

Excerpts from Changing the Past

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Moreno on Time

Time is basic to both the theory and the practice of psycho-drama. Doctor Moreno referred to Time as one of the *Universalia* (see *Psychodrama, Volume III, pp 11f*). He does not address time philosophically, mystically or phenomenologically, but in terms of psychotherapy. Inasmuch as we live in time, he said, we may suffer a form of pathology with respect to each.

He regarded the Freudian psychoanalytic preoccupation with the past as one-sided *reduced* time which minimizes the overall effect of time on a person. Moreno preferred to focus on the *present, the here and now*. He called attention to the dynamics of the *moment, warming up to the moment, and the dynamics of the present*. He challenged us to risk *encounter, a telic phenomenon* which takes place in the now.

He noted that the FUTURE had been neglected till recently (1969). but he acknowledged Adler, Horney and Sullivan's awareness of the future. He said *we certainly live in the future rather than in the past....*

It is one thing to consider the expectancies of future happenings in our minds and another thing to simulate them, to construct techniques which enable us to live in the future, to act as if the future is on hand, right here, a la recherche du temps de l'avenir.

He cited the example of clients who are anxious about getting a job, or of renegotiating a job, and how we may role train them. Likewise with marriage, divorce, a new baby...etc. This is how psychodrama goes beyond Adler, Horney and Sullivan in providing a structured process. He concluded,

Thus all three dimensions of time--past, present and future are brought together in psychodrama, as they are in life, from the point of view of functional therapy.

Ledford Bischof's *Interpreting Personality Theories (1970)* related Moreno's view of time to roles, whereby the past structures roles, the present governs the action of roles, and the future sets goals for roles.

To structure roles is to develop cultural conserves. Society rewards those who have learned the roles they've taken well enough to perform them as expected. On the other hand, to continue following such an inflexible pattern risks the loss of further spontaneity and creativity.

Spontaneity and creativity enable us to play our roles in full concert with the past, present and future. Moreno thought that roles frozen in the past invited regressive infantile behavior, whereas roles structured in the present alone lack a stabilizing core and fall prey to trivial and transient momentary influence. Roles restricted to the future may function as escapist fantasy unless they are related to present concerns. Without spontaneity and creativity as the source of new roles, humanity may fail to reach its highest potential. Avoiding the inadequate stereotyped response the spontaneity factor is appropriate to the situation, competent and timely. Spontaneity transcends a mere time sequence.

Moreno contrasted his therapeutic practice with the psycho-analytic in working forward, while psychoanalysts work backward. The healthy sequence is to warm up to spontaneity, generate creativity, and produce a cultural conserve, but guard against sinking into yesterday's conserves. Let them serve as a matrix subject to warm up, which will allow the process to continue.

In *Sociometry and the Science of Man, (p 60)* Moreno wrote that the moment is not a part of history, but history is in the moment, that is, history finds its fulfillment in the moment. The German language has two words for history. One has to do with the sequence of events, and the second is the disciplined study of these events. Moreno is using history in the former sense.

Chronos and Kairos

Many readers miss Moreno's point because they assimilate the *moment* into time as conventionally understood. Reference to three Greek words for time may be helpful.

'Hora' is indefinite time, a kind of variable time, or 'anytime.' Time suggested by nature serves as metaphor, such as day or hour, when the day or hour is undetermined, unknown or imprecise.

Chronos refers to measured or linear time. Observers are able to agree that this time is longer than that time, or that time is shorter than this time. The time of science and common sense is simply duration, or empty time, in contrast with *Kairos*,

Kairos implies opportune time, connotes timeliness, and has sharply defined features. *Kairos* is Moreno's *moment*, marked by a powerful sense of presence and encounter, where time is filled and fulfilled.

THE CHANGING PAST

The *remembered present* requires our bringing the past to the psychodrama stage as the foundation on which to create the future. Bear in mind that the past was once a future, so we may speak of a whole series of "past futures," not only to distinguish them from all the "future futures" stretching before us, but to remind us of the sequence of perspectives guiding our choices.

In our view there is no singular fixed or immutable past. Rather one actively constructs a personal past, ever destructing and reconstructing sequences of pasts in reacting to ongoing experience. Directors find and focus on dysfunctional roles, exploring the social-emotional context of their development, and prompting the renegotiation of more effective roles. A person's selections in the present swiftly come to be one's past, and that past makes up one's identity at any given moment. Recognizing how human memory processes operate imposes hard limits on easy assumptions, but throws wide doors to change. To show works in progress, we've reconstructed from our in-patient clinical notes a week's psychodramas, together with two additional sessions done within a fortnight of the others by one of those 7 protagonists. Enough data has been provided for readers to reach their own independent judgments in evaluating our thesis.

