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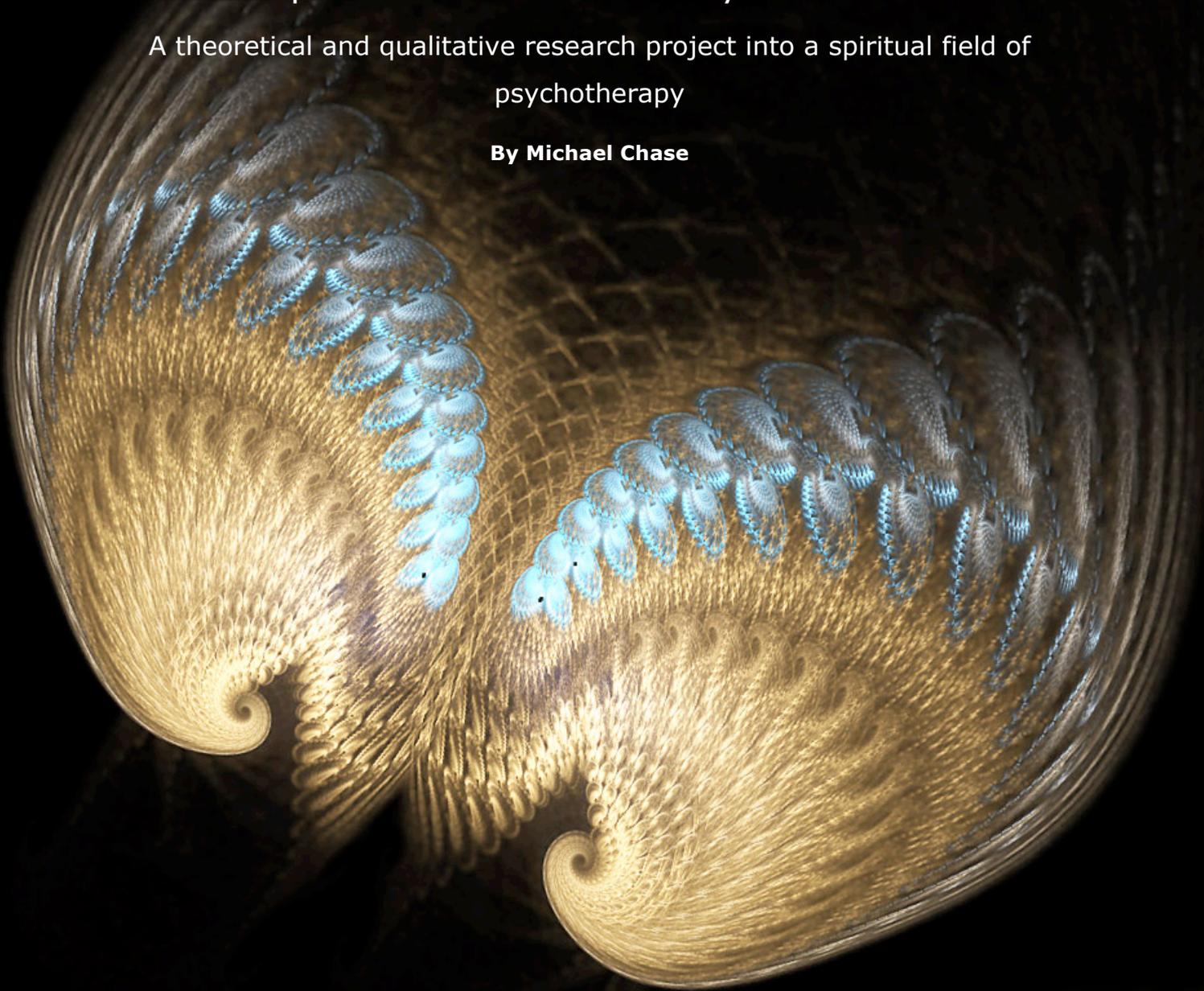
## Spiritual Dimensions of Psychodrama

A theoretical and qualitative research project into a spiritual field of  
psychotherapy

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# Spiritual Dimensions of Psychodrama

A theoretical and qualitative research project into a spiritual field of psychotherapy

## Abstract

In this thesis I look at Jacob Moreno's spiritual perspectives on psychodrama, predominantly through his writing in *Words of the Father* (1971). I also explore Zerka Moreno's explicitly expressed views on spiritual aspects of life and psychodrama. I follow this with a brief look at the work of four women who have developed theory and practice of a spiritual nature in the field of psychodrama: Connie Miller in Souldrama, then Kate Hudgens in her Therapeutic Spiral Model, followed by Natalie Winter in her article on The Fourth Role Category and finally Susan Aaron in Psychodramatic Bodywork®. I then look at the work and ideas of Rudolf Steiner's Spiritual Psychology and take a brief look at Karl Jung's relationship to the spirit. After the literature review I introduce the qualitative research into my own practice and conclude with a discussion introducing new 'prescriptive roles and action structures' into my psychodrama practice. The main question for the qualitative research is:

What understanding and practices exist in the spiritual dimensions of psychodrama?

Sub-question 1): What new dimensions can be created in order to generate deeper levels of meaning and healing of traumatic life events?

Sub-question 2): How can tenets from Rudolf Steiner's spiritual science inform and improve my practice as a psychodramatist?

## Introduction

On starting my training in psychodrama I quickly became aware of the rich and creative form of human development through the person-centred action methods. I noticed the freedom this gave the individual or protagonist in how their work developed and how, from time to time, roles and scenes of a spiritual dimension would arise. This reminded me of some of the ideas of Rudolf Steiner. Steiner's emphasis in the field of psychotherapy and psychology was to continually emphasise the spiritual dimensions. He believed that incorporating spiritual dimensions within the therapeutic relationship would positively effect what happens in the body and soul dimensions, without which healing would be incomplete.

Classical psychodrama incorporates spiritual dimensions if the protagonist requires and the director offers. Other modalities of psychodrama outside the classical approach have consciously introduced aspects of spirituality which have gone further than J. L. Moreno was able to go in his lifetime. Whilst exploring the work of Connie Miller, Kate Hudgens, Natalie Winter and Susan Aaron, it became evident how the creative and spontaneous approach of psychodrama left them free to research and develop the spiritual dimensions of their work. It became evident too that some of the spiritual dimensions I was looking for, as far as I can see, have not been developed as yet. I also realised that I did not wish to incorporate some of the spiritual dimensions that have been developed by others, into my practice and theory. It gradually dawned on me that I would need to develop my practice myself, drawing from what exists in the field and going into some new areas.

## Theoretical contributions of a spiritual dimension from the world of psychodrama

Jacob Levi Moreno

Jacob Levi Moreno, the founder of psychodrama, was a modern man in a modern world. Like Prometheus, he brought the burning hot gift of fire to a humanity that was waiting in a world dying of abstraction, and he called it 'spontaneity'. When asked by Sigmund Freud what he thought of his paper on dream analysis, Moreno challenged his notions saying: "I start where you leave off. You analyse people's dreams. In a way you disillusion them. I teach them to dream again." (Moreno, 2012, pp.42-43) He said of the spiritual world which he refers to as 'cosmos':

"...the cosmos must be so integrated into the therapeutic setting that it has experiential and existential value for the protagonist...A therapeutic method which does not concern itself with these enormous cosmic implications, with man's very destiny, is incomplete and inadequate...It is therefore, through man's faith in the infinite creativity of the cosmos that what he embodies in the psychodramatic world may one day actually become true." (Moreno, 1966, pp.11-12)

Moreno makes it quite clear that what we struggle with in the modern world is a loss of faith in vertical attention, in anything representing a greater power in life. He considers that more often than not, we put our faith in an authority which does not deserve it, such as a priest, politician or therapist. What is required, he suggests, is to experience one's own relationship to the divine by becoming co-creators with our own lives through embodiment: "The image of God can take form and embodiment through every man...God is always within and among us, as he is for children. Instead of coming down from the skies, he comes in by way of the stage

door.” (Moreno, 1966, pp. 11-12) Moreno’s deep sense that we are all Gods, that we are all creators of the universe is a huge pill to swallow. There would have been a time when he would probably have been burned at the stake as a religious heretic. Senior psychodramatist and trainer Peter Haworth shared his concerns thus:

“It seems quite likely that Moreno’s hearing voices was some sort of dissociative experience, perhaps related to his childhood relationship with his father. In the preface to the 1971 edition of *The Words of the Father*, Moreno says: ‘This book contains the words of God, our Father, the Creator of the Universe’. (Karp, Homes and Bradshaw Tavon, 1998, p. 21)

There are others who share Haworth’s concern that Moreno has gone too far in arriving at his words of God; yet might this concern be misplaced? What is Moreno's God?

Moreno’s approach to godhead and spirit entails asking one to enter a world that is continually in a state of becoming. Arising spontaneously, as it were, in the moment, this is a god we can become. On the one hand spontaneity is the living spirit of Moreno’s God: “God is the Being who can summon the maximum of spontaneity and He is the Being whose spontaneity has become all creativity.” (Moreno, 1971, p.173)

Yet there seems to be another God that he refers to, something less graspable than the spontaneous God who can summon the greatest amount of spontaneity. This God is a mystery still to be solved, a dimension in which, he suggests, a spiritual world exists with gods on different planets and a cosmos inhabited by beings of different orders:

“...there is the affirmation that there are other universes created whose organisation is a total mystery to us; that the creator is present in every being of every universe, aware of and inseparable from every action, thought and feeling.” (Moreno, 1971, p.168)

The spontaneous God that we can become is another God from the ‘total mystery...creator god’. I believe Moreno was referring to the God of spontaneity whilst writing *The Words of the Father* rather than the “total mystery..creator god.” Following *The Words of the Father* (1971) Moreno does not seem to have taken the dimensions of cosmos any further than in roles. The nature of psychodramatic roles offers the protagonist freedom to be God, an angel, the spirit and other esoteric roles when needed. However, as with Prometheus, the gift of fire did not sit squarely with Zeus, as it gave freedom to humanity. Moreno’s gift of freedom, the spontaneous God, can be a challenging legacy, yet it is the source of everything.

#### Zerka Toeman Moreno

Zerka Moreno considers the spiritual dimensions of psychodrama in her own way in *A Memoir: To Dream Again*. (2012) Perhaps as a woman bringing a feeling perspective and sensitively exploring ideas with the ripeness of old age, she stands as an authority behind certain ideas that her husband was only able to pass on philosophically in the development of psychodrama.

Zerka was the second wife of Jacob Moreno and was over 25 years younger than him. She has played a central role in the development of psychodrama over the last 65 years. J. L. Moreno was the passionate, charismatic and bold founder, “a creative genius” in Z. T. Moreno’s words. She is of a different orientation, taking initially a more supportive role. Buchanan states: “When Zerka Toeman met J. L. Moreno in the summer of 1941, it was the beginning of the most successful partnership in the history of psychiatry.” (Moreno, 2012)

In her opening chapter Zerka Moreno states her spiritual commitment to J. L. Moreno in her poem *Déjà Vu*:

“It is not true that we two met  
But a bare few weeks ago.  
We know each other way, way back.  
There is no proof of this and yet  
I feel that it is so...”  
(Moreno, 2012, pp. 125-126)

She uses the phrase so often expressed by poets and people deeply in love, the feeling of having met before. Zerka Moreno’s approach to things that are deeply spiritual is not with bold charismatic statements; but rather she shares her beliefs and her sense of how it is.

It is impossible to demonstrate the existence of the spirit, yet many of us have a notion that the spirit is an intrinsic part of our existence as human beings. To capture this idea Zerka Moreno cites Chardin’s formulation: “We are not human beings on a spiritual journey; we are spiritual beings on a human journey.” (Moreno, 2012, p. 40) I find it inspiring that Zerka Moreno is prepared to take a point of view with such a vast perspective. We might wonder if this is to some extent due to having a father who was an Anthroposophist, an adherent of the world view of Rudolf Steiner, who believed in reincarnation. (Moreno, 2012) Here we can see her perspective on what we might call 'destiny', that life has meaning and purpose and that each of us has an individual path which does not exist in an existential vacuum:

“Events beyond our immediate control forge our paths. One can either take the position that life is just a bundle of uncontrolled, uncontrollable, meaningless events or assume that there is a design, however invisible...Nevertheless, the mystery remains.” (Moreno, 2012, p. 40)

She suggests that even the most challenging situations can be there for our development and growth, if we are able to transform them through our conscious striving: “The worst thing that happens to you can be the best thing for you; if it does not get the best of you.” (Moreno, 2012, p.30) This leads on to a crucial question stated by psychologists, mystics and laymen alike: why might we choose our parents? The idea that we have something to do with determining who our parents or carers are, some of whom have possibly not given us a good enough childhood, is quite preposterous from the point of view of many psychotherapists. Alice Miller states: “We can only solve this riddle (of unhealthy narcissism) if we manage to see the parents, too, as insecure children...”(Miller, 1987, p. 88) Miller and some of the addiction recovery programs which take to apportioning blame on our parents for the upbringings we have had, might take up arms against such an idea. This idea requires us to take responsibility for everything that has happened, is happening, and will happen in the future regarding poor parenting. Could we have chosen such situations in order to learn the most from the lessons that life has to offer? J. L. Moreno wrote: “... the child has something to do with being born, that a child’s spontaneity helps it to propel itself towards life...” (Moreno, 2012, p.80) Zerka Moreno believes that some of us choose our parents and later on she goes on to say more about why she feels she chose her own mother: “My sense is that I chose her in order to learn what good parenting is really about. Probably because it is easier for me to learn from negative than from positive lessons.” (Moreno, 2012, p.244) This does not infer that children are responsible for their abuse, but as adults we need to take responsibility for how we understand and use the experiences from childhood.

