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Psychodrama for Fallen Gods: A Review of Morenian Theology

Christopher Kraus

In recent years, there has been a coverup of J. L. Moreno's early theory of the Godhead in the literature and practice of psychodrama. This is a summary of a theology of psychodrama based on the writings of Moreno. As a therapeutic procedure, psychodrama is considered in light of a paradoxical relationship between humanity and divinity. Specifically, psychodrama is interpreted as the resolution of a person's wish to be God with a realization of being human. The dynamic separation and connection between an individual and a cosmic universe is explored in relationship to the psychodramatic theory of child development, role reversal, and surplus reality. Attention is focused around Moreno's notions of the Godhead, the marriage of science and religion, and experimental theology. Various religious and philosophical personalities have influenced Moreno's pragmatic theology of psychodrama. The present psychodrama profession is apparently separated from its own theological origins.

"I try to give them the courage to dream again. I teach the people to play God" (J. L. Moreno, 1946, p. 6).

J. L. Moreno introduced psychodrama with the intention of enlightening people regarding their shared divinity. Perhaps no idea of Moreno's philosophy is as misunderstood and controversial as his writing on the Godhead. The present literature and practice of psychodrama hardly mentions it. What follows is a review of Moreno's earliest theological constructs in the hopes of reviving an interest in psychodrama's original dream.

This essay summarizes a theology of psychodrama based on Moreno's pronouncements about the Godhead and his seminal ideas of the marriage between science and religion, and experimental theology. It is a theology of the paradoxical separation and connection between humanity and divinity. According to this theology, the ambitious aim of psychodrama is to reconnect a person with God. Psychodrama was Moreno's way to reunite mortals momentarily with an eternal world of all-spontaneity. It is a method for people who have fallen from their dreams. Each fall affirms their separation from God, and their mortality from their immortality. Through a therapeutic procedure, psychodrama picks up fallen angels and points them towards the realization of hopes and desires.

As a young child, Moreno enacted the first psychodrama with his playmates by taking the role of God. He sat on a throne atop chairs and a table while his angels scurried around him. At that moment he wanted to fly and so surged off his throne. He discovered that the role was indeed a fantasy because he crashed to the ground and broke his arm. He got up from the fall and kept trying to put his dream into action. In spite of the fall, Moreno never stopped believing he could be God.

I recall that I was brought to a gypsy healer to treat the broken arm and the great effect it had upon myself, my belief that I am a special case, that I am God and that God permitted me to play God and also that the one who plays God is punished for his daring. It was as if I had become a "fallen" God. The experience has never left me and has saved my life up to now. . . . How to embody God, to give him a tangible reality was my question and still is. (Moreno, 1972, pp. 206-207, 205)

This incident crystallized Moreno's notion of psychodrama as an attempt to reconcile the fantasy of being God with the reality of being human.

Moreno was enacting a "normal megalomania" while playing the role of God. He was the powerful center of his universe. According to his theory of child development (Moreno & Moreno, 1944), the infant inhabits a universe which is indistinct from the self. Fused with this first universe, the child is the megalomaniac center of it. Early in infant development there is a break from this universe and the infant discovers that what he or she perceives as his universe (fantasy) is not exactly what others perceive (reality). Through the course of development, however, Moreno asserts that the child tries to make a bridge between fantasy and reality by realizing fantasies. The supreme fantasy,

which is the hardest to realize, is the role of God, the creator of the universe. According to Moreno,

All the other roles revolve around this core, and all other roles are subordinate to it. . . . With a rather sophisticated phrase Moreno described the child as “*Megalomania ‘Normalis’—Dosim Repetatur.*” Thus, using his previous training as a medical doctor, Moreno diagnosed the child’s first role as a megalomaniac and then stated that the prescription to retain this inner core of the first role is to repeat it. (Bischof, 1970, p. 250)

In short, the role of God is embodied in the infant, lost from the child learning how to take another’s perspective, and regained by the adult as a central guiding dream.

This theology of psychodrama is characterized by a longing to return to the paradise of infant megalomania. The playful paradise of infancy in which spontaneity is abundantly accessible was a certain *idée fixe* in Moreno. He thought of this realm as “a sort of primordial nature which is immortal and returns afresh with every generation; a first universe which contains all beings and in which all events are sacred. [He] liked that realm and did not plan to leave it, ever” (Moreno, 1955, p. 10).

Separation from this paradise was comparable to hell, or cosmic anxiety, according to Moreno. Anxiety “is provoked by a cosmic hunger to maintain identity with the entire universe” (Moreno, 1956, p. 74). The identification of person with entire universe is complete in that first universe of infancy. But as that universe is broken and the individual ego differentiates itself from it, the ego finds itself in a struggle with an unfamiliar second universe. The ego discovers its solitude and alienation from a prefabricated world which the individual had no part in constructing. The ego’s stagnant response is withdrawal and further separation from that world. “The effort to escape from the conserved world appears like an attempt to return to paradise lost, the *first* universe of man, which has been substituted step-by-step . . . by the *second* universe in which we live today” (Moreno, 1939, p. 14).

The process of reclaiming this alien universe is accomplished through an engaging reversal of roles. In describing the development of his son Jonathan, Moreno writes that by role reversal, his child “could now return the whole cosmos unto himself [and] regain the ‘paradise lost’ ” (1956, p. 162). This is the model for Moreno’s original and pervasive vision of a role reversal with God. The role reversal with God aims to reincarnate, for the moment, onmipotent creativity and total spontaneity in a person. It is a reintegration of a person into the first universe of megalomaniac paradise.

In order to reverse roles with God, a person must first recognize his or her separateness from God. This follows Zerka Moreno's (1975) developmental stages of childhood. "The child is not able to role-reverse with significant others until he recognizes his separateness. He cannot yield what he does not own" (p. 57). Although there is a degree of connectedness inherent in reversing roles, the connection cannot be experienced fully without a prior understanding of the separation. The very fact that a person is *not* God makes the role reversal with God meaningful. A sense of self, of unique I, is necessary before a reversal with God can be completed. Likewise, God has a certain unique identity. According to Moreno (1947, pp. 186-187), "it is a different kind of subjectivity from that of man."

Role reversal with God is a momentous communion of the individual with the universe, but it does not last. The communion and all that it recalls of childhood is a reminder of the interconnection between humanity and a cosmic network. Without this effort of encounter, this warming up to spontaneity, there is a sharp separation between the individual and the supreme creator God. There is the reminder of mortality, fallen angels, and impossible dreams. There is a longing for a paradise lost. There is social isolation and cosmic alienation.

The Godhead

The Godhead is Moreno's way of representing the source of creativity within a cosmic framework. He wrote extensively about the Godhead in *Das testament des vaters*, which was published anonymously in 1920, translated by its author into *The words of the father* in 1941, and revised into *The psychodrama of God, a new hypothesis of the self* in 1947. Power (1975) and Simmons (1982) have written discourses on J. L. Moreno's theology of the Godhead.

Moreno makes it clear that the Godhead is a changing concept for a permanent universal law. Each person has a version of the Godhead. Each culture and era has its own version. "No construction of the Godhead can be final and each new moment may require a new construction" (Moreno, 1947, p. 191). And yet, Moreno asserts that his version of the Godhead as total spontaneity and total creativity is "the highest and most universal Godhead of all . . . [because] in Him none of the individual and national Gods—no particle of them—is lost" (1947, p. 314). "We can say with greater certainty than ever that the supreme power ruling the world is spontaneity and creativity" (Moreno, 1956, p. 117).

Here is a contradiction familiar to theology. On the one hand, there are many ways to express God. On the other hand, only one way, Mor-

eno's way, is the most appropriate expression. Moreno believed that during that moment of history in which he wrote, the Creator Godhead was indeed the most adequate explanation of the universe. The separation and connection between people and God at that moment of history clarifies the reason why Moreno idealized one particular Godhead over several other versions.

The evolution of the Godhead describes a progression from a distant God to a close God. According to Moreno (1947, 1972), three stages in this evolution are the He-God, the Thou-God, and the I-God. Yahweh, distant third-person God of power and wisdom in the Old Testament, was the creator of the universe who was separated in the heavens from the creation on earth. Only occasionally did Yahweh enter the earthly world. The physical distance of this third-person He-God from the children of Israel provided an external locus of protection for a Hebrew nation struggling for survival (Moreno, 1972).

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ, man of love and goodness, was a God who could be addressed directly as Thou. To Moreno, Christ was a living God embodied in a human, whereas Yahweh was a cosmic God separated from humanity in the heavens. The personalized Godhead provided the hope of fellowship and community in a world of enemies (Moreno, 1972). Thou-God symbolized a tight connection, a shared divinity between people and their deity.

The locus of creativity resided on earth in the Godhead of the New Testament. But for Moreno it was still one-person-removed from each individual. Moreno claimed to initiate the third stage of evolution with the publication of the I-God in a testament authored anonymously (1920). "Everyone can portray his version of God through his own actions and so communicate his own version to others. That was the simple meaning of my first book, in which I proclaimed the 'I-God' " (Moreno & Moreno, 1969, p. 21).

In his own version of the Old Testament, Moreno used the first-person "I" as the mouthpiece for God in *The words of the father*, and published it without claiming authorship. In Moreno's view, all people past and yet to come had created the "Words"; all were responsible for these words, hence personal authorship would have been a lie (Moreno, 1972). The book was an invitation to an encounter with the saving source of creativity: the "I" (Power, 1975). In effect, each reader had to repeat, "I am God, the Creator." The result is that there are theoretically a million gods. Unfortunately, the book has been interpreted as empty pathological megalomania. "None of my inspirations and pronouncements," writes Moreno (1969, p. 21), ". . . have

been more severely criticized, misunderstood and ridiculed, than the idea that I proclaimed myself as God."

