Chapter 5
Of morals, ethics and encounters
Commentary

Moreno's bringing together of theatre and therapy resulted in clinical tensions, which are discussed here by his son. Therapy seeks to make connections. People's minds are often dramatically lacking in an inner 'population' when disturbance first brings them forward to seek help. The psychodramatist and protagonist play out a real drama in a session in which the patient's symptoms, behaviour and feelings reveal the hidden corners of the past.

This process also occurs in other more verbal therapies, but in psychodrama the healing and the drama are interwoven. The enactment provides revelation, consolation and confirmation of our humanity. This link between drama and enactment was first noticed by Moreno in the Augarten in Vienna, when he was conducting his play experiments with the children.

Moreno's concept of the encounter is another view of the I-Thou relationship. Jonathan Moreno explores why his father took up a different position to that of Freud. In the present re-evaluation of reality and equality in therapy, Moreno's non-hierarchical position, stressing therapy be 'face to face', can be seen as having won a wider acceptance. For example, it is interesting to note that the importance of reality and equality in therapy are now considered worthy of comment by psychoanalysts, a position Moreno espoused in the 1920s. Moreno saw encounter rather than transference as the principle of cure, and his emphasis on action and relation rather than words was a direct refutation of psychoanalysis.

Psychodramatic moral philosophy and ethics
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INTRODUCTION: MORALITY AND ETHICS

In the writings and psychotherapeutic work of J.L.Moreno and his followers there is an implicit moral philosophy. This moral philosophy, by which I mean a general orientation towards the good, is bound up with the ideas and outlook of Moreno's formative years in the early twentieth century. This was a time marked by spasmodic political and social revolutions and the introduction into Europe of 'total wars' that did not spare innocent populations. It was also a time of exceptional creativity that broke new ground in the arts and theoretical sciences, especially mathematics and physics. Vienna, where J.L.Moreno attended medical school and lived most of his early life, was at the epicentre of these developments (Janik and Toulmin 1973; Marineau 1989).

When psychodrama emerged, most moral philosophy was a highly abstract study, closely tied to metaphysics. In our own time, there is a more concrete concern about ethical conduct in the professions, suggesting a return to Aristotle's classic understanding of moral virtue as closely tied to practical action,

without which claims to personal morality are hollow. When academic philosophers use the term ethics,

they refer either to the study of morality, or the study of the standards of moral conduct of specific professional groups, such as health care professionals. Thus morality is, as the word suggests, a *quality,* whereas ethics is a standard of behaviour that is justified according to a moral theory. Therefore behind discussions about ethics in these senses there is a continuing need for a normative theory that can provide a basis for discussions of ethical standards (Kellermann 1992).

In this chapter I will attempt to suggest some moral dimensions of psychodrama theory and also to sketch some ethical issues in psychodrama therapy that are of a practical nature. The founder of psychodrama recognised these latter more concrete ethical concerns, but they were not a preoccupation at that time. The philosophical goals of psychodrama during Moreno's lifetime established a different moral agenda than that which would be required by the standards of professional ethics of our own day. To some extent this reflects the fact that the philosophical morality of psychodrama as a social movement has had to undergo the difficult transformation into the professional ethics of psychodrama as a psychotherapy, a transformation that some will find unfortunate. Yet, I believe that the aims of psychodrama therapy cannot be fully understood without an appreciation of its underlying moral philosophy.

One cautionary note: I have not in this chapter attempted to provide systematic linkages between the ensuing discussion of psychodrama as a moral philosophy and practical problems of ethics in psychodrama. Thus there is an undeniable conceptual break between the two parts of my presentation. It would be desirable from an aesthetic standpoint to identify some connections between psychodramatic moral philosophy and the ethical norms that are to govern the practice of psychodrama therapy. One possibility is that the idea of interpersonal mutuality can do this job.[1] Perhaps I will be able to pursue this question in detail some day, or others will. In the present chapter, the discussion of psychodrama as a moral philosophy proceeds against the background of my reading, experiencing, and thinking about my father's ideas. The discussion of ethical issues in psychodrama therapy is rooted in my professional perspective as a professor of ethics in the biomedical and behavioural sciences.

