The Passionate Technique

Chapter four: Interviewing for a role (pp 56 – 77)

Antony Williams

> All the world's a stage
> And all the men and women merely players
> *As You Like it*

Morenian definitions of a role

Carl Whitaker maintains that 'Moreno was probably more clearly responsible for the move from individual therapy to the understanding of interpersonal components of psychological living than any other single psychiatrist in the field' (cited in Fox, 1987, p. vi). Moreno suggested that we were all actors on the stage of life, and at the same time he exposed our considerable stage phobia or one may say, life phobia. The idea of 'role' was central in Moreno's theory of personality. Roles were not masks or a kind of top-up to the core self, but actually constituted the self: 'Role playing is prior to the emergence of the self. Roles do not emerge from the self but the self emerges from roles (Moreno, 1964, p. 157). The word 'role' is therefore not opposed to the word 'real', or associated with masks or forms of insincerity. A role is the 'functioning form the individual assumes in the specific moment he reacts to a specific situation in which other persons or objects are involved' (Moreno, 1964, p. iv).

The choice is not between playing a role and not playing a role one has no choice in play-acting. The choice is only between one role and another. Bentley (1972) notes that the famous expression 'all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players' may have been derived from a motto in Latin on the wall of Shakespeare's own theatre, the Globe: *Totus mundus facit histrionem*. While Shakespeare popularised the expression, the concept of our playing roles in life is a good deal older, it seems. In Greek and Roman theatre, the parts for the actors were written on 'rolls' and read by the prompters to the actors. Like 'catharsis', 'tele', and protagonist, the notion of role is one of those difficult parts of Morenian terminology that he borrowed from Greek theatre to create a new language for psychiatry. Sometimes the technical psychodramatic use of terms, however, and their connotation to other contexts, tend to clash. 'Role' and 'protagonist' are terms from the theatre, but the theatre in this case is everyday life. 'Role' reinforces the idea that we are improvising actors, who can change the middle or end of any script that is handed to us.

From 1936, the start of his treatment centre at Beacon Hill, north of New York City, Moreno attempted to treat not only the individual sent for therapy, but members of the patient's social atom as well- the spouse, the parents, the organisation, the lover, the children. He himself believed that a role is completely enacted when the person comes into living contact with. We are actors, not from falsehood, but from truth; our truth becomes more manifest the more

we are in touch with our spontaneity if we persist with our old script when there is a chance for improvisation, we become rigid. The number of roles available to us becomes limited; our flexibility to adapt to a changed situation is restricted. Our personal system becomes closed, and probably the social systems within which we operate, such as our family, job, or circle of friends may also become closed.

Let us examine the elements in the Morenian definition of roles given earlier. Firstly, it is a functioning form, that is, an action or a position taken up-a way of being. Secondly, roles are developed in a specific moment: one's role relations, even to the same other person, therefore, are not permanent. Thirdly, they arise in reaction to a specific situation: that is, roles are determined by context. A person may take up the role of aggrieved husband at home, but he is unlikely to adopt that role on a soccer field. A woman may be a tough union rep at work, but may be a nurturing mother to her infant when she comes home. If people attempt fixedly to maintain a role from one context to another, they and those around them can experience considerable distress. Nurturing mother may not be an appropriate role state for someone negotiating a log of claims, and tough union rep may not always fit the mother-child interaction. Evidently the context and the time are highly significant in determining what an appropriate role should be. Finally, in Moreno's definition, 'other persons or objects are involved': that is, rotes imply an interaction between person and object, or person and person. Basil Fawlty beats his broken-down car with a branch; a father takes his daughter to the beach; a priest says Mass before a large congregation in each case, the role is a feature of an interaction.

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We are at our 'fullest' when living contact is made, when the 'I' playing the role feels that the other role is 'thou' and not 'it' one can see the influence of Martin Buber here, and in fact Buber was an early contribution to a little magazine that Moreno founded. When we are walled off from each other we still enact certain roles, of course, but they may be inappropriate, cutting us off from an adequate warm-up to ourselves and others.

Perceiving the other as it usually obscures important systemic information - feedback- which allows systems continually to adjust. We do need 'its' in our lives as well as 'thous' (otherwise we would become rapidly exhausted with the intensity of things simply by buying a bus ticket or walking through a city street) but too often the 'thous' that we do really need, and therefore the 'I-s' that we need, have become 'its', and our response to life is unnecessarily flattened and constrained.

Five components of a role

Psychodrama as therapy or as revelation aims to push back old boundaries and help people enter new territory. It operates by a kind of peripheral vision, enriching, distorting, and ultimately transforming what commonsense would otherwise present. The protagonist's unconscious processes are usually believed to be trustworthy, taking them to scenes that are relevant and allowing the production itself to leap ahead of analysis. But not always. Dramas can also be unhelpfully chaotic, or repetitively caught, or trivial and sentimentalising. The protagonist's spontaneity needs to be assisted by the director's skill and knowledge that is based on an analysis of protagonists' roles as they interact with relevant others.

Analysis of behaviour generally answers three questions:
1. What does the person believe?
2. What is the feeling state?
3. And what is actually said or done?

Such an analysis, however helpful, can still neglect the notion of role as being interactional. The systems view demands five rather than the traditional three components of a role in order to conduct an adequate role analysis. The components, actually implicit in Moreno's definition given at the start of this chapter are: context, behaviour, belief, feeling, and consequences. The three-part analysis tends to produce excessively intrapsychic and no-interactional understandings, whereas a five-part analysis leads directly into systemic thinking. Contextual, behavioural, belief, affective, and consequential aspects of a role are deduced by means of the enactment itself, and by means of the interview-in-role. Although the present section concentrates on the verbal interview, it must be kept in mind that the five components of a role often fall out 'naturally in the course of the production. The presentation of the five components via enactment rather than by interview will be frequently demonstrated in the reports of later dramas.

