

Spontaneity Made Explicit

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The classical description of spontaneity - *an adequate response to a new situation or a new response to an old situation* - has endured. Perhaps we like it because it is in everyday language; it relates spontaneity to our everyday lives. There's a suggestion in it that change is possible. It situates spontaneity as response and so differentiates it from impulsiveness. And the description can easily be expressed and investigated using role theory. No wonder it's become a classic and people continue to infuse it with life and relevance.

I have come at describing spontaneity from another perspective; hopefully one that is complementary and also encouraging of others to construct their own descriptions. I have taken video footage of psychodramas and together with a number of trainers we have carefully considered what is actually occurring and how that fits with our conceptualisations (Carter et. al, 2001; Clayton and Carter, 2004). Spontaneity has been a key focus. It appears that spontaneity can not be seen directly, but it can be seen in its effects. It is these effects that I have gathered up and arranged and

re-arranged and finally sculptured into a design - a diagram and a description - which I present as Figure 1 (overleaf).

Warm-up

How is that as a warm-up? My editors suggest that it's probably not sufficient especially since the style of this paper is somewhat unconventional and therefore requires some indication of what's to come. Perhaps this fits with Moreno's (1983) conclusion that the thing human beings are least ready for is surprise. So do I prepare you for this or not? Some would call that a choice; I prefer to see the possibilities as attractions or warm-ups.

The structure is that every italicised concept (given in the description under the diagram) will be written about, one by one; and the first one is warm-up; always warm-up first. Right now, we are warming up and that is the style of writing I'm aiming for; one in which you the reader get an experience of the thing we're talking about. So, usually I'm going to lead in with more of a poetic feel for a concept. Then there'll be a boxed description of how it lives and works in practice. Hopefully, together

