

SOCIOMETRY AS A LIFE PHILOSOPHY*

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To the extent that one exists, the formal philosophical structure of sociometry is at best ponderously vague and ambiguous. Conceivably this is a pleasant state of affairs for those people who are "formally" philosophers, inasmuch as their livelihood depends upon deciphering the often barely intelligible meanings of highly esoteric arguments. But, for most of us, the nicety of this task is of little concern. Few of us are overly preoccupied with the questions of formal ("academic") philosophy. Rather what we want from philosophy is a set of guidelines, or principles, which concern themselves not with the ultimate meaning of the universe, but rather with *how* we should live. Essentially we want our philosophy to deal with the existential questions which unrelentingly confront us.

The degree to which the products of formal philosophical theorizing have been of value to the common man is problematic. The fact is that formal philosophers have most frequently concerned themselves with constructing abstract metaphysics. But these metaphysics are intrinsically different from the constructions most of us use operationally in everyday life. The pre-reflective theorizing with which we handle mundane exigencies has its counterpart *not* in the construction of abstract metaphysics, but in the construction of what may be called "everyday metaphysics" or life philosophies. The distinction which I am making is this: A life philosophy is not so much a philosophy *of* life (a metaphysics) as it is a philosophy *for* living. Where an academic reflexive metaphysics is abstract, a life philosophy is pragmatic and action oriented. Indeed, its elegance is less important than its practicability. Ultimately a life philosophy may be conceived of as an "everyday metaphysics" which, in Alvin Gouldner's phrase, is "a conception of how to live and a total praxis."¹ In the final analysis it is functional and praxis oriented rather than speculative and insight oriented. This shift in viewpoint thus corresponds to our sociometric emphasis on taking the view of the creator instead of simply inquiring, at any level, into the nature of pre-existent things.

* Paper presented at the 34th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama, March 18-21, 1976.

¹ Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1970, p. 504.

Although the philosophy of sociometry can be discussed in terms of either a reflexive (abstract metaphysical) dimension or a pre-reflective (life philosophy) dimension, it is the pre-reflective, praxis oriented aspect of the life philosophy which is the most salient feature of Moreno's sociometry. Moreno's philosophy was a distinctive brand of existentialism. When Moreno's belief system is examined with reference to Braaten's (1961)² insightful list of the main existentialist themes which define a contemporary humanistic life philosophy, this conception is clearly borne out. The main themes which Braaten identifies as comprising a humanistic-existential belief system may be expressed as follows:³

- (1) Man, you are free, define yourself
- (2) Cultivate your individuality
- (3) Live in dialogue with your fellow man
- (4) Your own experiencing is the highest authority
- (5) Be fully present in the immediacy of the moment
- (6) There is no truth except in action
- (7) You can transcend yourself in spurts
- (8) Live with your potentialities creatively
- (9) In choosing yourself, choose man
- (10) You must learn to accept certain limits in life

These ten themes also comprise, at least to a noteworthy extent, the belief system which articulates Moreno's life philosophy. Yet although it is rather easy to declare by fiat that these themes are implicit in the philosophical infrastructure of such and such a theory (or of this or that particular theorist), such facile declarations are of little value. The contention itself does not diminish the burden of illustrative proof.

MORENO'S EXISTENTIAL HUMANISM

Using the thematic statements outlined above, I believe that it is possible to demonstrate the existential foundations of Moreno's sociometric life philosophy and the humanistic values which undergird and support it. In demonstrating the precise manner in which these themes are expressed in Moreno's work, it will undoubtedly be beneficial to review them one by one in the course of explicating their development. With only minor modifications, all of these themes find full realization in Moreno's seminal theory. These ten themes are articulated in the following ways:

² Reference is made to the revised version found in Albert Ellis, *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy*. Secacus, New Jersey: Lyle Stuart Inc., 1962, pp. 124-125.

