

Heart of Humanity: Thinking it Through with Moreno Again and Again

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ABSTRACT

Don argues each concept in Moreno's vision for humanity is appreciated best when viewed in the light of all the others. He suggests that taking them one by one often leads to misinterpretation. Worse, the psychodrama community may become distanced from Moreno's core philosophies. Embracing Moreno's thinking as a whole enhances and refines the comprehension and application of his work. The central thrust of Moreno's thinking attends to a range of factors that together powerfully assist us to work effectively with the *heart of humanity*. Within this article, Don asks you to think of social systems, individual systems, each individual person, personality and relationships, as well as their physical and mental well-being and family health.

KEYWORDS

Moreno, humanity, health, psychodrama, canon of creativity

Introduction

I have rediscovered the idea that in order for anyone to comprehend the elements of a system cohesively they must be prepared to immerse themselves in its universe of discourse. In order to 'get' Dr Jacob L. Moreno, you and I need to immerse ourselves in his universe of discourse. Dr Moreno produced a tremendous supply of clues and statements, and has a unique way of perceiving and penetrating the human condition. When we gather his core concepts, guided by his canon of creativity, we can view each concept or methodology more adequately.^{1,2}

A universe of discourse may be defined as referring to the set of entities that a model is based on.³

Here I am thinking of the set of entities from Moreno's thinking and work

that run deep throughout his philosophy, theology and through all his work. I am convinced that Moreno's ideas penetrate and open up the *heart of humanity* and its nature. None of his concepts, theories or methodologies are truly meaningful in isolation. The entire panoply is essential to comprehending each part. Each is inseparable from the whole. Each is dependent on all the others together. We cannot comprehend 'role' without 'canon of creativity', the 'four universals', the 'phases of spontaneity development', and all the rest.^{4,5}

If we work from this position, rather than assume that we have already 'got' it, then our practice, communication and training processes will be strengthened. When people experience psychodrama and fall in love with the method they learn the methodologies, apply the techniques, enter its culture and adopt coherent attitudes. They can easily take for granted they have a psychodrama base from which to focus on each concept or method separately. Experiencing immersion in the psychodramatic method is a significant base that serves practitioners well. I am asking you to consider that it is not enough. We can do better by holding to Moreno's complete frame of reference — his universe of discourse.⁶

Exploring Moreno's view of humanity beginning at its core

The whole is crucial yet one factor is I believe key to all else. I will begin by writing about it as an unnamed factor at the *heart of humanity*. Play along with me please. Think of a baby in birth. The mother's body is organised to expel the child to become an air-reliant creature. A midwife coaches the mother to access her embodied abilities for this purpose. We may not be justified in fantasising that the neonate collaborates in achieving an escape, nevertheless, transfer of this small person from a tightly bounded liquid environment to one of air, with its incredible expansiveness, is a shocking demand to meet the new. To this point, the babe in the womb is attached to a governing placenta controlling its development. Suddenly it is thrust into the open-air-world. The child then experiences comfort of mindful cuddling from the womb's owner. Wonderfully, the babe survives the shock, and with its critical temporary reflexes, breathes for the first time and soon will suckle for the first time.⁷

Imagine at the *heart of humanity* is a factor which enables us to deal with each challenge we meet. This factor pushes us towards surviving, and even more — towards thriving. It is not confined to humanity. It is fundamental to creation and all life. Other primates have births similar to ours. Even rats and pigeons are the experimental base for appreciating how human behaviour works. Animals, even primitive reptiles, are organised to vary their responses for survival. Cells in central and peripheral nervous systems respond to the same principles of renewal.

Plant life deals with seasonal variations and meets evolutionary challenges, as

did plants washed from South American flooding rivers to the Galapagos Islands. In brief evolutionary time of millions of years, these plants adapted precisely. Fauna was similarly carried across the ocean. Do not let us miss that in the shorter term, both fauna and flora survived river torrents, half an ocean, exposure to every element, and an inhospitable landing. They survived millions of evolutionary years of adjustment — one day at a time.

