

**DESCRIPTION AND WORD FOR WORD TRANSCRIPTION OF
STRUCTURE WITH “KATHLEEN”
LED BY ALBERT PESSO DECEMBER 2003
INCLUDING KATHLEEN’S COMMENTS ON THE STRUCTURE AND HER POEM**

By

Albert Pesso

She was a fascinating mixture of vulnerability and lurking threat. Her dark eyes filled quickly with tears but regularly flashed wordless challenges to me. Her skepticism was clear at the outset of the program, “I don’t think anything of value can come of just two days of work with you,” she said, and followed that up by telling me that she had been in therapy for eighteen years without any good effect. She gazed intensely at me as she silently dared me to think I would do any better. Though the barbs launched from her down-turned mouth and angry eyes fell upon me with chilling effect, I could not ignore the nearly simultaneous expressions of helpless suffering and pleading for relief that leaked out around the rims of her bold hostility.

We are in a European city where I am launching the first day of a research program on the efficacy of PBSP for use with clients with traumatic histories in conjunction with the university in that city. Four clients with traumatic history have volunteered to be subjects. Days before, they had each filled out psychological questionnaires and then were placed inside an fMRI scanner to make records of their brain activity as different images were flashed on a screen before them. This was done to establish a baseline prior to the two days of the workshop with me. After the workshop they will be asked to fill out a second questionnaire and then be given a second run in the fMRI scanner to see what changes show up in the various brain structures that could be affected by the work.

Kathleen is a very intelligent, talented person who has lived in despair and unhappiness all of her life. Our work together had a shaky, precarious beginning.^[1] Before I begin to make therapeutic interventions, I like to establish a clear contract with the client that she is going to follow her own impulse to heal and will bring the work of a structure (the name we give to the therapeutic process) to a good end. In a structure we review and illustrate clients’ negative history with the help of role-players or objects chosen by the client to represent the figures in their past. The purpose of this is to provide a stage where the memories and consequences rising from past failures of maturational needs can become clear and consciously experienced. Then we can construct a supplementary, symbolic history with alternative, life supporting figures that we call ideal mothers, fathers, etc. who, had they been in the client’s life, would have provided the necessary interactions that would have naturally led to a more fulfilling and happier life.

This contract negotiation with Kathleen was fraught with pitfalls. It soon became clear that her idea of the therapy would be that I would make suggestions and she would follow them. ^[2]That smacked of a state of surrender (and disguised passive aggression) on her part and I told her firmly, but gently, that

this was not a contract I could agree to. I said, "If you are following me, then you are not being you." I told her that in PBSP the therapist follows the client, trusting that the emotions (felt consciously as affect and unconsciously as sensations in the body) that arose in the work contain the seeds and energy that would result in a healing reorganization of perception and action in the present.

"My contract is to follow your desire," I said. She grew silent, her eyes, downcast. Then she said, "I feel split and it feels kind of strange to speak for one."

I said, "Everyone has different parts and we will give room for each one. I assume there is one you with many parts."

"It seems that a part would never stop crying, and there is another part that sees an ideal world." I said, "That is the part that has hope. There is the part of you that is still longing for something. I call that the soul, the part that is longing to have it the way it should be."

"When I was a child there was the crying child." I asked her why she was a crying child. And she said, I was always sad, worried and afraid." "Children are never those things for nothing," I said, "you must have seen sad things, things that made you worried, seen things that made you afraid."

For long moments she looked at the ground, deep in thought and I imagined she was reviewing old images in her mind.

"What's happening inside," I asked.

"I remember big people who tried to care for us but had many troubles themselves."

"I said, "Do you remember I said in the theory in the beginning when big people have problems we try to solve it ourselves?" She looked at me and nodded glumly. "I'm guessing you did that."

"Who are the big people?" I asked.

"Mother, father and grandmother," she replied

"Who was the one who needed help themselves?" I asked.

"All of them, She said.

"Even your grandmother?" I wondered aloud.

She nodded sadly in assent.

Holes in Roles

Here she presents a classic example of the negative consequences on a child's life when significant role figures do not or could not carry out their necessary care-giving responsibilities and have unfulfilled needs themselves. This is a double whammy.

First, her basic developmental needs are not met and that has negative consequences on her normal maturational processes, which would result in the absence of emotional security or a regular sense of well-being.

Second, her innate capacity for compassion has been too early awakened and over-stimulated by the sight of suffering loved-ones. The consequences of this are deep, dark (in the sense of unconscious) and disastrous to her natural inclination to act (without guilt) in her own self-interest.^[3] This kind of history is the foundation of a life-long pattern of attending to the needs of others at the expense of neglecting one's own needs.

The unmet needs of her childhood development, never having been fulfilled, continue to stay unfulfilled fueling her unending misery and disappointment with life.

If she had only suffered deficits of her needs at the hands of uncaring or unable parents, the usual PBSP intervention would be to supply her with ideal parents who would have been caring and capable enough to do so. This would be enacted in the session, always with the client's agreement and control. Each event that highlighted a deficit is re-played and satisfied/solved both verbally and non-verbally. At the end of such a structure we help the client anchor and imprint this symbolic/virtual event in what we call the mind's body – a repository of remembered age states, actions and interactions that are the data base out of which people construct future anticipations of interactions in the real world.

In other words, our history predicts and produces our present and constructs the foundation for our future. A negative history, uncorrected, tends to produce a negative present and prepares one for a negative future. A positive history, reinforced, tends to produce a positive present and leaves one with justifiable hope for a positive future.

This healing intervention with ideal figures, so successful with clients who have had just a single whammy, so to speak, will not work at all with those, like Kathleen who have had a double whammy. That brings us to the heading topic of Holes in Roles. By that phrase, we mean several things. One, that there is an innate, genetic, evolutionary, biological or what you will set of interior maturational, developmental needs that, when satisfied lead to the attainment of a generative, adult state. A successful adult is one who has had their personal needs met at the right age and with the right kinds of figures. An adult with that kind of history fulfills the first rule of existence, i.e. appropriate and successful maintenance of the self. Such an adult is then better prepared and happy to carry out the second rule of existence, which is maintenance of the species, that is, to replicate. A more romantic way of putting it, would be that an adult person, having been loved, is now prepared to love and take care of others, i.e. to find an adored mate, to create the next generation of adored children. Love leads the way.

What has this got to do with holes in roles? Not only do we innately know what we need, we innately know who the relational figures should be out there to satisfy those needs. We know the roles and we know the role-behaviors before we enter this world. By that I mean that that information is stored in our genes, our dna, our nervous organization, that oversees the development of our systems of perception and systems of action. After all, sensing and moving have everything to do with staying alive and making more life possible. We know beforehand what kind of world we should see that would make life possible and what kinds of figures we should see during our maturation that would enable this

outcome. When those figures out there are deficient, that means they have holes in their roles and that has negative consequences. Their offspring will have equivalent holes in their developmental makeup. Such unfortunate people are able to wait and do wait forever to have those holes filled later in their lives, in their education, in their marriages, on the job with their bosses and even in their own suffering families with their own offspring. That is, if they don't go into therapy and have the job done cleanly and appropriately.

Now about the other kinds of holes in roles. When parents and other care-givers, i.e. grandparents, aunts, uncles and other antecedents (sometimes even going back generations) have suffered maturational misfortunes in their own lives, their off-spring, just like Kathleen, note that unhappiness and do some remarkable things to themselves to make things better for the grown-ups they need and love.

I learned later in the work that Kathleen felt that her mother did not really know how to take care of her, or even want to. Her mother let her know at various times that she did not really want to marry her father, let alone have children with him, thus discounting Kathleen's very existence. She naturally turned to her grandmother for succor and that she received to some extent. Thus her grandmother filled in the holes in her mother's maternal functions.

However, her grandmother had deficits in her own upbringing and they were massive.

"What kind of help did she (her grandmother) need?"

"She had health problems...she was very emotional. She was often sad and nervous."

As she said those descriptive words I could see by the look on her face and the interior gaze of her eyes that she was seeing those emotionally loaded images of her grandmother in her mind's eye. Her face and body immediately and accurately showed the impact of that memory. Her eyes were sad and lowered, with a look of heartfelt concern, coupled with resignation and long endured hopelessness. Her face was moist with the residue of wiped away tears.^[4]

I said, "If a witness were here, the witness would say, "I see how much sympathy you feel when you think of your grandmother having problems, health problems."

The witness figure is a PBSP hypothetical construct posited as a benign, caring figure who sees the emotions one shows on one's face and body, gives them a name and places that emotion in the context that produces that emotion. The naming of the emotion is done by the therapist – who hopefully can accurately assess what is showing visually – but posited as a third figure in the room. When appropriate, the witness figure can be represented by a role-player in the group. In that case the words for the witness figure are nonetheless supplied by the therapist.

Her face flooded with tears and she wiped them away with a tissue. Her face had the ache of inexpressible and helpless longing to do something about the scene she was seeing inside, She was actually looking downward toward the floor, her head slightly turned to one side, but it was not the floor she was seeing. She might well have been back in time looking at the event from above.

"Do you see how that makes you cry? That's sympathy or compassion. And it's coming from your image of your grandmother."

She took in a deep involuntary breath and held it.

"It must have awakened so much compassion in your little child's heart, I think, to see her like that."

Her eyes closed, her lips pressed together, trying to suppress the feelings that were welling up.

"So you're not crying for nothing, you're crying for her right now."

I said to her, "Whenever there is a strong emotion that means that is an important figure. And now your strong emotion is coming from your grandmother. Would you like to have someone or something represent your grandmother who had health problems...since there is so much emotion there?"

The intention here is to externalize the images that are seen in the mind's eye in the interior theater of memory and imagination and have those scenes and figures represented in the room. Not in the sense that it is happening now in the actual room, but hypothetically constructing a virtual stage that could move through time and space and be seen with present day eyes. In a way, the scene she was looking down at from above inside her brain with her mind's eye, would now be actually represented in the room to be seen with her real eyes. Thus, the scene in the room could be a perfect replica of the scenes in her awakened memory.

"Could you pick something?" Leaving her the option to pick an object or a person.

She looked side to side, let the air out of her chest, turned toward one of the group members and said her name, "Marjan?" Both saying her name and asking her at the same moment.

I said to the group member who had already indicated that she would accept the role, "Say, 'I will role-play that part of your grandmother who had health problems.'"

The contracting procedure for taking a role is very important. Group members are told beforehand that they have the option to turn down a role and that if they choose to accept the role they have to follow some clear rules. They are asked to understand that they are not personally identified with the role and that it is not their personality that the group member has in mind, but the personality of the relative she is seeing so vividly in her mind's eye. The role player is simply the superstructure upon which the client can project the qualities she knows so well from the past. At the outset of the group they are taught that when they are given instructions by the client how to take on that role and what to say in that role, that they should not deviate from what they are told. They are not expected to invent the role or to make up the words that the figure would say. Only the client knows those facts and their vivid and emotionally laden memories are the guideline to be followed.

So the contracting statement is important. They are not asked to be the figure, they are asked only to role-play that figure. Thus the group member does not have to find inside themselves the qualities that the client remembers in her grandmother, but simply be themselves saying whatever lines are required. In other words, they don't have to be "Method" actors who try to generate or awaken the characters

feelings in themselves. The client is already seeing and hearing so much authentic grandmotherly qualities in her mind, she only needs external place-holders, so to speak, to make it vivid and believable in the room.

If the client did not have powerful interior images we would not make the intervention of having someone role-play such a figure. Some role-playing techniques attempt to awaken interior feelings by exterior figures. This is not what is done in structures. We only place figures in the room when they are already seen interiorly and powerfully responded to, without outside influence or pressure.

At the end of the structure, the role-player makes a de-roleing statement, whereby they say, "I am no longer role-playing that part of your grandmother who had health problems, I am Marjan."

In that way, they shed the role and no longer assume any part of the role in whatever contact they have later with the one who is having the session. The point here is to maintain the distinction between symbolic relationships and literal relationships and not to confuse or combine the two.

"Do you want to place her?"

She said, "Yes," leaned forward and touched a spot on the ground to her left side with her left hand. She rubbed her eyes, looked like she was seeing the actual room now and was preparing herself to see her grandmother represented there.

"Which way should she face," I asked.

Spatialization is important here. Emotional events and emotional memory always has spatial characteristics. Placement is not the least random. It is not for nothing that the part of the brain that holds emotional memories, the hippocampus, is also the mediator of spatial awareness.

With clarity and conviction Kathleen indicated the direction she should face.

Wanting the figure to be accurately portrayed, I asked, "Was she sad herself...when you think of her was she sad? How did you see her when she had health problems?"

"She wasn't very sad, she was kind of brave," she said with quiet admiration and respect as she surveyed that image inside.

I suggested that witness figure could say, "I see how much respect and admiration you feel about your grandmother, even though she had health problems." "Is that correct?"

I prefer to always check witness statements with clients to be sure that it truly reflects what emotions they are having.^[5]

She nodded yes, solemnly.

"What kind of health problems did she have?"

"She had chronic asthma and the beginning of tuberculosis." "She got cured."

I let out a quiet, involuntary "Wow" at this point because what she said awakened a theoretical notion.

"So she really had breathing problems," I said.

"Can I talk to you a little bit about theory," I asked, hoping she would say yes so that I could make the next step of applying that theory.

She looked up at me with a combined expression of interest, impatience and slight irritation. Her interest was enough of a signal for me to continue.

"Sometimes in this work when people have a history with problems of breathing, sometimes it is an indication they had missing fathers in their lives. And I was wondering if that was the case for her."

"She was an orphan," she said.

"So she didn't have a father," I underlined.

She shook her head sadly and said, "No," in a way that conveyed her sense of the injustice that that condition implied. Looking downward, her tone weak and resigned, she voiced a long known, painful reality, "Neither mother nor father."

"Actually her father died when she was a little baby," she added. When she said those words she had an expression on her face that made me certain she was now bodily reacting to a vivid scene in her mind's eye of her grandmother as a fatherless little baby. She undoubtedly constructed those images when she had first been told that story when she was a little child. Then each and every time that story was recounted she very likely refreshed and reinforced that emotion-producing image. And to this day, it still had the power to produce -- within her present, adult consciousness -- the same aching, sympathy, compassion and longing that it could have been different for her grandmother.

"And her mother died when she was eleven or twelve."

"Right," I said softly, indicating that I understood what that kind of history must have been like for her grandmother to bear.

"So if we were to give her anything," -- as she heard me speak those words which implied a new possibility (she immediately understood where I was going for I had detailed the theory of how to deal with holes in roles at the outset of the session) -- she shifted her gaze from the floor and met my eyes with interest and anticipation, in marked contrast to her mood, milliseconds ago -- "we would give her an ideal father who wouldn't die..." Hearing this she put her lips firmly together, blinked several times in understanding and nodded her head in strong agreement and acceptance. "...and a mother who wouldn't die." "Shall we do that for her?"

She nodded again, indicating another yes, but her raised eyebrows and slightly down-turned mouth also suggested a touch of skepticism with a dash of a "why not?" attitude.

"So, pick an ideal father and an ideal mother for her?" I hesitantly put forward.

She turned to her left and reached toward the floor, about to pick objects to represent those figurative possibilities.

