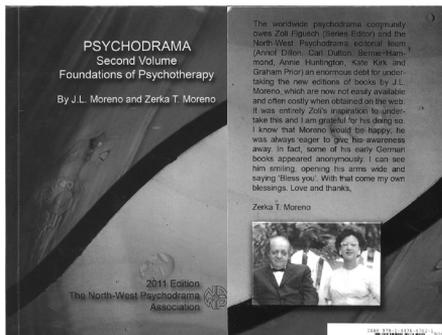


Book Reviews



Psychodrama Second Volume: Foundations of Psychotherapy (2011 Edition)

By J.L. Moreno and Zerka T. Moreno
The North-West Psychodrama
Association
2011
Original publication 1959 by Beacon
House, New York

ISBN 978-I-4476-4762-I
Available at <www.lulu.com>

Reviewed by Elizabeth Synnot

I commend *Psychodrama Second Volume: Foundations of Psychotherapy* to all those who work to assist folks to free themselves from the shackles of the past, to expand possibilities in living and to research the social condition. I imagine benefit to those who enjoy the exploration of ideas and the different solutions that early psychotherapists developed to common dilemmas of individual and group psychotherapy, the forms, theories, techniques and philosophies. This book may evoke in you a warm up to your own review of psychotherapeutic ideas and to your experience as a clinician and trainee.

The first volume in this series of three was published in 1946. This second volume, a collaboration between J.L. Moreno and Zerka Moreno, was first published in 1959 by Beacon House, New York. It collects together a range of articles that first appeared in professional journals between 1954 and 1957. The current 2011 publication is the third reprint of *Psychodrama Second Volume* and it remains relevant and stimulating today. Having begun life as separate articles, the chapters can easily be read as standalones worthwhile in themselves or sequentially, as their themes build one upon another.

Early on in the volume, Moreno states that he is oriented to the commonalities between his approach and those of others. However, this book does not unfold so obviously. He pronounces his as a “modern Socratic method”, definitely a teaching method, and engages a coterie of contemporary professionals to review, often support and sometimes laud his approach to human beings and their individual and collective development. You certainly get to appreciate that

Moreno is well versed in others' approaches to the same territory and that he is also redefining that territory. In particular, he is moving from an emphasis on the individual to a perspective where the individual is understood as engaged in a group and in a larger social context. Chapter Five (Psychodrama of Adolph Hitler) is a fulsome illustration of this.

Psychodrama Second Volume is redolent with thought provoking challenges to the basic assumptions underlying psychotherapy. It is made up of six chapters. Each chapter contains a themed lecture by J.L. Moreno, a discussion of the lecture by a range of seventeen psychiatrists, ten psychologists, six sociologists and two theologians, followed by Moreno's reply to that discussion. Chapter One's lecture challenges the assumptions underlying transference and the behaviour ascribed to it. Moreno uses auxiliary egos and the stage to minimise transference with the therapist. He goes further, arguing that tele and warm up in role relating are, in combination, the underlying reality and the vital elements in all therapeutic relationships.

Chapter Two focuses on the reified ideas of consciousness, unconsciousness and co-unconsciousness. Relating to the same arena of life others refer to as the unconscious, Moreno presents ten techniques to build a bridge between two folk: dialogue, silent observation, counselling and guiding, interviewing, being an auxiliary ego, being a catalyst for relating and productivity, soliloquy, role reversal, doubling, mirroring. Moreno also presents existential validation, meaning validation in situ with no attempt to confirm the past or predict the future, as on a continuum with scientific validation. He expands on this topic in Chapter Six.

In Chapter Three, Moreno addresses the unfolding dilemmas of the psychoanalytic movement as i) acting out with the therapist, ii) early trauma that is related in analysis as fantasy, iii) transference of love by the patient and transference of dread by the therapist and iv) tapping into the unconscious. The various solutions to these dilemmas are also presented: the vehicle or format of therapy (chair, table) and the instructions for behaviour (free association and other verbal methods) when using that vehicle. Moreno contrasts these solutions with his own vehicle, the stage, and his orientation to be, to act and to behave rather than to infer reality from words and language. His theory developed in parallel with his use of dramatic techniques, thus rather than the unconscious, spontaneity and creativity are central. He paid attention to researching normal communities and was not reliant on data primarily from the abnormal.

Chapter Four presents research on role reversal, including its limits, based on exploration in the Moreno household. It concludes with sixteen hypotheses regarding role reversal that provide much food for thought. Chapter Five provides an illustration of the movement from a subjective and personal psychodramatic series of enactments (a man believing he is Hitler) with a group of auxiliaries, through to the collective, group centred and sociodramatic (the group's responses to Hitler on the psychodrama stage and in the world). In Chapter Six, the final

section of the book, Moreno summarises his conclusions regarding commonalities and differences between psychotherapy methods, including the contrasts between psychodrama and psychoanalysis.

Like me, you may enjoy the historic perspective *Psychodrama Volume Two* presents and find your thinking stimulated and your imagination provoked. It was mid last century that many of the seminal ideas that so influenced the development of psychotherapy were first brokered and some, like the unconscious, are still centre stage today. Placing Moreno's approach to psychotherapy alongside Freud's, Jung's, Adler's and others, gives the reader real insight into the originality of Moreno's notions of humanity. Psychodrama remains on the fringe in many of these circles because it advocates different solutions to dilemmas and different perspectives on the dilemmas themselves. This is highlighted by the fact that some of the book's discussants are reading Moreno's lectures without the experience of the psychodrama method. As such, they are comparing Moreno's ideas with their own perspectives as psychologists, psychiatrists, theologians and sociologists.

There are a few minor disappointments for me. Firstly, the series preface written for this reprint makes no attempt to warm the reader up to the relevance of this book today. Secondly, the index is a direct reprint of the original. An update, easily enough done I imagine, would have greatly assisted readers. My third and more substantive disappointment is that there is no discussion in this volume of surplus reality alongside concepts of the unconscious. Fortunately Zerka Moreno has filled this gap in the 2000 book *Psychodrama, Surplus Reality and the Art of Healing*, co-authored with Lief Blomqvist and Thomas Rutzel.

The uniqueness of psychodrama as a method that concurrently heals the psyche, teaches different orientations to living and researches the human condition emerges for me as I reflect on *Psychodrama Second Volume: Foundations of Psychotherapy*. In psychodrama, we combine the social with the uniquely personal and throw a window onto the larger cultural forces at play in our communities. The spontaneity evoked in this dramatic method enables new solutions to emerge in response to old or anticipated dilemmas.

Elizabeth Synnot, sociodrama practitioner, has been a student of Moreno's methods for approximately 35 years. She has applied it in her work as a community developer, organisational developer, family therapist, psychotherapist, educator and psychodrama trainer educator practitioner in training (TEPIT). Elizabeth can be contacted at <diz@eis.net.au>.