

***THE PRACTICE OF A WORKING SOCIODRAMATIST***

**Rising to the challenge of  
increasing our capacity for sociodrama  
while working day to day  
in developing and emerging social systems**

***Brendan Cartmel***

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This thesis has been completed in partial fulfilment of the requirements toward certification as a Practitioner by the Board of Examiners of the Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand Psychodrama Association Incorporated. It represents a considerable body of work undertaken with extensive supervision. This knowledge and insight has been gained through hundreds of hours of experience, study and reflection.

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# ABSTRACT

This thesis demonstrates the application of sociodramatic principles in groups, organisations, social systems and general society. It presents examples with the sociodramatist encountering social systems having increasingly complex forms. It also presents examples with the sociodramatist's increasing developmental response. This is followed by a sociodramatic group work example illustrating developmentally targeted social remediation.

The descriptions of sociodramatic work provide the basis for drawing out implications for the theory and practice of sociodrama. The term interlocutor is explained. An explanation is provided as to how sociodramatic interlocutors create a unique form of dialogue. The dialogue relates a person and their social system so remediation occurs and is transformative for both the person and the social system.

The thesis shows how sociodramatic interlocutors work to generate capacity in protagonists to more fully engage in social remediation so it is both developmental and potentially transforming of them and their social system.

A case is made for developmental social remediation as a most adequate explanation of social innovation. Developmental social remediation is defined as an individual's anticipating social transformation. Criteria are presented for categorising developmental social remediation as sociodramatic. Areas for further research are proposed.

## PREFACE

There are many times in my life when I reflect that I have been transformed and it is as if my new self has come from nowhere. I came in fact from a remote farming and fishing town in South Australia named Tumbly Bay. My formative years were spent playing safely and imaginatively with friends. I say safely only because we were as invincible as Gods. I nearly drowned, was eaten by sharks, got shot, crushed by cars and crippled by motor bikes but these were minor incidents when compared to becoming physically stronger, more dextrous, skilful at sport and more sexually potent day by day. I say we played imaginatively because hunting and fishing and playing sport without umpires and driving vehicles without licences meant we mostly made up our own rules.

One day when I was fifteen the town was invaded by auto combine harvesters. These grain reaping machines were twice the size of the traditional machine and did bulk handling. Consequently, over night, grain silos replaced bag sheds. It was as if trucks, farmers and families instantly doubled in size. The rural social system, its members and their means of living were instantly and irreversibly transformed. So was I.

I later moved to Adelaide and worked in a factory and was awarded as top apprentice. The next week a new machine arrived in the factory. It was called an auto machining centre. It could work 24 hours a day and produce three times as much as I could. Once again my social system, its members and way of living were instantly and irreversibly transformed. As was I.

After concluding my apprenticeship I moved to Melbourne and studied theology, engineering, organisation behaviour and community development as I wanted to learn the answers to big questions associated with changing social systems. I had made a loving nuclear family, had a good job as a project engineer and socialised well in a good suburban community church. Within a short period of time industry suddenly changed and, along with thousands of others, I was made redundant. Several suicides occurred in families of the church congregation. Yet again, virtually over-night, my social system along with its members, their way of living and relating were irreversibly transformed. We were all challenged to reach out with increased effort to relate in a new way and make more sense of life.

From that point on a new *me* came from nowhere. Sociodrama was no longer something to deploy when I was in crisis or a time of major social transition. It became my daily practice. I developed increased social capacity. I found myself rising to the challenge of life unfolding as a complex and emergent adventure.

Sociodrama, its method and set of principles, rewarded me by enlarging my capacity to engage more fully with others and with social systems. It drew my attention to my limits of separation from others. It enabled me instead to focus on the existence and value of relationships. I knew eschewing any sociodrama practice would lead to demoralisation. I knew sociodrama could

tap into the very spontaneity of the universe; the same spontaneity society tapped into to reconfigure itself.

I now knew myself as a sociodramatist intimately involved in a cosmic drama located in diverse social systems. I knew these social systems were layered in complexity. Executive decisions were required as to what was critical to attend to, how to relate all and sundry and how to become a more effective social agent. I knew I myself needed continual remediating to maximise my social intelligence as I engaged in my social system's cultural development.

In respect to the future of humanity, I see sociodrama as a very young science. From an evolutionary perspective, species live on average some 400,000 years. We humans are but 40,000 years old. We have a while to go before becoming extinct from biological necessity. To prevent inadequate social relations causing premature morbidity our future social systems will need members with significant social intelligence. Such social intelligence must be sufficient to build durable relations. It can do so through undertaking requisite transformative social practices. From this perspective sociodrama has only just commenced laying the foundation for such capacity.

## ***Appreciation***

I am for ever indebted to Dr Max Clayton who has been a very significant trainer to me for more than 20 years and kept inspiring me during the times I thought working sociodramatically was a near impossible goal for me or anyone else. I remember walking into a room and meeting him for the first time and instantly recognising that here was someone who totally loved sociodramatic work and everyone with whom he was involved. He communicated through his body that he knew each of us are far more than a persona or a set of behaviours. We each at some deep level want to transform ourselves and become new all over again and make our social systems even better places in which to thrive.

My heart felt thanks goes to Chris Hosking who persistently provided loving training and supervision and so willingly shared her exquisite psychodramatic abilities with me over many years. She enabled me to appreciate personal development as a most valuable life long adventure. When I was all but walking away from the method she asked, 'what is the sociodramatic question?' and I was able to refocus my energy and see my way clear to writing this thesis.

I am truly grateful to the AANZPA community for providing both a robust culture in which to train and so many diverse people with which to experience the power of the method. These good companions continue to involve me in their professional work and in their personal lives. Long may the community's capacity to use the method continue enlarging.

## **THE TRANSFORMATIVE NATURE OF THE SOCIODRAMATIC METHOD**

Many occasions spring up in sociodramatist's daily life when they recognise they are all of a sudden in a social system and sociodrama principles apply right here and right now. Moments arise as if from nowhere when it becomes immediately obvious to the sociodramatist that a person and their social system are reaching out with increased effort to relate in a new way. A pathway opens up that is empowering both them and their social system to transform. The person and the social system in those moments are at one in being ready to work to make the social system develop better functioning for the system's sake as a whole. Not just to function better for them as an individual alone.

My vision is of me leading myself as I engage with others while they function as individuals creating cultures filled with spontaneous, generous and life-giving relations around the world. Having made vital relations our core vocation, we sociodramatists work as cultural creatives to sustain our societies as ever more meaningful places in which to live and ever more creative spaces in which to thrive. We spawn developmental experiences as nurseries capable of propagating learning cultures and social environments with capacity to sustain transformative relations. We seek to enable continuous learning communities that practice social system remediation intended for personal and social system's transformation.

This thesis pre-supposes a sociodramatist's natural habitat is a learning culture that is intent on sponsoring all it's inhabitants to self-author a culture rather than to just be subject to their parented culture. As such, it is written in the hope that readers are encouraged to learn more about, and involve their self more deeply in, social systems remediation as a personal and social development practice. It is hoped readers are encouraged to spontaneously enhance their development as cultural creatives day by day.

This thesis is consistent with Moreno's concept of sociatry, by which he meant social systems healing. It is also consistent with his idea of socionomy by which he meant world-wide social systems remediation practice. The thesis explicates sociodramatists extending their role as fully engaged and developmentally critical social remediators. They fully engage their self in social systems as complex and developmental phenomena. They develop an ever more expansive vision and identity as social remediators.

One facet of Moreno's genius is sponsoring sociodrama as action methods empowering groups to dramatically enact their transformative identity as it emerges in social systems in real time. Morenian spontaneous enactments overcome the performative contradiction created when social theory and social practice are treated as split entities.

