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THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE MOMENT AND THE SPONTANEITY THEATRE

J. L. Moreno
Beacon Hill, Beacon, New York

EDITOR'S NOTE. The growing interest in the concept of the moment, the concept of spontaneity and the theory of interpersonal relation-systems has made long over-due a translation of the pioneer work along these lines: "Das Stegreiftheater," by J. L. Moreno, published in Berlin in 1923.

This was the tenth in a series of publications in German which began in 1914 and in which Moreno, step by step, outlined his philosophy of the moment.

In this publication, the philosophy of the moment is applied to the drama. The following is the first instalment of a translation of the original text.

"Das Stegreiftheater" was not solely the product of theoretical speculation. Here, as in other branches of Moreno's work, theory and experiment developed hand in hand. "Das Stegreiftheater" was preceded by the foundation in Vienna of a Spontaneity Theatre (Stegreiftheater) which became the first psychodramatic laboratory as well as the first interpersonal clinic. In his first works in English (1928-1932), Moreno gave to some of the concepts which are found in "Das Stegreiftheater" English terms such as "spontaneity test," "spontaneity technique," "spontaneity quotient" and "instinctive" and "guided" spontaneity.

The word "Stegreif" is untranslatable, and therefore the present title was given to the English version in order to present a clear indication of the content of the work.

Certain passages which, in translation, would have made difficult reading, have been greatly simplified and clarified by the author. This English version attempts to convey the thought-content of the author more directly than did the original, German version. Further instalments will appear in subsequent issues of SOCIOMETRY.

STATUS NASCENDI

The first step towards a philosophy of the moment is to define and establish the moment as a concept in its own right. Previous approaches to the problem of the moment have failed to accomplish this or neglected it altogether. A study of the moment in experimental situations, parallel to and as a follow-up of a philosophical analysis of the subject provides one method of arriving at a definition of the moment.

In the establishment of a point of reference, three factors must be emphasized: the status nascendi, the locus, and the matrix. These represent different phases of the same process. There is no "thing" without its locus, no locus without its status nascendi, and no status nascendi without its matrix. The locus of a flower, for instance, is in the bed where it grows into a flower, and not its place in a woman's hair. Its status nascendi is that of a growing thing as it springs from the seed. Its matrix is the fertile seed, itself. The locus of a painting is its specific, original surroundings. If the painting is removed in space from its original surroundings, it becomes just another "thing"--a secondary, exchangeable value. It has lost the uniqueness which it had in its locus nascendi.

The locus of a word is the tongue of him who utters it, or the lines in which the pen first forms it. This word, repeated, becomes but another and more ugly sound; the handwriting, multiplied in print, becomes but an intellectual commodity. Again, the uniqueness is obliterated.

From the point of view of usefulness and practicability only, there is no difference between the original painting and the copies of it. The words spoken by a man and their printed reduplications communicate the same content to the outsider. The existence of many copies identical with the original creates the deceptive impression that there are many originals, or that the original and the copies have the same meaning. It may even give the impression that there is no true original--only derivatives.

It is important to reflect upon the inner process which takes place in the course of the removal of a creative expression from its locus nascendi to new places or media. One "thing" changes into another "thing"--although, due to the lag of language, the same word may be used for many different objects or events. Thus, the "David" of Michael Angelo in its locus nascendi is the true "David" of Michael Angelo. Placed in a museum, it is no longer truly itself: it is lending itself to the composition of another "thing," the museum. Now it is

one of the "things" which go to make up a museum. Similarly, the lily in the hand of a woman is no longer purely a lily, but a decorative extension of her hand, her body. The primary situation of a thing is in the place which gave it birth.

ANALYSIS OF THE THEATRE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE CATEGORY OF THE MOMENT

The inner structure of the theatre is easily recognizable if one considers the nascence of any specific dramatic production. In the rigid, "dogmatic" theatre, the creative product is given: it appears in its final, irrevocable form. The dramatist is no longer present, for his work is entirely divorced from him. His work, the creation of which was the very essence of certain moments bygone, returns only to deprive the present moment of any living creativity of its own. In consequence, the actors have had to give up their initiative and their spontaneity. They are merely the receptacles of a creation now past its moment of true creativity. Dramatist, actor, director and audience conspire in an interpretation of the moment which is mechanical. They have surrendered themselves to the enjoyment of an extra-temporal, moment-less performance. The value which appears supreme is like nothing but the spiritual bequest of someone who is dead.

In this sense, the drama is a thing of the past, a vanished reality. The conventional theatre is, at its best, dedicated to the worship of the dead, of dead events--a sort of resurrection-cult. Therefore, the institution of the theatre, in order to create out of nothing the semblance, at least, of present reality, had to become a deus ex machina. Reformers of the theatre, bewildered by the decline of its art and the decay of its public appeal, have not been able to uncover the seat of its disease because they have failed to see that the pathology of our theatre is part of a larger process of disintegration, the pathology of our culture as a whole of which the most characteristic symptom is the cultural conserve. An illustration of this is the drama conserve. The finished products of the drama--the scenes of the play, the dialogue, etc.,--fill the minds of the creative agents (the actors) before the drama reaches the actual presentation itself, thus rendering the actors uncreative for their crucial moment of the presentation. It is immaterial whether a work is written by a living dramatist or a dead one; it is immaterial even if the author himself becomes the actor of his own creation. The presentation is in all cases

a creation of the past. Viewed from this level--the status nascendi of a drama--movement, direction, costuming and setting all become matters of secondary importance.