Not only is "I" a living creator in each individual, but it is also a cosmic God of creativity which each individual shares. "It is the I-God with whom we are all connected. It is the *I* which becomes the *We*" (Moreno & Moreno, 1969, p. 21). It is a Godhead which makes every person uniquely responsible for whatever is created, and which connects each person with the common principle of creativity and spontaneity that rules the universe. At one moment a person is close to the Godhead when that person has warmed up to the common link of spontaneity and is on the verge of creating a new part of his or her surrounding world. At another moment a person is far from the Godhead when that person is socially isolated from all other "I's" and surrounded by an alien world created completely by strangers.

Moreno's God is spontaneity. Hence the commandment on the frontispiece of *The words of the father* (Moreno, 1941) is, "Be spontaneous!" This also means, "Be responsible for creating a world around you. Be aware that you share the universe with a million creative Gods."

Why retain the theological vocabulary in psychodrama? Why not relegate the Godhead to "the dark corners of library shelves" (Moreno, 1955, p. 8)? Because a recognition of the solid separation between I and God is a prerequisite for the union of I and God. The Godhead provides that clear vision of something more than "I."

The Marriage of Science and Religion

Moreno's intellectual model group

In an interview late in Moreno's lifetime (Sacks, 1971), he said that those who had had the greatest influence on his psychodramatic concepts were people with religious and philosophical personalities. Since the age of five, he had been brought up through the study of the Old Testament in his Sephardic Jewish family. As a result, he developed an early interest in the cosmos, which set the stage for all his successive work in psychodrama.

The experiences which I had I tried to put into words in a book which has become known as *Das Testament des Vaters* (1920) in which the idea of the I-Creator and the principles of creativity were proclaimed as the first principles of the universe. All that I know about these elusive things and all I have done on an experimental level since stems from these days [leading up to the composition of the book]. (Moreno, 1953, p. 391)

According to Moreno (1972), *Das testament des vaters* literally exploded from him in a fit of religious ecstasy. He recalls how he rushed to the

top of a castle tower and scribbled for hours on the walls verses that seemed to come from outside himself. A long warming up process preceded that spontaneous moment of creativity. Moreno's theology of psychodrama then was a gradual warm up to the prevailing attitudes of the times.

Several memorable events during Moreno's childhood and early adulthood in Vienna between 1894 and 1920 are reported succinctly in his *Preludes to my autobiography* (1955). In it he describes the birth of his mission to create a marriage between science and religion. At the time, science was considered a profession of facts and so-called reality, whereas religion was considered exclusively a profession of fantasy and epic romances. A network of historical and contemporary thinkers, writers, and artists debating the relative merits of science and religion surrounded Moreno at the turn of the century. These philosophical personalities formed a model of intellectual debate. Out of this seedbed of ideas blossomed Moreno's theology of psychodrama in *Das testament des vaters* (1920).

The Jewish prophets had a tremendous influence on Moreno for they had encountered the distant Godhead directly in the course of the drama of everyday living. They made themselves the mouthpiece of the Godhead. Moreno understood the Old Testament as a psychodrama of God in which the children of Israel held an ongoing dialogue with their Creator. Jesus and Buddha also left lasting impressions on Moreno, particularly in their messages of fellowship and love. The spontaneous nature of Jesus's Sermon on the Mount was a prime example of reversing roles with the Godhead. The history of the prophets as ridiculed social outcasts, never trusted but always vindicated in the end, may be a consolation to the present psychodrama community struggling for a voice in a medically and technologically oriented society.

The religious character of psychodrama is well illustrated by the way Moreno contrasts psychodrama with the ideas of Marx and Freud. "The one thing in common between Marxism and psychoanalysis," writes Moreno (1955, pp. 6-7), "was that they both rejected religion." To them, the church represented a conservative institution that tranquilized the masses in the name of a delusional father-God. Moreno would have agreed with their critique of religion as an institution in which church dogma and ritual chokes off spontaneity from its automated devotees, and in which the father-God of the Bible is an all-too-distant projection of one's everpresent potency and spontaneity. The theology Moreno offered was "just as much in contradiction and opposition to the official religions as it was to the agnostic, psychological, and political doctrines of [the] times" (Moreno, 1955, p. 8). But Mor-

eno never extended his critique of institutional religion to a rejection of all things spiritual, as did Marx and Freud. Instead, he took a position opposite to both, the side of "positive religion," in which the concept of God was a fantastic reality, rather than an unrealistic fantasy.

[His] contention was that religion should be tried again, a religion of a new sort, its inspirations modified and its techniques improved by the insights which science has given us . . . and by no means excluding some of the insights which Marxism and psychoanalysis have brought forth. (Moreno, 1955, pp. 6-7)

For Moreno (1969), the valuable contribution of Marx was the *socio-dynamic* person. This view of the person as primarily a social being bound in a network of relationships is the basis for Moreno's concept of the social atom. In addition, Moreno's crusade against the depersonalizing effect of the industrial society was to praise human creativity, just as Marx's struggle against capitalism was an effort to bolster human productivity. Marx and Moreno maintained that alienation (*entfremdung*) was the modern malaise of technological growth. Marx argued that this alientation from the various parts of production and from fellow workers was at the root of the person's inability to organize resistance. Moreno used this notion of social isolation as the primary condition for a total lack of spontaneity and creativity. A cooperative community was their common solution for restoring the dignity and creativity of individuals.

The valuable contribution of Freud to Moreno's theology was the concept of the *psychodynamic* person. Psychoanalysis validated a rich and highly influential fantasy life in every individual. Mind, rather than social intercourse, was viewed as the seething mass underlying personality. Conscious and unconscious perceptions, dreams, and illusions are the building blocks of psychodrama.

Moreno's position of positive religion offered a third dimension of personality: the *cosmodynamic* person (Moreno & Moreno, 1969). The cosmodynamic person participates not only in an interpsychic social dialogue and an intrapsychic psychodramatic dialogue, but also in an extrapsychic cosmological dialogue with the Godhead, the universal principle of spontaneity and creativity. The particular dynamics of a person interconnected with the cosmos revolve around the universal questions of birth and death, creation and extinction. Moreno asserts that this third dimension of humanity is particularly appropriate to the present era in which birth control, abortion rights, genetic engineering, and the threat of a nuclear holocaust calls immediate attention to the daily realities of birth and death on an individual and collective level.

Moreno grouped Marxism and Freudianism as philosophies of socioeconomic and psychological determinism, respectively. On the opposite philosophical perspective, he posed Henri Bergson's *élan vital* creationism which was a "total denial of determinism" (Moreno, 1949, p. 103). Moreno's spontaneity-creativity hypothesis was conceived as an intermediary philosophy (Moreno, 1946). Creativity is not simply a dependent derivative of social and psychological factors. Nor is it a magical force completely independent of human control. It is interwoven with socioeconomics and psyche in a cyclical process of warming up, spontaneity, creativity, and cultural conservation.

For Moreno, psychodrama was the living antithesis of psychoanalysis for pulling the patient off the couch and onto the stage (Sacks, 1971), and for taking the analyst out of his priestly confessional role behind the semidormant patient into a face-to-face encounter in the here and now with the vibrant creative person. As a projection screen, the silent analyst represents a faceless god in a godless world that has lost faith in a supreme creator. As a spontaneous and creative member of a group, a psychodramatist represents a god looking eye to eye and I to I into a sea of creative gods. In Freud's case, the rejection of religion cost him "the opportunity to learn . . . of the contributions which saints and prophets made toward psychotherapy as the most ingenious agents of psychotherapy before the advent of social science" (Moreno, 1946, p. 8).

Moreno objected to the psychoanalytic theory that heroes and geniuses "are all mental patients . . . or at least touched by insanity" (Moreno, 1955, p. 11). He proposed the theory that persons who have all the signs of paranoia and megalomania, exhibitionism and social maladjustment can still be fairly well controlled and healthy. Indeed they may show greater productivity by acting their symptoms out, rather than constraining and resolving these symptoms. The only way to get rid of the "God-syndrome" is to act it out (Moreno, 1955). After psychoanalysis's rejection of religion, "it remained for psychodrama to take the God-act seriously and to translate it into valid therapeutic terms" (Moreno, 1946, p. 8).

In the theology of psychodrama, the I-God encounter enacted in a role reversal with the Godhead represents one's relationship with the cosmos. Spinoza, Kierkegaard, and Sartre had a specific impact on the way Moreno conceptualized this encounter. According to Moreno (1947), Spinoza was the greatest modern agent in driving God from the earth. Spinoza intellectualized God and set God at such a great distance from human experience that an encounter was unreachable. He gained a logical understanding of God, but he lost the sense of God's growth and existence. On the other hand, Moreno considered

that Kierkegaard brought God too close to a person's subjective experience, again making an encounter impossible (Sacks, 1971). Kierkegaard's self-absorbing faith bottled up the potential for connecting with anything outside of the self. Moreno clustered Kierkegaard and the atheistic Sartre as two monological existentialists whom he stepped beyond by proposing a dialogical existentialism comparable to the improvised dialogues of Socrates. Monological existentialism views the individual as essentially alone. Dialogical existentialism views the individual as essentially connected in a relationship.

In addition to the prophets and the philosophers in Moreno's intellectual model group, there were also the expressive artists, notably Shakespeare, Beethoven, Goethe, and Nietzsche. Moreno weaves Hamlet, Othello, "Ode to Joy," Faust, and Zarathustra throughout his writings as examples of creative genius. Beethoven's home of Baden was a neighboring town which Moreno visited. The influence of Nietzsche was profound (J. D. Moreno, 1977). Moreno used Zarathustra as the central character in the first public psychodrama (Moreno, 1946). Zarathustra's adventures as the prophet descending into the masses to announce the death of God and the birth of the Overman is an allegory for Moreno's prophetic testament of the new Godhead, the I-God. These playwrights, poets, and musicians were masters of creative expression, not just creative thought. Thoughts are not enough for psychodrama. Putting brilliant ideas into action and making dreams come true is at the heart of creative genius.