PART ONE:
THE COSMIC DILEMMA

J.L.Moreno is not usually associated with darker thoughts about the human condition, especially as compared to, say, Freud. However, as a child, Moreno seems to have engaged in the same sorts of morbid reflection that many of us can recall in our own childhood, attempting to come to terms with our own mortality before we even have a glimmering idea of what life itself is about. Typical of these childhood reveries, as well, was Moreno's vacillation between nihilism and megalomania:

> Am I only a corpse that will rot and turn into meaningless dust? Or is this consciousness that I now feel extending into the cosmos the most real thing there is, indeed, all that there is? In other words, am I nothing or am I God?

> (Moreno 1941)

For Freud, these alternatives were manifestations of the same fundamental psychical structure, dynamically expressed as the principles of *eros* and *thanatos,* with the latter ultimately prevailing (Gay 1988).[2] For temperamental as well as philosophical reasons, Moreno could not accept such an outcome. Moreover, the logic with which he attacked the problem was different from that of Freud. For instead of looking inwards for a reductive explanation of this dynamic, he looked outwards towards its implications for his conduct in the world. In this sense he behaved more consistently with his medical training and the classical

philosophers than did Freud, for in his existential paradox he sought a prescription for action rather than for more study. Moreno's solution was that if he had the choice between meaninglessness and universality, between (in other words) being nothing and being God, then of course he would choose being God!

Strategies towards universality

Several comments are pertinent to this cosmic dilemma and Moreno's personal solution.

First, from a psychiatric standpoint one can understand Moreno's subsequent identification with his patients, who also struggled with the absurdity of existence. In his view, one difference between the mental patient who acts out a psychotic delusion and the 'normal' person is that the former is, for one reason or another, unable to ignore the cosmic paradox; but the result is a terrible loneliness and despair, a result that comes with being an isolate for having pursued the problem of existential absurdity to a socially unacceptable extreme. In this respect Moreno foresaw R.D.Laing's brilliant evocations of mental illness from the 'inside' (Laing 1965).

Second, some would argue that Moreno has a view of mankind as finally 'good', while Freud's treatment of eros and thanatos is more subtle; and it could be added that both are reductionistic in their account of human nature, but that Moreno's reductionism is more simplistic.[3] (In this regard, I remember him telling me that, unlike Freud, as he understood Freud, he believed that platonic love is possible.) To address the latter point first, it is not clear that reductionism to monism is 'more' reductionistic than to dualism, only that the hypothesised target items are structurally different. Further, as I suggested above, I do not see Moreno as pursuing a post-Kantian psychology of mental structures as did Freud. By this I mean that Freud inferred from patterns found in psychoanalysis characteristic sorts of mental activity (e.g. repression and sublimation). He then hypothesised entities (e.g. id, ego, superego) that could account for these mental activities. Moreno was quite uninterested in such speculation, regarding it as abstract and unnecessarily detached from human affairs. If Freud was a part of the platonic tradition in his concern with abstract entities, Moreno was an Aristotelian in his concern with functional processes. In this respect he was indeed closer to the behaviourists, but his behaviourism was akin to that of George Herbert Mead and John Dewey (who served on one of his editorial boards), rather than that of John Watson or B.F.Skinner.

Third, in this period Moreno was also among those who anticipated later-twentieth-century French existentialism, with its emphasis upon the unavoidable nature of choice and individual responsibility, a matter to which I will return. Not usually noted, however, is the similarity of Moreno's existentialist strategy in his personal crisis with that of another physician-philosopher, the American William James (1842–1910). As a young man James suffered from the depressive disorder commonly identified in the nineteenth century as 'neurasthenia', which was also manifested somatically in various aches and pains. Coming upon a catatonic mental patient in a Berlin asylum, James felt himself facing his own potential nothingness. Treating the problem as one of freedom of the will, James determined to adopt the view that his choice was free so long as he *determined* it to be free (Myers 1986). Much like Moreno forty years later, James asserted his own will as the way out of the crisis. From another point of view their decisions might seem self-indulgent, but to James and Moreno theirs were exercises in freedom and affirmations of their personal significance in a vast and ambiguous universe.