Context

It is said that Konrad Lorenz unwittingly attracted a curious crowd when he used to waddle through high grass and quack. His behaviour no doubt seemed weird to those who did not know that he was an ethologist imprinting himself on the ducklings who were following him. From this example it is plain that understanding the contexts of action implies making higher order distinctions than simple descriptions of action. For example, 'driving a car' is a higher order distinction than 'turning the steering wheel'; or 'a game of football' is a higher order distinction than 'kicking a piece of inflated leather'; or 'an exercise to learn about circular causality' is a higher order distinction than 'pushing a chair around a room' and then 'pushing a person around a room'. An examination of the contexts of action provides the link between a simple and otherwise unintelligible action and the social organisation that gives it meaning. As Bateson (1979) noted, the context reveals how the reactions of individuals to the reactions of other individuals are organised in time. Just as turning a wheel is given meaning by the higher order distinction of driving a car, so 'guilty person' is given meaning by describing a mother's interactions with her daughter, when a double description is produced.

Tracking the sequence of behaviour around a role provides a detailed environment for understanding all actions and interactions that go to co-create the role. Investigating the

context of a role implies an initial enquiry about what the other members of the social atom do and say when the protagonist is in a given scene. Such enquiry often reveals the coalition positions of the other members. For example: What does father do when mother runs to her room in tears? Have there been any events in the household recently which have been a bit unusual? are questions that help to establish the context of a role. Other leads that may be helpful in establishing context could be questions that refer to the family's developmental stage: mother might run to her room in tears because all her children have left home and she is now faced only with her husband for company for the next twenty-five years. If such is the case, then the text of mother's tears is crucial for understanding the role of the crying mother.

Directors who think consistently in systems terms can not only be more penetrating and efficient at getting to the heart of the family-construct system, but the work itself tends to be tighter, more efficient, and more dramatically satisfying. To save tedious role reversals, and to maintain a systems orientation, an overview of the main characters is requested. After the significant people have been identified, a 'gossiping in the presence of others' method can be used for the interview before the enactment. Gossiping asks one member in the family to comment on the relationship of another two. Let us suppose that the scene takes place in the family dining room when the protagonist is 15 years old. The director can ask:

D: What is happening in this scene?
P: There is a big family row because I came home late.
D: Who are you interacting with?
P: My father.
D: Who else is significant in this scene?
P: Grandmother, my father, my mother, and my brother Andrew.
D: What does your grandmother think of the relationship between your father and your mother?

The last question about the grandmother's estimate of relationship between father and mother is the gossiping question. This form of questioning also tends to keep the action neat, and if well timed does not cut across the protagonist's warm-up. In fact, preliminary contextual questions can help protagonists get on with the action, rather than having to continually go back to establish relevant detail. The action component can be spoilt both by too much initial verbal material, which leads to intellectualization and douses the warm-up, and too little, which results in the continual need to return to contextual explanation.

Directors do need to cover certain common elements in an interview for a role or a warm-up to a scene. The list presented below is not intended to be exhaustive or for that matter to be gone through every time. Sometimes only one or two details are sufficient to establish what is essential.

1. *Location in time: the year, how old the person is, the season, day, and time. What has just been happening to this person or in this family? Is this the first time there has been such an interaction?*
2. *Location in space: whether the scene is in the country or city, in a house or out of doors. What is the immediate environment? The director can induce a sort of 'action trance' by asking the protagonist such questions, so that the important*

> *objects need not always be established by direct questions but can emerge from the action and the production Itself:*
>> *Come up to this scene now. Go to the door. Close your eyes. What is the most important object in this scene? How does this object feel? How does it smell? You are only little: crouch down now and think of the scene from that level.*
> 3. *Awareness of self and other persons, in terms of size, stature, condition, ways of moving, and nicknames.*
> 4. *Identification of significant others and a review of role relations. What are the coalition alignments around the problem in the present? Who is most/least upset by the problem? Who feels most helpless, for example? To whom do they appeal when they feel helpless?*

Let us suppose that Dot is interviewing Penny with the intention of helping her notice some of the differences and changes in her life, especially when these took place, and who was around when they did take place. That is, she is looking for the *matrix of identity* of Penny's present roles.

D: So, you're six years old? What sort of little girl are you? Are you an active girl? Do you like to climb trees?
P: No, but I like to sit in the tree in our back garden where no-one can find me.
D: Mmmm. Who do you hide from most often?
P: My mommy and my brother. I like hearing them call out.
D: If someone did find you, who would you like it to be?
D: Jesus, 'cos he's my friend. He understands.
D: Does anyone in the family understand you nearly as well as Jesus?
P: My dad, but he's dead.
D: (Switching tack) How tall are you? Show me. Are you going to school? What are you wearing?
P: My check uniform because it's summer, and my brown shoes, and I've got a tartan schoolbag.
D: Have you! What's inside? Open it up and show me what's inside.

In this preliminary interview, Dot is attempting to create a sense of lived reality, and an appropriate 'regression', so that Penny's 6-year-old self is established. If this interview were being conducted in the context of a psychodrama, she would have established what Moreno calls the *locus nascendi*, the place where it all began, the environment, the space. She has also found that Penny hides 'most often' from her mother and her brother. She knows that Penny can talk to Jesus, her friend', and that Jesus may be a wisdom figure who could be useful later in the drama to give Penny advice, perhaps, or to support her. The most understanding family member is her father, who is dead. She stores that information away, too. It is likely to become a major theme that provides the true context for Penny's hiding.

