

Creative Genius: A Spark in a Cloud of Unknowing

DON REEKIE

ABSTRACT

This article presents the author's conviction and work showing that a psychodrama director learns to follow the protagonist/client and trust a wide range of interactive communications. Their full nature may be hidden from the director. The protagonist can be unconscious of specifics or relevance. The writer accepts many cognitive functions of the central nervous system happen at a speed making conscious consideration impossible. Learning is not only an intentional act but is built into our mind-body functioning. This paper posits that the instances described involve dynamic inter-play of S factor (spontaneity) and C factor (creativity) within the Morenian universe of discourse, and considers *creative genius* as an integrative quality common in human functioning.^{1,2,3}

KEYWORDS

creative genius, genius, creator, creativity, spontaneity, psychodrama, director, protagonist, surplus reality, tele and telic

Introduction

When I think *creative genius*, I think force. I see it related to and an expression of S factor. Moreno wrote of genius being activated by C factor. He recognised genius is a power or quality; C factor catalysed by S factor enables genius to be effective.^{4,5}

The words *creative genius*, do not describe a role. There is no 'functioning form'. There is no indication of thought, feeling or action. For Moreno a role is interactional, interpersonal and unique. I believe psycho somatic, social, socio dramatic and psycho dramatic dimensions are all present in every role. A role may be taken by modelling on another. It may be played with fluency and aplomb. A role may be created when functioning at heights of S factor. It is too easy to say: 'in a role', 'has the role', or 'taking the role', suggesting roles are entities separate from humans that can be 'put on'. Role is the whole way a

person is, in a creative moment of being themselves in response to a specific situation.⁶

Creative genius in clients of a psychodramatist

I meet a client and I think *creative genius*. Whatever their abilities, range of knowledge, skills or development, I put my faith in their active combination of S factor and C factor. A creative integrative and protective self makes sense of what people sometimes describe as 'resistance'. I meet a client who thinks they have little 'going for them', I glimpse *creative genius* and I remind myself that it is impossible to kill off S factor. My positive expectations promote respectful reciprocity.

I witness a psychodramatist with T factor (tele) tuned to 'accurate empathy' in meeting a client. Tele is sometimes compared with a telephone conversation. It is more like two physicians with stethoscopes listening to the other's heart. It is not telepathy. It includes knowing in a place of unknowing. The psychodramatist attends to the protagonist's narrative and their interpersonal functioning forms. Reciprocally, the protagonist reads the psychodramatist. Although their awareness is calibrated differently it is not necessarily less acute. Both parties accept, trust, and open to each other. The psychodramatist is comfortable in silences, and alert to a range of communications, including their own mind/body experiences.^{7, 8, 9}

Creative genius may work to protect by prompting avoiding engagement, even as far as isolating into pre-verbal functioning forms. Pathological spontaneity may initiate a battle of wits with self and the psychodramatist. The client may be fighting as if against alienation or drowning.¹⁰

A person meeting a situation with coping responses will also seek embryonic progressive freedoms. I believe *creative genius* is always moving to provide protection and promote health. In enactments a protagonist can build spontaneity, develop roles and repair social and cultural atom, sometimes without either psychodramatist or protagonist identifying the specific realities impacting the client's life.^{11, 12}

Stories of working with creative genius

1. *When a trusted world falls apart*

A lead psychologist in a psychiatric hospital invited me to collaborate with the charge occupational therapist, to work with a group of women in a community established to prepare them to live in small group homes in the community.

A generalised reinforcement economy is working successfully for most of the patients. They have access to a shop using tokens while privileges and outings are gained by approved behaviours. We are asked to work with those whom the token economy scheme has failed. These women, diagnosed as 'residual

schizophrenics', have been hospitalised for over twenty years. They have been 'excellent' compliant patients, always ready to help, nearly always smiling but never innovative. Their new environment is alien. They become depressed and uncooperative, but are neither hostile nor rebellious. They do not earn tokens. Their hygiene, self-care and time-management disappears. They stay in bed in the morning, resentful if chided.

My colleague and I organise regular groups and devise activities where oral communications are deemphasised. We invite them to play games, construct objects, and paint giant pictures together. All require communication. We often join in but make no guiding initiative. Sometimes we introduce games with an element missing and they create a variation themselves to make the game work. In three months they are organising their group sessions and choosing their activities together. They look after their own needs and they communicate with each other and their staff.

