

AN EXAMINATION OF THE COMMONALITY IN THEORY  
BETWEEN JACOB MORENO'S GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY  
MOVEMENT AND SELECTED RHETORICAL THEORIES

by

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# DEDICATION

To my husband, who has given so much. Without his support  
and love I would never have tried again.

To my parents and brother, for their help and encouragement,  
and for allowing me to invade their lives.

To Virginia Fry, my teacher and friend, for teaching me that  
there is a world beyond four walls.

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the major attempts to shift thinking in the field of twentieth century psychiatry and other social science fields was the Group Psychotherapy Movement, as led by Jacob Levy Moreno. This movement really began in the early twentieth century, but its roots go back to the late nineteenth century. It offered a new conception of the individual grounded in an elaborate theory system, and it was intellectual in nature. Moreno felt the potential impact of this new conception would be felt in both social sciences and society as a whole. It must be pointed out that group psychotherapy composed one third of Moreno's "Triadic System." The other two thirds were sociometry and psychodrama, but as they were integrally tied into the concept of the individual as group member, this paper's topic, though called the Group Psychotherapy Movement, will encompass all three.

This movement was hybrid in nature. It does not really fit into either of the established rhetorical conceptions of social movement types. Moreno's methods were often confrontational in nature, but the movement came into conflict with the established order only after its inception. The beginnings of the movement went back to Moreno's childhood, but it was not until he reached adulthood that the conflict began. To understand the nature of the movement, we must look to Lloyd Bitzer's article, "The Rhetorical Situation." Bitzer says the first of the three constituents of any rhetorical



situation is the exigence.<sup>1</sup> Moreno's group psychotherapy movement originated in response to one controlling exigence and several offshoots. The offshoots related to each section of the movement will be discussed, and then the controlling exigence will be examined.

The group therapy portion of the movement originated in response to an exigence; namely the fact that life itself is group life:

The first question which can be raised is: why group psychotherapy? . . . Living in groups is . . . a matter of survival. There is no alternative, . . . we are existentially stuck. Group therapy is a process which goes on regardless of whether it is done by means of scientific methods or not. The answer is that ongoing, unorganized group psychotherapy can be improved by scientific methods.<sup>2</sup>

Another component of the exigence of this situation is more difficult to comprehend. As a child, Moreno often "skipped" school, positioning himself on a hillside, drawing pictures or maps of people he saw together.<sup>3</sup> I can find nothing to indicate that there was any "imperfection marked by urgency" behind this which would make of it an exigence. Nevertheless, these crude childhood maps formed the basis for sociometry, about which Moreno later felt compelled to speak and write.

The exigence in the case of psychodrama lay in part in Aristotle's conception of catharsis. Moreno read Aristotle and reacted against Aristotle's theory of catharsis in the audience. Moreno felt that idea was wrong and set about to

demonstrate that the major catharsis in a dramatic situation occurs in the actors. Psychodrama also grew in part from Moreno's reactions against the established religions of his day. He was Jewish but as an adolescent converted to Catholicism due to his distaste for his parents' religion. He began reading the Bible, and from it he formulated the conception of God as an active creator. This led him to the belief that the human is also an actor, not in the commonly held theatrical view, but in the sense that one is a creator, a co-creator, with God, of the universe. Many of the other components of the psychodramatic method, such as the double, came from his reading of the Old and New Testament.<sup>4</sup> He read and interpreted, forming his own religion/therapy from what he read.

Moreno disagreed with Aristotle about the idea of catharsis. What Aristotle saw as the only catharsis present in a dramatic situation occurred in the spectator. Moreno felt that that was catharsis of a secondary nature. For him, the primary catharsis in any dramatic situation occurred in the actor.<sup>5</sup> The religions of the East and Near East added to this. According to Moreno, they held that one had to act in order to save oneself.<sup>6</sup>

In discovering more about Moreno's ideology, it quickly became apparent that this was no ordinary social movement. Bitzer says that rhetoric is situational, arising in response to an exigence.<sup>7</sup> I have just described by best understanding of what motivated the development of the three components of

his contribution. What sets this movement apart from other movement types is that, for Moreno, his ideology was the result of a spiritual, metaphysical religious experience. He felt he was the medium for the revelation of "truth," much like Jesus when he spent forty days and forty nights in the desert, or Moses when he went to the mountaintop and came down with the ten commandments.<sup>8</sup> So if there was one overriding exigence, it was the fact that Moreno felt compelled to share his revelations of the "truth" with the world so that they could share in the new vision of society he formulated. His tactics became confrontational later, as his ideas concerning therapy came up against accepted theories. It was then that Robert Cathcart's "dialectical enjoinder in the moral arena" became operative.<sup>9</sup> Cathcart felt that "through confrontation the seekers of change (the victims) experience a conversion wherein they recognize their own guilt, transcend the faulty order and acquire a new perspective."<sup>10</sup> This is what happened to Moreno as an adolescent when, becoming dissatisfied with what he saw as his parents' "watered down" religion, he converted to Catholicism, began reading the Bible, and formulated his own religious ideology. Perhaps Moreno always felt in conflict with the established religions, but the other necessary ingredient for Cathcart's confrontational movement, "dialectical enjoinder," occurred at a later point in this movement. As will be discussed later, Moreno very strongly believed in dialectic as a way of knowing, and his confrontation with others very often took the dialectical form.

Another factor which makes this a unique social movement is the fact that it started primarily as "Moreno's Movement." He alone felt the exigence discussed above. Others later joined his movement and accepted his philosophy and techniques for use. But the fact remains that in the beginning, this was pretty basically a one person movement.

