

THEORY AND INTUITION IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

by

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ABSTRACT

This study is an account of the development of a personal, intuitive epistemology for psychotherapy, and an exploration of some possible implications thereof for a general professional epistemology.

Initial analysis of the author's problematic clinical cases revealed that assumptions regarding the nature and process of therapy predisposed the author to a reliance on rational, theoretically founded therapeutic praxis. When rationality was perceived not to be achieving the desired ends in therapy, the author experienced escalating, critical self-consciousness, and worked ever harder at improved rational problem-solving. This constituted a self-reinforcing problem cycle during 'stuck' consultations.

The premise that effective action is rational was seen to constitute a *weltanschauung* of the therapist, and understood to be inconsistent with the postmodern frame of ecosystemic theory.

A hermeneutic action research process was initiated, its concern to accommodate spontaneity as an antidote to rigidifying rationality in the author's clinical and academic praxis. The exploration of spontaneity and intuition was massively influenced by the author's unexpected immersion in shamanic tradition, itself predicated on mythological and intuitive construction of 'a' world, rather than denotive description of 'the' world, as is the case in logocentric practice. The social disjunction and existential challenge occasioned by immersion in such tradition occasioned angst in the author, and it took years to find an uneasy rapprochement between the different contexts of the author's life.

Nonetheless, a change in the author's epistemology and clinical praxis were effected, and the initial problematic clinical situation - partly a consequence of a relational stance entailed in notions of objectivity, a hidden concomitant of logocentrism - has not recurred.

A case which evokes the revised epistemology and cognitive-affective-relational stance of the author is presented.

The possibility of an intuitive psychotherapy and its coherence with ecological thought and the tenets of postmodernism and narrative therapy are explored.

Key terms:

Constructionism, postmodernism, analytico-referential thought, denotation, intuition, evocation, shamanic practice, ecology, narrative therapy.

PROLOGUE

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

In 1988 I qualified as a Clinical Psychologist, having completed a Master's degree and an internship, and in 1990 I decided that I wanted to enhance my professional competence. Given that I enjoy professional study, I decided that the best approach would be to do a Doctoral degree.

I spoke to a few of the lecturers at the University of South Africa, faculty who had been teachers when I did my Master's degree there. Particularly I spoke to Professor Gerard Rademeyer, who had supervised my Master's degree thesis, and not long after I had made my appearance there, I was invited to participate in a new, somewhat experimental doctoral programme in Clinical Psychology. I accepted the invitation with relish.

The group held an initial meeting towards the end of 1990, in order to discuss the expectations that each participant had of the programme, each one having prepared a statement of their particular interests. The general expectation and hope was that the programme would provide some structure within which to enhance clinical skill, as well as a forum for exploring professional interests in the form of research projects oriented to producing a doctoral thesis. The interests I had listed included therapeutic creativity, therapeutic metaphor and mental imagery, parapsychology, and ecosystemic theory.

I assumed that professional development would be fostered by formal input, experiential learning and interaction with this group of seasoned

colleagues of varying theoretical orientations. The assumption did prove to be valid, but through an entirely unexpected and unconventional process. The current document is the outcome of the exploratory process that was initiated in the doctoral programme, although it neither marks its end, nor is it its only product.

I propose to deal with two questions in this chapter. These questions concern first, *the nature of the investigatory process* I engaged in, and second, *the relationship of this document to that process*.

The Nature of this Inquiry

When I enrolled for the program, my professional position may be said to have comprised two complementary domains of interest and activity - that of *theory*, and that of *clinical practice*, and a set of ideas regarding the relationship between these two domains. Naturally, I was seeking and anticipating growth in both of these domains.

Between this point and the point at which I write this document, a process of inquiry has intervened, and the product of that process is a new position with regard to both theory and praxis, and also a modified set of ideas regarding the relationship of the two domains.

From the outset, it was clear that the method of inquiry appropriate to therapy situated in a constructivist or constructionist framework (my departure point) would not necessarily be one associated with traditional science.¹

¹ The inappropriateness of positivistic methods for ecosystemic, social constructionist oriented enquiry is considered by authors such as Colapinto (1979), Atkinson and Heath (1987), and Moon, Dillon and Sprenkle (1990), inter alia. A consideration of this issue is unnecessary here, given the degree of consensus that exists on this issue.

Rather, the research process reflects a coherence with constructionist ideas as to how understanding can grow through disciplined investigation. Research methodologists Guba and Lincoln propose a model of a methodology for constructivist enquiry which is a useful heuristic device for describing my research process. (See Figure 1 below.)²

As can be seen, the model stipulates 'entry conditions' for the process of inquiry:³ first, that it is undertaken in a natural setting rather than in the contrived setting of a laboratory. In my case, this setting was the set of professional contexts in which I participate - clinical practice and professional dialogue.

Second, the model posits a triad of research elements in these natural settings: the use of *qualitative methods* and *tacit knowledge* by *human 'instruments'*.



² Guba and Lincoln (1989, p. 174).

³ These entry conditions derive from constructionist ontology and epistemology, which will be outlined later in this document.

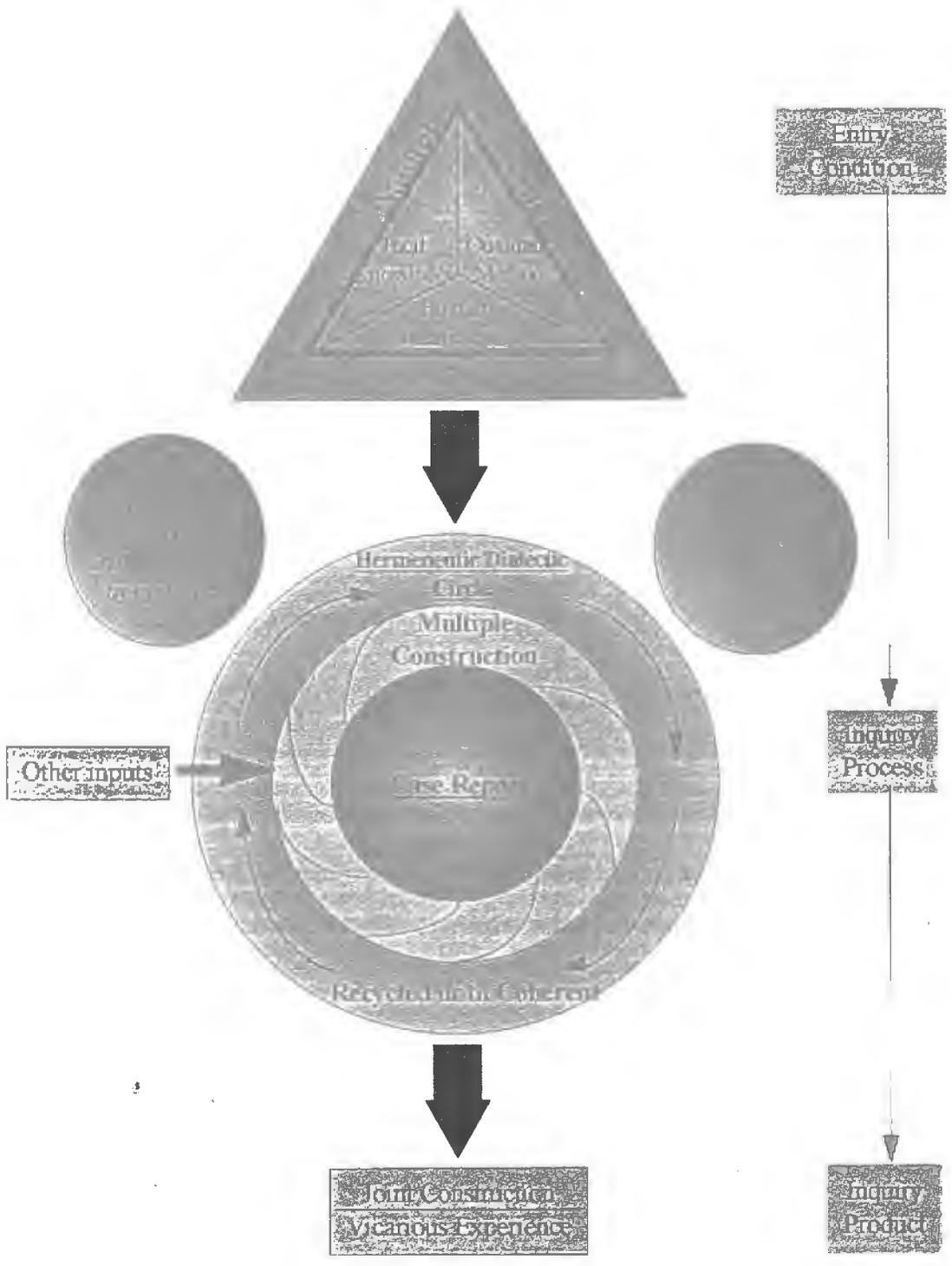


Figure 1.1 The Methodology of Constructivist Enquiry

As regards *qualitative methods*, this project partakes of all of what have been referred to as the 'characterising features' of qualitative research:⁴ First, the object of study concerned *the world as constituted by the investigated person(s)*, namely myself in various dialogical contexts - professional, with traditional healers, and with patients. Second, the collection of data was *open and flexible* (and in some cases even incidental and serendipitous, for reasons which will later become obvious). Third, the analysis of data did *not involve numerical and mathematical systems*; and finally, the research design was *cyclical and interactive*.⁵

As regards Guba's and Lincoln's elements of *tacit knowledge* and *human instruments*, the fact that the subject of my investigation concerned the types of (professional) healing knowledge and practice possible in different dialogical contexts meant that I was *inherently* concerned with tacit knowledge and with human instruments. Clearly, the entry conditions for the research process as per the model of Guba and Lincoln were met.

Flowing from these entry conditions, as I explored the terrain of interest to me I was *de facto* engaged in an *iterative hermeneutic cycle*, as suggested by the model. Such a cycle is constituted through a never-ending process of constructing views, interacting with the world on the basis of these views, and modifying the original construction to accommodate new perceptions and ideas, and so on. The content and process of the constructive-interactive cycle is influenced by dialogue, literature, other contexts of interpretation, and other 'inputs'.⁶

This hermeneutic cycle revolved around the core context of concern - healing in clinical practice, as reflected in case reports - and generated

⁴ Smaling (1994).

⁵ The final characterising element of qualitative research as per Smaling (1994), concerns the need for special attention to the role of the person of the researcher. This is relevant in studies of one set of subjects by another; clearly it is meaningless in the context of my research, where I myself was an aspect of the investigation.

⁶ I have placed 'inputs' in quotation marks, as such a construct seems mechanical: all other 'inputs' are themselves of necessity constructions.

repeated and multiple constructions of what seemed to be possible and helpful in therapy. One could describe the object of this study as the 'problem-organising, problem-dissolving' system constituted by myself and my patients, with particular emphasis on my cognitive processes and their dialogical contexts, and the respective roles of theory and intuition in those contexts.⁷

Further, as per the Guba and Lincoln model, the hermeneutic cycle embraced continuous shaping through evaluation, in the contexts of conversations which challenged and informed my evolving thinking about therapeutic action. Such conversations created *intersubjective domains* for the hermeneutic cycle and its products, which as noted by methodologist Smaling is important in achieving validity and counteracting tendencies towards 'narcissistic impressionism'.⁸ (He uses the latter picturesque phrase to describe the undesirable state of mistaking unexamined impressions for a form of research.)

The cycle has continued over seven years, and has yielded a measure of what I would term 'coherence'.⁹ 'Coherence' is an equilibrium in which my personal praxis, my affect and intuition, and the significant dialogical contexts in which I participate are relatively harmonised, from my point of view.¹⁰

Finally, the Guba and Lincoln model proposes that the product of such inquiry is a 'joint construction' - a construction shared by all stakeholders -

⁷ The notion of problem-organising, problem-dissolving systems was forwarded by Anderson and Goolishian, (1995), and is reviewed in context of their contribution in a recent publication.

⁸ Smaling (1994).

⁹ I took the liberty of substituting 'coherent' for the original 'consensus' where it now reads 'recycled until coherent'. This was necessary because the ideas I have developed fall between established domains, with some overlap, and there is as yet no single intersubjective consensual context, which is what is implied by the authors' original formulation. I have not developed consensual ideas regarding the process of therapy with shamans, although this document at least postulates the possibility of a domain of shared concerns and approaches.

¹⁰ I use the word 'praxis' to refer to the complementarity of therapeutic (theory/action).

which evokes 'vicarious experience'.¹¹ (I shall return to the issue of the products of this investigation, as it warrants some detailed consideration.)

Action research can be viewed as a particular method of engaging the hermeneutic cycle of constructionist enquiry, for action research is a method predicated upon the inherently hermeneutic process of *planning* an action, *implementing* it, *observing* the effects of the action, and *reflecting* on them. This cycle is repeated until the problem is solved.¹²

What seems to differentiate action research from other forms of structured inquiry is that it often commences with purposive action rather than highly articulate conceptual understanding, and that it seeks to solve practical problems rather than to generate answers to theoretical questions per se.¹³ At a certain point in the research process it became clear that I was engaged in a form of action research, which would potentially produce some theory, but rather more as a by-product to a practical problem solving process than as a primary objective. In other words, through the inquiry process, the relative weighting of the elements of the theory/practice complementarity changed, with the emphasis shifting to the practical domain. I do return from experiential, applied problem solving in clinical practice to address certain theoretical issues more formally, though, hoping to propose another possible area of intersubjectivity within the academic discourse of psychotherapy.

I mentioned above that the research process was at times serendipitous, and this is in fact a recognised aspect of action research.¹⁴ However, the role of fate, destiny, serendipity, divine guidance,

¹¹ Once again, the fact that there is no community of research subjects, but only the complementary domains of dialogical intersubjectivity in which I participated means that there the product is not as much a *joint construction* as it is a *personal construction* rooted in these domains.

¹² Rademeyer (1997).

¹³ Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). Action research shares concerns with the constructionist methodology of Guba and Lincoln in that it stresses naturalistic research settings, the employment of tacit knowledge, the evolution of understanding in a cyclical processes of enquiry, and the *locally applicable nature of perspectives and solutions so derived* - as contrasted with the *nomothetic interpretation of research data in terms of laws and generalisations* - the concern of traditional scientific enquiry.

¹⁴ Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). (As action provokes responses from the world acted upon in an unpredictable manner.)

synchronicity and sheer luck in this project cannot be overemphasised. 'Chance' meetings seemed to underpin the development of the ideas in this document to an uncanny extent. Although I don't dwell on this at any length in the actual body of the text, the design whereby my final construction came to legitimately embrace my list of interests from the beginning of the doctoral program - ecosystemic theory, therapeutic creativity, therapeutic metaphor and mental imagery, and parapsychology - is ineffable.

The Nature of the Current Document

This document can be thought of as a diachronic account of the process and results of naturalistic inquiry into a personal epistemology of psychotherapy.

Undertaking the writing of such a document has its problems.

Writing up events, case reports, thoughts, theoretical musings, and the anecdotes of instructive encounters has been a slow and painstaking process, and as it now stands, the text has been through what seems to be countless iterations of reconceptualisation, editing, and abridging and expanding. This is so because the text itself has, in its sequential incarnations, *itself been part of the hermeneutic cycle*. This situation where the product is changed by the process and the process is changed by the product creates several sources of difficulty for the author.

One of these was the fact that I would have an experience, a conversation or an idea and then muse over it for weeks, or months, or even years, rather than 'understanding' its significance immediately. *The meaning of historical experiences seldom arises in the form of semantic landmarks in linear sequential time - it arises in the eternal present of the recollecting 'I'*. One is therefore constantly writing retrospective fragments which subsume previous fragments and which themselves are later subsumed into greater

wholes which depict higher orders of pattern from later retrospective vantage points. The meaning emerging from the hermeneutic process of construal and reconstrual is inherently retrospective.)

An aspect of such retrospective construction is that events and ideas once thought significant lose their significance, while others may increase in perceived importance. This creates another set of difficulties - one is confronted with relinquishing 'pet' written fragments and cherished ideas, one is confronted with searching for pattern in ostensible chaos, and one is confronted with the problem of needing to decide finally what events mean, in order to tell a story. Ultimately, then, a document such as this can never escape its retrospective nature, can never lay claim to any sort of objectivity (its subject is subjectivity, its content is subjectivity, its production process is subjective) and it can never be comprehensive in what it includes. In other words, nobody has anything very tangible to rely on in determining whether this is the 'truth'. (This state of affairs bothered me for years - I constantly asked myself how best and most truthfully to tell the story.)

Given that one's retrospection creates meaningful patterns from the flux of recalled events, one test of whether such a construction of a pattern is a plausible and compelling account is the extent to which the story so created is coherent to the teller - whether it *rings* true. I have constantly subjected my writing to this test. It is worth noting that the coherence, the ring of believability ¹ if not of truth - of the account, is a product of this iterative process: eventually, what can seem like an endless process starts to produce coalesced patterns, and each further iteration yields diminishing returns in new meaning. It is this perspectival redundancy that I call 'coherence' - a stability in meaning that says 'it is done'.

A further factor which perhaps grounds the meaning emerging from retrospective hermeneutics is the intersubjective dimension - one of the very important contexts of construction has been my ongoing conversation with

Gert and certain other professional colleagues. The meaning could not 'fit' only and exclusively for me - that would be psychosis. It had to bear some relation to the macrophysical events that a court of law would recognise as true, and it had to 'fit' for Gert and these colleagues, too. This document is in some sense then also a *shared reconstruction* around certain real events.

Given the retrospective, selective and constructed nature of the final product, what then *can* such a document mean for a reader?

Guba and Lincoln, as noted above, stipulate that the product should allow the reader to have a 'vicarious experience', and suggesting that the utility of research products is enhanced if they provoke such experience.¹⁵ Tyler takes this notion even further, suggesting that *all* a 'postmodern ethnography' (such as this one) *can* do is to evoke something like vicarious experience. I will pursue this contention in some depth later on in the text: understanding it was emancipatory, for I had been caught in a trap of literalism, where I felt that unless I were giving a didactic account of events, what they made me think, and how I acted as a consequence, I was not doing anything remotely rigorous.¹⁶ However, for the reasons pointed out above, such an attempt at the impossible would have resulted in the greatest fiction possible in a study of this kind: a literalised account of evolving subjectivity, pretending not to be subjective itself. (I spent at least two years wondering how to get out of this dilemma, when thankfully Tyler arrived in my life and liberated me from the literalistic fallacy.) In the end, then, this document is (hopefully) an evocative account of the research process and its outcomes.

One recognises that every text is pitched at a reader, and that every context of discovery has its own rationality.¹⁷ One is not free in an academic context to evoke simply as one wishes.

¹⁵ Guba and Lincoln (1989)

¹⁶ Tyler (1987)

¹⁷ Smaling (1993)

Rationality, Context, and Style

The personal domain in which my thinking evolved did not always partake of the kind of rationality which is characteristic of the academic setting. I am sure that this will become abundantly clear below. Further, developing an intuitive approach to therapy required me to *relinquish* rationality in certain respects, and some of the experiences I had were well beyond the pale of the reasonable.

In order to convey my (unreasonable) story, I have attempted to strike a balance between didactic writing and more metaphorical and stylistically nuanced writing, to evoke as much 'vicarious experience' as is perhaps possible in an academic-evaluative context of discovery. An aspect of my adaptation of literary style to its intended end is that after due consideration I have also dropped some of the stylistic conventions of academia. References, for instance, have been placed in footnotes, because lists of dates and authors disrupt narrative flow and subtextual evocation. I use the first person. And in some instances I have adopted a marked degree of linguistic license in order to evoke a specific sense.

Such practices mean that this document oscillates in a grey zone between rigorous explication and unfettered creative expression. Whether or not this is useful, only the reader may judge.

Structure

Retrospectively, three phases in the concerns of this hermeneutic research process can be identified. These are a *definitional* phase, concerned with defining a problem, an *exploratory* phase, concerned with exploring alternative methods and ideas, and a *reflective* phase, during which my concerns focused on the application, meaning and implications of what I had discovered. These three phases give rise to the tripartite structure of the

remainder of the document. Chapters within the phase structure concern specific event-sequences and themes within the broader research process. Naturally, the demarcation of phases and chapters is a subjective punctuation of the reality of the process.

PART 1: IN SEARCH OF DEFINITION

CHAPTER 2

OLD MAPS

A personal professional problem

The Doctoral programme commenced formally early in 1991.

The faculty, including my supervisor Professor Gerhard Rademeyer,¹⁸ hypothesised that working with actual case material from our practices was likely to be the most useful way of identifying issues which would facilitate the professional development of our group.

It was natural, then, that early in the programme we were asked to define a 'personal professional problem', which would then serve as a reference point in our endeavours. In order to define such a personal professional problem, we were asked to write up a case report on one of our problematic cases, and to subject this report to an analytic process which Gert had devised - 'Therapist Self Research' or 'TSR'.

TSR was simply designed to facilitate an identification of the assumptions¹⁹ associated with the problematic situation - particularly, assumptions regarding the definition of the problem situation and our attempts to solve it. Gert maintained that the assumptions so identified undergirded 'first order' attempts to deal with the situation, following the formulations emanating from the Mental Research Institute of Palo Alto.¹⁹ He maintained that second-order or creative solutions to the personal

¹⁸ "Gert" from here on.

¹⁹ Cf., the treatise *Change: Principles of problem formation and problem resolution* wherein the theoretical principles developed by this group are expounded, (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974) as well as the detailed explication of the application of these principles to therapeutic problem solving in *The tactics of change: Doing therapy briefly* (Fisch, Weakland & Segal, 1983).

professional problem would of necessity involve an examination of the assumptions so revealed.

Another aspect of TSR, predicated on a further intuition that Gert held, was that in our entirely subjective and personal professional difficulties we would not only find fertile ground for the development of our clinical skills, but that we would also find themes on which to base a creative contribution to the field, in the form of a thesis or dissertation. I chose a case which I decided was particularly representative of my therapeutic failures - failures not defined by the symptomatology of the client as much as by the process of the therapy, whereby I became immobilised. I characterised my personal professional problem as *stuckness* - getting stuck in therapy, running out of ideas, losing mobility and ending up feeling helpless in certain cases. An inelegant word for an inelegant experience. My initial appraisal suggested that this feeling was not associated with any readily identifiable client characteristic, and I was interested to see whether the proposed investigation could shed any light on how I arrived in a 'stuck' position.

I submitted a case report on a patient whom I decided to call 'Lynne', referred to me by a colleague who had been seeing her for a number of years. I was to provide support and some fresh perspectives while my colleague was away on vacation over the holiday season.

Lynne, aged 17 at the time, has a history of the blackest and most chronic of depressions. The onset of this depression seems to have coincided with a time when her father was in the Intensive Care Unit at a local hospital. (He subsequently passed away.)

This depression has an incredible will of its own. It has proved immovable, immune to any form of treatment. A prisoner-of-war camp could be filled with dedicated, defeated professionals who had touched her life. (These professionals included some of the most pre-eminent of the academic psychiatric community in Johannesburg at the time.)

This depression has also known no sense of discretion. It invaded as and when it chose, incapacitating Lynne for months on end, to such an extent that she would lie in near-comatose paralysis on her hospital bed, feeling so utterly horrible that even the most awful of lingering deaths would have been welcome respite.

Lynne was not always stoic about her blight, the depression. She had a list of suicide attempts of varying degrees of severity as long as her list of failed medications and psychiatric diagnoses. She knew far more than I ever shall of tranquillisers and tricyclic antidepressants.

She was obese, viewed herself as the most thoroughly despicable blob in creation, felt guilty for being, and hated herself with a wan, effete hatred which was about all she had the energy to muster. She had lost some seven years of her life to this monster - indeed, most of her adolescence, and hence felt, when she had enough energy to care, and with some justification, that she was a social misfit in addition to all her other issues..

She would complain of the fact that she was so unused to living as a result of her incapacity that she had forgotten how to do simple things like go to movies. In this respect she was like some hybrid cave-plant, constantly living on the brink of darkness, an intimate with death, tantalised both by the faint images of life and by the hope of oblivion.

She has been repeatedly hospitalised by a number of treatment professionals, and has had numerous remissions from which she has always relapsed.

I rejected a simple biogenic hypothesis and opted for a functional one, in the light of the coterminous onset of the depression and her father's illness and death, and its effect on Lynne's development, as well as that of the family. I favoured a systemic approach to the problem, as was my wont at the time.

I noted in the file at the end of the first session that at that time Lynne did not look depressed and did not behave in a depressed way during the session. She was however intent upon making it abundantly clear to me that this relative

normalcy was a brief interlude rather than a lasting state. The threat of horrific relapse hung over the room like a cloud of toxic gas.

While she had always remained supportive, Lynne's mother seemed to have given up all hope of Lynne ever being rid of her symptoms, which are understood as the consequence of disease. Indeed, the entire family seemed draped in the melancholy stoicism of self-sacrifice and martyrdom. Lynne's mother will even claim overtly that she is 'sacrificing herself' for the sake of Lynne.

'The depression' - not Lynne - exercises considerable influence in the family, and it seemed that most of the life of the other family members was organised around this depression. The depression is an additional sibling whose presence can never be forgotten. Its name is also used as a mantra to keep the family's frustration and anger at bay, for they are incredibly stuck and speak about their own responses to the situation with an odd distance. Almost as if 'commenting on' rather than 'living out'.

My colleague is the only treatment person to have weathered this entire depression with Lynne. In terms of symptoms, no progress has been made. There have been times of remission, but as soon as anyone gets their hopes up, relapse 'happens'. Lynne sees the therapist as a source of support, as a confidante, as perhaps the only person to whom Lynne can talk. No doubt their conversations revolve around just how really bad it is.

Instructed by the Milanese approach of Mara Selvini-Palazzoli and her associates²⁰, which places emphasis on hypothesising, even before an initial session, I proceeded as follows: when my colleague referred the case to me, I thought that I would have to be careful with her, as there was some potential for Lynne to actually commit suicide. I also thought that I should be clever and avoid falling into the trap which my colleague had not succeeded in avoiding: I thought she had become an aspect of the problem-maintenance system. I was determined to be different in some way, and I was intent upon using my

²⁰ Boscolo, Cecchin, Hoffman and Perrin (1987); Selvini-Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin and Prata (1980).

intellect to guide and protect me from also becoming a part of the problem-system.

I mentally formulated my position along the following lines:

*"This is a professional patient who has been making a career out of depression. In some wise the therapist has become part of the problem-maintenance context. I must avoid becoming part of the problem maintenance context and I will do this by not offering the support to which she is used, and I will develop ideas in the therapy which run contrary to her 'I am sick' framework of beliefs."*²¹

I adopted a position suggested by the above from the first session, during which I saw both Lynne and her mother.

With regard to the content of the sessions, I was explicit in my attention to the ecological ramifications of this depression, in the best of Milanese tradition. I asked about who is involved, who notices, who helps, who withdraws, and every other sort of circular question I can think of. Lynne is quite disparaging of my questioning, and I have the impression that she constantly wants to remind me of the 'thing-ness' of her malady. With regard to content, I was also trying very hard to explore ways of viewing her depression as something other than depression - for instance as a form of loyalty or in terms of any other reconnotive frame which has a positive ring to it.

From a process point-of-view, I was quite provocative and refused to adopt a position in which I support her or play into her definition of herself as a victim. She finds my lack of sympathy puzzling, sometimes even outrageous, and complains that I am being facetious and not recognising the gravity of her situation.

