

THE CONCEPT OF SOCIODRAMA¹

A New Approach to the Problem of Inter-Cultural Relations

By

J. L. MORENO, M.D.

Everyone who comes to a theatre of the psychodrama for the first time wonders what connection a stage and a theatre have with psychiatry, education, sociology, anthropology, or any branch of social science. The methods of social science seem to be utterly unrelated to the theatre and the stage. But nothing seems to be further removed from them than the process of healing individual and social ailments, medical diagnosis and therapeutics. The strictest privacy in the physicians' consultation room and the careful prohibition of anything spectacular and exhibitory has been the unanimously accepted strategy of the medical profession all over the world since the days of Hypocrates—and rightly so—at least for the conventional methods dedicated to the treatment of physical and mental ills. However, a few generations after the death of Hypocrates another Greek scientist, Aristotle, observed a psychological phenomenon in the spectators witnessing a Greek drama, which he called catharsis. He tried to explain by it the aesthetic and moral effect of dramatic content². He had little idea of its consequences and the phenomenon remained buried in the libraries and for all scientific and practical purposes unnoticed by mediaeval and modern psychotherapies, psychoanalysis³ included—until the psychodramatic method brought it back into the consciousness of the social scientist of our time. This process of healing—catharsis—did not take place in a physician's consultation room. It took place in the *group*, in the *open* spaces of an amphitheatre, aroused by fanciful, dramatic actions on a stage, apparently unrelated to the lives of the people witnessing the spectacles.

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²Aristotle maintained that tragedy tends to purify the spectators and listeners by artistically exciting certain emotions which act as a kind of homeopathic relief from their own selfish passions.

³Freud used the term catharsis in his early work with Breuer, "Studien Ueber Hysterie," 1895, but he used it for a different emphasis, not conscious of the psychotherapeutic implications of the drama milieu to which Aristotle had referred. He dropped the term, however, soon after this publication. It remained for psychodrama to revive the term and to re-discover the concept of catharsis and to explore its full meaning. (See *Das Stegreiftheater*, Berlin, 1923, and *Psychodrama and Mental Catharsis*, *Sociometry*, 1940.)

Let us imagine for a moment that we are little children and are entering a theatre for the first time. Then the dramatic events on the stage would appear in a different light than to the sophisticated, disillusioned adult. They are actual and real. There is no playwright who has written a script. There is no producer who has made a number of people rehearse every word and gesture. The stage is not a "stage," but a part of the actual world. For the unadulterated imagination of the child these actors are not actors, but actual people. It is as though, by the moving of a magic wand, we are permitted to witness a private, personal world, events usually hidden from view—such as love and hate, murder and war, insanity and death, all the excesses of the human heart—the personal intrigues behind the affairs of state and church, revelations of the most secret and complicated inner workings of society. The dramatic process moving before our child-like eyes would appear then to be life itself. Therefore, if we could feel like little children again, we would still possess the gift of a naïve acceptance of the drama as absolute reality. A Greek tragedy, a drama of Shakespeare, of Ibsen or O'Neill would reach us directly, bereft of all their artificial trappings and constructions. But children become rapidly disillusioned from the original assumption. They learn of the trappings and fixtures behind the scene. They begin to realize: these actors are just playing, it is not in earnest. "Bambi" in the film is not the real Bambi, it is a picture made by men. The original unity between fantasy and reality in the child's mind is broken from now on and begins to develop in two separate dimensions of experience. It can be said that psychodrama is an attempt to breach the dualism between fantasy and reality, and to restore the original unity.

In the course of psychodrama a curious phenomenon has been noticed by many observers. A married woman, for instance, who tries to act out some of the most private and personal life situations in order to find a solution for her conflicts, is astonished to see how easily a total stranger (auxiliary ego), taking the part of her husband, is able, after little preparation, to fall into his role and to associate spontaneously words and gestures which she thought were only familiar to her. This can be easily explained. Every individual lives in a world which looks entirely private and personal to him, and in which he partakes in a number of private roles. But the millions of private worlds overlap in large portions. The larger portions which overlap are truly collective elements. Only the minor portions are private and personal. Every role is therefore a fusion of private and collective elements. Every role has two sides, a private and a collective side. The world around the person can be taken apart like an onion. First you

