When we allow that the individual projects a definition of the situation when he appears before others, we must also see that the others, however passive their role may seem to be, will themselves effectively project a definition of the situation by virtue of their response to the individual and by virtue of any lines of action they initiate to him. Ordinarily the definitions of the situation projected by the several different participants are sufficiently attuned to one another so that open contradiction will not occur. I do not mean that there will be the kind of consensus that arises when each individual present candidly expresses what he really feels and honestly agrees with the expressed feelings of the others present. This kind of harmony is an optimistic ideal and in any case not necessary for the smooth working of society. Rather, each participant is expected to suppress his immediate heart-felt feelings, conveying a view of the situation which he feels the others will be able to find at least temporarily acceptable. The maintenance of this surface of agreement, this veneer of consensus, is facilitated by each participant concealing his own wants behind statements which assert values to which everyone present feels obliged to give lip service. Further, there is usually a kind of division of definitional labor. Each participant is allowed to establish the tentative official ruling regarding matters which are vital to him but not immediately important to others, e.g., the rationalizations and justifications by which he accounts for his past activity. In exchange for this courtesy he remains silent or non-committed on matters important to others but not immediately important to him. We have then a kind of interactional modus vivendi. Together the participants contribute to a single over-all definition of the situation which involves not so much a real agreement as to what exists but rather a real agreement
as to whose claims concerning what issues will be temporarily honored. Real agreement will also exist concerning the desirability of avoiding an open conflict of definitions of the situation. I will refer to this level of agreement as a "working consensus." It is to be understood that the working consensus established in one interaction setting will be quite different in content from the working consensus established in a different type of setting. Thus, between two friends at lunch, a reciprocal show of affection, respect, and concern for the other is maintained. In service occupations, on the other hand, the specialist often maintains an image of disinterested involvement in the problem of the client, while the client responds with a show of respect for the competence and integrity of the specialist. Regardless of such differences in content, however, the general form of these working arrangements is the same.

In noting the tendency for a participant to accept the definitional claims made by the others present, we can appreciate the crucial importance of the information that the individual initially possesses or acquires concerning his fellow participants, for it is on the basis of this initial information that the individual starts to define the situation and starts to build up lines of responsive action. The individual's initial projection commits him to what he is proposing to be and requires him to drop all pretenses of being other things. As the interaction among the participants progresses, additions and modifications to this initial informational state will of course occur, but it is essential that these later developments be related without contradiction to, and even built up from, the initial positions taken by the several partici-

An interaction can be properly set up as a time and place for voicing differences in opinion, but in such cases participants must be careful to agree not to disagree on the proper tone of voice, vocabulary, and degree of seriousness in which all arguments are to be phrased, and upon the mutual respect which disengaging participants must carefully continue to express toward one another. This debaters' or academic definition of the situation may also be invoked suddenly and judiciously as a way of translating a serious conflict of views into one that can be handled within a framework acceptable to all present.

Ipants. It would seem that an individual can more easily make a choice as to what line of treatment to demand from and extend to the others present at the beginning of an encounter than he can alter the line of treatment that is being pursued once the interaction is underway.

In everyday life, of course, there is a clear understanding that first impressions are important. Thus, the work adjustment of those in service occupations will often hinges upon a capacity to seize and hold the initiative in the service relation, a capacity that will require subtle aggressiveness on the part of the server when he is of lower socio-economic status than his client. W. F. Whyte suggests the waitress as an example:

The first point that stands out is that the waitress who bears up under pressure does not simply respond to her customers. She acts with some skill to control their behavior. The first question to ask when we look at the customer relationship is, "Does the waitress get the jump on the customer, or does the customer get the jump on the waitress?" The skilled waitress realizes the crucial nature of this question.

The skilled waitress tackles the customer with confidence and without hesitation. For example, she may find that a new customer has seated himself before she could clear off the dirty dishes and change the cloth. He is now leaning on the table studying the menu. She greets him, says, "May I change the cover, please?" and, without waiting for an answer, takes his menu away from him so that he moves back from the table, and she goes about her work. The relationship is handled politely but firmly, and there is never any question as to who is in charge.

When the interaction that is initiated by "first impressions" is itself merely the initial interaction in an extended series of interactions involving the same participants, we speak of "getting off on the right foot" and feel that it is crucial that
we do so. Thus, one learns that some teachers take the following view:

You can't ever let them get the upper hand on you or you're through. So I start out tough. The first day I get a new class in, I let them know who's boss... You've got to start off tough, then you can ease up as you go along. If you start out easy-going, when you try to get tough, they'll just look at you and laugh.8

Similarly, attendants in mental institutions may feel that if the new patient is sharply put in his place the first day on the ward and made to see who is boss, much future difficulty will be prevented.9

Given the facts that the individual effectively projects a definition of the situation when he enters the presence of others, we can assume that events may occur within the interaction which contradict, discredit, or otherwise throw doubt upon this projection. When these disruptive events occur, the interaction itself may come to a confused and embarrassed halt. Some of the assumptions upon which the responses of the participants had been predicated become untenable, and the participants find themselves lodged in an interaction for which the situation has been wrongly defined and is now no longer defined. At such moments the individual whose presentation has been discredited may feel ashamed while the others present may feel hostile, and all the participants may come to feel ill at ease, embarrassed, or embarrassed, experiencing the kind of anxiety that is generated when the minute social system of face-to-face interaction breaks down.

In stressing the fact that the initial definition of the situation projected by an individual tends to provide a plan for the co-operative activity that follows—in stressing this

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action point of view—we must not overlook the crucial fact that any projected definition of the situation also has a distinctive moral character. It is this moral character of projections that will chiefly concern us in this report. Society is organized on the principle that any individual who possesses certain social characteristics has a moral right to expect that others will value and treat him in an appropriate way. Connected with this principle is a second, namely, that an individual who implicitly or explicitly signifies that he has certain social characteristics ought in fact to be what he claims he is. In consequence, when an individual projects a definition of the situation and thereby makes an implicit or explicit claim to be a person of a particular kind, he automatically exacts a moral demand upon the others, obliging them to value and treat him in the manner that persons of his kind have a right to expect.

He also implicitly forgives all claims to be things he does not appear to be10 and hence forgives the treatment that would be appropriate for such individuals. The others, then, that the individual has informed them as to what is and as to what they ought to see as the "is."

One cannot judge the importance of definitional disruptions by the frequency with which they occur, for apparently they would occur more frequently were not constant precautions taken. We find that preventive practices are constantly employed to avoid these embarrassments and that corrective practices are constantly employed to compensate for disrupting occurrences that have not been successfully avoided. When the individual employs these strategies and tactics to protect his own projections, we may refer to them as "defensive practices"; when a participant employs them to save the definition of the situation projected by another, we speak of "protective practices" or
"tact." Together, defensive and protective practices comprise the techniques employed to safeguard the impression fostered by an individual during his presence before others. It should be added that while we may be ready to see that no fostered impression would survive if defensive practices were not employed, we are less ready perhaps to see that few impressions could survive if those who received the impression did not exert tact in their reception of it.

