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## **Article 3**

### **‘But I knew better...’ Permeating the Correlationist Membrane in the Drama Classroom.**

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# **‘But I knew better...’ Permeating the Correlationist Membrane in the Drama Classroom.**

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**Amanda Kipling**

## **Abstract**

There is an abundance of studies about engagement in the drama process changing directions in thinking. This paper explores how and why these changes happen. Primarily drawing on Hume's early studies about thought and thought processes, a model of 'dramatic fear' is proposed as a possible dynamic context for thinking in drama. The story of year ten student, Nina, illuminates the theoretical structure proposed as it unfolded in a GCSE drama lesson. Her story provides the context for a further exploration into Meillassoux's 'moments of unreason' whereby we catch glimpses of the 'thing in itself' and momentarily penetrate the correlationist membrane.

Key words: Hume, Meillassoux, archetype, fossil, moments of unreason, correlationism, drama, role

## Introduction

This paper is written about thirty years after a drama lesson which left an indelible mark on the writer. The lesson involved elements of Teacher-in-Role, Man in a Mess and Mantle of the Expert (Heathcote and Bolton 1996). The writing of this paper has been driven by the writer's recent study of the work of eighteenth century philosopher, Hume (Hume 2000) and contemporary philosopher Meillassoux (Meillassoux 2008). Their thoughts on correlationism illuminated this drama lesson, and its impact on one student in particular. It is openly acknowledged that no formal data was collected at the time of the lesson and much is dependent on the memories which remains with the writer to this day. The theories of the two philosophers are applied to the writer's memory of, and reflection on, the apparent thinking which was indicated by fourteen and fifteen-year old students during a GCSE Drama lesson in a mainstream secondary school.

This paper requires some in-depth exploration into a number of elements which are drawn together in order to structure clearly the writer's intent to build a theoretical model which might assist teachers in the classroom in terms of analysing the kinds of thinking which are employed when students are in role, how we might invite and nurture these processes and the inter-relational pathways along which these synapses of thinking take place.

The paper begins with a thumbnail sketch of the lesson including a rationale about its design and how it was set up. This is followed by an explanation of the work of Hume, a definition of correlationism, how his theory relates to reason and logic in thinking, and how the passions disrupt this process. This invites a reflection on the nature of this disruption in the drama lesson and how thinking is redirected when in-role. At this stage, an opportunity presents itself for the writer to pursue a concept briefly mentioned but under-developed by Hume; that fear is acceptable in thinking in the dramatic context. This produces a model of the directions in which thinking occurs in drama – the 'Starmatrix of Dramatic Fear'. This is applied to the thinking of the students in the lesson and focussing on one in particular: Nina. The analysis continues under the impact of a challenge by Meillassoux (over 250 years after Hume) asserting his concept of 'unreason'. This contribution to the analytical narrative provides another vehicle to further inform the thinking of Nina for whom the lesson had a particularly profound impact.

## The Drama Lesson

The lesson took place in a mixed class of approximately twenty year ten students in a mainstream secondary comprehensive school. This

was a class who had opted to take a public examination (GCSE) in Drama at the end of year eleven.

The objective was to simulate a conflict of interest between town planners and a tribe living in an area earmarked for development, resonating the issues raised by the contemporary and controversial Docklands development in London and broader, long term colonisation issues internationally. The lesson was designed using a whole class immersive improvisation approach harnessing a 'Mantle of the Expert' process leading to a 'Man in a Mess' situation.

In the foreword of *Drama for Learning* (Heathcote and Bolton 1995) Cecily O'Neill describes Mantle of the Expert as providing

'a supportive, interpretive, and reflective community through a pattern of relationships and a network of tasks all embedded in a flexible context.'

Critically, O'Neill also states that the students' focus is on the task and less on their interactions with each other as they 'develop an awareness of their own knowledge and competencies' (O'Neill in Heathcote and Bolton 1995: viii)

The class was divided into two groups and positioned at each end of the hall. I adopted a high-status teacher-in-role as project leader and briefed one group as town planners. Students were given large sheets of paper and marker pens and set the task of creating any town they liked: the perfect town.

*'Thank you so much for all making it here today - I hope you all had good flights?'*

They were not given any specific roles; these were allowed to emerge as the drama developed. Consequently, initially the roles were played close to themselves and what they knew. Initially, they started planning, sounding and behaving very much like the people they were rather than indicating any sign that they had adopted a different role.

There was time pressure on students and a need to look busy and knowledgeable as O'Neill described. They asked no questions about where this land was, whether this development could take place in stages, or if there were any people living there already. They were presented with the task as a paper exercise by the Teacher in role as project leader and they engaged readily along the lines which were expected by this high-status role.