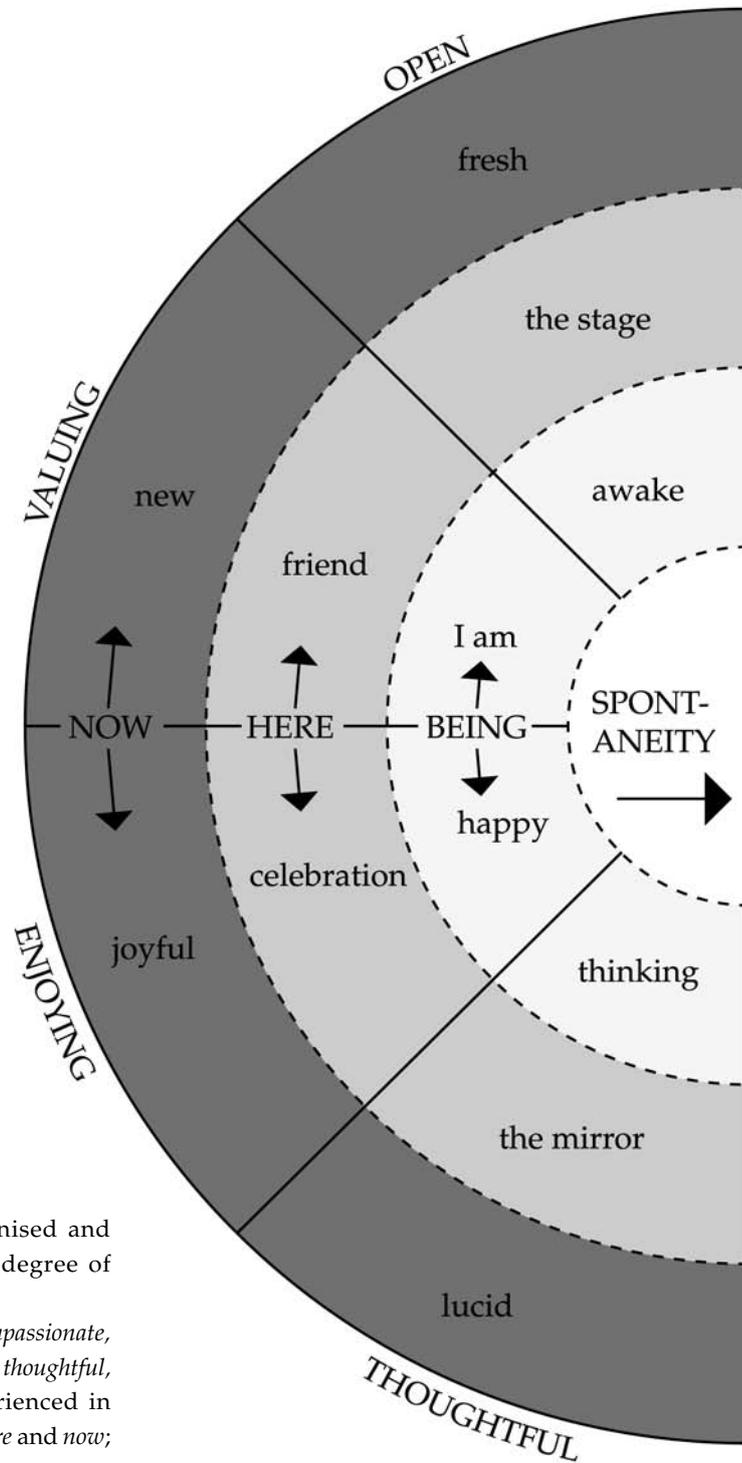
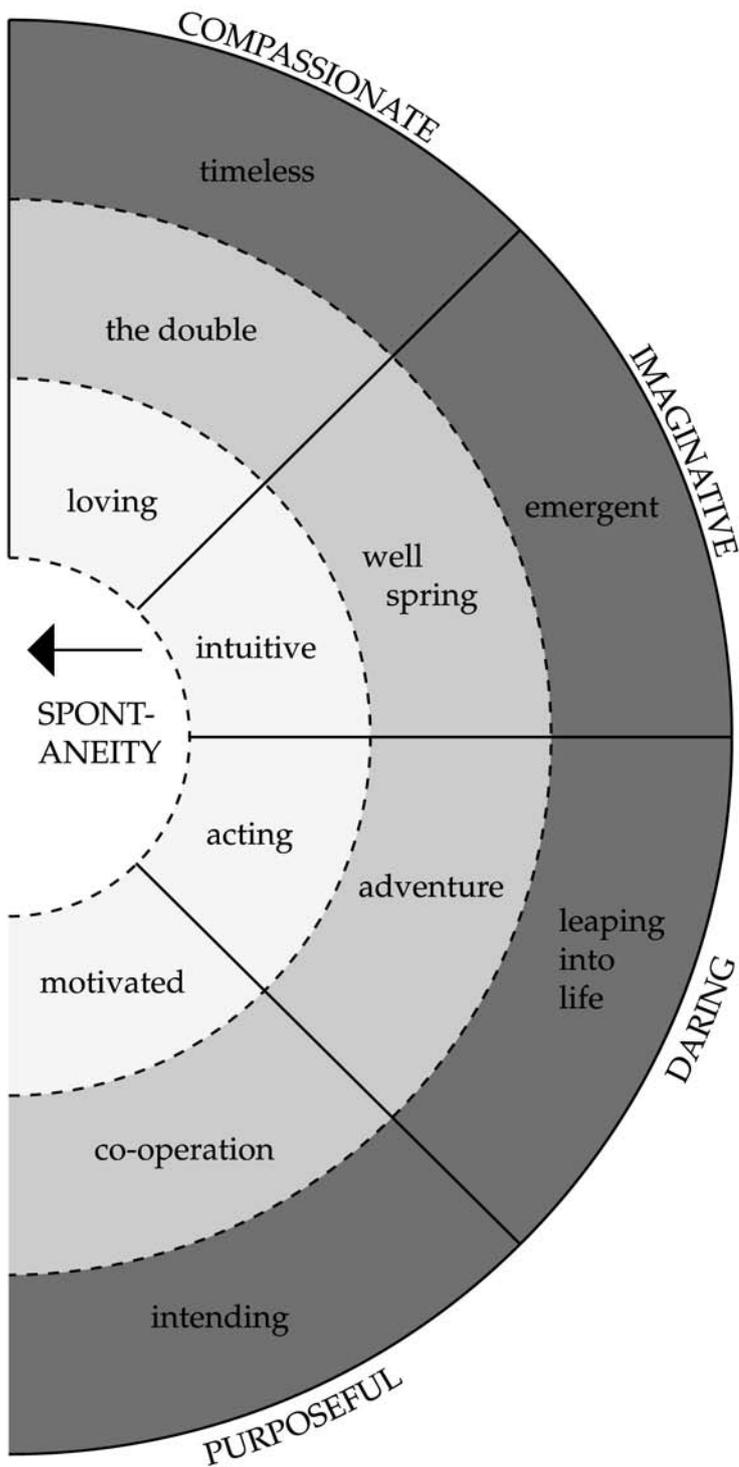