Soon they are taking their turn in flats on campus learning to be a responsible collective as a step towards half-way housing. For many years, they have fitted to staff requirements, and been rewarded by approval and privileges. They have experienced the token economy as a barren social environment. Engaging in the group activities opens a stage on which they generate their *creative genius*. Enjoyment of their interactions and appreciation of their relationships with one another offers greater leverage than tokens. As a by-product they earn tokens and access the shop.

2. A great deal of pleasure over not very much

In the same psychiatric hospital in a villa housing forty psychotic and severely intellectually handicapped patients, I co-lead a group with an occupational therapist. Staff have assessed patients' behaviours as requiring strong containment. We aim the group at socialising, introducing collaborative creative activities. The eight men respond with impulsive displays of enthusiasm. Their individual activities have a low level of intermittent interaction. None has more than primitive language. They communicate through movements and grunts. Their intellect and physical coordination is almost non-existent. Yet their *creative genius* is unmistakable. Not by evaluating what they produce, but by observing their pleasure at their efforts. It is similar to toddlers building with blocks or colouring on paper.

3. Step-by-step from unknowing to surety

A woman client, in her fifties, comes to consult me. She is disturbed at her intense irritation towards her mother. They have never been close, but she is earnestly caring for her mother, whose deterioration necessitates residential care. Having responsibility for overseeing her mother's move infuriates her. She fears being abusive. There are no clues to the origin of her powerful experiences.

After giving a brief explanation, she sits closed off. I ask her to close her eyes,

prompt relaxation and suggest she allow colours and shapes to enter her mind. She speaks quietly. There are balls, cubes, pyramids and indeterminable shapes — all with strong colours. I encourage her to touch, lift and move the objects. She speaks of arranging them, opens her eyes, rises and carries the surplus reality objects. She sets them down, and after rearranging them bounces the balls, absorbed in her experiences and making little comment. I suggest she place any objects she chooses in a box. She puts some in, arranges them and takes some out — then closes the box. The session concludes with her reflecting on her experience, and expressing her interest in having strong feelings at certain points of the process.

She returns four times over a few weeks. Each time she reports that she lives with her box and explores her objects. She speaks of satisfaction at being able to put them back in the box, close it and return to it when she chooses. Her intense anger is easing. She resettles her mother, and is satisfied. Sessions are all in action. I do not know what the shapes represent nor do I know whether she knows.

Two years later, she asks for an appointment. In the intervening time, childhood memories have gradually opened and she now knows what the nature of her work had been in the earlier sessions. Six sessions followed.

Fifty years earlier, between the age of six to nine, she had had a weekly music lesson. Her mother had taken her to each lesson and sat outside the room. Through the window, she had been able to see the statue she called “Mr Richard John Seddon”. The music teacher had sat alongside her on the stool sexually interfering with her. Her mother, waiting outside the door, had been beyond an impenetrable barrier. Her mother took her home, and had been in her life all week every week. As the years passed, silence had grown to an irreducible giant. On the stool, with music sheets before her and her fingers moving over the keys, she had frozen within. Mr Richard John Seddon had been her only witness and life companion. She had felt his presence. She had respected and trusted his reliability. She had known from what she had learned at school that he had been a good man for her country.

In enactments during the sessions the woman makes a strong relationship with the little girl she had been. Mr Richard John Seddon is again her witness and seems almost a friend. She encounters her mother in surplus reality. Becoming her mother in role reversal she experiences shock, pain and distress. As the woman she is now, she meets her mother woman to woman. She meets and converses with her mother at many different times in her life. Her anger is white hot. Her heart does not close off. She weeps for herself as child and for her mother who has never developed resources sufficient for responding to her daughter’s need.

As woman she chooses to confront her music teacher, with Mr Richard John Seddon and her mother by her side. Her mother is as she had been when my client was a child. My client explains to herself as child what she will do and that

she is not going to have her present. The confrontation is full in its ethical anger and clarity of purpose. Total rejection is not in doubt. She is not spiteful, nor vengeful. Her reunion with herself as child is lovingly secure.¹³

She is now able to be with her mother as she wants to, and is content with that.

