

Facing Jerusalem – Reflections on Doubling

by Sandra Turner

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Being a Double for another requires courage, generosity and the ability to love. Taking up the role of the Double therapeutically also requires the roles of language giver, wise educator and skilful clinician.

This paper arises out of my desire to come to grips with the task of doubling to teach trainees. Although I double extensively in my work and have become skilled in this area as a therapist, it is another step to teach this. In order to teach and train others I have had to grapple with the material anew, learning and integrating the concepts at an even deeper level. Out of this tussle and reflection, a number of insights have presented themselves to me.

THE MATRIX OF ALL IDENTITY AND THE DOUBLE

Moreno describes the state of the infant, in which the mother, the infant, and all objects are a single whole, as "The

Matrix of All Identity". The mother, when functioning as a Double, moves towards her infant reflecting back the child's experience whilst attending to the needs of the child. She responds to her baby, laughing, cooing and playing. While the baby does not have the language of the mother it nevertheless responds and is pulled into relationship. The mother talks for both the baby and for herself and both are enlivened. It is not only that the mother enters the mind of the child, but also that the child enters into the mind of the mother. There is a weaving together of their thoughts, feelings and actions as if they were one person.

This relationship is one of the most intimate, exclusive and sensitive of all, and it is out of this that the child gains a sense of being understood. Dynamics of co-being, co-action and co-experience are manifested in the relationship between the mother and infant which is the first learning experience for the infant. From

this first stage of undifferentiation the infant begins to discover its boundaries and have some beginning sense of a differentiated self.

There is high dependency and vulnerability. If the mother fails to respond in a good enough way, the infant is left with no other way of knowing their experience. If this continues on, as it does for many children, there is a lack of development of the self and this developing child has an associated pervading emptiness.

This relationship of a mother attuned to the needs and experiences of her child is not based on empathy alone. It is a two-way telic relationship, a giving from one to the other and back again. Moreno calls this two-way relationship, "tele at work". (Moreno:1977)

WHAT DOES DOUBLING DO?

Birth is a creative act where spontaneity is maximized and indeed required if the infant is to survive their transition to the new world. There must be a high level of warm up for the catharsis of birth to take place. In psychodrama the Double is seeking to arouse in the protagonist a similar experience. This time it is a birth of the self. The task of the Double is to increase the warm up of the protagonist to themselves, using both physical and mental starters, thus making possible a knowing of themselves that would otherwise be too difficult and frightening to acquire on their own. Good doubling results in a fuller warm up to the self, and thus greater consciousness emerges and is arrived at. From this place there comes an increased ability to live with freedom.

Doubling is therefore not a technique to be taught, though many of us endeavour to do so. If Doubling remains at the level of technique the end result is often a

parody of the protagonist. Relationship with the protagonist is often not sustained and actions and phrases, which might be 10 minutes or even half an hour old, are repeated rote-like. The Double has lost their spontaneity, has ceased to be sensitive to the subtle changes in the protagonist and is acting as an automaton. In the worst moments there is a provoking and goading of the protagonist with the intent towards catharsis and action, as if this is the goal of psychodrama. This style of auxiliary work puts at risk the integrity of the protagonist and psychodrama.

REFLECTIONS ON DOUBLING

Having reflected on doubling and on how to teach it in psychodrama training, I have arrived at a number of insights;

It Isn't New Action that is Required, it is a New Consciousness of Being

Doubling is concerned with a state of being rather than a state of doing. Therefore the Double must give up all agendas, give up their ego, give up their fears and enter into the world of the protagonist. There must be full role reversal and the Double must be able to live authentically from the "I" position of the protagonist. This presupposes that she can, and does, live from her own "I" position. The Double goes to where the protagonist is, into their world. She does not lead or take the protagonist to her world.

Doubling is an Act of Love

This love is not sentimental or romantic, nor does it look for gratification. The Double cannot get away with any pretense of caring for another. Taking up the role of Lady Diana, looking to the protagonist for approval and a photo opportunity, acting

as if they care about the other, will not do it. Instead she must be Mother Theresa and crawl on her knees amongst the garbage if need be. She must go to the other, enter their world and feel the cuts and bruises along the way, not knowing whether she will be accepted or not.

Doubling Requires a Warm up and Acceptance of Relationship by Both Parties

Even when the Double goes to be with the protagonist in their world there is no guarantee of relationship. There is a time of warm-up where both are learning to be together and to tolerate each other. There will be a moment of acceptance when the protagonist is willing to have another travel with them. For some protagonists this is their first experience of the beginnings of attachment.

The Double is a Travelling Companion

The painful process of acquiring self-knowledge which up to now has been defended against, can only be managed if we are not alone. The Double must be able to tolerate intense feelings and have the capacity for intimacy. She must also know unequivocally that it is possible to face the darkness, the void that is the unknown, and that by going to this place the protagonist will return with new life. Old restricted ways of being will drop away and there will be a resurrection of the spirit. The protagonist does not yet know this and therefore cannot go alone.

