

MENTAL CATHARSIS AND THE PSYCHODRAMA¹

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Catharsis, as a concept, was introduced by Aristotle. He used this term to express the peculiar effect of the Greek drama upon its spectators. In his "Poetics" he maintains that drama tends to purify the spectators by artistically exciting certain emotions which act as a kind of homeopathic relief from their own selfish passions.

This concept of catharsis has undergone a revolutionary change since systematic psychodramatic work began in Vienna in 1920. This change has been exemplified by the movement away from the written (conserved) drama and toward the spontaneous (psycho) drama, with the emphasis shifted from the spectators to the actors.

In my treatise: "The Spontaneity Theatre" (Das Stegreiftheater), published in 1923, the new definition of catharsis was: "It (the psychodrama) produces a healing effect -- not in the spectator (secondary catharsis) but in the producer-actors who produce the drama and, at the same time, liberate themselves from it." To gain a full comprehension of the developments since the time of Aristotle and the present-day meaning of catharsis, the historical background which led up to the spontaneity experiments in Vienna, the concept of the moment and the theories of spontaneity and creativity -- all these must be reviewed.

The Historical Background

One of the most important concepts in all human thought, the concept of the moment -- the moment of being, living and creating -- has been the step-child of all universally known philosophical systems.

1. Presented as a course of lectures during the 1940 Summer Session of the Psychodramatic Institute, Beacon Hill, Beacon, New York.

The reasons for this are that the moment is difficult to define; that it has appeared to most philosophers as but a fleeting transition between past and future, without real substance; that it is intangible and unstable and therefore an unsatisfactory basis for a system of theoretical and practical philosophy. Some phenomenon on a different plan than that presented by the moment, itself, had to be found which was tangible and capable of clear definition, but to which the moment was integrally related. I believe that I accomplished this more than twenty years ago when, in analyzing cultural conserves, I found a concept in the light of which the dynamic meaning of the moment could be reflected and evaluated and thus become a frame of reference. Up to this time the moment had been formulated as a particle of time and space, or as a mathematical abstraction; hence it had been pragmatically useless and theoretically sterile. If the concept of the moment could be constructed against a more adequate background, the way would be open for a modern theory of the moment and a theory, perhaps, of spontaneity and creativity as well.

As I look back on my own writings on the subject, I can see that it was with my three dialogues, "The Godhead as an Author", "The Godhead as a Speaker" and "The Godhead as an Actor", that my swing in the direction of a new philosophy of spontaneity and creativity began. The theme of the three dialogues was an analysis of how the Godhead, himself, -- considering him as the highest possible value of spontaneity and creativity, the top-value on any axiological scale -- would perform in the roles of author, speaker and actor. This brought about the analysis of three types of cultural conserve: the book, the memorized speech and the conventional drama of today. This second analysis, in turn, led to the postulation of a frame of reference for every type of action, work, or performance, each with two opposite poles: the maximum of spontaneity at one pole and zero spontaneity at the other, with many degrees of spontaneity in between the two, every degree representing a different quotient of spontaneity. This was an axiological scale; the ideal exponent of the one pole was a totally spontaneous creator, and the ideal exponent of the other, the total cultural conserve (the book, the motion picture, etc.). In two later publications, the "Discourse on the Moment" and my treatise, "The Spontaneity Theatre", these new concepts were put to

a concrete test in their application to inter-personal and inter-social relationships.

The lack of an adequate concept of the moment has spoiled any attempt at forming a theory of creativity and spontaneity. This is shown in the confusion in the works of Nietzsche and Bergson, for instance, whenever they had to deal with related problems.

The gods and heroes who became the basis for Nietzsche's value-theory were, like Beethoven, Bach, Wagner and others, persons who lived in the service of the cultural conserve. Since their achievements were "works", i.e., high-grade cultural conserves, these became the frame of reference for Nietzsche's valuations. From the point of view of the creative matrix, however, all conserves, whether high-grade or low-grade, were on the same plane. In spite of his recommendations, therefore, to be a "creator", to be "creative", his evaluation was virtually based on "works" or finished products. Similarly, his higher evaluation of the superman (Napoleon, Cesare Borgia, etc.) over the holy man (Christ, St. Francis, etc.) was merely a shift from one inflexible set of precepts to another. Nietzsche did not perceive that, whereas, on one occasion, love and charity may be the strongest responses to a situation, on another occasion their direct opposites, harshness and selfishness, may be the requisite answers. The old precept: "Love thy neighbor" became its opposite, a higher value, but as long as both thesis and antithesis led to rigid patterns of conduct we know that there was no gain made, since both were related to the cultural conserve. The exchange of new conserves for old does not change the position of man in his struggle with the realities of the world around him and cannot aid in the development of a human society of which man is to be the true master.

Bergson came closer to the problem than any of the modern philosophers. He was sufficiently sensitive to the dynamics of creativity to postulate time, itself, as being ceaseless change -- as being totally creative. In such a scheme there was no place, however, for the moment as a revolutionary category since every particle of time ("duration", as he called it) was creative in every one of its instants, in any case. One had only to plunge into immediate experience in order to participate in that stream of creativity, in that "élan vital" and "durée".

But he, Bergson, did not build a bridge between that creative absolute and the man-made time and space in which we live. The result is, then, that even if these immediate experiences were to have the quality of final reality he claimed for them, they have an irrational status and hence are useless to methodology and scientific progress.

During the last few decades, spontaneity and its collateral terms -- "spontaneous" and "extemporaneous", in English, "spontanéité" and "immédiat" in French, "Stegreif", "spontan" and "unmittelbar" in German -- have been in increasing use. This has brought about a growing clarification of the actual meaning of the whole concept. We watch various terms have their origins, their ascendancies and their falls from use and we know that they often pass through many changes in the course of their careers. Ultimately their finite meanings may crystallize and they may become permanent parts of scientific and, even, everyday language. Spontaneity and its collaterals have reached a climax in our time, and in the course of my studies it has become clear what their meaning is and what complexes of ideas they represent. "Spontaneity" and "spontaneous" have finally come to mean a value -- a human value. Spontaneity has become a biological as well as a social value. It is today a frame of reference for the scientist as well as for the politician, for the artist as well as the educator.

Here is an example: politicians, newspaper men and commentators often refer to a certain development in public opinion as a "spontaneous" movement. When they do this they really mean to say that the development in question is a genuine, sincere and truthful expression of the thoughts and wishes of the people. This term they apply to nominations, elections, political and cultural ideas, acts of revolution and acts of war. The consideration of spontaneity as a barometer of that high value, the will of the people, has become an axiom in politics. The theory behind this phenomenon is that if spontaneity is an expression of what the people think, then the man who can draw the spontaneity of the people to himself and his ideas should also have the right to exercise the greatest power over them. The desirability of even the label "spontaneous" is shown in the shrewd politician's use of propaganda to distort public opinion in his favor. Of course, after a change favorable to his plans has taken place, he will deny that

propaganda or anything of the sort has been used. He will hasten to hail the new trend in public opinion as a "spontaneous" one.

Spontaneity is also used as a standard for cultural values. It is not so long ago, for instance, that an orator who came before his audience unprepared was considered arrogant and superficial, largely because the generally accepted standard of values was that a man should prepare a speech in advance in every detail and come before his public with a well-polished, finished product. During the last few years we have heard increasingly often -- and with overtones of praise -- that this or that address was an "impromptu" or "extemporaneous" one, with the clear implication that because it was spontaneous it must have contained the speaker's innermost and sincerest views on the subject. All this suggests that a far-reaching change in the evaluation of spontaneity is now taking place and that this change is receiving wide public recognition. This is probably one reason why my theories of spontaneity and creativity, which received little attention twenty years ago, are now more timely. A change in attitude all over the world has stimulated many other researchers to think along similar lines. A sympathetic trend towards spontaneity can be observed in cultural endeavors of all sorts -- in the arts (the drama, for instance) in music and many others.

