

## **HISTORICAL RE-TRACING OF A 'FIFTH PROVINCE' DIS-POSITION:**

### **Excavating unactualised possibilities in systemic therapy.**

**Imelda McCarthy PhD**

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"The notion of a 'fifth province' is an aesthetic analogy which describes a space which is neither physical, geographical, nor political. It is a place which is beyond or behind the reach of our normal scientific consciousness. It is therefore, requires a method and a language which are sui generis both to reach it and to describe it" (Hederman, 1985, p 11).

The Fifth Province is both a metaphor and a synecdoche (1) in Celtic mythology by which the theme of contradiction is revealed/addressed. Contradictions have been spectacularly referred to in family therapy, for example in double bind theory and paradoxical injunction. However, it has been our experience in the team that the field lacked such metaphors for the incorporation /embracing of cultural resonances, socio-political inequity, contradictions and clinical dilemmas such as poverty, violence and sexual abuse. This mythological inspiration of the Fifth Province gave us the ground to extend the boundaries of our systemic practice, in method and language, to reach and describe these issues.

The metaphor of the Fifth Province was first reawakened by two Irish philosophers, Richard Kearney and Mark P. Hederman. From 1977 to 1985, they provided a literary forum for the expression of diverse views across political, religious and cultural divides in the Irish context. Their invocation of the Fifth Province, through their bi-annual journal, *The Crane Bag* (Hederman & Kearney, 1977 - 1985), attempted to transcend these divides.

Kearney and Hederman borrowed the notion of the Fifth Province from ancient Irish legend and imagined it acting as a "second centre of gravity" to the administrative centre of the country at Tara in County Meath. The balance between the two centres "was a guarantor of peace and harmony in the country as a whole". (Hederman & Kearney, 1977, p 10) The purpose of their journal was to mirror such a place in modern Ireland. This Irish postmodern aesthetic reached a critical mass in the inaugural address of Mary Robinson, President of Ireland in 1990. In her address, the President stated that if she

was to be a symbol of anything, she "would like to be a symbol of this reconciling and healing fifth province". (Robinson, 1990)

Moving away from the notion of a universally validatable reality in terms of particular descriptions, ie 'dysfunctional family', we have sought to place (objectivity) in parentheses, (Maturana & Varela, 1978). In our work reality becomes multifaceted. Brought forth, through conversation, is a multiverse (Maturana & Varela, 1978) of spontaneous, emergent possibilities.

Unbinding ourselves from the fetters of diagnostic categories and preferred solutions, ideal behaviours and 'normal' family/relational forms, we were freed to explore alternatives. To help us on this road we also forsook the security of a preferred (particular) therapeutic position in our work and replaced it instead with the process of what we call, the Fifth Province or Ambivalent Dis-Position. Dis-Positioning embodies, for us, a living, moving process rather than the more fixed activity implicit in holding a position. It does not refer to a psychological notion of 'disposition'. Dis-Positioning refers to the ability to move between positions in recognition of contradiction. In this way we must also include the taking and avoidance of a position.

Working amidst multi-person systems comprising family members, professionals and others, the sustaining of a singular view became untenable. It became apparent that if space were to be given to the variety of views, affiliative and contradictory, then it seemed that the social domain constituting these differing views and positions could no longer be constructed as monovalent. Rather, the distinctive social feature of the field holding together these contradictions and oppositions was ambivalence. We began to wonder if the notion of ambivalence, previously held as a matrix for symptom generation, might not in fact provide an entry point to a novel listening and talking?

Embracing ambivalences one moves between positions. The therapeutic craft laden with fixed realities loses its anchor and moves towards the confluence of approaching oppositions. This confluence however, does not imply a central or neutral positioning. In our words it constitutes a Fifth Province Dis-Position, (Heaney, 1982, p7; Hederman & Kearney, 1977, p10; McCarthy & Byrne, 1988; Byrne & McCarthy, 1988; Kearney et al, 1990). In our work we invoked this metaphor as a way to imagine that turbulent stillness where opposites attract and repel and both/and explanations find expression.