A clarifying statement seems to be in order at this point. Bitzer discusses the exigence in a rhetorical situation: "when it is perceived and when it is strong and important, then it constrains the thought and action of the perceiver who may respond rhetorically if he is in a position to do so."<sup>11</sup> I believe that in Moreno's case, his thought and action were constrained from early childhood. However, to be perfectly true to Bitzer's definition of the rhetorical situation it is incumbent upon me to define this as a rhetorical situation only after it came into conflict with the establishment, or at the time when Moreno wrote his first work or made his first speech. At that point it properly became a rhetorical situation according to Bitzer's definition. Up until that time, however, I feel Moreno was still acting rhetorically in Kenneth Burke's sense of the word. Burke says rhetoric must be addressed but, unlike Bitzer, allows for self-address.<sup>12</sup> Up until the point when Moreno first spoke out, the formulation of his ideology seems to have occurred through this self-address. When that point arrived, the situation became rhetorical in Bitzer's sense. What prompted Moreno to speak out has already been

discussed in a general sense. I believe what finally prompted him to speak out was his perception of the nature of Freud's therapy.

The third factor in making this a social movement that does not really fit as either a confrontational or innovational movement is the fact that even though Moreno's tactics were often confrontational in nature, I'm not altogether sure he saw this as replacement of the existing order. He did reject the values of the existing religious establishment, but he was not out, in one sense, to replace the existing psychiatric establishment. At the time his ideas came into conflict with the existing order, which was pretty basically Freud's psychoanalysis, he did not seek to replace the other theory with his own, but rather to encompass it. His theory was the one which was the larger scope--Freud was too limited and could be taken into his.<sup>13</sup> So, although Moreno's methods were not typical of the innovational movement as discussed by Smith and Windes,<sup>14</sup> in the sense that Freud's theory would still be used, Moreno was, in one sense, not completely confrontational. Perhaps a case could be made for saying that the movement was in part innovational if one views his belief that he could encompass Freud's theory rather than replace it as a strategy designed to minimize conflict. I tend to view it as an egocentric appraisal of his own theory on Moreno's part.

The second of Bitzer's constituents in any rhetorical situation is the audience.<sup>15</sup> It seems that Moreno's audience

existed on several different levels. The major audience, as stated before, was professional; this audience was composed of those in the social sciences, particularly psychiatry. He communicated with them through books, journals, professional meetings, etc. These were his main rhetorical channels. I feel social science professionals were his major audience. However, Moreno also hoped that eventually, everyone everywhere would adopt his ideas as their personal philosophy of life.<sup>16</sup> He felt that "a truly therapeutic procedure cannot have less an objective than the whole of mankind."<sup>17</sup> Through adoption of his vision as one's philosophy of life, one would be healed and integrated with the rest of society as a fully functioning, creative individual. This will be discussed in greater depth later.

The third of Bitzer's constituents is any constraints which may be operative in the situation.<sup>18</sup> There were several constraints involved in this situation. One major one was the existing theory with which Moreno's ideas came into conflict, and people's allegiance to it. Psychoanalysis was THE theory in use at the time when Moreno began to speak out and it was widely used. Since it was so firmly entrenched, there was allegiance to it, and that provided a constraint on Moreno's efforts. Another very major constraint was Moreno himself. Through his rude, egocentric behavior, he did much to turn people off his ideas. As the New York Times said in Moreno's obituary, ". . . acceptance of his theories was slow, particularly

because some colleagues deplored his showmanship."<sup>19</sup> Moreno himself conceded that he was paranoic, megalomaniac, and an exhibitionist.<sup>20</sup> Further testimony to his personal effect on his own movement is the fact that since his death, his ideas have gained wider acceptance.<sup>21</sup> I cannot say that this is due to the man himself--it could be partially due to the fact that he may have been ahead of his time. Nevertheless, his personality definitely had an impact on the acceptance of his ideas. It is beyond the scope of this paper to assess to what degree.

The question might legitimately arise: "why study the rhetoric of an egocentric, exhibitionist religious visionary?" The answer lies in part in the fact that the man was a psychiatrist, and a contemporary of Freud, who offered the world a new vision of the individual and society. His theories are still being used and from the personal experience of this author, are extremely powerful.<sup>22</sup> A study of this nature also seems to me to have potential interest to persons in several different fields, among them psychology, sociology, social psychology and communication. Beyond all these reasons, though, Moreno himself offers a rationale for a study of his ideology. In speaking of sociometry, he said, ". . . it is these techniques which made sociometry famous and which have been universally accepted, whereas its underlying philosophy of life has been relegated to the dark corners of library shelves or entirely pushed aside."<sup>23</sup> This study is an attempt to bring

that philosophy of life out of the dark corners of the library and into the light.

#### METHOD

The method to be used in this study is a modification of Ernest G. Bormann's "rhetorical vision."<sup>24</sup> In his article, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality," Bormann discusses "the dynamic process of group fantasizing."<sup>25</sup> He states that Robert Bales, through his small group research, provides the rhetorical critic ". . . with an account of how dramatizing communication creates social reality for groups of people."<sup>26</sup> This paper will examine how Moreno's "dramatizing communication" constituted a social reality. In other words, it will examine Moreno's Weltanschauung as revealed in several of his communicative works.

Given the fact that Bormann drew on small group research for his theory, and the fact that Moreno felt that the group is the primary unit of society, this seems like an obviously correct choice. Each deals with the dynamics present in the group. For example, Moreno would have heartily agreed with Bormann (quoting Bales) that "the culture of the interacting group stimulates in each of its members a feeling that he has entered a new realm of reality--a world of heroes, villains, saints, and enemies--a drama, a work of art."<sup>27</sup> One of the cornerstones of Moreno's group therapy was the belief that a group is more than a collection of individuals, that there are



fundamentally different processes which become operative when one enters a group. Moreno would also have agreed with the emphasis on the here and now of group life. And fundamentally, both Moreno and Bormann are dramatistic in their view of life. There seem to be too many similarities between the two to ignore Bormann as a method for revealing Moreno's rhetorical vision.

