

THE PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY OF SOCIODRAMA

The first section of this paper discusses the definition of sociodrama and psychodrama in terms of their different goals and similar assumptions. The second section discusses the philosophy of sociodrama and sociometry.

In Australia a distinction has been made between psychodrama and sociodrama. This distinction has partly arisen because of a need for definition in terms of the Psychologist's Practising Acts passed by State Parliaments. Practitioners of sociodrama may have to define and justify their use of action methods such that their use in sociodrama is not for psychotherapy, or personality change or treatment of illness.

The need for definition has also arisen out of the use of action methods for learning and change in professions where the basic aim is education, effective organisation of production, enhancement of the quality of life and environment, the clarification of desires and values in relation to lifestyle, and the cultural and political evolution of society. Both legally and pragmatically a clearer definition of psychodrama and sociodrama seems necessary.

Sociodrama and psychodrama have some common underlying assumptions which differentiate them from other theoretical models of man and society.

Both sociodrama and psychodrama take an interpersonal perspective. Psychodrama however focuses on the individual's personal perception of events and views the interpersonal situation as it is perceived through the framework of constructs about the world which an individual has developed. The focus is upon the internal world and experiences of the person and the group members. Sociodrama focuses on the external world, on the groups, organisations and macro-structures such as cultures and political ideologies which shape the interpersonal experiences of people.

Both sociodrama and psychodrama have an underlying systems approach. A systems approach asserts that any whole - whether it be personality organisation a family, a sports, work or social group, an organisation, a society or a physical environment - is an organisation which is based on homeostasis or equilibrium and has an existence independent of the sum of its parts. A system is always in process of dynamic movement and change.

Sociodrama and psychodrama are phenomenological, that is they emphasize description rather than explanation. The focus of analysis is on the structure of the system and on the process which occurs in the system. The assumption is that while observation and the measurement of the process is taking place, the system has already changed. Measurement therefore can be likened to a still photograph and the ongoing movement or process within a system to a moving picture documentary.

Sociodrama and psychodrama elucidate the systems underlying the whole of society. Moreno (1951) comments upon this discovery.

The discovery that human society has an actual dynamic, central structure underlying and determining all its peripheral and formal groupings may one day be considered as the cornerstone of social science. This central structure.....is either found or is discernible in every form of human society....and exerts a determining influence upon every sphere in which the factor of human interrelations is an active agent - in economics, biology, social pathology, politics, government and similar spheres of social action. 1.

Both sociodrama and psychodrama assume that man is an actor and is capable of spontaneity, that is vitality, flexibility originality, creativity and adequacy in response to any situation. The degree to which spontaneity is mobilised is dependent upon the past experience and wisdom of the person as it is stored in action memory (the cultural conserve) and upon the way a person activates thinking, feeling and action in a particular situation (the warming up process). Spontaneity is in balance with anxiety which is produced by mobilising old inappropriate responses which are inadequate in a situation. This may be the result of sensory or emotional deprivation, damaging experiences, distorted perceptions, or limited models and limited experience. Spontaneity affirms that a new response is possible in any situation.,

Sociodrama and psychodrama are complimentary not competitive approaches to man and society. Psychodrama could be described as belonging to the field of individual and group psychotherapy. The field of sociodrama is the society. J.L. Moreno distinguishes between the genesis of society and genesis of personality in the following passage:

Knowledge of the central structure of human interrelations is essential to any general planning and construction of human society. In fact, this was well-nigh impossible as long as the key structures remained unknown.

Man believed that the genesis of society was outside his province - even more so than the genesis of personality... The new philosophy of human interrelations, sociometry, gives us a methodology and guide for the determination of the central structure of society and the evocation of the spontaneity of the subject - agents, and these two factors together supply us with a basis upon which the planning of human society may be undertaken. 2.

In summary, sociodrama and psychodrama take an interpersonal rather than an intra-psychic perspective. They both have an underlying systems approach to the person, groups and organisations. They share a phenomenological approach focusing on the process of what happens rather than an objective measurement. Both sociodrama and psychodrama assume that man is an actor and is capable of spontaneity which brings an element of newness to any situation. They are complimentary methods rather than competitive approaches.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIODRAMA AND SOCIOMETRY

Peter Mendelson (19) offers a general comment on sociodrama and sociometry as philosophy. In commenting upon sociometry as a philosophy he says that "the formal philosophical structure of sociometry is at best ponderously vague and ambiguous" 3. He points out that while sociometry may not provide a formal philosophy it does provide a life philosophy, 'a set of guidelines or principles which concern themselves not with the ultimate meaning of the universe, but rather how we should live". 4 He says that in his opinion Moreno's philosophy was a distinctive brand of humanistic - existentialism.

