering purposes - allowing the family to dance in his presence and enact their patterns of communication (Guldner, 1983).

Although psychodrama techniques have been incorporated into family therapy, Moreno is often not recognized or given credit for being the originator. Whitaker is probably one of the few family therapists who gives ample credit to Moreno as having had a significant influence on his own preferred mode of psychotherapy (in Fox, 1987, intro). "It has always been thus, from the days of group therapy on, and a considerable part of Moreno's writings has been devoted to crying 'Thief'" (Williams, 1989, p. 15).

The difference between what Williams (1989, 1991) is propagating and the efforts of Satir and other family therapists, is that instead of taking Moreno's methods and introducing them to the field of family therapy in a piecemeal fashion, he is taking Moreno's psychodrama as a whole and incorporating into it techniques existing within family therapy as contributions to a new way of thinking about psychodrama as a therapeutic method.

Williams is supported in his endeavours by Remer (1985) who has also attempted to illustrate that psychodramatic theory and practise lend themselves directly to systems interventions. It was his belief that "an increase in awareness and more extensive knowledge of both orientations could enhance therapeutic effectiveness by providing a more diverse perspective and more varied repertoire of interventions" (Remer, 1986, p. 21).

Remer wrote several articles on the subject such as "The Use of Psychodramatic Intervention with Families: Change on Multiple Levels (1986)" and "An Approach to Evolving Family Expectations: Social Atom theory" (1985). Like Williams, his main orientation lies within the strategic school of family therapy. Remer (1986) extrapolated on the similarities between the aspects, techniques and

applications of psychodrama to other first- and second order change interventions such as the "therapeutic double bind" (Haley, 1975) and "change by implication" (Hoffman, 1981). It was Remer's contention (1985) that psychodramatic intervention in its entirety and the selective use of its components can offer a unified perspective incorporating theoretical and practical aspects that can address some of the complexities of dealing with a family system.

The development of psychodrama can thus be said to have followed a general course through Moreno's horizontal systems approach, to a vertical approach focusing on catharsis and insight, to more recent attempts to re-introduce systemic concepts not typically Morenian but more reminiscent of the strategic school in family therapy. However, psychodrama is today for the most part still practised from a psychodynamic orientation, with strategic psychodrama as a kind of fringe activity practised by those few proponents of both psychodrama and family therapy.

In the next chapter the author will introduce an ecosystemic approach to psychodrama. This will entail not only going beyond current practices and conceptualisations of psychodrama, but also expanding for the ideas and concepts inherent to strategic psychodrama as propagated by Williams (1989, 1991) and Remer (1985, 1986). In essence, what will be called for is a different worldview - an alternative epistemology.

Perhaps the words of Carl G Jung (in Blatner, 1988, p.29) are relevant at this time, as they capture the hopes and expectations involved in this quest for yet another "new" (third-generational?) psychodrama:

The pioneer in the field has the good fortune to be able to draw valid conclusions from his total experience. The efforts and exhortations, the doubts and uncertainties of this voyage of discovery have penetrated his marrow too deeply to allow the perspective and clarity which are necessary for a comprehensive presentation. Those of the second

generation, who base their work on his groping attempts, the chance hits, the circuitous approaches, the half-truths and mistakes of the pioneer, are less burdened and can take more direct roads, envisage further goals. They are able to cast of many doubts and hesitations, concentrate on essentials, and in this way, map out a simpler and clearer picture of the newly discovered territory. The simplification and clarification rebound to the benefit of those of the third generation who are thus equipped from the onset with an overall chart. With this chart they are enabled to formulate new problems and mark out the boundaries more sharply than ever before.

"NOW the scripture says of Dependant Origination,:

' because this exists, that exists, because this arises that arises '.

But what does this mean? It means that all concrete entities occur in accordance with various conditions, and that all abstract entities are meaningful because of their mutual relations. Accordingly, what is being said here is that all there is no independent substantial entities, i.e. no things existing in themselves."

(Uchiyama Rochi, 1973, p. 102)

CHAPTER 3

AN ECOSYSTEMIC APPROACH TO PSYCHODRAMA: CORE IDEAS AND CLINICAL APPLICATION

An Alternative Epistemology

In this section an approach to psychodrama deriving from an ecosystemic orientation will be introduced. In doing so the author will capitalise on the ideas of Keeney, Maturana and Bateson which the author believes to be highly compatible even though there are some points of contrast. Before embarking on this journey to introduce what may be called an ecosystemic psychodrama, it must be emphasised again that this approach to psychodrama is not merely another theory, but it embodies a different way of thinking - an alternative epistemology.

From Linearity to Circularity

In adopting an ecosystemic perspective to psychodrama, the capacity to shift from a reductionistic to a holistic orientation is essential, as it revolves around a new epistemology based on cybernetics. The term epistemology, following Bateson (1972), refers to the way we know and understand the world around us, which determines how we think, how we act, and how we organise our existence. Bateson (1979) emphasised that mental processes requires circular (or more complex) chains of determination. Accordingly, it is the author's belief that therapists should employ a circular (cybernetic) epistemology rather than a lineal

(cause and effect epistemology).

A lineal epistemology orients the observer to focus on discrete sequences and to hypothesize about causal connections. A circular epistemology orients the observer to focus on recursiveness in the interaction between parts of the system and to hypothesize about holistic patterns. (Tomm, 1984, p. 22).

It is in this sense that a circular epistemology leads to the awareness, that "no action is an island ... All actions are parts of organised interaction" (Keeney, 1982b, p. 7).

For Moreno (in Williams, 1989, p. 13), "action was synonymous with interaction" and inherent to his work was an awareness of the recursiveness of interaction as exemplified through his concept "tele". However, he did not fully extrapolate on the patterns of interaction between parts of a system. Although his theories can be said to closely exemplify a circular epistemology, this way of thinking is not always apparent in the way psychodrama is practised today. Contemporary practitioners follow Zerka Moreno's vertical approach (Fox, 1987) which emphasises catharsis and insight as discrete sequences belonging to the psyche of the individual which are then observed to be the "cause" of therapeutic change. In contrast, the focus in an ecosystemic psychodrama will always be on identifying circular patterns that are characteristic of cybernetic feedback, rather than on the psyche of the individual.

Furthermore, an ecosystemic epistemology entails including the assumption that the director is also part of the pattern that he or she is observing. Thus there is a circular pattern between the director and the circular patterns he or she is exploring in a system. This process has been described as the cybernetics of cybernetics or second-order cybernetics (Keeney, 1982) and more accurately reflects the epistemology proposed by Bateson.

One implication of focusing on identifying circular patterns, is that no attempt is made to rigidly demarcate the circuitry (the psychodrama system) into isolated elements or mechanisms, such as director and protagonist. Rather the focus will be on the wholeness of the system and the psychodrama procedure. Furthermore, the use of nouns describing the therapeutic system in psychodrama (e.g. director, protagonist, auxillary ego) implies a linear epistemology based on metaphors of substance. "Ecosystemic epistemology requires that we undo these substantive substractions and begin seeing patterns of relationship" (Keeney, 1979, p.121). Therefore, to be able to speak of 'ecosystemic psychodrama' (itself an abstraction), descriptions such as 'director' and 'protagonist' will have to be reframed in terms of information and relationship. While it is not necessary to throw away traditional psychodramatic terms in order to describe ecosystemic psychodrama, we need to reframe these terms as references to patterns and not things. "'The patient's symptom' and the 'therapist interventions' are to be seen as communications in an informational network of human relationships" (Keeney, 1979, p.120). As such, the ecological relationship system which emerges in the process of the psychodrama can be seen as the interweaving of two major relational fields whose nodal points are represented by the 'identified patient/protagonist' and the 'identified therapist/director'. The term identified director (I.D.) will be used henceforth to imply that the role of the therapist can be as flexible and indeterminate as the role of the identified protagonist.

To summarise: *Ecosystemic psychodrama will be regarded as a process of creating a new ecosystem. "This new system, which is organised within a context of change, contains two previously distinct systems embodied by the therapist (director) and client (protagonist)" (Searight & Openlander, 1984, p. 55). Within this new ecosystem the director is then seen to be simultaneously an observer of the effects of specific actions and the participant-actor that makes change a possibility.*

Perturbing Ecologies of Ideas

A core assumption in this study is that people behave according to how they frame, define or punctuate the situations in which they are actors, and that such definitions of the situation are generalizations learned through repeated interaction with others. Bateson (1972) noted that, were it not for the fact that behaviour is dependant upon the meaning of events rather than the events themselves, there could be no psychotherapy. It is in this sense that Bateson described psychotherapy as a process in which basic premises underlying perception, cognition and behavior are changed or reorganised. Basic premises can be seen to refer to the ecology of ideas or the "consensual domain" (Maturana, 1975) existing in the system at a specific time. The question then of how people change is essentially how learning - the acquisition of an idea - in one or more individuals leads to change in other individuals so that new ideas and new interactional patterns are evolved. As such, ecosystemic psychodrama will be seen as one possible vehicle to perturb the ecology of ideas in which the particular problem is seen to exist, rather than merely as a vehicle for expressible experiencing or the deeply felt reliving of past experiences.

Within the context of this newly created system, the identified director's task then becomes that of reorganising elements of the protagonist's worldview and interweaving elements of the therapeutic system with the protagonist's system. This blending of perspectives was described by Bateson (1979) in his description of binocular vision - each eye provides a different perspective and the integration of these two views yield the bonus of depth perception:

It is correct (and a great improvement) to begin to think of the two parties to the interaction as two eyes, each giving a monocular view of what goes on and together, having a binocular view in depth. The double view is the relationship. (Bateson, 1972, p. 286).

In psychodrama, this bonus allows the (protagonist) to incorporate new information into his/her worldview which, in turn, permits a new pattern of organisation that does not include a symptom.

The emphasis here is on "new information". Bateson (in Keeney, 1983) emphasised that communicational events are triggered by difference rather than the way forces and impacts shove billiard balls around. Thus what is called for in psychodrama as in all therapies is 'news of a difference', that is, a difference that makes a difference which on one level reports 'news of a difference', but on another level this news commands a transformation such that news of a difference may be passed on to the next sequence or part in the circuit.

Therefore, much more is entailed here than just supporting the protagonist's full subjective one-sidedness and lifting it into the realm of theatre and art with the expectation that the act of recreating reality in terms of one's own vision is essentially an act of psychological healing. It is the double view which allows for new information, a perturbation of an ecology of ideas so that restructuring may occur. This view of the psychodrama process incorporates the awareness that the intervention of therapy itself can lead the client into more trouble than the original problem ever did, because it takes into account the systemic nature of the problem's maintenance, always including the observer in the observed.

A Paradigm for Health and Pathology

In contrast to other psychodramas, the therapist will not attempt to convert the client to the therapist's paradigm of healthy functioning. The idea on which psychodrama is currently built, as mentioned earlier, is "the ventilation theory", that is, that the expression of one's feelings is beneficial and that through assuming the "sick" role the protagonist can, for example, release aggressive tendencies and

regain a sense of equilibrium and repose. An ecosystemic approach, however, is a constructivist one in which the position is taken that it is "simply not possible to achieve an 'objective' view of the world, because observations will always be influenced by the perspective of the observer" (Atkinson & Heath, 1986, p. 9). "The acceptance of this position that there is no correct worldview allows the therapist to participate with the (group) within their own paradigm" (Searight & Openlander, 1984, p.2). Thus, in ecosystemic psychodrama there will not be an attempt to use psychodrama to rectify some hypothetical malfunctioning in the psyche of the problem carrier. Questions pertaining to the appropriate unit of treatment, diagnosis and the nature of pathology can never, from a constructivist point of view, be resolved by appealing to a supposedly objective system which lies before us. "There is no objective system; there are only the various distinctions that different observers draw" (Atkinson & Heath, 1986, p. 11).

Varela (in Atkinson & Heath, 1986, p. 13) summarises:

When you realise that whatever you see reflects your properties, instead of putting so much intent, so much energy, investing so much, in a particular content, you turn your back and focus on your capacity to do such a thing as distinction. So the capacity to compute a reality becomes much more interesting than the content of the reality. Not so much intent thus on the something, but on the process of doing what we do to arrive at something.

In the context of therapy, questions of change become problematic whenever we focus "our intent on the something" and attempt to specify what should change - the "it" to be changed. Cybernetic epistemology reframes our orientation by proposing that questions of change are always about cybernetic process. What this entails is that change should be regarded as one half of a more encompassing cybernetic complementarity, stability/change. Thus it would be incomplete to imagine change without stability in cybernetic systems. The cybernetic view then is to see all requests for change as requests for change and stability.

Keeney (1982, p. 119) maintained that "fluctuations, changes and differences of events maintain the sameness and stability of their recursive organisation. This is what Prigogine (1978) referred to as 'order through fluctuation'. The essential aspect of the notion of 'order through fluctuation' is that at any point in time, the systems functions in a particular way with fluctuations around that point. "This particular way of functioning has a range of stability within which fluctuations are dampened and the system remains more or less unchanged" (Dell & Goolishian, 1981, p. 179). In order to witness a new dynamic range of functioning ("change") any amplified fluctuations in a system has to exceed that existing range of stability. Change then involves change of change - change of how a systems habitual process of change leads to stability.

This idea that all systems, whether individuals or families, achieve stability through processes of change also has implications for the process of pathology. According to Keeney (1982) these patterns of organisation begin to suggest how pathology or symptomology contribute to the achievement of stability through change. In other words, symptoms can be seen to be a sort of "escalating sameness" (Keeney, 1982, p. 123). This view of symptomology suggests that any patterns of behaviour that can be characterised as an effort towards maximising or minimising a variable, rather than diversity, are pathological. Therefore, a monotonous recycling of interactional sequences signifies pathology, whereas a self-corrective organisation of diverse sequences is more characteristic of ecosystemic health. This formulation characterises the healthy individual as an integrated, whole unity of diverse differences. Consequently a whole, healthy integrated person is not necessarily one who can be called "symptom free". "For these people, health and pathology are sides of a cybernetic complementarity" (Keeney, 1982, p. 126).

With regard to whole families, Whitaker (1979) has described healthy families as contexts wherein role positions constantly shift, enabling the "scapegoat" function to rotate. Although Moreno's concept (1953) of the fully functioning person was also based on the idea of the multirole personality, he did not view

health and pathology as sides of a cybernetic complementarity in the sense that health for him was necessarily symptom-free. He conceptualised health as the ability to choose different positions of the self, to be flexible and adaptive and health for him was equated with spontaneity. (Blatner & Blatner, 1988). It is in this sense that the basic principle of "ecosystemic psychodrama", like the basic principle of psychodrama itself, will remain that of spontaneity. However, conceptualisations of it will also have to be more systems-sound and systems-responsive.

An 'ecosystemic psychodrama' suggests a further approach to spontaneity - one based on cybernetics. "There are major and minor, gradual shifts through which all social atoms, such as the family, must pass. A change in constructs or patterns - spontaneity - is needed" (Williams, 1989, p.83). "Spontaneity (then) is the capacity to take up adequate new roles within a system; it is made possible when the person or whole system has access to certain sorts of information, certain definitions of itself that become "news of a difference" (Williams, 1989, p. 122).