Early psychodramatists were careful to distinguish what we did from what psychoanalysts do. We do so less, now that we've come into an era which presumes to resolve human conflict and suffering immediately, if not sooner. The prevailing view throws therapy professionals onto the defensive, for administrators have come to require justification for looking into the past, when present and future worries most people so much more. The trend resembles an adolescent posture in its denial of the past. As it happens, we psychodramatists find ourselves in a somewhat better position than most, championing present and future as the proper arena for decisive action. But let us not mislead the public, for our quarrel with the psychoanalysts was not that they focused on the past, but on the way they did it. We have made the past present, and thereby have put the lie to those who pretend that the past cannot be changed.

To Thaw the Frozen Past

To believe the past cannot be changed invites defeat from the very start. How can the future remain open, if the past be a lost cause? Must we settle for grim compromise, gritting our teeth and plunging blindly onward, no matter what? Heroic surely, but intelligent, not even close.

Shall we join the mythical figure who all day every day inched his boulder up a hill, only to find it again at the bottom on the morrow? Taking for granted one must be stuck with the particular past known at any given moment is like trying to score in a footrace while clad in overcoat and boots.

This is to invite you to strip for racing, to shed the passive resignation that nothing can be done about the past. Do you argue that letting the past go frees one for present and future, without even taking a good look at it? Consider:

1. We're not necessarily aware of what the past has been,
2. for there is no singular past, which nearly everyone knows, but a plurality of pasts.

What gets in the way of your granting the obvious? Biases of 19th century science, with its resolute determinism, its oversold objectivity, its exaltation of cause and effect, and the stumbling block of specification in advance have placed today's commonsense in a straightjacket.

If we compare your past with my past at points of overlap, we discover they are not at all the same. May I take for granted that my version is correct, and that yours is in error?

3. Having come this far, we now find ourselves confronted with a past different from the one each started with and we can no longer return to the starting line.

Here professional historians begin, for they understand that past realities require consensual agreement among competent observers of public, verifiable events. But even an educated past refuses to be fully and finally nailed down, what with new facts ever coming to light.

4. Every new fact carries with it the possibility, even the likelihood, of a new perspective--and on occasion, a radically different one. This is why history must be re-written for every generation.

Even collective conclusions incorporate biases, making it exceedingly difficult for anyone inside to find a fulcrum outside with which to move them. Yet the experience of a later day offers an alternate fulcrum. The long view of moving fulcrums suggests that whoever looks has become part of what is being looked at.

To persons in pain, objective history hardly matters at all. What matters is my own personal history, the source of my pain. What has happened to me have been events so private and personal that I don't expect they shall ever be public and verifiable. If my subjective history gave me enough pain, I am likely to have sought out a psychotherapist. Together we arrived at a past-for-me analogous to a historian's history of a particular society.

5. Successful psychotherapy produces a view of the past quite different from independent views patient and therapist each brought into their relationship at its beginning.

You know this is so. Why strain your patience? Because I fear you may think *everybody knows perspectives vary, but events themselves never change at all.*

6. Past events won't change unless we let them. If you must have an unchanging past, that's what you'll get. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy to believe the past cannot be changed, for that serves to make it so. Why settle for such a bad bargain? The anxious and insecure long for stability and clarity, but where truth and certainty conflict, truth suffers. Has certainty already convinced me I have the truth too? Should I deceive myself into sacrificing a grasp of an ever changing reality for a frozen picture? Frozen pasts lead from frozen presents to frozen futures. I cannot change, *if I will not to change*, no matter how much I think I want to. I am doomed to be who I am. If I am a victim, at least I know that I am, and have accepted it.

Educate the Conscience

We have arrived at something both true and false, which we must sort out. The way forward requires acceptance. But acceptance of what? Wrong question. Acceptance of whom! This particular person, all too long convinced of his or her unacceptability. Quite another matter. I cannot be objective about my past, for inevitably I judge it. My conscience both loves and hates me for who I've been. If I step back from my conscience, I realize the conscience I've developed echoes composite consciences of parent-figures, who themselves have echoed society-at-large--at least as it was way back then, not necessarily what they may feel now, or what society today upholds.