peel one part off, and then another, then you continue until all private roles are removed. But unlike in an onion, we find a core, a core of roles. From the point of view of this core the private roles appear like a veneer which gives the collective roles individual coloring, differing somewhat in every case. It is *the* father, *the* mother, *the* lover, *the* gentleman, *the* soldier, versus *a* father, *a* mother, *a* lover, *a* gentleman, *a* soldier. In the one case the auxiliary ego attempts to portray the father, the lover, the warrior, and so forth, as they are found to operate in a specific culture, for instance, in an Arabic village, in a Russian collective farm, in Nazi Germany, or in a Japanese settlement. In the other case it is a father, a lover, a warrior, whom the subject himself has to portray because he is identical with him or privately related to him. But they represent a specific father, a specific lover, a specific warrior, a particular individual. These forms of role-playing are lived and experienced in a personal way and they must be portrayed in a personal way. The other ones, the general roles, are lived and experienced in a collective way, and they must be portrayed in a collective way. The roles which represent collective ideas and experiences are called socio-dramatic roles, those representing individual ideas and experiences, psychodramatic roles. But we know from our experiments that these two forms of role-playing can never be truly separated. Whenever a subject has to portray her own role as a wife or a mother, in a most individual and intimate sense, and within the context of her actual life, a great deal of the wife-role and the mother-role in general enters into the picture. Therefore, the spectators of the psychodrama are affected simultaneously by two phenomena, a mother and her child as a personal problem, and the mother-child relation as an ideal pattern of conduct. Psychodrama has been defined as a deep action method dealing with inter-personal relations and private ideologies, and sociodrama⁴ as a deep action method dealing with inter-group relations and collective ideologies.⁵

The procedure in the development of a sociodrama differs in many ways from the procedure which I have described as psychodramatic. In a psychodramatic session, the attention of the director and his staff are centered upon the individual and his private problems. As these are unfolded before a group, the spectators are affected by the psychodramatic acts in proportion to the affinities existing between their own context of roles,

⁴Sociodrama has two roots,—socius, which means the associate, the other fellow, and drama, which means action. Sociodrama would mean action in behalf of the other fellow.

⁵See J. L. Moreno, "Sociometry and the Cultural Order," Sociometry Monographs No. 2, 1943, page 331.

and the role context of the central subject. Even the so-called group approach in psychodrama is in the deeper sense individual-centered. The audience is organized in accord with a mental syndrome which all participating individuals have in common, and the aim of the director is to reach every individual in his own sphere, separated from the other. He is using the group approach only to reach therapeutically more than one individual in the same session. The group approach in psychodrama is concerned with a group of *private* individuals, which makes the group itself, in a sense, private. Careful planning and organizing the audience is here indispensable because there is no outward sign indicating which individual suffers from the same mental syndrome and can share the same treatment situation. There is a limit therefore, as to how far the psychodramatic method can go in fact-finding and solving inter-personal conflicts. The collective causes cannot be dealt with except in their subjectified form. I recall a psychodramatic session to which two families, door-to-door neighbors in a small town, came to adjust a problem. They had been involved in a dispute because of a broken fence which separated their properties. It was easy to disclose in the first three scenes as to how the fence was broken. A fight between two boys (scene one) was followed by an argument between their mothers (scene two, neighbor A. and neighbor B.). The next morning (scene three) the fence was found broken by neighbor C. Neighbor A. and neighbor B. rushed to the scene and accused each other of having done it, but a policeman stepped in and assured them that it was the storm which had felled many trees overnight and with them the fence. But the hostilities between A. and B. were not resolved by these explanations. After a short pause (temporary catharsis) the dispute continued and in scene five deeper causes came to the fore. Neighbor A., of Italian descent, belonged to a labor union which neighbor B., of Polish descent, considered to undermine the welfare of the country. After mending the fence dispute, we tried to mend their political differences of opinion, but there we had only partial success. There were in their conflicts collective factors involved, the implications of which went far beyond their individual good will to understand one another. They too, were super-individual, like the storm which broke the fence, but a social storm, which may have to be understood and controlled by different means. A special form of psychodrama was necessary which would focus its dramatic eye upon the collective factors. This is the way sociodrama was born.

