

THE FUNCTION OF THE
SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR IN
EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHODRAMA

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INTRODUCTION

The experimental psychodrama has shown that controlled experiments in the social sciences can be carried out--for the first time, it is believed, in the evolution of the social sciences--with the same precision as in the so-called natural sciences. More particularly, it is possible to make the social investigator,¹ who is inside the social situation, an objective part of the material studied--to have him, so to speak, both inside the experiment and outside of it. What has hitherto been, in the strict sense, impossible, now becomes possible: man can be made his own "guinea-pig."²

A scientifically correct exploration of a social problem must begin with the exploration of the social investigator himself. This exploration has several well-marked phases: first, it must determine the rôle which the investigator is to assume in the situation he is to examine; second, it must determine the changes in his attitudes and rôles which will take place in the course of the investigation. Finally, the mind of the investigator must be explored to determine what he is thinking before, during, and after the investigation. In short, the investigator must expose himself to systematic observation. For a thorough, systematic observation of the social investigator, the psychodramatic method is ideally suited.

In the psychodramatic method, the function of the social investigator is primarily fulfilled by the psychodramatic

¹J. L. Moreno, "A Frame of Reference for Testing the Social Investigator," *Sociometry*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 317-327, and "Developments in Social Psychology, 1930-1940," by L. S. Cottrell, Jr., and Ruth Gallagher, *Sociometry Monograph*, No. 1, 1941, pp. 57 and 58.

²Julian Huxley, "Science, Natural and Social," *Scientific Monthly*, Jan., 1940, and G. A. Lundberg, "The Future of the Social Sciences," *Scientific Monthly*, Oct., 1941.

director. It is the director who is the prime mover in the investigation. To a lesser extent, the auxiliary egos employed by the director in the investigation can also be considered as social investigators, but their function as such is subsidiary to that of the director; they act as tools of the director and bring to him the benefit of their actual participation in the problem itself, both as reporters of their observations and as agents of the director functioning within the problem in a controlled and systematic fashion.

It is the purpose of this paper to examine and objectify both the psychodramatic director and the auxiliary ego in their functions as social investigators, first, in a general way within the frame of the psychodramatic procedure and, second, in reference to a particular case-illustration.

ANALYSIS OF THE PSYCHODRAMATIC DIRECTOR

To a hypothetical question as to whether or not the function of the director is essential to the psychodramatic procedure, the answer can only be in the affirmative, for someone, after all, must start the session, call upon the subjects, open the various interviews and act as a sort of "super-auxiliary ego" to keep an eye on the total picture.

The psychodramatic director, in his function as a social investigator, can be examined from two points of view. First, there is the point of view of the general and formal pattern of conduct which he exhibits at all times and in all cases; second, there are the patterns of conduct which he exhibits in a particular case. Here there may be as many variations in his behavior as there are cases. The director can describe and outline the psychological considerations which determine his selection of a particular approach or method of treatment. It is also necessary that he give some idea of the motives which drive him to assume a certain range of rôles in relation to a subject and to challenge the subject to assume certain counter-rôles. Here, too, must be included all the inner frames of reference within the director, and their relationship to the inner frames of reference within the subject and the auxiliary egos who function in the problem. We must know, for instance, what prompts the director to select certain auxiliary egos and reject certain others in the solution of a particular problem.

In this paper we shall limit the analysis of the director to the general and formal pattern which, we have found, is

not without bias in spite of the fact that it has become almost a ritual. Long before the director could subject himself to analysis by the group of people who compose the psychodramatic audience at any given time--regardless, indeed, of whether or not he does so subject himself--he is nevertheless continuously exposed to observation and analysis by this group. A scientific approach to this problem of analysis has been made, and the reactions of every one of the participants to the director's procedure have been determined. The director was induced to reveal the motives underlying his actions, and the participants were asked to put themselves in his place and report their own reactions and inclinations, just as if each one of them were the director. A comparison of the various points of view brought interesting results. It was seen that three major patterns of the director's actions were scrutinized: (a) the "interview-position," that is, the position in which he opens a session and interviews a subject, (b) and (c) the "observer-position" and the "spectator-position."

The Interview-Position. The first function of a psychodramatic director is to get the session going. In most cases this is done by an interview with someone selected from the group of spectators. This person may be a subject who is to be investigated or a patient who is to be treated. In either case, the position which the director takes up must be a natural one and one which implies an acknowledgment of the whole psychodramatic situation: the group, sitting in the audience from which, at any time, anyone may be called upon to function on the stage, and the setting which combines the audience and the stage, with its three levels and its balcony. The position most usually adopted by the director at this juncture is a seated one at the center point of the second level of the stage. Whereas this position is a natural one to assume, it may be well to inquire as to the motives of the director for assuming it and to check the reactions it has upon an average group of twenty people in the audience. The essentially practical reasons for assuming a seated position on the second level of the stage at approximately its center point are the following. The director is, in this position, relaxed. Sitting as he is on the second level, he finds that the upper level's edge presents a convenient rest for his elbow and that he can place his feet comfortably on the first, or lower, level. Inquiry among the group of twenty spectators brought the comment from each of them that they, too, would assume this particular position and that the relaxation which this position affords the director had

a relaxing effect upon each of them. They volunteered the opinion that, if the director were to stand, they themselves would reflect the tension and formality of this position--perhaps because of the fact that they, at the time, would be sitting. Another practical reason for choosing the second level--as opposed to the lower level--is that here the director is easily visible to everyone in the audience. From the point of view of the director, this interview-position has the advantage that when he calls a subject to sit beside him for the interview, both are on the same level--they are "equal." This is particularly important when it comes to the treatment of a mental patient. In psychiatric work, there is often a feeling of coldness or distance between the patient and the physician. This position places them face to face--as man to man, so to speak--with no physical or symbolic barriers between them, on the same level.