The tribe was briefed by the teacher as a teacher (not as teacher-in-role) and was asked to select roles. They quickly identified who they were (I recall a child whose job it was to fetch water and an

expectant mother as two examples) and started to work themselves into the drama as they created their community arriving at a context far away from themselves.

I returned to the town planners and started to lever some role development through Teacher in Role.

*'You were involved in a similar project weren't you?' 'It was a shame I could not be involved in that riverside development... did they manage to sort out the problems with flooding in the end?' 'Of course this project is wonderful opportunity for you to work on; we had so many applications...'*

Gradually students slid into varying roles and continued to develop their plan, moving on from a close copy of their own High Street and starting to wonder about slightly wider issues like transport, schools and places of employment beyond shops.

The two groups were led into the dramatic frames in contrasting ways. The town planners were steered towards an abstract task based on what they knew and were plunged into it with no role preparation. Roles gradually grew from that point, partly with teacher-in-role contribution and partly from collaborative work, finding gaps in the group's knowledge and filling these with roles as required and desired. The tribe, contrastingly, was set the task with teacher out of role and was invited to select roles briefly then remain in developmental role as they built their own drama establishing their tribal life. Roles grew out of the internal dynamics of the tribe itself as opposed to the more external demands of the town planning project.

Usually the Mantle of the Expert approach is taken slowly over lengthy periods of time and in less charged circumstances. However, in secondary school settings there is very little opportunity for this to happen. Consequently, I identify Mantle of the Expert in terms of where the thinking and learning of contextual expertise is seen to surface and develop gradually and under higher dramatic pressure in the secondary school context. As the drama continued, the expertise developed from the six-year-old girl whose job it is to milk a goat each morning to the senior planner whose mind is on securing a building contract for that hospital.

O'Neill claims that

*'Thinking from within a situation immediately forces a different kind of thinking from the students.'* (2015: 112).

The tribe child was seen selecting the (mimed) right sized water vessel and looking at the number of people requiring water, checking the other vessels to see how much was left. The process of

developing the mantle was seen deliberately and in detail as the students steadily immersed themselves into this world of the tribe, growing their own role with high focus on their position within the tribe, keeping the thinking about the detailed, personal, local and the immediate.

Contrastingly, a planner was becoming quite overt in her opinions over what she did and didn't know, making remarks like

'I know that river is a problem where it is, but how easy it would be to change it I don't know...anyone here have any ideas about managing water supplies?'

Their thinking was more concerned with where matters were going rather than the dramatic here and now. They saw themselves as vehicles for a bigger developing picture in large abstract terms, with the thinking being impersonal, wider and more forward-looking.

This account pauses here to consider further the dynamic O'Neill describes above, harnessing the concept of correlationism and Hume's theory on thought.

## Understanding Correlationism

Until the late eighteenth century, philosophical thinking was largely shaped by the notion of a god-given Absolute. (Meillassoux 2008). Kant's removal of the notion of an Absolute released philosophical explorations into the hitherto under- or un-explored.

Kant (1724-1804) concluded that we, without a God, as humans, are only capable of seeing the world in terms of ourselves. Levi R. Bryant (2004) summarised Kant's perspective neatly:

'The mind does not merely reflect reality, but rather *actively structures* reality'

and this reality we can never really know in itself -

'but only as it appears to us'.

Consequently, we replace one barrier with another. The barrier provided by a God-given Absolute is replaced with the limitations of ourselves in terms of what we can perceive through our senses, experiences and our reasoning and how these co-relate to each other. This became known as Correlationism.

Hume (1711-1776), wishing to avoid replacing one external absolute with another, focussed on our reasoning process as a way of

reaching an alternative idea of how we make sense of the world internally. He suggested that

‘An impression first strikes upon the senses...Of this impression there is a copy taken in the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and we call this an idea.’ (Hume 2008: 19).

The soul produces all our associated ‘ideas’ around it in order to give the impression a new meaningful identity for ourselves. This model differs for everyone in structure as we bring our own unique experiences to this process. Hume identifies Three ‘Relations’ which link the ideas to the impression, holding the evolving model together: resemblance, contiguity and cause and effect. As Ayer points out, the first two are concerned with association, but

‘The important relation is that of Cause and Effect, on which, Hume claims, all reasonings concerning matters of fact seem to be founded.’ (Ayer 2000: 44)

This is the first thought system and it pertains to the senses and the memory.

## **A closer consideration of Hume’s Cause and Effect**

Hume suggests that, when looking at two objects, we start to identify a ‘cause and effect’ link. Hume asserts that repeated experience of the same cause and effect over time forges habitual predictive perception into accepted beliefs. In essence, Hume argues, we mistake mere habit for unquestionable, reasoned law of cause and effect.