For Moreno, sociodrama is more than using action methods so better social systems theory and social practice can be rationally deduced. It is acting spontaneously in the moment in real time so that, at some moment in time,

something comes out of nothing, which makes for a truly emergent wisdom making practice.

## LITERATURE SURVEY

Sociodrama literature is thin on the ground in respect to increasing capacity for sociodrama and it is even thinner in terms of elaborating theory related to increasing capacity. There is good reason for this. Sociodramatists have busied themselves with making psychodramatic action methods in respect to social systems immediately appealing and teachable and directly applicable and beneficial in relieving social need. Such is Peter Felix Kellerman's focus in his book, 'Sociodrama and Collective Trauma'. The book's content is given over to collective and generational trauma healed via appreciation of difference and diversity role training.

Sternberg and Garcia in their book 'Who's In Your Shoes?' explain sociodrama's strong foundations. They show it is a juxtaposition between the private and collective parts of roles (Sternberg and Garcia, 2000, p.119). They also identify creativity and spontaneity as co-actions. Creativity functioning as arch substance and spontaneity functioning as arch catalyst. Together they make group activity meaningful. (Ibid p.125) Their work illustrates that better aligning personal and social roles is therapeutic in the sense that disparity between the two is healed, reduced or is less traumatic.

In his book 'The Living Spirit of the Psychodramatic Method', Clayton characterises sociodrama's initial purpose is to 'create in each individual an experiential knowledge of their self in relationship to the essential nature of groups'... as social systems (Clayton, 2004, p. 213). He expands the purpose of sociodrama in Chapter 31 through demonstrating creating a group culture that is 'a co-operative style of life and learning'. The emphasis is on the individuals and the group co-operatively co-sharing the leadership as a learning culture where the curriculum is expanding role flexibility and functionality. Gratefully this culture now permeates the whole of Australian Aotearoa New Zealand Psychodrama Association (AANZPA) and as a result the Association's capacity for collective creativity and spontaneity is much increased.

There is a philosophical debate to be had on the use of the word creativity in the literature. There is no definitive distinction between the terms creativity and innovation. Invariably the term creativity is used when it would be more useful to sociodrama to use innovation. Doing so could convey the idea that the protagonist is intending to develop and increase their capacity for changing social functioning rather than just to create new and novel behaviour intended for their self alone. As a consequence, rather than the new action being intended as only a gesture, hand waving, towards the social system, it could be conveyed that the protagonist is intending to sponsor emergence of a new enduring and lasting social habit.

None of the literature this author has found links topics of an individual's social emotional development to autonomy and self authorship or to cognitive adult development, nor to social systems as culture as school. The works of Dr Robert Kegan and Dr Michael Basseches from the 1980s on 'self authorship' and dialectical thinking in adult development read in conjunction with J.L. Moreno's writings, greatly strengthen the link. So to does reading Dr Lev Vygotsky's 1930's work on developing social systems, as culture as school. We can also add to the list Otto Laske's 2008 inter-developmental consultations as described in 'Measuring Hidden Dimensions'. Together these resources are hugely relevant and significant steps in facilitating growth in complex social intelligence and supplementing Moreno's vision. They are seminal to any approach to increasing sociodrama's capacity through integrating the three great foci of psychology; behaviour, epistemology and cognition. Familiarity with these ideas fosters recognition and valuing interdisciplinary approaches and dialectic thought, as recently assembled by Dr Roy Bhaskar, as Critical Realism.

No doubt Moreno was a great dialectic thinker. He wove Space, Time, Reality (Experience) and Cosmos together as domains enabling a fuller and more dramatic engagement with the universe as a live engagement. Inferences to dialectic cognition are recognisable throughout his writing but are most explicit in the section on 'The Dialectic Character of Sociometry' (Moreno, 1993, p 82) when he emphasised the aboriginalness of science as a praxis.

In the literature there is typically no linking between psychodramatic technique and Subject Object Relations psychology. All psychodramatic techniques, including Role Reversal, Mirroring, Concretisation and Doubling, are consistent with Subject Object Relations psychology (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 191-193). As theory, Subject Object Relations psychology explains how psychodramatic techniques are effective in inducing identity in self and are effective in the development of knowing behaviour as the self acting autonomously. It explains differentiating self authorship as a necessary stage in creating greater capacity to be socially innovative and sociodramatic. Stronger links between Subject Object Relations psychology and Moreno's concept of psychodrama differentiating a Matrix of Identity is beneficial in explicating social remediation.

During a sociodrama any small increase in capacity is recognised and communicated by the protagonist re-cognising their self as experiencing greater cognitive fluidity and freedom of function. It is really important for the sociodrama producer-director to create a mutual relationship with the protagonist and clearly communicate about seeing the increased capacity for cognitive fluidity and function. It leads to the protagonist and others seeing the aspect of the protagonist, that is socially new, is now explicitly outed for all to see. This is fundamental to making the increased capacity a stable capability that the protagonist can celebrate.

This thesis is commensurate with many theses and journal articles published by AANZPA which emphasise the crucial nature of autonomy and of individuals creating desirable social systems. The exercise of autonomy, (in the sense of self interested individual and personal performance,) and

individuals creating and fostering lively desirable social systems are germane to good sociodrama work.

This thesis seeks to explicate how developmental interlocutors relate the emergence of an individual's autonomy to the cultivation of social systems that sanction autonomous behaviour. It highlights that, when an individual's autonomy relates well with social systems that sanction autonomous behaviour, then both the people and the systems acquire more soul.

In this thesis I refer to the term, requisite developmental social remediation. I use it to mean the constructive relations, between an individual's autonomy and their social systems that sanction the individual's autonomy. They are requisite in that it is as if they are especially made to be constructive. They are remediative in the sense that the relations enable progressive and durable transformation. Specialist terms such as these are explained further in the later section named, Further Clarification of Terms.

# THE SOCIODRAMATIST AT WORK (CLINICAL DISSERTATION)

## *Initial Encounters with Social Systems*

When a person is in a new and unfamiliar social situation, they can become sensitive to others' difference. Likewise, they can see the extent to which those they more easily fit in with, are different from any they do not so easily accommodate. In those moments the person is also more likely to see these new others as differently and uniquely cultured from their self. They may also see their own culture has uniquely shaped them in contrast to the cultural shaping any new others have undergone. It is, in those moments, as if our eyes are using new lenses which give extra perspective for observing just how powerful culture really is in forming each and every one of us.

If the person entering into the unfamiliar social system were to summon enough power to see a movie of their self, or take a helicopter view, they may see their self as a naive participant. They may even be able to track their feelings and ways of thinking while being so different. Intense feelings of shame of knowing so little or fear of being so ignorant might emerge. Then again, vulnerability about how to respond appropriately, fear of being seen to be an idiot and not knowing how to act in the situation might surface. Their thinking is likely to be clouded as they are unable to understand or reason why these new others have ways of thinking that are so different from theirs.

A sociodramatist while quarrying into a culture and having to make sense of seemingly nonsensical conversations is most likely to experience shame at being socially exposed and exceptional. In order to explore others' ways of living, a sociodramatist may be surprised to hear them self saying unexpected things, acting in ways they would not normally do and asking very different questions than usual.

These matters will be investigated and illustrated in the next section as I describe myself working as a sociodramatist. I describe myself as a sociodramatist working with progressively more complex social systems. I highlight recent experiences I have had when first encountering these social systems and how I initially responded, and I relay some learning pertinent to understanding sociodrama theory and practice as a way of appreciating how individuals and social systems develop.

## **A Social System as a Social Experience**

### ***Description of the event - A social system at a ski-resort***

Recently friends invited my wife and I to join them and their acquaintances for a long weekend at their ski chalet. Being the off season meant it would be an opportunity for non-crowded socialising and mountain trekking in fine weather.