In addition to the fact that precautions are taken to prevent disruption of projected definitions, we may also note that an intense interest in these disrupted corners to play a significant role in the social life of the group. Practical jokes and social games are played in which embarrassments are to be taken seriously are purposefully engineered. Fantasies are created in which devastating exposures occur. Anecdotes from the past—real, embroidered, or fictitious—are told and retold, detailing disruptions which occurred, almost occurred, or occurred and were admirably resolved. There seems to be no grouping which does not have a ready supply of these games, reverses, and cautionary tales, to be used as a source of humor, a catharsis for anxieties, and a sanction for inducing individuals to be modest in their claims and reasonable in their projected expectations. The individual may tell himself through dreams of getting into impossible positions. Fables tell of the time a guest got his dates mixed and arrived when neither the house nor anyone in it was ready for him. Journalists tell of times when an all-too-meaningful misprint occurred, and the paper's assumption of objectivity or decorum was humorously discredited. Public servants tell of times a client ridiculously misunderstood form instructions, giving answers which implied an unanticipated and bizarre definition of the situation. Seamen, whose homes away from home is rigorously on-man, tell stories of coming back home and inadvertently asking another to "pass the

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12 Goffman, op. cit., pp. 319-27.
the other performances as the audience, observers, or co-participants. The pre-established pattern of action which is unfolded during a performance and which may be presented or played through on other occasions may be called a "part" or "routine."16 These situational terms can easily be related to conventional structural ones. When an individual or performer plays the same part to the same audience on different occasions, a social relationship is likely to arise. Defining social role as the enactment of rights and duties attached to a given status, we can say that a social role will involve one or more parts and that each of these different parts may be presented by the performer on a series of occasions to the same kinds of audience or to an audience of the same persons.

16 For comments on the importance of distinguishing between a routine of interaction and any particular instance when this routine is played through, see John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern, *The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* (2nd ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 49.

Chapter I

PERFORMANCES

Belief in the Part One is Playing

When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the task he performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be. In line with this, there is the popular view that the individual offers his performance and puts on his show "for the benefit of other people." It will be convenient to begin a consideration of performances by turning the question around and looking at the individual's own belief in the impression of reality that he attempts to engender in those among whom he finds himself.

At one extreme, one finds that the performer can be fully taken in by his own act; he can be sinewly convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality. When his audience is also convinced in this way about the show he puts on—and this seems to be the typical case—then for the moment at least, only the sociologists or the socially disgruntled will have any doubts about the "realness" of what is presented.

At the other extreme, we find that the performer may not be taken in at all by his own routine. This possibility is understandable, since no one is in quite as good an observational position to see through the act as the person who puts it on. Coupled with this, the performer may be moved to guide the conviction of his audience only as a means to
other ends, having no ultimate concern in the conception that they have of him or of the situation. When the individual has no belief in his own act and no ultimate concern with the beliefs of his audience, we may call him cynical, reserving the term "sincere" for individuals who believe in the impression fostered by their own performance. It should be understood that the cynical, with all his professional disengagement, may obtain unprofessional pleasures from his masquerade, experiencing a kind of glib, glib, glib spiritual aggression from the fact that he can toy at will with something his audience must take seriously.¹

It is not assumed, of course, that all cynical performers are interested in deceiving their audiences for purposes of what is called "self-interest" or private gain. A cynical individual may delude his audience for what he considers to be their own good, or for the good of the community, etc. For illustrations of this we need not appeal to sadly enlightened showmen such as Marcus Aurelius or Hon. Taft. We know that in service occupations practitioners who may otherwise be sincere are sometimes forced to delude their customers because their customers show such a heartfelt demand for it. Doctors who are led into giving placebos, filling station attendants who mistakenly check and recheck tire pressures for anxious women motorists, shoe clerks who sell a shoe that fits but tell the customer it is the size she wants to hear—these are cynical performers whose audiences will not allow them to be sincere. Similarly, it seems that sympathetic patients in mental wards will sometimes feign bizarre symptoms so that student nurses will not be subjected to a disappointingly sane performance.² So also,

¹ Perhaps the real crime of the confidence man is not that he takes money from his victim but that he robs all of us of the belief that middle-class manners and appearance can be sustained only by middle-class people. A discredited professional can be cynically hostile to the service relation his clients expect him to extend to them; the confidence man is not the model to hold the whole "legit" world in contempt.

² See Taeti, op. cit. p. 4. Harry Stack Sullivan has suggested that the tact of institutionalized performers can operate in the other direction, resulting in a kind of noblesse-obligee sanctity. See his "Socio-Psychiatric Research," American Journal of Psychiatry, X, pp. 97-98.

³ A study of 'social recoveries' in one of our large mental hospitals some years ago taught me that patients were never released from care because they had learned not to manifest symptoms to the environing persons; in other words, had integrated enough of the personal environment to realize the prejudice opposed to their delusions. It seemed almost as if they grew wise enough to be tolerant of the imbecility surrounding them, having finally discovered that it was stupidity and not malice. They could then secure satisfaction from contact with others, while discharging a part of their savings by psychotic means.

A team, then, may be defined as a set of individuals whose intimate co-operation is required if a given projected definition of the situation is to be maintained. A team is a grouping, but it is a grouping not in relation to a social structure or social organization but rather in relation to an interaction or series of interactions in which the relevant definition of the situation is maintained.

We have seen, and will see further, that if a performance is to be effective it will be likely that the extent and character of the co-operation that makes this possible will be concealed and kept secret. A team, then, has something of the character of a secret society. The audience may appreciate, of course, that all the members of the team are held together by a bond no member of the audience shares. Thus, for example, when customers enter a service establishment, they clearly appreciate that all employees are different from customers by virtue of this official role. However, the individuals who are on the staff of an establishment are not members of a team by virtue of staff status, but only by virtue of the co-operation which they maintain in order to sustain a given definition of the situation. No effort may be made in many cases to conceal who is on the staff; but they form a secret society, a team, in so far as a secret is kept as to how they are co-operating together to maintain a particular definition of the situation. Teams may be created by individuals to aid the group they are members of, but in aiding themselves and their group in this dramaturgical way, they are acting as a team, not a group. Thus a team, as used herein, is the kind of secret society whose members may be known by non-members to constitute a society, even an exclusive one, but the society these individuals are known to constitute is not the one they constitute by virtue of acting as a team.

Since we all participate on teams we must all carry within ourselves something of the sweet guilt of conspirators. And since each team is engaged in maintaining the stability of some definitions of the situation, concealing or playing down certain facts in order to do this, we can expect the performer to live out his conspiratorial career in some furtiveness.
Chapter III

REGIONS AND REGION BEHAVIOR

A region may be defined as any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception. Regions vary, of course, in the degree to which they are bounded and according to the media of communication in which the barriers to perception occur. Thus thick glass panels, such as are found in broadcasting control rooms, can isolate a region aurally but not visually, while an office bounded by beaver-board partitions is closed off in the opposite way.

In our Anglo-American society—a relatively indoor one—when a performance is given it is usually given in a highly bounded region, to which boundaries with respect to time are often added. The impression and understanding fostered by the performance will tend to saturate the region and time span, so that any individual located in this space-time manifold will be in a position to observe the performance and be guided by the definition of the situation which the performance fosters.¹

Often a performance will involve only one focus of visual attention on the part of performer and audience, as, for example, when a political speech is presented in a hall or when a patient is talking to a doctor in the latter's consulting room. However, many performances involve, as constituent parts, separate knots or clusters of verbal interaction. Thus a cocktail party typically involves several conversational subgroups which constantly shift in size and membership. Similarly, the show maintained on the floor of a shop typically involves several foci of verbal interaction, each composed of attendant-customer pairs.

Given a particular performance as a point of reference, it will sometimes be convenient to use the term “front region” to refer to the place where the performance is given. The fixed sign-equipment in such a place has already been referred to as that part of front called “setting.” We will have to see that some aspects of a performance seem to be played not to the audience but to the front region.

The performance of an individual in a front region may be seen as an effort to give the appearance that his activity in the region maintains and embodies certain standards. These standards seem to fall into two broad groupings. One grouping has to do with the way in which the performer treats the audience while engaged in talk with them or in gestural interchanges that are a substitute for talk. These standards are sometimes referred to as matters of politeness. The other group of standards has to do with the way in which the performer comports himself while in visual or aural range of the audience but not necessarily engaged in talk with them. I shall use the term “decorum” to refer to this second group of standards, although some excuses and some qualifications will have to be added to justify the usage.