The contrast between the theatre as we know it and the spontaneity theatre lies in their different treatments of the moment. The former endeavors to present its products before an audience as definite, finished creations; the moment is ignored. The latter attempts to produce the moment itself and, at one stroke, to create as integral parts of it the form and content of the drama.

The conventional theatre belongs to the world of appearances; the "thing in itself," the spontaneous creative process in statu nascendi, is suppressed. Because of the extra-momentary character of its creation, the conventional theatre has its metaphysics in a time already past, outside of the precincts of the stage. The dramatic work, at the moment when it was created during the fleeting moments of that past, was not even then a thing of the present because it was directed towards a future moment--the moment of its performance on the stage--and not toward the moment of its creation. A spontaneous performance presents things only as they are at the moment of production. It is not dependent upon any past moments nor is it directed towards any future moments.

The spontaneous concept of the moment has led to new methods of production. While the conventional theatre places the spontaneity process backstage (in space) and prior to the performance (in time)--in the creation of the script, the creation of the rôles and the study of them, the designing of the settings and costumes, the formation of the ensembles and the rehearsals--the spontaneity theatre brings before the audience the original, primary processes of spontaneity, undiminished and inclusive of all phases of the production. That which, in the conventional theatre, takes place behind the curtain--the very "thing in itself," the spontaneous creative process, the "meta-theatre"--now takes the stage. The entire work of art is formed before our eyes, status nascendi, in a sequence which is the reverse of anything we have ever before seen: the genesis of the idea, the conception and designing of the setting, the distribution of the rôles and the metamorphosis of the actor--in this order.

There are three forms of the drama to which an experiment based upon the philosophy of the moment lends itself: the spontaneity theatre, as a dramatic art of the moment, the dramatized or living newspaper and the therapeutic theatre.¹

¹These three forms were created and practised during the three years' existence of the Vienna Stegreiftheater (1922-25); the

The spontaneity theatre is a vehicle organized for the presentation of drama of the moment. The dramatist is in the key-rôle. He is not merely a writer--in fact he does not actually write anything--but an active agent, confronting the players with an idea which may have been growing in his mind for some time, and warming them up to immediate production. The rôle of the dramatist is often taken by one of the actors, who then becomes dramatist and leading actor at the same time.

The dramatized or "living" newspaper is a presentation of the news of the day as it occurs. It is the synthesis between the spontaneity theatre and a newspaper. The intention is to make the expression on the stage spontaneous in form (impromptu) as well as in content (the news of the day). The dramatized newspaper has another asset from the point of view of an art of the moment: the absolute evidence of true spontaneity it has for the onlookers--and not simply for the actors, as in some forms of the spontaneity theatre--because of the daily news character of the material projected. A good dramatized newspaper tries to produce the news as quickly as it can be gathered by the reporters; thus the production may change in content from hour to hour.²

The therapeutic theatre uses the vehicle of the spontaneity theatre for therapeutic ends. The key person is the mental patient. The fictitious character of the dramatist's world is replaced by the actual structure of the patient's world, real or imaginary.

The first step in all these forms is the selection of the material for the initial situation on the stage. In the first case above, it may be the idea of the dramatist, in the second case, the news provides the material, and in the third, it is provided by the interview which indicates clues to the patient's leading symptom. In a psychological laboratory devoted to spontaneity experiments, some sort of editorial department is necessary in which these first steps are prepared and organized.

first dramatized newspaper in the United States was presented at the Guild Theatre, New York City, on April 5, 1931, under the direction of the author.

²In this sense, the dramatized newspaper launched in Vienna was a genuine anticipation of the "Movietone News," the "March of Time," the "Living Newspaper" of the WPA, and the modern radio news broadcast. However, the conserve character of these mechanical forms is in utter contradiction to the spontaneity principle and, in this sense, the "Movietone News" and the "March of Time" are not as revolutionary as they seem; the deceptive impression arises from the technical apparatus, whether film, radio or whatever. They must therefore be regarded as replicas of conventional expression.

Except for analysis, experimentation in the moment is the sole instrument of spontaneity exploration. A spontaneity experiment does not presuppose the theoretical and practical equipment of the theatre as it is known today. It begins as if the conventional theatre had never existed. It does not seek to overthrow, but drives forward, unfettered, along a new road.

THE SPONTANEITY TEST

In its preparatory phase, the spontaneity theatre becomes a psycho-technical laboratory. The director prepares the ground for the productions; this phase of the work is strictly exploratory. He sets up the various experimental or test situations. The patterns which the actors set out to produce are either situations and rôles which they themselves wish to produce and which they may have within themselves at some degree of development, or situations and rôles for which they have little or no experience. If such tests of spontaneous actors are made in a large number of situations and rôles, then a graduated scale can be constructed which will show their comparative degrees of spontaneity and readiness for different situations and rôles. The material gained from such spontaneity tests can be used for diagnostic interpretation and as an opening for the development of the spontaneity of individuals in the functions, rôles and situations which have been found to be in a rudimentary state--a sort of training in spontaneity.