Mendelson discusses Moreno's theory in the light of several themes pertaining to humanistic - existentialist belief. In commenting upon the existentialist belief that man is free to define himself he says that "human freedom is the first postulate of sociometry.... man, in contrast to the robot, has a choice in all matters and the choice itself is an expression of man's existential freedom" 5. He says that in the sociometric system, spontaneity is the operational manifestation of freedom. "It is the force through which man individuates himself from the collective, while simultaneously freeing himself from a private and collective past". 5 Mendelson goes on to comment on Moreno's theory as it illustrates other existentialist beliefs such as cultivation of individuality, encounter and dialogue with the other, the immediacy of the moment, the here-and-now, the primacy of experience as truth which is verified by one's own senses, and living as a process of being and of becoming. For Moreno the process of becoming was a transformation towards becoming the creator-man. Mendelson comments that when man as creator comes to terms with the constraints imposed by structures, history, power and prestige a struggle between an established and an emergent world order occurs. Commenting on Moreno's positive emphasis he says that 'Moreno might have said that man must learn to accept certain limits in life, but it would undoubtedly have been characteristic of him excitedly to say that man must learn to accept all the challenges of life, to learn to live creatively, and in so doing to creatively transform both himself and his universe." 6

Joe Hart (19) 7 offers a comment on the assumptions underlying sociometry as a life philosophy. In an article entitled "An Outline of Basic Postulates in Sociometry" he says that sociometry is not so much a set of tools but the basis for developing a personal philosophy, a way of life. Conversations with his students led him to examine the basic postulates of sociometry. His first postulate is that people are affiliative and that the affiliative need draws people to associate with some aspect of human social organisation. His second postulate

is that affiliation is a selective process, so that as man strives to affiliate he selects those who complete his picture of himself as a person, those who help him identify with some aspect of social organisation. A third postulate is that affiliative selection is made according to different criteria, some formal and defined by the purpose of the organisation, some informal. The study of sociometric choices provides a study of the informal structure of society. Other postulates are that democracy and freedom through the development of spontaneity and the actualization of potential, are accepted values in sociometry. Freedom and responsibility cannot be separated so that mature freedom implies a relationship based on altruism, on service and interest, and implies the person's capability of accepting responsibility and contributing to the maintenance of social structure. His final postulate is that sociometry is future oriented and involves itself in changing social organisation.

Mendelson (19) in his discussion of sociometry as a social theory rather than a philosophy, says that sociometry takes an explicitly ethical stance. It assumes equality, an oppositional and critical stance in its search for change, and has as its purpose a radical redesigning of society which is characterised by creative ferment.

Moreno spoke about creative ferment in two ways, in man's relation to man and as creative revolution. He saw sociometry as a means of intervening in the structure of relationships between people and in organisational structures. He saw social revolution in terms of man coming to terms with the products of his mind, his inventions - the computer, the robot, refrigerators, automobiles, airplanes and the like⁸ and above all the atomic bomb⁹. It was with some urgency about the survival of human existence that he spoke of creative revolution. He saw that there had been a division between man's will to create and man's will to power¹⁰. It is at this point that Moreno's philosophy suggests a transpersonal emphasis beyond the humanistic. He says that if man continues to fill the world with his inventions (of which there seems no end to new forms and developments) and aims to control his creations he "unleashes forms of energy and perhaps touches on properties which far surpass his own little world and which belong to the larger, unexplored and perhaps uncontrollable universe... Man may perish by fabricating robots in excess of his control"¹¹ this will become a more outstanding problem the more successfully technical forces prosper.

The creative revolution which Moreno called for was that man take up his own fate and the fate of the universe. He wrote: 'Man is asked to turn upon himself. Man is directed to recognise

the significance of the living encounter... he is asked to relate himself directly to the people whom he meets, to recognise their immortal and inextinguishable value" 12. Elsewhere he wrote "Man is a cosmic man not only a social man or an individual man... a therapeutic method which does not concern itself with these cosmic implications, with man's very destiny is incomplete and inadequate". 13

So for Moreno the creative revolution has an inner component - the disciplining of life by the will to create rather than the will to power, and an outer component - revolution in social structures such that universal peace and recognition of the immortal and inextinguishable value in the other are established.

In the transpersonal area Moreno takes his discussion a little further. He says "it is the I - God with whom we are all connected. It is the I which becomes the We. When the I - God is universalised, the whole God concept becomes one of humbleness, weakness and inferiority... God has never been so lowly described and so universal in his dependence." 14 The theology which Moreno uses is a process theology. For him God is in the process of becoming the I - God. God has no existence as a cosmic being only as he is manifest or embodied in man. It is not that God is what each individual experiences as spiritual but rather the creator embodied in each individual. Each individual is in a process of change towards becoming more the creator.

In summary sociodrama and sociometry have a humanist - existentialist philosophy and underlying postulates. It also has a transpersonal emphasis which is not well developed. The process of training the sociodramatist involves assisting a person to stay in the process of meeting and encountering others and at the same time developing the inner creative I.

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