

Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy

Toward a Therapeutic Aesthetics

Paolo J. Knill, Ellen G. Levine and Stephen K. Levine



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Introduction

Stephen K. Levine

This volume attempts to provide a presentation of the fundamental principles and practice of expressive arts therapy. For a long time, an understanding of these principles and practice has been based on psychological frameworks extrinsic to the arts. The psychotherapeutic use of the arts is then carried out within these pre-existing frameworks. As a result, the arts are not valued for their own intrinsic capacities but are seen primarily as instruments to enhance existing psychotherapeutic practices. Thus in psychoanalysis, for example, the art work is often taken as a symbolic representation of an unconscious mental process. The meaning of the work is then interpreted within the particular psychoanalytic tradition to which the analyst belongs. The work itself and the process of art-making that produced it are not understood in their own terms but rather within an already established point of view based on a psychology, however valuable in itself, for which art is a secondary phenomenon.

The authors of this volume, on the contrary, put aesthetics squarely in the center of their understanding of the therapeutic use of the arts. Although our backgrounds are diverse and our perspectives have been shaped in different ways, we all believe that the field of expressive arts therapy needs a foundation based on the practice of the arts. Therefore, in our subtitle, we speak of a “therapeutic aesthetics” as the horizon within which the principles and practice of our field can be understood.

This does not mean that we reject psychological theories. On the contrary, we respect the intrinsic value of those theories for the fields of practice which they support; and, in addition, we see that there are many perspectives in psychology that contain an aesthetic dimension which resonates with our own. Many psychological and psychotherapeutic frameworks value the place of the imagination in human life and engage in practices which draw on the powers of the imagination (e.g., free association, active imagination, role plays, etc.). We ourselves have been trained in a number of diverse therapeutic schools and have been clients of several differently trained therapists.

However, as we have engaged in and helped shape the field of expressive arts therapy over the years, we have come to realize that the power of the arts is the basis of our work. First and foremost this power must be understood in its own right before we can look at other theoretical perspectives (whether these draw on psychology or come from other fields) and establish our similarities with and differences from them. These other perspectives can then help illuminate our own by providing concepts and principles which explicate the aesthetic dimension from another point of view.

Thus in Chapter 1, which provides a philosophical understanding of expressive arts therapy, the classical concept of *poiesis* or art-making is placed at the center of human existence. *Poiesis* is understood in the traditional sense as the capacity to respond to and shape the world. “Shaping” is a fundamental concept in the image of human nature that underlies our field. However, in the contemporary or “post-modern” world in which we live, there is no longer an agreed-upon foundation in terms of which such an act of shaping would have a standard and a goal. Rather there are a multiplicity of competing perspectives, with the result that we often feel that there is no foundation for our being and doing at all. We must, therefore, conceive of *poiesis* differently than it is traditionally thought if we are to provide a therapeutic aesthetics that is adequate to our time.

For this reason, although we keep art-making at the center of our understanding, we try to free it from the traditional context in which it was understood, a context based on the confidence of the capacity of reason to comprehend and master reality. We “deconstruct” this context by showing the assumptions on which it was based and then try to look at the phenomenon of art in its own terms. In doing so, we see that art-making cannot be

conceived of as the imposition of an already-formed idea upon the matter at hand. Rather, we see art as originating not in reason but in play, in an exploration in which letting go of control leads to surprising results. This necessary surrender of control means that the artist enters a chaotic field, in which he or she has neither complete understanding of nor complete mastery over what is happening. However, if we can stay with this chaotic experience, it often happens that something emerges, the gift of a work that carries meaning and value. Then reason can be employed in its critical capacity, evaluating the emerging work and making decisions for its revision. Nevertheless, the creative or “poietic” act cannot be understood within the classical concept of *poiesis* in which rationality dominates. The play of imagination must be placed at the center of the human capacity for shaping if we are to understand this power in its own right.

Given this framework of understanding, developed further in Chapter 1, it is then possible for us to be open to other theoretical perspectives which resonate with our own and which may show us other aspects of the phenomena which we are viewing. Therefore we turn to, among others, D.W. Winnicott’s psychological notion of transitional experience and Victor Turner’s anthropological concept of liminality in order to develop our comprehension of the role of chaos and multiplicity within a post-modern understanding of *poiesis*. The convergence of our perspective with these and others coming from different fields than our own suggests that the traditional understanding of human nature is undergoing a paradigm change today. We can no longer base our comprehension of the arts or of therapy within the classical framework but must find concepts appropriate to the way in which these appear today. Chapter 1 of this volume attempts to perform this task.

After the philosophical foundations for an understanding of *poiesis* today have been laid, Chapter 2 turns to the theory of practice in the field of expressive arts therapy. How can we understand the actual practice of the work, in terms of its structure, its setting, and the roles that are played by its participants? This chapter sets out a model for practice that is based on the central concept of decentering into an alternative reality in order to expand the range of play. The concept of decentering from the everyday or literal reality of the client into an imaginative or playful experience has obvious connections with the way in which *poiesis* is conceived of in the previous

chapter. Nevertheless, Chapter 2 can be read in its own terms for an understanding of the practice of our work.

In this chapter, the ideal-typical framework for a session is understood as consisting in a “filling in” through a conversational discussion of the client’s situation (which is usually a restricted one), followed by a decentering into imaginal reality through play, art-making or ritual. The role of the therapist or change agent is to hold aesthetic responsibility for the session, intervening when necessary in order to augment the client’s effective reality and helping the client to understand his or her experience through an aesthetic analysis of both the process and the work. This analysis tries to “stay on the surface” and refrains from interpretations that are based on theoretical frameworks stemming from psychological or other non-aesthetic perspectives. Finally the session typically ends with a “harvesting” of the material that has emerged, in which the client reflects back on the situation that originally brought him or her to ask for help.

In Chapter 3, different examples of expressive arts therapy practice in training, supervision and therapy are provided and discussed in detail in order to form a concrete understanding of the field. Vignettes are given of both individual and group work in the expressive arts from an aesthetic perspective. Again, this chapter can be read on its own, but an attentive reader will see the ways in which it resonates with the concepts set out in the previous chapters. In particular, the notion of a critical incident in practice is explored, an occasion in which a chaotic breakdown of the therapeutic or educational process in the expressive arts becomes an opportunity for increased understanding. The shaping of a framework or structure, the phase of destructuring and the consequent formation of new structures or frames are all seen as essential for a therapeutic practice carried out within an aesthetic perspective.

As we have indicated, the chapters are relatively self-contained and may therefore be read in any order. Readers with a strong interest in practice may begin with Chapter 3, those interested in the methodology and theory of practice might start with Chapter 2, and those who want to reflect on the fundamental philosophical framework of the field should begin with Chapter 1. Philosophy, methodology and practice are all intertwined yet can be separated out for analysis and treated individually. We believe that, though we write on different aspects of the work, the perspectives of the

authors converge on the central theme of the necessity of forming a therapeutic aesthetics as a basis for expressive arts therapy. Thus the book itself is ultimately an instance of the act of shaping at the heart of *poiesis*.

The Philosophy of Expressive Arts Therapy: *Poiesis* as a Response to the World

Stephen K. Levine

Introduction

Every therapeutic practice implies, either explicitly or implicitly, a philosophical framework within which its particular activity can be understood. In this chapter, we will seek to develop the basic concepts and principles underlying the practice of expressive arts therapy. In particular, we will ask: what is the conception of human existence that permeates our work and gives it meaning?

In German, this conception of human existence is sometimes referred to as a *Menschenbild*, literally an image or picture of the human. The word “*Bild*” has a particular significance for our field. It can mean an image, and in this sense forms part of the word “*Einbildung*,” or imagination, a term central to the arts. But *Bild* also has the sense of “formation,” that which is shaped or formed, as in the noun “*Bildung*,” cultivation or education. “*Bildung*” is particularly significant, since it has had a special reference to the tradition of humanism in which, through an exposure to the classics of

Western art and literature, the young person is supposed to be educated and brought into adulthood.

Bildung as a cultural ideal, of course, can no longer be taken for granted. The canonical works of Western civilization have lost their immediate identification with culture *per se*. In a post-modern world, not only have these works been supplemented by the proliferation of alternative models, but the very notion of a canon has come under attack as a form of domination by a particular social group. Moreover, the ideal of *Bildung* as the result of a process of literary and artistic cultivation can be seen as an impediment to a more immediate experience of bodily encounter with others and the world.

Nevertheless, there is something that can be retained in this traditional notion of *Bildung*, something that hints at the basic human capacity of shaping, a shaping that forms both world and self. We can call this capacity “*poiesis*,” using the classical Greek word for making. *Poiesis* in Greek refers specifically to art-making but also has the more general sense of any activity that brings something new into the world. *Poiesis* is central to the conception of human existence, the *Menschenbild*, that underlies expressive arts therapy. We will have to understand this notion of *poiesis* in such a way that it can take account of the fundamental role that the arts have played in human culture, as well as of the critique that post-modernism and post-colonialism have made of the humanistic tradition in which European culture has been taken as the norm for all others. In fact, we would maintain that the conception of *poiesis* in the philosophy of expressive arts therapy is particularly appropriate to a decentered world in which this culture can no longer be taken as the norm.

Before developing this conception, however, we need to understand the philosophical framework that has been dominant for therapeutic theory and practice in the West. In the following pages, we will go back to the beginnings of modern Western thought in the work of Descartes. The Cartesian *Menschenbild* is based on a fundamental split between body and mind, nature and culture, self and world. After setting out the basic principles of Descartes’ thought, we will trace the critique of Cartesianism carried out in the phenomenological philosophy of Husserl and Heidegger. Finally, we will see how the radical self-critique of phenomenology, already anticipated in Heidegger and carried further in the work of such thinkers as Derrida, has led to a questioning of modernity itself and to the develop-

ment of what could justly be called a post-modern perspective. Only by clearing the way through rethinking the tradition of modern thought can we see how the underlying notions of this tradition have come into question, thus preparing the way for new concepts. In particular, we will try to show that reformulating the classical concept of *poiesis* within a post-modern perspective can provide us with a new *Menschenbild* adequate for the theory and practice of expressive arts therapy.

Therapeutic practice and the critique of modernism

The therapeutic function itself is as old as human history. Wherever humans have been born, suffered and died, there has been a need for healing practices that aim to alleviate or console those who are in pain. In pre-modern cultures, these practices addressed the soul as well as the body. From an anthropological perspective, in fact, we could say that it is only in comparatively recent history that healing practices having a purely physical character have been developed.

In cultures all over the world until the emergence of modernity, healing was always seen as involving both physical and psychological dimensions. The distinction between body and soul was rarely made in absolute terms. Not only was the soul seen as embodied, but the body itself was viewed as animated, ensouled. Thus it was never possible to treat the body in isolation from the soul – that is to say, separately from the sphere of meaning and value which the notion of *psyche* implies.

This psychosomatic conception meant that healing practices needed to address both dimensions of human existence. For this purpose, the arts were particularly suitable. As anthropology has shown, the practice of healing has traditionally been carried out within a ceremonial context, in which artistic media carry symbolic significance. We could call this traditional practice “symbolic healing” (Sandner 1979, p.11), if we were to keep in mind that it always involved bodily means as well. The arts are particularly suitable for the traditional practice of healing insofar as they always involve both a physical and a psychological dimension. Therapeutic practices throughout history have employed artistic media in a central role; the basis for this practice is the understanding of the person in his or her psychosomatic unity. When persons are understood as embodied souls,

then the arts, with their necessary involvement in both the realm of material objects and of psychic significance, are particularly relevant to the practice of healing.

The situation of therapy in the world today, however, is fundamentally different. Modern medicine addresses the body. Although there has certainly been a growth of interest in psychosomatic phenomena (in the specific sense of those psychological processes that have produced physical effects), in the so-called “placebo effect,” in alternative procedures such as visualization, etc., nevertheless, all of this fits badly within the framework of medical practice, based as it is on a purely physical view of the body. At the same time as and partly in reaction to the reductive materialism that underlies physical medicine, the New Age notion of a disembodied spirituality has found many adherents and has resulted in an excessive credulity among its practitioners which sometimes has bizarre results, as every new cure-all is immediately accepted and then very quickly dropped in favor of a new one.

This opposition between a materialistic medicine and a disembodied spirituality is merely an extreme form of the dualism between the mind and the body that inaugurated the emergence of the modern world-view. As we have noted, in order to develop a philosophical framework adequate to the practice of expressive arts therapy, we must first undertake a critique of this dualism. We will never be able to understand the therapeutic role of the arts until we go beyond the mind–body split which characterizes modern thought.

Modernity and the mind–body split

The classic formulation of mind–body dualism is to be found in the writings of René Descartes. Descartes inaugurated a tradition which has continued up until our own time. What is important for understanding this tradition is to situate it in terms of the historical problematic to which Descartes’ work is addressed.

Descartes was writing at the beginning of modern science. The new mathematical understanding of nature, as formulated by Galileo, posed a challenge to the dominant world-view, shaped as it was by the teaching of the church. Descartes’ task, then, was to provide an understanding of

nature, based on modern science, that would leave intact the spiritual vocation of the human person. The way he did this was by employing the method of doubt, a radicalization of the critical function of philosophical thinking. By systematically carrying out this procedure of subjecting all realms of knowledge to the criterion of doubt, Descartes was able to establish that, while everything else may be dubitable, the one thing I can know with certainty is my own act of doubting, since I can only doubt it by another act of doubt. As doubt is clearly a kind of thought, it seemed evident to Descartes that the foundation of all knowing must be the “I think” or *cogito* – that is, the mind of the subject of knowledge. The one thing that is certain is that I exist as, in Descartes’ words, a “thinking thing” (Descartes 1958, p.186).

As a cognitive subject, for Descartes, I possess ideas which represent objects outside of my mind: ideas of the world, of others, and of my own body. Though for all practical purposes I must treat these ideas as valid, nevertheless none of them have the epistemological certainty that my own existence as a thinking being does. The knowledge of my own mind appears to me with clarity and distinctness. If I take these criteria of clarity and distinctness as the marks of truth in general, then my everyday experience of the world cannot be said to have the certainty that the reflective awareness of my own existence possesses. Everyday perception is obscure and confused. There are, however, ideas which do possess the qualities of clarity and distinctness and which therefore can provide me with knowledge that is certain and indubitable; these are the mathematical ideas of which the new science of nature consists.

Even though I cannot rely on the senses to attain truth concerning the nature of the external world, I can, Descartes argues, assume that such a world exists. (Descartes bases this conclusion on a proof of the existence and nature of God which is not necessary to follow for our purposes in this presentation of his thinking.) However, even though we have a right to assert with certainty that the world exists “outside” of the mind, critical reflection shows us that the true nature of this world is not as it is experienced through the senses but must be as it is described in mathematical physics, since only the concepts of natural science are clear and distinct.

The result of Descartes’ reasoning was the formulation of an epistemology that guaranteed the validity of the new mathematics of nature. At the

same time, his philosophy established an independent sphere of subjectivity which could only be understood through reflective self-observation, thus laying the ground for the new science of psychology. The concept of reality became split between an immaterial thinking substance, constituted by its ideas, and an extended substance, consisting of particles in space. Cartesian dualism thus provided a philosophical justification for modern physical science, while preserving the spiritual dimension to which the church addressed itself.

Descartes' philosophical dualism, however, left many problems to his successors. The central one concerned the relationship between mind and body, consciousness and nature. Once Descartes' argument for God's existence could no longer be accepted as a justification of the validity of our perception, the question arose of the epistemological relationship between subject and object. If subjectivity is a self-enclosed sphere of mental representations or "ideas," then how are we to understand our knowledge of the "external" world? How can we come to know this world, if it is so different from our mind, the organ of knowledge? What is the status of our everyday experience, if it does not present the world to us as it is formulated in mathematical science? How can body and soul interact, if they are such radically different substances?

Ultimately, in the history of Western thought, Cartesian dualism tended to break apart, leading to, on the one hand, an extreme materialism that denied the existence of mind, and, on the other, an idealism in which matter was conceived as the product of a mental act on the part of some absolute subject. Either Descartes' dualism led to such materialist or idealist monisms or else it resulted in grand schemes for dialectical resolution, such as Hegel's, which were powerful in their intellectual scope but ultimately incapable of successfully bringing together the duality of existence once it had been formulated in such opposing terms.

Faced with this dilemma, philosophy largely reconfigured itself as a methodological reflection upon science; philosophy became identified with the philosophy of science. However, this tendency not only meant that the fundamental philosophical questions were ruled out of court as "metaphysical," beyond our possible knowledge, it also led to a neglect of the basic task of philosophical thought, insofar as it took for granted the premise of the validity of scientific knowledge instead of subjecting this

knowledge to a critique of its foundations. Ironically, the ultimate legacy of Cartesianism was a forgetting of the radical doubt with which Descartes' project had itself originated.

Phenomenology and the overcoming of Cartesian dualism

We will now outline some of the essential steps in the overcoming of Cartesianism that are necessary to understand in order to provide a philosophical basis for expressive arts therapy today. The first and, in some ways, most important of these steps was the development of a phenomenological philosophy. Phenomenology, in fact, originated as a proposed solution to the problems created by Cartesian dualism. Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, though himself trained as a mathematician, was troubled by the inability of scientific thinking to provide a foundation for its own validity. He understood this problematic as having originated in Descartes' philosophical split between consciousness and nature with which modern thought began. Husserl saw that Cartesian dualism, although ostensibly founded upon the method of radical doubt, in fact presupposed the existence of the natural world as described in mathematical physics. If this presupposition is held in abeyance – in Husserl's term, parenthesized – then our conclusions will be quite different from Descartes' (Husserl 1960, p.20).

The conception of the mind as a self-enclosed sphere of interiority populated by ideas which represent a world outside of it only makes sense if there is a prior preconception of the nature of the object as radically different from and cut off from the subject. When we let go of our prejudice as to the objectivity of the external world, we become free to look at this world as well as our mental life as they appear to us, as they are given in the phenomena of experience in which they come to show themselves. Husserl's phenomenological method is thus meant to be a presuppositionless investigation into the nature of experience as it appears, rather than as it is formulated beforehand through some theoretical presupposition, no matter how seemingly obvious the latter may seem to be.

On the basis of this method, Husserl was led to the fundamental principle of phenomenology, the principle of intentionality. This principle,

which is arrived at not as a dogmatic starting point but through the reflective observation of experience without presuppositions, states that every act of consciousness is a consciousness *of* something. That is to say, the mind intends its object directly, rather than representing it through an idea. Perception, for example, is always experienced as the perception of a perceived object, not as the awareness of an idea that represents the object. Thus the perceptual object is given to me directly in experience as what is perceived through an act of perception. The same would be true for other intentional acts, whether they be acts of imagination, memory, judgment or, for that matter, scientific cognition. A mathematical entity is given to me in its own characteristic manner, different from, for example, the way in which a perceptual or memorial object is given. The task of phenomenology, then, is to investigate the manners of givenness by which things appear to consciousness.

The significance of the phenomenological attitude is that it opens up the world of experience as a legitimate field for philosophical inquiry. In fact, one could say that there is in the phenomenological attitude a priority given to experience over theoretical formulations. Husserl's maxim, "Back to the things themselves" (Kockelmans 1967), signifies a return to the world as it presents itself in all its manifestations, a world that is not "in my mind," but that appears always as the object of intentional acts. Even the world of mathematical physics is the correlate of specific, quite complex, acts of intentionality. Husserl was in no sense an enemy of science. Rather, he believed that science needed a foundation that could secure its validity and that such a foundation could ultimately be provided only by a philosophy that did not presuppose this validity in advance.

The implications of phenomenology for the Cartesian project are clear. Once the presuppositions of Descartes' thought are given up, there is no more need to maintain the radical dualism to which these ultimately lead. The world is not given to me as represented by my ideas; nor does the mind appear as a self-enclosed sphere of interiority. Rather consciousness and world are correlative; acts of consciousness open up to or intend the world.

Moreover, the world is first and foremost what is given to me through my senses. All other intentional acts presuppose and build on this fundamental presence of the world. The results of phenomenological inquiry are thus to re-insert the subject into the sensible world and to open up this

world as accessible to conscious awareness. Experience, far from being despised as deceptive, appears now as the foundation for all knowledge.

Phenomenology and existence: being-in-the-world

Husserl's attempt to create a presuppositionless philosophy based on a phenomenology of consciousness resulted in a new philosophical movement which set out to investigate experience in all its dimensions. Not only the phenomena of scientific awareness, but also those of the most diverse realms of experience, including the moral, aesthetic and political dimensions, became legitimate fields for phenomenological inquiry. At the same time, true to the spirit of philosophical critique, the foundations of Husserl's own thinking came into question for those who followed after him.

Martin Heidegger, in particular, raised the issue of existence once more after it had been bracketed in favor of a descriptive account of consciousness and its objects. In Heidegger's view, to begin with consciousness, as Husserl did, was itself to accept the framework of Cartesian philosophy, even if its dualistic conclusions were rejected. "Consciousness" is a philosophical abstraction from the givenness of everyday experience; it only results from a reflective act of awareness in which one steps back from this experience. Existence precedes reflection; therefore consciousness cannot be taken as an epistemological starting point.

Moreover, if phenomenology begins with consciousness, it runs the risk of grounding the objects of consciousness in intentional acts, thus re-establishing a philosophy of the subject that ultimately leads to a transcendental idealism, the postulation of an absolute subjectivity whose existence is ontologically prior to that of the world. From this perspective, the world would be seen as coming into being as the result of the positing acts of this transcendental subject. Thus, for Heidegger, phenomenology, which began with the critique of all presuppositions, ends for Husserl with an idealist metaphysics that it cannot justify by its own method.

There is, however, another tendency in Husserl's thinking which Heidegger was to develop in a new direction. On the one hand, Husserl's philosophy of consciousness led him to a metaphysics of a worldless transcendental subject; on the other hand, his phenomenological investigations

brought a new awareness of the primary character of everyday life, the life we live with others in the world and upon which all special acts of awareness and their objects are based. Husserl called the location of everyday experience the “lifeworld” (“*Lebenswelt*”) and saw it as the basis of all other worlds, such as the world given to us through scientific inquiry (Husserl 1970).

For Heidegger, the lifeworld, the world of everyday life, is what shows itself to us in our very act of existing. Insofar as we are beings who exist in a world, we are “there,” and our existence can be understood only through this notion of being-there (“*Dasein*,” Heidegger’s gloss on the ordinary German word for existence). This means that the human being is a being-in-the-world. The characteristic of mundanity is not added on to the existence of a transcendental subject; rather it is part of the existential constitution of human being itself (Heidegger 1996).

The world is given to us, in Heidegger’s view, not as the correlate of acts of conscious meaning-giving but as that which pre-exists all our awareness. We are *thrown* into the world; we find ourselves in, for example, a particular historical and cultural epoch and with particular characteristics which we have not chosen – for example, our gender, class, race, etc. If we are to understand the individual as he or she exists, it would be absurd to assume the position of a transcendental idealism in which “world” originates through the meaning-giving acts of an essentially worldless subject.

In my actual existence, I find myself in a world which I have not made; this world is given to me as a realm of interconnected significance, a system of meaning within which I must locate myself and my projects. Moreover, I am not alone in the world; rather, I find myself in the world with others. My being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-Sein*) is a being-with-others (*Mit-Sein*). The solipsism to which transcendental idealism ultimately leads is put into question by a phenomenological investigation into the existence of *Dasein*. The world is given to me as a shared phenomenon; I cannot understand my being-in-the-world without this reference to others who are there with me.

The fundamental phenomenon of my being-in-the-world does not, however, appear to me as a brute fact. The world that I live in with others is given to me as that which has meaning for me. The meaning-structure of the world appears only in the light of the possibilities for my existence which I project into the future. This does not mean that the meaning that is

given to me is arbitrary or “subjective.” I cannot arrange to have been thrown into a different world; such a wish is a mere fantasy of escape. However, I do have the choice of how to live in this world. In particular, I can choose whether to live in accordance with my existence as someone who is responsible for my own being or I can attempt to disclaim responsibility and lose myself in the anonymous mass of society, what Heidegger calls the “they” or the “one” (“*das Man*”). What “they” say or do then becomes the criterion for my own existence.

For Heidegger, humans, insofar as they exist, have a choice to be or not be who they are, i.e. to be, in his terms, “authentic” or “inauthentic” (“*eigentlich*” or “*uneigentlich*”). Human being is always my own to be. The German word “*eigentlich*” has at its root the sense of “ownness,” that which belongs to me or is proper to me. In English, we also say what is “appropriate” to me. Authentic existence results from the choice of an existence which is appropriate to me as an existing individual.

Ultimately, for Heidegger, what is most proper to my existence, what most belongs to me, is my own death. No one else can die for me. If I choose to live authentically, I must, therefore, face the possibility of my own impossibility, the absolute certainty of my demise. As a mortal being, *Dasein* is subject to dread (“*Angst*”), the fear not of something in particular but the nameless anxiety which has nothing for its object. In fact, it is its own possible nothingness which appears to *Dasein* as its most fundamental mood. This vertiginous state of mind makes the security of being-in-the-world fall away. I can no longer understand myself as “one” or as part of the “they.” Death individualizes and confronts me with responsibility for my own existence. Only as mortal can I be with others in an authentic way.

Authentic being-with, for Heidegger, means that I must first accept responsibility for my own existence. It also means that I must be with the other in such a way as to allow him or her to make the same kind of choice. Just as I cannot die another’s death, I also cannot jump in and relieve them of the responsibility for their existence. At most, I can try to show them the danger of inauthenticity and thereby clear the way for their own freedom. Authentic care for others, what Heidegger calls “solicitude” (“*Fürsorge*”), depends on the understanding that each existing individual is ultimately responsible for him or herself.

Heidegger's phenomenology, as outlined in his early work, *Being and Time*, depicts human existence as a being-in-the-world with others that is fundamentally conditioned by our mortality. We are free, but our freedom is ultimately without foundation other than itself. Nothing forces us to be responsible for our own existence; it is precisely the acceptance of this nothingness as the basis of my freedom that enables me to face the fundamental anxiety or dread that comes with being human.

There is, therefore, an abyssal quality to Heidegger's description of human being. Our existence is grounded in our freedom – that is to say, it has no ground other than the understanding and acceptance of its finitude, its own non-being. To make non-being or nothingness into the basis of existence is to encounter an abyss at the core of being. This is indeed, as Sartre was later to say, a “dreadful freedom” (Sartre 1956).

World and earth: art as a setting-into-work of truth

Although Heidegger's thinking began with the concept of the lifeworld, the world of everyday life, his phenomenological investigation into the finitude of human existence led him to see this world as unable to provide its own ground. In *Dasein's* fundamental state-of-mind of dread, the existence of the world falls away; that is to say, in my encounter with my own nothingness, I lose the world. To say that freedom is the ground of existence is but another way of saying that the world cannot be its own foundation. Heidegger's later thinking is an attempt to explore this abyssal quality of the world.

“World” is the context of all that appears to me in my experience. The phenomenological method insists that only what appears in experience can be considered true. Any recourse to a metaphysical foundation of the world is thus not possible for a phenomenological philosophy. Rather phenomenology must interrogate the world in terms of the way it presents itself. The question arises, then: is there a fundamental experience in which the world reveals itself other than that of dread in the face of my own nothingness?

In his later writings, Heidegger focuses on the experience of the work of art as an essential way in which the world is manifested. This focus opens up for him the non-foundational character of *Dasein* in a new direction. In *Being and Time* (1996), the lack of a ground manifested itself through the

dreadful freedom in which I grasp my mortality. It seemed as if the only alternative to immersion in the trivial affairs of daily life was an heroic encounter with death. This stance is uncomfortably close to the glorification of death in Fascist ideology, e.g. the battle cry of Spanish Fascism, "*Viva la muerte!*" For a period of time, Heidegger himself saw the possibility of authentic existence as inherent in the Nazi movement in Germany, insofar as German "National Socialism" promised a future that would be a seizing of the possibilities for greatness lying dormant in the past of the German people. It remains an open question as to what extent Heidegger's Nazism was a possibility that genuinely belonged to his philosophical work and to what extent it resulted from a deluded perception of the nature of the Nazi movement.

Subsequent to his experience with Nazism and perhaps partly as a reaction to it, a different tone enters into Heidegger's later thinking. He begins to look to the arts for an encounter with the ground of Being. The essay "The Origin of the Work of Art" shows, through a phenomenological interpretation of specific works, that the authentic work of art always manifests the world of an historical community. In so doing, the work shows the truth of this world to the members of this community. Art, therefore, can be seen as the "setting-itself-to-work" of truth (Heidegger 1971, p.39).

This turn in Heidegger's thinking to the world-manifesting nature of the work of art is a radical departure from the framework of traditional aesthetics. Modern aesthetics, rooted in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, conceives of beauty as a subjective phenomenon, that which produces a harmony of the faculties of the mind (Kant 1987). Truth, for Kant, is set apart from aesthetic experience; truth is characterized by the necessity and universality of judgments which result from the methodical investigation of an object, not by taste, which is a subjective phenomenon. Kant, in spite of his attempt to encompass ethics and aesthetics, as well as scientific inquiry, within the framework of reason, remains trapped by a taken-for-granted Cartesianism which divides the world into objective reality and subjective appearance. Within this framework, the work of art can only have, at best, a symbolic relationship to truth, suggesting a never-to-be-realized unity of nature and mind.

Already in *Being and Time*, Heidegger had developed a different conception of truth, not as the correspondence of a subjective judgment to an objective state of affairs, but as an uncovering, a taking out of concealment of that which has been hidden or obscured. Heidegger here returns to the roots of the original Greek word for truth, “*aletheia*,” unconcealment (etymologically, a rescuing from the waters of *Lethe*, the river of forgetfulness). What shows itself first and foremost is not the objective reality to which my judgments must correspond. Rather, it is the inauthentic world of *das Man*, the “they-self” in accordance with which I lose my authentic possibilities. To have access to truth as unconcealment, I must be taken out of my everyday experience of the world, steeped as it is in the perspective of *das Man*. In the earlier text, this “ecstatic” existence, in which I step outside of my everyday self, was envisioned as the dreadful anticipation of my death, the experience of the meaninglessness of the world of everyday life in the face of my own mortality.

In “The Origin of the Work of Art,” we are presented with a different kind of “*ecstasis*,” the dis-location that comes when the work of art opens me to another experience of the world. In the face of the work, it is as if I see the world for the first time – that is, I see it in its truth. In the light of this truth, I myself appear differently and the possibilities for action of which I am capable become laid out before me. As Rilke said in one of his poems, the work that I was looking at sees me and tells me, “You must change your life” (Rilke 1984, p.61).

The work, however, does not call to me alone. Rather, for Heidegger, the work sets up a world that can be the basis for the existence of an historical community. Authenticity, which in *Being and Time* presented itself as radically individualizing, here assumes a communal character. The truth of the work takes place only within the historical world in which the work is set forth, a world in which I dwell with others.

The work sets up this world by manifesting its truth. The Greek temple, for example, in showing itself as a place for communal worship, presents a world in which the gods can dwell. Mortals can then measure themselves in terms of their distance from the gods. The setting-itself-into-work of truth here gives meaning and value to the lives of those who can exist together with the work. The historical tradition of Greek culture is founded upon the works which sustain it. Heidegger wonders whether today, in a world in

which all things, including art works, are treated as material to be manipulated according to our will, the work of art can have this founding function. Nevertheless, he thinks that, through a phenomenological understanding of the works of the past, we can recover the authentic possibility of art to be a founding phenomenon and hope for a time when this possibility can once again be realized.

Even authentic works, however, do not divulge their full significance all at once. There is something in them that resists complete understanding, something that holds itself back from manifestation. For Heidegger, this essential feature of the work of art as something set apart from and resistant to understanding stems from its thingly character. The significance of the work emerges out of the materials from which it is made. It is not that a significant form is impressed upon brute matter; rather we encounter the “matter” of the work only in its resistance to our attempt at understanding.

A painting, for example, can never be understood in terms of what it represents or even in terms of its qualities, understood as abstract forms. The painting is always this specific painted thing, with its textures, tones, hues, density, etc. It has what Merleau-Ponty was later to call a “flesh” which resists analysis by cognitive understanding (Merleau-Ponty 1968). Thus we might say that an authentic work can never be adequately reproduced (as anyone who has, for example, visited the Van Gogh museum in Holland can testify). If, indeed, we live in an “age of mechanical reproduction,” in Walter Benjamin’s terms, then we not only take away from works what he calls their “aura,” their quality of being set apart or sacred, we also rob them of their capacity to found a world in which we could dwell (Benjamin 1969, p.221).

For Heidegger, then, the authentic work sets up a “world,” and it also sets forth the “earth,” that which is the ground of the work. The aspect of earth prevents the work from ever being completely understood. “World” and “earth,” for Heidegger, are correlative terms. The encounter with a work of art shows that the world is not self-sufficient; it rests upon a non-objective ground which can never be comprehended and mastered by the understanding. We cannot say precisely what “earth” signifies, for to do so would be to place it in the network of significance comprehended by “world.” But we can think it as that from which significance emerges, the source or origin of all meaning.

There is a tendency, of course, for a reader of Heidegger to identify his concept of “earth” with the literal earth upon which we stand. To some extent, this is legitimate, since our earth is indeed the ground of the different historical worlds which have come forth over time. Yet Heidegger’s “earth” cannot be identified with our planet, if it is conceived of as a storehouse of resources for human projects. Such a sense of the earth ties it back into the context of instrumentality in the everyday world. “Earth,” for Heidegger, is the ever non-objective ground which only comes to show itself through the work of art as that which resists absorption into the world of the work. There is in fact a conflict or “rift” (“*Riss*”) between world and earth, between what is revealing and what is concealing, which is established in the work. This conflict gives the work its capacity to break through our ordinary understanding of the world. If the earth were to be wholly absorbed in the world of the work, the latter would become merely an object of consumption, which indeed it has become to a great extent in our modern economy of exchange.

Through a phenomenological analysis of the work of art, Heidegger is led to a new understanding of the world as it appears to *Dasein*. In *Being and Time*, it seemed that the significance of the world only manifested itself when its meaningfulness fell away, when *Dasein*, anticipating its death, recognized the groundlessness of its existence. The true face of the world, we might say, showed itself as nothingness. Heidegger could be seen as having painted a picture of human being alone in a meaningless world, with the responsibility for making meaning through decisions that have no basis other than one’s own existence. The anticipatory resoluteness of the existing individual in the face of death seemed in Heidegger’s early writings to be the only manner of existence that could achieve authenticity in an inauthentic world.

Heidegger himself has spoken of a “turn” in his thinking after *Being and Time*. In whatever way one might interpret the meaning of that “turn” (and Heidegger himself has rejected an “existentialist” interpretation of his early work and insisted on the continuity of his thinking), there is no denying that a new style and tone begins to emerge in his later writings. There is a kind of “poetic” quality to his later writing that corresponds to his focus on the arts, especially on poetry itself. What appeared at first as an heroic act of individual will now comes to be depicted as a receptive attitude of

letting-be, based on the hope that a new gift of meaning may come, if we can let go of our need to master the world.

The inauthentic world of everyday *Dasein* which appeared as an ontological given in the early work now manifests itself as the historical horizon of a technological civilization. Through a recollection of the being of the work of art, Heidegger aims to establish grounds for the hope that humans can learn to dwell on the earth within a world filled with significance. The finitude of the existing individual is seen to rest now not on the nihilistic lack of meaning requiring an overcoming by a heroic act of self-existence, but on the ever non-objective ground of Being, which comes forth in the work, if we can learn to respect the mystery of that which cannot be understood and controlled.

***Poiesis* as a basis for the *Menschenbild* of expressive arts therapy**

Within the framework of a phenomenological analysis of human existence, the arts occupy a central role. If art is understood as a mode of “showing” or “manifesting,” then this central role for the aesthetic within a phenomenological philosophy makes sense, since phenomenology is based on the notion of the phenomenon, that which shows itself to us. For Heidegger, in his later writings, *Dasein* understands itself primarily through an encounter with works of art. In this encounter, human existence is seen to depend not on the defiant act of self-assertion of a worldless subject, but on the capacity to let meaning emerge through a shaping of that which is given. This capacity, following Heidegger, we will call with the Greek name “*poiesis*.” In Greek, as we have noted, “*poiesis*” had a similar meaning to the word “art” in English, signifying both a particular medium (in this case, poetry) and the activity of making in general. We use the Greek term deliberately, not only for its historical associations, but also because its very strangeness invites us to put into question our taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of aesthetics.

In the following sections, we will explore the notion of *poiesis* to see to what extent it can serve as the central concept in a philosophy of expressive arts therapy. Every philosophy of “human nature,” or “*Menschenbild*,” we have said, rests upon a fundamental concept. *Poiesis*, we believe, is an appro-

priate category upon which to establish the *Menschenbild* of the philosophy of expressive arts therapy. However, it is essential that we understand this category in terms that are relevant to our experience of being-in-the-world today. What, then, does *poiesis* mean in the contemporary world?

It may be helpful to begin by going back to those philosophical texts in which the word has a primary place. Aristotle distinguishes between three kinds of knowing: knowing by observing (*theoria*), knowing by doing or acting (*praxis*), and knowing by making (*poiesis*) (Aristotle 1941). Within the contemplative tradition of philosophy to which Aristotle belongs, *theoria*, the intellectual act which results in scientific understanding, is regarded as the highest form of knowing. *Praxis*, knowing through an engagement in action resulting in the practical knowledge of the political and social world, is given second rank; while *poiesis*, the technical knowledge which is necessary for both the craftsman and the artist to produce their work, comes last. Still, it is worth noting that for Aristotle, *poiesis*, though not the highest form of cognition, does involve knowledge: there is a connection between the arts and understanding which implies that the practice of the arts is more than the result of a blind activity of inspiration.

Moreover, it becomes clear in Aristotle's *Poetics* that the knowledge of the poet (the writer of tragic dramas) involves not only the technique involved in constructing a play; this knowledge also necessarily requires an understanding of human action (that of which the play is an "imitation," or "*mimesis*") in its deepest significance. Only a tragedy constructed on the basis of this wisdom could have the cathartic power to purify us of those emotions from which we suffer. If tragedy can have this healing effect, the knowledge afforded by *poiesis* must be more than technical know-how, no matter how essential that may be.

The value given to *poiesis* by Aristotle stands in sharp contrast to Plato's estimation of that activity. For Plato, *poiesis* is devoid of knowledge; it arises out of a kind of mania in which the artist achieves a state of inspiration. What he makes with his *mimesis* is not true being but a poor copy of the things of this world, a world which itself is only a reflection of the eternal and uncreated world of the Forms of existence (Plato 1968).

Moreover, just as *poiesis* is akin to madness for Plato, so the products of the poet's activity are seen as inducing a condition of disorder and distur-

bance in those to whom they are addressed. The poet stirs up the soul of his audience; in so doing, he takes his auditors away from the ordered disposition of the *psyche* that is necessary to the leading of a peaceful civil life. For this reason, Plato bans the poets from entrance to the just city described in the *Republic*.

Of course, Plato's relationship to *poiesis* is more complicated than a straightforward reading of the *Republic* would suggest. Although he bans poetry and art from the just city, one could argue that he is unable to ban them from his own discourse. The *Republic* itself is the product of an act of *poiesis*; it is a work of literary art in which philosophical arguments are embedded in a dramatic form. Moreover, Plato's text relies on the poetic devices of metaphor and allegory for an understanding of its central points. Finally, the *Republic* ends with a mythical account of the destination of the soul resulting from a recognition of the limits of rational knowledge. *Logos* or philosophical reason, which seemed at first so distinct from *mythos* or story-telling, now turns to myth for assistance at the most crucial point.

Although Plato rejects *mimesis*, the central modality of *poiesis*, he not only employs it as his primary literary modality, he also relies on it for comprehension of the fundamental problematic in his philosophy: the relationship between the "true" world of the unchanging Forms of being and the illusory realm of the everyday life of the senses, subject to coming into being and passing away. The everyday world is said to "imitate" the world of the Forms or Ideas; this imitation is also said to be a kind of "participation" ("*methexis*"). By being "like" true being, the world of the senses somehow "participates" in its reality. How our knowledge of truth can be based upon imitation, while *poiesis* is rejected for its imitative or mimetic character, is never explained. "The ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry" to which Plato alludes in the *Republic* recurs in the work of the philosopher himself.

Plato is the most poetic of philosophers at the same time as he presents himself as the most antagonistic to *poiesis*. Any philosophy that aims to re-establish the primacy of *poiesis* must first come to terms with Platonic thought. For this reason, Nietzsche, the philosopher of *poiesis par excellence*, begins his thinking with an attempt to free himself from Platonic thought. *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche's first major work, is not only an attempt to understand the origins of Greek tragic art, it is also part of his struggle to

overcome Platonism in all its forms. By doing so, Nietzsche hopes, the way will be cleared for a re-birth of the tragic *poiesis* that gave life meaning and value for the ancient Greeks (Nietzsche 1966).

Nietzsche's philosophical critique is itself formulated in poetic terms, insofar as he presents his thinking not by argument but through images. The figures of the Greek gods, Apollo and Dionysos, are invoked in an act of imaginal memory which stands in contrast to what Nietzsche sees as the contemporary forgetting of the essential character of existence. Modern European culture, for Nietzsche, has been permeated by an overly rationalistic world-view which has lost touch with the energetic basis of culture in life. The modern emphasis upon reason and intellect as a means of knowing and controlling whatever exists reflects the predominance of the Socratic attitude that Plato prizes, an attitude that subjects all being to the standard of being-known. Socratic logic, for Nietzsche, leads to a world in which only that which can be scientifically comprehended and technically controlled is regarded as real.

Greek culture itself, and tragic art in particular, in Nietzsche's view, has been understood by scholars from this rational perspective. The classical scholarship of Nietzsche's day reflected the prevailing view of ancient Greek culture as a world of harmony and order. In the tradition of classical *Bildung*, Greek serenity was seen as an ideal to be achieved through a study of the works that this culture has handed down to us. Tragedy was primarily viewed as a literary art, and its perfection was seen to consist in the sublimity of language employed by the poets. A philological and literary analysis of the formal qualities of this language was envisioned as the primary way to understand the perfection of tragic art.

Nietzsche was himself trained as a classical philologist; his knowledge of Greek culture was at least equal to that of his contemporaries. All the more remarkable, then, was the fact that he arrived at a radically divergent perspective from the prevailing one. For Nietzsche, Greek "serenity" was a mask that the Greeks held up to themselves so as to avoid looking into the abyss. Far from regarding the world as a harmonious realm of orderly existence, the classical Greeks saw deeply into the chaotic nature of being itself, its existence as will, a blind striving without end. The formal perfection of their art was an antidote to their knowledge of the chaos of

existence. *Poiesis*, in Nietzsche's eyes, was for the Greeks a medicine which aimed to save them from their insight into the absurdity of existence.

What is it about Being that filled the Greeks with horror? The Greeks, Nietzsche thought, saw that the chaotic striving of existence ultimately consists in its temporality. To exist implies a temporal gap at the heart of being, a self-overcoming that cannot remain in an eternal present. Time is the enemy of order and meaning; coming into being and passing away are, as Plato saw, inimical to the absolute presence to which the knowledge of truth aspires. It was for this reason that Plato constructed a "true" world, an eternal realm of being which is subject to unchanging law. (Christianity, as all religions, in Nietzsche's view, far from being in opposition to philosophy, sustains itself only on the premise shared with philosophy of the existence of an eternal world of true being.)

The image of the true world constructed by philosophy is in a sense the result of an act of *poiesis*, as we saw in Plato's work. However, the character of this kind of *poiesis* is fundamentally different for Nietzsche than is the *poiesis* involved in tragic art. This is due to the fact that tragedy includes chaos in its form. To understand this point, we must first acknowledge with Nietzsche that the tragic dramas cannot be primarily treated as literary texts. Emphasis on the ordered perfection of language neglects the fact that the tragedies were first and foremost *performed*. Tragic dramas were not meant to be studied by scholars in libraries; they were presented as live performances to an audience.

If we can imagine the performance of tragedy instead of treating the texts as though they were works to be read, Nietzsche thought, we can also come to understand one of the characteristics of tragic art which is otherwise unintelligible: the role of the chorus. Recalling the performance of tragedy through an act of imaginal memory enables us to comprehend what appears otherwise as the strange pre-eminence of the choral sections of the dramas.

The chorus, unlike the individual actors, did not declaim its words; it sang and danced them. The chorus provided the music of the plays; and this, thought Nietzsche, was the ground from which the speeches of the protagonists emerged. Music, for Nietzsche, is the art of time; it alone can reach below language to the fundamental character of existence as coming into being and passing away. By disregarding the foundational role of

music in the performance of tragedy, classical scholarship robbed the plays of their deepest existential significance. They became instead disembodied texts whose power to affect us seems inexplicable.

In the role of the chorus, moreover, Nietzsche saw a resemblance to earlier modes of expression. The song and dance of the chorus in tragedy resembles the behavior of the choral throng in ritual, especially that of the devotees of the god, Dionysos. The Dionysian throng, in its devotion to the god, lays the groundwork for the emergence of the hero, whose fate is like that of the dying god. The story of Dionysos is that of a god who is torn apart at the hands of his adherents and then re-membered in an act of devotion. Dionysos is the god of wine, whose seeds must be spread out and disseminated before they can be gathered at the harvest. Dionysian rituals celebrate this god who is torn apart and re-membered.

Dionysos is also the god of the festivals in the course of which the tragedies were presented. Tragedy, the highest form of *poiesis*, is a Dionysian art; it originated, in Nietzsche's view, in the choral throng devoted to the god. Tragedy is born, that is, out of the spirit of music. The original title of Nietzsche's book, in fact, was *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*. Although historians have debated the accuracy of Nietzsche's account of the origin of Greek tragedy in Dionysian ritual, the important point for us is the insight upon which this account is based: to treat tragedy as a Dionysian art is to regard tragic *poiesis* as a performance of healing in which the spectator is brought to an understanding and acceptance of the ground of his or her existence as a finite, temporal being.

This transformation is achieved through the Dionysian music of the drama but only as it issues forth into the lives of the protagonists. Here Nietzsche has recourse to another figure in Greek mythology, that of Apollo. The image of Apollo stands for all that is intelligible and meaningful in human existence. Apollo is the god of law and of light; he brings order to communities. Moreover, he is the god of the individual; he separates the community into discrete particulars. Apollo can be seen as providing the basis for much in the tragic dramas: the beauty and order of their language, the figures of the individual protagonists that stand forth upon the stage, the principle of justice that results in their fate – all owe their existence to an Apollonian principle.

Nietzsche sees the specific relationship of the Dionysian to the Apollonian as giving tragic art its power. This relationship distinguishes tragedy from the purely ritual enactment of Dionysian worship. Here Nietzsche restores to tragedy the excellence it achieves through poetic language. It is through the relationship between the Apollonian and the Dionysian that tragic *poiesis* gains its power. Without the Dionysian, the Apollonian turns into arid logic; but without the Apollonian, the Dionysian becomes chaos and madness. Each needs the other to be fulfilled.

At the same time, the Apollonian and the Dionysian do not have the same ontological status for Nietzsche. Dionysos, the dying god, is the god of time, of coming into being and passing away. His fate is that of all living beings, insofar as time is the great disposer of existence. We might say that he is the image of Being in its fundamental temporal quality, were it not that from Nietzsche's perspective even to speak of an image of Dionysos is, strictly speaking, inaccurate. We encounter Dionysos not through beholding his image but rather in a state of intoxication, an ecstatic condition in which we *become* the god.

This ecstatic union is immensely joyful, as we feel the vital power at the heart of our existence; at the same time, it is utterly painful, as we experience our own transience and ultimate end. For the Greeks of the tragic age, the only way to bear this ecstasy without being destroyed was to transform it into the dream image of the Apollonian world. Dionysian ecstasies require Apollonian images. The Apollonian qualities of the tragic dramas are necessary in order for the spectator to tolerate the truths about existence which Dionysian experience brings. Dionysian being thus gives rise to Apollonian form.

What is essential, in Nietzsche's view, is to understand that the tragic drama affirms its Dionysian roots. The chorus retains the spirit of music which expresses the basic character of existence as time. Moreover, the protagonist, though appearing as an Apollonian individual, suffers the fate of Dionysos; he is torn apart and re-membered in the play. The hero, in that sense, could be said to be a mask of Dionysos.

Tragic art, *poiesis*, is for Nietzsche an alternative to the aridity of a scientific and technological culture. His hope is that if we can recall its origins in the spirit of music, we can find the roots of our own existence again and prepare the way for a re-birth of tragedy to occur. Nietzsche himself origi-

nally saw this re-birth in the operatic work of Richard Wagner, a perspective he was ultimately to disavow. Even *The Birth of Tragedy* he came to regard as an “impossible” book, for its romantic fervor and its metaphysical hypostasis of the will. However, the Dionysian spirit that animates the early work continues, I believe, to be the source of his thinking and a possible resource for our own. A Dionysian conception of *poiesis* might even, as we shall see, become the basis for a theory of expressive arts theory.

To speak in terms of such a concept of *poiesis* is not, however, to embrace a Nietzschean metaphysics of the will. Here we can return to Heidegger’s notion of *poiesis* for an alternative perspective. For Heidegger, even though Nietzsche aimed to overcome the overly rationalistic character of Western civilization by asserting the primacy of existence over thought, he nevertheless did so in a way that reconfirmed the basic project of mastery that underlies philosophy itself (Heidegger 1979). By viewing Being in terms of will, Nietzsche unwittingly continued in the tradition which he had attempted to overthrow. The projection of the “true” world as an eternal presence available to cognition is itself an attempt to bring Being under the power of the knowing subject. Traditional Western philosophy originates in the will to control life by thought, to subject time to the eternity of the idea. However, an overcoming based on a similar will-to-power will always be caught in that which it tries to escape.