After testing a large number of individuals, we have found that the aptitude for spontaneity work varies. There is something like a talent for spontaneity work. There are individuals whose spontaneity is generally superior to that of others, just as there are individuals who appear to be more talented only in respect to some specific performance. This spontaneity which an individual can summon when placed in rôles and situations which are totally strange to him--in proportion to the amount of spontaneity exhibited by a large number of other individuals when faced with situations which are equally strange to them--determines his spontaneity quotient. The spontaneity quotient of an individual does not necessarily rise and fall with his intelligence quotient. There are many individuals of high intelligence who have a low degree of general spontaneity (although they may be highly spontaneous along a special line). When compared with many other mental functions of these individuals, such as intelligence and memory, the sense for spontaneity is seen to be far less developed.

This may perhaps be so because, in the civilization of conserves which we have developed, spontaneity is far less used and trained than, for instance, intelligence and memory. The sense for spontaneity, as a cerebral function, shows a more rudimentary development than any other important, fundamental function of the central nervous system. This may explain the astonishing inferiority of men when confronted with surprise tactics.

The study of surprise tactics in the laboratory shows the flexibility or the rigidity of individuals when faced with unexpected incidents. Taken by surprise, people act frightened or stunned. They produce false responses or none at all. It seems that there is nothing for which human beings are more ill-prepared and the human brain more ill-equipped than for surprise. The normal brain responds confusedly, but psychological tests of surprise have found that fatigued, nerve-racked and machine-ridden people are still more inadequate--they have no response ready nor any organized, intelligent reaction to offer to sudden blows which seem to come from nowhere. Conditions of high cultural and technological organization coincide alarmingly with increased immobility of thought and action. Spontaneity training is the most important remedy for this general weakness.

This also explains why actors of the conventional theatre and their dramatists are rarely able to do any spontaneity work. For the presentation of spontaneous states and spontaneity ideas, individuals are required who have undergone a specific training. This training will produce people who have learned rapidly to embody their own inspirations and to react rapidly to those of others.

It is important that the director study the results of all these experiments and tests. Constant familiarity with such situations and their results will lead him to increasing knowledge and skill. Notwithstanding all this preliminary preparation and organization of skill and knowledge, the performance itself is the free, unpremeditated, spontaneous product of the director and his co-workers. The technical information is extraneous to the stage-situations themselves. The technical knowledge comes into play only in order constantly to enrich the spontaneity of the group and the mutual interaction with a constant supply of new and unpremeditated situations.

These experiments can be called spontaneity tests. They may gradually lead to a new conception of the science of the drama. The situation of the actor and that of the spectator have changed and thus their relationship to one another must undergo a new interpretation.

Many hundreds of spontaneity tests were made in this laboratory and many hundreds of productions were presented before and in collaboration with audiences. Day by day the results of these tests were interpreted and analyzed. This led to a mass of systematic knowledge in preparation for a theory of spontaneity and creativity which could be based upon actual experiments. It led further to the invention of methods and techniques which could increase the resourcefulness and skill of the individual, a process which is called spontaneity training.

Some of the most significant theories and techniques are here outlined in reference to the domain of forms, the domain of interpersonal relationships, the domain of presentation and the domain of psychodramatic treatment of mental disorders.

THE ANALYTIC DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SPONTANEITY PLAYER AND THE DRAMATIC ACTOR

The script of the stage play--a product of the mind--is presented to the actor. It consists of words. The actor must not oppose his (secondary) mind to this product: he must sacrifice himself to it. The rôle stands before him with an individuality of its own. He is forced to drill himself so that he becomes two individuals--his own private, hidden self and the other self, the rôle he is to assume. It is as if he were forever jumping out of his own skin into that of the rôle and back into his own again. It is a tragic situation in which he finds himself. He may deceive himself and a gullible audience, but the language and the mental level of Shakespeare and other dramatists of his rank can never be fully re-created. The deep stage-fright experienced by many of the greatest mimes bears witness to this conflict within them.

Instead of himself, the actor personifies something which has already been personified as a rôle, by the dramatist. There are three possible relations between an actor and his rôle. In the first, he works himself into the rôle, step by step, as if it were a different individuality. The more he extinguishes his private self, the more he becomes able to "live" the rôle. In this case, the rôle is like the personality of someone he might wish to be, instead of himself. His attitude toward the rôle is one of sympathy. In the second, he finds the mean between his conception of the rôle and that of the author; his attitude, in this case, is one of considered balance. In the third, in disgust, he forces the specific rôle into his own individuality and disfigures the written words of the dramatist

into a personal style of his own. In this case, his attitude is antipathetic.

The language of the dramatist is the chief stimulus to which the whole personality of the actor responds. The latter's behavior is not genuinely creative, but re-creative. The manner in which he assimilates the material of the rôle is centripetal--from the material, outside of him, towards himself, the center. It is exactly the opposite process from that of the sculptor and the painter: their material is outside them in space. The ideas come out of their own minds and go into the material. In the case of the actor, the idea is outside him in space and enters into him just as if he were the material.

The spontaneity player is centrifugal. The spirit of the rôle is not in a book, as it is with the actor. It is not outside of him in space, as with the painter or the sculptor, but a part of him.

