

Clayton, G.M. (1989). Notes on Spontaneity. In *Group Work Training Manual* (pp.67-68). Australian College of Psychodrama, Melbourne.

Notes On Spontaneity

Excerpted from Dr Max Clayton (1989) *Group Work Training Manual*, Australian College of Psychodrama, Melbourne, pp 67-68.

In both sociometry and the psychodramatic method there is an emphasis on spontaneity. This is the catalyst that activates and enlivens the individual group members so that a durable group structure is formed and so that the fulfilment of the functions and purpose of the group occurs.

Human beings are not dolls and must not be treated like dolls. They are endowed in various degrees with initiative and spontaneity.

Definition of Spontaneity

The classic definition of spontaneity created by Dr Moreno is: "an adequate response to a new situation or a new response to an old situation".

The nature of spontaneity is such that it operates in the here and now as a catalyser. It possesses no stable quality or volume and therefore cannot be stored up. It emerges in the moment. It creates an open ended system.

Forms of Spontaneity

Spontaneity takes a variety of different forms including:

Adequacy: This is the spontaneity which goes into the formation of adequate responses to novel situations. Adequacy is an adaptive, mobile and flexible ability of the self.

The importance of adequacy as a characteristic of spontaneity cannot be overemphasised. The popular understanding of spontaneity virtually amounts to the idea that a person does whatever they feel like at the time. The idea of spontaneity is a timely corrective to the popular idea which encourages simply acting out a person's frustration.

The Warm Up: Spontaneity takes the form of warming up to responding in particular situations. Spontaneity in the sense of a warming up process is necessary on all levels of human relations. There needs to be an adequate warm up to eating, walking, sleeping, sexual expression, social communication, creativity and religious expression. If we enter into a situation cold we do not function adequately. There is a need to warm up to particular roles, that is to the appropriate thinking, feeling and actions. When we warm up fully to a particular moment in a particular situation then we are said to be in a spontaneity state.

Then the creative genius, which is like a sleeping giant inside us, awakens and its powers are available to us.

Vitality: Vitality is that form of spontaneity which goes into revitalising cultural conserves and social stereotypes. It gives newness and vivacity to feelings, actions and verbal content. It makes people look more youthful and intelligent than usual.

Originality: Originality is spontaneity which goes into the formation of free expressions of the personality. Thus a person may have a number of original ways of holding a wine glass. It is not significant enough to be termed creativity but is a unique expansion or variation of a cultural conserve.

The Movement from Reality to Fantasy and Back Again: Spontaneity is a factor which makes for mastery over both reality and fantasy and for a rapid shifting between the two. People who lack this form of spontaneity remain either caught in the mundane world or caught in a fantasy world.

Creativity: This is the highest form of spontaneity. It is the spontaneity which goes into creating new organisms, new forms of art, new patterns of living, new inventions and new ideas. If there were no creativity we would have a world that is automatic, that has no past and future, no evolution or purpose, a world that would be changeless and meaningless.

Cultural Conserves

Cultural conserves are the result of the work of creativity. These are the finished product of the creative process. The cultural conserve is anything that preserves the values of a particular culture and may take the form of a material object such as a book, a film, a building, or a musical composition. As a repository of the past, cultural conserves preserve and continue a person's creative ego. Without them people would be reduced to creating spontaneously the same forms to meet the same situations day after day. In addition to providing continuity to the heritage of human existence, the cultural conserve plays an even more significant role as a springboard for enticing new spontaneity toward creativity. Moreno writes "*These conserves wait for Prince Charming spontaneity to wake them from their sleep. Left to themselves, nothing new would ever happen, But conserves represent the greatest cultural; capital, a form of property and power, a means of expressing superiority when the superiority of immediate spontaneous creativity is not available.*"

Notes on Spontaneity 2

from K Franklin (2006) Trainee Handbook, Western Institute of Psychodrama.

Dr Moreno also wrote that:

*Without creativity, the spontaneity of the universe will run empty and abortive,
Without spontaneity, the creativity of the universe will become perfect and lifeless.*

The action of spontaneity in a person is recognisable in these five ways:

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|------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Vitality | There is life In each role: | <i>Vigour</i> |
| Originality | To do with creativity: | <i>Freshness</i> |
| Novelty | Able to come up with something new: | <i>Surprise</i> |
| Appropriateness | Fits the situation and context: | <i>Adequacy</i> |
| Flexibility | Ability to move between roles so that a number of roles are available to the person: | <i>Confidence</i> |