Even the notion of “overcoming,” for Heidegger, must be given up once it is seen as an expression of the will. Rather than overcome our tradition, in his view, we must unbuild or deconstruct it so that its origin becomes apparent. Once we do so, we can see that philosophy rests on what Derrida later was to call a “metaphysics of presence,” the conception that truth can be brought to rest in a timeless now (Derrida 1973). This deconstruction of the tradition is thus a consequence of understanding truth as unconcealment, for only by dismantling the barriers erected by forgetting can we re-member ourselves again.

Heidegger’s own understanding of *poiesis* has to do with a remembering that brings to light the character of Being as time. Rather than willful self-assertion, it is a “letting-be” (*Seinlassen*) that allows Being to appear in its passing and arrival. The “event” (*das Ereignis*) is the coming-to-manifestation of what is; and the event is always a singular, historical occasion in which what is gathered together is cast into a possible future. *Poiesis*, then, is

the act in which Being eventuates; by setting truth into a work, a historical community can be born.

The presence of the work is thus not the atemporal existence aimed at in the tradition of philosophy; rather, the work is always situated in a particular historical world. Moreover, the work not only reveals the openness of that world, it also shows the hiddenness of its ground. The work contains a mystery that keeps it from being an object of knowledge; it will always be more than what we can say about it in our interpretations. Nevertheless, the work shows us who we are, for we are ourselves knowable yet unfathomable.

Heidegger's critique of Nietzsche's metaphysics of the will does not, in our view, invalidate the insights of the latter into the Dionysian character of tragic *poiesis*. Dionysos is subject to time; he suffers fragmentation and is brought together in a communal act of celebration. Moreover, Dionysos stands for a certain quality of existence, the dynamic power of life itself. When Dionysos is present, the atmosphere is enlivened; there is a festive or, as Bakhtin puts it, a "carnavalesque" quality to a Dionysian community (Bakhtin 1984). Dionysian *poiesis* brings life to a group: the spirit of music comes into play, and the community experiences its being-together in song. The healing power of ritual could be said to stem from the presence of Dionysos. The practice of expressive arts therapy recalls this Dionysian presence in a contemporary world in which the character of festivity is either, for the most part, lost, exiled to the margins or transformed into material for the entertainment industry. In the following section, we will examine the ways in which a Dionysian *poiesis* can be seen as central to our field.

***Poiesis*, chaos and liminal experience**

Poiesis is understood traditionally as an activity of formation, in which the artist gives shape to matter in accordance with his or her idea. The specifically aesthetic quality of a work is seen as consisting in its form; perfection of form leads to the experience of beauty. The philosophy of art from Aristotle to Kant is based on this understanding. This perspective itself stems, ultimately, from a tradition of reflection in which the intellect is regarded as the primary mode of human existence. As Aristotle says, "the

human is the living being with intellect” or, in the usual translation, “man is the rational animal.” Both Plato and Aristotle, despite their different valuations of *poiesis*, agree in regarding it as a making in which intelligible form is given to chaotic matter.

In modern aesthetics, especially in the classic work of Kant, the predominance of form is coupled with an emphasis on the experience of the audience or spectator (Kant 1987). Aesthetics becomes a science of the experience of beauty, rather than an understanding of the work of the artist. *Poiesis* itself tends to fade into the background, as the arts are understood in terms of aesthetic experience. Beauty, as we have noted, is taken as a subjective phenomenon, lacking in objectivity and therefore without relationship to truth.

From the standpoint of a phenomenology of art-making, however, form is not experienced as primary in the making of the work, although it may appear to be so from the perspective which looks upon the finished product. Artistic form emerges out of a chaos which seeks its own shape. The role of the artist or poet is not to impose a pre-existing form upon senseless matter but to allow the material to find its own sense. What is primary is what is given, a chaos of meanings which demands assistance in order to come-into-form. The poet is thus the mediator or facilitator who lends a hand to the process of formation, not the demiurge who creates *ex nihilo*.

This perspective is consonant with the views of artists themselves, who often speak of attending to or receiving the work. The work comes to me; I do not make it through a willful imposition of my idea upon the world. Certainly I may have an intention when I begin; but unless I am willing to let go of my initial idea, I cannot be open to what will arrive. Often, in fact, the work comes as a surprise; what I find is radically different from that which I sought.

Of course, the work needs me to be born; I am not superfluous. My skills in the medium are necessary for the work to arrive. Moreover, the work comes always to *me*; it is not indifferent to my particular experience of life. However, it does not belong to me; I do not own it as my property. Rather, the work comes as a gift which I have the obligation to repay; I can give it away only if I have received it (Hyde 1983).

None of this would be comprehensible were the work the product of my subjective form-giving intention. *Poiesis* happens not in accordance with intellect and will but through the experience of surrender to a process which I can neither understand nor control in advance. Once the work arrives, then I need to exercise my knowledge and capacity in helping it to find its appropriate shape. Critical revision demands consciousness and will. But for something to come in the first place, I must abandon any critical intention and become open or receptive to what is coming. *Poiesis* requires a “letting-be” in order to take place.

This account of artistic making can only be comprehended within the framework of a Dionysian *poiesis*. The experience of chaos which is a necessary phase of the process of creation is essentially Dionysian; the artist, that is, must become like the god and be willing to be subject to a chaotic experience which he or she can neither comprehend in advance nor control. In order for this to happen, he or she must be willing to give up the position of the ego, the knowing subject who is master of the world. An element of resistance usually arrives at this point; the fear of letting go of control stands in the way of immersion in the process. A paradoxical will-to-not-will is thus necessary in order to overcome the initial resistance. Metaphorically speaking, one could say that giving up control is like dying; it is a kind of ego-death. The artist must willingly undergo the experience of chaotic fragmentation in order to find a new form.

To a reflective awareness which regards the finished work, the form of the work can always be understood in terms of what preceded it. Thus the work can be put into an art-historical tradition or interpreted biographically in terms of the artist's prior experience. But the work-in-the-making can never be predicted; it is only afterwards that it all makes sense. One could say that the work arrives to re-organize the field that preceded it. In the light of the finished product, what was there before makes perfect sense; however, before it arrived, all was obscure and unclear.

In this respect, there is a similarity between a Dionysian conception of *poiesis* and the new science of chaos (Levine 1994). Unlike linear processes, chaotic phenomena in nature can neither be predicted nor controlled. This does not mean that they are incomprehensible. Rather, after the process has taken place, one can always provide an analysis. In this way, the under-

standing of chaos can be seen as analogous to a reflective comprehension of the creative process.

One should not make too much of this similarity, however. First of all, not every natural phenomenon has a chaotic character. The Newtonian laws still hold for our understanding of nature; and, indeed, our technical civilization depends on our ability to predict and control natural phenomena, an ability which would be impossible were all nature chaotic. Second, the creative process requires the assistance of the artist in a way that natural phenomena of any kind do not. Art, we might say, is always artificial; though the artist must “get out of the way” of what is happening, it would not happen without his or her help. The artist is the necessary midwife in the birth of the work.

The phenomenon of self-organization or “autopoiesis” is relevant here. Many natural phenomena, especially biological ones, engage in a process of self-organization; they find their form without external intervention. Similarly, there is an autopoietic element in artistic creativity. Something happens without my conscious and deliberate intervention. However, my non-intervention is not a mere absence; it is more like the notion of *wu-wei* or “non-action” in Taoist thought, a “doing-without-doing,” an acting that is also a surrendering to what is taking place. This letting-be requires the presence of the artist, and, in the critical revision of what arrives, even a conscious and deliberate presence.

We could say that there is an affinity between chaos theory and a Dionysian poetics. This affinity can be found in other fields of inquiry as well. Perhaps it even indicates an emerging paradigm shift in our understanding of the world and ourselves. One area where this affinity is noticeable is in the field of ritual studies. Victor Turner, in particular, has developed an analysis of the ritual process in which the element of what he calls “liminality” is paramount (Turner 1969). Turner bases his analysis on the sociological framework developed by Arnold van Gennep in his treatment of the rites of passage, rituals that accompany the transition from one social status to another (van Gennep 1960).

For van Gennep, the structure of ritual is threefold: an initial period of separation from one’s social group and role, followed by a period in which one is in the “margin” between two different social statuses, concluding with an integration into a new social group with a new identity recognized

by all its members. Each moment in this structure demands its own kind of ritual action. Thus, for example, the ritual passage from childhood to adulthood in many tribal cultures often involves a separation of young people from their families, a period of living together in seclusion under the supervision of the ritual elders, and finally their re-incorporation into society with all the rights and responsibilities belonging to adult members of the group.

Van Gennep calls these rituals “rites of passage,” insofar as they can be likened to a journey, in which one first must leave home, then travel through an unknown “no-man’s-land,” and finally arrive at a new destination. The middle or “marginal” phase of the process is also referred to by him as the “threshold” or “*limin*” (Latin for “threshold”). Turner, following van Gennep, focuses upon this liminal element of the ritual process. He understands the liminal condition as one in which all familiar structures have been given up and new ones have not yet appeared. It is thus a time of deconstructing, a chaotic experience before the new stable structure arrives.

Turner calls the condition of being in this chaotic phase of the ritual process “liminality.” It is a time of confusion and powerlessness, as old identities and roles are abandoned and nothing has yet taken their place; but it is also a time of great creativity, in which one is free to invent new forms of meaning for oneself and for the group to which one belongs. Ritual is often thought of as a conservative mechanism designed to affirm and preserve the traditions of a social group. Turner, on the other hand, wishes to call attention to the potential creativity of the ritual process, insofar as this process depends on the crucial condition of liminality, in which the old has been given up and the new is coming into being.

The liminality of ritual is clearly a Dionysian notion. This should not be surprising, if we recall that the image of Dionysos, which underlies our concept of *poiesis*, itself comes from the rituals of the dying god. The chaotic creativity of the Dionysian worshippers has all the characteristics of liminality that Turner describes. Moreover, the communal character of Dionysian worship plays a prominent role in Turner’s view of ritual. In the liminal phase of the ritual process, all the identifying marks of the participants which make up their social identities are stripped away and replaced by the experience of sharing a common fate. The initiates feel their shared humanity; they have, as Turner says, an experience of “human kind-ness,”

of solidarity and comradeship which binds them together. Turner's name for this experience is "communitas" (Turner 1969). Those who share a liminal experience feel themselves bound in a *communitas* that is distinguished from the separation that social structure and role normally entail.

Liminality and *communitas* are thus essential characteristics of a Dionysian *poiesis*. They name a state of being which is separate from the world of everyday life. However, the liminal condition is not intended to be permanent. Liminality marks a particular stage in the rituals of passage, the one in which the transition or change occurs. It is preceded by a stable condition, and it leads to the acquisition of a new position in the structured world. Liminality is not, for Turner, meant to be a permanent state. In fact, he views all attempts at a permanent liminal existence, as in certain counter-cultural or revolutionary movements, to be doomed to failure. Social life requires identifiable roles and responsibilities in order to take place; a permanent state of chaos would be inimical to the survival of the group.

We might say that the same temporary status holds for the *poiesis* that is specifically Dionysian in nature. The festivals of Dionysos are conducted at particular times; only then can the tragic dramas be presented. Their presentation has the effect of bringing the citizens into a state of solidarity or *communitas* in which new symbols and meanings can be experienced together. When the festival has concluded, however, daily life must begin again, although it is hoped it will be marked by a sense of increased vitality and meaning.

In the liminal phase of ritual which Turner describes, moreover, the participants are not left to themselves; there is always a "master of ceremonies" whose task is to conduct them through the unknown land in which they find themselves. In this way, the master of ceremonies resembles the tragic poet, who must provide the audience with structures which they can follow in experiencing the performance. Although the poet himself experiences a kind of chaotic liminality in his process of making, nevertheless the work that he presents to the audience must have a form that they can recognize. Both ritual master and poet have the paradoxical responsibility of structuring a chaotic process; they must lead the participants into an unknown land in which new discoveries can be made, and they must then be able to conduct them safely back to a secure and habitable location.

Liminality in the therapeutic process

The therapeutic process itself can be understood within the framework of liminality (Schwartz-Salant and Stein 1991). Therapy is a time out of time, a pause in everyday life in which habitual behaviors, attitudes and beliefs can be examined and transformed. However, in order for therapeutic change to occur, there must be a process of destructuring in which one's old identity comes into question and is taken apart.

Usually clients enter therapy with a sense that their lives have already become chaotic; the experience of "falling apart" is often what motivates people to ask for help. A fragmented sense of self is extremely painful; it leads to a lack of meaning and purpose and is often experienced as helplessness. The well-known lines from Yeats' (1959) poem "The Second Coming" could be used to describe the condition of the client entering therapy: "Things fall apart./The center cannot hold./Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."

In this state of mind, the client tends to view the therapist as a potential savior, as one who will restore the lost self to its position of security. But what is most therapeutic, it seems to us, is not the attempt to "get someone together again." Rather the therapeutic effect comes from the ability to stay with the experience of nothingness and fragmentation without imposing a new structure. If the therapist can resist the impulse to help (a paradoxical task, since he or she works on the basis of this impulse), then there is the possibility that the client can find the way to a new sense of self. Creativity in the therapeutic process depends upon this ability to tolerate breakdown.

In the work of Freud, the founder of modern psychotherapy, we can see the tension between liminality and structure and the ways in which the therapist plays a role with regard to their interaction. The great discovery of Freud was the insight into the liminal, chaotic nature of unconscious psychic life. Normally, we experience ourselves as conscious beings. For Descartes, as we noted before, consciousness is equivalent to existence: thinking is my mode of being. What Freud discovered was that my consciousness of self rests upon an existence which I do not comprehend with clarity and distinctness. This realm of being of which I am unaware is obscure and confused. It has no central "I" or ego which organizes and

controls it. The unconscious, in other words, is chaotic; it encompasses a space unknown to the “rational animal.”

The concept of the “unconscious” in psychoanalysis is itself a paradoxical notion; it signifies a knowing that we are not aware of. In this sense, the unconscious can never become an object of knowledge. We understand it through the traces it leaves in conscious awareness. From the psychoanalytic perspective, if there is an unconscious mental life, it can only be understood by interpreting what is given to us consciously. This is why interpretation is essential to psychoanalytic thinking; the unconscious dimension of mental life can only be reached by an extrapolation from what is presented. The basic framework of psychoanalysis renders a phenomenology of experience suspect. There is always more than meets the eye.

Freud was fascinated by the presence of the unconscious in conscious mental life, insofar as it manifests itself in hidden form in dreams, neurotic symptoms and works of art. All these phenomena resist conscious understanding yet seem to have a logic of their own. It is to Freud’s credit that, rationalist as he was, he was able to integrate the irrational into his thinking and practice. The key for Freud was to find a method that would allow the unconscious to manifest itself, to the greatest extent possible, in undistorted form. He found this method in the practice of free association.

Free association, in which one aims to speak while giving up all conscious control over one’s thoughts, is for Freud central to psychoanalytic practice. Thoughts that ordinarily would be kept from expression, due to either their “unrealistic” or “immoral” character, are allowed free space. The patient is encouraged to say whatever comes into his or her mind. The analyst, for his or her part, is to maintain a state of “free-floating” awareness in which any prejudgment as to the meaning of the patient’s associations is held in suspension. There is a faith that ultimately the deeper meaning of what is uttered will come to light.

In terms of the perspective we have been developing in this chapter, we could say that psychoanalysis involves an experience of liminality, in which patients, under the guidance of an analyst, willingly immerse themselves in the chaos of unconscious mental life. The unconscious, which has been experienced as a source of disorder that threatens the stable identity of the patient, proves to be a re-source for psychic growth, the basis on which a new identity can be formed. In order for this to happen, the patient must be

willing to let go of knowledge and control to make room for the expression of previously unrecognized thoughts and desires. The acceptance of these thoughts and desires as one's own enables the conscious ego to claim its full range of existence. In doing so, it can be set free for new experiences that had previously been blocked by the barriers to what was unknown.

The role of liminality in psychoanalytic theory and practice has undergone a checkered fate, as various analytic traditions have made it either central or peripheral to their concerns. On the one hand, "wild" analysis tends to make liminality identical with psychoanalysis *per se*; on the other hand, more traditional and "legitimate" forms of analysis emphasize the knowledge of the analyst, that which makes his interpretations authoritative. Insofar as the analyst understands the structure of mental life, he or she can situate their patients' associations into a cognitive frame. Whether the central concepts of this frame involve drives and the defenses erected against them, the relations of the ego with its earliest "objects," or the struggle for the formation of an integral self, the analyst's knowledge becomes the schema in terms of which not only the analyst but patients themselves must interpret their associations.

The problematic of interpretation in psychoanalysis stems from Freud's basic conception of psychic life. If patients can find the meaning of their associations on their own, then this meaning could not have been the unconscious one that is assumed to underlie their thoughts. On the other hand, the analyst cannot substitute his or her own understanding for the patient's; if the meaning does not come to the latter, then it will carry no conviction with it. The patient must somehow be led to see what the analyst already knows. The potential for misrecognition is great here: patients soon learn which associations will receive a reinforcing response and which modes of understanding will be offered by the analyst as valid. As a result, patients tend to give analysts what the latter want, thus confirming their interpretive schemata.

The problematic position of interpretation in analytic thought becomes even more evident when we look at the psychoanalytic perspective on the third member of the group of unconscious mental phenomena we named before: the work of art. In this case, the artist does not usually provide any associations on the basis of which a meaning could emerge. Rather, the analyst is given free rein to interpret the work in terms of his or her own

framework of understanding without fear of meeting opposition. As a result, in our opinion, most analytic interpretations of works of art, beginning with Freud, are an expression of the fantasies of the analyst rather than of the artist. It is not only that the meaning of the work is reduced to the expression of a pre-existing psychic content; but, in addition, there is no warrant to assume that the psyche in question belongs to anyone other than the interpreter. As a result, interpretation has been brought into disrepute; most artists feel themselves to be, in Susan Sontag's words, "against interpretation" (Sontag 2001). It remains to be seen whether the concept of interpretation can be revisioned from another perspective.

The psychoanalytic tradition itself has, of course, expressed doubts about the way in which interpretation has been carried out. Sophisticated analysts are aware of the dangers of over-interpretation and of the substitution of the analyst's meaning for that of the patient. Within the narrative tradition of analytic interpretation that has recently gained attention, there has even been an understanding that the interpreted meaning is a "story," a *mythos*, rather than an objective truth. Rather than look at this tradition, however, we would prefer to focus on the work of one of the great analysts, D.W. Winnicott, to see an alternative perspective closer to our own.

Liminality and transitional experience

Although Winnicott began his professional career as a pediatrician and used many of the insights from his pediatric experience to understand the development of the child, he saw himself as firmly rooted in the psychoanalytic tradition. Thus he accepted Freud's concepts of the unconscious and of the instinctual structure of mental life as the foundation for any understanding of the psyche. Within the "object-relations" school based on the work of Melanie Klein, to which Winnicott could be said to belong, the object-relating aspect of the drive was given special priority. Every drive is oriented to an object of satisfaction. This "object" is understood as the representation of a person or part of a person.

Every psychoanalytic framework includes what we might call a story or myth of development. Within the object-relations perspective, the relationship to the mother is understood as primary for psychological growth. The

mother is seen as the original object-choice for both girls and boys. In fact, in the earliest stages of development, it is hypothesized, there is no experienced difference between the mother and the self. This “autistic” stage of the psyche must be overcome in order for the child to recognize the mother, and subsequently others, as different from him or herself.

Through his observation of infants, Winnicott noticed that there was a period in the child’s life when, no longer identified with the mother, the child did not yet recognize himself as a separate individual. He could, therefore, be characterized as in an “intermediate stage of development” (Winnicott 1971). In this stage, the child can be seen playing with objects which, while separate from himself, seem to have a reality that is merged with the child’s own existence. Winnicott called these objects “transitional objects.” The clearest example would be a “blankie” or “num-num,” to which a child is passionately attached. These and other such objects of attachment Winnicott considered could be “transitional,” insofar as they represented that intermediate stage of development between autism and separation, a stage in which the “me” and the “not-me” cannot be clearly distinguished.

Winnicott saw the development of transitional experience as crucial in the child’s formation of a unified sense of self. Transitional experience is at the origin of play, in which the difference between self and other is suspended. Beginning with transitional objects, the child’s play-space can extend to toys and, ultimately, as he or she grows into adulthood, to works of art. Transitional experience, for Winnicott, is thus at the origin of culture.

What characterizes transitional experience, in particular, is a kind of dreaming or reverie, a relaxed state of being in which distinctions are held at bay and one feels nourished by not having any demands put upon oneself to exist in a certain way. Without such experiences, Winnicott thought, one would grow up lacking a sense of oneself. To be a self, for him, is to feel free to dream, to relax and to let come what may. Without that freedom, one feels constrained to be something for another; the result tends to be the formation of a “false self,” in which one presents to the other what one thinks he or she expects, while simultaneously keeping one’s “true self” in an interior, private realm in which it can be protected and safe.

In this regard, Winnicott talks about the creation of a “holding environment” as essential for the development of the self (Winnicott 1971). The

mother and the environment as a whole must offer the child the experience of feeling affirmed for who he or she is in order for the child to have a sense of its own independent being. This acceptance or affirmation can be thought of, we would say, as a “letting-be,” analogous to Heidegger’s *Gelassenheit*. The child is set free to be who he or she is, if they are “held” or accepted in their innermost being.

In conjunction with his theory of child development, Winnicott put forward an understanding of therapeutic practice. The therapist or analyst must develop a holding environment, in which the patient feels free to be himself without constraint. The analytic experience thus resembles the transitional space of child development, a place for dreaming, where one can exist in a state of reverie without having to satisfy the analyst’s expectations. The analogy between transitional and analytic experience is so strong that one can say that the therapeutic space is a playground, where patient and analyst can play together without constraint.

Freud’s notion of free association is thus re-conceptualized by Winnicott as free play. This experience of purposeless being is seen as valuable in itself; it is the seed-bed for the growth of the self. It can be spoken of as an experience of formlessness or chaos, but this is a productive chaos in which new structures can emerge. If the analyst can provide a therapeutic holding environment and refrain from interpretation, the patient can feel free to become who he or she is. Winnicott even goes so far as to say that the analyst’s desire to interpret can arise out of his or her own fear of chaos; interpretation can thus be a defense against the analyst’s anxiety (Winnicott 1971).

Without necessarily endorsing Winnicott’s particular myth of development, we can see the way in which its key notions resonate with the perspective we have put forth so far. Winnicott’s “transitional experience” is clearly analogous to Turner’s “liminality.” In both cases, there is the understanding that transformation or change requires a phase in which one gives up existing structures and enters a chaotic state of being. Both Winnicott and Turner see this chaos as potentially creative: in transitional or liminal experience, new meanings emerge in symbolic or metaphorical form. Play and art take place through an immersion in formlessness.

However, for both Turner and Winnicott, the experience of chaos is not primarily valued for its own sake. Rather, transitional and liminal states are

phases in a process of destructuring and restructuring. Their ultimate purpose lies in the new meanings which emerge out of the ruins of the old. One comes out of these temporary conditions refreshed and with a new sense of purpose; but, pleasurable as they may be in themselves, they are undergone primarily in order to arrive at a new form of existence.

It seems as if both social and individual life require rejuvenation in order to be experienced with a sense of meaning and a feeling of vitality. The old order must be destructured to make way for the new. If we are not willing to undergo this experience of coming apart, we will not be able to experience ourselves as fully alive. In this sense, what we have called the “Dionysian” is necessary for the conduct of life.

Archetypal psychology and the imagination

In the tradition of archetypal psychology developed by C.G. Jung, and particularly in the work of James Hillman, we can find a similar appreciation for the Dionysian. Hillman begins within a Jungian framework, but his thinking takes him in new and unexplored directions. We will first sketch out the relevant parts of Jung’s thinking in order to understand Hillman’s place within this tradition.

For Jung, as for Freud, the psyche can only be understood in terms of a process of development. Whereas for Freud, however, the early stages of development are given precedence, for Jung it is maturity which dominates his thinking. The psyche, for Jung, should be understood in terms of its ultimate goal. We could say, in the terms that Paul Ricoeur employs in his book on Freud (Ricoeur 1970), that whereas Freud’s orientation was “archeological,” going back to the origin, Jung’s was “teleological,” looking towards the end. Of course, one approach implies the other: Freud emphasized the past in order to be able to escape from its tyranny into a different future, and Jung saw the goal of adult development as overcoming the onesidedness of early life.

For Jung, early development is always partial; one can only actualize a limited amount of one’s potential capacities. As a person matures, he or she comes to realize the limited character of their lives; one could say their un-lived life comes to haunt them, in the form of dreams, fantasies and feelings that seem foreign to the ego. Often this sense of an unfulfilled

existence leads to a crisis or breakdown, whether it be in mid-life or at a later stage. Therapy, then, through an exploration of these feelings and fantasies, becomes the means of finding the unactualized parts of the psyche and bringing them to conscious awareness. The image of the wholeness of psychic life that guides the process is called by Jung the "Self."

Just as, in Freud's thinking, the images that emerge in the process of free association are the key to understanding psychic life, so for Jung it is the imagination which gives us access to the development of the Self. The unconscious psyche expresses itself in imaginal form. In addition to those images which arise from the person's individual life, however, Jung also sees others which are common to all individuals and cultures. These collective images arise from fundamental structures of the psyche called "archetypes." The Self is such an archetype, as is, in fact, the Ego as well. The Ego, in Jung's view, is the archetype of conscious individual life; it is the source of our attempts to understand and control the world and ourselves. However, the Ego is only one of the archetypes of the psyche; a life or a culture oriented solely by the principles of the Ego would be necessarily partial and divorced from the instinctual roots of life.

These instinctual sources of individual life, repressed by the Ego, form the archetype of the "Shadow," a term which in Jung's understanding is close to Freud's notion of the personal unconscious. Psychic development aims at a bringing together of the Ego and the Shadow into an integral Self. However, for Jung, there is at least one other significant archetype that must be taken into account if psychic wholeness is to be achieved: the archetype of one's contrasexual nature, called the "anima" or "animus" (for men and women respectively). One's gender development is always partial, limited to being male or female. In order to achieve wholeness, the archetype of the opposite sex must be integrated into the psyche.

For Jung, an archetype is a structuring principle of the psyche. It possesses a certain kind of psychic energy, and it is the source of particular images which are associated with feelings of certain kinds. We can become aware of these images and feelings; but the archetype itself cannot be known. It is like the Kantian thing-in-itself which underlies all our representations. The archetype expresses itself primarily through the imagination. At one point, Jung even says that image *is* psyche (Jung in Hillman 1975).

The archetype breaks into our conscious awareness through our dreams and fantasies. Therapy, then, needs to focus on imaginal life, if it is to reach the depths of the psyche. In this respect Jung's therapeutic framework is similar to Freud's. However, in the work of archetypal psychology, Jung does not try to reduce the image to its origins in earlier development. Rather, he attempts to "dream the dream onward," to actively engage the imagination so that the psyche can find the form of expression that will allow the image to be integrated into conscious existence. Jung's archetypal psychology is a practice of the imagination.

James Hillman continues in the Jungian tradition of imaginal psychology. However, Hillman deviates from Jung in not presupposing the developmental framework that guides the latter's thinking. We could say that Hillman's work is an archetypal phenomenology. Rather than beginning with a teleological conception of the psyche, Hillman prefers to let the archetypes show themselves in all their multiplicity. In so doing, he demonstrates the fecundity of the imagination, its multiple and variegated forms.

Although Hillman does not explicitly reject Jung's concept of the Self, it is clear that he does not see it as necessary in order to understand the psyche. Hillman tends to use the word "soul," where Jung would use "Self." By "soul," he does not mean a substantial, underlying entity but the quality of existence that gives meaning and vitality to our experience (Hillman 1975). "Soul" in Hillman's usage can be compared with its use in the African-American tradition, in which one speaks of something as having or not having "soul." In Hillman's framework, it is the archetype of the anima which brings soul into the world; it is this archetype, we might say, which animates the psyche. The anima, in fact, tends to become the central archetype for Hillman; it represents everything meaningful and vital that is foreign to the Ego.

Hillman understands the Ego itself in terms of the archetype of the Hero. The Ego is the all-conquering entity that wishes to master reality through rational understanding. What the Ego lacks is "soul" – one must look away from this clarity of consciousness to find that which gives our lives value. Soul, for Hillman, dwells in the depths, in the dark, obscure places of the psyche, especially in its pathology. Hillman follows Keats in describing the world as "The vale of Soul-making." (Hillman 1975, p.ix).

The way to soul-making lies in the pathologizing acts of the psyche that break up the false unity of ego-awareness.

Pathology, for Hillman, is thus a process of “falling apart” – the psyche experiences fragmentation, as its heroic attitude of unification through consciousness necessarily reaches its limit (Hillman 1975). This pathological condition is often experienced as depression, a lack of meaning and a lowering of vital energy. Rather than trying to overcome this condition, which would require another heroic act of the Ego, Hillman suggests we “honor our depression” (Hillman 1975) – that is, allow it to manifest itself in all its forms. The way to do this is through an awakening of the imagination, an attending to the forms of soul wherever they manifest themselves. If we can do this, Hillman suggests, our fragmentation can become experienced as a resource of fertile multiplicity, a source for the renewal of the psyche.

We might say that, for Hillman (as for post-modern thought in general), wholeness is the disease rather than the cure. Soul is always particular, never general; it shows itself in the specific images that come to us and touch us. If we can give up trying to get ourselves together and instead glory in what Shakespeare called our “infinite variety,” then we can bring a quality of soul to our lives that will otherwise be lacking.

Hillman’s emphasis on multiplicity is so central to his thinking that he has called his perspective a “polytheistic psychology” (Hillman in Miller 1974). Rather than focusing on a unifying concept such as the Ego or Self, Hillman insists upon the value of diversity. This gives his psychology a particularly aesthetic character. The variety of images as they appear to us and touch us is primary for him. Hillman even goes so far as to suggest that much of our sense of psychic disturbance is due to the an-aesthetic quality of our lifeworld; the uniformity and homogeneity of modern life has robbed us of the variety which imagination brings. Therapy, therefore, must be, at least in part, devoted to restoring the aesthetic dimension of life; beauty, not knowledge, is the ultimate therapeutic goal for Hillman.

Instead of a developmental psychology, Hillman presents us with what might be called an aesthetic or poetic psychology, based on a phenomenology of the imagination. His method ultimately leads him to a conception of the person that is focused on the concept of character rather than on that of the Self (Hillman 1996). The concept of Self, understood as the totality of

the personality, tends towards abstraction. If the Self includes all human potential, then what can account for the differences among us? These differences tend to be placed at a non-essential level in Jungian psychology.

Thus the Jungian concept of the Self can easily be assimilated to the Hindu notion of the Self as that which is simultaneously everything and nothing, leading to a tendency in the Jungian tradition to find affinities with Eastern thought. Hillman, on the other hand, has spoken of the need for a "Southern" psychology, in contradistinction to what he sees as our "Northern" tradition of seriousness and singleness of purpose. A Southern psychology would have the Mediterranean quality of enjoyment in the diversity of life. Hillman has even suggested that we replace Descartes' "*Cogito, ergo sum*" ("I think, therefore I am") with the new motto of "*Convivo, ergo sum*" – in his translation, "I party, therefore I am" (Hillman and Ventura 1992). Conviviality becomes a virtue in archetypal psychology, not a distraction from the seriousness of the pursuit of the solitary Self.

For Hillman, in fact, the person is not a Self but a character. The term "character" for him retains some of its original sense as a mark or trace made upon something by an instrument. Thus a person's "character" can be said to be the marks or scars that life has traced upon him; our character is our scars. At the same time, the character is what is "characteristic," what distinguishes the person as this specific person and none other. It is what makes him a "character," in the double sense of a fictional or imaginal being and one who is peculiar, a "real character," as we sometimes say in colloquial language.

This peculiarity or singularity of the person is both who he or she is and what he or she has become. Since Hillman wishes to avoid a developmental perspective (which would rely on the presupposition of the teleology of the Self), it is difficult for him to admit that character is to a great extent shaped by external circumstance, by what has been done to us. Therefore he must affirm that character is somehow both given and made, a pre-existing tendency that finds the circumstances that permit it to exist. However, though it is indeed true that we tend to seek those experiences that coincide with our sense of ourselves, Hillman's anti-developmental framework may have prevented him from acknowledging the extent to which our history is not under our control, or even the control of an innate spirit or "*daimon*." Thrownness is an essential part of being human. Hillman's conception of

character, we believe, has a tendency to underestimate the suffering that comes to us without our having sought it, whether consciously or not. “Characterology” must also take account of the traumas of history.

Nevertheless, Hillman’s psychology has the great merit of bringing aesthetic particularity to the understanding of the psyche. From this perspective, there can be no norm or goal of development that would guide individual or collective life. Rather, the quality of a life is a function of the extent of its imaginative capacity, how fully the multiplicity of the psyche is given play. Hillman’s motto might be said to be, “The unimagined life is not worth living.” Thus, if there is a notion of development in this poetic psychology, it can only be a development of the imagination.

Hillman’s archetypal psychology prizes difference and variety above all. It envisions pathology as a process that the psyche undergoes in order to break up the constricting unity of egoic existence. In this sense, we can see a resemblance to the Dionysian process that we saw evident in the thinking of both Turner and Winnicott. Indeed, Hillman himself refers to his work as a “Dionysian” psychology (Hillman 1972). However, unlike both Turner and Winnicott, Hillman refuses a notion of integration or re-incorporation that would bring the fragments of psychic life together. For him, psychic life is fundamentally an-archic. Even the concept of “character” is not so much a unifying notion as one that particularizes and differentiates. In this refusal of integration, we could say that Hillman’s is one of the few truly post-modern psychologies.

Post-modernism and a deconstructed psychology of the imagination

Expressive arts therapy can itself be seen as a post-modern phenomenon. In order to understand this statement, we must devote some space to reflection on the meaning of the term “post-modernism.” The word signifies both an historical period and a philosophical perspective. Insofar as it refers to an historical period, it indicates a certain shift in social and political life. The “modern” world was essentially a period of European domination, in which the Western powers exercised control over the rest of the world. Modernism is a centralizing and unifying phenomenon; economically and politically, Europe became the “center,” whereas its colonies were relegated

to the “margins.” We can speak of modernity, therefore, as based on Eurocentrism (including in that term the former North American colonies, founded by Europeans).

This Eurocentrism, which subordinated the rest of the colonized world both economically and politically, was based on the concept of a “Western civilization” governed by rationality and universal norms. Science was taken as the primary medium of this rationality; technological advances based upon scientific discovery were instrumental in the colonization and exploitation of the non-European world. Modern philosophy, beginning with Descartes, can therefore be seen as an expression of and facilitator in the advancement of European hegemony.

Post-modernism refers to the break-up of Eurocentrism. It begins with the First World War in which the relative stability and normality of European social life was destroyed. Post-war economic catastrophe, the liberation of the former colonies, and the mass destruction during the Second World War all contributed to a loss of dominance of the European powers and a decentralization of economic, social and political life, a phenomenon now known as “post-colonialism.” Thus post-modernism can be said to have emerged out of the crisis of modernism. This crisis was particularly evident in the two great catastrophes of modern history: the Holocaust and Hiroshima. After these events, if not before, modernism in the guise of European culture could no longer present itself as the *telos* or goal of history.

Philosophically, the emergence of post-modernism signifies a loss of confidence in reason, as well as a refusal of all totalizing or centralizing modes of thought. We could very well see Nietzsche as the first great post-modern thinker, since his critique of Apollonian culture and his affirmation of the Dionysian are characteristic of post-modern thinking. If not a post-modernist *avant la lettre*, he must certainly be considered the progenitor of post-modern philosophy.

In Heidegger’s anti-foundationalism, we can find another source of the post-modern tendency in contemporary thought. By thinking Being within the horizon of time, Heidegger rejects the possibility of a stable and substantial ground for thought. What he calls the “ontological difference” between Being and being, that Being can never be *a* being, implies that we cannot ground our thinking on any entity, even one which represents the totality of beings, such as the Hegelian Absolute.

This anti-foundationalism gives Heidegger's thinking an abyssal quality, insofar as his thinking leads to an *Abgrund*, an absence of ground. He thus rejoins Nietzsche, whose dictum that "God is dead" signifies a similar inability to rely on a transcendent principle for the justification of existence. Post-modernism, in its rejection of a ground for thinking, is thus faced with the problem of nihilism that haunts European culture. If there is no God or Absolute, what holds everything together? What can we rely on to give our life meaning and value? Can we live without a principle that justifies our existence? It is no wonder that Dostoevsky was led to say, "Without God, everything is possible," or that Camus suggested that suicide and murder were the two great issues facing human beings today.

Post-modernism, then, is an expression of the crisis in reason which, as we have suggested, is part of the decline of Eurocentrism. Post-modernism emerges out of the catastrophes of history and attempts to find a way to face them without recourse to fantasies of salvation. In this sense, it can truly be called, as Blanchot says, the thinking of "the disaster" (Blanchot 1995). Post-modern philosophy is an attempt to think the break-up and fragmentation of social and cultural life. Ruins and fragments become the themes of its reflection. How to build a life out of the ruins and how to live with fragmentation are its great questions.

At the same time as it has this "catastrophic" quality, however, there is also a tendency in post-modern thinking towards celebration and festivity. The death of reason is also an opportunity for the re-birth of the imagination. In fact, the slogan of the liberation movement of May 1968 in France was "Power to the imagination!" The "decline of the West" does not necessarily mean decadence and despair; it may also signify a setting-free of all those powers that had been held in check by the rule of centralizing and totalizing tendencies. We could say, therefore, that there is a sense of Dionysian festivity in post-modern thinking, as well as an understanding of the catastrophic character of life. Within the Dionysian tradition, in fact, catastrophe and celebration belong together, as the tearing apart of the god becomes an opportunity for new life to emerge.

Just as the abyssal character of post-modernity can be thought of in terms of the Heideggerean concept of the ontological difference, so can its celebratory tendency as well. Anti-foundationalism not only means a loss, it also represents a liberation from the tyranny of the One. Difference can

therefore be celebrated for its own sake. We can see this tendency most clearly in the thought of Jacques Derrida, one of the most important thinkers to come after Heidegger. Derrida follows Heidegger in making the ontological difference central to his thinking. Unlike his predecessor, however, Derrida does not attempt to find an expanded concept of Being which can hold difference within it – an attempt which gave Heidegger's work a nostalgic cast, as he tried to find a more original tie to the earth in the simplicity of rural life. Instead, Derrida rigorously and playfully stays with difference as it disseminates itself endlessly. There is, for him, no god who can come to save us from history, only the endless play of difference.

To understand Derrida's thinking properly, however, we must follow him in tracing out the implications of the concept of difference. If we think of this notion as signifying an entity – namely, that which is different – we will in fact revert to the ideas of identity and totality we were trying to overcome. Derrida coins the word “*différance*” to indicate his central notion (Derrida 1973). *Différance* implies not only to differ, in the sense of not being the same, but also to defer, in the sense of temporal delay. *Différance*, therefore, is an attempt to think our existence in time – an impossible task, if thinking is understood as bringing things together into a stable unity. Derrida must therefore “think differently,” if he is to follow the critique of foundationalism.

One way to do this is to look at the history of thinking itself and let it show its own tendency to deny temporality. Nietzsche called this “philosophizing with a hammer,” insofar as the idols of thought have to be destroyed as false gods (Nietzsche in Kaufmann 1954). Heidegger similarly spoke of deconstructing the history of philosophy to reveal its bias against temporality. Derrida has called his own thinking a form of deconstructionism, a taking apart of previous texts to show how their attempt to escape from time and history has led them to impassable limits.

His first attempt to do this was in an encounter with phenomenology itself. For Derrida, although phenomenology attempts to set aside all presuppositions in understanding what shows itself, it nevertheless presupposes that the presence of the phenomenon can be brought into view. Phenomenology, at least in Husserl's texts, relies on bodily presence as the final source of evidence for truth. But, as Heidegger pointed out, what shows itself primarily and for the most part is not the truth but the distorted world

of the “they.” Moreover, even when truth can be brought into the open, for example, by the work of art, there is in it something that resists manifestation, that which is its non-objective ground.

For Derrida, Heidegger’s way of thinking, although opening the way for an anti-foundational perspective, is still contaminated by the “metaphysics of presence.” Heidegger continues to seek the way back to the ground of metaphysics through his destructuring of the tradition. Even a non-objective ground, for Derrida, presupposes presence as its ultimate foundation. What remains after a radical critique for him is the play of significations, the never-ending dissemination of meaning through *différance* (Derrida 1981).

Derrida’s work itself has been interpreted as a “negative theology,” a pointing to an absent god by refusing all signs of his presence, although he has rejected this interpretation (Caputo 1997). His writing is animated by the spirit of play without the necessity of postulating a player outside the game. Derrida’s thought refuses the goal of a knowing which aims to arrive at a basic principle; there is always something of a remainder for him, a supplement, trace or “parergon” (that which goes beyond the work, the *ergon*) (Derrida 1987). His thinking therefore has no beginning and no end; it is profoundly generative, like the spreading of seeds by Dionysos. One might say, from a Derridean point of view, that the god *is* the spreading of the seeds; he has no being outside of this proliferation.

Derrida’s philosophical project of deconstruction can be seen as analogous to the post-modern psychology of Jacques Lacan. Just as, for Derrida, the world can only be read as text and not as a substantial presence, so for Lacan, the “unconscious is structured like a language” (Lacan 1977). “It” speaks to and through us; and any attempt to master it is doomed to frustration.

This state of affairs can most clearly be seen in Lacan’s well-known account of the “mirror-stage” in child development (Lacan 1977). This stage is usually seen in developmental theories as a normative moment in the formation of the ego, in which the child is capable of recognizing himself for the first time. All subsequent recognitions by others are thought to be built upon the success of this initial self-recognition through reflection by the other. Likewise, disturbances in the self can be traced back to early misrecognition, a failure to be seen. Therapy, within this framework,

is thought to be based on “mirroring,” in which the therapist gives back to the client the lost image of him- or herself.

For Lacan, this conception of the self and its development is an illusion, albeit an inevitable one. In what we could call the Lacanian myth of development, the child’s fundamental experience of self is of a bundle of disconnected and fragmented bodily impulses. These impulses fail to cohere into a totality. When the child looks into the mirror, the temptation arises to identify with this image, in which I am presented as a whole being all at once. Subsequent relationships with others are then based upon a need to have them see me in my integral form, to recognize me as a self. For Lacan, this sort of recognition is fundamentally a misrecognition. My being, which cannot be grasped as a totality, is experienced as chaotic and abyssal. To escape from this experience I need others to “mirror” my idealized self-image. Failing that, I will act aggressively towards them in order to bring about my goal. Therefore, a therapy that is based on mirroring actually confirms the misrecognition that keeps me from what is real.

Lacan refers to this whole register of misrecognition between self and other as the “imaginary” (Lacan 1977). The term designates a game of mutual illusion which we necessarily play with one another, an illusion which ultimately leads to despair, once we realize that we can never find the one who will give us back to ourselves. Only if we can let go of this imaginary conception of the self can we enter into the realm of the free play of significations that Lacan calls the “symbolic.”

From a Lacanian developmental perspective, the mirroring or recognition that Winnicott sees as based upon the holding environment provided by the mother remains within the imaginary register. In order for the child to give up the illusion of coincidence with self, the father must break up this dyadic mother–infant relationship by introducing the child to language, understood as based upon a system of differences. The identity of the self can only be achieved by attempting to eliminate difference.

Entry into language or the symbolic dimension, on the other hand, prohibits the achieving of a stable identity. Development for Lacan leads ideally not to the formation of the self but to its deconstruction; it is a kind of undevelopment or *Abbildung*. For Lacan, as for Derrida, we might say, it is only by following Dante’s vision of the motto on the gates of Hell,

“Abandon hope all ye who enter here” (i.e., hope for salvation through ultimate presence), that one can live freely in the world.

Trauma and the work of art

The work of the post-modern thinkers we have been discussing, whatever field they come from, seems to converge on a similar theme: human beings have a need to find a principle which will give meaning and value to their experience of the self and of the world. This principle is meant to provide a foundation for thinking and being; it aims to be a solid and stable presence that can withstand the chaotic flux of experience. However, from a post-modern perspective, the search for such a principle is doomed to failure – neither God nor the Absolute Subject nor the Ego nor the Self can stand firm against the chaos and multiplicity inherent in our experience of the flux of time. Rather than futilely searching elsewhere for such a foundation, post-modern thinkers lay out another possibility: allowing formlessness and multiplicity to emerge without forcing them into a totality. Instead, if we can allow the free play of the imagination to develop, we can find forms that will hold the transitoriness of our experience. *Poiesis* is a valid activity in a post-modern world, not because it overcomes time and produces deathless works (or secures immortal fame for the poet), but precisely because the work retains its temporary character as a presence in the world. Its symbolic existence prevents it from being taken as a substantial foundation underlying the flux of life. It is, we might say, an event, rather than a thing.

Post-modern thinking celebrates the imagination. The field of experience is seen as a field of play, in which the very absence of a founding principle gives the freedom to build new worlds. A delight in multiplicity marks this tendency of contemporary thought. However, given this playfulness, the question arises whether a post-modern *poiesis* can provide an adequate response to the trauma and terror of the real. In a world in which memories of Auschwitz and Hiroshima (and, more recently, September 11) haunt our consciousness and in which the anticipation of terror fills us with paralyzing fear, what good does an admonition to give up all security and let go into the chaos of the free play of the imagination do us? Is it not this very insecurity which we need to overcome?

Moreover, do we not need to take account of the reality of trauma, whether on a historical or individual scale? Does trauma not interrupt our lives and intrude upon the flow of experience? Intrusive, recurrent, compelling – the memories of trauma prevent us from going on living. If post-modern *poiesis* can be taken as a guide for an artistic therapy, it must face the challenge of the existence of trauma (Levine 2002).

Trauma presents itself as the repetition of the same. The memories and feelings which come after trauma carry the mark of something fixed and unalterable which repeats itself against our will. Moreover, traumatic events become the center around which identities are constructed. Thus the survivor is often presented as the archetypal figure of our culture. What is remarkable is that in this contemporary figuration, trauma comes to serve a similar function to the founding principle of a traditional culture. In a post-modern culture, trauma validates and gives meaning to existence. We might even go so far as to say that trauma tends to play the role of a “negative sublime,” surpassing our mundane existence and marking us as sacred beings (LaCapra 2001).

To say this is not in any way to deny or minimize the suffering of victims of trauma. Rather we are trying to point to the way in which suffering is figured in a culture that lacks a ground. For suffering to be acknowledged at all, it must be given a meaning. In the absence of transcendence, the only meaning that is possible is negative, one in which the very existence of the traumatized person becomes a sanctified act.

It might be interesting to compare our contemporary treatment of suffering in terms of the trope of trauma with the classical conception of tragedy. For the Greeks, the tragic is both the event that marks us for suffering and the artistic presentation of that event for an audience of our peers. Tragedy, then, is the presentation of suffering; yet it has, as Aristotle saw, the paradoxical effect of purifying that suffering through its very presentation.

We are here in the company of the basic terms of tragedy: *poiesis*, *mimesis*, *catharsis*. The usual translation of Aristotle’s definition of tragic *poiesis* is that it is the imitation (*mimesis*) of an action in dramatic form, resulting in the *catharsis* of our emotions. However, everything depends upon our interpretation of these basic terms. *Poiesis* refers not just to the type of language used but to the act of performance, as Nietzsche has taught us. *Poiesis* is a

performative art. Moreover, to say that it relies on *mimesis* does not mean, as Plato thought, that it attempts to copy or imitate an action. *Mimesis* in a literal sense would be the reduplication of an act, its reproduction in every particular. No act of the imagination could or would ever try to do that. For Aristotle, it is clear that the object of *mimesis* is the form or essence of an action, that which gives it its meaning and existence. Moreover, "action" is understood in the broadest possible sense. The action of a tragedy is not solely, for example, Oedipus coming to know his true identity; it is, rather, an enactment of the limits of human knowledge and power and the suffering that ensues when these limits are breached.

Furthermore, *catharsis* does not refer to the elimination of troubling feelings, in Aristotle's view. Although the term can have the medical meaning of purging a foreign substance from the body, it also has roots in the ritual practice of purification. In this sense, the *catharsis* of pity and fear means that these emotions are allowed to be experienced in their purified state. As such, they do not make us "unhappy" but rather bring a sense of awe to our experience. Catharsis allows us to bear the horror we witness and to experience compassion for those who suffer without giving way. The performance of tragedy marks the tragic as a mode of being human: we are born, we suffer, and we will die. We can accept this knowledge only insofar as we are willing to look at it as it is presented to us in the play.

"Tragedy," then, differs in its significance from "trauma." Trauma is figured as something that invades the psyche from without; it is the consequence of an act which happens to us and for which we carry no responsibility (or only the ancillary one of happening to be in the wrong place at the wrong time). This is why trauma workers are unanimous in their insistence that the victim not be blamed. In this model of suffering as an invasion by something external to the being of the person (war, rape, genocide), trauma relies on the premise of an essentially unmarked and innocent existence that precedes the traumatic event and that is capable of being recaptured again. The goal of trauma therapy as normally practiced is to restore the essential innocence of victims by exorcizing their ghosts, the painful memories that haunt them. Even if these memories cannot be completely done away with, the intensity of the pain they cause and the frequency of their occurrence can be reduced. In any case, the trauma victim is a survivor,

one who has, like Ishmael in *Moby Dick*, returned to testify to what he has seen.