Quickly, I suggested, "Maybe pick people." I thought that since she had chosen a person to role-play her grandmother it would be more believable to Kathleen if she first saw actual people taking care of her grandmother. Kathleen very likely tried to satisfy her grandmother's need for parenting by creating an imaginary mother and father for her out of some of the stuff of her own being without ever consciously knowing she had taken on such a weighty, through strangely inflating, life-long burdensome task. The healing scene is constructed with an eye to relieve clients of the awesome responsibility they had unwittingly shouldered on others' behalf while endlessly postponing the satisfaction of their own needs.

"Okay," she said as she straightened up. She scanned something in her mind, looked to her right, turned forward and scanned interiorly once again. She seemed to be making some evaluations or judgments about both what kind of person could fulfill such a role and/or what person in the group might be able or willing to represent such a figure.

"Elias?" she asked as she looked at him from the corner of her eyes, her head bowed, with a hesitant and a slightly pleading expression on her face. "Would you be the Ideal..."

"He's going to role-play the Ideal Father for your real grandmother?" I said, feeling the need to clearly define the role for the role-player so that he would make the correct contract statement as he took on the role.

She looked over to him to see how he would take it.

"Could you say that? I asked.

She watched him carefully as he made the statement, "I will role-play the Ideal father for your real grandmother."

"Then pick an Ideal Mother."

She turned again to her right and looked at a female member of the group. Her eyes lit up with a fond expression and with a smile of budding hope she said, "Would you be the Ideal Mother for my grandmother." And then shot a glance at me to see how I reacted to her choice.

The group member made the contract statement and I suggested, "They should go behind her now." She nodded in vigorous agreement.

We, together, are beginning to choreograph a visual, virtual event for her that will let her see with her real eyes someone representing her real grandmother receiving what her grandmother had lacked in her actual childhood. This outside scene is constructed with the intention of offsetting the effect of the inner scene she had originally constructed in her mind's eye and emotionally reacted to so strongly

when she had first heard those family stories. She was not just hearing the sounds of words back then. Those words had the power to produce images which awakened feelings in her young mind and body that influenced the way she feels and thinks, even to this day. She not only *heard* those stories but simultaneously *saw* those stories as they were enacted in her imagination and seen in her mind's eye. Just as someone listening to radio dramas "sees" the events that are only described by words and reacts to those innerly "seen" events with all the appropriate emotions that would come from actually seeing similar events with one's "real" eyes. It is not for nothing we say, "Seeing is believing."

But she is not only seeing and reacting emotionally to the dramatization of those stories in the room we are illustrating with role-players. I believe that the more important drama is the one she is seeing and reacting to simultaneously in the theater of her own imagination that she is constructing from my word pictures coupled with the placement, action and statements of the role-players. One can perhaps say that she is actually having a kind of stereoscopic experience whereby she is simultaneously seeing an inside scene and an outside scene both of which are linked emotionally and cognitively in her mind. The outside players are really only the stand-ins and the controls for the more important inside, truly believable, figures that we cannot control in any other way.

What is happening in the therapy room is being inextricably coupled with the remembered imagination of her grandmother as a little child. With the addition of the new symbolic event, now carefully being choreographed, Kathleen's imagined, abandoned child image of her grandmother is "seen" on two, parallel levels. She can see her grandmother from the outside, with her real eyes as she is being represented by the role-player in the room. Simultaneously, she can see her grandmother from the inside, with her mind's eye as she uses the outside believable event to construct a new, more satisfying image of her grandmother's past in her imagination.

Thus, the grandmother is "seen" and planted into memory, being cared for – not by her real parents who died, but by the figures designated as ideal parents. Not neighbors, not baby sitters, not a sister or a brother. Each one of those kinship relations are good in and of themselves but only parents are charged in our psyches with the special significance that comes from our innate (genetic) tendency to wish and experience that our parents have consciously and lovingly supplied the sperm and the egg, which combined, has become our ticket and license to enter into life.

This is part of the PBSP technology of making new, believable memories. To be effective over time, they must be emotionally connected to actual memories and the satisfying event must be based on fundamental, natural, genetic human drives and tendencies evolved and honed over millennia to make life more possible and more satisfying.

We have learned to enumerate some of those innate life tasks and events that all children must experience in order to arrive at the stage of generativity. Only after experiencing such satisfactions at the right age and with the right kinship relationships do they feel willing and able to be of service to life without impossible strain.

With such satisfactions in their background they will more likely produce more life for the future with offspring, art or service to the world. First one has to have sufficient time and satisfactions for their self interest and then, from that foundation, be ready and comfortably able to have interest in the welfare of others.

In Kathleen's case, she abandoned self-interest early on, as that was not to be satisfied appropriately in the family she found herself born into. She then took upon herself, far too soon, the burden of being responsible for the care and welfare of others with the secondary hope that those efforts would somehow bring satisfaction to her own life. Later, I will go into more detail about the secondary effects of inflation of parts of the self that this responsibility produces unconsciously, but nonetheless has powerful effect on the quality of one satisfactions and interactions in the future.

With Kathleen's agreement, I instructed the role-played Ideal Parents to place themselves on each side of the role-played grandmother. "Be on your knees so that you will be taller than her," I said to the role-players, thinking that the visual height difference would be noticed to by Kathleen. She watched the ensemble being put together with curiosity and interest.

"And put your arms around her and look at her." I added.

"Lean your head against them," I instructed the role-player representing the grandmother.

Kathleen leaned forward to see more of what was going on.

"What happens when you see that?" I asked.

She took in the scene with all its implications and associations. I am sure part of her was remembering her actual grandmother without such loving support and that may be what produced the tears which she wiped with a tissue as they rolled down the side of her nose. She nodded softly as people do when they see something that they deem is fitting and right and said, "I am happy for my grandmother."

I noted that state by constructing a witness statement, "A witness would say I see how relieved you feel, that your grandmother has that....kind of possibility." "Is that right?"

She flashed a quick upward look at me...she was busy blowing her nose and seemed a bit impatient with my intervention, but nodded in assent that it was right.

She looked again at the scene with renewed interest.

I said, "Maybe it would be a good idea that the Ideal Parents would say, 'If we had been her ideal parents we would have taken care of her and you wouldn't have had to worry about her.'" My idea was to make the relationship and its implications more explicit by those words.

"What do you think about that?" I asked.

"I would still have to worry about her," she said emphatically, with great concern and a look of childlike, helpless trepidation in her tone and on her face. She didn't say those words looking at me, she was looking downward and inside and was very likely seeing the interior scenes of remembered events when she indeed did have to worry about her.

"Why is that?" I asked.

After some silence, I ventured, “I think you’re worried about her because there was nobody there, is that right?”^[6]

She was still looking down and after a pause, said softly and with some hopelessness, “I am worried because later in her life, she had a daughter, my mother....she was very emotionally dependent on her.”

“Aha,” I said softly to myself noting that she had shifted from seeing her imagined picture of her real grandmother being an infant to an actually remembered picture of her grandmother in a painful relationship with Kathleen’s mother.

“She shared my mother’s view on the world. Although she was a strong and nice person, the older she was the more she suffered.” Her voice broke as she began to weep.

“But I don’t think these parents could have helped it.” She added, with challenging conviction.

Here arrives the first hint of what I have come to call the “entity.” When someone fills the holes in roles for others with a fragment of their own psyche it produces a surprising but (explainable within this theoretical model) unconscious, omnipotent splinter of the total personality that has some stereotypical behavior patterns. This separated aspect has very different behaviors and intentions than the rest of the “normal” more unified/integrated soul or self. When it pops out, as in this moment, it is in surprising contrast to integrated/soul emotions that express a longing for satisfaction in interaction with others.

“Only I could have solved that need,” that omnipotent entity seems to imply. It always takes the position that there is no other beside itself that could have the power and position in question. And that is the hallmark of omnipotence. Omnipotent figures act on the assumption that they are the one and only and will fight ferociously to maintain that station. It makes me think of territoriality and that part of our genetic heritage or dna or primitive brain structures that is wired to battle for the singular ownership of some turf. All well and good in the service of integrated human behaviors but the entity is not a party to regular human behaviors. In its essence it is non-interactive. Now how can I say non-interactive when the entity features arise out of a child’s wish to interact with a needy care-giving figure with the goal of attending to the care-giver’s needs

The normal self is born in interactions with significant others. A child has to have its basic needs of place, nurture, support protection and limits met first in literal, concrete interactions – when it is an infant; then in satisfying metaphoric interactions as it grows older; and only after those stages are sufficiently satisfied does the person become autonomous. Having internalized the behaviors of the outside, trusted care-givers such people are enabled to care for its needs on their own. This is the route to healthy self-reliance. Thus, one can say that the unified, complex self or soul is born/cultivated in satisfying interactions. To repeat, essential care-giving first has to be externally supplied and further, only after maturity and reaching generativity, does one become a non-omnipotent supplier of the needs of others. By this definition, entities spring into being in children who have not had their needs met by care-givers when those very children see that those unhappy care-givers themselves are in need of essential care.

People are born with inherent capacities to take on many kinship roles in their lives. We all have something like modules of potential roles pre-packed in our psyches. They contain the seeds that will flower into future behaviors that will be manifest as we play out those roles. Our human nature anticipates and enables us to become mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, grandmothers, grandfathers and so forth as those roles in life normally occur. But those roles should be taken on in "due time" during the normal maturational process. Especially the parenting roles. One should optimally become a parent only after one has been successfully parented and only after one has developed the maturity needed to become an effective parent.

Let me see if I can paint a graphic picture for you that will illustrate some of the above points. Make a picture of a child in your mind with little circles inside that child representing the various role modules in their latent state. Those modules are cultivated and awakened by interactions with the appropriate figures in the outside world who demonstrate those behaviors in relationship with that child. So the natural development of those roles is accomplished through satisfying interactions. Further, I make the assumption or at least I posit the notion that we all contain an innate picture or interior pre-knowledge of the web of relationships that are required for successful living. That web of relationships represents a goal or a gestalt or an attractor for the energies or forces that will lead to the fullest organization of life. When there is a disturbance or a gap in that web, there is inner psychic pressure to complete it in one way or another.

Now lets place your picture of that child in a network that is full of gaps, as there was in Kathleen's life when she was a child. Let's imagine that child sees its caretaker, let's say it is Kathleen's grandmother suffering a sever life deficit or hearing about her suffering a severe life deficit. The first thing that happens is that Kathleen or that child feels a wave of compassion for that beloved and/or needed figure. That compassion is her soul's reaction to the pain of another. However, that very compassion awakens the need to complete the gestalt in the shattered web where so many figures are missing. What does that child do in the face of such a picture? Here is my metaphoric way of describing what might then transpire.

Imagine that that child sees there is a missing mother and a missing father and is moved to do something about it with her own undeveloped resources. It is rather like a child who hears that her parents are having financial difficulties and then is moved to offer the contents of her piggy bank as a way to help out. But in my picture the child does not reach into its piggy bank, but reaches into its psyche and plucks out the seed of mothering and fathering inside itself and extends that portion of itself outward to fill the empty slots in the network.

Another image is that of an aneurism. Rather than the child reaching inside itself, the empty space acts like a magnetic pull irresistibly drawing out a non-interactive, quantity of the child's banked resources and fills the network's empty space with that non-interactive, untamed "id like" entity of a potential, future, complex interactive identity.

On the one hand we still have a picture of a child, endlessly longing in loneliness for its needs to be satisfied. On the other hand we have this golem of an entity expanded out of the body of the child taking up a huge space, larger than itself that will solve the networks need for gestalt and completion. This entity has a life of its own that is not in harmony with the goals of the soul. It is rather god-like in its

omnipotence. Only It could do the job. It would then want to be the only It and would fight to the death if another authority tried to replace it.

So it wasn't too surprising to hear that Kathleen didn't think the Ideal Parents could have filled the job. However, a much more complex picture began to emerge.

Upon remembering that she said her grandmother had been dependent on her daughter, Kathleen's mother, I said to her, "I think what could be valuable at this time, is to give your mother an ideal mother because your mother had to take care of her motherfrom what you say. Is that right?" She doesn't respond.

Coming up with a new hypothesis I said, "I think you're feeling bad for your mother now."

"I think my mother had an ideal mother," she said, emphasizing the word "had" with a tone of resentment and implied criticism of her mother, adding "except she was a bit ill." This last said with a feeling of protectiveness and tender acceptance of her grandmother's physical disability.

"And also she was dependent, you said," I reminded her.

"Later on," she corrected me.

"That's the time I'm talking about," I said, letting her know we were not in conflict about her grandmother's dependency.

She nodded in satisfied agreement and I felt our alliance was still intact.

"I'm seeing now you're worried about your mother and you're worried about your grandmother also."

"No, I'm angry with my mother," she said forthrightly, "because she made my grandmother suffer so bad when she was so old and vulnerable."

"My mother made my grandmother very sad. But she was very old." She looked so wan, depressed and hopeless as she said this. Her mouth set with endurance and pessimism.^[7]

"I see," I said softly.

I proposed a witness statement that a witness would say, "I see how unfair it feels that your mother made your grandmother very sad."

"Shall we bring your mother here, the part of her that you are so angry at?"

In response she looked to the left and right on the floor near her and I said, "Maybe you can use an object for that."

She reached for a bottle containing mineral water and leaned forward placing it a few feet in front of her, rather near the figures representing her grandmother and her ideal parents. As she viewed where

she placed it she looked concentrated and her cheeks kind of puffed out as if she was going to blow out some breath.

"So that's the part of your mother," I confirmed.

Then I offered this possibility, "Maybe they could have protected her..." She looked at me squarely and with no trace of sadness or vulnerability, "...because if she is that close she's gonna hurt her again," I surmised questioningly. She nodded in silent agreement.

"So maybe we should bring in a protector for your grandmother?"

"Yes," she agreed with some hint of relief.

"Who could that be?" I wondered for and with her.

She blinked, took a breath and said, firmly, "Me."

A soft, "Whoa" of instant recalculation effortlessly escaped my lips.

So many emotions flickered across her face as she tilted her head to one side and wiped her face with a tissue. I thought I saw a glimmer of pleasure or pride at her prowess, a shine of love for the grandmother and a touch of sadness that I surmised was the little girl who wished it all wasn't the way it was.

However, I framed a witness statement saying that a witness would say, "I see how responsible you feel to be the protector for your grandmother." "Is that right?"

She nodded her head while all those different emotions continued swimming across her face and she said with pain coupled with a kind of prideful apology, "Well there wasn't anybody else." And I thought I saw a hint of a smile that for an instant poked through her regularly tearful demeanor and was instantly squelched, followed by an onrush of new tears.

I offered a witness statement that said, "I see how alone and helpless you feel that there was nobody else."

After some silence, I asked, "Where was her husband?" thinking that perhaps here was another empty role that she had to fill.

"Her husband died," she said and bit her lip only her left side, leaving an uneven shape on her mouth.

"So in a way you became her protector and took the role that her husband would do as a protector," I hypothesized and suggested at the same time.

"So maybe we should bring in an Ideal Husband for your grandmother, who would have stayed alive and protected her against your mother?" "So we save you from that trouble."

She nodded in acceptance of that idea.