I hypothesise that as child and woman she has *creative genius*. Embryonic roles have been forming. She has acted positively to develop herself. She has directed her life meaningfully to satisfying ends. Many in her community value her, yet they see her as shy and withdrawing. Her mother's S factor development was stunted. In turn, her inadequacies contributed to her daughter's lack of development. This continues into the girl's womanhood. Her *creative genius* guides her therapeutic work. My S factor gives me freedom to be with her creatively as an assistive companion on her journey. T factors are mutually positive. The relationship is trusting and open.

4. Raising a sword in a baronial domain

A heavily depressed man in his thirties consults me. His wife is completing eighteen months of psychotherapy. As her depression lifted, he has become depressed. Just three weeks before he came to me, his employer made him redundant from a long secure employment.

I invite him to name his purpose. He speaks about the people around him, including his wife. Speaking of his father and brother he is pained and angry, yet heavily restricted. As he speaks, a scene forms in my imagination. It is not visual but I have a powerful sense as to its details of space, time, place and relationship. I have learned to trust my non-visual awareness. I speak to him: "I see you and your brother as sons of a baron in medieval times. Your family is rich in lands, bears arms and are armoured with fine horses to travel on. What do you make of that? How do these men deal with each other?"

He draws an imaginary sword, swings it aloft, sheaths it and without question picks up the story, engaging strongly. We both learn a great deal about this man's social and cultural atom and his family of origin — in which these interactive functioning forms have developed. I ask how this medieval family deals with problems. There are stories of battles, deceit, betrayals, favouring of the younger brother and his own vanquishing. I say: "Let's see if we can build up this vanquished son". In his enactments he strengthens his relationships with his friends and followers, increases his battle skills, develops his ability to encounter, and puts his case to his father.

Incomplete as this is in one session, when he returns a week later he has phoned his brother, now in Australia, and has had a friendly chat. He is keen to explore the Baron's realms. He warms to encounters with intensity and flow.

He comes to his third session, having visited his father without bitterness or accusation and has begun a new style of relating. He and his wife have begun to open some concerns she has not been able to raise previously. He has applied

for, interviewed for and gained a job with a company he has had dealings with in his previous employment. He says: "Next week I'll be at work. I'll get back to you if I need to." He never has.

This client's *creative genius* and my psychodramatist's S factor produce a journey. He is the journeyer and self-director. I am a companion audience member and artistic director.¹⁴

As I engage with this client the phase of protagonist spontaneity development is crucial. He arrives depressed and disheartened. As he speaks of work and his relationship with his partner his affect is flat — spontaneity is low. Speaking of his brother and father, his feelings are in tension. He becomes awkward and restricted. He is depressed. He is not pre-verbally autistic. He is, not, in an undifferentiated matrix. His original family social and cultural atom context has him bursting with agitated energy. He is able to enter a role by both role taking and role reversal. He is not ready for identity reversal and does not yet experience self-realisation. He is ready, able and warmed up sufficiently to engage interactively and in surplus reality.

His challenges fit with his boyhood when sagas had vitality in surplus reality. My imagination responds with a medieval saga. My scene setting is sufficient to spark his interest. He opens to his narratives and to self-direction. I witness this man being director, then actor, then actor-scriptwriter. He moves quickly. He lifts the sword in taking the role, hoists it to play a role fluently and flourishes to create new roles — he is scripting in the moment.

It is possible for us to activate a functioning form inside ourselves. We can have experience within ourselves of taking, playing or creating a role without enacting it to the world outside us. A client may be operating at any of these levels of S factor and may make rapid shifts between them. A psychodramatist recognises psychosomatic cues, can double body movements and sense experiences and responses. It is T factor (telic) connection that alerts a psychodramatist to developments in the client's S factor. When the psychodramatist recognises a client's specific functioning form and then reveals it to them, it can assist them to recognise their self too. Action becomes more possible and movement, interaction, finding of voice, daring to be, in turn lead to discovery and development. *Creative genius* is at work.

Implications

Creative genius is an element in human functioning that integrates the factors identified by Jacob Moreno. I choose to name them S, C, F, T and W. It works to protect the self while promoting progressive development. Often a psychodrama director needs an act of faith to move into the unknown with a protagonist's *creative genius*.