A Taoist Position

When we think in terms of ecology, we encounter the Taoist position that organisms heal themselves if not interfered with. Since the whole ecology is recursively structured and self-corrective, any disturbed part will adjust if we leave it alone. The Taoist position, which attends to the whole ecology of cybernetic process, suggests that psychodrama from an ecosystemic approach should focus on how to allow an individual, a family or a system to achieve its own adjustments. The challenge for the identified director within a psychodrama is to facilitate a domain of differential discourse by joining or structurally coupling (Maturana, 1975) the protagonist system in such a way that will promote appropriate self-correction,

or in psychodrama terms, in such a way that the protagonist's system has access to spontaneity. "The avenue to therapeutic change is initiating an alternative form of higher order self-corrective feedback. This alternative self-corrective change attempts to generate a more adaptive way of maintaining the whole organisation of the system" (Keeney, 1983a, p.163).

This brings us to a consideration of the paradigm of autonomy as propagated by Maturana (1975). The paradigm of autonomy sees all living systems as organisationally closed and recursive systems, whose products are internally generated via the processes of self-reference, self-regulation and self-transformation. This emphasis on autonomy led Maturana and Varela to develop the theory of autopoiesis (Zeleny, 1980, p.45). Autopoiesis refers, as Zeleny and Pierre (in Jantsch & Waddington, 1976, p. 150) suggest, to the self-creation characteristics of all living organisms. It is this recursive self-production which constitutes the organizational closure of the living system.

Autopoietic organisation can be defined as a:

network of interrelated components producing processes such that the components through their interaction, generate recursively the same network of processes which produced them, and thus realise the network of processes as an identifiable unit in the space in which components exists. The product of an autopoietic system is necessarily always the system itself. (Jantsch & Waddington, 1980, p.151)

If the organisation of an autonomous system is closed, where does this leave the identified director? Does this mean that an identified director cannot interact with the system's wholeness? Varela (1976, p.28) provides an answer:

An observer or therapist can interact with a system by poking at it, throwing things at it and doing things like that, in various degrees of sophistication. These interactions represent perturbations of the stability of the whole

system, which in response, will compensate or will not compensate.

The implication of this is clear: ecosystemically speaking, the identified director of a psychodrama cannot by acting externally on a system specify what happens in that system.

Since we, as living systems, are structure-determined entities, then what ever happens to us is determined by our structures and is never determined by what ever we encounter in our medium. It may be triggered by perturbations but not determined by them. (Kenny, 1989, p.40).

Maturana therefore came to the conclusion that "there is no such thing as information" (Dell, 1985, p.6) and here he departs from Bateson's notion that "information... is a difference which makes a difference" (Bateson, 1972, p. 453). For the purposes of this study the idea of information will not be discarded. It will, however, not be regarded as a unilateral tool, but merely as a vehicle of perturbation. Within an ecosystemic approach to psychodrama one would always have to be aware not to fall into the "King Midas mindtrap" and to believe that just as King Midas could cause objects to behave as he wanted them to (i.e to turn them into gold), bringing to the client system 'news of difference', that is a difference that makes a difference, one could specify how a client system will behave. Maturana admonishes: "so called 'information' does not and cannot instruct the behavior of a living system. What we typically label as information is merely something which we observe to be interacting with the system" (Dell, 1985, p.6).

In essence then, the conducting of psychodramas from an ecosystemic epistemology departs radically from current practices of it precisely because it is Taoistic - non-purposeful, non-controlling and process-orientated. One does not purposively seek information in any strict programmed format, but one becomes receptive to the experience. In other words, the experience happens instead of being made to happen. Bateson (1972) refers to this "sense or recognition of the

fact of circularity" as "wisdom". Maslow (in Keeney, 1979, p, 126) describes "Taoistic knowing" as a "receptive openness.... a finding of order rather than an ordering". Thus what is called for is the wu-wei of the Taoists or the doing of non-doing which is a call for a higher form of action (Keeney, 1983a). Therapy therefore becomes a context in which a system finds its own adjustments. This relates to Moreno's (1923) ideas originally developed out of "Die Stegreiftheater", where striving for perfection was rejected in favour of being in the moment of creation. However, psychodrama has come a long way since its conception in Vienna and much of its original, dynamic innocence seems to have been lost in the process of striving for catharsis and insight. In a way it is possible to say that this study is about reincarnating Moreno back to psychodrama but "adding" to his work - the cybernetic breath of life.

Implications for the Pragmatics and Aesthetics of Psychodrama

A further argument in this thesis is that a psychodrama based on ecosystemic epistemology arises from a position that is responsive to issues of both pragmatics and aesthetics. What will be strived for in ecosystemic psychodrama is that it will as a therapy represent something of the balance between the aesthetic and pragmatic views of therapy which Keeney (1983) describes as complementary.

Before proceeding, any further, it is necessary to define pragmatics and aesthetics in order to clarify its specific meaning within the context of this study. Pragmatics will be seen, following Keeney (1982, p. 429), as the "practical consequences, or as applied to therapy, the behavioural nuts-and-bolts of therapeutic technique." Distinct from directly relating to what is useful and practical, an aesthetic view is more abstract and "comes to grips with relations: structure, context, schemata, similarity/dissimilarity, consonance/dissonance" (Keeney, 1982, p. 430).

However, "polarising pragmatics and aesthetics as if they were separate

competing views rather than focusing on their differences and relationship is the pragmatic error" (Allman, 1982, p. 415). The sides of the distinction, aesthetics versus pragmatics, following Varela (in Keeney, 1982, p. 431) are to be regarded as "not one, not two". Therefore the basic assumption will be that an aesthetics of psychodrama should embrace and conceptualise technique. Or put differently - the pragmatics, or nuts and bolts of therapeutic technique, should be juxtaposed with the aesthetic.

Such an epistemology, following Keeney and Sprenkle (1982), would necessarily have to embody two identifiable patterns: (a) the identified director moving in a reductionistic and specific direction when guided by ecosystem pragmatics and (b) the moving in a holistic (and more ambiguous) direction when concerned with ecosystem aesthetics. "The way in which such therapy is integrated would depend upon the form of dialectic between these two juxtaposed patterns" (Keeney & Sprenkle, 1982, p. 3). In the previous section the question was posed whether the current techniques or pragmatics of classical psychodrama, in so far as they are conceptualised to be in the service of catharsis and insight, could in fact propel necessary therapeutic change, that is, meet the aesthetic goal. In other words, do contemporary practices of psychodrama exemplify the complementary balance between aesthetics and pragmatics? In order to answer this question, the author will now focus on the pragmatics of psychodrama as proposed by Moreno and his contemporaries.

Structure and Elements of Classical Psychodrama

Moreno (in Holmes & Karp, 1991, p. 8) described five basic elements (or "instruments", as he often referred to them) of psychodrama:

- The protagonist - who is to be the focus of a psychodrama, being that member

of the group to explore their personal issues in a particular session.

- The director - who, in collaboration with the protagonist, directs and facilitates any individual drama. This individual is usually considered to be the therapist.
- The auxiliary egos - members of the group (or co-therapists) who play significant individuals from the protagonist's life, thus helping the enactment of the drama.
- The audience - consisting of other group members not directly involved in the enactment. The aim is that individuals, even if not directly involved in the drama, should remain actively and positively involved in the process and gain both enjoyment and benefit from the session.
- The stage - in most cases simply a space in a room large enough to allow some physical movement, although at Beacon, Moreno built a more complex theatrical structure, which allowed the use of different stage levels of the enactment.

A classical psychodrama consists of three stages:

- (i) warm-up - which involves the establishment of a context which fosters spontaneity,
- (ii) enactment - during which the protagonist's problem are acted out and finally
- (iii) sharing - when supportive feedback is given.

Psychodramatists consider each of these as essential in completing the psychodramatic process.

Major Techniques of Psychodrama

The following are some of the techniques in the service of the expressible experiencing of spontaneity:

Role Reversal

The rationale behind the use of this technique is that the protagonist will gain insight into the interactions that he/she partakes in. Insight is then regarded, following the psychodynamic tradition, as a sufficient prerequisite for change. Goldman and Morrison (1984, p.18) suggested five more specific purposes for role reversal:

- (1) At the simplest level, role reversal is necessary to obtain information known only to the protagonist.
- (2) Role reversal is also used when it is necessary for the protagonist to understand and feel the sensibility of the other.
- (3) It is used to help the protagonist see self through the eyes of the other, thus leading to awareness of the effects of one's own behaviour and being.
- (4) It can be used to accelerate protagonists' spontaneity and free up their thinking.
- (5) Finally, it can be used when the protagonist is the only one in a position to be able to answer a question about the self.

Doubling

This is a technique in which the protagonist is joined by another member of the group, who becomes an active participant in the enactment. The double's role is to function as a support in presenting the protagonist's position and feeling. Through his/her empathic bond, the double is able to express thoughts and feelings that the protagonist is repressing or censoring in the psychodrama" (Holmes & Karp, 1991, p. 11).

Doubling can be done by dramatising feelings, verbalising non-verbal communications, physical words and gestures, contradicting the feelings, defending against the feelings or self-observation - to name just a few possibilities.

Surplus Reality

Zerka Moreno (in Yablonsky, 1976, p. 45) defines surplus reality as those times in a psychodramatic enactment when scenes and events are dramatised "that have never happened, will never happen or can never happen". Thus, what is called for is our imagination. The imagination represents that dimension of our lives which is our surplus reality. "We are kings, we are slaves; we are again children, we exist ten years in the future. The invitation to utilize our imagination, to say, '...if...', is the essence of play and psychodrama" (Blatner, 1973, p. 124). The ability to experience these scenes (with the associated fears, emotions, fantasies and wishes) is regarded by most authors on the subject (Blatner & Blatner, 1988; Fox, 1987; Holmes & Karp, 1991;) as one of the magical strengths of the psychodramatic process.

Mirroring

This is a process during which the protagonist is replaced by another member of the group, allowing him or her to stand aside and watch the drama unfold. The aim with this technique is to encourage in the protagonist a more objective awareness of him/herself in interactions with others with the expectation that this could lead to change in interactional patterns.

Behind-your-back-technique

In this technique the protagonist leaves the room psychologically by turning his

back to the group. For all intents and purposes he/she is out of the room and overhearing the group discuss him. This technique provides the protagonist with feedback. The behind-your back technique can also be reversed. The audience is asked to turn their backs to the protagonist, to act as if they were really out of the room. "This method, like the previous one, is based on the idea that freedom of expression may come from an absence of visual stimulation" (Starr, 1977, p. 130).

Soliloquy

The protagonist is instructed to walk up and down and talk to himself out loud, in order to clarify his feelings. If the protagonist has difficulty expressing his emotions clearly, a double may be brought in.

Future Projection

This technique involves having the protagonist compose and enact a scene depicting a meaningful situation he expects to take part in some time in the future. Typically the director will pose the question to the protagonist, "how do you see yourself in 5 or 10 years time? The idea is that the protagonist may discover that as George Bernard Shaw once said, "There is only one thing worse than not getting what you want - and that is getting what you want!". As such the rationale is that through future projection the protagonist can gain a more realistic approach, and begin to portray scenes in which he can achieve some successes based on his own potential.

The Auxiliary Chair

An empty chair can be used to represent the significant other in an enactment. The protagonist is asked to visualize the person he is interacting with as sitting in

the chair and at times may role-reverse with the imaginary person by exchanging seating positions. The empty chair usually serves to make interactions with others not present more concrete.

The Magic Shop

The director has the group imagine a small shop on stage. The shopkeeper may be played by a trained auxiliary ego, a member of the group, or even by the director himself. The group is told that on the shelves of this magic shop all manner of wonderful qualities can be found. Anyone who wishes to buy may come into the shop. The shopkeeper then explains that he can only accept in barter some quality of the customer's life or personality which he would be willing to sacrifice. Once a tentative bargain has been struck the protagonist is encouraged to try out his newly purchased qualities, or to see how he gets along without the quality he has just given up.

The magic shop is most often used during the warming-up of a group as well as for purposes of clarifying goals and examining the consequences of one's choices.

Guided Fantasy

This refers to a wide variety of exercises in which the director has the group members imagine general themes, the details of which are filled in by each individual's unique imagery. This technique has also been called the directed daydream method.

Sociometry

Moreno's (1946) techniques of sociometry developed out of a search for ways

of measuring the form and structure of relationships in groups.

Sociometry provides data on the forms of an individual's roles and relationships. At its simplest this approach relies on asking members of the social grouping under investigation to indicate their relationship to each other. These measures may be committed to paper in a diagrammatic form (a sociogram) or expressed by the individuals arranging themselves in positions symbolizing their relationships (an action sociogram). More complicated interconnections and patterns can be demonstrated and the group asked to explore alternatives in order to recognize sources of conflict and misunderstanding and modify them. The basic assumption is that the individual involved in this process should make gains in social competence from the insight he gains through this experience.

Closure

Closure involves the process whereby the dramatic enactment of the protagonist's conflicts and life situations is brought full circle. Psychodrama sessions often start with present issues and then explore recent experiences of the protagonist. As the drama progresses, scenes from the past are enacted, going back into childhood. "In the later stages of the psychodrama, the process may be completed by moving forward in time and repeating the scenes in the present that prompted the psychodrama, but now in a version informed and alerted by the emotional and cognitive experiences of the psychodrama" (Goldman & Morrison, 1984).

"More of the same" or "news of a difference?"

The author has repeatedly made the assertion that for a procedure to be called a therapy new meaning must emerge from it, that is, "news of a difference". As the aesthetic goal is then to perturb ecologies of ideas within an ecosystemic

psychodrama, it is the author's contention that the current pragmatics, or "nuts and bolts" of psychodrama technique, is inadequate in meeting this goal. To be sure "Any psychodrama, or indeed any events of one's life, are capable of creating a context for adventure and discovery wherein new ideas may emerge. But there is little in the psychodrama method that ensures the endurance of these ideas" (Williams, 1989, p. 128). Insofar as these techniques are conceptualised to be merely in the service of catharsis and insight, the psychodrama procedure is at risk of merely leading to the re-enactment of old meanings. A domain could be created where more-of-the-same problem-causing solutions are exalted through enactment. Thus the protagonists may find themselves in a space where gushing out of emotions becomes the applauded norm with little change within the system they find themselves in, precisely because this emotional display may have been part of the original problem-causing solution. This is why a systemic orientation is propagated here. It is deemed irresponsible and lacking in essential wisdom to embark along with the protagonist in a journey where subjective one-sidedness is supported without consideration of all the levels of influence within a system. Thus psychodrama may lose itself in art and the wonders of imagination, epiphany and soul while systemic influences become a mere side-show in a purgatory drama with its focus on the individual as the main attraction.

This does not mean that the current techniques of psychodrama need to be discarded. They are perfectly valid contributions to a psychotherapy procedure. However what is called for is a reconceptualisation of these pragmatics in order to encompass an awareness of the circularity of systems so that protagonists can, through this process, encounter "news of a difference".