General Theory of Spontaneity and the Cultural Conserve

The book is the archetype of all cultural conserves -- the cultural conserve par excellence. In essence it existed long before the printing press in the hand written volumes of the monasteries and the memno-technical conserves of the Buddhist monks. The book has been perhaps the most important single factor in the formation of our culture. The cultural conserve aims at being the finished product and, as such, has assumed an almost sacred quality. This is the result of a generally-accepted theory of values. Processes brought to an end, acts finished and works perfected seem to have satisfied our theory of values better than processes and things which remain unfinished and in an imperfect state. These perfection-ideas were associated with the God-idea, itself. It

is significant to note, in this connection, that many of God's quasi-serve qualities may have been over-emphasized (his "works", his "universe", his "all-might", his "righteousness" and his "wisdom"), whereas his function as a spontaneous creator -- the most revolutionary concept of a god's function -- is nearly always a neglected one. The cultural conserve became the highest value it was possible to produce (the books of the Bible, the works of Shakespeare, Beethoven's symphonies, etc.). It is a successful mixture of spontaneous and creative material molded into a permanent form. As such it becomes the property of the general public -- something which everyone can share. Due to its permanent form it is a rallying-point to which one can return at will and upon which cultural tradition can be based. The cultural conserve is thus a consoling and a reassuring category. It is not surprising, therefore, that the category of the moment has had a poor opportunity to develop in a culture such as ours, saturated as it is with conserves, and relatively satisfied with them.

We may well assume that it must have been difficult for the primitive minds of a primitive, inferior culture -- or the early stages of our own culture -- to evolve the idea of the moment and to maintain it before cultural conserves ever existed, or when they were at best weakly developed and thinly distributed. It must have appeared to our ancestors much more useful and valuable to put all their energy into the development of cultural conserves and not to rely upon momentary improvisations in individual and social emergencies. Cultural conserves served two purposes; they were of assistance in threatening situations and they made secure the continuity of a cultural heritage. But the more developed the cultural conserve became -- the more widely they were distributed, the greater their influence became and the more attention there was given to their completion and perfection -- the more rarely did the people feel the need for momentary inspiration. Thus the spontaneous components of the cultural conserves, themselves, were weakened at the core and the development of the cultural conserve -- although it owed its very birth to the operation of spontaneous processes -- began to threaten and extinguish the spark which lay at its origin. This situation called forth, as if to its rescue, the diametric opposite of the cultural

conserve: the category of the moment. This event could only have occurred in our time, when cultural conserves have reached such a point of masterful development and distribution en masse that they have become a challenge and a threat to the sensitivity of man's creative patterns.

Just as an analysis and a reevaluation of the cultural conserve was forced upon me by the apparent decay of man's creative function when faced with the problems of our time, I was, in turn, forced to focus my attention from a new point of view upon the factors of spontaneity and creativity. The problem was to replace an outworn, antiquated system of values, the cultural conserve, with a new system of values in better accord with the emergencies of our time -- the spontaneity-creativity complex.

My first step was to reexamine the factors of spontaneity and creativity, and to determine their place in our universe. Although it was evident that a spontaneous creative process is the matrix and the initial stage of any cultural conserve -- whether a technological invention, a work of art or a form of religion -- the mere confirmation of such a fact was barren of any kind of progress. It simply brought to the fore the relationship between the moment, immediate action, spontaneity and creativity, in contrast to the customary link between spontaneity and automatic response. This first step led to a dead end.

The second step was far more rewarding. I started with the idea that the spontaneous creative matrix could be made the central focus of man's world not only as the underlying source but on the very surface of his actual living; that the flow of the matrix into the cultural conserve -- however indispensable this may appear to be -- is only one of the many routes open to the historical development of creativity; and that a different route is perhaps more desirable, a route which will carry the spontaneous creative matrix to the periphery of man's actuality -- his daily life.

At this juncture numerous questions arose which could not be answered by intellectual means, such as, for instance: is it the fate of the spontaneous creative matrix always to end in a cultural conserve because of the fallibility of human nature? To this and other questions there was only one answer possible: systematic experiments which would permit a theory of spontaneity to grow as a theory of action.

Numerous theoretical preparations were made and many precautions were taken. All dogmatic assumptions were discarded except those immediately needed to provide satisfactory conditions for the experiment. Some of the dogmas which were set aside may be worth discussion here since they indicate the atmosphere from which we had to free ourselves. One dogma, for instance, was the consideration of spontaneity as a sort of psychological energy -- a quantity distributing itself within a field -- which, if it cannot find actualization in one direction, flows in some other direction in order to maintain "equilibrium". Take, for instance, the concept of the libido in psychoanalytic theory. In accordance with this theory, Freud thought that, if the sexual impulse does not find satisfaction in its direct aim it must displace its unapplied energy elsewhere. It must, he thought, attach itself to a pathological locus or find a way out in sublimation. He could not even for a moment conceive of this unapplied affect vanishing because he was biased by the physical idea of the conservation of energy.²

If we, too, were to follow this precept of the energy-pattern when we consider spontaneity, we should have to believe that a person has a certain amount of spontaneity stored up to which he adds as he goes on living -- but in smaller and smaller quantities the more he is dominated by cultural conserves. As he performs actions, he draws from this reservoir; if he is not careful he may use it all up -- or even overdraw! The following alternative seemed to us to be just as plausible as the foregoing. This person is trained not to rely upon any reservoir of spontaneity; he has no alternative but to produce the amount of emotion, thought and action a novel situation demands from him. At times he may have to produce more of this, say, spontaneity, and at others, less -- in accord with what the situation or task requires. If he is well-trained, he will not produce less than the exact amount of spontaneity needed (for if this were to happen he would need a reservoir from which to draw) and he will likewise not produce more than the

2. A sterling illustration of the fact that physical concepts such as energy cannot be transferred onto a social or a psychological plane is the process of catharsis, which brings about fundamental changes in a situation without effecting any alteration in the energy-pattern of the situation.

situation calls for (because the surplus might tempt him to store it, thus completing a vicious circle which ends in a cultural conserve).

Another dogma whose acceptance we succeeded in avoiding -- for we believed it to be only a half-truth -- was that the climax of intensity of experience is at the moment of birth and that the intensity is de-sensitized as living goes on and recedes to its lowest ebb towards the end of life. To a person who is comparatively passive, this may seem a plausible point of view, but for a person who acts on the spur of the moment and who has no reservoir from which to draw energy -- not consciously, at least -- and at the same time is faced with a novel situation, such a situation is for him very similar to that of birth. He has been trained to put himself (by means of the "warming-up" process³) into motion in order to summon as much spontaneity as the emergency with which he is faced requires. This whole process is repeated again and again, no matter with what rapidity one novel situation follows another. At every such moment his training enables him to respond to a situation with the appropriate spontaneity.

