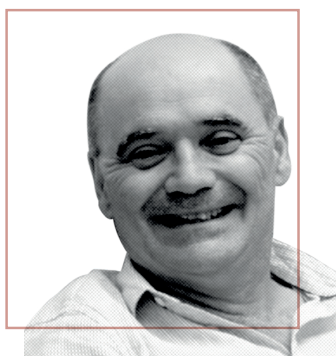


## From Doing to Being. Interactions, emotions, relationships, and consciousness: steps in the psychodramatic approach towards understanding human identity.

### Del hacer al ser. Interacciones, emociones, relaciones y conciencia: pasos del enfoque psicodramático hacia la comprensión de la identidad humana.



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#### **Abstract**

A scientific theoretical study.

The world is currently experiencing a lengthy period of prolonged, intense, and - in various respects - dramatic restrictions. Intended to contain the ever-spreading pandemic, these restrictions are impacting on our movements and our social interaction. This situation, however, can be taken as an opportunity to develop theories, thoughts, and insights into the origins and the processes by which human identity form.

Over the following pages, we will examine the complex, fascinating pathway that leads from the body to the mind, from action to thought, through the various dimensions of psychism (primarily: perception, emotion, and consciousness).

#### **Keywords**

interaction, emotions, body, mind, metacognition.

#### **Resumen**

Un estudio teórico científico.

El mundo vive actualmente un largo período de restricciones prolongadas, intensas y, en varios aspectos, dramáticas. Destinadas a contener la pandemia que se extiende sin cesar, estas restricciones afectan a nuestros movimientos y a nuestra interacción social. Sin embargo, esta situación puede aprovecharse para desarrollar teorías, conocimientos y reflexiones sobre los orígenes y los procesos de formación de la identidad humana.

En las siguientes páginas examinaremos el complejo y fascinante camino que lleva del cuerpo a la mente, de la acción al pensamiento, a través de las distintas dimensiones del psiquismo (principalmente: percepción, emoción y conciencia).

#### **Palabras clave**

interacción, emociones, cuerpo, mente, metacognición.

#### **THE AIMS OF THE PRESENT STUDY**

The history of the paths through which humanity has built mental models (representations) explanatory of experienced and observed reality shows two different ways to proceed; the first consists of intuitions, mental acts productive of axioms and postulates, able to explain the phenomena observed. In the second case explanations and universal laws are derived from the observation of what exists;; knowledge therefore takes its origin from concrete and specific sensory experiences.

It is therefore acquired awareness that the search for knowledge can proceed in two distinct, opposite but integrable directions: from general to particular (deduction); from particular to general (inductive process). (Aristotle; G.Galilei. 1632; Popper,1959).

Acting these two modes of research alternatively, though in articulated connection, it is possible to build a system of laws able to describe and explain reality at different levels of complexity.

Moreno experimented with both modes of scientific investigation, arriving, both conceptually and methodologically, at very valuable formulations.

In the first case, he left us fascinating insights: the one that recognizes in human beings an almost divine creative potential, and the one that hypothesizes a possibility of remote, implicit, communication between people, the tele, two-way empathy.

Inductively, through participant observation of subjects in action such as children in the playground, professional actors, war refugees, Viennese prostitutes, and inmates in re-education, he developed both intervention techniques and theoretical constructs related to the concepts of role, spontaneity, and sociometry.

These important acquisitions account for the importance of interpersonal relationships in the development of personality (Tele Theory); at the same time, thanks to them, we know that psychodramatic intervention is effective in meeting the needs of structuring/restructuring the individual personality and we know the reason for this effectiveness (Role Theory); finally, as an ontological determination, we know that the human being is characterized by a significant creative attitude (Spontaneity/Creativity Theory).

However, not all the dimensions of the reality of the Subject have found, in the Morenian conception, a complete development; the most significant among these gaps is the one that refers to an articulated and defined Theory of Personality.

Moreno left important intuitions and conceptual sketches, but he did not arrive at a defined and systematic theorization about the instances, processes and functions that compose and sustain the human personality.

The present study is therefore proposed as a contribution to the common research work that the community of psychodramatists is doing to respond to this need for further definition of the overall system of thought at the basis of psychodramatic practice.

