

# The Psychospiritual in Psychodrama: A Fourth Role Category

NATALIE L. WINTERS

---

**ABSTRACT.** In the past 25 years, spirituality has become a significant element in the healing arts. In this article, the author develops a fourth role category in psychodrama, the psychospiritual role category, to facilitate that emergence. The author describes and explains a model that is an expansion of the Canon of Creativity that she developed during 20 years of clinical psychodramatic practice with patients of varied backgrounds and diagnoses. She addresses specific roles within the category and suggests practical applications. The author incorporates the psychospiritual role category into the therapeutic and training processes and explains a structure for guiding clients and students in their growth process.

**Key words:** creativity, fourth role category, psychospiritual, spirituality

In the ambient atmosphere surrounding us and pervading the structure of each one of our body's cells is a spiritual force. This force is omnipresent and infinite. . . . It is this force which is life itself. (Regardie, 1932, p. 5)

THE CORE OF EACH LIVING BEING has an essence that is larger than ego and divine in quality. It pervades all that we are. It presumes a conviction that the universe is not negative or neutral but tilts toward goodness and love. It further presumes a deep trust that there is enough for all and that every human being deserves to share equally in the planet's abundance and is equally responsible for shaping our future. When we are willing to realize that essence, in ourselves and in another, all pretenses fall away. The light of life shines through. What exists then is compassion, understanding, acceptance, and an open heart. It is at those moments of illumination that *tele* vibrates and we can say, "I hear your pain. I resound to your joy." For decades, this spiritual truth has taken a back seat in all realms of life, and there is no time like the present to bring it to the forefront.

In the last quarter century and continuing into the year 2000, spirituality has re-emerged as an important element in psychology and in the healing arts. Before that time, with the exception of a few heroic voices, science and religion had been engaged in a subtle or implicit cold war, with spirituality as the victim.

Spirituality, that is, developing one's relationship with the greater wholeness of being and acknowledging an infinite universal intelligence, is very much a psychological phenomenon, even if it is not reducible to ordinary empirical scientific methods. We are at a juncture in history when spirituality, as distinguished from religion, is emerging from the background of experience to the foreground of awareness. That is especially important among professionals, artists, and many intellectuals.

Spirituality is a realm beyond words that cradles us within and surrounds us from without. It is that which infuses us with spontaneity and compels us to create. It is the source of all that is—what Moreno (1971) first addressed in the preface to *Words of the Father* as the scheme of existence that “comes from the highest authority—from God, . . . the quintessence of the spark of creativity is God” (pp. xii, xiii).

Although Moreno lived in a time when new thought was blossoming, it was not in vogue to base a healing treatment, be it physical or mental, on the concept of God. Yet herein, lie the roots of sociometry, group psychotherapy, and psychodrama. We could say that psychodrama is cradled in the God-head because the God-head is expressed in and through everything, an infinite experience of co-creation and co-responsibility.

As Moreno developed his ideas about creativity, he discovered that spontaneity, a kind of unconservable energy, can lead to creativity and eventually leads to an outcome or cultural conserve. From that outcome, we have the potential to grow and warm up to new levels of spontaneity. Moreno (1978, p.46) described his model as follows: “[S]pontaneity arouses creativity, C.  $S \rightarrow C$ . Creativity is receptive to spontaneity.  $S \leftarrow C$ . From their interactions Cultural Conserves, CC, result.  $S \rightarrow C \rightarrow CC$ . Conserves would accumulate indefinitely and remain in *cold storage*. They need to be re-born.” Moreno called this model of the creative process the Canon of Creativity, the field of rotating operations between spontaneity—creativity and the cultural conserve.

Moreno was a deeply spiritual man. In *Who Shall Survive*, he stated “that all measures and tests of humanity should be constructed after the model of God involved in the creation of the universe” (Moreno, 1978, p. 21). It seems paradoxical, therefore, that Moreno did not include God (spirit) in his canon. As a result of that omission, the spiritual realm or formative force, as it was called in a visual and experiential presentation titled *Formative Forces in Nature* by Barbara Kazanis in Spring Hill, Florida, on March 7, 1998, has not been considered central to psychodrama. Practitioners from Moreno to this

day have not fully valued or respected this dimension of the clients and students with whom they work. The inclusion of the spiritual realm shifts the focus of the beginning of a human being's creative process, and a dimension is incorporated into the model that gives us a more powerful approach to growth and healing.

