

CHAPTER TWO

The concept of the co-unconscious in Moreno's psychodrama*

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Introduction

Around 1937, J. L. Moreno defined his hypothesis regarding the shared unconscious within the theory of psychodrama, which, in his opinion, represents one of the dimensions of the interpersonal process itself. In his view, individuals with a stable, meaningful relationship, such as married couples, families, and professional partners, develop both specific and shared forms of subjectivity that constitute co-conscious and co-unconscious states. The former is remembered as part of their life history, as a component of their identity. The latter consists of what each individual has experienced, heard of, or known at some time, but is no longer able to remember. The co-unconscious state may also be related to something the individuals never really “knew” but which they experienced within their field of meaningful relationships, irrespective of whether these individuals were dead or alive. These

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elements constitute a continuum of relational transmitted meanings that give experiences a colorful and unique quality.

Even before making a connection to the co-unconscious, Moreno, in 1923, wrote his first observations of an interpersonal communication out of participant awareness:

There are players [in the Theatre of Spontaneity] who are connected with one another by an invisible correspondence of feelings, who have a sort of heightened sensitivity for their mutual inner process. One gesture is sufficient and often they do not have to look at one another, they are telepathic for one another. They communicate through a new sense, as if by a “medial” understanding. [1973 (1923), p. 68]

In a footnote referring to an article dated 1937, Moreno connected this former text to his writings on shared unconscious, “that could be called co-unconscious” (Moreno, 1983[1959b], p. 65).

However, Moreno contributed very little towards clarifying this concept. According to Ancelin-Shützenberger (2007), who worked closely with him for over twenty-five years, his work on this concept of the co-unconscious remained confined to his seminars and lectures and general discussions with colleagues.

His few texts on the subject are vague and lack unity, perhaps because the subject deals mainly with the psychological dimension of existence with which he concerned himself least, since his major interests were the study of creativity and the spontaneity of relationships, in investigating how groups were formed and how they functioned, and in developing the theory of roles, techniques, and strategies within dramatic action. Furthermore, in the 1940s, science placed great emphasis on correlations of cause and effect (the medical model) supported by statistics (the quantitative model), which hampered the comprehension of this phenomenon.

To this day, few contemporary psychodramatists have interested themselves in developing this theme conceptually. The objective of this chapter is to discuss what characterizes the co-conscious and co-unconscious states of mind, as defined by Moreno, presenting Moreno’s few texts about the concept, and to discuss the way in which this concept is used in psychodrama, based on contributions from selected contemporary psychodramatists.

Q1

Morin's *Introduction à la Pensée Complexe* (1991) stimulates us to consider the significance of some paradoxical phenomena that occur in all living beings, such as, for example, their capacity for self-organization, which allows them to remain always the same despite the fact that their parts (cells and molecules) are in a constant state of renewal. This perspective distances us from reductionism as a result of two apparently conflicting movements: complex organization and disorganization function in living beings in a strictly co-dependent manner. As a result of this new epistemological paradigm, more specific tools of thinking are available nowadays that permit us to understand co-unconscious processes.

Another important consideration is that subject and object are inseparable, one being essential to the other. The observer, by analysing a given phenomenon, interferes with and modifies what he/she is observing, thus extinguishing the notion of an object that exists autonomously and separately from a subject. The world is contained within our minds, which are contained within the world, and this does not result in unification but, rather, in a path along which both subject and object mutually interrupt one another. Therefore, the subject emerges while simultaneously creating the world. This provides human beings with the possibility for self-thought which permits the possibility of self-awareness.

Wechsler (2007, p. 73) summarizes these ideas well in the following statement:

There is no *a priori* reality. Irrespective of the subject, it is co-constructed by agents that inhabit the phenomenon within each agent's structural and functional possibilities. . . . Therefore, the *relational experience* that supports the constitution of intra and inter-psychic realities is supported by the *complementariness* of the roles, in the *interdependence* and in the impossibility of *dissociating* subject from phenomenon, although each one remains irreducible in relation to the other.