The method suggested by Bormann is one which involves looking at the fantasy themes which make up the rhetorical vision. In order to do this, he suggests that the critic begin by collecting evidence through looking at the communication produced. The critic should then proceed to analyze that content, and Bormann suggests numerous questions which one can ask oneself in the analysis.<sup>28</sup> I suggest an alternate procedure. An effective way to uncover or delineate Moreno's rhetorical vision as expressed in several of his works, has been suggested in a different context by Brown and Jameison. Each has stressed the importance of focusing on the axiological, epistemological and ontological components of a vision as a procedure for revealing the symbolic reality or vision of specific individuals and groups.<sup>29</sup>

In her article, "The Rhetorical Manifestations of Weltanschauung," Jameison claims that "rhetorical visions develop and decay in response to exigencies perceived through the filter of a worldview."<sup>30</sup> In quoting P. Albert Duhamel, Jameison also offers justification for looking at the three components. Duhamel said, "'the content of the idea "rhetoric,"

. . . or of the conception of what constitutes effective expression, is dependent upon the epistemology, psychology, and metaphysic of the system in which it occurs. The rhetorical is determined by the epistemological.'"<sup>31</sup>

In his article, "Making Present the Past: Public Address History," Brown bemoans the fact that too often studies of American address "find their cognate field in American history rather than in psychology, social psychology, or sociology."<sup>32</sup> He suggests that this offers little knowledge to one interested in theoretical understanding. Instead of taking an historical approach, Brown recommends that the critic examine the components of being, knowing, and valuing inherent in the social reality of public address. This is potentially more valuable because "to emphasize the creation of what Bormann has called 'rhetorical visions' would at once make evident to non-communication historians the distinctive contribution of rhetorical scholars, relate the history of public address to cognates additional to history, and make the past present in a greater variety of ways."<sup>33</sup> He further suggests that by doing this, we could come up with ". . . genres for public address that would relate to symbolic realities . . . since any Weltanschauung combines the dimensions of being, knowing and valuing, the genres emerging from historical interpretation would result from seeing how stances on each dimension combine with those on the others."<sup>34</sup> Clearly, there is theoretical justification for approaching Moreno's vision through its epistemological, ontological, and axiological components.

Another justification for looking at the three components rather than asking the questions Bormann suggests, is the fact that in order to illuminate Moreno's vision, one needs to go beyond those questions. Bormann suggests that one look for patterns of characterizations, dramatic situations, and settings.<sup>35</sup> But in discussing Moreno's vision, it is not enough to know that Freud was a villain in Moreno's drama, unless one knows how or why. It is not enough to know that Socrates was a hero unless one knows why or how that heroism fits into the larger picture, or what part of Socrates' philosophy was incorporated into the rhetorical vision. By looking at the ontological, axiological, and epistemological components, one gets the whole picture. The fact that any Weltanschauung contains these three components offers testimony to the universal applicability of this approach.

The data to be used in this study are several of Moreno's written works. They will be treated as "ideomemes." This method of analyzing a movement is discussed by Smith and Windes in their article, "Collective Action and The Single Text."<sup>36</sup> Smith and Windes suggest that an ideomeme is a representative text, and examination of a representative text is one way to "illustrate movement-specific concepts . . . an ideomeme is an attempt of a certain type of movement, in a particular stage of development, to create change through indictment of the present, the projection of a vision of past and future, depiction of good and evil."<sup>37</sup> There will be more than one

representative text used in this paper. Moreno has a large volume of written work. Often, an entire work deals with only one of the three of his contributions. In order to explore his ideology most completely, the use of one text is insufficient.

#### ANALYSIS

By Moreno's own admission, he differed with Freud in several important ways. Since Freud was the major theorist with which Moreno eventually came into conflict, his ideas will be contrasted with Moreno's, as a way to illuminate the latter. Freud's ideas will be presented as Moreno viewed them. The first area of difference was the fact that where Freud's psychoanalysis was directed toward the individual and he saw groups merely as collections of individuals, Moreno's interests lay with relationships between individuals in groups.<sup>38</sup> The first of the three major parts of his conceptualization, sociometry, was designed to quantitatively measure and thus to understand or diagnose those relationships. His conception of psychodrama, the second area, was as a tool for the intervention in and treatment of those relationships.<sup>39</sup> And, thirdly, his conception of group psychotherapy revolved around a belief that one individual could act as "therapeutic agent" for another in a group setting.<sup>40</sup> In a Freudian psychoanalytic system, the therapeutic power resided in the psychoanalyst.

Secondly, Moreno differed with Freud concerning the direction therapy should take. Whereas Freud's method was

premised on the importance of a person's past, and he explored that past for answers to a patient's present psychological problems, Moreno started with the patient's "here and now" and moved forward. Where Freud looked backward for an explanation of a person's present behavior, Moreno accepted that behavior as a starting point.<sup>41</sup> Bormann also discusses the here and now. He says he borrowed the concept from sensitivity training or encounter groups, which suggests to me that he is in Moreno's debt for this concept. This is further suggested by the fact that Bormann has interpreted the here and now precisely as Moreno did. Bormann wrote, "the 'here-and-now,' . . . refers to what is immediately happening in the group."<sup>42</sup>

The third major difference between Moreno and Freud was in their attitudes toward action or acting out.<sup>43</sup> Moreno felt that action is primary. He arrived at that conclusion through a synthesis of different sources. As has been discussed, he got part of the idea from the Bible, part from the religions of the East and Near East, and part from Aristotle. He also felt action is primary because as infants we are all action--we act before we speak. Freud felt that acting out was a symptom of immaturity among other things, and obviously it was not a part of his psychoanalytic method. Moreno saw Freud's method as passive and lifeless, and constructed as protection against either the patient or the analyst acting out.<sup>44</sup> Moreno's system of therapy was predicated on the belief that in order to be healed, one must act out.