³ *Ibid.*

(1) *Man, you are free, define yourself.* Moreno, in developing sociometry, claimed that he "sought a 'technique of freedom,' a technique of balancing the spontaneous social forces to the greatest possible harmony and unity of all."⁴ But of course, freedom, in the abstract, is an elusive state. What does it mean to say, "Man, you are free"? For one thing, such a statement clearly implies an antideterministic orientation. But on another level freedom must be seen as the presence of something positive. In the sociometric system, spontaneity is the operational manifestation of freedom. Spontaneity, in mobilizing nascent creativity, is that force through which man individuates himself from the collective, while simultaneously freeing himself from a private and collective past. A novel response to a new and unprecedented situation is by definition a "free" response; spontaneity and freedom are, if not identical, at least correlated: to have one without the other is unthinkable.

The prototype of the un-free nonspontaneous entity is the robot. The robot is entirely a responsive or reactive entity. To say that it is programmed means that it functions according to a past design, that its behavior is conserved. The robot does not define itself through its acts, for its acts are programmed into it *a priori*. In contrast, man is free precisely to the extent that he repudiates conserved behavior. Man, in contrast to the robot, has a *choice* in all matters, and the choice itself is an expression of man's existential freedom to say yea or nay.

The proactive model of man is tangibly embedded in Moreno's sociometry. Man, with inherent freedom operationally expressed through acts of spontaneity and creativity, is a *being* in the process of *becoming*.

Human freedom is the first postulate of sociometry. Its first two correlates are spontaneity-creativity and the inevitability of self-definition through existential choice. From these irreducible bases the rest of the sociometric belief system derives. But, as we shall see, this belief system is a closely knit thing, and there is a great deal of thematic interpenetration among parts. This will undoubtedly become obvious as we move on to the second major theme posited earlier.

(2) *Cultivate your individuality.* Although it is necessary in the sociometric system to recognize that man is free, this recognition alone is not sufficient. It is also necessary to recognize that there is a strong temptation to escape from the inevitable burden of freedom by trying to find identity with the cultural conserve, to escape into the routinization of everyday life. Here again is the primal choice: to be, or not to be.

⁴ J. L. Moreno, *Who Shall Survive? Foundations of Sociometry, Group Psychotherapy and Sociodrama*. Beacon, New York: Beacon House Inc., 1953, p. 8.

Of course even when one opts "to be" there are manifold ways of being. One can be as a robot, programmed and reactive. Or one can be as a god, spontaneously creating and proactive. Again we are brought back to the unparalleled importance of the spontaneity factor in Moreno's sociometric theory. Inasmuch as one of Moreno's great achievements was to develop the means whereby man could increase his spontaneity, there can be no doubt that the cultivation of individuality stood as one of sociometry's most important operational principles. The vehemence with which Moreno resisted the advent of a society of human robots had its counterpart in the extent to which he propagated and preached individuality, and the extent to which his whole theoretical system was constructed so as to enhance individuality. Man, not as a preprogrammed zoomatic,⁵ but as a proactive individuated agent, stood in the very center of Moreno's whole system. However, as we shall see, it was quite evident that man did not stand there alone.

(3) *Live in dialogue with your fellow man.* For Moreno, the world of the isolated man was circumscribed. To him it appeared that man developed his potential to the fullest only insofar as he interacted and truly communicated with other men. Recall, it was Moreno himself who first developed the seminal and now popularized principles of *Begegnung* or encounter. Accordingly, it may be worthwhile briefly to review this principle within the context of the present exposition.

Encounter, in Moreno's view, entailed two or more persons meeting "not only to face one another, but to live and experience one another—as actors, each in his own right."⁶ In his view it could be thought of as "the preamble, the universal frame of all forms of structured meeting, the common matrix of all the psychotherapies . . ."⁷ In essence, the encounter was the primordial form of all synergistic human relations. In bridging the distance to another, the individual actor enhanced the self-confirming, self-transcending impact of the meeting; in that respect the individual achieved a "realization of the self through the other"⁸ which is elusively denied to the isolated individual.

(4) *Your own experience is the highest authority.* For Moreno, to live in dialogue clearly did not mean to abandon one's own self. On the contrary, dialogue was intended to *enhance* the self. However, to proclaim one's own experience as the highest authority entails something even more important. Essentially, trusting one's own experience entails adopting a

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 599.