There is a curious parallel with tragic performance in trauma therapy. In the course of the latter, the victim is often encouraged to tell his or her story, to attempt to recall it in its exact mode of occurrence. Sometimes this re-telling is seen as an attempt to make the experience accessible for knowledge and reflection; sometimes it is envisioned as a literal repetition of the experience in which all the horror and shame are brought into the room in order to be eliminated once and for all. In either case, however, there is the assumption that the trauma is a factual event that can be recalled as it was in order to be either understood or re-experienced (or both).

Trauma, we have said, raises a question for post-modern thinking: can a reliance upon the free play of the imagination come to terms with the reality of human suffering? The question that post-modernism raises for trauma theory, on the other hand, is whether the model of trauma which this theory relies on depends upon premises which render human suffering unimaginable and which therefore prevent it from ever being acknowledged as part of life. Here we would have to disagree with certain post-modern theorists, such as Cathy Caruth, who have accepted the basic framework of trauma theory and attempted to place it within a post-modern frame (Caruth 1996). For Caruth, trauma is an exemplary phenomenon, insofar as it embodies the moment of deferral characteristic of contemporary thought. The trauma, in her view, is only experienced after the fact. At the time, it is too overwhelming to be taken into consciousness; it exceeds the limits of awareness.

Thus there is in Caruth's view, as Freud indicated in his discussion of the case of the "Wolf Man," an element of *nächtraglichkeit* in traumatic experience; its full significance only arises in the light of subsequent events. This explains why trauma victims may go through their horrific experiences in a state of shock and why their pain only arises later through nightmares, flashbacks and other phenomena. The trauma, thus, is inscribed in the mind without the conscious awareness of the victim; it only comes into consciousness afterwards. The premises of this theoretical framework are that what can properly be called "trauma" is that which cannot be experienced in consciousness, that the memory of the event is stored somewhere in the mind (or in the brain) only in order to recur later against the victim's

conscious intention, and that only a therapy which has for its goal the bringing of the memory into consciousness by re-calling the actual event is the appropriate way of working with the victim of trauma.

This is a powerful framework which has come to dominate the theory and practice of trauma therapy. However, in the light of the anti-foundationalism of post-modern thought, it is necessary to raise some questions about this point of view (Levine 2002; Leys 2000). In the first place, trauma theory assumes that the trauma is a “fact,” i.e., that the event is not mediated by consciousness but somehow escapes the way in which all experiences are interpreted by the subject. However, in order to honor the experience of those who have suffered, we need to remember that everyone experiences a “traumatic” event in his or her own way. Every person’s conception of self and others, their habits and characteristic ways of thinking and acting, their cultural assumptions and values, their disposition at the moment of the event – all these and many other factors affect the experience of a traumatic occurrence. To assume that trauma somehow escapes the experience of victims is to reduce them to the role of being passive spectators of their lives, an outcome which is the very goal of those who carry out traumatic acts.

We are not suggesting that the victim has the choice of whether or not to be affected; rather, we are only indicating that how they are affected very much needs to be taken into question. To give only one example, not all survivors of the Holocaust have experienced that traumatic event in the same way. Some have dwelt in bitterness with their memories; some were able to create new lives without seeing themselves only as victims or survivors; some have vowed “Never again!” and fought against those they see as enemies; others have made the same vow and meant by it that they will never treat other people as they were treated. The trauma of the Holocaust is not a “fact” that can be understood without interpretation – though certainly it is real, and we must never stop trying to understand it.

Moreover, it is not the case that most traumatic experiences occur without awareness; usually, victims are only too aware of what has happened to them. They may indeed be haunted by their memories; but these memories are themselves available to conscious recall, even when the victim would rather they were expunged from the mind forever. The model of trauma, derived originally from the delayed reactions of the shocked

victims of railway accidents, has been taken as normative for all survivors of horrific events, when in fact such a “typical” profile is the exception, not the norm.

Memory itself, whether available to recall at will or not, is not simply given but is “constructed” or made. Memory, from a phenomenological perspective, is not the literal registration of an event (itself understood as a pure fact); rather it is a forming or shaping of an event after it has occurred. We remember selectively; different people remember different things about the “same” event; and memories change over time, with no guarantee that they become more, or for that matter less, reliable. Memory and imagination, we might say, are no strangers to each other. Again, this does not mean that memory is always unreliable or that traumatic events did not occur, only that we must be careful of immediately identifying the memory with the event. There is a gap or space between them which allows for greater or lesser veracity.

It is this gap as well which makes possible the imaginative presentation of an event. The events that are re-called or re-experienced in expressive arts therapy are not a literal summing up of the dead past. Rather they are, like tragic performance, a creative elaboration of the past, one which may actually touch the truth of that past more closely than what is presented as a pure repetition. Here we can see the power of the arts to “set truth into a work.” The imaginative representation of a traumatic event can reach a deeper level of significance than a bare recital of the “facts.”

The role of the therapist in the treatment of trauma also has to be examined in the light of a post-modern critique of foundations. It is common to speak of the therapist as a “witness” to the traumatic experience of the patient. This notion of “witnessing” is usually taken for granted; but, in fact, it is not unproblematical. “Witnessing” usually implies that not only is the story of the client to be understood as the literal truth; it also means that the role of the therapist is seen as being the one who receives that truth without any interpretation of their own. The therapist in the role of witness is thought to be as much of a blank slate or pure consciousness as the client is; any other reaction on the therapist’s part is understood as “counter-transference” and is to be eliminated.

Within the perspective of expressive arts therapy, on the other hand, we would say that, although certainly therapists need to be able to listen to the

stories of their clients, listening is nevertheless an active experience in which what you say has an impact on me, according to the full range of my experience. The activity of listening is more than what is called “active listening,” in which I show that I have understood the other by making a mirroring, empathic response. Rather, listening is a responding, a speaking or communicating from the place where I am affected by what you have said. Such a response can even take an aesthetic form; it can be an “aesthetic response” (Knill, Barba and Fuchs 2004), in which my own experience of your story is given imaginative elaboration.

This kind of transformation, if done with sensitivity, is an indication of just how seriously I take what you have told me; if I only “mirrored” your experience, I would not be able to show that. I may even be able to help you to tell your story better by helping you find a manner of telling that is more effective for you; that is, by making an “aesthetic intervention” (Knill *et al.* 2004). And by conducting an “aesthetic analysis” (Knill *et al.* 2004), i.e., looking at what you have made, done or said afterwards, we may be able to see meanings in it which were not apparent during the process of making.

Once the arts have been admitted into the therapeutic space, it is not possible to stay in the literal realm of reality. Even an arts therapy like psychodrama, which often re-enacts real-life dramas, changes the meaning of the events by playing them in a psychodramatic space, with others than those who were involved, in the presence of an audience, and under the direction of the psychodramatist. Rather than being a defect in the therapeutic process, however, this necessary transformation into imaginal reality is precisely the virtue of using an artistic method. The *mimesis* of *poiesis*, we might say, is able to effect a *catharsis* precisely because it does not literally reproduce the event of suffering but transforms and transfigures it imaginatively. In this way we are freed from its grip and able to see it as it truly is for the first time.

Aesthetics after Auschwitz

One further consideration must be taken into account, if we are to attempt to provide a philosophy of expressive arts therapy. If we accept the anti-foundationalism of post-modern thought as our starting point (making sure that this perspective itself doesn’t become an unexamined dogma or a

new foundation), we have to come to terms with the post-modern critique of aesthetics as well. Traditional aesthetics, as we have indicated, envisages the work as a self-enclosed totality; it takes “classical” works as the norm and sees them as possessing an autonomy that separates the realm of art from that of everyday life. The work, then, has the function of elevating the viewer to a more cultivated level; it represents a “higher” sphere of life. This is the reason why the study of the classics was seen as the means of achieving *Bildung*, traditionally understood in terms of a cultivated and civilized attitude toward life.

The autonomy of art, however, as well as its role in embodying a “higher” sphere of life, are precisely what have come into question as a consequence of the great catastrophes of the twentieth century. If the result of all these centuries of cultivation is senseless and near-total destruction, then culture and the arts can no longer claim the superior value which has been placed upon them for so long. They might, in fact, even be seen as deceptive glosses which have prevented us from seeing the true horror of life. This is why the philosopher Theodor Adorno once said that, “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” (Adorno 1967).

This hyperbolic statement has been interpreted in many ways. In the context of Adorno’s work and that of the school of Critical Theory to which he belonged, it can mean that “culture” is the screen behind which terror operates. We must, therefore, remove this screen in order to see the horror of the real. Adorno’s statement can also be taken to mean that to write poetry about Auschwitz would itself be the highest form of barbarism; culture reaches its limits in the face of such a horror (Levine 1997).

We might recall here that the word “barbaric” was originally used by the Greeks to refer to the unintelligible sound of non-Greek languages, the “bar-bar” of other tongues. Civilization and the spread of the Greek language were seen as equivalent. Perhaps then what “Auschwitz” teaches us is that only a barbarous tongue could write the poetry of such a horror; civilized accents would cloak it with a veil of beauty. Certainly this is the dilemma that Paul Celan, perhaps the greatest poet of the Holocaust, faced after the war. Brought up in the language that was used by the murderers of his parents, Celan could no longer speak it as a “good German” might. He felt himself forced to break this language into fragments, to put the pieces

together in new combinations and to find poetic means to write the horror in ways that would not be complicit with it. The result was a new kind of poetry, not at all “classical” or uplifting, but powerful for showing the life that could not be erased, the life in the traces left by the ashes (Celan 1988).

Celan’s is a poetry of fragments; in that sense it is a true example of a post-modern *poiesis*, a writing that refuses totality or closure. For him, there is no divinity to which to appeal; even the “reader” is put into question as a stable, fixed entity. Celan’s poems are “messages in a bottle” addressed to an unnameable “you” (Celan 1986). Moreover, the reader, whoever he or she may be, is spoken to in a new way, a way that demands an encounter and a response. We can only read Celan by undergoing the fragmentation of life to which his work testifies and by being willing to stand with him in this fragmentary world.

Celan’s work, we believe, is an exemplar of the power of post-modernism to present trauma. Only by giving up the traditional alliance of aesthetics with formal unity could Celan’s “barbarism” learn to speak. This means that for *poiesis* to be therapeutic, it must let go of the illusions of formal aesthetics; it must be a “rough” or “poor” art that comes as it will, in all its barbaric yawp. The autonomy of art, its claim to rise above the body and the passions, its separation from everyday life and its ownership by specialists (whether professional artists or connoisseurs) – all of these are incapable of coming to terms with the necessity of *poiesis* today, a necessity that demands that we find the forms of formlessness, allowing the chaos of our experience to break through the strictures of our culture to arrive at new shapes. We can speak of this phenomenon as the emergence of hybridity, the principle of new configurations which emerge as separate and opposing traditions encounter each other; or we can speak of the significance of the “monster,” that uncategorizable being which unsettles all our preconceptions (Negri 2004). We must, in any case, be willing to give up our presuppositions as to the nature of the work of art and allow ourselves to be surprised by what unexpectedly comes. Otherwise we run the risk of forcing the fragmentary character of our clients’ (and our own) experience into the unity of an aesthetic formalism, a project that would only create a new idol of the work alongside that of the “Self.”

Conclusion

If we return now to the question of the *Menschenbild* of expressive arts therapy, it will perhaps appear in a new light. The creative human being can no longer be conceived of as a demiurge, a being who shapes matter according to an idea in the mind. Nor can the work be understood in terms of the classical conception of beauty, consisting in the perfection of form. This framework of traditional aesthetics is an expression of the domination of the will to power in Western thought and practice.

Rather, we conceive of human beings as thrown into a world which they have not made but for which they nevertheless have to accept responsibility, including aesthetic responsibility. *Poiesis* is the act of responding to what is given, imagining its possibilities and reshaping it in accordance with what is emerging. The result of such an act is always surprising. *Poiesis* is not the expression of a pre-existing reality, whether psychological or social; rather it is the transformation of that reality in accordance with the possibilities that emerge through our encounters with it.

These possibilities are not given in advance; they come only through an active engagement with the world. The form that this encounter takes is that of play. Play is experimental; it opens up the possibilities of the world. We suffer when there is no play-space, no gap between what we are and what we can be. Play also requires that we give up knowledge and control; we must surrender to the back and forth of a process without knowing the result in advance. This is true as much for therapy as for art-making. In order for either to be effective, they must be carried out in an attitude of playfulness, open to possibilities and discovery.

If there is a post-modern conception of *poiesis* as a form of *Bildung*, then, it cannot be based upon a subject–object opposition which leads only to mastery or victimhood. Rather the human being today has to be conceived of as de-centered, without a foundation of certainty leading to knowledge and control. Such a being is not autonomous, not self-enclosed and cut off from others or the environment. Dependency and vulnerability are not extrinsic to existence but rather are the conditions of its possibility. Far from being an impediment to our creativity, however, these characteristics are what enable us to respond to the world that we have been given. Because we are affected by this world, we must take account of it in our acts of shaping. *Poiesis*, the creative act of shaping or forming, is a response to

the call of the world; it depends on my capacity to listen to that other which addresses me.

This capacity to respond is inscribed in our very bodily existence. As Merleau-Ponty has shown, the body as we live it (*le corps vécu*) always takes a perspective on the world; perception itself is a creative act, not a passive reception of stimuli (Merleau-Ponty 1962). The arts, which are disciplines of the senses, then, arise only on the basis of this intrinsic capacity of the human being to shape the world in accordance with the possibilities that are given in it. Art-making is not reserved for the solitary act of a creative genius; it is open to all who live in the world with others.

Conceiving of the human being in terms of the notion of aesthetic responsibility as the capacity to respond and shape one's life enables us to understand suffering more adequately. Those who suffer and ask for help experience themselves as incapable of responding to their situation. They do not see or are unable to act on its possibilities but rather feel themselves to be victims without the capacity to shape their existence. Paradoxically, it is only by engaging in a creative process in which they give up control that they can regain a sense of their own capacity for action. Art-making in expressive arts therapy means entering into a liminal or transitional space in which the play of possibilities leads to surprising results. One can only participate in this space by letting go of the need to know and control what is happening.

The therapist can be thought of as the holder of the space, but only if holding is understood as a setting-free for the realization of one's possibilities. The security of a holding environment consists precisely in an encouragement to take risks and allow for surprises to emerge. The therapist is responsible for the setting of the frame or structure; but the frame must allow for the possibility of free play to occur (Nachmanovitch 1990), if the client is to go beyond a focus on the problem to discover something new. The emergence of this "third" (Knill *et al.* 2004) through play and the shaping of a work will be experienced as a gift that confers meaning through its effective reality.

The works that emerge from this process are not always beautiful in the sense of traditional aesthetics. Rather, they may be misshapen, grotesque and even deformed. As such, perhaps, they are more appropriate responses to the brokenness of experience in a fragmented world than the formation

of works which would exhibit a unified totality. Beauty itself can be a defense against life. If we are to admit the concept at all, perhaps it can only be in Rilke's sense in which "beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror..." for we must remember that, "Every angel is terrifying" (Rilke 1984).

Beauty and terror, joy and suffering, come together in the therapeutic aesthetics of expressive arts therapy. This is an ecstatic experience which takes us out of our immersion in everyday life and opens us up to a new vision of existence. *Poiesis* depends upon our capacity to respond, with the full range of human resources, to what affects us. Only in this way can we take account of both the wonder and the horror of the world in which we live.

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Foundations for a Theory of Practice

Paolo J. Knill

This chapter of the book will lay out a method of expressive arts practice that is congruent with the philosophical thinking presented in Chapter 1. In three parts, it will offer theoretical discussions relevant to the challenges posed when art-making and ritual play are introduced into the practice of therapeutic change. In the attempt to find a theory of practice, the following range of themes will be fundamental:

- Questions of *role and setting* will primarily look at methodologies guiding the relationship of change agent and client considering the emerging art work.
- Methodologies that serve the shaping of a session use the metaphor of “architecture” and will be discussed as *architectural considerations*. This discussion will focus on the sequence of phases, the timing, the bridging of phases and the opening and closing of phases and sessions.
- Methodologies that help to make decisions in the guidance of art-making will be discussed as *questions of administering*. The discussion will include questions about the choice of art disciplines, material, structures and frame in intermodal

methodology and questions about the motivation of clients to do activities that they are not accustomed to doing, using a “low skill/high sensitivity” approach.

- *Methodologies of intervention* will discuss the principles that guide the dialogue between client and change agent during all phases (art-making and non art-making) of a session.
- *Questions of interpretation* will primarily look at how the art work enters the discourse of client and change agent after the phase of art-making is concluded.

A discussion of architectural considerations also involves the methodologies of intervention. Questions of guidance will depend on role and setting, and some of the categories will influence all the others. Therefore, we will outline a general discourse on the theory of practice, while making an effort to organize our thoughts along the lines of the aforementioned themes.

We begin in Part I discussing what connects all schools of therapy with respect to imagination and play which, in essence, are the basis of all art-making. Part II will look at differences and consequences for the theory of practice that occur when schools of therapy (as well as supervision, counseling and consulting) choose art-making and ritual play in their setting. Part III is devoted to the methodology resulting for an intermodal expressive arts practice that takes an aesthetic perspective.

PART 1: DECENTERING AND THE ALTERNATIVE EXPERIENCE OF WORLD: CONTINUITIES IN THE PRACTICE OF CHANGE AGENTS

The rites of restoration: architecture, role and setting

Individuals' or communities' situations of change usually have ritual containers within which they are framed in space and time; we could say they have an “architecture.” Some characteristics of these containers depend on cultural traditions; some, however, also seem to be universal. One category of rituals of change is the *rites of passages* devoted to changes that concern social roles and life cycles from birth to death. (In our Western culture, we

have graduation, marriage, funerals, as well as initiations into specific professions: for example, training to become a therapist.)

Another category of rituals of change concerns the suffering that results from disconnection from fellow humans and the consequent loss of binding within the community, usually accompanied by conflict and crises. The ritual containers that are in place to restore well-being are often characterized as “healing rituals,” and change agents in charge of them need special empowerment. In this chapter, in which we consider the phenomena of imagination, play and the arts across many schools of professional training, we prefer the term *rites of restoration* to give credit to the fact that we can look for a restored cultural binding without necessarily presupposing a complete “healing” of the individual’s distress or condition. Examples of rites of restoration in our culture include all forms of psychotherapy, counseling, supervision, coaching, religious healing rituals, etc. Some rites of restoration are also connected to an initiation into a group that considers the acceptance of the condition as part of the restoration. Anthropologically speaking, such a rite could be considered to be a *ritual of affliction* (Turner 1967). We see these kinds of practices today, for example, in the various 12-step movements, such as the Alcoholics Anonymous movement. Certainly a rite of restoration can also result in a rite of passage, giving form to a major transformation.

There are universal characteristics in all rites of passage and rites of restoration. One of them is the practice of leaving the everyday situation and entering into a devotional space for a period of time. In such a case, there is a person or group responsible for that space or for the performance of rituals. I call this role that of being a *change agent*. Change agents have to be ordained or graduated; this is a universal characteristic of the profession. Today they are called professionals; and when we look at the root of the word in German, it still refers to a calling (“profession” in German is *Beruf*, and the German *Ruf* translates into the English “call” or “vocation”).

What all rites of restoration have in common

THE “HELPLESS SITUATION” AND THE LACK OF PLAY RANGE

The one who asks for help in unbearable suffering has reached the “limits” or is on the “edge” of dis-ease. When life *lacks* sense, when something or

everything is *missing* or problems are closing in so much that no relief or solutions are in sight any more, one speaks of being *stuck*, *treading on the same spot*, being *against a wall* or *cornered*, having reached a *dead-end*, being *at the limit* or *being in dire straits*. These metaphors suggest limits and boundaries that restrict the possibilities of finding ease. It seems there is not enough room to get around the obstacle; there is nothing left to find; and the one who asks for help has either the sense of lacking the skill to get around it, lacking the resources to make more room or to go on, or both. In addition, the person who is unable often painfully experiences herself as being worthless, and the lack of resources are accompanied by bitterness, leading to blame or self-blame. This situation I will call the *helpless situation*. The helpless situation occurs with all or some of the above characteristics, regardless of what it was that brought it into existence and regardless of what the person asking for help might name as symptoms and what we might attribute to influencing factors in the complexity of physiological, psychological, biological, environmental, and social interactions. When we look at the phenomenology of the helpless situation, keeping the generalizing reduction of *being at the limit or edge* in mind, it is important to note that sometimes such an experience is marked by the sense that nothing is there and nothing helps, and sometimes by the sense that too much is there and it is overwhelming. Both characterizations bring an experience of being stuck, an agitated immobility which we also characterize as a “lack of play range (*Spielraum*).” Situations like this call for a rite of restoration.

The lack of play range has both situational and individual aspects. The person seeking help experiences *situational restrictions*, such as:

- unemployment as the result of a physical or psychological condition
- the illness of a family member binding one to the home
- no job for the particular skills or traits of that person
- not enough time or space within an organization for a team to look at their relationships or deal with a conflict
- the “chemistry” of a relationship
- the limiting conditions specified in a contract.

They will also experience *individual restrictions*. There is a prevalent sense of not being able to do something about the situation: “I tried enough,” “I can’t any more,” or “I would if I could”, resulting from:

- somatic or psychosomatic illnesses
- mental disorders, for example, phobias, obsessions and compulsions, addictions
- affective disorders
- personality traits
- mental or physical constitution.

It should be noted that situational and individual restrictions often work together to limit the play range.

It should not astonish us, therefore, that many *interventions* in rites of restoration have as a primary goal an increase of the range of play. This goal allows the client in the stuck “life scene” to participate in finding ways through the complexity of options. It is reasonable to posit that most of the professionally guided helping methods have resorted to imagination as the opening for a greater range of play because imagination allows “limitless” openings to “address the absent” (Padrutt 2001) in scenarios through images, acts, moves, narratives, intonations and rhythms of time. These techniques are not reserved for the arts therapies only; they are widely applied. For example:

- focusing on dreams, visions, etc.
- daydreaming, free association or guided imagery
- wish-oriented discourses such as “What would happen if...”
- body language and its imaginary potential (“What is your shoulder saying?” or “What does that pose express?”)
- using works of art (music, texts, photos, paintings, movies, etc.)
- using cognitive imaginary methods like “change of perspective”
- desensitizing with pictures
- brainstorming
- using metaphors.

Imagining imagination imaginatively allows us to embrace a multitude of explanatory narratives about the origin of images and therefore also probably a limitless account of what we might engage in with the emergence of images. Certainly there is enough space for the complexity of the issues at stake. This is one of the reasons why dreams, daydreams and the arts were highly respected in traditional practices, religions and schools of psychotherapy, even though their meta-theories differ essentially.

We have noted that all rites of restoration have a spatial and temporal frame that distinguishes them from everyday reality. When we look for more common characteristics, we need to examine the separation of realities that occurs in the *architecture* of the session through the use of imagination and play. In what follows, we do not consider the term “reality” as synonymous with “world.” All experiences are within world. We are using the word “world” here without the definite article to make it evident that world is not a thing or object. We are, so to speak, “within world” or “part of world.” World is therefore within our thinking and action. Thus, Fink used the term “worlding” (Fink 1960).

Personal suffering, personal inability and situational restrictions experienced by clients are part of the habitual world experience. What enters the conversation constitutes everyday reality; the predicaments of the everyday may contain aspects of either literal reality (unemployment, living at a certain address, etc.) or of fantasy (paranoid thoughts). The everyday reality of a client seeking help seems to be closed, has no exit and lacks an adequate range of play.

Although rites of restoration have a clear spatial and temporal separateness from habitual world experience, they always offer sequences in which the everyday reality is concretely addressed. *Architecturally* speaking, these sequences sometimes happen in the opening and closing of a session – that is, either in the “filling-in” phase at the beginning, used by the change agent in order to get familiar with the issue, problem or conflict, or in the reflective phases toward the end that serve to clarify or provide an interpretation. These phases are mostly guided by conversational language as well as by non-verbal cues.

It is interesting that most rites of restoration initiate a phase or phases where an alternative world experience is invited through practices that engage imagination.

In these phases, the person seeking help is not in the habitual world experience, as in everyday life, nor are they focused on their everyday reality. This happens with the help of the change agent through imagination, without necessarily leading the client into a trance state. The things emerging in this imaginary space are surprising or unexpected. It is truly an *other* or *alternative experience of world*. It is important to note that the events or things emerging from the imaginary space are not all predictable. In the dream, this phenomenon is experienced as not being under one's control. There is a similar sense of having little control in free association or in guided imagery; on the other hand, some control is exerted in the practice of artistic disciplines. Only in the arts and play, however, is there a *thingly* presence of the images, a situation in which each person present is witnessing the same thing. At a later point, we will examine the methods of guiding a person through the alternative experience of world and its interpretation.

THE ALTERNATIVE WORLD EXPERIENCE AND THE LOGIC OF IMAGINATION

In the imaginary space that is emerging, things are in their surprising unpredictable unexpectedness, but they still possess a logic and are describable. They are, so to speak, predictable in their unpredictability. These events happen differently than in everyday life and its narratives. This difference expands the range of play reflected in the story of the distress in everyday life. Therefore, change agents apply methods of bridging the two experiences in order to find inroads for change, clarification or understanding for the purpose of easing the distress. In psychotherapy, for instance, this bridging is usually called "interpretation." The method of interpretation employed is rooted in a meta-theory that ranges from more or less explanatory to phenomenologically-oriented methods of interpretation. Although we find substantial differences in these methods of interpretation, there is little difference in the belief that an alternative world experience has importance in the process of therapeutic change. In other words, we could say that the practices of change agents demonstrate that there is a common understanding concerning the importance of the imagination, and that there is an agreement that the narratives emerging in the imaginary

space have an effect on the narratives of distress. The particular way that they are seen to be effective depends upon the meta-theoretical foundation of the school of therapy in question.

The connection between a story and the imagination is presented by the Dutch writer Mulisch. His understanding is built on the experience of a writer, but it could also have validity for the dreamer or daydreamer ("storyteller" may be exchanged with "painter," "musician," "dancer," etc.):

...the storyteller is telling the story; he is also not the essential story teller. The story as such is the essential story teller. The story itself is telling the story; from the first sentence on, the story is a surprise for the story teller, and this is known to all story tellers. (Mulisch 1999, p.97)

One of the essential steps in this process is to recognize and fully grasp the alternative world experience. In the phenomenological tradition, this experience has to be brought into the conversation as it presents itself. We call this the conversation about the imaginary reality. This phase is marked by looking at the process while attempting to abstain from interpretations of the issue, its clarification or its solution. To guide the client at a later point from that imaginary reality back into everyday life is usually part of a rite of restoration. Special attention is given to the way the imaginary and everyday reality interact with and affect the experience of the help-seeker, resulting in a change in the effective reality (Knill 1999). Most change agents believe that it is possible to have a different relationship to everyday life, providing that the logic of imagination, in its symbolism, has been understood and has given a message to that everyday life. Differences in theory exist in the epistemological assumptions about *who* (client or change agent) and *what* (meta-theory) is guiding our interpretation in that step from the imaginary to the everyday reality. Even the phenomenological approach, guided by the emergent as it presents itself, could be considered to be an interpretation. Bodenheimer distinguishes between "explanatory and answering interpretations" (Bodenheimer 1997). In the explanatory mode of interpretation, the "image" is explained to the help-seeker on the basis of a pre-existing meta-theoretical concept. By contrast, an answering interpretation gives a response to the "image" as it presents itself in the context of the therapeutic relationship.

The alternative world experience has two sources that enter the discourse of interpretation. One is the symbolic content of imagination, and the other is an affective sensory experience. The latter is addressed not only in body-oriented practices but also in many other psychotherapies, from art-oriented, focusing and counseling to the various psychodynamic and humanistic schools. Both sources of the alternative world experience – symbolic content and affective sensory experience – can be used in the process of interpretation.

As a consequence, the phase of the alternative world experience within rituals of restoration is framed by an entrance and an exit. In the entrance, the client leaves the troubled logic of daily life and enters the logic of imagination. At the exit, we are challenged with the difference as a confrontation. This “in and out” may be repeated several times or may be connected to a long phase in the center of a session. A characteristic of all the “in and outs” of the alternative experience are aspects of *decentering* and providing a *range of play*.

- By *decentering* we name the move away from the narrow logic of thinking and acting that marks the helplessness around the “dead-end” situation in question. This is a move into the opening of surprising unpredictable unexpectedness, the experience within the logic of imagination.
- Providing a *range of play* contrasts with the situational restrictions experienced by the seeker of help. The phenomenon of play is experienced in the “doing as if,” in the open-endedness, and in the circularity of the here and now that is usually connected to all alternative world experiences.

Decentering, an indispensable condition for alternative world experiences

The positive effect of decentering is acknowledged in many theories:

- *Watzlawick* (1983) demonstrates that centering on the problematic situation has a tendency to produce “more of the same” and tends to worsen the situation. On the other hand, a

decentering attitude induced, for instance, in *brainstorming* opens doors to unexpected solutions.

- *Creativity* is often explained (similarly to Moreno's definition of spontaneity) as an ability that allows people to discover a new solution to an old problem or an appropriate response to a new situation. Therefore, with a creative attitude the ordinary way of looking at things is abandoned.
- *Theories of imagination* explain that imagination is not totally controllable; it is predictable only in its unpredictability. We can distinguish three realms of imagination. The dream space is the least controllable; the daydream and trance space allow for some guidance; and artistic activity has characteristics of both dream and daydream. However, artistic activity is the only phenomenon of imagination that can be seen, heard or touched simultaneously by artist and witness. The importance of these realms of imagination is recognized by different schools – by psychoanalysis in its elaboration of the symbolism of the unconscious, by the humanistic schools in the validation of the riches of human potential and by the phenomenological schools where the existential shapes meaning. C.G. Jung declared early on in his writings that the artistic act is of special value because it is a thingly dream that can be witnessed. His understanding was that rather than painting a dream, the act of painting allows the dream to continue on the canvas (Chodorow 1997).
- Words which we use in the context of decentering activities can open the door to unexpected surprises and often emerge with spontaneity or intuition. They point in the direction of an alternative world experience through a distancing effect.

By entering a space of imagination and decentering, the exit out of the narrow situational and personal restrictions of the help-seeker also allows a distancing from personal fate. This distancing happens, for example, in Jungian analysis within the container of archetypal mythology, in drama therapy through relating roles or stories of the world of theater, and in post-modern psychology through a distancing within the historic and cultural multiplicity of narratives (White and Epston 1989).

All these theories show that an analysis of the logic within imaginative reality bears the potential to help by virtue of the distancing experience. A too-hasty return to the issues in the helpless situation in order to achieve quick results may result in a loss of an important and substantial conversation.

PART II: ENGAGING THE ARTS AND PLAY MAKES A DIFFERENCE

What does it mean to “exercise” the arts or play in decentering, and how is it different from other decentering methods?

Although in one way or another, all the methods of decentering that engage imagination offer the kind of results we are grouping under the category of *alternative world experience*, nevertheless the use of the artistic process offers options that are only specific to the arts.

Direct witnessing of the artistic work as a materialization of imagination

The thingly act or object (for example: a painting, a sculpture, a poem, a scene, a musical improvisation, a dance, a piece of performance art, or a ritual play) is there to be witnessed directly by the client and the professional change agent. We do not depend solely on the interpretation of clients, as we do when they talk about dreams, visions or daydreams. The story about a dream does not reveal the original image seen by the client, but rather my image of that story which may or may not be my client's experience of the original image.

Interpretations within the artistic mode of imagination, however, happen in the presence of a “third thing” – the emerged thingly work in process. The “third thing” allows a confrontational field of acts and discourses on the basis of an embodied emergence. As we have noted above, following Bodenheimer (1997), this confrontational field, handled more or less playfully and in an exploratory way, can on the one hand lead to

“explanatory interpretations” (guided by meta-theoretical explanations, as in-depth psychological, bioenergetic and spiritual schools) or, on the other hand, to “answering interpretations” (guided by the response to the emergent, as in existential, humanistic and solution-focused schools).

Intervention during the thingly process of shaping

The complexity of an imaginary reality emerging while literal material is formed permits interventions during the shaping that are concrete and placed specifically “on the surface.” These interventions can serve the purpose of grounding and testing reality. We may probe, for example, in a painting session by suggesting bigger paper, more water added to the color or closing the eyes for a while. Similarly, we may suggest to the dancer to use more space or to a musician to add the voice to the instrument.

Interventions with the work of art (oeuvre)

The reality of the in-and-out/to-and-fro alternative world experience is discernible through the here and now of the resulting artistic work and its completion as a “thing.” In its graspable presence, it offers many options for helping to distinguish between the different realities. The distinction of stage, canvas, studio space, audience space and the habitual world experience is concrete and explicit in a sensorimotor way. A painting that depicts fire, for instance, will not literally raise the temperature in the room. However, it may evoke the fear of burning or the joy of a bonfire. Similarly, in theater, an act of killing does not call for a literal ambulance or police officer; perhaps these roles can be played by another actress. Keeping in mind the distinction between levels of reality allows us to explore certain imagination-based situations with the full power of perception and experience, but without literal consequences within the “scene.”

A personal enabling and a situational coping with the achievement of the artistic work

As we have shown previously, an experience of distress or dis-ease is marked by a situational restriction and/or an individual inability. In art-oriented work within the rites of restoration, however, there is the affective

experience (literal, not symbolic) of enabling and achievement within a frame of limited resources. Helping to bring such an experience about belongs to the basic methodological skills of any art-oriented therapist. The therapist can enable people who are not artists and usually have a sense of “not being talented” to engage in art disciplines of some sort and to find satisfaction within them. Furthermore, these professional change agents are trained to understand one of the essential phenomena of the arts: the role of limiting resources, within a restricting frame, in order to reach beauty. Consequently, the experience of an art-oriented decentering is literally a coping experience in a situation of restriction which has the effect of discovering resources. The help-seeker may have said that they were unable to paint; and, in addition, there may have been a resistance to an assignment such as, for example, “Paint only in black and white.” In the end, though, we may be in front of a painting that makes sense.

Diet and medicine

The concept of diet and medicine reaches far beyond the physical metabolism of the body. The word *diet* (in Greek, *diaita*) originally meant a manner of living. Later, it was used to mean a regulated manner of living to maintain health; and, finally, it made exclusive reference to eating habits. Within a psychosomatic understanding, we could extend this term to refer to the regulated nourishment of psyche or soul. In terms of such a framework, *diet* would also concern a corrective regulation of psychic nourishment and metabolism.

We can apply similar reasoning to the concept of medicine. A substance must have two characteristics in order for it to qualify as a medicine. First, it must be composed in such a way that it can be metabolized by the system in question. Second, it must interact in a constructive way with the self-regulating forces in the system.

The work of art, as a phenomenon of the inter-structural relationship between the everyday and imaginative realities, is a remarkable entity within rituals of restoration. It is well suited to be part of the metabolism of the psychic system. In fact, one could see the art work as that which arrived exclusively for that very system, even though it should not be confused, from a phenomenological perspective, with a mirror image or an appear-

ance of the system's identity (Knill 1999). There are many traditional ways of relating to the art work that also satisfy the criteria of the second quality of a medicine. The transpersonal theory of intermodal expressive art therapy gives clues as to how, for example, mounted pictures may have the characteristics of a totem or an altar, how poems read may have the effect of prayers or mantras, how a song or music may console and how putting on a mask may help to conjure fear. The exercise of the arts, in the decentering phase, provides the possibility of giving "prescriptions" which may have an effect beyond the session time. The following examples demonstrate this idea of "prescription" (Knill, Barba and Fuchs 1995):

- Paint daily. Go to your easel instead of to the TV (diet).
- Read the poem that helped you in the session today every time your thoughts get stuck on that theme (medicine).
- Make a place for this sculpture where you can see it easily and so that anytime you get lost in those doubts again, you can look at it (medicine).

Providing a range of play: *Spielraum* as an indispensable condition for an alternative world experience

The "doing as if" or the "we would now be..." in a play-space will always have temporal, spatial or situational aspects. These "spells" allow a distinction from the literal everyday space, time and situation and open up to an alternative world experience that offers unforeseeable and unpredictable options.

The idea of widening the range of play by engaging the imagination is also a common concept in the practice of conflict resolution. Conflicts are seen, in such practices, as situations that lack choices and that give participants a sense of being locked into the matter of conflict (neurosis can also be understood as a narrowness of that kind). Decentering provides an opportunity to leave the zone of conflict with an opening to options for new actions and thoughts.

Therapeutic methods based on systems theory argue that a simultaneous intervention through perturbation and widening of the range of play may be effective for a surprising auto-poetic process of improvement. The

impetus in such a play puts discovery and fear in balance. Art disciplines can be seen as disciplines of play in which the probing of the artist is a kind of perturbation, and in which self-organization happens within the range of play defined by the frame's and the discipline's restrictions (material, space, time, and means). The therapist is a player in the system who does not play the habitual game of the family (a popular saying in family therapy). This method of perturbation from outside of the system is also used in many performance art-oriented therapies. Music therapists as well often play together with an individual client using the option of probing as a perturbation.

We distinguish between play, game and the play disciplines of the arts (in ordinary language, one says *play music*, *go to a play* and *play a role*). It is interesting that only the play therapists were able to join in one association uniting all schools of psychotherapy. We might assume that the strong belief in the method of non-directive play that is shared by all play therapists, regardless of the school from which they come, brings them together. Theoretically, it should be possible for all change agents practicing the disciplined play of the arts or ritual play to find a common denominator and join with one another. Perhaps the difficulty lies in the questions: why is non-directive play therapy with children so successful, why is it used by so many expressive arts therapists when they work with children, and what makes expressive arts therapists stick to the arts or ritual play when they work with adults?

In order to answer these questions we need to look at the difference between the characteristics of the play of children and the play of adults. Children, in contrast to adults, still have access to incantation and magic. They can cast a spell into a scene or role with one sentence, often without a stage and almost no props. "You be dead now." "I'll be drunk." Adults have lost such naiveté and innocence. It is not astonishing, therefore, that play needs to become ritualized for adults. In essence, we can make the following distinctions for providing a range of play with children and with adults:

- Providing a range of play through non-directive play with individual children is well established in expressive arts play therapy. Themes like sexuality, alcohol and death can pose fewer difficulties than other issues like anger, rage, sadness or

extreme regression. One reason for this might be the child's naiveté and innocence and the capacity to move in and out of imagination with "incantation and magic." Of course, the play therapist must be aware of the precautions necessary when working with abused children.

- Adults have more experience and are more immersed in reality, so they require a disciplined form of play or a frame that facilitates distinctions of realities. Yet it is conducive to use the expressive arts with adults to provide a "range of play."

The expressive arts offer the stage, the canvas, the dance studio, the art atelier, and the distance of fiction.

Ritual containers give permission to approach these themes playfully, because these frames make clear distinctions between the realities. The ancient "Death Dance" or "World Play" (still performed by the village community in Einsiedeln, Switzerland, in front of the cloister) allows members of the community to play out all the roles and scenes, both dark and light, that belong to humanity, without sanctions in everyday life. This is an example of archaic ritual play.

How do the arts provide the disciplined range of play?

The practice of the arts in therapy as a kind of play therapy for adults

Freedom and restriction, as providing the frame of any play within the arts, allow the distinction of realities by means of generally understood artistic traditions. With the exception of acute clinical situations, we usually find a tacit knowledge and a fairly good understanding of the "imaginary reality" that takes place in theater and the movies, even though the fantasy identification can sometimes become quite intense. The popular stage (*Volksbühne* in Germany) is still a frame for playful explorations of different realities. Well-guided structures in any art discipline allow the shaping of difficult themes which would be hard to express or explore otherwise. Taking into account the condition of the client providing careful explanations, this shaping through the arts can build on a great deal of tacit knowledge about such frames. The discipline of the arts is, so to speak, an anchor of hope that

can be used to distance oneself from the narrow ties of a singular narrative about oneself or one's destiny.

Arts disciplines allow clear interventions

The limits and boundaries that define the frame of an art discipline with respect to space, time, material and method of shaping belong to the particular tradition of art-making. Therefore, interventions with respect to limits and frame are easily accepted and understood. These artistic interventions, as well as interventions that occur during the process of the play, may possibly restrict the range of play; but usually they do not restrict the act of playing and its content. On the contrary, they make the playing less threatening. Furthermore, these interventions may help to distinguish between levels of reality.

Examples of such interventions might be:

(In the event of an intrusion on someone else's drum)

"Stay with your marimbaphone now. If you want to change to the drum later, take one that is available for the next improvisation. Tom's drum is already being used in this current one."

(In a situation of role confusion)

"This character is alive on the stage only. Off stage you are Mary, the actress, and we want to discuss the next act with you for the moment. We will go on in a minute."

The advantage of these interventions is that they are less bound to moralistic disciplinary actions and more grounded in the tacit knowledge of the arts studio practice.

Play within the arts as a kind of focusing

The trance-like presence during the disciplined play in the arts is focused on the *surface*: manifest in the material, the structure and the form involved in the act of shaping. The challenges inherent in the process of this shaping are in an existential relationship to the habitual world experience in everyday reality and therefore can be symbolically and experientially meaningful. The meaning found in the challenge posed by the artistic

shaping is an analogue to the challenge posed in the habitual world experience of the client.

Play as experiential learning

The accomplishment in art-making is a literal enabling which has the merit of a beauty which can evoke responses that “move” or “touch” us. In consequence, this distinct response of “completion” in the disciplined play within the arts is also a learning experience which provides individual enabling and situational coping. The effect of this experience is cognitive and physical. We can observe it in the change of emotion, mood and tone of the participant. This coping process can also be seen as a training or “exercise” to cope with the situational restrictions and individual inability in the help-seeker’s life. Within a cognitive frame of reference, the coping experience in the artistic process confronts beliefs such as: “I am not able to accomplish anything,” “I am not talented,” or “I have too few resources,” etc. Art-oriented therapies include more levels than just the level of cognitive argumentation:

- They are rich exercises with repetitive experiences of accomplishment.
- They are psycho-physical, concrete experiences that allow emotional and cognitive reasoning.
- They are sensory aesthetic experiences that touch or nourish soul. All the senses are engaged and, in this context, beauty makes sense.
- Beauty, as something that touches, can be motivating and convincing, bypassing the barriers built by cognitive reasoning and the logic of resistance and fear.
- With the repetitive experience of coping, beliefs in one’s lack of competence and ability are challenged. In addition, the act of having created a work which gives satisfaction and pleasure to the eye of the beholder is quite a confrontation to these convictions. There is a kind of contribution that adds beauty to the community – this is rewarding to the maker and the

audience. Within the scope of learning theory, one could see this experience as an aesthetic reward or a rewarding “soul food.”

- There is also an experiential field of discovery that motivates curiosity. Discovery of this kind is one of the fundamental sensorimotor and cognitive learning experiences. The challenge will be to bridge the discoveries which the experience in this field of play brings with the issue stemming from the client’s everyday reality.

In the traditional view of coping, structured exercising is fundamental. In the practice of art-oriented decentering, however, the process is guided with an attentive, supportive, open attitude; and the dialogue is led with open questions. The openness in exercising the art is a necessary condition for gaining access to the material and the symbolism that emerges through the art work or play. This dimension in the practice of the arts is not restricted by the logic of the habitual world experience and is not necessarily accessible with the usual methods of coping. The openness gives the hidden a chance to be seen and to be utilized as a possible resource. With these options come new perspectives, fantasies, ideas, and images of alternative ways to act or respond.

PART III: THE THEORY OF PRACTICE

Even though there are cultural differences in rites of restoration, they all resort to imagination as it manifests itself in the realms of dream, daydream, trance space, play or artistic activity. Two of the ingredients that are pertinent to the activity of change agents, with respect to imagination, are a “decentering into an alternative world experience” and the necessity of increasing the “range of play” (*Spielraum*).

Methodologies in the practice of art-oriented therapies usually focus on the symbolic content of imagination and the meaning of the experiential process. Those who use art-making and play must, however, recognize the fundamental difference that exists by using thingly manifestations of imagination. We have seen that this difference brings additional possibili-

ties of intervention in the artistic process and in the encounter with the work of art; these are unique to the art-oriented therapies. In the following, we will focus on the practical consequences helpful to change agents who use expressive arts within an intermodal framework and with an aesthetic perspective.

The heart of a session, the arts

The structure of sessions which include art-making as an alternative world experience will always need a substantial amount of time. In view of the benefits offered by this process and by the resulting work, *guidance* in the art-making as well as in the phases preceding and following must be handled with a strong awareness of time. Effective guidance, with a keen sense of the architecture of a session, must continuously consider time and space. Often we lose time in the opening and want to make it up by shortening the art-making phase. This, in turn, restricts the chance for effective decentering through the arts. A similar situation can occur in the closing phase when we run short on time and may become pressured to “hunt” for a result, rather than doing the careful work of attending to the work so that it may “speak” to us in its own particular voice.

The “architecture” of a session

The structure or “architecture” of art-oriented sessions could be sketched as in Figure 2.1.

Here we will add general comments to the phases depicted in the scheme in Figure 2.1 and, in the following sections of this part, explain in detail the principles guiding the practice.

- The total length of these sessions depends upon the setting. Generally, in an institutional setting, sessions are scheduled to last between 50 and 90 minutes. However, working in intensive blocks with longer sessions or having a cluster of sessions within one or more days can be quite useful. This tradition of longer sessions exists mainly in trainings for change agents in coaching, team development, organizational development and supervision.

Life of client	Habitual world experience before the session	D E C E N T E R I N G
Opening of session	Connecting to the daily reality	
Bridge	Guidance toward art-making or play	
Art-making or play	Alternative world experience Decentering techniques Work-oriented, play- or ritual-oriented Far from or close to the theme	
Aesthetic analyses	Recognizing the imaginary reality	
Bridge or “harvesting”	Recollecting the effective reality	
Closing of session	Connecting back to the opening of the session Homework	
Life of client	Habitual world experience is challenged	

Figure 2.1 The “architecture” of a session

- Even in the short session form, there is an opening and a closing in order to connect to where the client is coming from and going to. The way in which a particular professional performs the opening and closing of a session is often defined more by the school of therapy or counseling in which they were trained than by the method of art-oriented therapy that they employ. We will have to address this issue and ask ourselves whether the decentering that favors the thingly manifestation of imagination over other realms of imagination should not have principles that rule in the intermodal expressive arts practiced within an aesthetic perspective. We will discuss

the guiding principle of the conversational style in the section, “Administering the artistic process.”

- We also need to remember that expressive arts practice is not non-verbal. Certainly, there is a verbal conversation weaving through an entire session, though the extent to which it is the medium and substance of the relationship is always shifting. We will see that close attention needs to be paid to the way in which we “use the words,” in order to be consistent with the epistemology put forth in Chapter 1.
- The heart of the session, the alternative world experience, has two phases that sometimes intermingle: the phase of *art-making or play* and *aesthetic analysis*.
- As discussed in Part I of this chapter, these essential steps serve to facilitate the emergence of the thingly presence (art-making or play) and to recognize and fully grasp the alternative world experience (aesthetic analysis). This experience has to be brought into the conversation as it presents itself (imaginary reality), while looking at the process and resulting work, at the same time as we abstain from interpretations of the issue as well as from its clarification or solution.
- There are two phases that bridge the alternative world experience with the everyday reality. The first one guides from the opening to the art-making or play; the second one lies in *harvesting* the essence of the aesthetic analysis to guide the client from that imaginary reality back into everyday life in order to consider the issue, its clarification or solution.
- An extensive discourse threads through all art-oriented therapies around the first bridge. One of the fundamental questions asked focuses on the choice of the art disciplines or play material. Other issues cluster around the instructions to be given, how far away from or close to the themes the instructions should be, or what role the facilitator should play in the art-making.

Some theoretical perspectives that help to inform sensible practice

MOTIVATION AND SKILL

The endeavor of art-oriented decentering has a general application only if we are able to motivate the artistically untrained person to engage in an artistic process which moves toward the creation of a work of art or a ritual play. To achieve this we must consider the skill level of the client and find culturally relevant manifestations of art which are best suited to the client and to the facilitator in terms of the situation at hand. By “culturally relevant,” we mean that the art created in this work should be an art form relating to the culture we are in together. We should not define “therapy art” as a separate aesthetic category, either in style or in form. Sometimes the artistic work produced in our sessions will be close to art brut, minimal music, everyday poetry, “*expression corporelle*,” “poor theater” (Grotowski 1970), and many more manifestations of the contemporary performance art tradition. While the work produced in a session might sometimes resemble fine or folk art, folk music, harmony singing, rap, freestyle jazz or experimental ethnic fusion, it can always be facilitated in such a way that it connects to everyday experience and culture. This aesthetic stance is congruent with an understanding of identity as narrative and reflecting culture and community, rather than being focused exclusively on the individual subject.

The understanding of aesthetics presented in Chapter 1 is “polyphonic,” as opposed to one which relies on a simplistic formal distinction between “high” and “low” art. This is also an aesthetic, as was indicated there, that embraces the spectrum of styles and forms as demonstrated by cultural anthropology and what Bakhtin calls “the carnivalesque,” possibilities and combinations that include tragic, sublime and vulgar elements. As we have seen, this understanding of aesthetics is not a free pass to “anything goes” but rather an example of cultural sensitivity. The music therapist Stige says: “If you do not take the music seriously, you do not take the client seriously either” (Stige 2001). This is certainly also valid for any work of art in an expressive arts setting. Such an understanding of aesthetics builds the base of artistic processes and structures which we assign in order to motivate the client. We call the principle that guides this process *low skill/high sensitivity*.