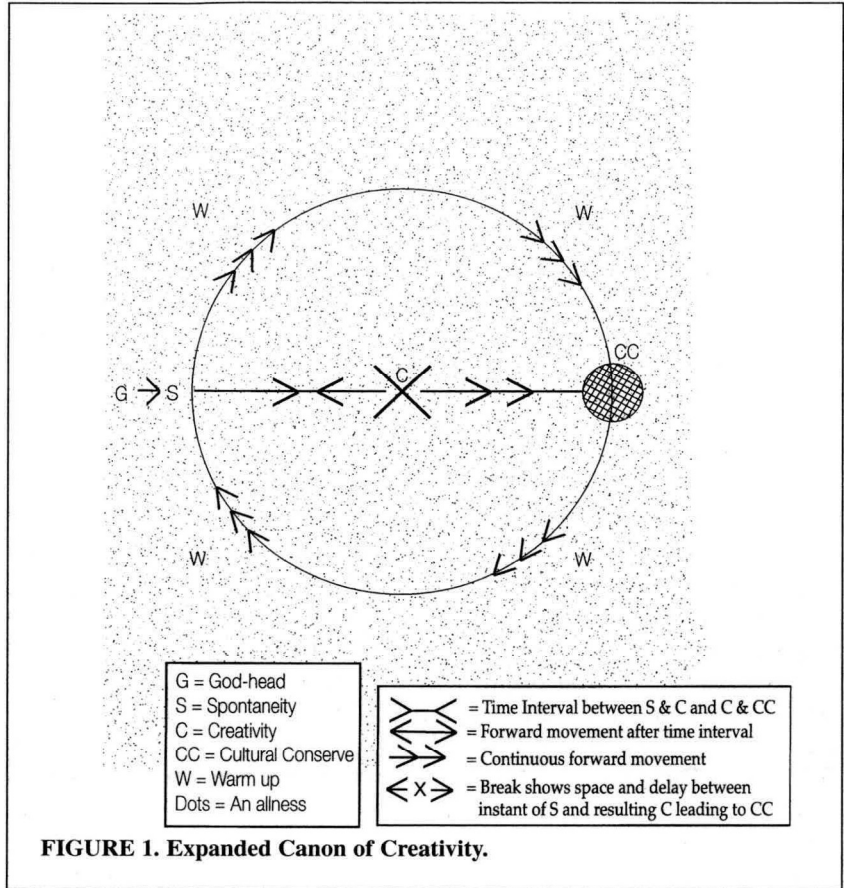
### Role Theory and the Psychospiritual

Along with his philosophy of spontaneity and creativity in the Moment, Moreno also enunciated a theory of personality development called role theory. He (Moreno, 1972) established three role categories as the headings under which to list all the roles people take from birth on: psychosomatic, psychodramatic, and sociocultural (p. 77). I believe the psychospiritual category is missing.

Spiritual issues have been relegated to axiodramas, confining them to a cell reserved for special treatment rather than considering them to be an integral aspect of psychodrama and all of human existence. I believe the psychospiritual is an essential role category. If we modify the original Morenian model with the addition of G as the Source, then we see that this Source is actually encompassing, within, interpenetrating, and creating a total, all-inclusive awareness or allness. *Allness* is a broader view of the cosmos, which Moreno saw as synonymous with the universe (Moreno, 1969, p. 21). Allness is beyond the realm of full human conception. At any moment, we are our own godselves co-creating with the God-head. Our creativity is expressed through our choices. Each moment, then, is the moment for all that we are ready to experience. "The continuing evolutionary process of within—and—beyond brings new within . . . and new beyonds" (Wilber, 1995, p. 279).