Z. T. Moreno has clearly made her life experiences into a work of art and has chosen the language of poetry to express it:

“...I believe life is meant to be a series of moral lessons for the soul, the actual

learning means being mindful of the events and scenes through which we pass, opening our eyes to the many forms in which lessons come, allowing them to enlarge our horizons and change our direction.” (Moreno, 2012, p. 277)

I would like to acknowledge the profundity of her statement, and I recognise how much more work I still need to do to transform my own life. I believe that hope, trust and faith are needed to learn the lessons that life can teach us. In Z. T. Moreno’s words: “The most significant lesson gained in this lifetime is that the impossible happens.” (Moreno, 2012, p. 520)

#### Four psychodramatists developing spiritual components to their practice

I believe that most psychodramatists make sense of the spiritual dimensions of life in their own way, whether implicitly or explicitly, through shamanism, Chinese healing or a world view that embraces more than just the physical. Many psychodramatists contribute to the spiritual dimensions of psychodrama within their own practice, enabling understanding and meaning of a ‘meta’ nature. The four practitioners I am including in this thesis are interestingly enough all women. Perhaps we will understand why this might be as the study unfolds. They have all embraced the 'cannon of creativity' that J. L. Moreno gave to humanity, from spontaneity to creativity, to cultural conserve and back again, as a cycle of continuous development. For Kate Hudgens the requirement is to create a safe model for working with trauma; for Susan Aaron it is to find appropriate expression of emotions. Connie Miller looks at leadership and taking responsibility for one’s own actions; and for Natalie Winter the requirement is the need for a more explicit articulation of deeply felt spiritual reality to be present in her practice. In this study I will focus only on the spiritual dimensions consciously

expressed by each of these practitioners in theory and within their fields of practice. I hope to map the field and see what exists and what gaps there may be.

### Connie Miller: Souldrama

Connie Miller is a psychodrama psychotherapist with experience in working with clients struggling in co-dependent relationships suffering within addictive and dysfunctional family systems. She designed Souldrama as an approach which offered tools and conditions to help clients with their spiritual development. (Miller 2008) Miller describes Souldrama as spirituality in action, where clients are taken through a seven step programme. This is inspired by the Buddhist philosophy of spiritual development where six phases of inner development are attained and mastered in order to reach enlightenment: “Each realm has a known anchor to assist the person in awakening, thereby escaping his illusionary person and fulfilling the opportunity presented in that realm.” (Miller, 2008, p .145)

The approach that Miller takes is presented as an interface between modern psychology, originated by Freud and Jung, Moreno’s incorporation of the godhead and the eastern stream of Buddhism. Miller writes a well-researched and crafted article where she states:

“Spirituality can be viewed as an energy that frames our experiences of the world. When we access that energy, it empowers you with courage to resolve problems and provides faith so that we can move forward in life. By incorporating spirituality in therapy, clients and counsellors can access this creative energy to help clients make meaningful life changes.” (Miller, 2008, p.140)

With this view of spirituality, Miller addresses the question of how to have more spirituality in life by proposing a spiritual journey defined as “a process through which individuals focus within themselves gaining self-awareness and self-forgiveness while creating empathic healing relationships with God and others.” (Miller, 2008, p.140) This is achieved by accessing spiritual intelligence, gaining access to energy beyond the day to day: “Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) refers to the skills, abilities and behaviours we need to balance the experience of expansive love with discipline and responsibility.” (Miller, 2008, p. 141)

SQ is seen as a vital requirement for wellbeing which has a significant role in keeping a healthy relationship to the self, others and the world. Miller places stress on the difference between the ego and the soul, from which a misunderstanding can arise regarding how the development of the spirit takes place: “Our ego focuses on how we are different from the world, and our soul focuses on how we are the same. When we align these two aspects of ourselves, we can move forward to our higher purpose, to our soul’s mission.” (Miller, 2008, p. 142)

What then occurs when there is shame and childhood trauma, when parts of our self are sacrificed and split off by stress? Miller has worked this through well and suggests...

“Spiritual growth is achieved through the repair of the bond with our soul following disconnection. (Zimmerhoff and Hartman, 1999) Strength of character, resilience, determination and deep trust all come from repair and realignment of the separation between ego and soul”. (Miller, 2008, p. 142)

How then, we might ask, does Souldrama support spiritual growth, the overcoming of the ego's separateness, the healing of traumatic life experiences, and the integration of the spiritual into life? Miller's methods are inspired by psychodramatic role taking, the most

significant role being that of the divine, God. This does not mean that every person's relationship with God or the divine is the same or even intact, but this is where the work can begin. As a means to achieve this, various roles are introduced:

“Taking the role of a higher power, an individual will find oneself spontaneously coming up with individualised and surprisingly meaningful answers within describing their relationship with their higher power. They learn whether they view higher power as critical, punishing, or loving.” (Miller, 2008, p. 142)

‘Inner’ conversations here described will be facilitated through a sequential ‘pilgrimage’ through seven phases. This involves participating in a series of activities: “As members travel through each door to the next stage, the ego and soul begin to align. As they grow spiritually, the rituals associated with passing through doorways concretises members’ personal spiritual growth and development.” (Miller, 2008, p. 147)

The seven steps are described briefly below. I will refer the reader to the article for more details. Briefly, each phase or stage is described as a doorway: Stage (1) accept the call to journey for a specific purpose; (2) find the faith in our vision needed to set out; (3) learn how to invoke the strength of spirit; (4) learn how to allow the spirit to speak and work through us in order to persist; (5) gain control over the obstacles that slow us down; (6) learn how to connect with our spiritual intelligence; (7) return to our home community, bringing back the blessings obtained. (Miller, 2008)

Miller has given much attention to detail with this process, in which some important tenets of a spiritual journey are elucidated. For example door one focuses on faith and prayer; door two the truth and gifts from parents; door three, compassion for self and other; door four is that of love, love for self, relationships and higher power; door five is humility; door six is

gratitude; and door seven inspiration and integration of the other six. (Miller, 2008) This is clearly connected to the Buddhist tradition and to the Tibetan Book of the Dead practices. It concurs with some of the spiritual practices that Rudolf Steiner suggests for developing the awakening of spiritual perception. Miller finishes her article by summing up the experiential field of the work:

“Freud recognised that the subconscious might contain the parts of us that are disowned and produce anxiety. Jung expanded his view of the subconscious to recognise that it is also a source of innate healing, creativity, and self-actualisation (1964). Divine energy, spirit, may work through our split, complex egos and seek to bring forth healing.”(Miller, 2008, p. 154)

It is exciting to see how Connie Miller has brought the Godhead from Moreno and made it the focus of her work in Souldrama. To the extent that it embraces Buddhism and Jung, Miller departs from classical psychodrama. The other spiritual aspects not mentioned in this article are to do with the understanding of different spiritual beings and reincarnation, which I will endeavour to explore in my research later on.

#### Kate Hudgens: Therapeutic Spiral Model

If Connie Miller, in the development of Souldrama, is a spiritual strategist, then I experience Kate Hudgens as a poet and healer in the creation of the Therapeutic Spiral Model (TSM). A psychodramatist and psychologist, Hudgens has drawn her work for the development of the TSM out of the need to understand her own suffering and the love for her fellow human beings, along with the wish and ability to support them in overcoming their trauma as she has managed to do with her own. In her description of her work she says...

“[The] spirit of healing is a spiral shell held in your hand. Look inside, turn it round, let it show you new worlds or views of yourself. Healing is not mere change but true transformation from a previous view of self, other, and the world. It is profound. It teaches all the depths of our individual stories as they weave and curve into similar, but different human struggles.” (Hudgens, 2012, p. 2)

Hudgens approach to the spiritual dimensions of psychodrama is from a different tradition to that of Miller’s Souldrama, because it taps into the ancient Native American traditions of healing in Shamanism. A Shaman Mohawk teacher at Hudgens’ retreat centre helped to give rise to some of the spiritual Prescriptive Roles which I will examine shortly and which have formed the basis for safe work in the area of trauma:

“She (the Mohawk teacher) worked individually and as a group co-creating TSM, bringing in many of the native teachings of spirituality, showing us how connected we are to each other, but also the animals, plants and rocks. I believe this has had a profound impact on how TSM uses the Spiritual Strengths and Spiritual Double to help people work through issues other psychologists might pathologise.” (Hudgens, 2012, p. 7)

What was evident in the psychodramatic world in the 1970’s was the immense power of the form to change lives and help with trauma in ways which other therapeutic modalities could not. This was not without its dangers though, with the possibilities of re-traumatisation and uncontrolled regression being triggered unintentionally by some directors misusing the action methods. How then to create safety within such a dynamic and effective form? This I believe is where Hudgens’ point of departure arose with the creation of Prescriptive Roles to support the client in working with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD):

“It begins with the director “prescribing” roles of support for the protagonist who is working on traumatic stress in its many forms. The psychological function of Prescriptive Roles is to restore spontaneity, vitality and emotional interpersonal, and spiritual strengths to build resilience needed in a protagonist who is going into battle against past trauma or present stress.” (Hudgens, 2012, pp. 9-10)

These restorative Prescriptive Roles which the director invites the protagonist and group to take are of different categories. While attending a workshop led by Hudgens in 2010 during the Annual British Psychodrama Conference, we were introduced to the role of 'spiritual strengths':

“Kate asked us to split into three groups, each chose scarves to represent the three strengths. I chose a scarf to represent a transpersonal strength based on the knowledge of Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophy. The second group chose intrapersonal and the third interpersonal strengths. We then laid the scarves out in a circle on the ground, joining them up so there were no gaps. This helped the group to begin to focus on strength and resiliency in preparation of the work to come.” (Chase, 2010, p. 5)

What was interesting about this piece of work was not that it helped me get in touch with some of my personal spiritual strengths, but that by placing the scarves representing the strength in a circle on the floor and stepping into the circle, I experienced a very powerful sense of safety in a new group. Like Miller, it was Moreno’s *The Words of the Father* (1971) that drew Hudgens to psychodrama in the first place:

“This book declares that each human being has the ability to co-create his or her own lives. He described a “god within” and eventually settled on the more neutral

godhead term, a radical view when the book was first published anonymously in the area of theology (1917) in Europe.” (Hudgens, 2012, p.5)

It comes as no surprise that Hudgens, like Miller, has the group taking roles of their Gods:

“In the TSM, many will often pick a god-Christian, Buddhist, Universal, Hindi etc as a supporting Prescriptive Role, but we have found that the purity of the god which the protagonist chooses must be tested for contamination due to religious persecution and other trauma that involve religion.” (Hudgens, 2012, p. 12)

With the 'spiritual double', Hudgens developed a role with Culbertston and Hug following 9/11. Something beyond human was required to support the development of trust in a world that would never be the same again, and the directions to the person holding the role are very exact:

“The Director directs the auxiliary or group member to “become that voice” that can see beyond the damage done. The damage that is causing pain, either from the long or recent past, and look to the future. The Spiritual Double helps the protagonist stand tall in his or her connection to senses that are spiritual—to intuition, “knowing” without knowing. The Spiritual Double becomes that internal voice that never gives up.” (Hudgens, 2012, p. 14)

The Prescriptive Role of the Spiritual Double is an intra-psychic role training device. When the protagonist hears the prescriptive statement enough times and begins to try it out for themselves, a new inner role can come into being. Other Prescriptive Roles include Observing Ego (OE), which Moreno developed and used occasionally, a role enabling the protagonist to be able to stay in touch with objectivity whilst entering deep, painful work.

The Containing Double, even if not described as a spiritual role, I believe is a voice of the “I” or Self, the more spiritual aspects of the individuality.

Hudgens works very spontaneously with the prescriptive roles, sometimes with multiple protagonists. Even though this can feel chaotic in comparison to classical psychodrama, TSM has given us the opportunity to work with stress, trauma and PTSD with tools that enable the development of resilience without the danger of re-traumatisation and uncontrolled regression.