Men will scarce ever be persuaded, that the effects of such consequence can flow from principles, which are seemingly so inconsiderable, and that the far greatest part of our reasonings with all our actions and passions, can be derived from nothing but custom and habit. (Hume 2008: 97)

Hume claims that this process is a second thought system and concerns judgement.

## **What are the implications of this theory in the drama lesson?**

We share a generally accepted view of the world based on correlationism and education works within this realm. The imagination, Hume suggests, rearranges these ideas and relations, the memory protects these, and our judgement is informed by the

reinforced order of things (Hume 2008). Hume uses the example of a fire going out in the grate while he is out of the room. Having witnessed a fire going out before, he draws on direct sense experiences and the memory in the first system. In the drama lesson the tribe appears to be involved in this kind of thinking.

The tribe's task involved existing and functioning in an ongoing present rather than the designing or execution of a project. They initially simply acted out what they knew – even if initially taken from television documentaries – herding goats, making bread, fixing shelters and so on. However, with no brief to pursue or develop away from this, they were drawn into the drama through a route which held them close to the initial impression. They followed the stages set out by Hume. They drew on what they knew before; resemblance (a vessel is needed to carry water); contiguity (a crack in an imagined vessel is discovered and it is discarded) and causality (a crack that big will leak water at such a rate that the vessel will be nearly empty by the time the carrier returns). Bread makers picked dough from their fingernails and rough grains out of the flour. A stray goat was retrieved, and a second opinion sought about a cut on its leg. By trying to reach the 'thing in itself' the thinking is mainly held within the first kind described by Hume – focussing on the senses and memory and on the immediate dramatic experience in the present moment.

Hume then used another example to illustrate the second kind of thinking. He deduced that a letter from abroad had been delivered when he heard footsteps on the stairs at a certain time of day. He had never experienced the journey of such a letter but he re-assembled other experiences in the memory by using his imagination to arrive at an accurate conclusion (Hume 2008). In this example, he used the second system – a chain of forged truths which is taken as cause and effect, but largely produced by habit. In addition to this, Hume asserted that we abstract ideas when they become too large for us to manage. In this example he abstracted distance and time in order to reach his conclusion. In this case, the chain of relational ideas becomes weak in length, weaker by abstraction and weaker again by the flawed beliefs holding it together, made from custom and habit, rather than causality. This is a second system and it concerns judgement.

The town planners' thinking seems closer to this second type described by Hume. They were fairly briskly introduced to the frame by a teacher-in-role and charged with a task to develop a town; a task already rooted in the imagined abstract as opposed to the imagined concrete and real. They started close to themselves harnessing the first kind of thinking drawing on the senses and the memory: their experience of roads, transport, buildings and so on drawing the things they knew from their own High Street onto the plan. Later, as the task demanded, they started to abstract their

thinking making a chain of logical connections and considering the terrain, rainfall, water and so on, crossing items out and replacing them with updated offerings. Although this might be perceived as more advanced, this thinking is leading them away from the original impression and more towards what our concept of what that impression ought to be. (This is just as Hume's conclusion about the letter was correct but arrived at by a weaker route, formulated by forging ideas, abstractions and habits rather than ideas and impressions.) It is a thought process which engages our own concepts 'for us' and is based on habitual thinking; the kind of habits which have been formed through more typical out-of-role thinking. It is a complex process which, in correlationist terms, enriches our symbolic connected chain-making thinking but brings us further away from the 'thing in itself'. The town planner, 1980's business woman, power-dressed and career-minded followed the chain with resemblance, (what she knew as she sketched in the supermarket on the plan) then contiguity (considering carparks and access) and causality (This huge supermarket would be better situated near a junction of a main road rather than on the edge of town near the river). The level of abstraction grew and took the thinker further away from the 'thing in itself' as they try to capture it.

Both groups were developing Mantles of Expertise along very different lines of thought.

This raises questions about thinking in the classroom: might a learner failing to grasp this chain of (potentially flawed) connected thought actually be trying to think in the opposite direction to reach the 'thing in itself'? Are they carefully looking for cause and effect, working with the impression and the original idea rather than rushing at making an accepted truth chain consisting of mere habit? Do learners have opportunities to challenge existing knowledge or explore the barriers of correlationism? Or does education simply expect the rearrangement of existing ideas with pre-existing correlational links? Moreover, are learners discouraged or even condemned for attempting to think against the correlationist grain? It would seem that the drama lesson is well positioned to provide opportunities for thinking to respond to some of these issues.

The nature of the two frames had been considered in terms of the potential to cause a Man in a Mess situation. However, as I intended to relate to the planners and be involved with them it seemed a natural decision to use Teacher in Role as my approach. I was not going to be a member of the tribe, so I remained out of role with them. My consideration at the time went no further than this. However, looking back, it would be of interest to study more explicitly the manner of presentation of task either in or out of role and the kinds of Humean thinking which are provoked in the group as a result.