⁶ Moreno, "Philosophy of the Third Psychiatric Revolution, with Special Emphasis on Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama," in Frieda Fromm-Reichmann and J. L. Moreno, *Progress in Psychotherapy 1956*. New York: Grune and Stratton, 1956, p. 27.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

basically empirical attitude in which truth is verified only insofar as it is in accord with one's own sensing. Conserved answers, passed on from one individual to the next or from one generation to the next, are thus inherently specious insofar as the source of their validity is removed from the concrete experiencing of the actor.

In positing one's own experience as the highest authority, Moreno advanced an ethos of democratic humanism in diverse spheres, ranging from the political to the scientific to the therapeutic. On the political level, a basic egalitarianism was postulated which stood in stark contrast to the "father knows best" attitude of totalitarian regimes of whatever political persuasion. In Moreno's view the concrete experience of the individual actor alone was the highest authority upon which he could profitably rely. On the scientific level, the dictum to trust one's own experience resulted in an attitude of implicit skepticism toward conserved scientific paradigms which did not fit experientially or empirically with the world-as-experienced by the scientist in his roles of actor and observer. This attitude, potentially at least, served as a stimulus for the scientist to construct paradigms which were congruent with his own world experience regardless of the prior "history" of his science. Most importantly however, on the therapeutic level the credo that the actor's own experience is his highest authority catalyzed the development of a set of procedures which explicitly recognized the existential reality and validity of the patient's world as he experienced it.⁹ Operationally, this meant that the patient was not informed by an authority higher than himself that his world or worldview was delusional; rather the patient was asked to construct the world as he experienced it, and to rely upon his experiences in his world (as dramatically structured in the therapeutic milieu) in order to achieve finer mastery over the everyday world from which he had become estranged. Those therapeutic gains which accrued developed not from the therapist's esoteric understanding of the patient, nor even from the patient's esoteric understanding of himself, but rather from the patient's actional experiencing of himself as the validated creator and director of his own universe. The patient, recognizing his own experience as the highest authority, was transformed from a conflicted actor into a creative actor, into a producer of his own life story. As actor and producer, his focus was thus no longer on the distant past or an imagined future, but on the here and now of life.

(5) *Be fully present in the immediacy of the moment.* In the contemporary idiom this belief is expressed in the popular injunction, "Live in the here and now". Yet surely it is ironic that this seemingly contemporary

⁹ See the treatment used in the "Hitler case" reprinted in Moreno, "Philosophy of the Third Psychiatric Revolution," pp. 39-44.

idea was advanced by Moreno over fifty years ago as one of the fundamental principles upon which his entire philosophy and theoretical system was based. Moreno, you may recall, developed a "philosophy of the creator": a philosophy which articulated man's nascent powers to construct and produce the world in which he lived. And you may recall that having developed a philosophy of the creator, Moreno came to believe that its main category must be the "category of the moment" in contradistinction to the 'present', which was a purely formal category. In Moreno's view the moment was a dynamic and creative category, one which attained its dynamic meaning through the spontaneous-creative processes.¹⁰

In warming up to the moment, man warmed up to the spontaneity state which catalyzed creativity. In living in the here and now, man achieved mastery over his immediate existential world, over his immediate productions. Instead of reaching after the past experiences or causes, or future expectations or dreams, man invested himself concretely in the tasks of the moment. It is worth recalling the manner in which Moreno berated Freud and Nietzsche for dismissing the importance of the moment:

To them the "*now and here*" seemed superficial. They did not know what to do with the moment. They did not take the moment in earnest, they did not think it through. It seemed to them that the only thing to do with the moment and its conflicts was to explain them, that is, to uncover the associations back to their causes. The other alternative would have appeared an absurdity to them: to live, to act out in the moment, to act unanalyzed. It would have seemed to be the end of psychology and of the psychologist. Spontaneity and spontaneous acting would have been refused by them because it appeared to be an affirmation of immaturity, or childhood, of unconscious living, a dangerous disregard for just that which the psychoanalyst tried to illumine. But *there is an alternative: to step into life itself, as a producer, to develop a technique from the moment upward in the direction of spontaneous-creative evolution, in the direction of life and time.*¹¹

(6) *There is no truth except in action.* An appreciation of this dictum is of the utmost importance in arriving at any proper understanding of Moreno's belief system and life philosophy. It is operationalized on a variety of concrete levels in the Morenean system of sociometry.