The stage at the Psychodramatic Institute has three levels. The upper one of these is where most of the action takes place--where the actual psychodramatic process comes to fulfillment. Consequently, from the point of view of symbolism, any preparatory interviews do not belong on that level and it is entirely logical that they take place on some other level: the second, for instance. This choice of the second level for the interview is therefore due--at least, in part--to the construction of this particular psychodramatic stage. It is quite conceivable that another stage might have either fewer or more levels. In which case, the logical level--either from practical or theoretical considerations--might well be some other level than the second. Likewise, it must not be set down as a hard and fast rule that the director must be seated during the interviews. With other directors, or with stages of different construction, the interview might take place with both the director and the subject seated at a desk or a table, or in seats in one of the front rows--or they might find it more suitable to remain standing. However, with a stage which has three levels, such as the one at the Psychodramatic Institute, it has been agreed by both directors and spectators that the warming-up process to the whole psychodramatic process, as well as to the various scenes to be acted out, is most efficiently carried out when the director sits at the center of the second level (as described above), with those whom he is interviewing at his side on the same level of the stage. It is this position to which the director returns at the end of every scene for analysis or for the purpose of warming up the subjects for the following scene. This has the effect of a recurring pattern which

which punctuates the succession of the scenes acted out on the stage proper. Here the director can directly assist in the process of building from climax to climax in scene after scene until the desired effect is reached. His function in this position can act like a bridge for the subjects and spectators alike from one scene to the next. It can also serve a purpose almost equally valuable as a bridge back to reality from some highly emotional or symbolic scene which has been played upon the higher level of the stage.

It was with the discussion of the position of the person to be interviewed--in reference to the psychodramatic director--that the question of individual bias arose. The director expressed a preference for having the subject sit at his right. This preference was so strong that he would not function well if the subject were on his left. He stated that to have the subject on his left impeded his process of warming up toward this subject; he could not begin the interview well nor could he carry it along with the necessary consistency and drive. Most of the spectators agreed that, if they were functioning as the director, they would exhibit the same preference; three, however, felt that they would prefer to have the subject on their left. Here, obviously, serious questions as to the subject's point of view in this matter could be raised. For instance, a given subject might, in order to foster his own warming-up process, need to be on the director's left.

Thus it can be seen that a bias--from the point of view of the director, the subject and the spectators--can become an element in a social investigation. Like the other considerations, it must be examined and allowance made for it. In the particular situation which we are outlining here, it can be seen that three kinds of bias were active: aesthetic, ethical and psychological. As an example of aesthetic bias, the director and a certain number of the participants may feel that they function at their best in just such a theatre setting as is provided by the Psychodramatic Institute; others may be made uncomfortable by it, and demand for satisfactory performance a setting of another type. Ethical bias may lead some of the participants to reject the assumption that the top level of the stage is the proper place for the true psychodramatic action--that the balcony is symbolic of the desire to perform as a hero or a messiah. A definite preference for having the subject on one's right during the interview is an example of psychological bias.

The Observer-Position. In this position the director stands on the audience level at the right of the stage,

close to the wall. This affords him a close view of the stage and a full view of the entire spectator-group. Generally, he puts his right foot on the edge of the first (lowest) level, which has the double effect of affording him some rest and turning his body to the left so that he is able to see both stage and audience without apparently changing his position. This position is particularly adapted for the close observation which is required in the mirror technique³ and in the study of spectator catharsis.³ From this position, the director can step up into the action and speak directly and forcefully to those taking part in a scene; he can move from one to another, as a dynamic agent, inspiring or checking their actions.

The Spectator-Position. A third position finds the director sitting in the front row. Here he is somewhat removed from active participation or interference with what is going on on the stage: he is the spectator, concentrating upon the action. Quite often he calls a subject to sit beside him in order to assist the warming-up process of this particular subject by explanatory remarks. Here again, the subject is put in a position of equality with the director: they are co-spectators of the action. It frequently happens that a resistant subject can be warmed up to the point of action, after other methods have failed, by encouraging and reassuring remarks from the director while a pertinent scene is taking place on the stage.

The above three positions for the psychodramatic director have been to some extent analyzed and discussed at the Psychodramatic Institute, as a part of a series of investigations into the function of the director as a social investigator. Further aspects of the problem will be taken up at another time. However, it is significant to note that the very essence of the psychodrama would be lost if any of these positions were recommended for rigid adherence. The director must at all times--just as must the auxiliary ego--be ready to adapt his positions and movements to the exigencies of the various situations as they appear. He must not, for instance, insist on maintaining the interview-position when a subject is resistant, and will not leave his seat. On such occasions, the director gets up and walks over to him and urges him to come up and sit by him. If not immediately successful, he may

³J. L. Moreno, "Psychodramatic Treatment of Psychoses," Sociometry, Vol. III, No. 2, 1940, p. 122.

return to his place on the second level of the stage and proceed with the session, working with other subjects, or wait until some significant scene has been started on the stage and then go and sit by the reluctant subject in the audience.

From some of the foregoing it might be deduced that the director has a tendency to develop a persistent pattern and to impose it upon the subjects, regardless of whether they like it or not. However, the subjective element in this tendency--perhaps the director's own bias--should be carefully scrutinized in every individual case with a view to weighing the effect which it may have upon the beginning, the course and the results of the whole psychodramatic process.

An analysis of all these positions has disclosed a number of significant subjective factors in the director which interfere, in part, with the pattern and distort the treatment and the results. They represent, as a totality, what can be called the "psychodramatic error" injected into the situation by the personality of the director.

Such an analysis of the director has two results. First, it gives us a clear picture of the limitations of the director. The director, too, can profit by this process, and his limitations can be carefully considered in an objectified presentation of his function. It may even happen that his limitations form a basic error in his performance and thus constitute an unsurmountable barrier to correction. Secondly, some or all of his limitations may be open to correction by means of spontaneity training. Increased flexibility may be produced and he may grow to be able to give all his subjects a maximum opportunity of expression, always directing a situation in such a fashion that it meets the needs of the subject first of all, and his own afterward.