### THE METHODOLOGY USED

The methodology that supports the work presented here is first of all that of collecting different data, elements of knowledge, mental representations, coming from a variety of sources, and approachable, connectable, for some common significant aspect.

One source of such data can be found in the conceptualizations contained in Moreno's writings; the second source can be found in the literature produced by other authors and schools of research and thought that have been active on the same themes; the third place of

origin of the ideas considered is that coinciding with the intense and considerable activity "in situ" carried out by psychodramatic operators in a century of history of the method (the writer can refer to at least 5000 sessions, corresponding to over 10,000 hours, of personally experienced psychodramatic workshop).

Subsequently, after creating an appropriate mental space, within it the collected ideas will be approached, juxtaposed, compared and possibly connected and integrated, to arrive at new elements of knowledge.

### A MATTER OF SET

To allow – or even to ensure - better understanding of this topic, a clear definition of its various elements and circumstances is essential.

When treating people and relationships, the term 'setting' is frequently used in reference to the collection of conditions within which treatment takes place. While originally an English word, in this context the term is also used in other languages. In general English, the word has a variety of meanings (including background, frame, environment). In psychoanalytic language and its associated concepts, 'setting' is used to refer to both the collection of external elements that form physical and relational space in which the therapy takes place (the location, the positions and postures of the actors, the frequency of sessions, the duration of the treatment, etc.) and also the internal elements. These internal elements, which are linked to the mental dimension of both the patient and the psychotherapist, (e.g. free associations and verbal expression, distancing from the emotional content expressed by a patient, not responding to patients' express requests, interpretation....) therefore form the psychological space of the encounter and give structure to the psychotherapeutic process as a relationship.

In psychodrama, there is a certain amount of confusion in the way the term 'setting' is used, since it is often also employed in reference to the location in which the therapeutic activity takes place, i.e. the psychodrama theatre. In actual fact, within this field, the 'setting' is not the physical environment but rather the collection of rules or underlying guidelines intended to foster, stimulate, and organize the various interactive/relational processes that occur during a psychodrama session.

Another more specific term is used to refer to the concrete, structural aspects that form the basis (and therefore allow the performance) of these activities and that is the 'set', i.e. the "psychodrama theatre". The set consists of the stage, the subject (or patient), the leader (or director),

the various auxiliary egos (or simply ‘auxiliaries’, the role played by the other members of the group), and lastly the audience.

### A MATTER OF SETTING

The contractual conditions that govern and organize a psychodrama session (i.e. the setting) have various aspects of note, the first of which is the *directive* character of the management of the group. The second is the *suspension of judgment* (those involved are required to refrain from openly judging the other members of the group, in either subjective or diagnostic terms). A third condition, the *suspension of response*, consists of the leader instructing the participants at the meeting to refrain from entering into any dialectical discussion with the other members of the group about their points of view, expressions, or statements.

Directly associated with the *suspension of response* requirement is the organization of exchanges between participants and the connected communication methods, which are based on the principle of *circularity*. In each of the session segments and the individual parts (referred to as activities) of structured actions and interactions in which the participants are involved, the participants start acting, one after another, in a circular fashion; this activity takes shape and proceeds until that particular part of the session is completed and its specific objectives achieved.

The principle of *circularity* of interactions and communication is associated, in turn, with a *symmetry* criterion, which ensures all the members of the group are on an equal footing.

Finally, the psychodrama director suggests roles and interactions which are not only symmetrical, but also *complementary*. The *complementarity* criterion refers to how - within the reciprocal relationships between the different members of the group - each member plays a counter-role with respect to the others, which is part of the processes by which their specific identity is defined.

### A MATTER OF FEELING

Feeling is both a sentiment and a sensation and a direct link can be traced between these different states of being. New knowledge in the field of neuroscience has brought confirmation of this, as well as explanations for it, and we are confident that it will continue in this direction in the future.

Examining emotions is extremely important in the field of psychodrama for two reasons. Firstly, because this

practice has often been included, in a reductive and somewhat confusing way, among what are known as the *cathartic methods* (catharsis = purification or purging; the cleansing of emotions). Secondly, because of the way in which a psychodrama session is structured and unfolds means it focuses specifically on the emotional aspects of events and, in turn, stimulates and generates masses of *emotional movements*.