This more complex way of thinking establishes new zones of meaning by understanding both the formation of the self and the co-unconscious. Rey (1996) shows that the development of theoretical thought was a necessary step in enabling human beings to understand some spaces of reality. Therefore, in Moreno's time, and perhaps until the advent of the latest discoveries in neurobiology,

phenomena such as the co-unconscious were unable to form part of the field of scientific knowledge and were described by Moreno using metaphorical approximations.

The constitution of self and the theory of roles

According to the theory of psychodrama, human development is organized on the basis of an infant's relationship with others via role-playing, which takes place in the physiological, psychological, and social dimensions. From this starting point, relatively stable forms of being are organized: the partial body, family and social selves. These partial selves often work in harmony but may also contradict each other. Therefore, since the complete self emerges from the roles played and not the other way around, this dynamic process between roles and counter-roles in their multiplicity of functions promotes gradual clustering and unification of multiple partial selves to what would be considered a global self that guarantees the continuity of the self and the ability to recognize oneself as single and unique. The multiple combinations of these factors confer great complexity to the global self. For example, as a consequence of this process, the same person may be assertive and pragmatic in his/her professional capacities, but reserved and tense in affective relationships in which he/she always fears rejection. This is the same self in its multiple roles/facets. Therefore, according to Moreno, memory and the co-unconscious are constituted and activated in accordance with relationships and active roles, which means that co-unconscious evocations are based on these roles.

The notion of the role also helps us to understand the convergence of collective and private elements in forming the overall self; therefore, it is highly operational. In its collective aspects, such as cultural units of behaviour, the roles convey the codes, values, beliefs, and specific cultural habits of a certain group, such as, for example, the appropriate level of physical proximity, the boundaries of privacy, the appropriate degree of social extroversion, etc. In its private domain, the roles express the specific myths of a family, which are transmitted either openly or implicitly or co-unconsciously from one generation to the next. For example: the firstborn male child will grow up to become a physician; marriages

should be made within the group of origin of the immigrant grandparents; only the elders know how to deal with problems; the significance of gender, etc.

Co-conscious and co-unconscious states and the inter-psyche

Two of Moreno's written statements about this subject merit particular attention. In the first, he says:

Co-conscious and co-unconscious states are by definition states that partners have experienced and produced together and that can therefore be reproduced or reenacted together. A co-conscious or co-unconscious state cannot be the property of one individual alone. It is always a *common* property that can only be reproduced by a joint effort. [Moreno, 1994(1946), p. vii]

It is clear from this text that, according to Moreno, co-conscious/co-unconscious goes beyond the limits of individual psychic space, belonging simultaneously to various individuals who, because of the solid intimacy existing in their relationship, are able to co-create them. It may be relived and re-enacted by them, but this may also apply to other individuals who may relate naturally to these sets of feelings, sensations, and beliefs. They constitute a relational dimension that results in what Moreno (1994[1946], p. vi) refers to as the *inter-psyche*, that is, a network of interconnected meanings, specific ways of being and of relating, that originate from two or more individuals and might or might not be accessible to the conscience.

These ideas are in accordance with the most recent studies conducted in the field of neuroscience, which point to the mirror neurons as being responsible for the complex condition that is now referred to as intersubjectivity. In fact, within the perspective of neurobiology, intersubjectivity is based on the process of transferring mental activity between individuals through unconscious motor resonance mechanisms (Hug, 2008). When an individual performs an action, expresses emotions or experiences sensations, he/she activates the same neural circuits in an observer through an automatic process that is mediated by a system of mirror neurons. This shared activation suggests a functional mechanism of automatic imitation of sensations, emotions, and actions in the body of

an observer, constituting a possible biological basis for understanding the mind of the other person and unconscious communication (Gallese, Eagle, & Migone, 2007).