THE SPONTANEITY STATE

What, with the actor, is the point of departure--the spoken word--with the spontaneity player is the end stage. The spontaneity player begins with the spontaneity state; he cannot proceed without it. He must have a running start, so to speak, in order to reach it, just as in the high jump. Once he has caught it, the state carries him along. The spontaneity state develops and warms up until it articulates at the level of speech. The original spontaneity state is complemented by the appropriate speech; the behavior of the body is complemented by an appropriate mental condition. The mind and the dramatic conceptions of an art are synthesized.

The spontaneity state must be differentiated from all other known psychological concepts. The words "affekt" and "emotion" do not completely convey its meaning, for a spontaneity state expresses not only emotions, like anxiety, fear, anger and hate, but also complex phenomena like politeness, cruelty, levity, haughtiness and slyness, or conditions like feeble-mindedness or alcoholism. In addition, a spontaneity state is not rigidly given, already existing. If this were so, no spontaneity would be necessary to bring it forth. Also, it does not emerge as the result of a compulsion--except, of course, in the pathological forms of spontaneity states. It is, in general, produced as an act of the will; it is voluntary, on the subject's part--however much involuntary material might be carried along with the spontaneity state into the projected act. A spontaneity state has the inherent tendency to be experienced by the

subject as his own act, autonomous and free--free, that is, from from any external influence and free from any internal influence which he cannot control. This experience may be delusory, but that is how he feels and thinks when he throws himself into a spontaneity state. It has, for the subject at least, all the markings of a freely produced action. Designations like "feeling" or "condition" for a spontaneity state are inadequate because it is not only the process within a person but also a flow of feeling in the direction of the spontaneity state of another person. From the contact between two spontaneity states centering, naturally, in two different persons, there results an interpersonal situation.³ It may express either harmony or friction.

The spontaneity state is a key-concept in all psychodramatic work. It is the starting-point. In spontaneity work it compares in importance with the lines which the playwright provides for the actor in the conventional theatre. By necessity, therefore, the study and rehearsal of parts are replaced by training in spontaneity states.

MECHANICS OF PRODUCTION

The production of a drama upon the stage has always been a paradoxical undertaking. The transposition of a dramatic work from the mind of the playwright to the stage must arouse a strange feeling in the dramatist, for he sees on the stage something that is still a part of him--part of him in the sense that, although spectators, producers and all outsiders may not be aware of it, this drama has already had its stage-production in his mind and it is still going on there. A drama's first, true stage is the mind of the dramatist. If this "mental" production could be co-experienced, could be felt and heard by the audience at the very moment when it emerges and develops in the mind of the dramatist, then they would find themselves in the real theatre and present at the real première. But in this material world of ours, what happens is the opposite of what would be spiritually correct and genuine. The theatrical producer employs a staff of people and attempts in all earnestness to project upon the stage an experience that

³The German text mentions "Beziehung der Lage einer Person zu der Lage einer anderen Person." The author used for this the simple term "Begegnungslage." The closest rendering of this untranslatable word is "inter-personal situation."

has already had its most perfect expression and its most logical theatre.

Therefore, psychologically speaking, the present has two guises: the "true" present, in which appears the true, unique process of creation, and the "false" present, in which duplicates of the original can appear in infinite numbers. It is with this "false" present that those in the conventional theatre deal, producers, actors, spectators and critics. Many compromises and imperfections of theatrical enterprises derive from this situation. The basis for reproduction is the work of the playwright. The higher the rank of the work, the closer should the reproduction resemble the original unique process of creation. The cutting, changing and manipulation of the dramatic work is therefore in contradiction to the essence of the drama. The lower the class of a dramatic piece, the easier it is for the actor to present it, or his rôle in it. The more superficial and cliché-like a piece is, the less is the effort it demands from the spectators and the more certain is its success.

The conventional theatre had to have a permanent and dependable criterion: the conservable portions of a process of creation which is already past--the words, the dialogues and the chain of situations of which the drama consists. For want of the "true" present, the word became the frame of reference. The highest ideal of all dramatic production in the conventional theatre has therefore become, of necessity, the true reproduction of every single work as laid down by the dramatist. The striving is towards the fullest recapitulation. The historical, conventional theatre is the attempted justification of a present whose creative essence is already a thing of the past, an unconscious, modern art of the dead and of the conserved word.

It is in accord with this trend that some producers try to imitate nature to a maximum degree. It is as if they were trying to extend the worship of the dead to inanimate things. There will always be worship of the dead as long as human memory uses the moment as the basis for repetition instead of itself being condensed and expressed in a moment.

The result is that the productions which we see in our theatres today are products of compilation and manipulation. They represent neither an art of the moment nor an art of full and true repetition. Thus the deeper sense of the theatre has become lost. The theatre of today is kinoid: like the motion-picture film, cut and cut again, the dramatic piece is cut and rearranged to meet some practical aim.

For an art of the moment it is the spontaneity theatre which becomes the ideal expression. It is the stage in the mind and spirit of the dramatist. Let us place ourselves under

the illusion that the characters which are in the process of production in the dramatist's mind have become at once visible and audible. In this ideal presentation, all essential factors are brought into accord: the process of production in accord with the process of presentation, the spontaneity state in accord with the word--before it has become a conserve.

