BOOK REVIEWS

Sociodrama: Who's in Your Shoes? by Patricia Sternberg and Antonina Garcia. 2000. Westport, CT: Praeger.

The publication of the revised and expanded second edition of *Sociodrama: Who's in Your Shoes?* admirably furthers the work of Jacob L. Moreno, the originator of sociodrama. Theory and practice are never far apart in this thoroughgoing account of the historical precedents and the tenor of the times that led to Moreno's development of sociodrama. In it, professors Sternberg and Garcia are careful to integrate historical and theoretical information about sociodrama with descriptions of how it is conducted. In doing so, they have provided an excellent book that serves both as a guidebook for the practice of sociodrama and as a source book for study and research. In it, we find a strong confirmation of Moreno's early belief in sociodrama's promise for solving problems of human relations.

To introduce the origins and fundamentals of sociodrama, the authors describe Moreno's early theatrical experimentation and the exploration of social issues that he conducted while he was a medical student in Vienna. We learn about his spontaneity theory, in which spontaneity serves as the impetus to bring creative ideas to fruition. We also learn that before he came to America in 1925, he had established the Theater of Spontaneity, the basic concept of which was that the actors were considered to be social researchers who, totally unrehearsed and without scripts, sought to create spontaneous interactions among themselves and the audience. In that kind of theater, the audiences could suggest topics from current events to be dramatized by the professional actors whom Moreno had trained in his method of spontaneity and social research. Moreno later called that new form of theater "The Living Newspaper."

Sociodrama, which emerged from it, continues to be focused exclusively

on social and cultural issues. There were times, however, when, in the spontaneous treatment of the public aspects of the issues, the actors revealed their personal thoughts and feelings. That shift from the public to the private focus opened up areas of investigation that, in their own right, proved to be significant and in need of clarification. Eventually that shift led to Moreno's development of psychodrama. To this day, it is the focus on personal rather than public issues that sharply differentiates psychodrama from sociodrama. Those are but two of the far-ranging interests and activities that prompted Moreno's thinking as a writer and theorist. His theories of role and personality development and his theory of interpersonal relations, with spontaneity and creativity as their cornerstones, were developed in relation to the psychodrama and sociodrama experiments and serve as the substructure of sociodrama. Sternberg and Garcia have impressively distilled these theories and interpreted them in their chapter "Examining Sociodrama Underpinnings."

The additions and revisions that have been made in the second edition of *Sociodrama: Who's in Your Shoes?* bring changes that have greatly enhanced its usefulness. The large number of new index and bibliography entries will aid those using the text for study and research. Those endeavoring to spark a sociodrama group's spontaneity and move it into enactment can find new scripted dialogues and suggestions for improvisational situations. Of special importance, however, are the new chapters and essays. Among the new chapters are "Focusing on the Stages of Group Development," "Sociodrama in Religion, Ethics, and Spiritual Growth," and "Marketing of Sociodrama," which contribute strongly to the book's usefulness and timeliness. Equally important are the essays in the book's final chapter that pull together the great variety of information throughout the book. In those essays, leading practitioners of sociodrama, both here and abroad, discuss their insights about sociodrama, its effectiveness, and their particular ways of using it.

The authors discuss the essential components of sociodrama—the warm-up, the enactment, and the sharing—when they examine sociodrama's structure and its goals and benefits. The issues that are of concern to the group, its "open tension systems," emerge during the warm-up discussion that precedes the enactment. It is the group leader's function to listen for the open tension systems and identify the one major issue that seems to excite the group's interest the most. That is the shared central issue that provides the theme to be explored in the sociodrama. During the warm-up, the group members may express such needs or drives as the need to be assertive or the need to be playful. It is through the director's help in fulfilling those needs or "act hungers" that the goals of sociodrama are achieved. Those are the goals of the expression of feeling (catharsis), gaining new perception (insight), and obtaining behavioral practice (role training). The authors point out that those actions and reactions are lifelong considerations for all of us and that sociodrama provides

the opportunity for people to express a wide range of emotions, from tears to laughter and from agitation to serenity. In that regard, they see sociodrama as "one of the most efficient yet safe methods available for obtaining information in the area of psychic emotional experience without undergoing the actual experience."

