

The Application of Individual Psychology Through Psychodramatics*

NAHUM E. SHOOPS, NEW YORK CITY

The purpose of this article is to present a series of psychodramatic lessons worked out in a third-year class of boys and girls from 7 to 9 years old.¹ We shall indicate how we selected the material presented to the pupils, the technique of presentation and the general reactions of the pupils.

Psychodramatics has much in common with all the schools of mental hygiene. But one advantage in particular is important to psychologists of any school. Pupil reaction may be examined and interpreted from the viewpoint of each one's own philosophy. We prefer Individual Psychology. From this angle, psychodramatics is an extension of the mirror techniques of Individual Psychology. It provides another channel for the application of Individual Psychology. It supplies us with a valuable addition to our repertoire of techniques (1) for dramatically exposing false beliefs and purposes, (2) for choosing a more desirable goal and life style, (3) for practicing new responsibilities in as many fields as possible. To clarify our interpretations, we will describe briefly our general plan of treating unadjusted children.

In common with the Individual Psychological procedure we arbitrarily divide our work into five main steps; i.e. after an individual diagnosis, which is Step I.

STEP II: We attempt to expose the pupil's false beliefs and selfish purposes that make him "tick." This does not mean exposure of faults which are mere symptoms.

Telling a child, "You lose your temper too often." "You have no initiative." "You can't take it." "Before you do anything, we have to start a bonfire under you." "You're too lazy," etc., might lead him to modify these traits. But it doesn't change his life purpose, which uses his temper, laziness, whining, etc. It just leads him to change his strategy.

Besides, knowing our mistakes is no guarantee of a change of either symptoms or, what is more important, our goals. Many a man knows he drinks too much or smokes too much, but still continues doing so. He and we shed our undesirable traits only if changing will get us something more than retaining our harmful habits.

Let us apply this specifically. For three years since graduating from high school, a brilliant young girl of 20 has been unable to decide what course to take in college. She likes journalism, art, psychology. She knows

*Editorial note: We are very glad to publish this important contribution of Mr. Shoops. It demonstrates clearly how the principles of Individual Psychology may be applied in many therapeutic techniques, especially those of group therapy, of which Psychodramatics is a part. Studies such as this indicate how these techniques gain considerable in effectiveness when used by one who is trained in Individual Psychology.

she can combine journalism and art to become a contributor to a fashion magazine. But then college would be such a financial strain on her widowed mother. "Oh, I wish I could make up my mind," or "Nobody will tell me just what to do," she complains.

She knows she cannot make up her mind. But her knowledge of her weakness does not cure her. Knowing our weakness is not a cure. If it were, the name calling and scoldings of our parents, employer, friends, and enemies would have long ago turned us into ghostly saints.

Our weaknesses serve a definite purpose. They are logical steps in the attainment of that purpose. How does our young friend's indecision serve her? If she had refused point blank to go to college she would be doing just as she is doing now—working in business. As her present job is not career work, she changes it frequently. She does not take it seriously. But she has a reputation to uphold—a pampering mother and doting relatives to mollify. If she refused to go to college, she would be expected to look for a job with a future. If she went to college, she would be expected to make good along her lines of training. So by her *apparent indecision* she escapes responsibility and blame.

She likes the irresponsibility and protection of childhood, but demands, too, the powers of adulthood. She is not really undecided about what she wants. So she sets her compass on the pole of prestige and power without responsibility. And indecision is the easy strategy for reaching her goal. Her desire for power without responsibility directs her thoughts and behavior. To change her, we must change her purpose, her "why," not merely her tactics. We must make her aware of the logical mistakes resulting from a mistaken goal. She must learn what determines her indecision. She must change her mistaken idea of self-improvement — her foolish goal.

STEP III: But this is only her first step toward normalcy. She must next choose a more useful life aim and then practice it. Our goal not only makes us "tick," but also measures life values. If teacher and pupils accept common goals they are more likely to use common yardsticks. But how can we lure 8, 10, or even 14-year-olds into knowing and feeling such abstractions as service for others, cooperation, etc. They understand living in terms of such concrete situations as running errands and playing games.

And even if children do understand adult principles born in the heat of their own experiences, will they accept adult values? The conflict between generations has been one fixed fact of every community of every period. Youth feels it is not understood—and even where it grudgingly grants some truth to the ideas of parents, it does not hesitate to protest. "Maybe it's all right for 'grown-ups' to do this, but we can't, because we don't know enough," or "Even if you're right, for once let me do it my own way. Why don't you let me grow up?"

STEP IV: During group and individual interviews we try to refer every act of the child to either his old or new goal. For example, when he tells us he had a quarrel with his younger brother because the latter

insisted on being the pitcher in a baseball game, we may say to a domineering child, "You're still trying to be the boss." If he reports he lost his temper, made his father angry, we may comment, "Yes it is hard to change, to try to be a helper instead of a trouble-maker."

STEP V: Practicing Responsibilities.

- A. It is not sufficient to think and know the right. One must practice doing the right thing until he understands and feels it. At first we may suggest that he need not try doing something for his mother, father, or family. It might prove too difficult. Therefore he should just think of two or three things he might do to help. Later we might say to him, "Now how long do you think it would take you to do something to help your mother, etc.?"
- B. This feeling of responsibility must be extended to as many fields of life as possible—as home, school, playground, and church. We must add that this sense of responsibility must be practiced out of a feeling of having something in common with all people; i.e. out of social feeling.