Hudgens’ Spiritual Double is similar to Miller’s Messengers of Light and God roles. It is worth noting, however, that TSM differs from Souldrama, because Souldrama has structures that the group is taken through, whereas TSM has prescriptive roles and a looser structure. Both these methods offer forms of containment for aspects of spiritual awakening and development.

To conclude with TSM, it is important to acknowledge the development of spiritual Prescriptive Poles in the psychodrama arena. This is not only for treating PTSD but is also used generally. The idea and function of Prescriptive Roles can limit the protagonist in as much as the words they use are not the protagonists. However this is a powerful role training device that can offer protagonists and the group the opportunity to have an ideal modelled which was never possible in life.

#### Natalie Winters: Psychospiritual, a Fourth Role Category

In continuing this exploration of some of the foremost psychodramatists in the field of spirituality, I would like to turn to Natalie Winters. Winters, a psychologist and

psychodramatist, is the director of the Centre of Psychodramatic Studies in Tampa Florida USA. She is a colleague of Hudgens and shares some similar aspects of her work to that of Miller and Hudgens. Winters has a very clear line through her work, that of introducing a 'fourth role category'. This is something Moreno referred to: "...all measures and tests of humanity should be constructed after the model of God involved in the creation of the universe." (Moreno, 1978, p. 21) Winters says that Moreno made a mistake in leaving God out of the Canon of Creativity: "[He]established three role categories as the headings under which to list the roles people take from birth on: psychosomatic, psychodramatic and sociocultural. I believe the psychospiritual is missing." (Winters, 2000, p.165)

Winters' take on spirituality is about wholeness of being and accepting an infinite universal intelligence. Like Miller, this is not an everyday intelligence but something that enables us to have the capacity to see the positive in life, to have an abundance of compassion and an open heart: "Spirituality is a realm beyond words that cradles us within and surrounds us from without." (Winters, 2000, p.164)

Winters' spirituality is an 'allness' that we can't fully comprehend. She enters a poetic reverie to find a way of living with the unknown. Here it is well expressed in the writings of Ken Wilber: 'The continuing evolutionary process of within and beyond brings new within and new beyond.' (Winters, 2000, p.165) The crux of Winters' contribution to this debate, as expressed in her article, is to develop a model that expands Moreno's 'Canon of Creativity'. She includes the psychospiritual aspect which she calls G, the Godhead.

"If we modify the original Morenian model with the addition of G as the Source, then we see that this Source is actually encompassing, within, interpenetrating, and creating a total, all-inclusive awareness or allness. *Allness* is a broader view of the cosmos, which Moreno saw as synonymous with the universe." (Winters, 2000, p.165)

With the fourth role category, the canon of creativity now includes God. The ‘allness’ and other important functions like ‘leaps of faith’; ‘spring boards’ to the next step; and ‘signatures of movement’ are included in her extended canon of creativity. Developing Moreno’s picture, spontaneity leads to creativity, leads to cultural conserve, leads to Godhead, and then back into spontaneity.

With the psychospiritual role category placed within her theory of psychodrama, Winters introduces nine role designations. Like Hudgens’ Prescriptive Roles and Millers’ gateways, these functions are for the psychospiritual role category. In summary they are: the imaginer; the meditator; the rememberer; the receiver; the giver; the artist; the channeler; the believer and the prayer.

Winters invites the reader to ‘expand and develop’ any additional aspects to this role that we feel are significant for us. These well considered role designations have an important task in fostering spiritual intelligence in the work of protagonists. Winters, like Miller, has created a form in which the spiritual aspects of the work are placed consciously within any psychodrama. She suggests that directors need to be clear about their own spiritual beliefs and values and be unafraid to introduce spirituality to the group at the offset. She offers an approach to the therapeutic process in nine points which are:

“1. When setting the scene, provide an atmosphere of safety and acceptance, a climate based on the concept that the cosmos is our home. The use of the preface to *The Words of the Father* (Moreno, 1971, pp. xviii-xx) can assist in this endeavour.

2. Present the psychospiritual role category by drawing the Cosmic Spiral of Creativity on a chart and teach it to the group. Keep the model in view at all times during each session.

3. Present the roles under the psychospiritual category, and discuss and enact each

role. Have participants brainstorm additional roles to support an understanding of the magnitude of the category.

4. Encourage free expression of individual spiritual beliefs by inviting open dialogue, acceptance, and appreciation of various precepts. A major goal of the dialogue is to understand each individual's orientation so that his or her beliefs can be incorporated effectively during the work.

5. Help clients create a conscious awareness of the presence of the Godhead at all times whether one is focusing on this presence or not. (Use whatever terminology fits for each client).

6. After a protagonist has been chosen and before the enactment, help the protagonist to concretize a place of reference for the spirit to be.

7. Should the protagonist lose spontaneity during the enactment (get stuck), bring in an auxiliary to play the God-head, the higher self, or whatever terminology applies. The auxiliary deepens and enhances the scenario beyond the scope of existing doubles and auxiliaries.

8. During the sharing portion, as they react to the protagonist, encourage participants to express fully their experience of the drama's having included spirituality as a cornerstone of the process.

9. Provide time for closure that allows participants to bring their experience to completion for the session. For example, form a circle, leave one thing in the circle you no longer want, take with you one thing you do want; or go within, experience your spiritual source, take a deep breath, find your centre and exhale”.

(Winters, 2000, p.170)

In the fourth role category Winters has made the case for the development of theory within the psychodramatic world by holding Moreno to his early annunciation of the Godhead and incorporating it into the cannon of creativity. This is a bold but important step, as it might be said that Moreno got cold feet after writing *The Words of the Father* (1971), a huge work that invited derision by its very nature. Firstly on account of the fact that it was not scientifically

founded as was his other theory, and because as he put it: “the difference between me and a psychotic is that I called in a publisher.” (Karp, Homes and Bradshaw Tavon, 1998, p. 21) If this was a refutation of his own work, then Winters has taken him up on it and given it back to psychodrama. I have not noticed any reference to this role designation of ‘psychospiritual’ by any other psychodrama practitioners or theorists. It is however a significant article in the way it makes the case for *The Words of the Father* (Moreno, 1971) stand in the foreground of psychodrama.

### Susan Aaron: Spirituality in Psychodramatic Bodywork®

Susan Aaron is described on the CD cover of *Spirituality and Emotions* (Aaron, 2008) as “an internationally respected expert on emotions, the body and spirituality.” She is a certified psychodramatist and a registered massage therapist with extensive training in body psychotherapy. In 1990 she originated a training programme called Psychodramatic Bodywork®(PB). Since then Susan’s trainings and workshops have been taken up by people in Canada, the U.S. and Europe by teaching and applying principles which are understood to support the physical, emotional and spiritual development of the individual.

Aaron's PB has as its core the ‘safe and correct’ expression of anger, fear and grief. Following the ‘correct’ expression of these emotions through the body by way of technology including tackle dummies, floor mats, and trained support from PB graduates, the participant is able to experience more positive feelings and emotions:

“...the path to loving yourselves and the path to forgiveness is releasing the emotions that are inside. When those emotions are released you don’t have to try to love, you don’t have to try to have compassion, and you don’t have to try to

forgive, it just kind of wells up from your heart, and you just find yourself overflowing with love, and joy and kindness and caring and compassion...”

(Aaron, 2008, cd. 31: 35)

Aaron’s approach to spirit, although not named as such in the included literature, has connections to Native American traditions of Shamanism. This includes drumming, chanting simple mantras, and the term 'spirit guides' which comprise spirit in PB. Aaron has a deep connection with her spirit guides, as they give her information. The indication is that we have more than one and that they are benevolent beings who we take with us wherever we go. Her approach is to help you communicate with your guides as a way to build a bridge to them:

“First of all spirit is here, each of you brought your guides with you, whether you know it or not. They are all here in the room with us, so it’s a very full crowd. You see, and some of you can actively feel that connection to your spirit, and some of you can’t; and when people can’t actively feel that connection, they think it is not there...So I’m telling you they are here. My guides are giving me this information and I am telling directly to each of you that in case you wondered if you had any, you do, and they are here. So just say hallo to them! Thank them for being here, welcome them.” (Aaron, 2008, cd. 24:19)

As with Miller, Hudgens and Winters, Aaron invites participants to have their own religion and belief system, and to make sense of what is said from their own understanding of spirit. She also makes it clear how hard it can be to make a connection to ones spirit guides because of undigested emotions, especially anger:

“It is very, very, very hard to feel a connection to spirit when we have a body full of anger or we are living in an environment full of anger...either one is hard; that

is why people despair in connection to spirit, they try and try but they don't succeed. Well today every one of you is being given a spirit booster shot. Because I am calling in your spirits, your spirit guides. Now I am going to use the words spirits and spirit guides, it's just because they are the ones which roll off my tongue. I am not trying to tell you how to define spirit. Whatever vocabulary you are comfortable with just translate it." (Aaron, 2008, cd. 23:14)

Aaron warns us about the dangers of 'ungrounded spirituality' where meditants might rise above their emotions or ignore the fear they might feel because of a trust in God: "people who say I rise above my anger, and then it comes out sideways." (Aaron, 2008, cd. 34:20) Aaron is very experienced and skilled in her approach to creating safety for the expression of emotions. This includes imaginations and visualisations of building connections with spirit guides who can protect us and help us create our 'bubbles'. These cocoon us from negative, toxic emotions which we might encounter in others. At the end of her workshop on spirituality and anger, Aaron does a prayer for the assembled participants where she invites them to imagine what she is asking:

"So ask your guides: please create a white light pathway between where I am sitting ...and all the way home... help keep my bubble strong...so that I am not influenced unduly by the energy around me...I want you to see yourself arriving safely, and I want you to see yourself bubbled up the entire way." (Aaron, 2008, cd. 01:02:20)

The PB approach to spirit guides differs from TSM and Souldrama mainly because the latter two suggest taking the role of the spiritual double or winged messenger, whereas Aaron asks us to visualise them. Aaron asks us to imagine these beings and chooses not to use the psychodramatic action method of embodiment.

The idea of spirituality is that it is something from the heart and cannot be accessed when there is anger present: “Spirituality is about love, it is about heart connection, it is not about power over or domination, or putting someone down...” (Aaron, 2008, cd. 18:36). In her article *Magic Maximised* (2012) Aaron places spirituality under the generic heading of 'magic'. Magic could be a thought, a vision, a strong hunch, and it is not necessary to explain the experience: “In this section I am using the word magic to refer to the wondrous, the unexpected, the delightful, the synchronistic, the amazing, the miraculous, and the uncanny.” (Aaron, 2012, p.40) She makes reference to the magic of ‘tele’ as a spiritual capacity of intuition and its importance for the best psychodramatic outcome:

“People describe this experience as magical, spiritual, psychical, or simply intuitive. Those who understand this to be a spiritual experience will often give credit to spirit guides, angels, or spiritual energy for information that moves the psychodrama towards its best outcome.” (Aaron, 2012, p.40)

Aaron's experience is that PB is a way to enhance magic, another form of spirituality, which helps directors, auxiliaries and protagonists to do deeper work. Her enthusiasm and commitment to developing PB is tenacious and infectious. She has a growing number of graduates across Canada, America and Europe who are following in her footsteps.

#### Discussion of the work of Miller, Hudgens, Winters, and Aaron

With a capacity for deep insight and intuition, these four women have made a significant contribution to the spiritual dimensions of psychodrama. Connie Miller's contribution of Souldrama using the seven step program of spiritual development includes: prayers; vocational aspects of working in the world; the use of the Winged Messenger role to support

transitions into next steps on the journey; and creating a conscious spiritual framework to help make more meaning in the lives of participants, is being positively taken up by participants all over the world. However, I believe Miller has not gone far enough in the spiritual dimensions of Souldrama by omitting the important tenet of how previous lives play into our present experiences. I will look at this later. I also wonder whether the seven step program is not person-centred enough to enable both spiritual development and personal therapy to take place.

Kate Hudgens' contribution to the spiritual dimensions of psychodrama through development of the Observing Ego role, God and Prescriptive Roles of spiritual double and transpersonal and spiritual strengths, along with a practice that has respect for the individual's personal spiritual beliefs, is being used extensively for working with trauma. But TSM's emphasis on severe trauma and PTSD leaves me wondering about the significance of spiritual development outside the severity of trauma. At the same time, having had traumatic experiences myself, I am aware of how they have impacted on my interest in spiritual dimensions of existence. This leads me to enquire about further levels of meaning arising, for example, in karma (the laws of cause and effect from previous lives) which TSM does not address. There are also the challenges of chaos arising when working with multiple protagonists, during which I believe the spiritual dimensions are diluted.