## **The Fifth Province: Myth**

In Ireland there are four provinces extant, whose origins predate recorded history. The Fifth Province, although not a geographically or temporal certainty still has a linguistic presence in the Irish language. The Irish word for province is 'coiced' which means 'fifth'. This province was envisaged as a "place where all oppositions were resolved...where unrelated things coincide" (Hederman & Kearney, 1977, p10).

By its attachment (in language and imagination) to the four provinces of Ireland, the fifth province created an alternate space, on the one hand, where new connections and encounters between apparent disparate positions (provinces/domains) might become possible. On the other hand it facilitated possibilities for transcending the limits of the position from which one came (Hederman, 1985, pp114-115). Imaginatively creating a Fifth Province through the Crane Bag in modern Ireland, Hederman and Kearney wondered if perhaps different, less competitive, less fragmentary and divisive relationships with one another on our torn island might be possible?

There has been much debate as to the whereabouts or identity of this hidden fifth province, with popular myth recording two stories. One claims that the four provinces met at a mythical hill, Uishneach, while the other claims a geographical location in County Meath. The Irish for Meath is 'Midhe', meaning middle or centre. Woods (1907, p242) in the Annals of Westmeath sites the fifth province as an actual historical location in the centre of Ireland. The Hill of the Kings (Uishneach) is stated to be the spot, in Westmeath, where the four provinces met. It is a slightly elevated vantage point with extensive vistas in all directions. It was at the Hill of Uishneach that the leaders of the four provinces assembled to sort out grievances and to receive counsel. It is also said that King Tuathal Teachtmair in the first century (A.D.), erected a palace on the Hill of Uishneach and cut off tracts of land from each of the surrounding four provinces, thus creating an actual geographical fifth province. This new province, which has since long ceased to exist, incorporated the other provinces and transcended them simultaneously.

Thus, whilst both traditions, the mythical and the historical, disagree as to whether the place was real or imaginary, both agree on the importance of the notion of a Fifth Province in Ireland. Currently the Fifth Province is not deemed to have been a political or geographical position but more akin to a dis-position, (Hederman & Kearney, 1977,

p10). However, its trace is still to be found in the Irish Language in that the term for 'province' is 'cuaige' which means, 'fifth'. So, where was this fifth? Maybe it was that imagined place that Hederman talks about, where different interests came together and dis-coursed. Relationships between one-and-other became possible. Realities were deconstructed and constructed. Fact and image were sundered and re-united. It was a province of imagination (image and nation!).

Since the dawn of time, Ireland has experienced political division, fragmentation, imposition/colonisation and despair. The Irish seem imbued with a sense of failure and have searched, over the centuries, for some counterbalancing consolation. It seems we have to-day not yet found it. However, in spite of apparent failure, the beleaguered Irish mind has occasionally found solace in art, literature, theatre and poetry. It is in these realms that the Irish imagination has blossomed.

Just as playwright Brian Friel suggests that the role of theatrical art might aid Ireland's search so we as therapists thought that in adopting 'artistic' metaphors, spirits trapped within the "confines of place and an attitude of mind" (Seamus Deane, 1984, Plays of Friel, p21) from which there is no perceived escape, might be freed.

### **The Fifth Province: Method**

Similarly in the domain of visual art, Ireland's foremost painter, Louis Le Brocquy has written:-

"As a painter you are trying to discover, to uncover, to reveal. I sometimes think of the activity of painting as a kind of archaeology of the spirit. As in archaeology, accident continually plays an important part. The painter like the archaeologist, is a watcher, a supervisor of accident, patiently disturbing the surface of things, until a significant accident becomes apparent, recognising it, conserving this as best (s)he can while provoking the possibility of further accident. In this way a whole image, a 'whatness', may with luck emerge almost spontaneously. Thus, what counts in painting is, I believe, recognition of significant accident within a larger preoccupation and not dexterity and skill and calculated imposition". (Le Brocquy, 1981, p146)

Thus, Le Brocquy (1981) enunciates the process whereby his artistic images configure themselves on canvas, facilitated by him as a watcher of accident. While his world is that of art, this artistic vocabulary specifies for us the reflexivity of the therapeutic encounter.

