

From Today, Tomorrow. Core Concepts of Psychodrama Revisited

*26th FEPTO Annual Meeting
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Jacob Levy Moreno

Birth 1889-05-18

44 years later...

Leave 1974-05-14

Meeting/Encounter 2018-05-14

Dear colleagues and friends, it's a great pleasure and a great honor for me to be invited at our 26th FEPTO Annual Meeting in Sofia to share with you my way of understanding and practicing Psychodrama and to present some of my thoughts linked with what I think are its core concepts, principles and values, through a shared with you co-creative and, I hope, enriching re-visiting process.

This FEPTO Meeting, which is aimed to be a meeting of recapitulation and somehow of reassessment of our method and of our organization, is even more significant and challenging for all of us because of the exactly 44 years that separate us from the time when Moreno has left us his Scientific, Psychotherapeutic and Humanistic legacy. (1889-05-18 - 1974-05-14)

Then I began growingly to realize that the *mind of God could not operate like the mind of a Buddhist or a psychoanalyst. Hovering over the chaos on the first day, he was there to create, not to take apart and to analyze. He may have become more of an analyst as the days of creation went on, or after it was all over-in moments of reverie or in moments of disillusionment with the result. If he had started with psychoanalysis he would hardly have begun to create anything, the world might have remained uncreated. Therefore, I conclude that God was first a creator, an actor, a psychodramatist? He had to create the world before he had the time, the need and inclination to analyze it.* (Preludes xvii)

I think, and the title of our Annual Meeting shows well, that we feel now to be in a position, when we are already having *the time, the need and the inclination to analyze it*, in the sense of exploring

and, if possible, creatively revisiting ourselves, our work and our method, through our own moments of *reverie and/or disillusionment*.

Today, I will focus my presentation only on Psychodrama, as part of the last, third phase of the sociometric period (1942/1952 xiv) in the development of Moreno's rich ideas on group psychotherapy and sociometry, and I will try to explore some of its core concepts, the way I understand them through my own experience and throughout my psychotherapeutic work till now.

I started with psychodrama from the top down. First it was axiodrama (1918), second came sociodrama (1921); psychodrama and its application to mental Disorders was the last stage of the development. (xxvi)

Psychodrama can be defined, therefore, as the science which explores the "truth" by dramatic methods. It deals with inter-personal relations and private worlds. (p. 81)

In order to "explore the "truth" by dramatic methods" I tried to put myself in the position of an action-researcher, following Moreno's sociometric and psychodramatic model, warming up myself to the theme through reading and questioning some Moreno's texts, (as well as some texts of A. Blatner, Jose Fonseca, Paul Holmes), then making many role reversals with their author(s) and with the content of the different concepts as well, and finally, trying to maintain a reflecting and self-reflecting stance during these processes, from the position of a director and conductor as well.

During this internal questioning I tried to make use of these same core concepts and of my own basic therapeutic assumptions, first, as my main tools for doing this re-visiting-work; second, as elements and aims of my revisiting activity per se; and third, as the final results of this same revisiting activity. In this sense, I could say that I tried to open myself to an ongoing circular process of Visiting-Unvisiting and Revisiting our core concepts and methodological assertions, looking at them as some sort of heuristic cultural conserves.

So, which are these basic, core, structural and structuring, establishing and developing Therapeutic Assertions, Basic Assumptions, Implicit Theories and unconditional Myths, of and about Psychodrama, lying in the foundations of our professional identity and of our representative organization - FEPTO, that could be, and, as the theme of our meeting supposes, need to be, revisited?

Almost all of the interrelated Moreno's concepts as: spontaneity, creativity and co-creativity, warm up, the here and now, tele, encounter, action and co-action etc. are very widely accepted, appreciated, studied and recognized as therapeutically inestimable, for their strong heuristic potential,

enabling a creative exploration, understanding and development of the human psyche and of human and social relationships.

Still, for the aims of this presentation, I decided to focus my attention only on some of them, according to my actual understanding, (as psychodramatist and psychoanalyst), of their theoretical and therapeutical importance, as well as of my view of the potential benefit from their reformulation, without pretending to have explored them sufficiently in dept, and grouping them in three main clusters:

- 1. The Canon of Creativity and the Spontaneous Creative Matrix**
- 2. The Meeting / Encounter**
- 3. The Cultural, the Social and the Role Atoms**

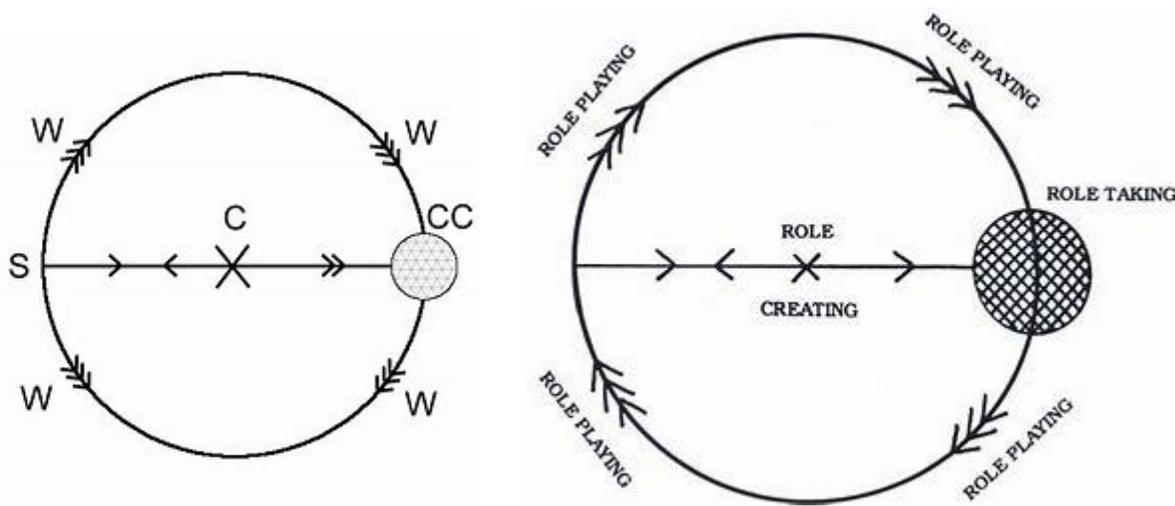
In revisiting and re-exploring these clusters of very basic concepts of our Method, I tried most of all to stay as faithful to my therapeutic experience as I have been able to, and to interpret my own internal questioning with critical neutrality, avoiding, as much as it was possible for me, to make definitive statements when expressing my own ideas, with some of which I still do not completely agree, but which I decided to expose at your creative and critical reasoning, in order to test their viability and potential usefulness.