These prophets, philosophers, and artists warmed Moreno up to the moment when the core theology of psychodrama burst out of him and onto the castle walls in red print. From this historically significant catharsis sprang the new perception that cosmology in theory is nothing, and cosmology in action is everything. A living theology provides the framework for a marriage of science and religion.

Science without religion

Moreno introduced psychodrama into a rapidly automated culture in which every advance in technology was reciprocated by an increase in depersonalization. Machines became objects of devotion because of their efficiency, predictability, and aura of perfection. Technological idolatry was the new science without religion. *Time* magazine's popular choice of the computer as its 1982 "Man of the Year" acknowledged the age of the robot. The value of finished products was overshadowing the value of the creative labor that went into the design and production of these holy machines. Moreno predicted that people would turn into

robots themselves if they continued to let their lives be shaped by robots. He called this automated species of humanity “zoomatons,” and he held them responsible for the disappearance of the Creator-God.

It was not God who was guilty. Man was the guilty one—man and the world which he had placed between himself and God. This second “world” is the source of the modern separation of man from his God. (Moreno, 1947, p. 199)

By themselves, machines and computers represent a total lack of spontaneity. Their superabundant creativity is monotonous. They produce the same thing over and over again. According to Moreno, they need an intervening factor to become truly creative. That factor is human spontaneity.

We build up the conserves and try to make them look like idols. I see the ghosts of Plato and Aristotle coming back. It makes creativity look stale and makes a puppet out of God. No! No! Aristotle and Plato have idolized the conserves like hundreds of the philosophers [and scientists] of western civilization. . . . Cultural conserves are like a sleeping beauty—they need a prince charming to awaken them. (Moreno, 1956, pp. 27, 31)

Machines have amounted to “the illusion of the finished perfected product whose assumed perfectibility was an excuse *par excellence* for forsaking its past, for preferring one phenomenon to its whole reality” (Moreno, 1946, p. 33). Moreno tried to reintroduce the creative source of the machines, thereby reuniting the cultural conserve with the process of creativity and spontaneity. Rather than smash the idols as did Moses in the Bible, or withdraw from them as an ivory-towered critic, Moreno tried to breathe new life into the idols by reconnecting them with their creator.

Another form of science without religion is egotistical idolatry. Moreno’s I-God concept is not simply grandiose narcissism, as his critics suggest (Power, 1975). The individual who cannot see beyond himself is just as alienated from the source of creativity as a robot.

Ethnocentrism is egotistical idolatry on a collective level. After writing prayers for Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Negroes, Communists, Nazis, Americans, pagans, and children, Moreno concludes *The psychodrama of God* (1947) with universal prayers. The purpose of Moreno’s “Prayers of Specific Groups” in this book is to affirm cultural diversity and at the same time to reconnect warring groups to their common Creator. The same section begins with individual prayers

in order to affirm the integrity of the single "I" before moving to ethnic, national, and universal identity. This affirmation is not to be confused with egotistic or ethnocentric idolatry. Each individual is unique. Each ethnic group is unique. But no individual is the center of the universe, and no ethnic group is the center of the universe. There is, according to Moreno, something more.

Finally, secular humanism is ethnocentrism and egotistical idolatry on a grandiose scale. It is anthropocentric idolatry. Moreno tried to show that there is more to the universe than humanity. There are animals, vegetables, minerals, molecules—a whole cosmos. The space shuttle mission can validate the expanse of the universe. Herein lies the value of Moreno's theological vocabulary. It persuades the individual to come out of himself or herself and reverse roles with other parts of the cosmic network, which includes other people, other cultures, and other parts of the ecosystem. Ultimately, the individual can reverse roles with all-spontaneity and all-creativity as the person did once before unconsciously in the first universe of infancy.

The theological language of I-God and Godhead preserves the separateness of the cosmos and the individual. Moreno retained an open alliance with his controversial theology in his final publications (1972). Why did he do this? Why not secularize his language into a humanistic doctrine as did Marx and Freud, and completely dissociate himself from one of the most conservative institutions of the time, the church? Because he had to preserve the paradox of the human condition as he saw it: one's wish to be God and one's alienation from the divine; the fantasy of omnipotence and the need to face reality (Sacks, 1971). By affirming the separate identities of I and God, he affirms the hope of their communion. Denying an identity to God brings an egocentric focus around a lonely isolated humanity, and covers up the ultimate cosmic paradox which psychodrama dares to resolve.

Creativity and spontaneity are not simply human traits, according to Moreno. They are cosmic principles. The current literature on psychodrama translates its classical theology of the Godhead into a secular, scientific language which conceals the split between humanity and the source of creativity. Has the psychodrama profession lost sight of its own cosmological genesis and idolized the techniques and directors of psychodrama? Psychodrama was meant to be more than a science of techniques and a cult following charismatic professionals.

Religion without science

In a world constantly changing, religion without science quickly turns into conservative dogmatism and mass delusions that do not ade-

quately account for the changing facts of everyday living. Why Moreno chose the theater instead of founding a religious sect, joining a monastery, or developing a detailed system of theology is important for an understanding of his marriage of science and religion in psychodrama. Indeed, before 1918, he had organized a religious group with a friend of his youth, Chaim Kellmer (Moreno, 1955), and roamed the streets of Vienna with several bearded men, telling stories to children and living a life of poverty. But his kabbalistic sect was short-lived.

As for joining a monastery, Moreno considered himself "a fighting saint, not a recluse" (1955).

There is a profound difference between the theoreticians of religion, sainthood, and altruism, St. John, St. Augustine, Plato, Plotinus, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, and Sorokin, and the experimenters, producers, and practitioners of religion and sainthood. Experimenters like Jesus, Buddha, St. Francis, Baal Schem, and lesser luminaries as Sabatai Zwi, Savonarola, and Pascal often look inadequate, imperfect, overbearing, eccentric, ebullient, stupid, even pathological, but they are trying to live a life of truth and prefer an imperfect existence to a perfect theory. (Moreno, 1956, p. 134)

After introducing the Creator-Godhead (Moreno, 1920), he felt "the next step is the realization and concretization of the idea in the flesh rather than its further intellectual extension" (1955, p. 8). Moreno brought his religious ideas to the arena of play and spontaneous action. He chose the therapeutic theater because, in his view, theater was "the greatest effort of man to train and express his imagination in action" (Sacks, 1971). Moreno wanted to extend his theology out of the written word and into the drama of everyday living. This drama provided the testing ground for a science of human and cosmological relations.

Experimental theology

Moreno created the first psychodrama stage as a laboratory for living. It was an active forum for what he called experimental theology. "The canon of creationism is the basis upon which theology can develop experimental procedures" (Moreno, 1947, p. 196). The theater of spontaneity was an improvisational laboratory, not a stage for script-writers, refined character actors, and repeat performances. Spontaneity provided that unknown, unpredictable dimension of everyday living so necessary for a laboratory simulation of life. The theater of spontaneity is a place where a person warms up to the universal process of spontaneity and creativity so that one may assume any number of roles at will, and appropriately meet an infinite number of expected and un-

expected situations. Role playing is child's play. It is a return to that enchanting universe of spontaneity. The psychodrama "is in our time the only modern invention adapted to people who live in a disrupted, technological world, which combines a religious and a scientific spirit in a unique group expression" (Moreno, 1956, p. 135).

The experimental procedure of psychodrama deals directly with the relationship between reality and fantasy. In doing so, it creates a marriage contract with scientific "facts" and religious "truths." In psychodrama,

There is a theater in which reality or being is proven through illusion . . . [a theater] which restores the original unity between the two metazones—through a process of humorous self-reflection; in the therapeutic theater reality and illusion are one. (Moreno, 1946, p. 31)

As a therapeutic procedure, psychodrama treats people who exclusively inhabit either the world of illusion or the world of reality, and who are consequently in need of bridging these two metazones in order to live a spontaneous and creative life.

Those who live completely in a world of fantasy are said to have a psychotic disorder with delusions of grandeur. These people believe they are the center and creator of the universe. In fact, they live in their own isolated worlds, and they have created very little outside of themselves. They are the gods, Jesus Christs, presidents, and rock stars that roam the back wards of psychiatric hospitals. Sometimes they are elected to political office or lead a religious cult. Moreno calls them spontaneous idiots (1953) because they have a minimal concern for what is socially appropriate and hence they do not respond effectively in the metareality zone. They are unable to co-create with other people. They turn instead to a rich fantasy world where their creativity is acceptable. The psychodramatic treatment of psychotics is to help them realize that they share the world with other gods around them, without letting them abandon their own dreams of omnipotence. These angels are flying high, but they are all alone. Psychodrama tries to reconnect them with the pain of their fall and with a world of fallen angels looking desperately for fellowship.

Those who live exclusively in a world of reality are said to have a neurotic disorder. They push themselves through endless work, seemingly in a hurry to finish something so that they can go on to something else. These people have abandoned their flights of fantasy after numerous discouraging falls. Perhaps while asleep they still have dreams or nightmares. But in their waking hours, they have sold out their dreams and settled for a mediocre world of reality. They have a

lot of creativity but very little spontaneity. Moreno calls this type of person a creator without arms (1953, p. 39). Such a person makes and does a lot with other people, but seems like a redundant robot who is impotent when facing a most profound need for love. The psychodramatic treatment for neurotics is to help pick up these fallen angels, show them their winged arms, and teach them to reach for the sky again. These angels crawl through their routines like an insect colony deeply resenting their inability to fly and love. Psychodrama tries to reconnect them with something worthy of their love and greater than themselves, and with a world of fallen angels just like themselves, who are dying to play God.