LOW SKILL/HIGH SENSITIVITY

In ethnological studies of the arts, we can find culturally different concepts of art-making that move and touch us in their beauty. In order to be touched in this way, we need to let go of our habitual ways of seeing and become sensitive to other materials and parameters of shaping. Many of us have been taught that the quality of art lies in the perfection of manual skills enabling us to expertly shape (form, modulate, change, handle, etc.) art material, time and space. As we investigate various cultures, however, we find that what is most outstanding in their art is not necessarily manual virtuosity, but rather something we might call a sensitivity toward the base material and its qualities as manifested in space and time. We could call this principle a *primary aesthetics*. In earlier literature it was called *competency of expression* (Knill *et al.* 1995).

For example, shapes raked in sand around arranged stones in a Zen garden, or flowers arranged in the Japanese fashion, will definitely touch us by their perfection, despite the fact that the manual skill demanded to create them is subordinated to a sensitivity to the material, space and time. Similarly, we are affected by the sensitively shaped sounds, clangs, and differentiated timbres of contrasting tones in non-metrical rhythms when we hear a Japanese Kabuki orchestra. Or we are affected by music melting vowel- and consonant-like cascades of sound in sculptures during the No theater. Both are intriguing by virtue of their expertise in distinguishing and producing sound qualities and structural contrast and less by the kind of virtuosity we are used to seeing when we watch a classical violinist.

The dances shaped from walking steps with a simple pulse-beat and formed only by the possibilities given through the geometry of the space, present through the forward, backward and standing still of simple choreography, seen most often in Native American or Canadian dance, radiates beauty by its precise resonance with the architecture and metrical relations through the pulse, even though it lacks the acrobatic virtuosity of classical dance. The poor theater created through improvisational dream enactment such as the Senoi perform (Jennings 1995) and the popular haiku form of poetry in Japan, used as entertainment, are other examples of the riches demonstrating low skill/high sensitivity. We certainly do not stipulate that we should imitate those cultures; neither do we want to give these art practices more validity than ours. This would lead us into a kind of

nativism. Moreover, the virtuosity of manual skills has great value in other cultures as well as ours (the raga tradition in India, Chinese theater, or polyrhythmic drumming in Africa, to mention a few). The concept of low skill/high sensitivity in turn is an important part of contemporary Western art, in forms such as art brut and folk art. Other examples are minimal music, installation art and performance art. Today we enjoy mixed media, collage and performance art together with *oeuvres* that are created with tremendous manual skill in art festivals and exhibits. Art is not restricted to any time period or culture, and we might postulate that the quality of beauty results from aesthetic competencies that are not bound to one particular kind of skill only.

The facilitator who understands that a client's motivation toward artistic involvement is an essential part of professional work in expressive arts will need to master the concept of low skill/high sensitivity. This concept will be understood only if professional training includes an experiential and theoretical component geared toward such an understanding. In addition, an expressive arts professional needs to be engaged in contemporary cultural events.

We will now introduce the essential elements that help to guide the motivation of clients and facilitators to engage in art-making together.

Categories to be considered in assigning art-making structures

As we will see later, motivation will depend on the sensitivity of clients and facilitators with respect to the elements of the artistic process (material, resources, tools, structure, frame, etc.), mentioned in the guidance of the process. In designing low skill/high sensitivity structures for clients with little experience in the arts, the great challenge is facing the frustration that clients experience when the assignment is too ambitious ("I am not trained as an artist; this is not for me!") or when it is too trivial ("This is kids' stuff!"). The more sensitized clients are to the steps leading to an artistic process, and the more their involvement can counter any indifference that is present, the more the motivation will increase. Later in this section, we will present a guideline for increasing motivation. When we want to design structures that help to guide the process effectively, it is important to distinguish the elements in this process.

The scope of such distinctions follows the levels of artistic discourse. Within those levels, we make distinctions between the properties or qualities of frame, material, sources, tools, shaping strategies and skills. These distinctions, in turn, will become a valuable base in making choices for the directions given to the clients in assigning and guiding the artistic process. We note that the emphasis of these levels depends upon the art discipline and style chosen. In general, however, for low skill/high sensitivity styles, attention to the frame, the “source of material” and the “preformed material” will usually override the expert distinctions between shaping tools, or the development of manual skills.

Comparing higher skill acrylic painting with collage art in expressive arts therapy, for instance, we might notice:

- In both artistic forms, the frame needs to pay attention to the size (choice of client or facilitator) and quality of paper (one able to hold water, the other glue).
- Collage has an elaborate amount of source-material (motivation to collect from the rich resources of pictures). Painting more often raises the question of what paint materials are at hand or preselected for the session in the studio.
- Collage is extremely elaborate in its basic qualities in terms of the complexity of the pictures chosen, while, in painting, the elaboration concerns only the qualities of the colors and their mixing.
- Painting can be extremely elaborate in terms of the tools available (kind of brushes, rollers, knives, etc.) while collage, in a low skill/high sensitivity mode, needs only scissors.
- Shaping skills in painting certainly require more elaboration than the cutting, tearing and gluing in collage art.

Elaboration within the categories also depends upon the art discipline. In music, for instance, the choice of the sound source, the musical instrument or sounding object is of exceptional importance. In dance, I have no other tool than my body. In general, becoming sensitive to the tool is the most important thing in low skill/high sensitivity models.

Table 2.1 Categorical distinctions in the arts disciplines

Examples	Possibilities of Distinctions				
<i>Disciplines and styles</i>	<i>Frame</i>	<i>Source-material</i>	<i>Basic qualities</i>	<i>Tools</i>	<i>Shaping</i>
Visual arts					
Painting	Canvas, paper, cardboard, plywood, etc. Size	Watercolor, acrylic, crayons, oil sticks, finger paint, charcoal, etc.	Colors, shapes, textures, lines, etc.	Brushes, knives, rollers, fingers, etc. Large, small, soft, hard, pointed, etc.	Start blind, out of movement, following attractors Free, abstract, concrete, geometric
Installation art	Stage-like space Three dimensions	Preformed objects Natural, environmental, trashy, personal, etc.	Spatial relationships, degree of alienation, etc. Close, far, connected, tied, etc.	Hands, tools for manipulation, etc.	Combine objects sensitively
Wood sculpturing	The “inner space” within the wood block	The “tree stems,” the kind of wood, its character, form and size, etc.	The wood’s grain, natural structure, form, etc.	Knives, hammers, wood chisels, etc. Cutting characteristic	Cutting, carving strategies
Dance	Studio or stage Time and space three-dimensional	Space and movement	Space shaped Effort and shape movement distinctions	The dancer’s body	Choreographic instructions, kind of patterns

Continued on next page

Table 2.1 continued

<i>Disciplines and styles</i>	<i>Frame</i>	<i>Source-material</i>	<i>Basic qualities</i>	<i>Tools</i>	<i>Shaping</i>
Music					
Concrete or action music	Shaped within a space of silence and time Given length	Musical instruments or sounding objects	Sounds shaped Quality of noise, timbre, pitch, volume, length, rhythm, etc.	Hands, mallets, bows, other Heavy, light, long, short, etc.	Scoring in time and ensemble structure, metrical, ametrical, etc.
Free vocal music	Shaped within a space of silence and time Given length	Human voice: male, female, spoken voice, singing voice, etc.	Vocal sounds, tones, etc. Pitch, timbre, volume, length, rhythm, etc.	The singer's body, vocal chords, breath, etc. Standing, sitting, sotto voce, whisper	Using a beat or ametrical, in harmony or in clusters, together or following or contrasting (unisono, harmony or counter-point), etc.
Traditional forms (songs, rhythm and blues, etc.)	Shaped within a space of silence and time Given length	Musical instruments and/or human voices	Tones, pitch, volume, length, rhythm	Hands, bows, mallets, etc. Vocal organs, articulation characteristics, phrasing characteristics	Simple blues or 12-bar blues patterns, rules of harmony singing, free variation heterophony, etc.

Continued on next page

Table 2.1 continued

<i>Disciplines and styles</i>	<i>Frame</i>	<i>Source-material</i>	<i>Basic qualities</i>	<i>Tools</i>	<i>Shaping</i>
Literary art	Lyric, epic, drama, story-telling, poem	Language, letters, words	Colloquial, metaphoric, reflective, symbolic, concrete, gibberish, etc.	Voice, pencil, pen, crayons, paper, etc.	Free writing, going with the sound of words Speaking, singing, collecting words, etc.
Theater					
Poor theater	Stage space and time structure	Situations, stories, plots, etc.	Acts, roles, props, scene, etc.	Body, voice and movements, one's own personality, etc.	Script, improvisation with restrictions or open scene
Puppet play	Puppet stage space and time structure	Puppet inventory, stories, plots, etc.	Acts, puppet characters, props	Hands, voice	Script, improvisation with restrictions or open scene

Frames are spatial, temporal or both and extend into different dimensions, mainly defined by the tradition of the art in question. Arts disciplines also have a tradition of breaking frames with discipline, resulting in new styles. The drama frame defining time, space and act and its continuity was broken in cinema with the technique of “flashback,” establishing a new tradition taken over by literature. The tradition of painting in predefined, two-dimensional frames was broken by graffiti artists. Such extensions of frames are mostly an extension of imagination and less a matter of acquiring more skills. Therefore, they are apt to be introduced in low skill/high sensitivity

structures. A performance art improvisation could be done on the staircase of a building moving up and down instead of on a stage; a sculpture could become a movable object placed differently everyday in an institution.

The distinctions we use in the choice of assignments and in the guidance of art-making with clients will have to follow our intention of sensitizing and choosing the appropriate frame of exploration. The schema outlined in Table 2.1 is an overview and an attempt to demonstrate what is meant by these distinctions. The distinctions listed are in a continuum of styles and disciplines, within which we might understand matter sometimes as source- material, sometimes more as basic quality and sometimes even as tool. If we paint, for example, with oil sticks, is the oil stick a tool or the source- material? The answer depends upon the focus of the assignment. We could suggest additional tools, like knives, or additional source-materials, like scrap pictures, to be integrated into the painting in a collage-like manner, or we could suggest paying attention to the quality of the oil sticks available. Looking at the work of Tinguely, the Swiss sculptor, we might consider his source-material as "*objets trouvés*" rather than steel, and the electric welding torch as tool. However, the steel rod melting in the sculpture could be another source-material, defining form as well. In the German composer Arthur Schnabel's compositions that utilize the voice of spoken language, the speaking could be considered the source-material, producing vowels and consonants as basic qualities, which are in turn shaped along qualities like timbres, volume, pitch and length. However, we could also consider the human body as the source-material and the qualities of bodily resonance (timbre, location and volume of vocal activity, etc.) as the main focus of shaping. If we think about the Wuppertal Dance Ensemble's Pina Bausch performance with the chairs, we could consider the chairs as much the source-material of movement as the dancer's body. We could also suggest that the chairs are part of the space which is shaped with the tool of the dancer's body.

The steps of motivation

Once the decision is made regarding the direction to go with the structure of the artistic process, it is beneficial to follow the distinctions that are adequate for the discipline and style in question. For each of the categories

(frame, source, base material, tools, shaping structure or order) we want to get the client sensitively involved. As a result, choices of sources, material, tools and directions of probing taken in the shaping should never be seen as indifferent, even if, in another context, the choice of thing or activity would be trivial.

This low skill/high sensitivity motivation usually takes the following steps:

- *Tuning into the senses*: come to the senses that are engaged in the process (physical warming up, meditative awakening, sensory exercises, etc.).
- *Defining and exploring the frame*: clarify spatial and temporal limits, guide through a sensory exploration of the space, while raising the awareness and quality of time.
- *Explorative searching*: each category that offers choices (source, material, tools and shaping options) needs to be met with a sensitive “beginner’s mind” so that it is not indifferently “available” but rather graspable “at hand.”
- *Explorative probing*: shaping options need to get out of the routine. Encourage unusual or new ways, raise sensory awareness through distancing, etc.
- *Regarding the emergent as partner*: raise the awareness of the “circularity” in the relationship with the emerging work. The circularity oscillates between following as a servant to the emerging work, leading with a courageous probing leap and sometimes experiencing the surprise of a synchronous falling into place. In disciplines of the performing arts, there is the circularity of re-entering the work in process again and again (exploratory creative repetition) in an attempt to find its form. This will be explained later in the “work-oriented method.”

Each step in this process will have to be extremely focused and concise in order to blend into the overall time-management of a session. Therefore, we will usually have to draw from previous similar experiences which serve, in essence, the overall awareness and sensitivity of the client. It is as if there is a kind of an educational thread through all the sessions. Sometimes, as we

will see later, our work will also require sessions that focus on only one of these steps.

- In the choice of a sound source, a specific musical instrument may, as a result of sensitive involvement, evoke an emotional response that becomes the focus of the session.
- A team (in a team-building task) may need a full movement session for body awareness and sensitivity about being near and far in the space before using their tool in dance and theater improvisations in future. This session may already yield riches for achieving the goal of team-building.

In order to give a better understanding of the steps, an example (abbreviated as an overview) might help; though, as mentioned before with respect to the distinctions given in the schema, those steps depend strongly on the style chosen in a particular art discipline.

The following is an example of the steps involved in an improvisation with concrete music, carried out with an individual during a coaching session:

- *Tuning into the senses.* Blindfolded listening, first to the environmental sounds, then to the inner sounds, all in silence. Still blindfolded, consider what is pleasing, what is disturbing, and what sounds you are longing for.
- *Explorative searching (often in music before the definition of a frame).* Find sound sources (including musical instruments) in the room that produce sounds which attract you in the sense of being either pleasing, longing, or exotic. Select one to three sources only.
- *Defining and exploring the frame.* Use just one instrument which can make two sounds capable of being repeated. No beat or metrical rhythm. Within a time frame of two minutes, listen to how silence interacts with the sounds.
- *Explorative probing.* On the chosen instruments, explore with awareness “sound spaced in silence,” a handful of sound motifs as a kind of repertoire. When chosen, demonstrate samples in

the frame explored before, as an exposition, an opening to the improvisation that follows.

- *Regarding the emergent as partner.* Improvise with these sounds, paying attention to how they relate to each other and also how they want to develop in these relationships. Improvise and explore within the frame of three to five minutes. The improvisation is repeated, with short *aesthetic responses* in between which help to find an essential form.

Another example would be the making of a piece of footwear installation art with a team in a supervision session. This involves:

- *Tuning into the senses.* Meditative structure sensing what is on your skin. Look at each other without talking. Focus on your feet: how aware are you about footwear and how your feet feel in your shoes or socks?
- *Defining and exploring the frame.* Empty a part of the working space and declare it as a place for an installation similar to a corner in an exhibit. Leave the room and come in again. Decide if it is in the right place in terms of light and perspective.
- *Explorative searching.* Leave the room and take a walk alone outside. Select the footwear (socks or shoes) you are attracted to, surprised by or irritated at. Come into the room with the choice you have made.
- *Explorative probing.* Have them “at hand” now, not on your feet, and encounter them in unusual ways: looking at what you usually stand on, trying them out in different positions in the room, approaching them like a photographer from the point of view of an object, not a shoe, etc. Find the encounters that interest or surprise you.
- *The emergent as partner.* The team will arrange the shoes in the frame in different exploratory modes. First exploration: only move your own object until nothing changes any more. Second exploration: everybody can move all objects except their own (see what your objects do without your intervention). Third

exploration: you may now do the final moves only with your own objects.

There seems to be a kind of optimal motivation that results when the instructions give a clear range of exploration and options, one that is not too wide and overwhelming, but also not too restricted and boring. This perspective stems from Piaget's research into the development of intelligence (Knill 1992).

"Less is more": a guiding principle for artistic assignments

The developmental theories of Jean Piaget suggest that the differentiation of new patterns is facilitated by playful exploration. This discovery process is motivated by curiosity and has a direction that proceeds from diffuse to more and more differentiated forms. It is important, however, to offer an optimal field of play in order to foster this motivation. If the field of play is too restricted, the client usually has only the option to reproduce restricted patterns; and the discovery made will be minimal – the challenge is uninteresting. If the field of play is too diffuse and overwhelming, then the client usually gives up or resorts to habitual patterns.

An example of a too-restricted field may be when I ask an adult in a painting session to fill two squares with two contrasting colors in fingerpaint, putting each color into each square. Very likely a remark about this being kids' stuff might result.

An example of a field that is too diffuse or overwhelming might be to offer a child in a music session the whole music studio with all the instruments and say: "Just play!" Even though there is a lot of freedom, habitual patterns might result, like playing the "chopsticks" on the piano to show off, or destructively banging a stereotypical rhythm on a drum.

The instructions for a field of play in the decentering process, therefore, have to carefully consider the artistic abilities and culture of the client, the relationship and the materials at hand. Restrictions in the field will most likely open up to the freedom of discovery, if one or more directions of exploration are left open. The choice of these directions must be a major consideration.

It may well be that the restriction to two colors of the kind mentioned in the above example could give freedom of discovery, if the direction of

shape on the canvas is left open. Another freedom may be provided by the choice of the paint material and the brushes, carefully guided by the change agent.

The example of music also might work if the change agent restricts the discovery to a sensitizing exploration of all the instruments with a soft mallet, touching them to find the most fascinating ring or clang. Later, the client could continue on one chosen instrument, finding different timbres of sound with which an improvisation could be started.

“Less is more” reminds us that usually restrictions in the field of play can lead to more of a discovery when the instructions give sensitizing directions of exploration. At the same time “MORE” could be understood as an acronym:

- M** Consider the **M**aterial, its shaping tool and frame, in the instruction.
- O** **O**rganize a direction of discovery that motivates.
- R** **R**estrict the frame and the field of play.
- E** Sensitize toward the **E**merging shapes.

We can see curiosity as the driving force in exploring new patterns; and, similarly, we can see a kind of “functional satisfaction” as the driving force in the repetition of newly discovered patterns in order to master them. This is a phenomenon we observe with children when they have found new skills. Often we do not give enough space for this satisfying, innate learning capability to be manifested in the repetition of a newly discovered pattern. Frequently we move on, perhaps out of a misunderstanding of the nature of spontaneity and creativity. Considering the analogous challenge to the everyday issues of the client in the alternative world experience, such learning through repetition makes a newly gained ability, understanding, or skill more effective and often also more evident in the aesthetic analysis and reflection during the harvesting phase.

With this understanding of the artistic process, we could distinguish two modes of fascination that play a role in motivating the artistic process in the stage of giving the assignment:

- exploration: discovering emerging patterns and forms
- repetition: becoming familiar with the emergent.

Both modes are important. If we look at the different arts disciplines, it is evident that the performing arts, by nature of their timelines, come to life as works or *oeuvres* only through repetition. It is interesting to note that the French word for “rehearsal” is “*répétition*.” Many change agents shy away from this notion of repetition in the performing arts because of the fact that it might too closely remind us of rehearsals of the type that indoctrinate patterns to be memorized and copied according to formal aesthetic criteria. As a result, change agents may prefer to stay exclusively with one longer process of improvisation. In the next section, I will explore other forms of improvisational structures of composing as they are used in contemporary performing arts. These “rehearsals” understand repetition as an aesthetic shaping process to find form. We will call this the *work-oriented* method of decentering.

Work-oriented versus play- or ritual-oriented decentering

We stated at the beginning of this part that the endeavor of art-oriented decentering has a general application only if we are able to demonstrate a method that motivates the artistically untrained person. We have outlined the method of low skill/high sensitivity, a method that helped to introduce the expressive arts to a wide range of clients in diverse cultures (America, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, Japan, Russia, South Africa).

In summarizing the theoretical arguments, we notice that the guidelines for assigning and directing artistic processes need to consider the motivation for the discovery of the new, as well as the motivation for becoming familiar with that which is discovered. When we think of decentering as a move away from the narrow logic of everyday thinking and acting, marking the helplessness around the “dead-end” situation of the client, and when we consider the opening of the surprising unpredictable unexpectedness, then we can see that the discovery of the new and the opening to the unexpected are certainly compatible notions which are furthered by becoming familiar with what arrived or emerged when we have validated the decentering process.

Reflection on guiding the process of decentering needs to pay more attention to the discovery process and to the familiarization with the discovered. Play and ritual-oriented decentering differs in style from that of work-oriented decentering; these distinctions will be made more clear in what follows.

PLAY, RITUAL AND THE ARTS

In order to understand the essential question in a field of philosophical or scientific inquiry, we must look at the continuities displayed in the research questions asked and the phenomena that are associated with the formation of an object. It would be difficult to imagine physics without the concepts and manifestations of force, movement, energy and matter; or education without considering the concept of skills and the question of objectives. The continuity principle states that continuity within object-formation preserves the logic of a discipline.

We pointed out continuities in a comparative study of healing practices in Part I of this chapter and noted that the use of rituals and imaginative play are featured prominently. Contemplating contemporary rituals of restoration, we noted the role of imaginative play that is shared with ancient traditions. In a similar manner, we found forms of disciplined rituals. The strict temporal and spatial structures, for instance, found in scheduling, contracts, room arrangements, use of substances, language, dress and the behavioral code in practice and training can be considered ritualistic from a phenomenological perspective. According to the “continuity principle” in the philosophy of science, we need to pay attention to systems that connect continuities when we attempt to build the theoretical base of a domain (Knill 1990, pp.77–9).

We have tried to show that the arts and play are the bridging existential phenomena that unite ritual characteristics, imagination and dream-world in a way that is not possible in other activities. The arts and play engage the conscious and the cognitive in the same way as guided fantasy. In addition, the arts offer a disciplined, ritualistic, thingly, temporal and spatial substance. We noticed this earlier when we discussed arts as rituals of restoration.

In this discourse, we find themes connected to fundamental existential phenomena, like death, work, love and strife. In addition, there is a search for meaning, truth and purpose that often connects to realities that are usually either considered sacred or are not accepted by the community to which one belongs. The words that we use to describe imagination within the context of an existential framework have either positive or negative connotations. They fluctuate between vision, revelation and faith on the one hand, and illusion, hallucination and delusion on the other. Healing practices usually offer clear demarcations or frames that facilitate safe communal sharing of these phenomena and make effective distinctions. Frames for such distinctions in healing practices often use the arts in a ritualistic form, including a combination of intermodal art disciplines and play.

PLAY- AND RITUAL-ORIENTED DECENTERING

The frames mentioned above can also be found in expressive arts practice. Play with objects, colors, clay, nature or found object sculpture, spontaneous role-playing, dance, musical jamming, spontaneous story-telling and similar artistic play can all become containers to hold existential themes, pathos and mystery. They provide a space in which one can become ready for surprises, and they offer encouragement to play and attend to the imagination. At the same time, we are engaged; and this invites us to persevere within challenging limitations. The artistic play also provides multiplicity and an opportunity to explore the unthinkable. It offers a space beyond morality or the traditional distinctions between light and shadow.

This artistic process is similar enough either to ritual or play to use it as such in the alternative world experience of decentering. We call this approach *play- or ritual-oriented decentering*. In a decentering of this kind, we focus less on the artistic product (also called the work or *oeuvre*). Here, the essence is the play or the artistic process, which often acts as a ritual transformation. This is certainly true in the use of play with children where the child is usually engaged in a story-line and only slightly in a reflection.

WORK-ORIENTED DECENTERING

Work-oriented practice takes the tradition of the different art disciplines as they are customarily engaged in, outside of the change agent's practice, into

account. Consequently, the *oeuvre* or work belongs to the artistic process and needs undivided attention in its creation and completion. Sometimes this style is referred to as *studio-based*.

Visual arts and writing are disciplines that traditionally end in a tangible work: the painting, sculpture, poem or tale. In contrast to the performing arts, these works become separate from their creator, as well as being outside of linear time. It is not astonishing, then, that expressive arts practitioners engaged in visual art and writing use the *work-oriented* style quite naturally when they validate the painting, sculpture or poem, dialoguing with it and reflecting on the process that led to the work. Still, it is also possible to use the visual arts in a *play-* and *ritual-oriented* style, as shown above, or in a performance art format, such as installations, communal clay sculptures, ritual land art, etc. It is also possible to do this within the literary arts, using story-telling, communal rapping, spontaneous reciting, stand-up comedy, etc.

In the following, we will focus on the “work-oriented” style. We will primarily consider the performance arts, since they normally end in a work. In order to validate and become familiar with a work-oriented approach, this focus on a particular method is useful.

Manifestations of performing arts are works that can be recognized and repeated, like dances, songs, plays and stories. The decentering that facilitates a process towards works of performing arts is called *work-oriented decentering*.

We have shown earlier that an experience of distress or dis-ease is marked by a situational restriction and/or individual inability. The work-oriented decentering now pays special attention to the affective experience (literally, not symbolically) of enabling and achievement within a frame of limited resources. Work-oriented decentering facilitates the arrival and therefore the completion of an art work. This has several benefits:

- Producing a piece of music, a song, a dance, a theater play or performance is an emotional experience of enabling and fulfillment. The artist befriends the work as she might befriend a painting or poem. It is as if the alternative world experience through the arts, which poses a challenge to everyday life-habits, will end in a truly unique solution: a work of art, always genuinely arriving through the creator and intended for

an audience. The artistic probing and interventions that brought the unique accomplishment forward can then become a resource for a solution-focused reflection on the issue of the client.

- The work is a nourishment of soul, a gift, which can be recalled and repeated (as shown earlier in the context of “diet and medicine”).
- The work connects to transpersonal traditions, or transpersonal considerations, as we will demonstrate later.
- The work can act as an important guide or protecting companion. For example, in non-directive play therapy with children, occasionally a song or a ritual play evolves which serves this purpose.

We will now look into a didactics that illustrates work-oriented performance art decentering.

ESSENTIALS OF A WORK-ORIENTED DIDACTICS

The most helpful skills in perusing a work-oriented approach are those we have learned from the improvisational performing arts, such as traditional jazz, and from post-modern forms, such as contemporary music and theater. The degree of improvisational freedom ranges from set traditional patterns (melodies, harmonic progressions, dance steps, and plots, with an almost unlimited freedom of choice of instruments, sets and ornamentation) to free forms that follow only a style. The latter is prevalent in the performance art tradition.

Performance art can be seen as an action-oriented musical improvisation or theater-oriented installation art. Joseph Beuys' expansion of the concept of art was influential in the development of performance art. The experiments associated with the period of “Happenings” and “Fluxus” in the 1960s may also be foregoers of performance art. Social potential and the wish for creative, communicative production within the performance art movement can easily be connected to the “Third Theater,” practiced by the Living Theater (in *Paradise Now*) and by Eugenio Barba (*Floating Islands*). In contrast, the one-person show within the performance art movement could have ties to the enactment practices of rock musicians (Vill 1991).

What needs to be considered is that not only acculturated folk music, dance and plays are passed along improvisationally. Post-modern performance events, as well, are repeated and become designated works: for example, the above-mentioned play, *Paradise Now*, as well as many jazz and rock pieces. Though their performance may vary drastically from event to event, they can still be recognized. The *repetition* of a work does not make it into a *reproduction*; the performance always starts in deconstruction and ends in reconstruction. Each time, it is an *in situ* composition, an embodied experience of the unique character of the piece. Every step in shaping the composition is questioned and understood again as to whether it is the quite-right step toward the genuineness of the performance. This process of meeting the work is analogous to meeting a person and entering into a relationship with them. The relationship will change over time; however, the identity of the other is respected. These traditions can teach us how to guide an artistic process in such a way that meeting the work can become a transformational gift.

Time is the essential factor of framing in the performing arts. Certainly space plays a major role as well; however, performing arts are time-framed. Their imaginary reality creates a kind of *time out*, which I, as a facilitator, should be careful of breaking into with instructions. Consequently, I need to consider closely what needs to be said before the time frame re-opens to the shaping exploration. In order to have opportunities for feedback, instructions and interventions without intruding upon the frame (especially in music, where any talk within the process is awkward and disturbing), we need a sequence of frames, in between which we create such opportunities. We usually call these frames *takes*, a term which originated in movie culture.

The instructions before the take will have to consider all the categories mentioned in the sections “Low skill/high sensitivity” and “Less is more.” This could mean not offering too much information. It might also be helpful to start with a sensitizing phase as the first take, before the improvisational score is introduced. Once participants are sensitized to the frame and source-material and the directions of exploration are established, an improvisational score can be given by the facilitator or developed with the client.

- Sensitizing in a dance improvisation might involve an exploration of the studio and a warming up the body under the facilitator's guidance. This *first-take* exploration could last for three minutes. During this exploration, the facilitator could suggest a selection from the following three levels: floor, middle level or being upright – whichever space feels most comfortable. During this time the facilitator might be silent and give feedback after the take, so that there is a sense of *time out* in the dance.
- Using this material, an improvisational score could be designed with the client. This discussion could include the characteristics of movement within the chosen level, music with a beat, music free of rhythm, no music, etc.

Practice has shown over and over again that it is more effective to start with a simple, concise improvisational score (see “Less is more”). This take should be no more than two to three minutes. A helpful remark is “Let’s just try and see – we can always change it later.” This lowers the level of expectations. We should also remember that more takes will follow. The objective is a truly unique work of art, a work genuinely arriving through the performing artist and meant for an audience. Primarily, this audience or witness is the facilitator. Therefore, each new take needs to be preceded by a *cycle of feedback* that includes the following items:

- the *client’s feedback* about the experience, and/or the *facilitator’s feedback* from their own witnessing
- feedback that gives answers as to what worked, what surprised, and what was challenging
- wishes about what could happen or be attempted in the next take
- after the second take and successive takes, the questions may be asked: *Is it on the way? What does it need to get there? What could be left out, or used again?*

Ways to shape this question would be: *Where are you with the work? Is it complete? How do you know? Where do you see its completion? What helped? What was in the way, and how did you overcome it?*

- The question: *Shall we make any changes in the score for the next take, or just try once more?* These changes can be suggested by the client, the facilitator or both.

Reminders about the cycle of takes and feedback

- Feedback and instructions have to be as concrete as possible. Speak *on the surface of the matter*. Ask *where* and *when* it happened, *what* is it, *how* could I see or hear it. Generalizations are usually judgmental or superficial in their interpretations. It is helpful to use concrete terminology about distinctions of frame, source-material, basic qualities, tools, shaping structures and their properties.
- The feedback time should be extremely short, so that the improvisational flow is not lost. You may want to alternate between the facilitator's feedback and the client's feedback.
- The takes should also stay short: in the range of two to four minutes. Although this feels short at the beginning, later the takes become so intense that the ending doesn't feel like an interruption. Instead, the takes end naturally within this time limit. The intensity increases because the emerging work becomes an acquaintance. The work is as fascinating as getting to know a special person, instead of always superficially seeking something or somebody new.
- It is helpful to mark the end of the take with cymbals, bells or a visual cue instead of breaking in with talking. Such a sign is not a command to stop, but rather a gentle reminder that it is time to find an ending.
- At first, facilitators coming from a visual arts background have difficulty seeing that instructions need to be complete and conclusive before and between the takes. These facilitators may also need to realize the importance of giving very specific information about frame, source-material and shaping. Much of this information is evident in the visual

arts and goes without saying: the size of paper, the choices of colors, the brushes. These things are usually pre-selected and restricted according to the choice of the facilitator. Also, in visual arts and writing it is possible to give feedback or instructions during the shaping process, but this may be quite disturbing during a performing arts improvisation.

- Often after a specific take, we hear the remark that it will not be the same in the next take. This is a familiar experience for painters, and a reminder of the painting process might help the client understand that this is okay. The painter sees the painting change from moment to moment, and still understands that it is the same canvas and therefore the same emerging painting that she works on. In a similar way, we work on the same improvisational theater play even though it changes after each take. The time comes when the work begins to guide us, and we see that it is arriving. We may remember the play each time or at the end by giving it a name.

Interdisciplinary considerations (compare Knill *et al.* 1995)

Multiplicity as a tradition

The majority of professional change agents who incorporate the arts into their practice find themselves divided into schools and associations based on their choice of artistic discipline. Some of the organized disciplines include music therapy, art therapy, dance/movement therapy, drama therapy and poetry therapy. When professionals “cross over” and draw on multiple disciplines, as they do for instance in the field of expressive arts, they can meet with opposition from their differently focused peers.

The controversy on one side appears to be rooted in a concern about the competency of practitioners who “spread themselves too thin.” Mastery of *each* artistic discipline requires a lifetime of study and practice, so the argument goes; how could a therapist hope to master *several*?

The arguments in this ongoing debate that favor specialization by artistic discipline are certainly reasonable – *in view of the context from which they emerge*. We want to present a different *context*, a different way of looking at the arts in the work of change agents – one which finds its foundation in the age-old *tradition of multiplicity* in the practice of the arts.

“Intermodal” expressive arts training of professionals neither requires nor promotes the mastery of several distinct schools, each of which finds focus in a single artistic discipline. Rather, it finds its primary focus in the *artistic tradition* that all the arts have in common. In other words, it is *a discipline unto itself*, with its own theoretical framework and focus that have also evolved from academies that train interdisciplinary arts (film, opera, performance art, etc.).

The artistic tradition that provides a basic foundation for the discipline of intermodal expressive arts is rooted, as we have shown before, in human imagination and play and is characterized by an inter-relatedness among the arts. It is the same tradition in which opera directors, choreographers, film-makers, theater and performance artists need to train and gain eloquence. The most recent exemplars of this tradition are the performance artists who strive for the expressive act that brings together texts, sounds, images and movements all at once. They challenge clichés and codes of the traditional arts establishment and promote the deconstruction of mechanisms of alienation. In this way, the *performance artist* became an essential part of the post-modern movement. It is only fair that we also consider here the oldest tradition: that of the minstrels, story-tellers and tribal artists who historically may have been organized in the form of guilds but who did not divide their work into specialization according to particular artistic disciplines.

In many cases, of course, the mastery those artists achieved in their training and throughout their practice built upon one or more basic disciplines; however, from the moment they began their formal studio training, they received a special interdisciplinary body of knowledge and skill that has to do with a sensitivity to the way an image finds its scene or act and how it speaks most clearly through its rhythm, sounds or verbal messages. In other words, these artists may come from theater, visual art, music, dance or a mix of these disciplines; but in order to have a significant impact they need to learn the intermodal skills of the artistic tradition that includes

theories like polyaesthetics, intermodal and crystallization theory. The great directors of film and stage are not “Jacks of all trades” – they are specialists in intermodal creativity.

We do not presume that intermodal expressive arts specialists exist on the same level as these masters. This would be unfair, just as it would be unfair to compare a music therapist with a great performer. What we will demonstrate is that there is a body of knowledge and skill induced by an artistic tradition that connects the arts. We also have found, however, that it helps for an expressive arts specialist to build upon one or more basic disciplines and that training cannot consist of a mere conglomerate of arts therapies.

To this end, we will endeavor to summarize various concepts and explain how they link the arts disciplines, building the backbone for the skills that make movies, for example, so powerful as enhancers of imagery through acting, movement, sound and words. The skills are similar to those used in the service of advertising industries to enhance, in sophisticated and manipulative ways, the messages they want to get across. At a time when the world's population is “hooked” on such and other intermodal products aired through a tube into the living rooms of millions, we might also raise the question: shouldn't we consider the skills about which we are speaking to be part of our educational basics? Aren't they required in order for people to make informed choices? The literacy campaign has been viewed as critical to democratic participation in our linguistically regulated society. An “intermodal literacy drive” could more fully enhance democratic participation and promote improvement in the quality of the “intermodal media flood” assailing us. A major landmark in the search for an effective media literacy campaign of that kind, based on the expressive arts, has been undertaken by Lesley Johnson. She builds her approach on a rich experience in video skills and the interdisciplinary practice of the arts (Johnson 2000).

Intermodal specialists have much to offer in the way of facilitating change nowadays, and a training that focuses on intermodal skills in the artistic tradition is required.

We will present here some specific theories pertinent to intermodal expressive arts, including the theory of imagination modalities, crystallization theory, polyaesthetic theory, and intermodal theory.

Intermodal methodology

MODALITIES OF IMAGINATION

We are accustomed in our visually-oriented society to reducing imagination to visual images alone. Because we understand the term *image* in a visual way, we often neglect imagination's other sensory aspects. In fact, isn't it true that humans typically *imagine* not only visual images, but also sounds and rhythms, movements, acts, spoken messages and moving pictures – even tastes and tactile sensations? Imagination should not be reduced, therefore, to pictures (images) alone.

In remembering dreams we may sense the *movement* of swimming, hear a voice sing or speak *words*, experience the *act* of killing, see the beautiful *image* of a city or listen to the *sound and rhythm* of music. *Imagination is thus truly intermodal.*

The movements, words, visual images, acts, sounds and rhythms that we sense in a dream or daydream may be defined as *modalities of imagination*. Indeed, some people never experience spoken, verbal messages in their dreams – only images. The modalities may be interwoven or isolated. “Cutting down a tree” in a dream is an *act*, but it also conveys an *image* (of a tree or a saw), and a *movement* (that of sawing). In the experience, the act may have been the outstanding fact. On the other hand, when we hear a voice unaccompanied by a visual image, we might remember it as a verbal message alone; such is the nature of a single modality of imagination.

Any art discipline, then, because of its connection with the imagination, can evoke, and find further expression in, any other modality imaginable. A poem, for instance, can evoke *visual images*, has a *rhythm*, and may find its power by describing an *act*. We think of poetry as a distinct art discipline, but on close examination we can clearly see how it taps into a multitude of modalities of imagination. A piece of music or a piece of theater, like a painting or novel, may contain any number of modalities perceptible by imagination: movements, acts, images, sounds, rhythms, words and empty spaces.

Modalities of imagination should not be confused with the essential sensory channels the various arts disciplines seem to prefer. The distinctions of preferred senses are particularly important in polyaesthetic theory, discussed later, while the distinctions of modalities of imagination are the

building block for crystallization theory. Both distinctions elaborate on the interdisciplinary nature of the arts. The two categories are:

- *preferred senses*, manifest in the various arts disciplines
 - visual arts: visual
 - music: auditory
 - dance: sensorimotor
 - literature and poetry: auditory and visual
 - theater: auditory, sensorimotor and visual
- *modalities of imagination*, manifest in the arts, dreams and daydreams
 - image
 - movement
 - act
 - word
 - sound
 - rhythm.

It may be helpful to consider the modalities of imagination in terms of facilitating an enactment or conversation in connection with the imagination or works of art. Understanding depends on the closeness to the specific senses and on the poetic nature of the imagination modalities. The enactment or conversation we want to be in is initiated *from the surface of the image* rather than being *about the meaning of the image*. Therefore, a song initiated by the rhythm of steps in a dance or a conversation about a spring tree, evoked by an image in a poem, intensifies the potential of the dance or poem more than a reductionist explanation of them.

The *differentiation* of art disciplines, modalities of imagination and preferred senses becomes a vital part of the expressive arts. Our understanding of differentiation in the arts and its implications for rituals of restoration may be deepened through the study of crystallization theory (Knill 1990).

CRYSTALLIZATION THEORY

In crystallization theory, the metaphor of crystallization is used to explain how in an environment “saturated” with artistic imagination, a small creative act, seen as a “seed,” will grow. The growth, following ancient traditions of the arts, reveals the seed’s full power with the clarity and order of a crystal. The theory attempts to formulate how the helping relationship can provide optimal conditions for emerging images to come to their potential through the use of different art disciplines.

Crystallization theory is built primarily upon the phenomenological premise that help is generated exclusively from the material that comes forth between change agent and client as they work and relate to one another (Knill 1990). It also builds on the understanding that the client is the expert of his suffering and will be the one who will, it is hoped, find clarity. The change agent needs to be the expert of effective guiding through the session. In the expressive arts frame, this material includes the artistic process. Therefore, crystallization theory provides an understanding to the change agent about the choices at hand during the session, with respect to the artistic discipline.

Crystallization theory builds on the distinctions posed by the modalities of imagination. Historically, each of the art disciplines, as vehicles for imagination, has provided specific containers with respect to the imagination modalities, using the creative act within their tradition in a unique way. For example:

- One can talk, dream or write about images, but most certainly images crystallize in a *picture or sculpture*.

There is no *visual art* without *image*.

Therefore *visual art has a special power with images*, even though paintings can evoke modalities like *rhythms* of shapes, or *acts* of war and peace, etc.

- One can be *moved* through music, a story, or a scene, or one can describe *motion* pictures, but most certainly movement is experienced strongly through its crystallization in *dance*.

There is no *dance, mime*, etc., without *movement*.

Therefore *dance, mime, etc. has a special power with movement*, even though dances can build on modalities like *rhythms*, or *images* of birds, or *acts* of love, etc.

- One may tell, write, sing or paint about acts, but the most impressive format for an act is its crystallized demonstration in a staged scene as *theater*.

There is no *theater or film* without *acts*.

Therefore *theater or film has a special power with acts*, even though a movie can focus on modalities like *images*, *melodies*, or dance-like *movements*, etc.

- One may walk or talk rhythmically or communicate through sounds, whistles, or moans, but we most intensely experience sound and rhythm that is crystallized in *music*.

There is no *music* without *sound and rhythm*.

Therefore *music has a special power with rhythm and sounds*, even though music can include modalities like *words* in lyrics, or operatic *acts*, or *images*, etc.

- One may use poetic images, scenes, or dramatic movements, but the poetic component is most accentuated in communication through telling a story or writing *poetry*.

There is no *poetry, fiction, etc.*, without *words*.

Therefore *poetry has a special power with words*, even though poems can evoke modalities like *rhythms*, or *acts* in ballads, or *images*, etc.

Choice of art discipline

These observations direct us also to the fact that we communicate in general through modalities of imagination – including visual images, posture and movement, sound, silence, rhythm, words and acts – without the intention of doing any “art” *per se*. The expressive arts change agent who studies and understands these distinctions may well become sensitive in the conversation with the client. The conversation may include, for instance, a descrip-

tion of movement modalities, a strong visual image, or a metaphoric act. Respectively, these could call for decentering by way of a dance, painting or theatrical enactment. On the other hand, the facilitator may suggest a dance as an appropriate first step, perhaps to change the perspective or to gain distance. A well-developed sensitivity based on an understanding of crystallization theory can help to make a decision according to this type of reasoning. This will be important, as we will see later, in finding cues for the decentering process, cues that are not linked directly to the problem or issue, as we have suggested in the decentering theory.

Intermodal transfer

This sensitivity and understanding is also helpful in the technique of *intermodal transfer*—that is, the shifting from one art form to another. This is another artistic skill which performance artists are innately familiar with, due to the interdisciplinary nature of their work. In their concern for personal expression that must not be restricted by technique, performance artists still want to master the current state of the arts and a variety of modalities. The quality of a performance, as Vill (1991) states, is therefore an act of balance between intermodal virtuosity and authentic expression. The play between music, art, dance, theater and body art continuously undergoes a process of evaluation. To master this play, the artist needs an outstanding sensitivity and acute presence when considering moving between materials and artistic disciplines (Vill 1991). The explorative search for the most effective material is not restricted to one artistic discipline. Once a material is found, it undergoes the scrutiny of a contextual evaluation that must match form and expression. The fundamental aesthetic criterion for choices in the design of performance art is the enhancement of an imagination modality. An expressive arts change agent might say to the client, for example:

“What kind of sound or rhythm supports the planned act?”

“Maybe we should leave it in silence and add an image on the backdrop?”

“No – a blackout and a poetic description of the act is more effective!”

These sorts of interventions are typical of decision-making among performance artists and movie-makers. In a decentering process, these skills serve the process of clarification. An intermodal transfer supports the focusing process, revealing the “quite-right” image, movement, sound and rhythm, or word. The process discloses the “felt sense” (Gendlin 1981) and can allow for a shift in awareness.

The eventual transfer to the poetic discipline deserves special mention. To finally crystallize to poetic activity allows images, acts, movements, rhythm or sounds to find a *cognitive sense* in poetic language. Poetry embodies the soul of new thought.

As we indicated earlier, interpretation need not be a translation into a meta-theory foreign to the shared experience of the artistic process. Rather, interpretation may work best as a creative dialogue carefully following the path of an image, act, movement or sound through various artistic modes until they are ready for cognitive crystallization *par excellence*.

Intermodal training refines the change agent’s intuitive presence both in the process of crystallization and in the decentering process. Effective training in this form of sensitivity requires the development of observational skills, as well as the practice of the arts and their transformation into performing art disciplines. Just as any artist can inform another in the understanding and mastery of modalities, the practitioners of expressive arts can also teach each other. The poet learns from the musician or dancer about rhythm. The painter may learn from the actor about scenes, time and space in relation to an act.

POLYAESTHETIC THEORY

In the 1950s Wolfgang Roscher, the celebrated German educator, musician and theater director, developed an interdisciplinary method for teaching music, theater, dance, literature and art. The intermodal improvisations and performances he facilitated were well received and formed the basis for a training model that became duplicated in numerous European schools, colleges and conservatories. Roscher’s theory of polyaesthetics was premised on the observation that all the art disciplines engage to some extent with all the sensory and communicative modalities. He found this to be true both in the perception and the production of the arts.

Among all art disciplines we find a variety of sensory channels and imagination modalities. Within the visual arts, for instance, we know that sensorimotor and tactile senses are engaged when we paint. We know that a painting communicates not only through the visual image, but also through other imagination modalities, like the rhythm of color. Also, a painting may evoke a story that depicts an act.

Music engages not only the auditory sensory modality, but also the sensorimotor, tactile and visual faculties. It communicates by means of imagination modalities such as rhythm and sound, and through words or lyrics that may evoke strong visual images.

Musicians of this polyaesthetic school require training and refinement of more than just the auditory faculties. They gain the *rhythmic* awareness of a dancer, combined with *visual* competencies concerning structure, form and timbre of music. In addition they find a *poetic* sensitivity to musical phrasing and lyrics and will understand the *drama* in the development of motifs. This new polyaesthetic theory (Roscher 1976) deepened the interdisciplinary research in music, dance and education done by Dalcroze, the founder of “Dalcroze Eurhythmics,” in the beginning of the last century (Bachmann 1991) and extended applications into the realm of the arts and literature.

The traditional model of arts education which grew from Chinese culture also deserves mention. Within this model, the practice of philosophy, aesthetics, music, visual arts, and many other disciplines, existed as a *single* tradition. When it came to educating artists, students engaged in what we would call an interdisciplinary approach. Painters wrote poetry, often including beautifully executed characters in their paintings. Musicians studied all the arts. It has only been within the last several decades that these practices have changed in deference to artistic specialization.

Liao (1989) wrote that the principle of polyaesthetic education and therapy should not negate the specificity of the particular art disciplines; rather, it should promote the traditional wisdom that all the arts are members of one harmonic body. To educate in an integrated way, therefore, one must allow a synthesis that sharpens the sensory modalities, an important competency for all artists. The human instinct is multisensory, Liao claimed. Visual senses do not exclude auditory ones, and auditory

senses are reinforced by visual ones. The Chinese chef, for example, always considers perfection of color, aroma and taste simultaneously.

Today, polyaesthetics is an established discipline, taught in many Austrian and German institutions. Polyaesthetics sheds light on intermodal theory through its teachings on sensory perception. As sensory perception is the main concern in sensitization to a field of play when decentering, polyaesthetic theory is a foundation for giving instructions. In dance, for example, it is taught that the ability to differentiate among movement structures corresponds to the development of sensorimotor intelligence. A sensorimotor experience of structure involves both time and space, and this means that the differentiation process in dance takes into account the exploration of images spatially *and* the exploration of sound temporally. The image of roots may help a dancer stay grounded in the wind; the branches may guide the dancer's spatial awareness; and the drum or flute can facilitate the shaping of time or rhythm. In a special education setting it might mean that a child with spatial learning disabilities can learn to coordinate time and space differentiation with sensorimotor dance activities.

Similarly, the material through which music is expressed is sound and silence. This material can be further differentiated according to the class or quality of sound, and also according to form or structure. The latter differentiation is facilitated through the visual and tactile senses. An image suggesting short and dry sounds contrasted with long ringing and light sounds, manifesting as sounds from a wood block and a xylophone, can sensitize us to contrasting timbres. Cascades of fast notes in a continuous downward stream may give our score some direction. In a special education setting it might mean that a child with language difficulties can learn to distinguish timbres of vowels and consonants through explorative music improvisations and free graphic notations in color.

Similar aspects of differentiation are found in language and its structure and content in interpersonal exchanges. Since thought has the structure of language, cognitive ability comes into play. Using the example of music, we see that not only the expressive and perceptive exploration of music is developed, but also the temporal distinctions of musical process, syntax, and verbal language structure. All these things help us to understand structure and content in music and poetry. Polyaesthetic theory can be applied to all the art disciplines. Through its distinctions considering

sensory modalities, developmental issues of perception, expression and cognition can also be better understood (Knill 1979).

INTERMODAL THEORY

The popularity of the use of the arts in rituals of restoration made the development of an intermodal theory inevitable. The investigation of all the art disciplines and their qualities in the creative process became the focal point of many change agents.

Important research contributed by Decker-Voigt (1975) in Europe helped to resolve the concern regarding the “unskilled mixing” of methods of art, dance, music and drama therapies. His investigation of modalities of expression and perception in education, special education and psychotherapy was based on the study of the intermodal aspects of music. This work further influenced the research of Knill in the United States (1979).

In the early 1970s at Lesley University in Cambridge, MA, Shaun McNiff, under the auspices of the Institute for the Arts and Human Development, initiated the first intermodal expressive therapy training group in the United States. He based his inquiry on clinical experiences with what he called “total expression” (McNiff 1981, pp.xix–xxi). In collaboration with the faculty at Lesley and with affiliated training programs in Europe, a theory for the integrated use of the arts in psychotherapy was formulated. The theory distinguished between interpersonal, intrapersonal and transpersonal considerations (Knill 1990). These considerations are a building block for the intervention theory in expressive arts. The interpersonal distinctions help considerably in the choice of the art discipline when working with groups, teams and communities. When we work with individuals, it might be helpful to assess the intrapersonal profile of the client, while the transpersonal distinctions help us in designing homework in context with the idea of “diet and medicine.”