The phenomenon of resonance is provoked by the dynamic interaction between an individual and his/her environment. Shared representations are formed (sometimes out of awareness) as a nucleus of cultural cohesion that serves as a basis for sharing human emotions (Fleury & Hug, 2008). This automatic sharing of emotions between individuals is the basic mechanism involved in social cognition and in the development of empathy. The emotional expression of one of the individuals guides the subjective and physiological experience of the other, serving as an interdependent social guide to maintain emotional reciprocity between pairs and groups (Decety & Meyer, 2008).

In child development, there is a mechanism mediated by the child's mirror neuron system that combines the perception and execution of actions in the newborn infant so that the child and its care-giver mutually regulate the effect of one on the other through implicit emotional communication (Fleury & Hug, 2008). Based on detailed studies performed with non-verbal babies (of 4–12 months), Stern and his collaborators (1984, cited in Stern, 2007, p. 106) concluded that there exists what these authors referred to as *affective harmonization* between mother and infant. Jaffe and co-authors (2001, cited in Stern, 2007, p. 106) described a certain rhythmic binding between the two within a time, which implies not only the possibility of capturing what is occurring with the other person, but of a synchronicity between the associated experiences. This synchronicity, which occurs automatically and without the participants being aware of it, creates a shared experience of togetherness (an intersychic phenomenon), thus establishing a secure attachment (an intrapsychic structure).

Furthermore, there appears to be agreement among investigators studying the neurophysiological bases of communication between individuals that, since birth, human babies have what is referred to as a psychology of *mutually sensitive minds* (our italics). Fleury and Hug (2008) reviewed several studies and found that the initial development of the baby's brain occurs principally in the right cerebral hemisphere, where the early processes related to emotions, relationships, and attachments (unconscious processes)

are stored in the implicit domain of learning and memory. Later, development increases in the left cerebral hemisphere, which is associated with verbal and linguistic development and information that is important for the infant's adaptation to culture, in the explicit domain of learning and memory. The full development of the child is reflected in the integration between the two brain hemispheres, which occurs through the corpus callosum.

Therefore, since the co-unconscious, according to Moreno, constellates among individuals, it generates states: that is, mobile clusters of joint qualities and characteristics that are organized, in part intentionally and in part by chance, within stable and significant relationships. They form a foundation of relational fabric, a matrix shared by individuals (inter) that leaves traces and fragments of these shared experiences in people (intra) and remains as stories, myths, and cultural traditions that go beyond the actual individuals themselves. It encompasses not only models of relationships within families, but also their meanings derived from social and cultural experiences.

In psychodrama, the notion of matrix is always associated with the idea of *locus* (where) and of *status nascendi* (when), that is, the psychic phenomena occur in a space-time and following a certain relational movement through which an emotional *modus operandi* (how) is organized by individuals belonging to the same family, to the same social group or to the same culture. This is a two-way process, "a still deeper reality in which the unconscious states of two or more individuals are interconnected to a system of co-unconscious states" (Moreno, 1994[1946], p. vii).

When this process is used to describe what sustains the development of the human infant, its emotional learning process within relationships, and through the roles that are fundamental to sustaining life, the matrix is then referred to as the identity matrix:

In the feeding situation, the active role of the person giving the food (the donor) is performed by an auxiliary ego (the mother) and the role of the individual receiving the food is acted out by the infant receiving nourishment. By giving the food, the mother preliminarily warms herself up to actions concerning the child that have a certain consistency. The child, in turn, by receiving the food warms up to a series of acts that also develop some degree of internal consistency. The result of this interaction is that a certain reciprocal

style of mutual role expectancy acts as a basis for all future role-playing between the infant and his/her *auxiliary egos*. [Moreno, 1994(1946), p. 62]

Zuretti (1998) identified the first action involving two human beings linked in the same space and time, which is childbirth, the beginning of the active co-unconscious process, thus confirming that it is these reciprocal expectations in roles that indicate co-unconscious states in which the participants are unaware and that are complementary and attuned. Indeed, one cannot exist without the other.

