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Chapter Seven

JACOB L. MORENO AND PSYCHODRAMA

INTRODUCTION

The psychodramatic method is a group method. It is based on the notion that human beings live and move in relationship to one another and benefit through developing relationships of a certain quality and with a sufficient volume of people. Human beings develop through a real encounter with others and with their own self. In this meeting there is a role reversal with the other person, the placing of oneself in the shoes of the other, and the seeing of oneself through the eyes of the other. Thus in the meeting there is the greater ability to appreciate the other person through knowing their perceptions of the world as well as a greater ability to see oneself.

In the classical psychodrama when the group meets a director seeks to create a situation in which group members come to focus on an important aspect of living that is of concern to all of them. This is termed the warm-up period of the group.

The group concern is then explored in depth by the group member by the group member who is most warmed up. The exploration of life is done through dramatic enactment with the assistance of a director and auxiliaries chosen by the protagonist from the group. The auxiliaries play the roles of those people necessary for accurate enactment of life situations or of future projections. Such dramatic enactment is called the action phase of the group.

The psychodramatic method is based on notions about the nature of human beings and their development from birth on, about the nature of human relationships, and about how growth and development occur.

The training of a director or an auxiliary involves considerable training and practical supervised experience. Training in the psychodramatic method is therefore outside the scope of this course in group work. In most cases the method is demonstrated during the seminar on psychodrama. The notes which follow present the major structural concepts of the method.

LITERATURE

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SELF PRESENTATION

The aim of the psychodramatic enactment is to portray life on the stage in a truthful manner. Thus the psychodramatic method involves the whole of human functioning, body and mind, reality and extra-reality, human beings in society and the cosmos, past, present and future enacted in the here-and-now.

THE MEETING

Meeting means more than an a vague inter-personal relation. It means that two or more persons meet, but not only to face one another but to live and experience each other as actors each in their own right. It is not like a professional meeting but a meeting of two people. Moreno writes: "In a meeting the two persons are there in space, with all their strengths and all their weaknesses, to human actors seething with spontaneity, only partly conscious of their mutual aims. It became clear to me then, as it is now to many sociometrists, that only people who meet one another can form a natural group and an actual society of human beings. It is people who meet one another who are the responsible and genuine founders of social living."

SPONTANEITY

In both sociometry and the psychodramatic method there is an emphasis on spontaneity. This is the catalyst that activates and enlivens the individual group

members so that a durable group structure is formed and so that the fulfillment of the functions and purpose of the group occurs.

Human beings are not dolls and must not be treated like dolls. They are endowed in various degrees with initiative and spontaneity.

Definition of Spontaneity

The classic definition of spontaneity created by Dr Moreno is: an adequate response to a new situation or a new response to an old situation.

The nature of spontaneity is such that it operates in the here and the now as a catalyzer. It possesses no stable quantity or volume and therefore cannot be stored up. It emerges in the moment. It creates an open ended system.

Forms of spontaneity

Spontaneity takes a variety of different forms including the following:

Adequacy: This is the spontaneity which goes into the formation of adequate responses to novel situations. Adequacy is an adaptive, mobile, and flexible ability of the self.

The importance of adequacy as a characteristic of spontaneity cannot be overemphasised. The popular understanding of spontaneity virtually amounts to the idea that a person does whatever they feel like at the time. The idea of adequacy is a timely corrective to the popular idea which encourages simply acting out a person's frustrations. Adequacy is what assists in the building up of a working and creative society.

The Warm-Up: Spontaneity takes the form of warming up to responding in particular situations. Spontaneity in the sense of a warming up process is necessary on all levels of human relations. There needs to be an adequate warm-up to eating, walking, sleeping, sexual expression, social communication, creativity, and religious expression. If we enter into a situation cold we do not function adequately. There is a need to warm up to particular roles, that is, to the appropriate thinking, feelings, and actions. When we warm up fully to a particular moment in a particular situation then we are said to be in a spontaneity state.

Then the creative genius, which is a sleeping giant inside us, awakens and its powers are available to us. Then new perceptions and new solutions emerge into our consciousness.