Dealing with emotions is both demanding and fascinating and this field has been explored extensively within different areas of study and from various perspectives. The literature on emotions is truly endless and the space available here too limited to provide even a vaguely satisfactory summary (an interesting, substantial, yet synthetic compendium, from a psychodramatic perspective, can be found in an article published recently by De Leonardis, 2019).

In this handful of pages, then, I will simply highlight and describe certain aspects of the “emotional world” that are particularly inherent – if one examines and considers certain interesting links - to psychodramatic theory and methodology.

Let’s start this consideration with a definition which summarizes the aspects explored later on, providing a reference for the discussion:

*An event, if attributable to a subject, is defined as an act, a product of action. Through perception, this immediately interacts with the actor’s mental apparatus, in the form of a sensation. The sensation then reverberates in the conscience as an emotion and subsequently, during the actors’ life, the diachronic development of emotions takes the name of sentiment.*

### CO-EXPERIENCING AND SHARING MOODS: THE CO-CONSCIOUS AND CO-UNCONSCIOUS

The participation by a group of people in a series of psychodrama sessions, even if they run over a very short period of time, leads to the creation of a sort of “familiarization” among the participants. A deep and stable sense of belonging is established, originating from shared experiences of intimacy and a willingness to trust. A sort of cognitive and affective “common identity” is created, partly consciously and partly implicitly. Moreno (1961) uses the following words to conceptualize and describe this phenomenon:

A co-conscious or co-unconscious state is not the preserve of the individual. It is always a shared property and cannot be reproduced without combined effort .... however great the capacity of a single partner within a couple may

be (or member of a group, I might add), that individual cannot reproduce any event relating to coupledness on their own, because the conscious and co-unconscious shared by partners is the matrix from which they draw inspiration and knowledge... It is life itself that binds them together, and it is the experience of living that leads them to develop a kind of "interpsyche", a structured stream of co-conscious and co-unconscious. (p. 236)

Apart from certain elements, such as the various members' life experiences, what is shared in the processes described by Moreno is the emotional world, viewed from two different perspectives. The first concerns the emotional content of the life of each participant, who expresses and shares their emotions within the group and in doing so builds and fuels what is known as the 'co-conscious'. The second focuses on the fact that the experiences, interactions, and communicative exchanges generated during participation in the psychodramatic experience lead to intense and significant emotional dynamics, which are produced and experienced collectively, forming what is known as the 'co-unconscious'.

### EMOTIONS: SO REGULARLY EXPERIENCED, YET SO UNFAMILIAR

It has already been said that emotions have long been observed and investigated from various study perspectives. Despite being so greatly explored, the definitions reached nevertheless remain uncertain and often contrasting.

The *emotional world* is interpreted varyingly as a life experience, as a somatic or, conversely, mental phenomenon, as a state or as a process consisting of multiple components, as a resource we humans have or, conversely, as a psychopathological symptom.

Given the above, it is clear how the difficulty in providing a definition of this field lies precisely in its multidimensional nature. Emotions are both body and mind, behavioral manifestations and thoughts (or at least, they are in their embryonic stage). Emotions are a physical expression of being and, at the same time, of cognition. In psychodramatic terms, they are action and representation. In accordance with this duality, they can be defined further by saying they belong to the reality of both the ego-actor and the ego-observer, contributing to the constitution and the evolution thereof at the same time.

I feel that the reason for so much confusion and uncertainty lies in that well-known need in most fields (however different they may be) for a certain "distance" to be maintained from a phenomenon when observing it, in order to consequently understand it (and therefore its constituent aspects) clearly and objectively.

For humanity (and by that I mean both as individuals and as a species), emotions are such an essential part of our core, so intertwined with all the acts involved in our formation and

evolution, that we find this necessary shift away extremely hard to make. We suffer from a sort of *indeterminacy principle* effect, in a social-psychological sense.

Emotions have always actively accompanied every evolutionary stage of the phylogenetic path of the human being, in the same way that they are an integral part of each individual's birth and development processes. They are so omnipresent that their peripheral function, the idea that they played merely an ancillary role in the constitution of (a) *Being* as a personal and social entity, should have been doubted immediately. Let's look at certain characterizing aspects of this phenomenon, underlining the fundamental importance of emotions with respect to various peculiarities of human identity.