First, sociometry is the one social science which most adequately utilizes action methods and action research to explore the most central features of

¹⁰ Moreno, *The Theater of Spontaneity*. Beacon, New York: Beacon House Inc., 1973, p. 44.

¹¹ Moreno, *Who Shall Survive?*, p. 9.

group structure and group dynamics. Sociometric research is of the sort which compels the scientist to "get his hands dirty" with his data, disdaining the illusory objective disinterest propagated as an essential feature of "good" research by more positivist types. In regard to their actional basis, the methods of sociometric research are socio-creative and socio-curative to an extent which purely observational methods can never be. Moreover, the sociometric researcher does not deny himself the actional and creative qualities which he attempts to stimulate in the human subjects of his research.

Finally, on another level, the general praxis orientation of Moreno's sociometry was a manifestation of his conviction that ultimately no truth existed unless it was expressed in action. This was exemplified by the fact that he, unlike most other American sociologists of the time, was not content merely to describe and analyze the world—indeed, the point of sociometry was precisely to change the world, to positively transform social structures and to liberate human potentialities. Sociometry was envisioned and developed not as a tool of description but as a technique of actualizing change in the concrete social world in the direction of greater freedom, spontaneity and creativity for all human actors. In that respect the proactive view of man was again embedded deeply in Moreno's orientation toward social change and the radical transformation of man and his world. However, as we shall see shortly, this proactive view also operated on another qualitatively different level in Moreno's system.

(7) *You can transcend yourself in spurts.* On the ideographic level too Moreno's view of man as a being in the process of becoming prevailed. Moreno posited that man was a creator, and that as such man created himself, at least existentially. But, on an empirical and operational level, Moreno's theory was, rather obviously, considerably more refined than just this.

Essentially, when Moreno intimated that man transcends himself in spurts, he implied something like this: that as man mobilized his spontaneity to meet the challenges of the universe, he activated the attitude and inherent power of a creator in redefining the universe, and in so doing he transformed both himself and his mode of being in a manner congruent with his works—articulating in the process a praxis which was by definition both creative and expansive.¹² The attitude of the creator was thus inevitably related to the transformation and development of the self, with, as Moreno saw it, the development of the self paralleling the development of the creator's attitude and abilities. That man himself vacillated between the role of the creator and the role of the robot was, perhaps, inevitable,

¹² Obviously a creator whose operational attitude is routinized and constricting is a contradiction in terms.

owing to the seductive attraction of routinized living engendered by the cultural conserves; but this vacillation only highlighted the fact that man's transformation into a creator was developmental and not, metaphorically speaking, "sociogenetically" determined and invariable.

(8) *Live your potentialities creatively.* If Moreno's credo had to be reduced to four words, perhaps "live your potentialities creatively" could be chosen as an appropriate capsule statement. The problem of creativity was at the very center of Moreno's universe, and indeed he always made it perfectly clear that the problem of creativity was the very hub upon which the survival of mankind turned.¹³ It is crucial to be consciously aware of the fact that to Moreno the question "Who shall survive?" does not evoke naturalistic, historic, or demographic analyses focusing on the survival of select populations; rather it evokes a treatise on the meaning of survival itself, contrasting the "survival" of a world of robots and zoomatons with the "survival" of a world of active creators, of self-enhancing and synergistic beings in the process of becoming. The unstated question inextricably linked to "What shall survive?" is: Survival as what? For Moreno, a world populated by human robots indicates not the survival but the death of mankind. The survival of man is inescapably linked to the survival of man's spontaneity and to his creative powers.

