

Open and Closed Systems Paper

in preparation for certification as a
Sociodramatist
by ANZPA

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“Written analysis of one organisation that to a large degree functions as an open system and one that to a large degree functions as a closed system.”

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1.0 Introduction

I found writing this paper a rewarding opportunity to deepen my understanding of role theory and systems theory in respect to appreciating open and closed dynamics and preparing myself to produce sociodrama.

1.1 Framework

This paper:

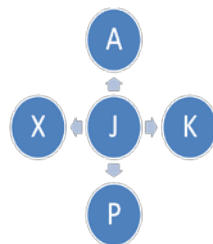
- describes how key terms are used
- describes both a closed and an open organisation
- describes 'open' and 'closed' dynamics of the organisations in relation to members role functioning and
- describes how and why awareness of open \ closed systems functioning is useful for the practicing sociodramatist.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 System

A system is a set of connected and interactive entities that produce a characteristic pattern of behaviour over time and thus are in relationship. A system is not just a heap of separate entities or unrelated clustered elements; function and purpose give the set of entities their relations integrity. In a human system it is the diverse values of the different individual persons comprising the particular system that is key to understanding what makes the people and \ or cultural artefacts relate and cause characteristic interaction and relations. It is the expression of 'preference for value' for another person or cultural artefact that over time produces behaviour patterns characteristic to that particular system set; its integrity as a relations phenomenon. Developments in acting out our preferences (valuing) and the development of our human culture are both sociodramatic and inter-dependent.

The figure below is a diagrammatic attempt at explaining a simple system with, in this case, proponent J at one point in time acting as a hub or conduit of relations to the others, thus demonstrating these relations (value choices) define characteristics of the system set. Just how the other entities (persons or artefacts) connect to each other and function in this phase or another phase of activity is a source of curiosity and naïve enquiry and open exploration.



Sociodrama preferences the interiority of a social system; its human and cultural collective subjective aspects. This can be represented spatially such that the inter-subjective "WE" space (any one has) is larger and enables more complexity than the subjective space that any "I" (as an individual) has. In turn my subjective individual "I" space is of larger capacity and is of greater complexity than all the objective "ITS" that physically make up and comprise my human system. The "ITS" are primarily only the litany of artefacts of my culture. My "WE" is that space as well as all my and others valuing of these "ITS".

People and organisations are comprised of artefacts ("Its"), "I" spaces and lots of "We" space. At any point in time the interactivity of people and in an organisation will not evidence the whole range of connectedness and all the subjectivity of the relations with others. It is the greater capacity of the WE space with others which gives veracity to the activities in the system and adds drama in respect to exchanges about the values in the system.

The genesis of sociodrama is 'homo narrans', the story making and enacting ape. Contemporary sociodrama is our story making and our enacting in situ the here and now quality of an extemporaneous production. It is but one step removed from pure spontaneity and naked spirit that is the very womb of the system of sociodrama and our emergent complex social system.

2.2 Closed System

A closed system here is understood as one whose grand narrative lacks novel emergent properties; meaning the story (the dominant narrative) identifying the system (organisation) is not fundamentally changing the nature (function and identity) of the system itself. The narrative has a 'known' quality and the stories told about any proponents within the organisation, feel 'familiar' characters. Over time there is no compromising change to the identity nor any re-making (development or evolution) of the system. Changing furniture within a closed system's house does not make the house another house; it is still that house that had its furniture changed.

The system's entities are not 'inclined' to change in any way that would effect the system's recognisability and the system's dynamics are those of conservation. Its intent is conservation of what it sees as the natural cultural conserve; its unchanging and ever-enduring aspects.

Opportunity to re-design or transform the dominant narrative and cultural artefacts are shy-ed away from. Activity is aimed at preserving what is 'normal' functioning. An anecdote that highlights something different or novel is devalued as it is perceived as being a weak signal heralding a reappraisal of the normal cultural values. Systems theory names the closed system dynamic allostatis, meaning persistently regulating towards homeostasis and stability.... of form and function.

2.3 Open System

An open system here is understood as one that not only has emergent properties but persistently and continuously regulates towards novel emergence. The story makers (protagonists) engage with explorative spirit and wilfully learn and expect new nuance, association and perspective. There is a willingness to be surprised and say, 'Ah-ha'. There is an open mindedness to what might spawn original perspective and experience and enable new form and functioning and be innovative without giving consideration to preservations.