The true subject of a sociodrama is the *group*. It is not limited by a special number of individuals, it can consist of as many persons as there are human beings living anywhere, or at least of as many as

belong to the same culture. Sociodrama is based upon the tacit assumption that the group formed by the audience is already organized by the social and cultural roles which in some degree all the carriers of the culture share. It is therefore incidental who the individuals are, or of whom the group is composed, or how large their number is. It is the group as a whole which has to be put upon the stage to work out its problem, because the group in sociodrama corresponds to the individual in psychodrama. But as the group is only a metaphor and does not exist by itself, its actual content are the interrelated persons composing it, not as private individuals but as representatives of the same culture. Sociodrama, therefore, in order to become effective, has to essay the difficult task of developing deep action methods, in which the working tools are representative types within a given culture and not private individuals. It is interested in the typical German father-role, in a generalized sense, and not in a particular sense, an individual father whose name happens to be Mueller, a German, living in Germany. It is interested in the role of the gentleman,—as it is held up as an ideal role in English-speaking countries—and not in *a* gentleman, a particular individual who happens to act like one.

Let us consider first two broad fields of application of sociodramatic procedures, namely, anthropology and inter-cultural relations. Cultural anthropologists have developed various methods by which to investigate extinct, primitive and contemporary cultures, for instance, by analysis of records of any sort, written records like books, pictorial records like films, technological records like tools, aesthetic records like temples and statues, and by actual contact with a culture by means of participant observers. Sociodrama is introducing a new approach to anthropological and cultural problems, methods of deep action and of experimental verification. The concept underlying this approach is the recognition that *man is a role-player*,⁶ that every individual is characterized by a certain range of roles which dominate his behaviour, and that every culture is characterized by a certain set of roles which it imposes with a varying degree of success upon its membership. The problem is how to bring a cultural order to view by dramatic

⁶Role-player is a literary translation of the German word "Rollenspieler" which I have used. See "Das Stegreiftheater" Pp. 31, 36, 63. It may be useful to differentiate between *role-taking*—which is the taking of a finished, fully established role which does not permit the individual any variation, any degree of freedom—*role-playing*—which permits the individual some degree of freedom—and *role-creating*—which permits the individual a high degree of freedom, as for instance, the *spontaneity player*. A role, as defined in this paper, is composed of two parts—its *collective denominator* and its *individual differential*.

methods. This would be comparatively simple if (a) all the crucial roles and situations of a culture were known, (b) if a number of individual participants of this culture were on hand for the purpose of re-enactment. A skillful director could take advantage of the fact that these individuals, being detached from their native soil, are able to play their own role with a certain degree of deliberation and objectivity.

For the study of cultural inter-relations the sociodramatic procedure is ideally suited, especially when two cultures co-exist in physical proximity and their members respectively are in a continuous process of interaction and exchange of values. Examples are the Negro-White, the American Indian-White, and the situation of all cultural and racial minorities in the United States. In culture A. every member has a mental picture of the role of the father, the mother, the judge, the mayor, the head of the state, the role of the priest, the role of God, the roles in each case modified somewhat by the subjective experiences of the members. But all these mental pictures refer to his *own* culture. The members of culture A. may have *no* images, or very *deficient* and distorted ones, of the representative roles in the neighboring culture B. And the members of culture B. may have no mental pictures, or very deficient and distorted ones, of the representative roles of culture A. This dilemma could be surmounted by reversal of role-playing as long as all roles in culture A. exist also in culture B. and vice versa. But the inter-cultural situation is often strained by another factor. Certain roles which exist in one culture, for instance, the role of God or the role of the gentleman, do not exist in another culture altogether or in a different form. Or a certain culture is so deficient in the development of a certain role, for instance the role of the warrior that it is continuously threatened by a neighboring culture in which the warrior role is highly developed. Furthermore, in one culture the same role may have a different or a totally opposite evaluation, for instance, the role of the private proprietor or capitalist in the U.S.A. or in Soviet Russia. The tensions arising from these problems cannot be alleviated by spreading of factual information only. Even if full information could be attained by observation and analysis, it has become certain that observation and analysis are inadequate tools for exploring the more sophisticated aspects of inter-cultural relations, and that deep action methods are indispensable. Moreover the latter have proven to be of indisputable value and unreplaceable because they can, in the form of the sociodrama, investigating *explore as well as treat* in one stroke, the conflicts which have arisen between two separate cultural orders, and at the same time, by the same action, undertaking to change the attitude of the members of one culture versus the members of the other. Furthermore,

it can reach large groups of people, and by using radio or television it can affect millions of local groups and neighborhoods, in which inter-cultural conflicts and tensions are dormant or in the initial phases of open warfare. Therefore, the potentialities of drama-research and role research⁷ for giving clues to methods by which public opinion and attitudes can be influenced or changed are still unrecognized and unresolved.