The therapeutic questions can follow these practical and earthy details. For example, Dot might follow up on Penny's spontaneous mention of hiding from mother and brother (Why hiding? Why not hiding from step- father and sister too?), or might actually follow a pre-arranged path, such as tracking Penny's beliefs about fathers through her 42 years, or her sense of herself as worthy, or whatever. Again, in Morenian terms, this process would be

called an enquiry into the *status nascendi,* how something grows and develops. The essence of the standard interview for a role, then, is the establishment of place, time, and relevant others.

Let us consider another interview segment that establishes the operation of two roles in one person. Most of us have several roles operating in rapid sequence as our self talk switches back and forth from daydream to denigration to coping strategies. Di is interviewing Patsy, who is grappling to maintain her feelings of self-confidence against feelings of being rejected.

D: Do you have a time in mind when these things occur most strongly to you? What is one time when you have stepped out?
P: It's a routine I make myself before I step out.
D: Is there anyone at home when you step out?
P: No.
D: Does it take place in the bedroom or the living room?
P: In the car.
D: What kind of car?
P: It's a Camry, gold, with press-button windows.
D: Reverse roles and be a Camry. Feel it in your body. Mmm. You look nice
P: Yes, I've got red stripes down each side, and press-button windows. I'm square, professional-looking, but smart.
D: Square, professional-looking, but smart! Reverse roles. How about you sit in your car, Patsy.
P: I'm sitting in my car, peak traffic going the other way. Feeling inadequate relationship wise, so I imagine Il phone a bloke and ask him to dinner. He is way away... doesn't know I exist. (Sighs) No good waiting for things to happen, have to make them happen. (Mimes phone) Oh hi, Steve, how about coming to my place for dinner?
P: (As Steve, loses steam) (Aside) I'm not used to this directness. How will I get out of this one?
D: What would a square, professional-looking, but smart person do, Patsy?
P: They'd pick up his tone, and tell him to get lost, the ambivalent shit!
D: What is the difference between a square, professional-looking, but smart person, and yourself? Choose someone to be the person. Address her about your differences.

Di has established a context within which Patsy moves into the drama. She knows that Patsy is alone. She does not yet know the coalition alignments in her social atom that may have ensured that she would be so. She has the first understandings of the type of role relations that Patsy has with herself and with a likely candidate for a date. She has established a double description between Patsy and a person who is professional-looking but smart, and is on her way to getting a description of the problem from the other. From this new description, which contrasts with Patsy's original view, she will create 'news of difference' wherein new responses can unfold.

Behaviour

Even the most obvious component of a role, the behavioural component, is not always established by the enactment itself. Prior to a drama, the director and protagonist develop a

common understanding of what might happen in the drama. The director focuses the inquiry onto what people say and do in relation to the problem, rather than settling for generalities. Detailed information about behaviour can reveal important distortions or contradictions that are the key to understanding the systemic functioning of the behaviour. Especially when using action methods one-to-one, the therapist can profit by taking a slow-motion picture of events leading up to, during, and after the problem that is the focus.

Let us say that Perry, a member of a therapy group, complains that he has been feeling 'helpless' lately. Upon closer questioning, it appears that the helplessness occurs particularly when his girl friend, Jan, spends a lot of time at netball and at her studies. Perry tends to talk in generalities about this issue, and is straining to get on with a scene where he can psycho-dramatically 'explode' at Jan for letting him down. This may indeed be the way to go. But there is time yet, and it will do no harm to hold Perry back a while longer, to check whether old and dysfunctional roles are not merely being reinforced. Indeed, further questioning reveals that Perry always goes home to see his mother when he feels helpless, and that Jan 'has to collect him there because she does not have enough money for a taxi to get home. Jan 'has to' chase him, and, in addition, earn the opprobrium of her future mother-in-law for neglect.

In action methods, no less than in any other method of therapy, the therapist needs to be persistent in tracking a particular behavioural sequence. What is the context? What behaviour follows what? What are the feelings involved? Whom do they affect? Who does what next? What happens then? In this way, the director asks Perry the sorts of questions that focus mostly on what Perry does. The director is concentrating on the behavioural level of the role, and thereby inevitably on its context.

D: What do you do when you feel helpless?
P: Nothing much. I feel so... so powerless.
D: When was the last time you felt like that?
P: Oh, it happens all the time.
D: Think of a time recently when it was really bad. Where was it?
P: In my flat.
D: In your flat. Who else was there?
P: No-one. Jan was out as usual.
D: How long had she been gone?
P: It seemed like ages. I'm always being left.
D: Be Jan for a moment, and walk out. (Etc.)

Prior to the enactment, then, the director has gained relevant information concerning the person towards whom the role is enacted, and when the role is enacted. The drama can then relate to major dilemmas in Perry's life, and is likely to be more systematically sound than if Perry were simply to rage against Jan, say. The director tries to understand, respect, connect, and produce relevant social-atom transactions. Protagonists themselves cannot always make these connections, as the continuation of dysfunctional family behaviour actually may require that they be unaware of them.

When the fuller story eventually emerges, the director might hypothesise that the systemic function of Perry's behaviour was that his mother would not feel lonely, and the function of

Jan's repeated calling on him at his mother's place was to show that there would never be another woman standing between a son and his mother. These hypotheses would be tested by further enactments, and further role analyses of the context, feelings, beliefs, and effects of the actions. Directors run the occupational hazard of becoming intimacy freaks indeed, the prospect of participating in many people's intimate worlds may often draw them to the profession in the first place. The danger for the client is that the therapist will join their own role system, especially at the emotional level, to the detriment of even the simplest enquiry of who did what to whom, and what happened next. Clients themselves often are not able to make these distinctions, in their focus on emotional meanings.