### WHAT ARE EMOTIONS?

Defining emotions is complex because they are such a rich variety of things. We can start by distinguishing between *primary emotions* and *secondary emotions*, by matching the two groups to the different nervous structures involved and the different mental manifestations of each group. In simple terms, primary emotions can be interpreted as *neurophysiological reactivity*. They are more connected to the bodily dimension of being and can be interpreted as *arousal* phenomena, i.e. a physiological reaction produced within the body. Secondary emotions, meanwhile, are associated with the functioning of more evolved brain circuits, they belong to a distinctly mental dimension and involve *appraisal*, i.e. the cognitive assessment of experience.

Secondly, emotions are related to the body, both as a place of activation/origin of the emotional process, and as a dimension within which the energies produced by the emotional process are expressed and/or concentrated/released.

Emotions are therefore inherent to the body, finding their 'starter' in the biological structures of the perceptive functions and in the processes that originate from these functions. Perception processes are either focused on the perceiver (proprioception and interoception) or outside thereof. Perceptual stimulation becomes sensations, which can be considered a basic and initial manifestation of emotion.

Emotions, however, also consist of a corporeal dimension in that they are supported by the interconnected activity of a person's different biological structures. Broadly speaking, they are connected throughout the body as a whole, and strictly speaking, they are connected by the brain.

Our body supports and participates in the production and development of emotional processes and, at the same time, experiences the effects thereof and - sometimes - expresses them.

There are various biological regions, cerebral districts and, lastly, mental functions involved in emotional processes. Panksepp (2014), among others, identifies three distinct categories of mental processes, each one of which is connected to specific areas of the brain, which correspond, in turn, to different stages of the phylogenetic evolution of cerebral structures.

Summarising then, emotions can be considered a collection of forms of reactions (consisting of numerous different processes) experienced within a subject in relation to stimuli from both the outer world and from within. This reactivity takes on different forms and is connected to specific structures and functions, including neurophysiological manifestations, neurovegetative reactions, instinctive responses, affective experiences, mental processing in the form of representation.

The most complex and advanced form of mental representation of the human being is the conscious form and, in particular, the evolution of this known as metacognition (thinking of ourselves as thinking beings, the awareness of being conscious entities). Emotions are also related to this further dimension of *Being*.

Once again, evidence of and an explanation for this can be found in the findings of neuroscientific research. Damasio (1994) starts by claiming that a Cartesian circle had occurred when the apparatus of rationality was deemed superior and distinct from its biological functions, thereby refuting the fact that the former should be considered internal to and arising from the latter.

## EMOTIONS AND SENTIMENTS

These two aspects are often mixed up and mistakenly considered synonymous, however what distinguishes emotions from sentiments is quite simply time. Time, not only as a physical dimension of reality but also, and above all, as an existential element.

Emotions correspond to the present, to immediate and short-term feelings, while sentiments are like a “logbook”, a record of all the emotions experienced. They accompany us throughout life, participating in the formation of our life story and the structuring of our personality.

Neuroscience helps us in this regard by providing conceptual support and depth to these arguments. Damasio, in particular, clearly highlights a distinction between emotions and sentiments while acknowledging that they belong to a single process. He defines emotions as complicated collections of chemical and neural responses, which go on to form neural configurations and thus become sentiments. (Damasio, 1999).

This reflection by Damasio is extremely interesting as it takes into account (confirming and further developing) the circular causal relationship that binds brain and mind, interconnecting the neuronal apparatus and the emotional processes that are part of the mind. On the one hand, the cerebral organ is the site of and contributes to the origin and development of emotions, and on the other, emotions and their action (starting from the biochemical reactions) contribute to the evolution and articulation of the brain's structures.

According to Damasio, consciousness is built on two phenomena. The first occurs when the person comes into contact and interacts with something, the second is the modifying effect this interaction has on the person. The biology of consciousness explains how the brain constructs representations of the two components, person and object, and of the relationships established between them.

Damasio (1999), again, provides neurological evidence of how certain brain mechanisms are common to both emotions and consciousness. According to his conception, the conscience is connected to emotions, it is derived from them through the transformation of emotions into sentiments, which start with sentiments of the body.