In his second statement, Moreno (1983[1959b], pp. 61–63) goes beyond this to define the subject more specifically. He writes,

We need to change the meaning of unconscious, looking for a counterpoint, a kind of musical key that would be able to relate every event in the unconscious of A to every event in the unconscious of B, or we need to seek concepts constructed in such a way that their existence is not derived from the resistances of an individual psyche, but rather from an even deeper reality in which the unconscious of various individuals is entwined in a co-unconscious. [p. ??]

Q2

If, metaphorically speaking, the co-unconscious is the musical counterpoint, a technique of composition made up of two or more melodic voices that perceive each other simultaneously within a harmonious relational dialogue, in real relationships there needs to be a functional complementariness between the co-unconscious states of the different individuals in this relationship. To enable everyone to contribute in such a combined and organized way, there needs to be a bonding factor. Ferreira (1963, cited in Penso, Costa, & Ribeiro, 2008, p. 11) referred to the defence mechanism that protects the family group against the threat of destruction and chaos as a family myth perpetuated through rules, beliefs, roles, and rituals. Therefore, as a result of this collective family creation, all the participants contribute towards assuring that the dangers, fears, secrets, and shames from the past remain invisible in the here and now of the relationship. A second element then emerges: the impossibility of the participants in this relationship to deal with these contents and processes, leading them to comply organically

with specific ways of avoiding family or social or cultural realities, depending on how unbearable and threatening they are to the self. This avoidance creates family defences or, in the broader system, cultural defences.

A result of this relatively stable complexity of meanings conferred by the experiences of the past is the impoverishment of existence. As a predefined game of repetition, it keeps alive issues of the *there and then* of another time and another place in detriment to what could be experienced spontaneously in the *here and now* of the relationship. These "living" issues, shared as co-unconscious states, push the individual to unconsciously repeat issues from the past, not only personal ones, but also family and cultural ones. According to Ancelin-Schützenberger (2007, p. 155): "it is not just sin, faults, mistakes and errors that may be passed down unaddressed from generation to generation, but also unresolved traumas, unmourned losses, family or personal secrets and any other unfinished business".

How psychodrama operates with the co-unconscious

Since psychodrama is a method of action in which concrete situations may be embodied in scenes and plots that allow the members of the group to experience, understand and resolve their conflicts on stage, psychodrama functions in a relaxed atmosphere, offering protection and a safe environment for the members of the group. It allows a type of communication between the therapist and the client that includes words but also incorporates action in roles, scripts and expressive manifestations of the body.

This non-verbal communication between the therapist and the patient creates a context in which the explicit verbal domain is able to interact with the implicit domain of memory (images, feelings, intuitions) within the patient-therapist relationship (Stern, 2007).

According to Moreno, this state of harmony between the therapist and his/her client depends on the "tele factor", a type of bilateral empathy that develops between individuals who maintain continuous links. The tele factor is "the basis of all healthy interpersonal relationships and an essential component of every method used in psychotherapy" (Moreno, 1969[1958a], p. 45). Thanks to the

progress made in neuroscience, it is possible to understand how this type of empathetic communication works neurologically between individuals.

Furthermore, there are always two standpoints in the therapeutic interaction: the interaction itself and the creation of images, feelings, fantasies, and intuitions influenced by the relational patterns situated in the implicit domain of the memory. This also occurs in groups as well as in dyads. Co-conscious and co-unconscious conflicts and mandates manifest themselves in two ways: first, as the topic of one participant who introduces a situation from his/her life history. While being incorporated into a character, through its very action it recovers new meanings that are then shared by all. This type of work performed with a protagonic scene is generally well accepted by the other members of the group. A second way for the co-unconscious to be revealed is as a symptom of the group, reflected in forms of attachment or in tacit agreements (group defence) that prevent communication from flowing. This second form of tension provides a better description of how the co-unconscious operates in a group.

In looking for these connections between different meanings in the past, present, and future of a participant or of various participants, psychodrama follows a phenomenological–existential psychotherapeutic model that values the original experience of each individual and his/her relationship with others, with the world and with him/herself. It deals with the phenomenological reality of the present moment without searching for connections of cause and effects.

