

The Wise Brain and the Moreno's Canon of Creativity  
by Ann E. Hale, M.A., TEP and Donna Little, MSW, TEP

Reading recommendations

Dayton, Tian . "Neuroscience and Psychodrama Validating the Mind/Body Approach of Psychodrama" • The opening plenary speech at the 64th Annual Conference in San Francisco, CA, April 28, 2006. Available <http://www.asgpp.org/html/library.html>

Hale, Ann E. and Donna Little. Sociometric Processing of Action Events. 2 ed. Roanoke, VA, 2002. (Available from [www.tcps.on.ca](http://www.tcps.on.ca) )

Lipton, Bruce H. The Biology of Belief. Carlsbad, CA, Hay House, 2005.

J. L. Moreno Who Shall Survive Beacon, NY, Beacon House, 1934,1953, 1978. (Especially page 47)

Nolte, John. "The Canon of Spontaneity - Creativity" • in The Psychodrama Papers. Hartford, CT. Encounter Publications, 2008, p. 103-134.

Pert, Candace B. Molecules of Emotion: The Science Behind Mind-Body Medicine. NY, Scibner, 1997.

Schultz, Mona Lisa. Awakening Intuition. NY, Three Rivers Press, 1998.

Siegel, Daniel J. The Mindful Brain: Reflections and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being. New York, WW Norton, 2007.

Siegel, Daniel J. The Developing Mind: How relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are. NY, Guilford Press, 1999.

Williams, Rob. <http://www.psych-k.com/pages/originator.php> Introduction to Psych-K, applied kinesiology to the superconscious mind.

A few remarks

We believe that Moreno would have rejoiced over the growing field of interpersonal neurobiology and the linkages which have been made to brain functioning and our understanding how well-being takes place in day to day living and in psychotherapeutic practice. In his professional life Moreno was a medical doctor, a social psychologist, a psychiatrist, a philosopher, a writer and an innovator. His approach to healing was focused on spontaneity, creativity and ways the cultural conserves can be utilized or hamper growth and well-being. This cornerstone of his life's work is referred to as the Canon of Spontaneity - Creativity and the Cultural Conserve. See Figure 1. His view of the cultural conserve, the end-product of all creative activity, that energetic aspect of the creative act which is conservable, is that it is

necessary to consider these end products as malleable, able to be tweaked, improved upon...essentially created anew. As an innovator he valued the notion of the "springboard" and "play" as ways to build and re-frame constructs which had lost their usefulness or needed superceding into something novel and useful. Essential to this process is a "what if" warm-up, an imagination which urges a man or a woman to depart the conserved world and play with their idea, adding greater and greater additions of spontaneity to the mix.

The block to creativity is fear. Moreno writes: "If spontaneity is such an important factor for man's world why is it so little developed? The answer is: man fears spontaneity, just like his ancestor in the jungle feared fire; he feared fire until he learned how to make it. Man will fear spontaneity until he will learn how to train it."

### Training Spontaneity

Donna and I have developed over the years a series of professional training we have called Sociometry and Healing. Initially it grew out of discussions and evaluation of sociometry training, particularly our frustrations related to there never seeming to be time enough to teach sociometric methods due to personal issues which surfaced. We switched to additional processing of personal psychodramas and group process sessions, in order that group members in training with us could understand the dynamics of the group and the ways the intersecting stories of the participants impacted patterns of relating...a sociometric set.

A sociometric set, for single individuals and for established groups, is a particular way we organize our relationships and positions within a group. It IS a cultural conserve. In our training we have been able to encourage a way to depart from fixed positions to more spontaneous choices and choice-making attitudes. We tackle fear. And, we still hold to a conserve from psychodrama which states: "Do not take anything away from a person until you are able to offer the person something of equal or greater value." To combat fear, especially in interpersonal relating, we need to create an environment where we make it safe for spontaneity, and where intimacy and conflict are not only tolerated, but expected and valued. To combat fear we give time and energy to developing a certain quality of curiosity about varying our usual relating patterns. The very idea that we have patterns, that these patterns are fluid, and vary depending on role repertoire and situation further assists people in the belief of managing their interpersonal choices. We also teach The Sociometric Cycle (Hale) which can be used to track issues related to belonging (attachment) and blocks to movement through role development phases and stages of group connection.. See Figure 2 for the way the Canon of Creativity merges with The Sociometric Cycle (Hale).

### The Wise Brain and the Canon of Creativity

Daniel J. Siegel in his book The Mindful Brain (2007) offers nine "domains" of integration, ways a person understands their experience

and embodies both the experience and the beliefs they hold related to the experience. Researchers studying aspects of mental life - from social psychology to the neurosciences - have used the term "integration" to refer to the collaborative, linking function that coordinates various levels of processes within the mind and between people. The third domain of Siegel's is Bilateral Integration, concerned primarily with left and right brain processes:

"The right brain processes information in a holistic way with dominance for the non-verbal aspects of empathy. The left brain functions in a logical, linear fashion, with more attention to the verbal elements, the use of language.