Let us take another illustration of the importance of finding out 'what happened'. Philippa presents for therapy with the complaint that her husband, Paddy, is always getting drunk. Enquiry about Paddy's drinking habits reveals that he comes home at night, begins a conversation with his wife, and then goes out to the pub. Further enquiry about what the couple say and do suggests that Philippa first complains to him bitterly about his behaviour, and then withdraws. The more bitterly she complains/ withdraws, the more he seems inclined to go out. When asked what her hypothesis is about Paddy's behaviour, Philippa says that she is probably being 'too soft' on him, and that she needs to make her feelings 'clearer' to him.

From the director's viewpoint it is easy to see that the complaining withdrawal and the drinking may be bound up with each other. It would be yet another linear solution, however, to suggest that the complaints or withdrawal cause the drinking, just as it would be to suggest that the drinking causes the complaints. If the roles of drinker and complainer are held to be 'inside' each party, either Paddy or Philippa could be treated for drinking or complaining. If, however, a double description is created, then Duke (the director) would be more inclined to treat the 'drinking-withdrawing relationship system'. Double description is a higher order of description than single description, or even two single descriptions placed side by side. The practice of double description will be described more fully in Chapter 7.

A third factor becomes evident from the contextual and behavioural interview. When Duke asks when Paddy's serious drinking problem seemed to begin, Philippa says that it began after the birth of their youngest son. Over the history of the marriage, all the children were quite frightened by Paddy's drinking, and drew closer to Philippa, to the extent that any possible separation could not be countenanced. At the time of Philippa's presenting for therapy, all the children have left home save the youngest son, who stays to 'protect the mother from the drunken, and by now verbally violent father. Is this the reason for Paddy's drinking? Perhaps not, although the factor involving the youngest child certainly widens out the definition of the family system, and any that did not involve this factor might not be very successful.

The view from every side of the relationship, the numerous double descriptions, must be juxtaposed to generate a sense of the relationship as a whole. It would seem that there was at least one point in the history of the system when important coalitions (husband-wife) underwent a shift (the birth of the first child; all the siblings save one leaving home) and the consequent adaptation to that shift became problematic for the family. The double descriptions required are quite complicated. The therapist may seek circular information on the differences in relationships the family has experienced before and after the problem

began. Father's solution of drinking is connected to mother's solution of withdrawing, which is connected to the son's solution of drawing close to mother. The problem and solution interactions are recursively related. Nearly all of this information has been gleaned from questions about context and behaviour tracking the sequence around the problem, and enquiry about the beginning of the problem and the attempted solutions to it. The information is relatively easy to obtain, and in most instances is well worth the trouble.

Beliefs

The ability to select out and respond to information about difference depends to a large degree on the recipients' restraints, their 'network of presuppositions' that exist largely out of consciousness. Yet the beliefs, or personal constructs pertaining to a role are the elements least likely to emerge directly by enactment. Sometimes they cannot even be deduced from the enactment: after all, people rarely state their beliefs directly, or even think of them as such. Those people who do go around saying I believe...are usually, and maybe rightly, considered to be bores. Since the interaction itself, then, may not yield sufficient information on the construct systems of the participants, a direct verbal interview often becomes necessary. Interviews around beliefs usually take place when an interaction has begun, and the context of the interaction is beginning to emerge is of little use to ask people about their beliefs until they are warmed up to a role, whereas the context and the behaviour may be established from the outset.

The director wants to find out what are the personal constructs of the protagonist and who are the major actors who have steered the protagonist's life in this particular direction. Changing old code books and the establishment of new ideas is a prime goal of therapy. The enactment, the interview-in-role, and therapy itself all contribute to the selection and endurance of new ideas in the therapeutic system. Directors might ask themselves:

- What are the restraints on change in the system?
- If the protagonist did change, would he or she be 'disloyal to someone else in the social atom, betraying them or perhaps betraying a personal code?
- If they acted differently, would they be going against a family injunction to behave in a certain way?
- For example, in this family is to be depressed of noble character because depression demonstrates 'sensitivity'?

It is only for the sake of analysis that roles are broken up into belief, affect, behaviour, context, and effect. In reality, of course, these all merge into each other. Roles are not 'things, and nor are the components of roles things. Roles are a construction on experience, a way of making sense of complicated data, a form of distinction that turns behaviour into information for the therapist. To analyse the 'affective' component of a role, then, is something of an artifice, given that emotions always have a content, a context, a set of beliefs around them that gives them shape, and have an effect on the roles that other people take up. Similarly, beliefs or cognitions are rarely emotionally neutral: they stem from or lead to behaviour, and always take place in a cultural as well as a personal context. All of them; beliefs, feelings, behaviours, contexts, and effects are simply distinctions made upon an

otherwise unintelligible mass of experience. They are ways of ordering and responding to reality.

The belief aspect of a role is one of the most complex factors involved in a role assessment. Behavioural cycles in individuals, families, and groups are governed by a belief system that filters into most aspects of daily life, and guides the members in much of what they do. It is composed of attitudes, assumptions, prejudices, convictions, and expectations. Beliefs are the network of presuppositions that restrain a person from taking action other than the action they do take Because they are largely out of awareness, they are difficult to discern, far less change. That is why only sometimes directors hit the jackpot about people's beliefs by asking directly, 'What do you believe?'

In a stable system such as a family, people's individual beliefs interlock to form a whole set of governing premises, the family construct system (Procter, 1985). When dealing with a whole system, it is not only the individual beliefs or the assumptions of any particular members that are crucial, but how these are linked to form the operating rules of the system. Change, which is what a therapist is usually driving at, exacts a price, and raises questions of what the repercussions will be in the rest of the system. Whole systems are not necessarily amenable to changing their operating rules.