The science of the conventional drama developed its principles and its laws from analytic and comparative study of many patterns of the drama after they had become "cold"--after they had become carefully organized systems of situations and dialogues. On the other hand, the science of the spontaneous drama, the science of an art of the moment, takes a totally different attitude towards the problem. It does not study the finished products, such as scenes, dialogues, sequences, climaxes and endings, and the events contained in them. It discloses psychological laws of a new kind: those which are based on the creative act, itself.

We arrive thus at two different methods of production. The one method produces the drama after its composition is finished; the other method produces and composes the drama in one and the same effort. In the latter, one after another the dramatis personae take form in the mind of the dramatist as the drama develops. Let us imagine that the dramatist becomes separated from the characters which take form in his mind. Then we arrive at the following picture: each of these dramatis personae is as if he were his own creator, and the dramatist were the one who merely combines the dramatis personae into a total work. This gives us the matrix of a spontaneous performance. We can now visualize the dramatist as his own producer and each of these personae dramatis as spontaneous actors within him. Whereas the drama, as long as it develops in the dramatist's mind, is a unique and totally creative act, in the spontaneity theatre this act becomes real and is therefore seen on a different plane. Now, every spontaneous actor is truly the creator of his own rôle, and the producer-director (alias the dramatist) must combine several units into the one total process. The problem thus to create and combine a number of creative acts at the instant when they emerge in statu nascendi in such a way that they do not confuse and hinder one another but, on the contrary, produce a unified and meaningful totality, demands a new science of direction.

The new science of direction is concerned with the laws by which a drama of two or more persons can be produced at the same time that it is being acted out by these persons. The difficulty of the procedure lies in the fundamental requirement

that the acting be spontaneous and that the actors must not be prepared (nor may they prepare themselves) consciously for the situations they are to create. The difficulty also lies in the fact that the dramatic production itself must emerge spontaneously. The dramatic idea--the creative unit, which is the matrix nascendi--may come from a specific inspiring agent such as a writer on the staff of the spontaneity theatre, the director or any of the participating spontaneity players. If the inspiring agent is an outsider--that is, someone who is not one of the players--then the form which the psychodrama can take is that of a spontaneity test. In such cases, these agents may have prepared an idea long before it is to be suddenly flung at the actors.

This brings to the fore a fundamental methodical distinction in spontaneity work: between (a), individually emerging spontaneity, directed or undirected by the individual himself, and (b), spontaneity stimulated or provoked by an outside agent, directed or undirected by that outside agent. The latter class leads itself more easily than the former to methods of disciplined and guided spontaneity.

The science of direction is confronted with a number of essential questions. Which are the central ideas to be produced? The choice of ideas will depend upon the problem to which spontaneity techniques are applied. If the problem is performance in a spontaneity theatre, then the originality and the aesthetic or social value of the idea will be decisive. Last but not least we must consider the availability and the comparative readiness of spontaneous actors for embodying them. If the problem is a dramatized newspaper, the ideas should be drawn from life. If the problem is the therapeutic situation of one or more individuals, the ideas should be drawn from their private worlds or be so chosen that they meet with their particular requirements.

Another essential question is in what tempo should the *dramatis personae* act? The length of a dramatic production in the spontaneity theatre is an important consideration, just as it is in the conventional theatre. But in spontaneity work, the factors of proper timing, the rhythm of production, the timing of a certain action so that it will emerge in conjunction with a certain phrase, the timing of interpersonal actions and counter-actions, are of the utmost significance. The present, in the personal world of one actor, may be crowded with a set of experiences and inspirations which are more or less different from the set of experiences and inspirations which are crowding the present of every other co-actor in the production.

A science of direction must develop a systematic knowledge of these phenomena so that the director and the actors may be taught them. In the spontaneous situations themselves, they must use these facts intuitively. There is no time for deliberation or rehearsal. Body and mind coordinated one second too early or too late may throw the whole situation out of gear. The duration of a spontaneous act and the pauses preceding and following it must be studied with precision. Otherwise, systematic guidance of students will get out of hand.

There are many conventional and institutional standards by which a definite time is allotted to certain services or performances, such as, for instance, a religious service, working hours, the length of a conventional opera or play. The situation changes, however, in informal situations. The factor of spontaneity enters into them to a varying degree and determines to a great extent the social and cultural values which the individuals draw from them. The problem of "balanced" timing becomes of paramount importance in all performances the duration of which cannot be laid down rigidly without interfering in a perhaps disadvantageous manner with the type of warming-up process a particular individual has. The composition of music, the painting of a portrait, the writing of a novel are illustrations. The lag in the warming-up process to a particular performance may, however, be detrimental to its social effect as well as to its cultural value, just as the lag of an overheated warming-up process may become detrimental to the individual performing or the co-participants in the situation. In everyday life these facts are taken for granted but only in the psychodramatic laboratory can they be explored by systematically devised experiments with living roles in life-situations.

The same theme which requires a period of from two to three hours in the conventional form of the drama must often be reduced to a fifteen- or twenty-minute period in the spontaneity theatre. In a dramatized newspaper, the cutting process may have to go to farther extremes, down to a one- to five-minute period. This considerable reduction of duration is possible for two reasons: the artists leave out more and more of the non-essentials in movement, dialogue and situations and--perhaps more important still--the spectators of a dramatized newspaper take a great imaginative load upon themselves and away from the actor-producers on the stage. The spectators are really spectator-actors; they are warmed up to the news. The amount of material that needs to be produced on the stage is reduced to a minimum. Indeed, if the material is too lengthy and too elaborate, the production will lose in social as well as aesthetic effects.