The body therefore participates in and is fundamental for conscious experience at the same time. The mind is not separate or distinct from the body but rather firmly connected with it. It offers the biological foundations and conditions that allow, among other things, its scientific exploration and explanation.

Specific brain areas and neurobiological mechanisms have been identified as linked to awareness of oneself and others, hence consciousness is corporeal and emotional first and foremost, and it becomes contemplative only later.

In his “*La mente relazionale*” (1999), Siegel also underlines the great importance of emotions in the structuring of many mechanisms on which the functioning of the mind is based.

The following quotation is an extremely interesting passage from Siegel's work, which highlights a special function of emotions that we will look at more closely later on: “In attachment experiences, the primary factor is the type of emotional communication ... Emotions play a fundamental role in attributing a value or meaning to representations, and in this way our reality is shaped by emotional and interpersonal processes. “ (Siegel 1999, page 6).

## FUNCTIONS OF EMOTIONS

Emotions, in different forms and manifestations, have accompanied humankind along the various stages of its evolutionary path, in the same way they accompany each of us humans through the different stages in the development of our identity.

At each evolutionary stage (as far as the species is concerned) and development stage (in individuals), different emotions and different functions are associated depending on their origin, centrality, and importance.

According to John Marshall Reeve, these different functions can be grouped into three distinct categories, namely adaptive, social, and motivational.

With reference to Ekman's theory, for the sake of brevity, we'll look at just a few examples of these functions. Fear is linked to protection, it signals danger, an emergency, and puts those who feel it in a state of alert. Sadness is associated with the need to re-process an event or a moment, a cry for help, and the beginning of a restoration process. Anger lies behind active self-defence, attacks, the defence of borders, or the movement thereof to one's advantage. For individuals, pleasure is connected to the pursuit and creation of a condition of psychophysical wellbeing, for the species, it stimulates and accompanies reproduction.

Among the many functions there is one which, because of its general, non-specific nature, I consider extremely important, although it has been underestimated and ignored by the vast majority of authors. I am referring to the described signifying function, as already mentioned by Daniel Siegel.

It is significant that much earlier, in one of his essays from 1939, Jean Paul Sartre had stated that: "the study of emotions has verified this principle: an emotion refers to what it signifies. And what it signifies, is all the relationships with the world established by humans".

In addition to the intrinsic value of an emotion, with its own purposes and effects, the signifying function of emotions, highlighted by Sartre and Siegel, is extremely interesting because it links emotions to another fundamental category investigated by the Morenian theory and used in psychodramatic methodology: *the role*. As a symbolic representation, this too, as we will see, also has (among other things) a signifying value.

Emotions perform a signifying function due to their vitalism, energy, and sensibilities. On a basic, essential

level, experiences are defined by their "flavours", the different shades and nuances they bring to a person's perceptions.

In addition to establishing, organising, and structuring (shaping) the action of the individual within the world, due to their symbolic nature, roles also embody, represent, and evoke meanings linked to ideas, concepts, and values.

## A MATTER OF ROLES

For psychodramatists, the role is a fundamental element of *Being and Action*. Remember that the role is "the actual and tangible forms which the self takes. Therefore, we can define the role as the functioning form the individual assumes in the specific moment he reacts to a specific situation in which other people or objects are involved. The symbolic representation of this functioning form, perceived by the individual and by others, is called role." (Moreno, 1961).

According to Morenian ontogenetic theory, *Action* is first and foremost a founding component of *Being*. Only in the second instance does it become its expression. "Roles do not emerge from the self; it is the self that emerges from the roles." (Moreno, 1985, page 36).

According to the same theory, a fundamental of psychodramatic thought, the first form of *Action*, from an evolutionary viewpoint, is the Action of that which is known as the *global being*. This is the term with which Moreno effectively defined the state of newborns, who exist entirely through physical action and movement. Their action occurs in a temporal dimension fixed in the present, in the moment, and characterized by immediacy. A baby is totally absorbed by its own acts, living in an existential condition of globality, which makes action, perception, experience (and representation) a whole. In these early times of subjective human existence *all is Identity*, to use the concise and effective Morenian definition. Everything is in concrete form. There is no separation, distinction, between form and meaning, between the physical object and its mental representation.