Figure 1.
Signs of Spontaneity

Spontaneity may be recognised and assessed according to the degree of warm-up to:

1. the qualities of *open, compassionate, imaginative, daring, purposeful, thoughtful, enjoying, and valuing* experienced in *being* and expressed in the *here* and *now*; and,
2. the *flow* between.



these two approaches will help the qualities in the diagram come alive and you will see how they have become embodied in your practice, or how they might.

I know psychodramatists love the term 'warm-up'. When I did a frequency count of terms used by trainers, I found 'warm-up' was used more than any other term except 'role' (Carter, 1997). Warm-up is a central organising concept to most psychodramatists. They attune to the group warm-up, they follow the protagonist's warm-up, they use role reversal to roll the warm-up of one role through the system, and so on. Moreno (1953) saw that *"the warming up process is the operational expression of spontaneity"* (p. 14). I am proposing that an assessment of spontaneity can be made by looking at the warm-up to each of the eight qualities in the diagram; the first one is *open*.

Open

"Openness is the most insignificant thing in the whole world. It is completely insignificant, truly ordinary, absolutely nothing...the absence of any kind of collection or evaluation." (Trungpa, 1973: 59). There is nothing to be done or not done. Like A. A. Milne when he was six, his face against a window on a rainy day.

We sit in a semi-circle that opens out onto a stage - a psychodrama group - and we can't help but be drawn to that open space. The director invites you onto the stage and the director is open too, tuning in with you, ready to follow your warm-up...

Compassionate

The sky takes into itself every shape and movement like the ultimate double for the universe. Perhaps the sky is a manifestation of compassion because compassion does not differentiate out the deserved from the undeserved. There is nothing you have done or

no place you are, that is not held in compassion. There is no membership fee or admission approval. Compassion has no agenda and so it can not be caught or defeated. There is no threat to it. It is not watching out for its end and so it is never too busy to wrap its heart around you.

The group leader has done her work well; group members know the protagonist holds the group theme, the motivating force and the reactive fear. They are committed to being auxiliaries. There is a co-operative effort of friends. There is no problem and nothing to fix. They throw their whole being into the protagonist's world. And the protagonist does not wait until his last out-breath to travel his life's journey. He embraces the goodness he is now. He is already forgiven.

Imaginative

Happiness is not always a friend of will, nor are laughter or freedom mates of pursuit, but imagination...that is a friend to all. Chance a look into that wellspring where all things can be held and refreshed; where the past is a treasure house and the future is a plaything. The imagination is a womb for the becoming into being. See how fertile it is when there is human warmth...

The director is intrigued. His imagination comes into play. *'Choose all the different people who have acted this way with you?'* he invites the protagonist. What will come next? The director lets the picture play upon him. No habit, no rule, the psychodrama is *"a creative process brought about by the coming together of the free flowing intuition of the director and the commitment of the protagonist to spontaneously entering the theatre of truth"* (Clayton, 1991: 55). On and on, the drama is right in front of us.