On the drive up we all gathered at an exclusive winery for lunch. The dining room had been booked prior. We had it to ourselves and looked out over manicured gardens. The group conducted introductions over pre-lunch drinks and welcomed a couple just arrived back from overseas. Conversation immediately and enthusiastically launched into valorising trips and cruises. Having not travelled much in my life and certainly not recently, I immediately began to feel out of my league in giving myself over to more pleasure and less work. I began to wonder how I could relate in any way at all to any of those present when I was disinterested in seeing the purpose of life as purely pleasure seeking. The group seemed to have the value that unless one aspired to regular world trips one did not have proper priorities.

We had just driven through a rain shower and the conversation eventually changed to the weather. The theme of Australia being a vast continent with a diverse and unpredictable environment and climate scientists being ignorant in accurately predicting climate change quickly developed. I wondered if I should from the get-go draw the conclusion I was in the company of climate change deniers and I again felt inadequate as to how to begin constructive relations. That topic done and dusted, the group conversation turned to threats to life's golden years and maintaining standards of living costs during retirement. Clearly my living standards during retirement would be very different from the group's and by the time I retreated to the car park I was shamed and angry that I had been naive in accepting the invitation to socialise with this group. I found myself in two minds as to whether to continue to the chalet. There seemed little hope of reconciling or integrating theirs and my values, outlooks and shared vision for society. I fantasised a weekend where I wallowed in shame and self pity at having to live with so few like-minded companions. In such circumstances, how could I sustain involving myself with everyone in an open spirit?

### ***Discussion of the event – Making a cultural bridge***

A commonly experienced first challenge for a sociodramatist is to connect and make a cultural bridge between their self and others from an unfamiliar and different social system. Like my experience with the ski lodge crew, the challenge is to get involved with others who have determined to express a much different world view, for instance a different pleasure and work balance or work ethic.

## ***Exploring a social system***

Being intensely curious about the relation between social systems and people's disposition, the sociodrama practitioner warms their self up to objectively observing the social system and to objectively observing the members and sustaining non-judgemental exploration of who these persons are. They warm up to not letting their feelings of shame restrict them from making discoveries pertinent to how the social system perpetuates itself. While in the car park I steeled myself to build up areas of myself that would make for further sociodramatic engagement and deeper work. For instance I became determined to look for other's progressive roles.

## ***Continuing Description***

Once at the chalet I joined the others in admiring the view and the group vocalised that it was important nothing jeopardise their chalet's pristine wilderness view. Polite distance characterised the relations however, once one member produced an acoustic guitar and strummed some tunes, I was able to join others in singing and my participation was welcomed. Fun and familiarity pervaded relations before we retired. I had let slip I had recently attended conferences and next day the guitarist cornered me to find out what my interest was. The more I shared the more he became interested and others joined in the discussion. In an open discussion I interviewed them as to what they would explore if they were to do research. Intimate spaces materialized. During our treks to the summit and mountain circuits we supported and challenged each other's physical endurances and social skills. Scrabble and singing again pervaded the next evening. I was invited to explain big words like ontology and metaphysics and thermodynamics as it may relate to global warming. I had a sense that as I continued to engage I was being accepted into the group more and that our interactions were developing warm and playful roles and mutual and reciprocal relations. My shame was replaced by mutual respectful companionship. We each were individuals doing our best to experience pleasure in making sense of our existence and in respecting others. Hugs and kisses were exchanged as we departed and regrets expressed that we were not staying on and deepening our relations work and clarity emerged that we had potential to further un-pack our stance around concerns for status.

## ***Discussion***

Simple as this story is, it surfaces salient points for the sociodramatist to savour. It is important the sociodramatist is seen to be learning as much, if not more, about the social system and exploring alternatives for the social system than the members. The sociodramatist is most curious to discover a social system's points of difference and fiercely attends to difference as means of understanding how our different cultures have authored us in different ways. It is just the way life is that we connect despite and through our differences. In addition a sociodramatist understands and uses dialogue in a unique way. They use dialogue to create greater capacity for relating. I expand these

points further in later sections as I explicate a developmental approach when practicing sociodrama.

## **A Social System as a Conflicted Group**

### ***Description of the event - Involvement in an academic faculty***

Imagine, if you will, an instance where you inadvertently have walked into a group in conflict. It's a social system with deep division. Is your first inclination to side with one adversary over the other or is it to seek to mediate? An issue for the sociodramatist as social systems specialist is how to research the nature of such divisions and whether to be seen by the adversaries as buying into the conflict or being conflict avoidant.

Two years ago a colleague emailed me an invitation to join a professional development group that included participants from diverse academic faculties and professions. The purpose was to engage in discourse about complex processes and develop inter-disciplinary appreciation and a holistic vision for education. I joined in great excitement. Various topics were pursued including; nature and democracy, choosing resilient futures, valid forms of reasoning, and liberal arts juxtaposed with technical expertise. I regularly attended the group and enthusiastically engaged in the discussions and was then invited to present a paper under the topic of mind and neuroscience. Although I am academically under qualified for the topic I eagerly accepted the challenge and felt proud to be deemed worthy of making a larger contribution in such an esteemed group. My elation soon turned to dismay and fear when during the first two sessions the presenters opined a strong theme attacking the university administration. It became evident the group was very disappointed with the administration's approach to education, particularly as it related to limiting faculty tenure and breadth of curriculum. The group's discourse had rapidly narrowed to a single sided debate defending liberal education against profit orientated administrators. I felt pressured to join with university staff in pillorying the administrators and curriculum designers as being intellectually narrow and ethically deficient. My options seemed very few. Should I align with one side or the other or opt for mediating between the warring parties? Did I have other options than disengaging from the debate and retreating into abstract theory. I fantasised the group had regressed into a fight and flight dynamic and was split between either lauding me as, true warrior against, or reactionary in the oppressor's favour, or retreating with me into abstract intellectualisation on a now immaterial topic.

### ***Discussion of the conflicted social system – systems analyst***

A common experience for a sociodramatist when first involving their self in a social system, which is conflicted, is to feel its members deep pain. When this occurs the challenge that comes up is to stay connected and relate to the system as a whole. This challenge for the sociodramatist is to deal with their own inner conflict when being pulled between this and that person or argument and not to submit to feeling dismayed that there is no apparent and immediate satisfactory solution. In those moments the sociodramatist

appreciates that there is not just difference in the group but also real angst and investment in difference. While preparing my presentation I steeled myself to highlight social systems systemic nature. To emphasise that broader society has social systems within social systems and that there are better ways to deepen engagement than by continuing conflict.

### ***Continuing Description***

In my presentation I emphasised inter-developmental systems thinking; particularly relations between behavioural, social emotional and cognitive psychologies and that privileging one subgroup against the other skews understanding. A manager cutting their company costs is in no way indicating their true motivation, behavioural, social emotional or cognitive or developmental level that they are acting on. For example, were they other-dependant, or self-authoring? Were they using mechanistic cause-effect logic or abductive and dialectic reasoning as they reduced expenses? I explained and advocated for developmental assessments to more accurately analyse such situations and conduct a more open investigation than does an axiological or Marxist approach and I tried to sponsor a greater dialogical interaction. As a consequence the group became motivated for more complex forms of understanding and engaging with administrators though they were no less angry.

### ***Discussion***

Clearly having a systems approach to conflict is crucial for the sociodramatist. It enables the conflict dynamics to be re-aligned and new stability to be sought without denying forces that generate conflict. The sociodramatist is pursuing more than just any different gestalt as cessation of conflict. The sociodramatist seeks social remediation that makes for greater social sustainability and that calls for explicating greater understanding of development. In later sections in this document I particularly focus on the importance of delving into human development as a complex developmental phenomenon.

