

# The Practical Science of Sociatry

A Progressive Path

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## Introduction

My purpose is to expand appreciation of the practical science of Sociatry<sup>1</sup>. This is relevant because sociatry is a plank of a forthcoming revolution. This revolution is not a military, economic, informational or similarly a technological revolution; it is a social revolution in the art<sup>2</sup> of being human. Our personal journey there - to that *oasis in the labyrinth* of our self - is Psychodramatic. Our journey together to that oasis in the labyrinth that is human culture is Sociatry.

The sociatry-seed of this foreseen social renaissance is lived and living, a Practical Science (Moreno et al, 1960). This quality distinguishes it from current *inert* social sciences such as economics and psychology and their application in health and education. Moreno envisaged a creative revolution where people invest in the art<sup>2</sup> of being. A society where people are:

- motivated by those twin-factors of creativity and spontaneity in human nature,
- are thereby enabled to create a better functioning self and society, and
- based on existential order of healing and

health; not humanism's contrary *dis-ease* model (eg Carroll, 2004) of social dis-order and its inevitable conflict.

Based on its Theory of Role, the same used in psychodrama, sociatry implies a sense of unity.

## Theory of Role

In Dr Moreno's extensive written work on *role theory* there is another and incomplete text, his *theory of role*, a general systems theory of psychodrama. It is useful to distinguish his role theory and his theory of role. Psychodrama is a wonderful example of experiential learning using living action methods and group work, having role as its unit of meaning and its measurement. Psychodrama is a modern-day competent role theory, because it is embedded in a systemic theory of role; it is capable of subsuming singularity (one right way of being); and it has scientific validity and empirical proof (Franklin, 1988).

Moreno identified a string of role functions within the systemic unity of person and personality. He wrote in *Who Shall Survive?* (1978: 3rd Ed) the following string having increasing depth and freedom:

It may be useful to differentiate between *role-taking* - which is the taking of a finished, fully established role which does not permit the individual any variation, any degree of freedom - *role playing* - which permits the individual some degree of freedom - and *role creating* - which permits the individual a high degree of freedom, as for instance, the spontaneity player.

In this way Moreno identified a unified theory of role with depth and complexity.

### **The Integrating Concept**

In our psychodramatic work at whatever level of social organisation - individual, couple, family, organisation or larger - it is important to know the ideal, purpose or goal; the integrating overarching concept of the work-group. When cooperation and collaboration are invoked contrary assumptions about unity and compromise can produce potentially catastrophic consequences.

Dr J L Moreno (1889-1974) and Professor G H Mead (1863-1931) were social philosophers who initiated science into modern role theory (Franklin, 2004). Mead (1934, p.xxi) asserted that *Man is a role taking animal*. An animal that mimics and copies hand me down gestures and other perfunctorily superficial social skills whose effect is to defend his traditional social unity - the jealous him & his - from personal accountability and cultural progress. The dynamic of role taking is to secure and protect safety.

On the other hand Moreno observed that *Man is a role player*. Role playing is of a different universal order and creates a different sense of psychological and societal unity.

Role and therefore unity is used in profoundly different ways that belonged to different orders

of different cultural universes. Professor Mead did not identify his theory of role. In default he used singularity, accepting that there is one right way to live, as his model. His role taking is a social conditioning. He draws our attention to the collective social role, to the singularity of role taking and to the human desire for social cohesion and safety. Role taking addresses the lower levels of a hierarchal need-scale such as Maslow's (1972).

### **Stages and Gestalts**

Moreno's three stages of role taking, role playing and role creating apply to societal development and sociology as they do to individual human development and psychodrama.

A child is born and identity as boy or girl is given. The child takes up his or her role by default. There is no freedom or choice here. And initially there is no personal conflict with this assigned singular identity. The child grows, becoming more aware of this identity given and reinforced socially. Alongside this role taking, the child has their own emerging experience of self, playing different roles, trying alternatives, finding what fits for them in their social world. From there the child slowly develops a deeper knowing of his or her self and begins acting to express it, creating the roles that are truly their own. This is the path to individuation. However the move to individuation is not certain. The child may simply fit in with conditioning social expectation and remain in coping roles.

Here we link to the three subsystems identifiable in the maturing personality. These are the progressive, coping and dysfunctional gestalts. There is a unique mix of these in a person. Usually one comes to dominate personality. Normally, coping rather than progressive or dysfunction dominates individual functioning. Again this applies to society.