There is also a desire for "Open Mind" as in the Zen understanding. To expect nothing at all and be content with just appreciating nuances of meaning of what... just is. To include the objective as an experience of the subjective, and to become a witness to the sensation of just experiencing. To suspend knowing. To contemplate and also to be responsive to just dicking around and wait for whatever may come next.

In addition an open system mind is ready for transformation and include and make a more complex narrative. While a closed system's worldview is bifurcated in that it sees its environs as separate from what might be (other), an open system has a unified worldview in that it sees itself as (at least in part), 'at one with' other. An open system's identity can be perturbed and its values become sufficiently plastic to re-align in a demonstrably new gestalt.

An open system is receptive of a more direct experience of inter-subjectivity and open to greater diversity (expansion) and depth of relations and extension of experience over time. In this sense an open system is also receptive of experiences consistent with Games Theory where play and improvisation is preferred. To entertain and experiment in appropriating 'what might be'; what might become a new and different future. In Games Theory the game is more encompassing than the innovations and rule making of any one participant's mind.

A part of the group's (the system's) mind can not explain the whole group's mind. Subsequently each participant is open to a schema greater than their individual ego's needs. The meta-perspective is that the universe is bountifully resourced and expanding. In contrast closed systems affirm resources and time are not unlimited and mortals must preference the stabilised form things take.

Systems theory names the ability of an open system to defy becoming chaotic (to stabilise and conserve functioning) as enantiostasis while the dynamic of sustaining an open system over changing (dissipating) environments is called syntony. Meaning resonance for:

- heuristic (self discovery) activity
- evolutionary consonance
- systems design and strategy.

2.4 Psychodramatic Role

A sociodrama is a person creating greater social discernment and superior social agency through psychodrama practice. The person is working out (enacting and relating) more appropriate and complex (dense and nuanced) sociometric functioning through developing psychodramatic capacity and re-mediating their complexity intelligence in respect to others and other groups.

A protagonist makes their particular psychodramatic role explicit in the actions, articulations (thoughts) and affectations expressed in a particular moment in a relationship. Typically a psychodramatic role in a sociodrama is described by referring to all three components (action, affect and thought) in a respective social interaction. For example, 'frenetic and precise and joyfully lyrical orchestral violinist. Or, 'elegant and polished and captivating and austere latin-dance instructor.

In sociodrama the protagonist and auxiliaries are always thought of as being in relation to a social system. Meaning they are sociometrically linked and connected to others. Just as in attachment theory there is never just a baby, always a baby and a mother so in sociodrama there is never an individual, always an individual and a social interaction. Thus sociodrama is the exercise of a group increasing its ability to function in the world through further developing existing or making new psychodramatic roles in relation with a social system's functioning.

3.0 Examples of Closed & Open Organisations

3.1 Closed Organisation Example

An example I have found of an organisation that to a large degree functions as a closed system is a community brass band, the Stonnington City Brass Band (SCB), of which I am a proud member. SCB comprises some 50 members and the uniform is royal blue with broad brim hats.

Aspects of its functioning that enable me to conclude it is mainly a closed system relate to:

Membership

Membership of the band is restricted. When competing in Band Competitions members must be registered to the Band and personal identity is verify-able. At any time one is not expected to be a member of another Brass Band. Membership is with the membership authority, the Victorian Bands League. Apologies are expected to be submitted and are recorded for non-attendance of rehearsal or performance.

Rules

The Band has a constitution which has rigorous requirements. As well as formal rules there are informal rules such as no drinking of alcohol until after a rehearsal or performance. The Secretary's role includes announcing the deliberations of the elected committee and reinforcing regulations such as dress and conduct. The secretary personifies the authority of the organisation and as such significantly impacts the leader-participant relationship and effects member's warm up and enacting relations with one another. Members warn each other of the secretary's latest drive to conform.

Dress \ Uniforms

Members are given uniforms as well as required to contribute standard clothing. Black socks only, not coloured, are required. Marks are given for dress during the year and an award is given for the best presented member. Corporate style polo tops are provided for casual events. This predetermining of dress highlights the importance of individuals functioning as members of a group with the clearly defined purpose of being proud and civil citizens who consistently volunteer for community service. The areas of physical appearance, orderliness, exactness, cooperation, conformity, aesthetics, and performance orientation are accentuated through the rigorous regulation of the outward appearance of the members.