It is important to underline, to fully emphasize, how the role, foundation, and origin of the self (in other words, of identity) is structured on and corresponds to three different dimensions: a) *substantial*: it is operation, concreteness, tangible or, in any case, perceptible; b) *formal*: it has its own precise and defined structure, c) *symbolic*; it contains inner meanings and draws on outer meanings.



Here, too, we find abundant and important concordances with the most recent acquisitions within the line of studies carried out in the field of neuroscience: “Cognition cannot be reduced to the activity of the brain but must include the body to which that brain is bound. The concept of self can be interpreted on different levels of complexity, the minimal level being the minimum self or core-self, the more complex being the self of narrative identity.” (Gallese, 2014).

Again: “Embodied simulation is an attempt to describe ... a basic functional mechanism involved in social cognition, not confined to the domain of action but including other aspects of intersubjectivity such as emotions and sensations.” (Gallese, 2014).

Thanks to recent discoveries regarding what have been coined “mirror neurons”, we know that the neuronal structures involved in the performance of a certain behaviour or task are exactly the same as those which are activated in motor inactivity conditions when a subject observes and, at the same time, builds an internal mental representation of concrete behaviours and actions.

Summarising and simplifying, in both the Morenian and the neuroscientific approaches, what we do is the precursor to and foundation of what we think, know and, ultimately, are. Therefore before *cogito ergo sum* comes *ago* (*I act*) *ergo sum*.

Gallese’s *embodied simulation* can be understood as bodily representation, i.e., the implicit form inherent (in an embryonic condition) in roles at a level of development which we psychodramatists refer to as ‘psychosomatic’.

**Psychosomatic** (or bodily) roles are those which although they can be taken and observed at any age, are the only ones encountered in the very early stages of human development. This is the stage where, as already mentioned, everything is identity, i.e. the simple, concrete dimension of being, as a dynamic, vital presence in the world, contains all meaning.

Only gradually, thanks to the interaction between the child’s neurological development and its relationship with the world (made up of objects and people) does a representative activity gradually emerge through the production of images inside the mind.

This still takes place within the first stage of an individual’s mental development, in what Moreno calls the “first universe”. However, it refers to a second phase thereof, a more evolved phase, wherein *all is reality*. During this period, a child is capable of separating and extracting

mental representations from the concreteness of the action (since he or she produces mental images) but is as yet unable to distinguish reality from the imagined. It is only with a further passage, upon accessing what is referred to as the *second universe*, that it becomes possible to fully discern between reality and pure imagination. Moreno hypothesises that this is enabled by the action of two particular, specific neurological structures, which are distinct yet mutually interactive. Forming two systems, in what he calls the *warming-up process*, *the first* is connected with the actions of reality, the other with imagined actions.

As a growing child accesses a representative dimension of life, a second category of roles emerges which leads to the foundation of the self: *psychodramatic* (or *phantasmatic*) roles. These concern the child’s inner world and help structure it in a particular and exclusive way. They are both constituent and representative of the child’s subjective specificity, of the unique ways in which the child experiences emotions and mentally represents reality.

Every single human being has a specific subjective identity but is also part of different relational contexts comprising other subjects, with whom that person interacts in a mutual or reciprocal way. The first broader context within which a role is taken and identity defined is the circumscribed and private context of the family within which one grows up. **Family roles** (father, mother, son, brother, sister ...) belong to this area.

As one broadens one’s field of action, moving towards increasingly structured and complex interactions, the individuals enter various collective contexts, finding a place for themselves therein. One experiences sociality and groups that differ considerably, in terms of the number of members, the type of group, the consistency, complexity, the organizational methods, and also the reasons for their formation, the aims and goals thereof.

Taken together, all these elements form the social dimension, within which one takes **social roles**. These roles form the foundation for the structure and identity of groups and, at the same time, contribute to the development and enrichment of the personalities of individuals.

Continuing along this metaphorical path that leads us from the individual closer and closer to the general (or universal) dimension, we reach the **cosmic** or *value roles*. These are the highest degree of abstraction as regards the founding structures of both psychic and social reality. This is the category of role that concerns

the transcendent, the purposes, the meanings, and the ultimate and absolute connections of human existence.