In the contributions from Winters to the field of spirituality in psychodrama we find the creation of a Fourth Role Category, the Psychospiritual, along with nine functions for the psychospiritual role designation. A fourth element to the canon of creativity is the Godhead, an inspiring and unique development even if it has not been taken up extensively. Here I look for more understanding in the content of Godhead: are there spiritual laws, beings and

dimensions that comprise 'allness'? My enquiry cannot stop here, as 'allness' suggests that I can do and know no more.

Susan Aaron's Psychodramatic Bodywork® suggests that we have spirit guides who help us; creates a bubble of protection; and involves the general understanding of spirituality as a form of magic. This can enable the director to make deep 'tele' connections with protagonists. It acknowledges the importance of emotions being correctly expressed before participants can make a connection to the spiritual in themselves, the other and to the world. But I believe that these spirit guides lack a context and function in PB. Other beliefs consider the angel as a being who accompanies human beings through different lives. For me this makes sense of having a guide and I will look at this later. I take the position that the roles need to be protagonist centred and experienced from the inside, which does not appear to be so in this aspect of Aaron's work.

Each of these women has, I believe, been open to imagination, intuition and inspiration which have brought different dimensions of the spirit to the foreground of their work. I acknowledge them for this contribution and use it as a springboard to take some small steps, inspired by Rudolf Steiner, a clairvoyant who has so much to say about 'science of the spirit'.

## Broader spiritual perspectives: Rudolf Steiner and Eben Alexander

As a psychodramatist, striving toward an imagination, intuition and inspiration of spirit, I believe spiritual dimensions cannot be left out of the therapeutic relationship. How do I incorporate the role of spirit in my practice? This has become a burning question. Why is there such a split between science and a spiritual conception of life? Is it possible to build a bridge between the two? In order to address these questions I would like to begin by looking

at some of the ideas of Rudolf Steiner (1861 to 1925). Steiner was an Austrian philosopher who founded Anthroposophy, a spiritual scientific world view. I will also look at the work of Dr. Eben Alexander a neurosurgeon, who has been trying to understand his spiritual experiences from a scientific point of view, following a near death experience.

It is straightforward to refer to the body, something we can see, feel and touch with the senses. We can refer to the psyche or soul which can be understood as our feelings, thoughts and impulses. We may all agree that these two exist, but to consider a consciousness free of the body can be challenging to comprehend. To imagine a life beyond the physical, a spiritual existence running parallel or within the physical body and soul is not necessarily easy to conceive. Steiner considers that the evolution of the idea of spirit has been thwarted by the church:

“Relatively early, in the very first centuries, the church prohibited the spirit. That means that, in a certain sense, it led to the evolution of dogma in such a way that the human being may consist of only body and soul...oddly enough, the Catholic view has made its way into contemporary science. If you try to understand why people working today in the science of psychology – the science of the soul – speak essentially of body and soul, rather than body, soul and spirit...people today no longer have within their thinking any way of achieving an idea or concept that would enable them to speak of the human spirit as a separate element in addition to the soul.” (Steiner, 1980, pp.157-158)

Dr. Eben Alexander, an academic and neurosurgeon for more than twenty five years, including fifteen years at Harvard Medical School in Boston, had a near-death experience (NDE) in November of 2008 that changed his life. This experience caused him to rethink everything he thought he knew about the human brain and consciousness. Following his

NDE, Alexander has been trying to understand the science-religion split, and he takes it back to the birth of modern science and philosophy. In an interview with Podcast host Steve Paulson, Alexander put it like this:

“...I think most importantly it was the discussion that happened between Rene Descartes and Spinoza back in the 17th Century. They started us into our current era. Our current era is one of mind/consciousness/soul and has been put in the realm of the church more-or-less. There was kind of a truce of sorts that I guess Descartes came up with back then to say there’s mind and then there’s body and just let the natural scientists, those with an interest like Francis Bacon and Galileo and Newton, let’s not burn them all at the stake.” (Bioethics Forum, 2012)

Like Steiner, Alexander goes back to decisions made in history, as well as addressing materialism and the inauguration of dualism in modern times. His statement that between Descartes and Francis Bacon human consciousness was given over to reductionist science and dualistic philosophy, something we are still living under, is an illusion.

What is very interesting is that both Steiner and Alexander have had similar experiences of the spiritual world. Steiner, from a point of view of a clairvoyant, says in his biography that he was born with the capacity to see spiritual realities. He later worked scientifically to decipher and understand them. In Alexander’s case he has been thrust into this experience of the spiritual world by his NDE. We might ask: what happens after we die? Does the phenomenon of the spiritual world actually exist? Bernard Lievegoed, a psychotherapist inspired by Anthroposophy, describes what he believes happens when we die:

“After death, the soul-spirit being of man still lives in the ether body. This ether body is the bearer of memory pictures. These pictures are now displayed before

the soul as one great life ‘tableau’ for about three days. Then the ether body (Rudolf Steiner speaks in this connection about the ether ‘corpse’, analogous to the physical corpse) starts to dissolve in the ether elements, just as the physical corpse dissolves in the physical elements.” (Lievegoed, 1985, p.84)

Regarding the understanding of reincarnation, the implication that we have repeated earth lives suggests that when we die at the end of this lifetime, we will incarnate again at some future time. This process of reincarnation is determined by our karma, the deeds we have done in our previous life, and this is seen in relation to other people and our encounters. Steiner, the educationalist and esotericist, invites us to awaken our spiritual faculties through spiritual exercises to develop imagination, intuition and inspiration. One of his suggestions is that we need to imagine that whatever happens to us is determined by what we have done to others in a past life. The imagination is that we have arranged everything that happens to us, as if there is a part of us, a person or role, which remembers all that has taken place in previous lives, and that this part is continually with us, creating situations directly influenced from our past life. Steiner suggests that we imagine a being who is always there, who wants to change us for the better...

“... the imaginary man whispers to us: this is something that has to do with another earth-existence, not with the present one. A kind of recollection of another earth-existence, that is the thought which quite definitely arises...we feel as though what arises in the soul is what we ourselves once were in an earlier incarnation on this earth.” (Steiner, 1912, p. 6)

This idea of reincarnation and karma, which for both Steiner and Alexander are realities, is a very significant aspect of the spiritual world. It suggests that we have to take responsibility

for all that takes place in our lives. They believe it is the consequences of our past deeds which determine our present circumstances and actions. Alexander uses poetic images to describe repeated earth lives. He says we are...

“...individual souls that are spending time in these costumes for this act of the play and I know that they are cooperating with other souls... I look at that as flying fish, that we are in and out of the water and we are helping each other...a manifestation of one of my soul mates might appear as an enemy, a nemesis in this existence and yet they are still here to help me learn a very crucial lesson, that the hardships, the difficulties, the hurdles are all gifts...” (Bioethics Forum, 2012)

The idea that we are working together with other people we know, be they parents, friends, colleagues to help each other develop, is articulated by Steiner in many ways, none as poignant as this:

“In the new mysteries the whole earth becomes a temple, the hidden tragedy and triumph of the pupil begins to become external fact. A man’s own friends become for him, though he may know little of it, the terrible and wonderful actors in the ceremony of his own initiation.” (Chase, 2007, p.10)

What Steiner is referring to is the difference in spiritual growth in the present time to that of ancient times. In ancient times, if we wanted to develop inwardly we had to go through initiation rituals; now, however, initiation takes place through the encounter between human beings. This is clearly a leaf from Moreno’s book, where encounters are considered the most significant aspects of life.

Alexander, like Steiner, makes it very clear that from his point of view our physical existence is where we have developed free will, and that this is achieved with our peers, without the expansive vista of the spiritual world being visible at all times:

“... I totally believe that the entire reason of existence is for our souls to manifest free will serving as a conduit of that unconditional love and those words don't begin to show what that experience really is. People can find that out in deep meditations, and centring prayer can get in touch with that extreme power... And yet our souls are chomping at the bit to get down in here...” (Bioethics Forum, 2012)

Considering spiritual beings, this journey from one life to another is where Steiner suggests the role of the angel is of major significance. The role of this 'guide' he suggests is to accompany the individual from one life to another. Here Steiner makes it clear that free will is also given to us from the spiritual world:

“Human beings really do have this kind of guide in the spiritual world, who leads them from one earth life to another, and who in fact does take care in each particular life, not of the things over which we have a free hand, but of the things we cannot think about, but with which our human organisation is connected.”  
(Steiner, 2000, p. 8)

Referring to the point of spiritual development and how that is achieved, this is a vast and differentiated question. We have seen from the practices of the psychodramatists, from J. L. Moreno through to Z. T. Moreno, Hudgens, Miller, Winters and Aaron, that psychodrama has a role to play in the development of spiritual capacities within the human being, as can all psychotherapy if it is taken on consciously. Sardello, a Jungian psychotherapist working out

of a spiritual scientific view, expresses it this way: “The real dangers of psychotherapy are exposed when the full spiritual nature of the human being is brought to light. The key to full cognition of individual human reality lies in reincarnation...” (Steiner, 1990, p.15) How can one grasp the ‘reality’ of reincarnation and beings of a spiritual nature?

Psychophonetics, a form of counselling developed by Yehuda Tagar which incorporates many of Steiner’s ideas, uses sound to heal trauma caught in the body. Dr. Robin Steel, a psychophonetics counsellor, states that our work to develop spiritually needs to take the form of exercises in imagination, inspiration and intuition:

“[Steiner] described three more senses that need to be developed consciously in each person for observing the hidden reality of human existence: Imagination for *seeing* the invisible reality of life dynamics; Inspiration for *hearing* the inaudible dynamics of living souls; and Intuition for *knowing* spiritual beings from within.”  
(Steel, 2011, p.8)

I will pick this point up later in my research. Finally I would like to move on to the most challenging aspect of all for many of us today, that of Jesus Christ. How can we in the modern western world understand Christ and the ‘Mystery of Golgotha’, as Steiner called it? And what about a Christology without referring to the church and dogma which have pervaded Christianity for fifteen hundred years? Moreno has made a clear case for Christ’s power of embodiment of the Godhead and the immense capacity Jesus had to be able to take on the level of spontaneity of God. I would like to refer to Moreno and Steiner here and bring in Jung. In the forward to Gerhard Wehr’s comparative study of Jung and Steiner, Sardello addresses the question of Christ in the following way:

“... the placement of Christ at the centre of Anthroposophy and the importance of

Christ in Jung...neither Jung nor Steiner ask for Christian belief. But both realize the utter foolishness of speaking of a psychology of the dead, the gods, and the spiritual worlds without coming up against the status of Christ. Jung clearly emphasizes the religious character of the psyche, but wants to hold that soul is influenced by many archetypal myths besides the Christian myth. He does, however, see the Christian myth as the future of the psyche, that is, the individuation as realization of the Self and Christ as the archetype of the Self.”  
(Wehr, 1990, pp. 28-29)

Steiner takes the view of Moreno that we have faith in the infinite creativity of the cosmos, which Steiner refers to as the Christ representing the creative self renewing power:

“For Steiner, it is the continuously creative self renewing power of Christ, ‘Christ impulse’, or the ‘Christ principle’, that is effective once more in our time...we find the Christ, the guide in us, through self knowledge. We can always find the Christ in this way because, since his life on earth, he is always present in us.”  
(Wehr 1990, pp. 158-159)

J. L. Moreno speaks about God within us: “The image of God can take form and embodiment through every man...God is always within and among us, as he is for children.” (Moreno, 1966, pp.11-12)

Here we have looked at Steiner and Alexander's understanding of spirit and the spiritual dimensions of existence; of the being that supports us between lives, our guardian angel, a being whose task it is to bring about experiences that help us grow. Even if they are not happy experiences we can learn from these difficult situations and relationships. There is Steiner's indication that the patient development of imagination, intuition and inspiration is a

means to cognition of the spirit; the idea of reincarnation as time spent in different costumes; and the significance of Christ as a fundamental cornerstone of spiritual life, outside of dogma and the church.

I believe that the transformation of thinking, feeling and willing into the capacities for spiritual cognition of active imagination, intuition and inspiration can be achieved through different means. Steiner gives concentration and contemplation exercises and meditations for this; Jung speaks of active imagination and individuation through psychotherapy. Many teachers, mystics and psychologists have other exercises. I believe that psychodrama has a significant role to play in this. In the research that follows I begin to develop exercises, Action Structures and Prescriptive Roles in an attempt to fill the gap where, as far as I am aware, no psychodramatic practice exists - those that explore the spiritual self, karma, reincarnation and Christ.

## Qualitative Research Project

My personal question is: can new exercises and roles informed by spiritual science improve my psychodrama practice? In order to begin answering this question I ran a research project at the end of my two year group, whilst finishing my fourth year with the Birmingham Institute of Psychodrama. I took some existing roles and developed new ones. I created some new structures to see what effect they had on making meaning for the participants.

