

Chapter 9

The director

Cognition in action

Marcia Karp

I feel safe inside me, Mum. I'll break my leg and that stuff, but I think I'll always be safe. I'm like a giant tube. Everything that has ever been known and everything that will be known passes through me. I just receive it and pass it along.

(Poppy Sprague, age 8, 1985)

PHILOSOPHY: COGNITION TAKES PLACE WHEN YOU ACT ON WHAT YOU KNOW

Perhaps an essential core of being is to know, and to know that you know.

Cognition is a complex process which incorporates the sum total of life experience. It takes place when you trust everything you know. In that moment of fusion, a heightened state of awareness occurs and you activate all your experience.

The quality of listening equals the ability to be immersed in the moment and vice versa; the quality of being immersed in the moment equals the quality of listening. A friend of mine, Midge, said 'I listen very well and then I say things that surprise myself'.

Cognition is defined as the action or faculty of knowing, perceiving and conceiving. It is the opposite to an emotion or a volition. Cognition is a perception, a sensation, or a notion or an intuition.

This fusion of knowing and acting is not acknowledged as part of the way we live our lives; therefore it is hard for us to name it and to trust it.

Because we do not know how to name it we call it intuition or a hunch. *Cognition is our deepest and most spontaneous form of knowing.* It can provide the essence and fullness of our existence. Perhaps we need a new language to describe living 'moment to moment' (J.Krishnamurti 1991). Spiritual teachers tell us we should consistently live our lives in moment to momentness.

A woman, for example, may know when she is about to be hit by her partner. She can read the subtext which informs her knowing. She has

cognition of what is about to happen. She can choose to act on what she knows or not.

A phone rings and the listener knows before speaking, who is on the other end.

A director in psychodrama may know that an issue for the protagonist is a lack of self-esteem. The director may see it, sense it and hear it. The director may choose to follow what is 'known'. Doubt can be a friend of the director. It is easy to check out what is doubtful for example. 'I notice you have difficulty looking at me when you speak. Are you afraid of what I may think of you?' In this kind of naive enquiry, confirmation occurs when doubt meets knowing.

This chapter will look at the role of the director in psychodrama and at how the skills and intuition of the director are part of a larger process of cognition.

To begin the subject of directing, I offer an excerpt from a discussion occurring at the end of this chapter. Anne Ancelin Schützenberger is talking to me.

Anne Psychodrama is an existential psychotherapy. It has to be in the here and now, free floating with the protagonist. Sometimes you are with the subject and sometimes you are back into yourself, able to cut it, change it, produce something new, something in the future, something different.

Marcia Sessions that are too pre-planned or pre-thought don't work. The concept of the here and now is simply that it is *here* and it is *now*. It is not *there* and *then*. Probably that is the saving grace of a group. Something new is produced every second, and it is the director's role to catch that new thing.

A STORY ABOUT KNOWING

As the chapter on directing unfolds I am struck by a comment made to me by a taxi driver the morning after the Dunblane tragedy in Scotland, 1996, where sixteen 5-year-olds were shot dead in their physical education class by a suspicious loner obsessed with guns and young boys. During the twenty-four hours after the event, neighbours, parents and a Member of Parliament were making statements about the murderer, Thomas Hamilton. 'Hamilton made your flesh crawl', said one. Another said: 'He was a man who carried a grudge, he believed there was a huge conspiracy against him.' 'He just crept along the hedge', 'He was quite disturbing', said a neighbour. Prior to the school killings, several parents had taken their sons out of a youth club Hamilton was running. A parent reported, 'The last time I spoke to the police about him, they told me that they were sure he was doing something wrong, but they couldn't prove it.' The policeman's parting words were 'One of

these days he'll overstep the mark, and that's when we'll catch him.' It was too late. The murderer shot himself along with the sixteen children. Hamilton's mother was shocked at hearing her son had been responsible for the massacre, 'I have never known him to get angry', she said. The mother was a woman Hamilton believed to be his older sister. He was raised by elderly grandparents whom he believed to be his parents. It was only later in life that he learned the truth of these relationships.

The taxi driver and I were speechless at the radio news of the massacre. 'I bet there's a lot of people who wished they'd listened to their instincts and acted on a gut reaction', he said. How difficult is the eternal struggle, to know something and to act on what you know. Sophisticated learning, rules and instruction chip away at our more basic wisdom and soon, we become like the centipede who can't walk because he's confused about which foot to use first.