Formulating the Theme

There were two grades in the class to which we applied our ideas—an upper and lower third year. The pupils in the lower half were brighter and were doing advanced work, while those in the upper half were retarded at least a year in reading and arithmetic. We selected this class because the teacher complained of her difficulties. Discussion with her revealed the following weaknesses:

Unless their teacher was at their side helping them, the retarded pupils were easily discouraged. Instead of working, they loafed, talked, giggled, sulked, fought, and made trouble in strenuous ways. They gained self-importance through the trouble they made.

Some of the advanced children needed constant assurance. They loved to run to their teacher and ask, "Am I all right so far?" They seemed afraid of losing approval and sought to regain it through correct work. They were developing the souls of hirelings. Many of them seemed to invent excuses to receive individual attention. Some day-dreamed. Some habitually forgot to bring homework, pencils, etc. Like their retarded neighbors, others were frequently late or absent for trivial reasons.

Both groups felt helpless without teacher assistance. Therefore, Mrs. E asked, "How can I get them to work and keep them working without my constantly standing over them, watching or helping them?" Our problem is evident.

The helpless must become self-reliant and the troublesome useful. Service and self-reliance vs. helplessness and disturbance—must become our term theme. All our guidance work for the term will be directed toward this end.

Children from 7 to 9 learn best from situations. But they do accept

theory in the form of adult rules more readily than older ones do. Therefore, we began with the term theme rather than with their own problems in actual situations. This propaganda phase of our work is one of our acute responsibilities. Man's finest qualities of courage, service, and self-sacrifice have been squandered through ignorance and misbeliefs. Primitive tribes, gangsters, enemies, and the rest of us suffer the consequences of our mistaken beliefs and purposes as surely as those born blind or crippled, blameless though the latter be.

Therefore, our first few lessons were devoted to leading our children to accept some true goal or principle that could become a yardstick for understanding behavior. We were looking for an intelligent, not a slavish acceptance of true values which were to become the spark plug of their lives. And in the use of these new measuring rods, children can become aware of their own mistakes and warped goals. From then on, our pupils can always learn to square their acts in terms of the new and old ideals.

Lesson I—May 8—Yardstick for Growth

In a third-year class the repetition, so necessary for learning, will prove quite monotonous to readers. We have, therefore, recorded a minimum of such questioning and answering.

We asked how many had baby brothers or sisters. The children repeated anecdotes about the babies at home. Then we told them the story of a baby whose parents lived in our house. We discussed how busy its mother was all day long, bathing the baby, changing its diapers, its bib, and feeding it.

Questioner: "Poor mother—all day, the baby gives its mother a lot of ——? Ans. 1. "Work." 2. "Trouble."

"When bedtime comes, both mother and father are very tired. Father works in a defense plant. Yet in the middle of the night, the baby cries and wakes poor tired mother and daddy. (Here we imitated the baby's screams. Before children, we don't hesitate to become actors.) She doesn't seem to care how tired they are. Why does baby do this?" Ans. 1. "She's mean." 2. "No, she's hungry." 3. "She doesn't know any better." 4. "She can't help it."

"A baby is a lot of trouble and work, isn't she? Who makes more trouble in the house?—baby or daddy? (Laughter). Ans. "Baby."

"Who helps more?—baby or daddy?" (Laughter). Ans. "Daddy."

"Who needs more help?—baby or daddy?" Ans. "Baby."

"Who makes more trouble—big people or children?" Ans. "Children make more trouble."

"Who help more—big people or children?" Ans. "Big people help."

We wrote on the blackboard: "Babies make trouble—Big people help."

After several children read these sentences, we asked, "Who makes more trouble at home, you or the baby? Who helps more at home, you or the baby? Of course you help more. You're more grown up."

"Now suppose we make a ruler to see how much trouble we make, or shall we call it a ruler to see how big we are?"

Baby

Big People



Trouble

Help

After explaining the ruler and having pupils read the words at each end, we asked, "At what end of the ruler would you put a little baby?" Point to the baby end. At what end would you place your father? Your mother? Where would you be on this ruler?"

It was surprising to see how accurately these 8-year-olds measured babies, parents, and even themselves. In self-measurement, their honesty often sprang from fear of class comments. They knew they couldn't get away with boasting. Here again we asked as many pupils as possible to judge and to measure.

In this lesson we hope to develop a new set of synonyms—"baby" with "helplessness and trouble," "big people" with "help." Whenever they think of adults, of growing up, they will also think of helpfulness. Perhaps they will, in the near future, begin to accept usefulness as the yardstick for measuring growth.

Lesson II—May 11—Class Problem

We have worked out a growth ruler, acceptable to both pupils and teacher. Now let us apply it to the teacher's complaint, "Many children won't work unless I'm standing over them." We decided to present this problem in action. Perhaps they will see the true meaning of their behavior.

Quest. "Would you like to put on a play? To be actors? Oh, everyone does. Well, let's make believe that one boy is doing some examples. The first one is easy. The second one is harder. They get harder and harder. If you were the boy, what would you do?"

"Joan, you may be the teacher. Vincent, you're the boy. (The actor teacher writes examples on the blackboard. Vincent starts his work. Then he stops, begins to giggle, becomes restless and finally he just loafs.)

"Who else would like to be the teacher?" Anna.

"Who else would like to be the boy?" Salvatore.

(Salvatore works faithfully.)

"Who tried hard?" Ans. "Salvatore."

"What did the first boy do? Ans. 1. "He fooled around." 2. "He giggled." 3. "He fooled around like a baby."

Quest. "What about Salvatore?" Ans. "He worked hard."

Quest. "Do you remember how we measured babies and big people?" (I drew the ruler on the blackboard.)