When Moreno intimates "Live your potentialities creatively," he implies the necessity for man to transcend the narrow strictures of the conserved past and the cultural conserves. To live one's life creatively is tantamount to living one's life freely, to acting as opposed to reacting, to living spontaneously and inventively as opposed to surreptitiously mimicking or unconsciously repeating routinized rituals which stand in the way of actual being and becoming. To live one's life creatively is to make of oneself all that can be made, treating one's own life as a work of art, bridging the gap between the esthetic and the existential.

(9) *In choosing yourself, choose man.* Perhaps Moreno projected his self image as a creator onto all other men, thereby endowing them with potentialities not intrinsically theirs. Would it matter if he had done so? Do not many of us cast mankind into our own image of ourself? The important point is not whether Moreno saw himself reflected in mankind's image, or mankind reflected in his own image; rather the important point is to clarify the essential existential link between man and mankind.

So early in his career as a social philosopher did Moreno postulate man's *co-responsibility* for the universe, for all men, things, events and activities, that in many respects this fundamental belief must be seen as being con-

¹³ Moreno, "Philosophy of the Third Psychiatric Revolution," p. 28.

stitutive of the bedrock upon which many of his later theoretical superstructures were constructed.¹⁴ Man, in Moreno's view, was not simply an actor, but a co-actor; not simply a performer, but a co-performer; not simply a creator, but a creator among creators, not simply a god, but a god among gods. And each man-god, as a creator, was not simply responsible for himself, but for the whole of creation, a creation which included others, just as others' creations included him.

With man's capacities as a creator came the inherent and inevitable existential responsibility for the creation, for *his* creation, for his universe. But in a society of creators, all became co-responsible for the shared universe they produced, just as stage actors are co-responsible for the success of the theatrical performance in which they are engaged. In choosing oneself, one had no choice but to choose man, for in Moreno's view man and mankind are inseparable. The inherent nascent powers of every man are shared by all of mankind, just as the praxis of the individual inevitably affects the ultimate conditions of his fellows. Man is *of* mankind, a part of a being ultimately greater than himself, inseparably bound to it. In the final analysis, neither man as an individual nor mankind as a universe could continue to exist without man choosing to invest himself fully, unconditionally, and creatively in both. The life and welfare of the individual is inextricably bound to the life and welfare of mankind, the maincurrents of both inseparably flowing in the same direction, either toward life and time or toward death and stasis. And man, as an actor and creator, is co-responsible for the sweep and swerve of these currents. However, as we shall see below, man alone can not always single-handedly determine their course.

(10) *You must learn to accept certain limits in life.* Man's powers as a creator are real, not metaphorical. But obviously man is not a creator in exactly the same sense as is a biblical god, who starts *de novo*, for the substance upon which man exercises his creative powers (namely the constructed world) confronts him at once as a substantially formed object. As such it—or more precisely, its cultural conserves and those who have a vested interest in its present structures—resists even his most creative attempts to transform the world radically. Thus the creative individual meets resistance in the already created world.

The extent to which the already established world can be radically altered by the creative actor is undoubtedly contingent upon many variables, among which might be included the creator's power to enforce his new creative definition of the world situation, the prior history and probable

¹⁴ See J. L. Moreno, *Das Testament des Vaters (The Words of the Father)*. Berlin-Potsdam: Gustav Kiepenheuer, Verlag, 1920.

futures of the world, et cetera. But to acknowledge this is only to acknowledge the undeniable: that all actors are constrained by certain limits in life, by history, power, prestige and so on. These limits derive from the structure and power arrangements of the established (conserved) world order and consequently they are no less real than is the creator's ability to transcend the conserves. However, an element of struggle enters here, and the outcome of any particular struggle between an established and an emergent world order is at best problematic.

There is no reason to think that Moreno underestimated the force of the limits imposed upon the creative actor; however, there is some reason to think that Moreno never truly believed that one must learn to *accept* these limits. Of course certain limits have to be accepted, among them—death. But other limits—to accept them without attempting to overcome them is never to know if they could have been overcome. On a pragmatic level, Moreno surely recognized that certain limits had to be accepted, yet on an existential level the premature acceptance of such limits foreclosed possibilities and doomed one to become no more than a second rate creator. With philosophical resolve Moreno might have said that man must learn to accept certain limits in life, but it would undoubtedly have been characteristic of him excitedly to say that man must learn to accept all the challenges of life, to learn to live creatively, and in so doing to creatively transform both himself and his universe.

