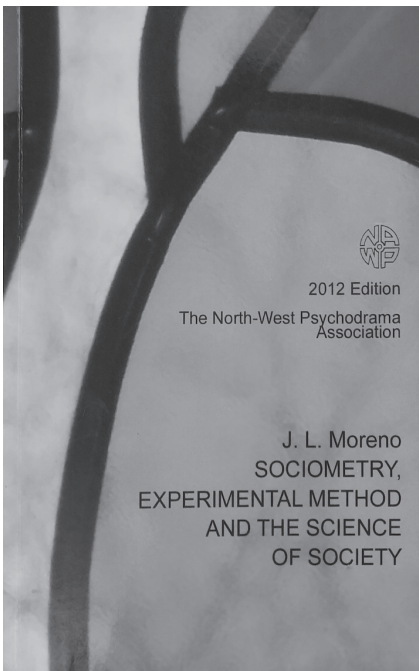


# Book reviews



*Sociometry, Experimental Method and the Science of Society; an approach to a new political orientation* (2012 edition)

By J.L. Moreno

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United Kingdom

Reviewed by Elizabeth Synnot

This book is the second edition. It was first published in 1951 by Beacon House, New York. It includes much of Moreno's significant sociometry writing from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. His writing continues to be relevant today with current social upheavals and tensions between and within social groups exacerbated by

internet and other satellite communications.

Sociometry is Moreno's fresh start to creating a reality based concept of society. Moreno presents his original inspirational ideas, the methodologies he devised and his research into formed and soon-to-be-formed communities and institutions. He also compares his approach with his contemporaries and makes critical comments on their approach to similar territory.

## *1. Sociometry and the experiential method.*

Moreno's approach considers each part of human society in its concreteness using sociometric procedures. The concepts and presentation of sociometric data, investigation and experimentation in situ are elucidated and are adapted to each specific group situation as it arises. His orientation is to the individual as a member of collective systems.

Spontaneity and the experimental method are defined. He discusses the private and collective aspirations of group members and that the purpose of an experiment relates to the group's purpose and the purpose of each member with each member becoming a co-experimenters.

Moreno compares his sociometric model of experimentation with

Marxian sociology's model of experimentation. Moreno opined that Marx was mainly oriented to changing the world while he could be said to be more oriented to finding the basic structure of society by trying to change it. Hence, there is only an implicit experimental model in Marx's work. I found Moreno's analysis of society in the 1920s through to the 1940s highly pertinent in 2020.

## *2. Group formation and social dynamics.*

This section is Moreno's vision for a methodology to change the whole world. He presents many sociometric investigations and the results from the 1920 through to 1947. For instance, it was from Moreno's and his colleagues sociometric research that Moreno formulated the cultural and social atom as a repeated pattern in group after group.

Moreno distinguishes sociometry methodology from other fledgling social science methods; by fully embracing subjectivity, the full involvement of those being investigated, the investigator as auxiliary, and psychodrama method being both experimental and therapeutic simultaneously. The latter arising in part because the exploration warms the participants up to their spontaneity.

He alludes to the intuitions that he has and then tests out in formed and forming communities. He creates verification processes for sociometric results, retesting the same population over time. He also gives an example of verification using the dispersement of rumours.

Throughout this section Moreno defines and elucidates the concepts that form sociometry including his philosophy of the moment. There are prescient passages, for instance, where he comments on the impact on human relationships of the technologies of his time; the printing press, radio and motion pictures. He anticipates further technological impacts that will bring together in one instance many psycho-social networks and allow for the interpretation of political phenomena.

Moreno also makes some generalised findings; the dialectic or truthful character of sociometry, its value when applied to such social planning concerns as migration of ethnic groups within a given geographic area, etc., the fledgling relationship of sociometry with the democratic process.

## *3. Political sociometry*

Moreno begins this section with his assessment of Marxism in 1947 emphasising that, unlike Marx, he considers the capitalistic-economic phenomena with the total social structure. He distinguishes the purpose of the politician with the sociometrist, saying that "The sociometrist is interested in the social revolution ... primarily as an exploration experiment and not as a social crusade — in what one learns from it and not only whether society improves through it." (p. 81).

It is a heart-felt disappointment to me that the theses that Moreno held for the use of his methodology in revolutionary events, movements and times have not found a central place.

#### 4. Military sociometry

*“The first step to be taken must be with the consent and the cooperation of the individuals concerned. It must be made by them as if it were their own project – their own design for living. There is no other way imaginable which can enlist the spontaneity, the critical intelligence and the enthusiasm of grown up, thinking people”* says Moreno (p. 206).

Having done much of my work as a sociodramatist in para-military organisations such as the Police, and large public service hierarchical organisations such as Health and Education Departments, this requirement for participants pursuing their own design for living was sometimes hard to achieve.

After considering different selection and training for leadership, Moreno cites a passage that he wrote earlier in *Who Shall Survive*, 1934,

*The leader ... gains in objective strength through considering the spontaneous forces within the group and does not impair the subjective strength of his own spontaneity.* (p. 353)

#### 5. Sociometry and microsociology

It takes some imagining for me to relate to a time when we did not conceive interpersonal relationships.

At page 228 Moreno significantly says, *“But as soon as we transferred these responses to the sociometric level and studied them not singly but in their interrelations, important methodological reasons suggest that we conceive this flowing feeling, the tele, as an inter-personal or more accurately and more broadly speaking, ‘as a sociometric structure’.”* (Italics in the original) He goes on to say that he never deviated from this position.

Throughout this book Moreno rails against commonly held cleavages; between the social and the personal, between inter-mental psychology and collective phenomena, between sociology and psychiatry. As he sought to have sociometry used in psychiatry and psychology, in sociology and social psychology, he used different language to persuade these audiences. Persuasion is still required to have psychodrama and other group psychotherapy held in good regard alongside individually focussed approaches. The sociogram was Moreno’s invention in 1923. It was constructed for presenting, exploring and measuring social structures as a whole. Moreno sees this as the scientific debut of sociometry.

As a practicing sociodramatist relating mostly to families, I find this

book highly relevant to my work. I commend it to all students and practitioners of psychodrama.



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