Fourth, from a logical point of view, the existential problem that Moreno and others have framed as a choice between insignificance and universality appears to commit the fallacy known as the false dilemma, for surely there is a vast middle ground between these extremes. Having established a false dilemma, we appear to be driven to one unsatisfactory conclusion or the other (meaninglessness or universality), while the more

reasonable possibility (that our moral status as beings is somewhere in between) gets ruled out in advance by the way the problem has been set up.

Without speaking for others who have addressed themselves to the fundamental existential problem (expressed in personal terms as 'Why do I exist at all?' or in more general terms by Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) as 'Why is there something rather than nothing?'), I believe that at least in Moreno's case there was a specific rationale for his extreme approach and his radical 'solution'. Like other Viennese intellectuals of the day, Moreno was acquainted with Einstein's early efforts in relativity theory; Einstein was a lecturer at the University while Moreno was a student. In order to formulate his theses, Einstein engaged in the *Gedankenexperiment,* or 'thought experiment'. His method called for the assignment of extreme values to variables in his physical formulae, values that could not be achieved in reality, like perfect vacuums or ideal gases, then following the implications of the result. A salient difference is that Moreno's experiments took place in action rather than only in thought: he took the role of God. Whether Einstein's thought experiments actually inspired Moreno or not, his method was similar: let us see what would happen if we gave individual existence either null or total value. The implications of the former are familiar, in light of which some might choose suicide or depravity. On the other hand, since there is no independent basis or criterion for choosing universality or nothingness, why not select universality?

The strategy I have been describing starts with the ontological question ('What is the status of my own existence?'), exercises the will to believe one alternative ('I am universal'), and issues in a certain moral significance ('If I am universal then I am God, responsible for all beings'). Another strategy achieves the same result, but starts with the question: 'For whom am I morally responsible?' Shall I say only those emotionally or physically closest to me, those related to me by blood, or by marriage, or those on the same street or in the same town or nation? Anywhere one draws the line must be arbitrary. Therefore either I am responsible for nothing or I am responsible for everything. In this approach the moral question is primary, the 'ontological' question (having to do with one's existential status), is derivative.

What is striking is that one can move back and forth between the idea of universality and that of responsibility. I believe that Moreno was intrigued by the 'dialectical' relation between the two, much as Freud was taken by that between eros and thanatos. Moreno's insight was closely bound up with his conviction that, as humankind's conception of the godhead evolved, it came to have greater universality and moral responsibility, from the distant and warlike 'He' God of the Biblical Hebrews to the loving and intimate 'Thou' God of the early Christians. According to this theology, now comes the 'I' God who is personally universal and responsible, both ontologically and morally inclusive. Because the 'I' God is me, and because from my point of view the entire universe is contained 'in my head', I cannot escape responsibility for the whole of the universe (Moreno 1941).

Moral responsibility: the protagonist and role reversal

The dialogue between ontological universality and moral responsibility is embodied concretely in the 'protagonist', literally 'one who undergoes the test' (Greek: *agon).* In the ancient theatre that so influenced Moreno, Oedipus is of course the most famous protagonist. This opens up the question, about what does the protagonist 'agonise'? In the most general sense, what is the nature of the test? I believe one can answer this question in psychodramatic moral philosophy in terms of the nexus of universality-responsibility, that this nexus provides the background of the struggle. The tale of Oedipus provides a convenient and familiar example; it also provides an interesting contrast to the psychoanalytic interpretation of the story's ultimate significance.

