

Moreno, Z.T. Blomkurst, L.D. & Rutzel, T. (2000) Sociometry in *Psychodrama, Surplus Reality And The Art Of Healing*, pp 92 – 113, Routledge, London.

Chapter 16

Sociometry

Regrettably, there is a tendency in group psychotherapy to apply ideas about the group which predate the advent of sociometry. Frequently the approach to group psychotherapy follows ideas related to and rooted in psychoanalysis and the psychology of the unconscious, of the individual, rather than to those which are guided by group dynamics as revealed through sociometry. The healing process in psychoanalysis is related to the dissolution of the projection phenomena manifested in the transference process towards the therapist and the members of the group.

Moreno emphasized that the therapeutic agency was not necessarily related to the therapist, but that it was inherent in every member of the group. Sociometry deals with choices. Because they are usually written down or made in action, the choices are always conscious. The motivation for the choice – the rationale, feelings and needs as presented by the group members – gives all the insight that is needed. There may well be unconscious motivation for choices but once they are declared and voiced they are no longer unconscious. The sociogram makes choices visible, facilitating the group psychotherapeutic process which includes encounter and psychodrama.

To work in groups in which only transference is recognized as motivation is to work with what 'is not manifest'. Therefore, transference relies on interpretation. The interpretation has to be accepted and agreed upon if it is to have any therapeutic value. In psychoanalysis as well as group analysis, the mutual agreement on interpretation is critical and many times the reason that therapies reach an abrupt end. Sociometry forces the group members to deal with the reality of their choices, whatever they may be.

Sociometric studies have pointed out that an individual's standing in the group may not have as much to do with personality as with level of acceptance and mutual regard. It is mutuality of positive choices that

makes for group cohesion and group effectiveness. That is best built by allowing people to express and act upon their choices.

Sociometry is an umbrella concept which deals with the essence of the human encounter in a rich variety of roles and counter-roles.

DAG: On the psychodrama stage we are dealing with the protagonist's life, with his or her perception of their inner and outer world. When working with their social atom we are looking at both these worlds.

The protagonist's social atom is always perceived from this point of view and is, therefore, subjective and one-sided. Sociometry, on the contrary, deals with mutual choices within a group and is at least two-sided. How would you define sociometry?

ZERKA: Sociometry deals with human relationships in terms of role interactions with significant others on the private level, on the professional level and on the community level. It was one of Moreno's ideas that there is too much forcing people into relationships which are not mutually productive and that we would do far better if we allowed people to have their choices even if that meant that choices might be changed. When choices change it is because our role interactions change. There should be enough flexibility built into the system to allow for that.

We make poor choices for partners in marriage, one of the central foci in our lives, or for mates or lovers. In childhood we are not allowed to practise choosing sufficiently and if you do not allow the child or a person to practise what they need to practise they lose that capacity. An educator by the name of Makarenko, who worked with orphans left by the convulsions of the revolution in Russia, stated: 'If you want a child to be courageous, put that child into situations where it can practise courage'. Perhaps what psychology and psychiatry tend to overlook is some basic knowledge that pedagogues can contribute to the developmental aspects of the human being. Moreno was also an excellent pedagogue, as witnessed by his improvisational drama groups made up of the children in the gardens of Vienna while he was still a student of philosophy.

We influenced the military during the Second World War. This is described in our volume *Group Psychotherapy: A Symposium*, published in 1945, and incidentally, the first book ever to carry that title. The British found that when that war broke out, there were not enough officers for the conscription army. Britain had a volunteer army whose officers came mainly from the upper strata of society or it was a hereditary function. With conscription and the entrance of so

many soldiers, there were not enough officers. The military had two ways of assigning men to officer candidacy school; one was to have a board of superior officers pick men from among the ranks, those they felt were suitable to become officers. The other was influenced by Moreno's idea that peers should choose from among their peers, so they allowed this to happen as well. That meant there were two groups: *superior-assigned* and *peer-assigned*. They followed them up to see how they fared when they went into battle. What did they find? Those who had been picked by their peers fared much better in terms of the troops' recognition of their leadership, their ability to coordinate their troops, their survival rate; all these were superior to those who had been picked by their superior officers. Here you have a perfect confirmation of Moreno's idea for building good group cohesion: give people the freedom of choice. (Moreno 1945: 205–217)

DAG: Choice is, therefore, a central subject in sociometric and psychodramatic philosophy?