Moreover, composite judgments may be less than united. Even children know authorities don't always practice what they preach, nor have they set forth exactly what they believe, nor have they measured self and others with the same yardstick. Reflecting on this should give one a lot of room to move around in, if I choose. Have we no freedom to criticize our own judgments?

The Depression Hurdle

Depressed people do not allow themselves the freedom they allow others. As the depressed see those who aren't depressed, what others have done flows from specific situations confronting them, replete with mitigating circumstances, where-as what I, if I'm a depressed person, have done I did because of the kind of person I am. Some persons *deserve*

one kind of future; others deserve another, but I deserve least of all, because of the kind of person I've been. How do I know what kind of person I am? Look at what I've wished for. Look at what I've done. Circular, isn't it?

If the depressed-me doesn't deserve much, is it any wonder I sabotage my opportunities? We keep making the same mistakes. How do we account for a woman's marrying three consecutive alcoholic husbands? Only too late she finds she's 'blown it again.' She makes matters worse as she labels herself sick, bad, crazy or stupid. The evidence may be read differently. Judgmental attitudes are not necessary, nor are they helpful. People who care about us refrain from using self-defeating labels against us.

Does the best person I know treat me like dirt? No, but he or she doesn't know me like God knows me. How odd, that the best person I know should treat me better than God. This psychodramatist suggests such idea of God reverse roles with the better person, for surely he or she is the more God-like. Let religious persons think this through, for theological doctrines like grace make good sense, and are consistent with God's love, not exclusively reserved for the deserving (whoever they are) but for the undeserving (like me).

How do normal persons differ from the depressed? Normals are much gentler with themselves, taking into account the many factors which inclined them in the wrong direction, and console themselves that nearly anyone else under like circumstances probably would've made the same mistake. Normals have a self-serving bias. We take for granted the past is fixed and you can't do anything about it anyway, but *in practice* everyone re-casts one's own individual past, minimizing what formerly was focused upon and moving to another focus in the midst of the abundant options making up one's past.

But it's not simply a matter of selecting from a pool of discrete events. The relationships among these to one's present situation is coming to be progressively recast, such that who I am coming to be stands out from whom I've once been. So I am in the process of remaking me! Moreover, I do this on the basis, not of something fixed and final, but of something that yields to my spontaneity and creativity. No one has infinite options, but the choices before us are sufficient, sufficient to open up the future.

At any given moment, the array of possibility changes, but not arbitrarily. I participate in that which I present to myself in the present. I maximize the range of my choosing, not by decrying or ignoring the past, but by

choosing among the givens, attributing to them the meaning which makes sense to me for where I may go on from here. Here I stand, acting so as to maximize my freedom.

This is why I tell my patients they may choose that past which best expresses who they are in the process of coming to be. On a purely physical level we assume the past to be fixed, final, and irretrievable, for the *arrow of time* flows in one direction only. We call that the *actual past*, which begins for the cosmos at the edge of the future, with an infinitesimal instant, the *actual present* its ephemeral boundary. The future does not yet exist, and the past has gone forever.

Such a view does not even allow for what has been called *the specious present*, that irreducible unit of experience we'd designate as present, *strictly speaking*. But experience has no place in the actual. We have no specious present without the *remembered past* and the perceived options for our future.

So who knows what that past is? That past is not one but many. The meaning I give, and continue to give, allows me to grow into someone I can respect and like, who belongs where now I am, as I move toward whom I want to come to be.

Educate Your Memory

One's memory does not function like a home camcorder. For one thing, sight and sound are processed separately, their most inclusive input lasting but a second or two, from which we may pull out matters of interest for the short-term memory store, scarcely more than a half-dozen items, to be lost in about 15 seconds. So how do we remember anything? A long-term memory store impacts upon the short-term store to designate what shall be rehearsed. What has been rehearsed well enough is passed from the rehearsal buffer of the short term store back into the long-term store, sometimes called semantic memory, deeply dependent on generalizations couched in language. Nevertheless, a place in the long-term store is no guarantee that any specific memory shall be readily accessible --as anyone who has flunked an exam knows only too well.