So, during my presentation, I will also formulate and open for discussion three personal theoretical proposals, linked with the discussed subjects, that I have structured as:

- 4. The principle of Psychic Conflictuality, as being the psycho and socio – dynamic core of Spontaneity and Creativity**
- 5. The principle of Neutrality, as a reflective and self-reflective stance allowing equidistance and equicloseness during the psychotherapeutic process**
- 6. The Atom of the role**

I will close my presentation with **an impromptu S W O T - analysis of the Psychodrama Method**, hoping this way to create some thought-bridges towards the forthcoming themes of our small working groups during this Annual Meeting.

1. The Canon of Creativity and the Spontaneous Creative Matrix



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 -> C**

Operation II – Creativity is receptive to Spontaneity. **C <- S**

Operation III – From their interactions Cultural Conserves, **CC** result.

S – C – CC

Operation IV – Conserves (CC) would accumulate indefinitely and remain “in cold storage.” They need to be reborn, the catalyzer Spontaneity revitalize them. **CC -> >> S -> >> CC.**

S does not operate in a vacuum. It moves either towards Creativity or towards Conserves.

Total Operation: Spontaneity – Creativity – Warming up – Act } Actor
Conserve

The canon of creativity has four phases: creativity, spontaneity, warming up process and conserve (See diagram) . Spontaneity is the catalyzer. Creativity is the elementary X, it is without any specialized connotation, the X which may be recognized by its acts. In order to become effective, it (the sleeping beauty) needs a catalyzer-spontaneity. The operational manifestation of the interacting spontaneity-creativity is the warming up process. As far as is known the only products of such interactions are the conserves. (p. 45-47) (46 is the diagram)

Spontaneity, Creativity

When God created the world, He started off by making every being a machine. He made one machine push the other and the whole universe ran like a machine. That seemed to be comfortable, safe and smooth. But then He thought it over. He smiled and put just an ounce of spontaneity into each of the machines and this has made for endless trouble ever since — and for endless enjoyment. (Preludes xvii)

Since the beginning of his work, Moreno is describing spontaneity as a divine living force, as a humanizing spirit, but putting it, at the same time, as implicitly conflictually linked with the comfortable, safe and smooth “mechanic” aspects of our human nature – revealing this way the presence of an inextricable intrinsic and structuring psychic conflictuality – “for endless troubles and for endless enjoyment”.

I will try to show, that throughout his theorization and development of the concept, Moreno was constantly trying to resolve, and if possible, to overcome this implicit conflict, more often through splitting and through relying on his deeply wished and trusted nonconflictual personal and social realm to come, only for finally getting back again to the inextricably conflictual, “unresolvable” and complex nature of spontaneity – the one of a **psychic construct of conflictual order**.

My contention was that religion should be tried again, a religion of a new sort... My position was threefold: first, the hypothesis of spontaneity-creativity as a propelling force in human progress, beyond and independent from libido and socio-economic motives which does not deny the fact that they are frequently interwoven, but which does deny the contention that they are merely a function and a derivative; second, the hypothesis of having faith in our fellowmen's intentions-outside of obedience resulting from physical and legalistic coercion-the hypothesis of love and mutual sharing as a powerful, indispensable working principle in group life; and third, the hypothesis of a superdynamic community based upon these principles which can be brought to realization through newer techniques. (Preludes xv)

As a consistent researcher Moreno is delineating his hypothesis from some of the widely spread scientific concepts of his time, and then he is insisting again on it's almost divine and positive nature, trying this way, I think, to find a quick short-cut and a definitive solution to the deranging conflict he has just discerned as lying at the heart of his own divine metaphor, by relying explicitly and with faith on the possibility of the realization of an nonconflictual, even if superdynamic, personal and social life.

He continues, by focusing now his theoretical reflections on sexuality, as the core assumption of the psychoanalytical system, the way he understands and interprets it.

The key concept of the Freudian system is the libido. But Freud, instead of associating sex with "spontaneity", associated it with anxiety, insecurity, abreaction, frustration and substitution. His system shows strong inclinations towards the negative and for negation, a tendency which grew stronger in him with age. Even sexuality...

he studied in its negative rather than in its positive aspects. It was not the sexual actor and his warm up towards orgasm, it was not sexual intercourse and the interaction of two in its positive unfoldment, but rather the miscarriages of sex, its deviations and displacements, its pathology rather than its normality, to which he gave his attention. Surely, he hoped that by showing up the calamities in the course of analysis, a healthy sexual life, liberated from its shackles, will emerge. (Preludes 1ii)

The psychoanalytic system suffers from a negative bias which gives a sour taste to all the appetites and aspirations of man. (Preludes 1iii)

Now we can see how a deep sense of conflictuality enters "the scene of the mind" of Moreno, but experienced as almost completely external, objectified and split into the positive and the negative aspects of the unfolding conflict between psychodrama and psychoanalysis, and not as much as an internal, dialectical, intrapsychic conflict between the sexuality, lived as a "warm up towards orgasm", at one side, and it's anxiogenic psychic counterparts at the other.