Cognition and emotion are like siblings. The galloping panic to make a respectable decision can often trample the parent (cognition). Cognition is ever patient, waiting to be heard in its wisdom. If neighbours, police and parents had acted on their gut feelings and persisted with their creative wisdom there might now be a teacher and her children still alive. Ironically, months before the tragedy, it was Hamilton who hit back at the campaign against himself and delivered 7,000 leaflets to prospective parents of the youth club he ran in Dunblane to clear his name. His persistence to clear his name was the very persistence that was needed to name him before the tragedy occurred.

TRUSTING COGNITION ALLOWS THE DIRECTOR SPONTANEITY

The crucial relevance of this story to directing psychodrama is in trusting cognition. *Trusting cognition is what allows* one to be spontaneous. Spontaneity gives the skills authenticity. Though authenticity is one of the foundation stones of good directing, it is difficult to teach directors to trust their hunches, to trust their intuition and their cognition. To whittle down thinking, observing and knowing into simple action is difficult; the timing is nearly impossible. Yet timing, as in the Dunblane tragedy, is of utmost importance. Each role reversal in directing, each scene change, each auxiliary ego choice is somewhat of a calm emergency. If the role reversal is late, it loses its meaning; if too early it can be ineffective or disrespectful. If the scene changes too soon, the inappropriate timing casts dust over the brilliantly exposed gems. If an auxiliary is chosen too late, the story may have already been told; the impact of the drama lost and the need for enactment gone.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR?

The director is a co-producer of the drama taking clues from the person seeking help. In most therapies, this is the therapist, facilitator or group leader. In psychodrama, the director is a trained person to help guide the action. 'I have nothing to work with and therefore the production is one that I structure gradually' (Moreno 1942).

The major role of the director is to stimulate spontaneity, to prompt, to guide and to structure the psychodrama from apparently nothing into something real for the person enacting the drama and for the group watching the drama. Each moment should live as if it is happening in the here and now. The protagonist holds the key to the inner and outer world. The director holds the door which opens and closes and the group provides the frame.

WHAT DOES THE DIRECTOR DO?

Directing the group

The chief concern of the director is the immediate behaviour of the group in front of her. In the beginning of the group she may notice two people sitting together but avoiding any contact, or one or two physically isolated from the others.

As the director observes the dynamics of the immediate group, non-verbal body language may indicate who of the group is ready to represent an aspect of life in front of the others. The tool to measure group dynamics is called sociometry. A sociogram or map of those dynamics invented by J.L. Moreno indicates the choices and rejections made by group members based on specific criteria. For example, who would you most like to sit next to? Who would you least like to sit next to? Eventually, a protagonist or subject is selected by the group, by the director or self-selected and supported by the others. The group assist the protagonist and provide a world that is absolutely real.

In psychodrama, the director takes the person into her own space on the group stage and follows the lead. Together they set up a situation that represents the protagonist's life. 'The scene is created by the subject. The director encourages the person to act out their problems naturally and spontaneously. The protagonists direct their own therapy, stopping when they feel the need' (Moreno and Moreno 1977). The director has many functions: producer, therapist, action analyst and group leader are among the main ones.

As producer he has to be on the alert to turn every clue which the subject offers into dramatic action to make the line of production one with the life line of the subject, and never to lose rapport with the

audience. At times the director may become indirect and passive and for all practical purposes, the session seems to be run by the subject. As analyst he may complement his own interpretation by responses coming from an informant in the audience.

(Moreno 1953:83)

Though one particular story is enacted, psychodrama is a group process. Each person is a therapeutic agent of the other and group members often gain as much from the session as the protagonist. As therapist, the director makes therapeutic choices, informs and educates the protagonist. When appropriate, the protagonist and the director work in tandem. At other times one is led by the other.

Directing the story and scenes

The director takes a story from a group member and through action separates the text from the subtext. Directing is a parallel activity. A story is enacted and parallel to that a trained evaluation of what is happening is ongoing. The director intercepts, breaks and dramatically re-orders the scenes as the clues come from the protagonist.

In directing the scenes, the emphasis is not on the dramatic effect, but on how true to life the scene feels. Good theatre is breathless production with authenticity as the aim. Detailed presentation is important. If the director is naively inquisitive and is a good social and environmental investigator, the protagonist will follow with spontaneous presentation of particular details in their living and working space. For example:

Director Show us your mother's hospital room.

Protagonist (Sets up room.)

Director Be your mother in bed. Are you lying down or sitting?

Protagonist I'm lying down and staring at the ceiling.

Director Are you in pain?

Protagonist No, not physically. I just don't want to live. I want to join my husband who died in the accident.

Director The accident? What happened?

