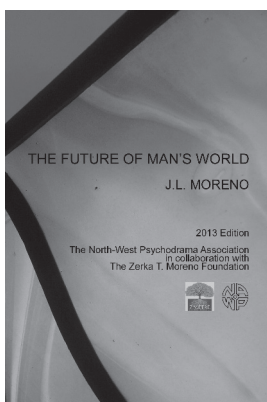


Book Reviews



The Future of Man's World (2013 Edition)

By J.L. Moreno

Published by The North-West Psychodrama Association, UK, in collaboration with the Zerka T. Moreno Foundation, USA

Reviewed by Rollo Browne

This short book, first published as *Psychodrama Monograph No 21* in 1947 by Beacon House, contains only 26 pages of Moreno's writing. Structured into three unnumbered chapters, International Sociatry and the United Nations Organisation, The Future of Man's Self and The Future of Man's World, it is packed with pithy and, at times, prescient statements that invite reflection. Being short, it also invites the reader to pick it up more than once to gain a deeper feel for Moreno's unique perspective. While some of the concepts appear in other writings, Moreno pulls them together here into an argument about the need for a creative revolution, the challenges that arise, his solutions and the human predicament. Essentially the book is about sociatry, a term Moreno coined as the social equivalent of psychiatry to describe the treatment of society, and it is underpinned by observations from his deep philosophy of spontaneity as the core of human existence. The reader can expect to find such gems as:

- The sociatric code.
- The bitter lesson of 20 years of sociometry.
- The 'idee fixe' that guided Moreno throughout his life.
- The main reason why Moreno shifted from a 'theatre of spontaneity' to a 'theatre of catharsis'.
- Spontaneity as the oldest phylogenetic factor, preceding memory, intelligence and sexuality.
- The location of the self.
- The hypothesis of the expanding self, which includes the gap between Man as the destroyer of the universe and Man as the creator.
- Sociometry as an answer to the "aggression coming from man relating to man".
- Creative revolution as an answer to the aggression coming from certain peculiar products of man's mind (artefacts such as weapons and books that Moreno calls robots).
- Counter-spontaneity and why that matters.

- The link between dolls in infancy and auxiliary egos in psychodrama.
- The fate of humankind as that of the dinosaur in reverse and why there may need to be more destruction before a true creative revolution can begin.

I would like to discuss but two of these, namely, the location of the self and the fate of humankind.

The Location of the Self

Moreno states that the locus (place or location) of the self is spontaneity (p.20). This is interesting because he never gives spontaneity itself a location. He defines spontaneity as both the matrix of creativity and as deviation from the laws of nature. By this, I understand him to mean that spontaneity is unpredictable and leads to unexpected outcomes. Of course, spontaneity is part of human nature. However, it does not follow predictable laws. In Moreno's writings, it is clear that the self is an expression of the dynamic interaction between spontaneity and the process of socialisation, which includes "the mighty social and cultural stereotypes which dominate the human environment" (Moreno, 1994:79-80).

Why then does Moreno think it important to define the locus of the self at all? This is not discussed in role theory. His fundamental thesis is that the self emerges from the roles, and that each role is developed in relationship with others in the social atom where role clusters become organised, where the individual identifies with certain of those role clusters, and where roles and role systems become conserved. Changes occur as old roles drop away and new roles develop, all with the assistance of spontaneity. In this process, different roles and role clusters can emerge as the self evolves.

Perhaps Moreno's statement on the locus of the self is in response to contemporary interest in the psychology of the self. The field of psychology of the self has developed considerably since his time. For example, object-relations theory suggests that the sense of self is based on a cohesive self-image, which is a product of the earliest experiences and relationships. These images of the self, or self-representations, are gradually internalised and identified with and over time, form an enduring structure within the mind and, in this way, pattern the self. Here the locus of that self is the mind of the entity who absorbs these experiences, creates self-representations, organises them and identifies with that organisation.