In this other world, the landscape of the artist is analogous to the conversational domain of systemic therapy. Within this conversational domain the systemic therapist or therapeutic team, like Le Brocquy's artist, is not seen to impose a professional discipline but to facilitate the emergence of possible solutions to a presented dilemma, (Hoffman, 1985, 1990; Andersen, 1987; Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; McCarthy & Byrne, 1988; Byrne & McCarthy, 1988; Salamon et al, 1991). It is in the interweave of conversation that the ordinary lines of communication between the participants are ruptured and re-conjugated, (Le Brocquy, Nov 1986, TV documentary). In this interweave, participants become, as it were, co-authors in the elaboration and invention of new problem-free stories. As a result, these problem-free stories could not be said to stem from a universalised professional (disciplinary) practice alone. They emerge under the hands of the therapist and not because of them (Le Brocquy, 1981).

### *The Problem-Resource System*

En route to imagining a Fifth Province dis-position we begin by identifying the key actors constituting the conversation around an identified problem and its possible/potential dissolution. This conversation, (in our view) inevitably includes all those key people who are engaged in interacting about the problem, its definition and dissolution. We refer to this social system as the Problem Resource System and distinguish its membership in terms of family members, engaged professionals and others. In previous publications, (McCarthy & Byrne, 1988; Byrne & McCarthy, 1988) we have referred to this as the 'problem defined/defining system'. Currently we view this designation as being too problem-focussed. Along with our Swedish colleagues, the AGS Team, who discuss the involvement of what they term "resource persons", (Salamon et al, 1991) we see that those who converse about a problem are usually those who converse about its dissolution. In addition, we use the term "re-sourcing" to describe the ambivalent process of a multipartied conversation about those "unactualised spaces" foreclosed by singular problem descriptions.

In line with Anderson and Goolishian (1987) and Hoffman (1985), we posit the emergence of the Problem-Resource System (PRS) upon the request for help or the citing of a complaint to a professional. The development of the concept, PRS has eluded in our minds, the bifurcation of the social field into separate domains of concern, such as familial and professional or social control and therapy. Instead, a coherent frame is created for conversations among disparate groups with diverse agendas and mandates. These frames we have called 'Diamonds' which will be described later. Diversity and

contradiction are seen as emergent in these frames and fields. Re-cognising the Problem Resource System as a conversational domain in which oppositions coincide and contradictions co-exist we also re-cognise it as a domain of ambivalence. With the co-existence of varied and contradictory agendas, inequalities may frequently be discerned. In instances of child protection, for example, that agenda is deemed to be primary in any therapeutic and social control intervention. A non-recognition of this agenda inequality, this social reality, can impede therapeutic endeavour and lead to much conflict among professionals and their agencies and encourage professional mis-alliances. These mis-alliances are seen when professionals ally with family members around their perceptions of the opposing agendas of 'social control' and 'therapy'. This conflict is further exacerbated and augmented, both within the family and among the professionals (including the team), when agenda equality is falsely assumed and the issue of clientship is confused. It is our opinion then that the distinction of agenda inequality also calls for re-view of the issue of 'clientship'.

#### *Who to talk to?*

Based on the Commission Model of the AGS Team (Salamon et al, 1991; Salamon, 1992) we have distinguished that when the PRS includes state-mandated professionals their mandate assumes primacy. Their legitimation derives from their state-mandated functions. However, identifying the locus of primary clientship (commission-giving) has other significant implications. It lessens the possibility for imposing help and/or correction on a family who are not voluntarily asking for it. Acknowledgement of a statutory agenda and a family's possible involuntary attendance prevents an assumption that the idea of therapy is either possible or appropriate for such instances. Therefore, we would determine that responses on the part of a consultant/team need to include the presence of social control mandates which may govern the degree of freedom that family members under surveillance may experience and the desire for personal and family autonomy on the part of all participants.

Accepting a state-mandated professional as the primary client with the power to set both the agenda and the criteria for outcome, did not erase the necessity of accepting the competing agendas of other members of the PRS. Thus, this work had to provide a new method of analysis and practice which attended to the necessity for both, child protection, and the desire for autonomy in family members. As such the PRS once again is characterised by a duality of purpose, an ambivalent social field.

