

NOTE ON PSYCHODRAMA, SOCIOMETRY INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOTHERAPY AND THE QUEST FOR "UNCONDITIONAL LOVE"

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It has long been asserted by psychotherapists that the patient is really coming to psychotherapy because of unfulfilled or incompletely filled needs for love. The conscientious psychotherapist must, at one time or another, question himself or herself as to whether this need is truly being met in his or her role of therapist. We know that sociometrically there are patients we prefer to others; it would be dishonest not to declare this to ourselves, even if we do not do it to the patient. One solution to this problem has been advocated by the practitioners of the "love therapy" school, who go the whole way with their patient, even to the point of becoming lovers.

What is the psychodramatist's view of this approach? One of the problems we face is that, by being psychotherapists to others, we are also vicariously being therapeutic to ourselves. How then, is it possible to know when we are transgressing from the professional role into the personal? This problem becomes more and more acute as ever-greater freedom of bodily contact is being permitted.

We find, in practice, that the existential pain for the great majority of people who come to us out of their need, is not to have had "unconditional love" as a child. It is every child's natural birthright but very few of us ever receive it. How many of our patients come, then, in search of this unconditional love which makes no other demand of them than that they be themselves, whatever they may be? Our task is largely one of "healing the hurt child" inside. Do hurt children want sexual contact with adults? Hardly. On the contrary, this is one of the most frequent areas of their pain. They have had relationships foisted onto them by their parents, sexual or otherwise, for which they were not prepared, and which they did not enter into as "consenting adults." This is not merely a legal or ethical problem. It is routine fare for the psychotherapist. How then, can we rationalize that this hurt child needs a good sexual partner? How is it that we overlook completely the need to be first unconditionally accepted, loved and cherished, not merely in a cold, therapeutic relationship, but as two human beings, facing their common pain?

How and where can this best be attained? What is the most productive setting for achieving this worthy goal? And who and what are the forces that best bring it about?

GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY

The hurt child who comes to us is looking for a way to correct past and present misfortunes in not finding suitable parents, a loving home, compatible siblings, warm lovers, etc. That these may be found in a group has been common knowledge ever since Moreno began to work on the premise that the problems of living are interpersonal and intergroupal and set about organizing groups sociometrically, that is, on the basis of mutual choices. Each person in the group was there because he so decided, not because he was tolerated or pushed into the group. This group, and others to which he chose to belong on the basis of the criterion extant in the group, became his "sociometric family." Today, encounter groups speak of "The Second Family" group, but since they do not organize these groups sociometrically, it is still not what the sociometrist has in mind and falls short of maximizing involvement and mutual responsibility. Assignment is not made on the basis of mutual choices for partnership in the group, but on whoever enrolls for it, hit or miss. The assumption is that whatever happens in the group is productive. Moreno has long pointed out the fallacy of this type of thinking. It has little more to commend itself than the natural family group has now, to which the cosmos assigns us hit or miss and which may or may not be a good sociometric assignment for us.

Nevertheless, the group psychotherapist, even without sociometry, has great advantages over the individual therapist, just because he functions within a group. In the group setting, the therapist's behavior is constantly being assessed and, provided he is a peer and not merely a superior in the group, the members of the group will soon let him know if he betrays himself as being seductive or hostile to one or another group member. The psychodramatist has the additional advantage of being a protagonist in the group, as well as being in the role of director or guide or facilitator. Thus, when he or she is confronted by the group about his or her behavior, it is the director's right to request a session as a protagonist, in order to deal with this recurring problem.

One interesting aspect of this assessment process was brought to my attention by a patient, who actually did not like groups. She was the oldest child of a large family, with much neglect and a great deal of suffering because of incomplete relationships with her parents, especially her mother. She came to psychodrama therapy after thirteen years of individual therapy which had helped to keep her out of mental hospitals, but which still left her feeling unfulfilled. After shopping around for a number of months, she chose to join one of my psychodrama therapy groups. She explained to me that, although she was not a "group person," she decided to join this one "because that way, if I see you are honest with all the others, I shall trust your honesty with me. Without being able to weigh this, I could not trust you."

I think this is one of the best recommendations for group treatment, though I realize many therapists question the validity of patients' evaluations. However, they must use it for themselves; how else could they gauge the effect of their own work? Especially in individual therapy, such evaluations are largely

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subjective. In the group, the other members help to keep an open eye and ear for the ongoing processes.

Is it then, not fair to say that the therapist should question him or herself before entering into what he chooses to interpret as a "love relationship"? To what extent is he basing this enterprise on his own needs? Are we being honest if we undertake this without remembering the "hurt child?" Are we adding to the child's hurt by entering into such a relationship? Is this not a repeat performance? Shouldn't we be as severe with ourselves as the child was with the original parents?

I believe that psychodrama goes far in resolving these questions. It makes possible a level of involvement over and beyond the sexual, on the part of all participants in the session, which puts the child who is questing for unconditional love into the most favorable limelight. In the past-action sharing the group members reveal their own hurt child and in so doing, again are able to obtain a small part of that unconditional love within a warm family group for which every human being hungers.

To a considerable extent this phenomenon accounts for the growing number of adherents and practitioners of psychodrama.