Oedipus's crisis, prompted by his *hubris* or arrogance, propelled him into questioning his moral responsibility for the world in which he lived, a world in which he committed patricide and incest. As soon as that question was raised Oedipus also necessarily confronted his true ontological status in such a world: from a man of heroic, nearly divine proportions at the beginning of the play to a fallen god, a 'tragic hero' at the end. In the psychodramatic view, the deeper significance of the play is not the unconscious libidinal impulses acted out in Oedipus's relations with his mother and father, for this was only the dynamic that propelled him towards his fate; rather, of deeper significance is the stage upon which Oedipus is destined to live out the rest of his days, that which is defined by the framework of universality and responsibility.

Let us take this account a step further. The Oedipus story is fascinating and powerful even for those of us who cannot (consciously) identify with his dark passions, drives of which he himself was once unaware. In spite of what psychoanalysis would regard as his rather successful repression, we identify with Oedipus as one who is thrust suddenly into an inescapable web of ontological and moral doubt. Oedipus suffers as we do. His catharsis is a projection of our own. So universal and morally compelling is his situation that we cannot resist role-reversing with him. We may only *sympathise* with his horrific discoveries, but we surely and irresistibly *empathise* with his existential situation. The distinction is significant, for patricide and incest do not for most of us excite immediate empathy, but the agony of ontological and moral doubt is instantly recognisable. It is, in a word, the human condition. We spontaneously reverse roles with Oedipus because his struggle or *agon* is ours.

I have finally used that familiar term in psychodramatic theory— spontaneity. What is the relevance of spontaneity and its conceptual sibling creativity in my account? Clearly, the ultimate test that we and Oedipus face is the occasion for the most spontaneity and creativity that can be mustered. Moreno liked to note an etymological link between *spon*taneity and re*spon*sibility. Linguistically he was wrong, but his error nevertheless provides some insight into his implicit moral philosophy linking the two. Oedipus's situation is one for which he bears moral responsibility, one so harrowing and final that it calls upon the utmost in spontaneous and creative response.

Sociometric morality I: the encounter and the double

All this sets the stage for Oedipus's last calamity: his spontaneous response to his tragedy is to pluck out his eyes and permanently remove himself from human contact. In so doing he symbolises the ultimate in sociometric disconnection: first, Oepidus is blind and therefore literally unable to 'encounter' in the way of the sighted, for he cannot gaze into the eyes of another; and second, Oedipus is an isolate, an abomination to the society of others. Both points deserve elaboration.

The standard interpretation of Oedipus's physical blindness at the end of the play contrasts it with his figurative blindness to his actual situation at the beginning of the play. As if to drive the point home, only an old blind 'seer' is able to forecast Oedipus's downfall. A psychodramatic account of Oedipus's blindness as a metaphor emphasises not only its epistemological significance, but its significance for the encounter as well. Recall Moreno's famous motto in his *Invitation to an Encounter:*

And when you are near I will tear your eyes out
and place them instead of mine,
and you will tear my eyes out
and will place them instead of yours,
Then I will look at you with your eyes…

and you will look at me with mine.

Both at the beginning and at the end of the play, Oedipus is incapable of authentic encounters. He is incapable at the beginning because he is blind to his situation, and therefore he is 'living a lie'. He is incapable of authentic encounters at the end not only in the rather trivial sense that he is blind to the gaze of others, but more profoundly because he has become aware of the bankruptcy of his personal identity, of all that he valued in himself, and therefore he is fated to be alone. Finally, because both forms of blindness may render complete encounters impossible (that is, Oedipus is either figuratively or literally isolated), Oedipus himself cannot role-reverse with another.

Sociometrically, Oedipus is at first a 'star', and at the end is an isolate. In the beginning Oedipus is adored by his people and his family, truly the sociometric centre of the Theban city-state, and it is universally reciprocated. At the end Oedipus is cut off from everyone, despicable in the sight of others and himself determined to stay out of their sight, as they (and he) are forever out of his own sight. But Oedipus's sociometric position as the star was a false one because it depended on a false set of assumptions about who he was. In reality, Oedipus was always an isolate because the 'true' Oedipus, the father-killer who slept with his mother, was not the one who was chosen by all.