This is a naive question that a 5-year-old might ask. If the timing is right, even a naive question is acceptable to the protagonist, often invited. The subject of an 'accident' was brought by the protagonist. Many directors are afraid to be bold and economic in their questioning. Some directors confuse simplicity with intrusion; however, if you follow the contextual lead of the protagonist you, as director, can follow what has already been given. The protagonist is worried about her baby who is agitated. She assumes the role of her own mother.

Protagonist (as mother) My husband crashed the car in a fog. I don't know how he could do that to me. He left me alone and now I don't know how to live without him. He did everything.

Director You sound angry.

Protagonist I never got angry at him; only about him to others.

Director Who to? To your daughter here, for example?

Protagonist Yes, I tell her about him all the time.

Director Can you show us what you say to her? Choose someone to be your mother now so you can be yourself.

Protagonist (She chooses a plump, kind-faced member of the group to play the role. She observes her mother lying on the hospital bed and begins to cry.)

Director Tell your mother what makes you cry.

Protagonist (facing mother) I want you to be happy about my baby. I am 5 months pregnant. I'm sad and you're sad and my father will never see my baby.

Director What do you miss most about your father?

Protagonist The way he held me. He loved me. I wanted my baby to feel his love too but she never will. I used to sit on his lap when I was little. (She smiles.)

Director You'd like your child to sit on his lap?

Protagonist Yes, it would be my dream.

Director Shall we do it now?

Protagonist How can we? (looking sad but interested) She's not even born yet.

Director Let's give you a chance to be a 5-month-old unborn baby. Would you like to feel what that would be like?

Protagonist Yes. Now that my baby is 6 months old in real life, she is both happy and agitated. I think it began here, at this time. I also feel happy and agitated in the hospital room.

Supporting, enhancing and following go hand in hand with intercepting, changing and adding to the scene. The protagonist becomes her unborn baby. In the next scene she watches her future child sitting in the lap of her dead father. She then assumes the role of herself sitting with father, saying what she was never able to say to her father when she herself was a child.

Directing the protagonist

What becomes produced in the structure of dramatic scenes is generally what the protagonist cannot produce alone, namely insight into patterns of behaviour.

The protagonist in the above example had originally presented the problem of having a 6-month-old child who was both agitated and happy. During the

time of her parents' accident she was herself 'agitated and happy'; which was a partial repetition of her childhood.

The protagonist said after the session: 'I was aware of those events but I never connected them to the mothering I had and the parenting of my daughter. It's like I found a part of myself that was there but unconstructed. It's as if I've woken up.' Psychodrama gives opportunities for enactment that life doesn't offer. The director helps to shape the enactment. The protagonist, in the above example, was involved in an unconscious maternal repetition.

It is interesting to note here that the original aims of Moreno's spontaneity training, which was the precursor to psychodrama, were:

- 1 better integration of emotional mechanisms in the acting personality;
- 2 the integration of knowledge in the acting personality;
- 3 and better adjustment of the acting personality to other persons in the immediate environment.

(Moreno 1942)

The better adjustment of the acting personality to other persons in the immediate environment meant that the unconscious behaviour of the protagonist must be made conscious. Conscious behaviour has a better chance of not being repeated.

It gives the protagonist a chance to make the choice of continuing or ending the behaviour.

Directing unconscious content

It is important for the director to respect the survival process thus far contained within the protagonist. Information is repressed, in the mind, for a reason. What Moreno said about spontaneity training is also true of psychodrama. 'The detailed presentation of things that are usually omitted may therefore be just the point' (Moreno 1942).

This omission may sometimes be misinterpreted as a conscious resistance. The very nature of resistance is that it is often an unknown process to the resister.

One of the greatest contributions of Freud, after he stopped utilising massage and hypnosis to create suggestibility, was his discovery of unconscious resistance. Before, by making a patient relaxed and therefore suggestible, he had bypassed the very process he wanted to explore. He began to interpret the resistance and the patient spoke about material that they would otherwise forget and resist (Jacobs 1996).

Directing auxiliary egos

Auxiliary ego direction is well covered in [Chapter 7](#) by Paul Holmes. In it he discusses the term ego stressing the fact that the role taken by a group member is held or played and is 'an extension of aspects or roles in the protagonist's own inner world or psyche'.

It is quite daring for a stranger to attempt to play a role well known to the protagonist. The greatest fear of group members, when beginning to play an auxiliary role, is their fear of getting it wrong. This is quite a natural fear and one that the director should be aware of and take into consideration. The auxiliary ego, as well as the protagonist, needs acknowledgement and encouragement to continue such a daring task. To present personal intimacy (the protagonist's task) and to represent the intimacy of an unknown role (the auxiliary ego's task) may seem quite usual for the director, but it is often unusual both for protagonist and the auxiliary ego.