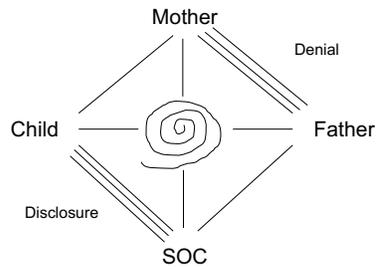
### *Diamonds*

Visualising the 'Fifth Province' in our work we imagined four-way relational, thematic and dialogical diamond-shaped drawings. The diamond figure illustrates the parties or themes and their interactions within client-professional discourses. Each of the points of the diamond figure represents one of the main actors within the Problem-Resource System. They both analyse and guide our consultancy process. They are a novel and useful shorthand method of illustrating and analysing the opposing and conflictual positions, themes and relational alignments within the PRS.

Drawing on Bateson's (1978, pp41-42) notions of symmetry and complementarity, the diamonds are shaped in two forms. Relations of symmetry are based on similarity while relations of complementarity are based on difference. Within our work around father-daughter incest disclosure we have distinguished two typical formations which we have referred to elsewhere as the symmetrical, competitive system and the complementary, co-operative system, (McCarthy & Byrne, 1988; Byrne & McCarthy, 1988; Kearney et al, 1990).

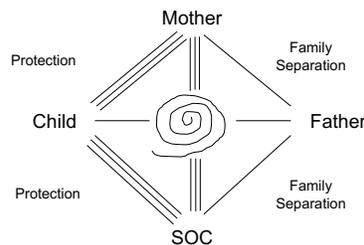
Systems of escalating symmetrical competition are constituted when both parents ally to protect each other, deny the abuse and blame their daughter(s) for disclosing it to a professional. For her part the daughter is aligned with (state-mandated) professionals for her protection. In such situations a competitive escalation is likely to ensue as to who should protect the child and as to whether the abuse occurred or not. Each alliance symmetrically insists on the 'rightness' of their own position(s) in an ongoing competitive struggle.

Symmetrical Diamond  
Abuse Scenario – Disclosure/Denial



The complementary co-operative system is constituted in situations where a mother supports her daughter's alliance with disclosure to (state-mandated) professionals. In this scenario, fathers are banished and their offending voices likely to be silenced. There is a statutory takeover of fatherhood.

Complementary Diamond  
Abuse Scenario – Removal of Abuser



*Diamonds as Methodology*

1. The diamonds are simplifying forms which enable the observer to make sense of ambivalent social fields i.e. situations of apparent oppositions, contrasts and contradictions.
2. They allow the observer to see the field inclusively i.e. to incorporate dimensions which would otherwise disqualify or mutually eliminate each other.

3. They illustrate a logic of "both/and and either/or".

4. They

- a) identify the key actors and/or themes of the problem-resource system (PRS - see below);
- b) distinguish the systemic (relational reflexive) patterns between those actors and/or themes;
- c) articulate four domains of potential conversation;
- d) guide the participant observer in relation to useful and non-useful questions and actions.

*Defining the PRS as potentially Symmetrical or Complementary*

- A. Situate key actors (including ourself as observer), their alignments and non-alignments in diamond form as above.
- B. Discern/Imagine the form of the PRS as symmetrical or complementary i.e. situations of competition or co-operation
- C. Indicate major themes which constitute those alignments and non-alignments.
- D. Imagine likely implication of one's chosen or obligated position/action. (Pre-visualization and considering possible unintended consequences)

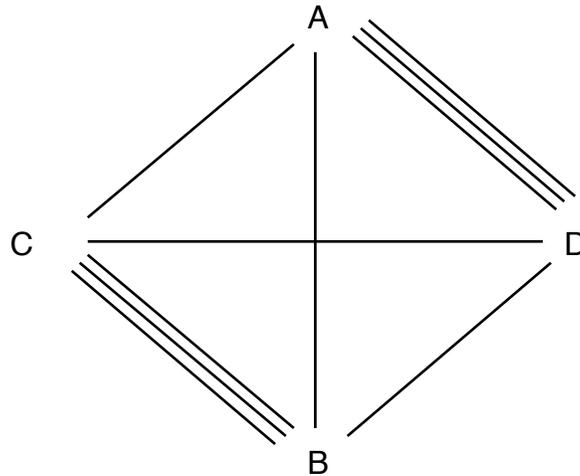
*Symmetrical and complementary diamonds.*

Two major distinctions, symmetry and complementary, may be applied to the diamond configurations. Symmetry implies relations of similarity e.g. a football game or an argument. Complementarity implies relations of difference i.e. fox-hunting, teaching, therapy.