Role reversal is a symmetric act, requiring the protagonist to participate. But our protagonist Oedipus is literally and figuratively isolated at the end of the play. He cannot engage in role reversal with us. But isolates can still have doubles, for doubling is asymmetric. All that is required is that the double be able to empathise (in psychodramatic terms, be 'telic') with the protagonist. In fact, the isolate is the easiest sociometric role to double because each of us understands that position so well and fears it the most. Since doubling does not presuppose the reciprocity of role reversal it is a 'nobler' act. It demands more spontaneity and creativity on the part of the other, at least in its first moments, than does role reversal. Looking after the poor and infirm, as Jesus is said to have done, might be just such a noble act. Thus, in the Christian tradition Jesus is able to double for those who are indifferent towards him, and even for those who reject him.

Sociometric morality II: interpersonal choice

Sociometric choice is both the symbol and the occasion for the emergence of the individual as a social creature. When that choice is mutual the idea of moral responsibility is concretised. Consider, for example, the relationships of Jesus and his original group of followers. In psychodramatic terms they chose one another for the roles of saviour and disciples. The drama of the Crucifixion story necessarily unfolded according to the logic of their relationship: as the saviour only Jesus fully understood the significance of their mutual responsibility, and he sacrificed all for them while they betrayed him. The full moral significance of sociometric choice as mutual responsibility is clarified in light of this example of failed mutuality (J.D. Moreno 1990).

The patterns that emerge from sociometric choices are also concrete expressions of universality. These patterns are paths of connectedness through which telic sensitivity instantaneously travels, affirming that each individual's place in the matrix is both discrete and comprehensive. Appropriately, the sociogram resembles constellations in the night sky, each unit both separate and an essential part of its context. In his fanciful tale of 'Johnny Psychodramatist', based loosely on the American fable of a boy who plants apple seeds wherever he goes, Johnny as a child drew lines between the people in his neighborhood, with

different colours depending on the way they felt about each other. The result resembled a map. After a lifetime of drawing lines from one to another, Johnny was taken to heaven where, in accordance with his unshakable habit, he drew a map of God and his angels as well. When their surprising feelings were exposed on this map they all began to laugh.

> Johnny was frightened because he thought that punishment would result from his deeds. But as he looked up, he saw to his astonishment that every figure on his heavenly map had turned into a star, and as he looked, farther and farther, more and more stars took their places, millions and millions of them, on the heavenly firmament. And from star to star sprang the lines, in all the colors he had ever envisioned, until they became what they were from the beginning of time, the starry skies of the universe. Every star was the picture of a man he had known when he was on earth, and their emotions were written in the lines that ran between them. The map he had drawn as a boy was now hinged to the skies above.
>
> (Moreno 1987)

A note about Nietzschean irony in Moreno's philosophy

I believe that Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844–1900) writings may have had a considerable impact on Moreno's thinking as a young man. Certainly they were well known enough at the time he was engaged in his early philosophising, even though the implications of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (Nietzsche n.d.) and Nietzsche's other writings were more obscure than they are today, following a generation of scholarly analysis. That allegorical work, so central to Nietzsche's thinking, describes a (western) world that has stumbled upon modernity, a world in which the old values, and perhaps the very idea of moral value itself, are at hazard. Hence, a revolution in the human relation to God and all values took place while most were at best dimly aware of it. Nietzsche can be viewed as one standing in the distance on the horizon, wildly shouting and waving his arms, trying to call our attention to the full meaning of modernity, while the rest of us go about our business as though the old rituals are not now empty husks. There is enough in Moreno's handling of the God question to suggest Nietzsche's influence, which clarifies initial puzzlement about Moreno's approach to the God question.

In particular, Moreno's identification of himself with God can be understood in terms of Nietzschean irony. Again, ours is a world in which 'God is dead' in the sense that pre-modern values no longer have the gravity they once did. Following Copernicus even gravity does not have its same value, nor directions in space, for in a Copernican universe 'up' and 'down' make no objective sense. The 'direction' provided by morality has also withered. Yet in a world such as this belief becomes even more important, for there is no absolute moral authority to impose constraints upon us. Without such an authority we are literally lost, directionless, doomed to float in a moral and cosmic void without a compass.