People's beliefs in a system can be the chief reason why the system cannot change; members are restrained by their personal constructs or beliefs from acting in any other way than the way in which they do act. They may believe they are doing the right thing already, but not 'hard' enough, as we saw in the section on 'behaviour' with Philippa's belief about her husband Paddy who drank too much. Family members presenting for therapy tend to think that one designated member is guilty or crazy, and that that person needs to change, rather than themselves or other members. Again the example of Philippa and Paddy springs to mind: each of them has a single description of the complaining/drinking system. The premise is that the symptom or person is a foreign element outside the system and can be changed separately. Even the crazy or guilty member believes that. So if Paddy's drinking can be fixed, the system will have no further problem. The principal challenge to the therapist becomes not how to eliminate the symptom, but to find what would happen if it is eliminated. What price has to be paid, who will pay it, and is it worth it? These are questions relevant to the network of presuppositions, or personal constructs, or beliefs surrounding a role for which change is demanded.

The steel band

A group member, Prue, complains that she has a severe headache, like a 'steel band' around her head. According to standard procedure, this steel band is first concretized by the director who asks Prue to choose an auxiliary, A, from the group to be that pressure. Again in standard procedure, a role reversal is required, and Prue herself acts as the pressure on A, who now represents her. When Prue is applying the pressure to her satisfaction, the interview-in-role as 'Pressure' begins.
D: Who are you?
Pressure: I'm the pressure on Prue's head.
D: How long have you been around?
Pressure: Oh, years now.

D: Looks like she really needs you.
Pressure: She certainly does - I stop her getting too cocky.
D: Is that what you're here for?
Pressure: Yes, she gets too big for her boots sometimes and I have to come along.
D: What does she have to do to make you go away?
Pressure: She has to sit tight, shut up, and stop flirting.
D: Is this how girls (sic) should be?
Pressure: Certainly- girls don't count they should wait to be noticed.
D: Tell that to Prue.
Pressure: You've got to sit tight, shut up, and stop flirting.
P: Keep telling her. (She does so)
D: Reverse roles

The role of the 'Pressure' has now been partially established with respect to a central belief, which seems to concern the upbringing of women. Two direct questions are asked about Pressure's beliefs: 'Is that what you're here for?' and 'Is this how girls should be?' Note that the role reversal did not take place straight after the interview, but after a brief enactment. Protagonists moving into a new role then have something to which they can respond, which will thus more easily bring out their own roles. In the case of Prue, the auxiliary now takes up the role of 'pressure' so that Prue can experience that role as being 'outside' her, and a double description is thereby created.

Pressure: You've got to sit tight, shut up, and stop flirting.
D: Reverse roles. Respond to that.
Prue: Aaah, it's awful.
D: Keep going; respond to that pressure.

At this stage, it is preferable to encourage Prue to continue the enactment rather than to commence an interview with the director, which will tend to divert her attention away from relevant matters in her social atom and on to her relationship with the director. Prue would develop a quite different set of roles towards the director than towards the 'pressure'; her roles as interviewee are not relevant at this point, though these will be the one's activated if the director over-interviews. Generally speaking, the interviewing should be merely enough to gain direction for a satisfactory enactment.

Prue: It's awful, just can't stand it.
D: Express yourself directly to the Pressure.
Prue: Go away please, just go away and leave me alone. (Begins to sob)
D: More
Prue: Go away, go away, go away.

Now that Prue's set of roles have begun to emerge (a role title for which may be tormented, impotent victim) it is time to see what the response is by the 'pressure'. Another role reversal is called for. Prue, in role reversal as pressure, keeps up her sadistic restrictions upon the weeping auxiliary. There is no let-up -rather an increase in torment. A theme is beginning to emerge.

Papp (1983, p. 4) defines a theme as a 'specific emotionally laden issue around which there is a recurring conflict'. There are many such themes in any family or group: dependence versus independence; responsibility versus irresponsibility; repression versus spontaneity; closeness versus distance. In a complementary dyad, usually one person assumes the role of responsible person, and the other assumes the role of irresponsible one; one will try to gain emotional closeness, and the other will evade this. In the case of Prue and her pressure, let us say that a theme is emerging of 'control versus release'. Possibly this dialectic had been a family theme when Prue was a little girl, and now the two sides of the conflict are embodied in the one person - Prue.

Let us revisit Prue in her mini drama, which has moved on somewhat. The 'pressure' has identified itself as Prue's elder brother. This phenomenon is completely common in psychodrama: a particular feeling (iron-band pressure') is given concrete form and is acted out by an auxiliary. After the interaction has developed, and after careful interviewing by the director, a family-of-origin figure may be identified, and a group member chosen to play the role of that person identification of a family member produces another choice point for the director whether to set the enactment with the member in a particular scene around a particular incident at an historic time, say when she was aged 7, or 12, or 15, or to attempt to resolve the drama in vignette form, without a scene or particular time. In the latter case, Prue simple 'meets her family in a neutral space and at an indeterminate time more like the present than anything else. History is actually created, rather than recreated, as it purports to be in a time-and-place psychodrama.