The classic sociometric test was so constructed that it was able to measure the conflict between the existing configuration of a group and that configuration which is really wanted by the members of the group (Preludes 1xxi)

The spontaneity-counterspontaneity chain between protagonist, director and audience has to be kept in constant flow in the here and now of the production in order to attain the maximum of involvement and unity of all the participants concerned. The spontaneity of one is a function of the spontaneity of the other. A decrease or loss in the spontaneity of one may produce a decrease or loss of spontaneity of the other of the three chief agents of production, protagonist, director and audience. (Preludes 1xxiv)

Moreno is clearly sensitive towards social and group conflicts but is again rather hesitant in admitting them on the individual and on the intrapsychic level, especially as inherent to the level of spontaneity. When describing the interpersonal aspects of the sponataneity-counterspontaneity's complementary

dynamic process, he is showing it as flow, mutually influenced by all the participants, a flow which can increase or decrease, but as if in a nonconflictual way, with a special emphasis on the here and now.

But inevitably conflictuality reapers soon, this time as clearly intrapsychic and under the form of the contradiction located between Spontaneity and Creativity themselves, both having the strong potential to become even diametrically opposite forces:

Spontaneity and creativity are not identical or similar processes. They are different categories, although strategically linked. In the case of Man his s may be diametrically opposite to his c; an individual may have a high degree of spontaneity but be entirely uncreative, a spontaneous idiot. Another individual may have a high degree of creativity but be entirely without spontaneity, a creator "without arms". God is an exceptional case because in God all spontaneity has become creativity. He is one case in which spontaneity and creativity are identical. At least, in the world of our experience we may never encounter pure spontaneity or pure cultural conserves, they are functions of one another. The universe is infinite creativity. The visible definition of creativity is the "child." (p. 39)

Confronted with this situation, Moreno is trying once more to outline a possible nonconflictual intrapsychic solution, in which the described opposite forces could be in perfect harmony, or even identical, as it could be in the case of God, in the infinity of the Universe, and to a great extent in the case of the "Child". This way, the Child, as a new metaphor, becomes the bearer of the somehow nonconflictual, purely creative and deeply wished by Moreno state of divine harmony, as if counterbalancing the "endless troubles", immanent in the act of creation of spontaneity itself, deciphered by him earlier.

And then, it seems that Moreno decides to locate the conflictuality inside the struggle between the Individual and the whole (past) culture, giving to this ongoing conflict its final representation in the Cultural Conserve, trying again to find a secure nonconflictual place for his wished better world, and finding it in the first universe of man, the paradise lost, which has to be rediscovered through spontaneity and to return in a circular infinitum - *every first universe was a second universe to a still earlier universe, and so ad infinitum.*(p. 40):

The struggle with the cultural conserves is profoundly characteristic of our whole culture; it expresses itself in various forms of trying to escape from them. The effort to escape from the conserved world appears like an attempt to return to paradise lost, the first universe of man, which has been substituted step-by-step and overlapped by the second universe in which we live today. (p. 41)

Now, having split and located the conflict's source somehow outside the Man, Moreno feels free to elaborate further on his very heuristic and meaningful concept, without (as if) having to deal anymore with heavy obstacles of intrapsychic nature.

Spontaneity operates in the present, now and here; it propels the individual towards an adequate response to a new situation or a new response to an old situation. It is strategically linked in two opposite directions, to automatism and reflexivity, as well as to productivity and creativity. It is, in its evolution, older than libido, memory or intelligence. Although the most universal and evolutionarily the oldest, it is the least developed among the factors operating in Man's world; it is most frequently discouraged and restrained by cultural devices. (p. 42)

This split-solution gives the freedom to Moreno to assert spontaneity as a nonconflictual, primordial and universal propelling force in this new, externalized conflictual situation with the discouraging culture. But even then, he wants once again to protect his idea *that there is a sort of primordial nature which is immortal and returns afresh with every generation*, and he reasserts that cultural devices could discourage and restrain Man's spontaneity, but evidently, not to stop or to destroy it.

It is as if Spontaneity needs only to be warmed up and it will operate nonconflictually, by itself, with no alternative, like a catalyzer and a searchlight for the most appropriate human emotions, thoughts and actions:

Spontaneity propels a variable degree of satisfactory response which an individual manifest in a situation of variable degree of novelty. The warming up process is the operational expression of spontaneity. Spontaneity and warming up process operate on all levels of human relations, eating, walking, sleeping, sexual intercourse, social communication, creativity, in religious self realization and asceticism. (p. 42)

Spontaneity is available in varying degrees of readiness, from zero to maximum, operating like a catalyzer. Thus he (the man) has, when faced with a novel situation, no alternative but to use the s factor as a guide or searchlight, prompting him as to which emotions, thoughts and actions are most appropriate. (p. 43)

But then, a very crucial question arises:

But what is spontaneity? Is it a kind of energy? If it is energy it is unconservable, if the

meaning of spontaneity should be kept consistent. We must, therefore, differentiate between two varieties of energy, conservable and unconservable energy. There is an energy which is conservable in the form of "cultural" conserves, which can be saved up, which can be spent at will in selected parts and used at different points in time; it is like a robot at the disposal of its owner. (p. 47)

This questioning is crucial, from my point of view, because it reopens the theme of the inherent conflict in spontaneity, "spontaneously" shown by Moreno till his first metaphor about the humanization of the machines. It reopens it by relocating it again on the internal, intrapsychic scene, as it happened before between Spontaneity and Creativity, but this time the conflict is seen more as some kind of internal circulation and transformation going on *between the unconservable spontaneity which is spent in a moment, which must emerge to be spent and which must be spent to make place for emergence, and the conservable energy, in form of a "cultural" conserves*, which becomes once again, astonishingly, the machine itself – the robot!