MORENEAN VALUES AND SOCIAL THEORY

Before leaving this subject, I should first like to turn to a second dimension of Moreno's value system, namely that which concerns itself with the value postulates of sociometry as a social theory.

In a recent Presidential Address to the American Sociological Association, Alfred McClung Lee has superbly redirected attention toward the differences between the conventional and humanistic perspectives by establishing a seven point schema which differentiates them. Inasmuch as I am going to discuss many of these points shortly with reference to Moreno's sociometry, it may be helpful to list Lee's schema straight off. According to Lee, a humanistic sociology should be:¹⁵

- (1) people centered, not nature centered
- (2) egalitarian, not elitist
- (3) ethical, not ethically neutral

¹⁵ Alfred McClung Lee, "Humanist Challenges to Positivists," *The Insurgent Sociologist*, VI, 1, (Fall 1975), 45.

- (4) on the side of human responsibility, not the responsibility of impersonal methods and of machines
- (5) "oppositional" and critical, not supportive and "clarifying"
- (6) on the side of social change, not "system" maintenance
- (7) on the side of intimate observation and creative ferment, not carefully trained professionals.

I shall now illustrate how Moreno's social philosophy falls within the humanistic mold established by Lee.

People centered vs. nature centered. Let us begin by discussing Lee's first point with reference to the value structure of Moreno's sociometry. Lee argues that, in a humanist view, sociology should be people centered, not nature centered. He says:

While many sorts of supernaturalists and nature-determinists claim to be "humanists," to be concerned chiefly with human welfare, their search for a substitute for human responsibility is usually clear enough in their writings. And with that shift in responsibility goes a belittling of the worth and dignity of humanity.¹⁶

Clearly, however, as I have pointed out before, Moreno was hardly guilty of dismissing human responsibility by seeking refuge in the fatuous "inevitability" of biological, environmental, or societal determinants. In fact, the determinist point of view, which placed responsibility for human affairs "out there" on some uncontrollable exogenous force, was rejected outright by Moreno, for he claimed decisively that every individual was ultimately co-responsible for the entire universe. Indeed, instead of abrogating responsibility, as Lee's positivist sociologist was wont to do, the Morenean sociometrist viewed man's reowning of his existential responsibility as an indispensable first step in recapturing control of both himself and his universe.

Related to this rather general philosophical orientation was Moreno's proactive image of man. Inasmuch as Moreno viewed man not as a consequence but as a cause, the flight from responsibility engendered by the positivists was anathema to him. Further, Moreno's praxis orientation operationalized the implicit belief that man not only *could* repossess control of the universe, but that he was ultimately *obligated* to do so. In his view the abrogation of responsibility paved the way for a society of robots orchestrated by a small minority of controllers, a totalitarian state of affairs which Moreno fundamentally despised. In the final analysis Moreno took

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

the position not that "God's will ought be done", but rather that man himself must take the responsibility of God in creating and controlling the universe. Thus Moreno squarely placed man, both burdened by responsibility and simultaneously liberated by it, back in the very center of the human universe. And there, in the humanistic view, was precisely where man belonged.

Egalitarian vs. elitist. Lee, in further differentiating between the value structures of humanistic and traditional sociologies, goes on to argue that in a humanist view sociology should be egalitarian, not elitist. In a sense I have already touched upon Moreno's orientation toward this question previously. I pointed out that Moreno rejected a totalitarian society of robots ruled from above by an elite who rather perversely assume the responsibility of all.