Moreno had very specific views concerning human ontology, epistemology, and axiology. While in any given case the three components are separable only arbitrarily, in Moreno's case it seems especially difficult. In its style, the written work seems almost to be "stream of consciousness," and he often seems to switch thought processes in midstream. One often wonders where, if at all, there are distinctions in his belief system. He seems to switch back and forth from talking about religion to science to therapy to actual historical events. For purposes of this paper, his views must obviously be categorized.

There are three parts to Moreno's ontological component: the human as group member, the group member as therapeutic agent, and the human as involved actor. In order to better draw out the substance of Moreno's vision, his conceptions will be contrasted with Freud's. The first part of the ontological component is the fact that the human is first and foremost a group member. One is not separable from one's relationships or the groups to which one belongs. In discussing group psychotherapy, Moreno asks and answers a hypothetical question: "if the individual is only a fragment or a part of reality, what is real and more comprehensive? . . . our answer was that however real the individual is, the group is a greater reality and includes it. Mankind is a greater reality still than the groups and the universe at large includes all individuals, all groups, and all possible

mankind."<sup>45</sup> In treating an individual in group psychotherapy, then, one treats him "in the vehicles in which he naturally exists, that is, in groups."<sup>46</sup>

Related to his religious views, Moreno said, "if God would come into the world again he would not come into it as an individual, but as a GROUP, as a collective."<sup>47</sup> Sociometry offered the world a way to measure relationships within and between groups. According to Moreno's view, that was the only way to "scientize" or formalize group work so that, through group psychotherapy, one could treat human relationships. Through that treatment, we would all be integrated in one fully functioning, creative world society. That society was Moreno's ultimate vision. The importance of his statement, quoted earlier, about the scope of a therapeutic procedure needing to treat the whole of humankind, becomes evident once one understands this ideal. Since we are all interrelated, by treating the individual in his or her relationships, one would eventually get to all of humankind.

Another aspect of the ontological component relates to the idea of the individual as a group member. In the attempt to heal and integrate group members, Moreno found that group members could act as "therapeutic agents" for one another.<sup>48</sup> This further carries forward the idea that the group is the basic unit of society. As Zerka Moreno, Jacob's wife, said in quoting his definitions:

it is fundamental principle of group psychotherapy that every individual is a therapeutic agent of the other individual, that every

group is a therapeutic agent of every other group . . . group psychotherapy treats not only the single individual, who is the center of attention because of special difficulties in adaptation to and in coordination in the group, but the entire group and all individuals who are in relation to him.<sup>49</sup>

Moreno saw his view of human ontology as the direct opposite of Freud's. He said Freud believed that "the psychological factors operating in an individual also operate in groups, in nations and in human civilization at large."<sup>50</sup> But Moreno felt that when one enters a group, different factors are operative and it is no longer feasible to look at the individual psyche as the basic unit and then try to project what one sees there to the larger group.<sup>51</sup> Being part of a group is a fundamentally different experience, both communicatively and otherwise, and requires an altogether different science than one which is individual centered. And since group membership is our natural state, "in group psychotherapy the patient is a group of individuals."<sup>52</sup> Moreno saw the healing or therapeutic power in psychoanalysis as residing in the analyst--the passive patient laying on the couch, and the analyst behind him or her, so as to avoid interaction. The patient talks and the analyst interprets.<sup>53</sup>

A third part of Moreno's ontological component is that of the human as actor, involved in the midst of life and the here and now, becoming and creating. This conception of the individual is constitutive of Moreno's belief that therapy should be synthesis, which will be discussed later in the



paper. Moreno felt his method of therapy was "operational" rather than "analytic."<sup>54</sup> The passive patient of Freud becomes the spontaneous creator in Moreno's system. The spontaneous creator combines all three, the ontological, epistemological, and axiological, components of this vision. Moreno discusses his religious views in explaining this concept of the creator. He says that on the first day of creation God would have created, rather than analyzed or taken apart. For Moreno Freud would have sat down and analyzed the situation.<sup>55</sup> Of God, Moreno says "if he had started with psychoanalysis he would hardly have begun to create anything, the world might have remained uncreated. Therefore, I conclude that God was first a creator, an actor, a psychodramatist."<sup>56</sup> That belief led, in part, to the birth of psychodrama and is integral to Moreno's overall approach to therapy. He felt we all have a part of God, the creator, in us. Creativity is the stuff of which the world is made. Through learning to be spontaneous, we release the creativity or God in each of us. The way we do this is through action (psychodrama, dialectic, being in the midst of life like Socrates and Jesus). As we all evolve, we become integrated with one another until we are the ideal society of fully functioning individuals discussed earlier.<sup>57</sup> That was the hope of Moreno's vision. Moreno says he turned around the backward looking nature of psychoanalysis--"we reversed the psychoanalytic technique and turned the subject loose as a totality,

turned him into spontaneous action, into a spontaneous actor. Instead of searching after past experiences, the subject turned his mind to the present, to immediate production."<sup>58</sup> The immediate production Moreno spoke of is production of spontaneity to release creativity. It is part of the concept that everything is constantly changing, evolving, and becoming something new. By starting with the here and now, and ignoring the past, the only way to go is forward--one is constantly evolving, constantly PRODUCING the future. Moreno discussed how this contrasted with Freud's therapy:

in the course of psychodramatic procedures we put the protagonist back on his feet. He is back in the fullness of his natural habitat of space and time. The couch- and chair-protagonist is now free from couch and chair. They are occasional props in an open field of potential persons and objects. He does not lie or sit; he is moving, acting, speaking, as in life itself.<sup>59</sup>

There are three major parts of Moreno's epistemological component to be discussed here, although a case could conceivably be made that a fourth could be his belief in religious revelation as a way to know. At any rate, the three major areas to be discussed are dialectic as a way to know, knowledge through another group member, and release of creativity while breaking up old conserves, as a way to know. It is important to keep in mind that both Freud and Moreno saw their own type of therapy as epistemological. But each had differing views of human ontology which led to differing conceptions of what type of therapy is epistemological.