**Research Question:** My main research question is: What understanding and practices exist within the spiritual dimensions of psychodrama? I will refer to those that I have considered in this body of work in due course. The two sub-questions are: 1) What new dimensions can be created in order to generate deeper levels of meaning and healing of traumatic life events?

2) How can tenets from spiritual science inform and improve my practice as a psychodramatist?

**Practitioner based action research:** The action research will be on my clinical practice with a three month group, including observations and field notes, a questionnaire and a focus group interview. I will reflect on my work to see if what I am proposing is appropriate and valid. McNiff describes this as a form of self reflective practice:

“Action research is a term which refers to a practical way of looking at your own work to check that it is as you would like it to be. Because action research is done by you, the practitioner, it is often referred to as practitioner based research; and because it involves you thinking about and reflecting on your work, it can also be called a form of self-reflective practice.” (McNiff, 2002, p.3)

The question arises: how can I improve my practice? This might seem invalid for a practitioner who is just qualifying, but having worked with action methods for 20 years, the improvement of my practice is not only as a psychodramatist but also in the field of my previous work which included an educational component and a self development component:

“The question ‘how do I improve my work?’ contains a social intent. The intention is that one person improves their work for their own benefit and the benefit of others...Your increased awareness and your readiness to be self critical will probably have an influence on the people you are working with.” (McNiff, 2002, p.5)

**Structure and participants:** The course took place over three months in the West Midlands with a group of six participants. We met one night a week for two and a quarter hours for eleven weeks. Barry had done a short psychodrama course with me two years previously and

was keen to get involved in the research. Bob had wanted to work with me for some years and this was the first opportunity for him to do so. Barbara had been in a two year ongoing psychodrama group with me and was interested in continuing under a new theme. Althea had done a short spell in the group in its early phase and was keen to get back into it. Glenda was new to psychodrama, though she was doing some work in the theatre. Finally Martin, who had been in the ongoing group with us the previous year and was interested in coming back, said he was intrigued by the title 'body, soul and spirit'.

**Invitation and consent:** The participants were invited into the research group and they were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 1) guaranteeing anonymity and the opportunity to withdraw if they wished. They were also given copies of the transcript of the interview for verification.

**Ideas to be developed:** I will take the following points mentioned by J. L. Moreno, Z.T. Moreno, Eben Alexander, Carl Jung and Rudolf Steiner, in order to develop new spiritual dimensions in my psychodrama practice that to my knowledge has not been done by any other practitioners:

- a. We are spiritual beings on a human journey.
- b. We reincarnate like actors spending time in different costumes.
- c. We have a being of support between lives, our guardian angel.
- d. We encounter some of the same people from one life to the next.
- e. We choose our parents sometimes for various reasons.
- f. We have a 'role' that teaches us through difficult situations and relationships.
- g. Life is a moral lesson for our souls.
- h. The significance of Christ as a cornerstone of spiritual life, outside of dogma and the church.
- i. We can develop imagination, intuition and inspiration as a means to cognition of the spirit.

## Empirical data presentation

I will present some of the sessions which were of particular significance to the research question, incorporating 1) new Prescriptive Roles 2) Action Structures and 3) quotes which were used in my clinical practice. This will include participants responses observed in the moment, their reaction following the course in an interview and finally the comments that they made in a questionnaire.

Why have prescriptive roles and action structures?

Psychodrama, I believe, has the possibility to incorporate all three activities of therapy, spiritual practice and study. This can be done through incorporating Prescriptive Roles of a spiritual nature, using action structures that can support experiencing different ways of looking at our lives, and significant quotes to reflect upon in action.

**Prescriptive Roles:** having worked with Kate Hudgens in TSM workshops I had firsthand experience of the effectiveness of a Prescriptive Role. These were highly effective in creating containment and resilience in the protagonist. These are akin to some of the theatre work I have done with John Wright who created catch phrases for working with archetypes.

The Prescriptive Roles have set phrases and statements that the protagonist or the auxiliaries holding roles for them can make. These offer support and learning and can give greater meaning to the work.

**Action Structure:** involves set sequences of action, incorporating Prescriptive Roles which offer the participant the possibility to enter into experiences, and to then make them their own. These structures are loose and basic but keep the work moving between personal and universal experiences like a pendulum swing within the enactment. Often these are used as a

warm up in more classical work. They can also be used as training to develop group member's skills in becoming spontaneous within the structure.

The Action Structures were also taken from my work in the theatre where specific scenes are set up for participants to learn skills and techniques for acting. In the context of therapy, I was working on the premise that the Action Structures acted as a basis on which personal work could be done on a deep, contained level, whilst working with potentially new ideas.

### Session content and responses from participants

In the first session I introduced the idea of body, soul and spirit by going into the Greek image of the charioteer. I described it briefly, and then by using chairs, masks and cloths to build a sculpt, the group was invited to help to develop the image.

**Greek Charioteer:** For the ancient Greeks the image of the charioteer was a way to picture how the body, soul and spirit worked together and coexisted within the human being. The ancient Greeks knew this three-fold idea and expressed it in the image of the chariot drawn by three horses, with the rider guiding the horses to their destination.

The ancients Greeks believed that the chariot is our physical body, be it strong or weak, young or old, fast or slow. The three horses they said are the soul, comprising our thinking, feeling and action; and the charioteer is the spirit holding the reins and guiding the horses, drawing the chariot towards its destination. In his feedback Barry said...

“... the reference to soul and spirit in this particular course makes the work spiritual rather than simply emotional and so opens up a bigger context and picture and a sense of a higher purpose in what one experiences in life. However, these ideas were approached as imaginative possibilities rather than as dogmatic beliefs and so we were grounded in reality. We worked with a spirit of play and mutual respect.” (Appendix 2)

## Action Structure of Life Review

The next piece of work we did was around an action structure that I call the 'life review'. It is based on the idea that after we go to sleep, the first thing our consciousness does is go through the day backwards. Rudolf Steiner suggests a meditation using this idea to go more deeply into sleep which he calls the 'daily review'. He bases this on his spiritual research into what happens when we die which, according to Steiner, is similar to going to sleep except we go through our life backwards.

**Action Structure:** what follows is a description in stages of the life review Action Structure.

- 1) Somebody holds the protagonist's role in the present, another at half their age now, and a third at their first memory. A brief statement is heard from each role.
- 2) The protagonist stands in a future place having died and looks back on all of this; each role plays back their statement; the protagonist observes the span of life in three scenes in mirror.
- 3) The protagonist can give them a message from the future. Role-reverse and hear it in the present.

Each participant had the opportunity to spend twenty minutes doing this piece of work. When Barry went through the action structure he spoke movingly to his life, saying how well he was doing and how much he loved his life. In his feedback Barry put it like this:

“I was impressed by doing a timeline process of imagining key memories in my past and physically moving back and forwards to various years. Memories came with visual pictures which were very vivid. It effectively brought stored memories into the light and I was free to look at them anew as I moved up and down the timeline.” (Appendix 3)

Even though this might have been an effective piece of work, it would not necessarily be appropriate with less grounded clients, for example those with attachment issues. Care needs to be taken not to go into uncontrolled regression.

### Prescriptive Role of Spirit and simple Action Structure

Following the image of the charioteer and the life review action structure, we began looking at the idea that each human being has a spiritual component, as described by Cardin, Aaron, Alexander and Steiner. I thought it would be appropriate at this point in our work that an eternal spiritual role could be developed in order to go into the more complex structure that I had in mind for later in the course. I introduced the quote: “We are not human beings on a spiritual journey; we are spiritual beings on a human journey.” (Moreno. 2012, p. 40) There was a brief discussion about this, setting a focussed tone for the work to come.

#### **Action Structure:**

- 1) Walk round the room as you experience yourself now. After a while stop and take on the shape of your day, sculpt it in your body, hold that posture as a summing up of the residual feeling from your day.
- 2) Prescriptive Role: Step out of that role taking a step to the left, wash off the day and find a place of centred calmness. Speak the sentence: 'I was here before you were born, and I will be after you die. I am your deepest core.'
- 3) Reach out and put your hand on the imaginary shoulder of the extreme day sculpt. Tell that role what it needs to hear.

Martin said: “Now you can relax and find a place within yourself to not take it so seriously.”

Barry said: “I love you and everything is good, I will be with you to help get everything you can from this day. It does have meaning.” In the feedback Glenda commented: “The session

really helped me to contextualise the idea of spirit and how to inhabit a spirit body which is something I am currently researching in my performance work.” (Appendix 2)

Althea found a more intense level of spontaneity: “The spontaneity required this time was more intense and a more profound level. Even if you don't actually believe in spirits or the world of the soul, and a lot of people don't, a unique situation of 'dramatic distance' occurs.” (Appendix 2)

Martin felt he was getting in touch with something new: “I enjoyed the nature of the questions we, as a group, were exploring. The intangible notion of our spirit, however that manifests itself. Also how this relates to others. What was great was that I felt able to explore this notion even though I would have to say I don't have a fully formed idea of what 'spirit' really is.” (Appendix 2)

In the interview, Althea talked about how she felt she has expanded her perception: “In that you feel you have a choice. It's like you have been travelling on one track and then suddenly you have a choice, it becomes illuminated, inspiration... spirit, purity, above and beyond the mundane. You can suddenly feel into these situations like an essence, like a spirit.” (Appendix 3)

As noted earlier, caution needs to be taken when using this technique with more fragmented and borderline clients who struggle with the difference between reality and fantasy. Were a client to have a dissociative tendency, this defence would need to be grounded in Prescriptive Roles.

Prescriptive role: preparer of difficulties

In order to move towards the most challenging aspect of the spirit, I wanted to introduce the idea of karma which requires us to take responsibility for all our actions. In karmic terms we have created the conditions for all that happens in life through deeds in previous lives. This is a challenging idea to grasp. However, I wanted to take small steps towards it, as no other practitioner I had come across had gone there.

I was inspired by a role that Steiner created of a 'second me' that has arranged all the unaccountable things that have happened. He gave the example of the being who, while you walk down the street, rushes up onto the roof and loosens a tile which then falls on your shoulder. (Steiner, 1912)

**Prescriptive Role development:**

I asked the group to imagine that there was a part of them, a role, that had the task of preparing all the events that might befall them in the course of the day, events that are seemingly inexplicable. This slightly tricky character goes ahead and plans little moments of fortune or misfortune that impact on your day. This was slow to get into but yielded much reflection from Martin: "A very interesting idea that I am responsible for all that takes place; a great role to explore, I think we barely scratched the surface of this idea. I have a feeling that it could lead to very deep work. It's such a mind blowing notion, sometimes feeling unfathomable...I'm talking about the idea of us inhabiting this role much like a shaman. I mean this is really a mind blowing notion." (Appendix 2)

Care needs to be taken to have worked with presenting problems before going into this structure with clients who have a history of self blame. As long as sufficient strengths were concretised in the intra-psyche role atom beforehand, this action structure could be used safely.

## Action Structure of Troubled Encounter and Prescriptive Role of Angel

The next idea that we explored was how encounters that trouble us can be of great significance for our development if we can overcome the debilitating trauma. To get into the mood I introduced the two quotes on page 31, one by Alexander and the other by Steiner. In order to go into the troubled encounter action structure it was important to develop strengths, so I introduced the prescriptive role of unconditional support or angel.

### **Prescriptive Role of Unconditional Support, Angel:**

Choose a scarf to put on an auxiliary to play your unconditional support. Coach them in saying the prescriptive statement: 'I am here for your well being and development, and I remember your choices from before you were born.' Swop around.

They worked in pairs with scarves to hold this role, and I coached them in taking the prescriptive role of unconditional support. Participants were free to choose what they called this role, so one called it guardian spirit, another angel. In pairs they held the other's scarf and said the prescriptive statement. When this was done, there was a quiet 'wow' from each of them in receiving the words from the auxiliary angel.

The feedback from Althea was of feeling constancy and calm: "The angel - unconditional support - I felt when enacting it, reiterating certain phrases 'I am there for you, I know the choices you made when you were born' was like a constant, a mantra - such as is used in meditation. It had a reassurance and a calming effect. Whatever you threw at it, it remained the same. This was like the spirit was above the mundane - from a higher level and knew ultimate truths." (Appendix 2) During the interview Barbara talked about how the angel came alive: "I also enjoyed giving your Guardian Spirit a voice and having somebody speak, sometimes yourself from that role, it kind of embodied something that is normally very

etheric and very intangible, and it was amazing how I could do that. There was a being; there was a sense of someone.” (Appendix 2)

**Action Structure of Troubled Encounter:**

- 1) Choose an object to represent an encounter with another person in your life which was challenging; find a statement that summed up their message to you.
- 2) With the unconditional support role supporting, look at what restorative statement you might need to say to the other in the troubled encounter; and then what you have gained from the encounter.

