

Psychodrama review on spontaneity and creativity



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

- Brett Cartwright

In the following essay I will be reviewing an excerpt called “ *Spontaneity and Creativity versus the Cultural Conserve*”, taken from the book “ *The Living Stage: A Step-by-Step Guide to Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy Essence of Psychodrama*” by Tian Dayton Ph. D. (Part 1: The *Essence of Psychodrama* , Chapter 5). There are three main areas that Dayton addresses in this chapter: Spontaneity and creativity; cultural and personal cultural conserves; and guidelines for therapeutic safety. In amongst summarising Dayton’s main points, I will be discussing both what I believe to be the intent of the writer, in conjunction with my understanding of psychodramatic theory and its application to therapeutic practice.

Dayton’s opening line of this chapter in “ *The Living Stage*” is “ Spontaneity and creativity are twin principles core to the fundamental theory of psychodrama.” (p. 62) This clearly depicts her intent as being to explore and better understand the definitions of spontaneity and creativity, as they were presented by J. L. Moreno. She does this by first explaining the three definitions of spontaneity within the psychodramatic modality, which are as follows.

1. Pathological Spontaneity: A novel response without adequacy, or pathological spontaneity.
2. Stereotyped Spontaneity: An adequate response without novelty and creativity, or stereotyped spontaneity.
3. True Spontaneity: An Adequate response with novelty and creativity.
Also called the “ spontaneity of the genius.” (p. 62)

Dayton continues by explaining that the constant and true goal of psychodrama is to help participants develop a healthy amount of spontaneity, and therefore become more in-the-moment and spontaneously creative in order to remove emotional blockages that may be affecting their day-to-day life. When healthy levels of spontaneity and creativity are achieved, it in turn “restores color, aliveness and passion, to help more of the inner person come alive.” (p. 63) Dayton then goes on to discuss the pros and cons of spontaneity when there is not enough consideration given to the contextual elements of any given situation, detailing the effects of not enough spontaneity and too much spontaneity. She also talks about the way in which spontaneity manifests via experiencing as opposed to having a reservoir, or amount of spontaneity ready prior to the experience. It is at this point that Dayton draws the link between spontaneity and creativity, explaining that despite their seeming differences and lack of connection, they are fundamentally connected at the core, giving movement to each other.

I believe it was Dayton’s intention to present and deliver a tangibly comprehensive body of content for the reader to digest, that will imbibe them with a good understanding of the three different definitions of spontaneity, why spontaneity is important in the first place, how spontaneity functions both internally and externally in regards to internal blockages and the affect they have on one’s external experiences. Thus leaving the therapist with a measured tool as such to then share with the client, that can be integrated to help recognise, restore and revitalise one’s experiencing of life.

In the next section of this chapter, Dayton explores Moreno's term ' Cultural Conserve', which in essence is the finished product of a spontaneous experience (p65). She reflects that this ' finished form' has two sides. Firstly, that it is just a natural outworking of one's spontaneous creative response that then gives it tangible form from which to reproduce or launch new expressions of spontaneity. Secondly, that it can be an obstacle which one is restricted by, as the product then becomes of higher value than that of the process, and in turn one is limited to " conserved patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving that drive the outward and inward expression of culture." (p. 67)

Personal cultural conserve is very much the same as cultural conserve, only it refers more to a set of conserves on an individual and experience based level. As Dayton so aptly describes, " The personal conserve can examine the conserved, internalized patterns that drive us, our sets of beliefs, patterns and inner constructs that move us toward a dynamic expression of our beingness." (p. 67) Dayton then goes on to discuss how these things can be identified and used in regards to a therapeutic setting, by looking at the client's personal conserve and working in a backward manner to discover the origin of each conserve. Thus bringing each conserve into the client's awareness so to help the client acknowledge, accept and make conscious choices to not continue the same patterns. It is here that she makes mention of Moreno's concept of the Godhead, drawing a brief descriptive summary of Moreno's intent to create a religious revolution, or new belief system, based around spontaneity and creativity, by planting seeds of belief that one could be Godlike.

Throughout this section I believe that Dayton was attempting to point out the limitations of both cultural conserves and personal cultural conserves, while acknowledging that both spontaneity and conserves are directly linked, as a cultural or personal cultural conserve is the outcome of spontaneous process, and both can be a launching pad as such for spontaneity to sprout from.

Dayton closes the chapter with a list of therapeutic guidelines one should follow in order to maintain a safe and conducive therapeutic environment when conducting a psychodrama session. She discusses the role of therapist as remaining with the protagonist, listening and following, not using shock techniques or pre-scripted material, using caution in areas of trauma and stand-ins for traumatic scenes, allowing ample time for sharing, and maintaining safe group norms.

I believe it to be quite clear that Dayton is outlining a therapeutic model of a psychodrama session that looks first and foremost at creating a safe and conducive environment for the protagonist and the group.

In conclusion, Dayton paints a clear picture of the differences between spontaneity and creativity and cultural and personal conserve. This chapter explains the differences between each one, while communicating how they all work in conjunction with one another, drawing on Moreno's concepts and discussing how they apply to both the theory and practice of psychodrama. I believe Dayton's overall intent is to provide a clear understanding of these main concepts, with the addition of some key therapeutic guidelines that are essential to have in place when conducting a psychodrama session.

References

Dayton Ph. D, T. (2005) Spontaneity and Creativity Versus the Cultural Conserve, *The Living Stage: A Step-by-Step Guide to Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy* (pp. 61-72) Florida: Health Communications Inc.

Bottom of Form

1