These distinctions illustrate the forms of alignments and non-alignments, competitions and co-operations between the four main actors or groups of actors or themes.

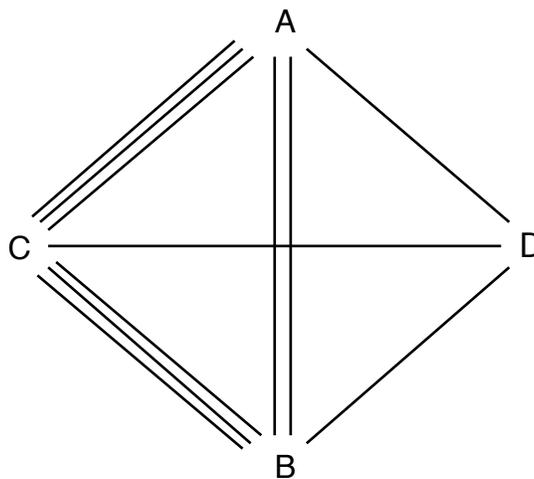
### a) Symmetrical Diamonds

Choose two persons/groups (i.e. A and B) in disagreement and then choose another dyad (i.e. C and D) who are allied to the positions of A and B. In this system A, B and C, D stand for two correlated polarities.



### b) Complementary Diamonds

Choose two persons/groups (i.e. A and B) who are in co-operative agreement around the issues of another, C, who is part of a dyad, C and D, where C is aligned to both A and B and D is excluded.



We distinguish that the major alignments and non-alignments which occur within the PRS are constructed by the emotional, linguistic and behavioural responses of participants and vice versa. For example, in the situation of father-daughter incest, we distinguish the shape of these alignments and non-alignments are held to reflect the invidious societal expectations with regard to the position the mother should or should not take in relation to her husband and her daughter. Generally, women are expected to maintain and sustain their adult to adult relationship with their partner while simultaneously being expected to be the primary caregivers and protectors of their children. A position not usually expected of men. In an Irish context the contradictory premises underlying the marital relationship and child welfare are made overt in a very particular/poignant way in the circumstances of child protection (physical and sexual abuse). The National Constitution of Ireland gives primacy to the marriage as the basis of society. Child welfare practices, on the other hand give primacy to child protection and wellbeing. Thus if a woman takes a stand and aligns with her husband to protect her marriage, as is depicted in the symmetrical competitive system, she is likely to become distanced from (non-aligned with) her daughter. In this scenario the daughter is equally likely to become strongly aligned with professionals around her own protection.

In this scenario, both sets of parties develop separate, opposing and conflicting agendas centring on either the protection of the parental marriage or on the protection of the child. The positions are usually seen by the participants to be mutually exclusive. A competitive struggle often ensues around the issues of protection between parents and professionals. Alignments and non-alignments are fixed in emotional tones of blame and counter-blame.

Where the mother aligns with her daughter and the professionals to guarantee the protection of her daughter and the removal of father from the family home, it is father who becomes the member of the PRS in the position of non-alignment with other participants. This (anti-) social configuration, if carried to extremes, due to a denial of the incest by father and/or a desire for marital separation by the mother, can result in instances of fragmentation, stark divisions and scapegoating. This social arrangement is illustrated in the complementary co-operative system.

In both the symmetrical, competitive system and the complementary, co-operative system the relationships between the parties involved hold the potential for progressive

escalation. In extreme instances these escalations may result in traumatic and devastating relational cut-offs and the breakdown of the family relational system. On the professional side, individual workers report experiencing a preponderance of negative reactions to incest and to the parents involved. In our experience, unrestrained escalatory processes are seen to hold the potential for, a) alienation between the daughter and her parents, b) the removal of the daughter and her siblings to long-term places of safety and c) long-term imprisonment, usually without treatment, of the father.

Holding together the dualities of purpose, non-equal competitive agendas and the co-operative and conflictual patterns of relationships (alignments and non-alignments) therefore calls for a toleration of and a dis-position towards co-existing oppositions (ambivalence) in the PRS.