Community Band

Community Band is a delimited term. A community band is distinct from a military band, a marching band, a concert band, ceremonial band or a competing band. Its main activity is to perform at community functions such as Citizenship Ceremonies and Council Park events. When I joined the band at the age of 46 it was a new experience for me. In uniform I felt stereotyped and was uneasy about performing on

Anzac day because of the military association. On the day I discovered the uniform gave me anonymity and the identity of Community Band separated me from identifying with military. The uniform became a costume and I was able to play the part while feeling my identity, to some degree, was de-personalised. Now days I feel my uniform prepares me to perform a standard civil service no matter if I feel prepared or not.

Music

The SCB has a limited range of music and arrangements. The music is mainly a function of the restricted range of instruments. 'Brass' instruments; but not french horns nor saxophones. Woodwinds and strings are considered and referred to and respected as guest instrumentalists. While the music performance is quite varied allowing a lot of colour via tempo and volume change and there is considerable diversity in types of music such as jazz and classical and stage (its not all marches) the arrangements are not open to the whole range of musical experience. 'Experimental' and sound-scaping or really long arrangements are not used. The music director chooses the music; there is no discussion about choosing and the arrangements are specific for brass band.

The specific well defined nature of the music played contributes a great deal to defining the exactness of the identity of the group as a brass band. The non-negotiable grand narrative is that these instrumentalists comprise a particular brass band and therefore each member can be satisfied and content and derive reward that the community recognises and knows them and owns them as their brass band.

Performance

Making a good collective sound is key to band performance. The group culture is for each member to focus on using their aptitude and talent to produce the bands intonation and to "play as one". Trying to achieve one sound re-iterates the need for the group to play as a closed sound system.

Performance at times can be easy. I have found on occasions the band 'carrying me along'. Familiar pieces can be relaxing. Yet I have found performing, particularly performing solos, to be particularly challenging. While a soloist is given quite a lot of freedom in expression and intonation and some licence in "pulling phrases around" timing the re-entry with the full band is deemed critical and the conductor's baton is totally authoritative at that point. I have noticed the band feeling shocked when I do something unexpected or not adhering to strict timing. Solo performers at times do "freeze" because of the bands expectations; they are not independent performers. There is satisfaction to be found, on the rare opportunity of performing a solo, of in effect 'leading' the band.

Governance and Leadership

In accord with the constitution there is a committee with formal positions and strict adherence to protocols. Formal motions are occasionally put to 'all of membership' but the committee meetings are "closed". Business is confidential to committee members only and discussion stops when others enter the room. SCB formally reports to City Council. Disagreement by committee members or ordinary members or between band and council is seen as a negative thing. The style of governance promotes the values of reliability, loyalty, trustworthiness, integrity and does not promote free or individual enterprise nor informal leadership.

Funding

The band is primarily funded by the city council and hire from private community organisations. SCB does not seek to be financially independent of local council. This impacts the culture of the band as a community sub-group offering service to the broader community.

Future

SCB functions as a monopoly in respect to this type of service to Council. It is confident of continuing to monopolise musical service and the reciprocal funding. This confidence manifests in a certain pride as the preferred service provider.

Functioning

The band has a fixed idea about its musical functioning. It thinks deficiency of musical ability and performance can be overcome through practicing. Repetition is the general cure all for substandard performance. The musical director commends the band for playing pieces the same way each time and having a set interpretation of 'the score'. The musical director consistently pleads to, "play what is written".

The band is segmented (seated) in sections. The sociometry is very much defined by these sections. Communication is mostly limited to whispering to those in your section. The atmosphere is mostly intense concentration, seriousness, patience and exasperation at the effort and amount of learning required.

Expectations

Anecdotes from participants give clear ideas of what Band standard expectations are. Repeated stories of past victories and trophy-ing abound. Trophy's are proudly displayed around the band room walls and given out each year as rewards. There are trophies for consistency. Stories reflect the archetype of the disciplined citizen (military-like) warrior enduring hardship to perform a standard duty at the designated time in inclement weather. Values pertaining to recognition, achievement, ambitiousness and are success are regularly emphasised and fears related to failure, humiliation and error are not directly accommodated.

Challenges

Some Brass Bands have changed to Concert Bands. SCB has resisted this trend and does not intend to change. The name has changed from Malvern Tramways Band 1911 to Malvern Brass Band to Stonnington City Brass in 2003. Different names; same instruments and music. There is an indefatigability to the band.

Summary

The closed system functioning of SCB assists efficiency in producing performance consistent with a certain standard. The band is well drilled and easily “falls in” when commanded. Participants know what to expect and are intent on the closed idea and mantra of ‘follow the baton’. Participants try not to think of improvising on that.