ZERKA: Sharing time and space with other humans are dynamic categories of living. We cannot escape that. Some of us have lived in families we did not want to be in, sharing time and space with them. Some believe that we make that choice before birth. At times we may think we made a poor choice, the task of learning is so hard. That's why we have so much therapy, to make up for the difficult choices. For others it is a very productive choice, to learn what they need to learn for their soul.

DAG: What is the exact meaning of the word 'sociometry'?

ZERKA: Measurement of human relations. That's the simplest way to state it. *Socius* is a Latin word and *métron* is of Greek origin. *Socius* means 'fellow, companion along the way' and there you have it already: who is your companion along the way? It is someone with whom you are doing something in common. *Métron* means 'to measure'. In sociometry we measure human contact and interaction.

DAG: The Latin word *societas* had a very clear and distinct meaning and designated a formation where people came together for certain purposes, e.g. to master a situation such as toppling a king or to carry out a crime. The ASGPP (American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama) would be such a *societas*, where people come together under the common criterion of their interest in psychodrama and group psychotherapy.

Sociometry deals with the mutuality of choices within the organization. So one can say that any society has a criterion as its

topic and sociometry deals with how people choose one another around a specific criterion. *Sociometry is action-oriented, focused on a common activity to be carried out by the group members.*

ZERKA: It is meant to change the world, to change, improve and enrich human interactions on all levels, wherever those may be.

DAG: I think it is important to point out that sociometry, like society, has action as its goal; after that goal is reached and completed the next action comes up. It is like a circle: the completion of one and the beginning of a new action.

ZERKA: We have the rise of a certain goal into action, the fulfilment, productivity and completion. We may have a decline, a death if it is no longer functional.

DAG: Could we say that sociometry deals with the group and the outer world?

ZERKA: Yes. It is given in the words 'companion along the way'.

DAG: When did Moreno actually produce his first sociometric research?

ZERKA: In the New York State Training School for Girls at Hudson. But he also did his research in various other schools, so chronologically it is not clear whether the Hudson work came first or whether the research elsewhere was done concurrently. Historically, it was immediately after his work at Sing Sing Prison in 1931. He was appointed Director of Research at Hudson, New York in 1932, and also in the early 30s he was permitted to enter various school systems and apply sociometry there in classes from kindergarten on up.

In Sing Sing he began first with what he called 'the assignment technique'. There he was a researcher getting to know the prisoners, putting them together in cells in ways which made them compatible and therapeutic with one another, to turn it into a therapeutic community. The idea was that while they were in prison they would learn and gain something from one another, not merely be punished, but learn something about being human. This learning they could also use when they left the stifling prison environment and were allowed to grow. It is a very liberal view, of course: moral re-education.

Moreno's concern was that children be permitted to make choices and he observed how well they would do that. For instance, studying children in the kindergarten, what did he discover? Their choices are very hit-or-miss, their sense for mutuality is not yet refined, it develops with age. That is why you see so many one-way choices in the sociogram of that age group, very little reciprocity. *What is important is mutuality*, choosing each other for the same interaction at the same time. You chose me to do this book together, I chose you

to do this book together; I could not have done it with anyone else in the same way, you could not have done it with anybody else. *That is profound mutuality*. It does not always work in that unique fashion, sometimes it does. It is said that Gilbert and Sullivan, who wrote so many charming operetta-type productions together, could not stand each other, but only on this criterion of 'producing a piece of light drama with music together' were they able to cooperate. Apparently when they split up their partnership, neither was as productive alone as they had been together.

