

"Psychodrama & Creativity: Introduction & Demonstration"

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Shepherd's Staff Training in Psychodrama

<http://www.sccc.com/psychodrama.htm>

January 26, 2007 9:45 am - 11:15 am (Part 1), 1:00 – 2:30 (Part 2)

The following is an outline to a presentation given at the Idaho Counselor Association Annual Conference, Developing our Creativity as Counselors -- Put Your Signature on the World, January 26-27, 2007. Html and PDF versions are also available.

Synopsis: Early on, J. L. Moreno (1889-1975), was struck by the creativity of children and this intrigue is at the core of Psychodrama, the approach he developed. Come to participate in this didactic, experiential, and question and answer session to the degree you are comfortable.

Participants will learn:

- The Morenian conception of creativity,
- How it is implemented in the psychodramatic enactment, and
- How it may be applied to other approaches and types of intervention.

Moreno's Early Encounter with Creativity

Early on Moreno was struck by the creativity and spontaneity of children and this intrigue is at the core of Psychodrama, the approach he developed. In his (Moreno 1983, pp. 3 - 4), "The Theatre of Spontaneity," in modified form in "Preludes to the Sociometric Movement" (1953, xvii-xix), and in his autobiography (Moreno, 1989, pp. 37-39), he identifies these experiences as playing a central role in his development of his approach, theories, and methods. He refers to "suffering" from an *idée fixe*, a French term for a mild obsession, not so much in the pathological sense, but rather more as a guiding vision" (Blatner, 1996b, p. 155). In his autobiography he states (Moreno, 1989),

Instead of talking to the children in plain language, I told them fairy tales. I discovered that I could never repeat the same fairy tale, that I felt an obligation to myself and to the children to maintain their sense of wonderment even when the plot was the same, to maintain myself on a level of spontaneity and creativity in order to live up to the rigorous demands of my creative ego, which did not give me the "prophetic license" for less. I watched with astonishment my transformations from a humdrum student into an adventurous prophet. I was aroused to greater deeds every day by the imaginative pleas of the children.

When I look at a child I see "yes, yes, yes, yes." they do not have to learn to say yes. *Being born is yes.* You see spontaneity in its living form. It is written all over the child, in his act-hunger, as he looks at things, as he listens to things, as he rushes into time, as he moves into space, as he grabs for objects, as he smiles and cries. In the very beginning, he sees no barriers in objects, no limits of distance, no resistances or prohibitions. But as objects hinder his locomotions and people respond to him with "no, no, no," he starts on his reactive phase, still reaching out, but with growing anxiety, fear, tension, and caution.

It was in my work with the children that my theories of spontaneity and creativity crystallized. Inevitably, the older the child the less spontaneous and less creative he was. The two factors, spontaneity and creativity went together. Also, I found that whenever a child repeated himself in the planning out of an idea or a dramatic sketch, his portrayals became more and more rigid.

I found deep meaning in children's Godplaying. . . .

From then on, one of my favorite pastimes was to sit at the foot of a large tree and let the children come and listen to a fairy tale. . . . It was not so much what I told them, the tales themselves, but it was the act, the atmosphere of mystery, the paradox, the becoming real of the unreal. . . .

The *idée fixe* became my constant source of productivity. It proclaimed that there is a sort of primordial nature which is immortal and returns afresh with every new generation, a first universe which contains all beings

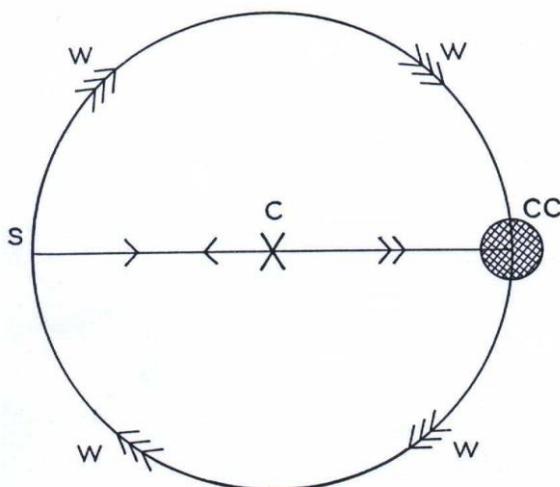
and in which all events are sacred. I liked that enchanting realm which was disclosed to me in the godplaying of children, and I have kept myself tied to it. I did not plan to leave it ever. . . .