There is a fundamental difference with humans in regard to this fundamental factor. We have qualities of consciousness, mindfulness, self-reflection, values and ethics. Animal brains have twinned flows of activity with capacity to determine and achieve accurate movements in play and hunting. Their brains work on synchronised organisation to move intentionally at speed. They are able to anticipate the effects of their movements and those of the other in leaping to seize prey or playmate. Humans have twin flow of brain function producing dual flows of consciousness. We have ability to be both actor and a coach from an audience position within ourselves. We compound this aptitude by our ability to reflect on the past and project into the future. This enables us to dramatically imagine ourselves in quite other places and even talk to ourselves there. We can plan actions to reach goals that may require complicated pathways. Our human brains not only learn, they learn to learn, and learn to learn to learn. Some of us learn to learn down to even deeper levels. This capacity, with other abilities we have noted, increases our choices moment to moment.^{8,9}

Let us tighten our focus on our target factor. This factor sustains and builds up our freedom to act purposefully. We humans think and feel. Values develop as we form preferences. We respond intentionally. We extend our selves with novelty. We have the capacity to learn about the processes of learning as we learn. 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.

There is no reason to think that unconscious action is not fully within the integrity of a person. We make many choices and reflect on them. Over time, we develop a certain consistency in our values and ethics. The range of “functioning forms” we take in a variety of social situations reveals a unique way of being the self we are. As we develop and strengthen a freedom to be ourselves, others come to see our character. They say they know us. They dare to predict, or take for granted, our future actions.

Perceptions are in part a result of cognitive pressures to make meaning and find consistency in what we observe and experience. Even so, it is believable that each human being has the capacity to develop patterns of functioning that have consistency. It is also reasonable to suggest that we may generate a free flow of energy to act with creativity, originality and vitality.

I will follow Jacob Moreno’s naming of this factor the S factor. I view raw

spontaneity as the primary and fundamental factor at the *heart of humanity*. I view Moreno's S factor as the human refinement and control of their spontaneity for ethical and loving purposes.

The S factor is at the core of Moreno's thought. To comprehend it in action we need the F factor, the functioning forms we take in being ourselves. The F factor (role) pulls in the CC factor (canon of creativity). We cannot ignore the W factor (the circling warm up evoking interactions that spark creativity). We orient and direct our focus to engage our S factor, which catalyses and propels the C factor (creativity) into action. There is provocation to both expansiveness and restrictiveness from the cc factor (cultural conserve).

Possible factor tags Don plays with

S	Activating, energising, catalysing & freeing	<i>spontaneity</i>
W	Directing, orientating, attending & generating	<i>warm up</i>
C	Producing, constructing, imagining & innovating	<i>creativity</i>
F	Person's functioning-form & interactive-cultural-element	<i>role</i>
cc	Establishing, regularising, grounding & securing	<i>cultural conserve</i>
T	Conscious & unconscious multi-level-connection & relating	<i>tele</i>
M	Moving, changing, transforming & communicating	<i>movement</i>
P	Encompassing, extending, fulsome & invigorating	<i>passion</i>
SCA	Smallest group of society for personal homeostasis & interactive relationships between members	<i>social & cultural atom</i>
Ut	First of 4 universals: point in & continuities of existence	<i>time</i>
Us	Second of 4 universals: particular & expansive existence	<i>space</i>
Ur	Third of 4 universals: existence underlying appearance	<i>reality</i>
Uc	Fourth of 4 universals: all existence apprehended or not	<i>cosmos</i>
sr	Reality inside and beyond the immediately real	<i>surplus reality</i>
st	Ground and space where life, action drama happens	<i>stage</i>
pr	First actor creator whose life drama is focus & vehicle	<i>protagonist</i>
ax	Those entering, assisting & building up a life's drama	<i>auxiliary</i>
au	Group seeing, experiencing & resonating with a drama	<i>audience</i>
Dr	The one charged with artistic production & dramatisation	<i>director</i> ¹⁰

Thinking it through with a fresh open mind

Why am I choosing to complicate things by giving these factors a letter, instead of a word? Why don't I just use the words Moreno introduced — or rather co-opted?

Those words simply do not convey Moreno's meanings. I choose to break

myself away from words that cause misconceptions of Moreno's vision. It is awkward to be pushed to read the word 'factor' and a single letter. Words are comforting. It will not be helpful to use the initial letter alternatives forever. My challenge is to escape from the traps of inadequate words in order to explore Moreno's meanings without their restrictions. I want us to dig deep into Moreno's universe of discourse.

It will assist me to take an artist's open mind to Moreno's expansive poetic vision. "For my part I know nothing with certainty, but the sight of the stars makes me dream."¹¹

I think it is good that the term S factor carries no meaning until we fill it up with Moreno's meanings. It requires us to identify Moreno's intentions, take in his view of humanity and bring our experience and reflection to bear on each piece of his Morenean panoply.