### **Operationalising the Fifth Province: Creating A Sui-Generis Language**

#### *a) An Ambivalent Dis-Position*

Working with these distinctions and amidst the frequent turmoil triggered by the disclosure of violence or abuse the metaphor of the 'Fifth Province' captured the imagination of the author and her team. It was thought to hold possibilities for enabling the co-creation of a linguistic system (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988, Milan, White and Epston, McNamee & Gergen, Andersen) wherein each member's story maybe voiced and approach com-passionate solutions for all. By placing ourselves within this linguistic system and utilising 'circular questioning'. (Palazzoli et al, 1981, Penn, 1982) an ambivalent therapeutic dis-position unfolded. By this we mean that through dis-positioning the interviewer and team do not position themselves in conversation on one side or another of an argument, proposition or debate but explored the views of all members without negating any of them. The entitlement to speak is constituted beyond a right and wrong (moral) paradigm where views are honoured as legitimate within their own meaning context. By recognising the sites from which members of the PRS speak about a particular event (meaning context), their different accounts weave a narrative in which possibilities for mutual understanding and respect emerge. In this narrating the abusive action(s) is called to a particular account where the speaking of it is privileged over silence while *abusive actions are not condoned*. (It is both a position and a non-position). The process can be initiated by a Milan style hypothesis (which is always held loosely). In my experience over the years this hypothesis when interwoven with the

stories of clients and professionals is generally de-constructed and the conversations become more nuanced whilst not forgetting the seriousness of the abuse committed and suffered. This kind of deconstruction of more fixed positionings has allowed for solutions to emerge which do not lead to siloed entrenchments and escalating fixed positionings. This is not to say that the perpetrator of the abuse may not go to prison and/or be the subject of mandated treatment.

Thus, the team, by appearing to situate themselves in imagination at the confluence of opposites and hearing all points of view, simultaneously appear central and peripheral. They are both a part of and apart from any presented point of view.

### *b) Re-Membering*

Re-membering is a vital part of our methodology. The term is borrowed from the feminist theologian, Mary Daly, (1984, p 10) to illustrate the dual meaning implied by the word, 'remember'. It was later adopted by Michael White in his work on Narrative Therapy. In our work it is an instrumental metaphor which we use to re-member the connections between people which may have become ruptured. This is brought about by recalling stories which point to subjects/themes now banished and/or forgotten, which in turn may offer the possibility of new connections between the concerned parties. While in the conventional treatment discourses of sexual abuse privilege the past in remembering the abuse events, we instead see the abuse event as a context marker for disconnection. For us the anticipation of renewed non-abusive connections exist a priori to any remembering of the abuse event(s). Thus, the relational implications of the abuse event(s) are re-membered in an imagined future where relationships of accountability are possible. Sadly, of course, this anticipation on our part cannot always be fulfilled.

(Footnote: In our writing the hyphenation (re-membering) heightens the ambiguity of the word.)

Within this Fifth Province model for systemic consultation and therapy, all activities begin with re-membering of the position of the team. This re-membering encompasses the emotional responses of team members to other participants and the presented material of the PRS. Re-membered also, by way of "circular questioning", (Palazzoli et al, 1980; Penn, 1982; Penn, 1985; Tomm, 1987; Tomm, 1988) are the views of other professionals

involved, the viewpoints of family members present; an absent topic inferred by the team from the presented material. Re-membering is a necessary and vital element of our methodology. This is so because it creates the possibility of including and elaborating the different and opposing viewpoints of participants of the PRS, while also facilitating the conditions for their observation and understanding. In our experience, increasing the possibilities for observation and understanding in turn increase possibilities for co-operation. In this way, Re-membering goes beyond 'neutrality' (Palazzoli et al, 1980) in that all participants are seen to compose all aspects of the PRS and thus are involved in the creation of participatory understanding.