## Better link required

However, the analytical narrative now moves on towards how the lesson arrives at Man in a Mess and how this event can be appreciated through a Humean lens.

Once both groups were deeply engaged, I explained that it was time for the planners to see the site: they would have the whole afternoon there so they could adapt their thinking if required. The drama minibus (my miming a steering wheel and leading the planners) took them to the other end of the hall and then I had to go back to the office...something had come up. Ignoring cries of

‘But there are people here! You never said anything about...’

I left the drama in a state of ‘Man in a Mess’.

Heathcote’s ‘Man in a Mess’ is a model whereby a drama teacher brings learners into a situation, ensures they are immersed in it and then facilitates the arrival of a problem or crisis they have to resolve. It is about ‘meaning-indicating, meaning-seeking, meaning-making, and meaning-finding always keyed into (her) pupils’ readiness to work in depth’ (Bolton 1998: 176 - 177).

In this model, it is important that the group arrived at this point so that a shared frame was held between them: a set of reinforced beliefs which the drama ‘mess’, which is about to follow, can challenge. In this case, each group had been invited to grasp very different frames and this involved very different kinds of thinking.

The sudden conflict is brought about by clashing the two conflicting frames together in three ways. Firstly, there is the evident conflict in terms of the rights over the land. Secondly two different ways of thinking have been established. Thirdly, the focus was now on the relationships within and across groups instead of on each of the tasks; a critical feature noted by O’Neill mentioned earlier.

## Hume and The Passions

Having created such an elaborate model of thinking, Hume then claims that

'our reasonings concerning causes and effects are derived from nothing more than custom; and that belief is more properly an act of, the, sensitive, than of the cognitive part of our natures' (Hume 2008: 143).

Humans are really driven by the passions and then validate their decisions they make using reasons rather than using reason to inform their actions. It is therefore important to examine what is happening in the drama lesson at this stage with this in mind.

## **The Tribe's Territory - passions are ignited**

When these two groups met there was a conflict between two mantles of expertise borne from very different ways of thinking. This caused an igniting of the passions. After a few seconds of stunned silence and dawning, the defence mechanisms went into action and dialogue burst into action with planners exclaiming their rationales about developing the land for the tribe's benefit, bringing civilisation and wealth to them so they could be included... and the tribe, pointing out that they were included where they wanted to be included and that their civilisation was quite civilised enough. (No need for fridges, their milk stays fresh when left in the goat.)

The fixed beliefs - albeit only forged in the previous twenty minutes or so - were fiercely defended as their truths manifested in exclamations like:

*'This is our land, that woman told us...', 'We were here first...'*

Slowly the weakness of the relations was revealed, the beliefs started to disintegrate, and their flawed relational ideas of resemblance, contiguity and causality seen for what they were. In their roles, hearts sank as they realised that their constructs on both system levels were flawed. Impressions have never really been engaged, habit had taken over causality. There was only one way forward... to dismantle the correlationist beliefs again and reformulate; to build new Mantles of well-reconsidered Expertise in order to get all Men out of the Mess.

Thus, we arrive at a powerful example of how, after carefully nurtured Mantle of the Expert processes, thinking can be disrupted by the passions bringing about the Man in a Mess situation. The reasoning was fast and sometimes furious as the chains were made in order to defend the choices made by the passions. As this pulsing, excited conflict caused a kind of anxiety, a secondary passion is released: a desire to resolve the conflict. The Mantles of Expertise

have to be *dismantled* and forged anew with redirected thinking processes developed to enable this to happen.

## Reflection on Hume and Fear

Kant's removal of the notion of the Absolute exposed Hume to infinite mind-expanding possibilities while writing *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Hume 2008). To challenge ourselves at the very boundaries of our knowledge is to challenge the boundaries of our existence and this is a fearful experience. This may explain Hume's meticulous recording of his developmental thinking in the highly intricate *Treatise*, providing a trail of pebbles back to his original impression, lest he lose himself in the terrifying infinity he was exploring.

Hume suggests that there are only two instances where terror and fear are agreeable – one is in religion (as he might have been experiencing) and the other in drama. In drama, he says that

‘the imagination reposes itself indolently on the idea; and the passion, being softened by the want of belief in the subject, has no more than the agreeable effect of enlivening the mind, and fixing the attention’ (Hume 2008: 95).

## A note about drama, theatre and ‘Dramatic Fear’

Hume would appear to be saying that, in the dramatic context, the imagination is untethered in its application to the idea. The chains of corellationist thinking which make up belief are loosened, as belief is not required, and the mind is re-excited with the possibility of thinking along new pathways. In the drama lesson, the shedding of the previously accept norms of thinking and new ‘expertise’ is invited, explored and reached by independent thinking as opposed to the more readily grasped pathway of chained correlationist thinking, and abstractism based on beliefs. Students were not only watching drama but making the drama at the same time which adds an extra dimension to the experience. By being surrounded by the freedom of thought brought about by others and the learning context being placed beyond the hitherto known and familiar, their actions and thinking within that context are at the same time, set free.

