

## **Brief notes and summary about The Double: Blatner, A. (1977). *The Double, in: Acting-In: Practical applications of psychodramatic methods.***

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In Psychodrama the Protagonist is chosen to work on an issue with the rest of the group, as audience, auxiliaries, and doubles. The as ifness of the playground is created within the dances between different roles in the here and now, of the then and there; where the characters of the inner world are displayed in the outer world, with the support of the different members of the group.

In the psychodramatic stage the double takes on an important role. The double comes to the scene to enable the spontaneity to come in. "...It helps the protagonist clarify and express a deeper level of emotion and preconscious ideation". (pp28)

The double's functions can be waving between stimulating interaction, providing support, and giving interpretations and suggestions.

When talking about doubling inevitably we need to talk about empathy. These are two concepts linked together in order to be efficiently used.

The group members listen to the speech and the body, they become in tune with the protagonist's world, and they react when something is there but not openly acknowledged. Empathy plays a key part, the group members have developed a rapport with the protagonist, there is a relationship amongst them and there is a sense of "if I was you... but correct me if I am wrong"

In Blatner's chapter he describes a variety of ways of doubling; there are the ones that dramatize the feelings and gestures, verbalise the nonverbal communication, support, and many others. I rather disagree with Blatner in trying to list the different ways a double can react to the protagonist, as I believe the list will be infinite. However I was struck by the variety and uses the double has in a psychodrama session. No wonder the role of the double in psychodrama was certainly one of Moreno's most valuable contributions within the psychodramatic process.

I can not stop but wonder about the similarities with an analytic group, when someone identifies the projective identification and brings it back to the group. The member of the group is hearing from someone else's feelings or behaviours he could not express himself. Hearing someone describing the introjection of the feelings, feelings that have been digested and articulated into a response, giving it back to the group makes me think of the similarity in these techniques.

When in an analytical group I sometimes feel emotions that do not belong to me entirely. I always check with the group, if any one else is feeling the same. I believe unconsciously I picked up on the group's emotional dynamic. When describing the feeling and enquiring about the nature of it, on some level I act as a double of the group. I have become an extension of the group, where I provide the group with a positive role model, by acting out, verbalizing what the group might wish to.

The difference might be that I am not doubling any one, I am speaking from my self, and from my awareness of my emotions. Nevertheless I still think that the result from both techniques could be the same.

As a trainee, during my first year, doubling was one of the scariest and risky places to be in. I experienced the pressure of "being right", of being "spot on". After participating in varied and various psychodramas I came to realise that actually this is not it. The double is not about being right

or wrong, it is about helping the action to flow. The protagonist is facing their inner world and shame, guilt and anger could be feelings bottled up and difficult to uncover. The double is giving permission to the protagonist to show those monsters and be contained and supported.

As a protagonist I found that having someone from the audience coming to the stage, standing alongside me, and speak up what might be going on for me is maybe more valuable than the words spoken as my double. The experience of someone metaphorically holding my hand and nodding that it is fine; that they are there for me is enough to help me going further on.

Blatner says "The task of helping another person to express his feelings may seem imposing..." (pg36). This was one of my fears when doubling. I was not sure if my doubling statement was talking about his personal history or mine. I always connect with the protagonist, and can feel the resonance to my own story. So how can we know when those feelings and thoughts belong to you or belong to me?

Lately I am starting to understand the skills involved when doubling. We did an exercise that was just about doubling. The trainees had to double another student. First of all we focus on the body language. We sat next to the "protagonist", and tried to feel their body expression. Imitating their posture, expression, gesture the double can feel within his body the possible sensations the protagonist is going through.

In an analytical group as a facilitator I might ask a group member about a part of his body that is expressing something; a foot moving up and down, biting the lip, all those nonverbal expressions are trying to communicate something. I sometimes get the answer of "I don't know".

As double you are enquiring, but you are feeling within yourself. By exaggerating the movements of the other, an emotion comes to the surface, and then can be expressed verbally.

The nonverbal expression is important, as important as paying attention to the choice of words. These can be clues to understand the feelings behind the words. I have found participating in psychodramas that sometimes the turning point for the protagonist has been said in a quieter tone of voice. Some words carry a lot of meaning. The meaning can be different for each of us; however the way of saying it can give information about the emotion behind it. I realised that the protagonist is aware of, however it is difficult to be expressed. The double helps the protagonist in revealing the full speech of the emotion, in those words, difficult to be said.

Pointing out the obvious might sound obvious. Sometimes the information is already there but not fully developed. A scene between a mother and her daughter, the obviousness is the relationship, the bond of mother-daughter. However the dynamic could have been so confused and messy that this bond is forgotten. The double can comment on these two roles and the nature of it.

In one of the psychodramas, the locus took the group and the protagonist to a scene where mother and daughter were discussing some matter, quite difficult. At some point a double came into the scene. The statement was clear and concise: "You are my mother; you are not acting as one". This statement was drawn into an important development of the psychodrama. The scene was a mother and a daughter; however the relationship seemed more to do with two friends.

When writing this summary I came to realise that a double could be in some way the good enough mother, mirroring the child's emotions, behaviours and thoughts. She is giving permission to the child to be. On the other hand she is giving words to the child's experiences. When we talked about the Winnicottian mother, responsive to the child's needs, I believe the double is holding that role in some way. The double is responding to the protagonist's need of expressing the inner world, which is stopping him to grow and develop, withholding pain and shame.