Directing with encouragement and neutrality

The director guides, reflects, encourages, enhances and tries to see the human story revealed from the protagonist's point of view. It is rare in life to be in trouble and to have someone in our corner throughout the duration of that troubled time. Essentially the director is a found advocate, a witness for the story teller. The protagonist may be vulnerable, suggestive and needy. The therapist attempts to stay in an objective, unbiased and neutral place while handling the subjectivity, bias and strong opinions of the protagonist. All is to be considered, heard and worked through.

The director's neutrality is often a calm blank canvas on which the protagonist can finally paint her real colours. As an artist's assistant, the director makes the palette available, from which the protagonist can select colours to paint.

An extraordinary story, illustrative of the colour analogy, was told to me by Anne Schützenberger. She was working with the Dalai Lama in North America. A chronic patient was brought to them. The woman had been hospitalised for years, having no function in her arms or legs. Anne asked the woman why her legs and arms were black. The woman responded by telling her that her extremities were black ever since her sister died forty years earlier.

'What happened then?' asked Anne.

The protagonist played out a scene after her sister died. The dead child, aged 2, was too big for the prepared coffin. The protagonist was 4. In front of her eyes, the funeral directors broke the arms and legs of the still body in order to fit the child into the coffin. At the time, the protagonist could only watch, horrified and in silence. Forty years later, the little child now entered the situation again, with the guidance of a psychodramatist.

‘What are you feeling that you cannot say?’ asked the director.

As the protagonist began to weep for her sister, scream at the men who broke the little body of her sister and rage at her parents for allowing it, the black skin of the protagonist began to turn pink. Her own arms and legs began to come back to their natural colour, a colour which had been absent for forty years. When the dead child’s arms and legs were broken, the protagonist had had a sympathetic reaction which was locked in her limbs. Hidden family loyalty is a subject that Schützenberger writes about and works with often (Schützenberger 1996).

WHAT MAKES A GOOD DIRECTOR?

Directing: skill and personality

In psychotherapy it is extremely difficult if not impossible to separate the skill from the personality of the therapist. Skill and personality are, at least in the act of performance, inseparably one.

The tension between personality and skill influence the four major roles of the director: group leader, therapist, action analyst and producer.

Remember that the director meets a group first in the role of group leader. Equality of status should be established, that is every member of the group is equal. Each presents themselves according to what he or she is, and with whatever life warm-up has occurred. The director is at the beginning of creation, naive, fresh, discovering and being co-responsible for each new moment. Here is where spontaneity begets spontaneity. If the director is free and easy then the sense of anything can happen, anything is possible is communicated. The group feels free to create moments together rather than passively attending a play.

For many years I have pondered the question, what makes a good director? As a trainer of psychodrama directors, it is interesting to see the parallel of skill and personality develop in the trainee. As the personality improves and clarifies through personal therapy, work as a protagonist, examination and change in sociometric status, through supervision, acceptance and ease with the authority of the trainer, so then do the skills improve.

In January 1996 at breakfast in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina four of us sat pondering the question. We devised the following list of qualities for a good director and a not-so-good director.

A list of qualities for a good director, by Zerka Moreno, Marcia Karp, Poppy Sprague and Deborah Smith

- Courage
- Emotional energy

- Fearlessness
- A no-holds-barred approach
- Imagination
- Outrageousness
- Listening with the third ear (hearing what is not being said)
- Ability to stop the protagonist from talking and knowing when to go back into action
- Being in the protagonist's corner and leaping out of it when necessary
- Knowing when to end with graceful closure (so many directors know where to start but not where to end)
- Integration in how the director dresses and presents him or herself
- Patience and curiosity (a trainee said to Zerka: 'I can't get them to ask the kind of questions you ask.' In response Zerka said: 'Ask naive questions. Don't know too much but know in conjunction with the feelings.'
- Jolt the protagonist out of their over-preparation
- Compassion and a sense of timing
- Being able to admit: 'I'm not sure I understand what you said, can you say it again?'
- Honesty
- To be an absolute advocate for the protagonist
- Respect for the protagonist's space
- Discard and dispense with critical judgement
- Enthusiasm for what could happen
- Interview the protagonist and auxiliary naively to create a bigger view
- Sense of humour
- Flexibility and humility

As we ended the discussion Zerka said, 'Personally, I don't think there's anything more valuable than knowing who you are and what your limitations are. The me/not me area gives the director distance to be able to survey the situation. It is important to be present without obstructing or getting in the way.'

What makes a not-so-good director?

