

Moreno, J.L. (1993). Doctrine of Spontaneity – Creativity. In *Who Shall Survive? Foundations of Sociometry, Group Psychotherapy and Sociodrama* (Student Edition). Beacon House, New York.

## DOCTRINE OF SPONTANEITY-CREATIVITY

The cornerstones of sociometric conceptualization are the universal concepts of spontaneity and creativity. Sociometry has taken these concepts from the metaphysical and philosophical level and brought them to empirical test by means of sociometric method. A presentation of these concepts is the first step within the sociometric system.

Spontaneity and creativity are not identical or similar processes. They are different categories, although strategically linked. In the case of Man his *s* may be diametrically opposite to his *c*; an individual may have a high degree of spontaneity but be entirely uncreative, a spontaneous idiot. Another individual may have a high degree of creativity but be entirely without spontaneity, a creator "without arms." God is an exceptional case because in God all spontaneity has become creativity. He is one case in which spontaneity and creativity are identical. At least, in the world of our experience we may never encounter pure spontaneity or pure cultural conserves, they are functions of one another.

The universe is infinite creativity. The visible definition of creativity is the "child." Spontaneity by itself can never produce a child but it can help enormously in its delivery. The universe is filled with the products of spontaneity-creativity interaction, as a) the effort which goes into the birth and rearing of new babies, b) the effort which goes into the creation of new works of art, "cultural conserves;" of new social institutions, social conserves and stereotypes; of technological inventions, robots and machines, and c) the effort which goes into the creation of new social orders. Spontaneity can enter the creatively endowed individual and evoke a response. There were many more Michelangelos born than the one who painted the great paintings, many more Beethovens born than the one who wrote the great symphonies, and many more Christs born than the one who became Jesus of Nazareth. What they have in common are creativity and the creative ideas. What separates them is the spontaneity which, in the successful cases, enables the carrier to take full command of his resources, whereas the failures are at a loss with all their treasures; they suffer from deficiencies in their warming-up process. Creativity without spontaneity becomes lifeless; its living intensity increases and decreases in proportion to the amount of spontaneity in which it partakes. Spontaneity without

creativity is empty and runs abortive. *Spontaneity and creativity are thus categories of a different order; creativity belongs to the categories of substance —it is the arch substance—spontaneity to the categories of catalyzer—it is the arch catalyzer.*

The fate of a culture is decided by the creativity of its carriers. But creativity as a scientific frame of reference has never been established and so a basis for a critique of deviations has been missing. If a disease of the creative functions has afflicted the primary group, the creative men of the human race, then it is of supreme importance that the principle of creativity be redefined and that its perverted forms be compared with creativity in its original states.

There are works which survive their creators and eventually dominate men's patterns of culture. They survive because of certain technological processes which conserve them. These conserves may enter into the flesh of the artist and control him from within, as, for instance, in the actor, or they provide technological forms with a content, for instance, books. We can visualize a period of civilization before they were discovered. There are *cultural conserves* underlying all forms of creative activities— the alphabet conserve, the number conserve, the language conserve, and musical notations. These conserves determine our forms of creative expression. They may operate at one time as a disciplining force — at another time, as a hindrance. It is possible to reconstruct the situation of creativity at a time prior to the conserves which dominate our culture. The *pre-conserve man*,\* the man of the *first universe*, had no musical notations with which he could project the musical experiences of his mind, no alphabetic notations with which he could project his words and thoughts into writing. He had no mathematical notations which became the basic language of science. Before he had selected from the inarticulate mass of sounds and vowels which developed into our languages he must have had a relation to the process of creativity different from modern man, if not in the source itself, certainly in projection and expression. When we removed, by a process of deconserving, one conserve after another from an actor, and

---

\* *Pre-conserve man* and *first universe* are relative concepts, considering the thousands of varieties of culture through which mankind has passed; every pre-conserve man was a conserve man to an earlier one and every first universe was a second universe to a still earlier universe, and so *ad infinitum*.

nothing remained but his naked personality, the pre-serve man came closer to our understanding. He must have been guided by the warming-up process inherent in his own organism, his master tool, isolated in space, unspecialized yet, but working as a totality, projecting into facial expressions, sounds, movements, the vision of his mind. A sort of psychodrama may have been the common denominator of all sorts of cultural conserves in which culture has gradually specialized itself. The sounds uttered by him originally, a simple device for making a life situation as expressive as possible, developed gradually into the phonetic residuum of the first alphabet which was selected in preference to other sounds. We find a hangover of the pre-serve technique of the psychodrama in the preparatory phase of every individual work of culture. The inspirations which lead a creative man to produce a work of culture are spontaneous. The more original and profound the problem is which a genius sets himself the more is he compelled to use, like the pre-serve man, his own personality as an experimental tool and the situation around him as raw material.