## **A Social System with A Life All Its Own**

### ***Description of the event:***

#### ***An open community group social system***

For the last eight years I had helped convene and moderate a philosophy Meet-up community group that meets in the evening once a month in a library. The group had a history of valuing open group processing and advertised itself as conducting open discussion on the theme of integrating knowledge and practices. Their approach was the opposite of partial perspective taking and fragmentary approaches to living. The group had open membership and over the time various characters had come and gone while a small core group of attendees remained. From time to time the group had sponsored workshops and group body-mind and meditation type sessions as extra

activities and various leaders had been chosen to facilitate those. The social system seemed to self perpetuate and have a life all its own.

In the last three months a small group of new attendees had attended. They opined that the group seemed leaderless and lacked direction and was under-achieving. One announced he would be providing leadership to meet the unmet group needs and said he had canvassed numbers from within the group to support his initiative in changing the way the group worked.

### ***Description - Research and direct engagement***

I decided for my own rather than group purposes to converse with him outside group time as to how serious he was and what were his motivations. After a brief talk we decided to continue the discussion via email and then meet together again. In the emails I received conflicting messages.

#### **On leadership**

“I have less than zero desire to be seen as so called leader, or be a leader in any way or form.”

“As a certified coach my position in groups is to bring to the group what is needed, and skilfully deliver insight.”

#### **On methodology**

“It took me a while to get out of my own ego and absorption.... and not to intellectually dominate others.”

“What is really needed is awareness via ruthless compassion....in order to serve that individual.”

#### **On group perspective**

“It is my assessment that the gap between theory and practice has become too large in the group.... so my position is to more fully inform how "WE" do what we do”.

“My personal belief and my feeling around the group is that the way in which the group is held and run no longer sits in service to those in it...”. “So in being really honest I see a group that is stuck in its current way all too happily unaware of how that current way actually profoundly counteracts the purpose for which it is bought together... Shadow”.

Taking this in, I was sheer aghast. After that my emotional response was fear and exasperation. It was evident he was serious and determined to change me and the group’s culture according to his perspective alone.

### ***Continued Description***

I alarmingly queried, “How could a certified human development practitioner be so unaware of the contradictions between their own functioning and good open group process?” I had in mind that he may be taking a superior position in relation to the other group members and also be divided within himself and I pondered whether he should be blocked from further attending the group. I decided to continue a dialogue with him and debated with myself, “Should I

make the group temporarily closed in order to save it's long term open functioning?"

I took time to reflect further on the situation and asked myself the following questions. "Should I take another tack and focus on enabling the challenger or increasing the group's capacity to remain open?" I took time to reflect on the basic assumptions of group as discussed by W.R. Bion. (Clayton, 1989, p.23) Was the group looking for safety from a leader or was it oriented in some other way? What was motivating the group members, what was blocking the expression they wished to express, and what were the solutions that the group had expressed? How could I best enable individual's self-authoring and avoid cultish type group-think when processing the group's leadership issue and at the same time not fragment the group?

### ***Discussion of the event: Courageously dealing with personal antagonism***

When encountering a group with robust dynamics and leadership conflicts it is to be expected the sociodramatist will experience terror from loss of control and fear from not being able to prevent their self or others being attacked or becoming attackers. I have noticed that group leaders quite often become incensed that a group at one moment will be experiencing safety and then rapidly change and become unsafe. Group members also frequently become fearful of taking responsibility for their own behaviour and how the group as a social system functions.

The challenge for the sociodramatist is to deal with their personal fears of feeling unsafe and summon the necessary courage to persevere with making group interventions. While preparing to respond I focussed on being open to different ways to proceed and recalled times in the past when I had been courageous and what that was like.

### ***Continuing Description***

When another group member than the one referred to above volunteered to present a report that would have implications for designing and scheduling future programs, I invited everyone in the group, including the protagonist who would be leader, to have a preliminary discussion and brainstorm on how to enable new ideas to be included in the group functioning and accept expressions from all those keen to offer leadership. During the discussion I referred to the work of Bion and suggested that his view of basic assumption behaviour would assist the group to understand how to bring about a more open group process. I confronted the would be leader with my understanding that his statements were contradictory and explained how non-dependent and open ways of expressing himself would be more congruent and authentic for me and how this would counter dependency issues. The group members then engaged in discussion. The group took on the work of clarifying how best to process programs in contrast to vetting program content and expressed desire to engage more with society in general. Consequently the group became less proselytising. The group was becoming more receptive to

attending to a self-authoring approach to making sense of itself when processing the group's leadership issue and less focussed on any one individual's ideas. The group retained a life 'all its own' and was not dependent on any leader.

## ***Reflexivity***

I have observed a general tendency for a person to be challenged by their initial contact with the prevailing culture. A person sometimes experiences being in over their head. It is the primary work of a sociodramatist to enable people to at least get their heads above water, to become reflexive in their position to the social system in which they live. In this regard Moreno's emphasis on Mirroring is particularly salient. To a person, in conflict in and with their social system, having the system accurately mirrored back to them is a powerfully reflexive experience and one generative of greater role flexibility. I expand on the value of Mirroring further in the Section titled 'Social Therapeutic Intervention in respect to the Paradox Workshop'.

## **A Social System Under Pressure**

### ***Description of the event - negotiating corporate contracts***

Economic downturn had once again descended on the infrastructure industry in Australia. As I contract to design and construct companies I was directly affected. I had less need to frequent company premises and worked more and more from my home office, although I eventually negotiated a new contract to start on a particular Monday. I heard twelve worthy managers and brilliant engineers had been retrenched the previous Friday and so was not surprised that on the Monday the staff had mixed reactions to me starting work back in the main office. Some were grieving losing good colleagues; others were really demoralised and still others relieved to survive and sceptical of future corporate life. I got cornered in the office kitchen by four staff members and felt impelled to have an elevator pitch to explain my identity and how come I was there. Was I a grief and loss counsellor, a company plant and a threat, an innovative colleague or just a lucky customer? I was overwhelmed having to generate viable explanations.

### ***Discussion of the event – setting a context and process***

Each social system is not only a complex entity in itself but it exists within a greater complex whole system that is in turn a sub-system of an even greater complex social system. The sociodramatist has to choose how much of the whole system to bite off when engaging and remediating with clients.

In the corporate kitchen I was given choice as to what to give attention to. Should I focus on personal issues; theirs and mine as victims or victors? Should I focus on ways for making sense of our socio-economic and socio-political systems? Should I explicate life being one big bold experiment to be lived in a complex indeterminate system?

Understandably, fears surface of the sociodramatist losing their identity as they regularly unexpectedly encounter new and diverse social systems. Sociodrama requires the director to reverse role with social system members and it is especially challenging when social system members are losing their social and professional identity. It is personally very challenging work to have to constantly reaffirm the identity of sociodramatist. To train myself for such a tendency I regularly reflect that my identity as sociodramatist is one I have actively chosen and at the same time an identity that seems both inside and outside the system and at once impersonal and personal. Such experiences remind us we are each not only different, likely to be in conflict and in a social system with a life all its own but that our identities are in constant flux.

### ***Continuing Description***

During the discussion with the concerned professionals in the corporate kitchen I sponsored myself as a sociodramatist who, if invited, could hang in for a long haul. I presented myself as willingly in undertaking futures oriented action enquiry and executive role training and coaching oriented for more adequate responses to emergent economic and socio-political systems and not abandon them like the corporation would. I highlighted myself as an executive coach enabling professionals to both develop their self and their professional groups so as to develop new forms of industrial democracy in the long term. The concerned professionals' response was, 'how do we know we can trust you?' The sociodramatist needs to be clear they are totally emotionally trust-worthy and able to deliver what they promise and this means to put realistic and clear boundaries on the scope of work to be undertaken.