Sociometry's basic egalitarian position manifests itself insofar as rigid sets of procedures are avoided, just as rigid methodologies and conserved theories are avoided, all because it is recognized that every individual's personal experience is his own highest authority, and because the presence of a select elite who ostensibly know all the answers and who do all the research and who serve as the gatekeepers of the sociometric armamentarium is seen as being no less pernicious than the conservative notion of a status hierarchy of creators. In the sociometric perspective, every man is viewed as a creator, equal to all other creators; every man is viewed as his own methodologist, technician, and theorist. Those who are sociometrists philosophically, and not just technically, resist elitist traditions, including the ethos of the rigid cults of conservative scientism; rather they seek dissemination of knowledge of the people by the people and for the people—not merely from the elect to the select.

Ethical vs. ethically neutral. Conservative, positivist, or traditional sociology, according to Lee, purports to be ethically neutral; in contrast a humanistic sociology is guided by values and actions of an explicitly ethical character. This frank acknowledgement of the ethical basis of the scientific enterprise implicitly pervades Moreno's sociometry. Ideally, the fundamental value structure of sociometry illustrated earlier goes a long way toward depicting the essential humanistic ethical stance of sociometry.

Of particular importance in this regard is the irreducible value postulate which states that man must assume responsibility for his choices, including their moral or immoral implications, and including the consequences of such choices; in accepting such responsibility the sociometrist is clearly *not* abrogating the ethical dimension of his work by surreptitiously shifting the responsibility of findings, implementation, and assessment onto the shoulders of policymakers and other admittedly non-neutral parties. Moreover, not

only does the sociometrist assume personal responsibility for his findings, he goes beyond that by not pretending that his work is in any sense value free—quite the contrary, in his work the sociometrist attempts to actualize a quite discernible set of values, prominent among which are the values of spontaneity, creativity, the actualization of human potential, and the advancement of democracy. In his actual praxis the true sociometrist is well aware that, in Lee's phrase, "an ethical neutrality with regard to moral and practical values is neither possible psychologically nor desirable socially or scientifically."¹⁷

Critical vs. supportive. Lee also maintains that the position of the humanistic sociologist is oppositional and critical, whereas the traditional sociologist tends to be supportive, intent on clarifying the existent state of affairs. In many respects this existent state of affairs is tantamount to what Moreno called a cultural conserve, and even a most cursory look at Moreno's writings demonstrates that he had no wish whatsoever to buttress any sort of conserve. On the contrary, he sought change; he sought the radical reformulation of society in a way in which human spontaneity and creativity would be freed, no longer constrained by established conserves, or by routinized ways of doing and modes of being. In Moreno's view there was no intrinsic value, in fact there was no value whatsoever, in preserving an out-moded status quo.

Moreno's orientation toward praxis exemplifies this perspective. For Moreno it was compulsory that abstract theorizing be translated into concrete actions in the real world, actions predicated upon and congruent with the theorist's theoretical stance toward the world as it confronts him in everyday life. Much like Marxism in this respect, Morenean sociometry *intends* change.¹⁸ Moreno had little patience with those who wanted disinterestedly to analyze the world, making short shrift of those who "did not try to change the universe, merely to understand it . . . (*for especially in the human sphere one can not understand the social present unless he tries to change it.*)"¹⁹ The point, for Moreno as for Marx, was not simply to interpret the world but to reformulate it anew, to transform the real *into* the ideal, creatively narrowing the gap between the craved and the conserved.

Social change vs. system maintenance. From what has just been said it should be quite obvious that Morenean sociometry is clearly on the side

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹⁸ Karl Marx, "Concerning Feuerbach," *Early Writings*. New York: Vintage Books, 1975, p. 423.

¹⁹ Moreno, *Psychodrama Vol. I*. Beacon, New York: Beacon House Inc., 1972, p. 9. Italics added.

of social change, for it has an express interest in redesigning society radically. Lee has pointed out that this favorable attitude toward social change is characteristic of a humanistic sociology, whereas traditional sociologists tend to manifest a more pervasive interest in system maintenance, or social order. Given this criterion, there can be little doubt of sociometry's fundamental humanistic orientation.