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Pragmatic Theology

The practical scientist in Moreno brought him to the shores of pragmatic America in 1925 where business was booming and social science was blooming. It was in this country that Moreno translated the theology of the Godhead into the science of sociometry. Thirty-

three years after *Das testament des vaters* (1920), he published his new testament of human relations, *Who shall survive?* (1953). As a scientific extension of the Godhead, Moreno's opus on sociometry proclaimed that faith in something greater than self, namely human fellowship and the universal principle of creativity and spontaneity, is a matter of daily human survival. "One of the greatest dilemmas of man in our time," writes Moreno, "is that he has lost faith in a supreme being, and often in any superior value system as a guide for conduct" (1966, p. 156).

The other side of Moreno's theology of creation is his theology of extinction. In *Who shall survive?* (1953), Moreno prophesied two diverging species of humanity: the robot and the spontaneous creative person. His title asks which of the two will become extinct. He modifies the deterministic theory of natural selection and indicates that each person is responsible for the future of his species. He describes how an increased access to spontaneity improves a person's chances for surviving novel and adverse conditions. However, if people choose to act unspontaneously, the species of creative human beings will become extinct, displaced by a breed of automatons. The truly creative *person* is expendable. The underlying *principle* of spontaneity and creativity would persist in a world of robots or on a post-nuclear holocaust planet, but no human species would survive to participate in it.

In the surplus reality of psychodrama, a person is

free from the fetters of facts and actualities, although not without the highest respect for them. And he has a good foundation to believe, as science has repeatedly taught us, that things are changing and can be further changed, even conditions which seemed for millennia absolutely fixed. [Psychodrama] is not a plea for "illusionism" or an escape from reality, but, just the opposite: a plea for the creativity of man and the creativity of the universe. It is therefore, through man's faith in the infinite creativity of the cosmos that what he embodies in a psychodramatic world may one day actually become true. (Moreno, 1966, pp. 155-156)

Experimental theology on the psychodrama stage is a prelude to pragmatic theology in the drama of everyday living. "The true symbol of the therapeutic theater is the private home" (Moreno, 1946, p. 26). The pragmatic creed of psychodrama is that all dreams are meant to be put into action.

Faith in a Creator-God is unusual in a society that worships the products rather than the process of creation. Moreno (1946, p. 31) wonders "why all the writings of man [about God], both affirmative and negative, have neglected almost completely His attribute of Creator." People have conserved and idolized the finished products, including the image of a perfect God. And because of its prosperous

status, mankind “forgot the status of creation itself, its silences, its deserts, its imperfections, its hopelessness, its inferiorities. . . . The work was finished and the creator seemed to be at an advantage compared with his various phases during evolution” (Moreno, 1946, pp. 32–33). Moreno wanted his Godhead to differ from the modern technological image of God as the abstract being of pure love and complete stability. These divine attributes focus on the status of God during the seventh day of creation, the day of rest. In contrast, Moreno imagined God as He was “in the beginning,” during the first six days of creation in the Bible. “There is another status of God, which even as a symbol has been neglected, that is the status of God before the Sabbath, from the moment of conception, during the process of creating and evolving the worlds and Himself” (Moreno, 1946, p. 32). The Creator-God is a “growing, fermenting, actively forming, imperfect being, striving towards perfection and completion” (Moreno, 1946, p. 32). Moreno imagined the God of Genesis like the first-born infant: struggling, stumbling, hollering, and rejoicing in the creative work that is life itself.

The Creator-God is Moreno’s symbol for all to create their universe. Through creativity “the world becomes our world, the world of our choice, the world of our creation—a projection of ourselves” (Moreno, 1947, p. xv). We combat alienation and isolation by fulfilling our dreams, growing into a world which we have co-created. This is the practical therapeutic relevance of creation theology. In the process of creation, we grown into a familiar world and connect with our co-creators in a network of relationships.

The integration of the isolated fallen into a community of fallen Gods and into a cosmic universe of all-spontaneity and all-creativity that is accessible at any given moment is the aim of psychodrama. The method recapitulates J. L. Moreno’s fall and subsequent healing as a child. It attempts to reconcile normal megalomania with the lonely realization of mortality and individuality. It teaches how to warm up to spontaneity and reverse roles with the all-creative Godhead. It embraces every scientific advance as a means to reaching impossible dreams. It puts every fantasy into action so that a world of choice can be created in reality. It provides a live experimental laboratory for the drama of everyday living. It is a simple religion and an ambitious science. It is “a truly therapeutic procedure [which does not] have less an objective than the whole of mankind” (Moreno, 1953, p. 3).

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Call for Papers

The *Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama, and Sociometry* is interested in publishing more material on theology and psychodrama. The editors will review and consider papers dealing with bibliodrama, theodrama, axiodrama, and other articles related to theology and psychodrama. Those wishing to submit papers on these topics should consult the "Information for authors" printed on cover 3 of this issue. Submissions should be sent to Managing Editor—JGPPS, 4000 Albemarle St., N.W., Washington, D.C., 20016.

The Diagnostic Use of the Social Atom

Jane A. Taylor

Psychodramatists, group facilitators, and other professionals in group work throughout the world make use of the concept of the social atom. Over the years a body of information has evolved about the diagnostic keys that purportedly can be observed in the social atoms produced by subjects with paper and pencil. After developing a systematic procedure for obtaining and examining such social atoms, the drawings produced by a sample of 30 subjects (10 "normals," 10 chronic psychotic, 10 not guilty by reason of insanity) were examined for intra- and inter-group differences. The results indicate the presence of validity in this body of knowledge and, consequently, open the way for additional uses and research.

The social atom has been an important theoretical and procedural construct and technique in the psychodramatic field since 1934. The social atom (SA) is considered to reflect these (the smallest number of) relationships that are required for an individual to feel complete, to experience belongingness, sociostasis, from the individual's personal perception:

Every individual lives in a social atom from the moment of birth on. The partners in [a person's] social atom are a special kind of acquaintanceship. Some feeling or interest develops between them, either one way or both ways. (Moreno, 1953, p. 618)

The social atom has been used as a vehicle for "warming up" a group (C. Hollander and S. Hollander, 1978); as a training tool with students in group dynamics (Wechsler, 1962); and for individual and group guidance in school classrooms (Zeleny, 1949; E. M. Shearon and W. Shearon, 1973). Other uses reported are: for studying the

nature of the choice process and individual differences in interrelationships (Jennings, 1941); as a diagnostic and treatment planning tool with hysterics (Maxwell, 1973) and with prisoners (S. Hollander, 1974). All of these uses indicate the potential projective usefulness of the SA.

Over the years there has evolved among psychodramatists through their experiences a body of information about diagnostic keys that purportedly can be observed in SAs produced by subjects (S) with paper and pencil.

Concurrently, through observation and research, there now exists a wealth of literature on the projective use of drawings, principally of the House-Tree-Person and Draw-A-Person type. The early literature, summarized by Hamner in *The Clinical Application of Projective Drawings* (1958), includes interpretation of such variables as: (a) size as an indicator of self-esteem/self-expansiveness/fantasy, self-inflation vs. feelings of inadequacy and, perhaps, even withdrawal tendencies; (b) pressure of pencil on paper indicative of assertiveness (heavy strokes) vs. low energy level or restraint and repression (light strokes); (c) long strokes (controlled behavior) as opposed to short strokes (impulsiveness); (d) inadequate detailing as indicative of distinct withdrawal tendencies, emptiness, reduced energy, and depression, as opposed to excessive detailing occurring in the more obsessive-compulsive; (e) erasures, if excessive, indicating uncertainty and indecisiveness or self-dissatisfaction; (f) rigid, repetitious, exact drawings associated with obsessive-compulsiveness, incipient schizophrenia, or early organics (reflecting the effort of these types to hold themselves together against their perceived threat of imminent disorganization); (g) lack of symmetry reflecting insecurity; or stressed bilateral symmetry showing rigidity, indicating obsessive-compulsiveness which may be expressed repression and over-intellectualization.

Placement of the subjects' figure in the center of the paper, according to Hamner, indicates security, self-direction, self-centered and more stable emotional behavior, whereas off-center placement indicates more uncontrolled, dependent qualities. With horizontal placement to the right of the midpoint of the paper, the person is likely to exhibit controlled, stable behavior and be willing to delay gratification. The further the midpoint of the drawing is to the left, the greater is the likelihood of impulsiveness, of seeking immediate gratification of needs and drives.

Hamner includes other variables. The higher the placement along the vertical axis above the paper midpoint, the greater is the striving towards a goal that may well be unattainable, leading to seeking of

satisfaction in fantasy, and/or a tendency to remain aloof and relatively inaccessible. The further the placement of a figure below the vertical midpoint, the greater is the feeling of insecurity, inadequacy, depression, or orientation toward the concrete. Drawings which appear to be clinging to the paper's edge reflect fear of independent action, need for support, lack of self-assurance. Defective synthesis and disorganized productions are characteristic of major emotional upheavals and psychosis. Repetition of subject matter and perseveration are indicative of schizophrenia.

Handler and Reyher (1965) reviewed 51 studies of human figure drawings with reference to 21 anxiety indices. Of these indices, the following yielded the expected results, i.e., were found to be indicative of subjects' anxiety: omission, distortion, detail loss, line pressure increase, heavy line, size increase and decrease, head simplification, and trunk simplification. The evidence was less consistent for line discontinuity, light line, vertical imbalance, delineation, line absence, less vs. more shading, and erasure.

Goldstein and Faterson (1969) found that more shading is an index of anxiety for men though not for women. Dennis (1958) and Dennis and Raskin (1960) postulate that placement in the upper left corner is simply the result of writing habit. Other research on the projective use of drawings has focused on the diagnosis of schizophrenia (Burton & Sjoberg, 1964; Milkovitch & Irvine, 1982); self-esteem (Delatte & Hendrickson, 1982); body image of physically abused adolescents (Hjorth & Harway, 1981); measure of interpersonal distance in family therapy (Brannigan, Schofield & Holtz, 1982; Tavantzis, 1982); and suicide plans (Vershup, 1977).