Figure 1 contains my expanded version of the canon of creativity. Outside the circle and before the S, I included G. The tiny dots both in and outside the circle represent the ever-present God-head, which is always in and around us (an "allness").

In Figure 2, I expanded the circle to a spiral, infused or ignited by spirit. The model expresses the ascending nature of life as it evolves: the infinite creator (or God-head) >< Spontaneity >< Creativity >< Cultural Conserve. The tiny dots in both figures represent the God-head in and around an allness. It should be recognized that there may be long intervals between accepting spontaneity as our divine nature and engaging in it. Another interval may elapse before spontaneity spurs creativity. The creative process may likewise take time to lead to a cultural conserve. The cultural conserve continues to be a Springboard to Warm up to new spontaneity when we feel connected to our concept of God and are motivated toward growth. It becomes a place to slide back into the old static ways of being when we disconnect from faith and



**FIGURE 1. Expanded Canon of Creativity.**

allow fear to infiltrate and paralyze our process. In this model, the broken lines indicate the leaps of faith that one takes to move to higher levels of personal evolution. The process begins with infinite spirit that moves through us, and we continue as co-creators, evolving endlessly to include in our awareness more than the physical plane. I call this the Cosmic Spiral of Creativity.

To move forward and grow, we must address our spiritual selves as expressed in the subheadings under the fourth role category, the psychospiritual. I have identified several roles and their characteristics in this fourth category and have developed them in a dialogue with Adam Blatner (personal interview, March 1999). What is unique about the roles is the limited involvement of ego and negative judgment. Our spirituality is in the foreground; ego takes a back seat.

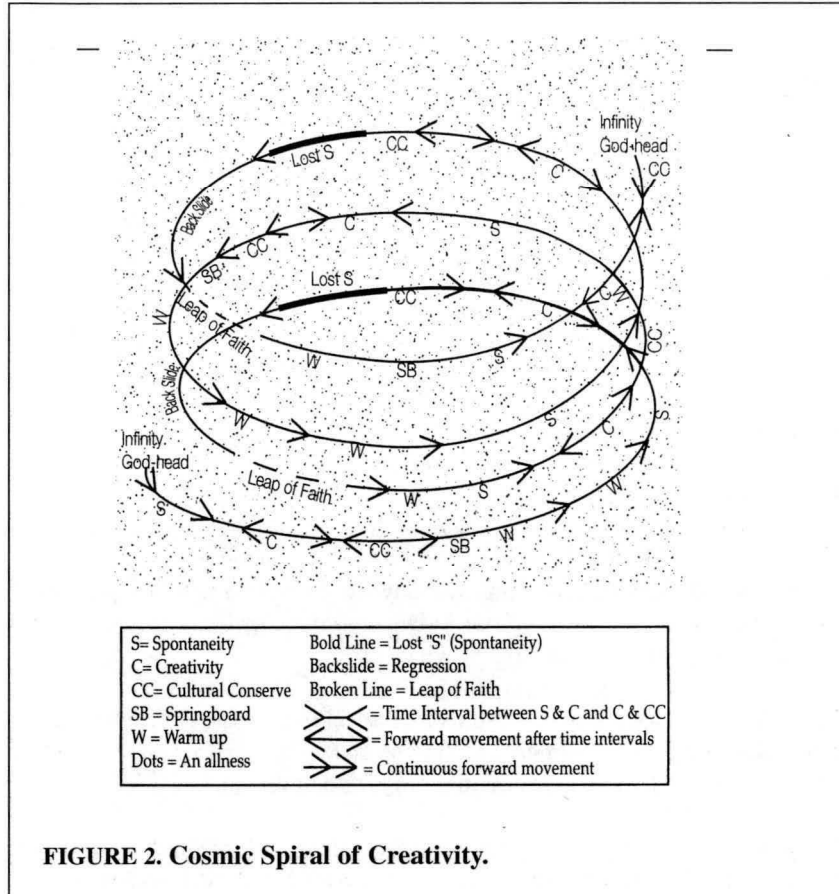


FIGURE 2. Cosmic Spiral of Creativity.