The interrelational processes in this phenomenological paradigm take three fundamental characteristics into consideration: intentionality, intuition, and intersubjectivity (Almeida, 2006):

Intentionality is close to knowledge, not as an agglomeration of cognitive images but as an insertion of the theme into an open reality that illuminates the present moment. This opening to the world seeks to identify the meanings of the phenomena in its relationship with the conscience. [p. ??]

Q3

Almeida defines intuition as the capacity to perceive the truth clearly and correctly before thinking or reflecting. Intuition is predominantly the result of pre-reflexive perception.

Q4

Intersubjectivity implies an encounter in such a way that two subjectivities meet each other. Moreno's concept of encounter expresses the basic characteristics of intersubjectivity, meaning that not only do two individuals meet, but they also share mutual experiences and understand each other. This encounter of two individuals (Moreno, 1994[1946], p. 251) may also be hostile: with one participant in opposition to the other (Moreno, 1969[1952], p. 72).

Within the perspective of neuroscience, these three interrelational processes are equivalent to the processes of unconscious resonance mediated at least partially by the mirror neurons. According to Schore (2003, p. 264), in the affective transactions between therapist and patient, a co-creation of an intersubjective context occurs, leading both of them to structural growth and to new brain connections.

Schore also suggests that, due to this resonance, the subjectivity of the therapist may become empathically attuned to the internal states of the patient, favouring the regulation of affections and the processing of cognitive–emotional interactions.

In groups, this phenomenon of multi-personal resonance plays an important role both in constituting the group and in developing its culture. When a psychodrama group gets together for the first time, it is the co-ordinator who creates the necessary conditions for the tenuous connection that starts developing among participants, beginning in small subgroups. These links may become stronger, depending on the need to include one another. Thus, this relational network is affected by the environment, by the group's history, by the similarities and differences between the participants, by leaderships, and by political and/or social determinants, etc. (Rodrigues, 2005). However, sometimes this fails to occur because, according to Moreno, some individuals are continuously excluded or marginalized from the process of communication and social contact, while others are greatly favoured. He refers to this effect as "sociodynamic law" (Moreno, 1934).

Groups also create connections that follow specific regulations, part of which are conscious (e.g., the objective of the meeting, etc.), while others are co-unconscious (myths, codes, etc.). Thus, the co-unconscious states may facilitate or restrict the constitution and maintenance of the group (Rodrigues, 2005).

Moreno (1961, p. 237) also points out that the co-unconscious states might be

the result of direct interpersonal experience between intimate ensembles of individuals. But they may also be the result of experiences shared on a social and cultural level. The personal contact of the intimate ensembles is then replaced by indirect, transpersonal or symbolic contact. The familial interpsyche is replaced then by a "cultural interpsyche." The sociodrama of a global group of participants becomes feasible . . . in which common experiences shared by people from all walks of life were brought to enactment.

These unconscious relational patterns are located in the right hemisphere of the brain; therefore, they are non-verbal and unconscious. They are manifested as actions or as metaphors or symbolisms that express internal resonance at that precise moment. As the co-conscious and co-unconscious states are experienced and produced in conjunction, they become dependent on relational experience to be transformed into one of these possibilities. Contents recognized by the explicit domain of individual or group memory become part of the co-conscious state (Fleury & Hug, 2008).

In the initial moments of a group session in psychodrama, it is the co-ordinator who centralizes communication, helps the group warm up, and offers support, guaranteeing an atmosphere of tranquility and confidence until some significant proposal (individual or collective) is represented on the "stage", the empty scenic space given over to the imagination. When these strategies fail to produce effects, in general there is a hidden theme that leads to this loss of spontaneity, this fear of being exposed and this paralysis in the group, and it must be identified. This discomfort very often generates attacks aimed either at the co-ordinator or at some scapegoat chosen *ad hoc*, who receives negative feelings that are not actually theirs. At this moment, the focus has to be on group themes, which, in psychodrama, may be conducted from three different perspectives: through protagonists, by spontaneous action, or with the group itself.