Unless, of course, we provide that compass for ourselves. But how, under the circumstances can this be done? Only by executing a kind of psychological trick (a 'will to power'): we must vigorously insist upon and defend certain 'truths', even while we know we might be wrong about them. In the modern era that is the best we can do, and it is enough. But perhaps we are not mature enough, strong enough, to see things as they are and take this ironic attitude. In that case it awaits a 'higher race', an 'over-man', to embrace the reality, to 'love our destiny'.

Moreno's identification of himself with the Godhead may be understood in this ironic spirit. In the ironic sense needed to preserve meaning and value in the modern world, any of us may say 'I am God'. If in the twentieth century it seems there is no God we can still 'will' God to be. Unlike Nietzsche, Moreno does not

believe it takes a superman to do this, but that in principle all of us have the spontaneity and creativity to do it. Perhaps, by training the spontaneity and creativity implicit in each of us, Moreno thought that the psychodrama could produce the Nietzschean superman.

PART TWO: ETHICS AND 'ACTION METHODS'

As a group psychotherapy, psychodrama has in common with other group modalities a number of elements that raise ethical concerns. I have addressed these more general issues elsewhere (J.D.Moreno 1991). Perhaps most fundamental among these is the question whether any psychotherapy can in practice give content to the ethical doctrine of 'informed consent': can psychotherapists disclose the risks and benefits of a proposed therapeutic intervention to a patient or client, as compared to the risks and benefits of other interventions, or to none at all? Although I believe this question poses a signficant moral challenge to the profession of psychotherapy, I will not pursue it here. Rather, in the remainder of this chapter I want to consider two aspects of psychodrama work in particular that create special ethical problems for the practitioner: psychodrama as an 'action method' and the 'open' psychodrama session.

As noted at the outset of this chapter, ethical concerns have become prominent in the health care professions. It is useful to distinguish between traditional and emerging ethical issues. An example of the former is sexual contact with clients, which is by consensus regarded as a grievous ethical violation. By contrast, emerging ethical issues usually have to do with more novel health care 'technologies', from genetic engineering to psychodrama therapy, and carry with them questions that are not easily managed in traditional terms.

While not new in the history of psychotherapy, action methods like psychodrama are new in the history of health care. They are also a departure from traditional western physician-patient relations, in which the latter is literally the passive partner. Classical psychoanalysis replicates the physician-patient relation more closely than do the action psychotherapies, which involve a variety of interactional situations between therapist and client. Thus, in addition to talking to the therapist, which resembles reporting one's medical history, in these other psychotherapies there is also enactment. In classical psychoanalysis the potential ethical problems are roughly the same sorts as those of medical practice, including inappropriate sexual advances and violations of confidentiality. But with action methods, and especially with the addition of the group, these issues are complicated further.

Psychodramatic shock

Psychodramatists frequently observe the sheer power of enactment. Explained in psychodramatic theory by the idea of the 'warm-up', as compared to 'talk therapy' alone, engagement in overt bodily activity vastly increases the protagonist's affective involvement in the subject matter. Several kinds of inadvertent harm can accompany the otherwise advantageous nature of enactment for psychotherapy: unresolved psychodramatic shock, physical harm to the protagonist or others and accidently revealed confidences or secrets.

Psychodramatic shock occurs when a protagonist's warm-up suddenly sharply increases or peaks, and remains there for some period of time during the scene. Unlike the usual more gradual warm-up that resembles a gradual curve, this vastly accelerated form often occurs as a surprise to the protagonist him- or herself as well as to the director and group members. The slightest feature of the enactment may trigger an unconscious image fraught with emotionality, often one associated with a painful childhood event. Behaviour resembling hysteria can result, including weeping, trembling, and shocking changes in the

protagonist's voice and carriage. Even a language unspoken for many years and seemingly forgotten may re-emerge. In one memorable case, a man brought up in Louisiana enacted a scene in which, as a little boy, he came upon his drunken and abusive father in their living room. Weeping hysterically prior to a furious outburst, he slipped back into the voice of a small child wailing fluently in his native Acadian or 'Cajun', a language he had not spoken in decades. The protagonist may 'come out' of this unforeseen role momentarily and remark on his or her surprise at what is happening, as occurred in this case, but then return to it with little prompting.