All these five categories, or dimensions, of role are important and contribute to the formation of human identity, humans as individuals and as groups. Among these, the first two - psychosomatic and psychodramatic roles - are absolutely essential for the development of human personality through metacognition. Bodily events (physical and concrete) together with imagination/representation form the foundation for the other three subsequent levels of identity.

As the study and practice of the concept that *the mind that originates from Action*, psychodrama focuses on and uses in particular (though not exclusively) the first two dimensions of a role, i.e. corporeality and representation. One could even define psychodramatic activity, overall, as an attentive, aware, structured, and interconnected series of separate *moments* that explore and stimulate activities relating to the body and the imagination, with the ultimate aim of pursuing and creating integrated connections between the said two different dimensions.

According to Morenian theory on human personality, personality is the result of the collection of roles that gradually emerge over the course of an individual's existence. As these roles develop, in terms of complexity and type, and connect with one another, they form a harmonious, integrated structure. Personality is the complete, complex form resulting from the integrated connection of all those partial "operational forms" - with their specific structure and aims - which we call roles.

### WARMING-UP PROCESSES AND THEIR ACTIVATORS

The term coined by Moreno to refer to all those psychic phenomena linked to the activation, mutation, development, and interconnection of different roles is *warming-up processes*.

*Warming up*, therefore, means something much more complex and significant than simply the preparation of a group, and a particular member thereof, for the psychodramatic exploration (through acting) of the content of the member's internal world.

### PHILOSOPHY OF THE MOMENT

In Morenian thought, this is the concept that refers to the study and arrangement of both the constituent dynamics and the resulting dynamics of the warming-up processes. There are three underlying factors: the *locus*, the *status*

*nascendi*, and the *matrix*. The *locus* is the environment in which the action (resulting from a specific creative event) originates and develops. It is the *field* where all the interactions between an *entity* and its interlocutors and antagonists (counter-roles in psychodramatic language) appear and take shape, which give substance to the manifestation, development, and modification of its being through its own precise, specific identity, however expected or unexpected this may be.

The *status nascendi* is the primary state of the action of every human act or expression, the precise moment in which a role appears and takes shape.

*The matrix is* an entity in its starting condition, as yet unexpressed, the "original organism". It is the entity at its zero moment, with its own wealth of potential and determinants inherent in its specific being. The *matrix is*, for example, the seed from which a plant will develop, or an embryo which will grow into a living being.

Human subjectivity, the Self, arises and develops in connection with the activation of a succession of warming-up processes triggered by *activators of the Self*, which Moreno (1985) divides into physical and mental.

"There appears to be very little mental activity in the activation of the newborn. We can assume that it uses only physical starting stimuli. Throughout our lives, physical starting stimuli continue to be the recovery stimuli for all warming-up processes" (Moreno, 1985, page 119). Following and interpreting Moreno's thought, psychic and social life can be seen as a succession of moments, a continuum along which the vital energy of human beings unfolds, taking new and appropriate forms (which we call roles) relating to individual and collective needs.

Activators (which may be physical or mental) are states of the individual, or of "others" (people or things, both being referred to as counter-roles), which lead up to and trigger subsequent states of being.

Among the various mental functions of the human being, Moreno attributes one of particular supreme importance, and that is *spontaneity*. He defines it as an unconscious factor, activator, and organizer of warming-up processes and of the resulting structures and configurations. It is a particular, special form of "intelligence" that allows the individual to make "an appropriate response to a new situation or a new response to an already familiar situation". (Moreno, 1953, p. 42).



## CONCLUSIONS

I think I can say that the study presented here confirms, by highlighting and describing its processes and constitutive functions, the validity of Moreno's original intuition which identified action as the epistemological paradigm that founds human subjectivity. Therefore, action is not only to be considered a manifestation and expression of being, but also to be valued as the foundation of metacognitive thinking, which is proper to the human being.

## HYPOTHESES ABOUT FUTURE LINES OF RESEARCH

A possible idea of development of the research that we want to share now consists in a deepening / experimental validation about the mode of operation, and the consequent effectiveness of some methodological procedures of Psychodrama; we can achieve this by observing and studying the intragroupal, cerebral and mental events within a psychodramatic session, integrating in the research action the techniques of investigation (brain imaging) so well developed and used in the so-called neuroscience.

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