The relevant information concerning the diagnostic observations discussed in this article has been garnered through dialogue with leading psychodramatists (Robert Siroka, Executive Director of the Institute for Sociotherapy in New York City, and James M. Enneis, former Chief of the Psychodrama Section at Saint Elizabeths Hospital in Washington, D.C.). To this writer's knowledge, this body of information has not yet been reported in the literature nor have efforts at verification been reported. There has been one as yet unpublished effort, based on the study to be discussed in this article, to develop a systematic procedure for obtaining SA information to be used for the assessment of interpersonal dynamics, treatment planning, and monitoring of changes occurring in the SA during the course of psychodramatic treatment (Allen, 1978).

Recognizing the need for normative data to explore that heretofore unconfirmed body of information and to demonstrate the potential

value of the SA as a projective device and diagnostic aid for treatment planning, an initial exploration (or pilot project) was conducted comparing the SAs of two psychiatric populations and a group of "normals."² Following are the hypotheses examined:

1. Over 90% of people put between 5 and 25 people in their SAs;
2. Considerable overlap in the figures or placement of one inside another (where one of the figures represents the protagonist) would indicate a need for movement toward greater independence. Or the fact that none of the figures represents the subject would indicate he/she is not seeing the individuals distinctly or separately;
3. Figures drawn big as opposed to small represent people who are big, important, or exert strong influence in the subject's life.
4. Figures drawn close to, as opposed to far from, the figure representing the subject indicate closeness in the relationships;
5. Reversal of symbols, doodling, outlining, etc., indicate conflict, anxiety, concern, unfinished business, and/or transferences;
6. Placement of figures above that of the subject may indicate feelings of inferiority or a negative attitude on the part of the protagonist. Placement of such figures below the subject may show his feelings of superiority or a positive attitude.
7. Placement of figures to the right of the subject may indicate the positive feelings of the protagonist towards them, while placement on the left may indicate negative feelings. There may also be indication of a time factor, with items on the left being earlier in time, those in the center representing the present, those on the right being in the future.

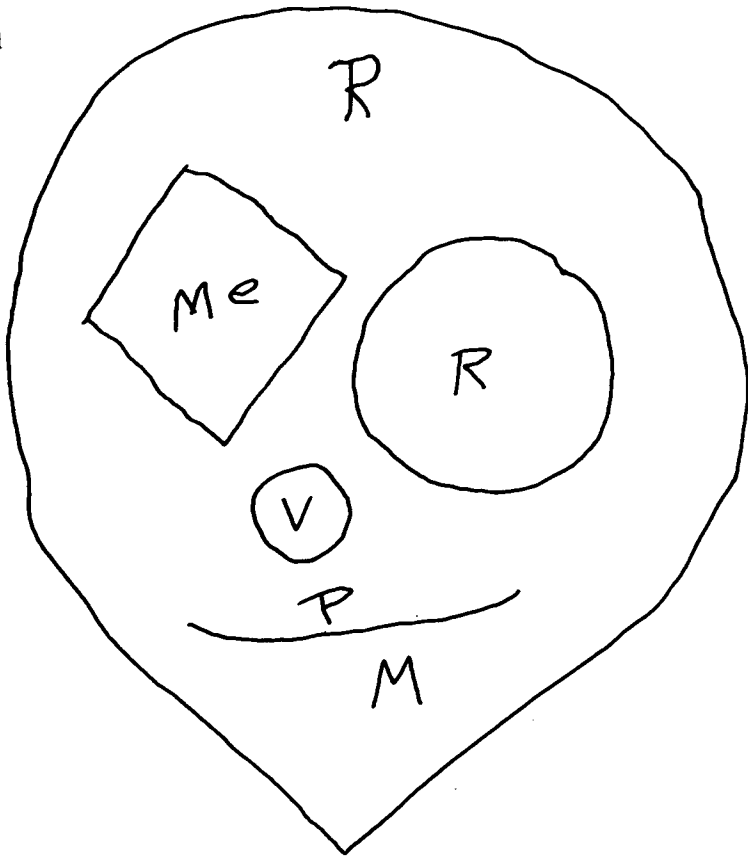
A systematic procedure was developed for obtaining, examining, and comparing SAs to explore the above-mentioned hypotheses. SAs were obtained from 30 subjects (10 "normals" vs. 10 chronic psychotic vs. 10 judged-not-guilty-by-reason-of-insanity or NGBRI). The hypotheses were then examined on the basis of those SAs.

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects selected were volunteers from the staff and inpatient population of Saint Elizabeths Hospital. "Normals" were defined as people who are maintaining themselves in the community with no previous psychiatric hospitalizations. The chronic psychotic were defined

Examples
of SA's
obtained
for this
study.



as people who have had four or more admissions to the hospital or at least seven years' continued hospitalization. The subjects were matched as closely as was possible and feasible on the basis of age, sex, race, and socioeconomic status. All of the hospitalized subjects were on some form of medication.

Each group of ten consisted of two females < 25 years old, one male < 25 years old, three males between 26 and 30 years old, three males between 31 and 35 years old, and one male between 56 and 60 years old. All subjects were, so far as this examiner could determine, within the lower socioeconomic level and all were Black. (Interestingly, none of the Caucasian inpatients approached would volunteer.)

Because of the special nature of the NGBRI group, that group was selected first; then the other two groups were matched to it.



Procedure

Most SAs were obtained in groups of two to four persons, in small, fairly well insulated rooms away from the large and frequently noisy dayrooms. Some were obtained on an individual basis. Following are the instructions given to obtain the SAs:

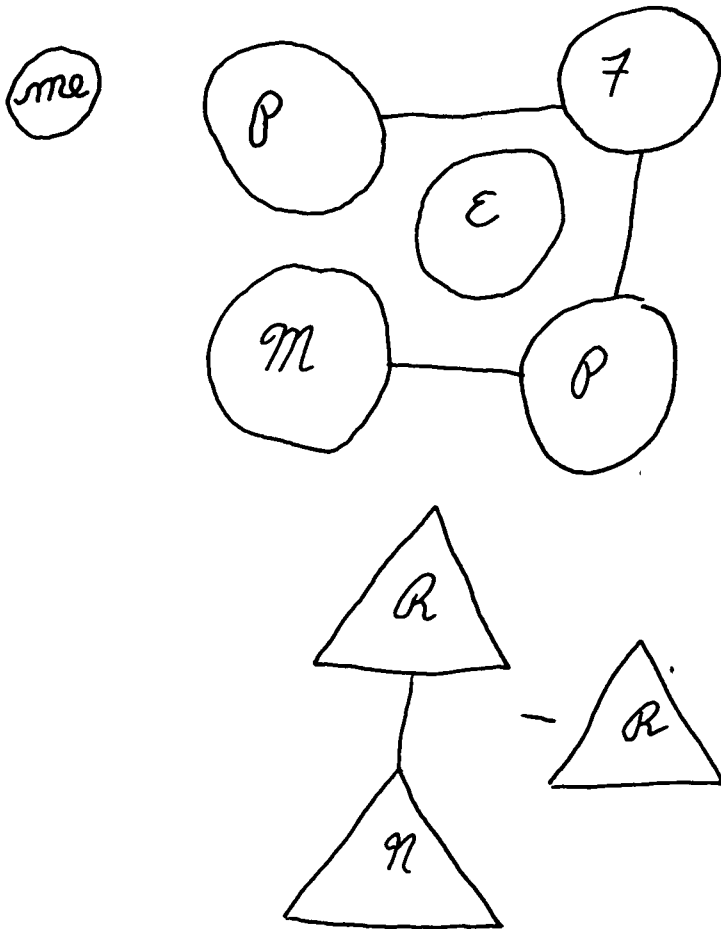
Using this paper and pencil, I want you to draw your social atom. Using triangles (three-sided figures) to represent males and circles to represent females, first place yourself on the paper—draw either a triangle or a circle to represent yourself on the paper. Now, write the word “me” or your name on that figure. Next, draw the appropriate figures (triangles or circles) to represent those people in your life who are necessary for you to feel complete, who are important to you. Your feelings about any of these people may be either positive (good, loving) or negative (bad, angry). Draw closer to you the person or persons toward whom you have the stronger feelings. Again, these feelings may be either positive or negative. You may also want to include someone who is deceased. Place the initials or first names of each of the people in the figures representing them.

If the protagonist (subject) was having difficulty conceptualizing the shape of a triangle, we presented a drawing to facilitate production of the SA.

The SAs were then explored individually with each subject using the following:

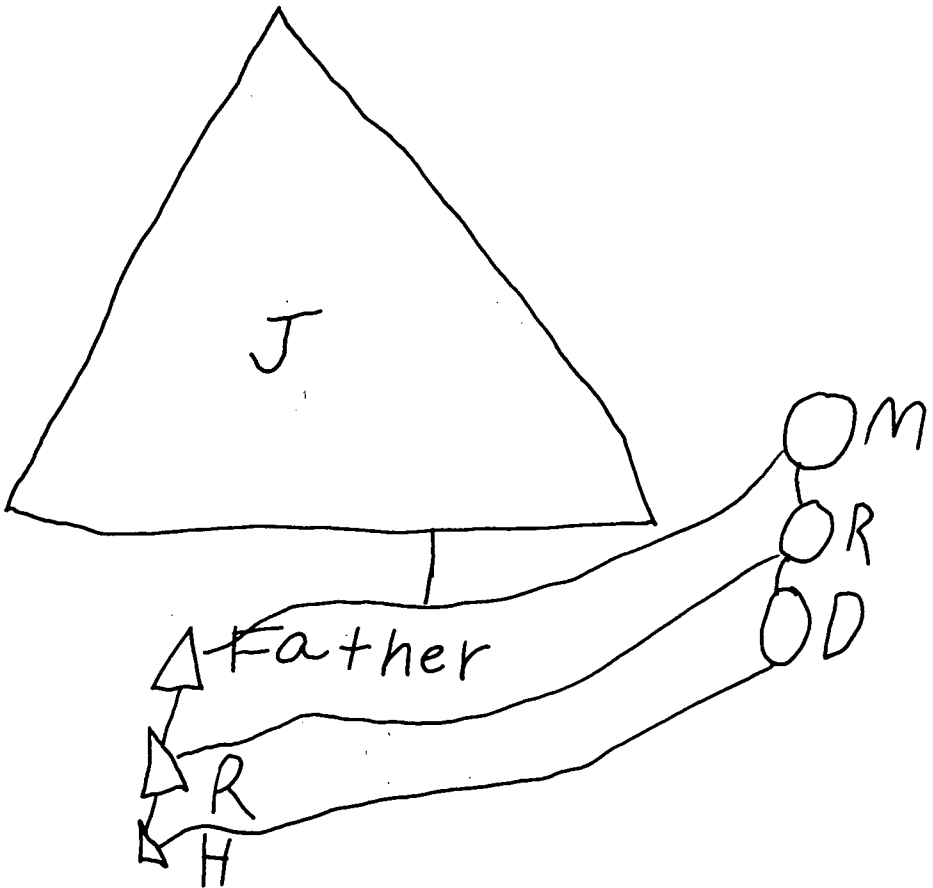
Guidelines for Interview

1. Ask for identity of each person represented. If possible, identify (a) fantasy figures, (b) people represented with whom there is no contact, and (c) people represented who are deceased.
2. Inquire about placement of figures in respect to placement of self on page: (a) proximity to self (Example: I see that you have drawn _____ closer to you. Do feel closer to _____ than perhaps _____ whom you've drawn further away/over here?); (b) placement of figures above and below self (Example: You have drawn _____ up here above where you have placed yourself. What is _____ like? How do you feel about _____? How would you describe your relationship to _____? Same for figures drawn below.); (c) placement to the right or left of self (Example:



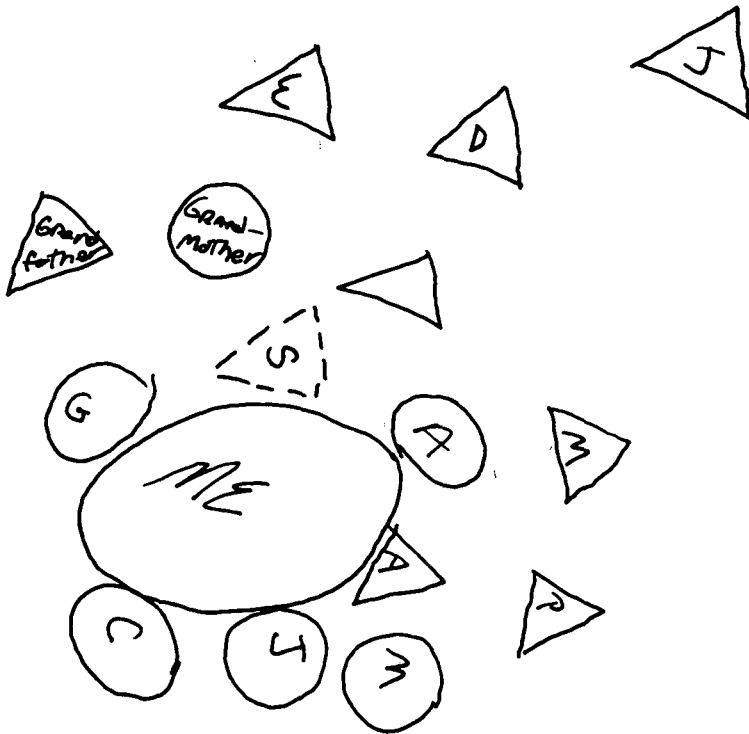
You have drawn _____ to the right of where you have drawn yourself. What is _____ like? How do you feel about _____? Is your relationship with _____ a new one or have you known _____ for a long time, perhaps more than a year? Same for figures to the left.).

3. Inquire about size of figures as compared to self: I see that you have drawn _____ larger/smaller than you have drawn yourself. What is _____ like? How do you feel about _____? What is your relationship with _____ like?
4. Question the protagonist about any erasures, overlapping figures, reversals of symbols, changes in shape, outlining, shading, and/or doodling for indications of conflict, anxiety, concern, and/or unfinished business.



The Guidelines used for the observational evaluation and comparisons between individuals and groups are:

1. Count the number of people represented (other than protagonist):
 - A. Fantasy figures.
 - B. People represented with whom the protagonist has no contact.
 - C. People represented who are deceased.
 - D. Females and males.
 - E. Relatives as opposed to friends.
2. Evaluate placement of figures:
 - A. Is there a time factor present, i.e., represented in right to left placement with center being in the present?



- B. Closeness to protagonist—strength of positive or negative influence?
- C. Placement above or below protagonist—indicative of protagonist feeling inferior or “less than” as opposed to feeling superior to?
- D. Fantasy; deceased; alive but having no contact with protagonist; alive and present with existing relationships?
- E. Family as opposed to friends?
3. Note number of figures:
 - A. Larger than protagonist (more important), smaller.
 - B. Males and females.
 - C. Fantasy figures; deceased persons; alive but having no contact with subject; alive and present, with existing relationships.
4. Examine the drawing for erasures, overlapping figures, reversal of symbols, changes in shapes, outlining, shading, and/or doodling on:
 - A. Figure representing protagonist.

- B. Males, females.
- C. Figures of persons important in life of protagonist.
- D. Fantasy figures; deceased; alive but having no contact with protagonist; alive and present, with existing relationships.
- E. Family members; friends.
- 5. Consider placement of SA on paper:
 - A. Centered.
 - B. Right or left.
 - C. Top or bottom.
 - D. Spread out or constricted.

TABLE 1—Intergroup Differences: Total Number of People Represented

NGBRI	CHRONIC PSYCHOTIC	NORMALS
Number of fantasy figures		
1	1	0
Number represented with whom protagonist has no contact		
19	13	14
Number represented who are deceased		
6	4	9
Number of females (F) vs. number of males (M)		
32 F, 31 M	30 F, 20 M	46 F, 26 M
Number of relatives (R) vs. number of friends (Fr)		
55 R, 11 Fr	36 R, 14 Fr	64 R, 20 Fr
Inclusive range of number of people represented		
3-14	2-13	2-15

Results

The between-group data are presented in the form of tables; however, as can be seen from the examples of the SAs presented earlier, many individual differences exist that are not strictly quantifiable. Two such differences, for example, were (a) the tendency for several of the NGBRI group to draw lines connecting the figures to each other and/or to self, and (b) the division of males and females into units on the paper separate from each other. Also of interest was the

tendency to represent a deceased person by a "dash" or to put a "dash" beside the figure rather than draw the figure itself with a "dashed line." Speculation would lead one to question (a) how closely the subjects listened to the instructions or (b) how well they understood the concept of representing a figure with "dashed lines." This was true of all three groups.

TABLE 2—Intergroup Differences: Placement of Figures

NGBRI	CHRONIC PSYCHOTIC	NORMALS
Time factor or positive vs. negative right-to-left placement		
No time factor	1 time factor	1 time factor
6 pos. vs. neg.	No pos. vs. neg.	2 pos. vs. neg.
Strength of positive feelings—closeness to protagonist		
8	6	9
Placement above or below protagonist indicative of inferior/superior		
7	5	3
Fantasy/deceased/alive but with no contact		
3	1	3
Relatives vs. friends		
3 Fr far	3 Fr close	4 R close

TABLE 3—Intergroup Differences: Size of Figures

NGBRI	CHRONIC PSYCHOTIC	NORMALS
Larger/Smaller than protagonist		
6	1	4
Importance in life of protagonist		
2	8	0
Fantasy/deceased/alive but no contact		
3	1	1
Relatives vs. friends		
2	0	0

TABLE 4—Intergroup Differences: Erasures, Overlapping Figures, Reversals of Symbols, Changes in Shape, Outlining, Shading, and/or Doodling

NGBRI	CHRONIC PSYCHOTIC	NORMALS
4	Figure representing protagonist 4	2
5	Sex differences 4	2
6	Importance in life of protagonist 8	2
5	Relatives vs. friends 2	1

TABLE 5—Intergroup Differences: Placement of SA on Paper

NGBRI	CHRONIC PSYCHOTIC	NORMALS
1	Centered 2	5
9	Left 9	5
0	Right 0	0
9	Top 7	7
0	Bottom 0	0
3	Constricted 3	6

Conclusions

The first hypothesis (that over 90% of protagonists would put between 5 and 25 people in their SAs) is of potential import because logic would lead one to wonder at a person's ability to maintain relationships of any depth with over 25 persons; fewer than 5 would indicate deprivation.

None of the 30 SAs represented more than 25 people. Two (20%) of the ten "normals" showed less than five; six (60%) of the ten chronic psychotic group showed less than five, and five (50%) of the ten NGBRI group represented less than five. Though the samples are small, length and number of hospitalizations, age, and sex of subject appear to contribute descriptively here, i.e., none of the females in any group had less than five; however, they were all under 30 years of age. Age was not a factor with the two "normal" males who produced less than five as one was under 25 and one was between 31 and 35.

Exploration with the subjects concerning the kinds of figures represented revealed no fantasy figures in the SAs for the "normals." Fantasy figures were represented in only two of the SAs produced by the hospitalized group: one NGBRI and one chronic psychotic.

The NGBRI group represented more people with whom they had had no contact. There was a difference of only one between the "normal" and chronic psychotic group. A possible explanation for this may be that, among the younger chronic psychotics, because of medication in addition to treatment, admissions are not of such duration as to cause prolonged loss of contact with community ties. This may not be the case with older patients carrying the chronic psychotic label. On the other hand, the NGBRI group does not have the opportunity to experience such ease of hospital discharge by the very nature of their admission.

Number of males represented vs. number of females represented appeared to be fairly evenly distributed across the two sexes, the ages, and the subsamples.