The skilful psychodrama therapist will utilise the therapeutic advantages of such incidents, and the catharsis that follows may be quite extraordinary. However, the seering nature of this experience requires more than the usual care in reintegrating the protagonist, both intra- and interpersonally. Failure to accomplish adequate closure is indicated by the protagonist's feeling that he or she has been 'left hanging' and has been exposed to something he or she has not resolved, even in a short-term sense. It is important for the director to recognise this phenomenon even if he or she is uncertain how to accomplish resolution, for often the group can be called upon to provide a comforting 'womb' in which to encircle and cradle the protagonist, providing at least a physical minimum of comfort and reassurance. Psychodramatic shock and its sequelae provide an excellent example of the therapeutic power of the method as well as the importance of well-trained practitioners.

Psychodramatic shock and other deep warm-ups may also expose the protagonist and other group members to the danger of physical harm, as violence may accompany the reactive phase. At such times the director's first obligation is to protect everyone from injury, including the protagonist, suspending the action if necessary to do so. Hesitation in this respect, however well intended, is simply a failure of the director's professional responsibility and judgement. Often risks are taken when the director feels an obligation to help a protagonist complete a catharsis even though the physical arrangements are inappropriate, such as permitting an auxiliary ego to be wrestled to the ground on a hard floor and without the protection that can be afforded by several sturdy and experienced co-therapists. Admirable as directorial motives may be in such circumstances, they should not be permitted to 'trump' his or her better judgement.

A different sort of harm that can accompany warming up occurs when the protagonist blurts out secrets or confidences that could prove embarrassing or even personally or professionally damaging, either to the protagonist or to someone else who may not even be a member of the group. In one case a protagonist working on her anger towards her therapist, who was not present, portrayed what seemed to be a bungled job. Although the director had reached an agreement that the therapist's actual name would not be used, in her warmed-up condition the protagonist used it anyway. At such times it is important to stop the action and remind everyone that they are co-therapists with the moral responsibility to maintain confidentiality. Later, before the session is ended, it is highly advisable to revisit the issue and perhaps even to ask group members to engage in a role reversal with the protagonist and with any other individual who might be harmed by the information. In this way the moral point may be reinforced. In such situations it is most important for the director to establish an atmosphere in which transgressions from the norm of confidentiality will be regarded as intolerable by one's fellow group members. To do that the issue must be addressed directly, perhaps more than once, with an attitude of utmost seriousness.

The 'open' psychodrama session

The open session is an interesting example of the way that ethical concerns in psychodrama have changed, along with the understanding of what psychodrama itself is. For if psychodrama is essentially *theatre,* then some things will be permissible that would not be if it is essentially *therapy.* For decades, Moreno and his

colleagues conducted psychodrama sessions that were open to the public, for a modest admission fee. Members of the audience, mostly strangers to one another, were warmed up to very complex psychodramas, and the protagonist and other actors emerged from the group. These sessions, held mostly in New York City, attracted a large following and helped make psychodrama a well-known medium, especially among intellectuals.

When one attended an open session, was one paying for entertainment, therapy or education? Clearly, all three elements were present, and arguably so was a fourth: social reform along the lines of sociometric theory. The problem with assessing the ethics of the open session is precisely that it is difficult to know which category it falls into. If it is therapy, then there are obvious and probably intractable problems of confidentiality (not to mention extraordinary legal risks), in which case one would have to conclude that it is unethical to conduct psychodrama sessions open to the public. If it is theatre or education then the standard of confidentiality does not apply, at least not nearly so stringently, and one would not reach this conclusion.