Quest. "Where would you put the first boy on the ruler? The second boy?"

Quest. "What do babies do all day?" Ans. 1. "They play." 2. "They make work for everyone." 3. "They giggle." 4. "Mamma has to keep after them all day."

"Sometimes children get big, but still are babies. Some are even

8 years old, but they act like babies. How do they act like babies?"
Ans. "They giggle all the time." 2. "They fool around." 3. "They don't work." 4. "They want the teacher to do things for them all the time." 5. "They're always bothering the teacher," etc.

Quest. "Well, should the teacher help these children all the time?" Ans. 1. "She has no time." 2. "She has other children."

Quest. "At home they cry, 'Mamma, where're my books?' At school they cry, 'I can't do it!' In school, instead of saying, 'Help, mamma,' they call 'Help, teacher!' What else could they do?"

Here we have taken the new goal and applied it to a standard class problem. Loafing and helplessness, "fooling around," are for the moment, no longer glamorous. This new belief has been served in the wrappings of specific and personal experiences. True, our pupils often give us the answers they think the teacher expects. But then at least they know of a new guide for testing their maturity. Then they see old behavior in a new light—and often as a mistaken behavior. Ultimately, we hope they will not only know better goals, but will understand them.

Lesson III—May 15—Home Problems

In our first lessons we identified service with growth, helplessness and disturbance with immaturity. To help our pupils appreciate this "Service Code," we must apply this principle to as many situations as possible. Thus this belief may expand into the "I am my brother's keeper" practice.

With young children we may also plunge right into actual personal experiences. As they are not so bashful or shy about their mistakes as older children, we intend to apply our yardstick to their home life—for home is the nursery of character and personality. We intend to proceed from a standard class experience to a specific experience of a particular child.

First, we reviewed baby acts in school. Then we again drew the "growth ruler" on the blackboard and said:

"The other day we made a ruler for what?" Ans. 1. "To see if you're a baby." 2. "To see if you're a big man."

"Now, mommy has to watch a baby all the time." (Pupils offer such instances as dress the little one, change diapers, bathe, etc.)

"When baby wants something, it does what?" Ans. "Cries."

"Now who needs more help from your mother—baby or father? (Laughter) When we grow older, do we need more help from mother or less help?" Ans. "Less."

"Some children like to keep mother busy with them, so they act like babies. Then mother has not time for anyone but them. They want mother to be with them, so they act like babies. When a baby wants something what does it do?" Ans. 1. "It cries." 2. "It makes a noise."

Ques. "What do bigger children do to keep mother running after them?"

Ans. "Angie said, 'I forgot to wash my ears.' 'Instead of crying or making a noise, what does Angie do to keep mother busy with her, and so make trouble?' Ans. "Dirty ears."

"Would you like to play a game? Let us play coming home from school."

(I.) We chose Joseph, a show-off, the "intentionally kind" type. He

helps his mother not as a responsibility, but chiefly as a bribe to win her preference over his sister. We gave Anna the part of his mother. In the hearing of the class Joseph describes: 1. His mother. 2. The kitchen of his home. This is the entry room of the family apartment. Using pupil seats, blackboards, he minutely locates and describes the furniture of the kitchen. This may appear unnecessary, but it helps make the situation more real to Joseph and the class.

Scene: Joseph comes home. Mother puts him to work, dusting. He acts the model child.

Knowing his quarrelsome and untruthful habits, we felt he presented a rather distorted picture. Hence we asked him, "What's your sister doing all this time?"

Sneeringly, he answers—"Oh she reads a book." Quest. "What do you say when you see her reading a book while you're working?" Ans. "Oh, we fight."

(This, we decided, would be the topic of our next session.) Quest. "Then why didn't you show your fight in your play? Do you just want to show how nice you are?"

(II.) Next, the twin sisters reenacted a home incident. As we felt the class was not ready for the point involved, we let it drop with a few words of praise.

(III.) Then we called on Fred to show what he usually does when he gets home after school. Fred is an outstanding pupil in our school. In a pupil body, the average I. Q. ranges from 88 to 91; Fred's I. Q. is 149. He does everything correctly. He obeys all laws. He is teacher's angel. He revels in the praise of superiors. He acts at times like the trustworthy dog, eager for a pat on the head. Fred is on the road to becoming a faithful subordinate with the soul of the school monitor, with no initiative, but with the sole ambition of working for adult approval. This had to be made concrete and evident to him.

Fred carefully described the kitchen setting of his home. It seemed as though all the children of the class entered their own apartments through the kitchen. The following dialogue presented Fred's picture of his relationship at home:

Mother: "Hello." Ans. "Hello."

Mother: "Put your clothes away." Ans. "Yes, mamma." Fred does so.

Mother: "Put your books away." Ans. "Yes, mamma." Fred does so.

Mother: "Go to the store and get a loaf of bread, etc." Fred: "Yes, mamma."

(Fred returns.) Mother: "Now sit down and do your homework." He does so.

Mother: "Did you finish your homework?" Fred: "Yes."

Mother: "Now go out and play."

Later, mother, leaning out of window, calls, "Fred, come home and practice."

Class comment: 1. "What a baby!" 2. "Yes, mamma!"

Quest. "Which one of the children was the most helpful at home?"

Ans. 1. "Vincent." 2. "He helped." "He didn't holler, 'Oh, I gotta play ball.'" 3. "No. He was showing off."

Ans. "Fred." 2. "No, he was the biggest baby."

Quest. "Why?" Ans. "His mother had to tell him everything. Put your books away, etc."