As you can see, I am following a procedure that allows us to fill in all the holes in roles with so-called Ideal Figures in this structured setting. This step fulfills the innate wish and expectation embedded in everyone's soul for a gestalt, closure and completion in the family network. These Ideal figures appear to provide enough satisfaction to people's core selves and the relief it brings seems to be enough compensation to overcome the entity's hubris and arrogant power. When it works, the aneurism seems to shrink back, the psychic reserves invested in others too soon can be returned to their original account. The interest in the other – too early awakened – is abated and self interest in one getting one's own needs met returns as an appropriate priority allowing a stunted maturation process to resume its evolution.

"Why don't we bring in somebody to be the ideal husband for your grandmother?"

She looked thoughtful for a while, then looked about the room and gestured toward one of the men with her hand. "Would you?"

The group member said, "I will role-play the ideal husband for your grandmother."

"And he should be right in front of her to protect her from your mother, I think," suggesting this in the knowledge that in that spatial configuration he could visually appear as a shield between her mother and her grandmother.

"Yeah, but they used to be a nice couple," she objected, seeing this man as a replacement of the living grandfather and as an act of disloyalty.

"But that was before he died and before your mother was attacking her. So this is at the age when your mother was attacking her."

She nodded in acceptance and understanding and looked over at the figure to renew her image of the time that was being attended to.

"And then she should have protection." Now she saw the picture and nodded in relieved agreement. "Because if she has no protection, you will go there to do it....I'm sure." She set her lips in firm acknowledgement and nodded her head in agreement as her gaze turned inward, in all likelihood remembering events when she actually had taken that protective position.

"Let's put him there." Once again, she nodded in understanding and agreement

It took some moments for the role-player to understand and place himself accordingly. She watched with interest looking at me giving instructions to the role-player and then over to the role-player who didn't understand English sufficiently and was hesitant and placed himself at the wrong angle and in the wrong direction. I felt it was important that the visual picture be accurate otherwise she would not believe his words of protection as his position would not be visually indicative of a shield. What was occurring in real time was a kind of test to see if even here in this symbolic setting it would not turn out right and she would have to be the replacement once more. I remained insistent and emphatic that it

should be done properly, while others in the group translated my words to Czech for the role-player. Thus in the transference, my zealousness that it should be correct was reassuring to her. If I had failed in that endeavor and if the position finally taken was not indicative of protection, the following words of protection would have been simply a verbal charade and therefore totally unbelievable.

Then, when it came time for the role-player to make the statement, "If I had been the Ideal husband for your real grandmother I would have protected her from your mother, and you wouldn't have had to do it."

He stumbled over the lines and had to say each portion slowly after being given the words to say for each portion of the statement. Kathleen's expressions during that process were fascinating to watch. I think she looked at him, both as the real Czech role-player having difficulties, (for whom, I am sure she had some compassion and sympathy for his difficulties) and as the stand-in for the new picture she could build in her mind for an ideal husband for her grandmother during the period after her real grandfather had died. A warm, hint of a smile flickered over her face, the first time in this session that a positive emotion had appeared. Kathleen is an intelligent woman and could see the situation in all its ramifications. She seemed to both like and appreciate the role-player as himself – willing to take on the role, though it was clearly difficult for him – and also to like and appreciate the fact that someone other than herself was on duty as the protector of her grandmother. She could both suspend disbelief when the theatrics were so plainly being constructed and be able to totally believe the construction as if it were "real" after the scene was organized correctly." Thus, she was able to be in the position of being both the co-organizer of the scene and the audience of the scene at the same time.

I directed the role-player to hold his hands in a position as if to stop, the mother. She looked up at that figure holding his hands that way with an expression of appreciation, warmth and relief. Quite another face was showing. Young, a bit impish, even a bit mischievous but clearly satisfied. Then when she turned her gaze toward the object representing her mother, sadness came over her face.

"What happens when you see that?" I asked.

She silently continued to focus on the scene, especially attending to the extended protective hand of the ideal husband over the object representing her mother. Wiped her nose and eyes and said, "It feels good."

I proffered a witness statement, "I see how relaxed and relieved you feel when you see how it could have been with his protection." Is that right?" In doing so, I thought I would connect and anchor the moment consciously with that witness statement. Linking the relaxation and relief with the protective figures actions and its place in time.

For some reason, I said, "So you had a lot of responsibilities then."

For long moments she kept her eyes on the object representing her mother. I imagined she was reviewing or seeing something in that context and did not interrupt her for about a minute, then I said, "What's happening now?" wanting to get information of what had just occurred before that moment would disappear and a new context come up without resolving what had just been happening.

Another half minute passed, then she said, "I feel kind of empty."^[8]

"Yeah," I said. "I think what happens at such a moment is what I call the entity."

I knew I was going to make some explanatory remarks and watched her face to see how she might take my notions.

"When we take those roles, (it, the entity) suddenly lost its job. And then we don't know who we are." Without shifting her gaze, still almost hypnotized by the figure, she nodded in understanding. "Some of our identity is tied up with the entity," I explained further. She reset her lips and rapidly nodded her head indicating she caught the implication of what I said. As I spoke she occasionally looked up at me and then turned back to the figure.

"So it's a little disorienting you see." "Now what's my job if I'm not doing these things?" I said, paraphrasing what her internal dialogue might consist of.

"Do you understand that?" I asked.

"I do," she said nodding, her eyes glumly fixed on that object. "It happens to me very often when everything comes back again." She stayed silent again for a moment.

"But right now, he's doing the job," I reminded her, hoping to offset the statement that everything comes back again. She accepted that statement with a nod of relief.

"And I think," she looked up at me with interest, "a part of you is relieved." Appealing to her soul that wouldn't have wanted the job in the first place. She raised her eyes from the object to me nodding, seemingly both in agreement with that observation and appreciation of the fact that this image had produced relief.

Trying to fix the relief in the appropriate time-line, and not only a phenomenon of the absolute present, I said, "Let yourself imagine being, at whatever age, and having this sense of relief."

Her face became markedly more animated, she blinked her eyes fairly rapidly during the next moments as she processed that suggestion.

"And you're looking at your mother, what do you see and what do you think of?" I wondered aloud. "What do you feel when you look at her?" trying to give her a way to look for what emotional information she could access in sensing what was going on in her body.

"I'm feeling some pity." She said ruefully.

"Pity for your mother?" I enquired.

"Pity that she wasn't a better daughter." She answered with a tone of regret and disappointment.

"Pity for your grandmother?" I said, suddenly realizing the object of that emotion.

"Maybe we should give an Ideal Daughter to your grandmother?" I said, realizing that here was another role she might have filled.

"Hmmm," she murmured, eyebrows raised with interest in this unexpected possibility, all the while nodding with anticipation.

"Do you want some object to be the ideal daughter for your grandmother?" I offered.

She immediately looked to one side and then the other then rose from the floor where she was sitting. She picked a red pillow and I suggested, "Place it so that it's near her."

She walked over to the person role-playing the real grandmother and placed it beside her, then went back to where she had been sitting.

To confirm and formalize the designation of the pillow I said, "And that figure represented by the pillow would say, "I'm role-playing the ideal daughter to your real grandmother. Is that right?"

Still sitting, she reached over and made a small adjustment of the pillow, placing it in a way that seemed that she was arranging it "just the way it should be" to represent that figure and simultaneously both answered me and I thought also grunted, her satisfaction of the shift of the pillow with a sound like, "Hmm."

"And what happens when you imagine she has an ideal daughter? What would the ideal daughter do?" I asked.

She pressed her lips together in thought, tossed her head a bit side-wards and back – making some strands of her hair swing for a moment.

"She wouldn't have transferred all of her own problems back to her," she said with a slight tone of pity that it had been other than that with her real mother.

I took the gist of what she was saying and proposed a statement that the ideal daughter could have directed to her, Kathleen, as if she could speak over the span of time and place where this new symbolic event was being staged and tell her in this present moment, what she would have done that was different in the manner that Kathleen had already formulated.

"Right, so this Ideal Daughter is talking to you now, saying, 'If I had been your grandmother's Ideal Daughter, I wouldn't have had problems'" --- I put it this way to conform to the notion that she was the Ideal daughter and therefore would have been different than the real mother in that regard --- " 'and if I did,'" – putting it in that way so that in that particular hypothetical case, she nonetheless would have acted differently than her real mother had in relationship to her real grandmother. Then I took the statement word for word that Kathleen had made in describing the attributes of this ideal daughter, " 'I wouldn't have transferred them onto my mother."

In this way, she could take those words and hear them coming not only from the figures outside in the room, but more importantly hear them as if coming from the figures she was simultaneously

constructing in her mind. Those figures would consist of the remembered image of her real grandmother in combination with the newly constructed image of this ideal daughter organized/choreographed to be in marked contrast to what she had actually remembered seeing in the past between her real mother and her real grandmother.

She sat in silence as she registered that statement and ran it through her imagination.

“And what happens when you hear that?” I asked.

She nodded twice, still looking at the scene inside her mind and said with a soft voice, “Nice.”

I then formulated a witness statement based on the expression on her face and the sound of her voice, saying, “A witness would say, ‘I see how good you feel to imagine, the justice, the fairness, that your grandmother would have an ideal daughter who wouldn’t have transferred her problems.’”

“Yes,” she said softly in understanding and acceptance, still looking at those designated objects outside while simultaneously seeing her imagined, populated scene on the inside.

Just for a point of clarification, I did not posit the witness as saying how good you feel that your grandmother had a daughter that said that. That would make it seem as if it had actually happened. To anchor the ego and the fact that this is a fabricated symbolic reality, I frame it appropriately by saying how good you feel to imagine. For that is what we are doing, we are making a new memory via imagination. We don’t for a moment suggest that we are making a new reality. However, we have found, that a contrived new memory made this way and placed appropriately in the mind has the power of an actual memory.

Watching her face, I asked, “What happens now?”

She composed her lips, shifted her body and blinked rapidly, seeming to organize the thoughts and memories that were filling her mind, then said sadly, and with some resentment, “I was just remembering how mother very often complained about me and my sisters...” she shrugged her shoulder as if trying to sluff off the unpleasantness of the memory... “to grandmother and....” She paused to let some air out of her chest with a sound that conveyed a sense of stale frustration.^[9]

Trying to compose that scene more accurately in my own mind, I asked, “What did she say about you and your sister to her?”

“And father,” she said, finishing her sentence before answering my question saying, “I don’t know,” she said with a tired, impatience.

“She was complaining about you? I asked, as a way of reminding her of what she had started saying a moment ago.

“She was complaining about everything all the time,” she said with a sense of long endured resentment of mistreatment. This was a cue that she herself could now be receptive to being ministered to.

"So maybe we need to give you, now, an ideal mother who wouldn't have been complaining all the time."

She nodded with a flash of eagerness and said, "Yes, please" emphasizing "please" in a way that made me feel she was aching for the relief that could be experienced in the possibility I had just described. Since her grandmother's needs had been attended to by giving her an ideal protective husband it had become more possible that her own self-interest could be satisfied.

"Who shall we have for your ideal mother?" I asked.

She looked thoughtful, sighed a bit, her mouth a bit glum, turned her head toward one of the women in the group and then said that person's name, "Kathleen."

That other Kathleen said, "I will take the role of your Ideal Mother."

"Place her as your Ideal Mother," I said, emphasizing the word Ideal. I did this as I felt that when she was thinking of making the choice, she had conjured up unpleasant memories of her real mother – indicated by the glum look on her face – and I wanted to make sure that she completed the task of choosing someone to represent an ideal mother and not the real mother with whom she had experienced so much unpleasantness.

She looked about herself for the space to locate this new possibility. She looked down to the space at her right side, then turned her head from side to side and uttered a confused and bewildered "where?" wondering aloud whether it was even possible to find a place for this new interactive phenomenon.

Picking up this hesitation, I said "and she wouldn't be complaining," as a way to remind her this was an Ideal Mother and not her real mother who had always been complaining.

"Maybe she says that?" I added as a way to help her register the difference.

The role player is then instructed to say, "If I had been your ideal mother, I wouldn't have been complaining all the time." The idea here is to provide Kathleen with the reverse of what her real mother had been doing, rather than simply have the ideal mother make a general benign, kindly statement.

Kathleen looked directly at the role-player as she said those words and nodded with welcoming acceptance and agreement.

Kathleen seemed satisfied that this was indeed the ideal mother talking and said, "Okay, maybe she sits over there," pointing to the direction on her right side where she had first looked a moment earlier.

"And does she look at you?" Checking with her about that element of the role-play.

"Yeah, she doesn't have to look at me," she responded.

"Which way should she look," I said trying to arrange the setting so it would match her wishes.

"She looks in her own direction," tossing her right arm upward, as if she was discarding something and indicating the wished for position with a single gesture.

I saw that as a cue to give another dimension to the qualities of the Ideal mother based on that wish of hers, and said, "So she could say, 'If I had been your ideal mother, I would look in my own direction.' Do you like that?" Kathleen nodded eagerly in agreement to this proposal.

The ideal figure says those words and then I offered another possibility as a reversal of what the real mother had done, "And maybe she says, 'I wouldn't have complained about you?' with a hint in my voice that there was another quality coming after this one, "and I wouldn't have attacked my mother." The role player said those words following Kathleen's agreement that she would like to hear that from her.

"What happens when she says those things?"

She was silent for a while, clearly reviewing something in her mind. Perhaps she was seeing it as it had been; perhaps she was seeing and hearing what might have been.

"Could you say what goes on inside you?" I asked softly and gently.

After a moment she said, "It's very ideal," emphasizing the word ideal.

"Yeah," I responded. For a moment I was not sure whether she was pleased with the experience of something ideal or she was being a bit sarcastic. I came to the conclusion that the final quality she was conveying was a bit of sadness that had come from noting the contrast of this present image with what she had actually remembered experiencing with her real mother.

"It's far from reality."^[10]

"Exactly," I said in confirmation of that remark. "Reality was very unhappy, and now we are inventing a new possibility. That's what we do, we make a new possible memory,"

I said in explanation of the entire procedure. "That's not just in your mind," I added, meaning the scene we had been arranging "but you can see it," indicating the spatial setting she had arranged for all the figures.

"I always think that it would be this way," she said with longing for the kind of idealism she spoke about at the outset. This was her soul speaking, with hope based on an innate knowledge of how things should have been in the world. The justice, just so-ness, the rightness of what we all feel should be due to all people.

Her emotions prompted a witness statement, from me, "A witness would say 'I see how much you long that it could have been this way.'" Underlining her hope and her newly felt relief that it could be so.

"Well I always mostly imagined it *could* be this way," she said plaintively. "I always struggled to put it in the right way." The longing for that kind of outcome coupled with helplessness and despair that she could not accomplish this in reality was clear in her voice and on her face.^[11]

Trying to help her understand the unconscious pressures on her motivations and behaviors provoked by the Holes in Roles in her family setting, and reviewing what had been represented in the role-playing, I said, "I think what you did when you struggled to put it in the right way, I think you 'became' your grandmother's mother, I think you 'became' your grandmother's father, I think you 'became' your grandmother's husband and I think you 'became' your grandmother's daughter. As I reviewed this she listened attentively though she was also busy blowing her nose as she looked at me from under slightly lidded eyes – all the while nodding in understanding while shifting her body and kind of rearranging herself, perhaps in readiness for something new.