Barry had a moving encounter with his wife, and with the support of the ‘angel’ he was able to find another perspective to their relationship when he said: “Your chaos has taught me to be still and focused...” and later: “I understood the angel or guide to represent the Higher Self in touch with the realm of Spirit – which saw the overview from the spiritual perspective and could offer wisdom and guidance for the highest good of all in any situation; freed from the emotional entanglement of the situation and the limitations within the relationship between people in it which had created the problem.” (Appendix 2)

**Action Structure of Choosing our Parents**

I believe that in order to take responsibly for life, and not fall into the victim role, we need to have free choice. In formatting the idea that I choose my parents, I can see what gifts I have received from them, and whether I can transform the aspects which don’t feel like gifts at all into a gift by working on myself. This might include expression of abreaction towards parent or carer, whilst also taking responsibility for having chosen them. I believe the idea of choosing a difficult parent only becomes feasible once we have worked through any difficulty that might be there and learnt something which we could not have learnt without them.

## Action Structure

- 1) Choose an object to represent your unborn self.
- 2) Choose auxiliaries to take roles of parents/carers: what is their statement to you now?
- 3) Choose auxiliaries to take the role of Unconditional Support (US), with the statement 'I am here for your well being and development, and I remember your choices from before you were born'. The US takes you to your parents saying: 'I am taking you to choose your parents.'
- 4) With help of US say what you have got from parents: 1) statement of admonition and intent to make up for what was missing and 2) statement of gratitude for gifts received.

Each group member got fifteen to twenty minutes to bring these roles together and to look at what they have learnt from the encounter. There was quite a slow, deep reflective attitude; this kind of work cannot be rushed.

Martin made a statement of gratitude, thanking his parents for giving him resilience, and then saying to Martin's unborn self that he would not get an opportunity to own and feel his feelings as they would not be allowed. He then made a statement to his unborn self saying he was allowed to have his feelings and that adult Martin would commit to support unborn Martin to have his feelings and own them.

There was a deep sharing for having seen Martin being so transparent. Martin commented later: "It makes me wonder if working with these roles helps us (humans) look at some of these questions/issues in ways we might not have considered. They could perhaps help us get out of our own pre-conceived ideas about certain things that happen to us. I think its rich territory." (Appendix 2)

Althea connected to the idea of responsibility in life by saying:

“In choosing your own parents, the responsibility of that is awesome. So often there is the tendency to blame your emotional landscape on your parents, or to analyse your psychical foundation with reference to them e.g. ‘I react in this way because as a child...’The idea that you choose your own parents turns this concept on its head.” (Appendix 4)

Glenda has connections and reservations: “I liked the structure of the soul before it was born, in the practical world and then in the afterlife, but I was not sure that I bought in to the idea that my parents were chosen to teach me a lesson in this life.” (Appendix 2)

I responded to Glenda’s doubt that she did not buy into the idea of choosing her parents, by affirming the importance to go with what had most meaning for her. This piece of work had the most connection and feedback out of all the work on the course. Barry found it helped him see life differently:

“...the sense of spirit is physicalised, we have been able to explore that and see it is there in that moment of encounter...you encounter yourself through the encounter with others ...and seeing other people differently, mother and father or whatever...I can see their humanity through the work and get an understanding of what makes them human when becoming parents...” (Appendix 2)

Althea again connecting this time to freedom and choices:

“I am interested in the work with the spirit ... we are invited into a psychodrama on ‘before you were born’, and ‘knowing the choices’ and enacting that in part of everyday life, the continuity in the here and now... I started visualising the actual spirit rather than it had been something floating around the subterranean or in the ether ...so spirit becomes there with the mask, here with the body. I find it a good representation of spirit.” (Appendix 2)

## Action Structure of Karma: arranging different encounters

Finally on the second to last session we got to the more explicit structures around the ideas of reincarnation and karma. Having established the prescriptive roles, and the method of working in action structures, alongside doing more classical psychodrama, which proved to be an important process, it was now time to work towards closure, and to take a final look at how far we might be able to get on the theme of past lives.

Karma and reincarnation is not about knowing your past or future lives, but placing your present life in a context. This is all about meaning making and widening the context of understanding.

I invited the group to join me in a working hypothesis that reincarnation and karma are part of life by using the quote from Alexander: “we are individual souls that are spending time in these costumes for this act of the play”, and “my soul mate might appear as an enemy to learn lessons through hardship etc.” (Appendix 2) I also introduced a poem attributed to a Maori entitled My Law, which states in verse three: “From body to body your spirit speeds on/It seeks a new form when the old one has gone/And the form that it finds is the fabric you wrought/On the loom of the Mind from the fibre of Thought.” (Appendix 4)

### **Action Structure:**

Warm up:

- 1) Establish external strength through role of US: being there for unconditional regard and development.
- 2) Choose two people in your life you have a strong connection with, one positive, the other negative; choose a mask to represent each and a third to represent yourself.

Enactment:

- 1) Prepare four cloths on the ground demarcating three spaces: past as soul/spirit; present here and now in the physical; future with soul/spirit. Place masks on the cloths between pre-birth and post-life.
- 2) Angel introduces auxiliaries to protagonist and invites auxiliaries to take up roles of friend and foe (real people from life): Look into each other's eyes and see a friend who is here to help you grow with a statement: 'we are here to help each other grow, and I need you to do... x!' Coach them into what it is you need for your future life.
- 3) Your unconditional support (US) leads you to pick up and put on a mask and takes you across the scarf to the place of this life. US is clear in directing the activities. Stand in the place of the present life and hear the auxiliaries speaking the messages in mask with gestures: enact your relationship to them in mime. Go into mirror to see what is needed.
- 4) US takes the three of you to the death line represented by the scarf, where you take off your masks and meet in the space between death and rebirth for a reflection. This is framed with a prescriptive statement: 'Having performed that role for you, how do you feel, or...what did you get out of it?'

I demonstrated with one group and then let groups work in threes. This brought up reflective responses from Althea: "The roles enable you to be more philosophical about life's events, freeing you up to actually perceive things more as they are, as if you could see things from a mountain, and put a different perspective on it." (Appendix 2)

Barbara commented on the intelligence creating the life we now lead:

"The long journey of looking at 'before you were born', and looking at that *intelligence* creating the life we are now living... made me be outside of my life, but also be more in my life at the same time. And that bit that was looking at my life I connected that to my spirit." (Appendix 2)

Martin demonstrated a scientific outlook saying: "...a framework where things are ethereal and perhaps we would describe them as spiritual or things that really we can't prove ultimately with science but I feel by looking at these things it has really helped me look at our humanity." (Appendix 2)

Barbara said finally: "I found the structures worked very well. They enabled us to bring abstract ideas into three dimensional reality." (Appendix 2)

## Discussion

I have considered the work with four action structures: life review; troubled encounter, choosing parents and arranging encounters. We looked at the four prescriptive roles: spirit; the role of preparing difficulties; the unconditional support or angel; and the unborn self, which became in a few cases part of the Action Structures. I have also considered the use of quotes.

In the feedback from participants in the group about how they experience the differences between the classical psychodrama which four of them had done for a year, one of them for two years, they were quite clear that the experiences were different one from the other. The general feeling was that classical psychodrama was more about emotions, whereas the Action Structures and Prescriptive Roles took them to a more objective place within themselves.

Barbara put it in this way:

"Reflecting on the old sessions, it was the emotions...you could be plugged in so deep... before we were groping round in your heart, up to your elbows in blood and guts... this work has been so different... and now we were looking down at it from the stars...it's about changing perspective and getting a very different lot of insights." (Appendix 2)

Martin talked about the universal connection within the work: "...whereas this work...felt like I used a different part of my brain to look at these sorts of things; and therefore it's allowed me a little bit more freedom to be creative and accept the creativeness of my mind, and how I perceive things." (Appendix 4)

And finally Althea put it poetically: "What gave this course its unique characteristic however, was its gentleness and sense of peace in connection with the spirit, your origins, nature and the unlimited creative possibilities and inspiration that comes with it. That sense of wonder." (Appendix 2)

#### Fifth role of the director

While running this course I held many roles. I experienced two unfamiliar roles, that of educator, and also what I believe was a hierophant role. A hierophant is a person who interprets sacred mysteries and arcane principles, bringing religious congregants into the presence of that which is deemed 'holy' (Wiki, 2012). In this research the hierophant role was about leading the group through experiences in which they were getting lots of life insights and experiences of a spiritual nature.

The idea of the fifth role arose out of Kellerman's four roles of the director (1992). These are in brief the group leader, the action analyst, the therapist and the producer. These, Kellerman posits, are different roles we need to be able to take while directing a piece of psychodrama. I would like to make the case for a fifth role of the director, that of the hierophant. The hierophant role takes responsibility for the spiritual/educational relationship between protagonist and group members; and looking at what level of meaning is brought to create a balanced piece of work, including the realms of soul and spirit.

Below are actions and responsibilities that the hierophant role needs to take:

### **Hierophant role responsibilities:**

- To bring in spiritual literature and content in discussions, warm up and closure.
- To look deeply into themselves and examine their own spirituality and how they can name it in the work and create opportunity for taking it into action.
- To stop the work and ask the question how can we find your spiritual strength here?
- To create Prescriptive Roles which offer the participants insight into the spiritual dimensions of life while in action.
- To create Action Structures which incorporate opportunities for spiritual insights that participants and the director might have.

There are other aspects associated with this role, but they are incorporated into the other director functions.

What needs developing and improving in these new approaches to psychodrama?

Quotes: Firstly even though five out of six participants appreciated the quotes, Barbara found that they drew the energy away from the spontaneous action. The following needs to be considered: that the quotes are not too long and that participants are not listening passively.

What worked on one occasion was inviting the group to walk around while I read a poem or that they read them themselves beforehand. Another aspect is the need to consider cultural acceptability or norms of the group i.e. a totally atheistic group may object, or a fundamental Christian may find any notion of past lives an anathema to their beliefs. So quotes need to be chosen according to client base.

Timing: The work was new for us all; there was not time for each person to experience every structure, and so the learning aspect of grasping some new ways of working with psychodramatic structures was not always experienced from the inside by all. This could be frustrating.

Structures: If the structures were too complex, it was difficult for group members to be spontaneous. This was especially the case with the present/future structure in the ‘tension field’. Structures need to arise out of the work with the group rather than be imposed rigidly from the outside.

Incomplete: The Action Structures, Prescriptive Roles and quotes are a good start for the development of spiritual dimensions in psychodrama; however, this is only the beginning of a long journey. Also the conscious underpinning of the Christ role was not finally completed and needs consideration with regard to freedom of religious belief.

## Conclusion

From the observations, interview and feedback of the participants involved in the three month course, the responses were positive. They generally appreciated the development of the Action Structures, quotes and Prescriptive Roles and got a lot of new insights about spiritual dimensions of life. There was a large degree of catharsis and meaning-making during sessions, and a lot of food for thought was generated and disseminated. It is clear that this work is building on the foundations of the work of J. L. Moreno and Zerka Moreno, as well as on the steps that Kate Hudgens, Connie Miller, Natalie Winter and Susan Aaron have made in the development of psychodrama’s spiritual dimensions.

It has become evident to me through this research that the views of Rudolf Steiner have a significant role to play in the spiritual dimensions of psychodrama. In addressing the question: ‘what understanding and practices exist in the spiritual dimensions of psychodrama?’, I can confidently say that there are more than I was aware of at the offset, though not enough to satisfy my longing to know more. To the question: ‘what new

dimensions can be created in order to generate deeper levels of meaning and healing of traumatic life events?', it is evident that the incorporation of new Action Structures, Prescriptive Roles and literature can open up new spiritual dimensions in psychodrama. To the question: 'how can tenets from spiritual science inform and improve my practice as a psychodramatist?', I can say without a shadow of doubt that the work of Steiner's spiritual science has a significant role to play in developing insight, understanding, meaning and rigour to relieve stress and trauma of troubled lives.

### Acknowledgements

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Consent Form

Research project for Psychodrama Thesis

by Mike Chase

5<sup>th</sup> July 2012

I .....agree to give consent to be included in the research project including observations of sessions I have been in, a group discussion, and to fill in a questionnaire; on the basis that full anonymity will be observed at all times; none of the names or voices of those involved will be made public knowledge, this includes place of origin, age and sex. Finally I will have full right to withdraw and not to be included if at any time that feels necessary; and I will have a chance to sign off any written material in which any of my involvement is included.

Mike Chase would be grateful if you joined him and the other participants in the usual session room at 7.00 pm on the 26<sup>th</sup> July for a recorded discussion about the work over the past 10 sessions, followed by light refreshments when a certificate of attendance will be given to all.

If you are in agreement please sign:

Respondent:

Name

---

Signature

Interviewer:

Michael Chase

---

Signature

## **Appendix 2**

### Participant Feedback to questions

Present: Barbara: B; Barry: Ba; Bob: Bo; Martin: M; Glenda: G; Althea: A

#### **How did you hear about this course?**

B: I have attended previous psychodrama courses.