Quest. "So you mean that by now Fred should know enough to put his books away, do his homework by himself?" Ans. "Yes, his mother must keep after him like a baby."

We then reviewed the different ways of keeping mother busy with us, as dirty necks, dropping books everywhere, fighting with siblings, making mother angry, etc.

For homework we made the following assignment: Write down one way we act like babies at home, instead of big people.

In these three lessons we have made progress. We began with the aim of giving the children a new idea of adulthood. In lesson II we applied this to a specific problem common to this class. But in lesson III we went one step further. Not only did we apply this new principle to their home activity, but we illustrated it with a personal, specific and habitual home situation. We are now examining not only the act, but the doer also.

But in lessons IV and V we will present a different angle. Instead of dramatizing the activities of several pupils, the lesson will be centered on one pupil only. One child will present a common home scene. Then he with his problems will be the subject of class discussion and drama. Then we hope to conduct an individual interview in a group session.

Lesson IV—May 16—Work with an Individual

We intended to devote this session to Joseph's rivalry with his older sister. However, it didn't work out so. Five pupils read their answers to the homework assignment of "Baby Tricks at Home." We received such answers as, "My mother has to tell me to put my books away." "My mother has to tell me two times to wash the dishes, etc." "I holler when I have to go to the store. I say it ain't my chance to go."

This led to discussion on fights with siblings. To lighten our work, we allowed Joan to dramatize an actual bed scene with a pillow fight. The noise attracted mother, who took Joan to bed with her.

We asked, "What's Joan's trick? How does she make trouble? How does she make her mother take care of her alone?" These three interpretations were emphasized in the questioning.

Lesson V—May 19

Here we continue the exposure and correction of one child's mistaken responses to a situation resulting from faulty beliefs which lead to inadequate behavior.

We reviewed that growing up means helping more—that growth is

measured in terms of service. The children coined several slogans. 1. Baby Needs Help, Big Boy Helps. 2. Baby Cries, Big Boy Tries.

We took up the case of Joseph, who helped his mother to show what a fine fellow he was; in his dramatization he forgot to include his sister, with whom he admitted he quarreled. He helped out of a desire to exceed his sister in his mother's affections and not from a sense of responsibility. Though his strategy was not of the best, it was better than "pinching the baby," in order to be important.

Scene: Boy comes home from school. Starts to work—notices older sister is reading. He orders her to work. In the quarrel, he punches his sister, who strikes back. Father scolds them.

Quest. "Did you have to fight?" Ans. "Well, she wouldn't help."

Quest. "What else could he have done?" Ans. (By another pupil.) "He should mind his own business. He thinks he's a 'big shot'."

Quest. "Joseph, do you think you can tell us what else you could have done besides fight?" (Discussion followed.)

In this neighborhood bullying of sisters is not rare. This dramatization gave the girls a chance to express their ideas on a relationship that most brothers took for granted.

Homework again was: Write down one way of making trouble instead of helping.

At the beginning of this lesson, Joan, who plays the trouble-making sister in the bed scene, protested, "My mother does not take me in her bed when I fight. I'm no baby. We just made it up." Her comment is quite revealing as to original purpose and as to a possible change.

Lesson VI—May 23—Interviewing Individuals

In this session we are going to take up the individual interview, not in private, but in public, in a group atmosphere. We hope to combine group and individual correction treatment. Some of our work was not planned, but happened because of incidents that illustrated the class premise. In such cases, we always substitute the immediate situation for the prepared work. Such class incidents are invaluable for amplifying our original plans. The one we intend to discuss led to a public individual interview.

We said to class, "Last Friday I had such a pleasant time here. We played Mother and Father. And then for homework we said we would write about one way we make trouble.

As I said this, I saw Anna put up both hands to her face. She looked both surprised and worried. I then said to the class:

"I saw Anna do this." (I imitated her gesture.) "I wonder what that means." (Then I called her to me.)

"You forgot to do this homework. Yes? Now what's going to happen. The class stops work while I must tell you to do it. Your mother has to keep after you to do something. What?" Anna: "My

homework. When I went to bed yesterday, she said, 'Anna, did you do your homework?' I said I forgot."

"How else do you make trouble for your mamma?"

"I forgot to do things."

"You are the baby, aren't you?" Ans. "Yes."

"You hate to give up your baby ways. At home, you like to have your mother busy with you. At school, you want to have Mrs. E—— keep after you. I wonder how? I suppose you start your work, your arithmetic. But you stop and don't finish. Then Mrs. E—— has to watch you and say, 'Anna finish your reading, your arithmetic.' In school you want Mrs. E—— to be your mamma. And now you want me to keep busy with you."

"Oh no!"

Quest. "Well, it looks to me you feel big only when you have some big person take care of you." No answer. "When do you think you can stop making trouble? Keeping people busy with you? like a——?" (Class, "a baby.") Anna replied, "Right away."

"Oh no, you can't. No one can change so quickly. You think all you have to do is to push a button in your head or your side—like the button for the electric light—and then you'll be grown up. Later, when you get tired of being on your own, you'll push a button again and you become a baby again. Then you get yourself a policeman, a servant to look out for you. Oh no—it doesn't work that way. But I'll be here tomorrow. See whether you can tell one thing you did to help like a big girl and not be troublesome like a baby, and without being told to help."

I turned to Freddy who did everything he was told, but seldom on his own, and said, "You know what we mean, Freddy. We don't need mamma to take us by the hand and say, 'Now do your homework. Now you may get up. Now you may eat. Now you go out and play'."

"When we grow up, we must learn to be—what?" Ans. 1. "No trouble." 2. "A help." 3. "On your own"—(this came from Freddy.)