At that moment Moreno is put in front of the same dilemma that Freud faced, when having to decide about the nature of the libido, and finally naming it as one of the "witches" of his theory. Which means that he had to acknowledge it more as a metaphorical scaffolding construction, needed in order to describe and to explore the very complex aspects of the psychic structuring, development and functioning.

The dilemma of Moreno looks very similar. The machine, the robot, has to be simultaneously the body, the "pushing" and "inter-pushing" corps, before the adding of Spontaneity, and in the same time, it has to be the cultural conserve as well, which is holding cultural meanings for this same body, after the adding of Spontaneity and Creativity. We are in front of the dilemma of the birth and the development of the psychic life in and through the body, the dilemma of **the processes of progressive symbolization and mentalization of the soma and of the progressive structuration of the somatic roles**, circulating between *inter-personal relations and private worlds*, and progressively transforming the somatic body into a psychic body - into an internally conflictual, represented and representing body, which opens its already "psyche-zed" space for the future roles in the role matrix to come. (for J. Fonseca it is *an energetic body* which emerges as the result of the interaction between *the physical and the psychological body*)

Then Moreno hesitates once again on the same topic: are the cultural conserves *a robot at the disposal of its Owner*, or they are *the crutches of the insecure, instable and inadequate Slave Organism*? Are we slaves or owners of ourselves through our role matrix, and could we help the transformation of the first into the second? Moreno seems once more prone to make use of a splitting and to see spontaneity and cultural achievements essentially in opposition:

In the past he (man) has done everything to discourage its (spontaneity) development. He could not rely upon the instability and insecurity of the moment, with an organism which was not ready to deal with it adequately; he encouraged the development of devices as intelligence, memory, social and cultural conserves, which would give him the needed support with the result that he gradually became the slave of his own crutches. (p. 47)

From this, somehow ambiguous point of view, the last attempt of Moreno to make even bigger the distance between his theoretical concepts of spontaneity and creativity, and the psychoanalytical approach towards the very similar unconscious phenomenon, and to reassert the split between the “lowest” and the “highest”, sounds not very convincing:

If the nineteenth century looked for the "lowest" common denominator of mankind, the unconscious, the twentieth century discovered, or rediscovered its "highest" common denominator-spontaneity and creativity. (p. 48)

Before continuing with my own considerations about these same theoretical and clinical issues, I will try, as a summary, to formulate some wide-spread nonconflictual “basic assumptions” about S-C that I have found implicitly and explicitly present in many psychodrama texts and during many workshops, and which I think derive directly from the presented above efforts of Moreno to find some kind of a more definitive and nonconflictual solution to the circular dilemma he faced.

The Canon of Creativity and the Spontaneous Creative Matrix – basic assumptions:

- The Action and the co-Action (e.g. the (W) Warming-up) are generators of positive energy for change per se;
- The Spontaneity (S) is a “searched for” natural force (or energy), repressed by cultural devices, that has to be opened and stimulated (to listen to the child within) through the warming up in action;
- The Creativity (C) is a natural and positive phenomenon which tends to be conserved, and needs only to be de-conserved and re-awaken;
- The Cultural Conserve (CC), is the repository of the end products of all creative acts, and it impedes at moments the spontaneous and creative functioning;

I will try to revisit the proposed by Moreno somehow “split based” solution between Man and his *crutches*, by applying a more “conflict and compromise based” approach, and will try to make, I hope, a constructive use of some of the discoveries of psychoanalysis, as many other psychodramatists have done as well, hoping not to spread too much *sour taste to all the appetites and aspirations of man*.

In what follows, I will not deal with the theories of learning, performing, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, self-efficacy, self-reflection etc., which are defining spontaneity as an intrinsic motivational

energy, more prone to psychological measurement and assessment, and which have been very creatively used by many authors and researchers. I will focus mainly on conflictuality.

My psychodrama as well as my psychoanalytical practice till now have shown me through every group and with every patient, the inescapable conflictual and ambivalent complexity of our Human Desires and the ensuing Roles, which doesn't *lower* them, neither does turn them into *negativity*. This is why I'm looking at the anxieties arising in connection with these needs and desires, incl. the sexual ones, as signs of some non-resolved and not metabolized intrapsychic conflictual tendencies, aroused by the interpersonal co-action, that need to be explored, worked-through and elaborated, rather than as elements preventing or facilitating spontaneity, that could be solely positively or negatively appreciated and/or stimulated in the here and now of the moment. From this point of view, I think that Spontaneity and Creativity are surely not *merely a function and a derivative*, as Moreno feared, but rather a **very complex conflictual constructions and compromise formations**, which seems, for me, to make more understandable the very strong psychic resistances involved against their change - the very "conservative" character of the Cultural Conserves described by Moreno through "the fear of fire":

*man fears spontaneity,
just like his ancestor in the jungle feared fire; he feared
fire until he learned how to make it. Man will fear spontaneity
until he will learn how to train it. (p. 47)*

In other words – I think that *we need not to fear "fire"*, but to accept the very complex and conflictual character of "spontaneity", arising in each concrete situation as a compromise formation and as a final momentary result of the constant intrapsychic interplay between the many conflictual oppositions in our psyche – between inside and outside, between the primary and the secondary psychic processes, between the omnipotence, governed by the pleasure principle and the reality itself, represented psychically through the reality principle, between the (o)positions of Narcissus and Oedipus, etc. - from one side, and between our own role matrix, and the one needed and shown by the Other in the interpersonal encounter, from the other, resulting on a descriptive level in an "attitude of the mind", as A. Blatner has put it. From this point of view, we could assert that Spontaneity and Creativity are not linked in a circular repetitive way at infinitum but are dialectically evolving and are both prone to mutual mutative changes.