²¹ Technocratically, I could describe the family and wider ecosystem as a context in which a certain pattern of communicative interaction had been reified as an independent entity entitled depression. Such a formulation would be broadly consistent with the ecosystemic tradition, finding its roots in the seminal work of the Palo Alto group in the 1950's (Bateson, Jackson, Haley & Weakland, 1956) through to more current perspectives - e.g. the Milan group.

(I am basing my orientation to the process on the work of Farelly,²² to some extent. He has advocated adopting a provocative stance which disconfirms pathological behaviour. My position vis-à-vis this patient also reflects my understanding of interpersonal psychotherapy as espoused by Young and Beier,²³ amongst others.)

When the patient arrives for subsequent sessions she inevitably launches into a description of her problems no matter what has transpired in the previous session. And I feel that I am running out of steam as far as ideas are concerned. I cast around, but it is only for so long that I can remain creative and inspired regarding the positive function of her anxiety, and the ecology which renders her depression meaningful. I feel that I have become part of that ecology too, already.

She relates to me quite positively at times and seems to find some of the ideas we discuss thought-provoking - I get my therapeutic hopes up...but every week she comes back and almost makes a point of nullifying the ideas discussed in the previous session. For example, we discuss the role of her anxiety as a motivation to action, and the next week the first thing she tells me just how wrong this has been - how the anxiety is simply a symptom of her illness. She does this in an almost pointed way and I begin to feel increasingly incompetent.

My response to her is anxious and I become ever more active in therapy. Exploring, listening, campaigning.

However, after a number of sessions I become aware that all I am capable of doing is to maintain a posture in which I am not offering any encouragement or support, while making increasingly more tenuous forays into the realm of the meaning of the depression in its ecology, and making half-hearted attempts to be provocative.

²² Farelly, and Brandsma (1974). Views which espouse therapeutic change through disruption of interactional sequences are inherently systemic and are most articulately explicated in the work of Sullivan, (1953), Carson, (1969), and Kiesler (1982) in particular.

²³ Young and Beier (1982).

This is my only real sense of therapeutic strategy and I feel that I cling to it in some desperation - more out of anxiety than with any conviction. I feel increasingly incompetent, and am immensely relieved when my colleague again returns from leave. Lynne clearly has more stamina at being depressed than I do at being optimistic, circular, provocative, relational and ecosystemic. In my mind's eye, I end up with a silly knowing smirk on my face during therapy, running thoughts of 'resistance' and so on through my brain, while feeling completely impotent.

It had not taken me very long to join the ranks of the defeated. Sadly, somewhat humbled, I took my place beside Eglonyl and various ghosts of psychiatrists in the halls of the vanquished. So much for clever footwork.

From my newly acquired position as therapeutic bystander I am able to admire the colleague who referred this woman to me. What amazing stamina - or something - to have been with this powerful depressive for six years. She [the colleague] must have had an amazing immunity to depression herself. This depression is one that could be highly contagious to psychotherapists.

TSR Analysis

The TSR analysis of the case of Lynne proved to be illuminating.

It became exceedingly clear that I was grappling with a problem which reflected my understanding of what constituted the clinician's role, and the way in which I interpreted and played this role.

The language I had used in describing the cases with which I had encountered problems included frequent reference to the notions of 'punctuation', 'preventing a recurrence of problem cycles', and so on. These sorts of cybernetic notions are an entrenched aspect of the literature on family therapy, broadly speaking, and analysing their use in my own report, I

uncovered two main assumptions that grounded my understanding and practice of therapy.

Assumption 1: An Epistemology for Diagnosis

The first of my assumptions concerned problem diagnosis.

I believed that therapeutic change would inevitably be predicated upon *the identification of recurrent sequences of interaction and associated semantic frames*, which would be evident not only in the accounts of the problem, but also in analogous sequences in the therapy session. This is a fairly conventional sort of assumption, one which I probably shared with many system-oriented therapists. The notion of 'punctuation', which originates from Watzlawick et al,²⁴ proved to be relevant. I used the concept to describe my attempts to identify self-reinforcing cycles of behaviour and meaning which lead to the intensification or maintenance of the client's problem, rather than leading to a solution.

On this basis, I opted in most cases for an attempt to articulate to myself the client's problematic interactional and semantic patterns, including their effects on myself, and then used this articulation on which to predicate logically justifiable interventions.

Assumption 2: An Epistemology for Therapeutic Intervention

The second assumption follows naturally from the first, and concerns my implicit conception of the nature of my role as a therapist.

Based on my diagnostic analysis and formulation, I would adopt a therapeutic stance which would typically include both a *resistance to accepting*

²⁴ Watzlawick, Bavelas, Jackson (1967).

the overt meanings associated with the symptoms by the client-system, and to the symptoms in terms of their pragmatic effect on myself. From this contrary or disengaged position, I would attempt to explore the possibilities for the emergence of other meanings around symptoms, in the hope that I could thus bring into being both an interpersonal process and a view which freed the patient from the problem-maintaining cycle. Positively connoting symptoms generally formed an integral part of this therapeutic stance.

I thus saw myself very clearly as a 'change agent', operating from a power-base of knowledge of theory, skill, technique, and vigilance. My understanding would have been that therapeutic change took place as a direct function of my capacity for analysis and my technical artfulness in constructing interventions. My basic metaphor for therapy would thus have been that it constituted a technology of a Machiavellian kind.²⁵

Associated Inferences: Critical Peer Review

I could not help but note that I had extended my set of assumptions regarding the intellectual nature of therapy to underpin not only my therapeutic activity, but also my construal of the context of therapy as a professional activity within a professional community.

²⁵ The reader will be well aware, no doubt, that the two assumptions detailed here relate to fundamental themes in the ecosystemic epistemology, concerning the interactive, dynamic social processes whereby problems come to be defined, contained and resolved within semantic and political frames of reference, constituted within recursive, self-organising ecologies. The philosophical thought underpinning these themes originates primarily in Bateson's ecosystemic epistemology, as explicated for instance in *Mind and Nature*, (Bateson, 1979/1988) as well as in the constructivist literature exemplified in the work of Watzlawick and his colleagues (Watzlawick, 1984). These preoccupations in the body of thought known loosely as 'ecosystemic epistemology' identify it as a fast-evolving species of postmodernism, as Lynn Hoffman points out (Hoffman, 1995.) Much has been made of the differences between social constructionism, cybernetics, and social constructionism, both by Hoffman and others (Paré, 1996). A full consideration of this issue is not germane here, as my understanding of the issues at the time was consolidated around the themes I have explained above. What I find particularly interesting in retrospect is that I should have adopted quite so 'objectivist' an approach to therapy, when the literature of the era was so impregnated with references to participant observation and the impossibility of objectivity - axioms which I would have claimed to subscribe to. I will deal with this issue more fully later in this document.

Apart from believing that the therapist controlled the therapeutic process through intellectual artifice, I had constructed an imagined community of professionals who presided in judgement over my work. These phantasms in their own right critically demanded very high levels of intellectually justifiable and responsible work of me, and I accordingly construed therapeutic failure in this context to be a result of deficient intellection. And apart from these very considerable demands, this psychic Greek chorus also insisted that I be creative and cost effective in the service I provided.²⁶

In the cases in which I encountered difficulty, as exemplified by my anaesthetic encounter with Lynne, I would invariably experience criticism from my introjected critics, and hence try to appease them, redoubling my efforts, attempting ever more clever and precise diagnoses and strategies, working even harder at being 'meta' to the problem, and so on. In the case of Lynne, the intellectual resources available to me in adopting a meta-position were soon exhausted, and I then had no fall-back position, no alternative way of engaging with her. My subjective experience of this position: *stuck*. When the safety and certainty of intellectually based professionalism was challenged, under the wilting glare of my tormentors, I would habitually become self-conscious, pressurise myself, and eventually freeze, exhausted, defeated, and deflated.²⁷

An Intellectual 'Leitmotiv'

In the process of dialogue which followed, with Gert primarily, it became very clear that my attempts to solve the problem of stuckness all fell into a category which might be called 'more of the same', after Watzlawick et

²⁶ This kind of personification is possible retrospectively: at the time it wasn't quite as definite as I portray it here.

²⁷ I became aware through the course of writing this document that my excessive anxiety and self-consciousness can be seen (psychodynamically) as a variety of narcissism (Lowen, 1985). I have found that encountering my woundedness, *phenomenological lacunae in the subtexts of my narrative identity*, and my consequent *objectification of a fictional self-as-narrator and its narcissistic expression* has been a provocative and healing process. Unfortunately, as these are resonant themes, the explication of 'narcissism as a generalised form of narrative', what this entailed personally, and the implications of such a view are beyond the scope of this document.

al.²⁸ When the intellectual-powerful position failed, I responded to stuckness with an attempt to become more clever, which in turn led to more anxiety and more stuckness, and so on.

In this escalating process of anxious explanation, unconvinced therapeutic lunging, and disdainful client responses, I also became so lost in my own internal convolutions that the presence of the client became tangential, to say nothing of an I-Thou relationship or a profound existential encounter. If truth be told, I became secretly resentful with these patients who stymied me, obtusely disconfirming my professional self.

As a further aspect of the TSR project, Gert urged participants to try to identify a *leitmotiv* in their work: a recurrent theme, mirrored in the difficult cases, which reflected personal issues. Gert was proceeding from the suspicion that the themes identified such cases would be found to resonate through our professional as well as our personal lives.

In the process of several discussions with Gert and other colleagues, it became obvious to me that the sort of refuge in the intellect reflected in the Lynne episode was indeed a recurrent theme, a *leitmotiv* - not just with difficult cases, but which over time I would come to understand to be very deeply embedded in my entire being and my way of relating to the world.

I wrote the following, inter alia, of my experience of the therapy with Lynne for the TSR project

"I think the main issue is the compelling need I have to feel that I have some map of the process of therapy - some sense that I know where all of this is going. As soon as I step out of this kind of domain, I feel extremely uncomfortable and fearful. I fantasy getting into trouble for wasting patient's time and money and for not being professional.

²⁸ Watzlawick et al (1974).

I suppose this goes back to a theme in my existence which has revolved around being 'clever'...how integral this is to me and to my relationships - particularly with authority figures and ultimately my father"

Apparently, in resorting to intellectual explanation, I was dealing with Lynne, problem cases, and indeed psychotherapy in the most familiar of ways. And it became apparent to me that this intellectual approach, my habitual stance in dealing with clients and other relationships, had become both a position of professional competence as well as a millstone around my neck.

I also wrote the following:

"I do not trust the spontaneity of simply being in the relationship. I have a great desire-fear to control. Even if through subtle means. Lynne plays into this fear. Second order solution: do nothing!"

The 'Be Spontaneous' Paradox

Gert listened to my story as it unfolded through the TSR process, and formulated a hypothesis regarding the sort of activity that would foster my professional development.

He suggested that I develop a more spontaneous approach to therapy. His supposition was that in doing so, I would evoke different conversational and interactional possibilities, in so doing stimulating new meanings - a suggestion based on techniques designed to stimulate creative thinking, *inter alia*.²⁹

I did not understand this at the time.

²⁹ Gert apparently would subscribe to the dictum that if you want to think differently, do something different. This idea figures in the 'structural' family therapy techniques of Minuchin, in which Gert had been intensively schooled (Minuchin, 1974; Minuchin & Fishman, 1981).

What I heard was Gert saying "Be spontaneous." But everyone knows that this is a paradox. "How can you try to be deliberately spontaneous?", I asked myself, reflecting on the fact that Watzlawick himself addresses this very paradox.³⁰ And furthermore, how is one supposed to know what one is doing when one is being spontaneous? Was I being asked to perform a professional activity without knowing what I was doing? Was I blithely being asked to throw understanding to the winds?

I clearly remember sitting, looking at Gert in astonishment, through the veil of our commingled cigar and cigarette smoke, as the afternoon sun threw the shadow of the University building on the hill outside.

And as I contemplated this curious state of affairs, I pondered those contrasting conversations in therapy, profoundly intense episodes, which I judged to be transformative and which the clients involved had also found extremely moving and influential.

These moments, it seemed to me, had nothing whatever to do with my having adopted a Machiavellian position. I was puzzled by the fact that despite my internalised community of critical peers, some of my subjectively 'best' work revolved around not working with any sense of 'doing the right thing' or being adroit in the application of therapeutic models, tactics - or indeed using any intellect at all.

Coupled with this minor perversity, I was also aware of a lurking sadness that my therapeutic role had not turned out to be at all what I had imagined it would be, before I was trained. I had imagined profound existential encounters, I-thou relationships, empathy, warmth, congruence, and I had instead become a high priest of reason - as 'meta' to the therapeutic relationship as I could possibly be, a disengaged, almost disembodied mind, my seat in the therapy room a pulpit of analysis. I found this position

³⁰ Watzlawick et al (1974).

unsatisfying, but did not really know how to respond creatively to the received wisdom which me oppressed into it.

Further, it began to appear to me that the moments of inspiration were moments of profound connection with the being of the client, the 'thou'. These were moments in which there was a connection beyond my professional persona.

I began to reflect on the possibility of an alternative, more spontaneous modus operandi. I found that I did not have the conceptual tools to accommodate it, or perhaps, the courage to be free, and this perplexed and intrigued me. What would one have to do to find a home for an alternative - or at least complementary praxis - within my rather doctrinaire interpretation of ecosystemic epistemology?

CHAPTER 3

NEW BEARINGS

The Paradox is Extended

Parallel to the TSR activity, another process was unfolding in the doctoral programme.

As I contemplated the problem of the 'be spontaneous' paradox, so I was contemplating the requirements of the programme for the production of a thesis. I had never seen any real possibility of an intimate link between my clinical impasse and the requirements of academia for a substantial scholarly document, except via an explication of abstract, impersonal issues. I conceived of the thesis as a deeply researched and articulate *theoretical* consideration of a *theoretical* domain.

Given the fact that moments of therapeutic inspiration were intriguing to me, I intended rather vaguely at the time to consider the issue of creativity in the psychotherapeutic context.³¹ While this topic had a bearing on my clinical impasse, in that creativity seemed to represent the antithesis of stuckness, I was mentally and emotionally keeping the thesis and the clinical aspect of the programme separate.

³¹ I had written a Master's degree thesis on the topic of metaphor in psychotherapy (Shirley, 1988), and there were many themes that I encountered in addressing this issue which still interested me, and still promised to be fruitful. Metaphor in psychotherapy seemed to be an intellectual wedge into the issue of therapeutic creativity, so there was a natural continuity in moving from metaphor to creativity per se.

I could not conceive of the thesis as a document emerging from living process - *and was unaware that in this frame of mind, I was inadvertently replicating the pattern at the very heart of my clinical impasse: I resort to distant, dry and intellectual conceptions when confronted with problems.*

I had accordingly been writing short proposals for a thesis, and was struggling to produce something which satisfied Gert. He kept steering me away from the academic papers I would give him, encouraging me to write something more personal. In three successive sessions over a month and a half, he had been disinterested in the things I had written, all of which were meant to be pedigreed academia.³²

I began to get very frustrated with Gert. In fact, I began to feel *stuck!*

In not accepting my proposals, Gert was again guided by his intention to create a context in which I would not do 'more of the same', and thereby perpetuate my impasse. He argued that an intellectual approach would solve nothing, as it would represent a repetition of my typical 'first-order' response to problems.

Between Gert's urging to do something more personal in the thesis domain, and the 'be spontaneous' proposition in the clinical domain, the impasse of my personal professional problem began to pervade my entire relationship with the University.

³² I had proposed to deal with creativity and inspiration in therapy from epistemological, semiotic, neuropsychological, and other psycho-esoteric points-of-view.

Embracing the Personal

Of force, I began to consider the possibility that enrichment in the face of my therapeutic quandary as well as an answer to my thesis question lay *outside* the domain that I would usually consider in a professional context.

This thought made me very uneasy. One cannot conceptualise what one cannot conceptualise, to paraphrase someone or other.

Eventually, with trepidation aplenty, I decided to take a risk - to submit something completely different. It was neither a thesis proposal nor a case report - it was a statement of intent regarding personal themes which preoccupied me, and which I would never before have dreamed of speaking of so baldly in the academic setting. Submitting it was a spontaneous act from a seemingly untenable position, and the content of the submission concerned spontaneous, meaningful madness. I wrote it late one night, and faxed it to Gert the next day. (The event recounted in it is entirely true, having happened in 1987.) Here it is, slightly abridged:

Inspiration and Responsibility

In the 1980's I became intrigued by the work of the izangoma - African traditional healers. While some of their work appeared to be based on fairly common understandings of phenomena and treatment methods, much of the work of the isangoma is dependant on individual inspiration received from the shades, the guiding ancestor spirits.

One night, late, I had been talking to an isangoma who was interpreting my dreams and was instructing me about herbs and so on, and was walking back to my car through the deserted winter Hillbrow streets, as I was seized by the most compelling feeling that I should walk in a particular direction. It was an almost physical sensation of being pushed. I allowed myself to be drawn into the experience- I had the sense that I could ignore or resist the experience if I

wished. I walked, stopped, turned, rambled - and ended up standing on a street corner near my car, increasingly puzzled. Nothing was happening, and nothing kept on happening, so much so that I became extremely rational and decided that the whole experience was nonsense, I was imagining things etc. - so I decided to walk to my car and go home. As I approached the car I was again seized by the feeling very strongly, and turned suddenly to my left... to meet the direct gaze of a black man whom I had never seen before. It felt like a Moment of Truth, whatever that might be. I walked up to him feeling as if I were on a mission from the gods...

"Do you know me?", I asked.

"No."

The man looked me up and down, as if he were waiting for something. I felt at a loss. The kinaesthetic sense that there was something 'right' about our encounter was almost overpowering.

"You are a sangoma!", I almost shouted.

"Yes."

This episode taught me that there is more to the things that come through us, and me, than meets the eye.

This realisation has been the motivating force behind much of my interest in psychology...there seem to be realms of potential which a traditional scientific world-view has difficulty in accounting for.

My long-standing interest in the philosophy of science reveals that the notions of objectivity and independent rationality are flawed. Science must begin to realise that it represents a set of perceptual biases embedded in social contexts.

Models of psychotherapy, in the light of this, can best be seen as guiding principles reflecting social relationships and ideologies, intellectual fashions...

But psychotherapy (and psychology generally) exists in a social nexus with institutions which prescribe what is permissible and define that which will be considered legitimate. Models and theories are cornerstones in this process of legitimisation. Well-established models have been lent validity by the academic community and its institutions.

How then is the therapist to develop spontaneity, to let the mysterious flow through their person, to be open to various kinds of healing craziness ? (As epitomised by the sangoma experience.) And if this were indeed possible, would the therapist not be caught in an impossible dialectic between responsibility and inspiration, juggling craziness and social approval, spontaneity and recognised technique, technical jargon and the immediacy of metaphor...

The moment of submitting this piece was one which I have come to punctuate as the beginning of a process of personal transformation. Previously, I had often thought of the Hillbrow experience, and rather profound dealings with certain *izangoma*.³³ However, it had always been something of which I couldn't speak to professional colleagues. Opening the conversation with Gert to this topic ushered in a new dialogue.

A New Dialogue

I had always thought of my involvement with traditional healers as somehow part of 'another life' - a life which included my interest in the mystical and the spiritual, things which ostensibly had nothing to do with my existence as a psychotherapist. I had always assumed that if there were to be any synergy between these two aspects of my experience, it would be in alternative healing practices, rather than in the intellectually stimulating but dry realms of academically informed psychology.

³³ *Isangoma* - Zulu singular for traditional healer and diviner, *izangoma* plural. I had attended various rituals, had dreams of *izangoma*, and had been told on at least three occasions, by different *izangoma*, that I had a spirit-calling to become an *isangoma*. I liked the idea but balked when it came to actually taking traditional medicines or performing rituals myself. My squeamish fear had always got the better of me - to say nothing of my silent scepticism.

Submitting this piece was a radical step for me. I was completely uncertain as to how it would be received. Certainly my chorus of critics would have seen this as one of those unscientific flights of fancy more indicative of my pathology than of anything else. "Surely this kind of irrationality can't belong in a psychology department?", I asked myself. And yet, I was excited - somehow, *something* seemed possible.

Gert read the piece, and when I arrived for our next session, he didn't say very much. He seemed to be taken by what I had written - he smiled, and said softly "Man, this is nice...". I don't remember exactly what transpired during the session, but I do remember that I had the sense that a new range of possibilities had opened in my relationship to my thesis and all that it represented. But I left with questions - how does one follow up on that piece, or on the experience for that matter? What does it mean? Where does it belong?

I had *done* something different. I had taken a second order step. Gert's 'tactic' had 'worked'. A potential bridge between two worlds of discourse had been implied, and the personal and the spiritual could begin to talk to the impersonal and the abstract. In my own frame of reference, it would prove to be a very novel dialogue indeed.

The strangest series of happenings that I have ever experienced began in the few months that immediately followed my handing this piece to Gert. It was as if this act of 'going public' was part of synchronistically related wave of astonishing events. For instance, I suddenly seemed to be experiencing therapy differently. For some reason, I was seeing more mental images during therapy than I ever had before, seemingly from nowhere - imaginal reflections of the lives, thoughts, and feelings of patients, that

helped me understand and empathise much more deeply.³⁴ I felt as if I had tapped in to a source of understanding beyond myself, definitely not constructed by my using ecosystemic theoretical templates. And there was a momentous visit to sangoma extraordinaire Credo Mutwa with Brad Keeney, and the incredible events that ensued from that. And therapy with Leanne. And Mama Kunene. And so on...

My 'doing' something different seemed been part of an emergence of a personally novel way of participating in an ecology of mind.

Disturbing months followed, which I still wouldn't be able to talk about to Gert or any other professional colleague for another year. In the vortex of this time the bulk of the remainder of this document's content emerged.

As I participated in different contexts and did new things, reflected on my activities and tried to navigate on a new basis through new terrain, it became apparent to Gert and I that I was engaged in a form of action research, and that the thesis dilemma was to be resolved in construing it as a form of action research report centering on my attempts to deal with spontaneity.

Action Research: An Emergent Methodological Frame

My initial thesis proposals had been oriented to theoretically driven investigations of the phenomenon of creativity in psychotherapy, with the primary end being the production of theory itself with a secondary, 'informing' relation to practice. Gert's stance, as I have noted above, was

³⁴ For example, on one occasion I was dealing with an extremely disturbed client who had had polio as a child. In the session, somewhat randomly, I saw an image of straps - such as those which would have been used to fasten a leg-brace. When I brought in the image of straps in relation to something she said, she looked at me as if she had just seen a ghost. "How did you know that?", she asked, "...straps were a huge part of it." Later on in the same session I had a profound image come to me, linking her current complaints to an episode in her life from long ago, and also to a film she had recently seen - an image which clarified certain aspects of the difficulties being presented.

based on the supposition that this would merely have perpetuated my reliance on conceptual maps and would not have moved outside "*the conceptual matrix responsible for the problem in the first place*".³⁵

Gert's injunction and stance provoked me to enter into a new mode of engagement with the problem, the crux of which was my adoption of different position in relation to the official discourse of theory. Rather than with the disengaged production of such theory, I found myself concerned with reflective, experimental *in vivo* efforts to solve the real life issue of therapeutic spontaneity in ongoing 'live' contexts - that is, the university and my consulting room.

This stance towards the solution of a professional problem is *de facto* action research - a mode of inquiry aimed specifically at the generation of professional knowledge, with particular regard to situations in *which judgement regarding purposeful activity* is required, particularly where 'penetrating insight' *which can not be based directly on prior learning* is required.³⁶

Clearly, there could be no context of which this was more true than my psychotherapeutic-academic impasse. Gert's urging for me to do something spontaneous prompted me into a different type of action, which in turn would provoke a novel set of reflective processes prefiguring further action, and so on.

The pursuit of enhanced action, the heart of action research, has indeed been described in terms of a cyclical process of *planning, acting, observing and reflecting*, and the remainder of this document depicts a process

³⁵ Rademeyer (1997, p. 1).

³⁶ Ebutt and Elliott (1984).

that embraces all the elements of this cycle, although not always in such a linear and invariant sequence.^{37,38}

In adopting this active-interpretative stance

*"The change [associated with action research] typically involves re-education, a term that refers to changing patterns of thinking and acting that are presently well established in individuals... The change is typically at the level of norms and values expressed in action."*³⁹

Nothing could be a clearer statement of the purpose and outcome of this project.

In my case, though, the *planning* component of the cycle obtusely concerned my contriving *not* to plan - or, planning to incorporate spontaneously generated material into therapy and thus, the professional domain. The first decisively different *action* was the submission of the *isangoma* piece, which followed previous *reflection* on prior *observation* of *previous* action, in the context of conversations with Gert and others...⁴⁰

I thus traversed the action research spiral, concerned with the development of a personal epistemology for psychotherapy. As a general methodological principle, "action research implies adopting a deliberate openness to new experiences and processes..."⁴¹ and in trying to explore in an open fashion I found myself extended beyond theoretical clarity, facing existential issues that entirely changed my life and the way I saw the universe. Unexpectedly, I meandered through the shadows of my soul and culture in a process which raised not only personal questions but also

³⁷ Grundy and Kemmis (1984).

³⁸ Kemmis and McTaggart (1988).

³⁹ Argyris, Putnam and Smith (1985, p.9).

⁴⁰ I find the dichotomisation implicit in the planning-acting-observing-reflecting formulation somewhat misleading. To act is to observe is to reflect is to inform future action, i.e., to plan... each of these is an abstracted partial arc of a circuit of mind.

⁴¹ McNiff (1988, p.9).

profound questions about the nature of professional knowledge itself, and the assumptions regarding epistemic access associated with it.

How does one evaluate the value of perspectives so gleaned? In the final analysis, action research-based knowledge is to be evaluated in terms of its 'authenticity':

"...the actor alone can be the final arbiter of the truth of an interpretation, not rules nor principles nor theories",

and,

" the test of others' interpretations must be whether they are compelling in the light of his or her authentic knowledge..."⁴²

What follows is my construction of what I find to be compelling 'truths'.

⁴² Grundy and Kemmis (1984, p. 6).

PART II: NEW TERRITORY, NO MAP

CHAPTER 4

THE PROBLEM OF SPONTANEOUS SCIENCE

Spontaneity: Contradictions and Contraindications

While the submission of the isangoma piece may well have been a watershed in the context of my attempts to define a thesis topic and in my relationship to a fantasised hyperintellectual professional community, the idea of spontaneity in the clinical setting was one fraught with difficulty. My initial attempts to work spontaneously in therapy had met with mixed results. Eléna's was a case in point:⁴³

Eléna was referred to me by a medical practitioner. She had gone to consult the doctor during a particularly difficult phase in her life complaining of a chronic 'lack of self-confidence', manifesting particularly in her relationship with her boyfriend.

During our first session, she related her current difficulties to sexual abuse by an elder brother during her childhood. This had gone on for many years, and Eléna recounted it tearfully, jerking breathlessly from wracked sob to wracked sob. It was evident that she had not ever really spoken about it to anyone, and had done her best to forget everything. She had a sense, however, that the time had come for her to try to remember and to learn to live with her history. It clearly distressed her enormously.