Bo: By email and in a phone conversation with Mike Chase whom I've known and worked with for years.

Ba: Email.

M: E-mail sent by Mike Chase.

A: You e-mailed me and told me about the course after I had attended a previous one run by you and Jane at the Glasshouse.

#### **Have you done any workshops or courses like this before, please state briefly?**

B: Two years of psychodrama.

Ba: I did a psychodrama taster with Mike a couple of years ago.

G: Have done lots of drama and performance workshops/courses but not using drama as a therapeutic tool.

M: Only previous psychodrama course with Mike.

A: I did a one year psychodrama course with you earlier which involved a larger group, and then I did 'one on one' with you. I had also experienced dramatherapy and the 'Theatre of the Oppressed' at college, and acting in a secondary school setting.

#### **If you had any expectations what might they have been?**

B: I was open to however the course may be.

Ba: To explore aspects of myself in a small group and sharing with others.

G: I thought it was going to be a course to learn how to incorporate some of the approaches in my practice. Apart from that I did not know what I was really entering.

M: I registered that the title of the workshop differed from previous psychodrama workshops with Mike. I didn't really have any expectations, but was intrigued by the title.

A: The main expectations were of myself - to gain experience to do a masters degree [in the previous courses]. With this situation, I was not quite sure what involving the spirit and soul would actually mean, but I imagined that it would involve deeper disclosures, a more intimate emotional space and closer interaction among the group than before.

#### **Were the expectations met or not, please state briefly?**

B: I really enjoyed the course.

Ba: Yes. I gained some valuable new insights about myself and my relationships.

G: Original expectations changed as I realised the course was intended for a different purpose and at that point I tried to remain open to whatever may occur and I was pleased with what I encountered.

M: See above.

A: The expectations were met - I gained experience I feel I could use towards future goals. Also what I anticipated about the different situations was true, that the spirit course would involve more sensitivity, intimacy and deeper disclosures than before.

### **What did you enjoy the most about this course?**

B: Exploring things which were outside our current, concrete reality...i.e. before I was born.

G: Sharing with others with a mixture of respect, seriousness and fun.

G: Meeting new and interesting people and getting some insights into the more hidden aspects of myself.

M: I enjoyed the nature of the questions we, as a group, were exploring. The intangible notion of our spirit, however that manifests itself. Also how this relates to others. What was great was that I felt able to explore this notion even though I would have to say I don't have a fully formed idea of what 'Spirit' really is. I like the feeling that I can explore without completely understanding.

A: I enjoyed working with other people in a confidential, creative way. I think as well, the others on the course were very unique people, easily open to this kind of work. I enjoyed the element of trust, using drama and performance skills towards healing. The spirit of empathy in itself is healing. In the usual form of therapy, there is an 'us and them' situation. The 'expert' listening to the patient and imposing help and advice. The therapist has a function rather than being related to as a human being. If people honestly share their emotions and feelings, there is a sense of friendly support, such as : 'Yes, I do that, it happened to me and I behaved like...' They have a platform on which to air their views and concerns, to actually be listened to by people listening to them with not just a great emotional intensity, but with a view to actively being supportive. What gave this course its unique characteristic however, was its gentleness and sense of peace in connection with the spirit, your origins, nature and the unlimited creative possibilities and inspiration that comes with it. That sense of wonder.

### **What was the most challenging aspect?**

B: Accepting everyone.

Ba: Being prepared to be active in working on a difficult relationship issue when I was still suffering from it and wondering how others would respond to it. This was something I offered to do and I took up the challenge.

G: Getting into my body through the warm-ups and being creative through my physicality outside of a flow situation.

M: The time of each workshop. There never seemed enough time to go as far as we could have some weeks. Unfortunately I can't offer any advice on how to resolve this – especially as some of the ways of working were being discovered by Mike too.

A: Being sensitive, understanding and disciplined enough to fit into a group situation. Keeping things relevant.

### **What did you understand about the Prescriptive Roles**

#### **e.g: Angel/Guide/Unconditional support/Being that trips you up?**

B: Guardian angel figure who is purely there for my good/development.

Ba: I understood the angel or guide to represent the higher self in touch with the realm of Spirit – which saw the overview from the spiritual perspective and could offer wisdom and guidance for the highest good of all in any situation; freed from the emotional entanglement of the situation and the limitations within the relationship between people in it which had created the problem. Through this guidance I became aware of the positive and negative polarity which can occur within myself and within others and within my relationships. The point of view of the Guide helped me to see more objectively and to look for the gift which each person in a conflict situation could actually give to the other. It enabled me to see each person with compassion.

Unconditional support – I experienced this as non-judgemental support coming from each person in the group – both from those who acted in the drama and from those who watched.

B: They were all different aspects of myself.

M: Being that trips you up was a great role to explore, I think we barely scratched the surface of this idea. I have a feeling that it could lead to very deep work. It's such a mind blowing notion, sometimes feeling unfathomable. I wonder if time could be spent really creating a character/version of ourselves that can be used in this exploration, I mean really creating an 'other' or *shadow self* that can allow people freedom to 'go there'. I'm talking about the idea of us inhabiting this role much like a shaman. I mean this is really a mind blowing notion. Just say I had AIDS, I would have to explore this notion that I've allowed someone to give this to me as a 'lesson' (?). Holy shit! That's deep, deep work! It's just fascinating. I think it would be great to make a totem/symbol/image poster (?) of our 'guide'. Though I realise this would involve an 'art' class and we barely have the time to complete everything we want to already!

A: Higher beings exist outside of normal human relations -spirits. Polarities of good and bad, helper and hinderer. To a certain extent, some of the onus of responsibility could be taken up, absorbed by these 'higher beings' as if their role in the proceedings may be summed up as 'It was meant to be, it's in the stars'. However, paradoxically with the spirit world comes an added dimension of responsibility, for example if you choose your own parents, you actively invite the circumstances, the karma involved with that. The polarities also, may not necessarily be external to yourself, but be part of you. For example, it helped me consider that a lot of the 'beings that trip you up' had the concrete form [when I was younger] of the poisonous, spiteful, bitter middle-aged woman, always on your back, always causing trouble, always judging and making life difficult. I wondered how I myself am a middle aged woman, am I capable of oppressing people in the same way? The angel - unconditional support - I felt when enacting it, reiterating certain phrases 'I am there for you, I know the choices you made when you were born' was like a constant, a mantra - such as is used in meditation. It had a reassurance and a calming effect. Whatever you threw at it, it remained the same. This was like the spirit was above the mundane - from a higher level and knew ultimate truths.

#### **Did you find them helpful in any way, and if so why?**

B: This is something I have felt for many years....always helpful.

B: Yes. I found them very helpful.

I have explained this above.

G: Yes, its helpful to see the more difficult sides of myself and encounter them as I would another person. I could see them in a different light and respond/react accordingly.

M: It makes me wonder if working with these roles helps us (humans) look at some of these questions/issues in ways we might not have considered. They could perhaps help us get out of our own pre-conceived ideas about certain things that happen to us. I think it's rich territory.

A: The roles enable you to be more philosophical about life's events, freeing you up to actually perceive things more as they are, as if you could see things from a mountain, and put a different perspective on it. The process of acting, experiencing the angel and reciprocating it by being it.

**How relevant was it for your you to have quotes from other thinkers e.g. Zerka Moreno, Eben Alexander, Steiner etc. during the session?**

B: I found that the least helpful part.... The power of the work for me is in the people who are creating it. When quotes are read out, I feel that it disperses the energy away from the group.

Ba: The Steiner quote helped my sense of the group sharing a common ground of understanding as we all were sympathetic to the idea of being spiritual-physical beings. It reminded me of what I already knew and its expression allowed a shared context for the group members to approach each other in the work – with mutual respect.

G: Extremely and this really enriched my experience. I would have liked more of this.

M: The quotes were really good as a starting point, a springboard for the work that was going to happen that particular evening. The work by Eben Alexander seemed to appeal to all of us at this particular time and it was right to follow that curiosity. Once again, using something brought from the outside allowed me some freedom to think: 'Why not...let's explore this a little'. Also the quotes seemed to allow variations of interpretation by each individual and Mike was never too dictatorial in how it MUST be interpreted.

A: I found it very helpful to introduce the words of these individuals into the work. It gave things a wider, broader context from the outside. You could also use their ideas as a springboard for your own, and give them a new relevance. From a research point of view its very useful as well.

**How did you relate to the structures in some of the sessions, like: choosing your parents; learning from adversity; we have arranged things that happen to us; identifying physical and spiritual aspects of our selves, etc.?**

B: I found the structures worked very well. They enabled us to bring abstract ideas into three dimensional reality.

Ba: I related to them with interest and enjoyment. I first heard of the idea that we choose our parents back in 1984 and found it very liberating then as it gave me a new spiritual sense of who I might be. I found that whatever the issues I brought to the group in the session I was able to gain new insights, understanding and possible solutions through using these structures and through the shared experience with others in the work.

G: I liked the structure of the soul before it was born, then in the practical world and then in the afterlife, but I was not sure that I bought into the idea that my parents were chosen to teach me a lesson in this life. The session really helped me to contextualise the idea of spirit and how to inhabit a spirit body which is something I am currently researching in my performance work.

M: Each of the structures were presented with a notion that even though they were huge questions to ask, some could even say 'fantastical', we were allowed to say:...'let's give ourselves the permission to ask WHAT IF...' Therefore each individual was given a chance to relate to the structures as much or as little as they wished. I think this is a great way to present the work.

A: In choosing your own parents, the responsibility of that is awesome. So often there is the tendency to blame your emotional landscape on your parents, or to analyse your psychical foundation with reference to them, ie., 'I react in this way because as a child...' The idea that you choose your own parents turns this concept on its head. I think it's an Anthroposophical belief that can empower you by seeing it as part of a natural progression of karma of which you are an active participant, and that spirits can flow through you and around the situation with continuity connecting everything, and that you can connect with them and alter your own consciousness, and influence events in a healthy, holistic way to improve the lives of yourself and those around you.

**If you have experienced psychodrama or similar work before, how do you compare those experiences to this course *Exploring roles of body, soul and spirit*?**

B: It was a similar experience with a subtle difference. If I was to do more of this work, I would prefer to spend much more time on one exercise and allow the experience to be much richer rather than rushing through such profound ideas.

Ba: As an actor I am used to exploring characters in relationship and how others see them as well as exploring the characters' objectives at any moment in a play whether alone or in interaction with others. I am also used to the idea of emotional memory. (All of these factors come in the work of Stanislavski etc).

I found that in psychodrama I can safely explore these kind of elements in myself and in my personal life and relationships and issues. So it is a transfer of these processes into actual life rather than just using them in exploring the fictional life of dramatic characters.

The reference to soul and spirit in this particular course makes the work spiritual rather than simply emotional and so opens up a bigger context and picture and a degree and a sense of a higher purpose in what one experiences in life. However, these ideas were approached as imaginative possibilities rather than as dogmatic beliefs and so we were grounded in reality. We worked with a spirit of play and mutual respect.

G: Psychodrama is more explicit in bringing to life and voicing these components, separate but interrelated aspects of the human being.

M: I think I answered this in the last class recording. I haven't particularly changed my mind about it. Is it OK that I just leave it at what I said in the recording?

A: I suppose I could draw a comparison between firstly the 'Rainbow of Desire' of Boal and his *aesthetic space* and the therapeutic stage - the *Locus Nascendi* of Moreno. The Boal stage tends to be more political in its interaction with people, more outward or dramatherapist than that of Moreno. The *Locus Nascendi* demands spontaneity from its participants/patients in a way that is really personal and deep, dealing with the subconscious in a medical way as well. With this course, *Exploring Roles of Mind, Body and Spirit* I felt the action was even deeper and more intimate still. The spontaneity required this time was more intense and on a more profound level. Even if you don't actually believe in spirits or the world of the soul, and a lot of people don't, a unique situation of 'dramatic distance' occurs. [In the work of Boal, dramatic distance was described as 'dichotomy' as one of the three main properties of the aesthetic space. Its ability to heal, to be therapeutic, lies in the fact that you are somewhat distanced from the harmful events, by such factors as different time scale, watching your role in a relived situation performed by somebody else, and different environment]. What can happen

I think with non-believers, for instance, is that talk of the spirit world makes them think of non-reality rather than super-reality. So to discuss real emotions often raw and painful 'softens the blow' and enables them to tread deeper into the mindset of their own realities and penetrate their own psyche. The masks you use also help to create 'dramatic distance' and help with 'structural archetypes'.

**What are you taking away from this course?**

B: Enrichment of my understanding of the human journey.

Ba: A desire to do more and to work with this group of people again.  
Insights which I can apply in my personal life. An awareness of my life in a new perspective.