I hope to have been able to give here a clear idea of sociodrama as a concept, and am going to introduce now some of the methods and techniques which have been applied to actual problems. One method is the dramatized or living newspaper technique which I started twenty years ago in the Viennese Stegreiftheater. It was a novel project, a synthesis between the newspaper and the drama.⁸ Among the forms of writing, the newspaper comes nearest to being a spontaneous expression and to fulfilling—in a trivial and limited way—what we mean by the concept of the moment. It is tied up with the present. An event, soon after it has happened, loses its news value. It has therefore a natural affinity to the form of the spontaneous drama, which requires for its unrehearsed, immediate form an equally spontaneous and immediate content, for instance the ever new and ever changing social and cultural events which are flashed from moment to moment to the editorial office of a newspaper. In this sense the living newspaper was not only dramatic, but rather sociodramatic. Three factors had to be considered in the dramatized newspaper production. First, the localities where the events took place and the personages involved in them. Second, a cast of impromptu reporters who had to get into contact with them whenever possible, and bring, or transfer the news to us. Third, a set of impromptu actors who were able to portray on the spot the roles and

⁷For source material on role research see: Das Stegreiftheater, 1923. J. L. Moreno, "Psychopathology of Interpersonal Relations and Interpersonal Therapy," *Sociometry*, 1937, Vol. I, No. 1. Theodore Sarbin, "The Concept of the Role," *Sociometry*, 1943, Vol. VI, No. 3.

⁸At first I used the term, living newspaper (Lebendige Zeitung), which was changed later to the more appropriate term "Dramatized Newspaper" (Die Dramatizierte Zeitung). "Sie ist eine Synthese aus Theater und Zeitung, daher wesentlich verschieden vom mittelalterlichen und russischen Brauch einer muendlichen und gesprochenen Zeitung. . . Die dramatisierte Zeitung ist keine Rezitation, das Leben selbst wird gespielt. Die Ereignisse sind dramatisiert." (It is a synthesis between drama and newspaper, therefore it differs in essence from the mediaeval and Russian custom of a spoken newspaper. The dramatized newspaper is not a recital of news, life itself is enacted. The events are dramatized.—Transl. by the author.) See section "Die Dramatizierte Zeitung" in J. L. Moreno's "Rede vor dem Richter," page 33, Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, Berlin 1925, obtainable at Beacon House, Inc., New York City.

situations which had just occurred. In our present terminology we would say that the reporters functioned—as the primary persons of the actual situations were absent—as go betweens, warming up our actors—the auxiliary egos—to the scenes and roles which were to be enacted. In the course of production a significant feature developed. Even if a printed newspaper brings reports from as different parts of the world as Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, India or China, the description of the events is given in *words*. But in a living newspaper, the event had to be dramatized in accord with the cultural characteristics of the locality. The roles and the setting had to be portrayed, in order to have meaning, in the gestures, movements and interaction forms characteristic for that particular cultural setting. The consequence was that the audience of a dramatized newspaper had an opportunity to experience in a living form the ways of cultural role-taking in various parts of the world. But the living newspaper technique, after a few years of nation-wide popularity, in the form of the March of Time and as a W.P.A. project, came to a dead end in 1940. It would be interesting to point out the causes which brought a valuable sociodramatic invention to disuse. A review of one of my first living newspaper experiments in the U.S.A.⁹ which brought the idea into the grapevines years before the dramatization of events by the March of Time as well as by the W.P.A. was begun, may throw some light upon the reasons for its eventual failure. The reaction of the press was as follows:

New York Evening World Telegram, March 28, 1931. (Douglas Gilbert)

"To obviate the suspicion of previous rehearsals Dr. Moreno's troupe will dramatize news events of the day."

New York Sun, March 30, 1931.

"The audience at the Guild Theatre on Sunday will see a 'newsreel' of current events created in stage form under their very noses, acted without any sort of rehearsal. It will be possible to read in *The Sun* on Saturday evening the account of a bank robbery, a public ceremony or the death of a prominent man and to see that selfsame incident portrayed on the stage only twenty-four hours later."