⁴³ I was actually too ashamed to present this case for supervision, but the experience had been significant enough to make me extremely cheery of the negative potential of my particular version of 'spontaneity'. Its personal significance was such that it formed a discreet, private backdrop to my journey, and as such, it bears recounting here. This therapy had begun during the Doctoral programme in latter 1991.

She presented herself in a very timid and fearful way, her fixed and friendly grin an attractive, frozen mask behind which she ironically buried her agony and isolation. Her timorousness was obvious, and she explained that apart from the lack of self-confidence, she also had difficulty maintaining personal relationships - particularly with men.

She evoked strong feelings of protectiveness in me, and I thought that an initial therapeutic aim would be to create a context in which a safe relationship could develop. I had the notion that once a relationship had developed, we could begin to explore the feelings which were troubling her in greater depth, as well as the ecology in which they were manifest, and begin to experiment with alternative frames and patterns.

During a session shortly after the initial one, she explained that it was difficult for her to 'open the door': she had become so used to anaesthetising herself, putting strong, painful, feelings beyond awareness, that she was terrified of giving them a voice, suspecting that she would be overwhelmed. It emerged that this pattern of avoidance related to her attempts to control fairly profound mood swings.

Despite her efforts, however, the memory of the abuse stalked her, intruding painfully into her life at unpredictable moments, undermining her sense of self.

For the first few sessions, I maintained a low profile, doing little except trying to be empathic and to build a relationship. Then, in a later session, I had some indication that I could adopt a different position, that I might be able to draw her into a different way of relating.⁴⁴

So, I began to tease her gently - she maintained her distance, her unasserting stance. I became more vigorous, trying to coax, cajole, persuade and force her into experimenting with a new way of relating to me. Generally trying to

⁴⁴ This formulation of tactics was again based on a "black box" view of the client: the relevance of therapy being the domain of interpersonal pattern rather than the deeper semantics of her psyche.

create a context in which she would admit something new into her repertoire.⁴⁵ Still she maintained her distance, and I, foolishly overcome with my own sense of the moment, escalated my provocation sharply. Eventually, she burst into tears, and released a torrent of emotion which would have moved Genghis Khan. It was the wail of an infant helpless to prevent an incomprehensible assault.

I had thought of myself as inviting her into a wonderful realm of new behavioural possibilities by trying to be provocative, playing with her. I was inviting her into a new drama with new roles. Implicitly, I was also saying to her that her style was arbitrary and that all she had to do was to change, and that here was her opportunity. Don your new clothes, my dear. Don your new mask. Inadvertently, by focusing too much on my own strategy - and being far too in love with the grand moment - I had become the tormentor of her past, in my wild escalation of bullying power. I had become a soloist without any backing. I was playing discordant scales, in a one man band. Call it improvising if you will: it didn't feel very musical to me.⁴⁶

In retrospect, I could perhaps frame this event as an acting out of a counter-transference which could have told me a great deal about her position and her feelings. At the time, however, I didn't see it as such, and it was all I could do to 'save' the therapy. My guilt and fear, my reparative instincts, my regret and remorse, together with both her paralysis and capacity to endure and to cope, led some 18 months later to a satisfactory conclusion to the therapy. Or perhaps, less selfishly, it was merely the grace of God.

Much of our time was spent in considering the patterns of her persistence in abusive relationships with males. [!]

⁴⁵ In retrospect, this case seems to exemplify something over and above destructive spontaneity: It again exemplifies my approach to therapy at the time, insofar as I was trying to disrupt an interactional pattern and an associated set of definitions. When I wrote this piece I thought that it exemplified a case of unsuccessful spontaneity. On reviewing now (some years later) however, I doubt whether it does: it is far more tactical than spontaneous, reflecting the adoption of a position not responsive to the feedback of the client. Ergo: I now understand the very notion of spontaneity differently.

⁴⁶ As far as the musical metaphor is concerned, it seemed a discordant, hammering crescendo on a strategic piano. I adopted this metaphor in reporting on the case in the light of Keeney's approach to describing 'improvisational' therapy, in which he adopts a root metaphor derived from the performing arts, and music in particular (Keeney, 1990). Shortly before I met Elena, I had attended a seminar on improvisational therapy, and as a consequence of this case I had a very sceptical view of my own capacity to improvise meaningfully.

Reflecting on this nasty episode, I had come to a sober perspective - I could not simply indulge my wild flights of therapeutic fancy. *Acting upon impulse did not necessarily produce concordant therapeutic experiences.*⁴⁷

Responsible Spontaneity and Professional Subjectivity

Over and above my poorly managed therapy with Elena, by the time Gert 'administered' the 'be spontaneous' paradox, I had also read Dell's contribution on possible limitations in the systemic view of violence.⁴⁸ Questions nagged: does the systemic view tend to trivialise violence? Is systemic praxis prone to legitimating violence?

I believed, *apropos* my dealings with Elena, that I myself had strayed into what I considered a fundamentally abusive position and I thus had personally grounded sympathy for views that 'power' and 'abuse' cannot be dismissed through the mere sophistry of calling them 'epistemological errors'.⁴⁹

I was forced to begin to contemplate serious questions: *within an ecosystemic view, what could anchor one in healing and prevent abuse, anchor one in therapeutic harmony rather than discord...?*⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Perhaps people with no ear for music cannot improvise.

⁴⁸ Dell (1989).

⁴⁹ It is indeed this issue that Dell (1989) attempts to deal with in the article mentioned above. The original notion that the concept of power amounted to an epistemological error is found in Bateson (1967/1973).

⁵⁰ Again I frame my question in musical metaphor: how does one find the source of inspiration in which one can create beautiful harmonies that resonate with the context?

It was clear to me that whereas in medicine, established and verified *procedure* is the ultimate test of utility and defensibility, this can *inherently not* be the case in ecosystemic therapy. For while medicine relies on analytico-referential thought and an epistemology applicable to macrophysical phenomena, ecosystemic therapy claims to be informed by post-modern thought.

Analytico-referential thought is predicated on the assertion of objective 'master narratives', paradigms, or frames of reference and hence it allows for, encourages, nay, *insists* upon, explanatory recourse to absolute truths established through dutiful empirical enquiry. On the other hand, postmodernism generally, and ecosystemic therapy specifically, recognises the subjective and conversational nature of the therapeutic venture, and brooks no reference to presumed objective facts.⁵¹

In this context, I was forced to ask how to hedge against the negative potential of the therapeutic situation, if principle, method and procedure could not necessarily provide such a hedge? And I was forced to ask the corollary question as to how to facilitate the occurrence of profound healing.

*What can possibly inform professional practice within a postmodern weltanschauung?*⁵²

I was therefore struck by the paradox that the majority of the purported manifestations of systems thought in clinical praxis *do* espouse some form of method - consider the gurus: Haley with both general and specific strategies,⁵³ Minuchin with his structural approach,⁵⁴ the Palo Alto

⁵¹ See especially Hoffman (1990) and Tyler (1990).

⁵² Varela (1989) asks this question in an interesting format, and noting that "...the domains we inhabit as humans are in fact groundless in that nowhere is there a fixed reference point from which to classify, rearrange or ascertain their origins..." (pp. 21-22), comes to the conclusion that effective therapists do not act as if they were not participating in the situation or as if they had a fixed and independent frame of reference. The question vexed the field at the time, and continues to do so. I believe that the question arises as an inevitable consequence of a postmodern stance.

⁵³ Haley (1963; 1976; 1980).

⁵⁴ Minuchin (1974); Minuchin and Fishman (1981).

group and their 'tactics of change',⁵⁵ the Milan group with 'hypothesising, circularity, neutrality', 'ritualised prescriptions' and 'long intervals'⁵⁶ - and sundry others too numerous to begin to mention.⁵⁷ A gaggle of highly regarded authors, family theorists, all advocating methods, all trying to reconcile their methods with ideas of ecosystem, and all doing so in spite of what seemed to me an obvious paradox regarding the impossibility of objective metanarrative and associated method.⁵⁸ Keeney seemed to be one of a very few voices advocating another perspective on method, with his 'improvisational' therapy...

And there was I, trying to use these methods to help patients, and hoping to enjoy my work. And not least of all, in order to gain perspective on what I was doing, I was trying to reconcile their views with the original ecosystemic epistemology as per Bateson⁵⁹ and his self-styled progeny. I had to ask *what kind of professional standards might apply within this welter of inconsistent and contradictory ideas.*⁶⁰

These doubts and perplexities regarding ecosystemic therapeutic praxis formed the subtextual background to Gert's injunction to be spontaneous. It was a double bind - on the one hand, Gert advocated

⁵⁵ Fisch et al. (1983).

⁵⁶ Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin, and Prata (1978); Selvini-Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin and Prata (1980); Selvini-Palazzoli (1980).

⁵⁷ Hoffman (1981) provides an overview of the ideas prevalent at the time of my training. Most centered on providing a theoretical descriptive framework which lends coherence to clinical work.

⁵⁸ It is in retrospect clear that some of this confusion arose precisely as a result of my trying to accommodate all these theories under the umbrella of one overarching postmodernist metatheory, when in fact their most basic assumptions were not necessarily commensurable with postmodernism at all, unless they are reinterpreted as metaphor.

⁵⁹ Bateson (1967/1973).

⁶⁰ It seems to me that the point to be made here is that there is no coherent metatheory for family therapy or other systems-theory based interventions. Systems oriented therapy is unified at the level of practice by virtue of its focus on interactional units, and not by any underlying theory on which the seemingly endless variety of practices is predicated. There is thus an essential tension between the ontological-epistemological domain and the domain of clinical pragmatics. Practices may converge: explanations and rationales for these will certainly diverge. Some of my confusion stemmed from this tension - in my construction of the state of affairs in the body of practice, I was searching for a coherent and unified metaperspective, predicated upon emergent postmodern axioms. I believed that such a perspective would allow me to think about *all* models and propositions in an integrated way. Perhaps it might be said, ironically, that this was the dream of a closet positivist... I would now far rather accept that any 'theory' of ecosystemic therapy inheres in a group of debates which have various degrees of intertextuality and subsist in various language communities which overlap only partially. It is patently false to reify such theory, or to afford it the status of a paradigm, for it shows no signs of the internal consistency that would justify the use of the term in Kuhn's (1970) original sense.

spontaneity, on the other, the entire body of literature advocated method, or at least, reason.⁶¹ Apart from the odd maverick.

And to make matters *worst*, my *best* subjective experiences in therapy had been in methodlessness. The example I recount below dates from 1989, and has a traditional African metaphorical cast.⁶²

Rifleman Motaung

A young black soldier with enuresis was referred to me.

I was intrigued as to what configuration of social factors would align him with the army of his oppressors, and found that although his reasons were primarily financial and pragmatic, his family had nonetheless been riven by his entry into the army. It was soon after his enlistment that the symptoms had appeared.

My immediate hypothesis was that the symptoms had something to do with the apparent disjunction between his professional life as a soldier and his personal life in his family and his community - specifically in the context of what is fondly known as 'the apartheid regime', which he would have been perceived to have been supporting.

*He had previously been referred for psychiatric evaluation by an army doctor, and had been treated with an antidepressant that was supposed to alleviate enuresis. Military incompetence being what it is, the treatment had never been reviewed, and he continued to wet his bed, months after treatment had commenced... On closer investigation I discovered that he was also experiencing polymodal hallucinations: he recurrently heard voices and experienced associated senses of presence and *deja vu*. He also frequently experienced rather severe bouts of depersonalization. I referred him for a neurological investigation, suspecting Temporal Lobe Epilepsy (TLE), wanting*

⁶¹ At least, it felt like it. I attempt no reduction of the situation into primary, secondary and tertiary negative injunctions, as per the original formulation.

⁶² The case was done during the two years of 'national service' I did as a resentful, passive-aggressive, and terrified conscript in the South African Defence Force, working as a psychotherapist.

to eliminate the possibility of organic pathology before commencing with therapy. The neurological investigation was inconclusive, as they always seemed to be, and the antidepressant prescription was renewed without explanation. (He had no symptoms of depression, and I wondered vaguely if they perhaps had a surplus at the time. I had however always found the psychiatric machinations of the army unfathomable, so I didn't think about it too much.) I happened to know that in black African patients, clinical pictures tend to be different to those of Europeans,⁶³ so once he had been given a clean, if somewhat cursory bill of neurological health, I was not too concerned about the possible organic pathogenesis of the voices etc.

The patient spoke very good English, and I decided that a hypnotic mode of treatment would be worth exploring. (I once before had had a 'miracle' cure of enuresis take place over two sessions of hypnosis.⁶⁴) I wanted to explore metaphors around his distance from his family and his ancestors, and the idea that his symptom might be trying to remind him of them, to make him remember, to re-personalise him, to re-enliven his connection to kin.

I became intrigued by the fact that his family totem animal was the crocodile, and I had some curious intuition of a link between the crocodile and the nocturnal river in his bed.

I didn't try to establish trance conventionally. I simply started telling a long story in which he approached a river.

He sat on the tilted back government issue chair, with his head resting on the wall. His eyes were closed, and as I narrated, I decided to close mine too. After a short time I found myself simply relating what I saw in my mind's eye - him, falling asleep on the banks of the river, and beginning to dream. And in his dream, being approached by a crocodile who was his ancestor - who took him down into the river and told him that his enuresis was caused by the ancestors -

⁶³ Odejide, Oyewunmi and Ohaeri (1989).

⁶⁴ I adopted a systemic stance to hypnosis, following the work of Lifschütz and Fourie (1985).

that they were unhappy with his life, that they wanted to be remembered. A dream within a sleep within a trance.

Once we had both emerged from the river, we started to discuss what it was that he could do to honour his ancestors. We discussed this for two sessions, and it was arranged that he should be given a pass to go and do his reconnecting with family and ancestors, performing certain rituals.

When he returned from leave, his enuresis had disappeared completely.

I saw him only once for a follow-up session after his leave, and never again, but some months later another person in his battalion told me that he had left the army to go to stay with his family and to become an isangoma. His illness had been the manifestation of a calling.

This news filled me with joy and amazement: the therapy had obviously loosened things up enough for him to have found an entirely new way of being connected to his ecology.

What was particularly striking was that during the session, and in similar sessions with other patients, I had had the feeling of *becoming a participant rather than remaining a tactical choreographer*, and the therapy seemed in each case to unfold from within itself and of its own accord. While there was a general sense of what to do, of what might work, I had elaborated around themes in a very unselfconscious and unplanned way, seemingly to great effect. And these sorts of therapies invariably made *me* feel great - they had none of the powerful, clever, violent feel of my *faux pas* with Elena.

Hindrances and Hints, Fear and Fascination

My 'stuck' cases showed the limitations of my use of method, my impulsive and aggressive case showed that 'improvisation' as I interpreted it could also not necessarily be trusted, and my spontaneous and magical cases showed - what? That there existed some kind of therapeutic potential which I could not readily tap, which

was also associated with spontaneity? I had no idea how to facilitate these experiences.

Nor could I seem to find an explanatory foothold for any of these phenomena within the ecosystemic literature of which I was aware. And in his responses to my submissions, Gert was suggesting that it wouldn't help me to try.

The questionable possibility of a moral and methodological foundation for therapy, the 'be spontaneous paradox', and generally, the question as to what to do, came to preoccupy me for at least the following four years of action research documented here.⁶⁵

'Be spontaneous' was a paradoxical injunction within a contradiction: be professional by intentionally *not* controlling what you do. The logic, the *weight* of professionalism militated against it. Experience both confirmed and denied it. It resonated with Keeney's proposals.

It frightened me.

And yet there was a hint - just a hint - of an unthinkable, unspeakable rapprochement of all these entanglements in a case like that of Rifleman Motaung.

That fascinated me - it hinted at magic.

⁶⁵ The crux of this preoccupation was the fear that solipsistic relativism was the only possible logical position in an ecosystemic approach - something which my sense of aesthetics would not tolerate.

CHAPTER 5

INTO THE WORLD OF THE SHAMAN

The Magician

In 1991, the year *before* I submitted the piece on the close encounter of the *isangoma* kind, Keeney, author of both serious mainstream contributions as well as somewhat maverick provocations on systemic therapy,⁶⁶ had visited SA, as I mentioned briefly above.

He had played tape recordings and recounted stories of therapies, all of which exemplified a musical lightness, an unfettered, gentle, free creativity. Despite my negative experience with Elena in latter 1991, and my resultant reserve towards my own spontaneous productions, I found his views and anecdotes intriguing and challenging - they seemed to hold the promise of a kind of professional freedom that I could only dream of, although I was also dubious, like many of my colleagues. But in discussing his own development as a therapist with the doctoral group, he revealed that he had been profoundly influenced by his encounters with Native American shamans and healers.

⁶⁶ Some - he published rather prolifically - of Keeney's influential mainstream publications are: Keeney (1979; 1982a; 1982b; 1983) and Keeney and Sprenkle (1982). These particular publications constitute a serious consideration of an epistemology for family therapy which embraces aesthetics. Among his more unusual contributions one would find, inter alia, Keeney, Nolan and Madsen (1992) and Keeney (1991). The latter, more recent publications are unusual as a direct and logical consequence of their consistency with the premises of the epistemology developed in the earlier publications, for they reflect a therapeutic 'methodology' unconstrained by the strictures of modernist, structuralist thought. The approach Keeney developed is probably most fully articulated in his *Improvisational therapy* (Keeney, 1990).

This really piqued my interest, for his story resonated synchronistically with my long-standing interest in *isangoma*. I desperately wanted to explore the connection between Keeney's ideas and my questions - but I had to wait another year. Until that autumn, filled with promise and inchoate possibility, about three weeks after I had seen Gert about the *isangoma* piece, when Keeney was scheduled to arrive again. Perhaps this would be the opportunity for exploration I had been hoping for...

Keeney arrived for the second time in May 1992, and was again scheduled to present certain workshops. Gert planned for Keeney to spend an informal day with the two of us - what I thought would be time for exploration, time perhaps to challenge him...

As it happened, this day could not materialise - the demands on Keeney were too dense. Too many people, all picking his brains, all challenging him on small points of order, all trying to understand. I was very disappointed, but in any event had to go through to the university during that week to deliver something. And, peculiarly, Gert somehow managed to organise for me to give Keeney a lift to Johannesburg from Pretoria. Hallelujah! An hour of Bradford Keeney, even if it was on the highway. (I often wonder what made Gert do this - it proved to be a singular stroke of destiny.)

The Hollow Bone

Within minutes we were talking about healers.

Brad spoke of an image handed to him by a Native American healer: the healer as a *hollow bone*. This was a profoundly evocative image: I instantly knew intuitively what it meant. The encounter with the *isangoma* in Hillbrow

flashed to mind. Something to do with making room for intuition, having for a moment been a clear channel?

In the cutting Witwatersrand night wind: I had been improvising, but not in a disengaged, self-important way, as had been the case with Elena. I had been dancing to a music which was unusual and distant, yet which connected me to the squalid urban ecology of gangland, flatland, drugland, in an entirely real and poignant way. *I had managed to get out of my own way.* In a medium of knowing and experiencing which I certainly could not have reconciled with a formal educational setting - much less with a thesis or a professional clinician's role. It was a moment in which the subjective inner and the consensual outer fuse, the distinction lost. A moment of being lost in knowledge. I had *been* a hollow bone, for a few instants.

I told Brad of my dallying and dithering around the *izangoma*, my ambivalence, fear, my stuckness... By the time we reached the shopping mall where he needed to go to a bookshop, I had begun to realise that the visiting guru was legitimating the craziness of my secret past. I wanted to pinch myself.

I was about to show him the way to the shop and was locking the trunk of my car, when an old, tattered fragment of paper caught my eye. It was a bad feeling of mine, transmuted into a poem. On some impulse I handed the paper to Keeney. He read it for a minute, then motioned me into the car. Who knows what went through his mind at that moment? We climbed back in, and he began chanting and praying over me, touching my chest.

I had never before contemplated shamanism at midday in a BMW in a parking lot in an upmarket Johannesburg suburb. I was somewhat surprised by this new turn of events. Yet curiously I had the sense that it was the right

way for he and I to connect. I closed my eyes and let go, after a while beginning to chant myself.

When Keeney, whom I now feel I may call Brad, stopped, I opened my eyes to see a security guard three feet away, goggling into the car, his eyes bulging and his hand reaching for his truncheon. There was also a row of cars stopped behind us, and all eyes were on the two nut-cases in the silver BMW. I was a little nonplussed initially but soon we were both caught up in gales of laughter at the sheer incongruity of the moment. It all seemed so crazy, so utterly crazy, and so joyous.

And thus began an exceeding strange journey.

Stan, looking into the night with his old eyes, had been right: it *was* time.

Into Soul Country

A little later, over lunch, I recounted something of my memory of Credo Mutwa,⁶⁷ an extraordinary *isangoma* whom I had met in 1984. I suggested that Brad, who was literally following his dreams of meeting shamans and healers all over the world, might like to meet Mutwa.

Brad told me that 'coincidentally', the night before, he had been reading a book written by Credo Mutwa, at a colleague's house, and that he had felt impelled to meet Credo. He had also had a dream of meeting a member of the San tribe, nomads of the African desert - and I knew that Credo's family had been of San origin.

⁶⁷ Credo Mutwa, apart from being the Dalai Lama of *isangoma*, is also a painter, sculptor, raconteur, and internationally renowned author.

So we precipitously decided to go to Credo the following weekend. I ate a tuna salad, Brad had a saucy beef dish, and we parted. Brad strolled off into the next chapter of his book, and I went home, not feeling sure at all of what I was feeling, except that I was excited, excited, excited.

I found out from the grapevine that Credo had been living in a town called Mafikeng, having fled his place in Soweto in the midst of the violent, protracted death throes of the old South Africa. I had been in Mafikeng on business about a month before, and for some curious 'coincidental' reason had kept a tourist brochure I'd picked up in passing. I had certainly not been thinking of Credo Mutwa. It had an information phone number on it, and when I phoned, Credo's address and phone number was given immediately, quite amazingly. I phoned Credo on the Friday night before we were due to depart, almost despite myself, not feeling at all sure that this was the sort of thing that I *did*. Credo agreed to see us, although he was ill.

Curiously, too, all of the psychotherapy patients I was seeing at the time spontaneously and 'coincidentally' cancelled their Saturday morning appointments for the day on which we were scheduled to go - allowing us to plan for an early start. Everything was falling into place so smoothly, it was as if the journey had been ordained.

We set off, Brad and I, on the highways through the maize country of the then Western Transvaal.⁶⁸ I found it appropriately ironic that we had to travel through Ventersdorp, a small town renowned at the time for the fact that it had been the sight of a confrontation between extreme right wing Aryan supremacy types and the police - a first in a changing country. Through the heartland of the sad and dying white supremacists, on the way back to discover Old Afrik'.

⁶⁸ Now re-christened the North West Province.

Brad told of his dreams, and his journey, and that he had come to ask Credo how to die. I kept having an uncanny sense that Brad would not come back alive, or that I would not, or that neither of us would. It was as if the Mafikeng road, and the familiar dry drought-ridden dustbowl of the veld, had become an unknown world, and I was convinced that we were going to meet our doom in a traffic accident. It was a liminal passage, over a threshold, into the heart of an African afternoon.

In some respects my premonition of death proved to be correct.

I had brought along the unfinished stick Credo Mutwa had given me, and it was two days after Ascension Day, 1992, and it was eight years after I'd first met Credo.

In the car, we spoke of many things. Brad opened his soul and poured out to his stories of the healers, his strange and wonderful encounters with these men and women, his spirit helpers and animals, of which one was a leopard, an animal which had been a recurrent motif on his visit to Africa. And we spoke of death.

Mostly I listened, spellbound and dazed: here seemed to be a real flesh and blood Castaneda...⁶⁹

And yet it was B.P. Keeney, author of one of the best presented academic texts I had ever read. But here he was sitting in my car telling me unreservedly about his unreasonable spiritual experiences and his fears about going public with them - fears that were identical to the fears that kept me from ever trying to integrate my *isangoma* experiences with my formal clinical work. And, he had had very many experiences which paralleled that which I

⁶⁹ Carlos Castaneda authored various (controversial) books detailing his encounter and training under a Yaqui sorcerer, and his writings have come to represent a (controversial) landmark in the ethnography of magical practices, much as he himself has become a landmark figure in the experiential investigation of alternative cosmologies and the ethnopharmacology of the sacred. (Castaneda, 1972; 1976; 1977; 1981; 1988; 1993).

had with the *isangoma*, another liminal night somewhere in another life.

It seemed to me though that Brad had given up, or been forced to give up prevaricating and had fully embraced a somewhat solitary, somewhat nomadic destiny, which was to walk with the spirits, trusting in his dreams, trusting in his intuition, trusting in God. Talking to him was like talking to someone from another world, he was so engulfed and preoccupied by the mystery of his search for healing.

I found myself filled with love for him, and respect, and compassion, for it was clear that the journey was difficult, if not impossible, stripping himself as he willed himself to be that hollow bone, that perfect instrument.

Driving with him through the afternoon was dream-like. Being lost in Lichtenberg with him was dream-like. Being lost again at Llotlamoreng, Credo's place, driving through the virgin bush in the same small German sedan, in search of the great shaman: it was all a dream.

We pulled up at an Ndebele⁷⁰ village. I called a greeting, and someone approached us.

At first we were refused entry - but once I explained that I had phoned, and that Brad had come from America on the strength of a dream, the defences were lowered enough for us to be allowed through. I shrieked in excitement, and from across the yard a shriek echoed back. I fell into step behind Brad, a ritual semi-trot. Brad's head was down, his paces small, brisk and purposeful.

We were led to Credo's workshop, and ushered into the gloom, and there he sat, exactly as I remembered him. I explained tentatively that we

⁷⁰ South African tribal group renowned for exquisitely colourful geometric murals and beadwork.

had phoned, handed over the gifts that I had brought. I sat down on a narrow wooden bench next to Brad as I had been invited to, feeling that I should really sit on the floor at Credo's feet.

Credo is a big man, and his bulk and his magic and his hospitality filled the room. Brad began telling of his dreams, and of the feeling he had for Credo's illness, of which he had had a premonition during the journey. He mentioned that his dreams had brought him in search of a bushman.⁷¹

Credo then began to talk, to weave his spells, explaining that he was of bushman ancestry.

And his words flowed, his stories cascading from his soul, so vivid that they felt as real as our own personal memories. Images filled the gloom of the workshop, pinpricks of light on Credo's glasses moving as he surveyed the wonders filling the labyrinths of his soul. From ancient wells he drew tales of beauty and wisdom, touching on each of the themes we had spoken of in the car, almost as if intoning the litany on which our conversation had been a commentary. And each time his conversation harmonised with the echoes of ours, my sense of awe grew. The afternoon in the little workshop became fuller and fuller, inflated with sacred time, pregnant with magic, suffused with love.

And slowly, gently, the intensity and otherness of the afternoon grew. I lost track of my job, which was to look after the tape recorder for Brad. And again I was lost among the marvels of the Aladdin's cave the workshop had become. And sensing that something was to happen, wondering vaguely what was to become of me, but not caring, surrendered.

⁷¹ The word 'bushman' has been used for the San people and vice versa. 'Bushman' is now considered pejorative by some, although apparently not by the bushmen themselves...

The shadows outside were growing longer. It was late afternoon by the time Brad began to touch Credo, in the areas of his body and throat where Brad had sympathetically pre-experienced Credo's pains during our journey. And soon he was in transport, dancing, singing, chanting, touching Credo, who sat with the stillness and dignity of a monarch.