At the outset of the book, the authors identify both the similarities and the differences between sociodrama and psychodrama. The two are similar in that they both explore thoughts, feelings, and roles through enactment. In doing so, they share the use of specialized techniques that Moreno developed to deepen the enactment and bring out what he called the "invisible dimensions of living" that are "not fully experienced or expressed." They are what he called the "surplus reality" dimensions of dreams and daydreams, thought fragments and unacknowledged feelings. To bring them out, he developed the surplus reality techniques of role reversal, which the authors refer to as "one of the most profound techniques that Moreno developed," doubling, the aside, and future projection, all of which are used in both sociodrama and psychodrama.

As the authors point out, there are, however, fundamental differences in the way that the methods are used. As a therapeutic modality, psychodrama focuses on the personal problems of a particular member of the psychodrama group, the protagonist. By using the surplus reality techniques developed by Moreno in the psychodramatic reenactment of the protagonist's real-life experiences, the psychotherapist seeks to work through the protagonist's problems and restore his or her well-being.

That is in sharp contrast to sociodrama, which never acts out any one person's situation or emotional problem. Its focus, instead, is exclusively on hypothetical situations that illustrate the issues that the group is interested in examining. As an educational modality, sociodrama informs people about the nature of the problem that is enacted and serves to clarify the values that are involved. Through its enactment, a sociodrama provides group members with an action setting in which to learn the complexities of the problem and the best ways of dealing with them. Sociodrama focuses on the way the group relates to the social issue that is being examined. In that way, the group is the subject, whereas in a psychodrama, the individual is the subject.

It is the authors' hope that by reading their book and experimenting with its contents readers will share the joy and enthusiasm they had in writing it. The complete compatibility they have with sociodrama's goals and methods becomes clear very soon. So too does their strong belief that sociodrama has the ability to transform the way we look at problem solving. Like Moreno, they see a wide range of settings in which sociodrama's unique contribution to problem solving can be used, such settings as schools, churches, businesses, and theaters, as well as psychotherapy sessions and social action groups.

Sternberg and Garcia have provided a finely drawn account of the historical and theoretical background that gave rise to sociodrama, the fundamentals of its theory and practice, and the specifics of its application. In doing so, they champion the high hopes of J. L. Moreno for sociodrama's continuing role in the exploration of social issues and the resolution of conflicts—and serve his cause well.

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Theory and Practice of Action and Drama Techniques, by Leni Verhofstadt-Denève. 2000. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

The subtitle for this philosophical tome is *Developmental Psychotherapy From an Existential–Dialectical Viewpoint.* The book might have been more accurately titled "A Foundation in Existential–Dialectical Developmental Psychology," or "A Phenomenological–Dialectical Approach to Personality and Its Application to Action–Based Therapies." Most likely, the publisher did not want a title that would intimidate readers, especially practitioners of action techniques. Actually, this book, or something like it, is exactly what practitioners of psychodrama and other action-based therapeutic techniques need most. Clearly, one of the most glaring deficits in the training and professional development of action-focused therapists is a coherent philosophical foundation out of which technique can develop and be guided. Verhofstadt-Denève provides a well-grounded and philosophically sound approach to human psychology. Unfortunately, many drama therapists and psychodramatists may find it difficult to interpret, especially if they do not read French. The author religiously preserves the French language of many important and seminal quotations and fails to include any translation to accompany them.

Pick up any scholarly philosophy journal or significant philosophy work, and you will find that French, Latin, and German are standard vehicles for imparting the wisdom of the ages. No one wants to miss the most intimate linguistic nuance of philosophical meaning. Among philosophy scholars, it may be felt that to translate those quotations would take from their meaning and diminish their power. Like Hebrew to the Torah, Arabic to the Quran, or Latin to the Catholic canon, there is a perception of magical power in the word as given in its original form. Language is the voice of the soul. To translate it is to lose the connection to the heart of the meaning itself. Transformed into another language, it may make sense, but it will not carry the power or the author's heart and soul. The reader will not *feel* what the author meant originally. But how will the average psychodramatist feel about so much "in-your-