### **A Social System With Perplexed Identity**

#### ***Description of the event - Chaplaincy reference group***

Two years ago I saw an invitation to join a university chaplaincy reference group and immediately applied as I thought I could contribute to expanding the vision of student chaplaincy and enhance relations between the traditional faiths and the sixteen different religious orders of chaplaincy represented at universities. I rapidly became frustrated with the work. Time was consumed with funding applications and designing position descriptions and work plans and recruiting chaplains and no time was allocated to discussing a vision and mission statement for ecumenical chaplaincy. The term itself is anachronistic; it literally simply means ecclesiastic liaison to noble family.

Others on the committee seemed either too busy or unwilling to stop and reflect on the complexity of the work. The most supplementary approach for me to take seemed to exercise untold patience while opting for open-ended enquiry; to work to sustain good group process while waiting to see what transpired, all the while waiting for any small opportunity to arise for providing generic relations role training; to accept the situation as one best suited to endless open-ended enquiry and eschew strategising and outcome expectations. The fact that students more and more see traditional and formal religion as irrelevant seemed an issue too big to address. I asked myself,

'should I accept the status quo, challenge the system or resign from the committee?' I fantasised a retreat or location and scenery change would be necessary to change the group's culture.

### ***Discussion of the event:***

#### ***A social system with in-determinate future***

Some social systems experience their identity challenged by the more extant culture. They are challenged by the broader society to adapt in some way or be seen as increasingly irrelevant and ignored. If such social systems are slow to change it is not the sociodramatist's role to initiate change for the sake of change.

Patient enquiry may be needed to enable the social system to become more reflexive and to make new meaning for its self. It is a challenge for the sociodramatist to deal with their own frustration when not seeing progress and to not project their anxiety on the client group's social system. The sociodramatist is more concerned with increasing capacity to relate to the more extant social system and culture than crafting new social identity. I focussed on remaining non-attached to achievement and to wait and see what emerged.

### ***Continuing Description***

Unexpectedly funding became available and a new position was created for chaplaincy co-ordinator. I took the opportunity to meet with the appointee and to interview him as to how best to engage in discourse about strengthening relations with the extant social system.

Now that we have looked at five examples of social systems and each increasing in complexity, it is possible to look with more focus at a particular example of developmental social remediation and use of a specific interlocutor as it relates to layered social complexity.

## **Example of Sociodramatic Work in a Group Workshop**

Having approached sociodrama from the broad perspective of engaging social systems generally, let us now look from the more focussed vantage point of sociodrama as a group workshop intended as appropriately targeting developmental social remediation.

### **Sociodrama Workshop with the Theme of Using Paradox**

Recently I became involved with an author who had written a critically acclaimed academic book on the parables and sayings of Jesus. His thesis is that Jesus was a deeply paradoxical thinker intent on communicating that life is inherently vexatious while anyone tries to make sense and meaning of living. Contradictions abound and it as if, to use the author's term, life is an improbable riot with paradox in our lives acting as barriers to means of transformation. The author proposes that Jesus used paradox to teach how to skilfully make sense of what would otherwise be nonsensical situations. I thought this theme was an excellent basis for sociodrama and I conducted a three-hour workshop with seven attendees engaging in enactments.

I commenced by outlining the carefully thought out plan I had crafted to assist the group to warm up and develop a unified focus to life as full of paradox. I introduced Jesus saying, 'the first will be last and the last will be first' and the story of the prodigal son where the younger wayward son is reconciled to his father while the loyal elder son loses spontaneity and becomes resentful and remote from his father. I then framed the Sociodramatic Question as: "How can we best take into account our relations as paradoxical, while we decide what we do next and with whom?"

I concentrated on being an inclusive bridge builder between each participant. Once the group had welcomed and warmed up to the author and the theme and as the author was very warmed up to presenting his ideas, I directed him in enacting the paradoxes in the prodigal son story; both the paradox of each son and the paradox of the father in exchanging good relations between his sons but not having open and good relations with both at the same time. The enactments were followed by a sharing session and then an intermission. The following samplings are group members' recollections of the sharing. Auxiliary #1

I was chosen to play the role of the prodigal son when he was recognising his prodigal ways and wanting to return home. As an auxiliary and group member I pondered the question, 'which son was better equipped to deal with life after experiencing their life journey?' I was helped to realise that the ostracism and subsequent struggles I experienced with my family have paradoxically made me socially and emotionally stronger than other members of my family. I remember the sharing as full and deep and I felt a great satisfaction with exploring the prodigal son's story as overlapping my own story in several ways.

#### **Auxiliary #2**

I realised the time my daughter died was a paradox in that, having been estranged, just before the time of her death she came back into my life and she

contributed to my freedom and wealth by dying. She had just been left some money so in dying she emotionally and monetarily... killed the fatted calf for me!

I identified with being the young pre prodigal squandering my resources with an invulnerable sense of abundance, launching out into the unknown adventures of life. At different times I had empathy and identification with the good son and then a recoiling from his twisted bitter sense of self righteousness. I learned that time and connection are often collateral innocents once pride, expectation and assumption prevails. Paradoxically, time and connection can be retrieved through the magic of self reflection, felt experience and psychodrama.

### Auxiliary #3

At first I was negative of the dutiful son as a bit of a tight arse who needed more generosity and the prodigal as a recidivist and the father as unable to adopt some tough love boundaries. Then later I warmed to the dinkum prodigal as contributing a lot of life to the family having gone through the maelstrom and taken life lessons to heart. I came to see him as a source of wise guidance for those who never ventured as he had done and someone able to better differentiate some aspects of their society to the benefit of all. The prodigal would bring some important non-material enrichment and it is little wonder his daddy celebrated welcoming him back.

After the intermission I coached the group to ponder how paradox played out directly in their life and one group member warmed up to being caught up in divergent views on global warming and economic consequences of climate change. All the other group members readily identified with making sense of global warming as vexatious and I then directed him in a drama with him responding to paradox as the purpose, while engaging with the realities associated with global warming and climate change.

The group protagonist concretised a palaeontologist, meteorologist, economist, global warming denier and multi-media journalist on the stage and enacted the dilemma of holding multiple perspectives intent on not creating like-minded-ness nor being like-principled.

From a Mirror position the protagonist became aware it was patently obvious to all auxiliaries the system was dysfunctional. He then became less anxious as he accepted me supporting him in acknowledging all the characters on the stage formed a system that was without coherent vision, assumptions, ways of working and motivations when relating to the problem. He and I agreed to agree, the stage setting was a good example of a vexatious and paradoxical case.

He then accepted he needed to take responsibility for being less anxious at this moment; even though the system determined to stay problematic. He and I together resolved for the meantime to remain open to new ways of thinking while staying genuinely vexed to what the future of environmental climate might be.

After further directing took place the session concluded with the group, seated in a circle, doing group sharing and then we all completed the following sentences.

I am more aware of the paradoxes in my life when...

I am more aware of the paradoxes in my life as barrier, vexation and means of transformation when...

I am more aware of the complexity of my social and personal identity as “the riot of the improbable” when...

I am more aware of paradox as a means of skill-full means to me being open & requiring faith when...

If I were more like this more often...

I am more likely to become more self-authoring as and when....

The world works best when....

## **Discussion of the workshop**

Once each group member had reflected on experiencing global warming and climate change as an example of life presenting itself, as both a critical and complex occurrence filled with paradox, they were able to articulate intending to live with deeper knowledge and understanding how to practice developmental sense making, as skilful means in living a more spontaneous and meaningful life.