Thus conceptualisations of existing techniques will have to be reframed to include references to pattern and relationship. No longer will these techniques be seen to be in the service of catharsis and insight only, but rather in the service of ecosystemic principles emphasising "patterns that connect". Their focus will shift from the individual to include the system of which the protagonist forms part, including an awareness of the circularity and recursiveness of interactions. From

an ecosystemic perspective, the director will not view these techniques as instruments of instructive interaction, but as part of an ecology of which the director is simultaneously a participant-observer. Therefore these techniques will be not conceptualised as tools for imparting "objective" truth with the assumption that this "insight" will lead to change. Rather they will viewed as be part of a creative unfolding of the process of therapy where all truths are co-constructed by the participants.

In short, the existing pragmatics of psychodrama, in as far as they are reconceptualised to encapsulate a worldview which emphasises the notions of circularity, holism and constructivism, can be integrated within an ecosystemic approach. An illustration of their practical application within an ecosystemic approach will be extrapolated upon in the section dealing with the case studies.

Introducing Transforms

The author now wishes to introduce a further set of techniques, deriving from a systemic tradition, to the field of psychodrama - including those suggested by Willaims (1989) and Remer (1986). It is the contention of the author that these techniques could enhance the potential of psychodrama to deal with systems in a holistic and circular manner.

When considering a new set of techniques to introduce to the field of psychodrama, the author prefers to use the word "transforms" when referring to techniques as it adequately captures the idea of how a therapist shapes his response to the system that he treats. Keeney (1983) has used the term "transform" to describe a range of communication patterns which the therapist introduces to the client system as a means of perturbing an existing set of ecology of ideas. Transforms that may prove valuable to the field of psychodrama include

therapist contributions such as reframing (Hoffman, 1981); circular questioning (Selvini-Palazolli, Boscolo, Cechin & Prata, 1980); prescribing the symptom (Haley, 1976; Weeks & L'Abate, 1982); restructuring, (Minuchin, 1981); and externalization (White, 1984).

Introducing these transforms is, however, not an attempt to reduce the therapeutic artistry of psychodrama to packageable techniques that can be explicitly taught and evaluated. That would be contrary to the view of the complementary balance between pragmatics and aesthetics. Regarding the distinction between aesthetics and pragmatics as complementary helps us avoid being split between the choice of free-associative muddle and technique untempered by wisdom. As Bateson (1972, p. 44) notes: "Rigor alone is paralytic death, but imagination alone is insanity". In psychodrama, as in all therapies, the aesthetic quest necessarily involves a recursive dance between rigour and imagination. And because psychodrama may be at risk at losing itself in the darker spirals of the imagination, these techniques are introduced with the reminder that "We need to use our whole brain - not right, not left" (Keeney, 1982, p. 431).

Reframing

One of the most potent ways of perturbing consensual ideas is providing an alternative conceptualisation of the problem behaviour. This is called a reframing (Hoffmann, 1981) or a redefinition (Andolfi et al, 1983) of the problem and should fit the known facts as well or better than the original understanding of the problem.

Remer (1986, p.23) notes: "Two requirements of the psychodramatic process always reframe the problem: the insistence on acting in the here-and-now and the use of family members as auxiliary egos to portray the situation". The shift to the present tense - 'I am entering the room. It is dark' - reframes the situation as one to be handled now. The inclusion of others, as in an action family sociogram (Goldman & Morrison, 1984), reframes the problem as a shared family one, not

that of the protagonist (identified patient) alone. By including auxiliary egos as system members in the action the definition of the problem can be extended to include the interactive patterns of others involved in the problem's maintenance. Instead of an individual as problem carrier, the problem may be reframed as a shared family one.

Circular questioning:

The Milan Associates introduced the circular interview as a means for conducting a systemic investigation of the changes and differences in family relationships which recursively support dysfunctional interactions or symptoms in the family (Fleuridas, Nelson & Rosenthal, 1986, p. 113).

"The aim of circular questioning is to fix the point in the history of the system when important coalitions underwent a shift and the consequent adaptation to that shift became problematic for the system" (Penn, 1982, p. 272) or in psychodrama terms, when 'access' to spontaneity became a problem.

Circular questions can also be an intervention in and for themselves. "Responding to the circular questions compels (protagonists) to experience the circularity of their family system, the family "current" if you will, and abandon more linear stances" (Penn, 1982, p. 271).

Circular questioning in psychodrama, for the most part, can take place within the interview-in-role which precedes the actual enactment of the protagonist's drama, and as such it may set the stage for recursive awareness. While psychodrama can take place within a family context, it is more often the case that the protagonist is the only member of the family present at the enactment. Circular questions can be directed at the protagonist who can either answer for himself or role reverse as different members of his family. Alternatively a double or auxiliary ego may be brought in.

Williams (1989) is one of the main exponents of this systems/psychodrama hybrid technique, the "circular" interview-in-role. In warming up a protagonist, he confronts him with a series of questions to facilitate his shift of identity and to bring out important aspects of the interpersonal system. He might ask, for example, "How would your mother feel if you actually passed the exam? How would your father react to your mother's pride in you? How will you react to your father's jealous anger about your mother's pride in you?" (Williams, 1989). Within the dramas, everything the protagonist does is followed up by an exploration into what others do, think and feel in response, in order to establish the circular causal system.

An advantage of using circular questions in a psychodrama is that this sort of questioning can save unnecessary role reversals and accelerate the warm-up in the family system.

Penn (1982, p. 273) described nine categories of circular questioning:

- Category 1: Verbal and analogical information

The director utilises the cue words used by the protagonist to describe his/her problem and transposes it into statements about relationships and differences in relationships, eg:

Who worries most when your mother is depressed?

Who communicates least in the family?

- Category 2: Problem definition

The first question, "What is the problem in the family now?" secures one end of the arc that will later connect the problem to a time in the past, usually the

beginning of the problem.

- **Category 3: Coalition alignments in the present**

These questions discern the coalition alignment around the problem in the present: Who is most upset, helpless etc. when (problem definition)?

- **Category 4: A different sequence**

In this category circular questions are asked to find out what different members do when the problem occurs. The rationale is to discover how the family's solution to the problem has in itself become a problem.

- **Category 5: Questions of classification and comparison**

These questions elicit information about relationship changes in the family.

Examples:

Who is closest to your mother now, who next, who next. etc.

Was this always true, was it ever different, or, is it different now?

- **Category 6: Agreement questions**

Agreement questions provide an opportunity for the identified director to rank coalitions in terms of their strength and priority.

Who in the family agrees with you that your sister is closer to your brother?

Who would agree with you that your brother takes your father's side when there is an argument?

- **Category 7: Gossiping in the presence**

These questions are used to obtain additional triadic information. It involves asking one member of the family to comment on the relationship of the other two. In the case of psychodrama where other members of the family are not present the protagonist can either role-reverse and answer his own questions as the other members of his family, or a double may be brought in.

- **Category 8:**

Sub-system comparisons both between sub-systems and within sub-systems draw finer distinctions about relationships. A special category of sub-system comparisons are questions that begin with if: "If Mary left home, would things be better between you and your husband?"

"These questions test the consequences of change and therefore have exceptional interventional powers of their own" (Penn, 1982, p. 274).

- **Category 9: Explanation Questions:**

Explanation questions illuminate former past relationships in the family: What is your explanation for the (problem definition)?

Prescribing the symptom

"Prescribing the symptom, is what the name implies, doing more of what is punctuated as problematic" (Remer, 1986, p. 23). Prescribing the symptom can perturb the ecology of ideas around what the symptom does for the system, how it is self-defeating and/or what needs to be done to give up the symptom. Concretising situations, which is the term used most frequently for the acting out of a metaphor produced by the protagonist or the director, particularly with exaggeration, can produce the effects of prescribing the symptom.

Restructuring

"Restructuring the family's physical relationships in a session as a representation of a deeper restructuring of the family's relationship to each other in other situations is a technique employed by Minuchin." (Remer, 1986, p. 25) Similar ends can be accomplished in psychodrama though the use of role reversal with doubling or physical manipulation of the scene elements by the director.

Minuchin's techniques (1974) of challenging family structure - boundary making and unbalancing are particularly suited to the psychodramatic method. "Boundary making techniques are aimed at the psychological distance between family members and also at the duration of interaction within a significant holon (spouse, parental or sibling)" (Guldner, 1983, p. 150). "Minuchin views the process of unbalancing as changing the hierarchical relationship of the members of a sub-system" (Guldner, 1983, p.151). These aims can be achieved in psychodrama through the process of careful scene establishment which can concretise both psychological distance and hierarchical relationships within a family.

Externalization:

White (1984) has been responsible for developing a technique called "externalizing the problem". "What is basically entailed is a linguistic separation

of the distinction of the problem from the personal identity of the client" (Tomm, 1989, p. 54). "The reason this process is so healing is that it is an effective antidote to an inadvertent but ubiquitous pathologizing process in human interaction, i.e. negative labelling" (Tomm, 1989, p. 56).

White's technique (1984) of externalizing the problem, which makes careful use of language in a therapeutic conversation, can be extended in psychodrama to include externalization through enactment. A client can interact with the externalized problem, as an object or an auxiliary ego, through the use of drama. For example, White's experience with children with encopresis led him to invent the label of "Sneaky-poo" as a way of talking about the problem as if it was distinct and separate from the child (Tomm, 1989). Sneaky-poo can, as it may, be "further" externalized through psychodrama by choosing an auxiliary ego to play the role of Sneaky-poo and allowing the child to enter into a dialogue with Sneaky-poo. This form of enactment distinguishes the problem as Sneaky-poo, rather than the child and complications of criticism, blame and guilt are significantly reduced.

The value of this technique lies in the fact that blame tends to restrain and guilt tends to constrain and reducing their prevalence is liberating. It opens space to explore new efforts in problem solving.

White (1987) also describes how it is possible to externalize schizophrenia as an illness, then externalize aspects of the "in-the-corner" (that is, the cluster of negative symptoms) that are coached by schizophrenia, then externalize the specific habits that support the life style, and finally to externalize the pathologising assumptions and presuppositions upon which these habits depend.

In other words, the process of externalizing the problem is progressive. It is not a static reframe of the problem; it is a continuous process of constructing a 'new reality' in the ongoing therapeutic dissection of the problem, 'cutting it away' from the patient's sense of self as a person.

(Tomm, 1989, p. 56) .

The idea is that once the overall problem and specific components of it has been externalized, patients are invited to notice opportunities to take action against the externalized problem.

Through externalizing the problem through enactment and the use of auxiliary egos, patients are invited to become selective observers of themselves within the psychodrama and to invite group members to participate in noticing their constructive actions and to recognize their own personal agency in making healing choices for their lives.

"From first- to second-order cybernetics"

While the techniques proposed are by no means exhaustive, they demonstrate that systems interventions can lend themselves to and contribute directly to psychodramatic practice.

It is important to note again that these techniques have developed out of what has been called "first-order cybernetics". Although the techniques themselves can be incorporated into an "ecosystemic psychodrama", conceptualisations of them will differ to include the view taken in this thesis of first- and second-order cybernetics as two sides of a complementary pair.

It is in this sense that this thesis departs from Williams' (1989) and Remer's (1986) strategic psychodrama in as far as it propagates a first-order cybernetic stance only. First-order cyberneticians often conceptualise techniques as a purposeful intention to manipulate another. However, within an ecosystemic approach the view is taken that "conscious purpose, with its aim of achieving specific goals, cannot always take into account the whole ecological context and that this cognitive deficiency leads to ecological disconnections" (Keeney & Sprenkle, 1982, p. 17).

Therefore, in contrast to Williams (1989) and Remer (1986) who focus on specific goals, the ecosystemic position is not one associated with instructive interaction, that is, conscious purpose and control. Rather it "makes purpose an emergent from the process of creation" (Allman, 1981, p. 419).

Bateson (1972, p. 146) admonishes:

Mere purpose rationally unaided by such phenomena as art, religion, dream and the like is necessarily pathogenic and destructive of life;... its virulence springs specifically from the circumstance that life depends upon interlocking circuits of contingency, while consciousness can see only such short arcs of such circuits as human purpose may direct.

From an ecosystemic point of view, it is not possible for one person to influence another person in a direct or lineal way (Dell, 1985; Hoffman, 1985). All that the identified director can do is to present ideas (verbal and through action) which could perturb the consensual domain as it exists at any one time within the therapeutic system. This does not mean that the techniques developed from within a first-order cybernetic position cannot or should not be used, but that it is the therapist's responsibility to ensure that techniques are not in any way manipulative but adequately coupled to the ecology of which they are part. A therapist who uses these techniques while seeing himself as a unilateral power broker or manipulator is dealing with partial arcs of cybernetic systems and cannot fully consider the whole ecology of problems they attempt to alter.

Maturana (in Dell, 1985, p. 17) explains that

if we are able to couple ourselves to objects in such a way that we can bring about a predicted or desired outcome, then we have the psychological experience of causality... The psychological experience of "causality", however, can never entail instructive interaction.

Interactions consist (and can only consist of) fit, match, or coupling. To believe that a part of the system can control the whole is what Bateson (1972) called "epistemological error" and what Maturana (1975) would call the "myth of instructive interaction".

Therefore a therapist cannot, from an ecosystemic point of view, conceptualise these techniques as being in the service of instructive interaction or conscious purpose. The therapist can only allow the techniques to flow with the process of creation within a balance between pragmatics and aesthetics and ensure adequate coupling, fit and match with the ecology of which he or she is part.

Williams and Remer, coming from a first-order cybernetic position, emphasised the homeostatic and adaptive properties of systems. Williams (1989) assumes that protagonists have such very strong reasons for clinging to patently maladaptive behaviour that they will change only if and when the interpersonal reasons for the behavior are exposed and obviated. True to his strategic position, he postulates that "unless there is real understanding of the systemic strains that produce the 'symptom', and a better solution is offered, the new behavior cannot be experienced as superior to the old" (Williams, 1989, p. 55). What he implies is that a protagonist needs a symptom or that a symptom serves a homeostatic function in the family. From the point of view taken in this thesis, to use this kind of language is to assume a dualism between one part of the system and another part.

It is more correct to say that all parts are engaged in whatever ordering of constancy or change is in question, in an equal and co-ordinate fashion. To speak otherwise is to engage in what Dell describes as a kind of "fuzzy systems animism." (in Hoffman, 1981, p. 88).

Furthermore, as the view taken within an ecosystemic psychodrama is one that includes the assumption that it is the observer (director) who draws distinctions that create "reality", the therapist will not consider himself as an outside agent but rather as part of the therapeutic system, or "part of an ecosystem" (Keeney,

1982). Thus there will be no claims made in terms of "real understanding" and "better solutions" as though this is the objective "truth". Rather, the ecosystemic position is a constructivist one in which the position is taken that it is "simply not possible to achieve an 'objective' view of the world, because observations will always be influenced by the perspective of the observer" (Atkinson & Heath, 1986, p. 9).

Second-order cybernetics is a way of pointing to the observer's inclusion and participation in the system. No longer do we speak of therapists as being "in charge" of creating change and insist that they remain "outside" the system being treated in order to be "objective". Second-order cybernetics attends to the recursive relation between client and therapist - a perspective which avoids the premises of "objectivity". It proposes that the alternative is "ethics" (Keeney, 1982) and leads to the examination of how the observer participates in the observed. Therefore, what becomes important is the role of the therapists in relation to these techniques, not the techniques as such.