I went on to say, "And I think, you filled in all those empty spaces, I think..." at which point she coughed and simultaneously nodded in rather simple and open agreement to my conclusion. "and that's a big job," I said with a note of appreciation of the cost it must have been to her.

She nodded briskly, saying with emphasis, "There was no forget." This seemed to imply that no job could be left out.

"So you took even more jobs, maybe now we can see why you're so split in so many people, like you said. You had to take on a lot of jobs."

"So far," I said indicating the filled in roles that had been assigned to take care of the grandmother and mother, "there's less jobs here now." This was to underline the fact that at least in this imagined arena, more appropriate others had taken over those care-taking functions she had assumed as her responsibility so long ago. Then to continue the survey with less ballast, I said, "What were the other jobs you took?"

She took a breath that sounded like a gasp and said, "Because my mother was complaining all the time, I was trying to make her happy."

"Make her happy by.....what...?" I paused, reflecting on what role that could have been.

Without stopping to hear what I might come up with, she continued, "Doing everything she wanted (me) to." She said expressing a complex combination of obligation, resentment and long endured weariness.

"So you tried to be the ideal daughter?" I asked, watching to see how she reacted to my wondering about that possibility. She nodded a 'yes' that was different than any of the other nods she had responded with. This nod was longer, larger, or deeper than the others and it gave me the impression of an obedient child who was solemnly (and perhaps somewhat sullenly) prepared and accustomed to say yes to whatever was asked of it, no matter what the cost.^[12]

"So let's give your mother an ideal daughter," I said with an optimistically rising tone to convey that such a step was now an obvious good idea as well as part of the continuing pattern we had used in

representing all the other figures and thus not a bit difficult to install. "So that it doesn't have to be you," I emphasized.

"I don't know that she thinks that it exists," she said despairingly, in marked contrast to my optimism.

"So a witness would say, 'I see how hopeless you feel that your mother would ever be satisfied.' Is that right?"

"But maybe she needed more than I daughter," I said to open the door of another possibility. "Maybe she needed a mother and a father." I offered. "Maybe she needed a husband," I added.

She dabbed at the tears welling up in her eyes. "She had all of this," she said hopelessly.

"But it didn't satisfy her, did it?" I said sympathetically knowing that Kathleen must have felt as if she were a failed daughter as she shook her head sadly in agreement. Further, I knew that by emphasizing that the mother was not satisfied by those relationships I would be showing her a step that could lead to the discovery of what kind of figure the mother would expect to get satisfaction from.

"What can we do to make....to give your mother the things that she needed...." I said to help get her mind on that track.

"I don't know," she said, almost wailing, her body slumped and limp.

"that it wouldn't be you?" I finished the question.

"A little dog," she said emphatically with more than a hint of resentment and perhaps some jealousy.

"Let's give her a little dog." I said as if that were a simple task to accomplish in this symbolic setting.

"Pick something to be a little dog for your mother," I offered. She looked immediately to her left side and picked up a varicolored blanket, folded it, held it to her chest for a moment as if it were a doll or a baby, stood up and placed it on the floor beside the bottle that was used to represent her real mother. She then tipped the bottle so that it rested on its side on the blanket.

As she settled back to her place on the cushion, I offered a possible statement that the little dog could make that would exemplify what had just been organized.

"Perhaps the little dog could say (if it could speak) 'If I had been your mother's little dog, she could have rested on me.'" I put it this way, to highlight the relationship that had Kathleen had designed and also to bring to light that this was a kind of support that the dog was providing. She tilted her head to one side as I said that sentence and took a breath.

"I think you wanted your mother to rest, because you let her lay down." I explained.

She made a kind of "oof" sound as she let her breath out. It made me think there was a sob that was ready to be expressed right behind it.

"Is that right?" I inquired.

"She's got a little dog now and she seems to be very happy with it," she said sadly, but with a bit of irritation.

"Yeah, So a witness could say, 'I see how disappointed....or something....I don't know what the emotion is that you feel....that she's finally happy with the little dog.'" ^[13]

"We should have given her that little dog a long time ago," meaning that if there was indeed a need for support it should have been posited as arriving at a different age for the mother rather than in the immediate present.

"And since she's resting on it, it looks like it's giving her support," I explained. This would be moving into a problematic area because it could certainly imply that her grandmother, her mother's mother, had not provided sufficient support for Kathleen's mother during her childhood. This possibility would surely not rest well with Kathleen as she would certainly feel that such an explanation would bring doubt to her grandmother's worthiness.

"And support is what people need from their parents do you know?." I continued on that track nonetheless. "So maybe inside the little dog is (the principle of) Ideal Parents who would have supported her when she was a child," I opined. "Because I think that that's what the little dog's function is," I continued.

She didn't respond, so I took a further step proposing, "So maybe the little dog talks and says, 'If I had been in your mother's life, I would have been a mother and a father for her when she was a child.'" I wondered if this would bring some history of her mother's childhood or some irritation at me for suggesting her grandmother was insufficient.

"So she could have been resting on a mother and a father," I continued the exploratory dog statement, "and not just on me as a little dog." "So maybe we could kind of put a mother and a father there for her when she was child." I stubbornly continued my proposal.

"Anyway, that's more theoretical speculation," I said, giving room for disagreement and doubt about the validity of my ideas. "She really needed parents," I continued nonetheless.

"But she had parents," she said emphatically. "Her mother loved her too much..." ^[14]

"Right," I said softly, internally noting I was about to hear important new details about how she felt about her mother.

"... there for her all the time, putting her in the first place all the time," she said with some annoyance.

"You sound resentful, so maybe the witness would see, 'how resentful you feel that even though your grandmother loved her so much, and put her in the first place so much, that she was still not a nice person and not happy,' Is that right?"

As she listened to those remarks, I noticed that Kathleen had an expression on her face that made me think of a very young, forlorn child.

When I finished the witness statement, Kathleen shrugged her shoulders as if noting something that was incomprehensible “She was unhappy that she was married,” she said sadly.

“What happened when she got married?” I asked, knowing that an unhappy marriage impairs a child’s sense of belonging and rightfulness in having a place in the world.^[15]

Kathleen stared at the ground, but she was not seeing the ground, but perhaps seeing her mother’s unhappy face in her memory. “She said that was when her unhappiness started,” she said lifelessly, her face slack and unmoving.

I decided to externalize the image she might be seeing in her mind by verbally describing a hypothetical moment where her mother, might speak those words, as if she were somehow in the room, though presented as if it were some time in the past.

I pointed to the object representing her mother, saying, “So she’s talking.” I said that to help her organize a believable scene in her mind’s eye where she was “seeing” an image of her real mother. She says, ‘My unhappiness started when I got married.’ That’s what your real mother is saying,” I reiterated.

I watched her face to see how she reacted to my coupling those words she had just used to describe her mother’s feelings with that remembered image she was still fixated on.

Kathleen nodded, both in acknowledgement of the truth of those words and the rightness of how it fit with her memory.

“So she’s blaming marriage on her unhappiness?” I partly asked and concluded. Kathleen nodded in agreement, then added another component saying, “and father and her children.” She sniffed in a short breath with a sound that led me to believe she might be feeling a hint of indignation.

“So she’s blaming her husband and her children for her unhappiness?” I said with a rising tone indicative of my own astonishment at such a conclusion. Kathleen blinked back tears as she nodded in acknowledgment of that truth.

“Now when you say that,” I took the moment to teach, “it opens up the topic of place again.” Then continued by affirming, “That your mother didn’t really want children. It only brought her unhappiness.”

Kathleen confirmed my view of her mother’s attitude in a very quiet, resigned way saying simply, “She didn’t. She said that.”

“Whoa,” I let out of my mouth, spontaneously, knowing how devastating it would be for a child to hear those words from its mother.

"So a witness would say, 'I see how lost and pained you are to remember your mother saying, 'Children brought me unhappiness.'"

Her head slowly tilted back and sideward until it rested against the wall behind her. Then she blinked rapidly several times and tightened her lips in an effort to hold back the cries that would have accompanied the tears that were welling up in her eyes.

"That suggests, even though you said was happy in her childhood, she didn't really get to what I call a generative stage, where she (would have) wanted children" I said beginning to teach the notion of what it means to mature and to reach the stage where one is naturally inclined to produce something valuable for the next generation. This has to do with the concept behind the fifth basic task of life, which is to find and fulfill one's personal uniqueness and potentiality, i.e. to "bear fruit." When one is mature and has reached the generative stage, interest in others naturally takes prominence over interest in the self.

"She was not generative, she didn't want children," I said, noting to myself that Kathleen nodded in agreement with that statement, "so something was really missing even though you say she had a happy childhood," I further speculated while continuing to watch how she reacted to my speculation.

"She was not generative. She didn't want children." I said, with clearer conviction. "So something was really missing there," I said with a note of sympathy for her mother, knowing that this statement would open the notion that her mother had suffered some important deficits in her own life.

I watched Kathleen's face as she silently took in what I had been saying. She stared, unmoving, as if seeing some inner pictures that included scenes that confirmed or underlined her mother's personal history in this regard.

"I don't think your mother was ready to be married," I repeated, knowing that introducing the idea of readiness would lead to the understanding that her mother had not been provided the necessary interactions in her upbringing which would have led to that rite of passage. "And wasn't ready to have children. She didn't mature, I don't think," I said.

"She was thirty one," Kathleen said, meaning the age when her mother was married. Then added, with resignation and a flatness of tone, "And thirty four when I was born."

"You were the first one?" I inquired, wondering what was behind that way of stating those facts.

"No, the third one," she answered.

"So that means she had three children in three years?" I asked with some astonishment.

Kathleen took a deep breath and then reported, "She had my sister...an older sister. Then she had twins," she added, explaining how there were three children but only two pregnancies.

"Twins," I said softly to myself to underline my own understanding that she must have been a twin.

"I think the real trouble started when us twins were born." She said with conviction. Then in the short silence that followed as I took in that fact, she wiped away a tear that had escaped her efforts to control her pain.

To underline this moment, I posed a witness statement, "So a witness would say, 'I see how impressed you feel, to think that the trouble started when you were born.'" Internally, I felt empathically for Kathleen knowing how devastating it must have been for her to experience that her very birth was the beginning of trouble.

"That exactly highlights the place issue, that you were not a welcome child." I said, as a way of resuming teaching her about this particular theoretical formulation and how we could deal with it in the therapy.

Kathleen closed her eyes briefly on hearing this, blinked them rapidly, as if returning from some far away place that she had gone to when she closed her eyes for that moment. As I began to formulate a procedure that we could follow to attend to the effects of this negative history, she looked at me with open eyes that signaled to me her intelligent and clear interest in what I might offer.

"So maybe we should do another thing here." I watched to see if that interested her and it did. "Since we already (have enrolled) an Ideal Mother," she set her lips in disbelief at that notion, "the Ideal mother could say," I continued nevertheless, "'If I had been your ideal mother, I would have *wanted* to have a husband...." Beginning the process of reversing the actually history in the new memory we could form. On hearing this portion of the Ideal Mother's statement she dropped her eyes to look at the image of her real mother to note the contrast, I thought, and her face turned sad and glum.

Then, continuing the Ideal mother statement, I added "I would have *wanted* to have children." I said in completion of the Mother's statement.

In explanation, of why I had posed that statement coming from the ideal mother, I said, "Just so we can give a different flavor. Okay?" I asked, checking if we could continue by having a role-playing Ideal mother say those things to her. Kathleen nodded in assent. She was now clearly touched and tears flowed. She wiped at them with the already soaked tissue she had been holding in her hand in preparation prepared for that interaction.^[16]

The role-playing Ideal mother then began her statement as Kathleen looked at her, head turned sideways, her eyes looking at her from the corner of her eyes, a bit poised to turn back away if anything went awry in this new possibility.

"If I had been your ideal mother," the role-player began, "I would have wanted to have a husband, and I would have wanted to have children." On hearing this, Kathleen could no longer hold back her pain and tears flowed copiously, while, with head bowed she held her lower lip prisoner between her upper lip and her teeth, so no sound could escape.

"A witness would say, "'I see how moved you are at the thought of it and how much pain you feel to remember how it was.'" "

Is that right?" I asked. "That it was not like that?"

Kathleen looked down at her right side, overwhelmed with grief.

"But now we are bringing in a mother who would have wanted children."

Once again she bit at her lip but only on one side so she struck a bit like a tough look, though she was only staring sideward toward the ground and stayed silent for a while.

"And would have wanted a husband," I reminded her.

Her face, moist with tears, she daubed her nose and her eyes and looking down and sideward, was the picture of utmost helplessness and despair. Feelings, I am sure, she suffered most of her life.

After a moment, I asked, "What's happening now?" trying to get a some idea of where she had gone internally.

"It reminded me" she paused to think for a moment, then let out a small gasp of helpless frustration, and continued saying, "of a kind of controversial (I think she meant contradictory)^[17] way of...about my mother, because she often said, she never wanted children or husband. At the same time she was saying she liked us and was glad she had us," she said with flat affect.

"At the same time she was saying that all the troubles started when she had husband and us, and was always kind of...." at this point she stopped talking and made alternative chopping motions with her left and right arms and then a tearing motion to illustrate what it felt like to her

"Yes, split," I said in understanding the meaning of her gestures. Kathleen's face communicated the displeasure and discontentment she felt being on the receiving end of those contradictory remarks.

"There's the different realities you spoke about," I said, referring to what she had told earlier in the session. "Because your mother would first express one reality and then she expressed an alternative contradictory...." Kathleen whose face was jumping with changing expressions, interrupted me to say, "So I don't feel fair when I am saying, she really didn't want children, because on the other hand she says, I am *glad* that you are born."

"Yes," I said in understanding and Kathleen went on to say, "She doesn't remember what she did to us." And then audibly sniffed in some tears.

"Yeah," I murmured in sympathy. "The only thing I can think of here..."^[18]

As I began articulating my proposed intervention, .Kathleen looked up into my eyes with some interest combined with sadness. Her slightly awakened hope tempered by a challenging expression born of a long history of frustrated expectations.

"...is that the Ideal mother would say," I continued, "'If I had been your ideal mother, I would have had only one feeling.' This preliminary statement caused Kathleen to nod and close her eyes in a moment of silent grief coupled with relief coming from the sense of the "rightness" conveyed by that phrase. "'I wouldn't have had the opposite feeling.'" I said, in finishing the ideal mother statement.

"Okay?" I asked as she shot a glance over to where the ideal mother was standing. This gave me the cue that the proposed statement was now accepted and she was ready to hear it from the role-player.

The role-player then said those words, "If I had been your ideal mother, I would have had only one feeling, I wouldn't have had the opposite feeling."

"So she would not put you in a double bind" I said. "Do you know what a double bind is?" I asked. Kathleen nodded her head with clear understanding of what that meant. "Where the opposite things are both true," I added as Kathleen continued nodding her understanding. "It splits the brain," I elaborated. Her eyes flashed a signal of mutual agreement of reality as she nodded once more

Kathleen sat silently, emotions roiling across her face -- then a gasp of a suppressed sob slipped past her lips. After a time she sighed and slowly a rueful, but quiet expression settled on her face. She sat this way, unmoving for some moments.