ANALYSIS OF THE AUXILIARY EGO

The auxiliary ego cannot be analyzed as a social investigator except while he is in operation--functioning not as an observer but as an acting agent. He is sent out on the stage by the director with instructions to portray a certain rôle and, at the same time, to observe himself in action very closely; to register continuously, as he warms up to the rôle, what this rôle does to him and what he does to it. While his experiences are still warm immediately after a scene, he can record his own reactions. Thus, the auxiliary ego represents a new tool in social investigation. Here, the participant

observer becomes also an "observing participant." His work consists in taking on a rôle--the rôle of a particular person or any rôle required by this person as a counter-rôle. It has been suggested⁴ that "the method of empathy seems to be one of the basic principles in the technique of psychodramatics." A careful analysis of the auxiliary ego function shows that empathy alone is not able to provide a leading clue to what is taking place in the psychodramatic situation. According to the theory of empathy formulated by Theodore Lipps,⁵ the investigator "feels himself into" the subject's attitude but the investigator remains in a passive rôle--the rôle of spectator. He is able to interpret "some" of the behavior of the spectators of a psychodrama⁶ but the production of the rôles which an auxiliary ego develops cannot be explained by empathy. Concepts like "spontaneity state," "the warming-up process," "tele" and the "configuration of rôles" are necessary for a proper interpretation. The auxiliary ego in action is not only feeling but doing; he is both constructing and reconstructing a present or an absentee subject. Often it matters little whether the reconstruction is an identical copy of a subject or whether it carries merely the illusion of that identity, just as in the arts, where an expressionistic or surrealist painting is far from being a copy of a natural setting, yet may project the dynamic essence of the setting much more impressively than would its identical copy.

At this point we can see that the auxiliary ego brings to the function of the social investigator a quality which is impossible to the investigator in the natural sciences. The investigator of physical phenomena, for instance, can observe his own reactions in the course of the study of astronomical events, let us say, but he could never transform himself into a star or a planet. Nevertheless, this is exactly what he would have to do if he were to try to reproduce the auxiliary ego technique in the domain of astronomical observation. The natural scientist may claim that such a proposition is entirely unnecessary in his specialty, that the field of exploration is fully resolved by the operations which are already in use. He does not have to become his own "guinea-pig" when he studies the movements of stars and planets, but in the social sciences

⁴Paul Horst and associates, "The Prediction of Personal Adjustment," Social Science Research Council, 1941, pp. 223 and 224.

⁵Theodore Lipps, "Das Wissen von Fremden Ichen," *Psychologische Untersuchungen*, I, pp. 694 and 722, 1907.

⁶J. L. Moreno, "Mental Catharsis and the Psychodrama," *Sociometry*, Vol. III, No. 3, 1940.

the auxiliary ego procedures are well on the way to overcoming the century-old antinomy between the natural and the social sciences.

The bias of the auxiliary ego--his social and cultural limitations--cannot be studied except in the light of his actual work. A full case-illustration is therefore necessary in order that we, and the auxiliary ego, as well, may check from point to point the varying errors which enter into his rôles and counter-rôles in the course of the psychodramatic procedure.

Just as the psychodramatic director must at all times be aware of himself and his relation to the subject or patient, objectifying himself continually as the process of investigation of the subject goes on, he must also be keenly aware of the abilities and limitations of the staff-members who are to function with or for the subject as auxiliary egos upon the stage. His best approach to this knowledge is gained by spontaneity tests.⁷

By means of these tests, staff-members can be classified in two ways. The director will know the range of rôles for each individual, including himself, as well as the type of situation in which he shows the most spontaneity. Furthermore, variations in behavior-patterns can be noted and taken into account by the director when he selects the staff-workers who will work in a given situation or with a given subject.

Basically there are three types of rôles, any one of which the psychodramatic staff-worker may be called upon to portray. He may act the part of a real person in relation to the subject; he may represent a character whom the subject imagines; or he may be called upon to project a part of the subject's own ego.⁸ Whether this rôle is real, fictitious or symbolic, the staff-worker should endeavor at all times to identify and integrate his portrayal with the mental processes of the subject. The proof of his success is the subject's acceptance of him in the rôle. Once this has been accomplished, the staff-worker becomes an auxiliary ego; and since he also represents an extension of the aims of the psychodramatic director, he is now a tool with which the latter can accomplish much in the way of social investigation or mental therapy. In order to demonstrate clearly the way in which a trained

⁷Directions for giving these tests, as well as some sample results will be found in: J. L. Moreno, "A Frame of Reference for Testing the Social Investigator," *Sociometry*, Vol. III, No. 4, 1940, pp. 317-327; and "Who Shall Survive?" pp. 176-191.

⁸A description of this process, known as the "double-ego" technique will be found in a subsequent portion of this paper.

auxiliary ego functions in a problem on the psychodramatic stage and also to show the actual mechanisms involved in the techniques employed by the psychodramatic director in his use of this delicate tool, we are giving here a case-illustration, an obsessional neurosis which was treated at the Psychodramatic Institute.

CASE-ILLUSTRATION⁹

William is a likeable, fair-haired youngster of eighteen. He seems quiet and rather well-mannered, and his intelligence is well above the average for his age. In a number of preliminary interviews with the director, William has displayed remarkable honesty, and this trait, as we shall see, carries over onto the psychodramatic stage.

The problem which he has brought for treatment is a severe form of obsessional neurosis. William thinks of people dying. He has vague images, not of the people themselves, but of things related to their deaths--such as funeral parlors, cemeteries, and the like. He develops a feeling of anxiety, and in order to combat this he employs several different devices. He coughs loudly and frequently, thereby hoping to disrupt the unpleasant train of thought. However, in the meantime, this has disturbed the entire household, and the coughing is not at an end. Out of this primary cough arises a secondary cough which is almost a nervous reflex, and following this, William begins to cough because he is hoarse--a tertiary stage. This cycle may go on for several days at a time.

William also seeks relief in loud talking, usually swearing at the images which disturb him. He seeks to drive them away by a name-calling process, but in doing so he upsets all the people with whom he lives. Sometimes he starts to shout vile imprecations while walking through the streets. More often he is at home, and the noise disturbs everyone in the house. Patterns of profanity tend to creep into his ordinary conversation. His parents are continually having to take him to task, and he gets the name of being a "bad boy."