One participant marvelled out loud at how ironic it was that they often fantasised what they would do after winning millions of dollars in Lotto. In doing so they were reflecting on the fact that in their day to day life they acted unimaginatively and were very reserved when punting on their life choices. They seemed to be integrating the brothers in the Prodigal Son story as their auxiliaries; too sparing or too extravagant. Another group member saw as paradoxical that, as she had recently risked transition to a new and more difficult job, she both accepted more responsibility and achieved being more innovative. Yet another group member shared how paradoxical it was for her that the more resilient she had recently become as a result of becoming a single person again, then the more she enjoyed reconnecting with an estranged neighbour.

It seemed a paradox to me that the more I prepared and directed and produced sociodrama with developmental structure in mind, then the more I was able to be impromptu with individual group members. My engagement continued even as unstructured moments spontaneously emerged. Saying this another way, the more confident I was in being fluid in my relations with a person, then in that moment the more confident and flexible they were in relating to me as someone who understood development is a natural process endemic to us all.

Working sociodramatists gain much through being able to construct challenging workshops that relate clearly how we make sense of our social systems and at the same time remaining very flexible in responding to how each participant engages with what arises within them.

Sociodrama workshops can relate to social systems having various amounts of complexity as per the examples previously cited; ones pertaining either to general difference, conflict, open groups, embedded social systems or perplexed identity. The paradox workshop seems to relate more to perplexed identity and relating inter-penetrating systems when each has different validity mechanisms.

The sociodramatist knows that switching (for example) from dichotomous to paradoxical thought engenders increasing capacity to relate what was previously thought only possible as oppositional. To explicate this more let's delve into the Paradox workshop and see how the mind opening questions and group sentence completions worked together with interlocutors enabling developmental social remediation.

## ***Social Therapeutic Intervention in respect to the Paradox Workshop***

As I directed the Paradox Sociodrama I observed the protagonist enacting good manners when engaging with the social system's auxiliaries and I concluded being respectful of social role was important to him. Being polite and explaining what is expected of you and explaining well what you want from the social environment typified his coping role as model citizen advocating adherence to model citizenship practices.

At the same time he felt unsure how stable he and others and the world are social emotionally. It was as though there was disconnection between polite engagement and how the actors really felt and acted for their self and towards each other. The actors were not only resolutely concerned about how others viewed their own value and direction and worth and capability, they were uncertain to the point of being distrustful of each other, and as a consequence stayed focussed on unceasingly and incessantly and patently explaining and self validating their professional stance in the world.

He could not see how anyone of the auxiliaries could be more self authoring without becoming more self opinionated. He feared more self authorship would make them conceited and therefore was stuck in the bind of each auxiliary having to re-validate their stance. Consequently even though they were all highly motivated and energetic they got tired of the struggle to constantly play the validating game. They reached the point of becoming sad not to be recognised as having instantly recognisable worthy values and making judgements that were, at once, credible and trustworthy in others' eyes.

I noticed the protagonist was able to function both critically and constructively. He was analytical and focussed on the palaeontologist, meteorologist, economist, global warming denier and multi-media journalist as each bounded by their social context. He also recognised each was involved in their discipline's process. Their attention to analysing, however, was at the expense of and inhibited constructing robust relations.

## **Remediation Engagement**

### ***Use of the Mirror Technique***

Once the system was firmly established as stuck and non-progressive, I asked the protagonist to stand in Mirror position and to view the system enacted and to observe what he saw. He saw isolated and non-relational experts who were not relating to one another.

### ***As interlocutor .....***

I stated the interlocutor's function was both to keep the dialoguing going between the auxiliaries and to think the future is ours to construct at least as much as it is to be constructed for us. In such circumstances, the interlocutor is better analysing and encouraging all parties to probe for and trial new and thoughtful relations rather than yielding self serving advice.

### ***As developmentalist....***

I asked the protagonist, when in the role of each auxiliary, to re-engage and experience getting the auxiliary's values authoritatively validated by the others. I advocated each auxiliary could satisfy for their self whether the other auxiliary really needed him to explain his value, direction, worth and capability for their own reasons or whether they wished him to clarify these things for his benefit alone. When this directive was completed it was clearer for him when it was the other auxiliary's issue or when it was, for example, the protagonist's vexation in the meteorologist's role. An agreed and credible validation process was also established for each exchange.

With the Mirror technique once again deployed, I interviewed the protagonist for role and he affirmed himself as someone who has, over two decades, done hard yards in developing their self professionally as a valid reflective judge.

The second part of my therapeutic intervention was to deploy the following questions as attempts at mind opening.

What would a more workable theory of validation have to account for in saying what is required here?

How are your attempts at validating here related to similar efforts by other professionals you know?

Would this validation process have an ever-greater impact if you were to relate it to decisions made in other parts of your life?

What might be these validations' common cultural denominator?

What would you say is the overriding relationship that makes these validations what they are?

These questions were inspired by Dr Otto Laske's dialectic Thought Forms as Mind Openers tabled in his book titled Hidden Dimensions of Human Systems (Laske, 2008, p. 610). Using them is intended to create dialogue between the producer and the protagonist as interlocutor for grounding increased capacity and concretising cognitive capability.

### **Remediation Check**

At this point I asked the protagonist to state the likely costs of using unvalidated expectations as typified in the previously stuck system. I then asked him to state gains he got as he accessed the validated and more relational system. The protagonist said that when he related to the auxiliaries and took a

punt at developing more differentiated validation criteria, he sensed he was being more autonomous. He also said that in the less relational social system he felt less directly engaged with others as they made their validations.

Making such a clear statement is evidence he may have now embedded the ability to transform more complex forms of validation into himself, while he makes more sense of global warming and climate change.

### **Doing the Sentence Completion Exercise**

Completing such sentences as;

I am more aware of the paradoxes in my life when...

I am more aware of the paradoxes in my life as barrier, vexation and means of transformation when...

enabled the group to appropriate its protagonist as a person who is now abductively integrating learning about paradox into his life. The group was able to see that when the world was viewed as filled with more paradox then there was less need to see the world as full of dichotomy and systems that necessarily oppose one another. The group benefited from seeing itself as a developmental social system.

# IMPLICATIONS FOR THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF SOCIODRAMA

We have looked at examples of sociodramatic work targeted at personal, group and social systems development when social systems are acknowledged as complex. We are now better prepared to discuss implications of sociodrama as developmental praxis. Let's focus in particular on refining interlocutors that sponsor developmental social remediation.

## ***Social Systems Cultures as Classrooms of Requisite Development***

Let's begin by reiterating the conclusions deduced via the following statements.

Social systems by nature are open and developing. To avoid premature social death their inhabitants must make significant adaptations all through their life. Social systems and adult development hang together from the same branch on the tree of life.

Social systems are organised with various degrees of complexity, and subsequently, knowing how to adapt to degrees of complexity is itself a complex process.

Complex adaptation requires complexity intelligence. Complexity intelligence is an amalgam of embodied, emotional, intellectual, cognitive and social intelligences. Using sociodrama to encounter social systems encountering social systems as complex entities enables us to better experience and work with all intelligences at the same time.

Given that we are challenged to continuously adapt to social systems it is best we attempt to make adaptations that are both therapeutic and developmental.

Therapeutic adaptations make for protagonist's ease of functioning in a social system as it currently operates. The protagonist adapts to the complexity of the social system (stable as it is) and in doing so acquires complexity intelligence and social skill more equivocally (and more easily accommodated) to the social system.

Developmental adaptations are attempts to adapt to the fact the social system itself is anticipating (is in the process of developing to) a higher form of complex functioning. An example of this is a group changing its worldview from being about conflict to being about peer to peer self governance. In doing so the group steps up a level of complexity in respect to views about governance. A similar increase in social complexity occurred when society transitioned from monarchic to democratic rule and being parliamentary. Another example is a group changing from being under pressure from a more extant social identity to becoming a group that has itself more capacity (flexibility) for extant social identity. Each of the five presentations about 'Initial

Encounters' at the start of the thesis, when compared with the previous one, accounts as an increase in complexity in respect to social identity.