"Creating coherence is a lifetime project. Integration is thus a process, not a final accomplishment. It is a verb, not a noun. This process perhaps is best seen as a form of resonance, defined as the mutually influencing interactions between two or more relatively independent and differentiated entities. This resonance allows two systems to amplify and co-regulate each other's activity. In the case of one mind, integration allows for the spontaneous flow of energy and information within the whole brain. This spontaneity does not mean random activation, but the flexible influence of layers of processes upon each other. By contrast, insecure attachment patterns produce incoherence, in that individuals' adaptations to suboptimal parenting experiences have placed marked restrictions on their capacity for resonance both within their own minds and with other minds.

Autobiographical narratives can reveal integration or incoherence. A coherent narrative reveals a blending of left- and right-hemispheric processes. The interpreting left hemisphere is driven to weave a tale of what it knows. When access to the right hemisphere's representation processes is limited, such a tale is incoherent. When the mentalizing, primary emotional, somatosensory, and autobiographical processes of the right hemisphere can be drawn upon, the left brain is able to "make sense" by integrating a coherent life story. Bilateral integration promotes coherent narratives.

Both Siegel and Moreno are investigators into the process of identity formation. Moreno named this process the Canon of Creativity: "a field of rotating operations" which is similar to what D. J. Siegel describes as "flexible influences of layers of processes upon each other." If you conceive of the left-brain as the processing plant for the "cultural conserve", as the weaving of tales about what it knows, and the right-brain as the prompter for the adventurous role investigator who embodies the spontaneous explorer of personal narrative, you have the basis for recognizing bilateral integration when it occurs in psychodramatic enactments. An example may help illustrate a way this is accomplished in a psychodrama session.

Example: A belief system is explored

Â Â Â Â A group session comes to a halt when one of the members has a near anxiety attack when faced with exploring group members choices for a partner for an exercise. Leslie (a fictitious name) is chosen to explore her fear of choosing. She states, "I am a poor chooser. I cannot trust my choices." She agrees to set up the situation where this belief about herself was formed. Her inner dialogue about herself as a chooser is an example of a cultural conserve, resulting from her experience, and ways she integrated these thoughts into her interpersonal identity. Leslie sets a scene from her first year of marriage when she discovers her husband has resumed intimate relations with a former girlfriend. "I have made the wrong choice for a husband and life partner." She weeps.

Director: "What did you do when you found out?"

Leslie: "I told him to get out. I got a lawyer and filed for divorce." This scene is set on stage and a double for Leslie is asked to join the action.

Director: (to the double) "I want you to amplify Leslie's belief that she makes poor choices."

As the exploration into seeking divorce ensues, and Leslie states she wants a divorce, the double states loudly, "See, there I am, once again making a wrong choice." This intervention is the beginning of role playing, no longer just taking the role as supplied by the protagonist, but amplifying it, exaggerating its application to all choices Leslie makes. In this way the psychodrama brings the incoherent dialogue to the surface. Leslie: (becoming enraged) "No way am I going to stay married to someone who cheats on me!"

Director: "So Leslie, are you making a good choice now?"

Leslie: "Of course I am."

Director: "Then I want you to take a moment here and consider that sometimes you make good choices."

The director is joining the person in their incoherent narrative and helping to provide an enactment which will stretch (neuronal plasticity) the former narrative to include a more coherent statement of the reality here in now that Leslie makes both good and bad decisions. She is especially able to make decisions to protect herself when she had information that is hurtful and causes suffering. In Morenean terms Leslie is role creating, changing her identity as a poor chooser, to a person who is able to make good choices on many occasions.

## Summary

Â Â Â Â Critical to the process of Spontaneity - Creativity - Cultural Conserve is the condition of receptivity, and specifically to have a response when fear surfaces. It is required in a person who wants to answer the "call to adventure" and create oneself. And it is required of a culture which receives the end product of creative acts. The subject of many psychodramatic enactments is an exploration of the range of coherence-to-incoherence in the personal narrative of the individual's journey to create oneself. What is explored are the dynamics, internal and interpersonal, which contribute to a person's ongoing process of learning and becoming. Receptivity is central for a process of transformation and

integration. Moreno's system of Spontaneity - Creativity - Cultural Conserve supports entirely the concept of co-regulation of each other's activity described by Siegel in the emerging field called interpersonal neurobiology. Through these actions the wise brain emerges.

© Ann E. Hale and Donna Little, March 20, 2009.

1. Moreno, J.L., Who Shall Survive? Beacon , NY, Beacon House, 1978., p.47

2. Moreno, Zerka. "Psychodramatic Rules, Techniques, and Adjunctive Methods" • Group Psychotherapy, 18, pp. 73-86.

3. Moreno, J.L. Words of the Father. Beacon, NY, Beacon House, 1971, p. 101. "What would you be if I were not? What would I be if you were not?"

4. Hale, Ann E. And Donna Little. Sociometric Processing of Action Events. 2 ed. Roanoke, VA, 2002.

5. Daniel J. Siegel. The Developing Mind. NY, Guilford Press, 1999, p. 301

This page comes from International Sociometry Training Network:  
<http://sociometry.net>

The URL for this page is:  
<http://sociometry.net/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=42>