This theoretical preparation led to several experimental methods in spontaneity. In one, the subject throws himself into a state -- into an emotion, a role or a relationship with another subject, any of these operating as a stimulus -- or, as we say, he "warms up" to it in a fashion as free as possible from previous patterns. This does not mean that the units comprising the state are expected to be absolutely new and without precedent for the subject; it means that the experiment is so intended as to bring the subject, as a totality, to bear upon his act, to increase the number of possible combinations and variations, and -- last but not least -- to bring about such a flexibility of the subject that he can summon any amount of spontaneity necessary for any situation with which he can be faced. It is clear, therefore, that the factor (spontaneity) which enables the subject to warm up to such states is not, in itself, a feeling or an emotion, a thought or an act which attaches itself to a chain of improvisations as the warming-up process proceeds. Spontaneity is a readiness of the subject to respond as required. It

3. See "Normal and Abnormal Characteristics of Performance Patterns," *Sociometry*, Vol II, No. 4, p. 41.

is a condition -- a conditioning -- of the subject; a preparation of the subject for free action. Thus, freedom of a subject cannot be attained by an act of will. It grows by degrees as the result of training in spontaneity. It seems certain, therefore, that through spontaneity training a subject becomes relatively freer from conserves -- past or future -- than he was previous to the training, which demonstrates that spontaneity is a biological value as well as a social value.

Another experimental method arose from the fact that the subject in action was often found to be controlled by remnants of roles which he had assumed at one time or another in the past, and these conserves interfered with or distorted the spontaneous flow of his action; or the subject, after having been liberated from old cliches in the course of spontaneity work, may have shown an inclination to conserve the best of the thoughts and speeches which he had extemporized and thus to repeat himself. In order to overcome such handicaps to untrammelled spontaneity and in order to keep him as unconserved as possible by the influence of conserves, he had to be de-conserved from time to time. These and many other steps were taken before we could be sure that our subjects had reached the point at which they might begin to operate in a truly spontaneous fashion.

The term "spontaneous" is often used to describe subjects whose control of their actions is diminished. This is, however, a usage of the term "spontaneous" which is not in accord with the etymology of the word, which shows it to be derived from the Latin *sponte*, "of free will".⁴ Since we have shown the relationship of spontaneous states to creative functions, it is clear that the warming-up to a spontaneous state leads up to and is aimed at more or less highly-organized patterns of conduct. Disorderly conduct and emotionalisms resulting from impulsive action are far from being desiderata of spontaneity work. Instead, they belong more in the realm of the pathology of spontaneity.

Spontaneity is often erroneously thought of as being more closely allied to emotion and action than to thought and rest. This bias probably developed because of the assumption that a person cannot really

4. Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language, New York and London, 1935, 1. 858

feel something without at the same time being spontaneous and that a person who is thinking can have a genuine experience without spontaneity, but this is not the case. There seems to be a similar misconception that a person in action needs continuous spontaneity in order to keep going, but that no spontaneity is required by a person at rest. As we know now, these are fallacies. Spontaneity can be present in a person when he is thinking just as well as when he is feeling, when he is at rest just as well as when he is in action.

Another confusion -- the difference between a cultural conserve and the spontaneous creative matrix of this conserve at the moment when it is springing into existence -- should be cleared up. An example may help to clarify this difference. Let us imagine the music of the Ninth Symphony at the moment it was being created by Beethoven, and let us also imagine the same music as a work of art -- a finished product-- separated from the composer himself. On the surface it may appear as if the creative units which went into the Ninth Symphony -- its musical themes, its climaxes, its harmonies, etc. -- must also have been in its original matrix, and that no difference exists between the one in its state in Beethoven's mind and the other in its conserved state -- except only that of locus. It might seem as if it were merely a transposition of the same material -- the same sum total of creative units -- from one locus in time (the mind of Beethoven) to another, (the musical score). Closer inspection, however, will show that this is not true. As Beethoven was walking through his garden trying intensively to warm up to his musical ideas, his whole personality was in an uproar. He made use of every possible physical and mental starter he could muster in order to get going in the right direction. These visions, images, thoughts and action-patterns -- both musical and non-musical inspirations -- were the indispensable background out of which the music of the Ninth Symphony grew. But all this background (which cannot truthfully be divorced from the state in which Beethoven was when he was truly being a creator) is not to be found in the finished product -- the musical score or its performance by a noted orchestra. Only the result is there. The fact that this background has been deleted from our present-day idea of Beethoven is the result of an

intellectual trick which is played upon us by centuries of being indoctrinated by the cultural conserves. If we look upon the initial spontaneous creative phase in Beethoven's composition of the Ninth Symphony as a positive phase and not as a transition in the direction of an end-product, we can see in Beethoven's musical compositions, his concepts of God, the universe and the destiny of humanity, in the loves, joys and griefs of his private life and -- especially -- in the gestures and movements of his body a united pattern from which a surface layer (the cultural conserve) can be lifted to satisfy certain pragmatic demands.

At the moment of composition, Beethoven's mind experienced these concepts, visions and images in conjunction with the developing symphony. They were integral parts of a creative act -- of a series of creative acts. He made a cross-section through them in such a way that only the material which could be fitted into the prospective conserve was included; the direction of the cross-section was determined by its frame. In this particular instance, the frame was that of musical notation; in another case it might have been the frame of language notation; at still another, it might have been a mechanical invention.

It is exactly at this point that our theory of spontaneous creativity is able to take a stand against what Beethoven, himself, did -- and probably was trying to do. If we imagine a Beethoven who would remain permanently in that initial, creative state -- or, at least, as long as the state lasted -- and who would refuse to give birth to musical conserves, a Beethoven, however, who would be just as determined as ever in his efforts to create new musical worlds, then we can grasp the psychological meaning of pure spontaneous creativity on the psychodramatic stage.

Spontaneity Training and Spontaneity Scales

Experiments on the psychodramatic stage have confirmed by hundreds of tests the validity of the above conjectural analysis of the inner, initial processes experienced by creative geniuses. It was confirmed that "spontaneous states are of short duration, extremely eventful and sometimes crowded with inspiration".⁵

5. See "Inter-Personal Therapy and the Psychopathology of Inter-Personal Relations," *Sociometry*, Vol. 1, Nos. 1 & 2, p. 69

These spontaneity tests opened up two avenues of experimentation. In the one case, spontaneity testing became the means whereby we could study the structure of spontaneity states and creative acts; in the other case, spontaneity tests enabled us to examine the readiness of any given subject to respond to new situations. When it was discovered that a certain subject lacked in readiness -- that his organism was unequal to the demands put upon it -- spontaneity training was applied. "The difficulty encountered by the subject is that a motive may arise in him a fraction of a second earlier than the gesture which corresponds to it; hence the component portions of an act are diffused. Therefore, the organism of the subject must become like a reservoir of free spontaneity in order to have in constant readiness the ability to perform the greatest possible number of varied, swift and practicable movements and acts."⁶

From the point of view of systematic research in spontaneity, perhaps the most significant phase consisted in the measurement of spontaneity and the development of spontaneity scales. The earliest study in spontaneity scales concerned itself with calculating the quotient of spontaneity for any cultural conserve. For example, a motion picture at the moment of presentation has a zero spontaneity quotient; a puppet show has a certain small degree of spontaneity in a moment of presentation because the factor of spontaneity enters via the personality of the persons who activate the strings; a theatrical performance has a quotient still higher than the puppet show because the actors are there in the flesh.