Teachers hear students say, "I have the answer inside me, but just can't get it out." Even though the complaint doesn't do them much good, we know they're not lying, for the information which could not be recalled for an essay exam is readily recognized on a multiple-choice test. Supplying a bit of information provided the trigger for the retrieval of memories not lost after all. Why the digression into the commonplace in the psychology of memory? For three reasons vital to the psychodramatist:

i. Memories of events are not exact reproductions of what happened, but *reconstructions*. That is to say, memory is an active subjective process, not a passive registration.

ii. Reconstructions borrow shamelessly from other sources, even to the extent of confabulation. How many eye-witnesses in court have innocently sworn that someone or something was there at a scene when in fact they were not!

iii. Feelings are not themselves stored, but are re-evoked on the basis of imagery. Reconstructed feelings may be both more or less intense, and even different from the original.

Here's how the above pertains to the psychodrama director's work. Whatever the limitation of memory, it is the truth by which the protagonist lives. We accept that truth, even though we'd have a different version, had we been on-site as things happened. To do otherwise would be to disserve those who've come to us for help. But beware of allowing yourself to be drawn into patients' lives outside therapy. You cannot guarantee truth to a third party, least of all risk sharing in court conclusions you've reached on the basis of what protagonists in all sincerity have told you. If courts proscribe heresy evidence, your expertise doesn't launder it enough to make it genuinely admissible after all. A little humility may prevent others misusing you.

Memory is exceedingly important nevertheless. Consider the plight of amnesia victims. How distressing it is to make choices when you do not know who you are, and therefore lack a basis for decision-making. Memory goes to the heart of who I am, providing me with a sense of identity to carry through a whole lifetime. Objectivity in natural science seeks to eliminate the self, but in psychotherapy it is the self who matters.

Transcend the Past

Psychodrama directors cannot dispense with the past, however 'unreliable.' The present moment takes its meaning from the past, and even the future is projected on the basis of the past. But on the other hand, we have much more freedom with the past than we may have ever imagined. Psychodramatists typically start with the protagonist's warmup. This involves reconstructing something that just happened on the hospital unit, or in family therapy, or back at home when the patient was on pass. As we enact that first scene, a connection emerges with something prior, which becomes our second scene. No matter how recent or remote, scene setting requires the protagonist's selections for places remembered and persons present. We represent it all. Inevitably the representations in actions evoke feelings which trigger relevant memories. We have a lot more going for us than those who remain in chairs.

Of course it doesn't end there, for the presence of raw emotion within the enactment of roles puts us in an arena where change can take place. Mere enactment itself on stage with persons *re-presented* in their absence before an accepting audience may transform ancient woes into something other than what they were. Whatever the actual may have been, which no one knows for sure, here we have witnessed the change in the patient's *reality*.

Psychodrama moves from enactment to re-enactment. Enactment's priority is clear, but the distinction between them cannot be as clean as the purists among us would like, but I think it's good enough. Through the spontaneity of auxiliaries, directors, doubles we bring to public and protagonist view what had been formerly hidden or insufficiently manifest, diluting the fears isolation produces, and enhancing the individual's functioning in the situation. Stopped-up feelings flow freely, and protagonists rehearse renegotiations for new roles through re-enactment more in accord with what one has been freed to want for oneself.

Some Specific Techniques

6. ICP (=inner child of the past) Use two chairs. In one of these you'll be yourself, here and now. In the other, yourself then and there. This is an IPY (=intrapsychic) dialogue in SR (=surplus reality).
7. HEDGE against suicide (=HS) When P longs for reunion with any deceased love, D says, **Look forward to that reunion, after you've lived a rich, full life, and will bring with you something that will please P and make P proud of you.** Better, program the scene so that the AUX says those words to P, ideally after P has supplied the language while occupying the RR position.
8. My SECRET from you (=MS) Now that you know the worst thing about me, how do you feel about me now? Appeal to persons present in audience in reality OR in SR, Now that P has heard the worst, RR and react. Then RB (=reverse back, hear and respond). This answers the questions: how did P respond when you actually told? Or how do you imagine they'd react if you told them now? Especially useful for disclosure of past sexual abuse---often to an intimate (parent, spouse or peer) whose response you've feared. (BF=boy friend. GF=girl friend).
9. Your SECRET from yourself (=YS) This involves confronting others with something they hadn't known about themselves, esp. terminally ill persons. Or being the messenger bringing bad news.
10. JUST DESERTS (=JD) What should be done to him, her, them? Who should do it? What next? If you do it in SR maybe you won't have to in life, particularly if it's against the law!
11. CONFRONTING sexual perpetrators 'perps' (=CP) is to be done in SR, preferably without RR. Begin with an empty chair, then have P choose someone she trusts to put in the chair, after the confrontation has begun. If feeling comes freely, D won't need to take that step. When D takes P to SR,