Although I think the SCB is an exemplary example of a closed organisation it is worth noting open aspects. The Brass Band is open in receiving new members, youngsters in particular, there is a senior and a junior band. SCB does not grieve those who ‘give-up’ the practice of banding. It simply marches on. Folks are open to each other and life long friendships develop in the band ‘family’. They eagerly welcome each other to rehearsal and like to joke and enjoy suppers. Spontaneity in the band is centred around the specific task of sight reading music. Thrill is attained in sharp reflexes quickly reading the next unexpected bar of notes. I have also been able to add some fun by organising a footy competition which has resulted in strengthening of the friendship and companionship component to relations and deepened my enjoyment as a member.

3.2 Open Organisation Example

An example of one organisation that to a large degree functioned as an open system was the Melany Open Sphere workshop. Open Sphere is the brain child of Tim Gartside and the two nights and two day Melany Open Sphere was an opportunity to experiment with developing a structure within the group that preferenced mobilising spontaneity and creativity and collective intelligence and to more fully utilise the experience of the group members than was typical of participants conventional work places. The aim was to give participants the option of alternating between a formal and vertical model of authority and a peer to peer authority structure in the hope of being more enticed to practice an ‘Open Sphered’ organisational structure.

I along with fourteen others attended the north of Brisbane co-convened Melany Open Sphere event in November 2007. All attendees, myself included, said it was an unexpected and unusual experience for them. We attended in roles hopeful for experiencing ourselves anew; in novel experimentation.

Membership

Attendees arrived because they accepted the open invitation to attend having received it ‘word of mouth’ or via email. We mostly did not know each other nor the specific motivations for others attending. The only presumption was we were there to be ‘open’. Whether we were friends or some sort of colleague or former clients of Tim was not established. Some attendees did not know Tim and seemed to attend because of other links. There was no limit to the size of the group identified. Cosmo the dog seemed to fit in with much of the activity.

Rules

The Worldview Centre accommodation was very welcoming and the host did explain some basic rules. Watch out for snakes and attacking spur-winged plovers. A bell would ring when food was tabled. Be free. Tim had a dome tent as an example of ‘open sphered’ structure. I found a dome tent and constructed it as my preferred accommodation; doing so in a good position without getting permission. Upon

reflection I understand this act was me quite naturally and unconsciously exercising my own authority and rule making; a rule of... its ok to sleep other than in a bedroom. This is a significant contrast to the brass band where I feel I can not step out of line of the expected thing to do.

Dress \ Uniforms

As the weather was comfortable night and day our dress was casual and as the conference room was carpeted we all mostly went barefoot. We functioned informally which is very different from what one can do in the brass band where one is literally continuously wearing a tuba or trombone. When wearing a tuba it is difficult to see oneself or be seen by others as anything other than playing the role of a tuba player! At Melany our dress gave no indication of our usual social role nor of an expected role. This seems to have assisted in orientating to both shared group leadership and informal leadership; not always aligning to the same intention.

Open Sphere

A lot of discussion and discourse occurred in the initial sessions as participants tried to establish what it meant for them to be an open sphere group member and relate peer to peer in group. This was truncated by some insisting we got on with doing 'it' rather than spending time working out what 'it' was. The forming of group norms at this stage included the value of uncertainty and living with a measure of ambiguity. This was finally accepted by everyone. It became important to trust others were staying playful and experimental in exploring and valuing open system work.

Setting aside some anxieties and suspending the need to know outcomes in advance was a priority. One member facilitated a tarot card type game where we each got to act out roles the cards assigned as we thought they applied to us. This permitted inventing action hero expressions of ourselves and encouraged us to enact our grandiose imagination. This contributed acceptance of others wanting more expression of their whole being.

Music- Singing

Depending on your own perspective on occasions the group evolved or devolved into music, singing and dancing. Open debate on one occasion came to the fore as to whether lights should be on, off or dimmed. There was some competition for leadership. In dancing folks improvised at will. There was an idea that learning occurs when having fun through singing and dancing.

Performance

My personal performance at OS varied greatly. At times I felt relaxed and content to hang out and at other times I was deeply conflicted and anxious at how to function. I had to negotiate with myself what would be appropriate in response to encountering others. I found meta-communicating very valuable. By declaring what I was feeling and how I was processing my thinking allowed others into my world and also showed I was interested in knowing what was going on inside others.

This experience contrasted greatly to my experience in SCB. The formality and defined performance in the band makes for safety while the undefined expectations of OS members eliminated safely knowing what was about to happen next.