The struggle with the cultural conserves is profoundly characteristic of our whole culture; it expresses itself in various forms of trying to escape from them. The effort to escape from the conserved world appears like an attempt to return to paradise lost, the *first* universe of man, which has been substituted step-by-step and overlapped by the *second* universe in which we live today. It is probable that all cultural conserves are the final projections of the tremendous abstractions which man's conceptual mind developed in a struggle for a superior existence. Gradually abstraction led from the pictures of things to the letters of the modern alphabet and to the numbers of arithmetic. The gradual abstraction and differentiation of sounds laid the ground for musical notations. But what must have been common to the Beethoven of a pre-serve culture and the Beethoven of our time is the *spontaneity level of creation*. However, it was then unchanged by the devices which dominate our culture and it was perhaps for that reason more powerful—on the other hand, less articulate, and less disciplined than our products today.

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. A great deal of Man's psycho- and socio-pathology can be ascribed to the insufficient development of spontaneity. Spontaneity "training" is therefore the most auspicious skill to be taught to therapists in all our institutions of learning and it is his task to teach his clients how to be more spontaneous without becoming excessive. There is ample evidence that the spontaneity of the infant has "something to do" with his arrival in this world. During pregnancy he warms up to the act of birth. The length of gestation is largely determined by the genotype of the foetus and not by the dam of the carrying individual. The infant wants to be born. Birth is a primary and creative process. It is positive before it is negative, it is healthy before it is pathological, it is a victory before it is a trauma. Anxiety results from "loss" of spontaneity.\*

Spontaneity propels a variable degree of satisfactory response which an individual manifests in a situation of variable degree of novelty. The warming up process is the *operational* expression of spontaneity. Spontaneity and warming up process operate on all levels of human relations, eating, walking, sleeping, sexual intercourse, social communication, creativity, in religious self realization and asceticism.

The place of the s factor in a universal theory of spontaneity is an important theoretical question. Does the s factor emerge only in the human group or can the s hypothesis be extended within certain limits to non-human groups and to the lower animals and plants? How can the existence of the s factor be reconciled with the idea of a mechanical law abiding universe, as, for instance, with the law of the conservation of energy? *The idea of the conservation of energy has been the "unconscious" model of many social and psychological theories, as the psychoanalytic theory of the libido.* In accordance with this

---

\* For a discussion of the relation of anxiety to spontaneity, see p. 171-173.

theory Freud thought that, if the sexual impulse does not find satisfaction in its direct aim, it must displace its unapplied energy elsewhere. It must, he thought, attach itself to a pathological locus or find a way out in sublimation. He could not conceive of this unapplied effect vanishing because he was biased by the physical idea of the conservation of energy. If we, too, were to follow here this precept of the energy pattern, and would neglect the perennial inconsistencies in the development of physical and mental phenomena, we would have to consider spontaneity as a psychological energy—a quantity distributing itself within a field—which, if it cannot find actualization in one direction, would flow in another direction in order to maintain its volume and attain equilibrium. We should have to assume that an individual has a certain amount of spontaneity stored up to which he adds and which he spends as he goes on living. As he lives he draws from this reservoir. He may use it all or even overdraw. Such an interpretation is, however, unsatisfactory according to spontaneity research, at least on the level of human creativity. The following theory is offered.

The individual is not endowed with a reservoir of spontaneity, in the sense of a given, stable volume or quantity. Spontaneity is (or is not) available in varying degrees of readiness, from zero to maximum, operating like a catalyzer. Thus he has, when faced with a novel situation, no alternative but to use the s factor as a guide or searchlight, prompting him as to which emotions, thoughts and actions are most appropriate. At times he has to invoke more spontaneity and at other times less, in accord with the requirements of the situation or task. He should be careful not to produce less than the exact amount of spontaneity needed—for if this were to happen he would need a "reservoir" from which to draw. Likewise he should be careful not to produce more than the situation calls for because the surplus might tempt him to store it, to establish a reservoir, conserving it for future tasks as if it were energy, thus completing a vicious circle which ends in the deterioration of spontaneity and the development of cultural conserves. Spontaneity functions only in the moment of its emergence just as, metaphorically speaking, light is turned on in a room, and all parts of it become distinct. When the light is turned off in a room, the basic structure remains the

same, but a fundamental quality has disappeared.