Interpersonal considerations

Interpersonal considerations take into account what we understand about group process within artistic activities. In their tradition, the arts disciplines regulate the communication between members of a group. We find not only restrictions through structure and form, but also permission for certain

interactions that may be difficult outside of the artistic form. Therefore, the group's process can become more visible or audible and may be encouraged through enactment or choreography. Some of this was recognized by Moreno and Moreno (1959) in the psychodramatic practice of sociometry. From our intermodal practice, we can compare various disciplines of art expression and demonstrate their differences. Painting, writing and sculpting in groups facilitates the process of individuation, because of their inherent conduciveness to private, isolated work. Music, with its resounding, inescapable presence, lends itself more naturally to socialization. Dance and movement, on the other hand, create opportunities for exploring relationships and coalitions within the group. Clinicians who make use of all these disciplines require special training in the interdisciplinary use of the arts in therapy. Of particular importance is an understanding and ability to engage the arts in decentering or in intermodal transfer. These techniques serve to extend expression, intensify group involvement or individuation, and also offer less threatening modes for finding words than those habitually used in conversation.

Intrapersonal considerations

Key intrapersonal considerations refer to the acquired emotional attitude of an individual or a collective toward a particular discipline of artistic expression. For example, certain people bring a great resistance to spontaneous expression through music, perhaps in response to performance anxiety related to formal training. Certain cultures discourage spontaneous acting, for example, which could appear to disrupt the social order. Many of us prefer or feel more at ease with particular forms of artistic expression than with others, and these preferences need to be taken into account in order to work from the individual's resources and strengthen them accordingly.

Transpersonal considerations

Transpersonal considerations evolve from the traditions of the spiritual, religious and ritualistic use of the arts. Pictures, sculptures and symbolic objects mark the place of worship and are like openings, doorways or windows to the sacred – the realm of spirits and gods. Instead of keeping her painting in a drawer, a client may engage in an ongoing dialogue with it

if she hangs it in the bedroom in a shrine-like way. She may want to place a sculpture she makes at the entrance of her house for a sense of protection, or to remind herself with each homecoming to leave something of the day's burden outside as an offering to this "totem pole."

Great prayers traditionally are also great poems and do not lose their power through repetition. In fact, it is repetition that reaffirms the experience and makes it "known by heart." Such power is in every touching poem. Who has not taken the time to read a love poem from a dear friend over and over again, renewing a deep emotional experience with each reading? It is good practice in rituals of restoration, therefore, to encourage repetition as a kind of homework (as suggested in "Diet and medicine").

Dance and music are united in many religious practices. Usually the dance builds a bridge to theater-like enactments, often with costumes or masks, while the music provides a link to songs and hymns. The repetitive enactment of an important spiritual event (initiation, blessing, redemption, conjuring or empowerment) is experienced in the container of theater or dance. It would make sense, then, that some clients would begin their sessions with remembering an important event through a dance or theater act, or end the session with an enactment of a blessing. Music, and especially song, has the characteristic of calling or praising. As an "inner" music, it can accompany us like a positive "ear worm" and surface unexpectedly in situations where it is helpful, sometimes entering our singing or whistling. Often, we are surprised at the emotional shift that accompanies it.

To act as a change agent who uses the arts without considering the ancient powers connected with them, and without fostering our clients' sensitivity and practice of them, means forgetting one of our most basic resources.

Intervention

The art analogue stance

THE HELPING RELATIONSHIP

Buber (1983) makes distinctions between the dynamics of the "I-It" and "I-Thou" relationships in facing the world. The English and German languages suggest different words in order to make the same distinctions.

These words are not necessarily used in this way in contemporary thought. The word “relationship” (*Beziehung*) and the word “meeting” (*Begegnung*) serve these distinctions. According to Webster, *relation* means “in reference to,” “kinship,” “comparison” (mathematics) and “in conformity” with (architecture). The word *meeting*, however, has closer ties to “come together from different directions,” “come face to face,” “to be present at the arrival of,” or “to experience” (as in: the plan will “meet” with disaster).

Meeting has a different quality than *relationship*. *Meeting* suggests such an acceptance of differences that an encounter may happen: there is a difference to be found in the nature of people, in their face-to-face experience, and in their ways of arriving at the meeting. *Relationship*, however, includes the tendency to make things conform, drawing it closer to kinship and its inherent tendency to compare. We find the identical difference in the German language between *Beziehung*, related to “pull,” and *Begegnung*, related to “counter” or “face-to-face.”

In order to be able to meet, therefore, one needs a container that makes it safe to accept differences with respect and without the avoidance that could turn a meeting into something casual or superficial. This is true for all meetings: the meeting between humans as peers, between humans and imagination, humans and art, and humans and what we call “nature.” If, as an example, music is not listened to in such a container – a concert hall, or a silent, private place – the music becomes casual background music, and will be drawn into the subjective, literal reality as a mood modifier. We know many traditional containers: museums, galleries, symposia, theater, studios, academies, laboratories, etc.

These containers are providers, but they do not guarantee a true meeting. The one who wants to meet truly needs to take a conscious step, or else the meeting easily stays casual or becomes part of her own mindset.

Meetings between humans are also provided with traditional containers that help a true encounter manifest. These containers, however, do not *guarantee* a true encounter. The container of marriage, for instance, can easily end in an uncommitted casualness or a disastrous forcing of the other into the “familiar,” a role which may be foreign to their character. The meeting becomes an experience in conforming to something other than we are, a veritable transference and/or countertransference relationship.

The meeting between people has a different dynamic than the one between people and things. To understand this dynamic was always one of the major objectives of anthropology, philosophy and psychology. We are interested here in the chemistry of the helping relationship in expressive arts as the meeting place for the change agent, the client and the arts. This meeting can only happen if both parties agree to a contractual bond, as we have shown earlier. In such a contract, one person asks for help while the other is present, willing to endure the one who asks for help without pulling them into the “familiar,” without becoming casual or withdrawn, and without manipulating them towards a fabricated solution. This is a very difficult task; probably it is ritualized in all cultures for this very reason.

THE “THIRD”: THE SPACE IN BETWEEN AND ITS DYNAMIC

The space in between can be differentiated in three realms. We call them the *mediated*, the *unmediated* and the *transmediated*.

- *The mediated.* Here we find the time, frequency and space of the meeting – all the things given, set up, handed out, presented, administered, received, distributed and taken away. As examples, we might think of a particular medium of communication, the scheduling, the hands-on probes, the medication prescribed, the art material distributed, the instructions given, the diet administered, or the drug taken away. The mediated can be analyzed, reproduced, sometimes reversed and clearly narrated. It also has a quantitative aspect.
- *The unmediated.* In this realm we find all the things in between that spring forth, are expected, become visible, hide, disappear, reappear or linger. The growing or dwindling of trust, the generated transference or arising countertransference, the connection or insight that becomes visible or hides in confusion, the complexity of a system revealed and the crisis expected are all part of the unmediated realm.

The unmediated can be foreseen or expected, analyzed, compared and described, but not reproduced identically, nor

reversed, nor essentially controlled. It has only qualitative properties.

- *The transmediated.* Here are all events that cannot be exactly foreseen, not planned, not administered – the things that are not do-able or enforceable and which therefore cannot be mediated, forwarded or reproduced. The transmediated has the characteristic of something that arrives or emerges. In the helping relationship, we call this emergent *the third* in the situation of *the two*. We know such events usually as surprising openings that lead to clarity or solutions. They are also described as “Aha-experiences.” The term “flash” was introduced by Balint (1980) for all the surprising and non-reproducible healing effects of a relationship. Grob (1989) talks about it as a “gift in the space of encounter” and Petersen (1985) highlights the aspect of *gift* that only arrives in an attitude free of utilitarianism and attachment to outcome.

“The third” cannot be exactly determined. After the fact, it can be described as an event and compared with other events. Certain conditions that led to the event can be pointed out and compared; but only attitudes of practice, not precise conditions, can determine its arrival.

The practice of expressive arts must consider the phenomenon of the third, because of the central position the arts have in its process. The artist knows that the power of the work depends on his or her ability to be open and present, cultivating a humble, serving attitude toward the arriving image, the emerging melody, the appearing rhythm or sound, the scene, or the message. Such readiness for the surprise needs discipline and surrender in a process that asks for *techné* (the classical Greek word for art in the sense of craft) in its original meaning: skill, method and knowledge.

ART ANALOGUE AND ART-ORIENTED

The art analogue metaphor for a helping relationship could be used to argue that the practice of the arts may help to open to the transmediated. The practice of the arts, then, would be a kind of *exercitium* for an ethical attitude that has respect for the third. In fact, the origins of medicine are very close to music. The ethics specialist Zimmerli (1986) has shown that

the *septem artes liberales* (seven liberal arts), which included music, were part of the preparatory studies for theology and medicine in the ancient universities. These studies were selected because of their educational quality as an ethical preparation for the helping professions. The ethical value in the practice of the arts is found in an attitude toward limits and hindrances – the artist traditionally has to overcome them in order to be successful.

The artist approaches limitations, resistance, or conflicting matters not as things to be eliminated, but instead as resources for a transformation. In the arts, limitations are sometimes kept, even though innovative technology may have overcome them; for example:

- black and white photography after color was available
- historical acoustic instruments with limited range after wider-range mechanical or electronic instruments were available
- use of a simple stage after complex, sophisticated stage machinery was available.

The challenge is to use limited resources innovatively as artistic tools. The attitude of the artist is to create structure and form, solutions that instill beauty in limited or chaotic formations. However, this attitude also includes the courage to eliminate hindrances that block the process. A pianist may accept the piano's inability to make a flute-like sound; in spite of that limitation, he may create an intriguing polyphonic interpretation that allows the melody to be heard through all the other voices. He will not, however, accept the slightly out-of-tune piano strings – he will tune them. This may not necessarily be true for the same pianist playing a honky-tonk tune on the identical piano. A similar situation may happen to a sculptor when the clay is a little dry. One day she might like the brittleness and the small cracks that arrive in the shaping of the figure that emerges; another day the arriving image may demand the adding of water and forceful kneading. In the discipline of the artistic process, it is the arriving third, the emergent in sight, that helps us to make the decision about which limits are challenges to be welcomed and which ones are hindrances to be eliminated.

The attitude of an artist has evident analogies with the attitude of a change agent toward problems, limitations or disturbances. The attitude toward the mediated, unmediated and transmediated in the meeting place

involves more than a simple mechanical process of resolving an issue or eliminating a disturbance. A further analogy between such attitudes can be seen in the openness for the “arriving third.” The artist knows this openness in the surrender to the arrival of an image, a scene, dance, music or a message. This readiness for the surprise is marked by demand and discipline using *techné* as a means to serve this arrival, and not as an end in itself.

The analyst Müller-Braunschweig was, to my knowledge, the first to define the work-situation of psychotherapy as an “analogue” to that of art. He warns, however, of a misunderstanding that can occur if it is the client who is compared to the work of art; rather, it is the “situation of the two” (client and change agent) in their *encounter* that is analogous to the evolving work of art (Salber 1980, p.19).

As a consequence, we define the attitude of a change agent who considers the transmediated realm of a helping relationship to be that of an *art analogue* attitude that corresponds to the specific ethical stance described above. This attitude does not necessarily prescribe the use of art activities in the practice.

Art-oriented is used as a term for a change agent who uses artistic activities in the session. It is possible, however, that an art-oriented therapist might not have an art analogue attitude. For instance, a therapist might use a painting procedure as a diagnostic test in order to choose a treatment plan, or a music therapist could use a certain type of musical instrument or sound for a behavioral desensitizing, rather than for their specifically artistic or aesthetic qualities.

The aesthetic perspective of intervention

With reference to the idea of aesthetics in our practice as leaping beyond the traditional understanding of a formal aesthetics, as outlined in Chapter 1, we will now define two concepts that guide the way to respond to clients during an alternative world experience. We call them *aesthetic response* and *aesthetic responsibility*. These concepts do not measure the art’s degree of beauty against an objective ideal. Rather, they describe characteristic ways of being in the presence of an art-making process, ritual play or work of art – ways that touch the depth of soul, evoke imagination, and engage

emotions and serene thought. Undoubtedly these characteristics need to be considered if we do not want to exclude beauty and bliss from our practice.

THE AESTHETIC RESPONSE

An *aesthetic response*,¹ as we will use the term here, refers to a distinct response to an artistic act or an art work that we associate with beauty. The response has a bodily origin. When the response is profound and soul-stirring, we describe it as “moving,” “touching” or “breath-taking” (in German, *Atem-beraubend*). Most languages suggest this sensory effect, even though we may sometimes not experience the effect literally. Not surprisingly, the origin of the Greek word *aesthesis* relates to sensation, according to Webster’s.

Our purpose of description here is to focus on the *quality* of these responses, rather than to try to objectify the qualities of events which evoke them. Therefore we abstain from using the parameters we normally associate with aesthetics, such as authenticity of form and content.

The research on effectivity and therapeutic intervention by Gendlin (1981) describes this response toward an image in a therapeutic context. He calls the phenomenon in his focusing method a *felt sense*. It occurs when a “quite-right” image emerges, an image that matches and resonates with the psychic condition of the client and evokes an observable response. This is followed by a shift in the client’s awareness which gives a sharpened understanding of the psychotherapeutic process. The words chosen by Gendlin in describing the phenomenon demonstrate the imaginal, sensual and surprising aspects of the response. The lucidity associated with the response and the effect on the breath is also pointed out by Bühler in what he described as the “Aha-experience,” mentioned above. In this context, Bühler does not refer directly to images, but he does mention imagination. However, we will concentrate here on the phenomenon of the response to beauty as it is experienced in the encounter with art-making or a work of

1 James Hillman used this term on 13 May 1994 in a Colloquium at Lesley University, Cambridge, MA, when he elaborated on the theme of aesthetic response and beauty.

art. We call it *aesthetic response* to make a distinction from other concepts like *therapeutic response*. The phenomenon occurs whether the experience of beauty is intensely pleasurable or is characterized by pain. The contrary quality, then, would not be ugliness but rather *an-aesthesia* – a dullness, an *inability* to respond.

How, then, might we distinguish between a *lack of response* due to a non-evocative occurrence and an *anaesthesia* to an evocative one? In other words, when a client fails to respond to a painting, for example, is it because of a dullness in the (non-evocative) painting or in the (anaesthetized) client? The distinction is important not only to therapists, for the aesthetic response can be a tool to help reach greater awareness. Obviously, this can only be done by providing enough space in our work to activate the senses to the point where the trust and confidence established can foster a sensory responsiveness. We have a special challenge in confronting the anaesthetizing mechanisms in the world of today. Could it be that genuine beauty has absented itself from our daily life to such an extent that we have to anaesthetize ourselves in order to protect ourselves from abusive realities? Perhaps concerns about abuse in contemporary therapy should include those which result from an anaesthetic everyday life; certainly then, the aesthetic response would have political implications.

Once we are sensitized, as we have shown, with the method of low skill/high sensitivity, we can trust our responses. An aesthetic response, then, signals the significance of what emerges. We meet here the whole range of artistic work – attractive and repulsive images under sunny and stormy skies, all bringing a rainbow of responses held in Eros, associated with beauty. The aesthetic response, therefore, has close ties with the erotic.

Moreover, the aesthetic response is a promising tool in meeting the work, as we will show in “Interpretation.”

AESTHETIC RESPONSIBILITY

Aesthetic response is a phenomenon existing in the presence of the art work, while *aesthetic responsibility* describes a phenomenon concerning the artistic process. We will see later that we need to consider both phenomena if we want to be able to make beauty a dimension in intervention and interpretation.

While commenting on the connection between Eros and the arts, Rudolf Arnheim (1987) said that no artistic process can exist outside a “loving affection.” This loving affection, or Eros, exists independently of the theme within that process. Rather, the thing that is presented through the artistic process is formally and thematically bestowed through this “loving affection.” Such an inclination toward Eros, which we notice as observers, is not necessarily in the object or theme presented; it is more of a sense that we get from the traces of the artistic process left in the work of art. They are traces of “loving affection.”

The attention focused on the theme and object, the intense devotion to the artistic process beyond the limits of space and time, and the permeation of artist and object in suffering and joy are qualities we attach to the experience of love toward an object. The Eros which drives the philosopher or artist to the vision is not different from the most common erotic Eros (Armstrong 1987). This erotic experience in the making of art culminates in the *letting go* of the work when it is recognized, illustrating a truly non-possessive attitude within that erotic engagement. We can observe these qualities also in the work of “non-professional” artists, in children and in clients. These qualities are a major motivating force in the alternative world experience when we truly decenter into the arts and away from our focus on the issue. Such qualities are not necessarily sufficient criteria for the greatness of a work of art, but they do make the work distinct from utilitarian activities for which the end determines the means (such as journalists taking photos of disasters, which satisfies a marketing goal, or tests that are designed according to a preconceived standard of evaluation). We are not saying that under such conditions a piece of art could never evolve; however, this would happen only incidentally and not according to the purpose of the activity.

The presence of beauty is not bound to the concreteness or abstractness of the theme or object presented. Beauty radiates through the ways in which the emergent, originally conceived in loving affection, approaches us. This may occur and may touch us deeply even in scenes of suffering, in works such as Picasso’s “Guernica,” Kodaly’s “Psalmus Hungaricus,” Bosch’s Hell, Breughel’s drunkards, Bach’s torture scenes in the Passions, or in the painful pictures, movements, sounds, rhythms, acts and words of clients. These presentations attract our attention and our empathic capacity

without awakening our anxiety or defenses. The power of beauty that allows us to approach the painful, the suffering, the ugly, and the repulsive is universal, as is well depicted in the myth of “Beauty and the Beast.”

In summary, certain qualities characterize responsible participation in the artistic process. They include:

- strong, committed attention
- a surrender that exceeds the limits of time and space
- a permeation of boundaries between artist and emergent
- a non-possessive attraction and yearning toward the emergent
- letting go of work when it is recognized
- the understanding that the validity of the process is independent of the “loveliness” or “beastliness” of the emergent.

These ways of responding to the emergent in an artistic process we call *aesthetic responsibility*. We will see later that it is important to guard a transformational process from destructiveness and also important to motivate the client truly to decenter in an affective way.

The power of beauty in intervention, an aesthetic responsibility

Aesthetic considerations guide us in facilitating an opening and sensitivity to the arrival of the emergent. We are interested in techniques and methods that increase our aesthetic responsibility, help unlock creativity, and foster technical skills for the artistic process. These techniques are a matter of aesthetics and not of behavioral science.

What does such aesthetic intervention look like in practice? Several examples, taken from a therapeutic setting, follow.

In *drama*, a therapist may use the following intervention:

Therapist: The voice and gesture seem incongruent with the character being portrayed. Let's explore the range of the voice in connection with the statement made just before Ann enters the room.

Theater is an art discipline that has deep psychological effects when the studio work is honed to aesthetic quality. Moreno recognized and made use

of this power in his “Theater of Spontaneity,” through which he developed and perfected his psycho-dramatic technique (Moreno and Moreno 1959). This power has been recognized and incorporated into acting theory as well, including the work of Konstantin Stanislavski (1961) in Russia, Jerzy Grotowski (1970) in Poland, and the French film-maker Jean Rouché (1975).

In *dance*, we might observe the following dialogue:

Therapist: I see your upper torso and arm movements reaching outward and diagonally halfway up, as if they were soaring wings, but I can perceive neither a grounding nor a flying. This is particularly evident in the legwork.

Dancer: I want to be a bird, but I sense that I cannot get off the floor.

Therapist: Try to get a sense of the air. (She guides the client in breathing strongly and making wind noises by mouth. The feet then move more directly downward, calling forth a strong, deliberate effort almost like that of a bird stomping just before springing from a branch.)

Therapist: What is still standing in the way of your becoming airborne? Explore the movement of your neck, upper torso and shoulders.

Eventually, after a period of similar interchanges, the client opens his larynx and screams like a sea gull, jumps up, and appears convincingly airborne in an improvised dance movement. The emerging dance is beautiful, cathartic, and emotional. The movement brings up what we might expect from a Reichian or bio-energetic therapy session, with the difference being that the breath, body and voice work are framed by the art discipline, increasingly more beautiful as the essence emerges. Simultaneously, the distance increases so this work can be viewed from a resource-oriented point of view.

In *visual art*, a therapist might encourage others to find the “right” images by offering interventions like: “Try bigger paper,” “Use more water,” “Look at it carefully before you go in,” “Do it again,” “Watch that negative space,” and “Try to define the space with color only.”

Painting has the advantage of permitting ongoing work with material for many sessions without “losing the thread,” because the material remains present from one session to the next. One can rework a painting or start all over again. Also, the paintings can be viewed side by side, as a documentation of transformation in progress. Holding and contemplating a series of images can be much like catching the effective reality of a life’s being and witnessing its actualization.

In *music*, a therapist may want to find out if the intent of a client is to have a regular metrical or non-metrical beat applied to an emerging rhythm. In this example, a technical suggestion for clarification leads to the discovery that a swinging in and out of the beat is intended or desired:

Therapist: All right, let’s work on the extremes, then. Start with the non-metrical, chaotic sound events, and then after a silence explore a simple beat on only one or two notes.

An intense studio work ensues. The difference in the moods resulting from the extremes in the improvisations (randomness of bursting sounds versus a flowing, metrical, almost melodic rhythmic structure) brings up intense images. They point to the difficulty the client has keeping his center when things get chaotic at his workplace. Only after a deeper understanding of the dilemma does the improvisation find its convincing form – a flowing metrical pulse on a deep drum, with a contrasting free vocal improvisation that includes offbeat riffs, radiating beauty.

While listening to a tape of a group improvisation, the therapist analyzes the structure and form of the piece with the musicians. Following the analysis, the group arrives at a consensus about how to reinterpret the work. They play until aesthetic satisfaction is reached. Through improvisational studio practice, many group issues resolve, as the group strives for a convincing musical form that satisfies criteria of *solo* and *tutti*, development and treatment of motifs and themes, etc.

In a great deal of therapy, the client often feels pressure to strive towards psychologically formulated normative or moral goals. When the aesthetic reflection has priority over the corrective one, it takes this pressure off the therapeutic relationship.

Aesthetic responsibility and the interface of education and rites of restoration

What is the difference between this type of work (in therapy, consulting, supervision and coaching) and work we might find in an educational studio setting of an art academy or conservatory? Both are rituals which make use of aesthetic criteria. However, they differ in the contractual relationship of the two who are engaged: change agent and client versus teacher and student. Each contracted ritual allows for and requires particular commitments, skills and competencies. In an educational ritual, the requirements derive from the educational goals dictated by a governing body and from the needs of an individual who seeks to develop or improve upon a specific skill or area of knowledge. In contrast, the ritual of therapy requires commitment, skills and competence similar to those that are called for in the context of rites of passage and restoration (Knill 1991).

Aesthetic responsibility and relational phenomena as countertransference

We need to be careful that we do not unconsciously contaminate the aesthetic response with phenomena that stem from our own historical issues as individuals and as artists. We have to constantly examine our motivation to respond and our attraction to the work with questions like the following:

- Is it only the experience of a kind of beauty that feels good and is easy to love that attracts me? Do I have the desire or the stamina to endure painful or ugly material?
- Am I more attracted to the satisfaction of confirming a psycho-theoretical speculation than to beauty? Am I in love with the “Sherlock Holmes” game of confirming my own hypotheses and being recognized as a successful change agent?
- Am I truly surprised about the material encountered, or just pleased to see what I thought might come? Am I just proudly astonished that I was “right”?
- Do I bring a subtle curiosity to the material? Is it a keen, loving affection accompanied by joy, awe and respectful fear that invokes an aesthetic response? Or am I playing a familiar game

of feigning interest to pull off something sensational? Am I using bravery to show interest despite my real anxiety?

- Am I ready to be confronted with unknown aesthetic cues and nurture them to mastery and comprehension? Or am I influencing the development of a piece of art with my response in a way that meets my formal aesthetic criteria for, perhaps, a portfolio about client art?
- Can I be honest about the lack of an aesthetic response when there is none forthcoming, even knowing that the client wishes for such recognition, and go on to ask for a transfer into another art form in order to explore further? Or do I simulate an aesthetic response in order to have a “good feeling” or to manipulate the session towards closure?

Many more such questions are possible. Each touches the relational dilemma.

A change agent's motivations must be questioned in order to clarify these phenomena. We must even question that aesthetic motivation that drives us to engage in activities which primarily reveal the problematic, painful, ugly, shocking and repulsive. Is it the thrill of sensationalism, the state of being “problem-tranced,” or a false bravery, compensating for anxiety, that spurs our motivation? Or is this motivation sensitively kindled by an intense, loving affection towards the emergent? Is our attention and surrender to the container committed and permeating, similar to that of an artistic discipline, as articulated earlier? Is the attraction non-possessive? Is there enough space for separation, similar to an artist letting go into the work? Do compassion and devotion to the painful and the joyous carry equal radiance in the aesthetic response – the “Aah” and “Aha” of saluting and recognizing? We call this questioning of motivation an *art analogue inquiry*.

As we pointed out earlier in the section about the art analogue helping relationship, the client should not be looked at outside of the *situation of the two*. The situation of client and therapist in their encounter is considered as an analogue to evolving art. We have seen that the presence of beauty and love does not necessarily depend on the content of the artistic work.

Instead, this presence is a consequence of *aesthetic responsibility* during the process of decentering and *aesthetic response* in meeting with what emerges.

A dynamic perspective of intervention through the arts

In the eyes of the one who feels helpless, the helper is often idealized as somebody *stepping in*, like a “*deus ex machina*,” taking the burden away or healing the wound. This is definitely a freeing, unbinding experience. Another idealization is that the helper will risk jumping in after the helpless to take them from turmoil to safety. This idealization certainly has an experiential base in life-threatening situations, where rescue workers literally jump in or when a medical professional steps forward to perform a procedure that saves lives. Both images fit the physical experience of a helpless bodily situation. They become a metaphor for the suffering soul’s image of a savior.

Today we have a greater awareness about the complexity of illness and health. We can picture them as interacting, interdependent concepts, such as pathology-oriented versus resilience-oriented ones. We can focus on body, mind, and society, or psychological, physiological, cultural and environmental aspects. This allows us to question the strict classification of helping situations as simply physical, psychological or societal, or the constructs of psychosomatic, somatic or mental. This does not mean that the helpless situation may not have simple priorities and needs, as in the example of an accident. However, we will usually have to accept the complexity of a helpless situation.

In this context, primary meta-theories concerning health and illness are questioned by post-modern thinkers like Kvale (1992) and Hillman (1996). They both postulate the acceptance of multiple narratives in revisioning a psychology that takes the complexity of the helpless situation into account. Today’s “theories of health” (salutogenesis) are influential because they can either complement or challenge the traditional etiologically-oriented psychopathology (Antonovsky 1993). The awareness of complexity and multiplicity can cause fear; in response to this anxiety, some New Age practices, for example, restore a primary meta-theory that has a simplistic account of the origins of suffering.

Considering the difficulties posed by this complexity, a productive way the helper could intervene is through *stepping forth with courage*. The act of entering is then an opening to the helpless situation that allows complexity to reveal itself through the relationship with the “helpless.” It also allows the help, in its own particularity, to unfold within that opening.

This image of stepping forth finds strong support in the epistemology that goes with systems-oriented thinking (Kriz 1997). Intervention is seen in this framework as a probing that initiates a principle of existential order within the helpless situation. This stepping forth into the helpless situation is based on an awareness of concepts such as self-organization, the immune system, resilience and resources. This awareness also allows the act of “jumping in after” or “stepping forth” in situations of crisis intervention.

In the following, we will consider the work-oriented expressive arts and the aesthetic perspective of intervention, both presented above, and attempt to describe the characteristics of a “stepping forth” intervention.

For the client, the artistic process presents itself paradoxically. In the helpless situation, the limits are experienced as painful, debilitating stuckness, and the restricted resources as bothersome. In the artistic setting, however, the limited frame opens up boundaries to an unexpected range of play. The restrictions of resources intrinsic to any art discipline (manifest in the choice of material or instruments) suddenly become a welcome challenge – as we have seen before, there is no art without challenging restrictions. The linear thinking in the hopeless situation is suddenly challenged by an unpredictable but possible artistic result. All of these challenges, offered by the interventions made to help build the artistic imagination, can also be frustrating for the client if the facilitator is not well trained as an artistic motivator. The facilitator needs to be able to monitor the process and to intervene with aesthetic responsibility. She must welcome conflict as an important ingredient that helps clarify the relationship and the process in an art analogue way. Low skill/high sensitivity motivation, aesthetic responsibility, aesthetic response and an understanding of intermodal theory all assist the facilitator in choosing the interventions necessary to guide the artistic process with strong, committed attention and a non-possessive attraction to the emerging image. At the same time, the facilitator is fully aware of the dynamic happening in the relationship between herself, the client and the work.

We could refer to this paradox as *breaking limits within a limiting frame*. It is a challenging but also rewarding intervention in expressive arts. Each time a client achieves an artistic result – a painting, sculpture, song, dance, improvisational performance, poem, story, Polaroid shot, theater scene, or installation – we witness a manifestation of the imagination, resulting from the creative physical act of shaping. The client now has a different sense of the body (tonus, temperature, respiration, etc.) and has literally changed the physical space he or she was in before. This is also true for the performing arts; there is a “before” and an “after” in connection with the stage, props and instruments and the reaction of the witnessing audience. The “attunement” of mood that goes with “being in the world” has changed with all its consequences, even though this experience is an extraordinary situation and not the ordinary helpless situation. The physicality of this experience, in this shared observational space, allows reflections on what helped or hindered the emerging work. Such inquiry will reveal new capabilities – the ability to handle situations of uncertainty in the presence of unexpected “imagery” and restricted resources (skill, material and instruments) that sometimes evoke difficult emotions.

Interpretation and reflection

The art-based or aesthetic perspective

The perspective introduced in Chapter 1 could be crystallized in the following sentence: *An artist is not the image, nor is the image a part of the artist*. The image came first to the artist and may have an important meaning for him or her. It is also presented to us and may have something to say to us. It becomes a present, or gift, for us, and it requires an exchange of gifts or a communion (Levine 1997).

If the presentation is performance-oriented, the situation requires special attention. Because the author is physically in the picture, acting, we need to resort to the framing techniques of the performing arts in order to clarify the distinction between author and work or performer and image. People may easily be confused with the image they are serving. For instance, within our phenomenological premise, a performer playing a murderer is not in danger of literally becoming one. What the performing actor does is serve that image so that it can emerge. If this were not so, we

would never find actors to take roles such as Hamlet, or Judas in the Passion Play. This role-serving task can be chosen or it can fall to a client, so it certainly may be an important experience of the actor's effective reality. In the moment of performance, however, it also becomes our effective reality and becomes important to us. The image dwells in this world, independent from our particular reality, and visits us in this presentation. Are we able to confront it without blame, defensive labeling or a need to push it back into the hidden, from where it will act unnoticed?

Certainly there are psychological theories that speculate about the meaning of the characters that emerge. However, these theories are not necessarily valid. They are imaginings, and therefore should be left open as possibilities. Perhaps particular roles could be our shadows or repressed feelings trying to find form, but such generalizations do not meet the standards of scrutiny for soul research. We expect more imagination from them. In addition, no serious research should be restricted to limited theoretical options. If, on the other hand, we allow the characters to reveal themselves, and if we can listen carefully and courageously to their language, they might say many more things than are contained in our theories. When we focus exclusively on a particular theory of interpretation, we hamper the true power of actualization in the work of art – a power that needs care in order to open to the fullness of the emerging work. This is what we are trained to do in working in the expressive arts.

The following are some interventions that will help create the frame, in order to avoid the confusion between presenter and presented:

- Mark the stage clearly. Define what is a part of the magical enactment (on stage) and what is not (off stage).
- Being on stage means serving the imaginative. Being off stage means witnessing. Keep an awareness of the difference.
- Use the character's name on stage or in the feedback process when referring to the acting work. Use the actor's name when addressing him, not the character's name he played; for example: "I liked it when you, John, played Ted, the lost traveler, in a quieter mood. That meant using less words. He was much more of a challenge to Mary. Rose, you played Mary. Is this true for you?"

- If spontaneous action is called for, as in one-to-one work in a small space, make sure to use masks or a prop when one is in character, and not use or wear them when speaking as the self.
- If there is no narrative to define time, as in improvisational dance or music, make a time agreement and an appropriate signal that is part of the ritual or performance so that you do not need to intrude upon the field of play.
- Make sure that the intermodal characteristics of a frame are clearly presented and conscious; for example:
 - Metaphorically speaking, the dancer in a dance is like the unity of the brush and the painter in visual art. Consequently, the dancer is totally submerged in the image with her body. It is not possible, therefore, to address the dancer while dancing in the same way as you would a painter while painting.
 - Timing in music is like framed space in painting: a canvas, for example. Taken-for-granted restrictions in the visual arts have to be defined in music. Consequently, we need to find agreements concerning time and duration before we start any musical improvisation.

It is not helpful, therefore, to talk *about* the images or presentations before they are properly recognized in an appropriately “framed” presentation. A more suitable approach occurs in the dialogue when we talk *to* or *from* them, and notice how they are also seen by others. McNiff (1992, pp.99–105) writes:

The guiding attitude of this method is the treatment of images as ensouled. We approach them as we would a person, who similarly cannot be explained. A person cannot be labeled “dependency,” “depression,” or some other abstract notion. The same applies to animals and other creatures. Neither the lion who lives in the wild nor the lion in a person’s painting can be reduced to “aggression.” The more we know about lions, the more we see the unique and specific qualities of each animal...talking *about* images has led to the more intimate and imaginative step of talking *with* them. Talk *about* pictures is from the perspective of ego, which controls the contents of the dis-

cussion. When talking *with* an image, I engage it as a new arrival in my life and I continuously acknowledge and discern *its* physical presence. As a participant in the dialogue, it is less likely to be reduced to abstract generalizations.

A phenomenological interpretation in the expressive arts must always consider aesthetic traditions. In the process of achieving understanding, we hope to use particular concrete or poetic language and stay away from generalizations. *Aesthetic analysis* is what we call looking at the presented art work. This is a major step in the process, and has to precede any reflective discourse. To stay with an aesthetic tradition will also help us in accepting the imaginal realities, presented as they are. The imaginal realities need to be honored as a phenomenon of the transmediate, as explained earlier. After they emerge from an artistic process, they have a permanence. This is not only true for celebrated characters and works like *Moby Dick*, *Mona Lisa*, Brubeck's "Take Five," *Hamlet* and Bach's *Toccata*. The same is true for the works that never enter the public domain: the bleeding rabbit painted by a child, the funny one-woman show presented by a client and the Saturday night blues improvised by a team. They all came and will come again, waiting to be recognized. The fact that they do not become publicly celebrated does not make them less accessible for dialogue, aesthetic analysis and further artistic exploration.

We will concentrate on aesthetic analysis in the next section as one of the options available in the work-oriented approach (keeping in mind the fact that in a play- or ritual-oriented approach or in work with small children or low-functioning adult clients, a simple dialogue, a poetic intermodal transfer or even a validating acknowledgment might be more suitable).

The aesthetic analysis: staying at the surface

When we look at the structure of an art-oriented session, outlined earlier in this chapter, we notice that the alternative world experience or decentering with the arts includes aesthetic analyses. The reason for this is that aesthetic analyses are also a *validation of the work and/or presentation* and therefore should happen in the studio space, where the artistic process and the presentation first evolved. Later, when we come back to reflect on the client's

main issue, presented in the *filling-in phase*, we can go back to the place where the session started. Usually, this is the sitting arrangement where client and change agent begin and end the session. Staying in the studio space with the art work during the aesthetic analysis, however, helps us stay decentered from the narrowness of the helpless situation, while at the same time honoring the work and the process that offered so much play range, surprising empowerment, aesthetic solutions and challenges. We notice in our practice that we can easily lose all these rich details if we look at the work with the reductionist attitude of an observer who searches for answers or interpretations. This attitude serves to analyze the problem or disease. It looks for solutions or a treatment plan. Certainly in the subsequent *bridging phase*, which we call *harvesting*, these reductions are important – they facilitate changes in the helpless situation and justify restoration. They are a base for actions to be taken, and such actions may result in sustainable changes. In a broader view, we might look at this process as analogous to a phenomenological research project. We note as much as we can from the object, as it presents itself. We aim to be unbiased by speculative hunting for results. We can easily overlook and lose important data from the decentering experience when we reduce it with an interpretation too early.

As an example, we can look at a team that had increasing communication difficulties in their development. In the decentering phase, they worked on a theater improvisation about a research expedition to the Arctic. After several takes, it ended in a comedy about a misunderstood route given to the captain. The group's tendency was to immediately make an interpretation, concluding that they should have more fun together and take misunderstandings more humorously. Certainly this is not bad advice. However, by intervention of the consultant, they looked in detail at how and where the characters changed, the adjustments in the plot for each take, those that worked and those that did not. Another topic was when each actor played, which role, and in what manner. The surprises in this aesthetic analysis were the details of the major character changes and the strategies that made the plot into a well-functioning comedy. In the subsequent harvesting period, it became clear that the team needed to examine how some members had volunteered their kindness and how routine tasks had been dumped on them as a consequence. The team developed a strategy and a job plot and agreed to try it out and evaluate it in the next session.

Metaphorically speaking, we need to stay on the *surface* of the work in aesthetic analysis. We need to avoid the superficiality of reductionistic generalizations. Observations are stated concretely and specifically about “what” we observed, “how,” “when,” and “where.” We also must be able to point out in space and time what we observe. Only then does the thingliness of the work become a bridge for encounter, as in Part I when we explained the “direct witnessing of the artistic work as a materialization of imagination.” Since we do not depend solely on the client’s interpretation in the arts (as is the case when she talks about dreams, visions or daydreams), client and facilitator can point out things, qualities, actions, shaping strategies, structures, forms, etc. These are important steps on the way to supplementing subjective perception, correcting “blind spots,” and finding surprises that can be shared.

Whenever possible, we try to follow a sequence of observations, starting with the concrete surface of the work and ending with what the work might say to us:

1. The “surface” of the work.
2. The “process” of shaping.
3. The “experience” of doing it.
4. “What does the work say? How is it significant?”

There is a tendency to start with question 4, which can mean adopting an attitude of “oracle interpretation” before we really have met the process and the work and looked at the experience. When we insist on the above sequence as an intervention, the answers to question 4 become more elaborate. The process and work are enriched by the “bridge of encounter,” mentioned above. We recognize the work’s or image’s symbolic validity; however, we have not yet adequately studied the symbolic quality of the learning experience in the process of shaping. The empowerment recognized in the artistic process has to be seen in contrast to the phenomena of “not being able” and “not having the resources” in the helpless situation. This recognition opens up to possibilities of relief in the same way the content of the images does. Guiding the client along the suggested sequence helps in this quest.

Furthermore, we ought not to forget what we forego when we focus solely on the symbolic quality of the image and do not value the major difference from other decentering methods, as pointed out in Part II. This difference is grounded in the actuality of client and facilitator being literally engaged together, while the artistic manifestation of imagination is emerging in a “thingly” way in the here and now.

Before we elaborate on the four levels of an aesthetic analysis, it must be pointed out that, in practice, the four levels rarely are followed exactly in the manner presented. Often the categories mix and levels change back and forth. It is helpful to consider the sequence as a guide to keeping the direction moving from the first level to the fourth level and not reversed. It is also helpful always to bring the discussion back to the concrete surface of the work.

1. THE “SURFACE” OF THE WORK

Here, we ask questions concerning the characteristics of the work. Characteristics and qualities of material, structure and form are pointed out and sometimes illustrated to make them visible. The questions and discussion depend on the arts discipline. The schema, “Possibilities of distinctions,” outlined in Table 2.1 in connection with low skill/high sensitivity, helps us to stay concrete and particular. For example:

- *A painting discussion* may mention a light green, roughly textured lake-shaped area that appears again, over here, to the right. It appears under this dark gray jagged spot, rock-shaped...and what a surprise: the pale orange ocher, a smoothly painted background, like silk; this reminds me of desert land with green bush-like vegetation around an oasis.
- *Discussion after a music improvisation.* Did you notice the long silence after the loud, sharp, accentuated metallic gamelan bell rang, with a long fade-out into pianissimo? It was about halfway in. It took a while until that dense, almost chaotic rustling entered, with the brushes on wood. It was almost like insects. What a surprise, then, when you changed to that melodious motif on the flute! It started with the same note as the gamelan ring, didn't it?

2. THE “PROCESS” OF SHAPING

Here, we ask questions concerning the characteristics of the shaping strategies. What was tried out and worked? What was attempted and failed? How did you know? What was it that helped you go on even though it failed? Which instructions or feedback have been helpful, and how do they show in the work? What was surprising in the emergence of the work? What did you expect when you started and how did it change? For example:

- In a discussion around a *dance process*, it may be mentioned that the facilitator gave good advice about letting go of having to be creative all the time. The strategy that worked best was repeating a movement until it changed itself and keeping the eyes open to see what happens between the dancers. This last instruction was challenging and frustrating, since the dancer could not let go of imitating.
- A discussion after *reading a poem*: What really worked was letting go of rhyming. Just following the rhythm of words brought surprising turns, like the one in the second line. I was frustrated by my attachment to creating deep meaning. The only thing that kept me going was the suggestion to go with the metaphors and not worry, and then the great surprises came. I had thought of writing a poem of liberation, and now it is such a humorous little poem.

3. THE “EXPERIENCE” OF DOING IT

Here, we want to compare the person’s state of being from the beginning to the end. What happened emotionally? How much presence was possible? What was unexpected or difficult, and where and how did it manifest itself? What was distracting, and how did you overcome it? Is there any peculiarity? Reflection should include physical as well as psychological conditions.

A discussion after a *theater improvisation* with a team may bring forth that their motivation was extremely low, and that they were tired at the beginning. They started out with not much more than curiosity. The turn happened after John had such a great idea for the second take. The unexpected thing was that Mary and Tom, who never talk, had a love scene that

worked so well and influenced the following takes. Everybody was engaged and excited, even though there was a frustrating third take. Giving up was discussed; however, the excitement of doing something together in ways never done before prevailed. Now, all of the members look alive and are ready to talk.

4. "WHAT DOES THE WORK SAY? HOW IS IT SIGNIFICANT?"

This level is easiest to approach by following basic conversational language. People occasionally say: "This speaks to me." Therefore, one can ask a client if the work speaks to him. "What does it say?" The dialogue can be extended from here into questions like: "What do you say to it?" In addition, naming works of art is a traditional practice in all the arts. We can ask for a name or title.

There are different ways of having this conversation according to the particular art discipline. In the performing arts, naming is familiar, but talking to a music, dance or theater piece can be troublesome. Questions about performing the role, dance or song are easier. Here are some possibilities:

- What does that character you played (danced) in that theater piece (dance) teach or tell you as an actor (dancer)? What do you want to tell him or her before you separate?
- What is the text that you would use as lyrics to that music, if you continued with it?
- What would you tell another dancer (actor/musician) if she had to perform this dance (theater piece or song), to help her get its character quite right?

Coming back again and ending

We have pointed out above how an analysis within the imaginative reality bears the potential of help through a distancing experience. As we indicated, a too-hasty return to the issues in the helpless situation, in search of quick results, may result in the loss of an important, substantial conversation. After a decentering, including a careful validation of the work, process and experience through aesthetic analysis, we are ready to return to the

client's problem or issue. Usually we leave the "studio" space to go back to the sitting arrangement of the beginning.

We need to reiterate what we said earlier about time management. It is important to leave enough time for this important step of guiding the client from the alternative world experience and its recognition back into everyday life. This phase is often called *harvesting*, because the riches from the aesthetic analysis conversation need to be harvested in view of the client's needs. It also reminds us how important it is to carefully collect these riches in the alternative experience of the world. The harvesting can be followed by a discussion of possible actions to take, treatment planning and/or homework. When decisions of this kind are made at the end of a session, it allows for an evaluation at the beginning of the next session.

HARVESTING

Here we have the opportunity to initiate what Bodenheimer (1997) calls an *answering interpretation*, presented earlier in Part I of this chapter.

We ask, with sensitivity and diligence, if anything from the aesthetic analysis has a connection to where we were before the decentering. If we ask this with sensitivity and focused attention, the client will find his own help and clarity. We say "before the decentering" and not just at the beginning of the session because we need to pay attention to the counseling that may have happened in the opening conversation. A well-led opening prepares for the work done later in the decentering and harvesting. We will look into this phenomenon later in this section.

Often it takes time to make the connections during the harvesting phase. The change agent needs to be patient in guiding this process of recognition. It is not desirable to jump in and do the explaining for the client. However, one might ask the client if it is okay to repeat the sentences they spoke during the decentering process and the analysis in order to prompt their memory. Amazingly enough, there are frequent surprising connections when these sentences are repeated slowly and the non-verbal cues of the client are watched for and verbalized. We suggest that change agents make notes of the client's comments during feedback and aesthetic analysis. It is regrettable if one remembers that something previously said was important and then in the harvesting forgets what it was. We need to

understand that in an effective alternative world experience the change agent, holding the aesthetic responsibility, is also decentered and consequently does not notice everything that could later offer a solution.

The influence of a resource-oriented attitude

As shown in the beginning of Part II, an experience of distress or dis-ease is marked by a situational restriction and/or individual inability (along with other things). In art-oriented decentering, however, there is an effective experience of enabling and achievement within a frame of limited resources. Consequently, the experience of an art-oriented decentering can be seen as a coping experience or an “access road” to resilience from a restrictive situation. Considering this, it is useful to look into contemporary counseling and therapy practices that use resource- and solution-oriented approaches. It has caught our attention that a well-guided discussion, assessment or “filling in” in the opening phase can prepare for a more effective discussion in the harvesting phase. To understand this, we have to go back to the notion of play range. We understand the alternative world experience as an opportunity to increase play range by engaging the arts, play or rituals. The harvesting phase is more bountiful if the return to the opening phase of the session is not the return to a discussion that focuses exclusively on problematic and painful issues. In the opening conversation, we should try to look at the issues from different sides: changing perspectives and asking for the experiences that are *not* painful or difficult. When we do this, we can better understand how painful and difficult it must be to lose hope and to long for relief. We need to look at the motivation that brought the client to the change agent and assess the wishes or visions that are connected to that motivation. All this is not to deny the difficulty; however, the process of harvesting from a resource-based perspective *adds to* the broadening of narrow thinking in the helpless situation. Often such conversational techniques are understood in the reductionistic theory of “positive thinking,” but we use some of them as tools to become concrete and particular. We aim to always focus the client on the *surface* of the *here and now* life experience, and the phenomenon of the *also*: the phenomenological understanding that when we say “day,” the night is *also* present; when we use the word “health,” we are *also* aware of “illness.”

Ending, homework and evaluation

The outcome of the harvesting should have an impact on the everyday reality of the client. This is necessary, even though sometimes there are sessions where the outcome is difficult to grasp. Sometimes it is necessary to find a way to bridge until the next session. When asking for practical applications at the end, it is important to be specific and concrete, because in the next session we will ask how it worked.

The expressive arts method has an additional option that can affect the everyday reality of the client: the option to give homework. We discussed this option in “Diet and medicine” in Part II. We may gain ideas for homework by considering the transpersonal distinctions of intermodal theory. Especially when the outcome in the harvesting offered little, or when the work is carried out with low-functioning clients, the experiential part of the decentering usually gives relief or hope and can be extended by using the arts as a homework assignment.

In a client’s next session, when we evaluate consequences and homework, the same specificity and concreteness that we practiced in the ending of the session before is helpful. The customary “How did it go?” is replaced by specifically asking about a particular action, situation or mood in a specific situation. Generalized answers need to become concrete, with questions such as, “How did you sense or notice that something happened or changed or was better or worse?”, or by changing the perspective and asking, “Who else noticed that this particular change occurred?” and “What did they say?”

Architectural considerations

When we look back on the section “The architecture of a session,” after having elaborated on the phases of an expressive arts decentering, we have to address several influential factors:

- the influence of role and setting
- the time demand of arts disciplines
- crises and conflict.

These factors determine to what extent the “ideal” structure will be applicable, and to what extent adapted forms may be more suitable.

The influence of role and setting

Settings in the range of supervision, consulting and coaching, as well as counseling and therapy with high-functioning clients, are more conducive to the proposed architecture. Exceptions are explained in the next section. Even though sessions in clinical settings can follow the same schema, *the practice shows on many occasions that an assessment may fill a whole session; subsequently the artistic process may be the major activity, extending over several sessions, with only brief reflections.* Later, a long aesthetic analysis may use almost a full session.

As mentioned earlier, the setting also influences the structure according to the particular schedule involved. An intensive seminar with a group or a team over a longer time period can stretch the architecture considerably. In contrast, for example, a clinical group setting with a non-permanent group, such as we find more and more often, may focus on artistic experiences that are opened and closed by a well-monitored check-in round.

The structure of an art-based decentering also depends on the setting. The design can be approached from the studio tradition. It is helpful to use the terminology from that culture during the decentering process. Instead of saying “group” or “team” in a music, theater or dance improvisation, using “ensemble” or “company” may keep the focus away from the problematic situation and instead on the studio work.

Table 2.2 will help to correlate the terminology of setting with the studio tradition.

The role of the change agent during the art-based decentering process is of major concern. It can be an inauspicious experience for clients when the change agent is watching and making notes. Such behavior is usually not a tradition of the studio. During the opening, aesthetic analysis and harvesting period, however, it is helpful to have such notes. It can relax clients if the change agent explains this in the beginning. After having done the process more than once, clients usually appreciate the sharing of the notes during the harvesting period, finding them extremely helpful.

During the art-based decentering process with groups or teams, the studio setting offers traditional roles that are also applicable for change agents: the conductor in music improvisations, the director in theater improvisations (as in psychodrama), the choreographer in dance improvisations, etc. They play the roles of audience and artistic feedback provider.