Gradually the mood came over me that I should leave the realm of the children and move into the world, the larger world, but, of course, always retaining the vision which my work with the children had given me. I decided that the *idée fixe* should remain my guide. (p. 36-39)

Moreno's Canon of Creativity and Related Concepts

Canon of Creativity

Spontaneity-Creativity-Conserve



FIELD OF ROTATION OPERATIONS BETWEEN SPONTANEITY-CREATIVITY-CULTURAL CONSERVE (S-C-CC)

S – Spontaneity, C – Creativity, CC – Cultural (or any) Conserve (for instance, a biological conserve, i.e. an animal organism, or a cultural conserve, i.e., a book, a motion picture, or a robot, i.e., a calculating machine); W – Warming up is the “operational” expression of spontaneity. The circle represents the field of operations between S, C and CC.

Operation I: Spontaneity arouses Creativity, C. $S \rightarrow C$.

Operation II: Creativity is receptive to spontaneity. $S \leftarrow C$.

Operation III: From their interactions Cultural Conserve, CC result. $S \rightarrow C \rightarrow CC$.

Operation IV: Conserve (CC) would accumulate indefinitely and remain “in cold storage.” They need to be reborn, the catalyzer Spontaneity revitalizes them. $CC \rightarrow S \rightarrow CC$.

S does not operate in a vacuum, it moves either towards Creativity or towards Conserve.

Total Operation: Spontaneity-creativity-warming up – act $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{actor} \\ \text{conserve} \end{array} \right.$

Note. From “Who Shall Survive? Foundations of Sociometry, Group Psychotherapy, and Sociodrama (1st Student Edition)” (p.18), by J. L. Moreno, 1993, McLean, VA: Royal. Copyright 1993 by the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama. Reproduced and adapted with permission.

Spontaneity

Spontaneity is an unconservable energy. Energy in terms of cultural conserve can be saved and used at different points in time. Spontaneity is unconservable. “One either is spontaneous at a given moment or one is not” (Moreno, 1993, p. 19). “Spontaneity has the capacity for freshness, originality, and usefulness” (Hale, 1981, p. 6). Spontaneity is not mere impulsively. Moreno (1966, p.20) identified it as being pathological, stereotyped, or true.

1. Pathological spontaneity – this form of spontaneity is in evidence when a person makes a novel response to a situation but one which is not useful or adequate. For example, it might be novel to exit a building by walking backward, but by doing so, a person unable to see where the steps begin. Hardly useful or adequate.
2. Stereotyped spontaneity – ‘It consists of a spontaneous response which is adequate to the situation, but which lacks sufficient novelty or significant creativity to be fruitful to the situation. The comedian’s repetitive reaction to situation soon loses its novelty, and although it may continue to provoke some laughter, it soon ceases to be a spontaneous response.’
3. True spontaneity -- ‘Is a high grade creativity variety of genius. In this type here is an adequate response accompanied by characteristics that are both novel and creative . . . to be truly spontaneous, the results must be in some way new and useful for some purpose.’

Moreno’s action therapy, psychodrama, was designed to increase spontaneity and creativity.

Warm Up

The purpose of warming up in psychodrama is to enhance spontaneity and to prepare for a creative enactment. Blatner (1996a, p. 43) identifies four preconditions for spontaneous behavior in this regard:

- (1) a sense of trust and safety; (2) a receptivity to intuitions, images, feeling, and other non-rational mental processes; (3) a bit of playfulness—so one doesn't feel overidentified with the success of every move in the process-- and; (4) a movement toward risk-taking and exploration into novelty.

I have described my own warm-up for conducting psychodramatic enactments elsewhere, including the warm up of the director, the warm up of the group and various effective exercises (Pramann, 2005). In addition, I have edited and posted a list of warm up ideas for children and adolescents (Pramann, 2002).

1. Group warm up – Nudge your neighbor, five minutes each – in groups of two identify a time in the past in which you felt particularly creative. What was happening? What was happening internally for you? What was the result?
2. Is there a life experience that you would like to transform, or revisit to find a different ending, or to find a transcendent realization or value in the present that you might not have anticipated at the time in the past? I am not meaning to suggest how the drama may conclude or even what the value of it may end up being ultimately.
3. Perhaps you have a psychodrama that is much different from what I have suggested here. That would be OK too.
4. Warmed up spectrogram.
5. Sociometric choice.

Creativity in a Psychodramatic Enactment

Examples from a live and unrehearsed psychodramatic enactment. For the purpose and objectives of the presentation I will stop amidst the process to comment on the creative element at various points or have someone act as recorder and at the end of the drama go back and comment on my creative processes at various points.

Creativity with Other Approaches and Types of Intervention

Discussion with the audience.

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Rob Pramann, Ph.D., C.G.P., T.E.P., is the Director of Shepherd's Staff Training in Psychodrama, and Clinical Director of Shepherd's Staff Christian Counseling Center in Sandy, Utah. He is a licensed psychologist and certified as a Group Psychotherapist and a Trainer, Educator and Practitioner of Psychodrama. He has presented locally and nationally on psychodrama, taught graduate level courses, and has written a number of articles on psychodrama (see <http://www.sccc.com/articles.htm>).