One method which seems to bring him relief at times from his feeling of anxiety is to take a bath. The disturbing factor here is again the annoyance which he causes the other members of his social atom, for he frequently feels it necessary

⁹Grateful acknowledgment for the stenographic records of this case is due to Mr. Joseph Sargent and Mr. and Mrs. Ward H. Goodenough.

to take these baths in the middle of the night. Sometimes he is content to let the water run, and the noise of this is sufficient to take his thoughts away from the unpleasant things upon which they have been lying. Here again we see the inevitability of disturbance to others.

All of these manifestations, and the resultant criticism of his behavior, have brought William to a point where he fears the return of these unpleasant thoughts rather than the thoughts themselves. His feeling of anxiety has become a fear of fear itself. He becomes subject to this fear whenever he passes a funeral parlor or a cemetery, reads a word which has unpleasant associations, and the like. His thoughts become a continual battleground on which part of his mentality fights back at the fears engendered by the other part.

After a short interview with William, the psychodramatic director selects a staff-member to act as auxiliary ego in representing William's outward self, and tells William to portray his own inner thoughts. This is known as the "double-ego" technique.¹⁰

The preparation for this scene takes five minutes. William is not sure about the role which he is to portray. The staff-member has never met him before, and tries to get him to describe the processes of thought which he undergoes at these times. William, who seems most anxious for the portrayal to be an honest one, keeps repeating that he cannot see the point of the scene, and is persuaded by the staff-member to "go ahead and act whatever role and situation comes into your mind."

A scene is finally chosen in which William is walking past a funeral parlor on his way to the club. He describes this to the audience:

¹⁰In obsessional neuroses and in some psychotic conditions which display symptom-patterns of this sort, the following technique has been found to bring relief: The patient's two egos, so to speak, are portrayed on the stage. The surface ego--that face of himself which he manifests in ordinary life and with which he is commonly identified--is acted out by an auxiliary ego. The deeper ego which is invisibly torturing and trying to defeat the "official" ego is acted out by the patient. The surface ego....not only gives expression to the patient's ordinary, superficial conduct, but fights back at the deeper ego..... The result is an objectification of the violent fight going on between the two alternating factors in the patient's mind." J. L. Moreno, "Psychodramatic Treatment of Psychoses," Sociometry, Vol. III, No. 2, 1940, p. 124.

- William: This scene is at the intersection of two streets in New York. I am walking down the street to the club to have a swim and I am just rounding the corner.
(The scene commences. The staff-member is now functioning as an auxiliary ego. He follows William like a shadow as he walks around the circular stage. He tried to copy William in everything but speech, and here he is forced to push the dialogue in order to stimulate his subject.)
- Aux. Ego: I wonder who I'm going to meet today?
- William: I see Jim down there ahead.
- Aux. Ego: I've got to get in some work at that racing start, today.
- William: I always was afraid of the water. I'll never learn to dive and swim.
- Aux. Ego: There's nothing wrong with the water. It's perfectly safe. The only thing is, I can't seem to let go of the edge of the pool.
- William: Two more blocks and I'll be there. I guess I'll walk a little faster.
- Aux. Ego: I wonder what those fellows up ahead are doing? Four or five, aren't there?
- William: (He is now opposite the funeral parlor.) I won't look over there. I've got to do something. I guess I'll concentrate on going swimming. I don't want to spoil the whole day. It will if it keeps on like this.
- Aux. Ego: I'd better not look over there.
- William: (Looking upward) It's getting cold--I hope it doesn't rain. Ha! (obvious relief) I'm past there already. There's the club ahead, there. When I get there I'll be safe. There will be nothing to disturb my imagination, there!
- Aux. Ego: What happened with those cars back there? I heard the brakes, but I'd better not look.
- William: If I hurry in--and get into the pool--I'll be all right.
(The scene ends here. William seems relieved.)

The psychodramatic director asks William whether, during the scene, he did not feel the urge to cough--as it certainly would have happened in real life. William claims that he felt no real anxiety during the entire scene. Another scene is tried, without any preparation, in which William is reading a newspaper. The results are similar to those in the preceding scene. William avoids all but the most obscure references to the things he fears. When the psychodramatic director interrupts to ask him why he does not swear or cough, he explains

that he does not have any feeling of panic. He says that he is not "warmed-up" to the part.

This situation on the psychodramatic stage may be compared to that which takes place inside a gasoline engine at the moment when the starting pedal is pressed. The auxiliary ego tries to supply the spark--he tries to bridge the gap which exists between his own mental processes and those of the subject. If he succeeds, it ignites the fuel of ideas, and as long as fresh ideas continue to be supplied, the spontaneity remains on a high level. Then, just like the driver whose engine has commenced a comfortable hum, we may expect progress.

In the analysis immediately following the two scenes, the psychodramatic director makes this comment: "William wants to work himself up! He must be encouraged so that he may be able to come to a complete presentation."

On the stage, William does exactly what he would do in real life--he avoids all references to or thoughts of those things which create in him this deep panic.

During these two scenes, the auxiliary ego has had an opportunity to see which ideas could elicit responses from William, and which seeds of thought fell on barren ground. Therefore, he can guide his actions in future scenes accordingly.

William has attempted, for the first time, to portray his obsessions on the psychodramatic stage. He has failed, it is true, but in the very moment of failure he recognizes that the fault lies largely with himself. He admits this when he says that he is not "warmed-up," that he "cannot seem to act the part." He does not realize it at the time, but this is actually a part of the process by which he will become "warmed-up" in the future. He is beginning to get an idea of what is expected of him on the psychodramatic stage. He has had some experience, however slight, in one of its most difficult techniques. Gradually he will be able to act out, on a psychodramatic level, those fears from which he flees in actual life. The scenes in which William has appeared, if taken as a part of this process, cannot be deemed failures.