I have drawn on specific examples where moving without knowing while trusting the client is highly evident. My development of S, C, F and T factors is

crucial to my ability to be with him. I accept T factor as a two-way relationship that generates deep appreciation, vital recognition and trust between people. I am certain that it is not just interpersonal relating with accurate empathy. Clients frequently offer clear reports of their purpose, narrative of events or mind/body experiences. I find in my work with clients, regardless of how equipped they are to engage openly, it is of great assistance to them for me to be a companion who is steady and trusting in areas of unknowing.

In the end, *creative genius* is a theological concept. To 'get' Moreno and not just 'get' to grips with his philosophy but to be capable of living and working with his methodologies we must 'get' his theology of interpersonal relations and his ethics. We will be greatly assisted to 'get' a hold of him by reading his *Words of the Father*, or better still listen to Moreno recite it and then speak to it in James Sacks' interview with him.^{15, 16}

Moreno sees us all as creators. You and I are creators. We are creators of our selves. There are genes, but there is no you or me until we create ourselves. We create consciously, unconsciously and always in relationship. Another significant Morenean idea concerned fathering. Moreno said "I am my own father". We are our own parents. We are father and mother to our selves. Moreno said, God is not dead, but we can only discover the meaning of god as we recognise that we are all 'I gods'. Then we can recognise ourselves and realise that if we humans act on the *creative genius* that is in us we are and must be creators.

Moreno sees an ethical imperative for humanity. The answer to the question *Who Shall Survive?* is both theological and ethical. What differentiates the factors S, C and all the other Morenean factors from their raw origins in nature, is loving and ethical human interpersonal choice. The malevolence and heroism of Disney's anthropomorphisms is probably misleading. We know malevolence, heroism and altruism are human qualities. Raw creativity and spontaneity propel us to act and create. We can create both good and evil. Humans act selfishly, destructively, foolishly and cruelly. Moreno passionately calls us to an ethical and theological pathway. He proposes that we be scientists and theatre producers; that we experiment to discover the *heart of humanity*. He calls us to be 'I gods'. He believes we are to be good and loving as we create our interpersonal relationships.

Creative genius operates in every one of us like a guardian spirit sparking creativity propelled by spontaneity.

Postscript

It is perhaps appropriate that the son of Zerka and Jacob is a professor of bio-ethics. Zerka was hugely proud of Jonathan's work on the President's Commission on Stem Cell Research.

ENDNOTES

1. My psychodrama trainers taught me to be open and welcoming to the unknown. Max Clayton 1987 said: "The

best place to be for a psychodrama director is 'up shit creek without a paddle'. Then all you have is your spontaneity." Warren Parry 1987 said: "It's the director's job to track the protagonist or client. You watch and follow. The way you follow is to think there are no stepping-stones. You see where their foot is about to set down and you lay a stone for them to step on." Jacob Moreno wrote in "Creative Theory of Personality: Spontaneity, Creativity and Human Potentialities", "... creational qualities are what they become through the spontaneous confluence of sub conscious, conscious, emotional, intellectual and spiritual elements, as they are at the disposal of the nervous system in man" and woman. (Moreno 1966) He also wrote: in "Psychodrama Vol. The First" p. XV, "Just as in a dream, so psychodrama appears to be an exposition of unconscious dynamics." "... directing *depends* chiefly upon the protagonist to provide the clues as to how to carry on the production." (Moreno 1946) Zerka Moreno wrote in To "Dream Again a *memoir*": "With the passing years, I stopped thinking of myself as a psychotherapist, because it became clear that I do not heal any psyches. Protagonists themselves do the healing. My task is to find and touch that autonomous healing centre within, to assist and direct the protagonist to do the same. I am merely a guide in the wilderness, clearing away obstacles so protagonists can find their very own path." (Moreno 2012)

