

The practical knowledge of the Wheel applied to rehearsals.

(An intermediate read for Chapter 7)

Nobody is better placed to explain the “Wheel of Consent” than its developer Betty Martin. For a more in-depth introduction, I therefore refer the reader to her own homepage – <https://www.wheelofconsent.org/free-resources> – and her book *The Art of Receiving and Giving. The Wheel of Consent* (Martin and Dalzen 2021).

What I offer here is an insight to how *we* worked with the “Wheel” as a method of rehearsing. And how we effected the “transposition”, as it were, from a practice based on *touch* to one of *seeing* and *speaking*.

This “transposition”, however, can only be fully grasped on the basis of the embodied practice itself. Ultimately, you will have to play some “3-minute games” yourself to get into it.

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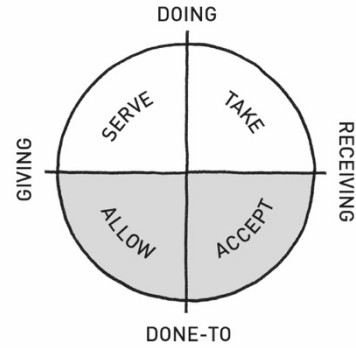
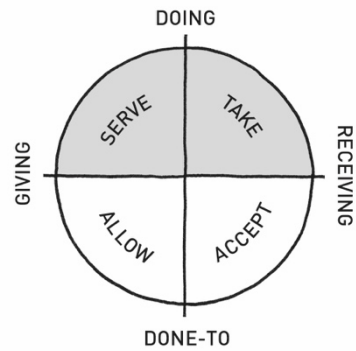
While the therapeutic practice of the “Wheel of Consent” is based on touch, its dynamics can be observed and reproduced in many other settings, too. (This is the reason why the “Wheel” is, according to Martin, both a practice *and* a model.)

From Claire’s descriptions of her initial experience with the practice, which was mostly in the Berlin dance scene, I had the feeling that the dynamics she related might also be transposable to a classical actor-director set-up.

At any rate, the two questions the Wheel tries to systematize in its 4 halves – Who is doing? & Who is it for? – seemed to also appear within the general situation of rehearsals.

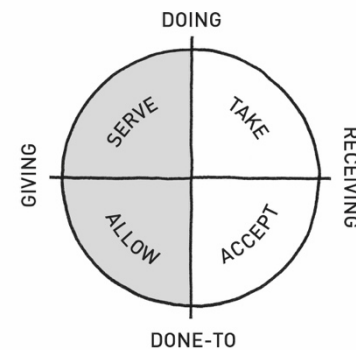
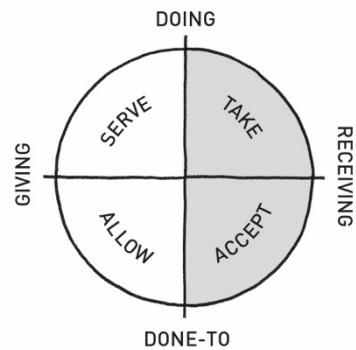
In our work, Claire, Mary and I had yet to define what an “action” is in this space without touch, as well as what could be comprised by “the gift”.

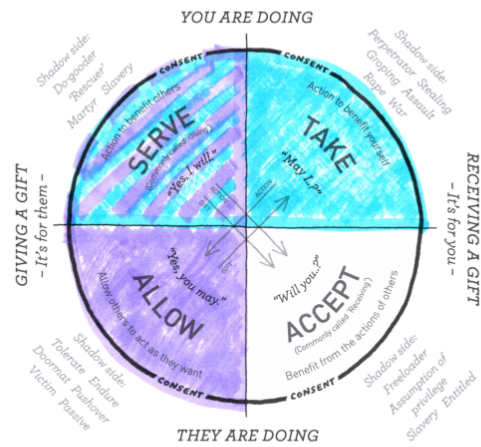
The two halves deriving from the above-mentioned questions that the Wheel systematizes – Who is doing? & Who is it for? –, make for what Martin calls the “two factors” appearing in “any instance of touch”.