In the first model, several short sequential dramatizations are usually created by different individuals or subgroups called "group emergents", who direct the plots until one of the characters is able to scenically explain and resolve the central conflict of the group. The action of this individual, who is denominated the protagonist, produces catharsis and integration, leading to a new existential synthesis towards the issue.

The second model of psychodrama focuses on spontaneous practices such as the “theatre of spontaneity” and the “living newspaper”, in which the director works with a team of trained auxiliary egos, allowing the proposed themes to be played out artistically. According to Burmeister (2008):

This connection with the mythic function of drama . . . addresses the universal dimension and inherent universal conflicts instead of focusing directly on real social contexts in the here and now. In the shadow of the myth and protected by its “symbolic” qualities, real social conflicts may arise and may be dealt with “indirectly” in an “un-conscious agenda” resulting in an improvement in the management of these conflicts. . . . The same may be true for theatre improvisations which will be effective even without being translated into the real social processes to which they refer (e.g. catharsis effects). [p. ??]

Q5

In the “playback theatre”, developed by Jonathan Fox (1986) and Jo Sallas (1993), the scenes are described by people in the audience and experienced spontaneously by the artists on stage. Because they operate within the domain of fantasy, sensitivity, and artistic singularity, the spontaneous methods map the co-conscious/co-unconscious elements present in the group.

The third type of direction is sociodramatic (a method focused on the group), which acts in accordance with the steps or phases of relational organization of the group: isolation, horizontal differentiation, and vertical differentiation (Moreno, 1934). In this model, moments of introspection are offered to permit self-recognition within the referred context, followed by multiple forms of identity expressions, emphasizing the plurality of ways of being that exist within the group. Finally, leaders from the group are encouraged to help the group in its search for solutions for these specific problems (Knobel, 1996, 2006). As a result of this collective co-unconscious creation, the group succeeds in identifying, dealing with, and overcoming what had existed before as a symptom.

Some specific techniques of psychodrama are also particularly useful. Since the most valuable and most reliable signs of these psychological obstacles are reflected in the bodies of the participants (preverbal field), the techniques of maximization and materialization tend to be useful. In the former, the client “takes it to the

limits by exaggerating certain body or verbal expressions” (Mene-gazzo, Tomasini, & Zuretti, 1995, p. 130). In materialization, body tension is connected to images, characters, or movements that clearly show what that discomfort causes to their bodies, helping to clarify what had appeared earlier as a clue.

These strategies give voice and shape to hidden feelings that may be played as characters in the “as if” of the psychodrama stage. By being enacted in this way, the product of some participants’ imagination then comes to belong to all the members and the imagination of all the others is then able to retouch its complexity. Within this rich inter-game of creation, many singular meanings associated with shared beliefs and customs emerge, turning something that was opaque into something more transparent.

It is important to emphasize that whatever is produced in the drama is there specifically to serve the protagonist and/or the group, not only because the stage is empty and available for any and every fantasy or anxiety, but also because the auxiliary egos are polymorphic: that is, they are there to enact any possible complementary role required by the participants. To conduct the movements contained in the scenes, the co-ordinator also has to define him/herself as a presence/absence, as someone who provides support but who does not interfere in the production itself.

The intervention model proposed by Feo (2008, 2010) is very interesting because it functions in two distinct phases: first, it introduces “tacit suspension of reality”, which, according to this author,

is related to an ensemble of strategies that a director [of psychodrama] applies to encourage the use of the psychodrama stage as a space for the maximum expression of singular feeling, actions and thinking that inhabit a certain individual or sub-group. . . . During *tacit suspension of reality* the director has to oppose resistance to any sovereign expression of otherness (any form of expression that attempts to impose itself as hegemonic and based on the desire of others) against the messenger of the group, since he/she is the one with the final word regarding the scenes. [??, p. ??]