Thus what is propagated in this thesis departs from Williams and Remer's first-order cybernetic position because it emphasises the observer's inclusion and participation in the system. As such, all psychodrama is seen to be the product of distinctions that are made, in part, by the director. Moreno hinted at such a view at least as early as 1959, but it has never been fully explored.

Furthermore, in contrast to the first-order cybernetic position which tends to reduce phenomena into manageable and practical bits and pieces, the second-order cybernetic position taken in this thesis is one characterised by a sensitivity to holism and its complexity, which is motivated by aesthetics.

Another point of difference between what Williams and Remer proposes and an ecosystemic psychodrama, is that an ecosystemic psychodrama is precisely what it entails - ecosystemic - that is, cognisance is given to whole ecologies. The first-order cybernetic position focuses on the family as the whole system, while an

ecosystemic orientation orientates the observer towards whole ecologies and all levels of systems pertaining to a protagonist at a certain time within a given context. Adherence will be given to Bateson's (in Keeney, 1979, p. 120) notion that: "if you want to understand some phenomenon or appearance, you must consider that phenomenon within the context of all completed circuits which are relevant to it."

One can say that the main difference then between Williams and Remer's strategic psychodrama and what is proposed in this thesis - an ecosystemic psychodrama - lies within a way of thinking and thinking about our thinking. This does not mean that the contributions of Williams and Remer are in any way negated, rather that what is propagated here is a shift more fully into second-order cybernetics, that is a further paradigm shift, another worldview evolution.

Conducting the Psychodrama

As the aim is to perturb the ideas of all the people concerned with the problem, that is, the consensual domain, all these people should ideally be present when the psychodrama takes place. This is, however, not always possible and one of the advantages of psychodrama is that auxiliary egos can be brought in to play the roles of significant others in an identified protagonist's system. The family can be recreated and in this process the identified protagonist's ecology of ideas "comes to play", as it were. Enactment allows the protagonists and others involved in the drama to see, to experience and to understand interactions in a way neither explanation nor description can ever approach. Through psychodrama people can experience and re-experience the "realities" of their families. The identified director's goal becomes to orthogonally interact with the system in such a way that he/she, as part of this newly created ecosystem, provides for the possibility of a new ecology of ideas to emerge.

As an ecosystemic approach embodies a constructivist position, this new ecology of ideas is not considered to be the "truth" or the "real cause" of the problem. What takes place in psychodrama is merely a perturbation of the way in which the identified protagonist thinks about the problem. What should also be considered is that the particular drama that emerges through this process reflects questions asked by the identified director. By asking questions around a particular theme, the identified director plays a role in the themes emerging from the psychodrama. The particular psychodrama can therefore be seen as co-constructed by all the participants.

As the therapist is part of the therapeutic system so that his/her ideas form part of the evolving consensual domain in this system, the role of a co-therapist is deemed to be of great importance, as co-therapy helps the therapist to alternate between the relational fields of group and therapist. The role of the co-therapist then is to be the watch-dog of the meta-awareness that the therapist is always a part of an ecosystem and is therefore "subject to all the constraints and necessities of the particular part-whole relationship in which he/she exists" (Keeney, 1979, p. 123). Furthermore, the audience of the psychodrama can also be utilised to provide a meta-perspective on the therapeutic process.

Psychodramas are conducted in a public rather than private way, which by itself often serves to perturb the ideas of identified protagonists, as the presence of more people lends a greater potency to the process of mutual qualification.

In accordance with an aesthetic view, the psychodrama stages of warm-up, enactment, sharing and closure will be reframed in terms of two-fold goals: "(1) enabling a symptomatic enactment to unfold and thereby produce a *reductio ad absurdum*, and (2) helping a system evolve towards an alternative structure for maintaining organisation" (Keeney, 1982, p. 168). In terms of cybernetics, the first goal involves establishing appropriate self-corrective feedback. This occurs when the psychodrama is conducted in such a way that it allows the protagonist to encounter the absurdity of the premises underlying his or her behaviour or

interaction. The second goal of change concerns the alternative structures a system will generate following correction of its erroneous premises. As will be seen from the descriptions of the psychodrama case studies, the new patterns and structures a system evolves are usually a surprise to both identified director and protagonist.

The identified director's participation in the enactment helps create what Keeney (1982) refers to as "sociofeedback". Thus the identified director, through the use of enactment and transforms can provide for a drama that is a mirror image of the communications in the protagonist's system. Transforms that are particularly suitable to this process of mirroring may include prescribing the symptom, positively connotating the symptom, and deliberately escalating the absurdity of the symptom. By following this process a *reductio ad absurdum* is created within the therapeutic system. By fully encountering this absurdity, an erroneous premise can be negated and corrected. As a result, a protagonist may then generate an alternative structure for maintaining its organisation.

To quote Watts (in Keeney, 1983b, p. 169):

The 'guru' or teacher of liberation must use his skill to persuade the student to act upon his own delusions, for the latter will resist any undermining of the props of his security. He teaches not by explanation, but by pointing out new ways of acting upon the student's false assumptions until the student convinces himself that they are false.

Furthermore, according to Keeney (1983a,) a necessary ingredient of effective sociofeedback in therapy involves the introduction of "random noise". He then goes further to liken the task of introducing noise in therapy with that of presenting a "Rorschach" to the client. Not just any Rorschach will do; the client must assume that there is meaning and order in it. A part of psychodrama then must always be to present meaningful Rorschach's through the process of enactment, which the protagonist (and sometimes the identified director) believe contain

"answers" and "solutions".

Thus, a cybernetic orientation to psychodrama centres around the construction of transforms that model symptomatic communication. These transforms must be packaged to provide an adequate source of random noise as a basis for structural change. A recursive cycle occurs whenever a transform of symptomatic communication is generated. This implies that the identified director must use the effect of his intervention to shape subsequent interventions. "This recursive cycling of transforms in sociofeedback constitutes the context of therapeutic change" (Keeney, 1983a, p. 171).

These considerations suggest that an identified director needs several basic skills: an ability to vary his behavior and an ability to discern and use the effects of that behaviour. These therapeutic skills correspond to the ways a therapist operates as an "effector" and "sensor". The task of creating difference concerns one's "effectors", whereas the discerning difference is the job of one's "sensors".

"When the relationship between effector and sensor, or intervention and diagnosis, is recursively organized, we may speak of a cybernetic system" (Keeney, 1983a, p. 172).

A Summary of the Main Concepts of this Section

At this point then the author would like to present a summary of what can be considered to be the benchmarks of an ecosystemic psychodrama.

1. An emphasis on circular rather than linear thinking is, of course, basic. In contrast to a linear epistemology a circular epistemology orients the identified director to focus on recursiveness in interaction between parts of the system and

to hypothesize about holistic patterns - the implication being that no longer will the identified director focus on discrete sequences, or hypothesize about causal connections.

2. The identified director within an ecosystemic psychodrama is seen to be simultaneously an observer of the effects of specific actions and the participant-actor that makes change a possibility. That is, the director is also part of the circular patterns he or she is observing.

3. Following this is the assumption that it is simply not possible to achieve an objective view of the world because observations will always be influenced by the perspective of the observer. An ecosystemic position therefore is a constructivist one - "the reality 'out there' is unknowable because it changes as we watch, and because our watching changes it" (Hoffmann, 1981).

4. Another implication of the view of the director as not being an outside agent but rather as part of the therapeutic system, or "part of an ecosystem" (Keeney, 1982) is that "we would have to abandon the idea of the therapist as a bullfighter, pushing and pulling the family to where he wanted it" (Hoffmann, 1981, p. 347). Ecosystemically speaking, the identified director of a psychodrama cannot by acting externally on a system specify what will happen to that system. The challenge for the identified director within a psychodrama is to facilitate a domain of differential discourse by joining or structurally coupling the protagonist system in a way that will appropriate self-correction; or, in psychodrama terms, in such a way that the protagonist system has access to spontaneity.

5. An ecosystemic psychodrama can be said to be, in essence, Taoistic - non-purposeful, non-controlling and process orientated. It is a finding of order rather than an ordering.

6. What is aimed for is that as a therapy psychodrama will represent something of the balance between the aesthetic and pragmatic views of therapy

which Keeney (1983) describes as complementary.

7. The emphasis at all times is on therapist responsibility and therapists see their therapies as activating their own growth and evolution.

Finally, to summarise a summary: an ecosystemic psychodrama is "governed" by relational conceptualisations and a striving towards complexity and holism. It entails an awareness of the reciprocity inherent in all our interactions. It is constructivistic in nature - "truth" is heuristic and certainty is discarded. It is based on a notion of complementarities and it assumes a monistic (both/and) universe.

ZEN KOAN

"Reality is what we take to be true.

What we take to be true is what we believe.

What we believe is based on our perceptions.

What we perceive depends on what we look for.

What we look for depends upon what we think.

What we think depends upon what we perceive.

What we perceive depends on what we take to be true.

What we take to be true is our reality."

(Zukav, 1979)

CHAPTER 4

ECOSYSTEMIC PSYCHODRAMA:
CASE STUDIES

Thus Spoke Ouroborous

"The communicational world is a world of self-reference and paradox where dog chases its own tail - the explanation is in the observation, the observer is in the observed" (Keeney, 1985, p. 49).

Keeping in mind Keeney's (1982) dictum that "what one knows leads to construction and what one constructs leads to knowing" (in Searight & Openlander, 1984, p. 55), the author now enters this section of the study in the role of the mystical creature Ouroborous, the snake that eats its own tail. As Ouroborous, the author can only claim to have been participant-observer of the group processes described here and descriptions will naturally be qualified by the author's own worldview. The implication is that as all observations involve self-reference any description says as much or more about the observer as it says about the subject of description.

As so much revolves around the seeing "I" of the observer, the author now wishes to introduce and refer to herself in the more personal pronoun "the big I-am" and to depart from the role of the academic author for the remainder of the final section of this study.

Furthermore, some of what follows in these case studies may seem to "disobey" Maturana's contention that "notions of purpose, information or code

cannot play any logical role in the descriptions of autopoietic systems" (Kenny, 1989, p.20). This position is ameliorated by Varela who points out that "our human cognitive capabilities will remain unsatisfied unless such explanations are also complemented with carefully constructed symbolic explanations" (Kenny, 1989, p. 20). As such, I, in the service of the mind's need, will be offering some symbolic explanations of the group processes in this section.

Entering the Epistemological Labyrinth

Describing the psychodrama case studies from an ecosystemic epistemology necessarily demands taking the larger system into consideration as this entails looking at systems on all levels. As Bateson (in Keeney, 1979, p. 120) stated: "If you want to understand some phenomenon or appearance, you must consider that phenomenon within the context of all completed circuits which are relevant to it". As such, this section begins with a discussion of the recursive role played by the larger context within which the psychodramas under discussion took place.

All of the psychodramas referred to in this study were conducted within a psychiatric institute. In this hospital a traditional linear epistemology exemplified by psychiatric nomenclature and the classical medical model of psychopathology - rules supreme. Working from an ecosystemic epistemology, it became increasingly important for the therapists concerned to consider the effects of a therapy aimed at attuning itself to interaction, complexity and context within a system that communicated unilateral control and an individually-based illness to the patients of the hospital.

Whereas the dominant worldview of the hospital followed an analytical logic concerned with combinations of discrete elements in an atomistic, reductionistic, and anti-contextual way the psychodramas were administered from an ecosystemic

epistemology with an emphasis on ecology, relationships and whole systems. Put more concretely, patients were being given the idea that they were ill as individuals due to biochemical influences which only medical intervention could cure. Thus symptoms were reified and the idea was perpetuated that symptoms have exclusive substantive locus within the boundaries of individuals. Simultaneously within the psychodrama groups all efforts were directed at seeing patterns of relationship and symptoms were viewed as relationship metaphors - communications about relationships. The goal of therapy became to change the ecological relationship system so that the metaphors of relationship could change.

The result was that a patient would enter the psychodrama context labelled as a sick individual carrying the stigma of various labels while the first diagnostic statement made by the therapist involved in the psychodramas was one of redefining the symptom/problem in interpersonal terms. This met with some "resistance" as will be shown in the case studies.

In the hospital, strict hierarchical systems exist where psychiatrists are seen as being at the top of a "ladder" and in control of making decisions regarding the patients lives. It was therefore deemed unwise by many to challenge the psychiatrists' worldview of their illness. Patients reaction to our "news of a difference", that they were not "the site of pathology", often induced a momentary sense of relief which soon shifted towards feelings of discomfort when they (and us) were again confronted with the fact that we were part of a larger hospital system.

One could venture to make the rather radical statement that the medical model and the issue of medication allowed things to stay the same and maintained the stability of the system. Cybernetically speaking, this statement can be extrapolated upon as follows:

The cybernetic network representing a family system includes governing loops or circuits that keep the system in check. These governing loops help to maintain

family stability and have accordingly been called "homeostatic cycles" by Hoffman (1981). This "homeostatic cycle" is seen as a cyclical sequence of behaviours that includes a piece of behavior tagged "irrational" or "symptomatic". Since the function of the cycle is to maintain homeostasis, "getting one element to change would only cause the other elements to readjust so that the outcome was the same". As such interventions based on the medical model become a part (a circuit) of the family system in supporting the prevention of necessary change precisely because psychiatric nomenclature cannot be separate from the underlying assumption that an individual is the receptor of lineal causal effects and hence the site of pathology. This non-systemic perspective may then hinder the process of inducing change in any relationship system. In contrast, the shift towards a more ecosystemic epistemology involves moving away from blaming the identified patient for his idiosyncrasies and/or blaming etiological factors for causing symptoms.

What happened, however, was that I, together with my co-therapists, embarked upon an almost messianic mission to absolve our patients from guilt and blame, losing sight of the fact that we ourselves had begun to live in our own epistemological error. We, but let me speak for myself, I began to blame the hospital system for many of our failures, attributing it to what I felt to be the medical model's circuitry role in allowing homeostasis to continue. In addition, I made another epistemological error: I attempted to convert patients into viewing treatment and themselves on my terms, advocating relationship metaphors with an epistemological vengeance. This process evolved into a situation where the more epistemologies clashed and opposed each other, the more I concentrated on imposing my own packaged cures on the patients. Instead of working towards an appropriate coupling with the ecology of which I was part, and to work from there in attempting to interact orthogonally with the system, I became a rebel propagating my cause at the expense of those people who had to live in a system dominated by medical nomenclature.

I began to question this process half way through my internship as it became

clear that the psychodrama sessions often created turmoil and confusion as many different levels of systems clashed and were integrated or extirpated in a continuous dance in and around homeostatic cycles. It became clear that I needed to move towards another metalevel awareness of how epistemologies as such interact and sometimes collide against each other. In retrospect, the possible reason why I took so long to consider the interaction between my worldview and the dominant worldview in the hospital, was because I myself as yet had failed to make a complete epistemological shift towards an ecosystemic orientation.

An ecosystemic epistemology involves more than mere academic understanding - it demands a shift from our dominant stance of living to incorporate an awareness which not only comes to one through rational thought but includes at its deepest level almost a religious conversion of the mind to accept its own role in living and creating. Truly becoming sensitive to the idea that, as observers, we influence what we observe because we cannot but be part of the situation, defined mutually by us and others, entails much more than merely nodding agreement with the idea - it means incorporating it into that which constitutes our whole being.