Another spontaneity scale attempted the reverse: it tried to determine the relative conserve quotient in various quasi-spontaneous patterns -- the *commedia dell' arte*, for instance. Underlying its improvisatory character, this form had strong conserve components, types like "Harlequin," "Columbine" and "Pantaloon", and a dialogue which was, to a great

6. ". . . die Schwierigkeit des Stegreifspielers besteht darin, dass ihm die Idee ein Mu früher eingefallen kann als die zugehörige Gebärde, wodurch die im Akt zusammengehörigen Teile leicht auseinander geraten. Der Körper des Spielers muss wie ein Reservoir von Freiheit die Ansätze zu einer möglichst grossen Anzahl verschiedener, rapid und sicher ausführbarer Bewegungen bereit haben". "Das Stegreiftheater," p. 40.

extent, repeated at every performance, a high conserve quotient.

Other spontaneity scales are based on the degree of readiness shown by various subjects in different impromptu situations or on their deviation from a statistically established normal response in standard life-situations.

The Vitalizing Effect of Spontaneity Techniques on Cultural Conservees

The first significant consequence of spontaneity work is a deeper view and a vitalization of the cultural conservees. One illustration of this effect comes from religion, prayer.

A prayer consists of four components: speech, thought content, feeling and the pattern of action. The essence of prayer is true repetition; it would be sacrilegious to change the speech, thought and gestures prescribed in the prayer. But when it comes to the feeling the subject can transcend the conserve, actually nullifying its repetitiousness by introducing a spontaneous factor. Feeling is the wedge by which spontaneity training can enter a religious experience. By the introjection of a spontaneous factor, the variation and intensification of feeling with which the subject accompanies a prayer may bring a depth into a stereotype -- literally the same for millions of others -- which may differentiate him from all other people praying at that time.

Another illustration is the drama. The dialogue and the thoughts of the playwright are sacred and inviolate, but the actor trained along spontaneity lines becomes able to turn out a new play at every performance. Feeling and, often, gestures are here the vehicles for reinvigoration.

For still another illustration let us turn to the performance of musical compositions. Numerous techniques can be used in order to stimulate the phantasy of the players in an orchestra, for instance, as they play one of Beethoven's symphonies, so that they may attain a semblance of the spontaneity which was the composer's at the moment when he created the symphony. As a prelude to their performance, the musicians can be trained to undergo auxiliary experiences

similar to those Beethoven underwent when he was creating.⁷

The more a cultural conserve is -- in the moment of presentation -- a total recapitulation of the same process, and the more a subject is conditioned to respond to it with the same feeling (in essence, the same feeling today as, let us say, ten years ago), the more the question arises as to what value the conserve has for the subject. It cannot be denied that the recall of a conserve is accompanied by great satisfaction and even joy. The periodic recapitulation seems to whisper into the subject's ear that all is the same, all is well -- the world has not changed. The cultural conserve renders to the individual a service similar to that which it renders as a historical category to culture at large -- continuity of heritage -- securing for him the preservation and the continuity of his ego. This provision is of aid as long as the individual lives in a comparatively still world; but what is he to do when the world around him is in a revolutionary change and when the quality of change is becoming more and more a permanent characteristic of the world in which he participates?

Mental Catharsis

A change may take place at any time in the life-situation of an individual. A person may leave or a new person may enter his social atom, or he may be compelled to leave all members of his social atom behind and develop new relationships because he has migrated to a new country. A change may take place in his life-situation because of certain developments in his cultural atom. He may, for instance, aspire to a new role -- that of an aviator -- which brings him, among other things, face to face with the problem of mastering a new machine. Or he is taken by surprise by new roles in his son or his wife which did not seem to exist in them before. Illustrations of changes which might press upon him could easily be multiplied. Influences might threaten him from the economic, psychological and social networks around him. It can well be said that, with the magnitude of change, the magnitude of spontaneity which an individual must summon in order to meet the change must increase in proportion.

7. See "Creativity and the Cultural Conserve," *Sociometry*, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 31.

If the supply (the amount of spontaneity) can meet the demand (the amount of change) the individual's own relative equilibrium within his social and cultural atoms will be maintained. As long, however, as he is unable to summon the spontaneity necessary to meet the change, a disequilibrium will manifest itself which will find its greatest expression in his inter-personal and inter-role relationships. This disequilibrium will increase in proportion to the falling-off of spontaneity and will reach a relative maximum when his spontaneity has reached its maximum point. It is a peculiarity of these disequilibria that they have their reciprocal effects. They throw out of equilibrium other persons at the same time. The wider the range of disequilibrium, the greater becomes the need for catharsis. Numerous methods -- therapeutic situations -- have been developed in the course of time which produce some degree of purification -- catharsis. It may be interesting to review some of these catharsis-producing media from the point of view of our spontaneity theory.

Catharsis in the Conventional Drama

Let us consider, first, the situation with which Aristotle introduced the concept of catharsis -- spectators witnessing a Greek tragedy. What is it that makes the drama catharsis-producing -- in the spectator? Aristotle explained it by a brilliant analysis of the emotions in the spectators, and he was correct as far as he went. But from the point of view of the spontaneity theory, however, he omitted the salient point: the spectator is witnessing and experiencing this human tragedy for the first time; these emotions, these roles, these conflicts and this outcome are in this constellation a novelty for him. For the actors on the stage, however, the novelty has diminished more and more with each repetition. Their need for and their possibilities of mental catharsis were consummated equally in the course of their inspirational readings and rehearsals. The more the drama became a conserve for them, the less catharsis could they obtain from it.

It is different with the spectator, however. The effect upon him of the performance of the spectacle he happens to witness resembles the effect of the first reading upon the actor. The events in the drama may arouse in the spectator emotions which may

have disquieted the spectator privately, but which are now magnified before him on the stage. However, it is the spontaneous factor of the first time which, on the one hand, arouses his disequilibrium to a high degree of articulation -- a degree of which he would not have been capable, by himself -- and, on the other hand, makes him a wide-open target for the purge of his impure emotions -- in other words, his mental catharsis.

A spectator, just as he may read a book a second or a third time, may be anxious to see a drama or a motion picture more than once. Every time he sees it he may experience portions of the spectacle which he overlooked earlier and which will act on him as another "first time", so to speak, operating as an irritating and a catharsis-producing agent. But as soon as he is well acquainted with the entire spectacle, he will react to it as a conserve. By that time, moreover, his possibilities of and his need for catharsis will have become almost nil.

The spectators, as private persons, have no experience and no knowledge of the trials and pains through which the playwright, the director and the actors have had to go in order to make possible a performance on the stage or in a film, or of the anxieties and strains the actors go through at the time the spectators are watching them. Comparatively speaking, the spectators are in a state of mind free of pain and fear. They are in an aesthetic situation, entirely inactive and quite willing to let their feelings follow the impressions which they receive from the stage, and to allow their ideas to develop in such a way that they may fit in with the pattern of the play. It is, in other words, the warming-up process of the inactive subject. The more the spectator is able to accept the emotions, the roles and the developments on the stage as corresponding to his own private feelings, private roles and private developments, the more thoroughly will his attention and his phantasy be carried away by the performance. The paradox is, however, that he is identifying himself with something with which he is not identical: the hero on the stage is not he, himself. The spectator can sympathize with acts which take place on the stage just as if they were his own acts, but they are not his; he can experience with the actors all the pain and the torture, all the misery and joy which they go

through -- and still be free of them. The degree to which the spectator can enter into the life upon the stage, adjusting his own feelings to what is portrayed there, is the measure of the catharsis he is able to obtain on this occasion.

The written drama of today is the organized mental product of one particular person, the playwright. For him, the creative states and the roles which he has introjected into his drama may correspond, in some degree, to certain of his private notions and unactualized roles. From this point of view we may say that the process of writing the drama may have been accompanied by a catharsis -- at least during the time of writing.