for the purpose of showing the response feared, supply P with a double when she returns to her own role. Don't have P linger in the RR position. We must guard against increasing guilt through understanding the perpetrator's point-of-view. We do RR with perpetrators only for the sake of information, not to experience the perp feelings. We may gain information into the perp character and how he justifies himself, or maintains cover-up. If ever we dare do this with actual perps, the psychodrama becomes an encounter. When working in a correctional setting the perp is the P, and the victim the AUX. When you do have P RR with perps,

a. with the best you can hope for from P, esp when you suspect the relationship will continue (as with a sibling, or extended family where avoidance may or may not be an option).

b. with the response which would give you the most satisfaction.

Then RB to open the door to what you want to do next. You may or may not want to follow up with 'just deserts.' OVERHEAR (=OH) is often an effective follow up. Let's imagine that someone important to you overheard CP confirm your accusation against him, RR with that person and react. D may stage a scene on the assumption that an important person in P's life has seen this psychodrama so far. Often we conclude a psychodrama with P's telling someone later what happened in his psychodrama, or writing (aloud) a letter home about it.

12. DELAY STAGING (=DS) Especially when P has come into PD with the agenda of doing that SR. D asks, **What was your warm up to our staging this? Let's back up and show that.** Often this takes place in conversation or soliloquy on the way to where one encounters the other.

13. SUBSTITUTE SCENE (=SS) follows 'delay staging' when doing the actual scene involves R rated production, or obvious staging difficulties.

14. LIFE SAVING toward preventing suicide (=LS) Minimize the warm up to suicide and move to actually having done it. Then put an AUX in the dead P role, and leave him there, while P shows us the discovery of the body and its impact on the discoverer. Delay RB until we've seen the impact on all the significant others.

a. BUT YOU DIDN'T DO IT (=NOT) Take P back to himself as he contemplated doing it. D asks, **What do you do next?** This could lead to a soliloquy or to an IPY consisting of **Do it vs Don't do it.** Be sure to investigate what P fears will take place if he doesn't suicide.

b. HOW WOULD YOU HAVE DONE IT? (=SP, or suicide plan) Just ask, don't stage. We don't want to role train (=RT) anyone into committing suicide. OR tell us what happened to save your life (preventing the suicide). D: **Now that you've been given another chance, what do you do with it next?** (=NXT)

15. POSITIVE FUTURE (=PF) D looks for a foundation which will make it plausible, as in presuming a favorable treatment outcome, and with P having made proper preparation, including working toward favorable breaks. How far into

future to take the TIME MACHINE? (=TM) Or imagine the passing of the seasons, or falling leaves of calander, as one may do in hypnosis. D would use NEGATIVE FUTURE (=NF) only as *the worst that can happen*, in order to discover what P is afraid will happen. Follow this with LIKELY FUTURE (=LF), to see where the P's balance at the moment is. D: *Given that this is the foreseeable future at this time, how would you like to change it?*

16. LOSE YOU (=LY) At the strategic moment, D supplies the double with the line, *I was afraid I'd lose you too.*

17. MINIMIZE GUILT (=MG) If P shows possible guilt at SR negative expression toward significant figures, D says *But you never actually did that, did you --- even though it would've been their 'just deserts.'* If P says, *Well, not quite so forcefully,* D says, *Too bad you didn't. They deserve it. And it might've helped your relationship in the long run. You saved them pain at your expense. You should get a medal* (said with an obvious 'tongue in cheek,' but avoid sarcasm itself).

On may also feel guilt over failing to express positive feeling. Not having been near when beloved persons die is a common experience, leading to anguish over not having said how much love they had, and how they wished they could have told them in time. We provide in psychodrama through surplus reality what life hasn't provided. We bring the dead temporarily back to life to give protagonists a chance to do what they wish they had done. Directors should remember that what one fails to do may be just as guilt producing as what one does wrong.

We invoke the same process when the words protagonists wish they had heard from dying or dead significant persons. Suppose the beloved is in a coma, and children require added reassurance that the words of love would've been forthcoming, we move forward in time to when the beloved comes out of the coma and says what they need to here. We have the protagonist RR with the beloved, supply the language, then RB so that the AUX representing the beloved may deliver the message, and offer the open arms. The fact that the return from the dead calls for a miracle is no obstacle in psychodrama. We represent whatever can be imagined. At some level of conscious we do not distinguish between a "dry run" and the real thing. Let's let that work for us. Not only may we minimize guilt here, but also anger (=MA).