This shuttling of the conversation back and forth between the pupil being interviewed at the front of the room and other members of the class at their seats, weaves the pupils into one pattern by making them participants as well as spectators. It helps to combine individual and group procedures. This is one difference between the private or public individual interview.

At this point we noticed that Vin D. no longer wore his eye patch. Vin D., an aggressive, domineering, quarrelsome boy, always managed to keep a bodyguard of admirers or victims around him.

We said, "Oh, your patch is off, Vin D. Now you can take care of yourself. You don't need to have someone put on a clean bandage, look at your eye, etc."

You know a baby likes to have people watch and look after it. Babies are afraid to be without a nurse. What does your baby at home do? Ans. 1. "Shakes his rattle." 2. "Cries." 3. "Makes a noise." 4. "He giggles." 5. "He laughs." (Vin D. is a giggler, a talker, a noisemaker.)

Vin D. volunteers, "When my brother fights me, my mother does not hit me. She hits Frank."

"When you make trouble, what does she do?"

"Nothing, she hits Frank."

"Even when you make trouble?" Ans. "She don't hit me."

"Oh, maybe when you make a lot of trouble, she undresses you and puts a diaper on you?" He laughed. (We knew his statements were not true. This will be taken up in another interview.)

We said, "Maybe you don't make any trouble. Maybe you help a lot. But how do some big babies make trouble? What tricks have some babies to keep others busy?" Ans. "My brother is 14. My mother has to wash his neck."

"What about you? Your mother is busy with your brother, and you want her to play with you. You're the baby! Is that it?"

"Who else knows some baby tricks?" Ans. "My brother is 14, too, and my mother has to call him about twenty times to wake him."

(Other tricks are mentioned. Assignment for homework: "*How To Be Big? Grown Up?*")

Lesson VII—May 26—Positive Approaches

In the last session we made two definite changes. We held an individual interview in a group setting. We wove individual and group problems into one harmonious pattern. Furthermore, we began to swing the emphasis from pupil mistakes (negative approach) to specific useful reactions (positive approach).

So we began with:

"Each of us promised that today we would tell how to help at home—as well as to make trouble." (This again led to an individual interview in a group setting.)

"Angie did not bring in any homework. (To class). What's going to happen now?"

Ans. 1. "Somebody's got to keep after her if she doesn't do her homework and remind her." 2. "It's like not finishing your work and Mrs. E. must keep after you." 3. "It's like a baby—your mother must say, 'Now do your homework. Now do the dishes.'"

(We called Angie to us.) "When we were almost a year old, we learned to walk and mamma said, 'Now take a step. Now another step.' Sometimes mamma held us by the hand. Some children like to have mamma hold them by the hand, dress them and take care of them. They feel like kings and queens when others help them. You act as if you like it, too—for you seem to want to make mamma do things for you. So you keep on doing baby things. Mamma has to hold you by the hand and make you do your homework. You try to make your mother your servant."

Quest. "What other baby tricks do you have?" Ans. "None."

Quest. "Do you know why babies shake their heads instead of speaking out?" Ans. "No."

"Because they can't talk. Are you the baby in the house?" Ans. "Yes."

"You act as if you like to have somebody take care of you, so you do a lot of baby tricks, eh?" Ans. "Yes."

As her answers became more and more inaudible, we pointed out, "See, even when you do talk, you make a little trouble. You talk so low we can-

not hear you. Everybody must keep so quiet when you talk—just as if you were a queen. Are you a baby queen?”

She still talked low—sometimes she shook her head. We pointed out how hard it was to change and praised the fact that she did and could speak up on several occasions. Now she could begin speaking up like a big girl, or shaking her head like a baby or even a cow.

Up to now we have tried to make our pupils aware of: 1. Their mistaken goals and the personal mistakes resulting from wrong beliefs. 2. The need for a change. 3. More desirable goals. 4. The necessity for practicing the more desirable goals and attitudes.

But adults who understand what they should do, often fail to do so, owing either to the tenacity of old habits or to the anxiety that may become apparent in actual situations. Hence our next problem is to graduate the training and to practice desirable responses in a safe environment and in simple roles until the individual can control patterns adequately. Then, through successful practice, he may begin to understand his newly chosen goal as well as merely become aware of it.

Antagonisms Dramatized

We recalled the sibling quarrels that destroy the peace of so many families. One boy, Joseph, was going to show how he really gets along with his older sister. He would repeat a previous performance, described in Lesson V.

(I.) After the usual warming-up procedure of describing the setting of his home, the characters of his parents, Joseph started his act. He came home. His mother put him to work polishing furniture. In the meantime his sister was reading. He yelled to her: “Hey, why can’t you do something?”

A quarrel and fight developed that was almost real. His parents stopped it.

Class comment. 1. “He was wrong.” 2. “He should mind his own business.”

We told the story of the cow who kicked the pail over after she was milked. (We then said to Joseph): “It seems to me that you helped your mother to show how good you are—not because everybody has to help. Maybe you just wanted to show you were better than your sister. What else could Joseph have done besides fight with his sister?”

Ans. 1. “He could have said nothing.” 2. “He could have laughed.” 3. “He could have asked her to help.” 4. “He should mind his own business.” 5. “He wants to be a big shot,” etc.

“Let us play this again. But this time we will try to mind our own business.”

(II.) This time Joseph did mind his own business. His father scolded Angela for loafing instead of working.

(III.) Again the play was repeated, with another girl taking the part of his sister, Angela. Mother gave sister a job when she found her loafing.