First, Moreno admits to having been greatly influenced by Socrates,<sup>60</sup> and says in Psychodrama (v. 2) that the volume is presented in a modern Socratic method of presentation.<sup>61</sup> In Who Shall Survive?, Moreno says of Socrates, "his dialogues impressed me, not because of their content, but because they were presented as 'reports' of actual sessions . . . and not an imaginary output of a poetic-philosophic mind."<sup>62</sup> Moreno continues:

Socrates, in order to prove a point, chose the form of the dialogue instead of lecturing to the crowd. He picked as his counterprotagonist a representative character, a sophist. Unconsciously using the technique of 'role reversal' he elevated the sophist and turned him into the teacher, whereas he himself assumed the role of the ignorant pupil who asked questions. He calculated intuitively what I had to discover after long practice, that by means of role reversal he could more easily find the weak spots in the armor of the sophist than if he would tell him directly what the faults of his logic were.<sup>63</sup>

Moreno did use the Socratic method of presentation in Psychodrama (v. 2), as was said earlier, and he said of its use that the aim of the dialogue he carried on with social scientists in that volume was greater understanding. I also feel this belief in dialectic as a way of knowing is, with his belief in action or acting out, one of the cornerstones of the psychodramatic method. Moreno felt that Socrates was "in a curious sort of way the closest to being a pioneer of the psychodramatic format . . . Socrates was involved with actual people, acting as their midwife and clarifier, very much like a modern psychodramatist would."<sup>65</sup>

While I do not dismiss the fact that Moreno was egocentric, I feel that to some degree he may have been misunderstood. The following statement in Who Shall Survive? offers an example of what I am talking about:

. . . there is another way of spreading ideas, that is to challenge people who represent opposite ideologies. This one, however, is often accompanied by filling your sociogram with enemy figures who block your expansion by counter-attacks of their own.<sup>66</sup>

I do feel this statement is confrontational in tone, but given everything I have read by Moreno, I think that to dismiss this as egocentric "battle plans" would be to miss Moreno's appreciation of the dialectic method. I feel that he believed that dialectic or action, wherein one is constantly "mixing it up" with others, are the only way to true knowledge. One can't sit back and be fed information, but rather must actively seek the "truth," going out to meet the "enemy" and through the exchange, evolve. This was Moreno's idea of "dialectical enjoinderment in the moral arena," and I feel he responded that way no matter what the situation. In other words, even if he agreed with one's ideology, he would still attempt to understand that ideology more completely through dialectic or action methods. Perhaps we have dismissed an important part of what Moreno saw as epistemological by assuming that his methods are reflective of a personality eccentricity.

An additional portion of Moreno's epistemological component is his belief that one person could act as a therapeutic agent for another. According to Moreno, power for

teaching and healing was thought to reside strictly with the psychoanalyst in a Freudian system.<sup>67</sup> But Moreno discovered in working with prostitutes in Vienna, that within a group setting, one person could perform the same function for another.<sup>68</sup> It must be inserted, however, that he felt he went beyond this in psychodrama, where the medium, or the action itself became therapeutic.<sup>69</sup> So action should probably be considered epistemological in his system as well. At any rate, the idea of one group member as therapeutic agent for another has been discussed earlier in this paper. I will not belabor the point except to say that Freud obviously felt knowledge came only through the analyst--one lays on the couch and the analyst interprets and heals. Knowledge through a group peer as therapeutic agent was a different epistemological outlook.

The final dimension of Moreno's epistemological component to be discussed here relates to psychodrama. One theoretical basis of psychodrama lay in Moreno's belief that catharsis occurs in the actor. As was discussed earlier, this was in direct opposition to Aristotle, who believed that catharsis takes place in the audience. In Mental Catharsis and the Psychodrama, Moreno spoke of his concept of catharsis as it modified Aristotle's:

This concept of catharsis has undergone a revolutionary change since systematic psychodramatic work began in Vienna in 1920. This change has been exemplified by the movement away from the written (conserved) drama and toward the SPONTANEOUS (psycho) drama, with

the emphasis shifted from the spectators to the actors . . . it (the psychodrama) produces a healing effect--not in the spectator (secondary catharsis) but in the producer-actors who produce the drama and, at the same time, liberate themselves from it.<sup>70</sup>

The other two influences on psychodrama were religious, as mentioned earlier, and can be summarized by saying that action is stressed--one must be involved in one's healing process.

During the process of psychodrama, then, learning occurs through the active recreation of life experiences and situations. The goal of psychodrama is reorganization of perceptions, the breaking up of old "conserves." This reorganization is made possible by spontaneity, which releases creativity, through catharsis. A conserve is "creativity expressed and preserved."<sup>71</sup> For example, one's memories, experiences and beliefs are conserves. They serve to provide structure or order to our existence. But they can become dysfunctional or outmoded or may have been misformed. They can become resistant to change and so block one's creativity. Moreno felt these conserves must be broken up and perceptions reorganized so new conserves can be formed. This learning process occurs during psychodrama and is an integral part of Moreno's therapy as epistemological.<sup>72</sup>

This process remarkably parallels Chaim Perelman's concept of association/dissociation. Perelman posits that persuasion is accomplished through dissociation of existing ideas which form a composite and association of new ones into a new

ccomposite.<sup>73</sup> This is Moreno's breaking up of old conserves (composites) and forming of new ones. The difference between the two is that Moreno's end result is healing; Perelman's is persuasion.