But for the actors, to whom this man's ideas are foreign, the situation is entirely different. If it should happen that an actor has a certain affinity for the part which is assigned to him -- if the playwright has managed to express certain of his private emotions better than he, himself, could have expressed them -- we may expect some degree of catharsis to take place in the private person of the actor. But one must not forget the effect made upon the actor by the great number of times he has to repeat his performance of this role in the course of rehearsing the role and, later, playing it night after night on the stage before an audience.

There are actors who give their best performances at their first reading of a role and their performances grow more and more conserved from this point on. Apparently they are more spontaneous at the first reading, and if there is a tele-relation between their own emotions and life-roles and those expressed by the part to which they have been assigned, they are spontaneous in proportion to the novelty of the experience of acquaintance. The more often they have to rehearse and play a part, the more will they lose in spontaneity and sincerity -- and in private interest -- in the part. The amount of private interest an actor has in a part is a measure of the spontaneity he is able to display in it. The amount of spontaneity, in turn, is a measure of the amount of catharsis which the private personality of the actor will gain from the process of acting this part.

Aristotle and, with him, most later theorists of the drama like Diderot, Lessing and Goethe, were apparently influenced in their judgment of what

mental catharsis⁸ is by their common frame of reference, the drama-convulse. Their views would have been vastly different if they had approached the problem from the point of view discussed in this paper, the point of view of the spontaneous drama.

Catharsis in the Psychodrama

Historically there have been two avenues which led to the psychodramatic view of mental catharsis. The one avenue led from the Greek drama to the conventional drama of today and with it went the universal acceptance of the Aristotelian concept of catharsis. The other avenue led from the religions of the East and the Near East. These religions held that a saint, in order to become a savior, had to make an effort; he had, first, to save himself. In other words, in the Greek situation the process of mental catharsis was conceived as being localized in the spectator -- a passive catharsis. In the religious situation the process of catharsis was localized in the individual, himself, -- in the actor, so to speak, his actual life becoming his stage. This was an active catharsis. In the Greek concept the process of realization of a role took place in an object, in a symbolic person on the stage. In the religious concept the process of realization took place in the subject -- the living person who was seeking the catharsis. One might say that passive catharsis is here face to face with active catharsis; aesthetic catharsis with ethical catharsis.

These two developments which heretofore have moved along independent paths have been brought to a synthesis by the psycho-dramatic concept of catharsis. From the ancient Greeks we have retained the drama and the stage, and we have accepted the Near East's view of catharsis; the actor has been made the locus for the catharsis. The old locus (the spectator) has become secondary. Furthermore, as actors on our stage we now have private persons with private tragedies, instead of the old Greek tragedians with their masks,

8. Breuer and Freud called their early hypnotic treatment of hysteria a "cathartic" procedure. Later, Freud replaced hypnosis with free association and the idea of cathartic procedure was abandoned. Their concept referred to the patient's discharge of memories in a state of hypnosis. Obviously, their cathartic procedure had no relationship to the drama.

their make-up and their detachment from the theme of the drama.

These private tragedies may be caused by various disequilibrating experiences, one source of which may be the body. They may be caused by the relationship of the body to the mind or by that of the mind to the body, and result in an inadequacy of performance at the moment. They may also be caused by an individual's thoughts and actions toward others, and by their thoughts and actions toward him. Again, they may be caused by a design of living which is too complicated for the amount of spontaneity the individual is able to summon. Practically speaking, there is no sphere of the universe imaginable, whether physical, mental, social or cultural, from which there may not emerge, at one time or another, some cause of disequilibrium in a person's life. It is almost a miracle that an individual can achieve and maintain any degree of balance, and man has continually been in search of devices which will enable to attain or increase his equilibrium.

One of the most powerful media which can produce this effect is mental catharsis. It can take place and bring relief from grief or fear without any change being necessary in the external situation. Large amounts of energy are thus retained which otherwise would go into efforts to change reality. Every disequilibrium, however, has its matrix and its locus, and the catharsis-producing agent -- in order to achieve the effect intended -- has to be applied at the seat of the ailment.

Mental catharsis cannot be reproduced wholesale and on a symbolic plane to meet all the situations and relationships in which there may exist some cause for disequilibrium within a person. It has to be applied concretely and specifically. The problem has been, therefore, to find a medium which can take care of the disequilibrating phenomena in the most realistic fashion, but still outside of reality; a medium which includes a realization as well as a catharsis for the body; a medium which makes catharsis as possible on the level of actions and gestures as it is on the level of speech; a medium which prepares the way for catharsis not only within an individual but also between two, three or as many individuals as are interlocked in a life-situation; a medium which opens up for catharsis the world of phantasies and unreal roles and relationships. To all these and many

other problems an answer has been found in one of the oldest inventions of man's creative mind -- the drama.

The Phenomena of Reduction and Expansion
on the Psychodramatic Stage

One of the problematic characteristics of human relations -- as we live through them -- is their quality of looseness. A love-relationship, for instance, takes time to develop. All worth while experiences in life take a long time to come to fruition. From the point of view of common sense, life appears full of tensions, disillusionings and dissatisfactions.

There is a pathological aspect to all life-situations as they exist in our culture today -- regardless of the mental conditions, normal or abnormal, of their constituents. Very few relationships are continuous and permanent, and even these few are often prematurely ended by the death of one of the partners. Most relationships are fragmentary and end in a most unsatisfactory fashion. In one case a life-situation is distorted because the two people who compose it spend too much time together; in another case because they spend too little time together. In one case, their life-situation is distorted because they have to exist side by side in one narrow room; in the other because they have too much freedom from any one locality. Such phenomena are not consequences of the economic structure of our society but, as we know from studies of such phenomena as the sociodynamic effect⁹, they are inherent in the psychological currents which underlie all inter-human relationships.

Excepting rare instances, therefore, but few undertakings of any of us ever get so much as started. Every one of us has ideas -- "dreams" -- of himself in a variety of situations. These we call "roles". Most of our roles remain in the "dream" stage -- they are never attempted or begun, and any attempts at actualizing our roles (rare as they are) remain, like most of our relationships, fragmentary, inconclusive, loose ends.

The number of major and minor disequilibria arising from instances such as these is so large that even someone with superhuman moral resources might

9. See "Statistics of Social Configurations," Sociometry, Vol. 1, Nos. 3 & 4, p. 359.

well be confused and at a loss. These phenomena have become associated in the mind of sociometric and psychodramatic workers with the concepts of the social and cultural atoms. It is these concepts which illustrate systematically and in the most dramatic fashion how impermanent and uncertain the organization and the trend of human lives can be.

In the course of studying the cultural atoms of individuals, we have most often encountered two groups of people in particular. In one group, the demands made upon them by the roles and role-relationships of the group in which they live is so much greater than their resources or their interests that they would prefer being transferred, if possible, to a society whose total design is simpler and in which the number of roles in which they would have to function is reduced. A trend like this should not be compared with infantile behavior; the reason for this desire to live in fewer roles and relations may be that these people wish to live more thoroughly in a few roles, rather than less so in a greater number of them. The other group desires to develop and realize many more roles than the pattern of the society in which they live can afford them. They would prefer an expansion of their society and not a reduction -- an enrichment of design and not a simplification. In between these two extremes there fall groups of people who would prefer a reduction of some phases of life but an expansion of some others.