Another significant problem is the positions and movements which a spontaneous actor assumes and makes within the space allotted to the production on the stage. In the conventional, rehearsed drama, this problem does not exist. Positions and movements are predetermined by the playwright and the director, working together. In real-life ceremonial acts and institutional behavior, just as on the conventional stage, the positions and movements of the participants are precisely preordained by rights and regulations. But in a spontaneity theatre, the actors must choose their positions on the stage and in relation to one another on the spur of the moment. It has therefore become a part of the training of a spontaneity actor to stimulate his readiness to place himself in positions which are in accord with his rôle and the situation in which he is to act.

These preparatory steps lead up to the final and crucial problem in a spontaneously developed dramatic production: how are the actors to interact so that they produce together--aside from each actor's individual production of his own rôle--a product which is valid as a whole, aesthetically and socially? In order to aid in attaining this end, a study of interpersonal relation-systems on the personal as well as on the rôle level is part and parcel of the experimental work carried out in psychodramatic laboratories.

In the course of experimentation with the various problems presented above, a director should arrive at a few general rules in reference to ideas for a plot, speed of acting, position on the stage, and interaction. He should become able to formulate for every specific occasion the dominant idea, the desirable tempo, a desirable position, and a desirable pattern of interaction.

ANALYSIS OF THE CREATIVE ACT AND CREATIVE FORMS

In the course of testing a large number of individuals we arrived at the following conclusions: the spontaneous actor is confronted with three forms of resistance which he must overcome in order to reach spontaneity states, (a), resistances which come from his own bodily actions in the presentation of rôles, (b), resistances which come from his private personality in the production of ideas and (c), resistances which come from the bodily actions, the ideas and emotions of the other actors working with him. The latter is an interpersnal

resistance. It is behind and underneath these barriers and resistances that the true, great theatre of poetic inspiration and production lies.

Analysis of the forms of plays follows the analysis of the individual or cultural resistances. We found that certain ideas are easily acted out by almost any actor. On the other hand, certain other plots appear to be difficult for all. Rapid and easy production is better accomplished the closer the creative units are to the end-phase of production. In order to make this more understandable, we may visualize the course of development through which a process of creation goes, from the stage in statu nascendi through a number of intermediate stages up to the final phase. Patterns of creative units, whether they originate in the private personality of the actor or in the culture to which he belongs are in various stages of development. If a creative unit exists in an individual close to its status nascendi--that is, in a rather amorphous state--the spontaneous production may be slowed down and there may be danger of a production with a forced and distorted appearance. This is, however, not the general rule. There are individual creators in whom the span between the status nascendi of a work and its end-phase is very narrow, such as children and primitive artists. There are others in whom the span is extremely wide, such as composers of monumental works of art, like Beethoven and Wagner. If a performance is called forth too early and abruptly, the tension in the individual will be greater than if it were called forth when ripe for presentation. Similarly, the tension will be almost nil if the performance is called forth too late, because the individual will have passed the peak of his warming-up process.

An illustration of this phenomena is also provided by collective forms which are composed of finished symbols, such as fairy-tales, folk-plays and many forms of primitive comedy. A fairy-tale is composed of symbols which have a finished expression in every grown-up individual who has lived in the culture of which the specific fairy-tale is a product. Cinderella or Snow White, for instance, sensitize ready-made symbols in the spontaneous actors who are portraying them, and thus a rapid and easily-warmed up production is possible. This, however, has little to do with individual talent but refers to the "collective" or social spontaneity. It is found to be true of the class of individuals who have been indoctrinated in their childhood with these fairy-tale symbols which they now portray in the spontaneity theatre. The amount of spontaneity necessary for their production is extremely small. The production comes easy to them.

Similarly, a certain class of individuals will readily be able to portray a joke spontaneously, or jokes for which they have developed a cultural affinity. These same actors may be found extremely inferior in spontaneity work of a more individualized kind, depending as it does upon individual rather than collective spontaneity.

A director of production could profit greatly from the analysis of cultural forms and their effectiveness before an audience. The problem of the assignment of rôles to an actor is a task which he has to face a dozen times a day in spontaneity work. If he is aware of the mental organization of every one of his actors and of the degree of development within them of the cultural and individual rôles to which they are assignable, he will make his choices with a certain amount of precision.

It is a characteristic of artistic production that the so-called "work of art" passes through a series of stages of development. It is very rare, for instance, that a poem is written at one sitting. It is still rarer that a novel or a drama finds its final form in the course of the first written version. A piece of sculpture which is left unfinished in one of the intermediate stages is often called a "torso." The implication is, when one speaks of a torso, not only that it is an incomplete work, but also something defective and undesirable. In all spontaneity production, it is not the finished work of the artist but these imperfect, unfinished stages which have the greatest significance, and it requires the readiness of the individual actor or dramatist to put them into action, to transpose them into movement, gestures, dialogue and interaction. If the individual actor were to try to actualize a creative idea when it is in a premature and rudimentary form, the presentation might not carry any force or leave any definite impression. It may have passed long ago through the rudimentary state but nevertheless in the course of time it will have lost for the individual the warmth of any present inspiration. Another aspect is demonstrated in the case of an actor who, although the idea he is trying to actualize is in a mature stage, nevertheless fails to make a good impression because he himself is not yet warmed up--that is, it is his warming-up process which is in a rudimentary state. He may find himself over-reaching, and the impression he will give is that of being cramped or forced. We see here that there is for a creative unit, one most favorable moment of actualization.