Daring

The protagonist knows there is no blank cheque from God. She knows from sharp experience that being alive means more ways for pain. Still, our

existential hero concentrates all her energy and throws herself into life not knowing what will come next. She doesn't wait for a safe place. Will she make it? Acting and failing; and, then more precise acting. She's not giving up on herself or anyone else. She won't say the world is falling to pieces because it is up to her, and you and me, no spectators.

There has been a projection of the protagonist's inner world into the psychodramatic stage. *'Try now to act what's in you.'* The director is insistent. *'Don't talk, just act what's immediately coming up in you.'* Time and time and time again. And there comes a time when the protagonist withdraws and says, *'He'll never understand'*. Yet the director says, *'There he is. Doesn't look like he's going to do it. This is your chance. You may not get another one. Tell him what your experience is.'*

Purposeful

The fertilised human egg drops into a placenta nest and grows there into a baby, ready and now travelling the birthing canal out into his mother's waiting arms. The boy becomes a man, the girl a woman, and they are attracted to become one, on and on...a seed contains the tree, a tadpole the frog; there is a motivating force from within out into the new. Even from the crucible of evil, Victor Frankl discovered the power of a 'why' to bear almost any 'how'.

The psychodrama group leader identifies our group theme, the motivating force towards having and sustaining intimacy. Psychodramatic groupwork methods are used so we are conscious as we thoughtfully build each other up. Difficulties are expected but we are not dominated by a desire for safety because we are in it together now. We commit to working co-operatively. Our friendship is a work. Yes, we are purposeful.

Thoughtful

Dogmatic ideas, trying to prove something, desperately desiring to know all the time; it looks like the mind is a runaway train that rides roughshod over our humanity. We are mandated to think and so we think we can train the thinking. We invent language that gives purpose and dignity to what we do. We work to maintain intelligence on a journey into the unknown. We discern fantasy from fact; achievable goals from impossible ones. We want to use clear thinking to get well organised. Yes, it is fortunate that thinking is not emotionally determined. Could it be that the mind that looks at the wonder of the Milky Way is the Milky Way finding a way to know itself? So many questions for this self-reflective being at the frontier of evolution.

The director generates ideas; lucid and alert, she makes interpretations based on the actions not just the content of what people are saying. She knows a new role may emerge at any moment. The group members see there is something worth having here and they wake up and become more present too; they cease to interrupt one another. There is much more room for experience and thinking to be integrated and expressed. Respect for one another in the group grows.

Enjoying

The dog has to be walked, but it won't do the circuit; it has to go off and sniff everything, play with everything.

The director and the group have worked well and so in the fifth session the group members are taking initiative with one another and are easy and light hearted; there is a lot of intimacy. But one group member says, *'I don't enjoy being with other people very much.'* And the director responds: *'Well you mightn't enjoy it but get with them and do things with them, act like a person who wants to eventually learn to enjoy life. You can't enjoy*

life unless you get involved with people and eventually you suddenly find you're enjoying it.'

Valuing

"We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us," Nelson Mandela tells us, "It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

The director is interested in the whole group living in the here and now, valuing each thing as it emerges. You become the protagonist. The objects and people you choose do not *represent* elements of your world, they *are* them. You do not *play* a role, you *are* the role. Not *as if*, not *role-play*, and not "*a very lifelike situation*" the Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (1985: 722) describes psychodrama as, but *the* life situation; you encountering yourself in the world.

The director does not assist anybody. She is not relating to authority. The director is not doing what Bohart and Greenberg (1997) describe as psychotherapeutic empathy - "*trying to communicate*" in a "*struggle to understand*" (p. 14). The psychodrama director is not a fix-it therapist doing all the work, tiring herself out. No, it is the director's psychodramatic belief that we are all creative geniuses. There is a co-operation in the expressions of experience as it expands. Not just a shaping of "*it into words and concepts*" (p. 14), but a co-action, psychodramatist and protagonist in being, letting the experience impact on them, awakened imagination engaged, creating new life between them.