It is important to present, from this point of view, an illustration of how the principle of reduction operates in a psychotherapeutic device -- the monastery. The cultural atom of a monk -- after he has joined a monastery -- in comparison with his cultural atom during the time he lived in society, must show a drastic, well-nigh revolutionary, change. As long as he was in the world outside, he acted, for instance, in the role of husband to his wife, in the role of father to his children, in the role of supporter to his parents and in the role of employer to the hands on his farm. If he had desires for women other than his wife, then he may have acted in the role of a Don Juan; he may have been an adventurer, a gambler, a drinker, etc. In other words, he acted in a number of roles which were suited to the pattern of society in which he lived. By entering the monastery he moved into a society which reduced the number of his roles to a minimum; the roles of husband,

father, employer, etc., were cut off at one stroke. The greater the number of roles in which an individual operates in any society, the greater will be the number of conflicts in which he can become involved. The monastic community, by contrast, offers to the newcomer a culture of the simplest possible design. By reducing the number of roles, disequilibrium arising from suffering is also reduced -- catharsis by reduction.

If we consider the monastery as a purely psycho-therapeutic device, divorced from its religious trappings, it can be said that it takes its "patients" out of the society in which they have been living (and to which they are never to return) and places them in a society modelled after different principles but in better accord with the requirements of the "patients". The psychodramatic situation, based on a different philosophy and aimed at different ends, has utilized in modern form a similar point of view. It takes the patient away from the world in which he lives and places him in the center of a new world, separated from the rest of his experiences. This new world is a dramatic stage, equipped with all the devices which can throw him into a new pattern of society -- a miniature society -- in which living is different and much easier. At times it is simpler and at others it is much richer than the society from which the patient has come, but to him it is just as real as -- sometimes more real than -- the world outside. On the stage he continues to live his own life, but it is more compact because it has been reduced to its essentials. Husband and wife, after twenty-five years of marriage, go onto the psychodramatic stage and in a few hours exchange experiences of a depth which they have never before known. On the psychodramatic stage things are accomplished so much more quickly than in real life; time is so intensified. It is characteristic for the design of the psychodrama that, in it, things begin and end within the time and space allotted to them.

The subject (or patient) is allowed in psychodramatic work to omit many scenes and details of his life -- at least to begin with. This gives him at the start a freedom from the complexities and intricacies of his everyday life at home. Sometimes he is also allowed to emphasize certain key moments and situations of his life and to leave unmentioned what seems to him monotonous and insignificant. This, also, brings him relief.

A subject is put on the psychodramatic stage and given the opportunity to live his life just as he would wish to live it. A lifetime is condensed into an hour or two, and the fragmentary quality of existence outside the theatre is reduced to proportions in which we are able to express the essential experiences of our existence. Thus the psychodramatic stage is able to give one's own life a unity and completeness which a great dramatist presents to his public on a symbolic level only.

Some mental patients exhibit a strong trend towards a simplification of their life-designs and a reduction of the number of roles they are called upon to play. As an illustration let us take the case of a woman who was suffering from a progressive form of manic-depressive psychosis. She showed a one-role pattern¹⁰ for, although she expressed agreement when asked to play the role of a princess on the psychodramatic stage, she did not act out the role when it came to the actual playing of the scene, but began to voice to her "suitor" in the scene her delusional complaint which involved her desire to die and a compulsion to work and save money to send to her husband who was in South America. Placed in the role of a salesgirl, a housewife, a nurse or a schoolteacher, although it apparently was her intention to act out these roles according to the proposed design, she did not make an attempt at any illusion but always acted her delusional role.

Accordingly, we tried to reduce the dimensions of the world around her and on the stage, as well, in order to be more in accord with her own spontaneity. When we had, to some degree, accomplished this we perceived that an open catharsis took place in the patient, an increase in the coherence of her action on the stage at times when her behavior outside the theatre showed a high degree of incoherence and confusion. As she began to improve it still was characteristic of her performance on the psychodramatic stage that she mixed a certain number of private elements with the roles, but in lucid intervals which approached the normal she was finally able to carry out a symbolic role without too obvious reference to her private problems.

10. Trends in psychotic patients and patterns of society towards reduction should not be taken as "regression" to an infantile level in the psychoanalytic sense.

Many patients have come to my attention who, in the course of a paranoid form of dementia praecox, have brought to near-extinction one after another of the roles which normal life demanded of them but not, apparently, because of any trend towards reduction. On the contrary, they seemed to have a frantic desire to make room for numerous other role-aspirations which were impossible of expression within the bounds of their normal existence.

An illustration of this phenomenon of expansion is the case of a mental patient whose conduct showed the presence of the seeds, at least, of many roles. At breakfast he claimed to be an aviator; at lunchtime he said he was a member of the British royal house; he spent the afternoon as a cowboy and at the supper-table he was a Chinese citizen. In a normal group these roles remained almost entirely on a verbal level since they received no support from the reality around him¹¹; he confused the people around him and he became more confused, himself, by their lack of response. To the growing vagueness and subjectivity of his paranoid conduct a stop was put when psychodramatic treatment was undertaken. The stage work showed that the action-pattern of his delusionary roles had a greater coherence than had been apparent in real life and that there was often more organization to them than mere verbal symbols. When the patient was supported by appropriate partners it was seen that these roles -- unlivable in the outside world -- could be given a semblance of reality for him on the psychodramatic stage. Since these roles were short-lived he could live through many of them within a two-hour session in the theatre and derive satisfaction from the realization of all of them. For these completely hallucinatory roles and relations the psychodramatic stage was, indeed, the only possible vehicle. His optical and acoustic hallucinations found not only an expression through the aid of his partners but, in the audience in the theatre, they found a world which

11. It has been a significant finding in the course of psychodramatic work that schizophrenic patients experience complicated patterns of emotion, thought and inter-personal relations. This is contrary to the general view of Freud and Bleuler that the experiences of schizophrenics are almost entirely confined to the verbal level and that verbal suggestion of an event is just as satisfactory to them as the actualization of an event would be.

could give them a social reality -- a world whose flexibility was able to accommodate the patient's trend towards expansion of his constellation of roles.

Personal and Inter-Personal Catharsis

It has become an accepted fact in psychodramatic therapy that action-patterns have a definite value in the process of catharsis. The climax in a patient's treatment usually takes place in the course of psychodramatic work on the stage and not during the interview preceding it or the analysis which comes after each scene. Interview, psychodrama and post-dramatic analysis form a continuous pattern, often so intertwined that it is difficult to tell where one leaves off and the other begins. But however relieving an analysis of situations may be for the patient, for a final test he must go back onto the stage in a real-life situation. There it may rapidly become clear that the equilibrium he had thought to have gained from the analysis is not adequate. What seems lacking is a "binder" between whatever analysis can give him in the way of equilibrium and the action in the moment of living. This binder is the spontaneity which the patient must be able to summon with split-second swiftness when a life-situation calls for it. Re-test after re-test must be made in order to assure the patient that the necessary catharsis has been attained within him. It is spontaneity in its various expressions which at last crowns the efforts of the psychodrama and gives the patient the final certainty of an established equilibrium.