We have found this to be true of ideas which are common to all individuals who belong to the same culture: fairy-tales, religious ideas, etc., as described above, or ideas which

are significant only for one individual or a small group of individuals. The individual scale of depth-production follows similar mechanisms to those of the general cultural scale of depth-production.

The cultivation of the torso and the consciousness of its worth has stimulated the development of a new sort of dramatist. He does not write: he is the prompter of ideas. He warms up his actors to the ideas which, at the same time, are maturing within him. Often the dramatist himself must enact the central person of an idea, but whether he is functioning as auxiliary ego (playwright) or co-actor, to his actors, his intensity and enthusiasm transfer themselves to them; they act almost as if under the influence of deep suggestion.

The spontaneity theatre revolutionized the function of the dramatist. He is a part of the immediate theatre. His subjective being is still controlled by the dramatic theme he wants to produce. He is not yet freed from it since it is not yet finished. He experiences an inspired, individual struggle for expression--the birth-pangs of creativity--far more strongly than he experiences his "work of art" itself. The dramatist is the all-important and interesting phenomenon, as long as the work is unfinished within his mind. His individuality loses all its importance once it is finished, however.⁴

PATHOLOGY OF SPONTANEITY WORK

Research into the creative act and the mechanics of production has here been presented merely in its general outline. A systematic program of study should be worked out for every one of the many problems which have emerged in the course of our experimentation, but whose importance has hardly been sketched. It seems to me that further research will demonstrate that there are certain principles which determine creative production and certain techniques which stimulate and facilitate the development of these principles. Time, for instance, is one of the factors upon which a new light is thrown. In spontaneity states and in creative acts, time has a different meaning from that which it has in the conventional theatre or in life. The duration of a conventional drama is far too long

⁴This may explain why the sight of the dramatist when he appears on the stage at the end of the first night of his play is almost invariably an anticlimax and sometimes provocative of humor at his expense.

for the spontaneity theatre, just as the real life-span of a man is too long for a conventional drama. A radical shortening of the whole creative process is necessary in psychodramatic work. Here, acts are richer in inspiration than acts in life or in a conventional drama. At the same time, they require a greater speed of presentation. But if they are too quickly presented, in an over-heated manner, the result is a distorted effect upon the co-participants as well as the spectator. Likewise, they can be presented far too slowly. The duration of spontaneity states is therefore not only a theoretical but also an important practical problem. The crowding of inspiration into a short span of time, or an extreme shortening of an act is often found to be a strain on the performer. He cannot carry on indefinitely with a creative act at the required intensity. The intensity of the spontaneous act cannot last beyond a certain point in time without weakening. The actor must come to a pause sooner or later. It is therefore important that, besides the process of act-making, he has the process of pause-making under control. An act is rhythmically followed by a pause and so on. Tension is followed by relaxation. There is a duration of tension and a duration of relaxation; both are measurable. A spontaneous act should not therefore, continue past the moment when relaxation threatens to set in. This is an inner creative crisis which is significant in every type of spontaneous performance, physical or mental, artistic or social. (This factor is known to athletes--especially to prize-fighters. A psychological knock-out takes place long before the physical knock-out. A faulty warming-up process in the losing fighter can generally be found responsible for a premature end to the fight.) The more extraordinary and the more original the type of creative stimulus, the greater will be the demands upon the individual performer and the more will he be forced to summon all the spontaneity he can muster in order to prove adequate. Production proceeds in upswings, with intermittent pauses for rest and recovery.

In the conventional theatre, the development of the drama is pre-established in all its phases. Every one of the earlier scenes prepares for the later scenes; thus a conventional drama does not confine its effect upon the spectator to the scenes immediately visible. It is the sum of all the scenes which have been acted out upon the stage, up to a certain moment, which produces the definite expectancies and tensions in the spectator at that moment. Throughout the course of the drama, his attention is being continuously shaped and directed. Therefore, a scene is often far more powerful in its effect

than it is in itself. This means that, if a certain scene is lifted from a drama and presented alone without the experience of all the scenes preceding it, it carries far less effect and meaning than when viewed in its proper place in the drama as a whole.

In the spontaneity theatre, the situation is different--at least, in part. The decisive factor is not as much the total work (the drama), but the force of the individual scenic "atoms." The performers cannot depend upon a deus ex machina like a prompter to come to the rescue when they forget a word or a gesture in their parts. Here they do not fill a preëstablished measure, time, with words and gestures. They must act in the moment--first in one moment and then in another. After the whole process is over, it may be looked upon as a "work of art" or a "play," but none of the performers knew ahead of time, with any certainty, what pattern the different acts and scenes were to combine into, in the end. The acts are separated from one another; a number of separated, independent efforts are made, and they form a chain of impulses which illuminate the process from moment to moment.