Directors should remember that the direct route to MG and MA both may be through first maximizing, if P can stand it. P can stand it when we provide adequate supports through doubles, creative settings and group feedback.

18. STRATEGIC STAGING (=SS): The best example is the ACTION SOCIOGRAM, detailed above. Some use the word SCULPTING, but I'm not quite sure what that refers to. Our usual staging I call REALISTIC (=RS), even when it's based on SR, where we freely imagine tables...etc. or represent them by whatever props are available. When we use props, such as chairs, in strategic staging, it is the specific arrangement of persons and things which matters. If it doesn't matter, I call that 'realistic.' The SPECTOGRAM, or self-placing on an imagined continuum between on-stage polarities, is a good example of strategic staging.

19. PHYSICAL PRESSURE (=PP): This is a form of CONCRETIZATION (=C), that is, putting the symbolic into physical form. Pushes and pulls serve usually. Ambivalence or conflict are often represented with an AUX pulling each arm. Watch that your AUX doesn't go overboard, however. When there are no risks, we've even allowed wrestling. Usually it's a good idea to have AUXs flanking the participants on stage. Doubles can take that role, or even substitute for the P and the significant other. Physical ploys get emotions to surface. TOUCHING (=T) is especially helpful. D usually gets doubles P has previously chosen to do it. Sometimes D may hold a frightened P's hand after asking.

20. AGE MANAGEMENT (=AM). In SR take P to an age when dialogue with the other would be more plausible. We keep P at the present age while we manipulate the other, unless the drama requires otherwise. A quasi-encounter with the psychodramatic baby (=PB) becomes possible when we imagine the baby at a specific age, child, teen, or adult. The choice is often symbolic, such as the age P was when PB was lost, or as if the PB had attained the age of one's child. We often ask teens to do that, or give or take advice from a PB or a peer of one's own age.

21. SOUND EFFECTS (=SE) D may orchestrate the group to produce needed sounds to heighten P's experience. Once in a while I come to P's defense, with an arm around the shoulder, and scold the other in his behalf, especially when P blocks on showing anger himself. An experienced double can do this maybe once in a session, but he'd better be sure this would be acceptable to P. One may ask, *You need someone by your side, may I put an arm around you, so that other person over there can see that I'm here with you?* That may cut effectiveness, so only ask if you're in doubt. If P shows discomfort nonverbally, withdraw immediately and say to the AUX playing the other, *Now you know who P has in his (or her) corner.*

When P is reviewing childhood beatings, which often comes up in correctional settings, I may remove my belt to strike the seat of a straight back chair. But if I am about to do this, I always tell P what I am doing so that P doesn't jump to the conclusion I'm about to hit him. If P says he can't handle that, I don't insist. Hearing the striking sound the D produces, while the AUX provides the angry words, will usually bring P to react as he did back then, sometimes more freely than he was allowed--or allowed himself to show at the time.

22. UNDOING (=UD) Parents fail to realize how important it is to give a child a chance to make up for his wrongs. Often they are so angry they want to 'rub it in,' increasing feelings of guilt and hopelessness. The child may've been told *It's too late. The damage has been done. I'll never forget it.* Nor will he, and it's so much the worse for everyone. The D may ask, *Is there nothing you can do which will change his heart?* (We get more mileage out of using the word 'heart' rather than the word 'mind') If there is, we set that up, of course, as warm up to the restaging. We give P the opportunity to do it another way this time rather than the way he'd actually done it before. We follow up with an improvisation from AUX what would happen next.

23. SUPPORTIVE PLOYS (=SY). EGO-BUILDING (=EB) is a standard ploy for building self-esteem. We go round the group, or ask for spontaneous responses, to D's request for something both good and true to say to the P about himself or herself. I don't often have occasion to use straight feedback with a P as I would with a student. When the student has been a P, with beginning groups I may prefer to supervise the director after P has given input and departed. The danger is that P may have had a very satisfying session, only to have it undermined by eager beavers intent on demonstrating their brilliant alternatives to what was done. P's feeling criticized is another side effect, even though in psychodrama we know there are no bad protagonists, only bad directors. This has to be balanced against the paranoia P's absence invites. D may choose to supervise directors in training one-to-one or with a select group of the trainee's peers, but not with patients.