New York Times, April 6, 1931.

"The first endeavor was to be a newspaper drama and the master explained the situation and assigned the parts swiftly."

New York Morning Telegraph, April 7, 1931. (Stanley Chapman)

"The impromptu players will present a spontaneous dramatization of

⁹Theatre Guild, April 5th, 1931.

a newspaper. . . . Presently all the members of the impromptu came on the stage and the doctor told them off for parts. He designated one as the owner of a newspaper, another as the city editor and another as the advertising manager."

New York Evening Post, April 6, 1931. (John Mason Brown)
 "You are now in the main office of a newspaper. Yes, in the main office of *The Daily Robot*, waiting for news."

The press reaction was reserved and sarcastic as is usual with a novelty. However, one factor was appreciated in the reports,—the spontaneity of the players. There was no playwright and no script. It is in this point that the March of Time as well as the W.P.A. living newspaper project have deviated from my original concept. They trivialized and distorted it. Admittedly, spontaneity playing is a difficult task. But it is the crux of the matter. It is immaterial here whether a play is written by one or by a group of writers. As soon as the living newspaper is used as a frame for writing a nice and polished play all the conventional trappings of the theatre automatically come back into operation. The idea of making the social present of a community dynamically experienced by all its members in an active way is destroyed. A living newspaper, once produced and repeated before many audiences like any other play, conflicts with the fact that there are hundreds of other versions of the same events and problems which are not brought to the experience of the spectators. The spectators, instead of being educated to become more spontaneously receptive are—by a detour to the conserve—indoctrinated by the old time rigidity and inflexibility which the living newspaper wanted to overcome. Every individual spectator or listener has a somewhat different, individual experience of the role of f.i., the politician, the murderer, the liberator, the priest. It is exactly in this individual-experience-variety that the living newspaper is able to excel and differentiate itself from all forms of conserved and stereotyped drama. Preparation and planning are required, but by methods of a different kind than those of the theatre.¹⁰

Another method developed out of the psychodramatic procedure which is free of the newspaper context. Many times people were found in the audience who suffer deeply from a major maladjustment, but of a collective and not of a private nature. One suffers because he is a Christian, a Jew or a Communist, or for instance he suffers because he is a Negro,

¹⁰The theatre is only one of the many forms which the idea of the drama can take, just as the church is one of the many forms which the universal idea of religion can take.

living in Harlem, New York City. Soon after the racial riots occurred in Harlem a number of sessions were dedicated to their exploration and possible treatment. Here the situation was more direct and required a more natural form of presentation than newspaper reporting. The two cultures which were involved in a conflict live in close proximity, engaged in a process of intermarriage and exchange of values. Expressed in terms of power the white group is in the role of dominance and the colored group in the role of subordination. We did not need any particular participant observer to study their inter-cultural relations, they are next-door neighbors. Indeed, the very audience which composed the session contained representative members of white and colored New Yorkers who, even if they did not live in Harlem proper, were directly or indirectly closely related to the situation existing there, leading up to the riots. The phases which we differentiated in the reconstruction of the Harlem situation were as follows: first, the situation which existed in Harlem before the riots took place. We gave, therefore, our attention to the standard situations in Negro Harlem, especially to the ones which were particularly prone to provoke inter-racial and inter-cultural frictions. The role of the typical Harlem cop, the role of the clergyman, the school teacher, the parent, the hotel owner, the gambler, the street walker, the role of the Negro war veteran and of the soldier on furlough or to be drafted, all these came to our attention, not in the individual, but in their collective representation. The second phase consisted of the situations which actually provoked the riots, the personages involved in them, and the roles in which they were at the time when the riots happened. The third phase began with the problem of how to translate the underlying collective events and the actual scenes of the riots into sociodramatic terms. The procedure was so designed that some of the actual rioters and victims of the riots should be brought to the theatre as if it would be a psychodramatic session, but the method was to leave it entirely open whether they will be put on the stage to portray their individual experiences. The idea was rather to have a number of individuals on the spot who could serve as *informants* of what *they* have gone through. The plan was that if they would not act in person, they could transfer their experience to some of our auxiliary egos who, in turn, would translate them into role-creating action. It was clear to all of us that even if we would have used some of the actual rioters in person on the stage, the purpose of their enactments would not have been for the sake of exploring individual situations and producing individual catharsis, but for the sake of exploring collective situations and producing a collective catharsis. The causations of the riots had little to do with the individual lives but