The physical law of the conservation of energy was accepted during the second half of the nineteenth century in many quarters as a universal axiom. Many scholars regarded energy in all its manifestations as though it would be a volume of water in a glass. If the water disappeared entirely or in part, it could not have vanished. It must have been consumed, spilled or transformed into an equivalent. They assumed that the volume of energy which it originally had must have been constant at any point of the process. Freud likewise speculated with the assumption that libido energy is to remain constant. If therefore the flow of libido energy is interrupted and inhibited from its aim, the dammed up energy must flow elsewhere and find new outlets, i.e., as aggression, substitution, projection, regression or sublimation. These phenomena which appear on the surface apparently unrelated could now be expressed in terms of a single principle, libido energy. In such a closed psychodynamic or sociodynamic system there is no place for spontaneity. If libido energy must remain constant socio-psychological determinism is absolute. As a factor like spontaneity is not admitted to operate the psychodynamic or socio-dynamic factors causing a behavior manifestation—if they cannot be traced to recent events—must be deferred farther and farther to an elusive past. The findings of spontaneity research had made such forced systems of intellectualization unnecessary. The unity and universality of explanation which they offered has become too high a price to pay. It led to over-simplification of interpretation and to a dangerous inertia hindering the development of new methods of fact finding and experimentation. As long as spontaneity was a vague, mystic and sacred notion such rigid systems could prosper almost undisputed, but with its inevitable emergence as a vigorous concept, as a clearly discernible and measurable agent, the tide began to turn in favor of more flexible systems.

The principle which set sociometry into motion is the twin concept of spontaneity and creativity, not as abstractions but as a function in actual human beings and in their relationships. Applied to social phenomena it made clear that human beings do not behave like dolls, but are endowed in various degrees with initiative and spontaneity. The so-called social structure resulting from the interaction of two and a

half thousand million individuals is not open to perception. It is not "given" like an immense visual configuration—for example like the geographical configuration of the globe, but it is every *moment* submerged and changed by inter-individual and collective factors. If there is any primary principle in the mental and social universe, it is found in this twin concept which has its most tangible reality in the interplay between person and person, between person and things, between person and work, between society and society, between society and the whole of mankind.

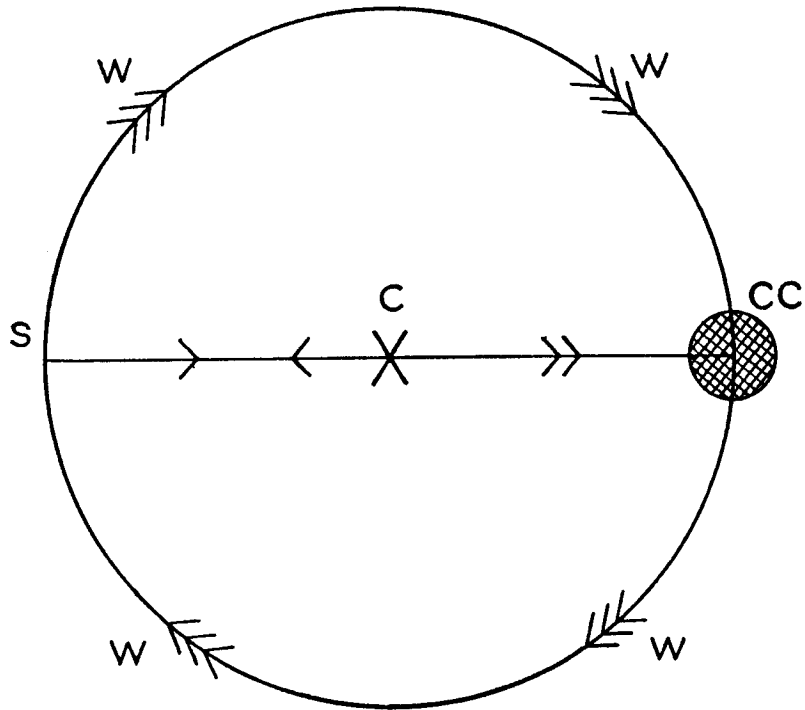
The fact that spontaneity and creativity can operate in our mental universe and evoke levels of organized expression which are not fully traceable to preceding determinants, causes us to recommend *the abandonment or reformulation of all current psychological and sociological theories, openly or tacitly based upon psychoanalytic doctrine, for example, the theories of frustration, projection, substitution and sublimation. These theories have to be rewritten, retested and based on spontaneity-creativity formulation.*