My own impression is that the open session is often, if not always, implicitly presented as an opportunity for psychotherapy. This would be true in those cases in which the director's goal is obviously to reveal deep emotional content, and I think it is hard to defend such an objective from ethical concerns, in spite of the benefits that might accrue to some indviduals. On the other hand, if the director obviously seeks to limit the exploration to more superficial subject matter, then I think one could argue persuasively that the aim of the open session is educational or theatrical. One way to do this, and to accomplish the social-reform aims as well, is to conduct the session as a sociodrama, so that the action does not dwell upon the details of individual lives.

The ethical challenges of open psychodrama sessions have become more apparent in recent years for at least two reasons: first, psychodrama has gradually become more identified as a therapy than as a form of theatre; second, our society generally has become more aware of ethical issues in health care, such as confidentiality. As one who years ago witnessed hundreds of open sessions and conducted a number of them, I can testify that such questions were hardly in the forefront.

To be sure, Moreno explicitly recognised the problem of maintaining confidentiality in group work. In his *Code of Ethics for Group Psychotherapy,* Moreno asserts that the Hippocratic obligation to keep matters of professional practice secret extends in group psychotherapy to all group members. He also raises a salient rhetorical question about preventing 'leaks' when group members are electronically linked to one another, as in closed-circuit television (Moreno 1962). Perspicuous as he was in raising the latter concern so much in advance of others, his reference to the Hippocratic tradition is dubious, since the oath in its various versions is meant to be part of a socialisation process of professionals, not patients. Promises among non-professionals to keep secrets must be based rather on a sense of human decency or, perhaps, prudence (considering the fear that one's own privacy is also at hazard), but bringing them under the rubric of professional codes seems to me to be a confusion.

There is, however, a further dimension of the open session that is not precisely captured in the categories of entertainment, therapy or education, and this is perhaps its most important quality. This dimension is exemplified in the 'sociodrama' and might be considered as a 'sociotherapy.' The goal of sociodrama is not to provide psychotherapy to any individual, but rather to foster the wellbeing of the group, usually by enhancing its cohesion and potential for co-operative activity. Group members play social roles such as 'teacher', 'policeman', 'bureaucrat' or 'politician' rather than individual roles, and the enactments are based initially on protocols familiar to members of the culture, then modified by the group based on concerns that emerge from the group. In this way a heightened sense of social solidarity often results.

In the open session, a sociodrama has the virtue of including all in the action, at least symbolically, through their membership in the culture that is host to the social roles being enacted. Emotional material that usually individuates group members is transformed into content that energises and enlivens the shared story. The salutary result is that social solidarity is enhanced while individual self-disclosure in this inherently 'leaky' environment is minimised.

Considering the ethical profile of sociodrama, one that is benign for the individual but a powerful agent of change for the group, the open setting for this method is not subject to the same objections as that for classical psychodrama. Indeed, often without calling it sociodrama or even being aware of its conceptual origins, sociodrama has become a routine element of conflict resolution, personnel training and education. Perhaps it is time for the psychodrama community to reclaim the sociodrama in all its richness in the open setting, wherein an ethically sound mix of entertainment, education and social therapy can be accomplished.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have attempted preliminary explorations that ranged over a great deal of territory, from psychodrama as a moral philosophy to ethical issues about and within psychodrama. Earlier I argued that psychodramatic moral philosophy turns on the nexus of universality and responsibility. I have also suggested that the ambiguities inherent in the nature of psychodrama (especially whether it is theatre or therapy), raise interesting and important ethical questions, as does the inherent power of psychodrama therapy itself. These and other questions will surely be discussed more as psychodrama continues to establish itself as a precious and unique medium of human expression.

NOTES

1 The editors of this volume, particularly Marcia Karp, suggested this to me.
2 I recognise that my interpretation of this dualism in Freud is by no means universally agreed. My view derives from the drift of his work in the last decade.
3 I owe these points to Kellermann, personal correspondence, September 16, 1992.

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