Theoretically speaking, the subject should be able rapidly to summon the spontaneity required for any given situation. Nevertheless, we often see a patient who puts up great resistance when asked to act out his problem. It may also happen that his mind is willing and he is able to make a start on the verbal level but the body lags behind; or, the body is brought into incomplete action which results in cramped gestures and movements and a disequilibrium of the function of speech, as well; or undue haste and impulsiveness may throw the body into overheated action. In situations like these, the spontaneity associated with verbal and mental images does not have the power to carry the body along with it. Analysis does not help; action is required. The method is to warm the subject up by means of mental and

physical starters, calling in another person to assist, if necessary. If this method is applied again and again, the subject learns through self-activation to get his organism ready for spontaneous action. It is a training in summoning spontaneity. In the course of overcoming the disequilibrium between the somatic and the mental processes, larger and larger portions of the organism are brought into play, pathological tensions and barriers are swept away and a catharsis takes place.

Disequilibrating experiences are often found between two or more persons in the roles and situations in which they are compelled to live. When they are placed upon the psychodramatic stage they seem to lack sufficient spontaneity in respect to one another to operate together in a common task. Psychodramatic methods can bring them to a point where they can reach one another at a depth-level which has been missing from their relationship. At this depth-level they can exchange thoughts and express emotions which will go far toward clarifying and erasing the causes of their conflict.

Two persons may carry on a relationship for an indefinite time in harmony. All of a sudden they find themselves enemies -- they do not know why. In the treatment of or interview with a single person it is impossible to find the true seat of the disequilibrium; both people are necessary, and they must be brought together in a situation which is crucial for them and in which they can act spontaneously. On the psychodramatic stage in one of these situations they will find themselves discarding evasions, reticences and equivocations, and revealing their true, naked emotions and feelings. They remain essentially the same two individuals who, a moment ago, stepped upon the stage, but facets of their natures are revealed which each had forgotten in the other person -- if, indeed they had ever been apparent before. It is here, on this level, that the true point of conflict is revealed. The basic features of their inter-personal clash can be gradually brought to visualization and, finally to their co-experience. If this depth-level had been ignored -- if the essential core of their conflict had remained undiscovered and unexplored -- no sound and permanent solution for their difficulty could have been reached. It required the stimulus of one personality upon the other in a spontaneous interaction to bring it to light.

Spectator and Group Catharsis

We have found that persons who witness a psychodramatic performance often become greatly disturbed. Sometimes, however, they leave the theatre very much relieved, almost as if it had been their own problems which they had just seen worked out upon the stage. Experiences such as these brought us back to the Aristotelian view of catharsis -- as taking place in the spectator -- but from a different angle and with a different perspective.

The audience in a therapeutic theatre was originally limited to persons necessary to accomplish the treatment. This is still considered the classic approach. At first we concerned ourselves with what this group meant to the actor-patients on the stage. It was soon discovered that they represented the world -- public opinion. The amount and the kind of influence which the group exerted upon the conduct of a patient on the stage became an object of research, but in the course of time we made another discovery -- the effect of psychodramatic work upon a spectator. This effect is bound to have important consequences for the psychodramatic treatment of groups.

By its own momentum the psychodramatic situation arouses people to act their problems out on a level on which the most intimate inter-individual and inter-role relationships find expression. This momentum is a dynamic factor which drives the subjects -- once they have started -- to act and talk things out in a way which takes them (and the spectators) by surprise.

There is a significant difference between the catharsis experienced by the spectator of a conventional drama and that experienced by the spectator of a psychodramatic performance. The question has been asked again and again: what factor produces this difference and in what does this difference consist? The persons on the psychodramatic stage do not really act, in the conventional sense. They are presenting themselves, their own problems and conflicts and -- this must be emphasized -- they make no attempt to make plays out of their problems. They are in dead earnest; they have been hounded by a conflict and they have come up against a blank wall in trying to escape. The spectator in the conventional theatre and the spectator of a psychodramatic performance can be compared to a man who sees the motion picture of a

volcano in eruption and a man who watches the eruption from the foot of the mountain itself. It is the drama of life, in primary form, which, through the vehicle of the therapeutic theatre, comes to view. It never does, otherwise. Man protects such intimate relationships and situations from inspection with every possible means of concealment. The ultimate, private -- yet anonymous -- character of the psychodrama makes every spectator in the audience a silent accomplice of those on the stage, no matter what may be revealed there. More and more the whole meaning of his function as a spectator vanishes and he becomes a part of and a silent partner in the psychodrama. This may explain the different character of the catharsis experienced by an onlooker in the therapeutic theatre compared with that which he attains from a conventional theatrical performance.

We are now about to consider the still deeper effect of psychodramatic work upon mental patients when they are spectators. It has been noticed here at Beacon Hill -- and I have referred to this phenomenon before -- that mental patients show a remarkable sensitivity for one another in daily life, a tele-relation for one another's actions and words which is often surprising to the staff, and which amounts to a high appreciation of their various ideological and emotional patterns. This heightened sensitivity was brought to a true test when we began to permit mental patients to witness a delusionary or a hallucinatory, a depressive or a paranoid experience of another patient, reproduced on the psychodramatic stage.

From a psychodramatic point of view the behavior of mental patients can be divided into three categories: refusal to enter the theatre, willingness to enter the theatre but only as a spectator and, finally, willingness to take part in what is going on upon the stage. The gap between the first two categories is relatively wide, but sooner or later every patient can be persuaded to become a spectator and once he has reached this phase, a therapeutic approach to his disorder is possible, even if he never goes onto the stage. The mental patient who, from his safe seat in the audience, witnesses a psychodrama -- especially if the central person in it is a patient with whom he is acquainted -- will show an interest and a curiosity far surpassing the normal and will reveal profound repercussions afterwards. The explanation of this effect is that the dramatization of

psychiatric phenomena brings into three-dimensional expression for the spectator-patient's patterns of experience which have not been permitted validity in the world outside the theatre. The mental patient in the audience thus comes into contact with the delusory or hallucinatory portion of another patient's world; he sees it worked out before his own eyes as if it were reality. There are hidden correspondences between the delusory portion of the scene he has seen acted out and his own delusions, many of which he has refrained from verbalizing. In addition, the after-reactions of mental patients to what some other mental patient has acted out on the stage reveal relationships between his own delusions and those he has seen worked out which are suggestive both of his relations outside the theatre on the psychotic level with this particular patient and of the kind of catharsis he experienced in the theatre.

The discovery of a spectator-catharsis in mental patients opened up a prospect of treating them at the same time as the patient on the stage. The latter became more and more a prototype of pathological mental processes for the entire group of patients in the audience. Patients who suffered from similar complaints or who had similar patterns of delusion and hallucination were selected to sit together in the audience. They then had similar cathartic experiences when a patient with a problem resembling their own was being treated on the stage.

The importance of this approach as a method of group psychotherapy is evident. At times, instead of using the mental patient as a prototype, specially-trained psychodramatic assistants -- so-called "auxiliary egos" -- have been used with equally beneficial results. Methodically, the use of the auxiliary ego was an advantage because of the frequent difficulty of influencing more or less non-coöperative mental patients to choose situations or plots which were fruitful for the whole group and not merely for themselves. The employment of auxiliary egos who were under our own control and sufficiently sensitive to the experiences of the psychotic, marked an important step forward in the technique of "group catharsis".

The return via the psychodrama to the Aristotelian view of catharsis has vitalized the original conception. Large mental hospitals, mental hygiene clinics, child guidance bureaus and community theatres

may be able to make use of the following scheme which has the obvious goal of treating large numbers of people at the same time. It is, of course, a special experiment within the psychodramatic sphere. It has to be tried out under the direction of someone who is highly skilled along psychiatric, psychodramatic and theatrical lines. It does not exclude the methods and techniques outlined in this paper and will never be able to replace them, but it may become an important auxiliary technique where individual or interpersonal treatment is practically impossible and where group catharsis is the method of choice.