In spontaneity theory energy as an organized system of psychological forces is not entirely given up. It reappears in the form of the cultural conserve. But instead of being the fountainhead, at the beginning of every process such as libido, it is at the end of a process, an end product. It is evaluated in its relativity, not as an ultimate form but as an *intermediate* product from time to time rearranged, re-shaped or entirely broken up by new spontaneity factors acting upon them. It is in the interaction between spontaneity-creativity and the cultural conserve that the existence of the s factor can be somewhat reconciled with the idea of a law-abiding universe, as for instance with the law of the conservation of energy.

The canon of creativity has four phases: creativity, spontaneity, warming up process and conserve (See diagram, p. 19). Spontaneity is the catalyzer. Creativity is the elementary X, it is without any specialized connotation, the X which may be recognized by its acts. In order to become effective, it (the sleeping beauty) needs a catalyzer—spontaneity. The operational manifestation of the interacting spontaneity-creativity is the warming up process. As far as is known the only products of such interactions are the conserves.



CANON OF CREATIVITY  
 SPONTANEITY-CREATIVITY-CONSERVE



FIELD OF ROTATING OPERATIONS BETWEEN SPONTANEITY-CREATIVITY-CULTURAL  
 CONSERVE (S-C-CC)

S—Spontaneity, C—Creativity, CC—Cultural (or any) Conserve (for instance, a biological conserve, i.e., an animal organism, or a cultural conserve, i.e., a book, a motion picture, or a robot, i.e., a calculating machine); W—Warming up is the “operational” expression of spontaneity. The circle represents the field of operations between S, C and CC.

*Operation I:* Spontaneity arouses Creativity, C. S→C.

*Operation II:* Creativity is receptive to spontaneity. S←C.

*Operation III:* From their interaction Cultural Conserves, CC, result. S→C→>>CC.

*Operation IV:* Conserves (CC) would accumulate indefinitely and remain “in cold storage.” They need to be reborn, the catalyzer Spontaneity revitalizes them.

CC→>>>S→>>>CC.

S does not operate in a vacuum, it moves either towards Creativity or towards Conserves.

*Total Operation*

Spontaneity-creativity-warming up—act < <sup>actor</sup>/<sub>conserve</sub>

The universe is infinite creativity. But what is spontaneity? Is it a kind of energy? If it is energy it is *unconservable*, if the meaning of spontaneity should be kept consistent. We must, therefore, differentiate between two varieties of energy, conservable and unconservable energy. There is an energy which is conservable in the form of "cultural" conserves, which can be saved up, which can be spent at will in selected parts and used at different points in time; it is like a robot at the disposal of its owner. There is another form of energy which emerges and which is spent in a moment, which must emerge to be spent and which must be spent to make place for emergence, like the life of some animals which are born and die in the love-act.

It is a truism to say that the universe cannot exist without physical and mental energy which can be preserved. But it is more important to realize that without the other kind of energy, the unconservable one—or spontaneity—the creativity of the universe could not start and could not run, it would come to a standstill.

There is apparently little spontaneity in the universe, or, at least, if there is any abundance of it only a small particle is available to man, hardly enough to keep him surviving. In the past he has done everything to discourage its development. He could not rely upon the instability and insecurity of the moment, with an organism which was not ready to deal with it adequately; he encouraged the development of devices as intelligence, memory, social and cultural conserves, which would give him the needed support with the result that he gradually became the slave of his own crutches. If there is a neurological localization of the spontaneity-creativity process it is the least developed function of man's nervous system. The difficulty is that one cannot store spontaneity, one either is spontaneous at a given moment or one is not. 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.

When the nineteenth century came to an end and the final accounting was made, what emerged as its greatest contribution to the mental and social sciences was to many minds the idea of the unconscious and its cathexes. When the twentieth century will close its doors that which I believe will come out as the greatest achievement is the idea of spontaneity and creativity, and the significant, indelible link between them. It may be said that the efforts of the two centuries complement one another. *If the nineteenth century looked for the "lowest" common denominator of mankind, the unconscious, the twentieth century discovered, or rediscovered its "highest" common denominator—spontaneity and creativity.*