When we look at the requirements of decorum in a region, requirements of the kind not related to the handling of others in conversation, we tend to divide these again into two subgroupings, moral and instrumental. Moral requirements are ends in themselves and presumably refer to rules regarding non-interference and non-molestation of others, rules regarding sexual propriety, rules regarding respect for sacred places, etc. Instrumental requirements are not ends in themselves and presumably refer to duties such as an employer might demand of his employees—care of property, maintenance of work levels, etc. It may be felt that the

¹ Under the term “behavioral setting,” Wright and Barker, in a research methodology report, give a very clear statement of the senses in which expectations regarding conduct come to be associated with particular places. See Herbert F. Wright and Roger G. Barker, Methods in Psychological Ecology (Topeka, Kansas: Ray’s Printing Service, 1950)
term decorum ought to cover only the moral standards and that another term should be used to cover the instrumental ones. When we examine the order that is maintained in a given region, however, we find that these two kinds of demands, moral and instrumental, seem to affect in much the same way the individual who must answer to them, and that both moral and instrumental grounds or rationalizations are put forth as justifications for most standards that must be maintained. Providing the standard is maintained by sanctions and by a sanctioner of some kind, it will often be of small moment to the performer whether the standard is justified chiefly on instrumental grounds or moral ones, and whether or not he is asked to incorporate the standard.

It was suggested earlier that when one’s activity occurs in the presence of other persons, some aspects of the activity are expressively accentuated and other aspects, which might discredit the fostered impression, are suppressed. It is clear that accentuated facts make their appearance in what I have called a front region; it should be just as clear
that there may be another region—a “back region” or “backstage”—where the suppressed facts make an appearance.

A back region or backstage may be defined as a place, relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course. There are, of course, many characteristic functions of such places. It is here that the capacity of a performance to express something beyond itself may be painstakingly fabricated; it is here that illusions and impressions are openly constructed. Here stage props and items of personal front can be stored in a kind of compact collapsing of whole repertoires of actions and characters. Here grades of ceremonial equipment, such as different types of liquor or clothes, can be hidden so that the audience will not be able to see the treatment accorded them in comparison with the treatment that could have been accorded them. Here devices such as the telephone are sequestered so that they can be used “privately.” Here costumes and other parts of personal front may be adjusted and scrutinized for flaws. Here the team can run through its performance, checking for offending expressions when no audience is present to be affronted by them; here poor members of the team, who are expressively inept, can be schooled or dropped from the performance. Here the performer can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character. Simone de Beauvoir provides a rather vivid picture of this backstage activity in describing situations from which the male audience is absent.

What gives value to such relations among women is the truthfulness they imply. Confronting man woman is

7 As Métraux (op. cit., p. 24) suggests, even the practice of voodoo cults will require such facilities:

Every case of possession has its theatrical side, as shown in the matter of disguises. The rooms of the sanctuary are not unlike the wings of a theater where the possessed find the necessary accessories. Unlike the hysterical, who reveals his anguish and his desires through symptoms—a personal means of expression—the ritual of possession must conform to the classic image of a mythical personage.

always play-acting; she lies when she makes believe that she accepts her status as the inessential other, she lies when she presents to him an imaginary personage through mimicry, costumery, studied phrases. These histrionics require a constant tension: when with her husband, or with her lover, every woman is more or less conscious of the thought: “I am not being myself.” the male world is harsh, sharp edged, its voices are too resounding, the lights are too crude, the contacts rough. With other women, a woman is behind the scenes; she is polishing her equipment, but not in battle; she is getting her costume together, preparing her make-up, laying out her tactics; she is lingering in dressing-gown and slippers in the wings before making her entrance on the stage; she likes this warm, easy, relaxed atmosphere. . . .

For some women this warm and frivolous intimacy is dearer than the serious pomp of relations with men.8

8 De Beauvoir, op. cit., p. 543.
Chapter V

COMMUNICATION OUT OF CHARACTER

When two teams present themselves to each other for purposes of interaction, the members of each team tend to maintain the line that they are what they claim to be; they tend to stay in character. Backstage familiarity is suppressed lest the interplay of poses collapse and all the participants find themselves on the same team, as it were, with no one left to play to. Each participant in the interaction ordinarily endeavors to know and keep his place, maintaining whatever balance of formality and informality has been established for the interaction, even to the point of extending this treatment to his own teammates. At the same time, each team tends to suppress its candid view of itself and of the other team, projecting a conception of self and a conception of other that is relatively acceptable to the other. And to ensure that communication will follow established, narrow channels, each team is prepared to assist the other team, tactfully and tactfully, in maintaining the impression it is attempting to foster.

Of course, at moments of great crisis, a new set of motives may suddenly become effective and the established social distance between the teams may sharply increase or decrease. An example may be cited from a study of a hospital ward on which experimental treatment was given to volunteers suffering from metabolic disorders about which little was known and for which little could be done.1 In face of

the research demands made upon the patients and the general feeling of hopelessness about prognosis, the usual sharply drawn line between doctor and patient was blunted. Doctors respectfully consulted with their patients at length about symptoms, and patients came to think of themselves in part as research associates. However, in general, when the crisis is past, the previous working consensus is likely to be reestablished, albeit hastily. Similarly, during sudden disruptions of a performance, and especially at times when a misidentification is discovered, a portrayed character can momentarily crumble while the performer behind the character "forgets himself" and blurs out a relatively unperformed exclamation. Thus, the wife of an American general recounts an incident occurring when she and her husband, informally attired, took a summer evening's drive together in an open army jeep:

The next sound we heard was the screeching brakes, as a Military Police jeep pulled us over to the side of the road. The MPs alighted and walked over to our jeep.

"You've got a government vehicle and a dame in it," the toughest of the soldiers snapped. "Let's see your trip ticket."

In the army, of course, nobody is supposed to drive a military vehicle without a trip ticket that says who gave the authority for the use of the jeep. The soldier was being very thorough and went on to ask for Wayne's driver's permit—another military paper Wayne should have had.

He had neither permit nor trip ticket, of course. But he did have his four-star overseas cap on the seat beside him. He popped it on his head quietly, but fast, while the MPs were digging in their jeep for the forms on which they planned to charge Wayne with every violation in the book. They got the forms, turned back to us, and stopped dead in their tracks, openmouthed.

Four stars!

Before he could think, the first soldier, who had done all the talking, blurted out, "God Lord!" and then, really frightened, slapped his hand over his mouth. He made a valiant effort to recover what he could from a bad situation by saying, "I didn't recognize you, sir."

In our Anglo-American society, it may be noted, "Good Lord!, "My God!," or their facial equivalents often serve as a performer's admission that he has momentarily placed himself in a position in which it is patent that no performed character can be sustained. These expressions represent an extreme form of communication out of character, and yet have become so conventionalized as almost to constitute a performed plea for forgiveness on the grounds that we are all poor fellow performers.