Governance and Leadership

The OS was governed by informal structures and peer to peer decision making. At one stage the bell rang announcing morning tea and scones. The group arranged to recess from work. At this point someone initiated more sociometric \ continuum exercise and others responded. I went for the warm scones and sat on the veranda soaking in warm sunshine. After a while I returned to the group and was surprised to see some peers deeply sharing. I joined the group and some did not notice I had left. They were that affected by the sharing. I was not made to apologise for non attendance.

Tim functioned as an expectant and enthusiastic open and informal facilitator throughout. He remained expectant that innovation and development of novel group functioning would emerge in unexpected ways. He lead with no clearly defined dominant narrative as to what we were to expect next.

Funding

There was a basic fee which we all paid although this was done informally and payment was not checked. Profits were decided to be rolled over into funding for promoting and as a deposit for the next OS.

Future

As some regarded this OS workshop as a one off event for them OS to them had no future. For others they expected a series of OS to eventuate with or without them attending. As of the time of writing this and Tim's untimely death the future of OS as an entity is very much up in the air.

Functioning

As this event was the first residential OS no norms had been formed. The group really had no concept as to how to function other than consensual decision making. Debate enlivened about whether discoursing about functioning meant creating a 'fixed idea' about achieving outcomes and purpose and therefore was propagating closed functioning. My understanding is the OS developed into something like a T-Group (therapy group) as on the last day a protagonist emerged and a psychodrama was produced and relevant sharing followed. The protagonist was delighted with her outcomes. The group was glad to support the enactment and catharsis. The theme of the enactment was "establishing respect and understanding of non-relating neighbours". This theme related to the tensions within the open sphere around either over and under-relating and could be seen as a tentative attempt to resolve the high level of ambiguity in the group process and adopting a restricted solution in the face of this ambiguity. That the sharing was entered into so fulsomely meant it could also be seen as an emergent enabling group solution for further development of respectful group engagement. A real moment of futuring choice.

Expectations

Anecdotes from participants give no clear idea of what was expected. At one stage the group decided to give up 'working' and go on a walk around the property. A sort of pilgrimage followed and a chance meeting with a horse seemed to gel the group's attention and each member in turn pat the horse. Some later related it was for them perhaps the most intimate time of the 2 ½ days.

The open functioning of the OS assisted participants to explore their relations with open group and its many faces of; encounter, laboratory, basic assumptions, group dynamics, T-group, et. al.. To be open relations focussed and more intimate rather than activity designer focussed. To lose contact with social habit. Participants had opportunity to exercise their own authority as the individual choosing 'shades of grey' of decisions.

My roles for curious light hearted and enduring enquirer and options suggester came to the fore.

Summary

The Melany OS is an exemplary example of an open organisation in that there were tensions in the group process as folks worked out how to make decisions and what to do next. Sub-groups formed around preference for various ideas and then choices had to be negotiated between the sub-groups. This made for an ever changing group sociometry. This is very different from the static brass band sociometry where what instrument you carry determines which sub-group (section) you belong to. Throughout the OS various ones for a while became sociometric stars. During one dance the style of one dancer was copied by most of the others and she was applauded afterwards.

We each experienced aligning with one person on one occasion and opposing that persons preference on another occasion. I found myself preferring another option on one instance but then enthusiastically joining in a voice work exercise on another occasion.

At one point one person was declared a special guest with rich experience to bring which made her a temporary authority and group instructor of a 'compelling' exercise. Not all wanted to participate. The group was open to formal sociometric exercising but closed to outing 'informal' choosing. In this way I think the 'magical' things emerging were equally of closed as of an open nature. However open responses to the 'magical' meta-narrative certainly gave the opportunity to openly go along with what was occurring.

Debate returned at one point around whether group process at times was either 'intellectual discussion' or 'personal work'. 'Philosophising' or meaningful 'personal' relations.

Some members were closed to the idea the group could have an open 'framework' and an open 'working hypothesis'. They said they were tyrannised by the fear of 'becoming intellectual' or 'meaning-ising' and feared losing being 'in the moment'. The group seemed closed to emerging action unless some key participants (acting as gate keepers) were ready and warmed up to 'doing it'. There was tension between nothing happening and seeing everything as very significant. There was role conflict around being either too sceptical or over-valuing something.

The hope that 'closed' organisations such as SCB would adopt more OS type 'peer to peer' functioning once they trusted and put "more reliance" in it seems unfounded. Closed organisations see ongoing advantage in remaining more functionally closed and more efficiently outcomes focussed than is the case with an Open Sphere model.