Being

Being is represented as a circle in the diagram. It is intimate with self, but what is self? The 21 grams of soul that exists after mind and body have gone? Our daimon? The thing that emerges

from role playing? Yes, says Moreno (1983), and I have invented the psychodrama method so you can rule and integrate the total universe into your self. I want you to experience the primordial and ongoing moment where chaos births into being. Not megalomaniac, but micromaniac; God coming into creative being in its humblest form.

We have lost our dignity, provoked J. L. Moreno. Starting with Copernicus knocking us out from the centre of the universe, then Darwin having us descended from apes, to Mandel's lottery, and then the final purge of genius by psychoanalysis, we have made the awful mistake of therefore thinking we are not divine; "*it was the revenge of the mediocre mind to bring everything down to its lowest common denominator.*" (Moreno, 1946: 6). Enough, he said, God could not be born without being its own creator, you and me, an 'I to I' God in the status nascendi, everything in process, even God; the evolution of the creator being more important than the evolution of creation.

Ramana Maharshi (2000) makes a connection between experience and self too: "*People would not understand the simple and bare truth - the truth of their everyday, ever-present, and eternal experience...They love mystery and not the bare truth, religions pamper them...why not abide in the self, right here and now?*" (p. 99).

The director knows that empathy for another is not created through orientating to an external idea or a strategy; but it is about the place inside yourself where you are conscious of the living connection with another human being. 'Fill yourself up with your experience,' commands the psychodrama director. 'Become conscious of your experience, and when you have it, express it.' There does not appear to be any need to identify an intermediate agent called self or not self.

Still, differentiation does seem a principle intent in the universe; apparently each one of the 100 billion galaxies is different from any other. Even two particles can not occupy the same quantum state. Perhaps this was the necessary pre-conditions for the mirror to be born and true communion to develop? Otherwise, mightn't all things gravitate toward a safe and predictable unity, devoid of creativity and birthday surprises?

Here

The here is the stage where I encounter you; where expressions of sociometry, tele and role theory have meaning. And there is a mystery. Picture the Hubble eye sitting in space just beyond earth's breathing and it sees far distant galaxies and clouds of galaxies, not only out there, but hitting its reflective eye right here and now, the ancient past with us now. It seems there is no end to perception, only the precision of the eye. And the eye, what is that? The infant's eye first sees a flat world and then depth and objects are experienced. There is a creation within the child of the without. In the moving into a new space, that space must be taken in. Like a rock breathes in the sun and the sun breathes the rock. Like Swimme and Berry (1992) urge us to see that the universe is not a collection of objects but a mutually evocative reality. Even with this computer, there is a kind of mutual taking in of symbols and patterns of symbols; although if I had to be a rock or a computer, I'd be going for the rock.

Siegel (1999) would have us believe that neuroscience can now show us that the infant's brain is structured according to her beginning social experiences; *"human connections shape the neural connections from which the mind emerges"* (p. 2). Perhaps in the right parietal lobe, in the landscape the psycho-neurologists call the social self, lives our social and cultural atom. What happens when that structure is concretised on

the stage, so it is seen, experienced, and acted with? Evidence mounts. Like the first successful amputation of a phantom limb by Ramachandran (1998) using a simple mirroring device, the reflecting back of an externalisation that was accurate to the internally experienced reality, engaged and updated the brain in ways that had not been achievable with surgery, creative visualisation or will.

Now

If I had eternal life, I'd probably never finish writing this paper; there'd always be some little change I could make. And *now* seems a harsh deadline. No more changes? Accept the everlasting present? Bring it into sharp focus. But I like to plan and fantasise; expecting my future happiness gives me more happiness than the actual thing. Regrets, nostalgia and memories are my old buddies. I know - and neuroscience also tells me - that the brain is most integrated when it is doing novel tasks, but this isn't novel anymore. I just want to finish this paper. Can this 'now' actually serve me now? I still haven't found a home for Rumi's phrase, *"the way you make love is the way God will be with you."* Oh...! I see it now; it's all in the warm-up and my commitment to that...