Table 2.2 The therapeutic setting and the artistic tradition	
<i>The setting</i>	<i>Artistic tradition</i>
<i>Individual sessions</i>	<i>Solo</i> (client alone) <i>Duet</i> (client with therapist)
<i>Groups</i> in tuning-in, warm-up or a celebration The group member who wants to work	<i>Ensemble</i> (improvisations, as in jazz) <i>Protagonist</i> in ensemble or company (client is an arranger, choreographer, etc.)
<i>Team</i>	<i>Ensemble or company</i> structures, with and without solos

Notes about improvisational scores or plots and the changes made to them by the ensemble or company can be displayed on a flip chart. This is helpful later in the aesthetic analysis.

The roles available in the individual settings are more difficult to carry out. Many well-trained expressive arts music therapists are skilled enough to follow the format of a duet and play with the client. They consider the professional relationship as a continuum, ranging from discursive verbal shaping to musical shaping, both done with the same awareness about the phenomena of the therapeutic relationship (countertransference, for example). There are also dance- and theater-oriented professionals who are practicing a similar approach. When doing this, it is important to preserve the change agent's audience role, so they are able to guide the feedback between the takes. If one is not experienced in doing this, the audience role is a good one to stay in. The major concern, then, is to ease the client's embarrassment around having to be a soloist on stage.

In studio-oriented visual arts and writing, it is also easier to be with a group. The studio setting offers the chance to go around between easels or to give individual help and then leave. Clients in an individual setting, however, need clarification. Options to be considered are writing a poem as

feedback to the client or making art that can be interrupted for a visit with the client.

Contracted roles may also influence the architecture. For instance, an art therapist in a recreational therapy setting will certainly focus more on the artistic process and minimize the opening and closing phases. A special education teacher in the role of a therapist in a school setting, working with learning disabled children, may very well apply a structure close to the one proposed here.

The time demand of arts disciplines

One factor often neglected is the time available in view of the discipline chosen. We know from studio practice that:

- All performing arts can be managed by rehearsal time. This does not necessarily guarantee a *work*. The work may still be on the way. Therefore, a session's time is controlled by the proposed duration of the takes.
- Painting in the studio has a history of sometimes arriving spontaneously and sometimes lingering over weeks or months. In order to adapt to this phenomenon, Ruf (2001) has developed a method called "Art Mapping." She suggests that the client continue working on the same painting in each session, using a special studio technique, even though the actual issue is changing. The ongoing painting is a continuous process, reflected upon each time in the aesthetic analysis and harvested regarding the present issue, until the painting is finished. This offers an opportunity to review and evaluate the process of change. There are also other visual arts traditions of low skill/high sensitivity, as we have mentioned before (installation art, collage, etc.).
- Writing poetry can provide short forms, and story-writing may also continue over more than one session.

We can learn from each other in terms of studio experiences and transfer different art disciplines into the restricted time frame of many settings. It rarely serves to push something that needs time to emerge into an impossi-

ble time slot. Sometimes it is more helpful to work with play, guided imagery, focusing, change of perspective or ritual than to push toward an artistic process that has no chance to reveal what it promises in the time provided.

Crises and conflict

One question that always needs to be raised in the context of using a structure in sessions is how to handle conflict and/or crises that arise in a group or team, or between client and change agent, and how that interferes with the session plan. In the proposed architecture, this concerns mainly the decentering process. This question cannot be addressed without looking at our attitude toward conflict and crises, and how we make distinctions between them. When we understand peace not necessarily as a condition without conflict, but rather as a way of living with conflict that is non-destructive to others and oneself, then crisis can be seen as a situation where this capacity breaks down and constructive communication is not possible any more. This understanding is analogous to an understanding of health as not necessarily being a condition without disturbances, but rather as concerning the level of well-being in handling the disturbances. Illness, then, is a situation where the immune system and/or the coping capacity breaks down – a kind of health crisis. Therefore, we could talk metaphorically about the “immune system” of a relationship or a group process.

In this sense we consider conflict to be an integral matter of any relationship or group process. The idea of widening the range of play by engaging the imagination is a common concept in the practice of strengthening the “immune system” in relational dynamics, as mentioned earlier in Part I. Also, the art analogue stance holds to the artistic approach, where limitations and conflicting matters are always a challenge and can spark the discovery of transformational resources. These challenges, offered by interventions made during all phases of the session, help build up the “immune system.” They can also be frustrating for the client if the facilitator cannot welcome conflict as an important ingredient that helps clarify the relationship and the process.

It is fair to say that conflict is at the very core of a restoration ritual and does not necessarily change the “architecture” of the ritual. The outbreak of

a crisis, on the other hand, needs immediate attention. Crisis management may require a decentering process to stop immediately. The goal will be to bring the crisis onto a conflict level rather than to achieve a complete resolution. In the resource-oriented approach of crisis management, the hope is that the client will learn to live with conflict resourcefully.

In one-to-one therapy, for instance, this interruption of the decentering happens when emotions overtake the client. The tears, rage or fear need full attention. An expressive arts psychotherapist knows to acknowledge the trust given to her in this moment, and will welcome the challenge which the moment brings. The resulting understanding about what happened will enrich the therapeutic relationship substantially.

In a coaching session with a team, if the communication breaks down completely, the ongoing aesthetic analysis must be put on hold until this situation is brought to a conflict level. In this situation, crisis management will depend much more on the mediation and communication skills of the facilitator. Also, the experienced change agent will welcome the confidence the team has placed in her by entrusting her with this crisis. It is a mistake to confuse this trust with the task of solving the situation for the team. A calm attitude, re-establishing communication and bringing the crisis to conflict level ought to give a clear message that conflicts can be lived with resourcefully. This is the moment to return to the structure, since the structure is exactly the means for the team to learn this message.

A crisis that is mentioned in the opening of a session can be regarded as being in a conflict state as long as it is clarified through conversation and non-verbal cues. In a resource-oriented approach to crisis management, a change agent's need to push a conflict into a crisis is as much questioned as would be a need to avoid conflict.

Administering the artistic process

The architectural structure of the session should be understood as a continuous process. This is true even though we can distinguish clear phases, and though the phases are distinct in their temporal and spatial dimensions. To understand the continuity through all the phases is of great help to the change agent in making any adaptations during the course of the session. The factors that contribute to this continuity are:

- the guiding principle of language
- the theme
- the bridges.

The guiding principle of language

Sometimes professionals forget that the alternative world experience is a waking experience in the world of everyday life. As explained at the beginning, it cannot be another world; it is simply an alternative experience of the same world. Similarly, the client and the change agent are as awake and conscious as they are in their everyday life. They are in different roles, and may be showing different parts of their character, but they are existentially the same. This has consequences in the session. When the client is going through the different phases, specifically decentering, the focus is different than the one in everyday life. The challenge of everyday reality is still existentially there, but the challenge of the alternative experience (posed by the art-making and its discovery process) is in the foreground. Therefore, we can return at any time to the issues presented by clients at the beginning of the session. The gift of the alternative world experience in all restoration rituals is not magic, but a time out into the realm of the imagination in order to find new ways of handling one's concerns.

Keeping this in mind, we can understand that we engage in a kind of shaping throughout all the phases of a session. The discursive guidance in the opening and closing of a session can be understood as a kind of facilitation which shapes and opens the narrow thinking about the helpless situation into the possibility of a greater richness. The thinking and sparse discursive language (if any) used during the art-oriented decentering is captured and guided by the demands or "imperative" of the source-material, tools, shaping challenge and the emerging work's structure and form. Even though it is not reflective, the decentering has a surprising logic and stringency, evident in the beauty of the process and completeness of the work. Reflective discourse returns in the aesthetic analysis and validates what was gained in this process. Next, the harvesting brings the reflection into contact with the issues presented in the opening of the session. Here, we come back to the realization that the clients remain the same people with the same concerns through the whole session, though going through

different kinds of shaping. Because of this continuity, it is important to pay attention to the skills of guidance in every stage of the process. Guidance through the artistic process cannot be thought of without language. Training in the appropriate use of language as a means of guidance must be a priority in the formation of expressive arts specialists.

The question arises at this point of the degree to which the change agent should determine the theme of a decentering process when the attention is on shaping. We will look at this question in the next section.

The role of the theme

We mentioned in the opening of this part that things emerging in alternative world experiences are surprising and unexpected. Emerging from the imaginary space, they are not all predictable. We also have found that the wealth of the dream is in its uncontrollable nature, and we usually cannot give it a theme in advance. Decentering approaches in the arts that favor this phenomenon make sure that the theme of the current issue is not suggested as a shaping theme in the artistic process. We call this approach a “theme-far” decentering.

Free association, guided imagery, and change of perspectives are also effective methods that can invite surprise outcomes. They usually take aspects of the issue or theme into account. Artistic decentering that uses structural or thematic aspects of the issue that is presented by the client is called “theme-near” decentering.

We need to be aware that we may lose much of the effect when we are decentering with a focus too close to the problematic matter. The tendency to produce “more of the same” may worsen the situation. An arts-based approach, however, could find guidance for the decentering process from some of the structures in the issue presented by the client rather than from the theme. In order to find such similarities in structures, we can consult intermodal theory. Interpersonal characteristics of the situation at hand may also give hints about the best art discipline to approach. The way the client’s issues manifest may help us see how crystallization theory might help. The following examples will serve as illustrations:

- A client describing confusion about a close relationship “moving” in many directions at once could be invited to dance.

The change agent notices the imagination modality of “movement” that crystallizes in dance, rather than sticking with the problem itself and asking the client to paint or dance the relationship.

- A team that is troubled by a leadership problem may be invited into a free improvisation with music. The change agent notices the interpersonal capacity of music (according to intermodal theory) that gives a play range to relational phenomena, rather than asking the team to play their literal reality on stage.

The theories presented concerning the alternative world experience show that the logic in the imaginative reality bears the potential of help *when it is a distancing experience*. It is usually not desirable, therefore, to take the problem into the theme of an artistic shaping in a literal way.

We want to emphasize here the understanding we gained in the opening inquiry where we compared rites of restoration in terms of their use of imagination. Our intent was to make it clear that all of them can have remarkable effectiveness when applied professionally. What we subsequently studied concerns the specific practice of an expressive arts specialist using the arts-based decentering approach. In this context, we are aware that “sticking to the theme” as practiced in psychodrama, focusing, and other approaches using imagination are effective methods, based on creativity and spontaneity. Well-trained change agents practicing expressive arts may also consciously make the choice to use them.

The importance of the bridges

The metaphor of “bridge” is a helpful one in many ways:

- the “bridge of encounter,” the gift of the thingliness of the arts as an opportunity in the therapeutic relationship
- the “bridging of sessions,” an opportunity offered through the work of the arts
- the “first bridge” from the focus on the issue into the alternative world experience through the arts
- the “harvesting” as the “second bridge” back to the issue, after the decentering.

We have written extensively about the second bridge in the section on aesthetic analysis and harvesting. The idea of bridging the sessions was covered in the discourses about homework and “Diet and medicine.” The “bridge of encounter” received some attention in the “Art-based or aesthetic perspective” section; however, the first bridge – one of the major challenges in the practice of art-based decentering – needs more discussion.

THE FIRST BRIDGE: THE CHOICE OF THE DECENTERING STRUCTURE

The questions that arise over and over again in the supervision of expressive arts change agents have to do with the choice of the arts discipline, the structure, and the role the facilitator should play in them. All these aspects are inter-related with other factors; for instance:

- the role of the theme (far from or close to the theme)
- the educational effect of having practiced low skill/high sensitivity explorations in different disciplines before, or of the client being a novice in art-based decentering
- the comfort level of the change agent with different arts disciplines
- the comfort level of the change agent with the issue at hand
- the intrapersonal profile of the clients (explained in “Intermodal theories”)
- the material, space and sound situation available in the facility
- the time available in view of the discipline chosen
- the “imagination modality” or “preferred senses” that mark the opening of the session
- the crystallization possibilities connected to the above
- the population, setting and role
- the role of the change agent during the decentering
- the contractual arrangements made.

Often, in situations of such complexity, we are overcome by the desire to reduce this multiplicity through theories that offer a simple prescription.

To apply the theories presented above in this manner would be in contradiction to the art analogue stance we have promoted. Our theories of practice are attempts to increase sensitivity and expertise in the search for options that help us to be present in the situation's complexity. Being present is understood as being courageous enough to "step forth" into decentering. We step forth even though we are ourselves helpless to fix the problematic, helpless situation of the client, while still trusting in the process of facilitation through the arts.

We found it comforting for both clients and change agent to be open about the critical moment of choice. If it is a client's first session, an explanation about art-based decentering is necessary. Explanation should always be based on prior experiences or understanding. In a counseling or consulting setting, for instance, the explanation may be based on the notion of non-verbal brainstorming or artistic role-playing. In therapy or in art a reference to the client's own earlier artistic or therapeutic experiences may be helpful.

In later sessions the change agent can ask for one or two minutes to prepare while the client contemplates the opening of the session. This time is usually enough to settle down and sense the options while musing about all the factors that play a role. Theories and previous experiences can stay in the background while conducting a decentering. Rather than attempting to design the best road to a solution, the change agent conducts his or her own "decentering" in contemplating the artistic structure that gives permission to step forth with confidence.

A premeditated solution is like a hidden agenda; this contradicts the notion of aesthetic responsibility and an art analogue attitude. During the preparation, many expressive arts professionals go to the material resources and allow themselves to get help from the materials while holding the situation in mind. If in doubt, the artist present in the change agent is an available resource. Only when I as a change agent am motivated and curious – even excited – about the art-based process does the work have a chance to emerge.

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The Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy: Training, Therapy and Supervision

Ellen G. Levine

In this chapter, I will attempt to ground some of the concepts and methods discussed in the first two chapters by describing situations in which these concepts and methods have been used. Expressive arts therapy is a practice and, like other forms of therapeutic practice, it requires training, putting the training into operation, and supervision of the practice as it is being carried out. This chapter will be divided into three parts, addressing the three aspects of practice: training, therapy, and supervision.

PART I: TRAINING IN THE PRACTICE OF AN AESTHETIC THERAPY

Training is the learning crucible for practice. Training to be an expressive arts therapist puts the student into processes of artistic exploration or self-exploration and, ultimately, of change. Most students who undergo the training and stay with it report a significant shift in their personal lives.

Shaun McNiff (1986) discusses the difference between psychotherapy training in academic and non-academic settings. He notes that in the academic programs, there is a tendency to either ignore or down-play the student's "personal growth" or "artistic development" as part of the educational experience. He advocates for a prominent place for these aspects of training, in addition to a strong interdisciplinary perspective and grounding in the humanities. In other words, McNiff sees the trainee as a person not just a professional. For him, the practice of expressive arts therapy demands the foundation of a comprehensive education that takes the personhood of the trainee into account.

There has always been a tension in the training of expressive and creative arts therapy students. This tension has primarily centered around the question of where to place the emphasis in the training – on the creative/art side or on the psychotherapy side? Many practitioners have wondered whether, on the one hand, we are psychotherapists who use a creative mode of intervention or, on the other hand, we are artists who use a psychotherapeutic mode to practice our art. Often the conclusion is that we need both.

However, over the years, the tension has been somewhat lost, and the emphasis in training and practice in the arts therapies has gone more toward the psychotherapy or psychology side. As Bruce Moon (1992) points out, for example, the professionalization of visual art therapy has pushed art more and more to the margins. Applicants are no longer required to have studio coursework as a requirement for registration as an art therapist in the United States. Most full-time art therapists report that their artistic practice is the first thing that is sacrificed when time pressures are strong.

In the field of expressive arts therapy, we have tried to explore and dialogue with this tension rather than remove it. In the training process, as teachers and trainers, we often feel frustrated about the lack of time to ground the students thoroughly in psychotherapeutic methods and principles and to keep the arts as a central focus as well. One way to address this dilemma has been to require students to take courses in psychotherapy outside of the training or to only accept students who already have a strong background in this area. Students with limited artistic experience also need additional work outside of the program.

In dialoguing with educators in the different specializations of the creative arts therapies, McNiff (1986) reports that there is general agreement regarding the emphasis in training: all agreed that their professions (music therapy, art therapy, drama therapy, dance therapy and expressive arts therapy) are not subdivisions of psychology but place primary emphasis upon the language of art. Many of the educators “stressed the importance of thinking within the context of the art medium as opposed to analyzing artistic expression within psychological constructs that do not originate in art” (McNiff 1986, p.269).

The basic way that we have tried to dance with this struggle between psychotherapy and the arts within the structure of the training in our approach to expressive arts therapy is to require the students to keep a double focus throughout their work: on the one hand, we ask them to solidify their artistic practices and to devote a significant portion of their time, on a weekly or even daily basis, to practicing and becoming fluent in the artistic disciplines. They can do this by taking courses or simply engaging in self-directed studio time. On the other hand, we ask them to fill in any gaps in their psychological or psychotherapeutic background by reading, taking courses and, most importantly, by undergoing their own psychotherapy, preferably with an expressive arts therapist.

We attempt to keep the training process in expressive arts therapy consistent with the methodology that informs the field as a whole. Training to be an expressive arts therapist demands that the student undergo a process of change in going from the untrained to the trained state. This change process is, in some ways, analogous to that of the client or patient. This is not to say that students are clients or patients but that, in order to understand fully the experience of the patient in a lived sense, the student must undergo a similar experience. The training experience brings the student into a kind of liminal or transitional space where their identity is often reformulated.

Students are asked at various points in the training to present their own experience in an artistic form. Making a presentation within the training process, using the arts to shape personal material and to show oneself to the group, involves students in a “rite of passage,” similar to rituals found in many cultures (S.K. Levine 1997). In the cultural context, the rite of passage helps an individual to cross over from one state to another –

childhood to adolescence, adolescence to adulthood, single to married, life to death. The act of presenting in the context of the training helps the student to cross over from being outside (the group and the training process) to being inside. If it is successful, the presentation is like a gift to the group. The group receives the presentation, and they are touched by it; a sense of community and mutual support arises. The entire training itself can be thought of as a rite of passage in which the trainee passes into the status of expressive arts therapist at the end.

The experience of training is similar – but not identical – to the experience of the patient along a multitude of dimensions: students engage in their own intermodal art-making; they work in a therapeutic relationship over time; they are in a group working on group dynamic issues. The training, in fact, relies on group learning, on co-creation, in the same way that the therapy itself is a co-created process. Sometimes the line between training and therapy is not that clear for the students. Rather, the education attempts to play with the edge between these two domains.

In addition to its emphasis on the arts, on self-understanding and on group learning, the training challenges students to question their ideas. There is an attempt to provide a theoretical framework or a guiding set of principles (such as those articulated in this volume) which will provoke and inspire the students in their practice. Students seem, on the one hand, to crave this intellectual inspiration and, on the other hand, to want to by-pass thinking and move directly into practice. Finding the quite-right balance between theory and practice is one of the challenges of training expressive arts therapists.

Until the student begins to find his or her way, and even after the way is clear, there are often periods of chaos and uncertainty that emerge. This is central to the experience of liminality in the training process. Many times it is the group process that plunges students into discomfort and anxiety. These periods of chaos can be seen as a necessary component of any change process and, by analogy, any art-making process. As we have discussed in other chapters of this book, the art-making and the therapeutic processes both often involve periods of formlessness or improvisation where neither artist nor trainee nor client nor therapist is entirely clear about what is happening and where things are going. Eventually, with enough playing around, so to speak, forms begin to cluster and a work starts to take shape.

Bruce Moon (1992) talks about “beginner’s chaos,” attributing this experience to “the disorientation that new environments, new expectations and new experiences can create” (p.23). I would add that chaos is not necessarily only experienced at the beginning of the training process but rather is a necessary component throughout the course of training and even afterwards. Welcoming and appreciating chaos and learning how it can be useful to change processes and to art-making processes are important objectives of training.

One student of expressive arts therapy who finished a three-year course of study at ISIS-Canada and received a Master’s degree from the European Graduate School devoted her Master’s thesis to the subject of “shaping chaos” as a way of becoming an expressive arts therapist (Miller 2000). In her thesis, she shows the ways in which an experience of formlessness is essential to learning. This is not to say that this is a comfortable feeling, as her interviews with students reveal much frustration and discomfort. However, she shows that the experience of not-knowing in training has parallels to the creative process and that it is also essential for the student to experience the confusion involved in formlessness as a way of connecting to patients or clients who often have the feeling of chaos. People who come for help are usually stuck and “going in circles,” without knowing what to do about their situation. The artist/therapist who is familiar with this experience, both as a person and as an artist, understands that formlessness or chaos is a necessary part of the process of shaping into form. But the form cannot be predetermined: the therapist cannot approach the client with the sense of knowing what is good for him or her, just as the artist needs a period of exploration without a plan to discover what comes next.

The incidents that will be described in this section are illustrative of aspects of the training process in both an institute setting and in graduate training. They are “critical incidents” that occurred during the training process and from which much learning was gleaned. Each incident will be situated in its context, described and then reflected upon in terms of its value for illustrating some of the major ideas developed in this book. By the notion of “critical incident,” I mean the crystallization of a crisis situation in which, we may say, it “came to a head.” This notion is connected to the idea of chaos as a necessary component of change processes. A crisis situation produces a sense of immediacy or a critical moment in which there is a

breakdown of the old order and a reformulation into a new order or form. The training incidents described below have that sense of immediacy and necessity about them. The intensity of these situations, if responded to properly, can provide an impetus to see things in a new way and, thus, for change.

It is important to note that the exercises described in these training examples would not necessarily be transferable to work with clients without significant modification and adaptation. Each individual or group has its own style, structure and needs, and the expressive arts training focuses on learning how to shape the quite-right arts experience for and with clients. At the same time, it prepares the student to face the challenge of breakdown in the artistic shaping; to have to redesign and restructure the plan based upon where the work is going, by being highly flexible and sensitive to the needs of those in need.

Group painting in a training process: structuring and destructuring through the arts

The following incident occurred when a group of students were almost finished with the final year of the first training group at ISIS-Canada, a training program in expressive arts therapy in Toronto, Canada. There had been an exciting and sometimes bumpy start to the new training program. The 15 members of the group were imbued with the fact that they were pioneers, sometimes enjoying this fact and, at other times, resenting the amount of experimentation they were asked to undergo. In terms of the overall tone of the group, it was an outspoken, talented and feisty one. There was a commitment to the training and to being honest with each other. This often made consensus and a feeling of harmony difficult to achieve.

As the group neared its ending and graduation, old complaints and interpersonal difficulties began to resurface. After a protracted period of group conflict and several attempts at resolution that did not work, the leaders of the group suggested a decentering activity: to create a group painting.

A large sheet of mural paper was unrolled and taped to the floor, paints and pastels laid out around it. It looked inviting, like a feast. The group

spent a long time working together on the painting. When it was done, the leaders invited members to talk to the painting as if it were a person, addressing it as “you,” following the method of dialoguing with images developed by Shaun McNiff (McNiff 1992). Many people spoke to the painting in admiring terms. They told it that they loved its color, its aliveness, and, most of all, the feeling of harmony that it gave them. At this point, most people felt that they had achieved a state of harmony and community in the training group through the art-making which they had not been able to achieve in any other way.

As the group was looking at the painting, one of the students, Ann (all names in this chapter have been changed), crawled onto the painting, took one of the edges and began to tear a long strip down the middle. There was an audible gasp from some people. Another student, Beth, came forward and tried to stop her from doing this. Beth was very upset, saying that she felt Ann was destroying something precious. Ann tried to explain why she was tearing the painting. She said that she, too, was upset for several reasons. First, she felt that the harmonious feeling that the painting conveyed was merely a cover-up for underlying feelings of fragmentation, discomfort and conflict that had not been adequately resolved. Second, she did not feel that she had any place in a group where everyone seemed to be harmonious and “as one.” She was tearing the painting to create a space for herself. After she heard this, Beth did not continue to try and stop Ann from tearing.

At this point, the group began to disperse. Some students joined in with tearing the painting; others went off in small groups to talk; others spent time alone, writing in their journals. Beth took pieces from the torn painting and pasted them on the cover of her own personal journal book. In subsequent classes, the group worked on the conflict that had surfaced between Ann and Beth. The dramatic structure of a Greek chorus was used to highlight the positions of Ann and Beth as protagonists. Despite this work, the conflict between Ann and Beth did not seem to be fully resolved by the time the class graduated.

In thinking about this critical incident in the training ten years later, I was curious about how members of the group would see it now from a distanced perspective. I was curious about what had stayed with them in terms of their own practice of expressive arts therapy, since most of these

original group members are practicing therapists now. I phoned a number of people who were in the original group. There was a great deal of interest in getting together, although some expressed apprehension about revisiting the incident, fearing, even now, a return to the old chaos and discomfort of the group process. Somehow their vivid memories seemed to confirm my sense that the tearing of the painting was indeed a critical incident.

Four members of the original group, including Ann and Beth, as well as one of the leaders, came together one evening recently to discuss this critical incident and its impact on their training. I asked them to reconstruct, from their point of view, what had happened in the group. Most remembered it in a similar way. There were also some additions to my story. Carol noted that the experience was significant for her because she realized that it put her back into the chaos of her family of origin. She felt that the group was “disintegrating” as her own family had, and she could not choose sides. She desperately wanted the leaders to help by taking charge of the situation.

Deborah felt upset that the group never had a chance to discuss whether to tear or not to tear the painting. She said that she had not felt distressed at the time, like Carol did, but that it made her think about “boundaries.” She remembered that this experience with the painting was not a new one for the group: in its exuberance, the “frames” or structures of the group got “torn” periodically, and the group often had difficulty “getting to anything.”

Gerald, the leader of the group, remembered that there was a split between himself and his co-leader and that perhaps this split influenced and was influenced by how much fragmentation he often felt in the group. He noted that, at the time, his major interest centered around the notion of destructuring through the arts and that it was rare for him to want to explore the aspect of harmony. Gerald could see how his orientation, both theoretically and practically, had an impact on the course of this group. While the leaders were not responsible for what happened, Gerald could see how they had affected the process.

In reflecting upon the value of the tearing of the image for training, all of those present agreed that, despite the difficulties, the experience had been worthwhile; it had influenced them and stayed with them as a vivid reminder of the training as a whole. Deborah recalled how the faculty of

the program often invited the group to experiment and, now that she is herself a leader and trainer, how much more comfortable she is with “just letting things happen.” The incident taught her about the value of relaxing boundaries and not being too controlling.

Carol said that the incident and the training as a whole made her appreciate the value of not-knowing and how one can never push someone or a group toward resolution. Ann felt that she is now much better at “holding conflict” and that having training as a “container,” a stable group and steady leaders makes change possible. Ann knew that the painting was not going to be literally “hurt” if she tore it; the incident taught her about the distancing value of artistic activity. Beth still felt somewhat unresolved about the incident but, with the discussion that night, she began to see how she had taken Ann’s act of tearing as a personal affront. She wondered if the leaders should have provided some guidelines about behavior in a group; but, upon further reflection, she appreciated how the incident simply highlighted the fact that there were confluences as well as “big splits” in the group and that both could co-exist. The image seemed to embody this fact. If the leaders had made clearer rules, then perhaps this incident would not have happened. Beth did say that after the incident, she began to feel closer to people in the group, even though the conflict with Ann had not been resolved. As far as what she had learned from the experience, Beth noted the fact that trust must have been high in the group for Ann to risk such a step. Beth also realized that to try and stop her was risky as well. The presence of such a “group bubble,” as she termed it, was necessary for change to happen.

As the group spent time looking at and reflecting on this experience with more distance, it raised many issues about their particular group but also about working with the arts. There was discussion of such issues as setting limits within a group, the role of the leaders, the ethics of a group art work (to whom does it belong?) and the role of chaos in group dynamics.

While it was not the intention of the meeting, it seemed that the reflections which were generated, more than ten years after the experience, were helpful in creating a sense of closure around the original incident. Ann and Beth were able to talk to each other, to listen to each other and to show understanding of each other’s perspective. They showed compassion for each other. Being able to share the positive elements that came out of the

incident and seeing it as a building block of their training reaffirmed the value of the training as a whole for everyone.

What the incident of the tearing of the image itself and the reflections years later point to is the importance of confusion and chaos for the learning process in training. If the goal of the learning process was to reach harmony and resolution, then one could say that it was a failure. However, if the goal was to find creative ways to deal with the difficulties the group was facing and to use framed chaos for the purpose of learning, then one could say that there was tremendous value in the whole process, difficult as it was. Framed chaos needs to be distinguished from unframed or potentially hurtful chaos. In the work with an image, there is a distancing going on; no one is getting hurt; and there is a stepping away from literal reality. Framed chaos takes place in an as-if reality, an imaginal space, and, as opposed to unbounded chaos where there is danger and threat, there is in framed chaos a potential for change.

The Horny Clay: dismembering and re-membering

The following incident took place in a summer school session at the European Graduate School (EGS) in Switzerland. One of the major objectives of the educational process in the expressive arts therapy programs at EGS is to prepare students both theoretically and practically for their work with others in many different settings, whether clinical, educational or other kinds of work places. This graduate summer school which leads to a master's or doctoral degree carries the education in the training institutes to another level. In addition to theoretical discourse, the classes use art-making as a way to explore questions. Art can bring new ideas or give a different perspective. Referring the art-making processes back to theoretical material is essential for teaching and learning in this context.

In order to create a conducive learning environment, the summer school structure includes a pattern of what is called "core group sessions" alternating with course periods and other activities. Students remain in the same core group of approximately 15 people for the entire summer session of three weeks. Each consecutive summer, the groups change and are reformulated depending upon enrollments.

The summer school begins with several core group sessions that initially focus on group bonding. After two or three opening sessions, students move on together into the first course, in which they study a particular subject for four days. After each four-day course period, they return to the core group sessions, designed to help them consolidate their learning in each course and to become a functioning and supportive learning group. Attention is often paid to group dynamic issues in the core group as these may enhance or hinder the learning of the students.

In my first summer of teaching at EGS, I spent time beforehand planning all of my sessions. I felt that I needed a well-laid-out plan in order to approach the challenge of this intensive teaching experience. Knowing that often the plan would have to be abandoned, nevertheless facing this first summer school, it made me feel less anxious to have some idea of where I would be going.

I had been assigned the leadership of a first-year core group. All of the students in this particular group were native German speakers, either of German or Swiss background. Since the courses at EGS are conducted in English, the students, for the most part, were rather anxious about their language skills in English. Their anxiety about language and my anxiety about teaching in the first summer school had the effect of making our initial two meetings seem somewhat subdued and quiet.

In the evening of the first full day together, our third class session, I set up an exercise which I thought would help the members of this new group begin to connect with each other. I chose clay as a medium to work with because it was messy and contained some risk in the medium itself. Molding clay, which is soft, warm and wet, can often be relaxing and open people up to more primitive feelings and fantasies. My thinking was that this group of adult artists could handle the medium, and that it might help them to loosen up with each other. (If I were working with another kind of group such as school-age boys with behavioral problems, I might have chosen something more contained as an initial bonding exercise – perhaps something like individual drawings with crayons or markers. The drawings can then be placed together, arranged like a kind of collage of the group. This sort of exercise helps to retain structure and boundaries in an initial phase of group building where this might be more necessary.)

I put a large mound of clay on sheets of plastic in the center of the room and placed buckets of water on the four corners of the plastic. I then asked the group to make something together, leaving the directions open for whatever would happen. Fairly quickly, people began moving toward the mound and began to shape it. I noticed that no one took any clay off to work alone. Everyone was engaged in working on the mound as a whole, either actively in the center or by attempting to move into the center to be part of the action.

After some quiet moving in and out, the action started to become livelier. The whole mound began to be transformed into a body with the shape of a head emerging. Shortly after the figure began to form, someone began making breasts, and others shaped a kind of penis/vagina almost in response. This caused a great deal of laughter and joking. As soon as the sexual elements entered the shaping, there was much more moving around, and voices got louder. Everyone was speaking in German, which indicated to me that they were feeling more comfortable and at home. They were not concerned about communicating with me but, rather, were totally absorbed in the process and focused on the emerging figure.

After almost an hour of working on the figure and making tail-like extensions from it on both sides, there was a cessation of activity. It seemed like it was finished (see Figure 3.1).

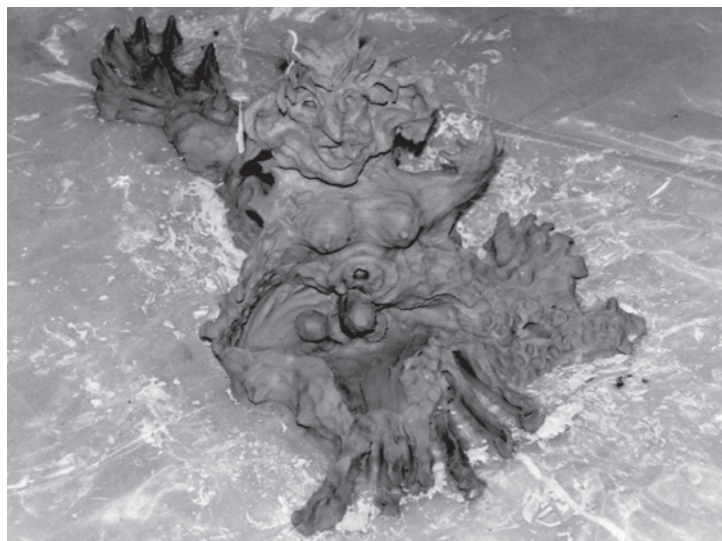


Figure 3.1 The Horny Clay

We spent the rest of the evening in a kind of “dreaming process” about this creature. We told creation stories about it – imaginary tales about where it was born and how it came to be here with us – and, at the end of the night, we gave it a name: “The Horny Clay,” a double reference to the horns on its head and to the sensuous feelings that had been aroused while making it. We placed the Horny Clay on a table overlooking our group circle on the floor. There was a strong sense that this creature was a part of the group, that it was “looking over us,” and that it had helped the group move toward the beginnings of a feeling of cohesion, so important in the early stages of group formation.

In the morning of the next day, we moved from core group issues of connection and formation to start on a course together. It happened that I was the teacher for this course, as well as the core group leader. When we entered our room to begin the course, we had a sense that something special had happened to us the night before. The Horny Clay was there and was beginning to dry, reminding us of the upsurge of excitement that was possible in this group given the right conditions. It also gave the group the message that something imaginative could happen between us. There was a feeling of more comfort in the group. The Horny Clay was definitely our “mascot.”

The course that we were beginning was titled: “Advanced Clinical Training and Evaluation of Practice.” I planned in the course to explore the theme of the relationship of a clinical attitude to an aesthetic attitude in the practice of expressive arts therapy. What happens when the studio enters the clinic? How does this change the traditional notion of what is considered “clinical”? In this course, I have the students explore their ideas through a combination of personal reflections, group discussion and art-making, particularly painting.

The opening to the course is a long brainstorming and reflection session on the difference between what happens in the studio and what happens in the clinic. Then I try to lead the thinking in the direction of seeing where these two seemingly disparate centers of activity begin to overlap. Certain concepts which reflect the overlap in these two areas might include, for example, sensitivity, curiosity, attention, presence, particularity. To be an artist and to be a clinician may, in the end, require similar attitudes. I try to avoid polarizing the artistic and the clinical attitudes.

The course moves on to examine the notion of helping, what it means to help or be helped. How can we help? In order to explore this question, I ask the students to go on a “sensitivity walk” and find an object which calls to them because it suggests a way of offering help to them. This object may be beautiful or it may be ugly and deformed. This gives the idea that help can come in many forms.

The next exploration is the creation of a group painting where they create collectively an image of helping. In German, the word that we worked with is “*Trost*,” which in English means “consolation.” By the evening of the first day of the course, we had generated a large painting and had engaged in much discussion around all the various forms of helping.

In the morning of the second day of the course, the students worked on individual paintings of their own experience of suffering, accompanied by written reflections in their journals. The idea is to embed the learning in the individual experience of each student so that they begin to experience themselves what it feels like to need help. This process often brings the student to a vulnerable and open place. It also gives them a starting point for the rest of the course. With the paintings and writings as the raw material, I then set up learning laboratories where, for the rest of the course, they worked in small groups with each other, practicing taking roles as “expert” (client), “companion” (therapist) and as observer/witness.

At lunch-time that day, I was approached by another student in the summer school. She said that she had been passing by my room and noticed the Horny Clay through the window. She was very excited by it and wanted to offer me her expertise in firing and preserving clay pieces. She said that she had technical knowledge of how to do this in such a way that would save the figure. Her feeling was that if we let it dry in the air, it would crack. I told her that I would bring that information to the group and that we would discuss it in the afternoon.

When we returned to the room after the afternoon break, we discovered, to our horror, that this student had already performed “surgery” on the Horny Clay during the break, without waiting for our decision. We found all the extremities of our mascot cut into pieces, the end of each piece wrapped in wet newspapers. Its head also had been severed from its body and wrapped in “bandages.” What caused us particular consternation was that the penis/vagina had been cut from the body. It felt as if our protector

had been mortally wounded and essentially “castrated.” As students came into the room and discovered the disaster, there was much anger and upset. I felt that I had somehow abandoned my role as “mother lion” of the group, that somehow I had allowed this violation by not emphasizing more strongly that we needed to discuss the situation first in the group. I wondered whether I had somehow misled the student into thinking that she could go ahead with her plan.

After we recovered a bit from the shock of this discovery, I saw that this was a perfect opportunity to bring the course material back – how would we “help” our friend? What could be done at this point? We talked a great deal about the student who was actually trying to “save” the Horny Clay and who ended up destroying it. This seemed very much like a traditional clinical attitude of diagnosis and treatment – the treatment was a success (precise, technically perfect) but the patient died! We also talked about the artist’s skill and technique as sometimes being out of touch with the impact that it might have on others. We went on to talk about ethical practice with the arts in therapy.

As a group, we settled on a way of helping the Horny Clay. Some wanted simply to return it back to a mound again but others argued that we must accept its brokenness and find a way to deal with it. We decided to bring our friend down from its table and place it on the large painting of “*Trost*” that we had created. We did this with some ceremony and singing. The group took off the “bandages” and rearranged the pieces so that the Horny Clay “came back together” again. We noticed that there were still gaps in its body, especially where the penis/vagina had been attached. One group member went outside and brought back a fallen piece of grapevine with the grapes still hanging from it in large bunches. She carefully draped the vines and the grapes around the “wound” in the area of the penis/vagina (see Figure 3.2). After this process was finished, I asked the group to go off individually and to reflect on what the whole process meant for them.

During the dinner break, I spoke with the student who had performed “surgery” on the Horny Clay. She felt that she needed to act so quickly because the sculpture was “in danger.” She indicated that it would have been impossible to “save” it if she had waited for our afternoon session to be over. She felt very upset and sorry for any pain that she had caused the



Figure 3.2 *The Horny Clay with grapes*

group, but she was still clear that she had done the “right” thing in terms of a technical decision to preserve the piece.

In the evening of the same day, we carried on with the course, with the Horny Clay sitting in the center of the group circle. At this point in the course, I set up a demonstration session. I worked with a student with the group observing me and used this as a teaching tool. At various points during the demonstration, I stopped and reflected on my methods, my choices, and my internal dialogue. I also opened up the discussion for the students to ask questions, make comments, and share their observations as the work was proceeding. It was as if we were watching a live video of a session and could press “pause” at any point.

Thomas, one of the male students in the group, volunteered to work with me. He brought his painting to the session but said that he would actually rather work with the Horny Clay on the group painting of “*Trost*.” He said that there was something important in this image that he needed to explore.

After the opening point of the session, where we set out the contract for our work together and talked a bit to get to know each other, Thomas bent down to the Horny Clay and took a portion of the grapevine with grapes

on it. He then draped it over his own genital area. Thomas began to tell the group about an experience that he had undergone at the age of 17. He had been diagnosed with testicular cancer, and the doctors had removed one of his testicles. Thomas said that he had shared this with very few people and was actually amazed that he could tell a whole group of relative strangers about this experience. He spoke about his shame around the operation and how he had carried this secret about himself for so many years.

The atmosphere in the room was quiet and very attentive. It was night, and the light was low. We felt that we had created a kind of special space for receiving Thomas' story and responding to it. All of us were moved by what Thomas shared that night.

The next day, we had a break from classroom learning and went as a whole school into the mountains for a hike. This particular hike explored the ancient water courses that come down through the mountains from the glaciers to the valley. These wooden channels were built to irrigate the crops in the valley; there are many myths and stories that surround the building and maintaining of them. On the hike, I spent some time walking and talking with Thomas who said that he felt quite different after the sharing of the past night. He reported that he felt joyful and more open to what he was experiencing on the walk. His senses were much more fully engaged than before.

In the next round of core group sessions, we continued to use the Horny Clay and the painting upon which it sat as an organizer for our activities. In one session, the students had a tea party in which they used the painting as a kind of table and set cups and saucers around the edge (see Figure 3.3). They brought sweets, and we laughed and sang together. The feeling in this session was quite celebratory.

As the summer school was ending, it was clear that we needed to do something with the Horny Clay in order to be finished with our work together. I felt that we should have some kind of a closing ritual that included our mascot and that we needed to find a way to say goodbye to it. We discussed various possibilities. The group felt that, rather than throw it away or recycle it back into soft clay, we should return the Horny Clay to the landscape and let it dissolve slowly with the rains and snow. We went outside to explore various locations that might be suitable for this and discovered a little pond with a large rock in the middle of it.



Figure 3.3 The Horny Clay tea party

In our last core group session of the summer, we designed a ceremony for returning the Horny Clay to the earth. In a processional line, singing and playing instruments, we carried it out to the pond. Thomas and another student helped to place the Horny Clay on the rock and to arrange it the way we had known it. While Thomas was helping to set it on the rock, a very powerful sprinkler sprayed him periodically. He allowed himself to be hit and to get completely soaked. For Thomas, it felt right to have to go through some kind of difficulty to say goodbye to the Horny Clay. After the Horny Clay was settled on the rock, the group formed a large circle around the pond. Each person said goodbye to the figure by tossing a rock into the pond and giving the Horny Clay a parting message (see Figure 3.4).

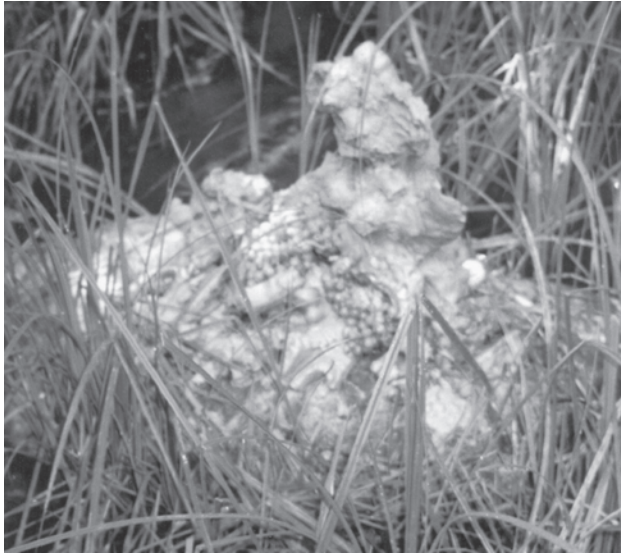


Figure 3.4 The Horny Clay on the rock

Elements of an aesthetic therapy training

The experience of making and using the Horny Clay has many layers of meaning attached to it. These layers of meaning are analogous to the experience of this group in its formation over the summer, to the experience of an individual student, Thomas, and to the relationship of the arts and therapy. For the group, it created a space in which sharing could take place. The image was a shared group form. Within this frame of the life and times of the Horny Clay, the dramas of the group could be enacted. The Horny Clay provided a metaphor that could shelter and contain group experiences. We could simply talk about the Horny Clay and that would bring up many kinds of thoughts and feelings. In fact, even years later when I meet members of this first core group again, we talk about the Horny Clay. The mere mention of the name creates an immediate and unspoken bond between us. We remember, as a kind of touchstone, what happened through the image. The work arrived to us and helped to create the architecture of our time together. It was exciting to have a metaphor ready-to-hand for various purposes in our work together.

For Thomas, the creation and working through with the image provided a personal breakthrough that otherwise might not have ever happened. If we did not have the dismembered Horny Clay, I am certain that Thomas' story would never have been told to the group. This image provided distance for Thomas, a way to get to the painful experience but in an indirect and less painful way.

In terms of the relationship of art-making to therapy, we can see many important connections. Using the framework of the difference between *literal* and *effective realities* developed in earlier chapters of this book, one could say that, in a sense, the effective reality of the Horny Clay was that it was able to de-literalize Thomas' experience. Thomas was no longer locked into the literal story of his operation but could play with it. The Horny Clay could be "repaired" in a way that his experience of his literal wounding could not. By repairing the Horny Clay and then making the connection between it and himself, Thomas could begin to reach out to others and share his secret as a way of also repairing the emotional damage he had experienced.

Entering a process with the Horny Clay put us into a *transitional experience* as a group. The Horny Clay helped us to create an alternative world, particularly by the dismembering of it, by our reactions to that act and by the subsequent repair of it. If the Horny Clay had not been violated, I do not think that it would have been as stirring for us or that it would have initiated such a long and protracted transitional period.

This critical incident in the training experience at EGS, the dismemberment and re-memberment of the Horny Clay, shows several elements of an aesthetic therapy at work in the training process. In the initial creation of the Horny Clay, the students were present and attentive to bringing forth something between them, some work that would be a co-creation. The experience of the work moved them: they felt good about what they had made and excited by its beauty. When the work was violated, they felt upset and responsible to deal with it in a way that both respected the work and that also carried the image further. In a sense, the Horny Clay became even more beautiful, precious and moving after its wounds were salved. It also took on a whole new appearance and became like Dionysos or Bacchus inviting us to dance and celebrate. Thus, following the image and the

shaping of the work became the ground upon which change could take place.

It was in and through the making of a work of art that training in an aesthetic clinical practice could be carried forward. The key notions of *presence*, *attention* and *aesthetic responsibility* are demonstrated in the way the clay was shaped and then responded to as the process unfolded. The Horny Clay was a perfect vehicle for learning. Its story allowed the students to learn in a *decentered* way, to take in the information indirectly. The process of learning was itself carried out in an *intermodal* way: making the clay figure, telling stories, creating *ritual dramas* to deal with the dismemberment and re-memberment. Finally, the whole experience was an analogue to life: we are always involved with *creation, destruction and reparation*. Going through these processes is an opportunity for some kind of change or new way of seeing.

In looking at both the tearing of the image described previously and at the dismemberment of the Horny Clay, there is an essential structure in both incidents that led to an opening up of learning. Both destructurings were spontaneous and unplanned happenings that literally cracked open the training process. The advances in learning would not have been possible without the making of an art work that acted as a substitute for the “real thing” – in the first case, the feelings of disconnection and fragmentation in the group and, in the second, the feeling of connection and Eros in the group. The destructuring experiences put each group into a liminal or alternative reality where a metaphor was developed that could be shared by everyone. Even years later, the memory of these incidents was powerful enough to inspire strong feelings of connection.

Clowning as an intermodal expressive art: training therapists through clown

In our institute training, we have been experimenting with incorporating clown work into the repertoire of the arts. Although clown has been used by others as a mode of therapy, it is my preference to use it more as a way of training beginning therapists, in order to help them pay attention to and experience some elements of therapeutic practice that are essential in working with people.

Clown, as an artistic discipline, can be subsumed under the category of drama or theater. Yet it is unique as a theater art. The kind of clown work that lends itself to training includes but goes beyond the common variety usually associated with the circus. We draw particularly upon the tradition of clown as a form of physical theater developed by Jacques LeCoq in Paris. This tradition sees the clown as the quintessence of theatrical performance. The clown goes beyond acting to find the pure pleasure of being and being alive, surrendering to the moment without being able to understand or control it.

The circus clown, on the other hand, is often a kind of stereotypical figure: wild orange hair, frilly collar, baggy pants and huge shoes. This clown has a role to play. He presents himself to us as clumsy and disorganized, racing around frantically disturbing and disrupting the serious and dangerous work of the circus. What unites the circus clown with the theater clown is their mutual love of play, their tendency to get into trouble and their willingness to show us their desire to be loved.

In all of its forms, clown performance does away with the “fourth wall.” This is the barrier that separates the actor from the audience in traditional theater. Clowns want to make contact with the audience and, unlike in traditional theatre, clowns often work spontaneously with whatever is happening in the audience. They react and respond in the moment; they discover something stupid that they can do and they take great pleasure in doing it for others. There is a keen generosity in the clown’s spirit. Whatever the clown does is in relationship to the audience and makes us feel something: humor, pathos, irritation, frustration, love and sadness.

Often the laughter that is elicited by the clown is in relationship to some kind of suffering or trouble into which the clown has fallen or which the clown has brought about. We can identify with the struggles of the clown, and we can also find great humor in the absurdity of these struggles. We can find the joy in the pain, and this begins to bring a new perspective to our suffering.

Clown involves improvisation and play. Things happen which are surprising and which demand that the clowns be attentive – listening, watching, open and ready to move. In clown performance, there are characters which are developed and scripts which emerge; but these are built up on improvisations and usually leave room for the unexpected and the sur-

prising to happen. The clown characters are explored and ultimately enacted in and through physical work. Clown is an embodied artistic form: the body is the tool and the ground upon which the character comes forward.

Like the traditions of the fool, the jester and the trickster in most cultures, clowns are the ones who can go beyond politeness and expose the hypocrisy of the ruling order. They are not afraid to be outrageous, to bring chaos and to show us the absurdity of ourselves and our lives. In this way, clowns can shake up our usual notions of how the world is organized, and they can show us that another way of being is possible.

