

DIMENSIONS OF CATHARSIS, DISCUSSION OF ZERKA MORENO'S LECTURE

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Every therapeutic operation has as its base or root a concept of man. As we have heard, the Morenean concept of catharsis rests on a ground different from the Freudian-Aristotelian view. Moreno views man as a creator seeking to free his spontaneity, breaking the shackles of restrictive conserves moving into action to define himself. Catharsis, then, involves action and further interaction.

Actional Catharsis may be viewed along three dimensions: the physical-situational, the temporal, and the role dimension.

Physical-situational dimension. In what place does the catharsis occur? For example sharing the moment with a protagonist who says about his father, "I wish he could have lived to see this. This is a part of my world that I could never share with him." In psychodrama this action can happen—breaking the conserve of the unfulfilled wish.

Temporal Dimension. Past—When the protagonist acts as himself at a previous time. Present—An interaction of individuals who are physically or psychologically present such as a couple working out their current relationship. Future—In the projected future as the person you might become.

Role Dimension. Actional catharsis can occur in the role of another during psychodrama. A young woman who as a child survived the ravages of World War II in Germany rages at her withdrawn and depressed father for years of unexpressed hurt. She reverses roles and in the role of the father for the first time emotionally connects the demoralizing events of the father's life with his unavailability to her. This act, resulting in tremendous emotional release, insight and understanding became a critical event in beginning to free the young woman from the painful effects of rejection.

The level of catharsis is then related to man's warmth to the act, the locus of the act and his ability to enter into the psychodramatic dimension of surplus reality. Catharsis is the conversation that never occurred, the role that was never played, and the fulfillment in the here and now of the possible. Actional catharsis is not retrospective but ontological. In psychodrama, actional catharsis can be experienced by the protagonist, auxiliaries and audience. Actional catharsis can occur in the role of another, in the manifest

past or projected future. Actional catharsis is neither role-bound nor time-bound. It is the agent which facilitates spontaneity, and enhances personal freedom.

Actional catharsis then is not only the drain-off of a traumatic-wound, but a springboard of human possibility.