(IV.) By then, Joseph was controlling himself fairly well under these

circumstances. We felt he was ready for a greater strain. We whispered to the girl to laugh and sing as she was walking past her brother while he was working.

This time Joseph really lost his temper and began to beat Angela. A family squabble ensued, with father and mother taking part. Meanwhile the class laughed at Joseph.

(V.) The play was repeated with one variation. We whispered to the actor sister to tease Joseph, who became angry, but he did not attempt to slap or punch her as in episodes I and IV.

(VI.) The play was repeated. Joseph maintained self-control, though with great difficulty.

Class comment: 1. "He can't mind his own business." 2. "He wants to be the boss." 3. "He makes a lot of trouble." We remarked, "He helps, too, doesn't he?" Ans. "Yes, like the cow!"

We asked, "How is Joseph better? How is he more like a big boy?" We closed the session on this encouraging level.

One may ask, "What's the point of all this teasing?"

It has been said that only a fool has to learn through experience. If this is so, then we're all fools—for we learn more through experience than through books, precepts or tailor-made knowledge. In this work, pupils are experiencing their mistakes and then practicing better answers to life conditions.

They are not merely acting. They are actually going through (future) personal situations. "Conduct in life is irrevocable; here every phase of performance is open to correction through criticism made by other participants, the instructor and the subject himself. — Things a boy would not tell to a teacher or even another boy, he will tell in these plays—and the humor of it may heal many potential grievances and conflicts. The subject is trained through acting in the simplest of roles in any specific situation pattern through various degrees of differentiation of the same situation pattern until he can command the pattern adequately; he trains also in many different situation patterns."²

Thus this work becomes a bridge to overcoming future situations. Through this bridge, the subjects minimize the intensity and welter of emotions that an immediate situation would arouse—for the risks are not so great.

This period has been the dramatic climax of our work to date. We will prepare for another finale through having other pupils present difficult conditions, through conducting more interviews, and through living a series of present and future episodes.

Lesson VIII—May 31

Again our prepared lesson was put aside. We began by saying:

"First, let us put our books away." (Only one boy, Patsy, failed to do so.)

"Now, Patsy, you have me all to yourself. I'll forget the whole

class to take care of you, to tell you something. You have me all to yourself. What do you think I ought to say to you?"

"Put my books away."

"You understand well. Come to me, Patsy. At home you try to keep your mother to yourself. At school somebody else must take care of you alone and say, 'Hurry, put your books away. Do this. Do that.' You try to make everybody take care of you. One would think you wanted to be a little king."

"Your mother often stops her work to talk to you alone. Why does your mother have to tell you to hurry?"

"I don't wake up. I take a long time to eat. I walk slowly."

"You are always slow. That's a good trick to keep somebody busy with you. When you were a baby, your mamma had to feed you, dress you, and be with you all day. You like having your mamma all to yourself. You want to keep your mamma to yourself. You do it by being slow."

"Does anyone else play tricks to keep mamma busy?"

Anthony (confirmed truant): "In the morning, I don't get up right away. I take a long time to wash my hands. I hope that I won't have time to go to school. I'll be too late." (Then this truant suddenly blushed and covered his face.)

"Now who would like to play coming late to school? First let us see what happens. John, (a notorious latecomer), will you tell us."

"In the morning I don't wanner get up. My grandmother hollers till I get up. I get late. I wash slow. My grandmother hollers. She keeps after me till I go out."

"If you were a baby, she'd say, 'Come, get up' — She'd pick you out of the crib. Then she'd say, 'Now mamma will help wash you. Now put on your stockings, now your other one,' etc. She'd be watching you all the time. You must like it, because you still keep her busy with you."

At this moment, a regular school fire drill took place and interfered with our plans to follow up the interview with a drama based on Patsy's homecoming.

Lesson IX—Helplessness

In lessons VI, VII, and VIII, with Anna, Angie, and Patsy, we conducted an individual interview in a public setting. Young children under proper conditions do not object to this, provided they are not humiliated. They willingly discuss their mistakes in an objective atmosphere. However, we cannot do without the private individual interview.

But we must bear in mind that only repetition that allows no exception makes most headway in substituting better attitudes for undesirable ones. For instance, in the habit of doing homework or bringing handkerchiefs, books and pencils to school, the teacher may inspect at unexpected intervals. But she will make more headway if she never fails merely to check such compliance every single morning. The quiet but persistent follow-up brings results. From this our children soon learn that consequences follow action or non-action as surely as night follows day.

We must avoid standing over our pupils and criticizing their every act. None of us can do effective work with a critic at our side all the time. We devote one regular weekly period to this formal discussion.

This may be reinforced with a similar dissection, when a classroom situation demands it. Ordinarily, a shrug of the shoulders, raised eyebrows and judicious neglect are often more effective than flare-ups or lectures. But for better understanding, dramatic action is essential.

We want to show children that baby habits are often retained even by pupils of their age. We want them to see that these habits are carried from babyhood into childhood, from home into school. These infantile carryovers keep them from feeling helpless and even make them feel important.

But we must not tell them this. They must come to see for themselves. Telling is moralizing and scolding. We must once more make vivid our term's theme of "Disturbance and Troublemaking of Infancy vs. Self-reliant Service of Adulthood." We tried to make this concrete with a dramatization of baby's first steps in learning to walk. We hoped they would see the connection between this and tardiness.

Getting to school late was one specific situation. But it is not this symptom we intend to work on. We wish to show that "coming late" is a baby trick and activity resulting from a mistaken purpose of gaining significance through deliberate helplessness. This can often become clear through dramatization. As we had intended to do this when the fire gong sounded, we continued this idea in the present lesson.