These crises are exceptional, however; a working consensus and a public keeping of place is the rule. But underneath this typical gentleman's agreement there are more usual but less apparent currents of communication. If these currents were not undercurrents, if these concepts were officially communicated instead of communicated in a surreptitious way, they would contradict and discredit the definition of the situation officially projected by the participants. When a social establishment is studied, these dissenting sentiments are almost always found. They demonstrate that while a performer may act as if his response in a situation were immediate, unthinking, and spontaneous, while he himself may think this to be the case, still it will always be possible for situations to arise in which he will convey to one or two persons present the understanding that the show he is maintaining is only and merely a show. The presence, then, of communication out of character provides one argument for the propriety of studying performances in terms of scenes and in terms of potential interaction disruptions. It may be repeated that no claim is made that surreptitious communications are any more a reflection of the real reality than are the official communications with which they are inconsistent; the point is that the performer is typically involved in both, and this dual involvement must be carefully managed lest official projec-

and performers praise their audience in a way that would be impermissible for them to do in the actual presence of the audience. But secret derogation seems to be much more common than secret praise, perhaps because such derogation serves to maintain the solidarity of the team, demonstrating mutual regard at the expense of those absent and compensating, perhaps, for the loss of self-respect that may occur when the audience must be accorded accommodative face-to-face treatment.

Two common techniques of derogating the absent audience may be suggested. First, when performers are in the region in which they will appear before the audience, and when the audience has left or has not yet arrived, the performers will sometimes play out a satire on their interaction with the audience, and with some members of the team taking the role of the audience. Frances Donovan, for example, in describing the sources of fun available to salesgirls, suggests the following:

But unless they are busy the girls do not remain long apart. An irresistible attraction draws them together again. At every opportunity they play the game of "customer," a game which they have invented and of which they never seem to tire—a game which for caricature and comedy, I have never seen surpassed on any stage. One girl takes the part of the saleswoman, another that of the customer in search of a dress, and together they put on an act that would delight the heart of a vaudeville audience.\(^3\)

A similar situation is described by Dennis Kneale in his discussion of the kind of social contact that natives arranged for the British during the early part of British rule in India:

If the young officers found little pleasure at these entertainments, their hosts, for all the satisfaction they would at other times have derived from Raji's grace and

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Kaliani's wit, were too uneasy to enjoy their own party till the guests had gone. Then followed an entertainment of which few English guests were aware. The doors would be shut, and the dancing girls, excellent mimics like all Indians, would give an imitation of the bored guests who had just left, and the uncomfortable tension of the last hour would be dispelled in bursts of happy laughter. And while the English phantom clattered home Raji and Kaliani would be dressed up to caricature English costume and be executing with indecent exaggeration an Orientalized version of English dances, those minuets and country dances which seemed so innocent and natural to English eyes, so different from the provocative posturing of Indian nautch-girls, but which to Indians appeared utterly scandalous.  

Among other things, this activity seems to provide a kind of ritual profanation of the front region as well as of the audience.

Secondly, a consistent difference between terms of reference and terms of address often appears. In the presence of the audience, the performers tend to use a favorable form of address to them. This involves, in modern society, a polite formal term, such as "Sir" or "Mr."

The term "Limey" is used by the Americans in place of "British," was generally employed with derogatory implications. They would reflect from using it in the presence of the British, though the latter usually didn't know what it meant or didn't give it a derogatory significance. Indeed, the Americans' use of the term 'nigger' but refrain from using it in front of a Negro. This nickname phenomenon is, of course, a common feature of ethnic relations in which categorical contacts prevail.  

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dence are referred to not even by a slitting name but by a code title which assimilates them fully to an abstract category. Thus doctors in the absence of a patient may refer to him as "the cardiologist" or "the specialist," butchers privately refer to their customers as "heads of hair." So, too, the audience may be referred to in their absence by a collective term combining distance and derogation, suggesting an in-group/out-group split. Thus musicians will call customers squares, native American office girls may secretly refer to their foreign colleagues as "G. B. S.;" American soldiers may secretly refer to English soldiers with whom they work as "Limeys," fishermen in carnivals present their spiel before persons whom they refer to in private, as rubes, natives, or towners; and Jews act out the routines of the parent society for an audience called goyim, while Negroes, when among themselves, will sometimes refer to whites by such terms as "oily." In an excellent study of pickpocket mobs, a similar point is made:

The mark's pockets are important to the pickpocket only because they contain money. In fact, the pockets have become so symbolic of both the mark and his money that a mark is very often—perhaps predominantly—referred to by pockets, as a left pocket, a kick out, or an insulated which was taken at a particular time or place. In fact, the mark is thought of in terms of the pocket for

5 "The term 'Limey' as used by the Americans is not of 'British,' was generally employed with derogatory implications. They would reflect from using it in the presence of the British, though the latter usually didn't know what it meant or didn't give it a derogatory significance. Indeed, the Americans' use of the term 'nigger' but refrain from using it in front of a Negro. This nickname phenomenon is, of course, a common feature of ethnic relations in which categorical contacts prevail.
which he was robbed, and the whole mob shares this imagery. 7

Perhaps the cruelest term of all is found in situations where an individual seeks to be called by a familiar term to his face, and this is tolerantly done, but in his absence he is referred to by a formal term. Thus in Shetland Isle a visitor who asked the local crofters to call him by his first name was sometimes obliged to his face, but in the absence of the visitor a formal term of reference would push him back into what was felt to be his proper place.

I have suggested two standard ways in which performers derogate their audiences—mock role-playing and uncomplimentary terms of reference. There are other standard ways. When no member of the audience is present, the members of the team may refer to aspects of their routine in a cynical or purely technical way, giving forceful evidence to themselves that they do not take the same view of their activity as the view they maintain for their audience. When teammates are warned that the audience is approaching, the teammates may hold off their performance, purposely, until the very last minute, until the audience almost catches a glimpse of backstage activity. Similarly, the team may race into backstage relaxation the moment the audience has departed. By means of this purposely rapid switch into or out of their act, the team in a sense can contaminate and profane the audience by backstage conduct, or rebel against the obligation of maintaining a show before the audience, or make extremely clear the difference between team and audience, and do all of these things without quite being caught out by the audience. Still another standard aggression against those absent occurs in the kidding and ribbing a member of the team receives when he is about to leave (or merely desires to leave) his teammates and rise or fall or move laterally into the ranks of the audience. At such times the teammate who is ready to move can be treated as if he had already moved, and abuse or familiarity can be

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bepossed upon him with impunity, and, by implication, upon the audience. And a final instance of aggression is found when someone from the audience is officially brought into the team. Again, he may be jokingly mistrusted and "given a hard time," for much the same reason that he was abused when he departed from the team he has just left. 8

The techniques of derogation which have been considered point out the fact that, verbally, individuals are treated relatively well to their faces and relatively badly behind their backs. This seems to be one of the basic generalizations that can be made about interaction, but we should not seek in our all-too-human nature an explanation of it. As previously suggested, backstage derogation of the audience serves to maintain the morale of the team. And when the audience is present, considerate treatment of them is necessary, not for their sake, or for their sake merely, but so that continuance of peaceful and orderly interaction will be assured. The "actual" feelings of the performers for a member of the audience (whether positive or negative) seem to have little to do with the question, either as a determinant of how this member of the audience is treated to his face or as a determinant of how he is treated behind his back. It may be true that backstage activity often takes the form of a council of war; but when two teams meet on the field of interaction it seems that they generally do not meet for peace or for war. They meet under a temporary truce, a working consensus, in order to get their business done.

Staging Talk

When teammates are out of the presence of the audience, discussion often turns to problems of staging. Questions are raised about the condition of sign-equipment; stands, lines, and positions are tentatively brought forth and "cleared" by the assembled membership; the merits and demerits of

8 Ch. Kenneth Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives, p. 234 f., who gives a social analysis of the individual being initiated, using as a key word "hazing."
available front regions are analyzed; the size and character of possible audiences for the performance are considered; past performance disruptions and likely disruptions are talked about; news about the teams of one's colleagues is transmitted; the reception given one's last performance is mulled over in what are sometimes called "post mortems"; wounds are licked and morale is strengthened for the next performance.

