

PSYCHOANALYST VS. PSYCHODRAMATIST
A DIALOGUE*

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Let me try to make my discussion remarks in a form congenial to the topic of our discussion. Let me present them in a dialogical form, choosing two protagonists as my principal spokesmen: the *Psychoanalyst* and the *Psychodramatist*. This, I suspect, is quite an artful device of sitting on the interdisciplinary fence, giving me a chance to speak with my tongue in other people's cheeks, while at the same time forcing them—that is my protagonists—to use my script for their discourse. Of course, I know full well that I am not likely to deceive you and that you will readily recognize my device for what it is: a feeble attempt to take a leaf out of Dr. Moreno's book—pretending, for a brief moment of grandiosity and expansiveness, to be Dr. Moreno himself. But you will note that I shall do so for brief moments only, followed by a deplorable change of personality in order to become an innocent mouthpiece of Dr. Moreno's psychoanalytic critics.

I begin with giving the Psychoanalyst the floor.

Psychoanalyst: "Psychodrama, Mr. Psychodramatist, is certainly one of your most lively and adventurous brain children. But didn't you admit yourself that its paternity reaches back to ancient Dionysian rites, Orphic mystery cults, Socratic dialogues and to the tradition of Greek tragedy and Aristotelian catharsis? In short, does not psychodrama amount to turning the clock back from the modern dynamic approach to obsolete ego-oriented methods of admonition, exhortation, persuasion or moral therapy? Does not psychodrama dispense with the most important accomplishments of psychoanalysis: with the part played by insight into unconscious dynamics? Does it not substitute continued acting out for systematic understanding, interpreting and working through of the patient's problems?"

Psychodramatist: My friend, your objections are of the common, garden variety type and have repeatedly been refuted by the psychodramatist. Acting out in psychodrama is something different from acting out in the psychoanalytic situation. It has a cathartic, liberating purpose. It is done with the full approval of the director. Indeed, he encourages it, leads up to

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it, helps to bring it about. Acting out in psychodrama is the counterpart of *free association* in psychoanalysis. Yet by contrast to the patient's productions on the couch, it is truly free, free from what Ehrenwald described as "doctrinal compliance." It is *spontaneous, creative and unrehearsed*. It brings the past back from oblivion and makes it real, life-like, *here and now*. Moreover, with the psychodramatist's direct cooperation, it enables the patient to cope with his current difficulties better than before. To quote Dr. Moreno: "The crux of the matter is that acting out be tolerated and take place within a setting which is safe for execution and under the guidance of therapists who are able to utilize the experience." Thus spake Dr. Moreno and so you see that psychoanalysts, by prohibiting acting out, dispense with one of the most powerful tools in the psychotherapist's armamentarium.

Psychoanalyst: (trying to control his counter-transference) There are several flaws in your argument. First, you adopt a psychoanalytic term for your own convenience and do not tell us exactly in what way it differs from the accepted psychoanalytic use. Psychoanalytically speaking—that is quoting Hinselwood and Schatzky—"acting out is the partial discharge of emotional tensions that is achieved by responding to the present situation as if it were the situation that originally gave rise to it." Acting out, therefore, is nothing but a dramatic manifestation of the neurotic symptom itself. By encouraging acting out you psychodramatists merely help the patient to hang on to his symptoms and thus to reduce temporarily his anxiety. Secondly, you are *wrong in suggesting* that we analysts actually prohibit acting out. We do no such thing. We interpret its meaning to the patient and in so doing relieve him of the need for *continued acting out, both inside and outside the psychoanalytic situation*. What you psychodramatists do is just the opposite. You reward the patient for the exhibition of his mental symptoms and thus become his accomplices in the formation and perpetuation of his neurotic defences.

A third flaw in your argument is well concealed from the eyes of the naive observer. You claim that you encourage acting out under the guidance of an *observer who is able to "utilize the experience"*. I submit that this is a purely verbal maneuver. You do not explain in what way, if any, the psychodramatist is really able to do so. I believe he "utilizes" his experience on the basis of intuitively applied psychoanalytic principles without, however, owning up to them, or without even being aware that this is what he is doing. In fact I believe that no "utilization" of therapeutic experiences is possible unless it is derived from a thorough understanding of individual

and group dynamics as it was first outlined by Freud. Put in a capsule, the psychodramatist is either a psychoanalyst without wanting to be one—like Molière's *Medecin Malgré lui*—or he is just joining his patient in the staging of an unrehearsed and spontaneous neurosis—or of a folie-a-deux, a trois, a quatre, etc.—as the case may be. It is true that most psychodramatists are in effect much more analytically minded than they like to admit. They remind me of the Jewish worshiper who tried to sneak into a synagogue on the day of atonement without a ticket. When stopped by the usher he tried to explain to him that he only wanted to deliver to his uncle his forgotten prayer book. But the usher was unconvinced. "You cheater," he said, waving his index finger, "You cheater, don't you dare let me catch you praying in there."

