

Book Review

BY CHRIS HOSKING

Psychodrama, Surplus Reality and the Art of Healing

BY ZERKA MORENO, LEIF DAG BLOMKKVIST AND THOMAS RUTZEL

The topics chosen for this book and the chapters selected are at once interesting and suggestive. The variety of formats and brief presentations have created a light, direct, personal and stimulating book.

Many practitioners and trainees will be pleased, indeed excited, to see the complex topic of surplus reality as one of the central subjects that is presented and discussed. The portrayal of psychodrama as a 'theatre of healing', but in its greater meaning and context, is timely and welcome.

It is pleasing to read a book that is not overly ambitious but addresses a few selected themes. It is clear that the authors have a deep interest and passion for these particular aspects of the larger work of psychodrama. This book makes a very worthwhile contribution to the growing body of knowledge built up by the community of people who are keen to extend their experience and application of psychodrama and its origins. It alerts us to people who are dedicated to make these ideas truly relevant to others, and to individuals who have achieved a significant level of integration of these notions within their own lives.

An outstanding feature of this book is a record of a series of interviews between Dag and Zerka. 'As for me, having experienced

psychodrama for almost sixty years now, I have come to think of it as the "Theatre of Mercy," she says. The interview with Zerka allows us to meet Zerka today and to touch something of her journey with psychodrama over sixty years.

The decision by the authors to present a good proportion of their material in the format of an interview, addresses an important question that some of us have, a question that is not always expressed. This is a question about the true value and strength of our work, that part of our life in which we invest tremendous energies. It is reassuring and inspiring to hear something of the evolution and continuing unfolding of the conclusions and learning's of Zerka. Dag's respect for Zerka as his teacher and friend is obvious and one can feel the meeting of two very dedicated and passionate individuals.

It is refreshing to once again consider the purposes of sharing, of role reversal, of the use of magic, and to be reminded of the protagonist and their particular contribution. The chapters enable the reader to enter into these areas easily, lightly and enthusiastically. The chapter on sociometry is instructive and very effective in making the field of sociometry come alive and to highlight some of the reasons why Moreno regarded sociometry as the foundation for our work in psychodrama.

As the interview progresses through the book, the reader is also provoked to warm up to another question – what is the question I have; out of all my musings and reflections on this method and its history, what would I ask Zerka? For the reader, to imagine being there with Dag and Zerka, imagining participating in the encounter is an inviting and stimulating approach.

The interview allows us to encounter Zerka with a certain intensity, to feel something of her personal life view, such as her love of spirituality. The encounter with Dag is less intense and revealing. Some of his questions are overly conserved and cannot be real questions for him because we know of his lengthy history and extensive experience with psychodrama. We encounter Dag much more truly in the introduction sections that precede each chapter; here the depth of his interest, knowledge and individuality is apparent. The conserve that appears in some questions is distracting and tends to belie the intended purpose of the interview as 'an encounter'.

In making a parallel here to our aims in psychodrama for congruency and intensity in encounter, then the aim for encounter between Dag and Zerka is partially successful. There is no discussion on the limitations of the interview methodology, and it is interesting to consider whether a discussion of this nature

this may have strengthened the experience of the encounter for the reader. Here we have a meeting between a person with sixty years experience and another with approximately thirty years experience, (also remarkable) – the teacher–trainee relationship may have been overemphasised or somewhat forced in the approach to this book.

At the close of the book Zerka says '...therefore, when people come to psychodrama in no matter what role, professional, patient or student, they want a revolution in their lives...' The notion of personal and social revolution is quietly and lovingly embraced by those who are attracted to psychodrama. As Zerka speaks to her audience here, we too are prompted to speak to one another of the vital importance of our need for revolution within ourselves and the greater culture in which we live.

The closing paragraph of this book is anticlimactic. Many would view the fact that psychodrama hasn't been accepted by the establishment as a blessing, as an inspiration and a success. As trainees and practitioners independently interpret this methodology in their own fields a new appreciation of spontaneity is often discovered. This is one of the very sources of vitality that enables the radical nature of this work to flourish.

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