Now the psychodramatic director tries another tack. His reasons were given in a discussion which followed the scene, and are well worth repeating verbatim:

"When a person has a clear delusion--if it is really clear and systematic--the person may be able to give a picture of what he experiences which is clear in every detail. But when we are dealing with people who have nothing but a rudimentary idea of their delusions, the auxiliary egos are at sea as to what to do. Then the technique is to increase the

proportions of their ideas--not to present mere copies--insofar as we have been able to discover them."

The psychodramatic director gets William to describe the undertaking establishment which he passes so often, and the sight of which disturbs him so greatly. Then he selects two staff-members to portray the undertaker and his wife. He tells William to direct the scene by telling the actors how he would imagine it.¹¹ William, however, claims that he has never allowed his fears to go that far and therefore has no mental picture of what goes on inside the funeral parlor. Consequently, the psychodramatic director instructs the staff-members to go ahead on their own and depict not a copy of a real undertaking parlor but a wholly imaginary one, with every detail magnified and exaggerated. The purpose is to attempt to depict an undertaking establishment which will confirm William's fears of what a real one must be like.

The result is a macabre performance tinged at all times with the grotesque. The staff-workers are highly imaginative and, gradually, four or five corpses take ghostly shape on the stage as the actors make physical comments and comparisons, and, now and again, a grimly humorous remark. Several spectators become extremely uneasy during this scene,¹² and William is among them. Still, when the psychodramatic director questions him after the conclusion of the scene, he says that he had never allowed himself to think about the life within a funeral parlor. Two other scenes are improvised by staff-members, portraying happenings in a funeral parlor, and William, as a spectator, is given a picture which he might have imagined, had his fears permitted him to go so far. This

¹¹The directorial method here employed is known as the "projection" technique. Cf. J. L. Moreno, "Psychodramatic Treatment of Psychoses," *Sociometry*, Vol. III, No. 2, 1940, pp. 122-123.

¹²The reader who is interested in this phase of the psychodrama will do well to consult the following articles: J. L. Moreno, "Mental Catharsis and the Psychodrama," *Sociometry*, Vol. III, No. 3, 1940, pp. 209-244, with special reference to the section headed: "Spectator and Group Catharsis," pp. 236-240; and P. T. Hodgskin, "Group Catharsis with Special Emphasis upon the Psychopathology of Money," *Sociometry*, Vol. IV, No. 2, 1941, pp. 184-192, with special reference to the section headed: "The Effect of the Psychodramatic Session on the Group," pp. 188-190.

Moreno postulates the laws which govern this spectator reaction and discusses possible therapeutic uses of it in large institutions. Hodgskin takes a single case and obtains an account from each spectator of his own reaction to a certain scene.

technique gives him something which he has never been able to produce by himself, either consciously or unconsciously. It furnishes a basis for future conjecture on his part.

In the discussion following these scenes, the technique which has been employed shows its first exploratory effect. A hitherto hidden piece of information is forthcoming from William--he has actually met the undertaker who runs this funeral parlor with the exterior of which he is so familiar. Up to this time William has persistently denied knowing him, but now it appears that he has met him and that the incident occurred at a gas station two blocks away from the funeral parlor. William is at once requested to portray this scene, with the aid of the same auxiliary ego with whom he worked previously.

It was in this scene that the auxiliary ego was first able properly to perform his function for William. Indeed, he also acted as a "starter" for William in the preparation, as well as working with him in the scene which followed.

The scene, as described by William, contained two or three lines of dialogue and would not have consumed more than thirty seconds at most, had it been played in this manner. William protested that he could not see what the psychodramatic director would be able to get out of it. The auxiliary ego, however, persuaded him to allow the scene to continue on beyond what actually happened, pointing out that the director would like to know what William's reactions might have been, had he had a longer conversation with the undertaker. William finally agrees to this and the following scene takes place:

The Scene: A Gas Station

William: played by himself.

The Undertaker: played by the auxiliary ego (William is in the gas station when the undertaker appears. The latter puts money into the cigarette machine.)

Aux. Ego: Have you seen the attendant around anywhere?

William: (Staring at the ground) I guess he's out back, working on a car.

Aux. Ego: He's never here when I want him--always out back or out to lunch.

William: I don't know. I guess so; I'm around here a lot of the time.

Aux. Ego: Do you do any work here?

William: No, just hang around.

Aux. Ego: Well, say--I need a part-time assistant over at my place. How would you like to work for me? (William begins to shake his head slowly, but doesn't

- say anything.) It would only take a couple of hours in the afternoon or evening--running errands and answering the phone. I could afford to pay pretty well for your time.
- William: Well--I don't think I'd have the time. I have home-work.
- Aux. Ego: (Interrupting) Oh, you'd have plenty of time for that at my place. I just need someone to be there while I'm out, and to do occasional errands and odd jobs. You'd have plenty of time for your homework.
- William: Well--I have a sort of job already--running errands for people on the block.
- Aux. Ego: You don't make much at that, do you? I could afford to pay you ten dollars a week, to start.
- William: Well, I do pretty well on this other job.
- Aux. Ego: How much do you make a week?
- William: Oh, three, four--sometimes five dollars a week.
- Aux. Ego: But I could pay you ten, and you'd be sure of it. Ten dollars a week--steady money--is not to be sneezed at. That's for just being around to answer the phone and run a few errands. You'd have plenty of time for yourself and your homework.
- William: Well, I don't know. You see, these people on our block sort of depend on me to do their errands. I wouldn't want to disappoint them.
- Aux. Ego: I realize that, but after all, when you can make more than twice as much, and be sure of it! Why, I should think you could tell them and they'd understand. (During this speech, the auxiliary ego tries to put his hand on William's shoulder. William pulls away, avoiding his touch.)
- William: Well, they kind of count on me, and I wouldn't want to disappoint them.
- Aux. Ego: Sure you won't change your mind?
- William: No, I wouldn't want to disappoint those people.
- Aux. Ego: Well, in case you do change your mind, let me know. You know where my place is, don't you?
- William: Yes, but I don't think - - -
- Aux. Ego: Fine! Let's see, you're William--William Morrow, aren't you?
- William: (Barely audible) Yes.
- Aux. Ego: Yes, I thought I knew you. I had heard you were a good worker. That's why I wanted to hire you. You live right down the block, don't you?
- William: (Pauses) Yes.