The director focuses his purpose and energy into this moment; the protagonist on the stage. The protagonist brings his mother and father onto the stage with him. In the psychodrama, he experiences the value of the emotional link with his mother and the wisdom and guidance of his father. There is a catharsis of integration. His spontaneity adds to the spontaneity of the others and that in turn stimulates his creativity. The freedom of the individual has not been set in conflict with the need of the group. His personal freedom is in tune with his social responsibility. Casting his eyes, heart and mind to the others in his social world sets him free from loneliness and self-absorption; sets them all free.

Flow

"An inherent spontaneity in the life of nature has once again been recognized by science, after a denial lasting over 300 years. The future is not fully determined in advance; it is open." (Sheldrake, 1990: 71). And the scientists have gone further and told a story of the universe from the big bang, still expanding at every point, to supernovas and second and third generation stars, the first cell and the emergence of memory, and feeding and sex, right on up to self-reflexive consciousness in the human being; and they stand in awe at the astounding ongoing emergence of new life.

The protagonist is encountering his favourite teacher on the stage. The director moves this to the side of the stage and works with the protagonist to produce the disturbing motive, a traumatic event that has been sending its dull waves into the present future. The protagonist moves into that event and gets to know it, and then he moves to the edge of the action space and then to the other scene with his favourite teacher. He accepts a double too. He is dipped into different landscapes and pulled out, he experiences pain and the double at the same time, fear and the breath of spontaneity; the cognition, the will and the emotions are moved between, the protagonist becomes less rigid and flexibility and movement are generated. There is a new future now.

The director values his own flow and the movement of his warm-up. He touches self-doubt but is not rooted by it. He moves between knowing nothing to seeing someone he doesn't want to be with and he remembers his conviction - built from repeated experiences - that it is worthwhile to hang in there. He stays in tune with his own experience and there is a protagonist. He produces the protagonist's script and there is a scene and they reflect and make a clinical assessment, on and on, as in life, different

times and places requiring different things but always a readiness.

Spontaneity

Spontaneity is the breath of the soul; new life in, waste out. It makes intelligence available and mobilises the enlightened emotions. It breathes life into the self and strengthens our communion with the earth. It *"appears to be the oldest phylogenetic factor which enters human behaviour. Certainly older than memory, intelligence or sexuality. It is in an embryonic stage of development but it has unlimited potentialities for training."* (Moreno, 1983: 7). And what training is that? High culture and technical sophistication alone aren't helping us sustain ourselves in the face of surprises.

We enter the psychodrama and cry out. No denial in a crisis. We hold and encourage each other. We value human experience and friendship more than anything. We generate respect and learn how to individuate because we must. We identify the emergence of intimacy and we work to sustain it. In our theatre of truth *"there is a creation of a social system within which we are all bound together as one human group dedicated to being sensitive to one another no matter what happens and to continue that whether there's a solution or not."* (Clayton & Carter, 2004: 115).

Wrap up

I don't see we have reached any solution to the 'problem' of clearly describing spontaneity. Hopefully we have made spontaneity more explicit by grounding the discussion in the experiences of the living psychodramatic stage. The diagram itself shows division; but being, here and now are not divided; nor is heart separated from thinking, nor joy from daring, but some measure of everything is present in everything else. There are some omissions in the diagram too; encounter is not expressed clearly. The connections between spontaneity and the

other constructs of tele, sociometry and role theory are not explicit. Warm-up and the various mechanisms of the dramatic stage are not represented. But such a diagram would then become inclusive of all the main psychodramatic constructs. I wonder if that could be done in a clear and aesthetically pleasing design. It could make an outstanding training and clinical tool. Perhaps this diagram and description of spontaneity will offer some inspiration for that endeavour.

*What use understanding,
if we lose the magic of possibilities?
What use technology,
if we become redundant?
What use control,
if we become lonely?
What use security,
if we lose surprise?
What use beautiful things,
if we forget how to create?
What use knowledge,
if we fail to experience?
What use clever words,
if we don't laugh?*

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