Eventually Brad began to look exhausted, and was falling at Credo's feet. By now I'd begun to feel quite saturated with an energy myself, so I thought I might help Brad by putting my hands on his shoulders.

As I did so, I unwittingly bid goodbye to my old life, and my own premonition of death came true.

For suddenly I *saw* waves of light issuing forth from Brad - pulses, like ripples in a pond. The Hindu word for a yogic level of attainment popped into my head. In quick succession, a bear, a crocodile and a leopard appeared behind me, and then within me. I found myself seized in a wave of convulsive energy which threw me to the floor. In a strange, distant corner of my mind I heard a roar from the hollows of my being, a roar impossibly loud and far away.

I became a leopard.

It is difficult to describe.

Later. Energy subsides. In Big Time, after some aeons. Credo stands up, his arms outstretched, and sings - a most haunting, wistful song, a song of benediction, and light, and love. It is a forgotten hymn, from the dimmest corner of memory, can only be to the Earth Mother. Credo names Brad, a ritual name: *iNgwe*. I roared as I told Brad the meaning of the word, the *leopard*, the final confirmation of the mysterious magic of the afternoon, the

resonance of the leopard, no word of leopard having been spoken. And I too was named: *iNgwazi*, the champion of the spear.

We began to leave, and I staggered out of the workshop, dazed, shivering with energy coursing through my body. Four izangoma came running, ululating, recognising something in the moment. I returned from, or to - I can't decide - another world entirely.

We walk to the car, both giddy, climb in, and drive off without looking back. Forgetting my stick in the workshop.

This is a true account. I'm still not sure exactly what happened, though I cannot doubt its power, nor its consequences in my life.

My years of resisting curious medicines prescribed by *izangoma*, of anaesthetising the idea of a calling to be an isangoma myself, of suppressing and isolating my interest in healing of the spirit - all these had been brought to an abrupt end.⁷²

⁷² Keeney recounts the episode of this visit to Credo Mutwa in his book *Shaking out the spirits: A psychotherapist's entry into the healing mysteries of global shamanism* (Keeney, 1994, pp.111-119). His quotation of Credo Mutwa is taken from the tape recording I was managing. His account in the book fits my memory of the strange afternoon perfectly.

CHAPTER 6

SEARCHING FOR A GUIDE

Home, Unfamiliar Home

We leave the villages of Credo Mutwa, shaking and quaking, peals of laughter and bolts of explosive energy bursting in the car, a psychic thunderstorm billowing about us as we drive off into the veld.

We decide in insane, euphoric hilarity to go home via a San rock engraving of what looked like a leopard - a tribute to the leopard, the recurrent motif of Brad's trip here. True to the form on the inward journey, we lose our way again and drive forever through sunset and into darkness, laughing incessantly.

African night engulfs us: old night, the lights of the famous sedan utterly puny against the black canopy and the expanses the dark liquid land, the black sea we sail. Travellers of old weaving through unknown waters, the future pregnant with wild magic. Magic. No fire, only dashboard lights and the ancient African past sprawled all around us. No elsewhere.

Eventually we reach the site of the engravings, a quarry, and gate-crash through a back entrance.

Billows of dust, powdered rock swirls around us in the yellow cocoon of the headlights. Meander towards the far side of a mountain: where the rabid jaws of technology have not yet bitten.⁷³

Lost again.

⁷³ The stone extracted there is used for a hi-tech application of some sort.

Progeny of the San people, in flat stone lie hundreds of images, shades of old awaiting their sacrifice to the new god. Each one testifies to a sacred day long since departed from the sacred hill.

Stop.

No chance of seeing your hand before your eyes, much less a single engraving somewhere in a few square kilometres of broken darkness.

Greet iNgwe, Spirit of Leopard, in night so utter, dark, sacred, wintry.

Silence. Silence. Silence. A great and impenetrable darkness. The weight of the presence of the invisible mountain.

Much later, miles later, in the silent sleeping suburbs of Johannesburg: one block from home, a Spotted Eagle Owl alights - a ghost in the beam of the headlights - watches impassively, head turning on an axis of infinite mystery as we pass. First time I've ever seen one around here.

A week later, I'm meeting Brad at the airport: I stride across the arrivals hall straight to him, not a falter in my step - no doubting the magic, as my feet lead me unwaveringly to his invisible presence in the milling crowd.

We agree to make ritual time tomorrow.

And in this time, I light some impepho,⁷⁴ and begin to chant. Soon I begin to vibrate, and old keening song comes from within, images and time passing. The ritual carries itself, born of its own knowing. Prayerful in my heart, vaguely aware that I am noisy in this distant closeness of trance, power flows as I lay hands on Brad.

Eventually, Brad speaks, his voice thick, brimming in the cold, singing silence:

"Remember always to pray...."

⁷⁴ iSangoma incense, lit in ceremony.

"The biggest obstacle is your self. And the belief that you are important. Remember this, Derek, for yours is the way of the healer, not of the warrior.

"As you stand on the threshold, think clearly, for your life will never be the same again..."

After some time, words come: "I feel peace..."

On the frozen lawn I am moved to dance, and a long spiral unwound itself from around my legs. I feel the moon, the sun above my head. The earth beneath me. I stand at the point where earth and sky meet, in my chest sky magic and the earth magic stand in awe of each other in silent fusion. I feel an eternal balance in my heart.

It was with great sadness that I bade farewell to Brad.

A Therapeutic Drama in a Parallel World

The first time I saw Leanne, about three weeks before Keeney arrived, I was rather uncomfortable.

She arrived at 8pm - the last therapy appointment of the day - in a well-coordinated outfit, and looked as if she has just returned from an impeccable gym in a tracksuit top, ski-pants, cross-trainers and immaculate make-up.

She smiled easily, from beneath her thicket of blond thatch. She was very striking indeed. I can't put my finger on what it was that made me feel mildly uneasy, though - it was just a sensation, an instinct. I felt that her persona was revealing far less than it was concealing, as if there were a hidden dimension to Leanne's being.

When I asked her how I could help her, she answered in a matter-of-fact tone that she had 'no intuition'. She explained that she was getting exactly what she wanted from life - she worked in a sales and marketing role, she was achieving remarkable levels of sales - the best in her company for that matter. She had been able to buy her own house early in her career, and her story, her manner

and her appearance gave the impression of a successful woman without a care in the world. Parties, friends, fun - it all seemed to be there. And yet there was this fly in the ointment - 'no intuition'.

I was intrigued. What does it mean to have 'no intuition'?

Leanne explained that she used mental imagery to help her achieve her goals. She would imagine the outcomes of her activities very vividly when she was setting goals for herself, focusing on all the details of what it was she wanted to attain, a practice that, in her view, worked to great effect. She experienced feeling completely in control of her fantasy life, and she maintained that she was extremely successful as a direct result of these practices. The absence of intuition was the only 'symptom' she reported - she was not depressed or anything else. It seemed to me that she was complaining of having too much control over her conscious thought, of not having places of respite from her will in her psyche. She had apparently succeeded in harnessing so much of her psychic energy in service of work and other goals that she experienced a curious sense of flatness in her life, a sense of her self being boring.

The problems arising from this were not highly intrusive - rather than arising as a result of actual distress, her coming to therapy seemed to be to do with a mild apprehension about the future: in particular, was this 'it'? There seemed to be a tacit question hanging over her life as to whether she had now 'arrived', and whether her current state defined what she could expect for the remainder of her mortal existence - an anticlimactic prospect.

I found myself poised at a juncture which might lead in two very different directions. On the one hand, I could opt to try to understand this complaint as a problem with a function or meaning in a wider system, very much in the line of the typical Milanese approach to family therapy. (Who would notice your lack of intuition? What might happen if you regained your intuition? Who would be most affected if you regained your intuition?) Or I could elect to follow my intuition. Gert's injunction came to mind, and I didn't hesitate. I could not help but be struck by the curious synchronicity of her complaint vis a vis my

current preoccupation as far as therapy was concerned, and felt also that I would be something of a liar if I did not follow my own intuitive pathways into this therapy. I was also reassured that a novel approach would not be dangerous, given her apparently excellent 'adaptive functioning' and general lack of distress.

In my own thinking, I understood Leanne's complaint as signalling an inarticulate consciousness of a need for a journey into an unknown realm in her psyche, into her own world of creative potential which would give her the experience of there being more to life, more spontaneity [sic!] than she could summon in her consciously highly controlled fashion.⁷⁵ I imagined that I might become a facilitator on this essentially exploratory journey through her psychic terrain - and this rather vague plan was all I had to go on.

It seemed to me that she had so much 'ego-consciousness' - rational, directed and convergent thought - that there was no magic anymore, and so we formulated the goal of the therapy as the reintroduction of the possibility of 'magic' into Leanne's life⁷⁶. Writing this up now, I can only chuckle - neither of us had the remotest idea as to how unbelievably successful we would be, or how literally this would happen.

The 'journey hypothesis', to juxtapose science and mythology for a moment, arose particularly from mental images occurring to me and a kinaesthetic sense of "something wanting to happen".⁷⁷ It certainly didn't arise in relation to template-based diagnostic analysis, or any conscious mental process. This sense of an imminent and important 'journey' thus represented a variety of perceptual

⁷⁵ I am aware that as I write this story, I am resisting the urge to censor it rather hard, almost as if I am caught in a scientific backwash which wants to drag me back to drown in the ocean of reason. I am trying to tell the story as I experienced though, in the unreason of all that transpired.

⁷⁶ Talk about clearly defined goals!

⁷⁷ What I find doubly surprising about this 'frame' is that it suddenly reflects a set of propositions regarding therapy ('psyche', 'journey', 'creative potential') that were essentially alien to my formerly mostly orthodox ecosystemic approach. I had somehow, almost unreflectively, re-constructed my role, which must indicate that the bonds that bound me to 'proper' ecosystemic practice were loosening.

*and semantic gestalt, a mythologised synthesis of all I was seeing, hearing, and feeling, and thinking.*⁷⁸

*My feeling regarding the process of the therapy was that it would have to be different to Leanne's usual modus operandi, and I therefore wanted to work with analogical material ab initio - imagery, metaphor, non-verbal material.*⁷⁹

I had been seeing the image of the fool before me through the session, and so after some exploration I closed with a fragment from the Tarot tale of the fool.

*"The fool is an image of the mysterious impulse within us to leap into the unknown. The conservative, cautious, realistic side of us watches with horror this wild, youthful spirit who, trusting in heaven, is prepared to walk over the cliff's edge without a moment's hesitation."*⁸⁰

The fool's step over the cliff's edge heralds the beginning of a process of surrender to forces outside the ego, the unconscious, the realm of the archetypes. The fool's journey is a journey of maturation and spirituality.

In the light of this image, I suggested to Leanne that she was on the brink of a significant psychic journey, which would lead her away from her rational functioning, away from her goal-directedness and into another realm of consciousness entirely, wherein she would find the depth which underlies the surfaces of cognition, and wherein she would encounter her own spirituality.

I emphasised the hazardous nature of the journey she wished to undertake, indicating that changing one's consciousness is healing as well as frightening. Why did I think it would be hazardous? Once again, I'm not sure. Part of the global intuition, perhaps. Or perhaps something of a response to Leanne's mildly blasé attitude to life?

⁷⁸ What is characteristic of these sorts of experiences, when they happen, is the fact that they feel as if they are not generated in the same manner in which a therapeutic hypothesis might be generated through a discursive, rational-analytical approach. It is far more of an aesthetic response, reflecting an idiosyncratic, personal engagement with the other, and when I use the word 'hypothesis', it is metaphorical, for the initial sense of what needs to happen in a therapy in these sorts of circumstances is not the result of verbal reflection.

⁷⁹ In this respect at least, an ecosystemic line of thought is more apparent - I was thinking of a process change.

⁸⁰ Sharman-Blake and Greene (1986).

Leanne listened soberly, giving the odd nervous, slightly truncated giggle. We parted with an agreement to continue the following week.

I'd felt rather pleased with the session. I'd granted myself permission to allow the Tarot theme into the therapy room, something which I'd not had the confidence to do before then - my associations with therapy had been with common sense, on the whole, apart from the odd deviation. I felt good about the session - it had a certain intensity to it, a certain feel which is quite difficult to describe: something like a spiritual upliftment, without the hallelujahs - a meditative warmth and fullness.

In the second session, she recounted a dream from the week, one of the few which she had ever remembered. In this dream, she went down to the river with her black 'brother', in life the child of a domestic who worked for her mother. (He had become such a part of the family that he had become a brother to her.)

My intuitive curiosity was aroused: the significance of a black child in the white woman's dreams? An encounter with an inner child, a personification of a spontaneous and intuitive spirit, also the shadow side of her rational white persona? At the river? I knew that many dreams of healers in South Africa revolve around rivers, home of certain families of ancestral guiding spirits, place of pilgrimage, baptism, purification. I knew that Leanne worked for a voluntary counselling organisation, and knew she had an interest in helping others - I wondered whether the river had some symbolic connection with healing.

Naturally, there are many interpretations of the river as a symbol.⁸¹ Western tradition teaches that water is often an image of the unconscious, a primeval, undifferentiated substrate to existence, which is a source of energy and renewal, and that a river crossing may mean a point of a fundamental change in attitude.⁸² I interpreted this dream as an encouraging sign, both from the point of view that she had remembered it, and in that it seemed to symbolically reflect certain of the themes which we had covered in the first session in the tale of the

⁸¹ Cirlot (1962)

⁸² Von Franz (1978)

fool, from the Tarot - notably, a change in attitude and an encounter with her unconscious.⁸³

We worked with the images from this dream for some time. We discussed her desire to be of assistance to people at some length, a theme which emerged from her reflection on her real-life relationship with her 'brother' of the dream - in the dream she felt protective towards him, and I discovered that this feeling of wanting to protect was general to her life, and a fundamental aspect of her relationship to the telephone counselling service where she worked. She was studying psychology on a part-time basis, with a view to qualifying as a psychologist eventually, in order to give greater expression to her empathy for and identification with humans in need.

She recounted some instances of telephone counselling sessions, and I was rather impressed at the level of empathy which was obvious from her accounts. I became more and more convinced that something of her unarticulated reason for being in therapy had to do with the emergence of the healer archetype - an archetype connected to intuitive processes rather than to rational processes, and the need to find a more integrated place for these processes in her hyper-literal life.

Once more, by the end of the session I was feeling most satisfied with our progress, with the sense of a quickening which filled the therapeutic space. The emergence of certain figural themes from the ground of her life provided a sense of direction for the therapy, and Leanne went home feeling excited about the progress which we were making, with our next appointment lined up.

⁸³ It is rather peculiar in retrospect that as soon as I entered into the dialogue in spontaneous fashion, my metaphors took on a Jungian flavour. I have no conscious idea as to why these sorts of metaphors would resonate. At any rate, the dream echoes of the conversation seemed like a confirmation from another realm of consciousness.

The following session was spent almost entirely on dreamwork, the water motif recurring. We explored Leanne's web of associations around water - which included renewal, rebirth, the yielding and flexible feminine potential strength in her life. I was rather surprised at the fact that Leanne had already begun to remember dreams regularly where this had been a rare occurrence indeed. I gained the distinct impression that a transformational process was unfolding, in relation to which therapy was catalytic.

I had mixed feelings about this. On the one hand, I felt a little awed by what appeared to be happening, feeling reverence even. The intuitive approach seemed to be delivering the goods... on the other hand, though, I was feeling insecure - I wasn't sure how to play my hand in this sort of role. I knew that I couldn't control the process, and I could also imagine becoming irrelevant quite easily.⁸⁴ And I felt guilty about feeling insecure about my role - for I knew my role was supposed to be that of a bridge, not a co-traveller. A curious, unquiet mix of feelings. Leanne, on the other hand, was quite excited. She felt that somehow she had stepped off the Fool's cliff, and was proceeding apace. She laughed animatedly, eyes twinkling.

I cautioned her again: a journey through this space is not a Sunday stroll through the park. I was filled with a sense of the need for respect for the daimones, the psychopomps who populate the unconscious.⁸⁵ She laughed frivolously and told me that she was ready, not sharing the sense that crawled through every cell of my body that the cliff-face had not been stepped off yet, a sense which spoke of dread and turmoil and awe and ecstasy, ec-stasis.

The following session in which I saw Leanne will remain with me as one of the most remarkable sessions to which I have ever been party.

⁸⁴ Which, on reflection, would have been a reasonable outcome.

⁸⁵ James Hillman, in his archetypal psychology, describes the ego as but one archetype (pattern of consciousness) which must inhabit the psychic space with other beings whom he calls "daimones" or "psychopomps" - shadowy figures appearing to us in dreams, fantasy, vision, and psychosis. These beings are ruminous, potent forces for transformation, and Hillman is not of the opinion that the unconscious is wonderful, sweet, or romantic. Like Jung, he believes that the process of psychic individuation is as fraught with danger as the journey of any mythical hero (Hillman, 1977).

I'd been off to see Credo Mutwa on the immediately previous Saturday, with Brad Keeney. On the Wednesday following my precipitate initiation into the world of the shaman I saw Leanne again.

It is rather impossible to describe the effect that Keeney and the events of the Saturday had had on me. I felt decidedly unusual, to say the least. I was in altered states of consciousness, all the time.⁸⁶ So it was in a somewhat different frame of mind that I approached the therapy with Leanne.

The impending session had been playing on my mind, more than others. I thought about the therapy in the light of what had happened with Keeney. I became utterly convinced that the entire therapy revolved around the emergence of the healer in Leanne, the archetype to which all her intuition was harnessed. I saw the therapy marking the beginnings of what I would later think of as Leanne's calling: the mark of the gods.

When Leanne arrived, I launched into an immediate framing of her dilemma as a process of contacting the healer within her. She sat and stared at me, somewhat bemused, blinking. I explained that I would no longer be charging for the therapy as I did not feel that it was fitting that I should charge to be the midwife to this process of hers.

The journey of the fool, incidentally, parallels the calling of the healer, which parallels the hero's journey - all journeys of self-discovery through the shadowy realms of the personal and collective unconscious.⁸⁷

We sat in the therapy room, comfortable in the modern Nordic style low intrusion couch and chair set. Some moments of silence elapsed. I looked at Leanne, and not knowing quite what was about to happen but convinced that

⁸⁶ For instance, I would walk past people at the bank where I was consulting and feel sicknesses in my body, and want to jump onto them to lay my hands and chant. I walked down the dark passage at my home and saw a silver light which was the living presence of my wife and daughter spilling out of the room, through the closed door. I do not mean the above examples at all figuratively. I am being perfectly literal - I saw as in the everyday sense of 'see', not in some metaphorical sense of with an inner eye. And it is not magical in the Disney sense, this sort of experience - I found it extremely disorienting and rather depressing. How does one reconcile the life of an empiricist industrial consultant with the life of a shaman? With difficulty, I was rapidly discovering.

⁸⁷ Walsh (1990).

something was indeed about to happen, I asked "Are you ready?". My question carried all the warnings of previous sessions.

Leanne contemplated the question for a moment, looked at me and smiled, and on a Wednesday night in the suburb of Benmore in the town of Sandton, said, simply, "Yes".

The echoes of her words were not even fading when the lights in the entire building suddenly extinguished themselves..

We sat in silence, looking at each other in the faint golden glow seeping through the window, where the open curtains allowed light in from the streets and other nearby buildings.

Leanne looked around the room. "God...", she whispered, looking alarmed.

"Something like that...", I croaked back.

I was awe-struck by this powerful synchronicity. It is one thing to believe on some conceptual level that fantasy magic is unfolding. It is another altogether when it announces with such a flourish.

We sat opposite each other on the floor, our fingertips touching. I began to chant softly, allowing the energy which I knew from the encounter with Brad to flow through my fingers. It was thick and milky, and I could feel Leanne's presence in an utterly non-material way, absorbing this energy. After some time, she muttered "Jeez!...". The energy transmission was as discernible for her as it was for me.

Some time went by, a minute or an age. I felt the building breathing beneath me, heaving slowly with earth-breath.

Eventually, we parted. I walked Leanne to her car, as the building was in darkness. The passage to the exit was as dark as a tomb. As she disappeared behind the closing lift doors, I reflected on the evening. I was full, awed,

silenced. Driving home, the road seemed unfamiliar, the road I had travelled so often in the last two years.

The next morning I fielded a phone call at my desk. It was Leanne - she had arrived home about three hours after she had left, with no idea of where she had been. And in her car was a stick. She should have been home after twenty minutes. And there should not have been a stick in her car.

Traditional African belief includes the idea that ancestor spirits are embodied in sticks.

I was shocked. My Western paranoia around altered states suddenly reengaged itself in full force. Some kind of fugue state? A psychotic reaction? Leanne sounded scared, as if she had let herself in for something bigger than she herself. This was not a fear of disintegration, but a fear of forces outside her.

We Westerners are incredibly conditioned to the ideas of conscious control over activity. A sangoma, on the other hand, would think nothing of disappearing for a few months into the bush, or even to the bottom of a river, if the ancestors deemed necessary. The radical stories I had heard from izangoma regarding their automatic and destined behaviour in thwasa - the state of the calling - I counterpoised against the paranoia of diagnosis.

I was worried that I had transgressed some ethical boundary, but also knew that all had been voluntary, if not entirely predictable. I had not had sex with Leanne, or in full consciousness succumbed to any of the myriad temptations which beset psychotherapists. But how do you discriminate between intuition and desire? How was I to judge whether what was unfolding was good or bad? Is white magic a justifiable psychotherapeutic technique?

One version of reality, a stubborn logical positivist's reductionist version, which I discovered to be rather deeply entrenched, was crashing into the other shamanic version rather brutally, and my psyche was the highway for this head-on. I had empirical evidence, mounting fast in both quantity and quality, for the shamanic reality. My suburban life, on the other hand, was built around

very clear assumptions that the ordinary reality is all there is - real is really real.

And now my poor patient was experiencing a very typically African form of altered state, which had a highly intrusive character. It wasn't happening in a scented ashram with the latest and most fashionable guru plastered onto the wall, dripping calm and gold watches. It was happening in her car on the way home with the same sort of raw power which had seized me at Credo's place. What does one make of this?

When next I saw her, she had had no more episodes of these mystical absences, which relieved me no end. She showed me the stick. A very nondescript fellow it was, looking as if it had been pruned off its host. I advised her to keep it carefully. Leanne's life was overtly undisturbed - she was continuing with her job, her social life was more or less unchanged. She was, however, experiencing altered states in much the same vein as I was. I took stock and decided that I was not about to do anything drastic regarding the therapy - it seemed that the best way was onward.

We got to talking of animals, around animals that had been appearing in her dreams. Animals had been very much part of the experience I had had with Brad, and shamans generally value animal helping spirits, with different animals being associated with different powers of healing, sorcery, or war. A dog had appeared in one of her dreams, and we were working with the image. I asked her what dog she could be, and she replied that she thought she could be a German Shepherd. I asked her what dog she thought I could be. As I asked her, in my mind's eye, a grey wolf appeared in front of me, and the room seemed to grow a shade lighter, a shade more arctic.

Leanne pondered the answer for a moment, then pulled her jersey around her more tightly, and, looking around the room, asked "Have you changed the colour in here or something?"

"No". My eyes began to water, gooseflesh crawling over my body.

She dismissed her question about the room, looked at me, and said "You wouldn't be a dog - you would be a wolf..."

It seemed that Leanne had solved her problem of having "no intuition".

We agreed to continue meeting, even though the presenting problem had apparently been resolved. All the things that were happening were a little too strange for either of us to deal with alone, and we agreed that we would meet to share stories each week.

One may well ask how these changes in the psychic space which Leanne inhabits occurred. I do not think that there is an answer which can be framed without moving well outside traditional Western explanations of psychotherapy, be they psychodynamic, behavioural, ecosystemic, whatever. At some point, "magic" becomes a parsimonious explanation, and we enter the domain of a transpersonal psychology. And what is "magic"? Is it an intervening variable or a hypothetical construct? Or is it language for processes of connectedness in ecologies which we cannot ever hope to represent in theory? Orders of connectedness that can form the basis of story alone, that defy the explicatory methods of analytico-referential thought?

Seeking Refuge

Some weeks later, I went back to Credo Mutwa for the first time since I had been with Brad. I flew across the veld in my silver car, filled with wonder, doubt, and confusion. It was to be the first of many returns.

I had much on my mind, and my heart was heavy, for I had no-one to talk to about these things, my fear of being rejected being too great. And confusion... what was I to do? Should I quit my job and sit under a tree, waiting for the spirits to deliver patients to me for healing?

My father was convinced I was off the rails again. My mother gently and non-judgementally thought I was probably getting into Satanism (also again)... I couldn't tell my close friends - the whole thing was just too weird. No-one knows what to do about these things - people gawp when you tell them, which is gratifying in certain respects but not entirely helpful. And I wanted to do something with these experiences - they seemed to want to go somewhere. I wanted to understand them, become intimate with this new world - but the alien-ness of the time made my existence in this state of transport seem very tenuous and strange. I was also frightened. My rotten Judaeo-Christian distinctions between the forces of good and evil were deeply enough ingrained to be intrusive, and to make me doubt the spiritual value of the experience. I was also far too nervous to confide in my thesis supervisor, Gert.

And so again I walked another gauntlet between the sonorous voices of authority and my own journey. In another world, yes. But the path was the same.

Returning to Mutwa was to return to the one man who I thought could give me guidance. But I had no idea how to approach him, either. I wasn't sure whether he would see me as a boy overblown with his own imagination and grandiose fantasies, or as a serious seeker. I hoped that I would fall into the latter category, but couldn't help being afraid that I was self-hypnotically intoxicated and fraudulent.

I was without a conversational context, a community to confirm me, and this pitched me into pain, self-doubt and exacerbated my need for safety and approval, setting me at odds with the desire to follow this intoxicating series of events. Negotiating insecure ambivalence between fascination on the

one hand and fear on the other was to become the theme of much of my journey thenceforth.⁸⁸

It was a bright Sunday morning outside Mutwa's gloomy workshop. Immediately I arrived he returned the stick I had left there with Brad, explaining that it had been carved by one of his izangoma and represented Mother earth, although he did not recall giving it to me.

I asked many questions, and he answered with customary magnanimity.

I asked him particularly about my difficulty around reconciling European and African ways and what I was to do about the situation.

"Yes," he said, "some rivers you have to dive into to see what little fish and goggas⁸⁹ are in there...". He chortled.

I said that I was ready to dive, believing that I was.

I explained some of the things I had been experiencing with Leanne. I needed some clear guidelines on how to deal with altered states, some sort of perspective on what I was experiencing.

Credo periodically peered through the dirty glass of the workshop, intent on knowing the comings and goings of all who entered his dry Mafikeng yard. He spoke of the place of healing:

"... the will must be surrendered into half-awake, half asleep state. If you find yourself in this state there is a little miracle that is going to happen. For instance when you want to see something in the near future - must put yourself into that strange time where you are between sleeping and waking. If you make your feeling known to the people they will make rituals to strengthen the power - this state is sacred.

⁸⁸ And so my journey into the spirit-healing world assumed the same form as my journey as a psychotherapist a search for a place of creative synthesis of the personal, spontaneous and experiential with the established and the traditional.

⁸⁹ South African slang for a nondescript insect.

In this state you can see the ill people and know how to heal them properly. You cannot heal the people when you are in the ordinary state of everyday consciousness.