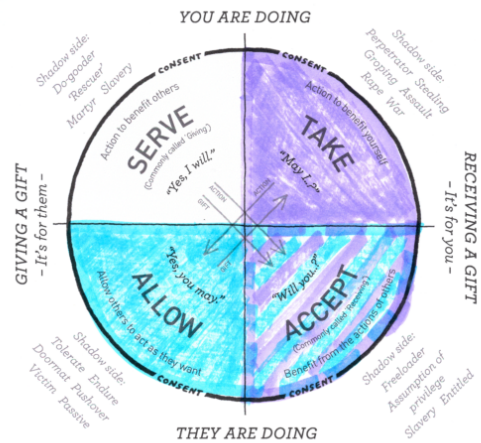
Please note: all graphics of the Wheel of Consent® with kind permission of School of Consent

Who is doing?: the Doing Half and Done-To Half

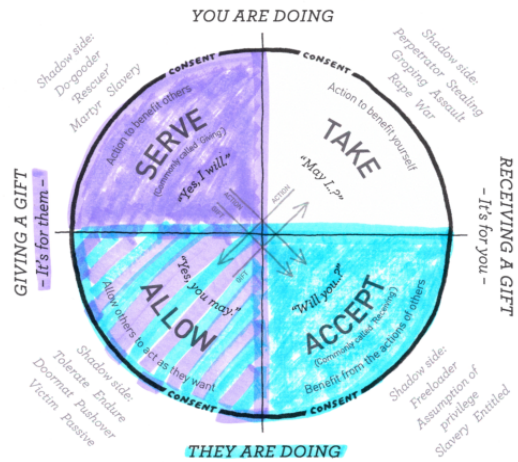




ACCEPT: they are doing and it's for you

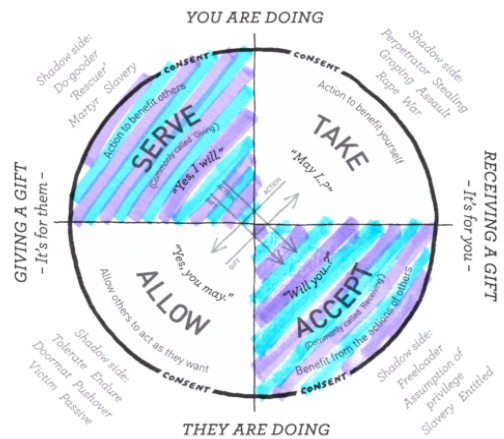


ALLOW: they are doing and it's for them

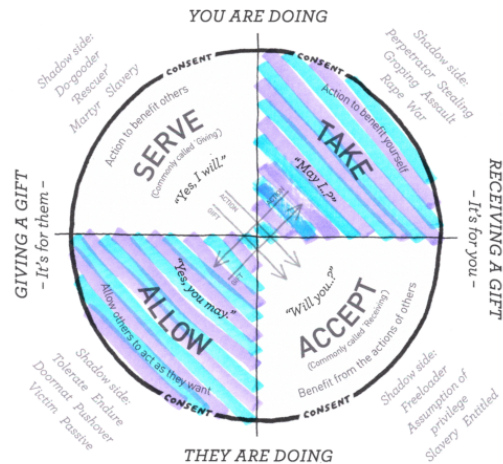


Those four quadrants of the Wheel are, in return, paired diagonally into two possible dynamics:

Between SERVE and ACCEPT



and between TAKE and ALLOW



This limitation (of only two dynamics) is important to realize early on as to not get overwhelmed by sheer combinatorics: in the orthodoxy of the Wheel, there can be no dynamic between the TAKE and the ACCEPT quadrant for instance, as both parties involved would be inhabiting the RECEIVING half of the Wheel *simultaneously*.