G: Not to be such a harsh judge of myself. To develop a better mother relationship to myself.  
Approaches of working with the everyday person using the expressive arts. Friends.

M: More questions than answers, but a desire to keep searching. A real affection for the other participants. You get to know people more deeply than some friends you see on a regular basis outside of the workshops. Very enriching.

A: A sense of peace. I think often in life, you have to deal with people who can have attitudes and behaviour you find oppressive. They can make your life a struggle as they try and force you to comply with their will to suit only themselves, and will use a variety of negative emotional tools to effect this, such as guilt, emotional blackmail and downright aggressive bullying. In this course, it was like spiritually detoxing in a forgiving, patient and kindly atmosphere where everyone was treated with respect.

Certain rituals such as 'checking in', 'closure', and literally the 'hands on' empathy ritual at the end of an individual's work would help this.

**What do you want to leave behind?**

B: An imprint on the ether of our wonderful times together.

Ba: Nothing but gratitude and a wish to continue the work.

G: Negative thought patterns that no longer serve me. An open door for future conversations and collaborations.

M: Can't think of anything.

A: Ideally? A sense that I want to help free people. To help them in supporting them being themselves, by being *myself*. To project yourself into the future armed with an ability to live at one's fullest potential, and to help others do that.

**Would you be interested in continuing with this kind of work in the future, and if so, do you have any idea what you would like to get out of it?**

B: Yes. See earlier answer for future hopes.

Ba: Yes. Very much. Working with this group of people. A deepening understanding of the processes and practice of psychodrama particularly with this spiritual /soul /body aspect. The therapeutic process itself of exploring and addressing personal issues as they arise contemporaneously with the running of the course.

G: I would like to pick up on specific issues that I feel were causing me problems and work with them for the entire duration of the course. Some weeks I did not get as much from the work, as I was just pulling things out of the air to work with.

M: Would definitely like to explore this area. Difficult to say exactly what I want to get out of it as it has raised lots of thoughts but no concrete beliefs or ideas. The Eben Alexander stuff was fascinating – I wish Rob had watched the video.

Ba: Yes, I would like to use this work in future. Possibly to help special needs people, to do a masters, or to help the mentally ill, or underprivileged. Employment in this area.

**Would you be interested in continuing this work in September 2012?**

B: Yes.

Ba: Yes I would be interested.

G: I won't be there.

M: Definitely, if I can work it into my schedule (will be going back to Uni for a year).

A: Yes.

**Any further comments:**

Ba: I found these sessions to be very enjoyable, challenging, thoughtful and enlightening. Mike shaped the processes well so that each of us worked in a safe trusting environment which allowed me (and I think everyone) to feel comfortable and to express myself freely. I could be both playful and serious and so engage fully in the creative process. I felt I could share some difficult issues in my present life and relationship, and reveal and share moments in my past including my childhood – looking at the time when I went away to boarding school, how I felt then, and my experience both of the school and of my parents at that time. I found the process here to be illuminating and healing.

Throughout the sessions, the structures Mike used enabled me to explore past and present experiences and to imagine future possibilities. The structures were simple and clearly expressed and very effective. The spiritual dimension in them allowed me to think laterally, outside the box and enhanced my imaginative exploration of events and of possibilities, including possible positive attitudes and solutions.

I was impressed by doing a timeline process of imagining key memories in my past and physically moving back and forwards to various years. Memories came with visual pictures which were very vivid. It effectively brought stored memories into the light and I was free to look at them anew as I moved up and down the timeline. The metaphor of the experience is as if I were a film projectionist looking through a strip of film, moving it back and forwards.

I could edit my point of view of what had happened from an objective vantage point, not changing the events but changing my point of view and so move on.

I am mindful of Julia Cameron's comments in *The Artist's Way* that our transformative creative power lies in our ability to change the narrative story about events in our lives. To me this seems to be a way of both releasing our creativity and of moving towards psychological health. Through these psychodrama processes in this course I can own my experiences, take responsibility, transform my point of view and so free myself from negativity and move positively forward. Seeing other people enact and embody the events enabled me to look objectively at them from the outside.

In a way this metaphor of film editor, or similar ones such as being the theatre director or scriptwriter of my own psychodrama, appears to be indicative of the processes we used. One could replace the terms “angel” or “guide” with these theatrical terms. However, that is me as a theatre practitioner speaking.

The terms “angel” and “guide” remind us of the spiritual dimension to life and accords with my belief that we do not just exist in a material universe, but rather live in a spiritual-physical universe in which a spiritual drama is unfolding. Since I believe that humans are spiritual-physical beings, I am equally comfortable with the terms “angel” or “guide” as representing potential support from the spiritual dimension which is open to humans through intuition. A more materialistic psychologist might use terms such as “super ego”. However, I prefer a spiritual understanding and awareness of humanity and of what it means to be a human being.

In summary, the psychodrama process of describing a scene in my life and having other group members stand in for myself and for others in the scene enabled me to step out, observe and give them words and in doing so both perceive and express positive solutions. It helped me to see what each participant needed to help them – the best gift for each for their highest good.

The sharing of experiences with others enabled me to see that we share common human challenges and experiences and this in itself is liberating.

We share a common humanity. This process was of course only made possible by Mike’s careful and considered shaping and facilitating of the processes as we went along.

Outside of the sessions, I actually began to become more aware of both myself and of the other person in my present relationships and put what I had learned through the session’s experience into practice, quite effectively.

I am grateful to Mike for having shaped and led this course and look forward to further sessions.

G: I felt that it was facilitated with sensitivity and that a safe space was created to work in.

M: I don’t think so; if I think of anything earth shattering will get back to you.

A: Cheers.

### **Appendix 3**

Body, Soul and Spirit Course Interview: With Mike Chase at the Glasshouse Arts Centre

A 20 minute interview on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2012 at 8.50 pm

Present: Barbara: B; Barry: Ba; Bob: Bo; Martin: M; Glenda: G; Althea: A

Question, MC: How has your understanding of the term ‘spirit’ developed in any way since we have been doing this work together, and I mean that in a very personal way? What is this term ‘spirit’; has it grown for you in any way? Does anything come to mind?

A: I am interested in the work with the spirit because with previous psychodrama there have been emotional interactions like playback, but when spirit is introduced, and we are invited in to a psychodrama on: ‘before you were born’, and ‘knowing the choices’ and enacting that in part of everyday life, the continuity in the here and now... not just in the nitty gritty here and now but before you were born... and that being part of it in the hereafter, before you were

born, and representing characters... I started visualising the actual spirit rather, then it had been something floating around the subterranean or in the ether ...so spirit becomes there with the mask, here with the body. I find it a good representation of spirit.

B: I also enjoyed giving your Guardian Spirit a voice and having somebody speak, sometimes yourself from that role, it kind of embodied something that is normally very etheric and very intangible, and it was amazing how I could do that. There was a being; there was a sense of someone.

G: I've been very interested in the concept, in how do we let the spirit constantly flow through you...so you can access that spirit any time freely. I'm involved in so many things that I can't stop, which is blocking having that connection with the spirit. It's been very helpful, this technique of seeing other people act out the things you are unconscious of ...like watching me standing there going blah, blah, blah, and I didn't realise I was doing that. But that action of seeing there in front of you what is blocking the spirit...once you get rid of that you can do anything, just get rid of that...(unconscious body language)...this image in front of me was really clear in pointing out what my idiosyncrasies and unconscious habits were and I think that's why I came to this research... I wanted to feel the spirit flowing freely through me... but I did not realise I was going to have therapy...I thought it was to find out how you were going to do this work...but obviously I've learnt that.

M: My interpretation of what we have been doing is along the lines of what B said looking at a framework where things are ethereal and perhaps we would describe them as spiritual or things that really we can't prove ultimately with science but I feel by looking at these things it has really helped me look at our humanity. So if we want to describe that as spirit, then it is the same as our humanity - that's the idea I have come to after those few weeks.

Ba: For me it has come to mean something that Steiner said about the spirit, and now I am not on my own in thinking this...the sense of spirit is physicalised, we have been able to explore that and see it is there in that moment of encounter...you encounter yourself through the encounter with others ...and seeing other people differently, mother and father or whatever...I can see their humanity through the work (with choosing your mother and father?) and get an understanding of what makes them human when becoming parents...

G: Whenever somebody has been doing some work on a role of the spirit, they become ageless...

Ba: The challenges that occur in life have their role; we have to go through it...

B: The long journey of looking at before you were born, and looking at that *intelligence* creating the life we are now living...you kind of become ageless, it made me be out of my life, but also be in my life at the same time. And that bit that was looking at my life I connected that to my spirit. We did say 'that is what we are going to do, we are going to go here and meet these people' and what we have been experiencing...that work we have been doing made more of life for me...

Ba: In this life, in this tension, what they were able to give me was...

B: What's the essence of that story, what is it saying to you...

A: In that you feel you have a choice. It's like you have been travelling on one track and then suddenly you have a choice, it becomes illuminated, inspiration... spirit, purity, above and beyond the mundane. It gives distant reflections on life, and feelings, and spirit and

inspiration, something that's pure, it comes from you. You can suddenly feel into these situations like an essence, like a spirit.

MC: (Goodbyes to Gina) How do feel the difference is between looking at given situations in a person's life as in classical psychodrama, compared to looking at things from a spiritual perspective, like the prescriptive roles and structures we have been doing in the last 10 weeks?

M: I've been thinking about this for a few weeks since we spoke about it and for me, obviously it's going to be different than for everyone else, I guess ... I don't know if it was because I was so ill last year, but in the more traditional psychodrama I found it very difficult when we created a situation and then being able to step out of it, because I felt the emotional connection to that scene, whatever it was, I felt so connected it made it very difficult for me to step out of that situation and be as objective, to my own satisfaction. Whereas this work, and once again I don't really know any technical terms, but it felt like I used a different part of my brain to look at these sorts of things; and therefore it's allowed me a little bit more freedom to be creative and accept the creativeness of my mind, and how I perceive things. Therefore it's allowed me to be far more connected to the work then last year. I felt far more free to be able to... even though, if I was hard pressed I would disagree with...I don't want to talk about Angels, there are some aspects of the work that immediately confront you and go...you know what, it's a load of wank; but I was still able to find my own way through it. So the work was open enough for me to do that. It allowed me a different kind of insight.

B: In reflecting on the old sessions, it was the emotions...you could be plugged in so deep... before, we were groping round in your heart, up to your elbows in blood and guts... this work has been so different... and now we were looking down at it from the stars...it's about changing perspective and getting a very different lot of insights.

A: Dealing with the eternal... B: ...and you in that eternal... A: ...eternal everlasting universe.

M: It's like last year the work, which was still fabulous, I'm not taking away from the great part of the work of working with other people, where actually everything we feel is universal, and that we all feel these emotions, these different contexts, so it takes the personal emotional thing and makes it universal. But this year, it's like a microscope really focusing on the magnifications pulled back so everything looks a little bigger, so that everything is more intangible yet even more unifying. It's like the things that unify us and make us feel good in the more standard work are emotional things, they are smaller emotional situations, whereas this is bigger and more universal.

## Appendix 4

### My Law – Tieme Ranapiri

The sun may be clouded, yet ever the sun  
Will sweep on its course till the Cycle is run.  
And when into chaos the system is hurled  
Again shall the Builder reshape a new world.  
Your path may be clouded, uncertain your goal:  
Move on – for your orbit is fixed to your soul.  
And though it may lead into darkness of night  
The torch of the Builder shall give it new light.

You were. You will be! Know this while you are:  
Your spirit has travelled both long and afar.  
It came from the Source, to the Source it returns –  
The Spark which was lit eternally burns.  
It slept in a jewel. It slept in a wave.  
It roamed in the forest. It rose from the grave.  
It took on strange garbs for eons of years  
And now in the soul of yourself It appears.

From body to body your spirit speeds on  
It seeks a new form when the old one has gone  
And the form that it finds is the fabric you wrought  
On the loom of the Mind from the fibre of Thought.  
As dew is drawn upwards in rain to descend  
Your thoughts drift away and in Destiny blend.  
You cannot escape them, for petty or great,  
Or evil or noble, they fashion your Fate.

Somewhere on some planet, sometime and somehow  
Your life will reflect your thoughts of your Now.  
My law is unerring, no blood can atone –  
The structure you built you will live in – alone.  
From cycle to cycle, through time and through space  
Your lives with your longings will ever keep pace  
And all that you ask for, and all you desire  
Must come at your bidding, as flame out of fire.

Once list' to that Voice and all tumult is done –  
Your life is the Life of the Infinite One.  
In the hurrying race you are conscious of pause  
With love for the purpose, and love for the Cause.  
You are your own Devil, you are your own God  
You fashioned the paths your footsteps have trod.  
And no one can save you from Error or Sin  
Until you have harked to the Spirit within.

*Attributed to a Maori*