- Being judgemental and impatient
- When the patient is brighter than the therapist
- When the director lacks the confidence to admit what she does not know
- Mixing the subjective/objective axis and not knowing whether the psychodrama belongs to the protagonist or the director (me/not me area)
- Being seduced by the protagonist's 'talking gymnastics'. Eventually the protagonist will criticise the director for 'wandering'. Clear focus and structure are needed for the wandering protagonist.

- Using skill without heart. If compassion and love are not transferred, the protagonist feels that unsuccessful techniques have been used and it increases the protagonist's feelings of helplessness. When the director is stuck she should say so and together they may work out where to go. Many protagonists have already been over-parented so the last thing they need is preconceived ideas of what they should do and say.
- Nervousness and anxiety are easily felt by a group and the group produces mirrored responses such as lack of co-operation, hesitancy and people leaving.
- Fear is a killer to a director. An ill patient once said to Zerka: 'I was helped because you didn't run away from my psychosis.'
- As a trainer, I don't like to watch a director who does not want to be there. My advice to the director who does not want to be there is 'Don't'
- Sentimentalising the end of a psychodrama

Stereotyping is a trap directors may fall into. When the preconceived stereotype is latched on to by the director, she stops listening and begins to steer the action to where the director assumes it has to go, based on her prior decisions. The feeling that the session can go anywhere, at any time, including stopping altogether, should be held in mind. This freedom of gymnastic footwork is exhilarating if the anything-can-happen atmosphere exists. Then it helps to shape the *sui generis*, one-of-a-kind session, in which people feel privileged to participate.

REACTIONS TO THE DIRECTOR

The transference of Freud and Moreno

It is important to remember that often reactions to the group leader do not originate in the present moment. Individuals in the group come ready to repeat behaviour that has happened to them before in life.

The group member may come prepared to resist authority, to feel burdened and exploited and expects that no one thing can help. Resistance can be acknowledged and utilised. Moreno suggests that the therapist occasionally also may have transference towards the patient.

Mental processes in his own mind, related to the patient, have a definite effect upon his conduct during the psychodramatic work. The suggestions he makes to the patient, the role in which he acts, the analytical interpretation he gives, influence the outcome of treatment. Transference develops on both poles.

(Moreno and Moreno 1977:227)

Moreno points out that though transference may be worked through with one's own therapist prior to group work it does not mean he has become free from transference in regard to any new individual he may meet in future. He would have to gain the armour of a saint.

His armour may crack at any time a new patient marches in, and the kind of complexes the patient throws at him may make a great difference in his conduct. Every new patient produces a spontaneous relationship with the therapist and no analysis can preview or check the emotional difficulties emerging on the spur of the moment.

(Moreno and Moreno 1977:227)

Although Gillie Ruscombe-King discusses transference in [Chapter 9](#) (Sharing) I would like to discuss Moreno's concept of transference related to the director.

Like the current guidelines of the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapists, Moreno recommended in 1950 that the therapist is in her own therapy during the treatment of others. Specifically, we know that the director guides the initial group warm-up, helps a representative voice move through action scenes toward problem solving and after sufficient closure, helps group members to identify with the work done by sharing similar life experiences.

Directors look for adequacy and consistency in their work while utilising two parallel processes of transference

In order to be adequate and consistent the directors constantly need to monitor their own behaviour.

When a director begins a group, she forms a positive alliance with group members. She provides a good-enough parent model, at times remains neutral and at times takes the side of the protagonist, aiming to remain authentic and appropriately stabilised throughout.

There are two parallel processes occurring. The patient's response to the director and the director's response to the protagonist. Moreno thought this was not 'counter-' transference, but two parallel processes of transference, that have the possibility of being productive or unproductive. It is the director's task to make them productive (Hare and Hare 1997).

Often when I have a protagonist damaged by parental misuse of power, I consciously transfer my optimism, hope, encouragement, faith and esteem towards that person, and during their work. This positive flow, for a short time may re-parent the protagonist during the psychodramatic process. Often they find themselves liberated from the I-can't, I-won't, I-can-never type of prison so common in low self-esteem and parental misuse of power.

TOTAL INVOLVEMENT AND MORENO'S CONCEPT OF THE GODHEAD

I visualised a healer as a spontaneous-creative protagonist in the midst of a group. A healer without theories and methods is like a painter without arms.

(Moreno 1955:19)

It may be helpful here to look at what ideas underpin the role of director. Is she a therapist with simply a set of skills for enactment or is there an overall philosophy in the democratic application of action-centred groupwork?