### Three Universes

Moreno's theory of role comprises three universes:

- 1st universe: Unconflicted state. We accept that there is one right way to live (singularity).
- 2nd universe: Transitional state. We know there is no one right way to live. We sense there is a deeper possibility of alignment with our fundamental human nature. We begin to experiment (role playing) but we are fearful and mostly play it safe. Denial of our human nature leads to confusion, depression and alienation. This is characterised in the dysfunctional or, at best, coping.
- 3rd universe: Progressive state. We act in accordance with our deep identity, originating in the creative spontaneity of our human nature. Characterised by role playing and role creating and the birth of an inclusive and diverse social unity.

Psychodrama alerts us to the individuating journey that each must take personally: *Who Shall Survive?* A personal journey through three broad stages of ageing: wild infancy; learning social ability in childhood and beyond; and wise-ripening of mature adulthood. Sociatry wakes us to the collaborative journey that society must also take if *society shall survive*.

Society is now transitional in the 2nd universe. We can identify problems *in society*, eg terrorism and response to natural disaster, on various local and world stages. Here society is confounded, and consequent profound confusion caused by contrary universal orders. Mankind stretched between old & new: desire for safety via social cohesion and loyalty and desire to create unity in diversity with its systemic stability and potential of peace.

Moreno elaborated his theory of role describing

1st and 2nd universes and hinting at a 3rd. He subsequently developed a unified general systems theory that we in ANZPA Inc know as psychodrama or simply as role theory. Moreno identified singular and plural elements - with their roots in psyche & socius - in the unity of role and integrating both secular and divine in one. He draws our attention to role as integrative and integrated, to a unity subsuming the singularity identified by Mead. His unified role taking - role playing worldview addresses our human desire for safe nurture and also for our natural expression in creative spontaneity. This bipolarity transforms Maslow's hierarchy of needs scale. Like holistic yin & yang it holds the focal conflict of contrary desires.

Sociatry is holistic, creating and living a 3rd universe ideal in a Society of Mankind. The three gestalts, stages and universes describe a cycle of life where there is beginning, middle and ending. Humanity has been through the stage where there was one right way to live (1st universe). Currently, the world is fallen into a 2nd universe cultural malaise.

In his study of child development Dr Moreno observed the differentiation of psychodramatic and social role function from earlier unified psychosomatic roles. He observed the social norm to differentiate & segregate those personal and interpersonal realms in unhealthy personal development. With creative spontaneity a person develops progressive functioning, differentiating and integrating subject-object functioning in identity formation. When creative spontaneity is stultified through differentiation-segregation, coping and dysfunction is the normal outcome. The 2nd universe in cultural history correlates with this event in individual development. This is the familiar 2nd universe path of alienation resulting in a profound confusion, suffering, misery, spiritual failure, mental illness, addiction and criminality.

At society systems level the 1st universe of singularity is contrary with a newly emerging and evocative 3rd universe. Moreno developed psychodrama in and for now, for these interesting times of this 2nd universe, of cultural transition between old and new unity.

New order requires new metaphor such as *loving of self and other as oneself*. Such a metaphor is implicit in Dr Moreno's role reversal. Progressive order invokes adulthood, whether man or woman, loving and individuated, having become deeply social. Progressive behaviour is ethical, and not simply perfunctory, subserviently obedient or contrarily oppositional to society's moral<sup>3</sup> order.

### **The Problem that is Society**

It is important to distinguish the problem that *is society* from groups that are problems *of society*.

The first is the problem that is society. Or rather, that scientific theory - why *society is problematic* - which is in the grip of older and unresolved theory and whose assumption of oneness is misinforming social unity. The second refers to the problems of society, those groups of people disordered and disorderly in a society that is fallen, failing to evolve. And that group work is the bailiwick of psychodrama.

Through our governing mechanisms we can arrange to quarantine mental illness, delinquency, terrorism, criminality and other problematic groups from mainstream society to avoid the problem that *is society*. For example, psychological disorder in adult gay men is predicated, not because they are gay, but by an old theory whose grip on social order pre-empts their proper identity formation and causing loss of spontaneity and consequent mental illness (Franklin, 1988). This theory is a problem that emerges from what is society rather than a problem for the group of gay men that are part

of society. To further scapegoat life's disturbances exacerbates society dis-ease.