Comprehension of the beliefs in the system (in this case so far between Prue and her brother) and the ensuing themes is not only arrived at through direct questioning, although this method has its place, as we have seen. The deduction of a theme and a core belief is based on observation of the enactment: listening for metaphorical language, tracking behavioural sequences, and picking up key attitudinal statements, such as You've got and 'just go away, leave me alone. The 'girls don't count' statement may or may not be crucial: it was said in the interview with the director, rather than to Prue, and has a conventional ring to it. Even an auxiliary role (such as a 'pressure') enacts a different set of roles towards the director than it may towards Prue. 'Girls don't count' may be a very deep family theme and the eventual core of the drama, or it may be a statement made with half an eye to the audience and half an eye to avoiding the deep pain in the family by diverting it to conventional sexual politics. The director Simply does not know until the interaction is more fully developed.

Understanding the belief component of a role is critical in attaining a Comprehensive definition that can allow the role system to change. Beliefs are the key to the unconscious networks of presuppositions that provide the restraints on spontaneity and new action. It is fallacious to conceive of spontaneity as a bizarre form of acting out or simple impulse release. Moreno suggests that warming-up to a spontaneous state leads to and is aimed at more or less highly organised patterns of conduct. He remarks 69 that spontaneity is often 'erroneously' thought of as being more closely allied to emotion and actions than to thought and rest: 'Spontaneity can be present in a person when he is thinking just as well as when he is feeling, when he is at rest just as well as when he is in action' (Moreno, 1964).

Feelings

In Chapter 7 it will be suggested that change cannot occur until the person- in-the-system feels adequately and accurately 'defined'. Only then can their perception of the problem and the consequent perception of solutions begin to be helpful-In psychodramatic work, altering the perception of the problem enables spontaneity to take place: the new map itself invites fresh solutions. In fact, if the drama is well laid out, one often does not need to search for solutions, new ways of construing the problem itself brings its own solution.

People's emotional experiences need to be part of this new definition. Since emotions are primary sources of information about one's experience of the world. Indeed, affective experience is extremely salient, to the extent that it often overrides other information. Emotion is the direct experience of the self; it is a crucial regulator of action and furnishes the basis of awareness of what is important to the person. Because it is so dominant, therefore, emotional experience can be a powerful tool for changing perceptions and meanings. 'New' emotional experience can provide an organising and integrative framework for the creation of meaning, especially meaning that refers to significant others in one's social atom.

Clearly, then, the affective or emotional level of a role is highly important. To evoke and clarify (define) the feeling component of a role is vital, so that once acknowledged and recognized it may then change (if change is required). This definition does not imply, as we shall show later, asking the person 'How do you feel?' Rather, the feeling is usually hinted at or subtly expressed by the protagonist, and then enlarged and enacted with the help of the director. The enactment of the feeling ultimately defines it and thereby clears the way for change. An interview for the 'feeling' component of a role, therefore, attempts as much to aid direct expression as to provide information to the protagonist. In fact, these two can be one and the same.

Pia, a woman of about 40, is complaining to the group that her world is collapsing around her. Her husband's business is about to go bust, and she is faced with the fifth move in seven years if the bankruptcy court puts an order on her house. Her husband will not talk to her, her children are showing signs of distress, and, to top it all off, her father-in-law, Freddie, has had a stroke and she is left with his care. In the segment to be presented below, Pia has already, in psychodramatic form, represented the house, financial security, and the children, Auxiliaries are on stage in these roles.

D: Where to now?

P: Freddie, I guess. He's had a severe stroke, and needs twenty-four hour care. (To Freddie): I wish you'd just die. (Cries)

D: Say it again.

P: I wish you'd just die. I wish you'd just die in your sleep, and then we could all get on with things. (Cries) I've got this terrible guilt.

D: Who do you need to tell this guilt to?

P: (Ignoring the director) I'm exhausted being around you. We'll have to take it in shifts. You fat, greedy pig eating all the time. You were 4 stones overweight. You knew! You knew!

D: Tell him.

P: I wish that stroke had killed you stone dead. You're a crazy-maker. You knew! You knew!

In this interaction with Pia, the director did not have to do very much by way of interviewing to clarify what feelings were present. The clarity came by the protagonist being allowed, indeed actively encouraged, to express herself, so that her anger with her father-in-law and her sense of bitter injustice could emerge. At times, this type of ventilation alone can be helpful in changing perceptions and in altering a person's role structure. The so-called 'ventilation is in fact a definition of the affective component of Pia's role system, and without it being recognized, it is unlikely that Pia could move on. Psychodrama is most successful at these types of primary definitions, which can be rich and useful for people.

Few writers, however, including those from the psychodramatic tradition itself (Moreno, 1964; Blatner, 1985; Kellerman, 1984) consider ventilation to be usually a sufficient condition for therapeutic change. Certainly the strategic position regards the desire for emotional expression within the whole context of the person's appeal for therapy, and looks carefully to see whether emotional expression may not be part of the problem rather than of the solution. Clients who seek therapy for ventilation purposes, and do it over and over, bind therapy itself into the problem. Emotional expression is an important part of a person or system's self-definition, but therapy needs to protect the client from this solution becoming a restrictive one.

A systemic psychodramatist also takes into consideration the function of feelings: feelings are social, as well as internal' to the person. As well as being an expression of the self, there is a certain politics to them, even if the political arena where they were spawned (the family of origin) is long gone. They are influenced by others, and attempt to influence them in their turn. One only has to observe a child who falls over and delays the tears until the mother is present to recognize this. Yet there is nothing false about the tears, they are simply a part of the child's complex interaction with others, part of the 'patterns' which connect.

A director might ask (before or during a psychodrama) some questions that reflect the connections between the protagonist's state and the other people in his or her life. The questions can be asked out loud to the protagonist, or they may simply be part of the director's thinking and formulation of the systemic hypothesis: What was the stimulus for the feelings? Towards whom are they directed? Who is most likely to be affected by them now? Who was most likely to have been affected by them in the family of origin? The audience of others is vitally relevant to feelings, even when this audience has long departed. Most psychodramatic enactments attempt to direct the expression of feelings to their relevant location, so these questions are by no means new. A systemic interview and enactment, however, may be more thorough in its investigation of the social origins and effects, and of the restraints on the protagonist taking any other course than the one he or she does take.