Even the word "psychodrama" presents continual problems — movies with a 'sick' psychological plot, political fracas and therapies with reckless acting-out come to the minds of the uninitiated. I really like the word. For me it is associated with life, health and community. I have several brief descriptions of what psychodrama is. The consistent response when I present one of these to a stranger who questions is fascination. I do not want to discard the other words either. I want to remove them temporarily so that I can freshen up my conserved thinking. It is invigorating to approach concepts anew and explore how each interacts with all others.

Is the S factor essentially healthy and good?

I cannot believe that the S factor is other than good. The phases of S factor development indicated by Moreno J.L. & Moreno F.B., are presented as essential pathways to developing freedom, authenticity and creative action. S factor cannot be other than one that is healthy and guided by sound ethical choices. Moreno produced methodologies that promote S factor development in adults after our human community has failed them in childhood. Moreno realised these interventions are needed because of the frequent inadequacies of early group life. Inadequate S factor and other inadequacies in parents result in their children becoming depleted or retarded in S factor too.^{12, 13}

When Moreno chose the word 'spontaneity', it already included impulsivity and recklessness. He differentiated 'controlled spontaneity' from 'pathological spontaneity'. When he wrote *Spontaneity Theory of Child Development*, with his wife Florence, in the journal *Sociometry* in 1944, he had begun to add the term 'S factor'. I believe Moreno's mind had a cohesive surety of focus — within wide sweeps of philosophy and a myriad of concepts. He could easily tolerate logical looseness here and there. He has left us the word 'spontaneity' and the term 'S factor energy'. Spontaneity, as a universal energy, has effects that are neutral, as is nuclear energy.¹⁴

I claim that Moreno's focus is to promote an ethical imperative. His S factor fits with that, while spontaneity more broadly is an indispensable raw energy propelling nature's abundance. In itself spontaneity is neutral; neither good nor bad. Humans can access spontaneity's energy for good or ill. Moreno worked to access and direct spontaneity towards acts of creation, to release genius, to give freedom and to realise potential. Without spontaneity human endeavour, even survival, is viewed with pessimism. *Who Shall Survive?* is a treatise calling for spontaneity in community health and collaborative action. Moreno's purpose is to carry the power of spontaneity forward, with the intention of creating a human society that is a community of 'I gods'.^{15, 16}

Spontaneity can be uncontrolled, pathological, impulsive, manic, vengeful and destructive. I doubt it is possible for spontaneity to be consciously directed for wrongful or damaging purposes. In pathological spontaneity, a person is more likely to have lost control. Intentional wickedness and calculated premeditation can have creativity, but I think it is likely to be conserved, rather than be catalysed by spontaneity.

Moreno treats the S factor as promoting health, as a capacity to be developed and as an energy that can be generated — but not be stored. It is a factor whose five qualities: vitality, creativity, originality, adequacy and flexibility, promote freedom of choice and action. It is related to 'warm up' and catalyses 'creativity'. It can take a conserved opus and perform or reproduce it with fresh S factor. When a conserve is a trap of repetitions, S factor can break the spell.^{17, 18}

Moreno presented the S factor as essentially healthy, adequate and appropriate to the context and purpose. When he published *Who Shall Survive?* in 1934, he proclaimed his science and genius for correcting and advancing society and healing community living. The book reveals sociometry as the science of relationships within society and at the *heart of humanity*. The authenticity of the S factor's ethics is open to testing in human functioning. Human capacity to develop S factor may be retarded, depleted or damaged. This results in people desperately needing social and cultural atom repair (SCA factor) and assistance to develop both S factor and adequate F factor.¹⁹

M factor

Zerka Moreno addressed a throng of international psychodramatists at Oxford in 1994, posing the question "Why did Dr Moreno create psychodrama?" Her answer was: "Because he recognised that *movement* precedes language in development, and is the highway to the psyche." Movement, and reciprocity in response to movements, are the earliest signals within relationship. Movement articulates and amply expresses states and levels of emotion and well-being. In the infant the S factor is active, W factor is significant and F factor (particular ways of being him or her self) is already being noted by the family.²⁰

People who aim to work cooperatively with others need to learn to read the

movements of the body as well as recognise words and paralanguage cues. Psychodramatists like other helping professionals take this seriously. I strengthened my ability to attend to psychosomatic cues by meeting with colleagues in a three person Milton Erickson induction exercise for over two years. We met fortnightly for two hours equally divided between being client, guide and observer. The client relaxed himself with eyes closed for thirty minutes, the guide spoke to him quietly continuously responding to each change in light or sound and every body cue of the client by naming them. Ten minutes discussion led by the observer concluded each segment. AANZPA training has, from its beginning, given close attention to developing abilities in observation, being an auxiliary, a double, a mirror, and in maximization.