This is why we could conceptualize Spontaneity not as much as an independent intrinsic "energy" (or factor, or attitude) operating in the human psyche and mind, *before or beyond the libido* formation (the way it could be seen only at the phenomenological, descriptive level of inquiry), but most of all as the consequence of a very complex conflictual psychic compromise formation. In this sense, ***spontaneity could be seen much more as a very complex psychic result, than as a psychic cause in itself***, a psychic construct, a capacity that could indeed be fostered, and in this sense *trained*, and which is experienced only on the conscious and behavioral level as *a propelling force in human progress*. This is why I think that spontaneity can only descriptively be "high", "low", "lost" or "blocked" in a cultural conserve. Psychodynamically it has to be considered as a psychic capacity which is "conflictualised", "constructed" and trained, as Moreno has put it, throughout our whole life, starting from the pre-symbolic *automatism*

and reflexivity (of human needs and desires), mentioned by him, and being subjected to successive transformations through our consecutive life achievements and losses, incarnated finally in the different roles, that we are prone to recognize at the social level as entities in themselves, as a-tomos or cultural conserves (through the whole process of “humanization” of the machine-robot). These conflictualised desires and primary phantasies, arising from and during the different positions and phases of our psychic development, with their ensuing object relations and psychic compromise formations, are associated, intertwined and enmeshed in such a way, that they are activated simultaneously in each given concrete situation as specific roles, with their specific atoms of the roles. (I will come back on this topic a little bit later). **We are to “choose” unconsciously (and that is what we use to call spontaneity) which of them to privilege in each concrete situation**, according to the interpersonal and intersubjective specificity of the unfolding process in the “here and now” of the encounter, from one hand, and of the intrapsychic economy and the activated object relational matrix and intrapsychic defensive operations, based on the “there and then”, from the other.

Even the “child’s Spontaneity and Creativity”, to which we are so frequently referring when discussing how to “re-learn” spontaneity, could not be seen as a pure culture of “innocence” and “spontaneous spontaneity”, but again as a complex conflictual psychic construction, which is not based only on some child’s primary “creative per se” capacity - “the realm of childlike multi-potentiality” of A. Blatner, which will be progressively “discouraged and restrained by cultural devices”. In order not to miss the complexity of the process we need to take also into account the child’s helplessness, with the ensuing very complex intrapsychic transformations and compromise formations that she or he will need to build through the vicissitudes of her or his needs and desires during her or his very early intersubjective and interpersonal experiences with the primary objects. It is of crucial importance to assert after Moreno, that as human beings, **we need obligatory to pass through the interpersonal and the intersubjective encounters in order to form, develop and gain access to our intrapsychic (intrasubjective) world**, as well as part of the normal psychic and emotional development of the infant (the matrix of identity), as of the whole life process and of the psychotherapeutic relationships.

The consequences of this reformulation of the concept of Spontaneity should lead, on the level of the therapeutic practice, to the conclusion that in order to “stimulate” a specific aspects of the protagonist’s spontaneity in some concrete situations of the psychodrama encounter, we need to arrange the scene in such a way, that could be helpful for the resolution of the underlying conflict/s that are overdetermining the spontaneity’s “blockage”, through opening a sufficient space for the working-through and elaboration of it’s phantasmatic, objectal and defensive corollary, which, I think, gives back all its psychological importance to the complex process of doing-undoing-redoing during the psychodramatic process.

It’s very important to notice also that **spontaneity and especially creativity, according to me, could be apprehended as such only in the afterwards/après-coup/nachträglichkeit of the encounter** and of the psychodrama enactment. In the moment of spontaneity and of action/co-action itself, the interaction/s are subjectively lived as “pure” acts/re-acts, thoughts and emotions, very close to what Moreno has so

abundantly described. I think that this point of view over the psychodrama enactments could shed some additional light over the crucial importance of the process of sharing.

The concept of afterwards is especially important as a tool when working with some patients and protagonists, for whom the acted-out “spontaneity” is the expression of a not sufficiently mentalized intrapsychic and interpersonal tensions which are finding expression directly in some behavioral motor discharge, or more silently, into the “somatic” body, through severe medical conditions (as manifestation of the pure activity of “pushing” of the robots-machines, before the adding of spontaneity and meaning). In these cases of non-neurotic patients, the seeming spontaneity is rather the expression of a repetition compulsion, and/or a form of traumatic repetition, without reachable symbolic meaning, and could be understood and worked-through, if ever, only in and through the afterwards/après-coup, and through the attentive elaboration of the tele experiences of the therapist and of the whole group.

It is especially for this kind of patients that the term “acting-out” is reserved in psychoanalysis, and this is why the Morenian idea of psychodrama as an “acting-out” has been a source of so many misunderstandings, especially when used as synonymous to every enactment in psychodrama. For me it is important to make a very clear theoretical and clinical distinction between the 1) acting-out as a Play, with all its transitional intrapsychic and intersubjective symbolic complexity, which was mainly the sense that Moreno gave to acting-out, and 2) the acting-out as an unconscious Repetition compulsion, which partially or fully lacks symbolization, and 3) the acting-out as a pretended spontaneity, hiding almost conscious aggressive and destructive impulses of vengeance and envy in search of an omnipotent control and triumph, where the play could be a perverse enactment.

In other words, we should keep in mind the differences between Subjective-Objects, Transitional Objects and Fetish-Objects, trying as much as we can to Play on the stage instead of “repeating”. I think, that the repetition compulsion deserves to the full extend the definition of Conserve, but one which is outside and beyond the Culture!