Moreno's location of the self in spontaneity suggests that the self is not directly located in the individual's mind. It is outside the mind. This is a direct challenge to psychological theory. His concept of spontaneity presented considerable difficulty for psychology. Moreno (1955:105) went so far as to say that the exclusion of spontaneity from most psychological

thinking was “*the problem of psychology*”. Part of the problem for theoretical psychology is that spontaneity is not easy to define, let alone measure. It is un-conservable and unpredictable. It cannot be called up at will nor controlled by will power. It does not exist by itself but only in the moment, as it infuses a role. Yet Moreno claimed that spontaneity was innate to every one of us, that it could only be experienced and that it was able to be trained.

Moreno was convinced of the centrality of spontaneity-creativity in understanding human behaviour, indeed in understanding the behaviour of the universe itself (Bischof, 1970:237). This conviction underlies his ‘*idée fixe*’, that spontaneity-creativity is the root of existence. From this come his formulations on understanding human behaviour and what it is that enhances human life. One example is his design for a stage to allow a maximum of freedom, where “the self of the actor and its spontaneous creativity had the first call” (p.16), not the playwright.

Moreno’s own writings and biographers recount his early struggles with existence, with God, with freedom, with identity. It seems apparent to this reviewer that his profound insight into the nature of existence came as revealed knowledge. By revealed knowledge, I mean a knowing that arises in a way that does not correspond with the rules of logic or the laws of cause and effect. And yet the perspectives, concepts and practices that flow from this central insight are imbued with precise delineation. Consider the practices of doubling, mirroring and role reversal, and how refined they are when they are at their most effective.

Yet, spontaneity remains a mystery. There is no answer to the questions, what is it, where is it from and why does it exist. It just is. By knowing it in our own lives, we also know the value of seeing and supporting spontaneity in others. That is adequate evidence of its existence for most of us. But Moreno goes a lot further. By placing the locus of the self as spontaneity, he is suggesting that the self is fundamentally a mystery and he invites us to join his mystic view of existence.

Not content with placing the self outside of the mind, Moreno introduces us to the idea of an expanding self. He argues that when spontaneity is at zero, the self is at zero; when spontaneity expands, the self expands; when spontaneity diminishes, the self diminishes. If the spontaneity potential is unlimited, then the self is unlimited. This is most likely Moreno’s experience, but it is way ahead of where most practitioners can follow him. It sounds logical, it may be possible, but what does it really involve?

The concept of an expanding self links the progression of the self to the I-Self-God, who identifies with the entire universe. Here Moreno is “not concerned with the godlikeness of a single individual but ... with the godlikeness of the total universe, its self-integration” (p.24). This progression may well be an accurate reflection of the stages of self-realisation and self-expansion but viewed from our conventional self-absorbed (narcissistic)

world view, we cannot see beyond the egocentric grandiose aspects of it.

The development of the I-Self-God is the underlying creative revolution that Moreno is seeking. It involves so much more than simply individuals developing their spontaneously creative selves. He knew that the idea of a spontaneous and creative self was deeply discredited and was determined to “bring the self back to the consciousness of mankind” (p.16). In his view, humans had been brought up to rely on conserves and not to trust their own spontaneity and that, “the only spontaneity they had learned to appreciate was that coming from an “animated” conserve” (p.19). Hence his call for a creative revolution to change the attitude of the public towards the spontaneous creative self.

Placing the self outside the mind alerts us to the implication that the mind is where most cultural conserves are located, and Moreno is awakening us to the capacity of the self located in spontaneity to create and go beyond these conserves. In addition, he is pointing to the self located in spontaneity as a way of connecting to and identifying with the creativity of the universe, with all existence.

The Fate of Mankind

In the epilogue to *The Future of Man's World*, Moreno writes, “Could we imagine a congress appropriating two billion dollars for “social atom” research? Maybe it is not appropriated and will not be because what matters is not money. Mankind may need still more serious setbacks before it comes to its “creative revolution”. Perhaps it is unavoidable that the present human civilization be destroyed, that mankind be reduced to a handful of individuals and human society to a few scattered social atoms before a new rooting can begin” (pp.36-37). This is a surprise to those of us who have always been inspired by the Morenian injunction to warm up, to rise up and step into the world as creative beings, that each of us is enough for this moment.