were largely due to the conflict which had arisen between the cultures A. and B. of which they were representatives on one side of the fence, or the other. Another principal part of the method was to reconstruct the living Harlem community in sociodramatic situations as it comes to dynamic expression day by day, regardless of any spectacular incidents or riots. A well chosen situation is often apt to tap a key complex of problems, for instance, in an employment bureau near Harlem which dealt with white and colored clients. This situation precipitated the perennial motive: "No employment because you are colored." The three characters in the plot were the white agent, and two colored girls who applied for jobs which had been advertised in a local newspaper, and each was represented on the stage by representatives of their own race. It was not surprising to find that the two colored applicants had some experience themselves which fitted the situation, and this made it easier for them to warm up to the representative, collective complaint which every Negro has against the white people as a group. The sociodrama began to develop from then on almost upon its own momentum. The girls returned home and told their parents that they had failed to get the jobs. A brother who was in the army and just home on furlough, got into a frenzy over what he heard from his sister. Then tension began to mount in the audience. One spectator after another tried to act out his own variation of the conflict, the colored problem in the army followed the colored unemployment problem and a spontaneous mood began to spread all over the audience and up to the stage, similar to the one which must have existed in Harlem before and on the day of the riots. This "warming up" process of an entire group to a re-experience of a perennial social problem unsolvable by conventional means, as newspaper reporting, books, pamphlets, social case work, interviews, religious sermons, and so forth, is opening new roads for social therapeutics. It is inherent in the method that all phases of the sociodrama, even the most technical preparatory steps are initiated *within* the group situation and not outside of it. As nothing whatsoever is left out from observation and action, everything which happens is available to research and analysis. *There is no backstage and no back moment.* Subjects should not be prepared ahead of time as to what role to take, how to act or what situations to select and which to leave out. They should not be advised how to react to the situations on the stage and no one should be picked in advance to do the responding. In other words, the procedure should be carried out sub species momenti and sub species loci, at one time and in one place. (This does not necessarily mean that all parts of the session are to be available to all the members of the group at once. It is sufficient for instance if—when an informant warms

up an auxiliary ego to a role—an observer follows them to their corner and records the process which is later communicated to the balance of the group.) The only factor which is brought into the situation and which is highly objectified, tested and re-tested, is the director himself and his staff of auxiliary egos. The preparation of director and staff is a desideratum in sociodramatic work. It gives them an objective approach to the situation and confidence in themselves. But the *spontaneity* of the subjects, of the informants as well as of the spectators, should be maintained by all means. Any rehearsal with informants ahead of the session will turn them into actors and often into bad ones. It would reduce the spontaneity and sincerity of the session, and turn it easily into an effort to imitate the theatre. In addition, it would deprive the spectators of a view into the development of the sociodrama from *statu nascendi*. Some of the most important factors may be barred from their experience in the warming-up process behind the scenes. What is lost in perfection and in show quality is gained in truthfulness and in the value which complete participation in the project offers to all members of the audience. The auxiliary egos are not necessarily used in every session. They are just *available* if an occasion arises. The director may choose *not* to use them and to prefer anonymous subjects from the group. Even the director is subordinated to the situation; it is a part of the strategy of psycho- and sociodrama that he must reduce his overt influence at times to a minimum, eliminating himself, leaving the direction to one or another member of the group.

If the total record,¹¹ auditory and visual, of a session is recorded and repeated one experiences a conglomeration of strategic plans, test procedures, interviews, fragments of scenes, fractions of fragments, analytic interpretations, methodical remarks, riotous outbursts of excitement, pauses full of tension, a dozen seeds of undreamt of social dramas and tragedies. But notwithstanding that psychodrama and sociodrama are mixtures of factors and processes which do not seem to belong together, according to the labels and restrictions of the university departments of aesthetics, the drama, ethics, or psychology, it exercises often a deeper effect upon the group than each of these could attain by themselves. It is probably because it is a truer counterpart to the ever unfinished and unpolished, half chaotic, and half cosmic life panorama in which we all take part.