Spontaneity in OS centred around awareness of and valuing ones own unique choosing rather than in the case of SCB that focussed on the closed skill of sight-reading music.

4.0 Sociodramatic Interest

I as a budding sociodramatist am keenly interested in maintaining awareness of how aspects of an organisation are either open or closed in order to relate to how the organisation responds once it is perturbed. A totally open response means the organisation's narrative is non-formalised. Totally closed, means the organisation's narrative is already fully decided and known and formed and is of its self alone of no direct dramatic consequence. There being no re-appraisal (negating) in valuing and no capacity for complexification. By holding in my mind open-ness and closed-ness in tension I can seek capacity for appropriate narrative entrainment breaking and seek capacity for generative narrative and subsequent emergent new meaning.

Being open and closed aware, when interviewing participants and constructing a sociodramatic working hypothesis, means I as sociodramatist can flexibly use various types of questions. Closed type questions tend to elicit answers that are easily confirmed or affirmative of what the system 'knows' or 'expects'. Open type questions tend to elicit answers of an exploratory nature. The answer could even be another question! Another type of open question tends to elicit answers as wonder and awe responses. The answer may be silence!

Being open and closed aware while producing sociodrama enables me as a sociodramatist to be more conscious of my open and closed intentions; whether I am open spirited or not; if I am applying strategic questioning and aware of "what is missing here?" and how closed the production process is at any time. Indeed how much open to feeling and emotions and sensing of 'value' I am 'in the moment' of a drama.

Being open and closed aware enables me to assess the functioning of the system in relation to various contentious issues of production. How naive the group is and whether that means they are open or closed? Are there multiple warm-ups and is this a product of being open or closed to various aspects of their psychodramatic system?

Sociodramatic production assists protagonists to be reflexive about the open and closed aspects of their social and cultural atom. I as a sociodramatist have the privilege to double them and their experience of this dynamic and to enter with them into their therapeutic enactment and be with them in their open and closed therapeutic space. This therapeutic space is the birth place ('status nascendi', origin) of naked sociodrama.

The dramatic unfolding aspect of sociodrama inevitably means at some stage I as producer and the protagonist and participants will experience what might be termed the "open wobbles"; like learning to ride a bike. Being open and closed aware helps me in being not fearful of a system's restrictive forces neither being overwhelmed by unrestrained chaos of motivating forces expression. Like nature's evolution, dramatic narrative meanders more than it progresses and I can 'hang with it'. As an open producer I can value being sensitive to myself and my own choices as they emerge.

In SCB I have learned to stay open to the music director as an exemplary clinician and to other members as caring human beings while I conform to the discipline of banding. I can continue to be an enthusiastic learner and full appreciator of my instrument. I can work at making good connections between band sections.

In the Melany OS I learned to be sensitive to 'in the moment' sociometric functioning and to respond to others quick warmup-to-leading and to value staying open to others by keeping on interviewing rather than closing off when I was confused. To feel grounded while observing chaordic group behaviour. I could continue refining my communication skills. I need not question the enthusiastic experimenting.

5.0 Conclusions

Sociodrama, as an action researching innovating practice of complex adaptive systems, is greatly enhanced by awareness of the system being both open and closed. Closed-ness enables participants to relate 'to' sociodrama because everything's function is more objectively delineated and so stands out for all to see. Openness enables participants to relate 'with' a sociodrama because everything's function is more subjectively delineated and personal and 'lived in'.

Sociodrama as a learning practice is primarily transformative, not conservative, and honouring a system as having dynamics for both closing and opening makes for greater acceptance of both change and safety.

Awareness of movement from closed to open and open to closed gives freedom to make 'safe fail' type interventions and not be restricted to an all or nothing type 'fail safe' intervening or participants seeing their system as needing to be 'fail safe'.

Just as 'open' and 'closed' in many respects can be seen as two sides of the same coin so they can be seen as the 'shadow' of the other. Each offering opportunity for different types of futures. We decide.

As sociodrama engages the group's inter-activities and inter-subjectivity and the opportunity of innovation is made prominent then spontaneity and creativity is released in relation to what is to become 'preserved' by remaining closed and what is to be 'negated' by embracing openness. Transformations in types of valuing can open up.

The world works best when we are conscious at any point in time how we are both closed and open.

At such moments spontaneity is more easily evidenced as adequate responses to a new situation or new responses to an old situation.

The world we want tomorrow is what we love to love today.

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