In this lesson, while the minds were certainly enlivened and the attention grasped (rather than ‘fixed’), the imagination was by no means indolent. In a somewhat contradictory fashion, the dramatic context provided a safety which allows passions to be released more

forcefully than in the real. The passions charged the thinking with an exciting, safe danger specific to drama and which made weighty demands on the imagination.

This state of leaving the self behind and entering into the unexpected, I shall call 'Dramatic Fear'. In order to progress our knowledge beyond correlationism, we need to sever ourselves from the hitherto believed and expose ourselves to radical critical scrutiny in the context of the unexpected. I use the term 'fear' much as I believe Hume intended - the excited and exciting anxiety of the unknown, the to-be-explored and to do so without the usual toolkit of correlationist thinking, without the oxygen tank, safety net or compass: to shed correlationist habitual beliefs surrounded by others in the same mode of thinking. In this moment in the drama the students collectively suspended both disbelief and belief in order for the unknown - or at least unexpected - to occur. The role Dramatic Fear has to play in thinking will be further explored when I return to the drama classroom.

## **Nina's experience of Dramatic Fear**

Thus far in the lesson dramatic fear has not involved anything frightening but its potential to do so has now been fulfilled. The rearranged order of things has been challenged and, with it, all the chains, relations and ideas which formed it. The stunned silence as realisation dawned indicated dramatic fear. All beliefs, whether in the first or second kind, were thrown away by the juxtaposing of the two groups' dramatic roles and beliefs systems: their mantles. They have to think again.

This is the unexpected but maybe not entirely the unknown. What is happening to me? To us? This passionate dramatic fear fuelled quick, defensive thinking initially for Nina. Her self-selected role of a determined, power-dressed businesswoman of the 1980s, urged her to persist with her financially lucrative plan. She produced re-arranged relational ideas again, all with ideas from the same plan but put together differently with the same habit-based relations, drawing on judgement. In a kind of panic, she refused to let drop her passionate grip on her initial Mantle of the Expert - though it was clearly no longer fit for purpose. For others, this gradually moved to problem solving and accepting that they had to start thinking again. They started to dismantle the mantle and reconsider, but Nina did not.

The drama was interrupted to introduce a different form in order to allow some absorption of this fiery exchange. In two concentric circles, the town planners in one and the tribe in another, a thought dialogue followed from a member of one circle to the partner

member of the other. Students here demonstrate what Heathcote describes as the process of working in mantle. They

‘express their understandings in their response to the variety of tasks demanded of them, and they reflect on their perceptions from both inside and outside the context’ (Heathcote 2015: 113).

While others demonstrated thoughts like:

‘ but I didn’t think anyone could ‘own’ land...what do they mean they ‘own ‘ this land? We never ‘owned it’. We live on it.’

And an interesting exchange initiated by a planner:

‘They don’t understand how we can help them ‘...

...and responded to by a tribe member: ‘I don’t understand their understandings’

The class went back into role. The energy had been replaced by a different energy and dramatic genre and it was challenging for them to pick up the strands of where they left off. Sensing the draining of energies away from the fiery fear of the immediate situation and towards a more familiar and less engaging terrain, the girl playing an expectant mother began to pant and groan. By doing so the groups were both plunged back into dramatic fear- the tension an oncoming birth brings to the situation, a pressure to come to some kind of agreement, and the heat of the hitherto unknown. She refuelled the passions thus causing another disruption in their correlationist thinking, challenging their chains of habitual thinking, recharging the drama, this time uniting both parties in their quest for expertise to get them out of the mess.