Staging talk, when called by other names such as gossip, "shop talk," etc., is a well-worn notion. I have stressed it here because it helps point up the fact that individuals with widely different social roles live in the same climate of dramaturgical experience. The talks that comedians and scholars give are quite different, but their talk about their talk is quite similar. To a surprising degree, before the talk, talkers talk to their friends about what will and will not hold the audience, what will and will not give offense; after the talk, all talkers talk to their friends about the kind of hell they spoke in, the kind of audience they drew, and the kind of reception they obtained. Staging talk has already been referred to in the discussion of backstage activity and collegial solidarity and will not be further discussed here.

**Team Collusion**

When a participant conveys something during interaction, we expect him to communicate only through the lips of the character he has chosen to project, openly addressing all of his remarks to the whole interaction so that all persons present are given equal status as recipients of communication. Thus whispering, for example, is often considered improper and prohibited, for it can destroy the impression that the performer is only what he appears to be and that things are as he has claimed them to be.²

² In recreational games, whispered huddles may be defined as acceptable, as they may be before audiences as such outside all colleagues to whom little consideration need be given. In social arrangements in which knots or clusters of persons hold separate conversations in each other's visible presence, no effort is often
performers, especially as regards their timing, without allowing the audience to become aware that a system of control communication is in operation in addition to the communication in which performers and audience are officially participating. So also, in business offices, executives who want to terminate interviews both rapidly and tactfully will train their secretaries to interrupt interviews at the proper time with the proper excuse. Another example may be taken from the kind of social establishment in America in which shoes are commonly sold. Sometimes a customer who wants a shoe of larger size than the one that is available or the one that fits may be handled as follows:

To impress the customer as to the effectiveness of his stretching the shoe, the salesman may tell the customer that he is going to stretch the shoes on the thirty-four last. This phrase tells the wrapper not to stretch the shoes, but to wrap them up as they are and hold them under the counter for a short while.\(^2\)

Staging cues are, of course, employed between performers and a shill or confederate in the audience, as in the case of "Cross fire" between a pitchman and his plant among the suckers. More commonly we find these cues employed among teammates while engaged in a performance, these cues in fact providing us with one reason for employing the concept of team instead of analyzing interaction in terms of a pattern of individual performances. This kind of teammate collusion, for example, plays an important role in impression management in American shops. Clerks in a given store commonly develop their own cues for handling the performance presented to the customer, although certain terms in the vocabulary seem to be relatively standardized and occur in the same form in many shops across the country. When clerks are members of a foreign language group, as is sometimes the case, they may employ this language for secret communication—a practice also employed by parents who spell out words in front of young children and by members of our better classes who talk to each other in French about things they do not want their children, their domestics, or their tradesmen to hear. However, this tactic, like whispering, is considered crude and impolite; secrets can be kept in this way but not the fact that secrets are being kept. Under such circumstances, teammates can hardly maintain their front of sincere solicitude for the customer (or frankness to the children, etc.). Harmless-sounding phrases which the customer thinks he understands are more useful to salespersons. For example, if a customer in a shoe store deeply desires, say, a B width, the salesman can convince the customer that that is what she is getting:

... the salesman will call to another salesman down the aisle and say, "Do they have this shoe?" By calling the salesman, "Benny," he implies that the answer should be that the width is B.\(^6\)

As engaging illustration of this kind of collusion is given in a paper on the Borax furniture house:

Now that the customer is in the store, suppose she can't be sold? The price is too high; she must consult her husband; she is only shopping. To let her walk (i.e., escape without buying) is treason in a Borax House. So an SOS is sent out by the salesman through one of the numerous foot-pushers in the store. In a flash the "manager" is on the scene, preoccupied with a suite and wholly oblivious of the Aladdin who sent for him.

"Pardon me, Mr. Dixon," says the salesman, simulating reluctance in disturbing such a busy personage. "I wonder if you could do something for my customer. She thinks the price of this suite is too high. Madam, this is our manager, Mr. Dixon."

Mr. Dixon clears his throat impressively. He is all of six feet, has iron-gray hair and wears a Masonic pin on the lapel of his coat. Nobody would suspect from his appearance that he is only a T.G. man, a special salesman to whom difficult customers are turned over.


\(^6\) David Geller, op. cit., p. 384.
"Yes," says Mr. Dixon, stroking his well-shaven chin. "I see. You go on, Bennett. I'll take care of madam myself. I'm not so busy at the moment anyhow."

The salesman slips away, valet-like, though he'll give Dixon hell if he muffs that sale.4

The practice described here of "T.Q.-ing" a customer to another salesman who takes the role of the manager is apparently common in many retail establishments. Other illustrations may be taken from a report on the language of furniture salesmen:

"Give me the number of this article," is a question concerning the price of the article. The forthcoming response is in code. The code is universal throughout the United States and is conveyed by simply doubling the cost, the salesman knowing what percentage of profit to add up to that.5

Verlier is used as a command..., meaning "lose yourself." It is employed when a salesman wants to let another salesman know that the latter's presence is interfering with a sale.6

In the semi-illegal and high-pressure fringes of our commercial life, it is common to find that teammates use an explicitly learned vocabulary through which information crucial to the show can be secretly conveyed. Presumably, this kind of code is not commonly found in thoroughly respectable circles.7 We find, however, that teammates...
A sensitive singer will need only the most delicate of
cues from his partner. Indeed they can be so delicate that
even the singer himself while profiting by them will not
be consciously aware of them. The less sensitive the
singer, the more pointed and therefore the more obvious
these cues will have to be.  
Another example may be cited from Dale’s discussion
of how civil servants during a meeting can cue their minister
that he is on treacherous ground:

But in the course of conversation new and unforeseen
points may well arise. If a civil servant at the committee
then sees his Minister taking a line which he thinks
wrong, he will not say so flatly; he will either scribble a
note to the Minister or he will delicately put forward
some fact or suggestion as a minor modification of his
Minister’s view. An experienced Minister will perceive the
red light at once and gently withdraw, or at least
postpone discussion. It will be clear that the mixture of
Ministers and civil servants in a Committee requires on
occasion some exercise of tact and some quickness of
perception on both sides.  
Very frequently informal staging cues will warn
team-mates that the audience has suddenly come into their
presence. Thus, in Shetland Hotel, when a guest was forward
enough to step into the kitchen uninvited, the first person
so to see this would call out in a special tone of voice either
the name of the other staff person present or a collective
name, such as “hobos,” if more than one other were present.
On this signal, males would remove caps from head, feet
from chairs, the females would bring their limbs into more
proper array, and all present would visibly stiffen in prepara-
tion for a forced performance. A well-known perform-
ance warning that is formally learned in the visual signal
employed in broadcasting studios. These literally or syn-

9 Ibid., p. 57.
10 Dale, op. cit., p. 147.

bolically read: “You are on the air.” An equally broad cue
is reported by Ponsoby:

The Queen (Victoria) often went to sleep during these
hot drives, and in order that she should not be seen like
this by a crowd in a village, I used to dig my spurs into
the horse whenever I saw a large crowd ahead and make
the astonished animal jump about and make a noise.
Princess Beatrice always knew that this meant a crowd,
and if the Queen didn’t wake with the noise I made, she
woke her herself.  
Many other kinds of persons have stood watch, of course,
over the relaxation of many other kinds of performers, as
may be illustrated from Katherine Archibald’s study of work
in a shipyard:

At times when work was especially slack I have myself
stood guard at the door of a tool shack, ready to warn
of the approach of a superintendent or a front-office boss,
while for days after a day nine or ten lesser bosses and work-
men played poker with passionate absorption.  
So, too, there are typical staging cues which tell the
performers that the coast is now clear and that relaxation of
front is possible. Other warning signs tell the performers
that while it may seem all right to drop their guard of
discretion, there are in fact members of the audience pres-
cent, making it inadvisable to do so. In the criminal world,
in fact, the warning that “legit” ears are listening or legit
eyes are watching is so important that it has a special name,
called “giving the office.” Such signs, of course, can also tell
the team that an innocent-looking member of the audience
is really a spottor or shopper or someone who is in other
ways more or less than he seems.