*c) Juxtaposing and Questioning at the Extremes*

'*Juxtapositioning*' is that practice of re-membering ambivalence which unifies a discourse by structuring it in terms of contradictory and contrasting voices. This refers to our notion that we bring to the clinical situation a priori stereotypical scenarios of polarities and dualisms in order to move beyond them. (i.e. mother protects father and social agents protect the child in the symmetrical scenario/diamond). Le Brocquy has a wonderful line where he talks about Juxtaposing pulling taut the nerves of insight and the ordinary becoming magnificent"! (Le Brocquy 1981)

It is furthered through a questioning which we refer to as, '*Questioning at the Extremes*'. This methodology was put forward in the PhD Thesis of the author and addresses the extreme manifestations of the logical frames (i.e. protection/punishment) of the re-membered participants of the PRS. It has been our experience that such amplifying questions create space for observation in conflictual situations and remove the participants from the immediacy of the conflict. It creates a common ground where there was none before.

Questioning at the Extremes avoids confrontation on the part of the person or persons asking the questions and also between the protagonists themselves. In distancing participants both from their conflict and from their own contributing positions, increased possibilities for observation in all emerge. Confrontation is eluded while all our usual views may be challenged. Nollaig Byrne in a workshop described deconstruction best proceeding as a kind of inactivity. There is no activity of demolition present but that when any construction of doubtful premises weighted with many stories it finally topples.

The amplification and juxtapositioning, in conversation, of apparent opposite viewpoints exposes competitive struggles for what they are and the interrelated nature of the presented behaviours, themes and views. Siting ourselves at the heart of this ambivalence each view is seen to propose its own contradiction in a recursive dance, (McCarthy & Byrne, 1988; Byrne & McCarthy, 1988). What was ambiguous often clears to reveal constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed solutions, which are often spontaneous.

Dis-positioning of the therapeutic team in this way precludes any causal role on our part. Our role becomes ambivalent in that it attempts to encapsulate the many divergent and often contradictory realities which are simultaneously 'centred' and 'de-centred'. They are neither with one or other but with both one and other (one another!) at the same time.

#### d) *Ambiguous Discourse*

An ambivalent dis-positioning is also/only possible within the domain of language. This occurs by way of ambiguous statements, which we refer to as, '*Repetitions*'. Repetitions are those statements which reflect, accept and question simultaneously the statements of the interviewee. Repetitions are also designed to be ambiguous in that they are simultaneously an amplification, a reflection, a question and an acceptance of a statement. In this ambiguous discourse, the repetition of the statements of interviewees is also a form of *amplification*. The amplification of the statement slows the pace of the interview and thus facilitates time for closer observation much as one would do with a slow-motion replay on television. Ambiguity is also evident in the acceptance and amplification of *allegorical offerings* by the team or other participants on the presented dilemma(s). Repetitions and the acceptance and elaboration of allegorical offerings illustrate a mode of talking on two levels. We propose that this talking on two levels, this equivocalism or indeed polyvocalism, creates opportunities for all members within the PRS to have the experience of hearing on two levels, hearing at least two sides of each argument. (a diaspora of dissensus)

Thus, the ambiguous nature of the disclosure mirrors the ambivalence which saturates the PRS. *Ambiguous discourse*, in our view, fosters conditions for double entendre, a double understanding and a double hearing in situations where a clear single understanding and

hearing masks the complexity inherent in the PRS. In this language is seen as playful rather than a mere means of exchange, so we magnify tone, tempo, categories and stories towards a possible deconstruction of siloed fixities and dominant discourses. There is a recognition that all participants are socially embedded speakers and not repositories of transcendent, autonomous representations. We constitute our language as it constitute us.

*e) A Celtic Consciousness*

Richard Kearney (Joyce and Le Brocquy, Crane Bag, 1980) the Irish philosopher, has written in relation to the Irish writer, James Joyce and the artist, Louis Le Brocquy that such an ambivalent dis-position has links with the prehistoric Celtic world. He states that Celtic consciousness manifests itself in the work of both Joyce and Le Brocquy and makes their art so:

"radically.... different from our normal 'logocentric' modes of perception that it shatters rather than substantiates any insular or centrist notion of identity." (p31)

Kearney goes on to cite another Irish artist Patrick Collins who points out that Irish and Celtic art have tended to:

"erase or deconstruct any suspicion of a stable or perduring tradition .... Celtic art .... is one in which the poet or painter brings himself to the point where he disseminates himself into an endless fall-out of traces. So that if the Irish hero Finn becomes Finn-again in Joyce's writings or the Irish writer, Joyce becomes Joyce again in Le Brocquy's paintings, it is only in both cases by becoming radically other." (p38).