The psychodrama director detects tiny physical movements during an enactment. The protagonist, a man in his late fifties, is feeling defeated. The face muscles, the body posture, and the tension of musculature are no longer those of an adult. Unfocussed eyes gaze middle distance, voice tone has changed. The director realises the protagonist is now a boy — feeling at risk and with antennae bristling. The director asks: “Where are we?” A young boy answers: “I am in my parents’ house. I am going through a drawer in the old chest.” The direction is: “Set up the scene.”

Neurological findings of recent years, and the practical applications of them, provide a rich harvest of remarkable information and technology. Often there are choruses claiming confirmation of this or that established practice or theory consequent on a neurological finding. It should not surprise people whose practice has been efficacious, when investigation of an entirely different order confirms their experience. Investigations can only reveal what is, and has always been, the reality. There is not a new reality. Reality is the same as that Moreno and many others plumbed. They followed the evidence of behaviour. Moreno observed the F factor, S factor and SCA factor.²¹

Conclusion

I have attempted to get inside Moreno’s view of the *heart of humanity*. I want to see Moreno’s methodologies and concepts in the light of his broad philosophical view. My aim is to see everything from his universe of discourse and follow my logic and experience where it leads me. I have not systematically examined the whole Morenean panoply. I have started from the S factor and connected with other concepts I believe are inseparable. I hope others might follow their own logic and experience in expanding appreciation of Moreno’s universe of discourse.

