

Psychodrama for Fallen Gods: A Review of Morenian Theology

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Running head: Fallen Gods

Abstract

In recent years, there has been a cover-up of J. L. Moreno's original 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. The influence of religious and philosophical personalities on Moreno's pragmatic theology of psychodrama is discussed. The present psychodrama profession is considered in an apparent separation from its own theological origins.

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

J. L. Moreno introduced psychodrama with the intention of enlightening people of their shared divinity. Perhaps no idea of Moreno's philosophy is as much misunderstood and as 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 of 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 momentarily reunite mortals 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 the fallen angel and points him 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 (Moreno, 1972). In spite of the fall, Moreno never stopped believing he could be God. He got up from the fall and kept trying to put his dream into action.

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, p. 205)

This incident crystalized 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 world which is indistinct from the self. Fused with a first universe, the child is the megalomaniac center of a world. Early in infant development there is a break from the first universe and the infant discovers that the world he or she perceives (fantasy) is not exactly the world

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 in 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 world is complete in the first universe of infancy. But as that universe is broken and the individual ego differentiates itself from the world, it 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 momentarily reincarnate omnipotent 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 identity of its own. 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 (Note 1) have written recent summaries 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, Moreno's way, is the most appropriate expression. Moreno believed that during the 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 earthen world. The physical distance of this third-person He-God from the children of Israel provided an external locus of protection for a scapegoated 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 between people and their shared divinity.

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 the 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 (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 (Note 2), he said that those who had the greatest influence on his psychodramatic concepts were people with religious and philosophical personalities. Since he was five years old, he was 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 reconstructs 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 impressionable 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" (Note 2) 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' 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 religious institutionalization 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 Moreno never generalized his critique of institutionalized 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 reli-

gion 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, the valuable contribution of Marx was the sociodynamic man (1969). 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 industrialization was in praise of 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 a worker's alienation from the various parts of production and from fellow coworkers was at the root of the worker's inability to organize resistance. Moreno used this notion of social isolation as the primary condition of uncreativity and a total lack of spontaneity. 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 psychodynamic man. 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 man (1969). The cosmodynamic man 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 call immediate attention to the daily realities of birth and death on an individual and collective level.

Moreno grouped Marxism and Freudianism as philosophies of socio-economic 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, 1946, 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 socio-economics 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 out of the couch and onto the stage (Note 2), and for taking the analyst out of his priestly confessional role behind the semi-dormant 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 towards psychotherapy as the most ingenious agents of psychotherapy before the advent of social science" (Moreno, 1946, p. 8).

Moreno waged a demonstration against the psychoanalytic theory that heroes and geniuses "are all mental patients...or at least touched by insanity" (Moreno, 1955, p. 11). He wanted to show that a person who has all the signs of paranoia and megalomania, exhibitionism and social maladjustment can still be fairly well-controlled and healthy, and indeed of apparently greater productivity by acting their symptoms out, not by constraining and resolving these symptoms. The only way to get rid of the "God-syndrome" is to act it out (Moreno, 1955). After psychoanalysis' 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 factor 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 that again made an encounter impossible (Note 2). 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 works of creative genius. Beethoven's home of Baden was a neighboring town which Moreno visited. The influence of Nietzsche was profound

(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 de-personalization. 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" ushered in 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 almost 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 Abraham in the Bible, or withdraw from them as an ivory-towered critic, Moreno tried to breath 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, Negros, 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 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 ani-

mals, 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 disassociate 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 (Note 2). 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 adequately 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, Plotin, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel and Sorokin, and the experimentors, producers and practitioners of religion and sainthood. Experimentors 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 in Das testament des vaters (1920), Moreno 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. Moreno chose the therapeutic theater because in his view, theater was "the greatest effort of man to train and express his imagination in action" (Note 2). 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 scriptwriters, 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 he or she may become any number of roles at will, and appropriately meet an infinite number of expected and unexpected situations. Role playing is child's play. It is a return to that enchanting universe of spontaneity. The psychodrama "test...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)

The original creative unity of reality and illusion cannot be restored until their fundamental separation is fully acknowledged. Just as a distinction and acceptance of 'I' and God is necessary before a complete role reversal can occur, so too, there must be a distinction and acceptance of reality and illusion before there is a return to the universe of total spontaneity and creativity in which reality and illusion are one. 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 desparately 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 this fallen angel, show him his winged arms, and teach him 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 them, who are dying to play God.

#### Pragmatic Theology

The practical scientist in Moreno brought him to the pragmatic shores of 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 (1960, p. 21), "is that he has lost faith in a supreme being, and often any superior value system as a guide for conduct."

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 milenna 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, 1960, pp. 20-21)

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 the 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). Like the first born infant, Moreno imagined the God of Genesis 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 grow into a familiar world and connect with our co-creators in a network of relationships.

The reintegration of the fallen isolate 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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