In becoming 'one' with the multitude of differently constructed realities, the team, whilst appearing central also disseminates themselves into an endless fall out of traces: and so simultaneously become 'other'. There is a waiting involved until words resonate sensually and move us into a less transcendent position and we too become embedded in the narrative and embody it. We have found it important not look for quick exits or

solutions as the fragile ecology of relationships and possibilities can be too easily fractured.

However, this holding of apparent dualities, in mind and in language simultaneously, (ambivalence) confronts our everyday usage of a linear language with its dualistic emphasis. In this it can be uncomfortable at times and so calls for our need for team, collegial and other supports. On the other hand, a sightless acceptance of linearity can inevitably construct fragmented realities at the expense of relational ones. (See Bateson 2017 for a more thorough understanding of the danger of breaking up ecologies)

Therefore, in brief, it has been my own experience and that of my team when we were working together that attempting to move towards an ambivalent dis-position in systemic discourse can lead to an acknowledgement, within the Problem-Resource System, of the multifaceted nature of the presented situation. Many alternatives often emerge to challenge the initial either/or propositions such as whether women always need the protection or men always need to be controlled in social relationships. It is our opinion that such implied dualisms suggest the more expanded recursion where fear masked as concern is implicated in every control of abuse and abuse of control. (Kearney, Byrne and McCarthy 1990; McCarthy & Byrne 2019)

Becoming part of a problem-resource system involves the participants in ethical considerations in the opinion of the author. The predominant discourse will elaborate certain realities while veiling others. Problems are presented in language and defined in language, therefore they have the potential for exacerbation and dissolution in language. Therapeutic conversations thus are important in bringing forth certain realities which can offer compassion, hope and support to all, protect some participants at the expense of others, scapegoat one in relief of the anxiety and/or guilt of the others, blame all members for the pain and suffering of one.

Also implicit in this "excavation of unactualised spaces" in (systemic) conversations is that 'healing' becomes possible through human co-operation, not negation of the other. It has always seemed strange that whilst there is a general belief, for the most part, that children reared in a loving, accepting environment thrive better than those reared in a rejecting, negative environment, yet for those of us who get into serious trouble we often produce practice models based largely on control and punishment to help people change for 'the better' of themselves and society. We see that the attempted control of another is

based on the negation of the other. As Irish writer, James Stephens (Irish Fairy Stories) says in relation to control, "For if another can control me that other has usurped me and how terribly I seem diminished by the seeming addition" (p243).

Therefore this article has attempted to explore the notion of a Fifth Province in conversations within a problem-resource system. Possibilities for imaginative explorations and re-membered fragmentations are both immergent and emergent so that identified clients and their attendant helpers may rediscover natural healing resources within themselves and their relationship systems. Such discoveries when they occur often do so spontaneously, much like Le Brocquy's images.

We ask, "can this attempted inversion of juxtaposed opposites and medium of therapy pull us, as Hoffman (14, pp316-317) has suggested, to a new level of awareness - a new co-created consciousness?". Le Brocquy (1981) names this process of inversion of image and medium in art, "transmogrification" (p139). He postulates that this dichotomy "pulls taut the nerves of insight" (p136) and reveals a new or different facet of 'reality'. An appreciation then of mutuality/interdependence of autonomy and interconnectedness can perhaps facilitate the activation of those previously unactualised possibilities wherein new orders may be created rather than imposed. (Maslow, 19 p98).

A conversation of the possible facilitates both clients and therapists to move with one-and-other within this co-created, co-evolved domain of therapy. To embrace this inconclusiveness in our lives, this state wherein there are no experts only co-travellers; no certainty or righteousness, only various and unknown possibilities; no rigidity or safe adherence to an historical frame, particular philosophical or theoretical set, is a humbling and exciting proposition. Perhaps as Hederman states:

"The space created by ... arrival in the transcendent dimension of the fifth province is enough to allow the fresh air from this no-man's land or non-place to blow through the province ... just left ... Breaking through creates a draught which blows the cobwebs from the ordinary and traditional".  
(12, p115).

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