Vitality: Vitality is that form of spontaneity which goes into revitalising cultural conserves and social stereotypes. It gives newness and vivacity to feelings, actions, and verbal content. It makes people look more youthful and intelligent than usual.

Originality: Originality is spontaneity which goes into the formation of free expressions of the personality. Thus a person may have a number of original ways of holding a wine glass. It is not significant enough to be termed creativity but is a unique expansion or variation of a cultural conserve.

The Movement from Reality to Fantasy and Back Again: Spontaneity is a factor which makes for mastery over both reality and fantasy and for a rapid shifting between the two. People who lack this form of spontaneity remain either caught in the mundane world or caught in a fantasy world.

Creativity: This is the highest form of spontaneity. It is the spontaneity which goes into creating new organisms, new forms of art, new patterns of living, new inventions and new ideas. If there were no creativity we would have a world that is automatic, that has no past or future, no evolution or purpose, a world that would be absolutely changeless and meaningless.

As a result of the work of creativity cultural conserves result. These are the finished product of the creative process. The cultural conserve is anything that preserves the values of a particular culture and may take the form of a material object such as a book, a film, a building, or a musical composition. As a repository of the past, cultural conserves preserve and continue a person's creative ego. Without them people would be reduced to creating spontaneously the same forms to meet the same situations day after day. In addition to providing continuity to the heritage of human existence, the cultural conserve plays and even more significant role as the springboard for enticing new spontaneity toward creativity. Moreno writes: "These conserves wait for Prince Charming spontaneity to awaken them from their sleep. Left to themselves, nothing new would ever happen. But conserves represent the greatest cultural capital, a form of property and power, a means of expressing superiority when the superiority of immediate spontaneous creativity is not available."

STRUCTURAL CONCEPTS

Role

The term role has been used by various theorists to mean different things. Dr J.L. Moreno uses the term to mean "the functioning form the individual assumes in the specific moment he reacts to a specific situation in which other persons or objects are involved." A role is therefore a unit of behaviour which is observable. It is specific to a situation and to the people or objects present in that situation. Its meaning can only be properly understood when the role is viewed in the context in which it takes place.

The first roles to develop are psychosomatic roles which are physiologically determined, such as the role of the sleeper, the eater, the walker, and the sexual role. Psychodramatic roles are the personal roles such as the roles of a mother, a teacher. These roles emerge early in life through fantasy. Psychodramatic roles

are elsewhere described by Moreno as “the personification of imagined things, both real and unreal”, God roles, ghosts, fairies, and hallucinated roles. They are the world of the inner experience of internal roles. They are primary to identity and the formation of the self concept. They are continually pressing for expression and may take socially useful or socially disapproved of forms. They are far more extensive and dominating than social roles.

Social roles are the roles of *the* mother, the son, the daughter, the teacher. Social roles develop in response to the cultural conserve. They are prescribed by the culture and are taught both by the family and social institutions.

The self is seen as an internal structure of roles. Psychosomatic roles cluster together providing an experience of body. Social roles cluster together providing an experience of society. Psychodramatic roles cluster together forming an experience of the psyche.

The Social Atom

Moreno has stated that the social atom is “that peculiar pattern of interpersonal relations which develops from the time of human birth. It first contains mother and child. As time goes on, it adds from the persons who come into the child’s orbit such persons as are unpleasant or pleasant to him and vica versa, those to whom he is unpleasant or pleasant. Persons who do not leave any impression, positive or negative, remain outside the social atom as mere acquaintances. The feeling which correlates two or more individuals has been called tele. The social atom is therefore a compound of the tele relationships of an individual. As positively or negatively charged persons may leave the individual’s social atom and others may enter it, the social atom has a more or less ever-changing constellation.” A psychodrama director is alert to the nature of an individual’s social atom, seeks to make a proper diagnosis of it, and develops interventions which lead to social atom repair.