It would be difficult for any team—a family, for example—to
manage the impressions if it fosters without such a set of
warning signals. A memoir concerning a mother and daugh-

11 Ponsoby, op. cit., p. 102.
12 Archibald, op. cit., p. 194.
ter who lived in one room in London provides the following example:

On the way past Gemmoro's I became filled with apprehension about our lunch, wondering how my mother would take to Scotty [a manicure-colleague she was bringing home to lunch for the first time] and what Scotty would think of my mother, and we were no sooner on the stairs than I started to talk in a loud voice to warn her that I was not alone. Indeed, this was quite a signal between us, for when two people live in a single room there is no telling what sort of untidiness can meet the unexpected visitor's eye. There was nearly always a cooking-pan or a dirty plate where it should not be, or stockings or a petticoat drying above the stove. My mother, warned by the raised voice of her exuberant daughter, would rush round like a circus dancer hiding the pan or the plate or the stockings, and then turn herself into a pillar of frozen dignity, very calm, all ready for the visitor. If she had cleared things up too quickly, and forgotten something very obvious, I would see her vigilant eye fixed upon it and I would be expected to do something about it without exciting the visitor's attention.18

It may be noted, finally, that the more unconsciously these cues are learned and employed, the easier it will be for the members of a team to conceal even from themselves that they do in fact function as a team. As previously suggested, even to its own members, a team may be a secret society. Closely associated with staging cues, we find that team work out ways of conveying extended verbal messages to one another in such a way as to protect a projected impression that might be disrupted were the audience to appreciate that information of this kind was being conveyed. Again we may cite an illustration from the British civil service:


Business etiquette, perhaps more concerned with strategic secrets than with moral ones, offers the following suggestions:

... Guard your end of a phone conversation if an outsider is within earshot. If you are taking a message from someone else, and you want to be sure you've got it straight, don't repeat the message in the usual fashion; instead, ask the caller to repeat it, so your clarion tones won't announce a possibly private message to all bystanders.

... Cover your papers before an outsider caller arrives, or make a habit of keeping them in folders or under a covering blank sheet.

... If you must speak to someone else in your organization when he is with an outsider, or with anyone who is not concerned with your message, do it in such a way that the third person doesn't pick up any information. You might use the interoffice telephone rather than the intercom, say, or write your message on a note you can hand over instead of speaking your piece in public.16

A visitor who is expected should be announced immediately. If you are cluttered with another person your secretary interrupts you to say something like, “Your three o'clock appointment is here. I thought you'd like to know.” (She doesn’t mention the visitor's name in the hearing of an outsider. If you are not likely to remember who your “three o'clock appointment” is, she writes the name on a slip of paper and hands it to you, or uses your private phone instead of the loudspeaker system.)17

Staging cues have been suggested as one main type of team collusion; another type involves communications which function chiefly to confirm for the performer the fact that he does not really hold with the working consensus, that the show he puts on is only a show, thereby providing himself with at least a private defense against the claims

16 Esquire Etiquette, op. cit., p. 7. Ellipsis dots the authors'.
17 Esquire Etiquette, op. cit., pp. 22-23.
It should be pointed out, however, that the prisoners found numerous ways to obey the letter but not the spirit of the Chinese demands. For example, during public self-criticism sessions they would often emphasize the wrong words in the sentence, thus making the whole ritual ridiculous: "I am sorry I called Comrade Wong a no-good son-of-a-bitch." Another favorite device was to promise never to "get caught" committing a certain crime in the future. Such devices were effective because even those Chinese who knew English were not sufficiently acquainted with idiom and slang to detect subtle ridicule.17

A similar form of communication out of character occurs where one member of a team performs his part for the special and secret amusement of his teammates; for example, he may throw himself into his part with an effusive enthusiasm that is at once exaggerated and precise, but so close to what the audience expects that they do not quite realize, or are not sure, that fun is being made of them. Thus, jazz musicians obliged to play "corny" music will sometimes play a little more comically than necessary, the slight exaggeration serving as a means by which the musicians can convey to each other their contempt for the audience and their own loyalty to higher things.18 A somewhat similar form of collusion occurs when one team member attempts to tease another while both are engaged in a performance. The immediate object here will be to make one's teammate almost burst out laughing, or almost stop, or almost lose his poise in other ways. For example, in a Scottland Hotel, the cook would sometimes stand at the kitchen entrance to the front regions of the hotel and solemnly answer with dignity and in standard English the questions put to him by hotel guests, while from within the kitchen the maids, straight-faced, would secretly goose him. By mocking the audience or teasing a teammate, the performer can show not only that he is not bound by the

18 Personal communication by Howard S. Becker.
This office seemed to have required the incumbent to attend
the master at his will, not for menial purposes, or not for
these purposes alone, but so that the master would always
have someone to be aligned with over against the others
present.
Actually, when we study the interaction between two teams in everyday situations we find that often the superordinate team will be expected to unbind just a little. For one thing, such relaxation of tension provides a basis for barter, the superordinate receives a service or good of some kind, while the subordinate receives an indulgent grant of intimacy. Thus, the reserve which upper-class people in Britain maintain during interaction with tradesmen and petty officials has been known to give way momentarily when a particular favor must be asked of these subordinates. Also, such relaxation of distance provides one means by which a feeling of spontaneity and involvement can be generated in the interaction. In any case, interaction between two teams often involves the taking of very small liberties, if only as a means of testing the ground to see if unexpected advantage might not be taken of the opposing side.

When a performer refuses to keep his place, whether it is of higher or lower rank than the audience, we may expect that the director, if there is one, and the audience may well become ill-disposed toward him. In many cases, the rank and file are also likely to object to him. As previously sug-


35 Personal communication from Helen Blaw, schoolteacher.
The integrity of the nurses' group can be upset by the indication of any one member; a nurse who allows her sexual needs to be met in an overt way by the patient alters the patients' attitude towards the whole nursing group and makes the nurses' therapeutic role a less effective one.  

Another illustration is found in Bettelheim's comments on his experience in constructing a therapeutic milieu at the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School at the University of Chicago:

Within the total setting of the therapeutic milieu, personal security, adequate instinctual gratification and group support all sensitize the child to inter-personal relations. It would, of course, defeat the purposes of milieu therapy if the children were not also safeguarded from the kind of disillusionment they have already experienced in their original settings. Staff coherency is therefore an important source of personal security to the children as the staff members remain imperious to the children's attempts to play off one staff member against another.

Originally, many children win the affection of one parent only at the cost of affectionate claims on the other. A child's means of controlling the family situation by pitting one parent against the other is often developed on this basis, but gives him no more than a relative security. Children who have used this technique with particular success are especially handicapped in their ability to form unambivalent relationships later on. In any case, as the children recreate oedipal situations in the school they also form positive, negative or ambivalent attachments to various staff members. It is essential that these relationships between children and individual staff members do not affect the relationships of staff members to each other. Without coherency in this area of the total milieu such attachments might deteriorate into neurotic relationships.

And destroy the basis of identification and sustained affectionate attachments.  