Psychodramatist: I do hope that your digs and diatribes against psychodrama will eventually have a cathartic effect on you and your own peace of mind. They will thereby prove the validity of our method. Disregarding the digs, let me remind you that it is just the psychodramatic setting which provides the cathartic experience with its high emotional impact, far exceeding anything that can be achieved on the couch. Again, as far as the factor of insight is concerned, we too aim—to quote Mr. Enneis—at a "thorough evaluation of the interpersonal or human relations structure." We too seek "to bring into awareness those patterns of relationships which seem to perpetuate psychosis or neurosis." And it is needless to say, we too are against sin—that is, against *irrational* acting out.

Psychoanalyst: I am glad that you too are against "irrational" acting out and in favor of rational behavior in general. But here, again, I suspect that without the established principles of psychoanalytic theory you are at a loss in deciding what is "rational" or "irrational" behavior. Of course, you have evolved a useful sociometric method for the study of groups and group behavior. But your theoretical construct *tele* is merely a substitute for Freud's concept of aim-inhibited libidinal or aggressive ties, responsible for group cohesion. In a similar vein, you emphasize the importance of the existentialist *encounter*, here and now, between therapist and patient. But your frequent reiteration of the phrase is no substitute for the dynamic understanding of the processes of transference, counter-transference, identification and projection which it implies. You introduce the concept of the *social atom* for the dynamic patterns of early child-parent relationships; of "*phantoms*" for objects introjected into personality structure; you talk about *co-conscious* or *co-unconscious* states in preference of Freud's basic distinction between the primary and the secondary processes and their

diverse manifestations. But all this merely amounts to an esoteric, private *nomenclature* in order to establish your identity as a separate and distinct school of psychotherapeutic thought. The trouble is that as a result the principles of psychodrama like those of existential analysis, religious counseling, etc., remain outside our established scientific frame of reference and cannot be integrated with it. It is true that few would deny the merits of psychodrama as a practical procedure. But I submit that to the extent to which it actually achieves therapeutic results it is a form fruste of psychoanalysis projected from the couch on to the psychodramatic stage.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I think it is high time at this point to silence the imaginary psychoanalyst of my script and indeed to reprimand him for his insistence on one-sided, intemperate, partisan statements. Also, I should now give the word to the psychodramatist for his rebuttal. The psychodramatist might conceivably retort that psychoanalysis is in effect a forme fruste of psychodrama. He might refuse to accept science as the last court of appeal to judge the validity of his approach. He might quote Dr. Moreno's statement that psychodrama and group therapy in general derive their rationale from existential and not from scientific validation, and so on and so forth.

But let me try in conclusion to come in edge-wise with a few words of my own. Needless to say, that I am not surprised to see the *Psychodramatist* and the *Psychoanalyst* of my script hopelessly at odds and unable to come to terms on basic principles. The reason is that they are committed to two fundamentally conflicting philosophical positions. The psychoanalytic approach is essentially based on a materialistic, mechanistic, causal-deterministic scheme of things. It is concerned with instinctual drives, forces or energies. To the analyst the personality of man is nothing but an assemblage of mutually interchangeable and interdependent constituent parts or quanta of energy. The psychodramatist, by contrast, moves along essentially teleological, idealistic or existentialistic lines. Like the priestly healer, the religious reformer, the spiritual counselor, or the moral therapist of a past era, he sees man as a free agent, as the maker of decisions, as the fount and origin of purpose, meaning and value in an otherwise cold and inhospitable universe. No wonder that these contrasting positions seem to be virtually irreconcilable and mutually exclusive. But the striking fact is that both the materialistic, drive-oriented psychoanalyst and the value-oriented existential therapist, spiritual counselor, moral therapist or psychodramatist can find ample confirmation of their respective philosophies in their patients' responses therapeutic or otherwise. This is what I have

described as *doctrinal compliance*.¹ In fact, the representatives of both camps can claim to be the spokesmen of a self-sealing, perfectly consistent and even pragmatically verifiable system of thought. Taking as they do two widely divergent theoretical presuppositions as their points of departure they both seem to be right in their own right.

This is certainly a perplexing state of affairs and this is not the time nor the place to speculate as to its reasons. But let me remind you that seeming contradictions of this order are by no means confined to the field of psychology and psychotherapy. The history of theoretical physics is replete with similar examples. A classical case in point is the wave *versus* the particle concept of light, each permitting a set of perfectly valid interpretations and predictive statements. Yet the two respective physical theories are just as mutually exclusive and seemingly incompatible as the *energy* versus the *value* aspects of our psychic life. We are told that Niels Bohr's celebrated principle of complementarity holds the key for the reconciliation of these paradoxes. It may well be that a similar principle of *psychological complementarity* will help resolve the behavioral scientist's and especially the psychotherapist's dilemma. It will be for the psychotherapist to bring about a reconciliation of the two conflicting aspects *within his own personality* in the first place: the reconciliation of the conflict between causally determined instinctual drives on the one hand, and man's value oriented creative aspirations and quest for freedom and spontaneity on the other. I do not know whether it is altogether possible to attain such a goal. But I believe that whoever will come close to its consummation is not likely to be an orthodox follower of any one of the contemporary rival schools of psychotherapy, psychoanalytic or otherwise.

¹ Doctrinal Compliance in Psychotherapy and Problems of Scientific Methodology. Progress in Psychotherapy, Vol. III.