It seems that Moreno was also aware of these kind of therapeutic challenges, when he wrote:

We psychodramatists are not afraid to act out our thoughts and feelings in a form appropriate to their dynamic content. The problem is not the acting out; it is rather whether the actor has the equipment with which to perform and has learned to keep what he performs within the bounds of his equipment. (Preludes xcvi)

This equipment, for me, resides mainly in the development of the symbolizing and compromise formation psychic capacity. And we should agree with Moreno when he’s saying that *The only way to get rid of the "God syndrome" is to act it out* . (xix), but by adding – to act it out not as an unconscious repetition, but through its representation and symbolization in the Play. From this point of view, **the main curative factor in Psychodrama shifts from the spontaneous action per se, to the relational**

intersubjective matrix given as a symbolized and symbolizing opportunity for the transformational intrapsychic processes in the protagonist to take place during the psychodramatic enactment.

Moreno has described with impressive professional lucidity and in a very moving way this hard-therapeutic work, accepting, this time clearly, on the clinical level, the therapeutic value of psychodrama as symbolizing and symbolized compromise formation. I will quote him in length:

*According to psychodramatic theory a considerable part of the psyche is not language-ridden, it is not infiltrated by the ordinary, significant language symbols. Therefore, bodily contact with subjects, if it can be established, touch caress, embrace, hand shake, sharing in silent activities, eating, walking or other activities, are an important preliminary to psychodramatic work itself. Bodily contact, body therapy and body training continue to operate in the psychodramatic situation. An elaborate system of production techniques has been developed by means of which the director and his auxiliary egos push themselves into the subject's world, populating it with figures extremely familiar to him, with the advantage, however, that they are not delusionary **but half imaginary, half real**. Like good and bad genii, they shock and upset him at times, at other times they surprise and comfort him. He finds himself, as if trapped, in a near-real world. He sees himself acting, he hears himself speaking, but his actions and thoughts, his feelings and perceptions do not come from him, they come, strangely enough, from another person, the psychodramatist, and from other persons, the auxiliary egos, the doubles and mirrors of his mind. (p. 87)*

In order to conclude this part of my presentation, I want to propose to define the position that I have elaborated above as the **principle of Psychic Conflictuality, understood as being the psycho and socio – dynamic core of the human's Spontaneity and Creativity.**

Before continuing my theoretical journey through the concepts of the Encounter and Roles, and as a consequence of the proposed above basic principle of psychic conflictuality, I think that it is important to make also an as clear as possible differentiation between the conscious and the unconscious (and the co-unconscious) aspects present explicitly and implicitly in our professional theorization and in all our concepts. I think that we strongly need to “validate” the subjectively unknown aspects of our intrapsychic, interpersonal and social life as unconscious and to accept this double sided, conflictual, conscious-unconscious presence in all the elements of our psychic functioning, and also in all the elements of the Canon of spontaneity, as well as in all the instruments and techniques of Psychodrama. I'm aware that what I'm proposing sounds self-evident and self-obvious, just a truism, but we have to remember the contrast that Moreno drew between *the "lowest" common denominator of mankind, the unconscious, and its "highest" common denominator-spontaneity and creativity.* So, through revisiting

this assertion, I hope to give some additional support to our continuous efforts through the years to combine the "lowest" and the "highest" as much as possible, and to put both simultaneously at work, in order to build a stronger therapeutic system – as Moreno has put it - *Freud was a great scientist but a poor poet . System building requires a combination of both gifts. (1v)*

Moreno himself tried also to overcome this splitting by making some constructive use of the concept of unconscious (and co-unconscious):

The unconscious lives on as a byproduct of the warming up process. (Preludes 1iv)

and also:

The dynamic logic of social relations is particularly intricate and has remained unconscious with Man because of his maximal proximity and involvement in his own situation

It takes enormous sacrifice and discipline to view and accept himself as he is as an individual man, the structure of the individual psyche, its psycho-dynamics; but the degree of invisibility of the structure of human society, of its sociodynamics is much greater than that of the single individual. (p. 73)

An important consequence from this "validation" of the Unconscious in our practice, I hope, could be to increase our sensibility towards the importance of working especially with these unconscious and co-unconscious aspects of the psychic reality on a personal and group level. (I will come back later on to the topic of the dimensions of the therapeutic process)

2. The Meeting / Encounter

"Meeting" means more than a vague interpersonal relation. It means that two or more actors meet, but not only to face one another, but to live and experience each other, as actors each in his own right. (p. 65)

But from the point of view of the meeting (the division between one-way role and two-way role relation) would develop into something which is certainly more human and perhaps more salutary than a psychoanalytic situation -into a meeting between two people, each with his various roles and aspirations. It would develop into a dramatic encounter, a phenomenon which with some modifications I later called the psychodramatic situation...each in his "role,"... (p. 66)

And the well-known poem "Invitation to a Meeting":

*"A meeting of two: eye to eye, face to face.
And when you are near, I will tear your eyes out*

*and place them instead of mine,
and you will tear my eyes out
and will place them instead of yours,
then I will look at you with your eyes
and you will look at me with mine." (Preludes xxxi)*

The theory of interpersonal relations is based upon the "primary dyad," the idea and experience of the meeting of two actors, the concrete-situational event preliminary to all interpersonal relations. (p. 64)

(The social experiment) starts with "you" and "me," with meetings and encounters, with actors and counteractors. Science of action begins with two verbs, - to be and to create, and with three nouns, actors, spontaneity and creativity. A collective of actors has a different meaning than a collectivity of organisms, it is a "we," not a "they," it is a "creatocracy," not a universe of interacting organisms...(p. 74)

Probably this is one of the greatest merit of Moreno, to have redirected the psychotherapeutic thinking and practice in the direction of the importance of the interpersonal and intersubjective experiences, which have, especially during the very early developmental stages of the infant, within *the "primary dyad"*, a decisive and crucial importance for the whole subsequent psychic growth and identity formation (matrix of identity). The influence of his heuristic ideas went far beyond the comprehension of these early developmental stages and of the matrix of identity, and led, as we know, to numerous developments in many other psychotherapeutic fields, and in psychoanalysis as well.