We are walking about in the wrong type of consciousness - it is like you have a very beautiful car and you put the very horrible wrong type of petrol in it. We lose our sacred consciousness when we become adults...in that state you can create miniature miracles. You can see into the future - it comes to you like a television. You can move things with your thoughts - you can even bend things - Uri Geller and other great people like him, some black, some white, operate in that childlike, dreamlike state.

A sort of a waking dream - in our language we say "ubasepusheni" - you become in the dream. When you become in the dream, that is the time when your full, your godly self gets to manifest - the godly self can't become operational unless the ordinary clumsy earthly has been moved slightly aside. Slightly sleeping, in a sort of a daze, you give a chance to the Godly self to emerge, in that the ordinary self is so neutralised."

How very different to hypothesising, circularity, and neutrality! What he was saying reflected, in far more articulate form, my own suspicions about spontaneity, intuition, and psychotherapy, resonating with my experiences with Leanne and others. I began to get excited.

I recounted to Credo a dream which I had in 1987, in which he appeared. He was walking towards some hills with a gentleman dressed in Zulu traditional regalia. I walked with them, and asked him if he remembered giving me a stick. In the dream he replied, "No, Derek, I gave you two sticks!"

He explained that I had dreamed of his ancestor, a Zulu chief called iNgoza. He said it was imperative that he make me another stick. I was overjoyed - ritual objects seemed very important. It was also going to give me a way of returning to Credo.

As I was beginning to take my leave, he looked at me speculatively, and said, "Now, there is just one last thing, iNgwe", calling me by the name he had given Brad. "This is just a thing that I have thought up now, now, now. It is - can you try to see? Can you try and look into something that is hidden?"

Credo's deep voice made resonant strokes in the air of the workshop. He shouted parenthetically to his granddaughter in Zulu to bring him some patent 'flu medicine.

"Now sir, let us see what powers god has given you... Sit down and feel as if you are a bit sleepy, and try to tell me the colours of the objects in here...", he said, holding a small and battered black metal tool-box.

"I see... blue?" asked I, having no idea whatsoever how to proceed. I had clearly not been listening to his advice about creating miniature miracles.

"No", he replied decisively. "Sir, you have not sought it properly. Relax first - you see relax first and, and, and, and, and...um..... really look for them. This is a great day for you." I sensed his mind searching through Zulu universes for the right words in English.

I was silent for a time. Then... "Flecks of red."

"What kind of red?"

"Quite a bright red. I saw yellow as well."

He opened the trunk and looked in, and chuckled. "Relax first," he said, "You must relax for about two minutes, relax.....".

A long silence followed, while I tried to let my mind flood with images. "I see green". I felt as if I were being tested, and my neurosis about being seen as a true seeker returned.

He chuckles again. "There you missed, look again - "

"Is there a stick?", I ask, doubting my perceptions entirely and thinking that I was simply obsessed with sticks, what with dreams and ritual journeys and all.

"What type of stick?"

"Tan?"

"Tan? No sir. No sir, look some more."

A long silence ensued, broken only by Credo shouting again to his granddaughter. "Zodwa, Zodwa!"

Tentatively, dealing with the anxiety - "Black, brown, a silvery safety pin. Stick with three things on it."

"Very strange, sir, and very interesting."

Then he continued, after a pause, "Relax, sir, relax, don't be too anxious... there are two objects....if you can tell me just one of them."

This carried on for some time, without much apparent success, until finally we stopped, and he produced two objects. One was a yellow bottle of jeweller's dye - rouge. I had also seen the bottle top, which was indeed tan. I unfortunately failed to record what the other object was.

By the end of this particular divining session, I was none too impressed with my God-given powers. I seemed to have named all the colours of the spectrum, and been half-right. Not very conclusive or riveting stuff. Credo seemed satisfied enough, though - he said I had seen some of the objects which he usually kept in this trunk. I thought that he might just have been humouring me.

Then he put his hand into the copious pocket of his khaki overall.

"What do I have in my pocket, Mr. Derek? "

I closed my eyes and looked inwards. First, I saw a coin, with the heads side visible. I dismissed this as a logic possibility rather than an inner perception. Immediately thereafter I saw a box-shaped object surrounded by energy lines, like the force field of a magnet. In fact, I thought it was a magnet, and naturally, being a well-educated person, I ignored this image for some time thinking of all the reasons that Credo wouldn't have a magnet in his pocket. I pondered all the other images I could possibly drum up, thinking that the first image could only be wrong. Eventually, he began to press me to answer, and I could find no landmark in the detritus with which my mind is filled to give me a clear and unequivocal sign as to the contents of his pocket. All I had left was the box with its lines.

"All I could see was a sort of a box-shaped thing", I said, tentatively. Credo jumped.

"Yes!", he expostulated. "Tell me more..."

"Something to do with energy - I see feather-like lines around - like energy...". I wasn't committing to this magnet business too quickly.

"Yes..."

And then, all in an instant, I saw someone with a pinprick of light at his fingertips in the darkness, with a corona of wavy lines around his hand. "A matchbox?", I asked, with a sense of cheating because it was so obvious.

Credo gave me the matchbox once he had congratulated me, on which he wrote the following:

"This box was accurately seen Psychically by DEREK SHIRLEY 12/7/92 C. Mutwa. He received it. It was in my pocket."

I keep this box.

Reflecting on the morning with Credo a little later, I sat in the sun next to some of his sculptures and spoke into my tape recorder. There is the whoosh of occasional gusts of wind. I record that the day was a wonderful one, and that Credo said to me - "It has been a great day for you - there has been a great outpouring of yourself...". When he said it, I no longer felt like an interloper from the suburbs. I drove the hours and miles home with some sense of peace, and great anticipation.

That was a Sunday.

On the Monday I phoned Leanne. As she answered, I said "Guess what I have in my hand...". Leanne began to giggle in a mildly uncontrolled manner. "Oh, no! Heh heh guess what I've been doing the whole weekend? heh heh heh..." A slight hint of mirthful hysteria had crept into her voice.

Leanne had been visiting her mother, when Sheila, the domestic worker who worked for Leanne's mother and an was enduring presence in Leanne's life, had called her to her quarters. There Leanne was introduced to an *isangoma* whom we came to know as "Mama" Maria Kunene. Mama had been making her find hidden coins for a few hours, hiding them on her person and in the room and getting Leanne to find them.

Another strange synchronicity, both of us playing this game 300km away from each other on the same day. What made it seem even more strange was Leanne's reply as to where this *isangoma* had come from.

"Derek, I don't know!", she said, in a most emphatically perplexed tone. "She just pitched up here and wanted to see me!"

We never did get to the bottom of that story. Mama later told me that her ancestors had sent her, but further than that, she wasn't saying anything.

I said goodbye to Leanne, quipping that when I returned from a conference I was about to attend, she would probably have beads in her hair. We both laughed.

Two days later, I left for a family therapy conference, where many strange events befell me. I shan't recount them here, as they seem a little peripheral, perhaps even a little too strange. One thing though, which bears recounting, was that I reconnected with an old friend, Lynne, whom I hadn't seen for at least four years. She was participating in a presentation on a workshop regarding her psychotherapeutic work in a black township outside Pretoria. She sat drumming on a stinking flat cowhide drum, dissolute. I saw a silver shadow swirling above her head, and understood in a flash that she was undergoing *thwasa*.

After the workshop, I walked beside her. When we were alone, I said to her, "Psychology doesn't understand the phenomenon of *ukuthwasa* very well, does it?"

She looked at me and gasped, turning pale. "I thought I was coming here to get away from all that", she said, somewhat plaintively. She confirmed that several *izangoma* in Mamelodi, the township where she worked, had told her that she had the calling.

I discovered that she had also had a powerful mystical encounter with Brad Keeney when he had been out here. We shared an immediate reference point, and our friendship was renewed.

It seemed that wherever I went, there was to be magic. The events with Lynne, and other happenings, had confirmed that what I was experiencing was objectively real in the sense that it wasn't simply some form of madness located entirely in my own perception. This was reassuring.

When I returned from the conference, I phoned Leanne.

"Derek," she said, laughing and crying, "I've got beads in my hair."

Leanne had formally become the *thwasa*, the apprentice, of Mama Kunene.

Magic and the Mundane

On the one hand, therapy was going well - I was excited with the patterns that unfolded there, not only with Leanne. But on the other hand, keeping my life, my family, and my mortgage bond going had begun to feel agonising. I was completely at a loss as to how to reconcile the different aspects of my life. Walking around the office made me feel deathly, and obviously at odds with everyone else there, for business, air-conditioned buildings, miles of electric cabling, computer screens, fluorescent lights, open-plan offices, and piped white noise are not easy marriage partners with earth magic.

So, by the time I returned from the conference, the thought of going back to the consulting job at the bank made me feel both physically ill and very depressed. The space at the bank seemed so shattered, so filled with random shards of incoherent energy that it was like a nightmare. I started to feel very sick, and knew that I needed help, although I didn't know who to ask. From being closed to these transpersonal sorts of perceptions and phenomena for a lifetime to being wide open is a transition which is extremely difficult to manage. All the energies which I was experiencing also made me very suspicious, and I was terrified that I would encounter evil. I felt very vulnerable indeed, with no real safe port, apart from Credo, who

lived too far away to be of daily assistance. I took to praying vigorously. The river into which I had dived seemed as if it might in fact be too deep.⁹⁰

On the Saturday afternoon upon which I accompanied Leanne to meet Mama, I was hoping to become her *thwasa*. I sensed the need for a teacher, someone who would be able to give my experience the structure I need. I couldn't imagine the relationship with Credo becoming formal, and hoped that mama would accept me as a student, and provide me with a shield behind which I could feel safe.

Upon shaking hands with her I fell into a violent trance, from which I was brought round by having my wrists and ankles wrung, and my back vigorously and violently slapped. Leanne said that I was 'out' for about ten minutes; it seemed like an instant to me.

Mama stalked off into the other part of the house, disappearing from the room we were in for a minute or two. Her interpreter, Sheila, explained that I had to find an object, whatever it was. I guessed that it was money - twenty cents. She seemed satisfied and asked me where it was. I looked at my stick and thought, "I don't know where it is, but the stick does!". I grabbed the stick and followed its shaking into the kitchen. Rapidly I found the coin under some newspaper.

With song and dance, my ritual apprenticeship to mama began.

Reflecting on this time of my life, consulting notes, tapes and poems from then, it is clear that I was undergoing a profound personal metamorphosis. One of the major issues I was grappling with was the

⁹⁰ Heber, Fleisher, Ross and Stanwick (1989) suggest that depersonalisation may be more common amongst alternative healing practitioners than in conventional therapists in a Western setting, on the basis of a study. My experience of being flung into this world without any shift in the context of my life was certainly depersonalising. The obvious cynical interpretation is that these healers are more psychologically disturbed in the first place - a hypothesis disconfirmed by the study. My experience is that dealing with the magical in a mechanical society can itself be depersonalising.

validity of different types of knowledge, and how to reconcile the shamanic type with the more familiar common or garden Western common-sense type.⁹¹

I had become entirely convinced that the shamanic type of knowledge is valid, but I badly needed help in order to contain and structure all these experiences in order to make them less bewildering and overwhelming. I still had a rather conventional life which I needed to attend to, and I had little support. I had no idea how I would integrate Western ideas regarding professionalism and the African magic. I threw in my lot with Mama, on a wing and a prayer.

I was embracing intuition. But my introjects of the 'Vienna circle, my chorus of mental critics, instead of subsiding into gentle silence, increased the volume and vehemence of their attack. For they do not care about experience: they only care about fact, and fact is, magic does not exist. No matter what Shirley thinks he may be experiencing. Or the Facts.

⁹¹ I was seeking a legitimate voice for my own experience, and a context in which to situate it. The obsession with the legitimacy of a way of knowing was obviously an expression of my own need to find some sort of cognitive container, rough and ready as it may have been, for all these events, to reduce my feelings of exposure.

CHAPTER 7

TWO WORLDS, ONE SELF

Disjunction

Mama Kunene at once placed me on a strict regimen of traditional medicines, aimed at calming me, curing my madness, purifying me and opening me to the world of the spirit.

I was up at dawn each day, drinking concoctions and burning incense in archaic rituals, quite often overwhelmed at the incongruity, absurdity even, of my situation. An umsamo was erected in the room I was using as a study - a shrine to the guiding spirits. It looked incompletely at home next to the computer. And I was wearing a mask of red clay on my face when I wasn't at work.

Mama had also put beads in my hair - a red triangle on the top in front, and a double circle of white beads hanging backwards from my crown. An aspect of the symbolism of these beads is that they signify that the wearer is a beggar, for the thwasa is one who has lost almost everything - in fact, in traditional society the thwasa is regarded as a ghost, having died to his or her former self.

For me, being dead was a huge relief.

But I wasn't dead enough. For beads in one's hair do not accord entirely with the norms of a conservative financial services institution. I asked Mama for permission to remove the beads from my hair while I was at work.

She sat quietly for some moments, and then indicated to our interpreter that it would be acceptable. "You are white", "and the people would not understand".

I returned to work on the Monday following my meeting with her with a sense of dread. I parked in the underground parking, feeling absolutely desolate and mournful. How do you die to yourself and keep your day job?

With clammy hands, I took the beads out of my hair, and within half an hour of being at the bank, I was feeling even more awful, and had a nauseating headache. I hadn't been reborn - it seemed that I had gone straight to hell.

I went to a coffee-shop near the office and held the beads in position on my head, like a diver sharing an oxygen tank, and felt a wave of relief. I momentarily took them away, and quickly got them back in place, to ward off that wave of nausea and dizziness. There could be no doubt.

"Makhosi", I entreated the spirits, on the verge of tears, "please allow me to carry on without the beads...", and as I intoned pleas to this effect in a muffled voice, I offered snuff as Mama had shown me.⁹² Desperate and surreptitious, in the corner of the coffee-shop. Feeling overwhelmed by the sheer hopelessness of the situation.

Fifteen beadless minutes later I was feeling perversely, perkily, fine.

Containment

What I had most hoped from Mama was containment and context. I needed to be near someone who seemed to know what was happening, and who knew what to do about it. Mama exuded confidence and passion, and that was extremely comforting. And she giggled at my difficulties, managing somehow simultaneously to convey both the idea that it would just be a matter of time before everything would come to a wonderful fruition, and the idea that I was indeed in deep trouble.

⁹² *Makhosi* is probably most accurately translated something into along the lines of 'O, exalted ones...'

Between her presence and the rituals she prescribed, I quickly began to feel better. The wildness of the energies and of the inexplicable events around me subsided, and the experience assumed a direction which seemed to accord with the experience of other *izangoma* - I was comforted.

Yet, on the other hand, work at the bank remained a problem. The fact that I was reporting to a man at the bank who prided himself on his strict and soul-less "empiricist" orientation did not make matters any easier, for when he eventually discovered that I was becoming a *isangoma*, he would make disparaging remarks and encourage me to 'grow up', redoubling his efforts to perform industrial-grade psychoanalysis on me.

And I am a little ashamed to admit that I retained a certain scepticism about the whole experience, myself. How I managed that, with all that was happening, I don't know, but I nevertheless reserved a corner of my mind for the belief that I could switch off the experience, interpret it all in terms of a more familiar Western psychology, overcome it all, like a psychic colonist amidst the heathen.⁹³

And my ambivalent sense of the impropriety and inadmissibility of the entire experience from a formal psychological point-of-view precluded my speaking to Gert, or anyone at the university, about it. It potentially smelled too much like madness.

The voice of my boss, of course, resonated with my own scepticism and my European critic-archetypes.

And so, the 'discourse' of the intuitive domain, which included Keeney, myself, Leanne, Mama Kunene, and the texts of the community of shamanic healers, stood in stark contrast and contradiction to the discourse of the rational domain,

⁹³ I've only recently realised that I did this, stumbling upon an episto-fascist in the depths of my own being.

including myself, the university, my boss, and the discourse of commerce. As my openness to the possibilities of intuition and the world of spirit grew, so my existential difficulties became more sharply defined, by virtue of the exclusiveness of the contexts which I was inhabiting, and their seeming irreconcilability. I felt better, but nothing became easier.

The splits between the rational and the intuitive in my own being were apparently surface cracks along on the edges of tectonic plates of ideology and heritage, of two highly contrasting cultures unfolding in parallel space-time. Intuition had placed me into another mental life-space, on another continent of consciousness, and yet my daily life continued in the spaces which by-and-large excluded it. My spiritual-intuitive excursion assumed troglodytic form, and in private I lived in the world of spirit, in the subterranean shadows of my outer, public existence as a somewhat erratic professional in a bank.

Perhaps my quiet scepticism also reflected a fear that all the shamanic events were entirely real. It's easy to keep disquieting things at a distance by thinking about them until the self-hypnosis of 'reason' takes hold.

Navigation in the Shadowlands of Intuition

Under the tutelage of Mama, Leanne and I were made to practice what we came to think of as the 'guessing game' every time we saw her, which was once or twice during the week and every weekend.

Mama would hide coins on her person, and in the house, as well as outside. We would have to kneel, and rhythmically intone the words "Shay'

sibon'! Shay' sibon'!", and then attempt to guess or to see the hidden money - both the denomination of the coins and their location.⁹⁴

She hid coins under her wrist beads, in her hair, and on one hilarious occasion, in her nose. (It was a small denomination coin.)

It is really a very curious practice, and plays a central role in the development of the powers of divination amongst the apprentice *izangoma*. It is extremely frustrating, because it seems that the harder one 'tries', the worse one's results are. It feels like a practice without method. There is nothing which one can consciously do to improve one's hit-rate. How can you plan to do the 'impossible'?

At times, I felt so completely frustrated that I could have chewed my *ipehlo*, my wand-come-medicine-whisk-come-symbol-of-lowly-status, to bits. And 'ukubula', the practice of divination, can also be extremely humiliating. Mama would shout and scold us when our performances were not up to par, blaming us for not having done our daily rituals of cleansing properly, or of having broken one of the taboos.

"*Siyakhuleka!*", mama would say brusquely, impatiently exhorting us to continue. Leanne would giggle and roll her eyes, unsure of seriously to take it.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ From the Zulu "Shaya sibona", which directly translated means 'Hi! We see!'. I understand that it amounts to asking the ancestors to hit one with visions.

⁹⁵ 'We greet the ancestors..' - a phrase indicating that the divination practice was about to begin.

I have come to recognise that *ukubula* is one of the most significant exercises that I have undertaken in my training as a healer. To be asked to find hidden objects is to be presented with the *koan*, the Zen riddle, of one's own mind.

We place so much emphasis on mental control, cognitive strategies, and the formal syntax of thought through the great intellectual tradition of the West, and *ukubula* asks of us that we abandon this tradition, to allow our minds to dwell in another (indefinable) way, which does not have a grammar of the sort we are used to. *Ukubula* confronted me with the *praxis of thought itself, as many Westerners understand it*. To offer a method would have been to mechanise a non-mechanical process, to literalise something which inherently defies literalisation.

And sometimes, I would have the peculiar experience of 'doing' it well. The chanted "Shay' sibon', shay' sibon', shay' sibon'!" would come out more melodically. The images would slide more fluidly into consciousness, while I watched. The object would be revealed more quickly.⁹⁶ Mama would beat the drum and sing joyfully and proudly.

And so, one learns slowly to access more easily the 'half-waking, half-sleeping state of consciousness' that Credo had spoken of. '*Ubasepusheni*'⁹⁷ - by letting go of the literal mind. Letting go of intention, letting go of anxiety or the desire to perform, attending merely...

Eventually, Mama allowed us to progress to identifying other sorts of things upon which she had decided. Once, Leanne and I discovered that she had 'hidden' the moon in the sky outside.

⁹⁶ 'Mkhubu' is the Zulu for the hidden object.

⁹⁷ "You become in the dream".

Our training eventually progressed through certain rituals of transition, which were accompanied by the slaughtering of goats in honour of the guiding spirits, and much public ceremonial demonstration of divination.⁹⁸ We were also constantly being filled with information over and above the divination practice: how to use herbs for treatment, and what sorts of rituals to perform in various situations such as hauntings, exorcisms, protections, recovery of lost people and stolen objects, funerals, etc. etc.

And despite the extremely private, almost covert nature of my *thwasa*, the evolution of my approach to psychotherapy was being profoundly influenced by what I was undergoing as a novice *isangoma*. In particular, *ukubula* was to make me attend more and more to aspects of my experience to which I had usually paid no heed - such as mental images and hunches that came to me spontaneously during therapy sessions, and I gradually started to use these sensations to guide my questioning, my exploration, and my interpretations, much as one would use similar sensations to guide divination.⁹⁹ The boundary between the praxis of psychotherapy and shamanic healing began to blur.

I had been regularly tape-recording sessions of psychotherapy, in order to try to capture such moments of 'inspiration', instances where my awareness latched onto something more than a theory-based interpretation of the phenomena of people's lives.. This however turned out to be a perverse exercise: it was as if the attempt to tape the sessions interrupted their flow.

⁹⁸ In Zimbabwe, where traditional healers have statutory recognition, certification as a healer involves divining the nature and location of five hidden objects in a courtroom, before a magistrate. (Personal communication with a herbalist from the Matopos area.) Ceremonial divination is analogous to oral examination by peers for Western physicians, and probably fulfils similar social function, viz. quality control.

⁹⁹ In addition, I had been urged to pay close attention to my dreams. I was astonished several times by the wisdom of the dreams which came - for instance, I dreamed of certain medicinal plants with the correct identification of their use. My dreams were filled with *izangoma*, caves, rivers, snakes, magic, and other images of what I thought of as the nether world, the shifting twilight outside rational consciousness, the psychic landscape in which the *izangoma* live.

The kind of experience I was seeking not only to enhance, but to document, proved to be rather elusive: all forms of intentionality seemed to block it. *The experience of inspiration in psychotherapy seemed to be independent of 'method' in the conventional sense and obstructed by any self-consciousness, just like the practice of ukubula.* My self-observation via the tapes proved to be an intervention in itself, obscuring what I was after with Heisenbergian obstinacy.¹⁰⁰

Nonetheless, there were instances during this period where the desired process unfolded, when I managed to lose myself in the session. I would discuss these moments in supervision with Gert. During these sessions, we developed a dialogue around ideas that could situate these experiences of 'creativity', or 'intuition' in some sort of meaningful dialogical context.

These discussions proved to be invaluable to me, as I gradually learned to trust a method in therapy over which I didn't have direct conscious control, and Gert and I were legitimating and contextualising this process. As I learned from Mama and others about allowing intuition to surface in divination, so my conversations with Gert allowed me to start to feel legitimate in affording it a place in formal Western therapy.

But I still wasn't telling Gert what was happening with the *izangoma* at all. I was attempting to keep the professional-rational and the personal-intuitive worlds apart, afraid that the rational one would disqualify the other, or humiliate me for belonging to the other. I did not believe that dual citizenship would be possible.

¹⁰⁰ Heisenberg's (1963) 'uncertainty principle' reflects the fact that observation is an intervention itself. Heisenberg discovered that it is impossible to determine both the momentum and the position of an electron simultaneously, as the act of bouncing a photon off the electron to mark its position will alter its momentum. (Much has been made of the analogy between this situation in the domain of quantum physics, and the corresponding one in 'social sciences' - cf. Capra (1983) reviews the implications of quantum physics for social discourse.)

Although the emergence of intuition occurred at the intersection of these two worlds and applied in both, each world still felt like a betrayal of the other.

One World, Two Modes of Mapping

Then, in October 1992, during two particular conversations between Gert and I, and with Stan Lifschitz in the second one, we breathed words into being that created a framework around ideas of intuition, creativity and therapeutic problem solving that contained the possibility of a rapprochement.

During the first discussion, we began talking about a notion which a colleague interested in sports psychology had begun to use.¹⁰¹ It seems that peak sports performance is characterised by 'flow' - a state of a mildly detached awareness, in which there is *an unselfconscious immersion in the activity, and an effortless ease of execution*. As is the case in divination.

It became apparent that lack of self-consciousness which seems to characterise this state of 'flow' also facilitates the appearance of mental images. We came to the logical conclusion that that the flow which emerges from such spontaneous mental imagery is completely incompatible with strategising and intellectualising.

This was an important recognition. The emergence of mental images is *not necessarily an artefact of conscious effort or the product of intellectual effort - it is an openness to the poetry of the soul*.

We discussed the notion of *zanshin*, a term derived from Japanese martial arts, which means 'one posture of heart', might be used to characterise this receptive state of consciousness. *Zanshin* describes a

¹⁰¹ Mr. Ken Jennings, from a workshop on mental imagery presented to the South African Institute of Marital and Family Therapy at Botha's Hill in 1992. He discusses his ideas regarding 'flow' in his doctoral thesis (Jennings, 1997).

reflective state of relaxed focus, where the awareness of the practitioner is held in calm repose, without effort or inner dialogue. This is the state that martial artists strive for, and it is understood to be the high point of practice, for it from within the repose of *zanshin* that the perfect response to any attack is generated.

We contrasted this mode of knowing and acting and acting with the professional epistemic axiom that comprehension comes as a result of mental activity rather than mental repose.¹⁰² *The notion of 'knowing through inactivity' differs quite profoundly from the standard western assumption that the sort of thinking and activity which forms the basis of efficient action is embodied in the active application of the intellect. As would be the case in manipulating theories and models in order to inform activity.*

In the Western tradition, we tend to see spontaneity as chaotic and potentially damaging to problem solving, and try to regulate our experience of psychotherapy by recourse to theory, which forces the therapy into predetermined forms. We fear the anarchy of the unfettered mind.

However, my inspired moments were a product of an unselfconscious absorption in the stories of the clients, and *zanshin*, and shamanic methods - of which divination is a prime example - embody a more open, receptive approach to problem solving. The metaphor of 'becoming in the dream' in divination rituals was paradigmatic as regards this sort of intellectually unstructured approach to conversation. I was not yet ready to speak to Gert about the shamanic link, however.

I remember clearly the feeling which I had on leaving Gert that afternoon - I was stilled. It all seemed so simple that words could only fail.

¹⁰² I think that this formulation could reasonably be called an 'epistemology' in the Batesonian sense.

By means of the 'zanshin' analogy, I could speak about some of the aspects of the shamanic experience for the first time, in a way that made sense to me in the first instance, but also to Gert. The analogy gave me a language, made me conscious of what I knew, and gave some small space of legitimacy to the *isangoma* experience in the formal psychological discourse.

The thoughts and feelings flowing from the discussion reverberated through two therapy sessions which I conducted the following evening. So excited was I that I faxed Gert a note the morning after these two therapies:

On Tuesday night 20/10/92 I saw 2 patients. The sessions were marvellous - having named the process Zanshin, I found I was able to act as if I were a sword master - almost copying the frame of mind I imagine in a sword master. (I must have picked it up in some previous life, it is so easy to remember now.) The images I was wanting came thick and fast! Zen-mind, no-mind. No history, no desire.

Dogen, founder of Soto Zen, says 'Forget the teachings'.

Minuchin says 'Throw the book away'.

Poem by Dogen:

*Water birds
going and coming
their traces disappear
but they never forget their path.*

It had been the first time that I had been able to facilitate these moments of inspiration in therapy that I was seeking. A moment when I stopped reaching for the moon in the stream and beheld the *moon*. It meant that I wasn't chasing mirages.