Q6

At a second moment, Feo proposes the “scenic introduction of otherness” in which

the sovereign perspective (anyone expressing him/herself as a creator of new versions to be enacted) now belongs to those who

did not have it beforehand, and the stage is now inhabited by their wishes and desires. Therefore, to suspend and to introduce otherness are simultaneous movements related to whoever is in charge of how the scenes are developing at that moment. With all [the participants] together, the objective is to achieve the maximum expression of how each one represents the scene and how they wish to transform it. [Feo, 2008, p. ??]

Q7

Therefore, since this occurs in a relational, protected locus, maintained democratic and free by the director, the psychodramatic action that alternates the suspension and the introduction of otherness allows the participants to develop not only the ability to tolerate differences, but also confidence in the power of egalitarian relations. The commitment and the expansion of the scenes produced sequentially by several members of the group tend to reveal the complexity of meanings enacted from the imagination of the group.

It is important to emphasize that although this model is only one of the many possibilities in psychodrama, it appears to constitute a highly successful way of mapping and reaching the co-conscious/co-unconscious states because of its low level of interference at the specific moment of creation. In addition, it sustains the imaginary production of all participants and produces scenic co-narratives that facilitate the experience of the co-unconscious matrix of the group.

Ferro (2005, cited in Neri, 2007, p. 26) refers to the psychoanalytical co-narrative by saying,

It is as if analyst and patient constructed a play together in which the plots come together, are articulated and developed, often randomly and unintentionally by the two co-narrators, in such a way that neither of them is the keeper of a pre-established truth: [proceeding] in this way, the co-narrative transformation replaces interpretation.

According to Zerka Moreno (Moreno, Blomkvist, & Rutzel, 2000, pp. 45–46), her husband, J. L. Moreno, noticed that

their protagonists moved within areas that were not real to anyone except to themselves, being entirely subjective . . . these ideas went beyond fantasy and intuition, they were almost a reverie

experience. Therefore, Moreno knew that he would be unable to really reach the protagonist's psyche unless he was able to inhabit this *surplus reality* together with the protagonist.

Q8

Hence, dramatization may lead, via warming up and spontaneity, to altered states of consciousness in which the protagonist (an individual or a group) becomes detached from the realistic parameters of time and space to live in a singular, artistic reality that offers new perspectives of knowledge (Knobel, 2007).

For Zerka Moreno, surplus reality is a dimension that goes beyond subjective and objective reality. It is a form of cosmic reality (Moreno, Blomkvist, & Rützel, 2000, pp. 45–46) that allows the person experiencing it to inhabit the imaginary perspective of infinity. Surplus reality points, therefore, to a knowledge that goes beyond the limits of formal logic, following a standard equivalent to that of dreams, but one that is experienced by a protagonist who is awake and active.

One of the privileged places for the appearance of co-conscious/co-unconscious states is in a large group (Weinberg & Schneider, 2003), particularly an ongoing psychodrama group that meets for several days during specialist group congresses. In this process, the psychodramatist proposes initially small expressive structured situations, which aim to encourage a first contact between the participants and decrease alienation and suspicion among them. He/she also invites them to express feelings, thoughts, fantasies, and emotions increasingly directed to the shared collective event. Following the group phases, he/she allows each participant to experience a first moment of introspection in which an extensive mapping of multiple private experiences is possible. They then organize themselves on partial themes, which can be dramatized collectively by different subgroups, enhancing diversity. This succession of sensitive expressions ends by highlighting a protagonistic collective theme that, by being enacted by representatives of the group as a whole, allows catharsis and understanding. Finally, there is a phase of sharing, reflection and elaboration of the experience as a whole.

During these procedures, when ideals and limits fail to be shared and ways of understanding them are not found within the group, two types of undesirable phenomena appear: the first occurs when the tolerable level of frustration is exceeded and anger and

impulsiveness take over, preventing the experience from being worked out conjointly. At the other end of the spectrum, the participants of large groups feel illuminated and immediately capable of transforming social reality in an omnipotent way.