The "normals" represented both more relatives and more friends than the other two subsamples. The NGBRI group represented nearly twice as many relatives as the chronic psychotic, though each group represented about the same number of friends.

Little information was available for exploring the second hypothesis (regarding overlapping or containment of figures, or omission of subject). Two chronic psychotic males drew figures overlapping their own. The overlapping figures represented family (parent or sibling) and girlfriends.

For the third hypothesis (size of figures indicating importance), of the four "normals" (40%) who drew the figure representing themselves larger than the others, the two females and two males stated that they probably do hold themselves as most important. Of the NGBRI, one female and four males (50%) demonstrated size differences. The female and one male acknowledged that the differences indicated degree of importance. All of the chronic psychotic group who demonstrated size differences (one female and seven males, 80%) acknowledge that these differences indicated degree of importance. This is consistent with other projective drawing research (Hamner, 1958; Handler & Reyher, 1965). Interestingly, in five of the chronic psychotic and five of the NGBRI, the size differences were according to gender of person represented: i.e., all males larger than females or vice versa. Sex of subject did not appear to be a factor, however.

For the fourth hypothesis, (distance from subject indicating degree of closeness in relationships) eight of the NGBRI group, six of the chronic psychotic, and nine "normals" or 71% in all stated that the distance differences between self and others on their SAs were indicative of degree of closeness in the relationships. The results are consistent with those reported by Brannigan et al. (1982).

There was no predominant tendency in any of the three groups to place relatives closer than friends or vice versa. There also were no significant differences among the groups in placing figures closer or farther away that represented deceased, fantasy, or people who are alive but with whom there has been little or no contact in over two months.

The SAs provided interesting observations in light of the fifth hypothesis (reversal of symbols, doodling, outlining, etc., to indicate conflict, anxiety, concern, unfinished business, and/or transference). Nearly half of both the chronic psychotic and NGBRI groups had produced doodling, outlining, or some other addition or distortion of the figure representing themselves as opposed to only two of the "normals." Sex differences, especially reversals, followed the same proportions: half of the hospitalized group as opposed to two "normals." Slightly more than half of the two hospitalized groups attributed the alterations/distortions/additions to importance of the person in his or her life. There was no observable difference in "friends as opposed to relatives" symbols; however, in the NGBRI group five subjects produced alterations/additions on more relatives than friends. These findings are consistent with other reported findings (Hamner, 1958; Handler & Reyher, 1965). No shading was noted.

In connection with hypothesis six (placement of figures indicating feelings of superiority/inferiority), interesting and corroborating

results also appeared. Seven NGBRI, five chronic psychotic, and two "normals" acknowledged the presence of such feelings in the placement of figures above the figure representing the subject (protagonist feels inferior) or below (the protagonist feels superior). Another "normal" described a different set of circumstances, i.e., he placed above himself those he supports financially and/or emotionally and placed below him those from whom he gets support.

For the seventh hypothesis (placement of figures to the right or left of the protagonist's figure, indicating positive/negative feelings, or the operation of a time factor) the drawings provided little additional information. Only 2 of the 30 subjects indicated that the placement was the result of a time factor. Six (60%) of the NGBRI group acknowledged that there was a difference in how they felt about people they placed on the (negative) left as opposed to the (positive) right. None of the chronic psychotic and two of the "normals" (or 26% overall) acknowledged the positive/negative difference.

Throughout the data collection, attention was focused on each subject's handedness while she/he drew her/his SA. Of the 30 subjects, 26 were right-handed. Of these 26, 22 began their SAs in the upper left corner of the paper though the instructions for the SA gave no indication where they should begin. Two of the left-handed subjects showed the same tendency. This placement could be an indicator of regression (Hamner, 1958) or simply writing habit (Dennis, 1958; Dennis & Raskin, 1960).

Approximately a third of the subjects had difficulty with the conceptualization of the triangle; that third included several "normals." The experimenter, thus, presented a picture of a triangle whenever it was apparent that a subject did not understand that concept; the idea was to procure the SA, not measure intelligence, brain damage, or other anomaly. Also, parts of the directions had to be repeated two or three times for several of the hospitalized subjects as they seemed to be hallucinating, despite medication and efforts to control for external stimuli such as noise.

Discussion/Summary

There does appear to be validity to the body of knowledge surrounding the diagnostic use of the paper-and-pencil-produced SA according to the results of this explorative study. There is a wealth of data accessible for investigation with the individual SA, and inter- and intra-group comparisons.

The instrument potentially is useful for group facilitators and trainers both in the initial phase of group formation and later in group

development. The SA can be used as a vehicle to get the individual members to focus on their respective worlds and to begin to share their worlds with each other. It is particularly advantageous for the group facilitator to set the example by sharing his/hers first. Further along in group development, the group members can make use of this tool to explore how their SAs are reflected in other relationships, for example, in the group setting itself. Observation of this process, as well as each individual's SA, will provide the facilitator data for recognizing possible areas of exploration or potential problems, depending on the nature and focus of the group (training vs. therapy). The uses are limited only by the facilitator's perceptiveness and creativity.

The future usefulness of the SA will depend not only on the skill of the group facilitator/trainer utilizing it but also on additional research. As this apparently has been the first such reported attempt to collect data and examine that data for individual and group differences, obviously much remains to be done in learning how to apply that information in group dynamics training, growth groups, diagnostic and treatment planning for the normals, mentally ill, substance abusers, elderly, and other such subpopulations with whom we, as professionals, become involved.

The systematic procedure developed for obtaining and examining the SA for intra- and inter-group differences for this exploration is not considered the "final word" but is presented here in the hope that others will become interested in the use of the SA, diagnostic and otherwise, and use this procedure and information as a springboard for their own explorations, thus contributing more to our understanding of this concept and its uses.

In summary, the results of this initial exploration would indicate that social atoms can be systematically produced by subjects with paper and pencil and appear to be useful vehicles for diagnostic and treatment purposes. Statistical analyses on other and larger populations are necessary before definitive conclusions can be reached.

Based on available information and this study in particular, immediate areas of further application/investigation would be the study of social atoms produced by (1) various psychiatric groups such as the various categories of schizophrenia, the neuroses, other psychoses; (2) ethnic and socioeconomic groups, age groups, male/female groups; and (3) pre-treatment and then post-treatment clients (Allen, 1978). Such research would enable us to distinguish intra- and inter-group differences; to provide valuable concrete diagnostic and treatment planning data; and to track and measure changes during treatment.

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Bouvet Prize Awarded

The 1984 Le Prix Maurice Bouvet de Psychanalyse was awarded to Jean Cournut for his article, "Deulis ratés, morts méconnues," which was published in the February 1983 issue of the Bulletin de la Société Psychanalytique de Paris. An abridged version of the article, entitled "D'un reste qui fait lien" was printed in the *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse*, XXVIII.

BRIEF REPORT

The Effect of Modeling in the Treatment of Agoraphobia

Alton Barbour

Agoraphobia is a fairly common and distressing phobic state, the essential features of which are a marked fear of being left alone, or in places from which escape might be difficult or help might not be available. Such places may include crowds, tunnels, bridges, modes of transportation, stores, and freeways.

Because of this unreasonable fear there is an increasing constriction of normal activities. The person may find it impossible to do grocery shopping and may eventually be afraid to leave the house or apartment in which one lives. The avoidance behaviors and fears dominate the sufferer's life. Often the panic attack which accompanies these symptoms further aggravates the restrictions. Panic or anxiety attacks are manifested by a sudden onset of apprehension, terror, and a sense of impending doom.

The disorder is found in approximately 2.2% of the population, but more frequently in women. Most of those seeking treatment for any phobia usually suffer from agoraphobia.

Although it is commonly believed that phobias are easy to treat (such as "fear of flying") no treatment for agoraphobia was available until the mid-1970s. Psychoanalytic or "insight therapy" has not been useful in the treatment of agoraphobics. Several behavioral approaches have been used to little avail.

Seeking an effective therapy, Marjorie Colburn, a California psychotherapist, has tested the merits of "participant modeling." The question she asked was, "Would modeling help motivate agoraphobics to expose themselves to the frightening stimuli?" "Exposure" was the gradual approach to the fear-inducing stimuli, with the phobic in control of approach and retreat. "Participant modeling" has the therapist

demonstrating this behavior rather than merely explaining the exposure treatment. In the research design Dr. Colburn compared treatment outcomes for phobics with and without participant modeling.

Psychodramatists will recognize the effectiveness of focusing on a single client (protagonist) in the presence of a supportive group—a familiar setting for treatment. They may also recognize modeling as a form of “mirror” technique.

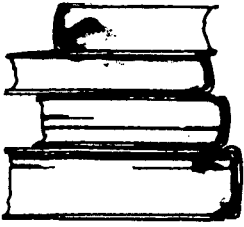
A typical exposure scene might be the following, with the client afraid to enter a restaurant. The group gathers outside a restaurant. The therapist or a group member assumes the role of the client, and approaches the door of the restaurant and touches the handle of the entrance door, showing that no harm is done and there is nothing to fear.

The client tries out this move. Then the model opens the door. The client approaches and opens the door. At any time the client can back away. Then, through a series of confrontations with the phobia (“with your worst fears”), the client is exposed to the problem and systematically desensitized. The fear is gradually extinguished.

The successful treatment is a combination of behaviorist psychotherapy, the use of the group as a therapeutic agent, and the use of action or psychodramatic methods. There are some indications that such a method might also be useful for decreasing the fears and increasing the confidence of clients with a variety of problems less serious than agoraphobia.

Modeling is a form of “role training” in which the desired behavior is mirrored before the client tries it out. It reinforces the notion that therapy occurs in a social context and that words in and of themselves are not enough. This exposure treatment takes the drama out of the theater and into the streets and department stores, into the “agora” or marketplace.

Alton Barbour, professor of Speech Communication at the University of Denver, is chair of the Research Review Committee for the Federation of Trainers and Training Programs in Psychodrama. He can be reached at the University of Denver, Denver, Colorado 80208.