We began by saying:

"Let us play 'Coming to School Late.' Just a moment. How many have ever seen your mother or someone else teach a baby to walk?" Many claimed they taught baby brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews. John placed his niece's bottle on a low table and got the child to walk while he watched and coaxed it.

Quest. "Who would like to play mamma teaching baby to walk?" (In each dramatization, the actor parent was 100 per cent absorbed with the baby, coaxing, encouraging it step by step.)

Quest. "Why doesn't mother do some sewing or go out of the room while baby is learning to walk?" Ans. 1. "Oh, he's too scared." 2. "He wants his mother near him." 3. "He might fall." 4. "She can't leave him alone." 5. "He can't learn alone." 6. "He's too small." 7. "He'd cry if his mamma did not watch him."

Quest. "You mean babies keep their mamma busy with them? They must be coaxed, pushed, played with to make them feel safe. Mother says, 'Now this footie, now do this, and so on.' Who makes more trouble? Who takes up more time of your mothers'—the baby or your father?" (This question always pleases them.) Ans. (giggling) "Baby."

Questioner: "The baby is afraid to be on his own." Freddy grinned at me.

"Who wants to play the mother now? Mary?" (She hesitated, blushed furiously and shrank so visibly that we feared an issue. Her unwillingness was our fault. We had called on her before she was ready. So we passed this lightly, with the comment, "I know some day, you, too, will be glad to help us out.")

"Now let's play 'Coming to School Late'. Why do you come late, Patsy?" (A bright boy with many infantile carryovers.) Ans. "I don't get up when my mother wakes me."

(We chose a forceful girl for the mother. After the usual pre-

liminaries, the play went on. Patsy had to be awakened half a dozen times and finally pulled out of bed. The outstanding feature was his mother's unceasing follow-up of "Do this! Do that! Here's your shirt! your pants! your stockings! your shoes! wash your face! brush your teeth! comb your hair!" His lagging produced nagging; her nagging stimulated lagging.)

(The class laughed.) "Just like the baby—his mother must keep after him."

Quest. "Well, if he acts like a baby—what should his mother do?" Ans. 1. "Take his clothes off and put him in diapers." 2. "Keep him in the baby carriage." 3. "Don't let him play with other children."

Comment: "Then he could read stories." Ans. 1. "No, a baby can't read." 2. "He can't talk." 3. "We'll give him a rattle and leave him alone."

In similar fashion we dramatized John's late arrival in the classroom.)

Lesson X—Taking Criticism

Our general plan was to apply the term theme first to one situation—their actions on getting home after school. We did not carry this plan out in machinelike fashion to every child. Through training for varied future situations, through individual interviews, we broadened our pupil's understanding of both immaturity and maturity. When we resumed our original plan, the pupils revealed a greater sensitivity to goals both good and bad. Furthermore, in the next lessons, the children not only applied the theme yardstick to more activities, but they were able to "take" more direct criticism. After all, most of us endure about the same disappointments, hurts, kicks and sorrows. But we do not "take" our troubles in the same way. We differ in "how" we take life. This "how" was one rule for measuring progress. Hence we felt our pupils had taken a step forward when they were able to "take" criticism calmly and without temper or near tears.

We began our lesson with mild-mannered, bright and self-reliant Joseph K, the youngest in his family. He dramatized his daily homecoming from school. When Joseph threw his books on the table his mother said:

"Put your books away." His answer, "No" was shouted back, while he was changing into play clothes.

Mother: "Joey, put your books away." Ans. "No."

Mother: (grasping Joseph by the arm), "I said, put your books away."

Ans. "Try and make me." He ran out into the street. Joseph looked at the class for some signs of approval, but was astonished at the children's silent, shocked faces.

We then asked "Who else wants to show what he does when he gets home?"

(Gladys portrayed the typical normal child.)

(Vincent, aggressive, defiant, rebellious, active in everything but work, began the action by refusing the food his mother had set before him.)

Vincent: "I don't like potatoes and catsup. They look rotten. Fry them."

Mother threatened to tell father.

Vincent: "I'll tell him first."
 Mother: "Eat." Vincent: "I won't." (He rose and started to walk out.)
 Mother: "Then don't come back for anything to eat till supper."
 Vincent: "Who wants to come back to this dirty house?"
 Quest. "Who was the most helpful child? The most grown up? How do babies make trouble?" Ans. "They always keep somebody busy."
 Quest. "What about the children we saw today?" Ans. "Two were babies." Quest. "In every way?" Ans. "Yes."
 Quest. "What are other baby tricks that keep mamma busy?" Ans. "They wet themselves."
 Quest. "Oh, I'm sure we've all given up that trick. Don't you?" Vincent: "No, I don't."
 Quest. "When do children stop wetting themselves?" Patsy: "When they're 9." (Patsy is 8 years old.)
 Ans. "That would be a good trick for anyone who wants to be a baby."

(However the class decided 2 years was about the right age. We drew our age ruler on the blackboard. Vincent located the position of a 2-year-old on the ruler.)

We then discussed other baby tricks and listed those that children gave up and when. We finished with a discussion as to (1) when babies begin to think of something else besides playing; i.e. helping (2) how they could do something for the family.

These two dramatizations at the beginning of our work might have led some pupils to imitate the actors. But at this time they no longer were regarded as heroes. Even the actors could see this. For when the teacher asked Joseph K, a few days later, "Joey, do you really talk that way to your mother?" he blushed and said, "I feel funny now." Vincent, the rebel, needs a few private individual interviews.