Developmental adaptation is consistent with founding sociologist Erving Goffman's understanding of psychodrama as 'anticipatory socialisation'. Anticipatory socialisation as developmental adaptations requires increased spontaneity and this is recognisable and measurable as an increase in cognitive fluidity. For developmental adaptation to occur a greater level of social organisation (order) has to be requisitioned and this means being able to configure, juggle and balance more complex relations at the same time.

The conclusion of this thesis's deductive logic is captured in the following statement. Social systems cultures are classrooms with curriculum that requisition social adaptations anticipating social system development. In the classroom, requisite social development is recognisable as degrees of cognitive fluidity and complexity intelligence as evidenced in dialectic discourse.

In psychodrama literature the subject of development as anticipatory social adaptation comes under the purview of role theory, and we can now clarify how role analysis relates to social organisation complexity via degrees of cognitive fluidity. When reading the following section it's best at the outset to issue a warning. Deductive reasoning is totally inadequate when relating role analysis and cognitive fluidity. The relations of role analysis and cognitive fluidity are arrived at only by abductive reasoning and not by a process of deduction because both emergent social systems and the future are open entities.

Let's now take a closer look at role theory as it relates to development as anticipatory social adaptation.

## ***Role Theory and Role Analysis***

Moreno invented sociometry as calibrations of protagonists' tele in any particular social system, as a map of social order. The tele of individuals' somatic, psychodramatic and social roles can be measured to see how they align with others to order social systems. Lynette and Max Clayton follow Karen Horney's lead when formulating Role Analyses and schematise individual's roles as gestalts that are typically Coping, Fragmentary and Progressive. Collating all or part of a social system members' somatic, psychodramatic and social roles with Coping, Fragmentary and Progressive analyses means we end up with an array of roles and analyses as a map of social order. Such an array enables protagonists to better align their map of their social system with their individual functioning. Social system's sociometric and role analysis enables interlocutors to examine correlations with assessments of self authorship and cognitive fluidity as requisite of complex social development.

AANZPA Sociodrama Theses and Journal Articles rightfully and typically focus on therapeutic interventions. The distinctive psychodramatic role descriptions and protagonist's social roles and sociometry role analyses demonstrate the protagonist's social remediation and how these both effect

and affect social system culture. The importance of coaching for role flexibility has been a consistent theme in demonstrating how social remediation can be therapeutic. It is hoped you, dear reader, find the self authoring and dialectic discourse helpful when intuiting therapeutic role description and role analysis.

Regretfully, space here does not permit me to further expand and demonstrate the full value I gained from psychodramatic role analysis when directing the Paradox Workshop. In writing this thesis I have tried to describe myself seeing role theory both supplementing and complementing designing good developmental interlocutors.

In concluding this section on the function developmental interlocutor have for role theory and role analysis and at the risk of repeating myself, I emphasise the following. Because social systems develop dialectically, all effort should be taken to make the work abductive, and not at all deductive. Nor is it proper that role analysis be simplified to apply operationalised dialectic thought forms in a straightforward way.

The director-producer and protagonist may well work together to make a protagonist centred sociodrama, and arrive at consensus as to the drama being therapeutic. The director-producer and protagonist may also work together to make a protagonist centred sociodrama requisite in respect to developmental adaptation. However there is a more salient question to be asked. The more salient question is, 'how can we best engage a group to work at anticipating developmental adaptation as a culture?'

This thesis proposes it is efficacious to expand sociodrama's sharing phase and include a group discourse about complexity. The thesis proposes that conducting sentence completion exercises, as mind opening, prompts for greater cognitive fluidity. The greater cognitive fluidity is anticipatory of greater complexity intelligence. Relating the group's sociodramatic work to dialectic thought forms as mind openers creates anticipation for social development. As they complete their sentences, group members can spark off one another and create a group worldview in respect to anticipating developmental discourse. The resulting complexity intelligence is necessary for, but not necessarily sufficient for, developmentally transforming the group's social discourse about social system development. At the end of the workshop each group participant takes their anticipations away with them and has opportunity to apply them in their life.

## **FURTHER CLARIFICATION OF TERMS**

This thesis includes many terms that have dense meaning and may be new to AANZPA readers. In the following section I give a more descriptive account of how terms have been used and make the thesis easy to appropriate.

### **Development**

Initially we each are very much a child of our time and place. A culture initially claims its members minds and souls. Our culture develops us as much as we develop our own self. To research self authorship, it is important to strengthen warm-up to 'culture' and to stay strongly warmed-up to the formative 'cultural frames of mind' the group members have acquired. To focus myself on this fact I attend to the following questions; do we have this culture or does this culture have us? In other words, is the culture 'authoring' the group's protagonist and the group and / or is the group's protagonist and group self authoring a new group culture?

Sociodrama is classically a protagonist self-authoring in respect to their broader social culture with implications for self-authoring their self in their familial culture. Psychodrama on the other hand is classically a protagonist self-authoring in respect to their self as an individual in their familial culture with implications for broader social self-authoring; two sides of the one coin.

A person caught between being a subject of their given culture and a self-author of their self-determined culture is typically conflicted with respect to their own values, direction, worth and capability as the individual they really are.

During the Paradox Workshop I was able to facilitate the group in accepting paradox as a more productive reference than dichotomy when engaging with complex systems. They became comfortable with paradox schooling sufficient learning to be requisite in respect to their self development by their self. They were self authors while at the same time recognising they were in over their heads in a complex social system and developmental habitat. The protagonist was able to see himself as subject to the complex business of global warming and climate change and that creating a more nuanced approach enabled him to be more self accepting when diverse validation criteria were active.

The dilemma of culture and social systems as a curriculum with infinitely diverse learning possibility becomes much more manageable when we focus on the purpose of each of us learning about development.

## **Naïve Enquiry and the Sociodramatic Question**

Sociodrama can be defined as the enactment that takes place in the course of answering three of life's crucial questions.

As a person who is developing, what shall I do next in my place in the world and with whom shall I do it?

As a person who is developing, what can I do now I have decided what to do next and where and with whom?

As a person who is developing, having begun to act, how am I going while doing this right now?

The sociodramatist, having realised they and others in a first encounter with a social system are in over their heads in that culture and have commenced encountering the; stances to life, social habits, values and preferred approaches, is prepared to explore those broad questions.

At those times I warm myself up to interviewing others in a very natural way using naive questions. I aim to be open to my thoughts and emotions and to share those truthfully to become transparent so others can see them. I check that in others assessment I am cognitively and emotionally trustworthy. I wish with genuine curiosity to un-obtrusively find things out. Like; how come the group formed, how the group is motivated, what values members prefer and the hopes and expectations each has. My aim is to uncover and appreciate the expectations behind and beneath any particular stance in the world. An example of stance in the world would be a clash of values as in axiology, between, for example, preference for large or small cars or seeing this or that genre of movie. Identifying a stance in the world brings to the foreground of my attention sociodrama as the relations of respective artefacts and the dynamics in the culture; the dynamics and tensions constantly wrought when citizens choose and make day to day decisions in fashioning their contemporaneous culture.

In hearing the answers to the crucial questions about 'my place' and 'my activity', I sustain warming myself up as a sociometrist who is able to Double the client as one who has both positive or negative tele to their self and various others and artefacts. I imagine myself as someone in someone else's skin deciding what is my current capability and what are my limitations and who in this social system, for example, are now my colleagues and who are my competitors.

Naïve enquiry is a door for accessing the protagonist's social system and involving me with the protagonist as an insider in the social system making choices and in determining stances in respect to how to self-author who they are. This engages me as their accurate friendly companion who can possibly lead towards greater self-authorship and greater degrees of personal freedom. The protagonist and I can then establish boundaries as to when and how our relations can be more or less mutual and non-mutual in respect to their attempts to become more self-authoring.