Feelings can certainly be a true compass pointing to the direction of spontaneous action; they are a genuine expression of being, a source to discovery, an agent for change, an action tendency, and for most of us, maybe even the reason for living. They are both the means and the barometer of contact with others. They are not the only indicator of whom the person really is, however, and can cloud as well as reveal a way for change. People can be restrained from feeling enough, or restrained from effective thinking and action because they feel too much.

Ideally, change or new learning makes a client feel better at the end of therapy. But the aim of therapy is not to feel better: one can feel better without change by having a massage, or by taking a tablet. Strong feelings can even interrupt the course of therapy: if a person attempts to begin a psychodrama whilst flooded', for example, there will not be much chance of him or her hearing instructions, managing role reversals, etc. Directors then need to require early role reversals, and have the protagonist blow their nose, dry their eyes, and clean up a little as they go into the new role. Alternatively, they can concentrate on getting all the objects of the scene around. Focusing on the objects can Serve as a warm-up to a scene if a person is flat, or can help the development of managerial and observer roles if the person is too flooded. The aim is to have protagonists reach a state where their network of presuppositions are loosened and restraints on possibility are relaxed. Strong expression of feeling can help or hinder such a task. Strong feeling can be as much a resistance as no feeling at all.

Let us consider the protagonist who appears to be experiencing strong emotions but cannot describe or even enact that experience to the director or audience. A wordless state often suggests that the person in the scene is very young, possibly pre-language. The person may be in touch with deep feelings, but does not have 'the words to say it'. In such a regressed state, it is very difficult to make decisions, or even to establish a satisfactory scene and dialogue at first. Such protagonists will usually respond to a request for role reversal to another trustworthy, helpful person 'who knows all about little girls/boys'; in role as that person, they can set up the scene, or collaborate with the protagonist in doing so. If the protagonist had not developed childhood roles appropriate to girls or boys of that age, the director, using the necessary techniques, can work with the adult protagonist teaching his/her own child. The director actively works with him/her at that time discussing what is happening and establishing double descriptions. There is no such thing as an 'adult' role only roles that are adequate, spontaneous, and creative. Both children and adults need such roles.

In contrast with the flooded protagonist, other clients become stuck in therapy because there is insufficient feeling available to them. Far from not having the words to say it, they seem only to have the words and not the connections. With emotional data missing, they appear to have little idea of the wellsprings of their actions; they lack imaginative life and resonance with themselves. With such protagonists, it is preferable for directors to assume that the feelings are very strong, rather than to reprimand the person for being in some way impaired. Such a reprimand is, in any case, usually counterproductive, making the person dive for cover. Numbed people are often in an affectless state following unbearable pain or loss or deprivation, which may have taken place very early in their lives. They have learnt to cut off, and have forgotten who taught them the lesson. Gentle and persistent development of feeling states can be most productive for such people, who gain a sense of kin with suffering and laughing humanity.

D: What stops you? Choose it.
P: I can't. Responsibility weighs me down and I can't see anything. I haven't cried for as long as can remember. I feel so different from people here. They all seem so emotional, so open.
D: Choose someone to be 'responsibility'. (He does) Reverse roles and weigh Perry down.
P: Ouch. Owww!
D: Who are you saying that to?

P: I don't know.
D: If you did know, who would it be?
P: I don't know.
D: Is there a wise person in your life?
P: Yes, my cousin Emille.
D: Reverse roles. Emille, are you older or younger than Perry?
E: I'm older.
D: What do you do for a living?
E: I'm an accountant.
D: Really? Do you know all about figures?
E: Sure do, it's my living.
D: And about living?
E: Yep, know something about that, too,
D: Emille, who does Perry want to say 'ouch' to?
E His younger brother. He was always better than Perry at everything and his dad loved him more.
D: Thanks, Emille. Reverse roles. Choose your younger brother. (Perry does so with 'responsibility' still draped over his neck.) Address him.

Perry tries, but finds it difficult to speak. The auxiliary he has chosen as Responsibility is huge, and weighs him nearly to the ground. He tries to throw Responsibility off. It persists, and a wrestling match develops. No attempt has been made at this stage to develop the role of Responsibility, to find out where it came from, when it came, etc, although this would have been a legitimate course of action. Eventually Perry succeeds in his struggles, and stands up straight. He is flushed, his eyes sparkle for the first time.

P: I want to talk to my dad.
D: Get him here, then.

The auxiliary is chosen, and the father is interviewed-in-role. Perry begins to cry as soon as he sees his father psychodramatically represented. The drama begins. The 'what' (in Perry's case, responsibility) has become a 'who' (brother, father) and has led the way to interpersonal therapy.

This drama mostly reflects standard psychodramatic practice; the extended interview with Emille illustrates the long path that sometimes needs to be taken with a 'stuck protagonist, who only in role as another person can nominate relevant figures from the social atom who provide the warm-up in the drama. An early focus on feeling can be exquisitely accurate, or can produce a flattened, narcissistic self-exploration in the protagonist, which is usually undesirable. The explosive emotion often released in psychodrama is used as a powerful vehicle for new learning, and as a memorable carrier for new roles. Usually it defines some system or other, often family-of-origin, and then redefines that system in a new pattern of organisation. Human difficulties often arise when emotions are not recognized. Emotional need is thwarted, and because thwarted may become dominant, fixed, and rigid. Psychodrama can help people to experience intensely the subjective self and thereby recover the vitality needed for change. It helps people generate new ways of experiencing that have previously been restrained from awareness and possibility.