Keeney (1983b, p. 47) speculates that "the task of trying to adopt an ecosystemic epistemology may be as risky a voyage as (or even analogous to) a schizophrenic transition". My own experience was that each time I thought I had finally "arrived", I was confronted again and again with the realisation that I was merely at that junction where I "found" myself to be wandering between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born.

Bateson (in Keeney, 1982) describes orders of learning which he refers to as Learning I, Learning II and Learning III. "Learning I refers to a situation where the perceived choices are within a particular set of behavioral alternatives" (Keeney, 1982). Whereas Learning I deals with "change in the specificity of response" or the learning of a particular simple action within a given context, Learning II refers to learning about a particular context of learning. As Bateson (1972, p. 300) proposes, "What is learned in Learning II is a way of punctuating events" rather

than a specific behavioural response. Learning III represents a corrective change in the system of sets of alternatives from which the choice is made. "Here change does not refer to change of a specific response (Learning I) or contextual punctuation (Learning II), but refers to change of the premises underlying an entire system of punctuation habits" (Keeney, 1983a, p. 77). Bateson (1972, p. 172, p. 301) notes that this order of learning is very difficult and rare, "although it sometimes occurs in psychotherapy, religious conversion, and other sequences in which there is profound reorganisation of character."

As such I was (and still am) aspiring to Learning III, and in this process conducting psychodramas from an ecosystemic perspective has become my chosen ritual or vehicle for changing my epistemology. The case studies will be described in such a way as to exemplify this evolutionary process within me as participant-observer.

The problem, however, with aspiring to Learning III as Keeney (1982, p. 159) points out is that "we tend to overlook that most of our punctuations arise from the same premises for punctuating". Learning an alternative way of punctuating constitutes a second-order change (Learning II). While I was engaged in such learning, I often merely shifted from one theoretical punctuation to another only to find myself wondering what to do with a variety of views. In retrospect I am now able to say that I have come to the realisation that Learning III can only emerge when different epistemologies are discerned. "Entering the labyrinth of epistemological comparison means going beyond theory and becoming aware of a difference that may make the most profound difference in one's orientation to clinical understanding and action" (Keeney, 1982, p. 160).

Finally, to return to Keeney's (1982) dictum: "If construction also leads to knowing", then the implication of having conducted psychodramas from an ecosystemic perspective and writing down these descriptions may be that each time I swallow myself (describe an aspect of the group process) I "will be creating a different order of recursion" (Keeney, 1983b, p. 32). Thus, I will be indicating

a difference whenever the circle travels through myself. (Ouroborous again!) The wonder of it all (for me) is that the process of writing these descriptions might be autocatalytic in themselves. Mills (in Dell & Goolishian, 1981, p. 182) refers to this recursive process as "working the loop". Thus, I write a description of the psychodramas which might lead to increased awareness which might enable me to restructure myself and ... "restructuring increases the capability for system awareness" (Dell & Goolishian, 1981, p. 184). As such, then, this study in itself also plays an important functional role for me in becoming and being my chosen epistemology, that is, in evolving towards Learning III.

Evolving Enactment through Ecosystemic Process

The psychodrama sessions described here took place in three different wards each with their own set of meanings on different levels: ward 12, ward 11 and ward 17. To illustrate how awareness and meanings evolved within the therapists themselves, the case studies are presented in the order in which they actually took place within the hospital.

Case Study: Ward 12

One of the first psychodramas conducted in the hospital involved eight patients from a rehabilitation ward. This particular group consisted predominantly of white members, both male and female. Patients on this ward are considered to have improved significantly enough to be sent back home to their families. Their stay at this ward is generally short and they are allowed more freedom and responsibility than patients on other wards. There is often a sense of pride for having "made" it to ward 12, mixed with apprehension of having to enter the world "out there" again.

We, as therapists, were still new and relatively unversed in the system we found ourselves in. We carried with us a set of punctuations which were rather radically biased against the system we had just entered. My own feeling was that I had a cause to fight for, that I was involved in some kind of a tribal war against a hostile system that had to be expatriated for the benefit of all those trapped and mutilated within it. Such was my Joan of Arc delusion, and I entered this context in full battle regalia only to be overthrown by the very people I was ready to save.

Our main intention concerning this psychodrama was to give to the patients a very loud and resonating message that they were not in any way the site of pathology. We all experienced a sense of extreme urgency about proclaiming our message because we felt that the patients were soon to be sent home with a pipedream. We believed that they needed to hear and be given some kind of Laingian credit that "insanity is a sane response to an insane environment" and that there are no sick individuals, only sick relationships, before the patients were delivered into the clutches of their utterly "evil" families. Our modus operandi was to utilise White's technique of externalization, and to create characters out of the different labels patients have received and then to put these labels within relationship systems through enactment.

"Externalizing the abominable twins"

This particular session proceeded with me very much in the perceived role of director, asking one of the male patients to choose an auxiliary ego to play the role of his "manic depression". He laughed and said that he should actually be choosing two auxiliary egos, which he referred to as 'Mr Manic' and 'Mr Depression' - the abominable twins". After he had chosen his two auxiliary egos I proceeded to ask him to set up his family of origin to which he protested by saying that he is now a married man with his own family and that he would prefer to leave his family of origin out of the enactment. Instead of respecting his intentions we thought this to be a good opportunity to "gossip in the presence". My co-therapist and I

continued, feeling very wise, by asking each other why he would feel so strongly about not including his family of origin. We implicated that there must be a "deep dark secret" which he was reticent to share but that for this very reason it might be a healing experience for him to divulge his origins rather than attempting to conceal them.

I must however mention at this stage that it is only in retrospect that I am able to indicate a different order of recursion. It is only through writing this thesis that I have come to realise how we forced our own intentions on this patient and that our modus operandi at this stage became more important to us than ensuring that the techniques we were using were adequately coupled with the system of which they were part. "Gossiping in the presence" became a manipulative manoeuvre on our side, but at that stage we were on a mission - to "prove" that families of origin are the site of pathology - and so we became trapped in our own epistemological error and in the myth of instructive interaction. Instead of self-reflecting we saw his intentions as resistance, and were completely anaesthetised to our role in co-creating.

He became rather angry at this stage, which we punctuated as further resistance. We completely overlooked the fact that this punctuation arose from the same linear cause and effect premises for punctuating we were attempting to "overcome" through advocating an ecosystemic approach. Learning an alternative way of punctuating constitutes a second order change (Learning II) and we were still merely trapped in the "old" world while believing that we were already in the "new" one. After all, we had recently undergone two years of intense "thought training" as students and we believed that all that was necessary was for us to continue to translate our aesthetic stance into pragmatics. The way this psychodrama progressed illustrates how we were merely confused mortals acting the role of the demigods of an epistemology which we ourselves had not as yet become.

Finally the protagonist gave angry consent to set up his family of origin and did

so with great resentment. He explained that he was an only child and that in his family, "like in all others" there were "good times and bad times". I then proceeded to ask him to set the stage for a family dinner, thinking that in families this is often the scenario for many a battle scene. And what we wanted was a battle of some sort so that we could show how the auxiliary egos "manic" and "depressive" fitted into and served a function within these dynamics. Some therapist "contamination" also took place here as this idea was probably more a reflection of my own experiences than the universal occurrence I wanted it to be. The "family" however remained silent and when this was commented upon the protagonists noted that this is just what happened "nobody ever really spoke to each other". I asked him what would have happened if he were to comment on the silence, to which he answered that he would not have done so in the context of his family. I decided then to merely allow the silence to continue. The protagonist and his auxiliary mother and father remained dead still as if frozen and as the silence became heavier he became markedly agitated, shifting around uncomfortably. He looked up rather abruptly and said in an angry tone: "Okay, send in the clowns"! I asked him what he meant and he got up from his chair to fetch his two "externalizations" 'Manic' and 'Depressive'. He placed them on his chair and walked away to take a seat with the audience. The auxiliary egos remained inactive and passive, clearly waiting for the director to lead the way.

This was another level in the evolutionary course I followed in which conducting psychodramas taught me some valuable lessons. I have found that if the director takes a role which is strongly directing and controlling, group members tend to become relatively more passive and avoid taking initiative. Consequently I have tried to avoid this in subsequent psychodramas and to be more aware of the recursive role of directing as such.

I continued to ask the protagonist to imagine how his parents would react to the presence of these two auxiliary egos to which he merely answered: "I have had enough". Again we, as therapists, were ready to push and pull and manoeuvre him back into the enactment but to our surprise and discomfort some of the group

members agreed and commented that "acting is just a silly game". We succumbed immediately, and retreated - not altogether with dignity. We felt cheated and merely dismissed the group instead of grabbing the opportunity to process comment on the impact of the silence which obviously had a profound effect on the protagonist. Trapped in our own hubris we let the protagonist go without co-creating with him an ecology of ideas around the interaction that took place. Instead we punctuated the session as non-action and a failure.

Left to our own devices after everyone had left we proceeded to blame and found a lot of comfort in such linear statements as commenting on the fact that the mentally ill are known for their concreteness and that being part of the abominable hospital system we should have expected this kind of "resistance". From an ecosystemic epistemology of course there can be no resistance as it entails an awareness of recursiveness and the therapist's role in creating a new ecosystem. However we were feeling particularly vulnerable and fragile at this stage of our internship and blaming "out there" in its own crazy way allowed us to continue and not face our own despair.

My experiences during this study brought to light the strong human need to blame as it allows for homeostasis to continue and thus for some superficial sense of comfort. And perhaps this is why a linear epistemology still rules supreme, not only in the hospital but in the world's mind.

Some "post-mortem" considerations:

The technique of externalization as utilised in this case study is an illustration of how a technique traditionally considered as systemic can be incorporated into the psychodrama procedure. In this particular instance a label (manic depressive) was externalized through enactment, not only to linguistically separate it from the identity of the patient, but also to place it within a relational context made concrete through setting the scene of a family dinner. The rationale was that in this way the role of the symptom, manic depression, could be explored as to how it functioned

and enabled the system to uphold itself in its particular ways. Our hope was that this process would enable the patient to notice opportunities to take action against the problem, once it had been externalized in this way. In subsequent psychodramas this technique was used with some astonishing results, with patients acting out for themselves their own healing choices in their lives. In this drama however healing choices were made for the patient as pragmatics came to override aesthetics. This particular case study is a prime example of what may transpire when, as a therapist, one becomes unresponsive to the view of pragmatics and aesthetics as complementary. In our concentrated efforts to introduce externalization as the chosen pragmatic tool, we lost touch with the broader aesthetic content and, as head emerged without heart, we created farce instead of art.

Bateson's (1972) account of the unusual game of croquet that Lewis Carroll's Alice tries to play in Alice in Wonderland may be an apt metaphor for our structural coupling (non-coupling?) as therapists with the group medium. In Carroll's game, Alice is coupled with a "flamingo mallet" which is coupled with a "hedgehog ball". As Bateson (in Keeney & Sprenkle, 1982, p. 9) comments: "Alice's difficulty arises from the fact that she does not 'understand' the Flamingo, i.e she does not have systemic information about the 'system' that confronts her. Similarly the flamingo does not understand Alice. They are at 'cross-purposes'."

As such, we were at cross-purposes with the group medium and vice-versa. We wanted to pursue our own agenda regardless of the larger context which impacted on patients in such a way that our messages about relationships could not be heard. As we had as yet failed to understand this and did not have systemic information about the system confronting us, we could not take into proper consideration the effects of a therapy attuned to interaction on a system which propagated the individual as the site of pathology. Furthermore, our adamant attempts and lack of sensitivity to the protagonist's own ecology of ideas put us at cross-purposes with the protagonist. And so, in our story too, "the flamingo" and "Alice" could not play with a rolling, prickly hedgehog of change!

Yet, ecosystemically speaking, "every action, including those called interventions, can be viewed by the therapist as part of a creative unfolding. In this sense there are no mistakes per se, but only action that is connected to a structured sequence of action" (Keeney, 1983, p.171). Thus, for me to have attempted to look for the "right intervention" in retrospect or at the stage the psychodrama was unfolding, would simply have meant missing the larger point, which is to focus on discovering the broader structure that always encompasses any particular bit of behaviour.

And this, then, is where I touch upon Learning II in my own domain where I am able to *know* that "all statements in a system influence the future and are thereby self-recursive ... everything that happens affect the system - even if it fails to effect the desired changes" (Dell & Goolishian, 1981, p. 192). If this could have been our mode of thinking at the time the psychodrama took place, our need for blaming would have been superfluous and we would truly have been able to feel part of the creative unfolding of this particular psychodrama.

Now, however, while I may still have some sense of sadness regarding this "lost group", I am able to hope that my own increased awareness may enable me to restructure myself as therapist and as the wonder of the process unfolds upon itself... restructuring again may increase the capability for system awareness.

Case Study: Ward 11

Ward 11 is a lock-up ward for patients in the acute phase of their illness. Patients are for the most part still very psychotic, often scared and confused at finding themselves in a mental hospital. They soon find out that this is an "entrance" ward and that they will be transferred to one of two wards, ward 12 (a short-term rehabilitation ward) or ward 4 (a long-term rehabilitation ward). The goal becomes to be discharged or to be transferred to ward 12, as ward 4 implies a longer stay. Entering the ward meant being bombarded with the hospital's most

famous question - "When am I going home?". Outbreaks of violence on this ward were not uncommon, but well controlled by the staff who maintained close contact with the patients. In general, the doctors on this ward invested a great deal of energy in the patients who were observed with close scrutiny to detect any signs of improvement which would allow them to be moved on to an open ward.

This particular psychodrama consisted of two therapists and eight patients. This was the first session with the group and for many of the members their first acquaintance with the concept of group therapy.

Where I was at on my own evolutionary path was to be intensely aware of respecting my patient's intentions, of trying to adequately couple with the group medium as a green-thumb therapist. While I was involved in a process where thinking about my thinking became most important, it remained on a level where my awareness was focused on how my epistemology interacted with my patients'. To a large degree, however, I still remained blissfully unaware of how my epistemology interacted with those of the larger system of which we all formed part. This unawareness is reflected in the outcome of this particular psychodrama which I believe illustrates the necessity of examining all completed circuits relevant to the phenomenon one wishes to study.

"Mirroring stone-throwing"

By way of introduction the patients were asked to divide into dyads and to spend some time conversing with their partner in order to gain some information about each other. After about ten minutes each person was asked to introduce their partner to the rest of the group. The identified director then continued to direct questions at the person introducing his partner. Questions asked were basic and aimed at eliciting emphatic responses such as: Do you think your partner misses his family, or Does he feel a little bit unhappy and scared on this ward? Answers to questions were usually met with agreement from partners and other

members of the group. The aim of these kind of questions were to establish a domain where there could be a sense of mutual sharing and support before the actual enactment took place. The therapists were intensely aware of establishing whether group members (and therapists) were "sufficiently" connected to each other to allow for structural coupling to ensue in view of the fact that this is a "transit ward". Patients on this ward usually spend a short time together before being moved to different wards and have little time to form acquaintances or therapeutic alliances with a therapist.