The playwright of the conventional drama is, in this scheme, replaced by a more complicated mechanism. The community in which the subjects live -- they may be mental patients or normal people -- is explored, and by direct interviews or other means the dominating ideologies, emotions or illusions of the community are determined. The more thorough this preliminary investigation is, the better. In addition, many of the subjects may already have acted on the psychodramatic stage and thus may have been able to supply pertinent material about themselves. All this material is then studied carefully by the auxiliary egos, and the design of one or more psychodramas is worked out. These psychodramas are so constructed that they may reach the depth-levels of as large a proportion of the subjects as possible. They may even be assisted in this process by some of the subjects themselves. The resultant psychodrama is preferably spontaneous, but a conserve drama can be visualized as possible in this situation.

The actors of the conventional drama are replaced for this psychodrama by auxiliary egos. If the objective is to be the treatment of mental patients, the auxiliary egos will have been trained to portray delusions or hallucinations -- or any psychotic processes which suit the purpose.

In contradistinction to the conventional theatre, the spectators of this psychodrama are then witnessing a performance which is expressly intended to relate (and which, in fact, does relate) to their specific individual problems. The reactions of the spectators during and immediately following the performance can be made the basis for individual psychodramatic treatments. Thus is Aristotle's concept of catharsis brought to its rightful, logical culmination.

The therapeutic aspect of the psychodrama cannot be divorced from its aesthetic aspect nor, ultimately, from its ethical character. What the aesthetic drama has done for deities like Dionysius, Brahma and Jehovah and for representative characters like Hamlet, Macbeth or Oedipus, the psychodrama can do for every man. In the therapeutic theatre an anonymous, average man becomes something approaching a work of art -- not only for others but for himself. A tiny, insignificant existence is here elevated to a level of dignity and respect. Its private problems are projected on a high plane of action before a special public -- a small world, perhaps, but the world of the therapeutic theatre. The world in which we all live is imperfect, unjust and amoral, but in the therapeutic theatre a little person can rise above our everyday world. Here his ego becomes an aesthetic prototype -- he becomes representative of mankind. On the psychodramatic stage he is put into a state of inspiration -- he is the dramatist of himself.

Comments and Conclusions

At this juncture it is logical to consider what processes in other types of psychotherapy are used to attain mental catharsis. Throughout this paper it has been my purpose to demonstrate the close relationship between spontaneity and mental catharsis, the material being largely drawn from actual psychodramatic experiments and studies. It can readily be assumed that any other genuine psychotherapeutic approach to the same problems must disclose similar basic conditions and that catharsis will be attained by similar devices.

An interested investigator can observe a plain relationship between other types of psychotherapy (such as hypnosis, suggestion or psychoanalysis) and the psychodrama. All of these might be viewed as variously undeveloped stages of a complete psychodramatic pattern of treatment. The spontaneous factor operates in all psychotherapies up to certain limits. It operates in the "free association" technique used in psychoanalysis, in suggestion therapy or during a hypnotic session. On the basis of the conclusions reached in this paper, there must be a relationship between the spontaneity quotient of any type of psychotherapy and the extent of mental catharsis it achieves. Similarly, the other principles discussed,

such as the patterns of roles and role-relationships which are given so much prominence in psychodramatic work, can be discerned as operating -- even if only in a fragmentary fashion -- in every psychotherapeutic technique.

Students of psychotherapy -- especially those who practice psychoanalysis or use such psychoanalytic terms as "transference", "regression", "libido", "unconscious" and many others -- may well wonder what usefulness remains for these concepts. These psychoanalytic concepts can be superseded by more inclusive ones which originated as the result of psychodramatic and sociometric findings. An illustration is the concept of "transference," considered by Freud the cornerstone of all psychoanalytic therapy. The stimulating value of a concept must come to an end when new findings and dynamic factors demand a re-orientation of the whole field in which they are applied. Any new concepts should show the limitations of previous concepts in this sense: Bernheim's concept of "suggestion" was discarded by Freud in favor of what he called "transference," a larger concept which also included "suggestion". Within the last twenty years, studies of inter-individual relationships and of attraction-repulsion patterns in large groups have led me to develop a new concept, "tele", which is inclusive of "transference" (which, in turn, includes "suggestion") and, in addition, is able to take in its stride processes as widely separated as the "narcissistic" psychoses on the one hand, and psychosocial "networks" on the other.

Terminological Comments

Psychodrama is a form of the drama in which the plots, situations and rôles -- whether real or symbolic -- reflect the actual problems of the persons acting and are not the work of a playwright. It has been found that psychodramatic procedure is accompanied by profound forms of mental catharsis. The psychodrama, as originally conceived, is carried out in a quasi-theatrical setting, with a stage and a selected audience.

Psychodrama, in the wider sense in which the word is used today, is an exploratory approach to the conserved and the improvised forms of the drama, re-evaluated on the basis of psychodramatic concepts.

The psychodrama developed out of the impromptu play. The impromptu play, as a principle in psychotherapy, was first used by me in the treatment of children, and later in the treatment of mental patients. From the year 1911 to the year 1930 I was practically alone in using this principle -- at least in a systematic fashion, but in the last few years the number of educators and psychiatrists to take up the use of this principle has been increasing. In educational and psychiatric literature terms like 'play-techniques', 'release therapy', 'play therapy', 'projection methods' and others, which suggest the use of the impromptu-play principle, have begun to be current. Although it had its inception in the idea of the impromptu play, the psychodrama of today is vastly different from it and should not become confused with it. In order to show how the psychodrama developed out of the impromptu play and to indicate where in the courses of the two have diverged, I shall here describe the process which resulted in this differentiation.

I began my work with children at a time when there was only one alternative to allowing children to play spontaneously by themselves: an imitation, on the children's level, of the conventional, conserved drama. A therapist could either watch the children at their games and interpret their behavior in terms of some ideology, like psychoanalysis, for instance, or he could teach them to rehearse and act out, like adults, a play made from, shall we say, the story of 'Little Red Riding-Hood'. I initiated a technique which was considered, at the time, something of a novelty: I assisted the children in putting together a plot which they were to act out, spontaneously, with the expectation that this impromptu play would, in itself, produce in its participants a mental catharsis.

The greater the number of situations and roles involved and the more complex they became, the more difficult it grew to use the word 'playing' in this connection -- in fact, its use became rather absurd. When I began to use the impromptu-play principle with adults, as applied to their actual, intimate problems, the reality of the situations, the earnestness of the participants and the consequences implied for them in the procedure were so great that the suggestion that they were playing a game was abandoned; the word

'drama' seemed much closer to the factual experiences. But the word 'drama' still seemed to imply a poetic, fictional product and therefore the qualifying prefix 'psycho-' was added.

Rôles and the Cultural Atom. Every individual -- just as he has at all times a set of friends and a set of enemies -- has a range of rôles in which he sees himself and faces a range of counter-rôles in which he sees others around him. They are in various stages of development. The tangible aspects of what is known as 'ego' are the rôles in which he operates; the pattern of rôle-relations around an individual as their focus is called his 'cultural atom'.

The use here of the word 'atom' can be justified if we consider a cultural atom as the smallest functional unit within a cultural pattern. The adjective 'cultural' can be justified when we consider rôles and relationships between rôles as the most significant development within any specific culture (regardless of what definition is given to the word 'culture' by any school of thought). Just as sociometric procedures are able to investigate the configuration of social atoms, spontaneity tests and psychodramatic procedures are the means of studying cultural atoms.

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