Sociodramatic procedure needs careful planning. The planning is a

¹¹Records are made in the course of psychodramatic and sociodramatic procedure as a matter of routine—stenograms, photographs, films, phonograph records, etc., can be made. In this way the conserve returns but in a subordinated function, secondary to the function of spontaneity and creativity.

task of the director which consists, first, in gathering all factual information necessary for the project which is to be improvised, this information to be communicated to his staff of auxiliary egos. Any information is, at best, a framework so that the egos should not be hindered in their improvisations by a lack of purely technical knowledge of the subject matter. It provides them with the atmosphere of a social conflict, for instance, the Negro-White situation in the southern states, or the Hindu-Mohammedan situation in India. Second, some training of the auxiliary egos for a project is necessary. An auxiliary ego as a private person may have, for instance, a bias against Nazi Germany, and be in favor of Soviet Russia. In a session which is dedicated to the presentation of the Nazi-Communist conflict, he may unconsciously show his leanings towards communism by giving a distorted portrayal of a Nazi soldier compared with that of a Russian soldier. Therefore, the auxiliary ego must learn to detach himself as far as possible from everything in his own collective life which might bias him toward one or another of the cultures portrayed. Elaborate spontaneity training may be necessary before his own collective conflicts cease to affect his function as an auxiliary in inter-cultural relations. However, the most careful preparation and training of director and egos should not turn them into stereotyped role-takers. It should give them a solid basis for undertaking a difficult social and cultural project. Every session into which they enter is full of unpredictable elements; a group of people they have never faced may spring a surprise upon them. They are compelled to stay free from too much anticipation of forthcoming events. Last but not least, they must be able to subjectify rapidly the experiences of the actual informants. In order to do this it takes vigilance and spontaneity.

The exploratory value of sociodramatic procedure is only one half of the contribution which it can make, the other and perhaps the greater half of the contribution is that it can *cure* as well as solve, that it can change attitudes, as well as study them. An understanding of this is closely linked with the concept of catharsis with which I opened this paper. The meaning it has in sociodrama can be elucidated by comparing it with the primary meaning which Freud has given the psychoanalytic situation and to psychoanalytic therapy. Freud insisted upon the strict privacy and individual character of the psychoanalytic situation. He did not permit anyone to enter that situation, not even the closest kin of the subject under treatment. This was a logical procedure from the point of view of individual psychology and the strategy of the psychoanalyst, but it closed Freud's eyes to the essence of catharsis as it operates in sociodrama. Sociodrama deals with problems which, as we know, can neither be clarified nor treated in a secret.

chamber and by the seclusion of two. It needs all the eyes and all the ears of the community, its depth and breadth, in order that it may operate adequately. It needs, therefore, a milieu which differs entirely from the psychoanalytic situation, a forum in which the group with its collective problems can be treated with the same earnestness as the individual is treated in a consultation room. The ideal form for this is the drama which all can share, the forum par excellence is the amphitheatre, and the effect is a community catharsis.

It remains to clarify what kind of a process catharsis is, by what forces it is brought about,—its causations, and what results it has,—its effects. Aristotle maintained that it purifies the mind of the spectators by holding a mirror before them, how unfortunate was Oedipus, how miserable Cassandra, and how mournful and destitute Electra. It arouses fear and pity in them, liberating them from the temptation of falling into the abyss of madness and of perversion themselves. Aristotle has well indicated one of the effects, but he has left unsaid by what force the process of purification is caused. Freud would ascribe this effect to a psychological mechanism which he called unconscious identification, which is closely akin to the Aristotelian interpretation—the spectator, by living through the dramatic events, in identifying himself with the characters, finds at least temporary relief from his deeper unconscious conflicts. But identification is in itself a symptom and not a cause. It is not the primary process. Aristotle was handicapped in giving the causes leading up to catharsis, by the fact that the tragedy was for him an irreducible fixed entity. He did not return step by step to its *statu nascendi*, the social and cultural sources out of which the form of the drama emerged. Sociodrama returns to the *statu nascendi* of these deepest social realities unflavored yet by art and undiluted yet by intellectualization. The great collective conflicts are stirring up hostility between one culture and another, one race and another, culminating in wars and revolutions. In a sociodramatic session hundreds of individuals bring their conflicts in *statu nascendi* with them. These individuals are not yet differentiated into categories, spectators and actors. They are all potentially in the same situation. The director is searching for a conflict which may stir up the group to the deepest possible catharsis, and for actors to portray this conflict. Everyone in the group goes through a similar process. Everyone warms up with varying degrees of intensity, positively or negatively towards the situation to be dramatized and towards the characters to be portrayed. The director says: There is a Negro who is lynched by a mob. Who wants to take the part of the Negro? There is a man who leads the white mob against the Negro. Who wants to be that man? Everyone may

be the vehicle for the enactment of these roles. There is no ready-made dramatic conserve, not even a final plot, everything is fluid. Everyone undergoes a process of initial excitement, stirred up by physical and mental starters.