The Cultural Atom

The cultural atom refers to the roles and the relationships between the roles which are enacted by the individuals in the social atom. Therefore the cultural atom is part of the social atom. It is the social atom looked at from a particular perspective. In any group it is important to develop the ability to observe and assess the nature of the roles enacted by different group members and which roles lead to productive group functioning. Accurate assessment of the role system of individuals and well thought out plans will lead not only to a better functioning group but also to a better functioning individual.

Systems

Each person is linked to the larger culture. Moreno writes:

A social atom is thus composed of numerous tele structures; social atoms are again parts of a still larger pattern, the psychological networks which bind or separate large groups of individuals due to their tele relationship.

Psychological networks are parts of a still larger unit, the psychological geography of a community. A community is again part of the largest configuration, the psychological totality of human society itself.

THE DRAMA

In every drama there are different people playing different roles.

The Director

The director is the chief therapist who has abilities to conduct the warm-up phase of the group, the action phase, and the sharing phase. During the action phase of a drama there are usually three sub-phases namely: production, social investigation, and therapeutic guidance.

The Protagonist

The protagonist is the chief actor, the person who is most warmed up to the group concern. The protagonist therefore assists the whole group to waking group members up to their own functioning with respect to the subject of the drama, through stimulating their imagination, and through pointing the way toward new solutions to aspects of living.

The Auxiliary Ego

This is a person who takes the role of a significant other in the drama.

The Audience

The audience plays a significant role in a drama from time to time the audience may be moved to interact with the protagonist or with auxiliaries. The audience plays a significant role after the action phase of the drama is over by sharing of their own experiences, thoughts and reflections with the protagonist such that the protagonist not only feels reconnected with the group but also

frequently there is a greater integration of the solutions worked out in the drama and further discoveries made.

PSYCHODRAMATIC TECHNIQUES

The following are some of the major techniques used in a session:

Role Reversal. The protagonist, in an interpersonal situation, takes the role of the other person involved.

Double. An auxiliary ego is placed side by side with the protagonist and interacts with him, physically duplicating him in space and assisting him in the assessment of his problems.

Mirror. In the classic mirror technique, an auxiliary ego acts the part of the protagonist, assumes his identity and reproduces the protagonist's behaviour with others.

Soliloquy. The monologue of the protagonist in the situation he is acting. Soliloquy is usually part of the warm-up to a situation.

Aside. The portrayal by side-dialogues and side actions of hidden thoughts and feelings which parallel the overt thoughts and actions.

Details of these and other techniques can be found in Zerka T Moreno, "A Survey of Psychodramatic Techniques," *Psychodrama and Group Psychotherapy Monographs*, No. 44. New York: Beacon House, Inc., 1969.

SPECIALISED FORMS OF THE METHOD

The psychodramatic method is expressed through a number of specialised forms.

Psychodrama

Psychodrama is a method which explores the total personality of an individual as it is expressed in their life situation through spontaneous drama. It allows the person to express his view of a situation by taking all relevant roles and examining the interactions. The inner and outer reality of the person take shape more thoroughly and more completely than life would permit under normal circumstances.

Sociodrama

Sociodrama uses spontaneous drama to act out problems or issues in society, to examine the nature or interactions between various groups and explore various solutions.

Spontaneity Training

Spontaneity training develops the spontaneity of the individual. Spontaneity as defined by Dr Moreno includes such skills as warm-up, creativity, originality and adequacy of response.

Role Training

Role training focuses on development of specific aspects of a person's functioning and may become necessary when roles in a person are inadequate or absent as, for instance, when a person is undergoing a professional training process, is changing his position in society or is institutionalised for a long period of time.

THE ROLE OF THE THERAPIST

Dr Moreno regarded every member of a group as a active therapeutic agent for every other member of the group. "The groups function for themselves, and the therapeutic process streams through their mutual inter-relations." He emphasises that the therapeutic agent must not be a psychiatrist or an educator. It can be any participating individual. Therapy happens through the interaction of one or more persons who are so coordinated with one another that the curative tendencies within each person is strengthened and the disparaging tendencies are checked.

The director or therapist is there to stimulate the spontaneity and warm-up of the group and to participate utilising their own spontaneity. The director is defined as the person with the most spontaneity in the room.