2. In my article "Heart of Humanity" in this Journal I write: "Learning new skills is not only an intentional act, learning is built into our body-mind functioning. Being free to be ourselves does not depend on deliberation. We tend to think of ourselves as always consciously in control of our choices and actions. Many cognitive functions happen at a speed that makes conscious consideration impossible." (Reekie 2013)
3. The lettered tags for alternative terms throughout this article are those I have played with in my article Heart of Humanity in this journal. You will find a full list in a frame on the third page.
4. The "Oxford Dictionary" defines "genius" as "creative and inventive capacity", "exceptional or creative power", as a "tutelary spirit of person or place", "a guardian which serves to protect" and "a spirit influencing a person for good or ill". (Clarendon Press, Oxford, UK)
5. Jacob Moreno considers that genius is an attribute people have to greater or lesser extent. Probably very many have it to a high degree. Mostly they fail to create to their potential. Moreno says *C factor* is crucial for creation to be generated, and *S factor* is the catalyst. Moreno wrote in "Who Shall Survive?" (see Student Ed. p. II 1993) that in the examples of genius Michelangelo, Beethoven or Jesus creative capacity is activated: "Each has attributes of genius; many others have equally so, but activation of creation does not happen because of a lack in *S factor*". (Moreno 1934) Moreno wrote in the "Words of the Father": "The universe is infinite creativity ... the highest common denominator ... of *humankind*" (Moreno 1920)
6. In my 2007 article "Becoming Jane", I write (page 49 ff) of role as essence of being with explanatory power to open up the whole way of being a person has. (Reekie 2007)
7. In 1951, Carl Rogers published "Client-Centred Therapy" — the work he is best known for. Roger's core goal for implementing his rules was to have the client actualise his or her own inherent potentialities. Clinician's "accurate empathy" is seen to help a client move towards self-actualisation. (Rogers 1957)
8. Jacob Moreno wrote in "Psychodrama Vol. The First" p. XI "The telic relationship between protagonist and therapist and the significant Dramatis Personae of the world which they portray are crucial for the therapeutic progress." (Moreno 1977) and "By role reversing a *person* tries to identify with *another*. Co-conscious and co unconscious states in *the* two individuals are interlocked and interactive." (Moreno 1946)
9. Jacob Moreno wrote in "Psychodrama Vol. The First", p.157ff "Role playing is prior to the emergence of the self. Roles do not emerge from the self but the self emerges from roles." "Role theory is useful in making a mysterious concept of the self tangible and operational." "Function of role is to enter the unconscious from the social world and bring shape and order into it." (Moreno 1946)
10. Jacob Moreno & Florence B Moreno wrote "Spontaneity theory of child development". Sociometry, 7, 89-

- 128, republished as “Principles of Spontaneity” in “Psychodrama Vol. The First” 1946 Section IV, which covers over one hundred pages concerning spontaneity and S factor. They trace the development of spontaneity from when a baby is dependent on, and psychologically undifferentiated from, a mother, through to strongly developed realisation of self and freedom to act. (Moreno & Moreno 1944)
- I1. In my AANZPA Journal article “Becoming Jane”, Vol. 16, 2007, I write about the importance of not only seeing the coping strategies, but to discern the embryonic “functioning forms” that are developing. This requires us to consider what the coping strategy’s purpose is. Then we think, what would the individuated functioning be, if it could be activated. I believe it is essential in encouraging development for us to respond to the tiniest efforts towards individuation. (Reekie 2007) Moreno wrote of “embryonic roles” referring to infancy when pre-verbal sound making, movements and autism are evident. He noted that then there are psychosomatic dimensions of role, where will and feelings are strong but organised action and language are not developed. He writes: “The infant lives before and immediately after birth in an undifferentiated universe which I have called ‘matrix of identity’. This matrix is existential not experienced. It can be seen as the locus from which, in gradual stages, the self and its branches, the roles, emerge. These roles are the embryos, forerunners of the self the roles strive towards clustering and unification.” “Psychodrama Vol. The First”, p. 161. (Moreno 1946)
- I2. Jacob Moreno wrote in “The Future of Man’s World”: “This is why I chose the course of the theatre . . . ‘By the grace of God’ an ‘idee 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 generation.” (Moreno 2012)
- I3. I will not produce re-enactments of early life wounding and violation. Before enactments where an adult chooses to confront a violator from childhood, I work to connect with recalled or imagined scenes prior to them first being wounded. Then, in “future projection”, they enact their desired life developments. In the enactments with this woman, I choose to produce a drama with secure companions as sturdy bastions. In my view there is no value or useful purpose in a protagonist confronting a violator in the context of an abusive event. As a child they had no equality in power differentials, which makes the enactment stacked against them once again.
- I4. Zerka Moreno addressing the IAGP Congress in London 1998 on “Ethical Anger”, described a triad of relationships when a psychodramatist works one to one. It echoes Moreno’s “five instruments”. Zerka sees both client and psychodramatist moving between “director”, “actor” and “audience member”.
- I5. Paul Johnson, the theologian who developed Process Theology, following the philosophy of Whitehead and Russell, wrote in “Psychology of Religion” (1945) arguing that Moreno introduced an interpersonal theory of psychology. (Johnson 1945)
- I6. Jacob Moreno’s “Words of the Father” is available through www.lulu.com. It can also be heard in the 1963 interview with James Sacks where Dr Moreno speaks of our taking responsibility for all creation, which “requires the challenge to see oneself, each of us, as ‘god’ or as of no value. We are existentially challenged with fear and inadequacy against our becoming an ‘I god creator’. Creativity is seen to be in everything and we are to be god and we are capable of that role and task. God — cosmic, other, love, scientist, has intense personal reality in each of us. We are the creators. The universe is infinite creativity. Past present or future are all bound together by the principle of inclusiveness. I have to assume responsibility for all things. There is no limit to the responsibilities that are ours.” (Moreno 1920) Hear it on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zngVciTk2X0>