The elements of clowning described above make it a useful artistic practice for the training of therapists. Its intermodal qualities are a particularly good fit with expressive arts therapy. In our training courses for therapists, there is an emphasis on play, improvisation, being together with others and finding the pleasure in such being together – like clown and audience, or clowns playing together with the audience. Clown work helps therapists to practice many skills: listening, responding, going with the images that are emerging in the moment and building upon them. Clown work also introduces training therapists to the experience of chaos as a force for change and for the creation of possibilities. Onstage or in therapy, the most important element is being open for what can happen. This means that one has to come out and abandon all the ideas one had back stage. Working without a script brings the opportunity to enter a state of chaos or confusion; this is where clowns live.

We begin clown training for therapists with a long period of warming up that involves playing games and physical movement. This helps to loosen up the body and to create an atmosphere of freedom. Our next step is to give them a red nose and introduce them to the fundamental building block of clown-formation: the *Nothing Turn*. The red nose is a traditional symbol of the clown. The nose is a kind of tiny mask that both protects and reveals at the same time. It creates a separation from the ordinary world, helping the person to enter an alternative reality. The nose also looks absurd and heightens the feeling of being absurd. The clown must be willing to embrace his or her own absurdity, something that we try to hide in ordinary life.

In the *Nothing Turn*, the task is to go behind a door, put on the nose and a hat, chosen at random, enter the room and then make contact with the audience by *doing nothing* – nothing beyond simply walking out and standing there, encountering the audience. Doing nothing is not easy: it is always tempting to entertain the audience, to act in a certain way in order to get a response. By eliminating acting, this exercise encourages the experience of making contact through just being there, being together with others.

It is always fascinating to see how much actually does happen during this short three-minute exercise. Often the one doing nothing experiences some emotion – happiness, sadness, fear, uncertainty – and this will show on the face and the body. The audience feels moved by the vulnerability that they see in the human being before them. The *Nothing Turn* is done in silence and with extreme concentration so that a mood is created which allows for subtleties to be observed.

Upon this canvas of nothing, the clown character can be built. Even when there is a character, it is important to remember the essential clown elements: making contact with the audience, paying attention to what is happening, listening, responding, playing and letting go. Beginning with the *Nothing Turn* helps to provide a reminder of these elements which need to become embedded in the body.

After paring down to nothing, one can start to find a character for the clown which is done by means of movement and physical work. Students are asked to move through the room, without walking in circles around the perimeter, and letting the direction of their movement be drawn to the empty spaces that open up through the movement of others. In ordinary life, we tend to avoid empty spaces, preferring to fill our time with activities and tasks. The experience of moving toward emptiness here is one of opening up possibilities, as in the *Nothing Turn* described above.

After walking for some time in our habitual way, we begin to exaggerate our movements. By so doing, we can find a character emerging from an ordinary, neutral state. We isolate each body part and make it bigger or smaller; or we take the normal walk and exaggerate it or else find its opposite. Often we encourage sounds to come and then one word or a phrase that might crystallize the sense of the movement being developed. The building blocks of character formation are based on personal charac-

teristics but begin to go beyond them at the same time. This emerging character moves around the room alone and then encounters others in playful interaction. Partnerships are formed, and the partners help to coach each other, bringing out their characters more and more. Once a character has begun to emerge, we use costumes to enhance it. Usually we have one partner dress the other so that one's own personal style is obliterated in favor of serving the character. Ordinary dress is played with and sometimes abandoned altogether, and what comes forward is often quite extreme (see Figure 3.5).



Figure 3.5 Clown characters

Partners then get a chance to perform together. In the performance work, one needs to learn how to make contact with the audience and to show oneself. The clown characters must take the audience into their world. Sometimes we create scenarios for partners to use as a frame for their performance: a client and a therapist; parent and child; a blind date. If the student can manage performance anxiety enough to be able to go on stage,

usually what is discovered in the performance work is the pleasure one finds in simply being and playing together with others.

To play with others requires “complicity.” This is the play that develops between the actors and which they must learn to be sensitive to picking up and following (see Figure 3.6). The same sense of mutual play has to exist in therapy in order for it to work. There needs to be complicity in the relationship between client and therapist, the capacity for working and playing together, paying attention to and listening to each other. This back and forth movement of play, when it is experienced in the therapeutic relationship, provides a base for surprising things to happen. In therapy as in clown, some of the best moments involve a surprise.



Figure 3.6 Max and Sadie, a clown couple

What haunts us in performance work in clown and in therapy as well is what we call the “flop.” Although the atmosphere in clown training for therapists is accepting and welcoming, often there is a feeling that nothing

is happening on stage and that the performer is “dying” out there. This is very much like what happens in therapy – sometimes the space is dead and we are stuck together, unable to find the play between us or our aliveness. The necessity in clown is to stay with the failure, and, rather than trying to hide or avoid it, to actually find the pleasure in it. This could also be a metaphor for the therapeutic experience – to hang in there and to play with the difficulties rather than trying to fix them in order for them to go away. Clowns are people in trouble, as are clients. Only by staying with the trouble rather than avoiding it can we find our way.

What do therapists learn from the artistic discipline of clown that they can take back into their practice? One interesting outcome of the clown work is the ability to experience *pleasure* and to *play*, especially to play with oddity, strangeness and with our own limitations and peculiarities. Clown characters are larger than life and have *permission* to act in ways that are not usually appropriate in the everyday world. They exaggerate their most peculiar tendencies. Through this character work, the audience becomes part of the world of the character. It gets pleasure from being witness to the struggles and joys of the character through the experience of interaction and identification.

For the clown performer, the experience can be described as a “free fall” or “riding a wave.” When the clown experiences the connection to the audience and to his or her play partners, there is a feeling of excitement and a wish to go on forever. Playing with the audience, as well as playing against the audience, allows the clown to forget about literal reality and *enter an alternative reality*. This is the same kind of transitional experience that one achieves in the play-space of therapy with the arts.

Clown is also useful for expressive arts therapy training due to its being a form of physical theater. It can offer an opportunity to understand the role of the body in the building of character and style. The body is the ground from which all creative and artistic work emerges, and the clown work emphasizes this. By observing other characters and their particular physical movements and by experiencing the building up of one’s own character through intensive body work, a training therapist can learn a great deal about the relationship between the body and the persona or what is presented to the world.

The *distancing* function of clown work also makes an impact on therapists in training. It is not exactly *me* that I am playing as a character but some exaggerated aspect of me that I take into a new direction. I use the resources that I have to build the character; but, at a certain point, the character goes beyond me and becomes something else. I can look at this character, observe it, work on it and develop it as I would with any other kind of work of art. Often the character has a name, a story about how it came to be born and about how it lives now. At the point that I have created something that goes beyond me, it becomes a work in the world, and others can relate to it: love it, hate it, feel sorry for it, see themselves in it. The character begins to “exist” as a person in its own right. This kind of character work is analogous to the work-oriented mode of expressive arts therapy that has been discussed in other parts of this book.

Finally, working in the art form of clown necessitates *staying in the moment, sharpening sensitivity, listening and looking for openings*. These are important skills for therapists whether they may be expressive arts therapists or not. Clowns see things for the very first time. Clown training helps to open up the senses and notice the smallest things and the smallest changes in things. Clowns are open to surprises, and they delight in the discovery of something new. In one clown performance, a woman comes out with her arms full of broken eggshells. She does not speak to the audience. She looks shy and impish, as if she has a secret which she is bursting to share with the audience. Slowly and in a surprising way, eggshells begin to drop on the floor. She seems embarrassed, but she can't help dropping and stepping on them. As she does, she giggles, looks at us sheepishly and, in these moments, shares the pleasure and the pain of it with us. After all the eggshells drop to the floor, she is left with two red ones. She holds them up – they make a heart shape and then, unfortunately, they come apart and fall to the floor. She is obviously upset but her upset is also mixed with delight; she is showing it all to us. As she leaves the stage, which ends up covered in broken eggshells, we are left with a feeling of pathos and of empathy for the character. We are touched by the absurdity of her vulnerability and, therefore, of our own.

Clowns are always in crisis, always falling apart. Instead of avoiding this state of being, they play with it and find pleasure in it. They play with their friends or with the audience and stay open to the surprises that can

come out of failing and being vulnerable. One could say that the clown exists in a critical moment and makes use of this moment to heighten the intensity of the experience, to bring the audience into the experience of pleasure in chaos, in getting into big trouble and not knowing how to get out of it. In this way, clown work fits with the other aspects of training to be an expressive arts therapist which involves coming into a critical moment and making use of it. The clown discipline requires that the performer show his or her suffering and helplessness to the audience and, in doing so, make a connection to it, as if to say: we all suffer and fall apart, and we must learn to play with this unavoidable fact of life.

Music as a way of working through conflict in a training group

At the end of the first term of a second year class at ISIS-Canada, conflicts were beginning to emerge between members of the group. The familiarity that group members were feeling with each other was making it safer to expose some long-standing personality differences. This kind of conflict is certainly inevitable in groups. Conflict, as long as it is used and worked with, can be welcomed as the initiator of a richer degree of intimacy and involvement between members. As the teacher of the group, I made a decision to spend one three-hour evening focusing on the conflicts, using the arts, particularly music, as a means of exploring and working on what was happening. I chose music because it was the modality which we were studying at the time and also because music provided a means of decentering from the conflicts in order to allow space for them to be explored.

When groups are experiencing conflict, they have a greater need for structure and leadership. With this in mind, I designed a structure for the three-hour evening which I felt would hold the group adequately so that they would feel safe enough to express publicly what was going on. What I want to discuss here is the structure, especially the phase of decentering, showing how it worked and how something spontaneous and unplanned emerged in the course of the evening which made a significant difference in the outcome of the process. The overall form of the evening can be understood in terms of the methodology outlined in Chapter 2.

The evening began with a warm-up, as we usually do each week. The warm-up is important to get members of the group grounded in their bodies and able to make a break between the day, with all of its busy-ness and everyday stresses, and the evening class as a special space. The warm-up is short (about ten minutes) and is generally both physical and interactive in nature.

After the warm-up, each student was asked to draw their image of the group as it looks to them now. Then they were asked to answer the following two questions:

1. What do I see happening in the group? Give an overview but also say specifically who you see doing/saying what to whom.
2. What is going on for me in the group? Is this my usual way of being in groups or in my family?

Before we heard from each person in turn, I sketched out some ground rules for the go-around: be specific (name names); no blaming, name-calling or attacking; take responsibility for your own feelings; try to identify the points where you are particularly challenged. Each person showed his or her image and spoke for three minutes. After this go-around, we had a break; then we entered the decentering phase of the structure.

In the decentering phase, I divided the group into two halves. One half of the group was designated as musicians, and one half of the group was to listen, giving feedback to the musicians. I asked the musicians to experiment with their instruments (simple percussion instruments and a guitar) until they found sounds that had a tone or rhythm that gave them pleasure. The musicians began with the first “take,” an improvisation in which each musician entered one at a time in order of their position in line and played for about two minutes. After they played, the feedback group suggested images that came to them while they were listening. The musicians also had a chance to discuss what worked and what they wished for in the next take. We repeated the process in the next take.

When the groups switched roles, I added another instruction to the format: in addition to the tones and rhythms that were pleasing, they should also play around to find tones, sounds and rhythms that were unpleasant or grating. I had not planned to add this idea to the structure, but I felt intuitively that it was the right thing to do. In addition to the

elements of the structure that were planned beforehand, this turned out to be a significant aesthetic intervention. After the first take, we realized that the impact of adding this option to the score opened things up in the music. It was as if permission had been granted to go further – louder, higher pitch, voices added in, more dissonance and counterpoint, and off-beats coming through. The mood of the whole group also shifted. There was laughter for the first time. The second take was more animated and musically enlivened than the first one.

In the aesthetic analysis phase of the work, when we analyzed the musical scores, we found that adding the “irritating sounds” made the music richer and more complex. Many group members observed that the first take was sweet but rather bland and boring. In the last take, there was a dynamic that made the music much more exciting and interesting.

After the musical improvisations, I asked them to go back to the initial image of the group which they had made earlier and to rework it, adding or taking away anything. In this way we were returning to an examination of the conflicts that were presented in the “filling-in” stage by way of reflection on the visual images. After this, there was a final round where each person addressed the question: where are you now? At this point we were “harvesting” the information that could be taken out and applied to the problems more directly. In the harvesting, it emerged that the decentering into a musical structure seemed to have the effect of releasing and dissipating the conflicts that the group had been experiencing. Members of the group who had been upset and angry seemed more relaxed, noticing that they definitely felt different after engaging in the work of making music together.

Adding the possibility of making dissonant sounds introduced the notion that being angry or irritable was allowed and that the music was capable of finding a place for and containing these feelings. In addition, putting what we could call “thorns” together with the “roses” made the music much richer and more interesting. Participating in a musical shaping also forced each person to listen and add something to the group sound; commitment to the process and sensitivity to each other was a requirement. In fact, one of the issues identified in the first go-around was that of a lack of commitment to the group. Some group members felt that others were not carrying their weight in the group.

In terms of the *architecture* of the evening session, we could say that the structure of *problem-identification*, *decentering*, *aesthetic intervention*, *aesthetic analysis* and *harvesting* had the cumulative result of framing and containing the conflict but also of allowing for freedom, a greater range of play and experimentation. The structure held feelings that could have potentially led to chaos and feelings of hopelessness in the group. At the same time, there was room for a productive period of chaos by allowing for freedom within the frame of the creation of a musical piece.

PART II: THE PRACTICE OF AN AESTHETIC THERAPY

The practice of expressive arts therapy is an aesthetic practice. Such a practice depends upon the exercise and cultivation of sensitivity: an opening of the senses on the part both of the therapist and of the patient or client. The body is the source of sensing activity and the beginning point for artistic work in all the modalities: awakening and sharpening the senses, listening and looking for openings, finding pleasure in the back and forth, the play, of the relationship and with the materials. All therapy involves some kind of play and complicity between therapist and patient, but in expressive arts therapy we deliberately play with the arts and go from the activation of the senses to the creation of works.

The training of the expressive arts therapist attempts to be a preparation for such a practice. Critical incidents in training and the reflections that come out of these incidents, such as those described above, help to prepare students for the rigors of practice in the world. However, one can never be fully prepared for the twists and turns of practice. Chaos always enters practice; one can never predict or control what will be uncovered or discovered in the therapeutic encounter. Following the lead of the client and knowing when to make interventions which bring art and shaping into the relationship require alertness, sensitivity and the ability to improvise. A training which emphasizes these qualities can prepare students for meeting chaos and for stepping into the unknown, using their own resources and their base of practical experience which has been acquired over time.

The idea of the “unknown” is connected with the creation of an alternative world; we go into a zone or area of experience that is not everyday reality. We create together an imaginative realm that contains images, language and activities that sometimes do not make linear or literal sense. We share this world, and we understand it as a shared or co-created reality. While there are no recipes or formulas for meeting the unpredictability encountered in conducting an aesthetic practice, we do have a framework that can guide therapeutic practice. The first two chapters of this book have provided the philosophy and methodology of this framework. In the following examples of my style of practicing expressive arts therapy, we will see how this framework looks in different situations and how the unpredictability of the work can be met. We will then analyze each situation according to the structure of an arts-oriented practice.

Farah: breaking free and separating

In my book *Tending the Fire: Studies in Art, Therapy and Creativity* (1995), I discussed my work with Farah, a young woman of Muslim heritage, whom I saw on and off from the time she was nine years old until she was 16. Farah’s parents were divorced; when she was brought by her mother to see me, Farah had just returned to Canada from living with her father in Pakistan after a separation from her mother of about four years. Her mother was quite concerned about her. She was described as being difficult and defiant at home and doing poorly in school. During the initial period of therapy, I was involved in Farah’s struggle to become her own person and, at the same time, to establish a relationship with her mother. I was also involved with her mother in attempting to help her to parent Farah in the best way possible. Her mother was emotional and dramatic, and it was difficult for her to appreciate Farah, who was quieter and more sensitive. Their problems clustered around communication and attunement. In my sessions with Farah, we worked with visual art, particularly with clay, making bowls and containers, and also developing a journal book where she could write her thoughts and feelings, much like a diary. These works and the supportive relationship with me seemed to help her begin to feel her shape as a person. The sessions which I had with her and her mother attempted to find common ground between them, but it always seemed like

a struggle. I wondered whether the separation of four years had created a rift that really never could be mended.

What I would like to do here is to take up Farah's story again, highlighting for the purpose of this book some recent sessions where the arts figured prominently in our work together. Farah's story continues past 1995, when I finished my earlier book. I had left the clinic on a leave-of-absence for a few months and had ended my contact with her then. When I returned in 1996, I saw Farah a few more times. My book had been published, and I gave her a copy of it. The book has three parts. In the first part, I write a journal which chronicles a time where I painted and wrote intensively about the painting process. In the second part, I deal with more theoretical perspectives on therapy, the therapeutic relationship and expressive arts therapy. In the third part, I discuss my practical work with individuals and groups, part of which is a discussion of Farah. She was thrilled to read the book, especially the first part where I talked more personally about myself. She had always wanted to know more about my real life, my family and my feelings. Having access to this through the book was very important for her. I felt that enough distance and time had passed between us and that it would be all right to share this with her. She also enjoyed reading about herself. However, her mother found the book and was quite surprised by the way she was described. She was not altogether pleased, and, after a while, she forbade Farah to come to the clinic to see me, as she had done many times throughout Farah's earlier treatment.

Some months went by, and I began to hear from Farah again, but only intermittently by telephone. Farah would call me when her mother was not at home. Again, things at home had not changed much, but Farah was happier because she was extremely attached to her two new stepbrothers (her mother had remarried during the course of the earlier therapy) who were quite young. Farah was nearing the end of her high-school time and talked to me mostly about her future plans. She had refused to go through with an arranged marriage, and she was placing more importance on becoming independent and going to college. At this point, she felt that going to college would be the only way to leave home. I would hear from her about once every two months, and she would tell me about school and her projects there, particularly the work she was doing in her art classes. She had continued to take art and was considering a career either in graphic

design, ceramics, early childhood education, psychology or art therapy. She had always expressed a wish to be “just like” me, even when she was much younger.

During this period, as she neared high-school graduation, her phone calls began to increase in frequency and intensity. As she explored the possibility of leaving home and venturing out more independently, Farah came more and more to want to be close to me, sometimes wanting to literally become me in her fantasies about her future career. To this end, she invented a game that we would play over the telephone. In this “game,” Farah would playfully pretend that I was her mother. Once she had my agreement that it would be possible to do this, she would ring me up and, when I answered the phone, she would cheerfully and brightly say: “Hi, Mom!” One of the topics that became prominent in our discussions at this time was Farah’s desire to become Jewish like me. She had a very strong fantasy that she would like to practice as a Jew, to attend synagogue (wearing a sari) and to meet and marry a Jewish man.

What I mainly did during this period was to listen and play the game with her. As long as I was sure that we were in agreement that this was make-believe, then I felt free to play with her as if I were her mother. Somehow playing this game was important for Farah; she enjoyed playing with the possibility of having a different kind of mother, one who would give her the approval and nourishment that she was seeking so desperately. I felt that the distinction between literal and imaginal reality here was helping to create the frame within which we could play. The game was helping Farah to play the role of a “regular” daughter, something she could only do with someone who was willing to play the role of a “normal” mother. This could only happen within a frame that emphasized distinctions between realities.

In the early spring of her high-school graduation year, I got a call one day from Farah announcing to me that she had left home. She was living in a shelter for women not far from her home. Things had gotten very bad at home – her mother was physically abusive, and Farah had finally decided that she needed to take a big step and leave altogether. While we had discussed this possibility many times, I was quite surprised that Farah had actually taken the step. She seemed happy and pleased with herself. She continued to call me from the shelter and eventually began to come to the

clinic for sessions. She announced that she was no longer wearing the *hijab* (head scarf) and that she was feeling quite free. The shelter workers seemed sympathetic and were trying to help her get a new start. Our work focused on decisions about where she would go to college and what she would study.

After the summer and into the next year, I continued to hear from Farah by telephone. She was enrolled in a community college program studying graphic design, living in the shelter which was near the school. She was working hard at school and at a part-time job; and she was trying to make friends. The nature of our conversations now had the tone of friendship more than that of client/therapist or even mother/daughter. I felt like she was beginning the process of separating from me now. This time, it was she who was initiating the separation and not her mother who was forbidding her to see me. This was an entirely different process than the earlier one.

In the spring of that year, Farah called and said she would like to see me again. She had a plan for these sessions to say goodbye to me formally. She said that she was ready to end our relationship because she felt independent now. She asked me to make sure that I had a variety of acrylic paints ready for our work. I made an appointment with her and waited to see what she had planned.

Farah arrived for the beginning of the session with two medium-sized canvas boards. She seemed pleased with herself. She was excited to see me again and to get started on her idea. She suggested that we put the two boards side by side and paint a picture together. When the whole picture was finished, her idea was to separate them and exchange them. I would keep one half and she would keep the other half.

I was delighted with this idea. It indicated to me that she had taken in a great deal from our work together in the past and that she was using what she had learned as a resource upon which she could draw. It also indicated a certain amount of comfort in our relationship. I liked that she had taken so much initiative in planning and preparing for the sessions. She could now take the lead and tell me what to do. I saw this as a big step for her – a further step toward independent living but this time on the ground of a secure relationship.

Following her instructions, we taped the two halves of canvas board together, set up the paints and began to work in silence. She tended to stay

on one board, so I followed by staying primarily on the other one. As the painting became more elaborate, I ventured over to her side – to embellish it rather than to make any significant additions or changes. She also did some non-intrusive painting over on my side. An area of interest and concentration on both of our parts was the seam where the paintings joined; we made sure that the images continued without interruption from one half to the other. We worked steadily, and the silent painting allowed us to enter an alternative world. It took about an hour to complete the two sides (see Figure 3.7).



Figure 3.7 Two halves together

When we looked at our work, we took some distance from it and described what we saw. We spoke about seeing a path that wound around the whole painting. There were stormy-looking parts and playful-looking places. When we imagined ourselves walking down the path, we saw ourselves as going through many different kinds of experiences and adventures on it. Farah drew out some of the links or analogies to which the painting pointed. She was struck by how much the painting was like our work together over so many years. She was surprised that we had made the painting without planning ahead or talking while we were working. We let the painting dry until the next session.

The following week we took the tape off the back of the painting and separated the two halves. She was clear that she wanted to give me the half that she had painted and that she wanted to keep the half that I had painted (see Figures 3.8 and 3.9).



Figure 3.8 Ellen's half

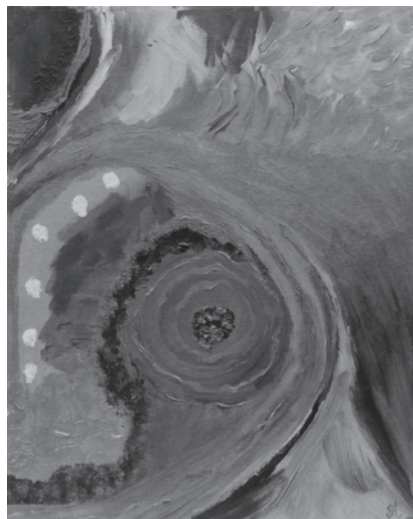


Figure 3.9 Farah's half

We took pictures of the painting together with both of us holding it and then with each of us holding our half. Farah wanted to take the film to be developed and said that she would send me the pictures. She left her half of the painting with me to keep for her, as she was not sure it would be safe in the shelter. I was leaving the clinic for summer holidays soon; she said she would come by the clinic and pick up the painting when she had found more secure housing in the summer.

The ending of this session was calm and unemotional. Somehow the painting carried the emotions for us. It was like a receptacle for our whole relationship. It seems to me to be a perfect example of how the arts can serve to distance and contain thoughts and feelings. Our focus was not on the separation of our relationship *per se* but on the separation of the parts of a work of art. Somehow this made our literal separation easier.

What I find interesting in reflecting upon the work that we created together is the form – the pieces are made together, and then they are

separated. The separation is clean; however, it is not fragmented into many pieces. There are two parts which are one when they are together yet can exist independently on their own. Each painting part has its own shape and integrity as an image – you don't need one to understand the other. What also strikes me is that while Farah set up this whole structure, she still was surprised at the outcome after we "harvested" it, especially in terms of what this pointed to about our work together over the course of our relationship.

Despite the fact that, ideally, the work of art holds the relationship in an imaginative way, the relationship still continued to be experienced with all the poignancy and ambivalence of a literal separation and was fraught with much difficulty. When Farah contacted me in the fall of the next year, she told me that she had lost the film and so had not been able to send me the pictures as she had promised. Farah still had her half of the painting, having picked it up while I was away in the summer; she said that she would bring it back some time for new pictures to be taken. It was quite a while before I heard from her again. She called and said she was well but too busy to come in with the painting. I began to feel that she was holding on to the absent half of the painting as a way of holding on to me – promising to bring it to me as a way of keeping me connected to her. Perhaps, at the same time, she was telling me that she could survive very well without me.

The next time that I heard from Farah, several months later, she had moved and was living in a large city some distance away. She was enrolled in a university program in fine arts and living on her own. Again, she promised to bring me her half of the painting but was not sure when this would be. At this point, I was simply interested in how important the painting had become and how connected she remained to me through possessing it.

It was not until the fall of the following year that I finally got the other half of the painting. When Farah called me, I told her that I would be visiting the city where she was living quite soon. We made arrangements to meet and for me to pick up the painting. On the phone, she shared with me that she had been feeling lonely lately and was having difficulty with making and keeping friends. She was concerned about this and seeking help for it through the school counseling services. She asked me to write a letter to the counseling services about her history with me and include a

possible diagnosis for her difficulties. In this way, it seemed to me, she was actively taking charge of her situation.

Farah and I arranged to meet in a small café in the city where she was living. She was early for the meeting and, when I arrived, she jumped up to greet me with a big hug. She looked older and had cut her hair quite short. As we ate lunch together, we spoke about our recollections of the making of the painting and how we did it. She was so pleased to see the two halves of the painting together again, and we spent some time speaking about the differences between them. Farah reflected upon her relationship to me and how crucial it had been for her to have me in her life.

We also reminisced about the early days of our work together and about some of the more difficult moments between us, especially an incident where Farah had taken two rings from my desk (I had taken them off when we were working with clay in one session), kept them at home and then lost them. She said that she had just wanted to hold them and had not realized that she had carried them home with her. Farah was embarrassed by this memory and upset when she learned that the rings were important to me and essentially irreplaceable. I was able to admit that I had not made it clear to her how important they were to me at the time, and we each identified our particular contributions to the situation. Farah apologized to me and was left with some guilt about what she had done.

A few weeks after our meeting in the café, Farah called me about the letter to her school and also spoke about how she might want to paint another painting with me some time in the future. We continue to be in connection by telephone, and I plan to return her half of the painting to her in the future. Our separation dance is not over.

Elements of an art-oriented practice in Farah's therapy

Beyond our connection around the art work that we created between us, the relationship between Farah and myself was built around her perception of our mutual love for the arts. My interests had inspired her; the image of me as an artist/therapist that she carried with her allowed her to separate from her family situation and become more independent. Certainly this modeling quality of her attachment to me was critical for her. I was not only a kind of mother figure but also a mentor. Whenever we spoke on the

phone, she wanted to know if I was painting and whether I was having shows of my work. She would also share with me the work that she was doing in the arts at school.

I had noted in *Tending the Fire* that it was Farah's resource to be able to enter *imaginal space* and it was her *imagination* that saved her again and again. Most importantly her imagination took place within a context; the *relationship* with me affirmed her capacity to make art. I was always willing to enter a play situation with her: to pretend to be her mother, to allow her to dream about my paintings, to continue a phone connection and to let her take the lead in designing a termination process using painting. If I had been rigid about the "proper" way to conduct a therapeutic encounter – dropping the play stance since she was more of an adult now, maintaining distance, insisting on face-to-face meetings – I might have lost her.

The central piece in the last phase of our work together was certainly the painting. It was a *shared image* that allowed us to approach the literal fact of our termination and work with it over time. The creation of the painting was a significant experience, providing us with the *distance* necessary to work with the poignant theme of separation. Farah's idea to make a painting together and then to separate it seems to me to have been a perfect metaphor for the literal situation in which we found ourselves. Her half had aspects of me in it and mine contained some of her – just as in a relationship when closeness and intimacy are allowed to develop.

The painting, as it began to exist apart from our creation of it, then provided another stage on which we could enact our separation drama: would the two halves of this painting ever be re-united? This is also a perfect *metaphor* for the next phase of our relationship – would we ever see each other again or could one half of the painting exist without the other and still stand on its own, with its own integrity as a work? At the moment, the tension is perpetuated because I have both halves of the painting. Once I return her half, we will be back to the separated state of our relationship, with the talisman or memento of the painting as a pointer towards this state.

Just as art-making as a shared interest was a significant part of the therapy with Farah, a literal art work itself was indispensable to the process. This work was important because it was co-created. I did not simply watch Farah paint, but I also engaged my own images in the work. In a way, this

was further modeling for Farah and further encouragement for her to keep making art as a way of coping with the challenges that life presents to us.

The way in which Farah set up the painting process was indicative, too, of how much she had taken in from the years of our work together. She had an implicit sense of how to structure the architecture of a process and how to enter an alternative world, a transitional space. She seemed to understand the necessity of working through something painful using the arts as a container. Her play range was increased as a result of our work together. She thought of the arts as a resource to provide solace at times of loss. As an arts therapist, it seems to me that it is a great privilege to be able to give someone a concrete resource that they can use in many different ways throughout their lives.

In terms of the themes which we have been developing in this part of the book, one could also say that Farah engaged in a process of dissolving and *destructuring* her identity as a “good Muslim girl,” obedient to her family. She entered a kind of *chaos* or *liminal state* where she was not sure what would come next. Her new identity was beginning to take shape in her relationship to the arts and in working with the arts in a therapeutic relationship. The therapeutic practice with her was a process of attempting to help her continue to find and refine this shape.

Robert: playing with power

Play is at the base of our work. Sometimes we call expressive arts therapy a “disciplined play with the arts.” We spend much time exploring, experimenting and making probes or investigations through art-making to find the quite-right shape for a work. We emphasize helping individuals, groups and communities find a greater “range of play” in their lives. The experience of helplessness is often an experience of being stuck in repetitive, overwhelming thoughts or behaviors. Increasing the range of play means that possibilities for action are opened up and imagination is engaged.

Our methodology of practice has many connections to the practice of play therapy, which depends upon play to do the work of change. Having been trained in both art therapy and psychoanalytic child psychotherapy, I see connections and cross-overs, as well as some differences, between play

therapy and expressive arts therapy. It is fundamental to understand that, for children, play is their work and their language. Therapy with play provides an opportunity for the child to make use of that language and helps them to use it more effectively and efficiently. When children are overwhelmed by their internal or external circumstances, sometimes they lose the capacity to play, and this resource is hidden from them.

Play therapy, like expressive arts therapy, involves a rite of restoration with a certain structure or architecture. In both play therapy and expressive arts therapy, we enter an alternative world which is liminal and decentered. In some forms of play therapy, the therapist attempts to make sense of this experience by providing interpretations of the play and the play themes. However, as I have come to practice play therapy over the years, I have moved away from providing such interpretations; they seem to me to break the play frame. I have come more to appreciate the therapeutic action of the transitional space itself without needing an external framework to make sense of it. If we are playing together and co-creating this world, we are building metaphors which can carry the meaning; there is an implicit understanding between us that requires us to stay within the frame. I would like to ground the discussion of the architecture of a rite of restoration through the next example from a short course of play therapy that I conducted in the clinic in which I work.

Robert was a seven-year-old boy of Asian heritage who was brought to the clinic by his mother. She was concerned about him because he was acting aggressively in school and losing his temper on many occasions. As I normally do, I took an extensive history of Robert and discovered many interesting and relevant facts about him and his family. Robert was born in China. Several months after his birth, his mother left China to come to Canada and study there. She was pursuing a doctoral degree in psychology. His father was a medical doctor in China. He stayed behind to look after Robert along with his parents and Robert's mother's family who all lived in the same village. Robert came to Canada with his father when he was about five years old and was re-united with his mother.

From this point on, things did not go very smoothly. Robert's father was not able to practice medicine in Canada and had to find menial work as a dishwasher in a restaurant. Robert's mother had obtained a higher degree and was living a more middle-class lifestyle. Not only because of their pro-

fessional differences but also because of the long separation between them, there was a great deal of tension between his parents, and they separated shortly after Robert and his father came to Canada. Robert lived with his mother, and his father visited him regularly. Robert missed his grandparents very much. He did not feel the same connection to his mother, as she had been away for most of his infancy and early childhood. Most importantly, his father was angry with his mother and highly volatile on the visits with Robert. He regularly took his anger out on Robert, striking out at him physically. Robert also felt angry with his father and powerless around him. Robert's mother took him to the clinic for help; she was highly attuned to her son and aware of his needs. She had a sense that Robert's behavior at school was connected with all of this turmoil in his family life but was uncertain about how to handle him. The school also wanted Robert to get some help.

I saw Robert and his mother for two sessions in order to get more information, and I also arranged for a native Chinese-speaking psychiatrist to interview Robert's father and perhaps begin to see him if he would agree to getting some help for himself. It became clear from the first meeting with Robert and his mother that Robert loved to play. During the interviews, he played happily by himself with the toys that I had provided. This was a good sign in terms of the resources that would be available to Robert should play therapy be recommended.

What made the decision for me about individual play therapy for Robert was the assessment session that we had during the interview phase. Robert was happy to come into the playroom with me and took up a central metaphor almost right away. After some initial exploration of the room, including the toys and art supplies that were available, Robert gravitated toward the playhouse and the furniture and figures within it. Taking some time to set it all up, he organized the materials of the playhouse into the following story: all the children were in the house living together (with no adults). They were repeatedly being attacked by Hu Kong, a fierce and scary figure. They kept repulsing Hu Kong's attacks, but he returned over and over again, renewing his attacks with more and more intensity. The children were helped in their fight by a large toy tiger that Robert named "Scott." This tiger was the ultimate protector of the children, rising up again and again to beat Hu Kong back. Robert gave me various roles to play

among the children, but he always wanted to play the roles of Hu Kong and Scott. When he was playing these roles, he seemed to be energized and revitalized.

This play during the assessment phase demonstrated to me that Robert could use a short course of play therapy to help him work through his feelings within the metaphor he had developed. For me the metaphor had a great deal to do with his anger at his father and his helplessness at not being able to get his father to stop acting out his anger on him. Yet I was not convinced that the metaphor was simply a mirror for his literal life situation; there was more to it. While the metaphor bore a definite relationship to the situation within which Robert found himself, it pointed beyond itself. This aspect of the metaphor interested me as possibly holding a surprise, something that Robert could explore through play. I wondered if playing through the metaphor could possibly open up a wider range of play for Robert.

Robert's mother agreed to a ten-session course of play therapy for Robert as well as to some sessions for her to work on parenting issues. Robert's father also agreed to continue to see the psychiatrist who had interviewed him and to talk about his situation. It was clear that, at this point, family therapy would not be indicated. It was our sense that the parents would fight when together and that this would not be helpful for Robert. He needed his own time, away from the war between his parents. It was hoped that through individual therapy for the parents, some of the war between them would be diminished. The fact that the parents were being "held" in this way and were willing to do their own work led to a good prognosis in this case.

Elements of a play- and art-oriented practice in Robert's therapy

The sessions with Robert had a predictable architecture. Robert would enter and I would remind him of the number of sessions that we had left, reinforcing the time frame. Then I would shepherd him to the playhouse and encourage him to begin again where he left off last time (*bridging from the everyday and helping the work to arrive*), reminding him about the development of the story until then. My *intervention* here was intended to show my interest in the metaphor, to enrich it and to keep it going. I was a playmate

but also, most importantly, a witness to the action. I knew that it was central for Robert to keep his (and my) attention focused on the problem of what would happen between Hu Kong and the children in the house. If he could play it out enough, my sense was that he might be relieved of his fear and anxiety around it (*harvesting*). This could also happen especially if his father, in reality, could manage his anger in a better way. That was the hope for the sessions with his father. After the play sessions and before the end of each session with Robert, I would always speak about what he thought would happen next week to Hu Kong, trying to cast his mind forward to some of the imaginative possibilities (a form of *homework*). In this way, a bridge back to the everyday was also created.

Robert always intended for Hu Kong to “die” in the end. He waited until the very last session to bring his death about; he seemed to be savoring it. It was as if he knew that this must be the outcome not only for the object of the father’s anger but also for his own helplessness. The handling of the time frame, sticking closely to the agreed-upon ten-session contract, was helpful for Robert. I suspected that Robert’s symptoms were reactive in nature and had not yet become embedded too deeply. His mother as well as his teachers noted that Robert had changed rather quickly from being a co-operative, bright and easy child to being angry and explosive. I suspected that, under the right circumstances, Robert could change back again; I did not anticipate that his treatment would be long term.

Robert’s mother and teachers all noticed a shift in Robert as our sessions were closing. He was back to being his “old self.” I arranged for a follow-up meeting about one month later to check in on Robert’s situation. It seemed as though he was doing much better. Several years later, when Robert was a teenager, I received a letter from his mother, thanking me for the work that I had done with Robert. She said that he was doing very well in school and, in addition, had become a concert-level cellist. She attributed some of his successes to the sessions we had when he was a little boy.

How can we understand what happened in Robert’s treatment in terms of the methodology of expressive arts therapy? Helping Robert to create a space that was separated off from his everyday world and thereby engaging his imagination to go to work for him seems to be a crucial aspect of what Robert went through. I did not interpret any of the underlying meanings

of the metaphor for Robert but simply created the conditions for the metaphor to emerge and be played out.

Robert had been in a dead-end situation that was repeating itself over and over. His parents worked on changing their own behavior in the situation, while Robert worked on the ways in which their behavior had affected him. The play therapy created a gap for Robert, a space for him to *decenter* and take control of his situation through the play metaphor. He played all the roles and could experiment with the position of each one, finding the *range of play* in every position. This play gave him a sense of power and control. If he could exercise this power somewhere through his imagination, it could satisfy his desire to “act it out” in his real life. The play therapy, as a rite of restoration, was able to help Robert return to his “old self” and *reaffirm the resources* that he had to help him cope with future difficulties. The metaphor and the play within the therapeutic relationship helped Robert to find a form for the anger and chaotic feelings that were threatening to take over his life. In this way, the play was able to bind and contain his anger and to help him begin to transform it in creative ways.

Jack: to the rescue

Jack was a boy about one year younger than Robert, whom I saw for a short course of play therapy at the request of one of my colleagues, a family therapist at the clinic. My colleague, Paul, had been seeing the family for several months. At the stepmother’s request, Paul referred Jack for some play sessions. Like Robert, Jack had been an easy-going child until events in his family changed radically. Jack’s biological mother, Faith, gave the care of Jack over to his father and stepmother when Jack was an infant. Because Faith had serious mental health problems, it was difficult for her to be his primary parent. However, she did see Jack regularly. Jack was happily adjusted to the fact that he had four parents – Faith, her partner, Jack’s biological father and his father’s partner, Nancy.

The events that led to Jack’s referral for play therapy had to do with the mysterious disappearance of his father. According to Nancy, Jack’s father left home suddenly one day and did not return. She heard through a neighborhood friend that Jack’s father was living quite far away. Nancy was not sure when, if ever, he would be back. At first, Jack seemed all right; but after

a month of missing his father, he began showing signs of stress: sadness, anger, nightmares and bed-wetting. Nancy also was depressed; her state of mind made it difficult to deal with Jack at times, especially when he was angry.

I started Jack's therapy by meeting with all of his caregivers in the playroom along with Paul, my colleague. Jack had requested that Paul introduce him to me so that he could feel more comfortable. As we talked together, Jack explored the playroom and started to show a keen interest in the toys. Like Robert, Jack seemed to love to play – a good sign for how things might go with him. Everyone said that Jack was basically an easy child. They hoped that his symptoms would clear up soon.

When his family left the room, Jack and I made a tentative initial connection. Helping Jack to formulate an over-arching metaphor did not come as easily as it had with Robert. Jack was reserved but curious about me and about what he could do in the space of the playroom. The first play session centered around Jack's testing, in a tentative way, the limits of the room and what I would accept or tolerate within it. We never spoke about Jack's outside life or any of the recent events that had led him to be at the clinic at that time. My tendency while working with children is to simply let the play or the art-making emerge. I trust that something, however subtle, will happen and that the links to real-life material will be there implicitly.

In the next session, Jack used the time to begin to develop a theme which he then explored in many ways over the whole course of the treatment. In his play, Jack arranged many different situations in order to provide himself with the opportunity to rescue someone or something. The first scenario revolved around using the doctor's kit. Jack played the doctor and examined me. My illness was very bad, and he had to call for an ambulance. He then became the ambulance driver, speaking in a low, "in-control" voice, knowing exactly what to do.

In subsequent sessions, this doctor/ambulance driver play continued and became more and more intense. I offered to elaborate the play by sometimes lying on the floor and making sounds like a very ill person. My enhancements encouraged him to continue playing. His movements and sounds conveyed great urgency. He often rushed into the scene, breathless and anxious to rescue me very quickly. The more I played along with his tone and supported it, the richer the material became.

The sessions had a predictable, ritualized quality to them. Jack would enter the room, ask himself what he would like to do (“Hmmm, what would I like to do today?”), set up the scenario and give me my role. The ending of each session became a drama in itself. I always encourage children to help with the clean-up. To this end, I structure the session so that there will be enough time to clean-up. This is not only because I want the room to be clean, but also, and more importantly, to help the child consolidate and get ready to leave the space of the play.

In order to deal with the ending of the session, Jack came up with another imaginary character, “The Clean-Up Policeman.” I would have to call for him to come in the same way each time (Jack gave me the script): “Gee, look at this mess. Maybe we need some help here. I think I should call the Clean-Up Policeman.” That would be the cue for Jack to slowly and ceremoniously put on a police helmet, get himself “revved up” like a motor and burst into the scene. The Clean-Up Policeman did not speak but rushed around breathlessly putting away the toys. My (self-appointed) role was to narrate the event: “Wow, look at that guy! He’s doing such a great job of cleaning up!” etc. My narration seemed to feed the character and help Jack to immerse himself totally in the play.

Elements of a play- and art-oriented practice in Jack’s therapy

What does this clinical vignette tell us about the elements of practice with play and the arts? Like Robert’s treatment, the work with Jack required a *predictable structure* or architecture. There was a clear beginning, a middle and an end to the sessions. We had an overall frame of ten sessions. These *frames* provided the possibility for maximum freedom of action within defined limits. They served as a safety net for the child to be able to go into the painful material. The holding function of the frames created a ritual structure – to move from everyday reality to the open space of play with all of its possibilities back to everyday reality again. This ritual structure was enhanced by Jack himself in terms of the ways he found to establish these areas of play: at first, asking himself what he should do; then moving into the play material with certain characters like the doctor/ambulance guy; and then finishing up with the character of the Clean-Up Policeman.

However, there were times when Jack did not use these “helpers” and found himself in confusion and some chaos. For example, toward the end of our ten-session period, Jack refused to clean up and refused to call for the Policeman. I sensed that he was refusing to leave the therapy and holding on to our work together. In fact, during this period, it was literally difficult to get him to stop playing and to leave. At this point, I felt that I needed to break out of the transitional space and reflect to him how I thought he was probably sad about the sessions coming to an end. I showed him that I could understand the chaos of his experience; this seemed to help him consolidate and leave the room. The experience of chaos that I saw Jack going through indicated to me the potency of the therapy for him and the strength of his attachment both to me and to the process.

Metaphors certainly provided a sheltering place for the material. The characters that Jack invented played a drama of rescue and recovery. Of course I could see the analogies to his real-life situation – his need to be in control, his wish to find his father, his implicit sense that his father was in danger or in trouble – but I did not feel it would be useful to spell all of this out for Jack. The important fact was that he was playing out these themes and trying to come to some resolution by means of the *distancing* of drama and play.

The *relationship* between Jack and myself was an essential component of the therapy. It provided the backdrop for the action as well as the encouragement and support that Jack needed to go ahead with his play. In ending this relationship, it was important to work with Jack’s parents (his father returned after our seventh session) to help them see the importance of Jack’s capacity to play. I also tried to encourage them to pick up where I was leaving off – to play with Jack on a regular basis. I gave some instructions on what kind of play would be best; imaginative play where Jack could take the lead and give the parent or parents roles to play. I also gave the parents a “prescription” to play daily with Jack, a daily dosage. In my view, this was the right “medicine” for him.

Sue and Sam: deadlock and struggle

In working with children and families, there are many different ways that the therapy can be carried out, depending upon the needs and wishes of the

families. Sometimes, the family can work together as a whole. At other times, it is best to see the child separately or the parents without the child present. Often I work with a parent, usually the mother, and a child together. Many families who use the services of my clinic are single-parent families.

In the case of Sue and Sam, Sue was a single mother raising Sam, an eight-year-old boy, with very little support either financially or emotionally. Sue put Sam on the waiting list of the clinic since he was having difficulty at home and at school. Sam was seen immediately because Sue reported that he was talking about killing himself. Sue also felt that she was “at the end of her rope.” The major complaints that Sue reported about Sam included: rude behavior toward her, unmanageable behavior in public, refusing to go to bed in his own room, staying up until one or two o’clock in the morning on a regular basis and having severe anxiety about changes of routines. Sue and Sam had been seen at other clinics in the city for many of the same complaints when Sam was smaller, but Sue felt that no one had ever really helped her.

In the initial interviews, a picture of the situation began to emerge. Sue was estranged from her family of origin, while Sam’s father lived far away and was only involved with Sam peripherally. Sam saw his father periodically if he came to visit or when Sam would go to his father’s home for holidays. There was a high degree of tension, ambivalence and anger between Sue and Sam’s father. Sue resented his absence from Sam’s life and was upset that he did not give any money for Sam’s support. Sometimes Sue felt that she would like Sam to live permanently with his father so that she could be free; yet, at the same time, she felt guilty for wanting to get rid of Sam.

I saw Sue for several weeks before I began to see Sue and Sam together, as I wanted to get a clear sense of what had gone wrong with other helpers in the past. I was aware that I could be setting myself up to be another helper cast on the dust heap and wanted to try something different. Sue said that, in the past, no one had ever worked with her individually, and no one had ever seen her together with Sam. She was especially upset about Sam’s last therapist – a psychiatrist who had seen Sam four times a week for almost two years. Sue felt that it had been “a total waste.” She was critical of the treatment with Dr. H: “All they ever did was play, and Dr. H let Sam do

whatever he liked.” I asked why she had continued for so long if she had felt so unhappy; Sue replied that everyone told her that Dr. H was “the best in the city” and that she was lucky to have gotten in to see him. Sue was waiting for Sam to change, but nothing seemed to be happening.

Sue worked hard at a demanding job that required late hours and some travel. She was proud of her success and her capacity to support herself and Sam, providing for all of his material needs. Sue experienced, however, a vast loneliness in her life and a feeling of being isolated with no family or friends to support her. I was aware that I would need to ally myself with both Sue and Sam if the treatment between them was going to work. However, Sue was angry and mistrustful; she seemed depleted. I was not sure that she really wanted to keep Sam with her.

In formulating the initial contract for our work, I was careful not to promise Sue that things would change. I said that we would start working and then see what happened. I first wanted to see how she was with Sam and only then decide what was possible to accomplish here. My sense was that Sue and Sam were experiencing a *severe constriction in their range of play*. I knew that I wanted to help them to free up the space between them, but I also saw that they were quite stuck, both individually and as a duo. I prepared Sue by saying that the treatment would probably involve playing and perhaps making art. Sue agreed to this contract but was clear that art was not something she wanted to do. I assured her that I would never force her to do anything she did not want to do.

Initially, I offered Sue ten sessions, with the idea that this would give us both some time to see if working together through play would be possible. After the first four sessions, Sam began coming with Sue. My first impression of Sam was that he appeared tired and tense. I noticed that he acted in an aggressive way towards his mother, physically attacking her at times. Although he refused to play with me at first, I persisted in inviting him to play by keeping my own playful attitude. Sam then began to play more in parallel to Sue and me. While the grown-ups played a game of bedtime with some small doll-like figures, Sam played with the dinosaurs – they were biting and eating each other. Sam listened to our play, showed interest in it and entered it at times. His contribution was to set up the dollhouse with lots of furniture, paying particular attention to the bedrooms, which were close together and full of furniture.

In subsequent sessions, I felt that Sam was beginning to get the idea that the point of our sessions was to play together. Sam would run to the playroom as soon as he saw me from the end of the hallway. He would enter the play immediately, without needing an invitation from me. He enjoyed having both his mother and me in the room devoted to playing with him for the hour. He was quite bossy, in fact, ordering us to “PLAY!” whenever he felt that we were talking to each other or not paying attention to him. For quite some time, the major theme that he developed in his play was the following: two kids (one played by me and one played by Sue) were trapped in the house, and a monster (played by Sam) was terrorizing them. The two kids never knew where the monster was or when it would attack them.

I saw some striking things going on between Sue and Sam during these play sessions: Sam was being rude and hostile to his mother, and I noticed Sue not responding to it. Sue often broke out of the play in order to comment on Sam’s appearance – saying that he was wearing a crumpled shirt or needed his face washed. Sam seemed angry or embarrassed by these comments. They definitely broke the flow of the play. I saw that when the play got further away from the actual events of life between Sue and Sam and became more imaginative, Sue would interrupt with a comment. Sue would smile or laugh at Sam when she was angry or upset and trying to set a limit with him. She would argue with Sam about his perceptions of events, trying to prove that he was not being rational or logical. Sue would sometimes retaliate with Sam in a hostile or aggressive way, similar to his own behavior. At these moments, I sensed that Sue had effectively abandoned her parental authority with Sam and that she had lost all feeling of compassion for him.