The final component, the axiological, involves both religious and non-religious values. Moreno seems to have been a very religious man, but just as he saw his therapy as different, so too he saw his religion as different from the mainstream. His was a "positive religion" which he saw as contradictory to the established religions of the day. He was influenced in the formulation of his religious views by psychoanalysis and the political doctrine of Marxism. He felt that both had rejected religion and "the idea of a community which is based on spontaneous love, unselfishness and sainthood, on positive goodness and naive cooperativeness."<sup>74</sup> He felt a new religion enhanced by scientific knowledge was in order. For him, religion and science were both valuable processes, but the "whole truth" could not be derived from either alone. Thus he proposed a combination.<sup>75</sup> His position was threefold; it involved beliefs in "spontaneity-creativity as a propelling force in human progress . . . love and mutual sharing as a powerful, indispensable working principle in group life . . . a superdynamic community based upon these principles which can be brought to realization through newer techniques."<sup>76</sup> Of his efforts he wrote, "I tried to do through sociometry what 'religion without science' has failed to accomplish in the past and what 'science without religion' has failed



to accomplish in Soviet Russia."<sup>77</sup> I feel his dissatisfaction was with the notion that if one is scientific one cannot be religious, and if one is religious, one cannot be scientific. He seemingly felt one could do both, so long as one did not let one intrude on the other. He set out to prove it. He felt that to keep the two "compartments" apart was an exercise in role playing, so he became a roleplayer and psychodramatist.<sup>78</sup> Through doing so, he could be both religious and scientific. He summed up his perception of the position of his religion thusly:

. . . the positive religion which I offered was just as much in contradiction and opposition to the official religions as it was to the agnostic, psychological and political doctrines of our time; indeed, when removed from its metaphoric shell it contains the most revolutionary kernel of my whole work.<sup>79</sup>

The second part of the axiological component ties into the belief in action discussed earlier. Moreno said in discussing his religious views that he chose to implement them rather than first further intellectualizing about them--he chose to act, to make his ideas concrete.<sup>80</sup> This ties into the ontological component already discussed, of Moreno's belief in the human as creator. The idea of the Godhead as active creator and each of us releasing the creativity or God in ourselves through spontaneity has already been discussed. This is important because Moreno's self-vision was that he, like God, would act rather than analyze or intellectualize.

His belief in action as axiological is further emphasized by what he said of Freud: "He was never shaken from



his belief that psychoanalysis is ANALYSIS, that it is not synthesis, not active therapy, not a projective method, not sociometry, not psychodrama, not group psychotherapy.<sup>81</sup> This is a part of his belief that in order to save or heal oneself, one must be a "fighting saint," working for one's salvation. It carried over to his views on dissemination of religious and other views--to disseminate his views, he must act on them, make them concrete. The whole view corresponds to Bitzer's conception of the exigence. Moreno felt compelled to action, not just rhetorically, but in the belief that only through action did the human achieve salvation or healing. Clearly, he viewed action as axiological.

The value Moreno placed on the "here and now" led to his view of therapy as synthesis, through action or dialectical methods. A valuable therapeutic process would not look backward for answers or help but would start with the present, the here and now. Through the recreation of experiences already lived through, in the here and now, and the reorganization of perceptions as a result of that, healing was synthesized. This was the operational mode of therapy, and in this mode, the here and now recreation was seen to be more real than the old experiences being recreated--that is why or how psychodrama worked. Bormann says much the same thing:

the culture of a group is a fantasy established from the past, which is acted upon in the present. In such moments, which occur not only in groups but also in individual responses to works of art, one is 'transported' to a world which seems somehow even

more real than the everyday world. One may feel exalted, fascinated, perhaps horrified or threatened, or powerfully impelled to action, but in any case, involved. One's feelings fuse with the symbols and images which carry the feeling in communication and sustain it over time. One is psychologically taken into a psychodramatic fantasy world, in which others in the group are also involved.<sup>82</sup>

Moreno contrasted this view of therapy in the here and now with other therapeutic views when he wrote, "both Freud and Jung have studied man as an historical development . . . on the other hand, our approach has been that of direct experiment; man in action, man thrown into action; the moment not part of history but history a part of the moment--SUB SPECIES MOMENTI."<sup>83</sup> The basis for Moreno's sociometry, psychodrama and group therapy is the conception of history as part of the moment, the here and now. Although past or future events are dealt with, they are dealt with and worked through in the here and now, and in an action synthesis, operational mode of therapy.

#### DISCUSSION

This study attempted to bring Moreno's philosophy of life out of the darkness and into the light. In so doing, I believe that some interesting common areas of theoretical conception between Moreno's ideology and rhetorical theory have been illuminated. These areas deserve further investigation, and they will now be enumerated.

First, it would seem that when Moreno discussed the breaking of conserves and reorganization of perceptions, and when Perelman discussed association and dissociation, they were, as noted previously, talking about the same thing. The processes of association are ". . . schemes which bring separate elements together and allow us to establish a unity among them."<sup>84</sup> It is this process of bringing separate elements together through which conserves are born. The breaking up of conserves is accomplished through dissociation, through the separation of "elements which are regarded as forming a whole . . . or a unified group within some system of thought."<sup>85</sup>

Second, we are capable of these acts because we are capable of action in a Burkeian sense. The emphasis on action by both Burke and Moreno is another area of common theoretical conception. Moreno's belief in action has already been discussed. Action for Burke involves "modes of behavior made possible by the acquiring of a conventional, arbitrary symbol system."<sup>86</sup> "'Action' is a term for the kind of behavior possible to a typically symbol-using animal (such as man) in contrast with the extrasymbolic or nonsymbolic operations of nature."<sup>87</sup> In other words, we are capable of acting instead of merely reacting or being acted upon. As Campbell wrote, "man is a rhetorical being because he is a symbol-using or signifying creature capable of influencing or being influenced because of his capacity for linguistic and semantic responses."<sup>88</sup> Further explanation was also provided by Campbell:

In such a view the receiver is an active contributor to the persuasion process who detects, identifies, and interprets the symbolic stimuli which are the message, participating in and creating its meanings which, in turn, become the most significant element in his future behavior. Persuasion becomes a consequence of the interaction between men and their language.<sup>89</sup>

This view is parallel to Moreno's view of therapy as synthesis. The process of detection, identification and interpretation of stimuli which become the most significant element in future behavior is Moreno's idea that through active recreation of experience in the here and now, healing is synthesized. That is part of his theory of action, and because that active recreation leads to altered detection, identification and interpretation of stimuli which thus changes behavior, it is consistent with Burke's theory of action.

Third, there is a strong connection between Moreno and Bormann's conceptions of the group and group life. As discussed earlier, there was parallel concern in both with the here and now of group life. Both would have agreed with Bales that "'the culture' of the interacting group stimulates in each of its members a feeling that he has entered a new realm of reality--a world of heroes, villains, saints, and enemies--a drama, a work of art."<sup>90</sup> This process for either Bormann or Moreno supports the latter's belief that in being part of a group, one is part of more than a collection of individuals, that there are fundamentally different processes operating.

What Bormann calls the "chaining out" of a social reality is not only what Moreno attempted to start in the dissemination of his ideas, but it is also the process which creates

group cohesiveness in a psychodrama group. It is this cohesiveness which makes it possible for participants to feel comfortable enough to divulge their innermost thoughts and feelings. So the connection between Bormann and Moreno exists on several different levels.

These three areas of similarity between Moreno's ideology and rhetorical theory deserve further investigation. One potentially valuable area of inquiry would be an investigation to see if one could demonstrate that the process through which individuals psychodramatically change, posited here as association and dissociation, is analogous to the process through which larger groups and society as a whole change. Such an inquiry would highlight human capacity for action in either Burke's or Moreno's sense of the word, which in either case allows for the breaking of conserves and reorganization of perceptions. It would also fulfill the promise Bormann made when he wrote that "just as some psychologists and sociologists have studied the small group in order to discover features of larger social structures, so can investigations of small group communication provide insight into the nature of public address and mass communication." Such potential information could greatly contribute to our field. We should not let the opportunity pass us by.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," Philosophy and Rhetoric, 1 (1968), p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>J. L. Moreno, M.D., Ed., The International Handbook of Group Psychotherapy (New York: Philosophical Library, 1966), pp. 158-159.

<sup>3</sup>Personal interview with Glendale Norris, certified psychodramatist, on Moreno, 19 February 1983.

<sup>4</sup>Personal interview with Glendale Norris, certified psychodramatist, on Moreno, 29 April 1983.

<sup>5</sup>J. L. Moreno, M.D., Mental Catharsis and the Psychodrama (Psychodrama Monographs No. 6 Beacon, New York: Beacon House Inc., 1940), p. 209.

<sup>6</sup>Moreno, Mental Catharsis, p. 227.

<sup>7</sup>Bitzer, p. 43.

<sup>8</sup>Norris interview, 29 April.

<sup>9</sup>Robert S. Cathcart, "Movements: Confrontation as Rhetorical Form," The Southern Speech Communication Journal, 43(1978), p. 242.

<sup>10</sup>Cathcart, p. 243.

<sup>11</sup>Bitzer, p. 43.

<sup>12</sup>Kenneth Burke, "A Grammar of Motives and a Rhetoric of Motives," in Contemporary Theories of Rhetoric: Selected Readings, ed. Richard L. Johannesen (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 88.

<sup>13</sup>Norris interview, 19 February.

<sup>14</sup>Ralph R. Smith and Russel R. Windes, "The Innovational Movement: A Rhetorical Theory," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 61(1975), pp. 140-164.

<sup>15</sup>Bitzer, p. 43.

<sup>16</sup>Norris interview, 19 February

<sup>17</sup>J. L. Moreno, M.D., Who Shall Survive? Foundations of Sociometry, Group Psychotherapy and Sociodrama (Beacon, New York: Beacon House Inc., 1953), p. 3.

<sup>18</sup>Bitzer, p. 43.

<sup>19</sup>Steven R. Weisman, "Jacob L. Moreno, Psychiatrist, 82: Pioneer of the Psychodrama Technique is Dead," New York Times, 16 May 1974, p. 44.

<sup>20</sup>J. L. Moreno, M.D., Who Shall Survive?, p. xix.

<sup>21</sup>Norris interview, 19 February.

<sup>22</sup>The author has participated both as protagonist and in other capacities in other person's psychodramas, and as group member, in both adolescent and adult groups, during the years 1977 and 1983.

<sup>23</sup>J. L. Moreno, M.D., Who Shall Survive?, p. xv.

<sup>24</sup>Ernest G. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 58 (1972), pp. 396-407.

<sup>25</sup>Bormann, p. 396.

<sup>26</sup>Bormann, p. 396.

<sup>27</sup>Bormann, p. 398.

<sup>28</sup>Bormann, pp. 401-402.

<sup>29</sup>Kathleen Jameison, "The Rhetorical Manifestations of Weltanschauung," Central States Speech Journal, 27(1976), pp. 4-14. William R. Brown, "Making Present the Past: Public Address History," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 60(1974), pp. 237-240.

<sup>30</sup>Jameison, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup>Jameison, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup>Brown, pp. 237-238.

<sup>34</sup>Brown, p. 238.