Is Moreno despairing of his efforts? Is he really saying that only destruction can wake us up to our true identity as creators? We might remember that Moreno saw that spontaneity-creativity would rise from the ashes of the First World War and that humanity had the chance to create anew. Unfortunately, history shows that we keep repeating the cycle of aggression and make incremental social change. It seems self-evident that social change is more driven by technological change than moral values.

Moreno's argument is that a society-wide creative revolution fails because of the fear of spontaneity. Instead, man seeks safety in conserves that are predictable and controllable and these, tellingly, are oriented to power not creativity. This means that, as a species, we are in an early stage of spontaneity development. We fail to focus our considerable energies on the difficult arts of sociatry and sociometry to address the inherent aggression

within human communities. Instead, humankind has turned to seeking solutions through creating artefacts or mechanical conserves that project human capacity into the world, especially weapons, books, computers and other useful devices. And what they all have in common is a lack of spontaneity. With this projection of power, comes all of our human pathology. We all recognise the rise of algorithms, apps, companion robots, driverless cars, robo-treatment for health, social media, automated targeted advertising through Google searches, genetic editing, the internet of things, and so on. It is mind boggling and proceeding at breakneck speed.

Moreno's dream is clear. "If a fraction of one-thousandth of the energy which mankind has exerted in the conception and development of mechanical devices were to be used for the improvement of our cultural capacity during the moment of creation itself, mankind would enter into a new age of culture, a type of culture which would not have to dread any possible increase of machinery nor robot races of the future" (p.35).

From the idea of spontaneity-creativity alive in every individual in his or her socius, Moreno expanded his vision to society and to civilization at large. But we, the inheritors of this vision, have not been able to bring to life a society based on sociometric and sociatric principles. Despite making numerous sociometric experiments and writing extensively, it is revealing how Moreno describes the bitter lesson of 20 years of sociometry. "It is fruitless to plunge ahead of the dynamics of small groups to which we belong to the next larger group" (p.13). Thus, we are left with the challenge of our individual creative revolutions and the ongoing challenges of life in the small groups to which we belong. We are still there.

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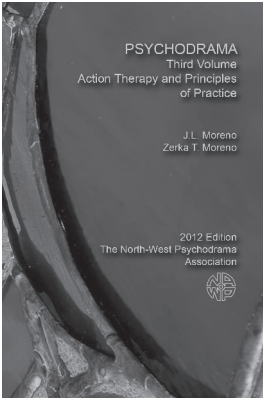
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Psychodrama Third Volume: Action Therapy and Principles of Practice (2012 Edition)

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Published by The North West Psychodrama Association, UK

Reviewed by Elizabeth Synnot

Psychodrama Third Volume: Action Therapy and Principles of Practice was originally published by Beacon House in 1969, with a second edition offered in 1975. This third edition, known as the 2012 edition and edited by Zoli Figusch, is one in a series of new editions of J.L. Moreno's and Zerka T. Moreno's work published by the North West Psychodrama Association and available through Lulu Press <www.lulu.com>.

This is a book about the application of the psychodrama method. Reading the volume from cover to cover, I am struck by the versatility of psychodrama methodology. The psychodrama enactments presented in the volume are tailored to the immediate participants and their purposes in their particular contexts. I delight in Moreno's seminal contributions of joy and laughter, movement and action, the nonverbal route to the psyche and his orientation to enable a creative revolution. On a practical note, the rules and adjunctive methods outlined towards the end of the book provide a useful and reassuring overview of critical principles for applications of psychodrama across contexts. That said, I find some sections to be a challenging read, particularly the long verbatim records of specific psychodrama enactments. Although critical to enabling the reader to formulate their own views before reading Moreno's analysis, the long unfolding of the spoken words in sessions was taxing for me as a reader. What follows is a brief outline of, and reflections on, each chapter.

Chapter One describes the therapeutic use of the psychodrama stage and presents four key universal concepts: time, space, reality and the cosmos. The step onto the stage and the creation of a new living moment,