### Psychospiritual Role Designations and Their Functions

A list of the roles people play within the psychospiritual role category and several descriptions of their functions follow:

*The imager.* This role is key to creativity, forming mental, sensory, and intuitive images of something not present in an ordinary way and not previously experienced. Imagining involves active merging of intention and focus and in its deeper nature has a life of its own. It expresses soul and does not simply follow the direction of the ego.

*The meditator.* The meditator transcends the physical plane and becomes open to receiving cosmic information unlikely to be available in other states of con-

sciousness. The meditator relinquishes outward attachments and affirms divine freedom within. It is the most direct channel to the allness. It requires attention and evolves—from role taking to role playing, to role creating—over time through consistent practice.

*The rememberer.* This role grows out of natural trance states, meditation, and imagination. Natural trance states occur in the individual in varying cycles and refer to the natural rhythms of the organism. We must remember what we have experienced through the aforementioned roles so we can apply the psychospiritual elements to the practice of psychodrama. As we remember, so we experience the memory in the moment, which is an essential element of psychodrama.

We are at the most rudimentary stages of understanding both memory and imagination. It is as if we were children who are looking at a great piece of art and pointing out the colors whose names we have just learned.

*The receiver.* The receiver surrenders judgment yet maintains the ability to discern. The role involves trust, faith, healing of mind, body, and spirit. It involves a willingness to give up control and access what we are given from sources that are obvious to us in everyday life as well as sources we do not understand. When we let go of our reliance on our five senses alone, we are able to receive what the universe provides for us.

*The giver.* In its truest sense, the role of the giver is that part of us which gives to the universe for the joy of giving, thereby encouraging a flow of abundance. It is our capacity to take pleasure in giving for its own sake.

*The artist.* The artist aligns with aesthetic values and produces that which evokes sensuality, insight, foresight, and pleasure for all to share. He or she works from an intuitive nature with connection to a higher self.

*The channeler.* The role of the channeler presumes opening the self to pure consciousness and infinite intelligence, allowing spontaneity to move through us without projections and transferences. It requires a subtle skill of emptying rather than filling “the self,” thereby allowing us to experience what comes in.

*The believer.* The role of the believer is to accept our spiritual nature as true and real and to have confidence, trust, and faith in that nature.

*The prayer.* The role of the prayer is to awaken devotion in the heart and soul. In this role, one loves spirit in whatever form one holds especially dear and enters into communication with the divine, believing in the eternal and giving quality of the infinite.

I invite readers to expand and develop additional role designations and functions.

### **The Role of the Director in the Psychospiritual Category**

The role of the director in the fourth role category is to be open to universal intelligence, to inspire and guide group members to drink the sweet nectar of the moment, and to live in the present, seeing beauty in everything. This is a tall order. With so much pain in an ever-changing world, *how* do we see the beauty? By inviting the expression of the group members' spiritual beliefs, the director opens an area of diversity and acceptance, of support and comfort not usually found in therapeutic and training experiences. Spirituality lends continuity to on-going change. Change and transitions are the most difficult challenges in life. To paraphrase Zerka Moreno, learning to live in limbo is learning to live. Times of transition are the journey, but we tend rather to focus on the destination. Transitional periods usually mean letting go of a dream, the familiar, the hoped for that did not happen. Transitions mean leaving one phase of life to embark on a new mission, following a new dream, daring to try, or even leaving life itself on this physical plane to enter the seemingly unknown.

Yet, the nature of living is transition and transformation. Directors need to be fully present and conscious of their own spirituality to help group members feel the depth of their sadness, cry their tears, shout their anger, dance their dance of good-byes, and experience that last hug, that last hold on what was and what can no longer be. The essential experience of a full catharsis is cleansing, and that allows for release of the old and making ready for the new. That is the journey.