A few days later Gert and I were again talking. The conversation started off around the exciting events in the two therapy sessions, and we meandered through the possible implications with increasing excitement.¹⁰³

Derek: *I came home and I wrote this thing:*

'I went into the session with this kid of zanshin idea ringing in my mind. And I was walking around thinking about that kind of awareness. I imagine being a swordfighter and what it would be like to be in a zanshin-type state. I imagined it during these sessions'.

I was having a session with a woman, who is a clinical psychologist. I was in a state of being receptive, but not trying to lead the session anywhere, or enhance the imagery, but with the quality of attentiveness without being idle or busy. Images (which are difficult to describe) came to me during the sessions. I had an image of something being stretched while she was talking to me. It was almost a fist, stretching a piece of plastic. She was talking about her daughter.

I tried to translate the image. I asked her about her daughter. I said, "I have the sense your daughter is trying to stretch your relationship to the absolute maximum, testing you...." and it made perfect sense to her.

The session seemed to be composed of these kinds of images. The direct relationship of the image to what the person is talking about is not always obvious. Sometimes the images seem random and I ignore them. [This session] they were somehow in the foreground of my attention. Every time I interpreted them or translated them in that way it was 'spot on' in terms of [my] understanding her, or enriching or even adding a dimension to her understanding.

I experienced it as quite a profound session, and I think she did as well, judging by her response. Every now and then I would attend to this internal image and ask, "is it something like this...?" And she would reply "yes".

It felt that it was simply happening.

¹⁰³ I have made very slight editorial amendments to this transcript to make it read easily.

When I went in I had been walking around and driving, thinking about zanshin in the 'swordfighting mode', and it seemed to confirm the discussion and carry through into the session. It was a potent experience. There was another dimension to it as well, with the other patient.

I was sitting with her, and she was talking about her relationships with men through various jobs, and I was listening to this, feeling her effect on me and trying to draw some parallels with her history as she had told it to me, and at the same time trying to attend to the internal images.

It was a very 'synthetic' [integrative] process, but it was not as if I was trying to direct it. It was more as if I was reflecting, and we managed to identify some theme between the two of us in how she relates to me, and the kinds of things which got her into deep water with bosses. There seemed to be a process of idealisation.

It was as if being in a passive, receptive state confirmed our discussion [regarding zanshin] - where there was no attempt to try and direct the conversation or do something.

Gert: Or even tying it all together and having a final understanding of what it is all about...

Derek: Yes, that is also important. There was also a sense that, towards the end of the session with the woman, where there were a lot of images, I began to think "Now how do I close this?" and my 'gut' said to me "don't,... you don't need to. Just let it be." Almost as though it would have been jarring to make some sort of clever statement. It is interesting, that the 'clever stuff' for me serves the function of signifying to the other person that I belong to a professional fraternity, because it doesn't seem as real, and seems to be the 'expected thing' from a psychologist, a kind of withdrawal, which feels phoney. It has no real substance.

When I wrote this thing over here, I was thinking about this. I had an amazing feeling of "this is it; this is amazing." I wrote it late at night, feeling wildly inspired.

Gert: *I feel very blocked and unable to respond, but I think I hear what you are saying and the implications are almost a bit too frightful to contemplate, given the approach and the typical attitude and mindset of the profession. We are all so mechanically minded, with prescribed approaches being used as an attempt to organise something into something else.*

Just thinking about the possibility of sitting fairly relaxedly, not trying to do anything, effect anything, and yet not disengaging altogether either...

If that is all that is necessary, it negates all these attempts to find the 'pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.' It is the pot, and yet it is too easy to think that it is, and too simple to think about it in that way. Almost as if the search would lead to a position of 'no search'.

Derek: *Yes. That is why the 'Zen stuff' seemed to speak about that sort of thing... I walked away with a curious sense of finality after our last session. So maybe I can relate that to what you are speaking about.*

Gert: *I feel a sense of pressure....*

Something must be produced, somehow.

Backtracking, when you arrived today and asked me about the drawings on the flipcharts in my office, I really did feel good about having the opportunity to speak, and yet I felt guilty, because we should have been doing something else. And I said to you, "we can sit in the other room, but it is going to change things".

Derek: *It is interesting, because I often experience something similar to that when I come. On the one level it is really nice to talk as we do, but on another level I feel "is this proper, is this right?"*

Gert: *Important things seems to happen almost immediately without orchestrating them. They do happen. Once you leave that kind of talk and go into a different direction, trying to be more proper, more productive, more professional, then you lose out on something which was very germane. And, had you followed it, could have lead into all kinds of interesting avenues, which would have been*

much more productive. It is a very paradoxical thing.

Derek: *[Unintelligible free associations for a moment.]*

Spontaneity is almost redefined as fully "being in flow". I don't know how to put it any other way.

Gert: *It is just possible that the spontaneity thing is just the thing that happens anyway, and we kill it.*

Derek: *Yes! That makes sense.*

Gert: *That is the ontological characteristic - the spontaneity.*

Derek: *Absolutely! How can...*

Gert: *We think what we need to pull it back from somewhere, to 'instigate it, orchestrate it' and that is the opposite process. If we leave it to its own devices, it will be there. It has probably been there anyway.*

This is a beautiful idea which would tie in very well with the creativity idea too. All the gadgets which have been developed to facilitate creativity somehow link with the idea of encouraging a person to do crazy things, i.e. non-linear, non-organisational things. For example, suspend your critical faculty, let it go, and so on.

One could turn the idea upside down and, instead of asking "How could we facilitate creativity?", ask "How we can stop interfering with it" - stop thinking that it is something which must be produced ex nihilo?

"How can you suspend yourself and what you have been taught about the Western way of grappling with reality and making it into something else... and let the real thing be?" That is the real question.

Derek: *What you are saying is amazing for me at a very personal level.*

I think my personal theory about psychotherapy with individuals and the way I do it, links with what you said about not denigrating the individual. What I seem to try to do with my clients is facilitate a process whereby they can almost

loosen themselves from all the kinds of things that clutter their heads.

Gert: *Like "Get out of your own way!?"*

Derek: *Yes, and almost re-find a way of being which is more flowing, less obstructed, less planned, less fraught with arguments and counter arguments, and that fits exactly with what you are saying. That is what I'm trying to do with clients, and with myself. The ontological assumption is that there is that kind of flow. If you stop fiddling with it...*

Gert: *It dramatically changes the whole scene, don't you think? What would happen if people would realise that they are part of a creative process, and that they needn't try and develop it?*

It is a matter of clearing the path, so you don't obstruct it.

Even the notion of facilitating creativity has again this organisational bent, i.e. If I do A, B C & D, I will be able to produce X, Y and Z...

Derek: *[At this point Stan, another teacher and colleague at the University walked in on the discussion, and I began explaining to him...]*

The traditional, common sense or implicit understanding we have in our culture, regarding creativity and spontaneity is that it is an unusual thing. It is something which occasionally comes along and makes a wave, which then returns to the usual thing. If you have a spontaneous evening it is an exception in the context of your life. So we've been speaking about the idea of flowing with things and responding to things, etc., etc.

Gert: *Can I add something? The next step, which has possibly been part of his [gesturing towards me] project, is how can we facilitate, create, organise, so that spontaneity can blossom/creativity can blossom. What can we do to make it happen? Our discussion led to the "flip" in thinking about spontaneity. What we've been doing all along is killing it through the causative, productive, instrumental approach to life which is taught us by our culture. It is most probably a matter of "get out of its way", rather than "doing something so as to produce it". It is not produced. The lid must be taken off to show that it is*

there.

Stan: *There is a paradox... no - a contradiction in trying to create certain circumstances which bring forth creativity, spontaneity. By its very nature it happens rather than is engineered.*

Derek: *That is one of the themes that led to the "flip". I have been trying to record sessions to see where it happened, and it just happened that the most creative moments have always been in sessions that I haven't recorded. It is almost as if trying blocks it and messes it up.*

Gert: *Maybe what we can do is to say, "Stay with the spontaneity, don't move away from it or try to manhandle it."*

Stan: *What I like about what you are saying is that, by its nature the creative act or the spontaneous act has to do with losing oneself. It is not predictable, it is not designable. The whole western culture is intellectual, exact and deliberate. Contrived. If we think we know what creativity is we can create... [inaudible]. That is the problem.*

Gert: *Maybe if we could reformulate that: it is not so much a matter of losing oneself, it is a matter of losing ones non-self, because you could say that the real self is the spontaneous one. Given that the context is contrived, we think we lose ourselves.*

Stan: *We lose our rational self, and being all that deliberate.*

One thing that comes to mind is that if we approach therapy, for example, as we have been instructed to do by the professional fraternity, then we do that. Where we have an hypothesis, then we are going in intellectually, deliberately, consciously. Are we then in some way preventing the creative act or the creative cycles that are emerging?

How many times, in my own experience, have I formulated a wonderful frame, which has emerged, and then the client says or implies, "so what?", as if it hadn't touched them. With the spontaneous 'stuff' it is not only me, but it is the whole circumstance which is moving beyond the expected.

The question is, "how do you get yourself out of the way?"

Gert: *For me it is being sensitive to the fact that the real thing happens when you don't contrive it.*

Stan: *I think that one of the aspects of this, which has to do with our culture, has to do with output.*

We try to achieve something in a deliberate way and evaluate ourselves in terms of the eventual goal. If we think of psychotherapy as a "service delivery system", what are the implications of that? Anything more than just helping somebody or supporting them may be debilitating them and chaining them.

Derek: *I have just had a redefinition of the term "to co-create". That is the idea underlying the Milan methodology. But if you are going about it yourself in a deliberate fashion, maybe you do block the emergence of spontaneity. To co-create, can you be 'co-spontaneous'? It is an entirely different way of doing things.*

Gert: *The word 'create' contains the notion of doing something at will. If we take the spontaneous, 'let-it-be' approach, what is there to say?*

Stan: *There are many things to say at a very different level, with a different intention. We would have a greater process orientation rather than a thing-in-itself or an outward orientation....what we would be doing is reporting on the useful outcomes.*

Gert: *Or perhaps [on the] the aesthetics of the situation - what we have created spontaneously together, like painting, which may give joy to others.*

Derek: *Rather than a programme which may be executed in another context.*

What I find interesting, associated with this creative mode, is the feeling that the context demands something else, and requires some intention other than simply reflecting and responding and assimilating, not in an impulsive way, but assimilating and responding and assimilating and responding.

It provokes a certain measure of anxiety, as if this way of being is not permitted here in some way. "Going off" and responding in an uncontrived way feels

presumptuous in this context. There is almost a linear parallel with creativity or being in a creative mode [being excluded or inhibited by one's perception of the context].

Gert: *It is as if we feel the need to be in an engineering mode. I don't know if this applies to females as well, but we have to make things happen, to move, to work.*

Stan: *It is the burden of responsibility, of the establishment, of one's security.*

Gert: *When the client says to you, "All the other girls in the hostel are so catty," and she says this with a depressed tone and in depressed gestures, don't you feel jolted into an attitude of pressure - i.e., "I must do something." As though you are required to produce.*

Stan: *The usefulness of what we are saying is that at the point of greatest crisis, we feel our responsible intervention is needed, which most often, in the moments of great personal crisis, is institutionalisation, which is 'logical'. Yet if you look at some of Auerswald's material you notice that in the moments of greatest crisis he didn't go over into action. In the story of Rose¹⁰⁴, he does not denigrate the individual [...inaudible] rather than going into action and becoming the 'caretaker'.*

Gert: *His saving grace, in a sense, is not knowing what to do under the circumstances.*

Derek: *It is interesting.... In Zen they speak about the "don't know" mind, that is what you aim for. In this state you must just deal with things as they happen.*

Gert: *This was a beautiful insight... one losing one's deliberate self. It is very freeing to think of the major mode of being as spontaneity, which has all the promise of being meaningful, helpful and useful, rather than the contrived way of being in which one is continually geared toward making things happen... [Tape ends.]*

¹⁰⁴ Auerswald (1985). Stan here refers to a remarkable vignette in this article dealing with a disturbed woman in the context of traditional Hawaiian society, and her encounter with Western ethnomedicine and law. Auerswald uses this vignette to illustrate the tenets of his ecosystemic view.

I immediately listened to the tape-recording of the discussion on the way home in the car. The ideas were very, very evocative indeed, and I mused over the implications of what we had discussed on my word processor that evening.¹⁰⁵

Perhaps this whole process has to do with reframing therapy for myself in such a wise that creativity - 'the real thing' - is legitimated... what emerges when you are fully immersed in a situation in an unselfconscious way. A process, perhaps, where by being intrigued with the content, the output monitoring mode comes to be switched off...

And... the spontaneity does embrace the total perception of the context. Mental images can be seen as spontaneous contextual perceptual acts. Strongly differentiated from seizing upon an idea or impulse and acting it out with some view of agency or effect in mind.

Interesting that this spontaneous vision has to do with how I as an individual see a situation, not with how it is meant to be seen through the lenses of a theory. Perhaps there is a dialectic tension between these two modes of seeing - like two parts of a complementarity - which means that the process of perceiving therapy occurs in a matrix of "subjective" and "superimposed" frameworks - representing links to the self and the professional community respectively...

What if the goal of therapy were to be redefined as simply to see anew in a spontaneous way?

And if intuition could guide this process of seeing anew, therapy would be far more analogous to art and creation than to science and discovery. In asking this question, therefore, I was asking whether therapy was not perhaps more appropriately considered a branch of literature than a branch of science, and I was calling into question the need for the baroque superstructures of theory with their gargoyles of technique.

¹⁰⁵ Again, I have exercised editorial discretion here.

This is not in itself a new proposition, and intellectually I could have framed it prior to this. But in the moment of asking it seriously, my one small step for personal epistemology was also one giant step for personal methodology. It raised the possibility that my personal, creative self, hitherto oppressed by my professional persona, would be able to contribute to healing. And this personal self embraced spirituality, where my professional persona did not. It opened the way for deeper subtexts of my being - a second, spiritual *leitmotiv* - to enter into the professional domain.

*PART III: REFLECTIONS IN THE
MIRROR - MIND*

CHAPTER 8

SCIENCE AND THE SOUL

Discovering the 'Science Complex'

In Part I of this document I recounted a process of defining the assumptive world that I originally operated from, coming to the surprising conclusion that I construed therapy as an *applied version of traditional science*.

Encountering the scientific theme was surprising because I would have professed to be a loyal adherent of a second-order cybernetic school of thought, and would have pointedly told anyone that objectivity was a redundant construct, and would certainly not have imagined that I was 'doing' (old style) 'science'.¹⁰⁶

Through the action research process, it became apparent that despite my theoretical understanding of the ecosystemic view and its stance towards the notion of objectivity, my actual praxis was still organised by assumptions reflecting some tacit form of 'objectivity'. While I might have claimed that I had embraced ecosystemic epistemology and relinquished traditional science, I had in fact inadvertently merely camouflaged the 'old epistemology' with new operational methods.

¹⁰⁶ The debate on an appropriate frame of reference for family therapy as regards its relationship to traditional science raged through the eighties. Hoffman's reviews of the evolution of the views of therapy as non-traditional science are instructive in this regard (Hoffman, 1990a; 1995). The key themes in the various approaches to family therapy are presented in Hoffman (1981) and Keeney and Ross (1984), the most compelling argument being that for a view of therapy as a pursuit that differs significantly from the natural sciences. The perspectives presented in these family therapy publications are framed by a more embracing debate regarding the type of discipline that psychology constitutes - a debate that is reviewed and placed in historical context by Bunge (1990a, b) and others - Cellierier & Ducret (1990); Mayer (1990); Panksepp (1990); Royce (1990).

In point of fact, these methods reflected my possession by a 'science complex', the main elements of which can be described as follows:

1. I automatically assumed that *all valid action has an explicit rationale*; and therefore that therapeutic action should at all times be fully logically justifiable to a critical audience of experts. The fantasy of being found rationale-deficient was catastrophic.
2. In order to develop interventions which were defensible, I believed that I should follow a set of interpretative rules in the therapeutic setting. These 'rules' aimed at achieving *logical coherence between contextualised activity and decontextualised theory*.
3. Therefore I would *habitually and selectively* focus on *describing observed phenomena in terms of general hypothetical aetiological patterns*. Doing so, I assumed, would lead me to develop interventions that were theoretically founded.¹⁰⁷
4. The process of developing a theoretically coherent approach to a problem is a *convergent, empirical and diagnostic cognitive process*. It subsists in the identification of *formal analogies between a presenting situation and general frameworks*.
5. By virtue of this practice, the particular instance comes to be seen as 'something else', and the *complexity of the unique is reduced to the simplicity of the general*.
6. My therapeutic process may thus be schematically represented as an *algorithm* - an iterative series of decision rules. (See Figure 1 below.)

¹⁰⁷ This all sounds so logical it is hard to imagine an alternative method. Indeed, a seminal journal article at the time of my training recommended this approach specifically (Selvini-Palazzoli et al, 1980).

7. To reiterate, then, while I claimed no longer to believe in objectivity, *I still behaved as if it existed*, and while I believed in the recursiveness of interactional process, I still had not stopped actually executing a linear causal model of therapy.

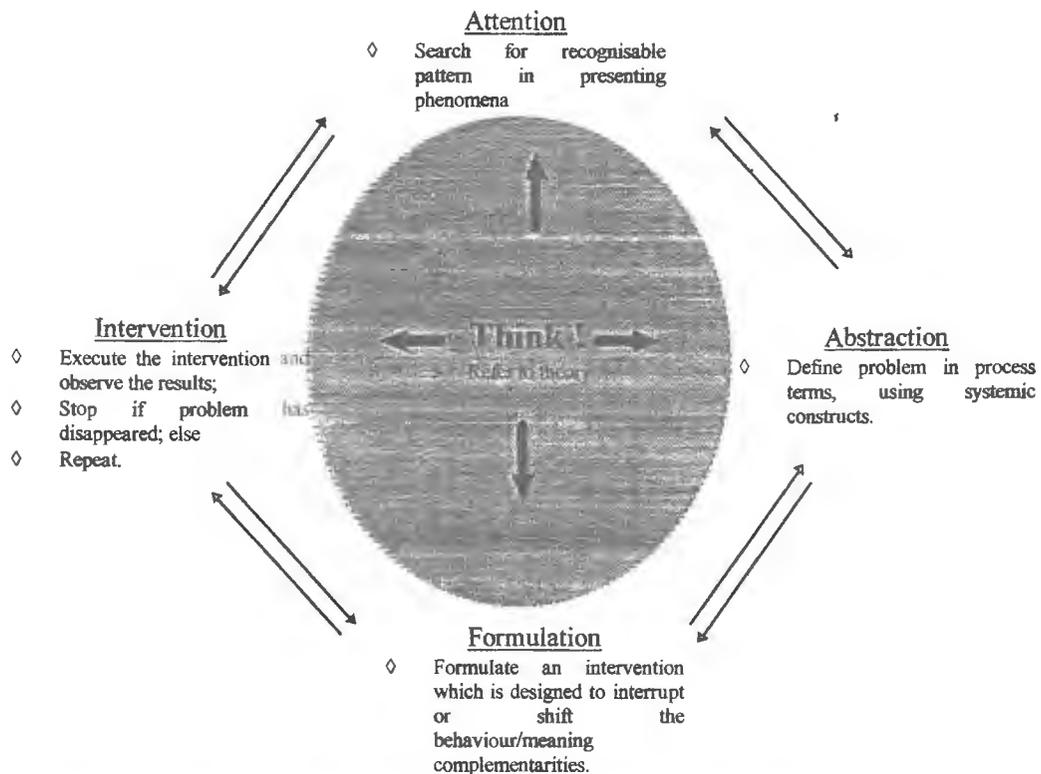


Figure 8.1: An Algorithm for a Scientific Psychotherapy

Note that this algorithm, although cyclical, is essentially linear and strategic, consisting of a sequence of steps which are rendered coherent by referring to a theoretical domain.

Beyond the Science Complex

In my adoption of a professional, responsible position, I would habitually adopt the relatively impersonal, emotionally detached position of an 'expert'. (Impersonal, that is, apart, in my case, from anxieties regarding justification to authoritarian patriarchy, and cost-effectiveness obligations to clients.) Thus, an inevitable consequence of possession by the science complex was that my personal self was abstracted from the therapeutic encounter, and that I was so busy thinking that I paid little attention to the unique and entirely subjective aspects of the therapeutic situation, except for the few cases and moments within therapies with an intuitive aspect.

The founder of the anti-psychiatry movement, R.D. Laing comments on the consequences of scientific observation - what he terms the 'objective look' - as follows:

The world has already been destroyed in theory. Is it worth bothering to destroy it in practice? We and the world we live in faded out of scientific theory years ago.¹⁰⁸

The act of objectification, and the stance of objectivity, are not objective objects... The scientific objective world is not the world of real life. It is a highly sophisticated artefact, created by multiple operations which effectively and efficiently exclude immediate experience in all its apparent capriciousness from its order of discourse.¹⁰⁹

When [the objective look] is operative...it has to cancel the live presence of the other person. To look at the other as an object is not only to change the person

¹⁰⁸ Laing, (1982, p.14).

¹⁰⁹ Laing (1982, p. 15).

to a thing but, by the same token, to cut off, while one is so looking, any personal relation between oneself and the other.¹¹⁰

When Galilean-Descartian rationality is in full sway, it completely dominates ones' actual perceptions. One no longer sees anyone, friend, lover, patient, as what in some quarters is still called a human being. One sees a thing.¹¹¹

I had been *doing* the objective look, and as a counterpoint to my selective attention to theoretically salient phenomena, I had been selectively ignoring a *feeling and intuiting, personally involved* self. This can make conversation very difficult.¹¹² Further, there were moments when therapy took turns which were profound and yet which did not conform to this expert praxis.

Gert's paradoxical injunction encouraged me to attend to hitherto largely ignored varieties of subjective experience. And as such, and whether or not he intended it so, *it therefore constituted a direct challenge to the authority of the science complex.*

And as I moved somewhat tentatively in this direction, I was suddenly and *synchronistically* plunged into a chaotic and confusing world in which spirituality, intuition, and non-mechanical and supernatural explanation all figured in a fluid and inchoative frame of reference. And thus, through my interaction with Keeney, Mutwa and the *izangoma*, and ultimately Gert and Stan, a previously oppressed, intuitive faculty was both cultivated and legitimated. An entire *genre* of experience - one facilitated in trance states known to shamans - came to have a voice. And, despite my scepticism, I was forced to begin to accept this voice as valid because of the *coherent and compelling nature* of the knowing that it generated.

¹¹⁰ Laing (1982, p. 17).

¹¹¹ Laing (1982, p. 29).

¹¹² I would now understand my failed sessions - of both the stuck and the impulsive variety - in the light of my objectification of the patients and the therapeutic process.

It also became apparent that although this form of knowing-as-a-basis-for-action has a home in certain philosophical traditions such as Zen and in healing practices the world over, on the whole, however, it is formally seemingly incommensurable with scientific discourse and Western analytico-referential thought. It is truly predicated on a different epistemology, in the strictest sense of the word.

In beginning to explore this epistemology, I was both scared and sceptical. For one thing, the mechanico-logical world-view is apparently profoundly hard-wired into my interpretative circuitry. As Bateson remarks,

"I suggest that it is the attempt to deal with life in logical terms and the compulsive nature of that attempt which produce within us the propensity for terror when it even hinted that such a logical approach might break down..."

and as he further states,

"We humans seem to wish that our logic was absolute. We seem to act on the assumption that it is so and then panic when the slightest overtone that it is not so, or might not be so, is presented. It is as if the tight coherence of the logical brain, even in persons who notoriously think with a great deal of muddleheadedness, must still be sacrosanct.... In truth, a breach in the apparent coherence of our mental logical process would seem to be a sort of death..."¹¹³

It was through the valley of this metaphorical death that I was forced to walk with Keeney and the *izzangoma*.¹¹⁴ My fears loomed large during this passage - I could not simply reboard the steady ship of materialist reductionism, and I was afraid and awed by the transpersonal realm I seemed to be traversing. And yet, perhaps to safeguard my sanity, within it all I still affected a certain scepticism.

¹¹³ Bateson (1979/1988, pp. 134-135).

¹¹⁴ Bateson may have been both right and wrong: unknowing and illogic are tolerable to individuals (and perhaps even larger groups) who do not partake of the ideas of logic and knowing. Bateson speaks of a subset of humans, not of all humans. The Western academic tradition has perhaps forgotten how to not know.

And as I reflected on what was transpiring, I realised that another aspect of my being was finding expression - a personal thema resonating through my history, evident in my engagement with martial arts, oriental thought and meditative practices, and with the world of the *izangoma*. Where the *first leitmotif* had concerned *action-as-applied-science*, this previously oppressed *second leitmotif* is a constellation of idioms in which action is depicted as an *art of the epiphanic*.

Through reflection it became clearer that the sense of social unacceptability pertinently raised by my membership of the world of the *izangoma*, reflected both *inner and outer splits* between subjective, personal and spiritual experience and 'official' reality in a 'mechologically' dominated society.¹¹⁵ This society had always encouraged my cleverness, and implicitly disqualified or silenced creative, vivid expression. It is not an institutional mode. The split between intuition and reason resonate in the utterly personal space of my own constructs *as well as* in the cultural space, through *both the texts of my identity and the discourse which contains them*.¹¹⁶

R.D. Laing quotes the following story:

*...while quite a child, of eight or ten perhaps, he [William Blake] had his first vision. Sauntering along, the boy looked up and saw a tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough like stars. Returned home he related the incident, and only through his mothers' intercession escaped a thrashing from his honest father, for telling a lie...*¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ "Mechologic" is the term Edgar Auerswald, noted author and therapist in the ecosystemic framework, uses to describe the linear cause-effect-subject-object grammar that inheres in most Western discourse (Auerswald, 1990). It was this sense of impropriety that prevented me from revealing my *thwasa* to Gert until the year after the discussion quoted in the previous chapter took place, i.e. 1993.

¹¹⁶ There is a complex of background factors in my own history which made this such a dominant personal theme. I don't intend to deal with the psychohistory of this complex in this document, as indicated previously.

¹¹⁷ Laing (1982, p. 77).

I have some sympathy for Blake. Laing goes on:

Angels transgress the frontier of the objective world. The objective world is the preserve of objective objects and objective events. In that objective world, angels are ipso facto, de facto, per se, as such, impossible, therefore they do not exist. Have angels biological utility? Have angels, that is, hallucinations, survival value? Are they signs of pathology? Do they remit spontaneously? Have they a good prognosis? Shall we allow them?¹¹⁸

When we come back to our ordinary mind with realisations culled from a transformed modulated state of mind, we judge the realisations of the transformations and modulations of the altered state, in so far as we imperfectly recall them, with our hierarchy of credence. However, sometimes the conversion of credibilities, which so often occur in the changed state, persists through into the otherwise ordinary state. Then there is a fight between the two antagonistic convictions.¹¹⁹

Narrative Orthodoxy

Where I had been searching for a context in which I could even contemplate debate of some of the issues arising from my experience, through the conversations described and transcribed above I found a context in which the discourse concerning intuition and spontaneity had achieved a certain measure of respectability. Although I did not yet trust the university dialogue to contain and tolerate the full range of curious transpersonal experiences, the conversations in question still represented a point of partial emancipation.

In the next phase of my journey, with a new-found sense of having more professional freedom than I would have expected, I continued exploring the intuitive, spiritual dimension of psychotherapeutic healing.

¹¹⁸ Laing (1982, p. 77).