"What are you thinking now?" I softly inquired.

"Better so not accustomed to be in a split kind of world" she began to reply and I interjected a quiet, "Right," to underline her assessment of what was better for her. "So I don't find it strange," she continued." Then added, "I do have so many people around me who do live in a split world."

"So a witness would say "I see how kind of struck you are, how strange it would be to not live in a split world." I proposed.

"Yeah," I said twice as she nodded her assent.

Sensing a receptivity to the idea of not being split, I suggested, "Taste for a moment how it would be to be in a single world like this." She looked at me with some surprise and curiosity. "Where you wouldn't have all these jobs," I said as I indicated all the figures in the room who were now filling the holes of the roles that she herself had undertaken.

"And you would have a mother with only one reality," I continued. "And a husband she loves." She looked upward her jaw dropping both with amazement at the possibility coupled with scornful skepticism. ..."And children she loves," her chin trembled for an instant following hearing about the children that mother would love.

After I finished the verbal portrait. She lifted her head closed her eyes as they rolled upwards in a millisecond of dreamlike experience of what I had painted for her mind's eye.

Then she opened her eyes which were brimming with pain, lowered her head and set her mouth glumly, as if silently saying, "that's beautiful but it can't be for me."^[19]

"It's hard to imagine that as reality," Kathleen said. But that didn't dismay me as I saw that her body and face had reacted to the pictures I had painted, even though her words were discounting the experience.

"Yeah," I said and then added, "A witness would say, 'I see how hopeless a part of you feels...' I put it as a "part of her" to leave room for the fact that there were other parts as well that were there either simultaneously or alternately. "....not being able to imagine it," I concluded the witness statement.

"But I think one part of you is tasting it anyway," I said as I watched her, even at that moment, seeming to be reviewing the new possibility I had placed in verbal pictures for her mind's eye to peruse. "Just by seeing it in front of you."

She nodded agreement and a ray of a smile of pleasure lit her face for a moment, as she gazed quietly and without seeing, at a spot in front of her in the air, and not at all at the figures arranged on the floor before her. Her body relaxed and she took in a satisfying full breath for the first time.

"Because it changes the expression on your face and the way you are breathing," I added.

She took several more relaxed breaths and then looked at me as I began to speak.

"I just realized," I remarked, "something I would like to share with you. When you thought about what your mother would need to make her happy?" She looked at me with open interest and anticipation. "Now that you told me this story, she would be happy with *no* husband, *no* children."

Kathleen nodded firmly in agreement, saying with clarity, certainty and without tears or signs of pain, "I know. I know that."

"So we would have to have your mother be a single woman." I suggested as a way to define her being most happy in this imaginary theater in both the therapy room and in her mind's eye. Kathleen nodded in agreement with that portrayal of her mother.

"Then you know in your heart she doesn't really want you," I concluded.

This hit home and tears once again welled up in her eyes as she said, "Yeah, I know."

"She's quite happy now she's older, and I'm not around her and she has her little dog. And I am happy that she is happy."

This is a critical moment, for the implication here is that the best thing for the mother would be the non-existence of Kathleen and this would negate her right to live. More so, Kathleen would seemingly sacrifice that right in order to make her mother happy. I knew that an important reversal had to come soon, or we would be underlining a quiet death wish on Kathleen's part. For it is typical that those with a severe place issue, frequently see death, or non-existence, as the one sure place where relief and acceptability is to be found.

"But that means she's happy because you disappeared." I said in following the logic of her mother's choice to its conclusion. And at the same time one step ahead of her in knowing that the topic of death was imminent.

"Yeah, I know that," she said in simple agreement without fear or pain. Death would have no sting for her.

"So maybe the ideal mother would say, "If I had been your ideal mother, I would be happy to have you in my life...?" I posed this as an initial statement that she could hear and looked to see if she would find it acceptable. "Yeah?" I asked looking for signs of approval. She didn't respond, so I said with soft encouragement, "See what that does,"

Kathleen made a face that communicated a non-committal, "Why not?" expression and nodded with a slight shrug of her shoulders.

The role-player then said, "If I had been your ideal mother, I would be happy to have you in my life."

To my surprise, this moved Kathleen greatly. She took in a sudden audible breath as if to suck in the possibility of experiencing a mother happy to have her in her life, while also sounding the sob of grief at remembering its actual absence.

"That touches something doesn't it?" I said sympathetically. As I spoke those words, she looked up at me with an open vulnerable expression. Moved to alleviate her pain and to further elaborate on the reversal of the real mother's attitude, I added, "Maybe she says 'I wouldn't have preferred the dog.'"

Hearing me say that, Kathleen looked for a second into my eyes, like a child appealing for love then quickly turned away. ^[20]Then, she looked down beside her, lips tightly pursing the pocket of unspent sobs and indicated that the role player should say those words.

The Ideal Mother then says "I wouldn't have preferred the dog." Kathleen shot a quick glance at the ideal mother figure, to see if she meant it, then silently wiped at the tears flowing down her cheeks with the soft flesh at the base of her thumb, remembering I am sure, that just the opposite had been true with her real mother.

Kathleen took several breaths, composing herself, setting her mouth firmly and turned her internal attention to her mother's well-being. She then said, with a sense of care-taking, "I always tried to see her happy...with the dog at least."

"A witness would say, 'I see how relieved you are that at least she's happy with the dog.'" I offer in response to the expression on her face.

"But it means at your disappearance," I concluded. She looked up at me and nodded in agreement and acceptance of that logical outcome.

I added, "Yeah, that you're willing to have your mother happy at your own expense..." I paused for a moment and she again nodded but now with resignation. Then I finished the thought, saying "...of non-existence."

She bit her lips and wiped her nose with the back of her knuckles as tears began to well up in her eyes. She let out a breath and a choked sigh came out with it..

"Now I can understand why you're sad all the time," I said sympathetically. "You have a lot to be sad about." She took in a breath and looked down at the floor at her left as if searching.

"Would you like to have your ideal mother beside you, so that you are not all alone?" I wondered aloud. Her face looked like it would break up, but she shook her head sadly, side-to-side several times in resigned acceptance of her isolation. "Okay," I said in understanding.

"Where is the tissue please?" She asked, leaning forward and looking about. The ideal mother figure indicated where they were and Kathleen leaned forward picking one up and saying in a very adult and composed voice, "Thank you."

To bring her back to the issue and away from her distraction by the Kleenex, I began saying, "It makes me think," she looked up at me as I spoke, "how lonely you must have been, right from the beginning, because children *know* whether they are wanted or not, wanted." As I finished she set her lips firmly, looked down ruefully at the tissue in her hands and nodded in agreement.

"You must have known it right from the beginning," I said as she wiped her eyes with the clean tissue and then forcefully cleared her nose into it.

After a moment, she sniffed in a breath and said, "with a bit of irritation, "I can't even *hear* about lonely children," "I always cry," she added, beginning to choke up.

She bit one side of her lip in that combination of stifling a sob while at the same time looking tough. She moved her jaw from side to side and the words which followed, came out broken from each other. "I.. can't ..see a... lonely child." The air fell out of her chest after she spoke those words.

"Yes, of course," I said quietly, in understanding.

She wiped at her face with her right hand, pushed her hair back from her face and took a deep breath, trying to compose herself. Then she looked down and fell silent for some seconds.

If nothing further was done about her isolation at this point, we could be underlining and reinforcing her loneliness – what we call a negative reconstruction in PBSP.

"Can I make a suggestion?" I checked before continuing. Kathleen raised her head to look up at me, her eyes sending complex messages of hopeless resignation, child-like imploring for help, while daring me to think anything would make a difference. She gave me the impression I could continue, so I went on, "Can she come one foot closer to you?"

As she heard those words, her eyes darted sideways to the spot where the ideal mother could be one foot closer with a look of desperate hope and stark terror. She raised her shoulders in a quick, "Why not?" shrug and nodded her okay and, I think, for a fleeting moment began to imagine that possibility in her mind's eye when she closed her eyes for that instant.

"Just one foot, just move that way," I directed the role-player to that spot and then watched Kathleen as she looked at the new spatial configuration. "How does that feel?" I asked.

The first instant she took in that new position almost took Kathleen's breath away. A baby's tiny cry leapt out, which she stifled at once. She took several breaths to quiet herself and then, checking internally how she felt, said evenly, "It's okay."

"You don't mind that she's closer?" I checked. "No," she answered. "Okay," I responded, recognizing that she had accepted the changed placement.

Then she turned from looking at me to focus on a spot on the floor between where the ideal mother figure was sitting and herself. She breathed somewhat unevenly – each exhalation accompanied by a short gasp -- and was silent for some time. I watched her, careful to not interrupt her internal process.

"I don't...I don't really...sort of...need mother close anymore...this close," she said with a mixture of flatness, choked back feelings and a truly adult feelings.

"No," I agreed, "I wasn't thinking you needed it today." Her head tilted to one side, she looked forlornly down at the floor. "But you certainly needed it as a child," I added, in preparation of positing this situation in a different timeline than the present.

Kathleen nodded in eager affirmation of that child need. "So maybe if you feel the child need," I both said and instructed, "that would be the time to bring her in. Because it isn't today you need it," Kathleen nodded with quick acceptance on hearing this option, "you needed it *then*," I finished.

To carry implement the clarification and differentiation between the stage of the here and now and the stage of there and then, I made this suggestion, "Maybe she simply says, 'If I had been your ideal mother, when you were a child,'" thus establishing the right kinship relationship and the right age for her imagination to set up the appropriate internal scene, "You would have seen how much I enjoyed to be close to you." I phrased it this way to highlight the contrast to the real mother's enjoyment of being close to the dog.

I watched her face to see how she took that picture. "Do you want to hear that?" I asked.

"No," she answered. "I'm a bit afraid of it because my mother did sometimes come close, but whenever she got close, she wanted to complain about something or she wanted to get support for something." "Right," I said, now gratified to see a new opportunity to further clarify the distinctions between the real and ideal mother figures.

"But then she doesn't want to be close to you, she wants to complain," I reasoned. "So maybe the ideal mother says, 'If I would have been your Ideal mother, I would have been happy being close to you I wouldn't have complained about it.'" "Do you want to hear that?" I asked. Kathleen indicated she would but without enthusiasm.

The ideal mother then said, "If I would have been your ideal mother, I would have been happy being close to you and I wouldn't have complained about it." Kathleen listened to the ideal mother figure saying those words without much affect showing though she looked up at her intermittently..

"So imagine how that would feel to the part of you that's a little girl inside," I said, as a way to focus the experience. Then looking at the spot on the floor outside in the room and simultaneously at the scene she was constructing inside her mind, Kathleen shortly said quietly, "It would have been nice."

"So a witness would say," I offered as a possibility 'I see how wistful you feel to think of how nice it might have been."

Kathleen recalled sadly, saying, "Most often, always trying to explain it to her -- how it would be nice -- when I was a child.". "Yeah," I said sympathetically.

"Maybe the Ideal Mother would say, "You wouldn't have had to explain it to me how nice it would be,'" I offered as a possibility. "Okay?" I said, asking for approval of that statement before the role-player would say those words.

With her approval the ideal mother figure then says the words while Kathleen continued fixing her gaze on that spot on the floor. So I took the liberty of adding "I would have known from my own heart."

And when the ideal mother repeated those words, "I would have known from my own heart." Kathleen, in a quick instant, looked up to catch the benign gaze of the group member who was role-playing the ideal mother and a moment of gratitude immediately graced her face. For indeed, that group member was not merely parroting those words but actually feeling for Kathleen as she said them. Thus, her own heart-felt expression was immediately linked to the ideal mother figure's image that she had been building inside in her mind's eye.

I waited as Kathleen took some time to let that sink in and then I said, as a way of fleshing out the notion of the ideal mother, "Yeah, so I think the ideal mother would have had that kind of early history where she would have matured enough to love." Kathleen raised her eyes from the floor and nodded a yes in quiet agreement..

"Your mother never did get to that place," I continued. She shook her head sadly, but sympathetically, side to side, in regretful accord with my conclusion.

"Maybe she says, "I would have been mature enough to love a man and love the children we created together." As I presented those words, her eyes once again began to fill with tears. "Do you want to hear that?" I asked.

Kathleen nodded yes and then looked over to the role player to watch her as she said, "I would have been mature enough to love a man and love the children we created together." At the end of the statement, Kathleen took a full breath and then stayed quietly looking at the spot on the floor.

While observing her during her silence I thought over the scene she might be constructing in her mind and speculated aloud, "Maybe we first should see her with an ideal husband? With your ideal father? So you see she's not alone and really cares about a man." Kathleen nodded her approval and spoke a soft, "Okay."

Kathleen looked about the room visually auditioning the men she could choose from. Leaning slightly forward and to her left side, brightened for the first time in the session and with a shy, childlike smile, pointed to one of them, saying, "Would you be my mother's ideal husband?" In order to be clear who he was married to, I corrected her by saying, "Your *Ideal mother's* ideal husband."

As the man chosen contractually took the role by saying, "I will role-play your ideal mother's ideal husband," Kathleen's eyes darted toward and away from him several times. In so doing, she appeared rather young and child-like with an expectant expression, albeit hesitant, but not at all resigned or tearful as she had been only moments before.

"Should he sit beside her?" I offered as a question. She shifted her body, which she now moved with a bit more energy and lightly murmured, "Mm huh."

As they were arranging themselves to her satisfaction, I offered this possibility, "Maybe she holds his leg and he holds her leg," as a way of non-verbally communicating relaxed intimacy between them – making sure that they appeared well-bonded and not available to be a partner for her. I wasn't so sure how she felt about that, for at first she looked doubtful and then she seemed to get used to the idea of it, though her face took on a darker aspect once more.

"How does that look?" I asked. She nodded acceptance.

"Imagine that that's what you would see when you came into the world..." I said, knowing that children love to know that they came from a pair of loving parents, "...affection between them," I added. Thus preparing the ground for having her internalize a fundamental sense of place in being a wished-for child of a sexually-connected, couple.

She stole side-long looks at them while she daubed at her cheeks and nose with a tissue, as tears had begun to moisten her face once more.

"I'm starting to feel sorry for my real father," she said ruefully. "Yeah," I responded, thinking I was now going to hear more about her relationship with him. "I'm Sure," I added quietly, indicating I was open to understanding what she might want to say about that.

"So a witness might say, 'I see how much sympathy you feel that your real father missed that,'" I offered as a possibility. "Is that right?" I inquired. Kathleen nodded a sorrowful yes.

Since Kathleen had filled in the holes in the roles for so many others in her family, it was entirely likely that she had also been a silent stand-in for the wife her father probably wished for. ^[21]Compassion for the unhappy other is always the first step for extending a portion of the self to fill all and every empty role-function.

"Do you want to put something to represent him here....since you are thinking about him now?" I said, following the procedure of always representing in the room all the figures that are affectively experienced at the moment they are recalled in imagination.

"A father?" she asked as she wiped the tissue all around her eyes trying to dry them. "Your real father," I said, to be more precise.

She leaned forward and placed a bottle of mineral water before her on the floor and it made a slight "pop" sound as it touched the ground, highlighting the emphasis that lay behind the effort.