The concept of the Godhead is one of Moreno's core ideas and yet it is often overlooked. It may be because people confuse it with egotism, with being better than others, with being God-like and therefore too far from real people. Nothing could be further from the truth. Moreno's concept of the Godhead has been largely misunderstood and under used. It is about ordinary people taking responsibility for ordinary living.

He said that a creative definition of God-playing is total involvement—to put everything of the unborn into the first moment of being. Moreno wanted each of us to be fully inside civilisation and not outside it.

All my inspiration for my methods and techniques have come directly from my idea of the Godhead and from the principle of the genesis.

(Moreno 1955:8)

I think Moreno focused on the Godhead to help us more fully participate in all aspects of life—both personal and professional. To just be—as if we were at the beginning of creation, naive, fresh, discovering and being responsible for each new moment created. When pondering what God was like on the first day of creation, Moreno thought he was:

knowing and wise with the ability to penetrate the abyss of the universe. Hovering over the first day's chaos, he was there to create, not to analyse or to just take part. God was first a creator, an actor. He had to create the world before he had time to analyse it. He would put every part of the chaos into the melting pot. All events have equal merit, hate and stupidity are just as close to his heart as love and wisdom.

(Moreno 1955:8)

Key ideas of the Godhead

1 To each according to what he or she is.

- 2 If God assigned spontaneity and creativity to each individual he created innumerable oppositions. God is dependent on everyone.
- 3 God-playing is maximum involvement and having faith in human intention.
- 4 Spontaneity and creativity is a propelling force in human progress.
- 5 The nearer people are to you (in spatial proximity) the more attention and acceptance is spent and needed. The nearer people are to you, in time, the more time is spent. The here and now comes first.
- 6 Moreno was interested in human beings sharing the responsibility of creating their existence so it did not fall on the shoulders of one but it was shared. 'If God ever comes back, he'll come back as a group' (Moreno 1955:12).
- 7 The creator is only interested in the creations, not in the possessions. This is in opposition to the concept of 'the father' who may be possessive, and protective.
- 8 Anonymity is the natural form in which to operate collectively and autonomously. Moreno wrote the book, *The Words of the Father* (1941), in which he role-reversed as God. He produced it anonymously.
- 9 The 'act' is the *atmosphere* of a creation, not the content or result.
- 10 Share the responsibility for all living things.
- 11 Be an ambassador of the universe and acknowledge that each of us is the same in our right to 'ambassadorship'. Play the role well, with care, diligence, caution and alertness.
- 12 The power of godliness is in each of us. We each have that potential.

**A DISCUSSION ON DIRECTING BETWEEN ANNE
ANCELIN SCHÜTZENBERGER AND MARCIA
KARP, APRIL 1996**

In preparing for this chapter I had a discussion with Moreno's original student, Anne Schützenberger. At the time of writing she was 78 years old and a wise scholar and practitioner.

Anne I think that the director of psychodrama is like a captain of a ship, master of the ship, doing what she pleases—*maitre bon après Dieu*—and I think what is very important for a director is to feel that anything is possible. The director should be free, to invent any new technique. For me a session of psychodrama is a mixture of art, science, creativity, psychotherapy and training, so it has to be a unique creation, very beautiful in itself.

Marcia I like the kind of group that feels, this group only happened with us. There could not have been another group like this, completely *sui generis*: our creation, one of a kind.

Anne For me, the main inventions of the genius of Moreno are first, role reversal: see the world as the other sees it. Second is the projection into the future or surplus reality: to give the protagonist things that life has not given, and to open him for the future. The third and, for me, maybe the most important, Moreno discovered the co-unconscious of the group. I will remind you that if Freud discovered the individual unconscious; Jung the collective unconscious; Moreno discovered the group unconscious and the co-unconscious of the group. When the director is directing he is tuned into the group feelings and the sociometry of the group and can understand what is happening under the surface of group communication.

Marcia How do you warm yourself up as a director?

Anne Usually, I sit quietly and watch. I listen to the group and I look at the group. I look very much at the non-verbal communication. I look if people...sometimes people sit by colours: all the blue blouses and blue shirts will be together. Sometimes all the men are together and all the women are together. I mean there is something about how a group sits and speaks and starts to talk that warms me up very much to the work.

Marcia My warm-up is to find a place where I can empty myself. It might be going for a walk; it might be from nature or silence. I used to overprepare sessions. Now my warm-up is more about me than it is about my interaction with the group. If I am prepared to receive, then the interaction is clear. There has been an unfortunate pattern of warm-ups where the group has music, or action-oriented games. I don't remember Moreno using these.

Anne Never. That reminds me that I saw Moreno drop the protagonist more often than is done now. He would decide if the person was ready to work or not ready to work. He was feeling free: he was never committed to the session. This is one of the main lessons I learned from him. I am not committed to running psychodrama.... I am committed to be fair to myself, the protagonist, the group, and to be there.