- Aux. Ego: In case something comes up, I'll drop you a card or come down to see you. I really need an assistant badly and I may be able to pay a little more than ten dollars a week. I'll have to see. What number do you live at?
- William: Right down the street. In the next block.
- Aux. Ego: You're sure you won't change your mind? (William simply shakes his head and looks away.) Now, let me see. What number was that you said you lived at?
- William: (After a pause) Sixty-five.
- Aux. Ego: Fine, fine! I'll see you soon. In case you change your mind in the meantime, drop into my place. I'll be glad to see you.

END OF SCENE

Throughout the entire scene, William presents an astonishing contrast to his usual self. He looks at the auxiliary ego only once or twice during the dialogue. Most of the time he looks at the ground and occasionally he turns his head away. He is very nervous and plays with a chair which is on the stage. He keeps this chair as a bulwark between him and the auxiliary ego, and when the latter moves past it and attempts to put his hand on William's shoulder, he involuntarily pulls away.

Here, at last, we see the auxiliary ego finally accepted by William--in the rôle of the undertaker. William is afraid of this character and everything for which he stands, and his fear shows in his voice, his gestures, and even in the ideas which he expresses on the psychodramatic stage. He clings desperately to a flimsy excuse in order to keep from taking an excellent job. He does not want this job because he is afraid, but he does not want to admit this fear, either to himself or to his auxiliary ego.

In this scene, William has achieved a certain catharsis. The original meeting with the undertaker had consumed a few seconds, at most. In view of his actions on the psychodramatic stage, it does not seem possible that he could have subjected this man to any long-drawn scrutiny. The picture which he carried away from that meeting must have been a shadowy one, even as his fears have become shadowy things through his refusal to confront them. Here, on the psychodramatic stage, William is given an opportunity to study this terrifying creature at greater length. The undertaker is presented to him as a normal man, and many of the blank spaces

in the original picture are now filled in. The fear of the unknown has been replaced by knowledge. This is the first step and, indeed, the sine qua non for the removal of that fear.

The psychodramatic director now suggests a scene to take place in William's home. William is to be thinking about this encounter with the undertaker and his ego-conflict is to be portrayed by himself and his auxiliary ego. The latter must now make a complete volte face and become that part of William's mental processes which mirror the fears, while William himself is to represent that part which fights them.

During the preparation, William shows a great advance over his previous effort of this type. Before, he had been unsure of himself because he did not know what he was expected to do. Now, he knows almost exactly what is wanted, and his assistance is invaluable to the person with whom he is about to work.

Although he still cannot translate his fears into actions, he knows that certain things upset him, while others do not. He cites the scene which had been presented to him as one which might have taken place in his mind--the scene between the undertaker and his wife. He says that his fears do not lie in that direction, that their basis is not in the gory details of death, but rather in the idea which lies behind death. He says to the auxiliary ego:

"You can talk all you want to about bloody corpses without upsetting me. It's just words (which describe situations and rôles) like 'funeral parlor,' 'undertaker' and things like that that start me off."

Among other things, he tends to visualize scenes and people, like the funeral parlor and the undertaker, "...as if someone had suddenly turned on a hidden motion picture machine." This, too, serves to start these attacks.

The auxiliary ego suggests to William that he try to visualize the meeting with the undertaker at the start of the scene. And thus begins a scene which shows, for the first time, the staff-member functioning as the auxiliary ego in a scene in which the "double-ego" technique is used.

(At the beginning of the scene there is a pause. Then the auxiliary ego begins to talk):

Aux. Ego: --Funny! I can't seem to keep from thinking about his face. I keep seeing him again the way he was in the gas station.

William: I'd better not think about him.

- Aux. Ego: Yes, but I can't seem to stop. He was a funny-looking guy.
- William: Wanted to know where the attendant was. (This is said in a very surly tone.)
- Aux. Ego: Why wasn't the attendant there, anyway? He should have been.
- William: Why couldn't he have had the change in his pocket instead of having to ask for the attendant?
- Aux. Ego: Why did he have to come there, anyway? It's almost two blocks away from his place.
- William: He could have gotten his cigarettes in a cigarette place. Why did he have to come to a gas station to get cigarettes?
- Aux. Ego: Maybe the attendant is a friend of his. Or maybe he gets something else there.... (William coughs.)
- William: (Coughing) Why did it have to happen to me? Why me, of all people? (Coughs)
- Aux. Ego: He should have known the attendant was out back. He shouldn't have had to ask me. He has a funny voice, anyway.
- William: Why does this sort of thing always have to happen to me? (Coughs)
- Aux. Ego: And then he offered me a job. As if I'd ever take a job in his place!
- William: (Coughs) Better not think about that! (Coughs)
- Aux. Ego: But I can't help it. Just because it's an undertaking parlor is no reason why I should keep on thinking about it.
- William: I don't want to think about it.
- Aux. Ego: But I do. Those brass plates. "Funeral Parlor."
- William: In gold letters.
- Aux. Ego: I wonder why they shine them so? You'd think they would paint them black, instead of making them so bright.
- William: (Coughs) It's nothing to brag about. (Coughs)
Well--'better' not think about it. 'Guess I'll try to read this newspaper.
- Aux. Ego: Oh--oh! Don't want to read that page!
- William: No sir! I'll turn it over and see what's on the next page.
- Aux. Ego: Who wants to read funeral notices, anyway?
- William: (Coughs) There's nothing to them, anyway. (Coughs)
- Aux. Ego: (He coughs--which brings an immediate responding cough from William.) That first one was Charles B. Rogers. I wonder what he was like?
- William: (Coughs) Better not think about him. (Coughs)