"So that's your real father, who you feel sympathy for" I said, formally acknowledging who it represented as I pointed to it. "Is that right?" I asked, to get her assurance that it represented externally the father who was already pictured in her mind.

She looked at the object wiping each side of her nose and I added, "Maybe he needs a wife?" I said, shortcircuiting the possibility that she would consciously or unconsciously fantasize herself beside him.

She nodded solemnly and a bit sadly in agreement.

"Shall we give him an ideal wife?" I asked and she immediately reached forward and placed an empty drinking glass beside the bottle. It made a light "thump" sound as it touched the floor. "Huh!" escaped my lips, for the symbolism was immediately evident.

Kathleen grinned mischievously and leaned back against the wall. "That's interesting," I began to say as she looked at me with a slightly devilish smile. Seeing that the gist of the situation had not eluded her one bit, I continued, by saying, "Maybe she could say, "If I had been your real father's ideal wife, I would have been happy that he filled my cup."

"Yes," she said and smiled at me mischievously and then suddenly burst into girlish laughter, which she did not try to suppress at all. She kept fondly looking at that symbolic couple -- bottle and glass -- for some time, a tender, sweet, playful grin on her face all the while.

"It looks like it made you happy," I said, feeling my own pleasure at seeing this aspect of her self appear. Still focused on the objects she merrily said, "Because I did it on purpose..." gesturing toward the bottle and glass with her hand "...I know what I was doingI knew what I was doing."

"Yes, yes," I murmured

"The witness would say," I began, "'I see how much pleasure you have, to know what you were doing..." on hearing that Kathleen smiled collaboratively at me for a moment "... and that would make your father happy.'" Kathleen nodded with satisfaction, then continued gazing warmly at the symbolic objects for some time without saying a word.

I wondered aloud, saying, "But I still think it gives you pleasure to imagine that he would be contented...I think," to underline that she had succeeded in giving him pleasure by symbolically supplying him with the love he needed from someone other than herself. Thus releasing herself from that role.

On hearing me say the witness words, Kathleen's expression changed from mirth to gentle sadness. At that moment she was able to be at two levels at the same time. In this symbolic setting, she could

consciously recall and re-experience the depth of her compassion for her father's loveless marriage, while simultaneously looking at herself in that history from the vantage point of her present consciousness.

"He's quite happy now," she began to say as she lifted her head to lean back against the wall behind her, as if pulling out of the picture, "since he emotionally left her and since he left home." "Right," I said softly, indicating I was visualizing the story in my own mind as she spoke. "He's getting better and better," she said, finishing her thought.

Her body was limp but not depressed as she said those words. Clearly she felt relief, but her posture and tonus indicated she was still somewhat distant from it all.

"So a witness would say," I began, "I see how relieved you feel on your father's behalf, that since he left her he's feeling better and better."

Then I reminded her, "But I think all the time you were young, you saw his unhappiness." On hearing this, pain and sadness came over her face. She tightened her lips as she recalled that history and nodded in solemn, childlike agreement.

"And you might have wanted to help him, and be, in your mind, his wife," I said speculatively and watched to see how she would respond to my hypothesis.

Kathleen looked at me while listening and when she heard the words, "in your mind, his wife," gazed upwards as if checking into the archives in her mind. She seemed to be scanning the interior memory clips as her eyes looked side to side. Then she said with conviction, "Oh no." She underlined her disagreement by continuing to vehemently shake her head side to side while her eyes still carried out their scanning assignment.

"No? Okay," I said, indicating a readiness to accept her conclusion. "Sometimes it happens," I said, in verbal retreat from my hypothesis.

"I know," Kathleen said, her eyes now finished exploring looked sidelong down at the floor. It didn't happen with me," she said conclusively. "Okay," I said, gracious in defeat.

"Also, mother was constantly telling us that he was awful and horrible and men are awful and horrible and it was no longer that I would get any chance to make him happy," she said with sorrow and regret as her arms gestured helplessness.

"Right," I said sympathetically. "But you may have *wished* he had a better wife," I added, seeing a new opening for my hypothesis.

"Oh yes, very often," she said at once, "very understanding. I wished he had a better wife," she said ended, agreeing with the words I had just used.

"So maybe she says," I said, indicating the figure representing her father's ideal wife, as Kathleen looked up to watch what I was doing and saying, "If I had been your real father's ideal wife, he would have been

happy....." Kathleen nodded, looking at the scene I was painting on the floor and simultaneously in her mind, ".....and you would have seen him happy."

Hearing and seeing this, Kathleen's lips tightened together, uttering, "Um hum," in an expression of satisfaction in seeing justice prevail as she nodded her acceptance of this symbolic, happier outcome.

Kathleen continued looking at the figures on the floor for some time in silence. I waited to see what she would come up with.

"I'm sort of trying to imagine a nice woman, who would like to cook," she began, with a smile indicating pleasure and continuing satisfaction with the theme of justice prevailing.

"Make beautiful clothes, would make him happy, and would be a real wife for my father," she continued.

"So she says," I began, "'If I had been your real father's ideal wife, I would like to cook, make beautiful clothes, would make him happy and be a real wife for him."

I watched to see what effect it had on Kathleen for she was still a bit sad, so I added, "And she says to you 'And you wouldn't have had to worry so much about that.'" On hearing this, Kathleen reacted with evident appreciation of that possibility, breathed a freer breath and let out a soft, "Yeah." ^[22]

Once again, Kathleen was wrapped in thoughts and memories for some moments. Then she took a long breath and let out an audible sigh. "What's that?" I asked.

"I just remembered that my father doesn't have any wife..." she opened her arms in a gesture of emptiness and sniffed in two short breaths, "... but he's still quite happy...which gives me a relief," she added in conclusion. Thus, presenting me with a picture of her father in the present with a still empty space beside him, reawakening the possibility that she would come across the validity of my hypothesis after all.

"So a witness would say," I began, "'I see how relieved you are to know that your father is still happy, even though he doesn't have a wife.'" She looked directly at me, head tilted as I made that witness statement. Then I added an aside to justify his happiness from her viewpoint, "But he's happy that he's away from your mother, I think."

"Yup," I said, as she nodded her head in agreement with that statement.

Then Kathleen said, "And also, I think it was quite nice...what he did when he never left her even, what he did emotionally, and I don't know," she gestured to her head, "and mentally.....that they can sort of be around each other and not suffer....I always thought it was a masterpiece," she said with a tinge of sarcasm on using the word masterpiece for such an endeavor. Nonetheless her regard and respect for him were clearly evident by her tone and the look on her face.

"So a witness would say," I began, "'I see how much admiration you feel for your father for making that masterpiece.'" "You must really admire him," I reiterated from my own standpoint to underline the

strength of the admiration. Kathleen tipped her head toward her shoulder ruefully as she heard the words “admire him” as if to say, “well, that’s a sad thing to admire.”

She didn’t have a look of admiration any longer, but one of sadness. For she continued staring at the objects as a range of unhappy emotions flickered across her features. I didn’t interrupt that process or ask her what was going on as I assumed she was continuing to review her unhappy past. However, I bided my time to see if there was any sign of a movement forthcoming that would lead toward a resolution of her life dilemma.

After some moments of silence, I took the lead in saying as a reminder, “So now he has an ideal wife who cooks for him. I’m putting it in the past,” I said, to help her place it in the time-line of her mind as a relationship her father would have had with an ideal wife while she was growing up and not necessarily a woman he would have in his life in the immediate present or the near future. “You would have seen him happier,” I said to verbally conjure up that image in her mind. She nodded many times, taking in those word pictures.

Once again, Kathleen became silent, this time even longer than before. “What are you thinking about?” I asked solicitously, for she seemed so isolated and alone.

“He would be still happier if he had someone... a wife like that,” she said as she wiped away tears and once again returned to isolation.

“So a witness would say,” I began, “I see how convinced you are that he would be still happier if he had a wife like that.” She nodded sadly in agreement.

“Therefore you don’t have to worry so much about him. It takes another worry from your shoulders,” I said to have her consider the side benefits she was gaining from allowing someone else, even if only a symbolic figure, to provide her father with the happiness she had wished for him all her life.

She sat silently, tears flowing copiously, albeit without accompanying sound. After a long half minute, I said quietly, “Do you want to say what you are thinking?”

“Sort of drifting away towards my current life,” Kathleen said dourly.

“And what did you think of, in your current life?” I asked with simple interest.

“I am not really sure that I strongly believe that people *have* to have partners and children in their life,” she answered hopelessly. Facing once again, the negation of the very basis for her own existence, for her own mother didn’t want either a partner or children.

“Hmm,” I said wonderingly, “So you’re saying that you’re not really sure that people have to have partners and children in their life to be happy..is that what you said?” “No,” I agreed, “many people don’t get married or have children.”

“But I’m thinking,” I averred, “If you had had parents like this....” pointing to her ideal parents. Without moving her head, Kathleen’s eyes swung to one side to look at them and at once, she had the classic

look of a forlorn, abandoned waif that one would see in children's fairy tales, longing to be found and taken home. "...it would have been...who wanted children..." I elaborated as she turned to look at me as I spoke, "...it would have been normal or natural for you to do the same."

Kathleen nodded ruefully, as if saying, "Yeah, but not for me."^[23]

"Can I make another observation now?" I asked for permission. Kathleen shrugged and nodded a resigned, "Sure, why not?" expression in my direction. A bit of a repeat of the challenge she had presented me with at the outset, i.e. "what makes you think that two days with you will make a difference in my life."

Nonetheless, I continued, knowing that the ground had been laid in this therapy session for attending to her own self interest. Too early in her life, her interest in taking care of others, robbed her of the time and energy she should have used for self-interest. Having filled all the holes in the roles of her family with ideal figures in lieu of her own self, she would now be energetically primed to internalize experiences that would enhance her own personal well-being.

I began by recounting what we had accomplished thus far. "We satisfied your grandmother, we satisfied your mother, we gave your father a wife.." As I made this verbal inventory, Kathleen looked at each of the figures we had represented in the room with their ideal satisfiers and recalling them, her eyes filled with tears, not only of sadness, but of being touched and relieved.

"We gave you ideal parents, but they are not giving *you* anything yet," I explained. She shook her head sadly, saying, "That's right."

"You're the only one not being satisfied so far," I concluded. With unwiped tears in her eyes and on her cheeks, Kathleen nodded her head in rueful resignation as if it were her fate to remain in that status.

"Do you want to see, for maybe 15 seconds, what you would feel, if you sat there..." indicating the ideal parents' location, "...or they sat on either side of you." Knowing how tenacious the old pattern was, I dared not offer a contract that she could refuse, so 15 seconds seemed the bare minimum to gain a beachhead on the barren shores of her own self-interest.

Kathleen looked first to her right side and then to her left, as if considering those places as locations for the ideal parents. "Want them on either side of you?" I asked. She drew her knees in, then gestured to both sides and said, "Better each here."

"Mother on that side, father on that side?" I asked as I pointed at each direction. She dropped her knees and sat once again lotus fashion, saying, "Mother here," indicating the left side, "father here," indicating her right side.

"I think for a minute, having them standing," I suggested, guessing that too close proximity would be problematic for Kathleen -- at least at this first trial exploration.

Kathleen said, "Okay," agreeing to my suggestion that they start standing

"Okay," I said as the ideal parent figures rose up to move toward her. "Be right beside her I directed. And then I said to Kathleen, "So that you could feel like a little child." This in explanation of why they would be standing over her, knowing that the height differential would be registered immediately by Kathleen.

Kathleen pulled her body together, her eyes downcast, as they assembled themselves, looking like she was about to shrink into herself.

"Come in very close...." I said, for they were standing far from her, and in complying, they inadvertently contacted Kathleen's shoulders. "...not touching her yet," I said, fearing that too soon contact might have been too much for her." Kathleen pulled her shoulders together for an instant and then relaxed them as they moved away slightly; then glanced at me with a look of appreciation for correcting their position.

When they were comfortably placed, I said, "See how it feels to have these big people.." I paused for a moment to let her take that in, "...so you could be a little child," I said, completing the image."

Kathleen, with a child-like pouting/sullen expression, glanced up and sideward toward the ideal father for an instant and then back down again, "... A child that came from them," I continued, to make it clear that she was a product of that couple

"But maybe you should see them first holding hands...so that you know that they're together" I said simply. That addendum came from my concern that if she only saw the ideal father, she might not have yet included in her consciousness that there was an ideal mother there as well. Seeing them holding hands would visually reinforce the notion that they were indeed an intimate, loving couple.

Upon hearing my suggestion, Kathleen's eyes immediately shot upward, so that the whites of her eyes below her pupils brightly reflected the dimming light in the room. To better see them, she leaned her head back, her eyes still arced upward, so that she could catch sight of their hand-holding which was happening just above and slightly behind her head. Then she glanced over to the ideal mother's direction and visually took in the fact that she was present. Then she dropped her head, and with a short huff of an exhalation leaned back against the wall, remaining that way for a time, her eyes downcast, her own hands clasped on her lap.

"and that you came from them..." I gently reminded her.

Her sad tears and resignation slowly rising, Kathleen shook her head slowly, from side to side, saying, "no," to something going on in her mind.^[24]

She took a breath and exhaling heavily, said, "I'm afraid of it," with finality. I detected a tone of wariness, resigned acceptance of the status quo, and hint of resolve to refuse the offer of solace as well.

"I think it moves you too much, is what you mean," I said, trying to explain herself to herself. "Is that right?" I said to check out my speculation.

Kathleen shrugged her right shoulder in a “maybe” kind of expression and then said in a heart-breaking, hopeless wail, “I just don’t believe that it happens...in reality.” It was painfully evident that her life history never included the simple, living-possibility of being a wanted, beloved child.

“I think a lot of children feel exactly that,” I said in rebuttal, meaning that a lot of children, not just one lucky child, feels like a wanted beloved child. Kathleen reached for the package of tissues and slowly extracted one.

“But it didn’t happen in your reality, that’s for sure,” I said sympathetically.

Then, as Kathleen raised the tissue to wipe her eyes and blow her nose, I said, “A witness would say, ‘I see how sad you are, thinking about it.’”

“Can I make one.. more.. small.. suggestion?” I said haltingly, cautiously checking if she were amenable to the idea so I could launch a second wave on the beachhead of hope to reinforce the possibility of familial connection. Kathleen watched my face as I spoke and then meekly said, “Okay,” like an obedient child trying to comply.

“That you put one hand on her foot and the other hand on his foot, just to see what the touch would be like.” Thus attempting escalation from the visual perception of the ideal figures to tactile experience of the ideal figures. Kathleen, audibly and energetically blew her nose twice into the tissue. Then she wiped her nose and mouth and looked down at their feet.

“Do you want to try that?” I asked softly, now fairly certain that she would refuse. Kathleen sadly shook her head side to side and then stared down at the floor straight in front of her as if waiting. Then she suddenly took in a breath, exhaled it with a sound of a half suppressed sob and audibly gasped in two, quick, half-choked breaths. Gaining control, she let out a longer, more natural exhalation

“It touches you, I think?” I said softly. She sat still, with the same sense of waiting as if accustomed to sitting for eternity in the waiting room of life. I knew she would not make a move on her own behalf now and it rested on me to make anything different happen.

“Maybe they could move closer to you?” I said tentatively. She didn’t show any response.