Year's Program

As the term was coming to a close, we could not continue the work. Originally these children sought significance through fighting, loafing and helplessness, not helpfulness. In ten lessons, given over a period of about six weeks, we felt that these pupils had gained some understanding of the true meaning of growth. They also had had an opportunity to practice their new ideas without fear of humiliation, danger or punishment.

It is quite evident that the number of situations for study is infinite. In fact it would take at least one year working at the rate of a lesson per week,

- (1) To dramatize one situation of each pupil in the class.
- (2) To interview individually but publicly at most, half the children.
- (3) To enable a dozen pupils to practice solving old irritations more adequately under more trying circumstances. This practice will take place in presence of the class.
- (4) To present dramatizations of fictitious situations illustrating pupil difficulties.

As the children grow older, new problems and interests will arise to keep the work fresh and vital. In this workshop of Personality Adjustment every member is both actor and doctor.

Summary

It is natural for teachers to ask, "Why should I take up psychodramatics? What can it offer to teachers and pupils that the other innumerable educational psychologies cannot? How can we use its lessons? Doesn't it breed a lot of new difficulties?"

Psychodramatics has much in common with other schools of mental hygiene. It is based on the action in an actual meeting of the child and the persons (or their substitutes) with whom he does not adjust normally. In such contacts, our children can practice reactions to situations difficult for them. But they learn through experience—under conditions somewhat freer of the excess anxieties and fears pervading actual conditions.

The child practices, i.e. acts out, the problems that trouble him — as, his constant quarrels with brothers, sisters, parents and friends. Other pupils and even his co-actors offer more desirable solutions with better purposes. The same experience is reenacted several times under more irritating and under ever-changing circumstances. By training to meet his problems of today, tonight and tomorrow, the child has a chance to learn (1) to view his present difficulties a bit more objectively and understandingly (2) to develop more resourcefulness, naturalness and courage to face the more perplexing trials of the future (3) and ultimately to view from the Mount Sinai of "I serve for God and man."

In addition, psychodramatics makes possible an organized program of personality adjustment that can continue from kindergarten on through the school life of our pupils. Difficult situations and people that haunt us from our first gasp of life become the core of this work.

Before explaining the cohering effects of our program let us review some of the more common practices up to date. First we have the private individual treatment. This is organized and effective, but teachers object to it as it takes up too much time. Besides, since it is best conducted after school hours, pupils look upon it as a punishment.

Then we have the standard direct and indirect methods. They can be arranged around the core of pupil weaknesses, but they have been based on talk, not action. For example, the teacher can select illustrative incidents from the lives of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln or even everyday people. Besides she can depend upon teacher example and suggestion. She can use incidents that occur in the classroom. But the latter excellent procedure is dependent on circumstances. And incidental instruction is accidental instruction, not truly organized teaching. Furthermore, all these types are based on a logical, not a living or emotional coherence. And few children have ever changed their purposes for verbal logical reasons.

But in this treatment, after diagnosing pupil aims, she can provide a continuous series of dramatizations by having her pupils reenact situations from their own lives that they meet inadequately. Then the parable, fable, joke, biographical sketch and illustrations fall in naturally with the action. We know how dramatically a good story illuminates the point of a situation. The classroom incidents complete and further illustrate the picture. Then, too, teacher example and suggestion round out the drama of living.

Psychodramatics has a solid core of action that is not washed away in a flood of verbal discussions. It provides a scaffold from which we can

work. Like the steel structure of a skyscraper around which the building is built, psychodramatics, too, provides the form around which parables, fables, jokes, stories of heroes, suggestion, example are essential elements.

Here it should be carefully noted that no child ought to be treated psychodramatically until he has had an individual private interview. (1) We must be certain that we understand our children's problems thoroughly before we try to cure them. (2) We must also know their background so as to prevent their revealing intimate family affairs that must never be discussed before a group of children. (3) Some children may be tempted to boast or lie about their defiance at home and thus show others new tricks. After the pupils have been trained to choose new goals and new values, they can take these false exploits with good humor.

The interview, private and public, gives us a picture of some of the common ground between Individual Psychology and psychodramatics.

That type of interview emphasizing relationships through dramatization, is not entirely new to Individual Psychologists. Dr. Adler often illustrated the child's style of life by dramatizing the latter's habitual attitude toward others. Psychodramatics carries the principles of this contact psychology further than does Individual Psychology.

Private interviews are still indispensable. The psychodrama serves to cut down their number.

To psychologists, psychodramatics is a well equipped laboratory of life where men and women of all schools may observe the same facts, but will use them along the lines of their own professional training.

To children, psychodramatics is a slow motion picture of present and future personal problems. The actors are always chosen from the audience. If in real life a child is too aggressive, too sensitive, too apathetic, etc., then (1) he may watch a dramatization of a situation too difficult for him, (2) he may play the role of a character entirely unlike himself, (3) or he may play his own role. The action may be repeated again and again, until the desirable attitude becomes natural and spontaneous.

Any present problem, any future problem involving people and situations may be practiced safely by those responding inadequately. Because the members of the cast are frequently changed, the child soon learns that the same situation rouses different responses from different people. But his answering attitude will always be permeated with active good-will.

Thus actors and audience, through both participation and unhurried study, will ultimately discover that life means service "for"—spiritually more than materially.

¹The author has published psychodramatic material for an intermediate group of pupils, age 10 to 12, in *Sociometry* VI, No. 5, 1943.

²Moreno, J. L., M.D. "Who Shall Survive." *Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Co.* 1934. Quotes and Summary. Pages 325 and 327.