- Aux. Ego: They had a picture of him.
 William: Oh, why did I have to see that?
 Aux. Ego: He's a funny-looking duck. Kind of like that undertaker I met in the gas station.
 William: There I go again! Why must I think about him? Or gas stations? Now, every time I think about gas stations, I'll start thinking about him again. (William is quite excited during this speech. His voice is much louder than it has heretofore been.)
 Aux. Ego: And that place of his! (Coughs) I wonder what it's like inside?
 William: No, I don't. I don't even want to think about the outside! (Coughs)
 Aux. Ego: I suppose his friends know what it's like inside. I wonder if he lives in there? (William coughs)
 William: I wouldn't want to live in there! (Coughs)
 Aux. Ego: I wonder if he has any friends? I suppose he must have. I wonder what they're like?
 William: I suppose even an undertaker has to have friends. I don't want to be one of them! (Coughs)
 Aux. Ego: No sir! I don't even want to go near him!
 William: (Coughs) I don't even want to think about him!
 Aux. Ego: Or his place.
 William: Guess I'll get up and go for a walk. Anything to get my mind off him! (They get up and turn to go left.)
 Aux. Ego: Oh--oh! I don't want to go that way!
 William: (Turning right, instead.) No sir! I'll go this way!

END OF SCENE

Throughout this scene, neither William nor his auxiliary ego used many gestures. Except for a desultory bit of pantomime when he was supposed to be reading the paper, William spent the entire time rubbing the palm of his left hand with the thumb and fingers of his right. The auxiliary ego attempted at all times to duplicate these actions. William used this continual rubbing to alleviate the tension caused by his anxiety.¹³ The auxiliary ego, who had started to use this gesture for no reason other than imitation, found it an excellent antidote for the tension which he, too, felt as the scene progressed. William's tension was caused by anxiety which stemmed from his fear of

¹³What follows here will be of interest to readers of "Developments in Social Psychology, 1930-1940," *Sociometry Monograph* No. 1, 1941, by L. S. Cottrell, Jr., and Ruth Gallagher.

the ideas which were being presented to him. The auxiliary ego was also laboring under a strain, but his anxiety arose from a different source. He was trying to fire each speech at William the instant the latter ceased uttering each one of his lines. In order to do this, he had, like a chess-player, to keep thinking several moves ahead. He was denied, however, the advantage of taking whatever time he needed. He had always to be prepared, and several times he was forced to discard whole trains of thought while he shifted to meet William's changing ideas. Despite this basic difference in attitude, the same physical release, i.e., hand rubbing, served as an outlet for both.

The auxiliary ego coughed twice during the scene. This was done deliberately, in order to see how it would effect William. The first time his auxiliary ego coughed, William immediately echoed him. Afterwards, this procedure seemed to have no effect. And what of William's own coughing?

In the interview immediately after the scene, the director asked William if he was aware that he had coughed. William said that he had coughed deliberately, in order to make the scene seem real. But when asked how often he had done so, he replied: "Three or four times." As a matter of actual fact, William coughed eighteen times.

Here, on the psychodramatic stage, we have seen William reproduce the actual physical symptoms of his obsession. We would seem to have forced him into a relapse. What is actually taking place is a channelization of his fears.¹⁴

This scene has been the first step in this operation. In order to continue it, the psychodramatic director selects a final scene for the session. We have seen William's acceptance of the production on the stage of what goes on inside an utterly imaginary funeral parlor--something which he had not even dared imagine for himself. In this final scene, William is asked to take the logical next step: to go inside this imaginary funeral parlor and accept the job which he was offered in the gas-station scene--actually to inhabit this imaginary setting.

While preparing the scene with the auxiliary ego, William at first displays extreme reluctance. He points out that he would not take the job for a salary two or three times as large as the one offered. When pressed, he admits that he would not take it for \$100 a week; later he amplifies this figure to \$1,000,000. The auxiliary ego persuades him to accept

¹⁴See J. L. Moreno, "Psychodramatic Treatment of Psychoses," *Sociometry*, Vol. III, No. 2, 1940, p. 117.

the job by saying that this is "intended as a test." Here we see the cumulative effect of all the scenes in which William has thus far participated on the psychodramatic stage. In the first part of the session, he would not have consented to this "test." Now he can be persuaded to try it, although he does so with obvious reluctance and a certain amount of trepidation. The scene begins:

Aux. Ego: Why, hello, William. Glad to see you!

William: (Staring at the floor) Hello.

Aux. Ego: Well, well! So you decided to change your mind about taking that job, after all! That's fine!

William: I guess so. What do I have to do?

Aux. Ego: Nothing, right now. Just sit down and make yourself comfortable. Would you like to look around, first? Come on! I'll show you the place. (The auxiliary ego, as the undertaker, shows William where various things are located in the office; then takes him to a basement room, where the bodies are kept until the funerals. William stops at the point which represents the door of this room and contents himself with peering vaguely inside. Then, the auxiliary ego points to a wall-telephone.) This is an extension of the upstairs 'phone. In case the phone rings and you're down here, you can answer it without having to go upstairs.

William: But I wouldn't be down here, would I?

Aux. Ego: Well, no. Probably not. But you might be down here doing some odd job or other, and it would save you the trip upstairs.

William: I thought I was just supposed to run errands and answer the phone. I thought I would have time to do my homework.

Aux. Ego: So you will, so you will. It's just that once in a while there are a few things to be done down here. You won't mind that, will you?

William: I guess not.

Aux. Ego: (As they are returning to the "office") Once in a while, I may need a hand bringing in the bodies, but that's not very heavy work. (Here William starts to say something, but the auxiliary ego interrupts.) They come in light pine boxes and they don't weigh very much. (William walks almost to the edge of the stage and stares at the back of the audience. The auxiliary ego continues): Right now there's nothing to do. (William sighs and returns,

sitting down at the desk.) I guess you can sit here and start in on your homework. (The auxiliary ego now goes back to the basement room and opens one of the coffins.) Say, William, could you bring me some of that formaldehyde? There's a bottle on the shelf over there. (William goes to the shelf and takes down a bottle. He hesitates, but then the auxiliary ego speaks again): Just bring it down here to me. (William does this, and starts back upstairs again.) Just a minute. Don't go, yet. I can use a hand here. (He pantomimes filling a syringe with formaldehyde.) Now, I want you to take the wrist here, and press so that the vein sticks out--like this. (He pantomimes this action.)