At this stage the identified director noted two main themes. Firstly, that patients were feeling alienated from their families. As one member put it: "I feel scattered from my family". The other theme that emerged was from one of the patients who expressed a strong need to go home to complete a burial ritual for his father who had died recently. Because this was put across with a dire sense of urgency it was decided that if the psychodrama coevolved in this way the burial ritual would be introduced as part of the psychodrama.

I then moved forward as the identified director and intimated to the group the sense of sadness I felt about the statements made by members around their families and I wondered aloud if it could perhaps be possible to invite some family members into the room during which we could create a real life drama with the family members portrayed by different members of the group. This was met with great enthusiasm. Every person in the group seemed to have a sense of what such a drama would entail and immediately moved into enactment.

The psychodrama procedure co-evolved as follows:

One of the patients volunteered to enact scenes from his family history for the group. He proceeded to explain his family situation to the group: He was his mother's only child and shared a house with her and three of his cousins. He mentioned that his mother had brought up the cousins "as her own children". His father was distanced from the family and lived on his own with his son from

another relationship. Auxiliary egos were chosen, of which one was the co-therapist as mother, and the protagonist proceeded to initiate them into their roles. As soon as the roles were allocated the auxiliary egos moved into their enactment and spontaneously co-evolved a homecoming scene. What occurred was a scene of joyous reunion with lots of hugs and kisses and expressions of love. The protagonist at this stage was obviously moved, if not slightly overwhelmed. One of the cousins then stepped forward as identified director and invited the father and his son to join the centre stage group. They were previously moved by the first director to a distant corner in the room as a metaphor for the father's absence. The father was reintroduced into the family with much aplomb and ceremony. In this sense the psychodrama became for the protagonist the living enactment of the hopes and expectations of togetherness and belonging which he shared with the group in the warm-up stages of the psychodrama. It as if this particular psychodrama became a spontaneous gift from his fellow patients to him. It was their idea to present a homecoming and all participants went out of their way to make it a dream come true, not only for the protagonist, but of course, in a way also for themselves. What bound these patients together was a sense of the strong need they had to be "unscattered" from their families, probably in more ways than just on a physical level. They all shared this dream of happy togetherness.

The cousin then moved the enactment to a welcome home party which the protagonist redefined as his 21st birthday party which he had missed due to his hospitalisation. The cousin directed the father to make a birthday speech which he did by praising his son and expressing belief in him and his potential. At this stage I stepped in again as director and asked the protagonist to role reverse as his father and complete the speech the way he believed his father would have done. This move was motivated by my own need to steer this psychodrama more towards the dynamics of his family in "real" life, rather than continuing in the mode of a gift, fulfilling hopes through enactment on an almost daydream level. It was my contention that while it was important to have allowed the group to present the daydream-gift it was also important to link with him at the level which he would

most probably be returning to his family rather than fostering enactment on a kind of escapist-level only.

Thus what was called for at this stage in the psychodrama was "news of a difference". It was my sense that the "information" during this session was at risk of falling short of providing "an adequate source of random noise as a basis for structural change" (Keeney, 1983a, p. 172). The possibility existed that our "in-tuneness" could lead to the introduction of more-of-the-same. Therefore it was deemed necessary to step in and ensure that our pragmatics were indeed juxtaposed with the aesthetic goal to allow for a new ecology of ideas to emerge.

In this case study, then, it was the aesthetic which emerged as main actor, allowing imagination and dreams to rule supreme. As this means riding one side of a distinction only, it cannot be considered art either. Rather, we were running the risk of entering the domain of free-associative muddle. Introducing the pragmatic tool of role reversal at this stage then was an attempt, one could say, to redress the complementary balance between pragmatics and aesthetics.

The protagonist continued in his role now as father: "My son, I wish for this family to be reunited. I want to marry your mother again and come back home to live with you."

I moved in as double for the protagonist hypothesizing that perhaps he is more angry with his father than the role play would suggest; "No, I am angry for you having deserted my family. You cannot just come back just like that - after all these years".

(At this stage the protagonist became sad and stepped out of his role as the father).

Protagonist to the audience: "Yes, I am angry with my father. He wants to come back now, that's true, but I am not ready to forgive. I cannot. Also my mother

does not want him back."

He was then asked to set up a scene between his mother and father before he had left the family. He chose two auxiliary egos and instructed them to argue about "anything" - "they would always fight about anything". While the auxiliary egos were fighting, he was asked to sculpt his position in relation to them through just using his body in space. He placed himself in the middle between them saying: "It was like they were throwing stones at each other. Only every stone hit me."

This metaphor was enacted by asking the auxiliary egos to throw balls of paper at each other, hitting the protagonist in the middle. He became increasingly distraught and I took him out of the enactment and asked him to stand by my side while a double moved into his position in the middle. The technique of mirroring was thus utilised to establish his family scene for him and he became a member of the audience.

I asked him at this stage what would happen after this process continued for a time. He answered: "I would fall down and they would stop". He walked up to the double and asked him to lie down holding his head in his arms and repositioned the two parental figures around him, laughing in a strange way as though lost for a moment in his own world. I asked him why he felt like laughing to which he responded: "He went away anyway."

At this stage the co-therapist who had been role-playing as mother initiated a move back into the here and now of their relationship and asked him: "My son, please tell me, how did things go so wrong?"

Protagonist: "Mother you have always been good to me. I could never understand why father went away to leave just the two of us, but now the other day my father came to me and said that he wants me back and wants to know me. But I know you don't want him in our lives again and that it..." (hesitates)

Director as double for protagonist: "...makes you afraid that you might lose me. I feel like I cannot see him even though I would want to but that it would upset you."

Protagonist: "Yes, but I can never say that to you, to her." (becomes upset and the cousin director steps in to console him. He then continues to speak to me, out of role now) "I will never say that to my mother, that I want to see my father again. She will think I don't love her any more."

At this stage the group dispersed back to their chairs and the identified therapists offered an explanation for his "breakdown" by framing it in relationship terms as a conflict between choosing mother or father. The idea was put to him that perhaps he had always been in this position and that this might have been very difficult for him as he had vested interests in both parties. The hypothesis was put to him that it all reached a climax which induced severe stress in him when his father made an appeal to him to rejoin the family after so many years. This brought back memories of old battles where he felt himself to be in the middle and which might have contributed to his current breakdown. He then volunteered information on the patterns of communication in his family which to the group seemed to strengthen the hypothesis. As such, a new ecology of ideas was created which included all members of his family and his symptomology could be described in interactional terms. This of course was not seen to reflect "the truth", nor was the interactional patterns which manifested itself here in anyway seen as the "cause" of his mental illness, it merely provided for an alternative conceptualisation of the problem.

Unfortunately there was neither time nor perhaps energy left to conduct the other psychodrama as planned around the burial ritual. A meeting was scheduled for the next week, in order to attend to this psychodrama as it was deemed important to adhere to the patient's obvious distress about missing his father's funeral.

Some further observations:

Quite a few of the more traditional psychodrama techniques were utilised in the process of conducting this psychodrama: role-reversal, doubling, action sociogram and mirroring. Their function in this drama, however, extended beyond being mere tools for catharsis and insight. They were used in the service of co-creating new ecologies of ideas through aiding relational reconceptualisations of the presenting problem. Thus they were used as systems-tools, in the sense that the worldview governing from behind the curtain of their application was focused on "patterns that connect", and not only on catharsis and insight as sufficient for therapeutic change.

This psychodrama was also introduced within the context of this study to show that unlike the previous case study an evolutionary process towards Learning III was indeed taking place. What then had "changed"?

I believe that inherent to this process was a conscious effort not to over-direct but to offer and perhaps guide along those lines which the patients were willing to walk. Instead of insisting on portraying family dramas, I as the identified director merely noted and shared my own feelings around a sense of sadness in the group and then invited instead of forced the families into our theatrical domain. Furthermore, the identified director's role remained as flexible as it can only be with the therapists themselves learning from the experience. It is interesting to note how in this particular psychodrama, the role of the director shifted freely through various individuals and the sense of spontaneity and creativity that developed could perhaps be seen as being directly related to this freedom within roles. As the psychodrama evolved, a sense of intuitively "knowing" the protagonist's dilemma as therapist developed alongside with the intensity of sharing. Hypothesising the conflict between father and son and venturing forth the possibility that mother feels threatened by father's sudden wish to return to the family emerged purely as part of sharing and being in another's world and allowing this world to show itself naturally and freely. This is my ecology of ideas about this psychodrama, which

was shared with my co-therapist during a discussion after the session, where we both felt rather elated at having participated in creating new conceptualisations - "news of a difference".

However, before we could applaud ourselves, another question needs to be asked: What then remained the same? An incident occurred in which the "reality" of the hospital system impacted hard - totally unforgiving at being ignored.

Three days after this psychodrama session took place the protagonist requested to see me urgently. He was totally distraught and confused. He explained to me how he had thought about the enactment and how this has brought him to the realisation that it was time for him to live his own life. He had taken a decision to ask his father not to approach him repeatedly with his request to return to his family but to approach his mother directly and speak to her about it. He mentioned that he was at "such peace of heart" having decided this and that he felt that with continued therapy he might not: "need to be sick any more". To this I agreed, a little bit in awe at how his descriptions "fitted" my ecology of ideas around mental illness. He then proceeded to tell me that he was once more terribly confused and unhappy as his doctor had told him that if he did not take his medication he would get sick again, that it was only the medication that was helping him and that he would probably need to take this medication for the rest of his life as it was doubtful whether he would ever be well again. He continued to extrapolate that the doctor had explained to him that there was some chemical imbalance in his brain and that this was why he needed to take the medication regularly. He expected a new answer from me, one that would incorporate both these conflicting messages which he was receiving - one I did not know how to give. He was once more in a position he knew all too well - caught between therapist mother and the institution father - with no where to go except back to that domain mother called a "metaphor for relationships" and father called a "psychosis".

Once again this forcibly reminded me of Bateson's dictum: "you must consider a phenomenon within the context of all completed circuits which are relevant to it".

This was not the first instance, and neither was this to be the last, where my worldview or my attempts towards an integration of an ecosystemic way of thinking clashed and grinded against The System of which I was now part. In my own rigidity I truly began to think and refer to The System in capital letters as though it was some kind of destructive mafia god.

We as therapists set out to find a kind of "compromise", to find a psychodrama which would incorporate and allow our worldview to be communicated and heard, but which would cause less conflict within the system. The next psychodrama, the burial ritual, is presented as an example of the kind of psychodramas which evolved partly as a natural outflow of our own increasing reticence to proclaim relationship metaphors too loudly.

"Burying a father"

The week after the family psychodrama a special session was held in order to provide a context within which the burial ritual could be held. The protagonist stepped forward, quite prepared for this day and immediately began to set the stage without any prompting from the therapists. It was clear that he understood this to be his time and that he had given the process ample deliberation. He began to organise the whole burial ritual, choosing his own auxiliary egos and ensuring the whole group's participation. He started off by digging a grave. Songs were sung and prayers were said by him and two auxiliary egos which he chose to be the priest and his mother. From the burial site he moved the group to his house in the corner of the room where he went into mourning. This was an extremely intense process. The protagonists started moaning and crying while the rest of the group chanted prayers and took chances in consoling and holding him. His tears were dried by fellow group members, who all gathered around him. At one stage he went into convulsions, which perturbed the therapists involved, but the rest of the group seemed to understand and were able to contain him. The protagonist then asked one of the group members to read a passage for him from a book that he

was carrying with him. The title of the book was Cain and Abel, which obviously had some profound personal meaning for him. After the reading he got up and thanked the members of the group profusely for participating and allowing him to complete the burial ritual for his father which he could not attend due to his illness.

This ritual to him was ultimately real and served an important function in allowing him peace of mind. The therapeutic impact was one of linking with his culture and allowing him the opportunity to complete his mourning process in his chosen traditional way.

The psychodrama then ended with a ritual hand-clasp where members, standing in a circle, place their hands upon each other's hands and hold it there until a prayer has been said. This has been the way I have chosen to end all consecutive psychodramas, as to my mind it serves as an apt metaphor for completion of the special sharing that takes place during psychodramas.

The difference between this psychodrama and the previous one in which an attempt was made to deal directly with the functional role of the protagonist's illness, is that here psychodrama is merely utilised to recreate for the protagonist what he feels to be a necessary healing experience of completion in his life. It did not directly involve the co-creation of constructions dealing with his illness which might potentially cause conflict for the patient within a system that communicates unilateral control and individually based illness. Whilst this psychodrama can be said to be some sort of compromise it was our sense as therapists at this stage that while this experience was ultimately meaningful to both protagonist and therapists, we had not yet found a way of incorporating our way of thinking into the system in a way that fits with all relevant circuits. My sense was that we were merely attempting to play underground, unable to breathe our own epistemology, but rather keeping it a secret from ourselves, our patients and The System. Ecosystemic psychodrama, was not being created, rather it seemed to remain at the level of a battle between ecosystems. This was our sense as therapists at least, the rest of the system remaining blissfully unaware, yet ready to extirpate

and throw out what to my mind could have been valuable "news of a difference" for the larger system as well.

Except for having to find ways of dealing with the hospital system, it was also necessary for us, as ecosystemic therapists (in creation), to take into account another circuit relevant within the context - a circuit which can be referred to as cultural values. During the course of the study, psychodrama groups were run with a number of groups, each with their own set of cultural meanings and ideas. For the most part, psychodrama groups were conducted with black men as this was the available client population at the time. To me it seemed as though their understanding of drama seemed to be deeply rooted as part of their way of being. Enactment came naturally to them and group members usually responded with unbridled enthusiasm and spontaneity. The psychodramas coevolved naturally and the identified director was often left with a sense of awe at the creativity and initiative taken by group members. In most of the psychodramas the role of identified director was continually taken up by alternating group members at various moments in time - protagonists becoming directors and vice-versa. This, of course, was also a reflection and necessary outcome of the therapists working from an ecosystemic epistemology where roles are not rigidly demarcated and the therapists are seen to be participant-observers at all times.

The portrayal of the burial ritual is a good example of how naturally enactment evolved in the group with minimum encouragement from the therapists. As a matter of fact, it was found that with black men, in particular, the warm-up stage of psychodrama often became superfluous.

However, at times, quite the reverse process manifested itself with groups consisting of predominantly white members. Extreme difficulties were often experienced as the members remained inactive and unresponsive, finding the idea of enactment very threatening and intrusive. During one particular session the idea of conducting a psychodrama had to be abandoned as it proved to be an inadequate coupling with that particular group medium. Consequently therapy was

continued on a verbal level only. The rest of the time was spent discussing why this particular mode of therapy met with so much "resistance", keeping in mind that from an ecosystemic epistemology there can be no resistance, as it entails an awareness of recursiveness and the therapist's role in creating a new ecosystem. What co-evolved from this discussion was that it appeared that there is a strong norm within the white population around the issue of containment. "Letting go", as one patient put it, was seen to be a weakness. Drama, furthermore, was not seen as an integral part of life, while amongst the black patient population each and everyone has had their own experience of township theatre and were well versed in this genre. My own experiences in Mamelodi supported this - in Mamelodi alone there were 9 theatre groups continually involved on all levels of the community: be it education, politics or entertainment. While this certainly does not exclude conducting psychodramas with white members, as this implies a sweeping generalisation, it is important to consider different cultural values and to deal with these issues specifically in the warm-up stages of a psychodrama. Looking at systems on all levels includes this sensitivity towards cultural values and ensures that psychodrama does not become some kind of misguided panacea.