¹¹⁹ Laing (1982, p. 63).

The notes I made in various attempts to document my thoughts and experiences with a view to producing a thesis (through 1993 until about mid-1997) portray not only a deepening appreciation of this dimension of therapy, but also various attempts to articulate this appreciation in coherent professional psychological language and narrative form. When writing seriously about the intuitive, spiritual realm into which I had been thrust I tended to favour an analytico-referential style of formulation. *I continued to try to talk about the spiritual and the intuitive in a 'university' language.*

While I had found space for exploration, I still judged academic acceptability and the requirements of a thesis in familiar terms. And this reflected not only the politics of academia but also the enduring stubbornness of that aspect of my own frame of reference that wanted to 'prove' the validity of what I was doing in analytico-referential terms.¹²⁰

So, I had moved from a position of wondering whether the entire demesne of intuition was legitimate to a perhaps less extreme position of trying to accommodate a new type of experience within an 'old' type of conversation. I still wanted to fortify my views behind the ramparts of logic and the unassailable battlements of theory.

Now it could be argued that the attempt to render intuition coherent in rational terms is itself incoherent, and it certainly seemed so at times. Indeed, Carl Jung stated that

"The term [intuition] does not denote something contrary to reason, but something outside the province of reason."¹²¹

¹²⁰ I do not include any of these documents here, as they are of incidental relevance only.

¹²¹ Parikh, Neubauer and Lank (1994, p. 11). (Underscore mine.)

Not surprising, then that my attempts to articulate a coherent 'framing story' for intuition in 'old style' professional language raised a vexing paradox. If intuition is 'outside the province of reason', what kind of reasonable frame could possibly contain it? *Intuition has the very bit of reason between its teeth.*

A redefinition of 'professionalism' was necessary in order to accommodate the 'para-rationality' of intuition, and this involved *reauthoring of some of the most fundamental texts and grammars of my identity*, to say nothing for the relational matrix in which this 'professionalism' exists.¹²² This is a process of a higher logical type than merely accommodating intuition within a given framework, to use Russell's classification.¹²³

In searching for a place for intuition and inspiration the task which confronted me, in retrospect, was *not* simply to *change my mind* on the basis of a few new observations or to reauthor little bits of my personal text. Rather, I was searching for a *new way of 'minding'* in terms of which different 'things' could be construed as 'facts', and for a way of talking about it that would do it justice - for the academic 'way of talking' generally excludes the very evocation that is the crux of intuition.

This redefinition of myself was reflected at various levels of recursion: my intrapsychic 'conversation' with myself was broadening and becoming more inclusive of purely subjective experiences, the interactional domain had changed, the explanatory domain was changing, the political domain was

¹²² I use the word 'grammars' in the sense that coherent texts are predicated on grammars, which are the sets of rules or ideas whereby coherent texts are generated. To borrow from Eco's (1985) semiotics, a grammar is an aspect of a metasemiotic framework whereby signs are interpreted.

¹²³ Bateson (1979/1988), *inter alia*.

changing. Indeed, I had begun to assume membership of a different language community.¹²⁴

It is thus small wonder that I got very stuck for some years trying to navigate the obstacle of reason to produce this document. And this latter stuckness was of the same variety as my original stuckness, although at a higher level of abstraction, concerning not merely the basis for clinical praxis but the entire domain of scientific language. It had to do with giving intuition a voice in the face of the silencing power of reason, in the very province in which reason has most effectively silenced the tropes of intuition - that of the academic text.¹²⁵

For personal expression, I was also writing poetry, short stories and anecdotes in a creative rather than didactic style. And in these pieces I addressed issues thematically, metaphorically, poetically, evocatively, emotively, subjectively. Where what I said didn't matter except to myself personally, I discovered that there was thematic coherence, a correspondence between my experience and the idioms of shamanism, which came to provide another, alternative vehicle for describing and understanding my experience. And these tropes were effective because of their capacity to evoke subjective coherence rather than to define literal truths.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Certain action researchers use the notion of *language community* to describe recursive communicative domains (Grundy & Kemmis, 1984). I find the notion of a 'language community' consistent with the notion that epistemologies - in the Batesonian sense of rules for decision and action - or what Grundy and Kemmis themselves call 'general sets of theorems regarding action' - inhere in 'ecologies of ideas', apropos Bateson. The notion of a language community is also consistent with the postmodern/post-structuralist formulation that social 'knowledge' *inheres in discursive or conversational contexts and does not reflect a context-independent ontologically correct truthfulness*. (The latter idea reflects an older, positivistic formulation in terms of which knowledge is reified.) The notion of a language community as a localised conversational node, in relation to which general theorems regarding action may be abstracted, is an appealing one, for it is free of the oppressive knowledge politics associated with institutionalised knowledge which imposes a 'universe' on the 'multiverse' - be it at the level of the state, the university, the family, or even the individual. (A detailed explication of this point would amount to a review of poststructuralism, postmodernism, Freudian and Marxist thought, critical theory, and cognitive science, and is beyond the scope of this document.) The term 'multiverse' was coined by cognitive scientist Humberto Maturana, whose work on the self organisation of living systems and biological epistemology has influenced by virtue of its resonance with constructivist and ecosystemic tenets (Efran & Lukens, 1985).

¹²⁵ A trope is a figure of speech, or more broadly, a literary idiom, a figurative theme.

¹²⁶ It is interesting to note that one of the possible meanings of the word 'theme' or 'thema' is 'ground for action' (Chambers 20th Century Dictionary, New Edition). The themes in shamanic lore are also a ground for action, analogous to the function of theory in science, except that they invoke, *open-ended multivocal symbolic action*, rather than the *convergent literal action* that follows from theory. These themes are metaphorical and as such do not suffer under the tyranny of materialistic literalism that characterises scientific thought.

From *Hypothesis* and *Thesis* to *Poiema* and *Poiesis*¹²⁷

Postmodernist Freeman, whose work I first encountered in 1995, helped to resolve my descriptive impasse, a Minotaurian dilemma with a horn of didactics and a horn of poetics.

He argues that the 'self' of a retrospective narrative is a fictionalised creation which in turn recreates the author in infinite iteration and reiteration, infinite recursion. *I tell the story of myself anew, and in so doing create a new 'I' to tell the story of myself anew.* He thus speaks of autobiographical accounts in terms of a *rewriting of the self*, in which all pretence of objectivity is abandoned.¹²⁸

In the light of this view, it would have been pointless to try to tell the story of the process of the evolution of my professional 'self' - as co-constituted in my seeing-thinking-acting-conversation - in detailed-chronological-linear-factual-didactic or even abstracted-distilled-scientised-sanitised format: the account would still be entirely fictional, and would doubly have lied, as the story would have abstracted itself from its telling, pretending itself not to be a story but rather a true account. It would have been to make the subjective construing and re-construing of my life which has coalesced into this document, appear to subscribe to a metalanguage of objective form and grammar, a master narrative of neat, appealing, and pure fantasy. It would make of me a defined object, when experientially I stubbornly remain a fluid subject.

¹²⁷ *Poiesis* - the process of creation, *poiema* its product.

¹²⁸ Freeman (1993). Freeman's position is consistent with the epistemology implicit in an emerging narrative therapy framework as exemplified in the works of Gergen and Kaye (1995) and MacNamee (1995), for example.

Postmodernism let me bootstrap myself, like Baron von Munchausen, out of the swampy clutches of a dry desertified academicised text. An action research process where the self is the crux of the process can never be reported literally. But what kind of story should then be told? What would its point be? The 'postmodern ethnography' of Tyler held a further key as to the kind of framing story suitable for this document

Neither self-perfecting in the manner of scientific discourse nor totalizing in the manner of political discourse, it [postmodern ethnography] is defined neither by a reflexive attention to its own rules nor by relation to an external object, it produces no idealisations of form and performance, no fictionalised realities or realities fictionalised. Its transcendence is not that of a metalanguage - of a language superior by means of its greater perfection of form - nor that of a unity created by synthesis and sublation, nor of praxis and practical application. Transcendent, then, neither by theory nor by praxis, nor by their synthesis, it describes no knowledge and produces no action. It transcends by evoking what cannot be known discursively or performed perfectly, though all know it as if discursively and perform it as if perfectly.

Evocation is neither presentation nor representation.. It presents no objects and represents none, yet it makes available through absence what can be conceived but not presented. It is thus beyond truth and immune to the judgement of performance. It overcomes the separation of the sensible and the conceivable, of form and content, of self and other, of language and world.

Evocation - that is to say, 'ethnography' - is the discourse of the postmodern world, for the world that made science and that science made, has disappeared, and scientific thought is now an archaic mode of consciousness surviving for awhile yet in degraded form without the ethnographic context that created and sustained it.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Tyler, (1987, p.199).

The word 'thesis', despite all injunctions (paradoxical or not) and insights to the contrary, has always managed to connote linearity, dryness, lots and lots of logic. Isn't 'thesis' at the hub of the academic cosmos? Isn't it a place of identity-less transcendence, where narrative form perfects itself in its own mirror? Doesn't the style of text you are now reading do just this?¹³⁰

Every time I sat down to write, unless I were storytelling or rambling rhetorical, I would inevitably find myself facing my pantheon of critical introjects and all they inspired. They were incarnate in my fantasy in the form of the masters of logic. I successfully avoided them for almost two years, by being stuck. Taking them on at their own game made me weak, made me taste bloodless, bilious, traitorousness. I would have to reduce the world of spirit to a mirage appearing in the deserts of materialism to do so. I once had a migraine attack trying to 'do' theory.

So, I declare this document an evocation.

And moving into an *evocative* rather than a *denotive* stance, I have been liberated from the discursive equivalent of believing the earth to be the centre of the universe. As Tyler says

*I call ethnography a meditative vehicle because we come to it not as to a map of knowledge nor as a guide to action, nor even for entertainment. We come to it as the start of a different kind of journey.*¹³¹

¹³⁰ A dictionary definition of the word 'thesis' indeed entails scholarly *argument*.

¹³¹ Tyler (1987, p. 216). (Emboldening mine.)

I believe I am already well under way on another type of journey.¹³² Where the conversation quoted in Chapter 7 punctuated a moment of partial emancipation in that the content of the intuitive domain became legitimate, *the moment of a more complete emancipation has arrived in that I now recognise that the textual form is subservient to phenomena and not the converse.* I do not have to 'fit' evocative-mythopoeic-poiesis - the domain of intuitive becoming - into degenerate denotative tropes for it to succeed or for it to be legitimate to myself or my peers - postmodernism - apropos Tyler - has redefined the rules of epistemic access to include evocation.¹³³

And thus this document does not constitute an attempt to proclaim new territory mapped or knowledge advanced: it claims no metaphysic: it constitutes an evocation, hopefully of a world in which an epistemology of intuition for healing practices is possible.

In framing this document as evocative, it has succeeded to the extent that you, the reader, has been invited *into a dialogue* rather than *to a monophonic performance*. The document is to be read as a

...text consisting of fragments of discourse intended to evoke in the minds of both reader and writer an emergent fantasy of a possible world of common-sense reality, and thus to provoke an aesthetic integration that will have a therapeutic effect. It is in a word, poetry - not in its textual form, but in its return to the original context and function of poetry which, by means of its performative break with everyday speech, evoked memories of the ethos of the community and thereby provoked hearers to act ethically... Postmodern ethnography attempts to recreate textually this spiral of poetic and ritual performance. Like them, it defamiliarises common-sense reality in a bracketed context of performance,

¹³² In a moment in which I recognise that evocation is the full speech for intuition, and when I recognised that Gert has become an exorcist of the ghosts of denotation rather than a priest of reason.

¹³³ I will attempt to deal with the possible charge of pure relativism in the next chapter.

*evokes a fantasy whole abducted from fragments, and then returns participants to the world of common sense - transformed, renewed, and sacralized.*¹³⁴

It is 'poiema' rather than a 'metaphysic', after Carse:

Poetry is not a sort of distorted and decorated prose, but rather prose is poetry which has been stripped down and pinned to a Procrustean bed of logic.

To separate the poiema from poiesis, the created object from the creative act is the essence of the theatrical.

*Poets cannot kill; they die. Metaphysics cannot die; it kills.*¹³⁵

As I have redefined 'professionalism' to include intuition, so I have adopted a different professional discursive style in talking to myself, and a restraint in addressing you, the reader. I am deliberately refraining from the literalism of theory to make all these experiences cohere. We are ourselves in an open-ended polyphonic conversation within the domain of idiom.

And in this domain of living idiom we may be healed from the wounds of excessive literalism.

¹³⁴ Tyler (1987, p. 202).

¹³⁵ Carse (1997, p. 64).

CHAPTER 9

A THEORETICAL ENCOUNTER

Context

The room was bare, save for a semicircle of chairs and tables focused like a parabola on the centre of the room. At this focal point stood another government issue state department standard chair and table, facing the others. The chair had a grey metal frame and dark blue plastic upholstery. It had no arms. The chairs in the semicircle, though, had small wooden armrests. Light came from an array of neon tubes, and the room was uniformly without deep shadow. Heavy drapes of a nondescript muted orange hid one of the walls; there may have been windows there. The tables were a serviceable tan, and the carpet was a rough synthetic webbing of an orangey-brown hue.

The door opened. Some men in suits came and sat in the semicircle - there were just the right number of desks - five or six. They spoke to each other without moving their hands very much, made the odd small joke and smiled mildly. They shuffled their papers, placed pens on the desks, and eventually, after some minutes, some of them lapsed into silence. It was clear that they were waiting.

A knock heralded the appearance of a woman's head from behind the door. It was tilted, and pointed at one of the men. It muttered something to him. "Send him in", he responded, glancing perfunctorily at the assembled group - audible now in the pencil-putting-down silence that had welled up like the chords of a bureaucrat's symphony. The head disappeared, the door

closing with care. The man glanced around the room again, and, half under his breath, muttered "Let's see what grounds the boy has."

In walked someone. Another man, wearing a suit with wrinkles in the pants. It had evidently not been dry-cleaned since it had last been worn. The shirt was white, the suit was dark, the tie was red and gold. The jacket had a nice cut.

I sat down, looked at my examiners. I tried to find myself within my anxiety. I could have sworn there was faint odour of formalin in the room. Maybe some kind of cleaning agent used in the building. I listened to my heart beat, looked around the room at the anonymous faces.

The chairman, whoever he was, said "Well, Doctor Shirley, please tell us how you think about what you actually do now." I felt a little disconcerted, looked around for cues. Faces, some with spectacles. Looking at me with no particular expression. They were neither kind nor unkind. The man who had spoken seemed to be harbouring some suggestion of a smile, as if he were slightly amused by the irony of the way he had addressed me.

Text ✓

INGWAZI Thank you, gentlemen. Well, Doctor, there are two orders of abstraction
SHIRLEY: implicit in my proposals.

—The first is *metapsychological*, and the second concerns *praxis*. Please allow me to demonstrate how I think about each.

The metapsychology of 'psychotherapy' concerns the context in which the word itself comes to have meaning. And as far as its metapsychology is concerned, I would say that the word 'psychotherapy' is an *ideological* constraint around certain Western ethnomedical healing practices which have primarily to do with communication, or conversation... and I would say the term probably has more to do with the *exclusion* of certain contexts and discourses of healing than with what can or should be included under its rubric.

PANEL MEMBER: That appears to be a very broad and sweeping statement, sir. What leads you to that conclusion?

INGWAZI SHIRLEY: Well, I would say that we would be hard put to define 'psychotherapy' in a postmodern world but by reference to the markers which define it as such. You certainly couldn't do it by referring to its content, for there are as many forms of 'psychotherapy' as there are conversations in contexts marked as 'psychotherapy' - by context markers such as institutions, certificates of qualification, textbooks, fees, and so on. 'Psychotherapy' is not as much a set of things that 'are therapeutic' as it is a *qualification of a conversations*, a stipulation of a relation between a conversation and a social context. And this qualification excludes certain conversations, not because they are not therapeutic, but because they do not qualify in terms of the set of qualifiers - certifications, affiliations, etcetera.

An aspect of the manner in which we assert and maintain a relationship between the heterogeneous set of practices we qualify as 'psychotherapy' and the social institutions which define this set as such, *is constituted through our way of talking about those conversations*. It has its own form of professional community theatre called 'theory'. We perform conversations about psychotherapy in Aristotelian logical format, using classification and concept to explicate its nature and process, as if there were a 'thing' to

describe. We attempt to approximate literal denotive language in these performances - even, ironically, as we talk about the role of metaphor in theory and in therapy.¹³⁶

Now certain contemporary philosophers and literary theorists call the exclusive belief in literalistic, analytico-referential reason alone '*logocentrism*'.¹³⁷ If you open any professional journal you will see that this 'reasonable', logocentric, style is the norm.

So the word '*psychotherapy*', apart from connoting official professional affiliations, also establishes a *political* boundary around the *officially admissible logocentric performance of the professional community*.

We also know that *many interactions not officially labelled 'psychotherapy' yet are healing* - from our own lives and even from the academic literature... indeed, there are organised traditions of healing in other cultures which seem to be effective.¹³⁸ And the official Western ethnomedical style of talking about healing is not at *all* the only possible style for talking about healing. For in other healing traditions, the discussion of healing heartily embraces both *logos* - or denotive reason - and *muthos*, or the evocative symbolic order - anecdote, metaphor, mythology, synchronicity, omens

¹³⁶ Didactic discussion of the evocative is characteristic of almost every article on metaphor ever published in the psychological literature - for a few recent examples, see Ettin (1994), Pare (1996), and Ingram (1994). The pursuit of the literal is central to psychology within an analytico-referential ethos.

¹³⁷ Arieti (1976) undertakes an explication of Aristotelian logic - the crux of logocentrism - as well as alternative logical or semantic strategies. It is interesting to contrast the logocentric approach with the notion that imagination is an avenue to knowledge, as propounded by philosophers such as Schopenhauer and Hegel - a notion which was influential in Romanticism via the work of Schelling (Flew, 1979). This notion is echoed more recently by authors in psychology such as Reid (1988) and Hillman (1977). Clearly, though, the type of knowledge issuing from logocentric discourse is distinct from that issuing from poetic discourse.

¹³⁸ Authors such as Csordas (1985), Favret-Saada (1989), Field (1990), Hajal (1987), Koss (1986), Lex (1975-6), Neki Joinet, Ndosi, Kilonzo, Hauli, and Duvinage (1986), Shaara and Strathen (1992) and Sheldon (1982); and all draw attention to the healing which can and does flow from healing performed and conceptualised outside the psychotherapeutic traditions. What is rather interesting is that a review of the pertinent literature reveals that psychology has apparently done very little to try to learn from its counterparts from other ethnic groups.

and dreams.^{139,140,141} This is a different *logic*, if you will, which does not try to reduce all knowledge to logocentric expression, or does not even distinguish between *logos* and *muthos*.

So, as far as the metapsychology of 'psychotherapy' is concerned, we see a nexus of interrelated constructions and *constructions of methods of construction* in a social context, all of which give a particular character to the endeavour and to its reflection in narrative. To phrase it another way, psychotherapy is not a *ding an sich* - it is constituted through its logocentric ritual performances.

PANEL MEMBER: I see you have rather pronounced postmodern leanings. So you are saying that to call a particular conversation 'psychotherapy' is to assert its belonging to what our anthropological colleagues might call a 'culture' - *apropos* Paré?¹⁴² And that this academic culture prohibits the use of metaphors not of a certain 'scientific' style?

INGWAZI Yes, exactly. It is in the decontextualised reification of 'psychotherapy'

¹³⁹ Where *logos* is constituted through Aristotelian categorical logic, based on the identification of the (presumably) essential properties of predicates, *muthos* is constituted via what Arieti (1976) would call *paleologic* - the predication of relationship or identity based on 'accidental' or peripheral likenesses between predicates. (For a *logical* review of the semiotics of figurative speech, metaphor, *muthos* or *paleologic* - as contrasted with the semiotics of *logos*, see Eco (1985). Eco also provides fascinating metaphorical *evocations* of *paleologic* in his novels, as in *The Island of the Day Before* (Eco, 1996). Paul Ricoeur, prominent twentieth century philosopher and proponent of a 'critical hermeneutics' as an analytic approach and philosophical framework, has addressed the relationship of *logos* and *muthos*, and comes to the conclusion that both in genuine reason (*logos*) and in genuine myth (*muthos*) we find a concern for the general emancipation of man (Kearney, 1991, p. 70). Ricoeur also states that the dominance of *muthos* by *logos* leads inexorably towards the 'positivistic impoverishment' of culture, and hence argues the need for a discourse embracing a hermeneutics of both of these logical orders. I would argue that such 'positivistic impoverishment' is already characteristic of the family therapy literature, by (ironic) virtue of its logocentrism, although I do acknowledge that there are exceptions in other domains of the discourse, as seen for instance in Milton Erickson's metaphorical-evocative teaching style (Erickson & Rossi, 1979).

¹⁴⁰ Logocentric discourse is analogous - although not identical - to the possibly more familiar notion of dominant brain hemisphere functioning - so called left-brain processing, where *muthos* would tend to involve non-dominant hemisphere processing (Danesi, 1982; Zdenek, 1988).

¹⁴¹ My own experience in receiving shamanic instruction is the basis for the contention that it occurs in the domain of *muthos*. I am certainly not alone in this: Larsen (1988) elaborates around this in great detail, postulating a 'mythic imagination' to which the shaman has access. Grim (1983) develops a model of shamanic initiation which is pervaded by *muthos*, and Mindell's (1993) work in what he calls 'process oriented psychology' builds to an extent on his experience with shamans in Africa, proposing methods for nurturing the mythopoeic ability and applying it in therapeutic and problem-solving settings. Indeed, the entire Castaneda-Don Juan series is pervaded by the theme of Castaneda's wrestling with his rationality, attempting to discover *muthos* in his stubbornly literalistic relation to the world (Castaneda, 1972; 1976; 1977; 1981; 1988; 1993).

¹⁴² Paré (1996) contends that 'culture' is a better metaphor for the family than 'system' in that the notion draws attention to the localised nature of meaning making practices and institutions that are shared by specific groups - or, as others would have it, to their epistemology. Culture, in this view, is the context which permeates meaning and in which meaning is created.

SHIRLEY: that we create the political and analogical boundaries around the construct, and define the rituals which perpetuate it. And in so doing we limit the ambit of its potential knowledge.

PANEL: We limit knowledge - that is an intriguing claim. Hmm... let us examine it
MEMBER: in two stages.

First, postmodernism has made us painfully aware that in the world of social discourse, where there is no Archimedes point for the levers of logic, no language can claim absolute ascendancy. Therefore, one begins to ask on what basis the idiom of a professional conversation could be delimited, not so?

INGWAZI: That is *precisely* the question which I have been grappling with for years.

SHIRLEY: Does the professional community have to serve as a 'trope police' to ensure the figurative and stylistic purity of the discourse of 'psychotherapy'? I don't believe it is the only option.

I suggest that this metapsychological position reminds us that 'psychotherapy' is a Western ethnomedical phenomenon, *not a cultureless absolute*. And hence its descriptive conventions are cultural artefacts of the Western academic discourse. I can't stress this enough. And the conclusion one moves towards is that poetry is a permissible, no, a *necessary* language...

PANEL: Okay. You are suggesting that poetry can tell us something that literal

MEMBER: language can't. This is actually quite well established in literary theory and the philosophy of language. There *is* an epistemology of metaphor... I don't think we should pursue this at the philosophical level now.¹⁴³ Let

¹⁴³ I have considered the epistemology of metaphor previously, and do not intend to launch into an explication here (Shirley, 1988). Serious considerations of this may be found in the work of Ricouer (1978), MacCormack (1985), and Pollio, Barlow, Fine, and Pollio (1977).

us return to our investigation of your proposition that *logos* limits knowledge in psychotherapy. What are the implications for therapeutic practice?

INGWAZI Well, if we can't point at 'psychotherapy' except by defining the context as
SHIRLEY: such, then it follows that we certainly can't specify what should happen within its ambit, beyond certain ethical guidelines and broad general hopes that personal narratives should change within it.¹⁴⁴

And if we can't logically specify what should happen within it, or even how we should talk about it, then it seems we're dealing with a process that is *nothing* like science - and incidentally, something which bears no relation to *any* branch of engineering.¹⁴⁵

So, while we can no longer ask how to do therapy with any certainty that we will get a literal answer, we can perhaps ask, following Wittgenstein, what kind of language game therapy may be.¹⁴⁶

Now I would say that modernist, structuralist metaphors for psychotherapy - like those, for example, of Haley, give rise to a conception of therapy as a logocentric language game.¹⁴⁷ And playing this game, therapy assumes the form of a prescriptive, proscriptive allegorization, successful insofar as it is evocative of adaptive behaviour defined by the ideologies implicit in theory. 'Psychotherapy' becomes a possibly benign,

¹⁴⁴ 'Narrative' has come into vogue as a root metaphor for the hermeneutics of family therapy. Considerations of the narrative perspective are found in Goncalves (1994); Anderson and Goolishian (1995); White and Epston (1990) and Paré (1996), while Focht and Beardslee (1996) and Larner (1996) provide clinical examples. I adopt the narrative metaphor here, conscious that it is a metaphor and believing along with authors such as these that it is a 'good' metaphor for throwing light on human affairs.

¹⁴⁵ This is not to say that meaning cannot be manipulated... it can - rhetoric is the study of this art. I do not propose that psychology should be considered a branch of rhetoric because of the problematic power dynamics that this approach creates - the therapist remains the expert agent of society. I prefer a more emancipatory approach.

¹⁴⁶ Thompson (1981) reviews Wittgenstein's notion of the 'language game', which proposes that there is an analogy between the rules governing games, in terms of which acts come to signify and are constrained, and the rules implicitly governing interactional, and hence linguistic, settings. (Wittgenstein took the study of these rules to be the proper object of philosophy. Thompson accordingly characterises Wittgenstein's thought as 'hermeneutic', concerned as it is with interpretation and explication of language games.)

¹⁴⁷ Haley (1963, 1976, 1980). (*Inter alia*.)

certainly totalitarian social engineering project.

In this kind of language game, the Master Narrative, the Patriarch of Theory and its entailments,¹⁴⁸ condemns the therapeutic performance to the menial status of a morality play, the allegorical voice of a patronising God plodding circuitously but steadily towards an explicit moral, expressed in normative adjustment, family structure, interactional style, and a depersonalised, nominalised, homogenised wasteland of the imagination.¹⁴⁹ For the game is an *interpretative* one, from the therapist's point of view. But it is not interpretation in relation to a truth - it is merely interpretation in terms of slowly dying second hand metaphor.

On the other hand, I would say that a postmodern praxis *suggests an enactment of muthos, a reciprocal poiesis, evocative conversation* where we don't attempt to fix meaning, to denote, programme, or manipulate.¹⁵⁰ It implies a humble, receptive engagement in full and naked sight of everyone's subjectivity. The game is creative, spontaneous, respectful.

In this kind of conversation theory plays a different role - it is framed as source of metaphor and nothing more. And, looping back to my earlier comments about our logocentrism, I believe that if one sees theory in this light, the ritual performances with the therapeutic community *about* the therapeutic performance, could be modified to be congruent - creative, feeling, poetic. Why not acknowledge evocation at all levels of the

¹⁴⁸ The notion of a metaphorical entailment is encountered in Lakoff's and Johnson's work, who postulate that certain 'root' metaphors, which propose an identity between two ideas, give rise to 'entailed' metaphors which derive from the same analogy - for instance, the root metaphor of 'up is better' will give rise to formulations of success as 'climbing the ladder', etcetera (Lakoff, 1990; Lakoff & Johnson, 1983). Paré (1996), who has not got his bibliography correct as far as this reference is concerned, touches on this theme, noting the mechanistic metaphors that were derived from the 'family as system' root metaphor.