The Meeting /Encounter – basic assumption

- The basic positions in the meeting are symmetrical, reciprocal and reversible

If we take the conflictuality as an organizing principle in the psychic realm, incl. in spontaneity and creativity, we will have to acknowledge **the basic asymmetry** of the different intrapsychic positions and roles from which each Meeting/Encounter in the here and now is taking place during our lifecycle, as well as the profound irreversibility of some of those positions - that is to say, we have to acknowledge the influence of the reality principle and of the reality itself (be it biological, psychological, social, cultural, structural or anthropological)- in the sense of accepting the limits of our psychic omnipotence, with the ensuing and structuring emergence of the difference between Beings, Sexes and Generations. We should have to admit being first sons and daughters, before becoming fathers and mothers, and only then - fathers of our fathers and mothers.

Even the Surplus reality should admit, accept and obey to its own Reality principle in order to move and to evolve from pure Action/activity, through Spontaneity to a constructive Creativity. It seems, for me, that Moreno used the concept of "truth", which he put at the core of his science, in this sense.

Apprehended from this angle, the encounter could be revisited in order to include not only the double reversible direction and interplay of the interpersonal and the intersubjective exchanges in *The tele-empathy-transference complex* (p. 87), but also to allow the fundamentally asymmetric and triangulated human desires and the ensuing sexuality, with all their inherent conflictuality, to enter the Psychic and the Psychodramatic Scene with its *three chief agents of production - protagonist, director and audience* (1xxiv). That means to acknowledge, that every meeting of two could at least be a meeting of three, where the third is psychically present in the mind of the protagonists, as the result of the unconscious and conflictual internal identifications of each of the actors with both of her/his parents and/or caregivers during his development and identity matrix formation. And that these three co-actors occupy different psychic places and are playing different asymmetric roles as well in the reality of their encounters, as, and especially, in the intrapsychic unconscious world and phantasies of each of them, having been themselves raised in similar triads, and this way, as Moreno has put it – at infinitum.

I think, and my practice has proved it, that the potential danger when taking a priori the meeting position as dyadic, reciprocal and internally symmetric and when behaving as therapists in accordance with this assumption, precisely because of the possible unconscious disappearance of the third-ness, it could easily lead to a therapeutic situation which could be experienced as being too close or symbiotic for the patient/protagonist, and be lived as potentially seductive, due to the internal, conflictual structure of our desires and spontaneity, that I tried to discern till now. In situations like this, the proposed by Moreno *bodily contact with subjects, touch caress, embrace, hand shake, sharing in silent activities, eating, walking or other activities*, viewed as *important preliminary to psychodramatic work itself*, could be experienced as strongly confusing.

During our Psychodramatic work in the group or on the stage, in order to overcome or to resolve some stronger resistances towards psychic changes (due to some “rigidity” or “elasticity” of the cultural conserves) and to stimulate actors’ spontaneity and creativity, it’s not seldom that we use explicitly or implicitly permissive, and in this sense charged with seductive potential, propositions and suggestions through our role-authority as directors. We are frequently making spontaneous or deliberate self-disclosures through sharing our spontaneous associations or our emotional experiences, we are making indirect (and sometimes even direct) proposals or advice giving through doubling and scene proposing, as well as through many other different supportive interventions during the play, which could also bias our therapeutic results.

Even our basic statement - “In Psychodrama everything is possible, so you can...” could be seen then as containing in itself a potentially confusing proposition, some kind of a seductive permission for the fulfillment of our most spontaneous and creative, but also most deep, strong and repressed desires, which are, in their final unconscious essence, our most conflictual, forbidden and feared desires as well. (otherwise, again, it could be difficult to explain the strong resistances against any changes in our Cultural Conserves.) In fact, it is in Imagination and in Fantasy that everything is possible, and when used creatively through the Psychodramatic Play, these psychic faculties could lead to a deep and emotional

psychotherapeutic transformational process, described so vividly by Moreno in his Canon of spontaneity.

On the other end of the director's role-spectrum could be found a very authoritarian and imperative professional position of a Master, which could again lead to a potentially "atomic" disaster, when not used in an appropriate manner:

*highly directive sociodrama can be used
for the indoctrination of any set of values, religious, communistic
or fascist.*
*One may think here of the atomic bomb; the bomb is neutral,
it does not take sides, it will serve the one who has it, the master. (Preludes xci)*

In order to try to counterbalance the mentioned above therapeutic pitfalls in our professional encounters and to conclude this second part of my presentation, I want to propose to enrich our professional role-atom as Psychodrama directors with **the principle of Neutrality, understood as a reflective and self-reflective professional stance, allowing psychic equidistance and equicloseness.**

This explicit and self-renewable neutrality, (as an ongoing internal work of reflection and self-reflection), should give its additional support to the neutrality, gained during the first meetings, by sustaining the initial "freedom from biases", needed in order to keep all the spontaneity of the actors at the disposal of the ongoing therapeutic process.

*I did not want to see or know anything about the people in advance,
so as to keep all my own and their spontaneity free for the moment
of meeting. It was to be a meeting at first sight. I wanted to be
as free from bias towards them as possible from the start of the
session and I wanted the group with which I was going to work
to be equally free of bias towards me. (Preludes 1xxii)*

3. The Cultural, the Social and the Role Atoms

Moreno has coined and has elaborated as interrelated the concepts of the social atom, the cultural atom and the role atom.