One of the possibilities which emerged in the course of this study is the probable potential of psychodrama to serve a valuable therapeutic function as well as an educational one within community settings specifically dealing with black groups.

Case Study: Ward 17

Ward 17 is a ward for patients that have been classified as SPD's - State President Detainees. These patients have all committed various crimes for which they were found not responsible due to a psychiatric illness. To my mind, they were also the forgotten people, as very little therapeutic intervention took place on this ward. Patient contact with staff is limited to receiving medication and strong disciplinary measures (usually increased sedative medication) if they break the

ward-rules. This is a lock-up ward with some patients finding themselves behind walls for periods that could extend to years. Patients have no idea of how long they will be hospitalised as they receive no set sentence. Thus there is no sense of having served a sentence within a limited period of time as this "punishment" could last a lifetime. For those unlucky enough to have no family to spend periods of leave with, time soon fuses into periods of light and darkness where the future ceases to exist. There are a possibility of being moved to an open ward and patients may then attend occupational therapy and earn an income. However, there is a limited number of beds available on this ward. Consequently, patients lives revolve around showing the "correct" behavior to qualify for the open ward and their interaction with therapists mainly centre around this need. One soon becomes overwhelmed with constant requests from these needy and greedy stimuli-deprived people who have no interest in being taken on a journey through their family interactional patterns while they have no life to speak of. Psychodrama sessions were continually interrupted by questions such as: "When will I go to ward 18?", or, "when will I be granted leave or be reclassified?." These were the pertinent issues and very real in the circumstances.

On many different levels we were made to realise that to deal with these people without taking their immediate context into consideration would have meant de-emphasising their reality and immediate truth. Consequently psychodrama sessions on this ward for the most part focused on the here-and-now and on interactional patterns between themselves, the staff and the larger system of which they were part. This then became our way of conducting within The System our ecosystemic psychodramas.

The psychodramas on this ward were conducted towards the end of the year, that is to say towards the end of our learning experience on *"How to deal with systems on different levels"*. For ourselves at least we have found an "answer" - first to deal with the here-and-now and to discover with the patients their experiences of the system which of they formed part at this stage in their lives. Only from there on would we explore different possibilities of changing ecological

relationship systems so that the metaphor of relationship could change.

Once more in retrospect, as part of the autocatalytic process of writing the thesis and "working the loop", I am able to say that perhaps it was possible for us to "be" ecosystemic within the context of this ward precisely because it was "the forgotten ward". There was far less pressure to conform to psychiatric nomenclature and our attempts to "entertain" the patients were much appreciated by staff and doctors alike. Perhaps the most one could venture to say is that this was a battle lost and won with true cybernetic complementarity.

"Discovering Kind-ness in Animal Farm"

Before this session my co-therapist and I had another session together where it was decided merely to attempt to provide a domain where the patients' ecology of ideas would emerge as part of the process of creation, through co-evolving and concretising metaphors. Of course even in this thinking about our thinking there could, but only be a self-referential paradox. Attempting consciously to do the "doing of non-doing" became our here-and-now paradox. However, it is my contention that this session to a large extent represents an ecosystemic psychodrama, within my ecology of ideas, owing to its Taoistic quality and the fact that it deals with and illustrates an awareness of how different ecosystems on different levels interact.

The group consisted of two therapists and ten patients, all classified as SPD's for committing various crimes ranging from murder to stealing a sheepskin. This was the fifth session with the group and the members were by this time relatively well versed in the psychodrama procedure.

As part of the warm-up members of the group were asked to choose any character, person, object or animal that they would like to be if they could come back to earth in another form and to tell the group what this character would most

like to do. They were also asked to fantasize about what this character's past, present and future would look like. Thus psychodrama's potential for surplus reality, the as-if of our imagination was utilised to transport for a moment people beyond their limited world of uncertainties. The group proceeded to fantasize, without reticence - showing much excitement for this short opportunity for what they felt to be wild and wonderful escapism. The therapist's hopes and expectations for this process was merely that through the use of metaphor the patient's dreams and hopes as well as current feelings could be explored. One could say that "intentionally" we attempted not to intentionally manipulate the psychodrama system, but to make purpose an emergent from the process of creation.

The group members came up with the following characters. Some of the key sentences around their choice of characters are given to illustrate the main themes of a sense of captivity, bondage and a yearning for freedom as well as a sense of a loss of agency which emerged through this process.

Aaron - lion. "I would growl and frighten anyone away who would try and capture me."

Kasmush - tiger. "As the tiger I would run fast and go back to live with my family."

Peter - Superman. "Superman is strong and powerful and so I would help everyone who is in trouble."

Jabulani - Arnold Schwarzenegger. "I would be the biggest man and no one would trouble me."

Antoni - bear. "then I would run across the plains of Alaska - wild and free."

Prince - bird . "then I could fly away."

Jeremiah - philosopher. "I would be wise and understand the world's problems".

Jabulani ("Smiley") - scientist. "I would make new discoveries and learn many things of how nature works."

Linda - a man. "I can be nothing else."

Some time was spent asking the members why they chose their specific character and getting the rest of the group to comment. Circular questioning was used and more specifically the technique of gossiping-in-the-presence. For instance, Peter was asked if he had any idea why Antoni chose to be a bear and what he imagined his past, present and future looks like. Which was followed up with questions such as: "Do you agree?" or "Who agrees with...?" What emerged from this process was that patient (and therapists) discovered that although every group member chose their own character, the idiosyncratic meanings of each could be linked to form part of a shared domain with the others. Themes around their sense of captivity, bondage and a yearning for freedom could be reframed as a shared one and not only as belonging to each individual as his own loneliness and pain. Patients were surprised that the others could understand and verbalise their own feelings. The therapists at this stage were themselves rather surprised as their idea has always been that patients naturally turn to each other for a sense of support. The degree of disconnectedness that the patients commented upon and their sense of relief to find that others felt as they did certainly did not fit our expectations of how patients attempt to cope with life on this ward. This illustrates how important it is for therapists to be aware of the map that they carry into the therapeutic domain. If we had continued in our belief that patients were in fact connected to each other as sources of support and attempted, with conscious purpose, to achieve specific goals, we might never have encountered this ecological context of which these patients were a part.

The two therapists then moved themselves "centre stage" and continued to dialogue between themselves as a way of commenting on the process that could also be seen as gossiping in the presence of the group. The whole group then becomes the audience. This technique is a kind of a derivative from the procedure used by the Milan team when they move the therapeutic team itself in front of the one-way mirror to comment on the processes they have observed in the family - to the family themselves - who are then moved behind the one-way mirror. We acted out for the group our own original ideas around connectedness and disconnectedness and attempted to comment upon and strengthen the idea of

shared themes around a mutual domain. We also attempted to complexify the descriptions around the perceived disconnectedness by introducing the hypothesis that the sense of disconnectedness was in many ways a symptom of the larger system that the patients found themselves in. At this stage certain patients joined us in the centre and the following information was co-constructed:

Communication between patients on this ward, while not discouraged, is certainly not facilitated. The idea seems to be - the less contact the less chance of conflict and potentially violent explosions. Furthermore, music is played so loudly during the day on this ward that at times patients can barely hear each other. Most important though, patients coming to this ward realise at some level that their inmates are responsible for committing a crime, in most cases of a violent nature. Being considered not responsible for their actions, the message is clear: there are others like you and they are mad and dangerous. Those who are not acutely ill, like those in the psychodrama group, often fear their fellow inmates and even those who are relatively improved, because the expectation is that they could be potentially violent - a message that is emphasised by the staff. While this is of course a very real fear, patients agreed that incidents of violence do not occur on such a regular basis as to warrant the kind of disconnectedness that was found amongst members of the group. Another factor that was mentioned was the limited availability of certain resources, such as cigarettes. Since a lot of their time is spent literally scrounging for cigarettes, those who are lucky enough to find some soon try to disappear and ward off those who come begging. The idea among the members of the group was that friends in such a setting could be ill afforded, but that there was a strong need amongst them to find at least one person who they could trust and share their thoughts and feelings with. Discussions also moved onto the larger system - that of the hospital - where many commented on the forensic unit's isolation from the rest of the hospital.

One could say that patients became involved on a meta-level with their own patterns of interaction within the different levels of systems that they found themselves in. In a sense, one could say that they discovered their own

ecosystemic epistemology and co-explored this with the therapists.

It became a shared goal in this psychodrama to further perturb the ecology of ideas that fellow patients were for the most part someone to be kept at a distance or to be afraid of. The idea became to open up possibilities of interconnectedness by restructuring through enactment. That is, to use enactment to ensure the endurance of the ideas that had developed around the issues of connectedness and disconnectedness. Gaining insight into their dynamics was not seen as sufficient to ensure the endurance of these ideas.

The psychodrama continued as follows:

The identified director started, having also chosen a character, namely a cheetah, to growl with Kasmush as a warm-up for acting. We growled and snarled at each other, chasing each other around the room. Kasmush then began to growl at the other members of the group, feigning attacks while they, within the role of their characters, either counter-attacked, tried to escape or became afraid. As such they enacted their fears of each other and the enactment became a concrete metaphor of their relationships. This was then commented upon by the co-director and each individual's reaction were given meaning within the context of the ward.

The director then moved back into the action and became a story-telling tree:

The story that co-evolved was as follows:

Once there was a big and strong bear who sat under a tree. This bear was sad, his heart felt heavy. He was thinking to himself.....

(Antoni got up to sit under the tree)

Antoni: "I am sad because I do not know where my family is and I miss them so much....I am all alone."

Tree: "And as he was sitting under the big tree a tiger came past him and asked him"

Kasmush: (hesitating) "What is the matter with you? Why do you look so sad?"

Bear: "I miss my family. I have lost them and do not know if I will ever find them again. "

(The tiger remained silent)

The tree: "Then came a bird who flew down to sit with them and told them that far across the mountains there where two humans..."

(The bird joined the group under the tree)

Bear: "What is humans, have they got fur like us?"

Tiger: "Have they got four legs too?"

Bird: (struggles - tree speaks for him while he just flies around "tweet", "tweet")

"No, but they are also big and strong and maybe they might be able to help you find your family."

(Bird leads them to humans - across the plains through the forests until they come to Superman and Arnold Swarzenegger- flexing their muscles). They say: "yes we are big and strong but you may also need two wise men - we know how and where to find them".

(Superman and Arnold takes them to the philosopher and the scientist. And as they came upon the two wise men, they were told by the tree that they are each allowed to ask the philosopher and the scientist one question about life and nature).

(They ask the scientist how he could help them).

The scientist: "I can help you through giving you medicine that will make you strong enough to go on the long journey to find the bear's family".

(At this stage the group were sufficiently involved in their own story to continue without the prompting of the story-telling tree. They also temporarily move out of the "story" into their own reality, although on a fantasy level.)

The bear to the philosopher: "Tell me, why is it that some people are locked up?"

Philosopher: "The people have done something wrong, and now they are punished forever."

The tiger: "When can I go home?"

Philosopher: "When the time comes, but I don't know when."

The bird: "I have no question, I just want to say that I have been here too long and I have not done nothing wrong, so I say we must all go home to our families."

(Arnold and Superman agrees. They start talking together about how long they have been in the ward. The tiger says he is going to escape. The rest laugh. At this stage two members of the group have been uninvolved in the psychodrama, the lion and the man. In an attempt to include them the tree starts talking to the lion asking him why he thinks the man is sitting there looking rather sad and angry. The lion initiates a move back into the story.)

Lion: (walks to the man) "Why are you just sitting there?"

(The man does not answer and the lion goes back to the group to ask them what they think. They (themselves) decide that they should send out a delegate to go and ask the man why he looks so sad. They nominate the bird and Arnold and then take a vote, deciding to send the bird. The bird flies off to ask him: "Why are you so sad, my man?"

Man: "It is because I am always alone."

At this point the rest of the group joins the man. The bear goes up to him and asks: "Would you like to join me and my friends in my search for my family?"

The man: "I think not. I too have a family and I don't know where they are. I want to go and look for them."

The tiger: "We are a mighty powerful team and we can help you too if you want."

The man: "I don't believe you."

(The group huddles around him. The bird places his hand on his shoulder but the man shrinks back. They remain sitting there quietly with the man.)

The tree: "How can we help you to accept our help?"

The man: (after a long silence) "You can just sit here with me." (at this point he hid his face in his arms).

The tiger: "I think he is crying."

The man: (muffled) "No, I am not!"

The tree: "It is okay to cry. I, too feel sad now."

The bear: "Yes." (The bear reaches out to comfort the tree. Together they sit

huddled, holding each other. The man looks up and the tree holds out a hand to him which he takes and the rest of the group moves close to him holding and comforting him.)

At this stage the psychodrama ended and members moved spontaneously towards each other to form a circle and perform the ritual hand-clasp with which they were familiar. Group members then moved back to their chairs in a quiet introspective way. The identified director felt that further discussion would dissipate intensity. Instead of being asked to comment on the process, members were asked to write down their ideas on what had happened in the psychodrama for the next session.

Some after-thoughts:

What happened here? Many times after a psychodrama session I was left unwilling to answer this question on a pragmatic level, feeling rather in awe of the magic and the wonder of it all. But as it is also my journey to become responsive to both aesthetic and pragmatic issues I will ensue:

Prior to the enactment an ecology of ideas was made explicit through discussion amongst and with group members. It seemed that the group's structural drift together on ward 17 had resulted in a conservative ontogeny where component roles, in terms of levels of involvement, were rigidly fixed in a kind of a freeze-frame where members felt disconnected from each other and in fact felt that it was safer to be so. Furthermore component members found that it was difficult, if not impossible, to assume different positions and were caught in a rigid structure where rotation of positions became impossible. As such the therapeutic goal became to allow members to encounter their own "absurdity" as it were. This goal was translated into pragmatics through co-creating a story with an almost child-like fairytale character through which we capitalised on psychodrama's potential for surplus reality. We invited the group to utilise their imagination and to say: "...if..." and to dramatise scenes with creative freedom. One could say that

what members enacted were their needs and that the psychodrama functioned on the level of wish-fulfilment fantasy. However, it is my contention that this particular psychodrama actually served as a perturbation of the ecology of ideas around being disconnected. This contention was strengthened by the written descriptions which I received at the next session. Members, for the most part, commented how strange it was that in this story they naturally moved towards each other. Furthermore they ultimately felt and described it as being uniquely their story. The feeling was that it opened up possibilities for support which they had thought were non-existent. Some of the group members described subsequent happenings on the ward where they helped or were aided by someone else in the group. They ascribed this to the story. One member with a particularly literary bent gave the story a title: "Discovering kindness in Animal Farm". Of course the story did not "cause" them to interconnect in any way, it merely opened up new meanings and new possibilities from which new interactional patterns and restructuring could emerge. If cocreation of an ecology of ideas is the process wherein "the ideas of each component member lead them to behave in ways that confirm or support the ideas of every other component member" (Bogdan, 1984, p.376), then one could say that their behaviour in the psychodrama, their movement towards each other, perturbed the ideas around disconnectedness and allowed for a new ecology of ideas to emerge which were in turn confirmed and supported by subsequent interactions.