In similar logics, SERVE and TAKE do not combine, as both parties would find themselves in the DOING half *simultaneously*, with no one there to be done to.

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What sounds abstract should get clearer when we imagine the situation of two people sitting opposite each other, ready to engage in a so-called “3-minute game”.

If the two are operating within the SERVE and ACCEPT dynamics for instance, the person in the GIVING half will initiate the game by asking the question:

“How would you like me to touch you for the next 3 minutes?”

If it is within the TAKE and ALLOW dynamics they are playing, the person in the GIVING half will initiate by asking:

“How would you like to touch me for the next 3 minutes?”

In response to one of these questions, once a wish surfaces for the person in the RECEIVING half, s/he will formulate her “request” as yet another question, using the formula “Will you...?” (ACCEPT) or “May I ...?” (TAKE)

For example: “Will you squeeze the space in between my fingers (for the next 3 minutes)?” (ACCEPT)

Or: “May I scratch your palm with my thumb (for the next 3 minutes)?” (TAKE)

The formulation of the request will then usually entail some *clarification* (“Do you want to scratch with your thumb’s nail or with its skin?”) and possibly *negotiations* (“I can do that, but only if I can change rhythm once in a while.”)

The underlying ambition of both, clarifications and negotiations, is always to reach a “full-hearted YES” from the person in the GIVING half; him/her being the one “giving the gift”.

From here on, the 3-minute game will start and unfold without further verbalization.

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When transposing the protocol originally designed for touch into the default set-up of rehearsals, the initiating questions will have to be adjusted.

Given the incommensurability of the actor-director relation, the questions will differ depending on whether asked by the actor or the director. However, both, actor and director, can occupy all four quadrants:

In the most literal sense

“How would you like to touch me?”

turns into:

“How would you like to direct me?” (Actor in SERVE)

And

“How would you like to be touched?”

turns into:

“How would you like me to direct you?” (Director in SERVE)

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But there are more playful, more inviting ways to initiate.

The actor in SERVE can ask for instance:

“What would you like me to do for you on stage?”

Or the director in SERVE can ask:

“How would you like me to stage you?”

“Who do you want to be on stage?”

“What kind of director would you like me to be for you?”

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Here are some concrete examples from Claire's and my work:

Johannes (in SERVE): How do you want me to direct you for the next 15 minutes?

Claire (in ACCEPT): Will you give me a precise score, consisting both of concrete and poetic language?

Clarifications, Negotiations

Johannes (full-heartedly): Yes, I will.

OR

Johannes: How do you want me to direct you for the next 15 minutes?

Claire: Will you, with the help of instructions and descriptions, spin a fictional net around me that sustains my solitude while performing?

Clarifications, Negotiations

Johannes (full-heartedly): Yes, I will.

In the video with this preview image, you will find an excerpt from the game we played after this very conversation.



Note how in the speech of the director the quality of instructions seems to transform over time. In my perception, it operates on a tangent to a voice over, similar to the one in Akerman's "Je, tu, il, elle".

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So while the director can be "towed out" of the RECEIVING half – which is arguably his/her default position in the default set-up of *Regietheater* – the actor gets to inhabit the quadrants of ACCEPT (with the director in SERVE) as well as the quadrant of TAKE; acting, according to Martin, while performing an "action to benefit yourself".

Here's another example in this very constellational dynamic where the director inhabits the GIVING half:

Johannes (in ALLOW): What would you like to do to me for the next 15 minutes?

Claire (in TAKE): May I interpret the instructions you give me? First physically – then interpret their meaning, in terms of thoughts and feelings, while I do them?

Clarifications, Negotiations

Johannes: Yes, you may.

A big part of the material derived from this very game figures in the last third of the two-channel video “A study in transference”.



To see the entire two-channel film, please send a brief statement of your research interest to registrator@uniarts.se.

Still from Chantal Akerman's movie "Je, tu, il, elle" (1974) by courtesy of "Collections CINEMATEK" © Fondation Chantal Akerman