*A pattern of attractions, repulsions and indifferences can be
discerned on the threshold between individual and group.
This pattern is called the "social atom". It is the smallest functional unit within
the social group...*
*Every individual, just as he is the focus of numerous attractions
and repulsions, also appears as the focus of numerous roles which*

are related to the roles of other individuals.... (p. 69)

(Every individual) also has a range of roles and a range of counter-roles . They are in various stages of development. The tangible aspects of what is known as "ego" are the roles in which he operates. The focal pattern of role-relations around an individual is called his cultural atom... (which is) the smallest functional unit within a cultural pattern..The socioatomic organization of a group cannot be separated from its cultural-atomic organization. The social and cultural atom are manifestations of the same social reality. (p. 70)

Role emergence is prior to the emergence of the self. Roles do not emerge from the self, but the self may emerge from roles ...Long before language linked roles emerge in the child's world, "psychosomatic roles" operate effectively (for instance, the role of the eater, the sleeper and the walker).(p. 79)

Working with the "role" as a point of reference appears to be a methodological advantage as compared with "personality" or "ego." These are less concrete and wrapped up in metapsychological mystery. (p. 75)

The sociometric matrix consists of various constellations, tele, the atom, the superatom or molecule (several atoms linked together), the "socioid" which may be defined as a cluster of atoms linked together with other clusters of atoms via inter-personal chains or networks; (p. 81)

Following a line of clinical reasoning, (which I recently found not to be very far from Jose Fonseca's developmental ideas linked with Moreno's matrix of identity), from some years I'm trying to develop **the concept of the "Atom of the role"**, investing my efforts to make more evident as well the conflictual and unconscious intrapsychic parts of the role itself, as its more conscious and explicitly or implicitly "prescribed" normative and social counterparts. I hope that this approach will give us the possibility to get even more closer to *the "truth" of the inter-personal relations and of the private worlds*

According to my understanding, the Role could be defined as a consistent, sustainable, dynamic and mainly unconscious construct (atom, complex), structured from:

- Unconscious desires/needs for/from the Other/s
- Unconscious phantasies, linked with these desires/needs (a kind of proto-roles)
- Internalized object relations (unconscious), linked with these desires and unconscious phantasies, especially towards the early primary objects
- Unconscious sanction (positive or negative) towards these desires/needs (leading to overt or latent intrapsychic and/or intersubjective conflicts)

- Achieved unconscious compromise formations – as the result of the defensive psychic maneuvers, incl. the resistances against the change (conserves)
- Behavioral, incl. somatic, affective, cognitive, social and spiritual elements, which are largely Conscious and socially constructed

The Cultural, the Social and the Role Atoms – basic assumption

- Roles are generally corresponding and/or identical to their descriptive socio-cultural or group designations and formulations, which makes them discernable and recognizable.

Roles are manifesting themselves in consistent and sustainable unconscious patterns (atoms) of individual and interpersonal behavior, showing simultaneously some almost completely conscious and rational dimensions on the socio-psychological level as well. Often it is these evident and phenomenological aspects of the roles that are taken for the roles themselves.

And again, the consequences from this “reformulation” of the Role concept through its Unconscious elements, could lead to an increasing importance of working especially with these unconscious psychic aspects and their hidden conflicts, on personal and on group level.

4. Instead of conclusion:

An impromptu S W O T - analysis of our Psychodrama Method

Our Strengths- Psychodrama is Instantaneous, Interactive, Inspirational, Interpersonal, Intersubjective, and Intrapsychic (the “five + one” I’s of Psychodrama)

Instantaneous (in the here and now);

Interactive (based on co-action)

Inspirational (aimed at co-creativity);

Interpersonal (using sociodynamics);

Intersubjective (moved by the encounter and télé);

Intrapsychic (organized from the psychodynamics);

We should agree with A. Blatner that “Psychodrama should be understood as a rich complex of methods which can and should be integrated into a holistic and integrative practice of multimodal psychotherapy”

Our Threats – The attractiveness of Seduction, Suggestion, Simplification, Speculation and Self-evidence (the five S of Psychodrama)

Seduction (Collusion);
Suggestion (Instilment);
Simplification (Naturalness);
Speculation (Idées fixes);
Self-evidence (Action mediated)

Our Weaknesses – Idées fixes, Omnipotence.

Therefore, I wanted to show that here is a man who has all the signs of paranoia and megalomania, exhibitionism and social maladjustment and who can still be fairly well controlled and healthy, and indeed, of apparently greater productivity by acting them out than if he would have tried to constrain and resolve his symptoms-the living antithesis of psychoanalysis, foreboding the protagonist of psychodrama. (Preludes xix)

We can only learn from Moreno how he has been able to reflect on his own specificities and difficulties with serenity and openness, without letting them constantly overwhelm him, and even has had the capacity to learn from them and to use them in favor of his scientific and personal spontaneity and creativity, developing Psychodrama as the science which explores especially the "truth" by dramatic methods!

Our Opportunities (our possible Organizational Answer) –

On the theoretical level

- To elaborate and to integrate more fully the intrapsychic and the psychodynamic aspects of the Psychodramatic enactment and to put side by side Creativity and Conflictuality, developing this way circularity into dialectic.
- To apprehend Conflictuality as residing not only in the social atom and/or between social and individual roles, but in the Atom of the role and in the roles themselves, in their elements, dynamics, development and maturation, in their Conscious and Unconscious levels.

On the clinical level

In Training:

- More Psychopathology
- More Clinical Cases
- More Individual Cases

In Practice:

- More Neutrality
- More Self-reflection (A. Blatner)
-

On the level of Research

- More studies in help of Psychodrama practitioners

- More studies about working with Non-neurotic (mainly Narcissistic and Borderline) Patients/Pathology, who are in serious difficulties with their weak capacities for symbolizing, mentalizing and playing

Dimo Stantchev M.D.

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