I never said anything during the sessions about these observations because I did not want to disrupt the play-frame, but I did set up a feedback structure outside of the sessions to address the implications of these observations. I set up the feedback in this way in order to preserve the frame of the play sessions and to leave them strictly for the play. The play sessions were on Wednesday mornings. Two days later, on Friday mornings, I would routinely call Sue at her office to discuss my observations in terms of concrete and practical things that she could do with Sam to make life easier between them.

Sue was open to hearing my observations and welcomed my honesty as well as the concrete help that I was giving her. I was trying to help Sue to improve the quality of her relationship with Sam along two dimensions: developing more compassion for Sam and his struggles and becoming more patient, firm and consistent with him. For example, I encouraged her to reassure him rather than argue with him about whether his feelings were rational and justified or not; I encouraged her to be clear and to follow through with consequences about his behavior. We practiced this latter strategy by using a “calm down chair” in the playroom where I said she was free to send Sam when she felt he was not listening to her or being hostile. By introducing these strategies, I was trying to help Sue extricate herself from the constant power struggles that seemed to drain and deplete both of them. The play sessions were designed to help open up the options in their relationship, to *extend the play range* and to help them have a different experience of each other – apart from the everyday routines and struggles which were frustrating and totally lacking in pleasure for both of them.

This two-dimensional strategy of play sessions with Sam which were open and free, coupled with a weekly telephone meeting where the discussion was much more structured and concrete, seemed to be working. After the seventh session, I offered Sue the possibility of continuing on with this work until I left the agency for the summer (approximately 20 sessions in total). I told her that if she needed more time, I would transfer her to another therapist. This renewed commitment on my part seemed to have a good effect on the treatment; and, by about the twelfth session, Sue appeared to be making improvement. Sam was beginning to sleep in his own bed and had made a good adjustment to a recent change in his daycare placement for after-school. In the next few sessions, Sam and Sue seemed to be relaxing more and enjoying each other.

In the fourteenth session, an interesting crisis developed that revolved around the play. When Sam and Sue arrived, Sam’s pants were wet; he seemed uncomfortable and irritable. He was hostile to Sue, and she put him in the “calm down chair.” The chair was next to a cupboard, and Sam began to bang his head against the side of the cupboard. Sue commented that she thought Sam was “simply getting attention as usual.” I was concerned that Sam would hurt his head by banging it, so I put a pillow between his head and the cupboard.

A game emerged as a result of my placing the pillow there, and I followed Sam's lead into the game: he became an aggressive little dinosaur, speaking in a dinosaur voice. In another play voice, I enhanced his image, talking to him about how much this little dinosaur liked to hit himself. In effect, I was encouraging him to bang his head but in a safe way – with a pillow to protect himself and within the protective shelter of a play metaphor.

I noticed that even when both Sam and I asked her, Sue was not joining in on this play as she had in the past. After a while, Sam stopped banging his head and looked at me. He seemed refreshed and relaxed; the anger had passed. Sue became quite enraged at this point. She said that she felt that I was rewarding Sam for his bad behavior by playing with him. She questioned the whole approach we were taking – that of playing. As she stormed out of the room with a stunned-looking Sam in tow, she said that she was “fed up with everything” and that Sam should finally just go and live with his father. When I urged her to stay and talk to me, she said that she was leaving and that this would be the last session.

When I called Sue on Friday, as part of our normal check-in, she sounded calmer. She agreed to come in on Wednesday by herself to talk to me. When she came, she even made some jokes about her anger. It was clear that she had achieved some distance from the emotionally charged reaction of the previous week.

We talked about her sense that my way of handling Sam's behavior rewarded him and how infuriated this made her. I explained my intention: to transform his self-destructive aggression into a more benign esteem-enhancing play and thus to defuse it. We talked about what she would have wanted me to do at the time. She was able to say that she wanted me to support her more in disciplining him. I tried to let go of my intention and to hear what she was saying to me. We moved on to discuss whether Sam should go to live with his father and all the implications of such a step both for Sue and for Sam. Sue then recommitted to the therapy, agreeing to be transferred to a new therapist; and we were able to go on.

This crisis and its resolution seemed to infuse the treatment with a new sense of openness and trust. Sam was still maintaining the gains that he had made around session 12 – sleeping in his own bed, in his own room and, in general, sleeping more. In session 16, a new play theme emerged: Sue was

the “referee” for a big fight between the toy gorilla (me) and a toy monster, Godzilla (Sam). This play evolved into a slow-motion dance/fight between Sam and myself with Sue still playing referee. The play sequence ended with Sam being held by both Sue and me. It was one of the first times that I saw nurturing and playful physical contact between Sue and Sam.

Playing with fighting and with destructiveness continued to be a theme in all of the remaining sessions. In addition to play/fighting and dance/fighting, Sam made an elaborate city out of blocks with Sue’s and my help and then, with lots of noise and excitement, knocked it all down.

As we moved toward the ending of our work together, Sue seemed somewhat more, though not completely, comfortable with Sam’s aggressive play. She and Sam were more relaxed with each other and more loving toward each other. There were still ways in which Sue had difficulty listening to Sam and having compassion for his difficulties. They still tended to get into power struggles, but these struggles did not seem as explosive.

In the last session, I invited the new therapist to come into the room and meet Sam. Sue had already met her in a joint meeting a few weeks previously. At this meeting, we did some planning for the transfer: for example, they would be sure to use the same toys that Sam had liked. Sue told the new therapist that she was pleased to continue, and she noted that some progress had been made.

Sam had been told about the change two weeks before and seemed to have no reaction to it at first. In this last session, he came bounding down the hallway to greet me as usual; but this time he clung to me and said he didn’t want me to leave. When the new therapist came to meet him, he was shy and would not look at her. After she left, he became engaged in a game of checkers, a new game for him. He played with great enthusiasm and excitement about winning. He was actually a fair opponent. Sam finished off the session with a final game of Godzilla attacking the house and frightening the kids. In this version, Godzilla ultimately got killed off. It was hard for Sam to leave. I still have the image of him, standing alone by the outside door, waving to me from the end of the hall.

Elements of a play- and art-oriented practice in Sue and Sam's therapy

In this work with a mother and child who came for help and who were locked together in a frustrating and repetitive cycle, the important element that needed to come to the forefront was an *expansion of their repertoire together*. They needed to be helped to find new possibilities for thinking, feeling, belief and action. They needed help in *establishing a play-space between them* where they could operate more flexibly and freely. In working in therapy through play, it became clear that a *frame* had to be placed around the process of playing together, separating it from everyday reality. If this had not been done, the child would not have been able to let go into play and the mother would not have been able to learn alternative responses. However, there still had to be a place to address the real concerns that this mother had about herself and her child. Thus, I set up another situation beside the play-frame where her everyday concerns could be discussed – the parallel weekly feedback and reflection session on the telephone.

Ideally, I would have wanted her to come into my office for these sessions; but the regular telephone contact served several purposes and even enriched what we could do. First, it honored the fact that she was busy and demonstrated that I was not going to put undue extra pressure on her. Second, it gave us a certain distance. I called her at her office so that the transaction had a business-like quality, and she didn't have to succumb to anything too emotional. Third, after the space of a few days, she appreciated my reflections on something that we both experienced, and she could hear my perspective on what I saw happening. Finally, I think that she felt safe enough to welcome my suggestions and try out some new strategies with her son.

Playing with order and chaos: a children's play and arts therapy group

At the clinic where I work, I teach and train students from different disciplines: social work, psychology, psychiatry and expressive arts therapy. The students practice and learn together in multidisciplinary teams. This often gives rise both to conflict and to lively interchanges. At one point, I supervised a co-therapy team consisting of a social work trainee and an expres-

sive arts therapy student working with a group of five school-age children (8 to 11 year olds, two boys and three girls) for six months. The children were referred to the group because they were having peer and school difficulties. The treatment plan included a play and art group for the children and a parallel discussion group for the parents. I also supervised the co-therapy team working with the parents. This team consisted of two psychology doctoral students. All four students met together before the groups began in order to plan the sessions and to get ready. They also met after each group was over to share information, to reflect on what happened in the group and to plan for the following week.

The primary purpose of the children's group was to help them to learn new ways of working and playing together with others, as well as to develop friendships by engaging in art-making projects and play structures. The main purpose of the parents' group was to provide a supportive place for parents to express and share their concerns about the children as well as to come up with new ideas together to help address these concerns.

Group meetings were preceded by an initial interview with the children and their parents for them to meet the leaders, and for the leaders to get a sense of each child and parent(s) separately. The interviews were designed to determine what the child or parent wanted to gain for themselves from the experience of the group. In addition, the interviews gleaned important information about the child's desires for playing and art-making: what kinds of things they liked to do by themselves or with other children, how they felt about art, what kinds of art they liked or did not like to do. The leaders needed some starting points in order to make connections with the children and to begin to shape the activities of the group. These starting points focused upon what the children were able to identify as their resources.

The parents understood that their group meeting was a mandatory part of the experience for their children. All the parents were willing and interested participants, expressing hunger for contact with other parents and for information-sharing about the children and their concerns about them.

My role as the supervisor of the group was to give guidance, practice-wisdom and support and to make interventions when necessary. I met with the therapy team both before and after the group sessions. During the sessions, I observed the teams working from behind a one-way mirror. I

usually began with the children's group, moved over to the parents' group and then finished up with the children again. In terms of the expectations of the clinic, I was the one who was ultimately responsible for the groups.

In the initial phase of the children's group, there were typical issues of structure and organization, group formation and rule-setting. The children were often restless and unsettled, and it took some time before they became used to the routine. This routine included: check-in (each one taking a turn to talk about the week); warm up (usually a physical game); snack (each child/parent was responsible for bringing the snack on a rotating basis); an art or play activity; and closing.

The first group was quite wild. We had decided to take all of the tables and chairs out of the room in order to have a completely open space for physical activity. For almost the entire hour and a half, the children ran around the room and did not listen to the leaders. After this group, we realized that this was too much space for the children; the openness of it seemed to make them anxious. In the second session, we tightened the space and returned the table to the center of the room, arranging placecards for the children so that they would know exactly where they "belonged." We noticed that this external structure helped the children to focus and to listen to each other. Because these were some of the goals for the group, we felt that it was important to provide the containment necessary to achieve them.

After this first, more chaotic, start, there was a great deal of attention paid to the development of the rules of the group: the leaders worked with the children to help them develop a set of rules that they could agree upon and ultimately live with. The following were the rules that the leaders and the children developed together:

1. No swearing.
2. No hurting anyone or their stuff.
3. No touching anyone without permission.
4. Hands off the equipment in the room.
5. No making fun of people just because they look different.

There were also consequences for breaking the rules: a chair in the room was designated as the “calm down chair;” a child could elect to go there on his or her own or else the leaders could ask a child to go into the chair. There were steps in the process of giving consequences: first a child was “noticed” by the leaders doing something that was against the rules. Then, if the child was “noticed” twice, he or she was asked to go into the chair, usually for about 5–10 minutes, until ready to come back into the group and participate. If the calm down chair was not working, the child’s parent would be asked to come out of the parent group and spend some time with the child outside of the room, helping to get the child ready to come back to the group. No child was excluded totally from the program – sent home or told not to return. The goal of the process was to keep everyone in the group and working together.

The rules were important as part of the holding function of the group. They helped to contain behavior in order for play and art-making to take place. While the leaders thought that one session of rule-making would be sufficient, they were surprised to see that the rules were always being broken, and that the children needed to be reminded of them in almost every group. In order to remind them, we taped a list of the rules on the wall before each group. The children were eventually able to take them on themselves and to remind each other.

In every group, we played games, tried various exercises in visual arts (collage, painting, drawing) and did some poetry. By the seventh group, after the holiday break, we initiated a more sustained mask-making project. We wanted to encourage the children to stay with and work on something over a period of time, to have an object that would help them to stretch their imaginations and to have an end result that they could take home with them after the group was over. The whole process took seven sessions, lasting over three months. The masks were made by sculpting a clay form, then covering the clay with Vaseline and plaster bandages. When the clay was dry, it was removed from behind. Then the mask was painted and used for dramatic enactments. Each child made his or her own mask; there was a “group mask” which was made as a collective creation (see Figure 3.10).

The initial work with the clay was extremely absorbing for the children. The feel of the wet clay and of the Vaseline was exciting and gave rise to much joking and laughter. The complexity of the forms that they

achieved kept them stimulated. In the second mask session, the children ran into the room to see what the masks looked like after drying for a week. In their interactions together, they seemed to be listening to each other more, enjoying each other's company and, in the check-in, sharing more of their outside life and their struggles.

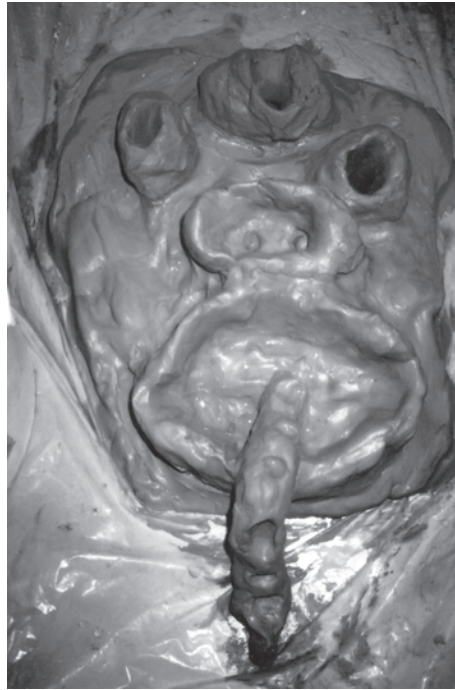


Figure 3.10 Clay mask – first stage

As the project went on, there were times when the children became bored or had a hard time staying focused on achieving an end result. The process required patience, repetition and struggle. The leaders played an important role in helping the children to stay with the work by encouraging them and working together with them.

From an artistic point of view, there were many challenges connected to the project: going carefully step by step; finishing the masks, which took time because some children would be absent and needed group time to catch up to the others; and getting the dry clay out from behind the dry mask. This was difficult to do without tearing the mask and required inter-

vention from the leaders. It was important that the leaders continue to believe in the artistic potential of the children: that the children could execute all the steps, finish the work and come up with a result about which they could feel proud.

The painting stage of the process brought back, to a great extent, the initial burst of excitement and enthusiasm that we saw with the clay. This painting part of the artistic work was more open and free, and each child could paint his or her mask in any way imaginable. To add to the richness of possibilities, one of the children brought in many kinds of decorative materials for the masks to share with everyone: feathers, buttons, yarn, etc. (see Figures 3.11 and 3.12).



Figure 3.11 Single finished mask

The final phase of the project was difficult to achieve. We wanted to have the children use the masks in dramatic enactment or play. We experimented with the way that each of the masks was a character that had a particular way of moving; but this was as far as the process went. After the hard work



Figure 3.12 All the finished masks

of the mask-making project, it seemed that the children wanted to move away from the masks and to do other activities. In particular, they wanted to play games. The boys wanted to make “swords” out of cardboard tubes that one of the leaders had brought. The group sessions were also coming to a close, and the children began talking about the ending of the sessions. We decided to drop the idea of working on a play; the children had worked enough and we could sense it. They were restless, and the group easily disintegrated in these last sessions. As we moved toward closing, we actively involved the children in designing their closing ritual or activities. Primarily, they wanted a special cake for snack and to play the games that they enjoyed over the course of the group. They wanted to show their masks to their parents at the end, but they did not want to take the mask work any further.

In the parallel parents’ group, there was an interesting movement from structure to openness. At first, the parents had expressed a desire for the leaders to bring in material for them to read and discuss – mostly concerning disciplining their children. After this began to happen, the parents slowly realized that what they actually wanted was simply a relaxing place where they could meet each other, eat a snack and share together without a fixed agenda.

The parents did not seem particularly interested in seeing what the children were doing. They were all simply happy to know that the children were occupied and working together. The parents shared stories and feelings about their children’s teachers and schools (mainly complaining about how they felt misunderstood); they shared ideas about resources and

services available to them in the community; and they shared stories about their own parents and their own childhood experiences.

At the mid-point, there was a joint meeting between the children and the parents. In this meeting, the leaders of the children's group talked about the progress of the group and the way that the children were moving forward together. At the end, the parents came to the children's group and looked at all their art work, which they were then able to take home.

Elements of a play- and art-oriented practice in group therapy

In reflecting on the elements that made the children's group and the parents' group successful, one important factor that stands out is the willingness of the leaders to listen to the group members and provide structures that responded to their needs, whether these were explicitly or implicitly expressed. The leaders of the children's group had to maintain a balance between directing the children into activities and following their lead. They also had to help facilitate group decision-making around what the children wanted to do, making sure that everyone was heard and that everyone felt included.

The introduction and carrying out of the mask project by the leaders of the children's group added another dimension to the work. It provided a space for concentrated art-making; this became a stage upon which each individual child could show themselves and in which the way the group functioned as a whole could be revealed. Each mask, both in terms of the process of making it and in terms of the work itself, became a microcosm of a particular child.

It was unfortunate that we did not have the time to carry the mask work further. Ideally, we could have put the masks away for a time and then returned to them. The space in between might have allowed the children to see their masks in a new way and to begin to develop them as "characters," distinct from themselves. We might have given the children the opportunity to trade masks and help to develop the characters in a more distanced way. Working with the physicality of the character could have given rise to a text or texts that the characters would speak; this could then lead to scenarios played out by the characters.

The oscillation between keeping the children focused on a task and following their lead uncovered an interesting theme in terms of running children's groups in general. If we work with play and the arts, the issue of *chaos* is usually present. When children get together in a free and open atmosphere, often there is an experience of bursting forth, sometimes with feelings of great joy and sometimes with feelings that are tinged with anxiety or aggressiveness. It is a challenge to leaders of children's groups to work with this chaos and to shape the high spirits (the noise and intense physical activity) into something that can work for the group. Often the tendency is to suppress these expressions altogether because they are too wild. However, what may be sacrificed by squelching the chaos is the ability to distinguish between "*productive*" and "*destructive*" *chaos*.

By "productive" chaos, I mean the kind of unstructured situation that brings excitement, aliveness and a feeling that something is emerging but is not yet known. "Productive" chaos refers to a period of disorganization that is in the service of art-making activity. There may be noise and intense random physical movement, but these are held and framed by a common intention in the group. An example of productive chaos in the children's group described above would be the free period of playing with the clay and the Vaseline in the early construction of the masks. Here the children were relaxed and open, making sexual and aggressive gestures that were held by the act of working on the material.

In contrast, "destructive" chaos would refer to a disorganized situation that endangers the group and inhibits the art-making activity. This might consist, for example, of noise or movement that were not bound or held by an activity. Children who are in this kind of situation do not pay attention to themselves or to others; they have lost the capacity to listen; and they might be in danger of hurting themselves or others. When this kind of chaos emerges, the leaders need to step in and frame what is happening, harness it and move it into a more productive direction. A destructive chaotic situation takes away from the capacity of children to work with the arts and to use their imaginations. Under these circumstances, everyone is simply trying to survive in his or her own way; there is rarely a sense of the members of a group acting together.

If we were to reflect on the parents' group in general, we might say that what seemed to make it successful was the openness of the leaders to follow

the path of the group and not to impose their own agenda. Initially, this was difficult for the two leaders of this group in terms of their own styles. They had to be reassured periodically that what was happening was therapeutic. They had a hard time accepting that what they experienced as the “chit-chat” of the group was actually helping the parents to relax, to bond and to support each other. In terms of the stated goals of these parents, they had identified having a place to relax and get support for parenting as major therapeutic elements. It was important for the leaders to keep reminding themselves of these goals.

The main tasks of the leaders of this group were the following: to provide and organize the space for the group every week, to listen and follow the conversation, to make sure that each parent had the opportunity to talk and to be heard, to summarize the themes and to stay in a collaborative relationship with the co-therapists of the children’s group.

In both cases, the children’s group and the parents’ group, the group acting together was an essential element in the therapeutic effect of the experience. In the children’s group, the regularity of group meetings, the holding function of the leaders, the routine of the structure, the clarity about expectations, coupled with the art-making activities, helped to promote group formation and the sense of a group acting together. In the parents’ group, some of the same elements were in place, in terms of regularity, holding and routine. While there was no art-making activity, there was enough freedom and possibility in the structure so that any kind of topic or subject for the discussion was acceptable. The parents felt heard and welcomed; the leaders communicated that each one had something important to contribute.

There was an emphasis in the children’s group on *making works*. Especially in terms of the masks, the leaders encouraged the children to make a work and to stay with it until it was finished. This encouragement had two purposes: first, it focused on the children’s capacities and tried to *enhance their resources* by acknowledging that everyone is capable of making something; second, it emphasized the *continuity* of the experience, that the work can be continued and held from week to week. In addition to saving the masks, the children’s art work was collected in a folder which they had decorated in one of the early groups. It was important to wait until the termination of the group to take all of the work home. The work was kept in a

special, safe place and brought back in every group so that the children could look at it again and again.

Music as an instrument of order in chaos

In a parallel parents' and children's group that I supervised several years later, we used music and musical improvisation as our main art modality. We did this because the leaders of the children's group were professional musicians taking the expressive arts therapy training, and music was their leading resource. In the interviewing process, we also discovered that each child had a musical background to one degree or another. We were all excited about what music could bring to a group of five boys (11 to 13 years old) identified as having difficulties with peer relationships.

The leaders supplied simple percussion instruments for the boys: a set of bongos, drumsticks, a cowbell, a variety of shakers and two clay ocarinas. Each boy was invited to choose an instrument and to check in with a sound. These sounds sometimes led to stories about how the week had been, or else they led directly into a group improvisation, inspired by the leaders who played along with them. This inspiration from the leaders was important in creating a group feeling and a group sound. The sounds of the leaders helped to cluster the disparate sounds made by the boys and help them to develop a sense of a "groove" together. The majority of these boys were challenged in their ability to listen; the musical structures that they invented and that were suggested by the leaders helped them to focus and pay attention to each other. They could sense when the music was off and when they needed to look at and listen to each other. The music that resulted was always the best indicator. In one particular structure suggested by the leader, a boy would begin and others would join in one after the other until everyone was participating. In another structure, each boy became a conductor, pointing to the sound that he wanted in the piece and indicating whether he wanted it fast or slow, loud or soft, staccato or smooth. After these improvisations, the boys would discuss what they wished for the next time and then do more "takes."

By working together through the language of music, the boys were developing a new experience of communication and co-operation. Again, we can see an example of the process of the group acting together in a ther-

apeutic art-making experience which works to create *order out of chaos* and to *increase the range of play*. All of these boys experienced a new sense of adequacy in their peer relationships through the *distancing function* of the musical structures.

PART III: SUPERVISION OF THE PRACTICE OF AN AESTHETIC THERAPY

In addition to course work, practical experience, personal psychotherapy and artistic practice, one of the most important ways that a student learns to be an expressive arts therapist is by working with a more experienced practitioner as a supervisor, observing and absorbing how they work and how they think. This is like the system of apprenticeship in order to learn a trade. The supervisor has years of experience and practice wisdom to impart in order to carry on the “trade” or, in this case, the art of practicing expressive arts therapy.

What are some of the elements of supervision with respect to the practice of expressive arts therapy as an aesthetic therapy?

1. Supervision creates an *overview*. It provides the supervisee with the opportunity to literally “see over” a situation. Often the supervisee is too close to the material to see it clearly. Like the artist who needs to get away from the canvas to see the work better, the supervisee needs the outside eye of the supervisor to be able to see the whole picture more clearly. This capacity for *distancing* helps to generate more information about the situation. As a consequence of supervision, the supervisee can begin to provide the distancing function for her- or himself in the moment – that is, even when the supervisor is not literally present. The capacity to take distance should also be counterbalanced by the capacity to *identify* with the clients and their situation. Too much distance creates disconnection; too much identification destroys the ability to see clearly. The right balance between distance and closeness, fostered by the learning in supervision, allows for a richer picture of the material.

2. Supervision creates *perspective*. The overview takes in the whole picture; but the supervisor can also provide a way of seeing. This angle on the work may allow the supervisee to see things with new eyes. Artists are often able to show us the world in a new way, to open up our ways of seeing. In a similar way, the supervisor can do this for the supervisee. One author (Tselikas-Portmann 1999) has called this role of the supervisor the “perturbator” or “intruder.” The supervisor does not subscribe to what seems self-evident within the supervised system; he or she is able to disturb the system by casting it in a new light.
3. Supervision creates a *space for reflection*. This is related to distancing and taking an overview. In addition, the time and space of supervision posits a special opening where the supervisee is encouraged to think about the difference between the material which is outside (the client or clients) and the material which is inside (the supervisee’s own feelings, thoughts and reactions). This reflective process can also involve art-making as a special way that material can be opened up. In opening space for reflection, a transitional space can also be created. The space of supervision is a “gap” where both supervisor and supervisee can play with ideas for therapeutic practice. The shelter of this space gives maximum freedom to speculate, dream and make art together in order to enhance reflection.
4. Supervision can be helpful in creating an area where the student can *decenter* from the literal problems of his or her work and enter a play-space. This play-space can stay close to the themes coming up in the practical work or it can go very far away from anything to do with the practice. Playing can relax and refresh as well as provide an opportunity to return to the material with a new openness.
5. Supervision creates a *multiplicity* of options. Because the supervisee is encouraged to look at the situation from another

view, or from many other views, supervision necessarily suggests different possibilities for intervening or structuring situations. Rather than reducing complexity, supervision should enhance it, thus supporting the idea that most difficult situations involving human beings cannot be resolved with simple answers.

6. Supervision creates an atmosphere of *curiosity* on the part of both the supervisor and the supervisee. Supervisors, although their experience usually tends to lead them to think about situations in repeating patterns, need to be as open to the material as the supervisee and sometimes to suspend their preconceptions in order to entertain new ideas. Supervision should foster curiosity and excitement on the part of the supervisee as well as on the part of the supervisor. Curiosity extends to both the material with the clients as well as to the way that the supervisee sees and handles various situations. This kind of curiosity fosters *improvisation* as a way of working and as a way of teaching. Supervision can be improvisatory in the sense that the supervisor, never knowing with certainty what will be presented from one session to the next, must have the capacity to receive the material and structure ways of working with it that are appropriate in the present moment. Similarly, teaching the supervisee to dance between having a plan set out beforehand and going with the needs of the client or clients at the moment is one of the major tasks of supervision.
7. Supervision, within the practice of an aesthetic therapy, creates an atmosphere of support for the *resources* of the supervisee. The supervisor has to help the supervisee to identify his or her strengths and to build upon them. The supervisor is not the one who has the truth, and he or she should not try to control the learning process of the supervisee. The supervisor cannot make the supervisee dependent. Rather, supervision gives the supervisee room to work things out for him- or herself.
8. Supervision creates a lively forum for *dialogue*, *mutual support* and *connection*. In group supervision situations, the supervisor helps the supervisees to learn from each other. In individual

supervision situations, the supervisor is open for the back and forth of dialogical communication. This does not mean that the supervisor cannot challenge or “perturb” the supervisee, as we indicated above. Rather, criticism or feedback must be given in a way that supports the supervisees and helps them to see another way of acting and thinking.

9. Supervision creates a space in which *art is at the center*. The central role of art-making and the art work is what primarily distinguishes supervision in expressive arts therapy from supervision in other approaches to psychotherapy training. This process includes making art in the supervision process and bringing in the art work of clients. There is a triangle (Tselikas-Portmann 1999, p.27) of supervisor/supervisee/art work which serves as an essential element of supervision in expressive arts therapy. Without the inclusion of art-making and the work of art into the supervision itself, we might tend to de-value the arts or media as “primary forms of clinical analysis and expression” (McNiff 1986, p.164). Supervision with and through the arts has the possibility to continue to help to teach the supervisee about the necessity to “[bear] the obliqueness inherent in metaphorical expressions instead of interpreting dramatic/artistic creations” (Tselikas-Portmann 1999, p.9).
10. Supervision creates a space for *imagination*. A great deal of knowledge and information exists outside of the direct awareness of the supervisee. Gaining access to this knowledge requires acts of imagination. A creative supervisor can help the supervisee unlock and uncover buried thoughts and feelings which may be interfering with or impinging upon the work with clients. The arts can be a useful way to make some of this hidden information visible. In doing so, the arts also open up the perspective of the supervisee for new possibilities.
11. Supervision, like training in general, creates a challenging place for *personal exploration*. Many authors who have written about supervision in the arts therapies make the distinction between supervision as therapy and supervision as an educational

experience. While this is an important distinction to make, often, in practice, the line between therapy and supervision can be blurred. Creative supervisors who use experiential and artistic methods to help supervisees understand personal blocks and hidden parts of themselves in relation to their work with clients must be prepared for the opening process that this will initiate in the supervisee. Keeping the work with the client or clients at the focus will be useful in helping to prevent the supervision from becoming therapy for the supervisee. It is also important to recognize when an issue is appropriate for supervision and when it needs to be brought to therapy. The therapeutic exploration of a clinical issue can be an important complement to the exploration of the same issue in supervision. The combination of the two creates new information and increases complexity. This possibility to increase complexity also holds true for the relationship between training as a whole and the experience of psychotherapy within the training. Supervision creates a *practical ground* upon which the supervisee can stand. This grounding involves clarity around the theoretical principles of the supervisor, the nature of the setting within which the supervision will take place, the needs and demands of the clients, the materials that are available or needed in the setting in order for the work to proceed, professional concerns such as ethics, laws and regulations, documentation and all areas of knowledge that affect the welfare and rights of the clients.

The practice of supervision, like the training in expressive arts therapy, is itself an aesthetic process. As such, supervision contains many of the elements that are needed to make art. Grounding in the practical materials at hand, imagination, improvisation, curiosity, an emphasis on resources, the ability to challenge, perturb and open to a fresh perspective, the capacity for nearness and distance, and an opening up to a multiplicity of possibilities – these could all be seen as elements of an artistic as well as of a supervisory process.

In the next section, I will move on to discuss some vignettes from my practice of supervision, especially those times when we made art as a way of

learning more about the work with clients. These examples will illustrate some of the elements of an aesthetic supervisory practice discussed above.

Learning through the arts: group supervision of expressive arts therapy trainees

Practical application of the training is a critical component of the educational process in becoming an expressive arts therapist. Students are placed in many different settings where they have an opportunity to apply what they are learning in the classroom. The practicum may involve the student with children in schools, hospitals or treatment centers; it may involve working with disabled adults, psychiatric patients, elderly people, homeless families, victims of torture and violence, or adolescents with a variety of problems from eating disorders to conduct problems or expulsion from school. In addition to these placements, there are many others; and students are encouraged to develop practicums in settings that would not necessarily be considered traditional or clinical. These might include, for example, a youth outreach program of a theater company or working with non-profit organizations doing team-building or working in a summer arts camp for differently-abled and able-bodied children.

In order to add more expressive arts therapy supervision to the curriculum of our training program, we formed a supervision group made up of about seven students who did not have adequate supervision on their practicum sites. Normally, students receive weekly supervision sessions from an experienced person at the practicum site. While this supervision is not necessarily through expressive arts therapy *per se*, the supervisor is usually sensitive to the therapeutic value of the arts and is able to guide the student, providing supervision from the perspective that fits with the culture of the agency. In the case of the students in the supervision group, however, there was no one on the site who was able to supervise, either because of time constraints or because of lack of training and experience.

Supervision that takes place in a group format has certain advantages and disadvantages. The major disadvantage has to do with the limitations on the amount of time that each student gets to work on their practicum issues. Sometimes there is the tendency to gloss over the work at each setting in order to give everyone time to share. However, this limitation can

be addressed by organizing the structure so that, although the pace is slowed down, more details are covered. One major advantage to a group supervision format is the enrichment that comes with many students sharing their ideas and perspectives. Another is the sense of mutual support that evolves from the group working together over time. Like any group, if it is working well, there is the development of a group feeling, promoting a sense of cohesion.

Besides sharing the progress of work on the practicum from week to week and addressing specific issues through discussion, the supervision group would periodically engage in art-making projects, either around themes relevant to the practical application of expressive arts therapy to client populations or in an open way, without any instruction, much like an open studio.

In the first meeting of the group, in which everyone was a bit anxious and needing some structure, we introduced a structure using four drawings designed to address the theme of the resources that each student was bringing into the practicum, the goals for learning, the obstacles in the way of the learning and the possibilities for overcoming the obstacles. In each drawing, the student was asked a question; the task was to generate an image in response to the question. Students were told that their imaginative response could take an exploratory form and need not be a literal representation of their answers to the questions.

1. Where am I now?
2. Where do I want to be?
3. What is the obstacle to where I want to be?
4. What do I need to do to move through the obstacle?

The use of a drawing rather than staying with a typical question/answer mode seemed to provide a safer ground upon which to reveal certain material, especially at the beginning of the group. After the four drawings were done, they were displayed for everyone to see and then organized together so that everyone's first drawings were grouped together, second drawings together and so forth. Grouping the drawings in this way served to bring members of the group together and to help them to get to know each other. Each person could begin to identify their own learning goals

and to see how their goals were similar or different to others. The structure also helped to expose certain of the students' vulnerabilities in a more safe and distanced way. For example, in reflecting on the third drawing, several students identified fear as an obstacle to their learning. While it would have been difficult to expose their fears directly in a group setting, particularly at the beginning, they could do so more easily within the indirect, framed space of the drawing.

In the second drawing, all the students were able to see very clearly what their hopes were for the supervision group. This helped to begin to identify a group consensus about what the goals of the learning would be for the group as a whole. It also was helpful to me as the teacher to see clearly what the students were looking for from the experience of the group. Some of the statements that came from the images of their wishes for the learning were:

"I am not alone. We have backpacks and hats. We're prepared." (This student had identified herself as "at the base of a big mountain" in answer to the first question.)

"Having time to reflect and support from others."

"Blooming, bigger and brighter."

"An older tree, reaching out."

"Moving forward and diving in."

"Shooting at the target."

"Flowing but grounded. Knowing and more solid."

We returned to the drawings in the next group meeting and did an intermodal transfer which involved a movement exploration of the drawings of the obstacle. Each student explored the obstacle by becoming it and putting the movement of the obstacle into the body. Sounds and words were also generated from this movement. In a second take, the students were asked to drop the obstacle movement from their own bodies, to move as themselves and then to imagine that the obstacle was in front of them. They were then asked to explore what they would do in movement when they were confronted with the obstacle. The movement variations included flowing in and out, chopping and pounding, poking and pushing,

walking through and around, and standing still. After the movement exploration, I asked the students to write for a time on their own, then to find partners and to share the writing and their thoughts about the whole process.

As the students got started on their practicums, there was more of a need to present material from their weekly sessions. We set up a schedule so that after the initial check-in and a warm-up, one person would be able to have an hour of the group time to go into more depth on an issue. We also planned to have an entire evening of art-making around a theme once a month. The weekly warm-up was led by one of the students; after the warm-up, we would discuss what worked and what did not work, using the warm-up also as a piece for supervision.

In one of the art-making sessions, I had the students work on the theme of identification and dis-identification through a series of intermodal explorations. The steps of the process were as follows:

1. Think about a challenging client. Walk like the client. Exaggerate this movement, going from neutral to very large, back to neutral and to very tiny. Find a phrase that the client would say and mutter it to yourself as you are moving. Taking turns, say the phrase out loud so others can hear it.
2. Take two large paintbrushes and concentrate all of the movement in the hands, while continuing to walk around. Say the phrase as well while walking, with the brushes moving.
3. Go to a large piece of paper (preferably pinned to the wall), take some paint and bring the movement onto the paper, making a sketch.
4. Write for a few minutes, reflecting on what you see in the image at this point and what happened with the movement.
5. From the movement sketch, construct a whole painting.
6. Visit each painting and leave several words at each one.
7. Out of the words that were given to you, make a poem.
8. Read the poems out loud when everyone is finished.
9. Discuss the whole exercise and reflect on the experience.

The students found this structure beneficial both for themselves and also in terms of enriching their understanding of their clients. Having time to make art was useful in itself. The open quality of the instructions allowed them to have an experience of decentering: after immersion in the exercise, they could leave the tight focus of the theme and become more exploratory.

This exercise, and others similar to it, promotes some of the objectives of supervision outlined above. It creates *a space in which distancing and reflection can occur*. Yet, because this is done through the arts, it has a more *exploratory quality* than a more linear discussion might have. It exercises imagination and multiplies possibilities in several ways: it invites the student to enact the role of the client but not as the client *per se*, rather as a kind of character; it replaces the client-as-real with the client-as-image, opening up the possibility of departing from what is ordinarily observed; it also makes room for others to add their perceptions and images to the mix, inviting the possibility of a surprise or of something new entering the scene.

Toward the end of the year, we had another art-making session designed to help students crystallize their work. I titled this one: *The Make-Over*. In this exercise, I had the students make portraits of themselves as they were before their experience of the practicum and then as they were after the experience. After the self-portraits, I asked them to make portraits of their clients before and after – either individual clients or groups. By “portraits,” I meant shapes or colors rather than true likenesses of themselves or of their clients. The shapes and colors would, it was hoped, help them to capture the essence more than a representative form.

One can clearly see changes from the first to the second picture from examples of a few of the student drawings (see Figures 3.13 to 3.16). The drawings helped the students to crystallize their observations and to bring the essence of their work to the foreground. It is sometimes distracting to get involved in all the details and miss the overview. The discipline of using one drawing to summarize a whole body of information forces students to make it as essential as possible. Asking them to first draw a picture of themselves helps students to take distance from their own experience and create perspective. Asking them to draw a picture of the client also creates a distance between student and client. The distance is a necessary part of learning, as long as it does not promote too much separation and the loss of a capacity to resonate with the client.

Supervision that goes well has a kind of improvisatory quality. Students bring their material, and there is a sense that we don't know exactly where the questions that are brought will lead us. We try to name those elements that make things work and those that do not work. To a great extent, supervision is like making a work of art. We play with the material; then a shape begins to emerge. From week to week, the students work on continuing to shape the material – to tune themselves like instruments in order to be sensitive in picking up on the cues or notes that their clients make in order to help them to make their own music.

For example, students working with a children's group in a public school setting were having a difficult time working with one child in particular. James would regularly enter the space and immediately do something that attracted the eye of a leader – touching something that was off-limits, not wanting to sit with the rest of the group, following any sort of impulse. This “acting-out behavior” would continue throughout the group session, disrupting group activities and making it difficult to carry out any of the projects and activities.

We began the supervision by talking about making rules and setting limits, not just for James, but also for the whole group. James was standing out as a kind of lightning rod for the group. In the group there were also children who were the opposite of James – shy, inhibited and timid – as well as children who were struggling between the two polarities. It was easy to overlook the needs of the other children because James had become so prominent. Our sense was that everyone needed a feeling of containment. James obviously needed help in focusing, and the other children needed to feel safe enough to take risks and emerge in the group.

Just as in the children's group within a clinical setting, the rule-making process in this school-based children's group needed to be addressed and shaped almost every week; the students needed support in continuing to go back to it over and over again. They also needed help in being consistent. There was a tendency for the students to feel guilty for carrying out a consequence with the children. They needed help in re-framing what they were trying to do: that it was not punishment for its own sake but for the sake of being able to get to the activities and to the essence of the work – the art-making and the therapy that comes with making art. Especially in a school environment, it was important to pay attention to and understand



Figure 3.13 Before and after (client)

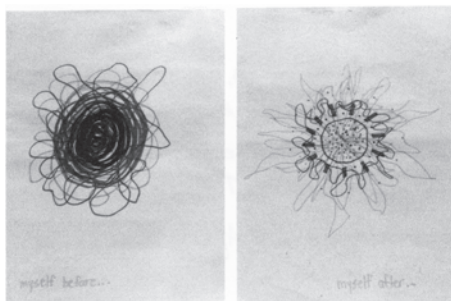


Figure 3.14 Before and after (trainee)

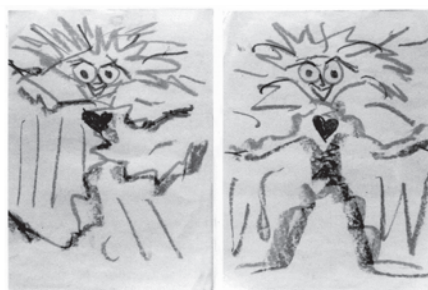


Figure 3.15 Before and after (client)

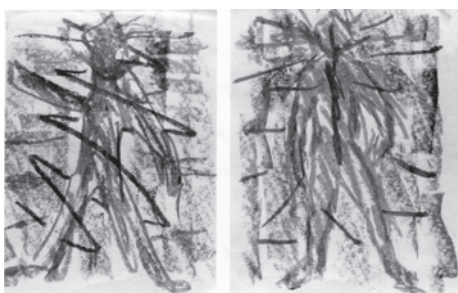


Figure 3.16 Before and after (trainee)

the host culture in terms of what its expectations were for the children. The rules of the group had to blend to an extent with the rules of the school, especially with respect to behavior in the hallways and spaces outside of the group room.

One of the major challenges in the supervision of this work is a dance between telling the students what to do and allowing them to discover what needs to be done by a process of trial and error. This is analogous to both a parenting relationship and to a patient/therapist relationship. However, like parenting, there are times when one needs to step in and show what needs to be done. Perhaps in the patient/therapist relationship there are also times when one must provide concrete help or tell someone what to do – for example, the therapist may need to take a stand when a patient is threatening to harm themselves or endanger others.

There are many times where the practice-wisdom of the supervisor is required in order to keep things flowing with the students and their clients. If the supervisor knowingly withholds information that would be helpful to the student, this might be detrimental to the student's learning and the experience of the client. In the example of James, when a destructive kind of chaos was threatening to overwhelm the therapeutic action of the group, it was essential for the supervisor to guide the students into building a more secure frame within which the children could operate (could create the space for productive chaos) rather than continuing to wait in the hope that the students would eventually discover this themselves.

Seeing and playing together: group supervision of a multidisciplinary training group

Supervision of a group of expressive arts therapy students has many challenges; but the supervision of students from different disciplines, using an arts approach, also has its own unique challenges and rewards. In the particular clinical setting from which the material discussed in this section is drawn, there are students working together from the disciplines of social work, psychology, psychiatry and expressive arts therapy. The expressive arts therapy students have no difficulty moving into the arts and seem proud to be able to demonstrate their competence in this area over and against the other students. There is sometimes a sense of a hierarchy among

the different disciplines; this seems inescapable in terms of how the professions are remunerated and seen by the culture as a whole. The value that is placed upon psychiatry as the highest level attainable and then the descending rank order from psychology to social work places the expressive arts therapists near to the bottom of the ladder, with consequent feelings of inferiority and competitiveness.

Whereas the expressive arts therapy students can excel in the arts, the other students tend, in general, to feel more insecure when they have to approach an art task in the supervision context. If the right atmosphere is created, however, these students can begin to experience the value of the arts in creating a new way to see their work. This is more important to try and achieve than the fostering of competition among the students.

In one of the earlier supervision sessions with this multidisciplinary group, we did a warm-up in order to get to know each other and to begin to connect. We passed around a lump of clay, and each person had a minute to take a turn shaping it. Each time it arrived at a new person, it became something different or something on it was enhanced. There was laughter and playfulness. A kind of freedom began to open up in the group, and some of the feeling of tension or awkwardness started to dissipate. The students said that they realized how much permission the arts gave to explore and experiment.

The exercise did not allow time for anyone to display technical skill in molding clay or for anyone to worry about whether they could do it or not, whether they were “artistic” or not. The clay simply demanded to be handled. At the end of the shaping period, we looked at what we had made together and told a mutual story about it, with each person taking a turn to tell a part of the story and pass it on.

In one of the early supervision sessions with this group, I introduced the four drawings exercise discussed above. I added a part to the exercise in which everyone went around, looked at each other’s second drawing (Where do I want to be?) and had the task of leaving a few words behind as a response. Each person then wrote a poem using the words that they were given by the others. One drawing, done by a psychiatric resident, was accompanied by the following poem:

Colorful Energetic Balls
Colorful Bold Pies
Colorful DNA that
Connects the Confusing Wiggly Circuits
From a Bright but Fertile Void
Into a Cosmic or Comic Playground.

Another drawing, done by an expressive arts therapy student, was accompanied by the following poem:

Angry Airy Moonscape
Spacious Yellow
Organized Searching for Treasures
Primary Heat
Long Haul Pluck.

In discussing the impact of the arts on their learning, the students who came from disciplines other than expressive arts therapy agreed that the arts introduced an element of surprise into their learning experience. They found that to be enjoyable and also touching. They appreciated the playful space created in the group and noticed that they could learn just as well (or better) in this more relaxed atmosphere. The expressive arts therapy students, for their part, learned a great deal about communicating with other allied professionals. It was a stretch for them to discourse about their work in a way that other professionals could understand.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the practical applications of expressive arts therapy in the areas of training, practice and supervision. When we look back over the material presented here, what stands out as one of the recurring themes, in addition to the notions of chaos and order, is the role of the aesthetic dimension. How are we to understand the place of aesthetics in our field? What do we mean by aesthetics within the context of a therapy practice? One could also ask: what is the relationship between aesthetics and the concepts of chaos and order?

In her book *Studio Art Therapy* (2002), Cathy Moon notes that many art therapists have ignored the topic of aesthetics because it has traditionally

involved the category of formal beauty, considered by them to be an elitist notion. Beauty has also been understood to be a quality of craft or of an adherence to formal criteria, such as order, harmony, balance and composition. Moon, on the contrary, wants to retrieve the concept of beauty from the clutches of formalism and to expand it in order to encompass art that is produced in therapy sessions. Her conception of art, following Robbins (1987), recognizes beauty as arising out of disorder or out of that which is alive, and, following McNiff (1998), sees beauty as including imperfection, pathos and struggle. According to Moon:

When we are moved to tears by tender expressions of pain, in awe of the courage required for a client to transform internal experiences into tangible form, or witness a client giving artistic expression to something that could be articulated in no other way, we comprehend beauty in forms that deviate from conventional aesthetic standards. (Moon 2002, p.137)

From the perspective we have developed in this book, we might say that the aesthetics of expressive arts therapy centers not on the notion of form as determined by the perception of a finished work, but, rather, on forming or shaping as the basic capacity of human beings. As was developed in the earlier chapters, to be human means to be capable of *poiesis*, being able to respond to and shape the world and the self. This shaping response is a complex process which involves both *formation* and *deformation* as well as the possibility of *re-formation*.

Training, practice and supervision in expressive arts therapy all draw upon this complex process of shaping. As we have seen in some of the vignettes discussed earlier (the Horny Clay or the Tearing of the Image) there are periods of *chaos* and a strong *liminal* sense to the whole training experience. The work of training is designed to recognize the value of *productive chaos* and to develop a high degree of *sensitivity*, to literally sense at all levels what is before us, be it the client, the space or the materials. Sensitivity involves paying attention through all the senses, attuning to the potential for expression, sensing what possibilities there are for following the *image* and helping to shape it in the way that fits for the client (whether it be an individual, group or community). Developing this kind of sensitivity involves students in a re-formulation of their own identities. It takes the full training period and beyond. In fact, it could be seen as an entire life project.

In therapeutic practice, acts of shaping are always present. From the beginning, working with materials demands the creation of an environment which is conducive to making works. Much of what we do in therapy is to set up spaces (both physically and emotionally) that invite images to come and make it safe enough to engage in a process of destruction and re-formulation. Once we have the images, then we need to follow them and help to bring them into a form.

What is involved in this forming/shaping process? As we have seen in many of the examples from practice work, there is always the necessity for a *frame* that helps to maximize the imaginative possibilities and hold the difficulties that inevitably emerge. The frame can be defined by time (we meet from 5 to 6 p.m. on Wednesdays), space (we work in a 10 by 12 ft room) or materials (we use clay or only black and white paint). It can also be defined by the particular structure in terms of which the work takes place. *Distancing* is another necessary element in the shaping process – we work on something that is not-me, it is out there in the world, and I can look at it. Certain arts have more or less distancing qualities: visual art is more distancing than voice, for example. The distancing function of art helps to provide containment for the brokenness with which the aesthetic/creative process works. We are also looking to help others to *expand the play range or repertoire* in the acts of shaping in which we help them to engage. In many of the practice examples, we saw a focus on *making works of art* as a key component of the therapy (the termination of therapy with Farah, the masks of the children's group, the musical improvisations). These works were important in themselves and also as *sheltering metaphors* for more emotionally laden experiences.

Finally, in supervision, we can also see the shaping process at work. Supervision might be considered a key component of training and one of the forces that promotes a re-formulation of identity in the training of expressive arts therapists or any therapist-in-training. A major goal of supervision is to encourage the students to continue to tune themselves as instruments for therapeutic practice. The challenge for the supervisor is to dance with the student in such a way that determining who is leading and who is following is almost impossible.

Much of the act of supervision depends upon improvising around a theme and playing with the material brought by the students until a shape

begins to emerge. The supervisor brings their experience to the process but does not impose it upon the students or the material. The supervisor might be compared to a midwife who can guide the students to find their own styles and ways of working. As with training and practice, supervision creates the conditions within which learning and change can take place. And as with training and practice, supervision is an experience in which *shaping and being shaped* or *aesthetic activity* is at the center.

The practice of expressive arts therapy is based upon a *therapeutic aesthetics* which is appropriate to the nature of our work in this field. In expressive arts therapy, works of art come out of the museums, the concert halls, the galleries and the theaters and leave their mark upon the everyday life of people in need. Only a therapeutic aesthetics based upon *poiesis*, the capacity to respond to and shape the world, can actually affect people in their very existence. In this way, therapy becomes the basis not only for a specialized professional activity, but also for our being-in-the-world.

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