Marcia Or if there was something false in what was being presented. Moreno was very good at picking that up.

Anne There is a chemistry working between the director, the protagonist and the group. If it is not there, everything is false. It becomes bad theatre.

Marcia One of the things that makes a good director is involvement, curiosity, a kind of nose for where the energy lies, where the energy is coming from.

Anne That is it exactly. Someone who will carry the energy of the group, and very often it is better picked up by the director than elected or

selected by the group. They may be so much in need that they don't feel it. I think having small nothings is a very good warm-up for the group. One of the definitions of psychodrama given by Moreno is to play one's life on the stage but another less well-known definition is that it is a physical battle and a mind battle between the director and the resistance of the protagonist. So one of the ways to make a good psychodrama is to catch the protagonist unaware, not let him build a defence. Small nothings and vignettes are ways to have the protagonist open up and not be defensive. People are sometimes afraid to make a full psychodrama but few will refuse to make a small vignette.

Marcia Yes, I think it is true that the undefended place is important.... I am thinking of people who direct sessions with too much of a formulaic idea of what it is to direct, so they may ask the protagonist to be the auxiliary, then the auxiliary comes up and is the role, then they do the next one, and the next one, and so on, and it gets rather boring. As Merlyn Pitzele once said, I have never seen a boring psychodrama but I have seen boring psychodramatists. Sometimes people try to remember the techniques and forget what they are for. One of the original reasons for devising psychodrama was to train spontaneity. The director needs to remember, when rushing towards the end of a resolution, that she is also training spontaneity both in the protagonist and in the people who play the different roles; also in the director, keeping the director fresh. So everybody in the group is training in spontaneity.

Anne There are other things which have to be said about directing. You are not obliged to make one scene extend for one hour. An interesting way to work is to achieve a catharsis and then stop. Another way to work is to have, let's say, twenty minutes warming up of the group, have a twenty-minute psychodrama and have a good forty minutes sharing, putting many vignettes in the sharing. The catharsis of the audience is very important. For me there is no difference in being a protagonist or being a member of the audience having a catharsis, being able to speak about it, cry about it or share it with the group. You can do many things in an hour.

Marcia So, when we talk about protagonist-centred psychodrama, in fact the protagonist is always changing every moment. The spotlight of the protagonist can move, once the action and the energy has changed or shifted. The director has to be very flexible to see the spotlight change from one part of the room to another.

Anne I have two examples that come to mind. I once did a psychodrama in surplus reality—about the death of a father. The protagonist could not attend the death of his father because he could not get a plane

ticket. He arrived the next day and his father was dead. We did surplus reality and he talked to his dead father as if he was there when he died. There was lots of emotion; there was a big catharsis. During the sharing, because part of the group was crying, we had seven or eight vignettes with the dying father, or the dead father, dead mother, dead grandmother, dead cat, dead neighbour. They were moved by the psychodrama and they each quite naturally took about one, two or three minutes to have their own vignette from the audience. So, as you said, the spotlight moved but it was at the same time different, important, very short and a very good sharing for the protagonist. Another thing came to me as you were speaking. I think it was at the Congress in Copenhagen. We had a strong psychodrama, then we had a sharing with vignettes. Much later, in Buenos Aires, a lady came to me asking, 'did I remember Copenhagen?' I said, 'Yes, but what do you mean?' She said, 'You did a vignette with me in the audience, in the sharing, and it was about me having stopped my university studies. You worked with me for a few minutes and after that I went to university again. I finished. I am now a fully fledged psychologist and a psychotherapist, and all that change came from the sharing vignette.' It is crucial to know that many important things happen in the audience.

Marcia It is a real affirmation about timing which is something that we don't talk enough about in directing psychodrama...timing. When a person comes to us with a problem, it is important to ask the question, why now? Why have you brought this particular problem to me now? The person begins to think, well, what is happening in my life that makes it so crucial now? What happens in the small vignettes during the sharing is that the person's timing has come to a crescendo. Cognitively and emotionally things come together, forming a combustion which ignites into a truth that cannot be held back. I think the director has to have gymnastic shoes on to catch the energy of the group. Many people have said to me, 'If you hadn't seen me or encouraged me at that time I would never have been able to say that', or 'I would never have been able to do that.' Maybe, as directors, we have to be prepared to see that when the focus changes, it is also to do with internal timing which has shifted from 'I could never say that', 'I could never do that', to 'I can do that now', 'I am thinking that now', and 'Now is the time'. Einstein used to say: 'Imagination is more important than knowledge.' When a person imagines, while watching others playing roles, that they see themselves, for example, talking to a dead mother that they never had a chance to talk to, then now is the time.