Book Review

Ira Heilveil *Video Mental Health Practices: An Activities Handbook*. New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1982, \$17.95.

The use of video in the mental health field is gradually finding its way into professional practice. Heilveil, obviously on top of its growth, has managed to compile a respectable number of video activities for the therapy situation, covering a range of therapies. Among other important issues, he discusses some of the contraindications of video, as in the case of a person experiencing an acute psychotic episode.

The first chapter is a brief introduction, including a short history of the video movement, ethical concerns, and what situations seem to be useful for video. In addition, Heilveil points to the reasons that video seems to work in therapy, the main one being that "it enables the client to cut through layers of denial." This point may accentuate why video may be particularly useful in psychodynamic work. Finally he makes note of "the resistant therapist." I recall when audio was first beginning to be used more frequently in therapy. The ambivalent or reluctant therapist usually had trouble getting people to be taped. This is even more accentuated with video.

In the second chapter, Individual Psychotherapy, Heilveil presents some useful suggestions on how to introduce video to the client. In general the video activities are presented clearly, and often references allow the reader to obtain more information about technique. The "job interview" is one of the activities. A person is taped doing a simulated job interview and then the tape is replayed so that feedback can be given for self-correction. This can be expanded to deal with an issue like confronting the boss. I have used this with clients and on myself. I taped myself simulating my dissertation defense and then reviewed the tape so that I could improve my delivery.

Chapter three, Individual Child Psychotherapy, discusses how to introduce video to children (it's usually not hard, as many kids love to play with the video). Activities include using positive and self-modeling tapes, the use of video in play therapy, and the use of video games.

Chapters four and five outline activities useful in group therapy with adults and with children and adolescents. In addition to a number of

varied video activities, Heilveil discusses how best to tape groups. He also points out that video often seems to help groups develop cohesiveness, by bringing the group together in an intimate way. In a sense, I suppose, the video might take the place of the "outsider," which the group "bands" against. He covers the use of video in psychodrama which, according to Heilveil, "natural bedfellows." I would agree. One unique activity in the chapter on children and adolescents is "individual autobiographies." The group members take portable video equipment home and tape their families or significant activities in which the member is involved. The tape is played in the group allowing other group members to get to know one another on a broader basis.

Chapter six focuses on family therapy. There are a few interesting activities in this section, and some that seem a bit unwieldy. As Heilveil points out, video can be an excellent way of helping family members and therapists pick out repetitive patterns and particular role assignments. Unfortunately, little has been written on the use of video in family therapy.

Chapter seven, Training and Supervision, is a welcome addition to the book. Heilveil includes in this chapter a number of activities that would be of use to trainers and supervisors. Again, some activities seem a bit time consuming, but many of them could no doubt be modified to fit into the time scheme of the supervisor. One nice touch in this chapter is the inclusion of "Doing it Yourself." Heilveil takes the reader through the process of producing a professional training tape for mass distribution.

In chapter eight, Special Populations, the author looks at the use of video with patients plagued by suicidal impulses, seizure disorders, alcoholism, anorexia, and Tourette's syndrome. Trainers in assertion and parent effectiveness will also find here material of value for their practice.

Special Applications/Advanced Technology constitutes the final chapter. Here Heilveil takes a look at the productions that can be derived from more elaborate and expensive equipment and technology. This section will appeal most to the avid video "freak," but, as the author himself states, "There is not yet a single piece of equipment that can substantially enhance the therapeutic value of self-confrontation achieved with the simplest of equipment."

Heilveil occasionally uses excessive space explaining certain complex activities, which remain confusing even after his explanation. It would suffice in some cases to give a very cursory explanation of, and purpose for, the activity, and then simply refer the reader to the primary source. In addition, Heilveil might have included a short section on

choosing basic equipment, in order to assist those just starting out with video.

Over all, Heilveil has written a good reference book for professionals who are currently using video or for those wanting to begin using it. The book offers useful video activities for a number of therapeutic modalities. It also includes plenty of examples so that the reader can readily understand how to use the techniques. In addition, I appreciate the appendix that is provided, which not only contains a list of centers from which to obtain scripts for use with some video activities, but also centers where one can rent or buy video tape productions.

In conclusion, the book offers a relatively thorough look at what can be done with video, and contains many useful activities for those wanting to make the best therapeutic use of their VCR's.

MARSHALL FINE

Marshall Fine is assistant professor in the Department of Family Studies at the University of Guelph in Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1, Canada.

RESEARCH AWARD

"The Federation of Trainers and Training Programs in Psychodrama (FTTPP) announces that Karl Staven has been awarded the 1983 Research Award. Mr. Staven's research study concerned the effect of role reversal on accurate body images of obese patients and was conducted under the auspices of the Psychodrama Training Program, St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington, D.C. Mr. Staven has been given an award certificate as well a \$100.00 cash prize.

The FTTPP Research Review Committee is also accepting nominations for the 1984 Research Award for research in the action methods. Nominations should include the following information: Name and current address of author(s), three copies of a brief statement of significance in terms of action methods, and three complete copies of the report. The deadline for submission is December 30, 1984. Nominations should be addressed to: T. Schramski, Ph.D., Research Review Committee, c/o TCPGP, 927 N. 10th Avenue, Tucson, Arizona 85705."

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The Moreno Collection at Harvard

Several years ago the Moreno family donated the papers, books and manuscripts of J. L. Moreno, M.D. to the medical library at Harvard University. Since then this collection has been stored in cardboard boxes in the basement of the library. The American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama believes it is time to get psychodrama out of the basement and onto the shelves. With your support we can do that.

In order to catalog and index the collection, \$20,000 must be raised. The Society has already raised the first \$6,000 and has forwarded that to Harvard and the work has begun. However, we must raise an additional \$14,000 to complete the project.

Once the collection is finished, professionals and scholars from throughout the world will have access to all of Moreno's writings, books, manuscripts and letters at one central location. Researchers will also have the use of an outstanding library to use as a base for their review of Moreno's work. For too long, Moreno's seminal writings (published and unpublished) have been inaccessible to scholars and researchers.

The Society believes that great benefits to the psychodramatic community will result from making the collection available to researchers and scholars. If you wish to assist in this effort, please send a tax deductible contribution to the Moreno Collection, American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama, 116 East 27th Street, New York, New York 10016.

CALL FOR A.S.G.P.P. RESEARCH AWARD NOMINATIONS

The ASGPP Research Committee invites nominations for the 1985 ASGPP RESEARCH AWARD. The purpose of this award is to recognize one particular published research study that has contributed to knowledge in the field of psychodrama, sociometry or group psychotherapy. Nominations may be journal articles published in 1983-84 and/or manuscripts that have been accepted for publication. Nominations must include the following:

1. Name, address and telephone number of author(s) and person(s) nominating the research.
2. Five copies of a brief statement describing the significance of the research to knowledge in the field of psychodrama & sociometry.
3. Five complete copies of the article.

Deadline for nominations is December 31, 1984. Send nominations to Dr. Thomas Treadwell, Department of Psychology, West Chester University, West Chester, PA. 19380

CALL FOR ASGPP STUDENT RESEARCH AWARD NOMINATIONS

The ASGPP Research Committee invites nominations for the 1985 SGPP STUDENT RESEARCH AWARD. The purpose of this award is to recognize two UNPUBLISHED PROJECTS students recently completed for either their Practitioner of T.E.P. certificate or their Masters or Doctoral Degree that has contributed to the field of psychodrama, sociometry or group psychotherapy. To be eligible for nomination, candidate must have completed their project during 1982, 1983 or 1984. Nominations must include the following:

1. Name, address and telephone number of author and trainer(s) and/or advisor(s) nominating this project.
2. Five copies of a ten page summary report of the research which illustrates:
 - (a) Objectives of the research project.
 - (b) Perspectives and/or methods.
 - (c) Data source of research.
 - (d) Results, conclusions, or point of view of research.
 - (e) Scientific, therapeutic or educational importance.
 - (f) Abstract of the project.

Deadline for nominations is December 31, 1984. Send nominations to Dr. Thomas Treadwell, Department of Psychology, West Chester University, West Chester, PA. 19380

Information for Authors

The *Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama and Sociometry* publishes manuscripts that deal with the application of group psychotherapy, psychodrama, sociometry, role playing, life skills training, and other action methods to the fields of psychotherapy, counseling, and education. Preference will be given to articles dealing with experimental research and empirical studies. The journal will continue to publish reviews of the literature, case reports, and action techniques. Theoretical articles will be published if they have practical application. Theme issues will be published from time to time.

The journal welcomes practitioners' short reports of approximately 500 words. This brief reports section is devoted to descriptions of new techniques, clinical observations, results of small surveys and short studies.

1. Contributors should submit two copies of each manuscript to be considered for publication. In addition, the author should keep an exact copy so the editors can refer to specific pages and lines if a question arises. The manuscript should be double spaced with wide margins.
2. Each manuscript must be accompanied by an abstract of about 100 words. It should precede the text and include brief statements of the problem, the method, the data, and conclusions. In the case of a manuscript commenting on an article previously published in the JGPPS, the abstract should state the topics covered and the central thesis, as well as identifying the date of the issue in which the article appeared.
3. The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 3rd edition, the American Psychological Association, 1983, should be used as a style reference in preparation of manuscripts. Special attention should be directed to *references*. Only articles and books specifically cited in the text of the article should be listed in the references.
4. Reproductions of figures (graphs and charts) may be submitted for review purposes, but the originals must be supplied if the manuscript is accepted for publication. Tables should be prepared and captioned exactly as they are to appear in the journal.
5. Explanatory notes are avoided by incorporating their content in the text.
6. Accepted manuscripts are normally published within six months of acceptance. Each author receives two complimentary copies of the issue in which the article appears.
7. Submissions are addressed to the managing editor, *Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama, and Sociometry*, HELDREF Publications, 4000 Albemarle Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016.

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