Catharsis in the sociodrama differs from catharsis in the psychodrama.¹² The psychodramatic approach deals with personal problems principally and aims at personal catharsis.¹³ In psychodramatic procedure a subject whether it is a Christian, a Communist, a Negro, a Jew, a Jap, or a Nazi is treated as a specific person, with his private world. His collective situation is considered only as far as it affects his personal situation. Therefore, he has to be *himself* the chief actor in the treatment procedure. In sociodramatic procedure the subject is not a person, but a group. Therefore it is not an individual Negro who is considered, but all Negroes, all Christians, all Jews, are considered. There are inter-cultural conflicts in which an individual is persecuted, not because of himself, but because of the group to which he belongs. It is not a Negro but the Negro, it is not a Christian but the Christian, and in reverse the persecutor is in the mind of the persecuted not a white man but the white people, not an individual German, but the Nazis. Therefore, in the sociodramatic session it is in principle immaterial which individual portrays the role of a Christian, a Jew, or a Nazi, as long as he is a member of the collective treated. Anyone can be the actor. An individual who takes the role of the Christian on the stage will portray it for every Christian, whoever takes the role of a Jew, for every Jew, as the aim of the procedure is not his own salvation, but the salvation of all the members of his clan.¹⁴ The protagonist on the stage

¹²See J. L. Moreno, "Mental Catharsis and the Psychodrama," *Sociometry*, Volume 3, No. 3, 1940, p. 227.

¹³The difference between psychodrama and sociodrama should be extended to every type of group psychotherapy. A difference should be made between the individual type of group psychotherapy and the collective type of group psychotherapy. The individual type of group psychotherapy is individual-centered. It focusses its attention upon the single individuals in the situation, of which the group consists, and not upon the group in general. The collective type of group psychotherapy is group centered. It focusses its attention upon the collective denominators and is not interested in the individual differentials or the private problems which they produce.

¹⁴One individual may of course be preferred to another in the portrayal of a particular role but only because of a greater ability to portray it, and not because his own situation differs in any way from the situation of every other member of his group. Just as there are some people who are photogenic, there are some individuals who are *dramatogenic*, especially sensitive for collective experiences and able to dramatize them easily.

is not portraying a *dramatis personae*, the creative output of the mind of an *individual* playwright, but a collective experience. He, an auxiliary ego, is an emotional extension of many egos. Therefore, in a sociodramatic sense, it is not identification of the spectator with the actor on the stage, presuming some difference between him and the character which the latter portrays. It is *identity*.¹⁶ All Christians, all Negroes, all Jews or all Nazis are collective characters. Every Christian is, as a Christian, identical with every other Christian. In the primary phase of collective *identity*, there is no need, therefore, for identification. There is no difference between spectators and actors; all are protagonists.

The drama production of the individual playwright has a number of intermediary phases to which little attention has been given in drama research. Between the initial phase and source—the dramatic life events themselves—as the Wars of Troy, the French Revolution, the World Wars I and II, the social upheavals accompanying them, and the dramatic works of Aeschylus, Shakespeare or Ibsen, is a long track of development which requires investigation. It is here that the sociodrama can step in and serve as a check and balance to cultural tensions and hostilities arising from world-wide events and as a means to social catharsis. In the form of the psychodramatic and sociodramatic conserve in film and television, the drama conserve may come back revitalized, opening a new vista for the future of the drama.

This is the genesis of the drama and of its original aim, that of collective catharsis.

¹⁶For further elaboration, see J. L. Moreno and F. B. Moreno, "Psychodramatic Theory of Child-development" *Sociometry*, Volume 7, No. 1, 1944.

The Concept of Sociodrama: A New Approach to the Problem of Inter-Cultural Relations



J. L. Moreno

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