Anne They see themselves in their mind's eye doing that.

Marcia ...and they have almost visualised it before it happens and because they are ripe for that enactment of their own visualisation, their hope is highest at that point. In order for anybody to change in life, they have to have hope and motivation to change, otherwise they won't change.

Anne I would like to come back to something you said before. My late friend, Eduardo Cortisa, used to say that a group therapist should have eyes revolving around like a...

Marcia A lighthouse beacon?

Anne Yes, going around the group. Then you see whose breathing pattern changes, who becomes pale, who becomes red, who has tears in their eyes, who starts to move to the edge of their chair, who starts to open their mouth as if they want to say something.

Marcia Anne, you and I often say, that to be a director you have to be a little bit of a witch and I think that witchery, in a way, is this kind of open reality where...you have eyes and ears more open than normal and you are picking up clues. I am thinking of a woman I was working with from Argentina. She was a very small woman, and I said to her, 'Were you a premature baby?' She said 'Yes, I was.' Well, that didn't seem to me very strange because she was small, so she may have been a small baby. Then I said to her, 'Were you born in the Andes?' She said 'Yes, how do you know the Andes?' I said, 'I don't know, you were talking about seeing mountains or hills or something like that' Then I asked her a third question: 'Were you the eldest child?' She said 'Yes, I was.' Now, in asking those three questions, it seemed to me very obvious. However, other people thought that I was some sort of witch. I know it happens to you a lot. I think it is simply being in tune visually, listening to verbal and non-verbal clues. When the observational qualities are high for the director, then information is coming in and being absorbed. The director can naively ask questions, like a little kid does, 'Oh aren't you small. Were you a small as a baby?'

Anne I think the co-unconscious of Moreno is stronger than Jung's collective unconscious. It is more complicated. I think you can be open-minded in this way only when you have been on the stage long enough, if you have run groups long enough. You don't have to think about it; it comes naturally to you...

Marcia And if you have nothing to prove. Often young directors are trying to prove something. Probably one of the great healing qualities of therapists is that they are, simply, with the person who needs healing, proving nothing, just being. This 'being with' is profound because when the co-unconscious is working together, trust is building between them, love is flowing between them, caring is flowing

between them and the 'being-together-aspect' contains and holds the creativity of the healing process. What happens with young directors is that they start the opposite way. They start with the creativity thinking that it will produce trust and co-unconsciousness. Maybe it works from the other way, that the creativity is an invention built between people who trust each other and who want to create together.

Anne When you know your theory and your techniques enough, then you are free to be centred on the client.

Marcia I become the person I am working with, then I can see from inside their own needs. My skills are only there to facilitate the needs in the client or the patient or the protagonist.

Anne Psychodrama is an existential psychotherapy. You move, free floating in the here and now with the protagonist.

Marcia Sessions that are pre-planned or pre-thought don't work. The concept of the here and now is simply that it is *here* and it is *now* and it is not *there* and *then*. Probably that is the saving grace of a group because something new is produced every second, and it's the director's role to catch that new thing. We are holding hands with the person's readiness. A good director stays with the protagonist through productive and non-productive moments. The director is a midwife in bringing forth what is needed and what is unborn.

CLOSURE OF THE DIRECTOR: COGNITION IN ACTION

The director needs to use her eyes and ears to courageously observe and act on the hidden, the unspoken and the non-verbal clues given by the members of the group and by the protagonist.

In training thousands of directors over thirty years, a statement often made by the trainee comes to mind: 'I was just going to do that. I knew that was the next thing to do. I was thinking about it just when you said it'

Because so many of us have been damaged by criticism and judgement we have unfortunately internalised a massive critic which destabilises our confidence and makes us hesitate in doing the things we know we can do. We need to get rid of the critic and do.

There is a wonderful story about procrastination. An old couple, 93 and 96, were visited by the police and a social worker at 3:00 a.m., because they were causing such a commotion and woke all the neighbours.

'I hate her, I want a divorce', said the husband.

'I can't live with him any longer', said the 93-year-old wife.

‘Why now? Why have you waited so long for this to happen?’ said the social worker.

‘We thought we would wait until all the children were dead.’

To use timing, to act on what you know, to utilise conviction about one’s own gut reaction, to trust intuition, to let intuition inform skills, to incorporate the sum total of life experience in the moment of cognition and then to act on it, that is the task of the director in psychodrama. I wish you courage, inspiration, skill; enjoyment and good luck.

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THE SHARING