The Double must be prepared to go into the territory of the protagonist's world and must be at least familiar with the lie of the land. Some familiarity ensures false paths are not taken and there is not a retreat from entering

the smelly swamps when they appear. Short cuts are to be resisted. The Double must be aware that in any moment there is more than one thing occurring in a protagonist. They need to be wise in determining what to focus on and what to maximize. A protagonist who laughs whenever they come close to their pain needs a Double who will challenge this and who will assist in the pain being expressed: this is the time to enter the smelly swamp. Joining the protagonist in flighty laughter, which is essentially a coping role, will be of limited assistance and will be a false path.

The role of the Double is limited by the experience of the auxiliary. The auxiliary must open up to all that they know, reverberate with their own experience and bring into consciousness their knowing of each moment. From this world of subjectivity the double must then bring into play their objectivity, including the roles of clinician and systems thinker to inform the experience.

The Double enables the protagonist to stay steadfast in facing that which is to be faced. She is the companion who lets the protagonist know they are not alone. Whenever new territory is entered there is an inevitable vulnerability which is often, and most reasonably, defended against, resulting in a pulling away from the new. The Double helps to ensure a forward stance is maintained.

Often when mirroring is undertaken, the vulnerability experienced by the protagonist is underestimated by the director. It is critical that the director takes up the role of Double alongside the protagonist as they endeavour to see those aspects of themselves that are not recognized.

The Double is the First Witness

New beginnings are sustained more easily if they are witnessed. Witnessing concretizes what has happened. Very often the first movement towards something new is not noticed by the protagonist. At this point they are unconscious and will still be living from an old script. A primary function of the Double is to bring into awareness the unknown. Being subtly attuned to the affect and body cues of the protagonist enables the Double to utilize maximization so consciousness begins to develop and thought begins to inform feeling in the protagonist.

The Double Builds Relatedness

All that is essential to learning is to be found in the relationship between the Double and the protagonist. When the protagonist learns to tolerate being seen having big feelings and not being overwhelmed, whilst sustaining relationship, trust and confidence in the self develops. This new learning can then be taken into other relationships.

Implications for Training

It is clear that for a trainee to learn to be an effective Double there is more than technique to be grasped.

Doubles must have had the experience of being doubled many times; of being held in relationship whilst they face their own anguish. It is preferable that they have experienced this within a psychodramatic context, to build their confidence that the method is robust enough to assist people to face what ever they need to face.

The Double must have been a protagonist many times, and know well the terrain of

their own self. They must have developed an ability to face those moments of terror that we all have without dissociating.

The Double must have been an auxiliary even more frequently to expand their role repertoire beyond their own life experience, and in doing so develop a greater appreciation for the richness and complexity of life.

Doubles must be able to sustain encounter and not pull away from their own or the others vulnerability when there is intimacy.

Group members have the opportunity to further their own development through being a Double. If they are able to remain open, vulnerable and take pride in the new life that has been brought forth in the protagonist they will be nourished and strengthened themselves. Any temptation to retreat into grandiosity or shame will be reduced.

Often there is a need for the work of the Double to be recognized especially when the work has been emotionally demanding. In this situation Mirroring by the director or other group members is needed and will assist the Double in finding their own ground to stand back on. This is captured in the following statement, "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us." [M Williamson 1992]

Doubling and Faith are Related

I have only recently begun to appreciate the relationship of Doubling to faith and formal religion.

One night when I arrive home from church my husband Ran asks me if going to church helps. He wants to walk with me and is keen to know how I make sense of both living with cancer and facing my own mortality. I am in no mood for a meaningful conversation about life; church on this occasion was less than what I sought. Having been well trained to say "Yes" to the first image that comes to mind I nevertheless flippantly toss it off as if it has little meaning. This image is of Jesus who at the time of Passover is steadfastly facing towards Jerusalem, all the time knowing it is his own death that he walks towards. I say to Ran 'this is the story that comes to mind and that if another can do it then it shows me a way to do this myself.' The story begins to take hold inside of me in a new way. In moments of solitude there is another Double available.

Moreno writes that the idea of the Double is as old as civilization and that it is found in the great religions. "If you could only talk to that person who is closest to you, with whom you are best acquainted. If we could produce for you the Double of yourself,

then you would have somebody with whom you could act together, because you belong together". (Moreno:1946)

To face Jerusalem is to face towards all of who we are, both the darkness and anguish and the brightness of our light. To do this we need many Doubles along the way, people who can help us to stay courageous and open hearted when we are struggling with our light and when we are frightened. This is what we seek to achieve in this process called psychodrama.

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