Consequences

Just as roles are born in a context, they are designed to have an effect, even though the exact nature of this effect cannot be predicted. If I sulk with persons A and B, they may respond by queries as to my state of being. If I sulk with persons C and D, however, they may simply go off and leave me alone as 'bad company' or 'no fun'. Fortunately or unfortunately, in human systems, especially in close systems like families, the effects of a role can often be predicted with more certainty. So knowledge of the effect a role has can lead to a conclusion about the nature of the role itself, a nature that may otherwise have been obscure.

Because roles are interactive, those that we take up affect the roles that other people take up, and vice versa. Often the meaning or function of a role only becomes clear when one observes what the outcome of the role is. So far as an outcome is observable at all. The meaning of a person adopting the role of sick person may become apparent in the roles that other people take up around this sick person, such as solicitous helper, or guilty lackey, frustrated lover. The role of sick person may indeed not have emanated from that person at all, as we would usually assume, but may have been created by a significant person in the social atom who needs to be a solicitous helper. For the system to be defined properly, several acts of double descriptions may be needed, even for such an apparently individual role as 'sick person'.

Let us return to Prue and her steel band. The complete system within which Prue enacts her roles is not yet apparent. A two-party family interaction usually presents an inadequate information-base for the director or protagonist to assess 'what is going on'. Prue's mother, and perhaps even other siblings are likely somehow to be involved in the reported interaction. For example, Prue's mother must be involved at least in her capacity as a role model: how is it that she does not influence her husband and son on their views about women? Does she agree with them? What is their marriage like that they have such views on the passivity of women? Perhaps she believes that women are weak and need rescuing by men. What happens if any member of the family changes their position? What would happen to Prue if she did not believe that she needed to sit still? What is that belief doing for her? What did it, or the contrary belief, do for her and the family when she was younger?

The whole point of Prue not being hitherto angry with her father, in the aforementioned case, may have been that she wished to protect her mother from change, because if she changed she might leave her husband. This is a consequence usually feared by children, and they will do a great deal to avoid it, even become ill, delinquent, or anorexic so that parents will stay together to look after them. While it is a feared consequence, however, it need not be an inevitable one. But Prue may be restrained from seeing reality in any other way. This is where the belief aspect of a role, the person's construct system, comes into play, and is perhaps the role element that most needs to change, as we have seen. In any case, Prue, by stopping being angry with her father in order to protect her mother from changing which would have led to parental separation, takes the role of parentified child or protector of the marriage. This crucial role may not emerge in the natural course of the psychodrama, if the psychodrama is not systematically considered.

The following five questions are useful ones for directors to bear in mind when assessing the consequences of a role:

1. What function does the presenting difficulty (usually revealed in the initial interview) serve in stabilising the social atom?
2. How does the social atom operate to stabilise the presenting difficulty?
3. What is the central theme around which the problem is organised?
4. What will be the consequences of change?
5. Therefore, what dilemmas does the protagonist face?

In the case of Prue, significantly, the scene is set at the age of 15, where questions of control and release are likely to be turbulent and important. Her blinding headaches served to stabilise the family just as she was entering early adolescence and her mother joined the workforce once more. Perhaps an outbreak of sexuality in the family would have been disruptive to the parents' marriage. Certainly, grandmother did not approve of mother working outside the home. The family operated to stabilise her difficulty by grandmother bringing pressure to bear on mother to be at home full-time. (Mother had just taken a job.) The central theme seems to be repression versus release, it is beautifully illustrated by the steel band. The consequence of change would have been that mother stayed in the job learnt new things about herself, and became less dependent on father. The feared consequence is that they would separate as a result of mother's independence. The therapeutic dilemma is how to be free and to be loyal at the same time.

Circular questioning is one way of identifying significant others and reviewing the consequences of role relations. For example, these questions could be asked:

D: What does your grandmother think of your father's relationship with your mother? (Prue answers)
What does your mother think of your relationship with Andrew? (Prue answers)
What does your father think of Andrew's relationship with your mother?

This sort of questioning, based on the Milan associate's (Selvini Palazzolli *et al.,* 1980) practice, can save unnecessary role reversals, and accelerate the warm-up to the family system. The questions increase the protagonist's systems awareness and can actually help prevent her undergoing another stuck psychodrama where she begins as the eternal victim of a misunderstanding father and emerges as a vindicated revenger. This routine is not so much a danger for a person's first two or three psychodramas, but can become so thereafter, a point that will be developed in the following chapters.

A director might even ask the protagonist (Prue) to predict the outcome of a struggle, and relate that prediction back into the system. For example:
D: If you had a fight today with your father, who would be most likely to cheer you on?
P: My mum.
D: Who in the family would have to change the most if you really became angry?
P: My sister.
D: Who in this family here or in our extended family would be the most horrified to see you bringing them here in a psychodrama?
P: They all would be.
D: But who especially? Which two?

P: My mum and my sister.

These questions should not be overdone, for reasons suggested earlier (of cooling the warming-up process). Relevant beliefs and reactions will emerge best of all in the actual enactment. In fact, any one of these questions can itself be made part of the psychodramatic enactment by the director suggesting that the answer be relayed directly to one of the other participants. For example, supposing Prue's answer to the question 'Who in the family would have to change the most if you really became angry?' was 'My mother', the director can then say, 'Express this directly to your mother' and after she has done so, have a role reversal with the mother and a mother/daughter dialogue. This interaction itself could become the point of the drama, or could be limited to one or two interchanges at the warming-up stage.