The complexities of a spontaneity theatre are therefore enormous. Not only the actor but the spectator, too, experiences individual moments and acts--not contrived combinations of ideas. The spectator may add certain factors to the scene, giving to the sketch some unity of his own. On the other hand, the producer of a spontaneity theatre may arrange scenes and themes in such a fashion that development of character and unity of motivation is approximated.

MACHINE-DRAMA AND THE SPONTANEITY PRINCIPLE

Just as a spontaneity scale and spontaneity quotients for individuals can be constructed, I have found it useful to arrange all forms and combinations of the theatre (in the broad sense) on a scale which shows their respective quotients of spontaneity. This scale runs from one extreme, whose prototype is the motion-picture film, to the other, whose prototype is the spontaneity theatre. Long before machines like the printing-press and the motion-picture film were invented and used for the support of the cultural conserves, man, by mnemotechnic, had made himself the vehicle of conserves. He also developed forms of the theatre, like the puppet theatre, which followed the mechanical principle very closely. But whereas in the motion-picture film the moment of performance is one hundred

percent mechanical, into the mechanical performance of a puppet theatre there enters one human, spontaneous factor, the emotions of the puppet-director who pulls the strings. On a spontaneity scale, the puppet theatre would come a few points away from the mechanical principle typified by the film; in the puppet theatre there is a spontaneity quotient involved--however minimal. This spontaneity quotient looms larger in other forms of the theatre, in the conventional drama, for instance. However, mechanical careful rehearsal may tend to make the play, the amount of spontaneity which trickles through is nevertheless greater than in a puppet theatre. The extra spontaneity factors are here projected from a group of actors and not--as in the puppet theatre--from one person only: the puppet director.

The production of a motion-picture consists of two stages: the presentation of the film before the public (and it is with the film at the moment of presentation that we are dealing here) and the actual production of the film at some previous time and place. The second stage corresponds to the production and preparation of a drama for its première. In the first stage--the presentational stage of the film--that we are used to considering as the essence of the theatre is entirely eliminated. The living actors, themselves, are obliterated from the experience of the spectator. What has remained is a canvas filled with moving, up-to-date hieroglyphs. Like the film, the book, when it is in its performance situation (which is to say, being read by someone) makes the presence of the living personality of the author unnecessary. The film, too, suppresses the actual process which brought about its existence. For the film--just as for the book--the moment has no meaning. Both can be repeated indefinitely, just like a gramophone record. They follow the principle which is characteristic for all cultural conserves, the suppression of a living, creative process. This is true whether we consider a musical composition, a dramatic production portrayed by a group of actors, or the production of a symphony of words--a novel or a scientific dissertation. Each is replaced by machinery of conservation.

I have already discussed the changes in the spontaneity quotient of a production at the moment of performance as one moves from the hundred-percent-serve end of the scale (the film) towards the hundred-percent-spontaneity end of it, of which portion the spontaneity theatre is an illustration, but not for the end itself. Close to the film on the scale are forms like the puppet theatre. Both have in common the elimination of surprise to the performer during the performance. A form

which can be said to tend towards the spontaneous end of the scale is the *commedia dell'arte*. The two opposite ends of the scale can be classified as the rigid principle and the fluid principle. The *commedia dell'arte* cannot be considered a true spontaneity theatre in our modern sense, although in its beginnings it had a more spontaneous character. If we analyze it backward, it appears like a naive form of the conventional drama. Rigid, ever-recurring types like "Columbine," "Harlequin" and "Pantaloon," together with prearranged situations in an inflexible sequence were of the essence in *commedia dell'arte*. The lines themselves were unwritten and it is in this feature that the improvisatory character of the form came to expression, but because the same situations and plots, and the same types of rôles were repeated again and again, the improvisatory character of the dialogue which prevailed when a cast was new disappeared little by little, the more often they repeated a given plot. They became slaves of their own recollection of the way they created each rôle, with the result that, after a given period of time (which, in the laboratory, can be predicted with accuracy) hardly a sentence or joke in the dialogue was any longer spontaneous. It was a victory of partly-conscious, partly-unconscious mnemotechnic over spontaneity. The actors began to play from faulty memory and hence they produced bad drama as well as bad spontaneity. They worked without a concept of the moment, or of the cultural conserve, and without a knowledge of the pathological implications of spontaneity. They might, by these means, have checked their own processes of production and saved them from degenerating into the opposite of what they set out to accomplish. The modern theory of spontaneity, with its techniques based on experimental research, has made it possible for spontaneity work to start from a solid base and grow gradually into a tangible and feasible approach to the drama.

We have learned that the cultural conserve is not an inescapable trap. Its stultifying effect can be corrected. Instead of making the machine an agent of the cultural conserve--which would be the course of least resistance and one of fatal regression into a general enslavement of man to a degree beyond that of his most primitive prototype--it is possible to make the machine an agent and a supporter of spontaneity. The radio and spontaneous performance can be combined, and also the film and spontaneity. Indeed, every type of machine can become a stimulus to spontaneity instead of a substitute for it. Therefore, beyond the limited domain of the theatre, the concepts of spontaneity and spontaneity training loom as the most important remedial agents for present civilization in its totality.