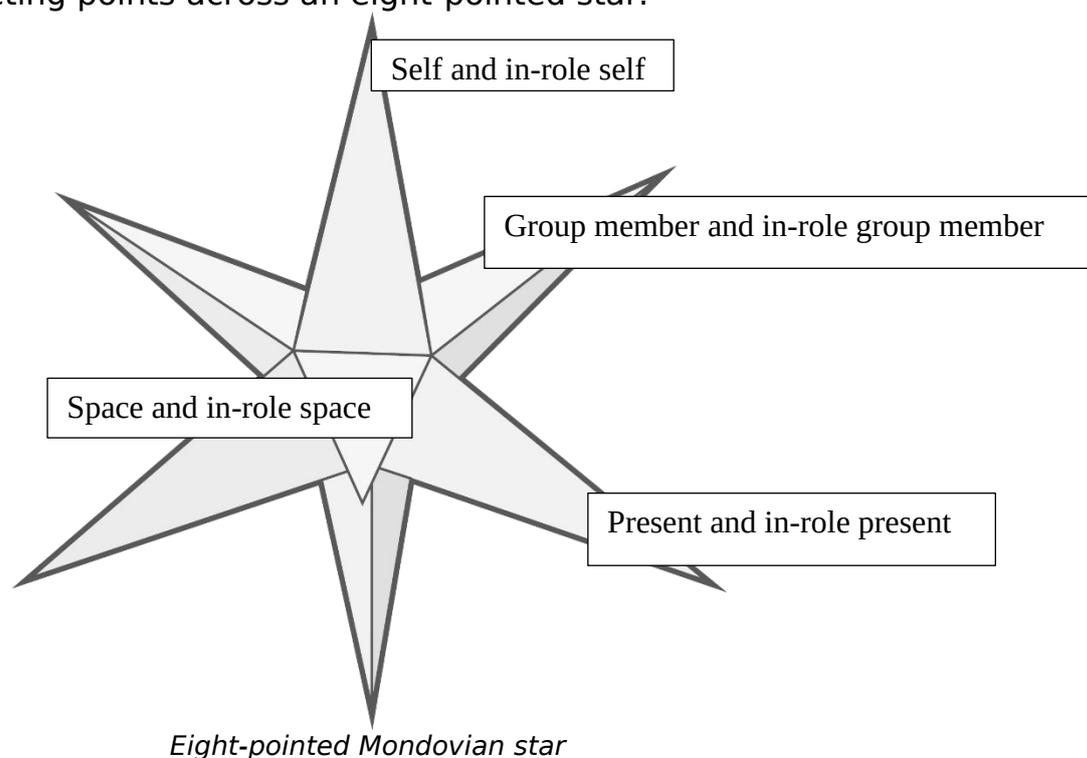
Students were now reconnected by different relations through the viewpoints of others. A planner saw that the river could provide water from which to drink and wash –and maybe produce power if linked to a mill of some kind with no need to flatten the whole area with concrete. The tribeswoman in anxious labour saw distance from the river as an urgent consideration- now thinking that some kind of transport might have been worth considering earlier.

## The Starmatrix of Dramatic Fear

‘The teaching is authentic, and yet it achieves its authenticity through ‘the big lie’, since it operates within a powerful fictional context, created through the inner dramatic rules of time, space, role and situation’ (O’Neill 2015: 112). For the purposes of this

paper I am adapting the term 'situation' to 'group' as I see the situation as being brought about by the other dimensions listed and, critically, this is brought about by each student having not only an individual role but also a group role identity. In a drama lesson, each participant is involved in all four of these dimensions both as themselves and in role, resulting in the engagement of up to eight different thinking directions at any one time.

If each learner occupies two roles (self and other) as an individual, and two roles within a group identity, in two different times and two spaces, this matrix of cross thinking resembles the lines connecting the intersecting points across an eight-pointed star.



As the dissection of the example demonstrates, the synapses made across the starmatrix cover wide ground and are made at a fast rate with multiple and varied connections until a solution is found. Man must develop Expertise if he is to get out of the Mess.

The students may not have reached beyond themselves, but by challenging their own correlationism, the quality of their thinking has been enriched and the process has been owned by them; the dramatic has become real by abandoning their abstracted learning and returning to the impression to rework the process from there. The atmosphere and total immersion to the role was evident in the classroom. This improvisation was now about half an hour long. But what about Nina, who was apparently entrapped by her initial Mantle of the Expert, stranded as the others pulled away?

## After the drama lesson

Nina took her time getting her bag. Her face told me that something was troubling her. She said she felt bad about the lesson. She had 'done town planning in geography' and had gained a 'good mark in the test'. She was horrified at herself for simply wanting to push forward with the plan in which 'she' had invested time and money. She saw others adapt but she had not. Reassuring her that drama sometimes exposes sides of ourselves we would rather not know about and that this was a safe space to make such a discovery, she responded: 'Yes, ...but I knew better'.

Let us consider what 'knowing' could mean in terms of Hume's model.

## Passions

Hume claims that

'Reason is and ought only to be slave of the passions' (Hume 2008: 297)

This process happened three times to Nina. Firstly, she was a businesswoman, very driven by financial success and status. Ideas were reinforced by repetition, custom and habit. When subjected to the passions, the force and vivacity of this idea and its quickly forged chains of correlationist thinking was raised to that of an impression. This explains the force Nina experienced to formulate her passionate plan while still in the office.

Secondly, Nina experienced that role and, by accepting dramatic fear, was exposed to a personal crisis when confronted by the tribe. The dramatic involvement led her in-role self to continue the reasoned thinking in the same direction of correlationism instead of turning towards the impression like the others.