A final illustration may be taken from a group therapy project, in which suggestions are sketched in for handling recurrent interaction difficulties caused by troublesome patients:

Attempts are made to establish a special relationship with the doctor. Patients often attempt to cultivate the illusion of a secret understanding with the doctor by, for example, trying to catch his eye if one patient brings up something that sounds 'crazy.' If they succeed in getting a response from the doctor which they can interpret as indicating a special bond, it can be very disruptive to the group. Since this type of dangerous byplay is characteristically non-verbal, the doctor must especially control his own non-verbal activity. Perhaps these citations tell us more about the partly hidden social sentiments of the writer than about the general processes that can occur when someone steps out of line, but recently, in the work of Stuton and Schwartz, we have

17 Bruno Bettelheim and Emma Sylvester, "Milieu Therapy," Psychosocial Reactions, XXXVI, 56.

"Betrayal of one's team by catching the eye of a member of the other team is, of course, a common occurrence. It may be noted that in everyday life refusal to enter into momentary collusive communication of this kind when one has been invited to do so is itself a minor affront to the invitee. One may find oneself in a dilemma as to whether to betray the object of the requested collusion or to affront the person seeking the collusion. An example is provided by Ivy Compton-Burnett, A Family and a Fortune (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1946), p. 15:

"But I was not smiling," said Blanche, in the easier tone of losing grasp of a situation. 'I should have known it myself. It would not be possible to be awake and make a noise and not hear it.'

"Justice gave an arch look at anyone who would receive it, Edgar did so as a duty and rapidly withdrew his eyes as another."

Maxwell Jones, op. cit., p. 58.
been given a fairly detailed report of the circuit of consequences which arises when the line between two teams is crossed.\textsuperscript{19}

It was suggested that at times crisis lines may momentarily break and members of opposing teams may momentarily forget their appropriate places with respect to one another. It was also suggested that certain purposes can sometimes be served, apparently, when barriers between teams are lowered, and that to achieve these purposes superordinate teams may temporarily join with the lower ranks. It must be added, as a kind of limiting case, that interacting teams sometimes seem to be prepared to step out of the dramatic framework for their actions and give themselves up for extended periods of time to a promiscuous orgy of clinical, religious, or ethical analysis. We can find a lurid version of this process in evangelical social movements which employ the open confession. A minor, sometimes admittedly not of very high status, stands up and tells in public what is, or what is thought to be, his sacrificial secrets and his self-protective distance from others, and this sacrifice tends to induce a backstop solidarity among all present. Group therapy affords a similar mechanism for the building up of team spirit and backstop solidarity. A psychic sinner stands up and talks about himself and invites others to talk about him in a way that would be impossible in ordinary interaction. In-group solidarity tends to result, and this "social support," as it is called, presumably has therapeutic value. (By everyday standards, the only thing a patient loses in this way is his self-respect.) Perhaps an echo of this is also to be found in the nurse-doctor meetings previously mentioned.

It may be that these shifts from apartness to intimacy occur at times of chronic stress. Or perhaps we can view

\textsuperscript{19} Alfred H. Stenton and Morris S. Schwartz, "The Management of a Type of Institutional Participation in Mental Illness," \textit{Psychiatry}, XII, pp. 13-16. In this paper the writers describe nurse-sponsorship of particular patients in terms of its effects upon other patients, the staff, and the transgressors.

\textsuperscript{20} An example may be seen in the claimed role of the Tavistock group as therapists for "working through" the antagonism of labor and management in industrial establishments. See the consultation records reported in Eliot Janes, \textit{The Changing Culture of a Factory} (London: Tavistock Ltd., 1951).
sive communication against them. It may also be defined as fitting if someone present of high status is made drunk and made to drop his front and become intimately approachable by his somewhat-lesser. The same aggressive tone is often achieved in a less sophisticated way by playing games or jokes in which the person who is the butt will be led, unceremoniously, into taking a position that is ludicrously untenable.

I would like to comment on a general point that seems to emerge from these considerations of team behavior. Whatever it is that generates the human want for social contact and for companionship, the effect seems to take two forms: a need for an audience before which to try out one's vaunted selves, and a need for teammates with whom to enter into collusive intimacies and backstage relaxation. And here the framework of this report begins to be too rigid for the facts that are pointed out by it. While the two functions that others can perform for us are usually segregated (this report being largely devoted to the reasons why this separation of function is necessary), there are no doubt times when both functions are performed almost simultaneously by the same others. As suggested, this may occur as a reciprocal license at convivial gatherings; but of course this dual function is also found as an unreciprocated obligation, an obligation engendering the sidekick role so that its incumbent will always be available either to witness the impress of his master makes or to help him convey it. Thus, on back-wards in mental hospitals one can find attendant and patient who have grown old together, and find that the patient is required to be the butt of the attendant's jokes at one moment, while receiving an aligning collusive wink from him at another; this therapeutic support being given the attendant whenever he is pleased to demand it. Perhaps the current military office of aide-de-camp can also be seen in part in these sidekick terms, the incumbent providing his general with a teammate who can be disposed with at will or used as a member of the audience. Some members of street-corner gangs and some executive assistants in the courts that form around Hollywood producers provide other illustrations.

In this chapter four types of communication out of character have been considered: treatment of the absent; staging talk; team collusion; and realigning actions. Each of these four types of conduct directs attention to the same point: the performance given by a team is not a spontaneous, immediate response to the situation, absorbing all of the team's energies and constituting their sole social reality; the performance is something the team members can stand back from, back far enough to imagine or play out simultaneously other kinds of performance attesting to other realities. Whether the performers feel their official offering is the "realist" reality or not, they will give surreptitious expression to multiple versions of reality, each version tending to be incompatible with the others.
CONCLUSION 249

The Role of Expression Is Conveying Impressions of Self

Perhaps a moral note can be permitted at the end. In this report the expressive component of social life has been treated as a source of impressions given to or taken by others. Expression, in turn, has been treated as a source of information about unapparent facts and as a means by which the recipients can guide their responses to the informant without having to wait for the full consequences of the informant’s actions to be felt. Expression, then, has been treated in terms of the communicative role it plays during social interaction and not, for example, in terms of consum-
matory or tension-release function it might have for the expresser.1

Underlying all social interaction there seems to be a fundamental dialectic. When one individual enters the presence of others, he will want to discover the facts of the situation. Were he to possess this information, he could know, and make allowances for, what will come to happen and he could give the others present as much of their due as is consistent with his enlightened self-interest. To uncover fully the factual nature of the situation, it would be necessary for the individual to know all the relevant social data about the others. It would also be necessary for the individual to know the actual outcome or end product of the activity of the others during the interaction, as well as their innermost feelings concerning him. Full information of this order is rarely available; in its absence, the individual tends to employ substitutes—cues, tests, hints, expressive gestures, status symbols, etc.—as predictive devices. In short, since the reality that the individual is concerned with is unperceivable at the moment, appearances must be relied upon in its stead. And, paradoxically, the more the individual is concerned with the reality that is not available to perception, the more must he concentrate his attention on appearances.

The individual tends to treat the others present on the basis of the impression they give now about the past and the future. It is here that communicative acts are translated into moral ones. The impressions that the others give tend to be treated as claims and promises they have implicitly made, and claims and promises tend to have a moral character. In his mind the individual says: “I am using these impressions of you as a way of checking up on you and your activity, and you ought not to lead me astray.” The peculiar thing about this is that the individual tends to take

1 A recent treatment of this kind may be found in Talcott Parsons, Robert F. Bales, and Edward A. Shils, Working Papers in the Theory of Action (Champaign, Ill.: The Free Press, 1951), Chap, 21, “The Theory of Symbolism in Relation to Action.”
this stand even though he expects the others to be uncon- 
sious of many of their expressive behaviors and even 
though he may expect to exploit the others on the basis of 
the information he glances about them. Since the sources of 
impression used by the observing individual involve a multi-
tude of standards pertaining to politeness and decorum, 
pertaining both to social intercourse and task-performance, 
we can appreciate why daily life is enmeshed in moral 
lines of discrimination.