An example of this is a sociodramatist feeling what it was like for their protagonist to negotiate a new contract and being conflicted and unsure about

their own values, direction, worth and capability. The sociodramatist coaches the protagonist to accept it is okay to not fully know what future the contract holds for her. The sociodramatist assures her that what is needed is for her to stay open to working at what; values, direction, worth and capability might emerge as her own while fulfilling the contract.

Naïve enquiry as interviewing ‘for’ role and ‘of’ role is presented thoroughly by Clayton in Chapter 16 of his book *The Living Spirit of the Psychodramatic Method* (Clayton, 2004, p.170 ff.). The import of Naïve Enquiry to this thesis is that it is hugely important in assisting the protagonist to enter the world of what is initially perceived as outside the protagonist and against them. Naïve enquiry enables the producer and protagonist to co-explore and identify the social system’s psychodramatic and social roles and how the roles are both contexted and relate to the social system as a whole. In addition, such naïve enquiry enables the producer and protagonist to co-explore how the protagonist forms their sociodramatic question.

In the Paradox Workshop naïve enquiry enabled me to co-explore the protagonist’s sociodramatic question; ‘How do I (as a person who is developing) act when various legitimate authorities are antagonistic to each other?’ Naive enquiry in respect to a sociodramatic question is not new to AANZPA, however, focussing on how a protagonist forms the question in relation to self authoring and mind opening is new.

## **Interlocutor and Meaning**

Working with sociodramatic questions via naïve enquiry is preparation for sociodramatic work as an interlocutor and to be clear about this I think of the following illustration; a person in the middle of a chorus line enables repartee and dialogue between each end of the chorus line. They are the interlocutor and their song lines synthesise new meaning to the contradictory or non-reconcilable scripts sung by the singers at each end of the chorus line. The interlocutor enables the meaning to transition to a fitting finale; the type we all enjoy. Simplistically interlocutor means dialogue partner. An example in the musical *Porgy and Bess* are the interlocutor phrases; ‘It ain’t necessarily so’, and, ‘The things you are liable, to read in the Bible’.

The score’s face-value meaning is, ‘the bible is unreliable and life is one big cruel con’. The more nuanced meaning is actually, ‘life is ironic; it is filled with contradictions and some seemingly unbelievable stories point to an underlying truth and wisdom. For example Jonah realises the potential of his being is much greater than who he currently is. For unfulfilled Jonah, his experience is he is inside a much greater being, like being in a whale’. When the song is sung and we transition back and forth between the different meanings communicated by each end of the chorus line we favour the latter as the finale`.

As sociodramatist in a first encounter with a social system and in over my head in that culture, I imaginatively explore for many possible layers of meaning and try to generate ideas that make layers of meaning. Dialectic thought is the best explanation for complexity befuddling our simple rationalizations and it is the best clarification we have for transitions to deeper

meaning. When first encountering a group I use dialectic thought forms to imaginatively generate meaning filled with contradiction, paradox and irony. I fantasise what might emerge and what an expanded culture might look like in this circumstance and, as a consequence, I open my mind to greater possibility.

Further refinement of interlocutors formed for social emotional development requires research into two areas. Firstly, relations between social roles flexibility and self authoring social systems. Secondly, how diverse sociodrama workshops best use mind-opener questions as means of promoting trans-factual (mind opening) group discourse.

In the paradox workshop, I was able as an interlocutor, to coach the protagonist to keep dialoguing with the oppositional auxiliaries and with him self. I coached him to explore how to make more sense of the social system's culture and to innovate and create a response which, although more nuanced, was none the less more integrative.

## **Dialectic**

For the purposes of this paper dialectic simply means the dynamics in relations that lead to transformation. Not all relations' dynamics lead to irreversible change. Complex processes and independent and inter-dependent relations anticipate irreversible change and this change can become transformative. Such dynamic relations are shaped in dialectic thought form.

## **Criteria for Assessing Developmental Social Remediation**

The following list of ideas is indicative of formulating criteria for assessing social remediation as developmental. The ideas are fertile ground for propagating interlocutors suited to generating increased sociodramatic capacity.

- Focussing on social systems as being developmental in nature

- Seeing social systems and their cultures as classrooms filled with students having social development as their curriculum

- Understanding that development of individuals and social systems is formed dialectically

- Knowing interlocutors work best when personal development is seen as requisite with social remediation

- Using trans-factual, mind opener, questioning together with abductive reasoning when producing group discourse. Seeing group discourse as anticipating increasing group capacity for sociodramatic remediation.

## **Requisite Social Remediation**

The sociodramatist uses social systems, and their cultures, juxtaposed with the respective developing individuals as classrooms. Their curriculum is social development. It is necessary to make sociodramatic work at once requisite of broad and deep and prudent social remediation.

Each social system together with each character within it and each sociodramatist's experience is unique. Subsequently, when designing approaches to sociodramatic work it is very difficult to take action that is both comprehensive enough and requisite of sufficient vision to encompass all situations and, at the same time, actualise specific remediations that are significant to any one individual member in their unique system. It is best that explorations avoid the brevity of a cookie-cutter approach and also meaningless never-ending open investigations and, at the same time, be very interesting and pertinent to the participants.

The previous accounts and discussions of first encounters with a social system and a workshop drew attention to sociodrama as intensely personal and reflexive work that is consistently full of surprises and jaw dropping moments when the sociodramatist finds the least expected things and realises they are now in over their heads in respect to making sense of a social system. The sociodramatist knows it is necessary to stand inside and outside the social system and to be simultaneously intimately-involved-and-connected while remaining out-of-the-way. To lead while experiencing, in the one moment as it were, both the pain of isolation and assurance of open togetherness and critical thinking enquiry.

The sociodramatist also knows that some social systems for all intent and purposes are more complex than others and hence some situations require more attention to be paid to systems exploration than others.

At all times it is incumbent on the sociodramatist to communicate how they are executing their plan for explicating development. The AANZPA Journal and published theses are replete with accounts of excellent works where social system's cultures have been remediated and more life and soul was brought into workplaces and organisations. While none of these accounts focus specifically on the topic of developmental adaptation recognisable via greater cognitive fluidity, as increasing capacity for sociodrama, the diversity and range of cases and the capacity sociodrama has to engage with all forms of complex social systems, is self evident. Perusing the 1999 and 2008 Journals containing articles from Rollo Browne and Vivienne Thomson are particularly valuable in this respect. There are articles on contexts as diverse as School Bullying, Career Planning, Productivity Development and Community Outreach Co-ordination. (AANZPA Journal 1999, Browne, p.27, Thomson, p.55.) (AANZPA Journal 2008, Browne, p.38, Thomson, p.28.)

More focus on what makes for better requisition of social system culture in respect to complexity and development will lead to creating sociodrama with greater capacity for complex social system's development.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Experiencing Sociodrama is similar to jumping from a high board into a flowing river. The sociodramatist wilfully experiences the thrill of plunging into the turbulence in any social system and for a time being subject to its perturbing power and transformative potential. They focus on using action methods to understand the social system's liveliness and how the social system usually unfolds and how it might take another path that leads to more complex organisation and functioning. The action enables the sociodramatist, protagonist and participants to acquire greater capacity for fully engaging others as together they are taken down stream. They can respond to being swept along as if suspended in rapids and waterfalls and whirlpools and experiencing a deeper and more complex medium.

The director-producer works with the protagonist to experience their self and their social system as; different, new, dynamic and having capacity for more complex functioning.

The sociodrama method intends to increase the spontaneity of all and sundry so that the protagonist and social system anticipate greater social intelligence and everything remains at once a new and transformative encounter.

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