To be able to continue existing, resisting, and creating within the difficult and conflicting reality of our everyday lives is indeed what this possible life requests of us.

New perspectives

This chapter presents the co-conscious and co-unconscious states conceived by Moreno in 1937 as an original creation within socio-psychology, since the idea of a relational and shared unconscious, currently referred to as social unconscious, emerged only in the 1960s.

For Hopper (2003, p. 129),

The concept of the social unconscious refers to the existence and constraints of social, cultural and communicational arrangements of which people are unaware: unaware, insofar as these arrangements are not perceived (not "known") and if perceived unacknowledged ("denied") and if acknowledged not taken as problematic, not considered with an optimal degree of detachment and objectivity.

Co-unconscious states, defined by Moreno as the social unconscious, also encompass limitations and ways of remaining unknown to oneself, which are relationally constituted as an implicit *modus operandi* arising from an infant's contact with its caregiver.

The psychodramatic proposal of a plural self compounded and brokered by roles allows understanding of how certain unperceived relational patterns operate in specific areas of identity, either to interdict or highlight certain themes, scenes, plots, ancestral mandates, family, group, or ethnic myths.

Therefore, a matrix of modes of being, stories, inventions, and fantasies that are expressed or hidden for generations are transgenerationally transmitted as dissociated elements of the participants' identities.

Based on contributions from the neurosciences, Fleury and Hug (2008) propose a preliminary definition of the co-unconscious

as a manifestation of the unconscious content of the implicit domain of memory and learning (the right hemisphere of the brain), which is stimulated by the phenomenological experience of the present moment through the interactive process that occurs between individuals or in a group. [p. ??]

Q9

As a method, psychodrama provides a set of strategies and techniques of action that operate in the imaginary dimension of the “as if”, allowing access to contents from the implicit memory domain. This occurs through warming up, which produces characters and plots (in the plane) of surplus reality that are not subject to conscious control. Their actions establish unexpected connections between elements in the present/past/future. In this way, threatening stories and implicit modes can gain new meanings in the more protected and less disruptive environment of the psychodrama stage.

When dealing with collective issues, psychodrama becomes sociodrama, which is a specific method, defined by Moreno (1934) as “an action method that deals with relationships between and within groups and with collective ideologies”, enabling greater confidence in the relationships and in the strength of the groups. As many people take responsibility and enact their conflicts and social aspirations collectively, so original solutions are found for the situations, ways of coexistence are traded, and conflicts are expressed. As “a group learning process focused on providing practice in solving problems of human relations” (Sternberg & Garcia, 2000, p. ??), sociodrama is a means of expressing and working out co-unconscious group themes.

Q10

In Brazil, sociodrama has been used as a privileged method of socio-educational intervention for use in marginalized populations (Marra, 2004), increasing the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of identity elements of the group that, in general, are dispersed and unpowered. Another interesting example of work involving sociodrama with the co-unconscious was conducted by Nery (2010) and enabled mapping of ethnic prejudice in a university in Brasilia, Brazil, resulting in a consequent slowdown of the problem. According to the author (2010, pp. 183–184),

flexibility in identity is critical for the success of any inclusion process, as it contributes to the empathic dialogue, [and this can only occur] after the identities present are highlighted, visibility is given to the pain experienced by the individuals, confrontations are allowed and conflicts experienced.

For Nery, sociodrama is the method of choice for projects of social and ethnic inclusion, both as a research tool and for its applicability in sociotherapeutic interventions.

Working with co-unconscious social mandates, sociodrama operates as a social therapy, allowing understanding and changing of anachronistic attitudes displaced in time (from other times and social contexts). As a method of research–action, it allows participants to understand and fix distortions that prevent their lives from flowing within a group, as well as forwarding their collective claims to different spheres of local power in a movement that seeks socially engaged solutions.

In our opinion, the psycho-sociodrama model of intervention with the co-unconscious opens a wide range of possibilities for research and action within communities, revealing implicit issues, unperceived beliefs, and deviations in communication and in joint action, transforming the shared social space.

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