Let us shift now to the point of view of the others. If they 
are to be gentlemanly, and play the individual's game, they 
will give little conscious heed to the fact that impressions 
are being formed about them but rather act without guile 
or concealance, enabling the individual to receive valid im-
pressions about them and their efforts. And if they happen 
to give thought to the fact that they are being observed, 
they will not allow this to influence them unduly, content 
in the belief that the individual will obtain a correct im-
pression and give them their due because of it. Should they 
be concerned with influencing the treatment that the indi-
vidual gives them, and this is properly to be expected, then 
a gentlemanly means will be available to them. They need 
only guide their action in the present so that its future 
consequences will be the kind that would lead a just indi-
vidual to treat them now in a way they want to be treated; 
until this is done, they have only to rely on the perceptiveness 
and justices of the individual who observes them.

Sometimes those who are observed do, of course, employ 
these proper means of influencing the way in which the 
observer treats them. But there is another way, a shorter 
and more efficient way, in which the observed can influence 
the observer. Instead of allowing an impression of their ac-
tivity to arise as an incidental by-product of their activity, 
they can recast their frame of reference and devote their 
efforts to the creation of desired impressions. Instead of 
attempting to achieve certain ends by acceptable means, 
they can attempt to achieve the impression that they are 
achieving certain ends by acceptable means. It is always 
possible to manipulate the impression the observer uses as 
a substitute for reality because a sign for the presence of a 
thing, not being that thing, can be employed in the absence 
of it. The observer's need to rely on representations of things 
itself creates the possibility of misrepresentation.

There are many sets of persons who feel that they could not 
only stay in business, whatever their business, if they limited 
themselves to the gentlemanly means of influencing the 
individual who observes them. At some point or other in the 
sound of their activity they feel it is necessary to band to-
gether and directly manipulate the impressions that they 
give. The observer become a performing team and the ob-
server become the audience. Actions which appear to be 
done on objects become gestures addressed to the audience.
The sound of activity becomes dramatized.

We come now to the basic dialectic. In their capacity as 
performers, individuals will be concerned with maintaining 
the impression that they are living up to the many standards 
by which they and their products are judged. Because these 
standards are so numerous and so pervasive, the individuals 
who are performers dwell more than we might think in a 
moral world. But, qua performers, individuals are con-
cerned not with the moral issue of realizing these standards, 
but with the amoral issue of engineering a convincing im-
pression that these standards are being realized. Our ac-
tivity, then, is largely concerned with moral matters, but as 
performers we do not have a moral concern with them. As 
performers we are merchants of morality. Our day is given 
over to intimate contact with the goods we display and our 
means are filled with intimate understandings of them; but it 
may well be that the more attention we give to these 
goods, then the more distant we feel from them and from 
those who are believing enough to buy them. To use a 
different imagery, the very obligation and profitability of 
appearing always in a steady moral light, of being a so-
cialized character, forces one to be the sort of person who 
practiced in the ways of the stage.
Staging and the Self

The general notion that we make a presentation of ourselves to others is hardly novel; what ought to be stressed in conclusion is that the very structure of the self can be seen in terms of how we arrange for such performances in our Anglo-American society.

In this report, the individual was divided by implication into two basic parts: he was viewed as a performer, a harried fabricator of impressions involved in the all-too-human task of staging a performance; he was viewed as a character, a figure, typically a fine one, whose spirit, strength, and other sterling qualities the performance was designed to evoke. The attributes of a performer and the attributes of a character are of a different order, quite basically so, yet both sets have their meaning in terms of the show that must go on.

First, character. In our society the character one performs and one's self are somewhat equated, and this self-as-character is usually seen as something housed within the body of its possessor, especially the upper parts thereof, being a nodule, somehow, in the psychobiology of personality. I suggest that this view is an implied part of what we are all trying to present, but provides, just because of this, a bad analysis of the presentation. In this report the performed self was seen as some kind of image, usually creditable, which the individual on stage and in character effectively attempts to induce others to hold in regard to him. While this image is entertained concerning the individual, so that a self is imputed to him, this self itself does not derive from its possessor, but from the whole scene of his action, being generated by that attribute of local events which renders them interpretable by witness. A correctly staged and performed scene leads the audience to impute a self to a performed character, but this imputation—this self—is a product of a scene that came off, and is not a cause of it. The self, then, as a performed character, is not an organic thing that has a specific location, whose fundamental fate is to be born, to mature, and to die; it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented, and the characteristic issue, the crucial concern, is whether it will be credited or discredited.

In analyzing the self then we are drawn from its possessor, from the person who will profit or lose most by it, for he and his body merely provide the peg on which something of collaborative manufacture will be hung for a time. And the means for producing and maintaining selves do not reside inside the peg; in fact these means are often bolted down in social establishments. There will be a back region with its tools for shaping the body, and a front region with its fixed props. There will be a team of persons whose activity on stage in conjunction with available props will constitute the scene from which the performed character's self will emerge, and another team, the audience, whose interpretative activity will be necessary for this emergence.

The self is a product of all these arrangements, and in all of its parts bears the marks of this genesis.

The whole machinery of self-production is cumbersome, of course, and sometimes breaks down, exposing its separate components: back region control; tonal collision; audience tact; and so forth. But, well oiled, impressions will flow from it fast enough to put us in the grip of one of our types of reality—the performance will come off and the firm self accorded each performed character will appear to emanate intrinsically from its performer.

Let us turn now from the individual as character performed to the individual as performer. He has a capacity to learn, this being exercised in the task of training for a part. He is given to having fantasies and dreams, some that plausibly unfold a triumphant performance, others full of anxiety and dread that needlessly deal with vital discredittings in a public front region. He often manifests a gregarious desire for teammates and audiences, a tactful considerateness for their concerns; and he has a capacity for deeply felt shame, leading him to minimize the chances he takes of exposure.

These attributes of the individual qua performer are not
merely a depicted effect of particular performances; they are psychobiological in nature, and yet they seem to arise out of intimate interaction with the contingencies of staging performances.

And now a final comment. In developing the conceptual framework employed in this report, some language of the stage was used. I spoke of performers and audiences; of routines and parts; of performances coming off or falling flat; of cues, stage settings and backstage; of dramaturgical needs, dramaturgical skills, and dramaturgical strategies. Now it should be admitted that this attempt to press a mere analogy so far was in part a rhetoric and a maneuver.

The claim that all the world’s a stage is sufficiently commonplace for readers to be familiar with its limitations and tolerant of its presentation, knowing that at any time they will easily be able to demonstrate to themselves that it is not to be taken too seriously. An action staged in a theater is a relatively contrived illusion and an admitted one; unlike ordinary life, nothing real or actual can happen to the performed characters—although at another level of course something real and actual can happen to the reputation of performers qua professionals whose everyday job is to put on theatrical performances.

And so here the language and mask of the stage will be dropped. Scaffolds, after all, are to build other things with, and should be erected with an eye to taking them down. This report is not concerned with aspects of theater that creep into everyday life. It is concerned with the structure of social encounters—the structure of those entities in social life that come into being whenever persons enter one another’s immediate physical presence. The key factor in this structure is the maintenance of a single definition of the situation, this definition having to be expressed, and this expression sustained in the face of a multitude of potential disruptions.

A character staged in a theater is not in some ways real, nor does it have the same kind of real consequences as does the thoroughly contrived character performed by a confidence man; but the successful staging of either of these types of false figures involves use of real techniques—the same techniques by which everyday persons sustain their real social situations. Those who conduct face to face interaction on a theater’s stage must meet the key requirement of real situations; they must expressively sustain a definition of the situation; but this they do in circumstances that have facilitated their developing an apt terminology for the interactional tasks that all of us share.