

# The Director

The Philosophy, Theory and Methods of J. L. Moreno: The Man Who Tried to Become God  
by John Nolte (pp 185-187)

The psychodrama director is a dramaturge. The content of the drama comes from the protagonist. A psychodrama is an externalization of the internal, the memories, thoughts, and feelings of the protagonist. The director has the responsibility of coming up with the proper dramatic techniques through which the protagonist can turn those thoughts and feelings into psychodramatic action, action that accurately reflects the protagonist's subjectivity and communicates it to the group. The director also has a responsibility to the audience, to keep the members of the audience in rapport with the protagonist during the drama. The director has the responsibility to see that the protagonist is not harmed by the psychodrama. Like any powerful instrument, psychodrama misused can be hurtful to participants. It is the director's obligation to see that this does not happen. For example, in psychodramatic therapy, a group member may be seeking to deal with the residuals of a severely traumatic experience like, for example, the death of a child. Although it may be in the protagonist's best interests to experience and express fully the terrible pain of that loss, it is in the hands of the director to make sure that in doing so the protagonist is not re-traumatized but, rather, that the experience leads toward resolution and acceptance of the tragedy that life has brought."

The most successful psychodramas occur when protagonists achieve the spontaneity state. This is an altered state of mind somewhat akin to, yet different from, a hypnotic state. The spontaneity state tends to happen when the protagonist experiences a high level of trust in the director. Then, as in hypnosis, the protagonist turns over some degree of intellectual or ego functioning to the director, allowing the fullest arousal and the most complete expression to his/her emotions. This requires great confidence in the director's expertise.

Once asked what the most important personal characteristic was that one needed in order to be a director, Moreno replied without a pause, "Courage." It is courage that is needed to go with the protagonist into the deepest, darkest areas of the protagonist's private world in order to attain release from the monsters and ghosts that may be lurking there. The courage of the director may be what gives the protagonist the courage to explore this territory. Psychodrama can feel like a risky undertaking, especially for one new to it. It is trust in the director that allows one to take that risk. Unlike the relationship between the psychoanalyst and the analysand, where analysts keep an objective distance between themselves and their analysands, the director and the protagonist enjoy a fuller relationship.

It is permissible, Moreno writes, that the director may laugh and joke with the protagonist and just as permissible to confront or shock the protagonist. Moreno's position clearly

underscores the fact that in psychodramatic therapy, the director is a real person and utilizes his/her own spontaneity in the directorial role. The psychodrama director's individuality and personality are expected to become integrated into his/her personal style as a director. The director of a psychodrama session is also responsible to the group members, some of whom enter the drama as auxiliary egos. He is in charge of the sharing session. After the drama has reached dramatic resolution and the director indicates that it has come to a close, the director invites the group members to share their personal life experiences that connect them to the protagonist and the themes and events that the protagonist has presented.

The psychodramatic protagonist has stepped out from the group as the original protagonist stepped out from the chorus in ancient Greek theater and expressed pain and concerns that are not only the protagonist's, but that are also the pains and concerns of the group. At the conclusion of the drama, as the protagonist returns from the spontaneity state to the more ordinary state of awareness, and from the psychodrama stage to the group, he/she often feels psychologically exposed, aware of having made public his/her deepest subjectivity. As group members relate their own experiences, identifying with the protagonist, the latter quickly realizes that he/she is not alone in the way he/she has experienced life. Fears of having revealed too much of oneself quickly fade, and the individual who has stepped out of the group and placed his private life upon the stage for everyone to see once again feels incorporated back into the group. The process of sharing is discussed in greater detail below.