ENDNOTES

1. Jacob Moreno's diagram Canon of Creativity illustrates the dynamics of warm up (W) constantly circling and responsively sparking creativity (C), catalysed by spontaneity (S) and resourced/impacted by cultural conserves (cc). See "Who Shall Survive?" Student Edition (1993) pp. 16-19. (Moreno 1934)
2. The term "methodology" is defined by "The Pocket Oxford Dictionary" as: "Science of method; body of methods used in an activity". Applications of psychodrama are usually described as methods and techniques. Rollo Browne, in his AANZPA Sociodrama thesis followed Bullock et al, 1988, p. 525 in using the term "methodology" in a wide sense to include a general investigation of the aims of a discipline, the main concepts, the methods used to achieve its aims, the principles of reasoning and the relationships between sub-disciplines. (Browne 2005)
3. The term "universe of discourse" is generally attributed to Augustus de Morgan (1846). It was also used by George Boole (1854) in his *Laws of Thought*. (de Morgan 1846)
4. Zerka Moreno wrote: "Dr Moreno long wished his work to be identified as a way of life, instead of merely categorised as a therapeutic procedure. He further declared that instead of looking at a *person* as a fallen being everyone is a potential genius and like the Supreme Being, co-responsible for all of mankind. It is the genius we should emphasize, not the failings." (Moreno 2012)
5. Panoply is a complete suit of armour and indicates a full complement, a full or splendid array.
6. Zerka Moreno wrote "Psychodramatic Rules, Techniques and Adjunctive Methods" laying out basic tenets of the method. (Moreno 1969)
7. Jacob Moreno wrote in "Who Shall Survive?" that birth is a prime example of spontaneity — see the Student Edition 1993, p. 14 (Moreno 1934)
8. I wrote in the AANZPA Journal of dual flows of consciousness contributing to the way our functioning forms operate. (Reekie 2009)
9. Gregory Bateson wrote about levels of learning in a paper: "Logical Categories of Learning and Communications" in Part Two of *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. (Bateson 1972)
10. I use the tag "SCA factor" (social cultural atom) here to include all aspects of what Moreno refers to separately as social atom and cultural atom (Moreno 1934), as well as those elaborated by Ann Hale who reports that Dr Moreno wrote, "the distinction between them is artificial" and "there is one social atom viewed from many perspectives". She also reports in Endnote I in her "Sociometric Processing of Action Events", that Anton Barbour revealed Dr Moreno told him that "psychodrama, sociometry and group psychotherapy are open systems which can admit new information." (Hale p.17 1981 & Hale et al 2002) It is also important to note the features of cultural atom that Lynette Clayton took account of in following her work with clients. (Clayton 1982)
11. Vincent van Gogh wrote to his brother Theo July 1888 paraphrased: "For my part I know nothing with certainty, but the sight of the stars makes me dream." (van Gogh 1888)
12. Jacob Moreno & Florence B Moreno wrote "Spontaneity theory of child development". *Sociometry*, 7, pp. 89-128, republished as "Principles of Spontaneity" in *Psychodrama Vol. The First*, 1946 (Moreno & Moreno 1944)
13. Jacob Moreno wrote in "Who Shall Survive?" "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." See the Student Edition 1993, pp. 13-14. (Moreno 1934)
14. Jacob Moreno wrote in "The Future of Man's World": "Spontaneity 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. Because it can be tapped directly by *humans themselves* its release can be well compared with the release of nuclear energy on the physical plane." See www.lulu.com (Moreno 1947)
15. Jacob Moreno commenced his introduction to his opus "Who Shall Survive?" with the sociometric assertion that: "A truly therapeutic procedure cannot have less an objective than the whole of *humankind*" See the Student Edition (1993) p. 3. This surely begins an ethical enterprise. His "Preludes" p. xci, in "Who Shall Survive?" takes this further: "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. It seems to be the same way with all scientific methods, they cannot be harnessed in favor of one or another cause. A particular form of sociodrama, however, is an exception to the rule, the group-centered form. Here the problem and presentation are not coerced upon the group by a mighty dictator-director but they come from the group. If true spontaneity is permitted to the members of the group the denaturalizing tendencies have to give way sooner or later to the spontaneous aspirations of the participants. The group centered form of sociodrama, unless prohibited by law, is a natural ally of democratic processes." see <http://www.asgpp.org/docs/WSS/WSS%20Index/WSS%20index.html> (Moreno 1934)
16. Jacob Moreno wrote in "The Future of Man's World" p. 22: "Every new step in self-realization and self-expansion will amount to a total revolution if the situation of *Humankind* on a more superior plane is compared with his situation on a more inferior plane. The I-Self-God process has obviously no relation to the idea of the Man-god and similar anthropomorphic allusions. We are not concerned with the godlikeness of a single individual but, to use a religious simile, with the godlikeness of the total universe, its self-integration." See www.lulu.com (Moreno 1947)
17. When spontaneity is low, there will be a lack of role flexibility, while increased spontaneity activates a person's innate creativity and generates new, more effective roles. Moreno in "Who Shall Survive?" (1993/1934) proposed that spontaneity is the freedom to mindfully generate and direct responses to meet a situation with "vitality, creativity, originality, adequacy and flexibility" as Clayton and Clayton noted in their chapter of "Experiential Psychotherapies in Australia" p. 91. (Clayton & Clayton, 1980)
18. Jacob Moreno drew a diagram in "Who Shall Survive?" of his canon of creativity (see endnote I. above) in the footnote he wrote that cultural conserves "need to be reborn, the catalyser spontaneity revitalizes them", see "Who Shall Survive?" Student Edition (1993) p. 18. (Moreno 1934)
19. Jacob Moreno wrote in "Who Shall Survive?" "The pivotal point of dialectic sociometry is that sociometry returns the social sciences to the 'aboriginal' science from which it came — 'ethics'; without, however, giving an inch of the objective goals of scientific method. Sociometry is the social ethics par excellence. Behind the front of the sociometric operations there are hidden a number of ethical principles." See the Student Edition 1993, p. 86. (Moreno 1934)
20. Zerka Moreno spoke of "movement" not language being the "highroad" to the psyche. Jacob Moreno wrote in "Psychodrama Vol. The First" p.157, of "roots", suggesting "Mead and Freud believed, for different reasons, that language is the main root of psychological analysis". (Moreno 1946)
21. Jacob Moreno was particularly perspicacious. Unfortunately his theatre, sociometry and body movements focus, though influential, have been little acknowledged in psychology. His observations have

also anticipated much understanding of behaviour uncovered recently by neurological research. An example is in biomechanics of elegant prosthetics, where methodologies are consistent with Moreno's work with movement. A CNN TV programme called "The Art of Movement" records the latest advances in biomechanics - bionic limb prosthetics, enabling agile walking and dexterous arm, hand and finger articulation. Control is by thinking. Upper limb prostheses placed over an upper arm stump, with electrodes in the area of neurological connections provide stimulation. These are identified with sensations as if movement were occurring in the phantom limb. The nervous system itself takes command of the prosthetic arm. An occupational therapist trains the arm and hand by coaching the recipient to imagine their movements. The adroit flow of movement is achieved by imagining and then acting as if — or role-taking. It is pure psychodramatic experiment and discovery. (CNN "The Art of Movement" 2013)

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Don Reekie, Trainer Educator and Practitioner, is a trainer with 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.