A systemic technique used to perturb and create ecologies of ideas in the process of conducting this psychodrama was circular questioning. In this psychodrama it was used as part of the warm-up procedure in ways similar to those suggested by Williams (1989). That is, a protagonist was confronted with a series of questions to facilitate his shift of identity, in this case towards a fictional character. Gossiping-in-the-presence was then used to bring out important aspects of their interpersonal system. In this way everything was followed up by an exploration into what the others do, think or feel in response, in order to establish the circular causal system. Minuchin's (1981) technique of restructuring was also utilised but in a manner more characteristic of the psychodrama procedure

itself. That is, restructuring was achieved through enactment of metaphors for relationships and these metaphors were extended to include restructuring possibilities in the future.

When one considers the role of the director in relation to these techniques, it soon becomes apparent that The Tree, or identified director's, questions and movements "steered" the story in a particular direction, making it clear that there was also a strong need for the tree to allow for connectedness and the kind of out-reach that occurred. The Tree often initiated words of comfort, moving the group towards each other, making sure all group members were involved. What I am attempting to describe is how the identified director's own need to connect these people to each other played an important role in the co-evolution of the particular enactment that followed. Perhaps one could say the identified director's need became the group need, and as this could be so it is one of the many possible "truths" in the multiverse of this particular psychodrama.

Finally then, the group in this particular psychodrama were dealt with as though they were a family. It was deemed important to deal with the dynamics in the group itself before giving individual members the opportunity to cocreate their family dramas with us. This group had a history together, a structural drift, which could have made the conducting of psychodramas on a personal, individual level a difficult task indeed, precisely because group members themselves felt that they were unavailable for each other. The call for us in structurally coupling with this group was to deal with the here-and-now and interactional patterns in the present. But, more importantly, our own awareness of how our epistemology interacted with the dominant epistemology within the hospital system made us realise that merely following our agenda of redefining problems or symptoms in interpersonal terms created conflict within the system which could prove to be ultimately detrimental to our patients. Subsequent psychodramas with this group did however include family psychodramas involving individual members, but it became our modus operandi to ensure firstly that all levels of systems within the immediate context was dealt with and that this awareness was passed on to the groups involved.

As such then it can be said that our concern with pragmatics, with applying the right nuts and bolts of therapeutic technique, was balanced by a regard for the broader aesthetic content, the context within which the psychodramas took place. And through this complementary balance an ecosystemic psychodrama could ensue as part of a creative unfolding, with head and heart emerging as "not one, not two".

Discussion

It is my opinion that these case studies do in fact demonstrate that systems interventions can lend themselves and contribute directly to psychodramatic practice. Illustrations were given of how techniques stemming from a systemic orientation could be incorporated and integrated with existing psychodramatic techniques. The examples dealt with in these case studies included externalization, reframing, circular questioning and restructuring. These techniques were used concurrently with the more traditional psychodrama techniques of role reversal, doubling, action sociogram, mirroring and surplus reality. However, the techniques originating from classical psychodrama were not used merely to promote insight and catharsis in the protagonists but rather to illuminate systems dynamics, in order to provide for a different conceptualisation of the problem. That is, their use was extended to include the endurance of new meaning. For instance, in the case study entitled "Mirroring stone throwing", family dynamics were acted out through mirroring and sculpting which were then utilised in reframing the symptom in relational terms.

Since a main postulate of this thesis has been the complementary balance between aesthetics and pragmatics, systemic techniques were at times introduced to ensure that the artistry inherent to psychodrama did not merely lead to "free-associative muddle" - as exemplified in the case studies "Mirroring stone

throwing" and "Discovering kindness in Animal Farm". Psychodramas were often "allowed", as it were, to proceed in a wish-fulfilling direction, which can be seen to be more reminiscent of the aesthetic position. Attempts were then made to ensure that each situation was given a "double description" in the sense that any interpersonal event was seen from the point of view of the other people involved. Both systemic as well as the more traditional techniques of psychodrama were employed in the service of creating such double descriptions to ensure that what would emerge from the process would indeed be "news of a difference". This refers back to Bateson's (1972) description of binocular vision of how each eye provides a different perspective and the integration of these two views yield the bonus of depth perception. The identified director's task throughout these case studies was to reorganise elements of the protagonists' worldview and to interweave elements of the therapeutic system with the protagonists system. Following Keeney (1983b), this permits a new pattern of organisation that does not include the symptom. This new pattern could only emerge through attaining the complementary balance between pragmatics and aesthetics which, as illustrated in the case study "externalising the abominable twins", did not always come about so easily. It demanded continual awareness from the therapists of our own role in relation to our techniques.

It is specifically in relation to this emphasis on the role of the therapist that the case studies discussed here can be seen to reflect a movement away from the Newtonian tenets of reductionism, linear causality and objectivity of observation towards the ecosystemic approach emphasising systems theory and a sense of ecology.

In the first case study presented here, under the heading of "Externalising the abominable twins", a Newtonian epistemology was evident. The notion of the therapist as power broker was still very much alive in my own mind. With this stance governing me, I insisted on imposing my own *modus operandi*, disregarding the ecology of which I formed part, and ended up creating a domain where the techniques I utilised became manipulative and inadequately coupled to the system.

Pragmatics overruled aesthetics as I proceeded with rigour untempered by wisdom. Furthermore, embedded in this thought system of linear causality, I fell into the epistemological trap of blaming "out there" with so-called neutral objectivity, ignoring my own role in co-creating.

The next case study can be said to exemplify a position where I found myself moving towards a second-order cybernetics stance but with a part of me still one leg firmly embedded in a way of thinking which reflected first-order cybernetics. Strong adherence was given to attempting to adequately couple with the group medium as green-thumb therapist. The psychodrama proceeded with ideas being co-created with a meta-awareness of the notion of pragmatics and aesthetics as complementary. However, the shift to second order cybernetics, or rather the both-and stance which includes both first and second order cybernetics as part of a complementary whole, was not complete. While the group medium was being dealt with in a systems-responsive way, the larger ecology of which the group formed part was ignored. A rather rude awakening followed as different messages given by different levels of the system clashed and left the protagonist of this psychodrama in the grip of a double bind. Thus, this psychodrama can be said to reflect an order of thinking reminiscent of the first-order cybernetic stance where only the immediate family system were dealt with and larger ecologies received much less recognition. The outcome of this psychodrama left me, however, with a sense of the dire importance of dealing with all levels of a system.

I continued to voyage towards what I could regard as an ecosystemic psychodrama and through some "compromises" with battles lost and won I "arrived" at the conclusion that what should be dealt with first and foremost is the system at hand. Psychodramas were then utilised as living theatre for exploring immediate relational patterns between patients, staff and the larger hospital system as exemplified by the last case study: "Discovering kindness in Animal Farm". This case study can be regarded as an example of what I wish to refer to as "ecosystemic psychodrama" precisely because it gives adherence to all circuits relevant to a specific system at a specific time and place.

My own shifts from linear to first-order thinking and finally towards second-order thinking can be seen as an imitation, an echo, of the evolutionary path of the theoretical developments in the field of psychodrama itself. Classical psychodrama with its embeddedness in the psychodynamic tradition of catharsis and insight reflected a way of thinking which emphasised the notions of linear causality, reductionism and the search for an "objective truth". Later developments involved movements towards initiating a systemic orientation based on first order cybernetics. In this way strategic psychodrama came into being where the focus still remained on the therapist as outside agent, as power broker. From there I then attempted to create an ecosystemic psychodrama with its main components in a way of thinking which reflected circularity, complexity and constructivism with an emphasis on including the observer. As such, then, there has been a parallel course between my own evolutionary path and that of the field of psychodrama. This can also be seen as a reflection of the orders of learning as described by Bateson (1972) - Learning I, II and III. I believe that one can say that this evolutionary path is perhaps an universal path, some kind of collective progression which all who learn and change follow through processes of conversion.

Concluding the Loop

Recommendations

In the process of conducting psychodramas I have made some observations which I believe will prove valuable to those interested in psychodrama as a therapeutic modality.

Firstly then, in conducting the psychodramas pertaining to this study, I found that the manner in which the identified director presents her/himself has a recursive effect on the amount of initiative and spontaneity exhibited within a group. Taking an over-controlling stance coupled with a personal sense that it is the director's

responsibility to direct, often created an atmosphere where group members seemed to be waiting for a script to be read out to them. Group members initiated very little of their own dialogue and became progressively more dependent on the director to lead and direct the procedure. Conversely, it was found that redefining the procedure as one where the group in a sense becomes the director allowed for greater flexibility, with different group members naturally shifting in and out of the role of identified director.

Another observation made in the course of conducting psychodramas pertains to different population groups. My findings suggested that groups consisting predominantly of black members exhibited a natural spontaneity towards initiating their own dramas and moving freely through different roles with uninhibited creativity. However, quite the reverse process manifested itself with groups consisting predominantly of white members. Group members often remained unresponsive and inactive, seemingly quite perturbed by the prospect of acting. Discussions with group members brought to light issues such as the value placed on containment and the fact that for some members (often Afrikaans-speaking members) drama belonged to that weird and wonderful fraternity of strange people in the theatre. On the other hand drama played an integral role in the lives of black people and proved to be a modality they were quite comfortable with as an avenue of expression. These differences between the two groups, which can be referred to as cultural values, need to be considered and explored with groups before conducting a psychodrama. This finding does not, however, suggest that psychodrama should be abandoned as an unsuitable therapeutic modality with white people, but it does point to the necessity of being aware of all levels of influences on particular groups. Many successful psychodramas were conducted with white members in this study. What was called for was to discuss these issues around cultural values and to be flexible enough to adapt the psychodrama to this. The main difference between conducting psychodramas with the two groups was that with predominantly black groups the warm-up procedure became rather superfluous as they spontaneously moved into acting. With white members ample time had to be given to warming-up and fostering the possibility of natural

and free enactment.

Finally, then, a recommendation which flows from the fact that what was attempted here was the development of an ecosystemic psychodrama with its emphasis on ecology and context. Psychodrama can never be viewed as a panacea which can be introduced in a set and rigid manner within a certain domain. What needs to be kept in mind is the dominant worldview of the context which one enters - of course - with one's own worldview. What is called for is an awareness of the interface between different epistemologies and how they may clash and dance around each other in circles that might trap those one wishes to heal. It is my contention that it is crucial to focus on the here-and-now of the dynamics and interactions of the present system to which patients are exposed to. My own experiences pertained to a psychiatric institute with a dominant epistemology which differed so radically from my own that exploration of how my messages and those of the system I found myself in created double binds, had to be considered a first priority.

As a result of these experiences I would like (as usual with messianic zeal) to impart this information, specially to those on their way to enter the epistemological labyrinth as interns within a psychiatric institute: *All therapies, not only psychodrama, can and should be used first and foremost as a living "theatre" for exploring dynamics within the immediate relational field around and within the system one deals with, with a meta-awareness of how epistemologies recursively interact at that moment in time and place.*

I know that for many this information might not exactly sound like "news of a difference". This is, after all, a message that has been imparted to us right through our years of studying. However, I have found that the conscious knowledge of the recursive nature of ecosystems which I have gained as a student did not prepare me for my experiences during my internship. At the most it induced in me a sense of hubris which made me blind and irresponsible to the ecology of which I was part, precisely because on an intellectual level I believed that I knew and

understood. My conduct within the system however is indicative of the fact that *conscious knowledge does not necessarily breed wisdom*. What was called for was for me to discover within myself a respect for ecology - which is a different order of knowing. This respect one can only find when one truly views and conducts oneself as part of a more encompassing mental system. Once one discovers this form of respect one is truly led to the awareness, not only on a conscious level, that any particular feeling, perception or idea is always a fragment of the whole system and context that embodies it. I believe that this is what the Buddhists call Samadhi. If a thesis then is also allowed to have a "deeper message", I hope that what speaks through these pages is a call towards an infinite respect for ecology.

Ouroborous' Epilogue

One of the difficulties of establishing a dialogue between systems espousing different epistemologies is that each system uses the rules governing its own epistemology to assess the differences between epistemologies. This process is evident throughout my attempt to create an ecosystemic psychodrama, during my internship as well as during the process of writing this thesis. Auerswald (1982) refers to this as a "poker/bridge problem" in which the players are unable to play cards since they each want to play different games and can't agree upon which game to play. Thus the players end up in deadlocked positions, unable to move in either direction. As such it is possible to take Auerswald's metaphor and say that while I was playing poker, the hospital system was playing bridge and in all likelihood would continue to do so. My choice was either to continue playing my own game or to "convert" and learn the rules of bridge which I had no intention of doing. The creative response however to this "poker/bridge problem", is to evolve a new game that incorporates the rules of both so that it may become a new game, poker-bridge. Only then could I truly refer to my attempts at creating a "new" psychodrama as ecosystemic psychodrama. The question then could be whether

I have in actual fact succeeded in all my endeavours to play this new game, poker-bridge.

It is my contention now that whether I answer "Yes" or "No" to this question, will be and can only be an answer from the depths of my own punctuations. And this is where the constructs of success or failure has come to have little meaning, within what has been for me a process of creative unfolding - more than anything else - towards self. Suffice it to say that my evolutionary journey in entering the epistemological labyrinth as Ouroboros has indeed made a profound difference to my orientation to clinical understanding and action. I started off my journey through psychodrama still very much embedded in my own linear thinking where blaming "out there" allowed me to live in some superficial cause and effect comfort zone. Attempting to change my mode of travelling towards the circular path brought me to the realisation that truly seeing symptoms as metaphorical communications about the ecology of relationship systems does indeed lead one to that stage of awareness Bateson depicts as "humility" and "loneliness". (Keeney, 1979, p. 122). It has become possible for me say that I know now that this "loneliness of liberation" arises when there is no longer any person, group or etiological factor to blame and be angry with. Still, the shift to an ecosystemic epistemology was not complete. Recognition of my own epistemological errors often came only in retrospect and my mode of thinking remained lodged in a first-order cybernetic stance where I believed myself to be, as therapist, the agent of power and unilateral control. It is only from those few psychodramas where I "managed" to relinquish adherence to my own myth of power, that I feel I have emerged truly as co-creator, allowing ecologies of ideas to emerge freely and as part of the process of creation.

Finally, however, I believe that the final autocatalytic shift towards becoming and being ecosystemic in my way of thinking only took place in the writing of this thesis. Even so, I hesitate to proclaim this with certainty. The circle continues and can only continue to travel through myself, indicating a difference as I continue to "work the loop", activating growth and evolution within different orders of

recursion.

One final question remains to be answered: Have I then, as the Big I-am, evolved towards Learning III? But this is another possible impossible question and I prefer to answer (and conclude) with a poem:

Reflective

*I found a
weed
that had a*

*mirror in it
and that
mirror*

*looked in at
a mirror
in
me that
had a
weed in it.*

(Allman, 1982, p. 427).

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