

Cinema, subjectivity and psychodrama

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Abstract

Influenced by new theories of subjectivity, modern theories of Cinema, and studies of Narrative Structures of Literary language, the author of this article seeks new ways of contributing to action in scenic space.

Keywords: psychodrama, groups, subjectivity, cinema.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, I work with three groups in my clinic. The two groups that I used to attend at Hospital das Clínicas were transferred to other therapists because of my recent retirement.

In the last ten years, assisting these five groups, it was found that there was not a protagonist in any session, that is, no scene or sequence of scenes dramatized was focused on one person.

This does not imply a disagreement of concept, but another action proposal from influences that have accumulated over the years. Among them, I highlight an incessant reading of cinema theories; theories of subjectivity – mainly Freud and Deleuze – and discourse analysis; and a better understanding of Literary Forms of Language. In addition to that a personal reinterpretation of the Matrix of Identity (Matrix of Subjectivity?) and everything that I have learned with my children about cinema, photography and theater.

It is also part of this new dimension a deep understanding of Moreno, mainly the concept of the Encounter and the difficult Theory of the Moment.

I believe that different action proposals, even opposing and conflicting, can be very rich. That's why I decided to show such similitudes and differences concerning my attitude, waiting for stimulating some discussions.

In fact, this brief article is a warm-up for a longer text, in book form, in which I hope to explore such questions extensively.

THE “SITUATION-PSYCHODRAMA”: THEATER AND CINEMA

INFLUENCES

In almost all cases, our scenes are performed in Drama dimension. Hardly we work using Epic or Lyric dimension. Drama is Dialogue, Presentified Actions and Conflict. Then we look after health through the Conflict Resolution, dramatizing it.

We have a protagonist – subject to two commands: internal or external, that can be conscious or unconscious – and we expose him to the conflict established by these two commands.

It is a muscular session. Two auxiliary egos or two members in the group simulate such command in a muscular action on the protagonist, who will enter into each of the forces, trying to recognize them. When this happens, the therapist takes the conflict out of an intrapsychic dimension and places it in a relational dimension. If there is no agreement, it achieves the solution through physical confrontation. The patient will be urged to fight for what he recognizes as his own.

In thesis, the conflict is exposed and solved. We think all the time about blocks and unblocks. There is an ideology of a centered and nuclear Self, submitted to commands. It is expected that he is able to impose his wishes and becomes victorious.

Scenes can be much more complex than that, but the principle is the same: serious dialogue, presentified action and conflict resolution.

For many years I have worked with this dimension. They are beautiful sessions and very effective inside the room. But over the years it has shown me that the solution showed inside the room does not always mean a solution in people's daily lives. In most of the times such questions remained. Why?

Maybe the conflicts are the results, and not the causes of human issues.

In any case, this dimension of dramatization is the center of what we pass on to our students and supervisees in our training courses. As it is a didactic vision and relatively easy to make, it usually provides a good learning, although there is the risk of being ritualized in preserves.

It could be argued that a work with a protagonist does not necessarily have to be done in this dimension. We could use lyric and epic dimensions, out of the game of conflict. It is true, just observe the scientific work we produce, public oversight, and dramatization reports that we will see few descriptions of scenes outside that scope. We are Psychodramatists because we work with Dramas, that is, with conflicts. It is an influence of theater, where drama prevails, and of Freud's Dialectic of Interiority, where conflict prevails. This is not bad, on the contrary, it can be very resolute for certain situations. But it is only a part of what we can do in our therapy sessions, or even in other uses of Psychodrama.

It could also be stated that working with an isolated person promotes the development of the personhood, the subjectivity. It is a truth, but a limited truth. Other forms of action may be more effective in this regard. We will return to this later. In any way, the use of short dramatizations, like vignettes, can compensate this in some way. I use this system about three or four times a year, per group. Such work allows a focus on more specific things of each person, followed by elaborations made by all of them. The common is sought. Conflict here can have spaces, but much more to be experienced as such than to be solved.

Another argument is that if we work with a group, this group is the protagonist. This is just a wordplay that would serve to hide more relevant questions. In this text, we can argue that we can work with all people at the same time, without losing their spaces

of experimentation and, consequently, subjectivization.

But if the core of the work is not in the conflict resolution, in the use of isolated protagonists, in an idea of Self with a nucleus, where is it then?