“Can I make a suggestion, what they do?” I offered next. She raised her eyes to look at me with vulnerable longing. Her look tended to support my inclination to believe that she might be open to the possibility I was about to offer.

“Come close enough so she could feel you on her shoulder,” I began to direct the role-players as Kathleen listened quietly to what was being organized.

“And then put your toe underneath her,” I added. As they began to carry out my instructions, they began sliding their toes under her knees, which were touching the floor in a lotus position. Kathleen turned to look at each of those contacts, first right and left, rather like a cat noticing who was touching it where, and then lifted the left corner of her mouth in a way that gave the appearance of enduring acceptable unpleasantness When they moved their legs closer to her shoulders, she took an audible

breath and shrank away slightly from the contact, as she had done before, but then let them drop, so that the sides of shoulders touched their legs when they landed.

She was quiet for a moment, examining interiorly how it felt. "Is it okay?...I told them to do that." I both asked and explained. Kathleen tipped her head to one side as if to listen to her own answer, raised one shoulder in a half shrug and then half nodded with her head. A begrudging "yes," I concluded to myself.

"It's better than as if I had to touch *them*," she said with some relief – as if given reprieve from an unpleasant assignment. "Right," I said, simultaneously acknowledging to her that I understood what she said, and to myself that this trial wave was managing to reach the beach.

"Maybe they could say, 'If we had been your ideal parents, we would have wanted to touch *you*,'" I suggested, to highlight the contrast to her having to do the touching and reaching in the past.

Kathleen listened and seemed to absorb the meaning of that statement as the role-figures said, "If we had been your ideal parents, we would have wanted to touch you."

Kathleen took a deep smooth breath and then sat in silence for some moments, this time not waiting, but clearly thinking something through. "What happens with that?" I asked, meaning with having heard that statement.

"I remember that my real father always sort of wanted to touch us – I think he had the right when I was playing.." "Right," I said, acknowledging what she was saying and waiting for what would come next.

"But we were told he was so *ugly..ugly*, I just..uhh..I just never felt like that, I never allowed it."

"Right," I said, gathering her meaning. "So maybe, the ideal mother says, 'If I had been your ideal mother, I would have told you that your father was handsome....'" Kathleen audibly let out a held breath..."and not ugly." "Is that okay?" I questioned.

Kathleen nodded in easy agreement. "Or should we say, 'beautiful or handsome, what should we...?' I asked searching for the appropriate adjective, thinking that the opposite of ugly is usually beautiful, but that beautiful is not typically used to describe a man.

Kathleen surprised me by saying, "Okay," would be enough." The beachhead was secure.

Now knowing believability was secure, I confidently made the suggestion. "The ideal mother would say, 'If I had been your ideal mother I would say, 'I would *never* (with strong emphasis) have said your real father was ugly...'" I then indicated that the role figure should start with that phrase, which she did, saying, "If I had been your ideal mother I would *never* have said your father was ugly," and then she waited to hear what the next phrase would be.

I continued the assignment by saying, "I would have said he was *okay*." The role-player then repeated those words, saying, "I would have said he was *okay*."

Then feeling perhaps over-confident, I gratuitously added, “And maybe ‘and even that he’s handsome’” Hearing that, a smile began to lighten Kathleen face as she very likely watched a projected picture of a handsome real father or an ideal father on the screen of her mind’s eye.

Her smile sweetened as she heard the role-figure saying, “And even that he’s handsome.”

Catching that change, I said, “That touched you.” Kathleen, without looking up, still focused on her inner screen, pursed her lips – not holding back tears as before, but surprising to consider, perhaps holding back pleasure or even a kiss – nonetheless she was still smiling rather happily.

“It made you look happy, is that right?” I asked, to be sure.

To my surprise, her eyes welled up with tears at once and said, “My father would be happy if she thought so,” meaning if her real mother had thought so. Thus confirming my hunch that she might have been seeing an image of her real father looking handsome in her mind’s eye. Her tears were now not for herself, but filled with compassion for her real father.

Taking her cue, I suggested, “Well maybe his,” – indicating the bottle symbolizing her real father – “ideal wife” – indicating the glass symbolizing his ideal wife – “would say, ‘If I had been your real father’s ideal wife..’” Here Kathleen looked at the objects on the floor and simultaneously at the images of her real father and his ideal wife in her mind’s eye. “I would have said,” I continued, “he is such a handsome man.” Thus bringing justice to a mistreated father.^[25]

“Is that right? I asked.” Kathleen nodded a nod of acknowledgement of justice carried out as she saw that scene carried out in her imagination.

“And he would have been happy,” I added, bringing in another detail for her to imagine.

Kathleen took a very deep breath and slowly let it out, her eyes blinking rapidly all the while.

Then soft tears rose again. “It touches you to think of that,” I said kindly. “I think you really felt badly for your father...” I surmised, “...that he didn’t get such compliments from his wife,” I continued. She nodded her head conveying the sympathy and dedication of a devoted daughter.

Her compassion for him was clear and now, with the inclusion of the figure of his ideal wife, she would not have to be the one who compensated him and brought him the love and admiration she knew he so deeply desired.

“I always feel that if everyone around me is happy, that I would be happy too,” Kathleen noted for herself. She tilted her head side-wards and back, eyes down-cast – the very image of a compassionate saint, aching with pity for the suffering. That is precisely the formula for filling in the holes in roles. One can only tend to one’s own happiness if everyone else in one’s network is provided with what they need to be happy. In other words, self-interest can only be allowed following the fulfillment of the interest others. Interest in others is a fine virtue, but not when it is awakened in children too early – before their own, self interested, maturational needs are met.

"That's why we had to make everyone around you happy..." I exclaimed with some self-satisfaction as Kathleen took her eyes off the ground to look at me.

To my surprise and pleasure, Kathleen burst into bubbles of unrestrained laughter, which I could not resist from making me laugh along with her. Still laughing, I continued saying, "...so that you would be able to.." But I had to stop laughing to say, "That's how we did it in the structure. We made everyone around you happy, so that *you* could be happy."

Kathleen looked down once more, this time, not seeing internal pictures. I thought that she was busy checking her internal sensations, and bodily state, which from my vantage point on the outside, seemed to be sending signals of relaxation and physical comfort. For her breathing was markedly different, easier and unconstrained, especially when she exhaled. Each exhalation was now accompanied by a small wind-sound of relief. Somewhat like the panting that comes when the threat has passed and the danger has been escaped.

"And that's where your life would have started," I noted to her as she looked back up at me.

She looked down once more, quietly absorbed, while strangely enough, thunder rumbled for many seconds in the background. We were at the dying end of a severe rainstorm, which had been raging for some time during much of the structure.

"What's happening now?" I inquired.

Kathleen took a deep breath to prepare to say what was coming, "There was a little bit that I wasn't able to overcome it myself....because I understand that everybody has their problems, much more than I do.

"I think what you're saying is, that you couldn't make everybody happy," I said, trying to comprehend what was behind her words. Indicating the various ideal figures for the real figures I made the following suggesting, "So they would say, 'If we had been back there then, we would have made everybody happy. It wouldn't have had to be your job.'"

I gathered that Kathleen she was not viewing that particular scene either in her mind or in the room, as she sat quietly, without responding to the words I proposed the ideal figures should speak. So, with the goal in mind to make the situation more believable, I suggested, "Maybe they should say those words." indicating those figures once again.

"If we had been back there," they began to say en masse, "we would have made everybody happy..." at this point Kathleen's eyes and mouth smiled peacefully in reaction to the scene she was "looking at" in her mind's eye that had been produced by their words. Her actual eyes were half closed and if there was a retinal image present, she was certainly not attending to it.

"So imagine being a child," I began to say, "with no responsibilities to make everybody happy..." Hearing these words, It appeared that Kathleen recalled and "saw" the remembered history where she had taken responsibility for everyone's happiness. For her eyes, smiling just a moment before began to well up and her previously upturned lips tightened against the impulse to cry.

“...with parents,” I continued, noting that immediately on hearing the word “parents” that Kathleen’s eyes opened to look at the actual room, darting to one side where the Ideal parents had been seated before, making congruent, the internal image and the external image.

“...who love you and are happy they made you,” I concluded the word picture.

Kathleen nodded with pleasurable acceptance of those words as she viewed that internal scene it conjured up. Her lips were held together in a kind of “savoring” smile, which led me to say, “Taste the flavor of that,” providing her with an oral metaphor to experience and internalize that new possibility.

I watched Kathleen for some time as she digested the moment. She took an audible easy breath, swallowed a few times and looked thoughtful. Then after breathing easily for some moments suddenly let out her breath with a slight gasp, leading me to think that she was caught up in a disturbing new thought or a image.

“What happens with that? I inquired.

“I could imagine I’m coming home from school and I am afraid of my mother being home.”

“Right,” I said, catching the gist of this new scene, “So she could say,” I said, indicating the ideal mother, “If I had been your ideal mother, you could come home from school without being afraid.”

Kathleen nodded her acceptance of that idea and then the Ideal mother said the words, “If I had been your ideal mother, you could have come home from school without being afraid.”

Though Kathleen seemed to accept that new possibility in principle, I decided to attempt to reinforce it by saying, “So imagine you have a different home now with this kind of mother ...” I emphasized this point to help her make a clear contrast between the newly awakened picture of her actual home that she and her real mother had lived in and the image of the ideal mother in a happier we were now creating in on the stage of her imagination. She could then internalize that new image to offset the negative impact of her memory of the unhappy history with her real mother in her real home..

Kathleen seemed to like that image, for her mouth moved in way that was reminiscent a of someone tasting something pleasurable.

“What happens when you imagine that?” I asked.

Kathleen didn’t answer for some moments, for she was intensely absorbed with her internal experience. Then, to my delight, she answered quietly, in a little girl voice, as if from far away, “I imagine an ideal mother and she is Indian and she is wearing a sari.” ^[26]

Outwardly, I immediately accepted the value of Kathleen’s new image, but inwardly, fanfares of trumpets could have sounded in my head. This believable image of an Indian ideal mother in a sari, indicated to me that the work we had done earlier – providing ideal figures to all those in her family network that she sacrificed her own self interest for – had now paid off. Early self-interest was finally gaining precedence over too-early interest-in-the-other. Hooray!!

"Why don't we do that," I said at once. Kathleen nodded in agreement

But why an Indian ideal mother wearing a Sari you might wonder? Here is my explanation for Kathleen's particular configuration of the ideal mother principle – for the notion of an ideal mother is indeed a universal principle. We are all born knowing that mothers exist and will be out there in the world when we first arrive, alive, on earth. And, when and if the world we are born into does not provide the kind of life-supporting, motherly care our genes have led us to anticipate in birth mothers, we appropriately withdraw the precious capital of the principle of ideal mothers from our actual mother's "bankrupt trust-fund" and deposit it in some more secure, trustworthy repository.

In my experience, the chosen repository can be found in some pretty unexpected locations. For example, death, the void, or even in one's own head (people sometimes have the fantasy wish that they gave birth to themselves in their own mind and are their own most trustworthy caretakers). Other loci can be on another planet, in another century, in another incarnation and so forth. In Kathleen's case, it seems that trust in an ideal mother would have to include someone raised in an Eastern culture.

Indicating the ideal mother, I said, "She says, 'I'm role-playing your Indian, Ideal mother.' Just so, we do it like that..." Upon hearing me say those preparatory words, that the ideal mother could say, Kathleen, with a playful look on her face, grinned with pleasure.

"....because that's what you're prepared to believe," I added. On hearing that, without lifting her head, Kathleen raised her eyebrows, slightly shrugged her shoulders, non-verbally seeming to say, "Yeah, that may be the case, but who cares." So much for unasked for judgments.

The role-player revised her role-playing contract by saying, "I am role-playing your Indian Ideal mother." Hearing the role-player's words, Kathleen's facial expressions gave me the impression that she might be evaluating/reviewing that new role-definition both visually and orally, as it seemed her mouth was tasting it over and her eyes seemed to be looking at a new internal image – most likely organizing an internally satisfying picture of the ideal mother as an Indian woman wearing a sari.

"And should we have an Indian ideal father too?" I asked, wanting to make sure she had two parents enrolled and not just one. No time to start leaving new holes in roles. Kathleen silently mulled that over for a moment, and then, not wanting to leave too much empty time and space without an ideal father, I asked, "What should he be?"

Kathleen blinked rapidly, took in a bit of air, and, with a hesitant, little-girl voice, said with a sense of impermissible, but insistent longing, "A warrior."

"A warrior?" I said with some wonderment. Kathleen looked up to gauge my reaction, made eye-contact with me long enough to nod twice definitively, and then looked down again.

"But is he Indian... the warrior?" I asked, trying to get clarification. Without looking up Kathleen nodded yes, with solemn certainty.

Getting the gist of what this was about I took the structure leadership reins with confidence and clarity saying, "So he should say, " indicating the role-player, "I will role-play your Ideal, Indian warrior father."

The role-player then said, "I will role-play your ideal, Indian, warrior father."

Kathleen did not move or show any emotion in response to this re-enrolling, so in an attempt to light up the internal stage and clarify the characters on it, I said, "So imagine having an Indian mother with a sari, and a warrior father," underlining the two main characteristics she had emphasized when she spoke of them.

"What happens with that....?" I began, and remained silent for a moment to watch how she would react to those words. Then I added, "...when you come home to such a family?"

Kathleen, deeply engrossed in her imagination did not move or speak and then, in a simple, young voice, quietly said, "I feel safe."

Until now, all through the structure, Kathleen described over and over again one situation after another how afraid she had felt. At this moment, she was finally able to organize the context which would allow her to feel safe. To anchor this important new experience in the requisite time-line, I said – gesturing toward the ideal parents "So they say, 'If we had been your ideal parents, you would have felt this safe in the past'"

In this stage of a structure, I often suggest that clients make a kinesthetic, visceral memory of their present emotional state and help them to transfer their presently-felt, body sensations to their body-memory of themselves as a child. For, it is at that age, when they would have originally wanted and needed to have had that experience. In this way, we endeavor to create a new memory, registered as if it had been experienced at that particular age when it was maturationally required.

The role-figures repeated those words, saying, "If we had been your ideal parents, you would have felt this safe in the past." Kathleen let the air out of her chest, sounding relieved and then breathed normally.

"So let yourself feel this safety, in the presence of an Indian mother with a sari and a warrior ideal father," I suggested.

From the mercurial shifts of expression on her face, Kathleen seemed to be both "seeing" and "being" in that newly constructed scene, while at the same time in touch with the memory of how it actually had been in her past.

"They both believed it." Kathleen began softly. "They wont... what?...believed?" I asked, not having heard or understood her clearly.

"They both believed," Kathleen said emphatically. "I lost that," I said in some confusion. as the lights in the room suddenly flickered on and off. The thunderstorm had been rumbling intermittently throughout and a lightning strike momentarily disrupted the current.

"I know," she said, "I'm just continuing seeing the imagination. And I realized I feel so safe," she audibly took in a deep breath, "because they both believe in God...."

"Yah," I said in relief and happiness for her, knowing that she was experiencing, through interaction with human beings, her bed-rock repository of trustworthy protection: God.

"...and both believed in the holiness and goodness of the whole universe."