<sup>35</sup>Bormann, p. 401.

<sup>36</sup>Ralph R. Smith and Russel Rayl Windes, "Collective Action and the Single Text," Southern Speech Communication Journal, 43(1978), pp. 110-128.

<sup>37</sup>Smith and Windes, "Collective Action," pp. 116-117.

<sup>38</sup>J. L. Moreno, M.D., Open Letter to Group Psychotherapists: An Introduction to Sociatry, Psychodrama Monographs, No. 23 (Beacon, New York: Beacon House, 1947), pp. 19-20.

<sup>39</sup>Norris interview, 19 February.

<sup>40</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. xxx.

<sup>41</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. lxxii. (This is only one of many references to this belief scattered throughout Moreno's work).

<sup>42</sup>Bormann, p. 397.

<sup>43</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, pp. liii-liv.

<sup>44</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. liv.

<sup>45</sup>J. L. Moreno, ed., International Handbook, p. 159.

<sup>46</sup>J. L. Moreno, ed., International Handbook, p. 159.

<sup>47</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, pp. xix-xx.

<sup>48</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. xxx.

<sup>49</sup>J. L. Moreno, ed., International Handbook, p. 84.

<sup>50</sup>J. L. Moreno, Open Letter, p. 17.

<sup>51</sup>J. L. Moreno, Open Letter, p. 20.

<sup>52</sup>J. L. Moreno, Open Letter, p. 16.

<sup>53</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. liii.

<sup>54</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. xxvii.

<sup>55</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, pp. xvi-xvii.

<sup>56</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. xvii.

<sup>57</sup>Norris interview, 19 February.

<sup>58</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. 9.

<sup>59</sup>J. L. Moreno, M.D., with Z. T. Moreno, Psychodrama, Second Volume: Foundations of Psychotherapy (Beacon, New York: Beacon House, 1969), p. 135.

<sup>60</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, pp. xxii-xxiv.



- <sup>61</sup>J. L. Moreno, Psychodrama, Second Volume, p. iii.
- <sup>62</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. xxii.
- <sup>63</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. xxiii.
- <sup>64</sup>J. L. Moreno, Psychodrama, Second Volume, p. iii.
- <sup>65</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. xxii.
- <sup>66</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. lxii.
- <sup>67</sup>J. L. Moreno, Psychodrama, First Volume: Third Edition With New Introduction (Beacon, New York: Beacon House Inc., 1964), p. 317.
- <sup>68</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, pp. xxviii-xxx.
- <sup>69</sup>J. L. Moreno, Psychodrama, First Volume, p. 317.
- <sup>70</sup>J. L. Moreno, Mental Catharsis, p. 209.
- <sup>71</sup>Glendale Norris, Psychodrama, Sociometry, and Sociatry, 31 July 1978, handout in psychodrama group, p. 1.
- <sup>72</sup>Norris handout, p. 1.
- <sup>73</sup>Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation (1958; rpt. Notre Dame: Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1971), p. 190.
- <sup>74</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. xv.
- <sup>75</sup>Norris interview, 29 April.
- <sup>76</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. xv.
- <sup>77</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. xv.
- <sup>78</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. xvi.
- <sup>79</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. xvi.
- <sup>80</sup>J. L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive?, p. xvi.
- <sup>81</sup>J. L. Moreno, Open Letter, p. 18.
- <sup>82</sup>Bormann, p. 398.
- <sup>83</sup>J. L. Moreno, ed., International Handbook, p. 39.

<sup>84</sup>Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, p. 190.

<sup>85</sup>Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, p. 190.

<sup>86</sup>Kenneth Burke, "(Nonsymbolic) Motion/(Symbolic) Action," Critical Inquiry, 4 (1978), 809.

<sup>87</sup>Kenneth Burke, "Dramatism" in The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 7 (1968), p. 447.

<sup>88</sup>Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Ontological Foundations of Rhetorical Theory," Philosophy and Rhetoric, 3 (1970), 103.

<sup>89</sup>Campbell, 103.

<sup>90</sup>Bormann, 398.

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE COMMONALITY IN THEORY  
BETWEEN JACOB MORENO'S GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY  
MOVEMENT AND SELECTED RHETORICAL THEORIES

by

JODY HOUSE WRIGHTSON

B. S., Kansas State University, 1973

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

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One of the major attempts to shift thinking in the field of twentieth century psychiatry and other social science fields was the Group Psychotherapy Movement as led by Jacob Levy Moreno. Moreno was a Viennese trained psychiatrist and contemporary of Freud. His was a rhetorical social movement but one which does not conform to existing rhetorical social movement types. This study undertook an examination of Moreno's and other selected rhetorical theories to discover whether there were commonalities in theoretical conception among them. In order to reveal the nature of reality as envisioned and embodied by that movement, a modification of Ernest G. Bormann's "Rhetorical Vision" method was utilized. This method was explicated in Bormann's 1972 article, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality."

In place of the questions Bormann suggested the critic ask in order to explicate the nature of the rhetorical vision, this study examined the ontological, epistemological, and axiological components of Moreno's worldview. This modification of Bormann's method was suggested in another context by William R. Brown and Kathleen Jamieson in their articles, "Making Present the Past: Public Address History" and "The Rhetorical Manifestations of Weltanschauung."

The data examined in the study were several of Moreno's written works. They were treated as "ideomemes" or representative texts. This method of analyzing a social movement was discussed by Smith and Windes in their article, "Collective

Action and The Single Text." The method they suggested was that one examine an ideomeme in order to "illustrate movement specific concepts." In Moreno's case, the use of one text was insufficient due to the large body of his written work. Therefore several of his works were examined.

The results of the examination of Moreno's vision revealed that there are, in fact, several commonalities in theoretical conception between Moreno and selected rhetorical theories. Further investigation was suggested.