I apologize in advance, because I will approach this matter briefly. Since a deeper answer, whether or not, would require much more space than an article for our Journal. It would approach theories of subjectivity and, perhaps, “cinematic” forms of dramatization. It is too much.

Let’s take a look at Moreno. In his protocols and in many of his writings, the questions posed in the dimension of conflicts and their solutions prevail. But if there is one thing we can really boast about Moreno, besides introducing theater to therapy and his work with psychotics, was to be a visionary. Someone capable of perceiving philosophical movements before becoming more concrete things, and introducing them to discussions.

In his book *Psychodrama*, Moreno (1975) states that people do not want to overcome reality, they want to expose it, they re-experience it, they own it.

This is the direction we must follow. The scenic space as a space of experimentation. As a space of construction of reality and of yourself. Experimenting forms of existence which codes are found in the world. Looking after health as a production of subjectivities.

Considering the scene as a space of subjectivization implies some differences regarding those things that have been the greater part of our daily life:

1. The contact with the chaotic-undifferentiated here will be taken not only as a producer of symptoms. Through the Dialectic of Differences, via Deleuze, we can understand psychic indeterminations containing a complexity that can differentiate into multiple singularities, lines of virtualities that can achieve consistencies. The desire acts on this ontological texture. This is consistent with the Morenian view of Encounter, in which the interaction between two beings can bring about the acquisition of other forms of existence.
2. Modern theater is almost always a drama. Brecht, in his quest for epic dimension, is a rare exception. As drama, theater implies conflicts and puts us in the role, as psychodramatists, of conflict solver. Perhaps we could look for adding other forms of technical action, such as cinema, allowing other languages to promote subjectivization. Cinema also works with drama, but it has a wide space for lyric and epic, forms that often benefit the development of subjectivities.
3. Cinema will not be considered as a “more modern” substitute, but only as something that adds up. Nor will it be considered only in its technical arsenal. The understanding of how the script and the assembly are formed are very interesting for our learning. I think this is so important that I will try to reaffirm it in other words. The study of screenplay and filmmaking may be more important to us, psychodramatists and therapists in general, than the acquisition of cinema language techniques.
4. The “Situation-Psychodrama”, arising from this combination of Theater and Cinema, can differ in many things from its origins. It creates another intimacy, another relationship with the edges of the scene, another

participation, another call to action, another space and so many other differences. I accept, beforehand, that the concept of Situation-Psychodrama that I am trying to develop, was, in this article, very loose and unstructured. But it will be much more developed in a longer text, in book form.

5. It is also important to know the literary forms, which are Drama, Epic and Lyric. We constantly work with Drama, although we do not always know what that means. A deeper knowledge of Epic and Lyric could greatly enrich our work as a promoter of scenic spaces of subjectivization.
6. The body here, in general, gains a deeper dimension. It will not be considered muscularly or as that which gives us an immediate perception of the origin of the conflict. It will be the virtual center of actions that gives access to temporality, to the imaginary, putting us in a situation, allowing the flow of desires and fantasies contained in the imaginary and carrying them out on a scene.
7. The scene itself, taken in this dimension, is different in a therapy project. It is no longer a link in a chain that direct something planned to an end. A scene from a sequence of scenes occurred on the same day or at very different times, but always aiming for a solution. It has a value in itself, as a source of creation, of experimenting realities and new forms of existence. Doesn't this situation, which is very present in the discussions about modern cinema, remind us of the Theory of the Moment?

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Imagine that in a session a group “has fallen” on a small planet that, by its size, receives the light of its sun on all its sides. If there is no light/dark alternation, there will be no abstraction of what is today and tomorrow. The social experience of time will be altered producing other forms of temporality and projects. A simple “game” exposes the group to an unusual experience. Which changes in autonomy and subjectivity will they experience? What will change in the capture of reality? Which other forms of interaction will occur?

Exposing people and showing us to other forms of experimentation at the same time, making psychodramatic scenic space an instrument of all this.

This path may seem harder to us. Thinking of a scene as a device that puts us in contact with our indeterminations, allowing an objectification of the lines of virtuality and, consequently, a gain of subjectivities, may seem complicated. At first, this theoretical plot may seem impenetrable to us. But it is not. Perhaps what is really complicated is the search for new postures when we have a fairly objective attitude readily.

But why are we supposed to use only one instrument of action before people who come to us when we can use two of them?

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