Quickly, so as not to lose the moment, I said, indicating the ideal parents, "So they would say, 'If we had been your ideal parents, we would have believed in God and the holiness and goodness of the whole universe.'"

Then, as role-figures repeated that statement, Kathleen, head tilted her head to her Ideal Father's side, and was the classic picture of serenity.

After some quiet moments, I said softly, "Let yourself feel in the family that believes in that." Kathleen thoughtful and still looking down and inside her mind, slowly brushed the Kleenex across her mouth. "What happens when you feel that?" I asked.

"I feel that I'm memorizing my last incarnation," Kathleen said to my surprise. [27]

"I'm sorry...you're...?" I stumbled, not at all clear what she meant.

"It feels like I'm memorizing...a memory is something that is remembered that was gone," She began to explain.

Now here is an interesting moment. Throughout I have been noting when Kathleen was seeing (and reacting to) a recollection of an actually experienced event and when she was seeing (and reacting to) a symbolic event in her imagination. Which symbolic event we were constructing in parallel with her actual, historical events. Now, with this new information about her belief in reincarnation, we are having, hypothetically, a moment when she is recalling, not a lived event of her actual lifetime, but according to her belief, a lived event that she is recalling from a previous lifetime. So then, what is the difference between a real and an actual memory? In some regard that is an irrelevant question, in that all imaginations, whether real or not, will affect the life and emotional state of the imaginer.

According to Kathleen, she was having an actual memory of her actual *prior* incarnation. With this work, I was trying to harness the believability of the safety, she "felt" in that (remembered or imagined – it truly does not matter which) incarnation to bolster the "symbolic false-memory" we were trying to create of a safe childhood in her actual personal, biographical history.

"But maybe this could be your metaphorical, or symbolic incarnation. In other words, a symbolic memory of an incarnation," I began, trying to untangle past, present and future – real and symbolic. "Let yourself feel, see how it would have been," I continued in that vein. "Because it will change how you look at the world," I urged, "when you let yourself make such a history."

Kathleen stayed silent, so I added in the same endeavor, "So instead of positing this as moment as a memory of a past incarnation, put it in as if it had been in your symbolic past in this, your present incarnation," I encouraged.

Kathleen blew her nose energetically, two times. "And what happens to your breathing when you...experience that?" I asked.

I went to a memory of my real parents," Kathleen said.

"I don't know.." I began to say, "..do you mean your real parents in reality or your real parents in the structure? I asked for clarification.

"In the structure," Kathleen said.

I gathered from this that she was in a place to review what had transpired in the structure.

To help her in recalling the structure steps we had taken in regard to her real parents I said, "In the structure, we gave your mother, no husband, no children, just a dog." I gestured toward the objects representing those figures.

"We gave your father an ideal wife," I paused for a moment to watch her face and said, "You're smiling at that." Whereupon Kathleen burst out with a girlish, mischievous laugh.

"So they're being cared for in the structure," I continued, with a smile on my own face and in my voice. With those words, I underlined Kathleen's release from the obligation to care for those needs.

Kathleen smiled with pleasure hearing me describe those virtual/symbolic relationships.

"And the witness would say, "I see how happy you are to know that." At this point Kathleen broke out with a minor explosion of laughter.

"And what happens now?" I wondered aloud. Kathleen took several deep, full breaths, indicative to me that she was at the end of the structure.

"Can you make a memory of all this?" I asked and recommended. Kathleen turned her gaze from the inner world of imagination and opened her eyes to see the actual room. Eye focus is another of the transition markers that show when a client has undergone that phase change of consciousness as they return with full attention to the present.

I continued by adding, "How good you feel when you remember that it was solved and you got a new ideal history.

With an ideal mother with a sari," I began a review, "and an ideal father who is a warrior. And they believed in the holiness...and we put it, not in a past incarnation, but in your present history." Kathleen breathed in peacefully. "And remember the good feeling it gave you," I reminded her.

Kathleen remained silent, reviewing it all in her mind for about a minute, then said with a bit of regret, "There is one more person who is close to me that is not happy."

"Who is that?" I asked. To my astonishment she replied, "My husband," for he had not come into her mind, or else she had censored any thought of him until now.

"Can we work on that on Friday?" I said, knowing that the research included another day of therapy, where we could attend to that topic. Kathleen nodded yes in agreement with that.

"Because that would be a whole new chapter, I think," I said, showing readiness for that work to come.

"Why don't we finish in this place," I recommended. "And we'll look at your partner on Friday," I said reassuringly. "So you can finish with a good history." I added.

She smiled in instant recollection of the good history we had organized for her to experience.

After she sat quietly absorbed in her interior images for some moments, I asked, "Is that okay?" Kathleen nodded in agreement..

"Shall we start with the de-rolling steps?" I began. "Do you have enough of it now?" I checked to be sure..

"How shall we begin de-rolling?" I asked. Kathleen's eyes darted upward, leading me to say, "Did we have any voices in the air?" I inquired. "I can't remember, I don't think we did," I said.

Voice figures are used to make statements of strategy based on the words people use when they describe how the function in the world.

"In case we did, we'll de-role them," I said, making a gesture as if I was pulling the figure out of the air where she had looked.

"Maybe we de-role your real grandmother's ideal daughter," I began, going through the roster of figures represented by members of the group or objects Kathleen selected. "That's the cushion," I said to the group member who moved forward to move that object from its position on the hypothetical stage we had placed her upon. Kathleen nodded her approval as each object was addressed and removed from their positions on the floor.

"And then, your real grandmother's ideal parents," I said, whereupon the group members taking those roles said, "I'm no longer role-playing your real grandmother's ideal parents." And then they say, "I am....." announcing their own names. After that they moved from their places where they had been assigned.

Kathleen watched that procedure with interest and keen attention to the details.

"And she de-roles," I said, indicating the group member representing her real grandmother. That group member then says, "I de-role as your real grandmother, I am....."

Following the same procedure, the Ideal husband to the grandmother de-roles.

"The bottle is no longer role-playing your real mother and the cushion is no longer role-playing the dog," I said as those objects were moved from the scene.

Then I indicated the other bottle and the glass beside it saying, "That is no longer role-playing your real father and your real father's ideal wife."

"And then, we de-role the witness I put in the air," I said, miming a gathering of that portion of the air that contained the notion of the witness figure. Kathleen looked at the spot in the air I indicated as I symbolically removed it.

"Are you ready for your ideal Indian mother and your ideal Indian warrior father?" I asked for permission to de-role those ideal figures who are always kept for the very last.

Kathleen nodded her approval, her lips pressed together, while they jointly said, "I am no longer role-playing your ideal mother/father, I am" adding their own names at the end of the contractual statement.

Kathleen smiled a smile of gratitude at me and, by glancing upward and sideward, sent the same message of appreciation to the role-players as they began to move from their positions behind and beside her.^[28]

"Okay," I said, thus marking the end of the session.

It is important that each step be done seriously so that in this ritual disengagement, the distinction between role and reality is reinforced.

Kathleen's notes:

^[1] I had very little info on PBSP and it was a big challenge for me. As well it was the first time I was in the group and it made me very anxious, as I am afraid of people, when they get close.

^[2] I was trying to express my willingness to follow the process rather than the therapist. I felt a great deal of resistance "in me" and I was ready to fight it and "let the process happen". The discussion on this topic felt like a big misunderstanding which made me feel like I was too strange to be understood – I was expressing readiness for co-operation and it was perceived as resistance... Eh.

^[3] I have developed a huge interest in others and I still feel guilty when I think „just about myself“. At the time of this structure I simply did not know anything about this.

^[4] Another moment, which I felt very strange about. I always loved my grandmother and I really cared for her. I remember that when she was ill, I was observing her breath. I was thinking that if I did so carefully enough it will keep my grandmother alive. I was very afraid that she could die or be very uncomfortable

or sad. However it has never ever came to my mind that I should not have do it! I was always sure that it was my business.

[5] The witnessing felt very accurate. I was confused with the whole process a lot and as well I was overwhelmed by my feelings, the witness helped me a lot to keep me safe and clear about what was happening.

[6] The whole process was an extremely difficult for me. I felt it worked and it was nice, but at the same time it felt like a „game“ I can play but it was not going to change the reality of what happened. The „hope“ and the deep sadness related to the reality experienced in the past was very apart. It was believable, BUT it was like two different possibilities very far from each other. The real one was saying to me „I am real, the other is nice but not true“. I had to put all my effort and push myself very hard to keep the hopeful picture alive.

[7] I was getting right to the „centre of this topic“. From my point of view it was not me at all. It was my very strange mother who destroyed my and my sisters' childhood, my father's life and my beloved grandmother old years. I felt very helpless and I did not know what to do. „Me“ was the last thing I had on my mind. The whole life till this very moment I felt responsible for all the misery and for the fact that despite all my effort I could do nothing.

[8] The „empty feeling“ was rather a feeling of „losing my ordinary order of things – i.e. losing part of my mental scheme I have integrated and I used to operate in and with. I had no idea what Al called „the entity“, but I knew that I had lost part of my own way of thinking and I was very confused. I can imagine that my brain was confused too and simply stopped working for a while. Buddhists do it deliberately by intensive thinking of „koan“. It was rather pleasant but at the same time, my brain was not ready to produce anything as it was not sure what „inside“ was still valid...??? This is the best was I can explain myself re this very moment.

[9] My mind kept producing a thousands of very sad and deeply traumatic scenes. My mother used us, children as a tool how to complain about life and how to keep her mother and our grandmother caring and always on her side. There was more in it. Our mother never loved us, so she never felt strange about doing it. But it had double effect on us – first, mother hated us and complained all the time, second it influenced our very beloved and loving person, who started to complain about us too. Double pack of madness for years.

So even when my grandmother had her ideal parents in the structure, my mother was the biggest problem anyway.

[10] I was saying loudly what I have felt almost all the time. The „ideal“ was so far from anything from my real life, that I almost could not „let it happen“. It was not an inability to receive I think. It was just like a „science fiction“. I could not relate to it because it was too far from any experience. My brain was busy with getting out from the „genetic nature“, but it was not easy at all.

[11] It is a very precious description of how it felt. I suddenly realized that my sadness simply came from somewhere. It was the fact that I could never accept the situation as it was and I did never accommodate it. There must have been something else in „me“, which was pushing to better life for me. I think that in

this very moment I realized that my old deep hope had a right to be fulfilled. I started to enjoy the structure more – I did not feel so guilty for creating ideal relatives any more.

^[12] *Exactly and because the ideal daughter” was not successful and could not make it good for everyone it was devastating.*

^[13] *Yes. The little dog has made my strange mother happier and it made me feel happier too. However, my mother often says that the dog is her only daughter and it is the only loving and beloved baby... After 37 years of endless effort to be and ideal daughter it does not sound nice even nowadays.*

^[14] *I was always convinced that my mother had the best parents anybody ever could have had. I did not know much about the need, especially about the limits. For me it was an enormous injustice what happened, that somebody like my mother, who had so nice and loving parents could have developed into such a creature, who destroyed so many lives. Giving her “even more ideal parents” felt like a real waste!!!!*

^[15] *When Al named it, I knew for the first time in my life that it is what I have been feeling: I had no right to live, to be happy and to be loved. It was very strong sudden realization – maybe to strong to be born. I have been still in a big struggle with this one. The second structure I did with Al the following day, helped me to settle down on the Earth.*

^[16] *Oh yes, big trouble. For me it was too much, Getting ideal mother or parent for myself was impossible to comprehend. Again I do not think it was an entity, it was inability to swallow it. To imagine it, to be present etc. Very strong sorrow - that it was a possibility and did not happen.*

^[17] *Yes, I meant „contradictory“.*

^[18] *Al said something theoretical at this moment, he explained how the „double bind“ expressions work with children. This bit of theory (as all other too) helped me to get orientated in my feelings and my own confusion. My life has never had the „logic“ framework and Al’s explanations had very calming effect on me.*

^[19] *This has been again the lasting deep feeling – it was good, lovely but not for me. However this structure started a process of believe. These little discussions with Al were very precious as I was not left alone with all my struggle, I was allowed to speak about it and we continued. If Al stopped and challenged my hard work on believing – it could have destroy the process.*

^[20] *I have been looking for love all my life. It was not easy to comprehend it and it is not even now. My feeling and it’s rational side says that if one does not learned how to be loved as a child the person will never be able to “be loved” in the life. Then being loved in the structure is almost unbearable and makes the experience very moving and painful.*

^[21] *I never wanted to be „my father’s wife“. I can imagine that it could have happened, but my mother put such an endless effort to speak about my father like he was an enemy, ugly, awful. She was telling*

us, kids, that he was trying to kill her (it was not true at all). It was her way. Complaining and abusing by talking about people who might love each other in a way that they started to hate or dislike each other. He special type of torture. I never wanted to touch my father and never felt close to him. It was her influence. Possibility of „marrying him – I once or twice thought about it - felt like something really disgusting.

^[22] *I always wanted my father to have a very good wife. To my surprise even in the structure it was a great pleasure to give him one. It was a strange feeling, that this part of the structure was so easy and nice whereas the other was so difficult. I was thinking somewhere back in my mind: My father was a nice man, no problem to imagine that he is happy with somebody.*

^[23] *Again. My feeling was that it is too different from everything I have ever seen and experienced. My ability to believe was ready at this point, my brain simply could not.*

^[24] *The feeling could be described as a deep sadness and sorrow. I can not explain it much better. Maybe as well that it is too nice so one can not take it. The brain is not used to such happiness...???*

^[25] *At this moment I felt a huge compassion for my real father. I am sure that he knew that our childhood was difficult, he could not help it and nobody ever could have. He did not divorced our mother because of us – he told us about it. So my wish that he deserved better life has been always strong. At this moment I imagined him in the room and I “saw” him crying and being very sad that he was not able to be „the ideal father“.*

^[26] *I did not know where these Indian people came from. I think that they must have been a different origin because that made them more believable. It surprised me too, but it appeared in my „mind“ and I was happy with it. As well they were related to India. The motherland of Buddhism. So they represented the quality of Buddhism too.*

^[27] *Last incarnation has to do with my Buddhism too. It made it very nice – I did not have to relate it to my real this life, but it was still me experiencing justice and good ideal parents.*

^[28] *When I got home I was extremely tired. My brain was very strongly reorganized. The following day I wrote a poem (attached), which shows the effect the structure had on me. It changed my “mind” in via that it started the positive change of my life, which is still going on.*

24 July 2003

Hidden in the sand

There is the mother, always caring, understanding

The loving wife, who knows her man

The sister, playful and merry, who laughs with you

The partner and friend, helping to save the world

The wise woman giving advice and praying for others

The kindred soul, enjoying being together in peace

There is the man, who loves his woman

The father, who knows what's the best for children

The brother, joking about the funny old world

The partner and friend, inspiring and sharing the job

The warrior, always protecting beings in the Universe

The shaman, healing and saving others from pain

The kindred soul, enjoying being together in peace

How comforting is to hear that: it is us

And so it is

It does not cost anything

Just the sand knows it till the End

Since the Beginning

Kathleen

Written after a structure work with Albert Pesso

© 1961 -2011 Albert Pesso and Diane Boyden-Pesso. All rights reserved.