But it is possible to go beyond just that. Moreno's actional orientation toward system change was the operational manifestation of a profound theoretical and philosophical belief in critical thinking—in short, his was an “oppositional” orientation. For Moreno, constant social change was a fact of life—not one to be feared, but rather one to be harnessed creatively. By propagating social change and harnessing its effects, Moreno was able to campaign against the routinization of everyday life, to diminish the strength and vitality of pernicious cultural conserves, and ultimately to advance the cause of spontaneity and creativity.

In a very real sense, the sociometrist became an advocate of egalitarianism and creative democracy through his praxis. It was, after all, substantial social change that he desired, not just the piecemeal accommodation of disaffected social groups who might disturb some “natural order.” For in the final analysis it was the natural order itself which the sociometrist desired to change. The sociometrist desired to change the universe, to reconstruct it creatively, to de-serve it, and to free it from those very “natural” forces which constrained it to maintain the shape of an unrelenting de-humanizing order; for finally the sociometrist rejected a “system” in which men were merely parts, not of which they were creators.

Creative ferment vs. carefully trained professionals. Finally, Lee says that a humanistic sociology is characterized by intimate observation and creative ferment. Can there be any doubt that sociometry is humanistic in this respect? Creativity is the central postulate of sociometry. The spontaneous ungirdling of creativity is a central goal of the sociometrist. More than any other, sociometry is the science of creativity.

It is characterized by a rejection of uncritical imitation of the sort that is often erroneously mistaken for professionalism, for such “professionalism” frequently stifles and inhibits originality and creativity. Moreover, it dismisses the tenuous value of internalizing conserved paradigms, particularly where such internalization is mistaken for a professional education. In contrast, it favors the development of a new paradigm, of multiple new paradigms, for each theorist is conceived of as being a creator in his own right.

Sociometry is characterized by a distrust of carefully trained professionals who would rather “play it safe” and stick to the conserved tradition than

to take a fresh look at the universe, a look through the eyes of the creator. Sociometry distrusts hackneyed ideology, routinized methodology, established and conserved explanations. The sociometrist defines himself as a creator. Retrojectively enlarging upon the world as constituted, he reformulates the world anew. Through his praxis the sociometrist attempts to create the world over. For what is the role of the sociometrist if not to recreate the universe? Was God a carefully trained professional?

DISCUSSION

In saying what I have so far said it should be clear that I am not speaking exclusively of the belief system of J. L. Moreno, for although Moreno undoubtedly shared many of the ideas expressed here, never did he explicate them fully within this particular frame of reference. Moreover, I am certainly not speaking of the belief system of most modern so-called sociometrists, who have become disinterested technocrats ignorant of the underlying philosophy of sociometry. It would be more accurate to say that I am advocating either a purist or a revisionist stance—the decision as to which depending upon the degree to which one is willing to infer what Moreno “meant”, beyond what he concretely said. In the final analysis I am speaking about what the belief system of sociometry should be, and what in my view it might become, given the original value orientation which Moreno himself promulgated and gave expression to.

I have spoken about the humanistic values which pervade the sociometric belief system, and I have claimed that that belief system provides a life philosophy, an everyday metaphysics of “how to live”. Further, I have shown the manner in which sociometry conforms in principle to the standards of a humanistic sociology. One last thing remains to be said.

The goals of sociometry go beyond those which can be simplistically expressed and concretely formulated. In many respects the ultimate goals of sociometry tend to be relatively abstract; they congeal around qualities all too elusive: spontaneity, creativity, catharsis, and so on. But in a very real sense these tend to be only intermediary goals, means to an end. And it is the end point which ultimately defines the path traveled.

What is the final goal of sociometry? Moreno said that “a truly therapeutic procedure cannot have less an objective than the whole of mankind”.²⁰ It follows that the ultimate goal is the therapeutic society; the radical transformation of the world in the direction of greater synergy, growth, and development. Every man the healer of every other; every so-

²⁰ Moreno, *Who Shall Survive?*, p. 3.

ciety a stimulus to the human development of every man. Every man a creator, no man an automaton: these are the ultimate goals of sociometry, the goals from which it derives its identity, the goals which lend credence, plausibility and inspiration to the true sociometrist as he goes out to encounter the universe.

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