As a consciously evolving spiritual being, the director brings an attitude of freshness, energy, and hope to the group. Such an attitude is pervasive and contagious. The director encourages members to look with anticipation at new experiences as exciting, adventurous, and scary in a positive way. They are filled with possibilities rather than with resentment and anger, and members need not feel vengeful, bitter, self-righteous, and negative. By holding the belief that we are all expressions of the God-head and supported by this dynamic life force, we recognize that we are, in fact, never alone or alienated. We are free to make decisions that are in our highest good, believing that life is continually evolving. "All improvement is dependent upon your seeing yourself as greater than you are. Then your potential stirs within you and your creative capacities unfold." (Barker, 1968, p. 9)

In a holistic atmosphere, it is easier to make choices about one's attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors concerning transition and loss—choices that can lead to healthy separation. Although it is difficult to see the bigger picture

in moments of distress, one's leap of faith soothes wounds and gives direction where there was none before. The director is pivotal in co-creating an environment in which faith abounds and hope prevails.

### **Practical Applications in the Spiritual Realm**

Group leaders and those who work with individuals are faced with dual challenges. First, they must be clear about their own spiritual values. Second, they must be unafraid to introduce spirituality, along with the other role categories, to the individual and the group in psychodrama.

I suggest the following approaches as a framework for incorporating the psychospiritual role category into the therapeutic process.

1. When setting the scene, provide an atmosphere of safety and acceptance, a climate based on the concept that the cosmos is our home. The use of the preface to *Words of the Father* (Moreno, 1971, pp. xviii–xx) can assist in this endeavor.

2. Present the psychospiritual role category by drawing the Cosmic Spiral of Creativity (Figure 2) on a chart and teach it to the group. Keep the model in view at all times during each session.

3. Present the roles under the psychospiritual category, and discuss and enact each role. Have participants brainstorm additional roles to support an understanding of the magnitude of the category.

4. Encourage free expression of individual spiritual beliefs by inviting open dialogue, acceptance, and appreciation of various precepts. A major goal of the dialogue is to understand each individual's orientation so that his or her beliefs can be incorporated effectively during the work.

5. Help clients create a conscious awareness of the presence of the God-head at all times whether one is focusing on this presence or not. (Use whatever terminology fits for each client.)

6. After a protagonist has been chosen and before the enactment, help the protagonist to concretize a place of reference for the spirit to be.

7. Should the protagonist lose spontaneity during the enactment (get stuck), bring in an auxiliary to play the God-head, the higher self, or whatever terminology applies. The auxiliary deepens and enhances the scenario beyond the scope of existing doubles and auxiliaries.

8. During the sharing portion, as they react to the protagonist, encourage participants to express fully their experience of the drama's having included spirituality as a cornerstone of the process.

9. Provide time for closure that allows participants to bring their experience to completion for the session. For example, form a circle, leave one thing in the circle you no longer want, take with you one thing you do want; or go

---

within, experience your spiritual source, take a deep breath, find your center, and exhale.

The psychospiritual role category provides a fundamental *raison d'être* without which it may be difficult to connect with our place in the cosmos. As Emerson (1851, p. 190) wrote, "[W]ithin us is the soul of the whole; the wise silence, the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE."

#### REFERENCES

- Barker, R. C. (1968). *The Power of Decision*. Los Angeles: Devorss.
- Emerson, R. W. (1851). *Emerson's Essays*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, Harper Row.
- Moreno, J. L. (1969). *Psychodrama Vol. 3, Action Therapy and Principles of Practice*. Beacon, NY: Beacon House.
- Moreno, J. L. (1971). *Words of the Father*. Beacon, NY: Beacon House.
- Moreno, J. L. (1972). *Psychodrama Vol. 1*. Beacon, NY: Beacon House.
- Moreno, J. L. (1978). *Who Shall Survive*. Beacon, NY: Beacon House.
- Regardie, I. (1932). *The Art of True Healing*. In M. Allen (Ed.), (1991): *The Art of True Healing*. San Rafael, CA: New World Library.
- Wilber, Ken (1995). *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution*. New York: Random House.

---

NATALIE L. WINTERS, a psychologist and diplomate in psychotherapy, is the director of the Center for Psychodramatic Studies in Tampa, Florida, and an adjunct professor at Nova Southeastern University. She can be reached by e-mail at NatalieLW3@aol.com and by mail at 12025 Wandsworth Drive, Tampa, FL 33626.