Thirdly, Nina's passion was engaged once more as she saw the suffering of the tribeswoman in childbirth and was forced to reconsider as she felt her reasoning chain disintegrate.

Previously connected ideas and relations from geography lessons were not engaged at all by Nina, (whereas that may have been what was happening to others at this stage). It was during the drama lesson where the importance of the people living on the land and the implications of this situation was consciously processed.

## Just when she thinks it is over...

Interestingly, it was after the drama lesson that Nina realised that she had already 'done this in geography'. This suggests that once out of role, Nina herself tried to return to her former out-of-role self and, somehow, she did not fit. Something had changed. On her own, as herself and without others - out of the safety of dramatic fear - she had to work this out. Following Humean theory, Nina processed the experience by making a copy and storing it in the memory as usual. Maybe it was at this point that she finds an almost identical file of ideas and connections already there: the geography lesson. The relation of resemblance delivers to her another passion: a shock at the match and an experience of the not-so-safe: 'non-dramatic fear'.

It was evident from this exchange that, when Nina came to the drama lesson she did not consciously engage in a search for this knowledge about herself. Within the role she was safe within the starmatrix, with eight dimensions all busily working together and transforming thinking and the self. However, when out of role, in one self, one time, one place and with the group gone taking their bags off to breaktime, the results of the thinking sent her back to the out-of-role world significantly changed and, for a while, confused and troubled by what has been learned, but which she does not recall learning, or seeking. This knowledge had somehow sought her. This unpleasant impression struck her as she came out of role with a cruel vivacity: she was not who and what she thought she was.

## Reaching beyond ourselves - the role of science

In 2007, there was a landmark conference held at Goldsmiths, University of London, where Meillassoux presented his ideas challenging the notion that we cannot reach beyond ourselves (Dolphijn 2016).

Meillassoux describes what he terms the

'correlationist circle - the argument according to which one cannot think the in-itself without entering into a vicious circle' (Meillassoux 2008: 5).

I have, thus far, been referring to this as the realm of correlationism and its barrier.

Meillassoux acknowledged that in correlationism,

‘the notion of an objective world-in-itself seems to elude our grasp’ (Harman 2007: 105)

and set himself the challenge of reaching the ‘in itself’ by suggesting that scientific thinking can locate what he called the ‘arche-fossil’. (Meillassoux 2008: 10) Scientific carbon dating enables us to reassemble a dinosaur, ascertain what it ate, how it lived, moved and so on. This was before mankind existed. Surely this was us reaching beyond ourselves – to a time when we were not even there? However, correlationists argued that, if mankind was not actually there then there is no correlationist circle to penetrate. We still do not reach beyond ourselves.

Meillassoux returned to the correlationists with a new argument. A correlationist is open to openness (Harman 2007). Anything is possible beyond ourselves. This is itself is a kind of absolute. Unlike previous absolutes which believe in something definite – god, annihilation, science - the absolute, Meillassoux proposes, is not that something exists, but that everything **might not**.

Meillassoux calls this ‘Unreason’ – there is no reason for anything to be as it is.

Meillassoux’s model presents itself as an explanation as to what may have taken place. I apply these principles here to illuminate that dreadful split second when something happened in Nina’s memory’s copy process when she files the drama experience in the memory and finds the matching file in the form of the Geography lesson.

I propose that, while Nina was emerging from the chaos caused in her starmatrix Humean thinking in the exciting safety of dramatic fear, her correlationist world collapsed and left a momentary vacuum of nothingness; somewhere in the starmatrix connections were undone, ‘unreason’ happened, the ‘might not’ occurred. Everything she had hitherto depended on for her entire thinking ‘might not’ be true. All her understanding, including the A grade in Geography, disappeared leaving a vacuum and the opening in the boundary allowed a seismic movement of thought and a reach through to the space made available.

I use the term ‘through’ rather than ‘beyond’ as I wish to challenge the notion that we actually ‘reach beyond’ the boundary. It is while Nina is **not** thinking about herself, while she is in a state of **not** reasoning, while in this vacuous state, that this knowledge comes to mind as if from nowhere. I now consider the nature of the barrier not to be represented by something solid with ‘an aperture’ as Meillassoux describes, (Meillassoux, 2008, p 64) but more like a

membrane through which a truth penetrates to us from beyond in such moments of unreason.

## Fear

Interestingly, after such efforts to open ‘an aperture’ in order to reach the absolute, Meillassoux concludes that that the view is not a positive one, but one of chaos:

‘capable of destroying both things and worlds, of bringing forth monstrous absurdities, yet also of never doing anything, of realizing every dream, but also every nightmare...’(Meillassoux 2008: 64).

It is, indeed, terrifying and quite different from the security of the Starmatrix of Dramatic Fear which supports exciting and excited discovery, challenge and creativity of thought.