William: I'd rather not.

Aux. Ego: Why not? (Pause.) Oh, come on! It won't bite you!

William: (Barely audible) Show me how you did that, again.

Aux. Ego: You take it like this and put one finger here and one here. Then you press down, like this. (William bends down very slowly, and copies the pantomime. His neck is very stiff and he tries to hold his head as far away from the "corpse" as possible.) That's fine! Kind of cold, isn't it? (William lets go of the hand.) Hey! Wait till I'm through! There we are--nothing to it, after all--was there?

END OF SCENE

Here, at last, we have brought William to the very threshold of his fears. Here, on the psychodramatic stage, he has been shown the handiwork of death, and he has held the cold hand of a corpse in his. In talking with him afterwards, it was learned that he had been able to visualize the hand, at the time. His actions on the stage were convincing evidence of this fact, and the end of the scene brought him obvious relief.

Here, in this crucial situation, the interested spectator stands, as it were, on a peak. Now he can see clearly the road by which William has been brought to this point, and the direction in which he will now be led. The carefully organized and integrated plan which has been followed by the psychodramatic director becomes apparent.

William, in trying to escape his fears, had come to a mental cul-de-sac. A speech in one of his scenes shows us how fraught with discomfort that blind iter of thought must have been. In thinking of his meeting with the undertaker,

William cries out: "There I go again! Why must I think about him? Or gas stations? Now, every time I think about gas stations, I'll start thinking about him again!"

From this, one readily sees how impossible it was for William to maintain this position with regard to his fears. In attempting to close the door on them, he had left himself open to another set of fears which, by these chains of association, must some day have filled his entire mental world.

Therefore, the director commenced the treatment by coaxing William out of his hiding-place and bringing him face to face with the fears from which he was trying to run. In performing this difficult operation, the auxiliary ego has been an invaluable tool.

The psychodramatic director continued by presenting, again by means of the auxiliary ego, the reality which was underlying these fears. This presentation was made on a symbolic level to a subject who would not have been willing to receive it otherwise.

The psychodramatic director has shown us what can be accomplished by a well-planned and skillfully-executed use of this therapeutic tool.

The road that lies ahead in William's case is an interesting one. The reader can readily envisage him portraying the rôle of the undertaker, perhaps directing his auxiliary ego in the conduct of his calling.¹⁵ He may be called upon to act the part of a person about to die, or, possible, one who is already dead. He may even find himself cast as Death in a psychodrama which would strike at the very root of his fears.

However, it can be seen that whatever procedure is followed will tend to diminish the importance of the auxiliary ego's rôle. He (the auxiliary ego) will begin to be dominated by the subject, as the latter begins to master the fears which have held him in thrall. There will be less and less need for the auxiliary ego to function as a starter--perhaps none at all.

William, himself, will be able to take the corpse's hand in his and say with confidence: "There we are! Nothing

¹⁵An interesting comparison here is the treatment of a boy who was laboring under the delusion that he might turn, or be turned, into a girl. At a strategic point in this treatment, he was placed in the rôle of a psychiatrist, and an auxiliary ego, in the rôle of a man suffering from the same delusion, came to him for advice. A description of this incident will be found in the following article: J. L. Moreno, "Psychodramatic Treatment of Psychoses," *Sociometry*, Vol. III, No. 2, 1940, p. 123.

to it, after all--was there?" The psychodramatic director, with the aid of the auxiliary ego, has shown him the way.

DISCUSSION

The pattern of conduct or the method of approach which the director exhibits in the case illustrated above shows an important deviation from the regular psychodramatic procedure, which, as we know, makes the subject the chief source of initiative in the dramatization of symptoms. William had never been inside the funeral parlor which was a few blocks from his home. Indeed, he had never been inside any funeral parlor. He claimed to have no knowledge whatsoever of what went on in such a place. Interviews and analysis in the preparatory phase did not elicit any satisfactory information from him in regard to dreams or phantasies of any sort relating to this topic. He even violently objected to hearing anything about it. In this deadlock, the director turned to a method which may have projected some of his own bias into the treatment-situation; he, and a number of his assistants, became the source of initiative, instead of the subject. They constructed upon the stage the atmosphere of a funeral parlor in several variations, and let them pass before the subject's eyes, watching him carefully for reactions. By a combination of empathy into the subject's psychological life and a constructive ingenuity of their own, they produced, without any design on the part of the subject, something which he needed, although it was not of his creation. His own imaginative expectancy fell into step, so to speak, with one of these "atmospheres," and thus, by means of an experience which was just as much extra-conscious as it was extra-unconscious, the subject attained a very effective catharsis.

The social investigators in the case, the psychodramatic director and the auxiliary egos, found themselves, therefore, in a situation where they had created for the subject something which had not previously existed for him, and they were faced with the necessity of exploring the product of their own imaginations in order to compensate for a lack in the subject, thus consciously "manufacturing" a psychodramatic error.

It seems obvious that some sort of bias must operate in every type of social investigator, whether he be a case-interviewer, a participant observer, an intelligence tester, a psychoanalyst, a sociometrist or of any other category. It follows, therefore, that no experiment in the social sciences can be

entirely controlled unless and until the social investigator, himself, is explored and his bias brought under control. An attempt to accomplish this under laboratory conditions would be extremely difficult because of the lack of adequate motivation for both the investigator and his subjects to undertake such a program. A life-situation cannot easily be manufactured under laboratory conditions. In psychodramatic work, however, the very atmosphere and purpose require the presentation of life-situations, on one hand, and analysis of the total situation on the other. Psychodramatic work partakes automatically of investigating the social investigator because its major tools for treatment, the director and the auxiliary egos, cannot effectively be used unless they are continuously examined and maintained at their keenest temper. Therefore, the psychodramatic procedure presents itself as doubly fitted to investigate every type of social investigator in his natural setting--the case-interviewer, the participant observer, and the rest--and protect the results of his work from any admixture of bias.

The Function of the Social Investigator in Experimental Psychodrama

J. L. Moreno; William S. Dunkin

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