A society that is ill has members who are sick: a social system with groups of individuals having disorder isomorphic<sup>4</sup> with the whole. In a disturbed social system expect disturbed members. Similarly, in a disturbed Unity of Nations expect disturbed, and disturbing, nation states. In a school assuming social control function, expect disturbance.

Australians are realising that health is a subset of the mind-set of society. That anxiety, depression, youth suicide etcetera, are outcomes, symptoms of a more general sickness, *the absence of health* in society. Aboriginal ill health is increasing seen as an Australian socio-cultural problem of paternalism and not justly a problem of Aboriginals. The *problem is society* where a malign mindset is at work. It is seldom met direct, except in role reversal to see our self as others see us.

Prof Mead and Dr Moreno each developed modern role theory, invoking contrary worldviews with different universal orders. Their worldview - *theory of role* -and their contrary universal orders - *order & disorder* - is old.

To understand Moreno's sociatry requires we appreciate that he is speaking to a vision of a new world order *of freedom* and not simply *freedom from* tyranny. He defines positively rather than in the negative using *presence of* rather than *absence of*. Healing & health are positive aspirations while coping in the absence of illness is laudatory but negative.

That a Health Department for example using medicine's disease model is primarily concerned with sickness and not with health is generally accepted. Ironically health construed as absence

of sickness is normally ignored and even prevents progress to *discover healing* that is primary. Likewise, that an Education Department steeped in teaching's nurture is primarily concerned with education is accepted as convention. In practice that irony of equating transmitted hand-me-down knowledge with education is generally ignored. Neglecting knowing for knowledge's sake denies spiritual progress by neglecting to *discover knowing* with its deep learning implications.

### **In The Grip**

John Maynard Keynes, the parent of modern economics, maintained that if you don't know what theory you are using then you are simply in the grip of an older theory. Colloquially it is said that assumptions are the mother of all stuff-ups. Keynes' view speaks to scientific principle.

From media accounts, modern day terrorists believe that they are fundamentally good acting to defend their society in the eyes of their god. Their theory of role informs their action in the name of the society they would create. Is psychodrama fundamentally flawed and are we spreading its error? This is a question that must be asked and answered without fear or favour.

Unless we know our theory of role we may simply be in the grip of an older and inappropriate theory. We may espouse a theory but in practice assume some other. Instead, *acting-in* - living Moreno's theory of role through psychodrama for instance - is essential to healing in this 2nd universe and to progress into health in 3rd universe re-unification.

### **Conclusion**

Psychodrama and sociatry are practical sciences; they are alive social sciences. They use the psychodramatic paradigm whereas current social sciences use the psychosocial paradigm. It is psychodrama's practical, developmental

and socially unifying ethic in this healing science that makes its young cousin sociatry a progressive cultural path of best practice. This is a path from society's current confounding, its confusion and its induction of dis-order in the populace. Sociatry is a way to systemic social unity and the stability of valued socio-diversity.

Psychodrama role theory uses integrated systemic theory of role. In practice it promotes healing of group and of its members. In sociatry Moreno anticipates in social healing a 3rd universe of social unity and health.

The notion of sociatry evokes a future society, a developing culture which values the bringing forward of roles aligned with our deep identity. These originate deep in our creative spontaneity of our human nature. Sociatry, like psychodrama, defines health to include role creating and role playing.

If we do not trust our process of creative spontaneity learning then we are instead producing what Moreno called *sociosis*. That is where role taking mentalities dominate spontaneity learning and identity formation to a living-death. And that end-state singularity is in service of a reductionist worldview where there is one right way to live.

Health can include conflict and is not merely an absence of conflict. Health does however mean that we will engage with each other without resorting to coping or to fragmenting roles. Instead, creating, learning and developing individuated roles, progressive roles integrative of both the personal and the collective elements in personality.

The practice of sociatry involves trusting and valuing a deeper knowing involved with individuation. The implication for practitioners is that they can *better* trust the client's

imaginative and intuitive world, and not be prematurely compromised by pre-empting assumption. They can be less conflicted with what a client brings forward from their deeper knowing.

#### Footnotes

- 1 Dr J L Moreno pronounced it so-sigh-a-tree.
- 2 Art; Oxford Dictionary, archaic 2nd person singular, present tense of be.
- 3 Moral, Oxford Dictionary: conforming to accepted standards of general conduct.
- 4 Isomorphic, Oxford Dictionary: 1 exactly corresponding in form and relations. 2 Crystallog. having the same form.

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