The uncomfortable moment passed but she is left with this unpleasant truth dominating her thoughts as shown on her face. Then, fascinatingly, she appears to take up another Meillassouxian process.

## ‘A touch of the Absolute’

Meillassoux revisits the notion of the absolute in order to reach beyond the correlationist confines of truth. Harman describes how Meillassoux introduces

‘a touch of the absolute’

drawing on his previous thinking regarding how we arrive at an arche-fossil:

‘for anything in the object that can be formulated in mathematical terms, it is meaningful to speak of it as a property of the object in itself’ (Harman 2007: 109).

Meillassoux locates within the objects a mathematical trail which can withstand the conditions of correlationism and tracks a pathway through and beyond it with a sense of form, direction and purpose. Quite amazingly, it would appear Nina did precisely this once out of role.

This impression which has struck Nina so forcefully she accepts as a truth – yet one she has not discovered through a chain of causality led by a traditional ‘educational’ route. She does not own it. She was

not seeking it as she did her town plan or her Geography test. Nina is faced with a disconnected truth which she finds impossible to file as it is so out of context. It is so shocking as an impression - she can't remember the last time she was faced with an impression so accustomed is she to ideas - Nina does as Meillassoux describes:

'...proceeds from the present to the past, following a logical order, rather than from the past to the present following a chronological order' (Meillassoux 2008: 16).

Using stronger causal links based on accepting this impression and carefully making relational links which are deliberately scrutinized as cause and effect, she locates the fossil: the Geography lesson. She realises that she had not really 'learnt' that lesson. Her brief exchange with me at the end of the lesson suggests that she either merged the files, or maybe replaced the Geography file with the drama file.

## Conclusion

While there is much explored about what being in role can do, as mentioned earlier, there is not so much detail concerning how drama does this. Like Nina, I have located a thirty-year-old fossil in the form of a remembered drama lesson which has directly informed this paper. The benefits of drama in terms of the development of cognitive skills are well documented; however, this paper has sought to scrutinise the students' thinking patterns within this lesson, drawing on Humean ideas and principles. It has placed the thought processes under the microscope and subjected them to detailed analysis.

The incidental contrasting frames presented, and the manner in which they were presented gave rise to two very different responses from the two groups in terms of the nature of their thinking and thought development. Brought about by the experimental use of Heathcote's Teacher-in-Role, Mantle of the Expert and Man in a Mess models, the Humean lens has exposed these processes to scrutiny and produced a detailed, substantiated analysis. I created a model - the Starmatrix - which captures the essential elements of the dramatic dimensions at play, not only identifying these dynamics, but offering a dissection of how these crossing, synapsing pathways charge learning and access multiple modes of cross-fertilized thinking. By following the Humean development of his theory, there is illumination around the role of passion in the learning context and the vital impact this has on bringing about redirected thinking. I would argue that this paper offers valuable insight into how drama lessons might be planned to set up, embed, and develop thinking skills at a deep and complex multi-directional

level. Moreover, it offers insight into how the emotions might be brought to a peak by the management of the dramatic circumstances and how that conflict might be managed most productively, most excitingly and most safely in learning through the employment of Heathcote's models.

The emerging from role process is another part of learning carrying potential for further study. How much of the in-role dramatic experience is carried through into the out-of-role and how does this happen? Nina illustrates this process for her in a very clear fashion to us and it happens to lend itself to Meillassoux's theories in an illuminating and exciting way.

The paper has analysed how a moment of unreason had been brought about for Nina, with its profound and lasting impact on her as a developing young woman. While this is no recipe for drama teachers to create such moments, the analysis provides some insight into how this might be encouraged, and how the chances might be increased so that authentic, genuine change in the individual can be brought about through the 'big lie'.

While for me, the moment of unreason took place thirty years after the event to take place, it allowed me to catch a glimpse of the 'thing in itself', that 'thing' being the essence of drama which makes us seek and find self-knowledge. I will close with a simple and understated phrase from Heathcote during one of the Jennings Lectures at Cleveland State University in March 1976.

Heathcote (1984: 115):

'The most important manifestation about this thing called drama is that it must show change.'

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### Image

Eight-pointed Moravian star: <http://howtomakemoravianstars.com/images/starGroups/8-point-paper-star.png> (Accessed: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020)

## Notes on Author



**Amanda Kipling** trained at The Central School of Speech and Drama and taught in South East London for 15 years. After a year teaching at Southbank International School, she worked in variety of roles as a freelancer at Greenwich, Kingston and Cambridge Universities before becoming course leader on the PGCE Drama course at Goldsmiths. Professional interests include critical pedagogy, resistant practice, and healing in the classroom which is the focus of her doctoral studies. Amanda is currently in her second year of the EdD course at the University of Chester and this article grew from one of her assignments.

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