¹⁴⁹ Bateson suggests that allegory is "...at best a distasteful sort of art..." (Bateson, (1967/1973, p.108)). Bateson suggests that as allegory is always designed to convey an explicit conscious meaning, it always serves an ideological purpose. In evaluating the function of myth in society, Ricoeur (in Kearney, (1991)) proposes that one of the important functions of philosophical analysis is to perform a hermeneutics of myth, and to demythologise ideological absolutes, with a view to emancipating humanity from bigotry arising from unquestioned myth. This is the precisely the function that feminist critiques of family theory, for instance, perform - they deconstruct the ideological underpinnings of the mythopoeia of theory (Hoffman, 1990b; Luepenitz, 1988).

¹⁵⁰ There is clearly a resonance between this view and the 'not-knowing' view of Anderson and Goolishian (1995).

discourse? The heart of what we do is metaphoric.

PANEL So in your opinion, that which is therapeutic involves the evocation of new
MEMBER: meaning, in interaction which subscribes to no master-narrative? A
conversational art? And that we are a community of artists who have been
blinded by science?

INGWAZI Something like that, yes.¹⁵¹

SHIRLEY:

PANEL A rather radical stance, but not without some precedent...¹⁵² [*Musing...*]

MEMBER: All forms of literature and healing evoke reconstrual, and reconstrual at
the epistemological level, and social epistemology is itself metaphoric...
[*Directly.*] Do you then propose then that the qualification of certain
conversations as 'psychotherapy', and its institutions, have no function?

INGWAZI No. There are ethical implications of enormous importance, and
SHIRLEY: obviously social and economic implications which are part and parcel of a
capitalist system.

What I am primarily interested in, though, is the 'price' of the form of
qualification we practice. The 'opportunity cost', to continue in the
commercial metaphor, of the dominance of logocentrism over poetic
evocation or myth-making.

¹⁵¹ Goncalves (1994) proposes that 'existential meaning' in therapy is of more significance than epistemological truth, and that *narrative*, in which existential meaning is construed, is an ideal root metaphor for existence. Author Milan Kundera's explores the theme that the experience of life is constituted around a *grund*, a basic metaphor which serves to organise their narrative (Kundera, 1992). In terms of existential meaning, metaphor is the order of the day. We construe via metaphoric processes, and we construe our construal in metaphoric terms. We punctuate and organise our narratives metaphorically. So, it may well be that understanding narrative as existentially meaningful *grund*, metaphorical and mythical rather than linear in nature, is a fruitful view of personal epistemology - in which case we will ironically have rediscovered psychoanalysis.

¹⁵² There is resonance between these ideas and those of certain authors questioning the role of theory in guiding clinical practice (Amundson, 1996; Miller, Hubble & Duncan, 1995). Various authors have similarly proposed that theory is metaphor - for example Paré (1996), Carvalho (1991) and Gergen (1991). This view has been well established in the philosophy of science for some time, and is examined by Boyd (1979), Kuhn (1979) and, with particular reference to social science, by Simons (1981) who proposes that in social science theory-constitutive metaphors are the norm, while in natural science, metaphors serve mainly an exegetic purpose.

For logocentric thinking obscures intuition... the immediate perception which is the source of creativity, perhaps the most fundamental possible apperceptions regarding relationship and wholeness in ecologies.¹⁵³ And so the price of technique is the art of the soul.

PANEL I'm interested in how you construe a relationship between intuition and
MEMBER: the psychotherapeutic situation.

INGWAZI Well, I would describe intuition as a form of perception that is personal,
SHIRLEY: spontaneous and ungrounded in any abstraction - it is not the result of
conscious interpretation. It 'comes' to us in subtle mixtures of feelings,
images, senses of atmospheres... it is a subjective response unmediated by
conscious cognition. And these sensations can be translated and
expressed by means of verbal images, metaphors, myths, artworks, music,
dance, and so forth.

And intuition and its expression is not arbitrary. Jung described intuition as a form of perception which gives a certain light on things which are otherwise obscure... it enables us in part to 'see' the unseen.¹⁵⁴ He also put forward the idea that intuition is a cognitive form concerned primarily with the symbolic realm - *muthos* - and with deep patterns in the symbolic aspects of construed reality - or as you and I might say, 'personal narratives' - not merely in linear text, but in a 'mythical mode',

¹⁵³ Various authors have explicitly raised the point that theory hinders intuitive and immediate perception (Arieti, 1976; Carvalho, 1991; Confer, 1987; Domash, 1981; Whitaker, 1976). Bateson (1967/1973) indeed makes the point that "...it is certain that the partial truths of consciousness will be in aggregate, a distortion of the truth of some larger whole..." (p.117) since consciousness is selective. He further makes the point that "...mere purposive rationality unaided by such phenomena as art, religion, dream, and the like is necessarily pathogenic and destructive of life; and that this 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..." (p.119). According to Bateson, art [*muthos*] has a function in maintaining wisdom, i.e. a view of the circuitry of life and hence a correction of the purposive imperative. It is interesting that Bateson herein proposes an evolutionary epistemology for aesthetics that is anything but solipsistic - the subjectivity of aesthetic experience and artistic expression has an ecological function in this view and is framed as a deeper wisdom that contextualises and calibrates objectivity. This is indeed one of the central themes of "The Aesthetics of Change" and Keeney's and Sprenkle's work on aesthetics in family therapy. (Keeney, (1982a, 1983); Keeney & Sprenkle, 1982). Why then limit the domain of professional performance to 'mere purposive rationality'? It is particularly remarkable that we are so logocentric a professional community when 100% of family therapists participating in a fairly recent survey were shown to use therapeutic metaphor - to actively participate in *muthos* (Bryant, Katz, Becvar & Becvar, 1988).

¹⁵⁴ Ross (1992).

represented in idiosyncratic images, metaphors, metonymies.¹⁵⁵ So intuition is a relational cognition, a kind of preconscious communication which allows us to apprehend the world of another person at a profoundly empathic level.¹⁵⁶ And he in fact described intuition as reflecting patterns of relationship and possibility¹⁵⁷ - so if we are successful and can express these apprehensions, we bring a voice to silent aspects of the construction of experience, we shed new light on the construal of relatedness, and so the narrative, even the personal master narrative, is retold and moves onward. As in art, so in therapy.

PANEL MEMBER: This is very interesting indeed... by attending to intuition, through some sort of unconscious communicative process, we could tune in deeply to the narratives of the other... narratives at a preconceptual level - the unconscious texts, the parataxic world Sullivan spoke about...¹⁵⁸

INGWAZI SHIRLEY: The contrast between the syntax of logic and the parataxic world of the unconscious is interesting. Where rational thought constructs life through adhering to syntax, intuition is construction via parataxic processes - a product of a sort of preconscious hermeneutics.

And I am not alone in the supposition that intuition is a valuable resource in therapy.

Lynn² Hoffman, the prominent family therapy metatheorist, comments that 'too much consciousness' is potentially inhibiting in the therapy situation, which is inherently a situation in which rationality has failed.¹⁵⁹ And over and above that, various clinicians, in more or less the same vein, have elaborated on the intuitive possibility in therapy...

¹⁵⁵ Ross (1992, p. 251). Footnote 27 above refers.

¹⁵⁶ There is a body of literature on the empathic dimension of intuition - for particularly evocative instances, see Domash (1981) and Todres (1990), as well as Grossman (1996).

¹⁵⁷ Ross (1992).

¹⁵⁸ Carson (1969); Sullivan (1953).

¹⁵⁹ Hoffman, (1990a).

For example, Whitaker, who speaks of 'shaman-like primary process' as the therapist's most useful mode of engaging.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, Mair speaks of therapy in the 'intermediary mode' - basically an intuitive, engaged, spontaneous stance.¹⁶¹ Various authors address the issue from a psychodynamic perspective, seeking to elucidate the cognitive processes associated with intuitive communication.¹⁶² Phenomenologist Todres even describes a 'holistic, pre-verbal sense' that allows us to recognise whether a verbal description 'fits' or not.¹⁶³ And there are many others who employ the concept intuition 'intuitively' in order to describe the attributes of the 'effective' therapist.¹⁶⁴

PANEL So to work in the intuitive domain would possibly be to 'play' metaphorically with very fundamental, preconscious orders of description of relatedness - subtexts to more conscious narratives.

INGWAZI Yes, I believe so. One author even suggests that inspired creative activity is in itself healing - perhaps the mere bringing into consciousness of the intuitive emancipates one's narrative.¹⁶⁵ And in this lies one possible link to shamanism, for I have no doubt that shamanism has to do with gaining access to orders of perception of relatedness via intuitive processes. I can vouch for this from my own experience, but there is also copious literature on it.¹⁶⁶

PANEL So you are saying that one of the processes of healing whereby

¹⁶⁰ Whitaker (1976).

¹⁶¹ Mair (1989).

¹⁶² Carvalho (1991); Domash (1981); Feinstein (1990); Fields (1985); Grusky (1987); Halgrimsson (1994); Woods (1995).

¹⁶³ Todres (1990).

¹⁶⁴ Eisengart and Faiver (1996); Finkel (1990); Sandell (1991).

¹⁶⁵ In an interesting review, Rosen (1977) considers the parallels between the life of the shaman and the psychiatrist, and suggests that in both instances, personal healing can be derived from inspired creativity emerging from beyond the ego, i.e. the domain of purposive thought.

¹⁶⁶ For experiential reports of the phenomenon of increasing intuitive perceptual ability through shamanic instruction, see for example Villoldo and Jendresen (1995a; 1995b); Arden (1996); Whitaker (1991). For more analytical considerations, the work of Grim (1983), Larsen (1988), Walsh (1990) and Kalweit (1992) is representative. Mindell (1993) proposes a series of exercises to develop these faculties. Halifax's chapter "Seeing in a sacred way" contains beautiful evocations of the vision of the unified cosmos, *apropos* various shamans and healers (Halifax, 1991, pp. 93-126).

MEMBER: shamanism operates is through the intuitive reauthoring of the texts of relatedness, as it were. A very, very interesting notion.

But I'm also a little surprised - it sounds more concrete that I would have expected from you, given what you have implied about the spiritual worlds... and you are proposing a master narrative here, which gives you the right to translate one frame into another... this all seems contradictory.

INGWAZI This is a logocentric, analytico-referential conversation we are performing. What I'm trying to do is to evoke the possibility of a common ground. My intuition, my common sense tells me that my giving testimony to the spirit world would not 'fit' here - such a performance would not be logocentric at all. What I *have* seen and what I *will* say is that intuition is only the thin end of the wedge - telepathy exists, which is intuition beyond mechanism, and there are all sorts of other phenomena, discussion of which this logocentric display precludes.

Did you know for instance that a volume was published in which the telepathic experiences of Freud and other serious analysts were reviewed?¹⁶⁷ No consideration of the therapeutic potential of these experiences was attempted,¹⁶⁸ however, and the volume seems to have disappeared into obscurity - I would suggest because it didn't fit within neat, sanitised, homogenised analytico-referential thought. I find this fascinating - it was one of those anomalies that the mechanistic conception of the universe couldn't accommodate, so it was ignored.

¹⁶⁷ Devereux (1953).

¹⁶⁸ Field (1992). Mayer (1996) calls for serious consideration of these sorts of phenomena, suggesting that they merit attention even though they fall outside the ambit of conventionally defined mental capacities and phenomena, while in a surprising pair of articles, Reed, (1996a,b) presents research evidence for 'telepathic' communication!

PANEL - So you are suggesting that intuition relies on thought processes which
MEMBER: partake of realities which our conceptual thought patently excludes and prevents us from apprehending - that it is the very nature of the thought we bring to bear in analysis that prevents us from having access to these experiences?

INGWAZI More or less, yes.

SHIRLEY:

Consider how context shapes and channels creativity and the inspirational processes which underpin it.¹⁶⁹ And consider the varying degrees of difficulty different people have in accessing 'endoceptual' material - the vague feelings and impressions that underlie intuition - depending on habitual modes of thought, temperamental variables¹⁷⁰, and even the degree of their self-consciousness.¹⁷¹ Intuition is a very delicate phenomenon - enhanced by certain things and inhibited by others. And logocentrism is its antithesis, perhaps even its Nemesis.

And in case you think I am very far out on a limb, I shall invoke a rhetorical device to enhance the credibility of what I am saying: I am not the only one reaching these conclusions.

¹⁶⁹ Ludwig (1992) considers the contextual influences on creativity, coming to the conclusion that culture is a very significant determinant of creative expression.

¹⁷⁰ Arieti (1976) coined the term *endocept*, while Domash (1981) elaborates on it, utilising the construct to describe intuitive communicative processes.

¹⁷¹ Bose (1992) considers the effects of self-consciousness in the therapist, and concludes that it inhibits contact with spontaneous emotionality. My own experience confirms this, and my sangoma training augments the proposition: access to intuitive material is inhibited by conscious effort or self-conscious affect.

Physicist Fritjof Capra briefly reviews an emergent school of thought which holds that 'dominator systems' of thought, expressed for instance in patriarchy, imperialism, and capitalism, are fundamentally anti-ecological.¹⁷² This perspective, *ecofeminism*, holds that these systems of thought are male-oriented, and that female experiential knowledge is more ecological, more richly linked to nature, but that it has been oppressed by dominator-system thought.

In similar vein, Camille Paglia, an iconoclast feminist, develops this theme through the evocative metaphors of *Sexual Personae*, putting forward the idea that a female orientation to the world, characterised *inter alia* by intuition, embraces relationship to nature, where male thought seeks to transcend it.¹⁷³

Capra is at pains to develop the idea of 'deep ecology', a view which emphasises the profound relationship of mind and nature, the spiritual unity of self and nature. Such a view is inherently not a dominator system for it does not construe of existence as a competition with a winner. Non-western societies the world over hold ecological views of this sort,¹⁷⁴ as do mystics, even in the Christian tradition.¹⁷⁵ Is it possible that it is partially through conceptual thought that we have lost our ability to apprehend such connectedness? Keeney once said that language is an epistemological knife with which we dice up the world.¹⁷⁶ And logocentric thought tends to slice us off from the ecology too, where intuition tends to reconnect us, for where intuition blurs the boundary of the experiencing 'I' and allows the ecology to resonate within the self,

¹⁷² Capra (1996).

¹⁷³ Paglia (1991).

¹⁷⁴ Buhrmann (1986); Hajal (1987); Hammond-Tooke (1989); Katz (1982). These authors deal with the non-dualistic views of ecology prevalent in traditional societies. Where mechanistic materialism would previously have allowed such views to be dismissed as primitive, it seems that physics and biology are rediscovering the inherent unity of ecology in the latter 20th century (Bohm, 1983; Capra, 1996; Sheldrake & Fox, 1997).

¹⁷⁵ Sheldrake & Fox, (1997).

¹⁷⁶ Keeney (1983).

logocentric thought always maintains sharp subject-object distinctions.

Intuition is the semiotic of the eco-self and deep ecology. Which brings us back to Bateson and the 'ecology of mind' - this metaphor is not an empty abstraction. The nature of ecology is semiotic - and not just conscious abstract semiotics.¹⁷⁷

So I suppose I would say that it isn't just the nature of the thought that excludes us. It is the logocentric subject-predicate state of consciousness. It really *is* a particular method of construing reality - and in accord with Gödel, one cannot get beyond the assumptions of a theorem from within the theorem - we are chained to the axioms of subject and predicate. Perception relies upon sets of axioms.¹⁷⁸ Logocentrism is one such set. Logocentric narrative creates a logocentric universe, in which subject-object fusion is impossible... or defined as impossible, or as mad, or as primitive.

PANEL MEMBER: The implications of this are staggering, assuming I allow myself to take it seriously for a moment.

INGWAZI SHIRLEY: Our *arrogance* is staggering. It is only our conviction in the correctness of our epistemology which obscures this. And that conviction comes from might, not right. If we can dominate and shape the world, how could we be wrong? But the shadows of our domination are upon us, as the earth gasps for breath...

But there is much to understand, much to be illuminated, much to rediscover. Like altered states of consciousness and how they might make us aware of these orders of connectedness and how to nurture the

¹⁷⁷ Mindell's (1982; 1993) 'dreambody' thesis and his process-oriented psychology provide articulate and beautiful evocations of the potential psychic experience of the interconnectedness of self and ecology.

¹⁷⁸ The famous theorem of Gödel is discussed in Watzlawick et al (1974).

consciousness that allows us this kind of perception.¹⁷⁹ And what the ontological implications might be, and what the nature of personal identity is. And so on... all I can see are questions, teeming like night shoals of fish, breaking the surface in the moonlight...

PANEL Well, thank you for that performance. There are many avenues to
MEMBER: pursue... but pragmatics intervenes. Our time seems to be up...

Subtext

Shirley leaves without ado, then the rest of the men stand. They smile mildly, make eye-contact and shake hands. A cleaner walks in. This little ecology evolves as it always does: one or two of panel greet her in a slightly embarrassed way - the rest of them avoid eye contact. She shuffles over to the wastebins and begins to empty them into a plastic bag.

We notice she is wearing the beads of a sangoma on her ankles and wrists.

¹⁷⁹ This is the domain of transpersonal psychology. There are methods of training in mystical and shamanic traditions which facilitate access to these orders of perception, as well as meditative techniques by now more familiar to Western audiences. Kelly, (1996) for instance sees intuition as an aspect of adaptive psychic functioning which can be enhanced by meditative practice - which incidentally inherently involves transcending purposive, logocentric inner dialogue. Creative thinking techniques may also be of some use (Zdenek, 1988). Footnote 32 above refers.

CHAPTER 10

THERAPY - AN EVOCATION

Introduction

The week I was finishing writing this thesis, I was wondering how I would conclude. What cases would I report on? I have reams of case notes, hours and hours of tape.

Then I saw a couple in the middle of the week and on reflection felt that what had happened exemplifies my 'method' these days. I simply sit, I listen, I try to hear and see. And incidentally, I don't have a theory of premarital counselling or a theory of autonomy.

Apart from the background to the session, I have tried to describe this case such that *the stream of consciousness of my engagement* is reflected. Much more can no doubt be made of the content retrospectively, but I've tried as far as possible to reflect only 'live' meaning-making, as that *was* the therapy, interspersing this account with some highly selective retrospective comments on my style. I haven't adopted a didactic style of reporting, as I am trying to *evoke a sense* of what I now do, in postmodern ethnographic fashion, rather than to define it in 'factual' fashion.

Jan and Alet

Jan first came to see me about a year ago. I saw him for about 8 months, during which time he resolved some of his main concerns. I met Alet when she accompanied him to his last session. Soon after, he went to England on a work assignment, and she remained here, apart from a holiday

with him during which they decided to marry. Jan came to see me last week for the first time since his return from the UK three months ago, and he had discussed certain concerns regarding the marriage. They have come together tonight to talk about some of the issues the impending marriage has raised. It is now Wednesday; the wedding is scheduled for Saturday.

Jan and Alet arrive slightly late for their appointment. I greet them warmly, usher them into my room, pour tea while making sundry small talk. It is apparent that Jan is not as forthcoming as he has usually been. He refuses my offer of tea for the first time. No tea, serious stuff tonight, perhaps?

I sit, face them, awareness gathering.

Alet has picked up the guitar standing in the consulting room, and as if in offering picks a few bars of a piece called 'Romance'. She is not technically skilful, yet she plays with feeling. I listen intently, trying to hear what she wants to tease from her fingers and the strings. Then she stops abruptly, hands the guitar to Jan to put down, muttering something. Too brief, too elusive to have been heard. Jan puts the guitar down without saying anything.

"How are you?", I ask, aware of him.

"Pretty shit", he replies, looking away. He seems tired and distant, invisible tears in his eyes. Alet looks down, away. She also seems sad. Interrupted romance.

I feel anxious about the possibility that their relationship is dissolving on the eve of the wedding. Is it their anxiety that I resonate with, unconsciously? There is a heavy air of avoidance over the room. "We can't talk" is what they don't say. Everything is too fragile. I wait, despite the fact that it feels a little awkward.

In the past I might have tried to adopt an active, theorising, investigative interventive-engineering approach. This action through inaction feels right for me.

Alet offers that Jan has said some things to her, and she has things she needs to talk about. (I fear that she has been bullied by Jan, who is quite an imposing presence.) She smiles at me. She has a small, expressive mouth, quite full lips, a girlish hint of sensuality, her lovely, clear green eyes sad now. Long intertwined pythons of legs, emerging from her mini skirt and occupying the room, are difficult to ignore. Should I have ignored them, wrestling with my sense of therapeutic propriety? What were they saying?

While doing nothing I attend to my feelings and allow my curiosity free rein. Whether or not I act on these feelings is still a matter of intuition. I notice things and park them in the back of my awareness. Writing this up I realise that Alet's legs resonate with other issues in the relationship. They too signify, and don't simply seduce.

The conversation shifts again to K. He says he feels helpless, frustrated. If marriage cannot be a mutually growing thing, what is it, he asks. He is dwarfed by what he sees - his frustration, his powerlessness to change her, his powerlessness to change himself. Anger, against the grain of his love, desire, fondness, considerateness. Doesn't want to berate her for the things he doesn't like. When he recounts seeing her leave fruit in a bowl until it began to decompose, waiting for her to do something, he finds his anger disjunct, intense. How can this blight be in our beautiful space? How can you not see it? Whose space will our shared space be? Will it be fairly decided? These are not conscious questions: rather they are subtextual themes of concern. Then having expressed resentment, having it named, Jan backtracks as if hounds of guilt bar his way. The protestations of her wonderfulness that he uses to nullify the danger of his resentment are not just about her, and seem a little insipid. He smiles wanly as he completes his self-denial. And the glimmer of tears as he sinks into the cupboard that he stares at, silent now, are a voice for his sad helplessness.

What voice is it that is not allowed here, we muse together, and he stands in his helplessness, poised between the silence of his resentment and the orchestra of

his professed feelings for her. It is as if he believes that he will have to sacrifice the voice of his resentment to make the marriage work, and yet also needs to have a say in what happens in their shared realm. Guilt too is named here, the one who brings silence.

Alet herself is silent. Until she interjects vigorously. "A-haaa." Subtext says 'gotcha!'. "Resentment!" Naming her suspicion. Delicate process here. How to give voice to silence without brutality? Either way. Surprised by her forcefulness. Want to protect K, the taste of his honestly good intentions lingering.

Yet I am resolved to honour this ceremony of naming. Zanshin, awareness - do nothing... And so I wait to become aware of how the feelings, their silences and their naming form a virtual space called relationship. My words have dropped, will drop like beads of water, rain in their silence, evocations of that space that is their world together. I watch what flowers grow from my words, not right, not wrong, not definitions but merely evocations, senses blooming differently between us all, like kaleidoscopic flower-mirages.

My entire stance and set of concerns are concerned with hearing the said and unsaid. Intuition is the doorway to the subtexts.

She turns to me. "I have been so afraid that Jan would be resentful about the income. I haven't had a good month at the shop. January won't be good either." She says he wants to live extravagantly and apparently, she has become an unequal partner in this set of meanings. His financial dominance has become too great...

Jan and I muse over the possibility that he may be afraid that he may not have the resources to provide what he may need to in the marriage. He is afraid of her being dependent on him. Jan comes clean and agrees that in fact he has become resentful, also to his dismay. Process landmark, I think. Dangerous, though, too. He says that he wants her to be more dynamic in running her shop - do marketing, push up sales volumes, make things more equitable. Very

aggressive business strategy, real corporate stuff. He is a senior project manager for a software engineering house, and it shows in this moment.

An image of her comes to me as he speaks marketing, dynamism. In the corner of my eye, she, with wispy ballet-dancer hands, out of keeping with assertiveness of legs, is holding the shop as if it were a rose. Looking with wistfulness at the shop under the onslaught of his strategy.

Refocus on her. Does the shop mean something different to you, to what it means to K? Not as a mallet for pounding money out of the world, but as an expression of something very intimate? Disjunction in meaning frames here? Are you faced with the threat of some loss? Somatic sense in me of loss, sadness.

This image of Alet holding the shop-rose is a perfect example of a spontaneous metaphoric image that contains much information - in this case, about how she actually does see the shop, the psychic function of the shop for her.

Yes... I get the feeling she is hugely relieved to be heard... but it's not only that, she continues. And this then elaborates into a conversation about her 'autonomy' - an idea in a recursive arc of mind which includes her shop.

And so autonomy and change in autonomy becomes a topic. The impending wedding makes them wonder about boundaries and space, about how they will accommodate to living with each other. What silences will have to be named, what will be lost and gained in naming.

And it begins to seem that the current difficulties are framed by a sort of unconscious premarital negotiation regarding autonomy, and interdependency, a wise set of issues to explore before being married.

And they leave knowing that marriage also involves the difficult work of expanding their shared narrative to include unknown aspects of each other, and unspoken aspects of themselves, where there will be other silences, other voices,

other difficulties. And that they have some means of coping. It is not a fairy tale, but it could become a good, human, shared space. They smile at me, agree together to come back sometime after the wedding. Jan touches Alet's shoulder outside my front door, and then the last thing I see is their headlights disappearing.

Their fear of not being able to continue has dissipated. They are together again. The narrative frame within which they are together is less oppressive - less is excluded, and their being together is based less on the ideology of what it should be, more on the phenomenology of what is. One might argue that their interleaving of narratives, the double description that is their relationship, the way they weave the tapestry that is their ecology of mind has been irrevocably changed. What will the consequences be? Who knows?

Initial Therapeutic Issues Revisited

At the beginning of this project I discovered that my epistemology for therapy was governed by two main assumptions, as I detailed in chapter two above. The above session highlights the manner in which my assumptions have changed through the process described in this document.

Assumption 1: An Epistemology for Diagnosis

I no longer diagnose and then intervene. The process of making sense together is both diagnosis and intervention. As far as epistemology goes, I am content to attend to the local organisation of mental ecology, predicated on metaphoric grounds. There is no literal specification of 'autonomy in marriage', and if there were it would make no difference, as we are not working with anything other than conscious and unconscious patterns of meaning making.

Intuition and rationality both figure in how I come to 'understand' what is happening. 'Epistemic' access is both mythopoeic and rational. Quotation marks indicate the local, constructed nature of this process.

Assumption 2: An Epistemology for Therapeutic Intervention

The foregoing comments apply again. 'Understanding' narratives and they ecology they constitute *is* intervention. There is no 'thing in the bushes'.

And intervention is also both rational and mythopoeic. It is only science that makes us imagine that the one is possible without the other.

Critical Peer Review

I haven't thought about a critical peer during therapy for ages.

Epilogue

The morning after the session recounted above, I awoke with a dream fresh in my awareness.

The final part of the dream sees me walking into a court. A scientist, an intellectual, is in the court, near the judge's bench. He and I laugh together warmly about a recent journey we have undertaken together, in which we all saw a shimmering, luminescent living being called Mother Earth way beneath us.

Once, he would have been the judge, attacking me. Now he shares a sense of magic. My professional problem, whatever it may have been about, has dissolved.

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