REFERENCES

Johnson, P. E. (1945) ‘Interpersonal Psychology of Religion; Moreno and Buber, Psychology of Religion.’

- Reprinted in *Psychodrama Theory and Therapy*, Ed. Ira A Greenberg, 1974, Behavioural Publications, NY.
- Moreno, J. L. (1920) *The Words of the Father* Beacon House Inc. Reprinted by the North-West Psychodrama Association, UK. (2013) See <http://www.lulu.com/shop/search.ep?keyWords=Words+of+the+Father+J.+L.+Moreno&categoryId=107121>
- Moreno, J. L. (1934) *Who Shall Survive?* Beacon House Inc. NY Reprinted in 1993 by the American Society of Group Psychotherapy & Psychodrama (ASGPP) in its Student Edition, McLean VA.
- Moreno, J.L. & F.B. (1944) *Psychodrama Volume The First*, Section IV, The First Edition, 1946, Beacon House Inc. NY. (Originally published in 1944, by Moreno, Jacob L. & Moreno, Florence B. as *Spontaneity Theory of Child Development. Sociometry*, 7, 89–128.)
- Moreno, J. L. (1946) *Psychodrama Volume The First* (First Edition) Beacon House Inc. NY.
- Moreno, J. L. (1947) *The Future of Man's World Monographs* No. 21 reprinted by the North-West Psychodrama Association, UK (2012) visit www.lulu.com
- Moreno, J. L. (1966) 'Creative Theory of Personality: Spontaneity, Creativity and Human Potentialities'. *University Bulletin of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. LXVI, No 4 January 24, 1966, pp. 19-24, Symposium of Explorations in Human Potentialities, by Herbert A. Otto (Ed.) publisher Charles C. Thomas, 1966. Reprinted in *Psychodrama: Theory and Therapy* by Ira A Greenberg 1974 and also in *Psychodrama Volume the First*, (1977) third edition, Beacon House Inc. NY.
- Moreno, Z. T. (2012) *To Dream Again A Memoir*, Mental Health Resources Catskill, NY. See <http://www.amazon.com/To-Dream-Again-A-Memoir/dp/0979434173>
- Reekie, D. (2007) 'Becoming Jane' in the *AANZPA Journal* Vol. 16, 2007
- Reekie, D. (2013) Heart of Humanity in the *AANZPA Journal* Vol. 22, 2013
- Rogers, C. R. (1957). 'The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change.' *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 21, 95–103.



Don Reekie, Trainer Educator and Practitioner, is a member of training staff of CITP Christchurch. Delight is Don's prime experience with each person and group he works with. Moment by moment he attends to minute particulars, to movements and motivations. He enjoys producing psychodrama and finds that good theatre leads to good consequences through opening recognition of what IS and the freedom to act. He knows that the psychodramatic method creates the opportunity for people to move forward strongly in their lives.