Another example of recognition of positive role interactions was my son Jonathan who, at age 3, pointed out to me a number of his play-school playmates: 'That one is good for building blocks with, that one plays fireman with me, that one is for colouring books with', etc. – a set of role diagrams in action. I believe Jonathan's early experience with psychodrama helped that kind of awareness.

In the Gilbert and Sullivan story we find a very special form of role interaction; in the Jonathan tale we find a rather mature consciousness of role interaction in a young child. There are also people who make choices on a different basis, for instance, a husband who chooses his wife absolutely and is faithful to her, but he is not enough for the wife: she needs other companions, a father or lover; so even on the level of choice capacity and maintaining loyalty to that choice we vary enormously.

As children mature, an increase in the number of choices which are reciprocated at the same time, in the same place and on the same criterion can be noted, and that is central in sociometry.

DAG: A sociogram is always done in the here and now. It is future-oriented as it gives birth to future actions.

ZERKA: You can only survey the past from your own perception because usually the significant others of the past situation are not present. But even if they were, their subjective perception of that past may well be at variance from your own. I recall a scene with my mother years ago. I had started to write some of my youthful memories of our family. Without my knowledge, she picked up my papers, read them, and told me: 'I do not recognize myself here'. My response was: 'That's OK, Mum, these are my memoirs, not yours. You will write yours from your perspective.' On the other hand, when I showed another segment to my sister, her eyes became teary and she whispered: 'It's beautiful and that is just the way it was'. Probably seen from the point of view of the same generation, however different the placement in the birth

rank and personality, there is greater conformity of perception and experience. But all of it depends upon subjective perception.

With sociometry as an aid, one can also look at some choices you would want to make in the future. A clear example of this happened in Beacon in the late 40s. Moreno had employed an African-American head nurse at the sanatorium. She proved to be the best psychiatric nurse we ever had. Some experiences with the position of head nurses in our hospital had taught us that certain hierarchical positions tend to isolate the person who occupies that position, no matter what the personality. One can see it in business and administration and unless that person is able to establish a firm mutual relationship with another in that organization this position is made extremely difficult.

That summer we enrolled a Japanese student. As part of the training, we carried out a sociometric test on the criterion: 'With whom do you want to spend a free evening while you are here?' The nurse and the student chose each other mutually; they made no other choices. When the student completed her stay with us and departed, Moreno pulled out the sociogram and pointed to it. He shook his head and looked worried. Then he confided in me: 'Miss B is an excellent head nurse, the entire staff likes her. There has been no problem with her and she is so good with the patients. But I predict that since our Japanese student left, we are going to lose Miss B in a few weeks. Look here, she has lost her first and only choice.' He turned out to be completely accurate: Miss B gave notice two weeks later. Moreno described this type of interpersonal connection, an exclusive one, as 'aristo-tele'. He defines 'aristo-tele' as a person of high hierarchic standing who has an exclusive mutual choice with a sociometric leader. The word *aristo* comes from the Greek and means 'best'. Aristocracy refers to a class of persons holding exceptional rank and privileges.

DAG: Is a criterion always a precondition for a sociometric choice?

ZERKA: Yes, the criterion is the compass for the role and vice versa. Role interactions belong to different criteria. After all, just as we are multiple role players, we are also multiple criteria carriers, that's what we do not realize. One of the most profound difficulties with monogamy is that we are multiple criteria people and if I choose a partner who does not have a role repertoire that fits my role repertoire we are in profound trouble. Then, even assuming that person has the role, if I do not play it the way my partner needs it and he does not play it the way I need it, just having the same role is not sufficient. We need to be able to perform it in a way which is mutually harmonious

to be productive, otherwise it becomes counter-productive. That's why I think so many of our marriages fail.

Before you were married or chose a mate, or lived with someone, you had eight, nine or ten friends, each of whom fitted a different role interaction and a different criterion. Now somehow society tells you: 'You can't do that any more. You have chosen this person to live with, now this person has to fulfil all your criteria.' It doesn't work well. Why do our marriages break down? I believe because monogamy is sociometrically contraindicated. I think it is not for the masses, but it is for a small *aristocracy*, for people who can maintain that exclusive relationship over time. I have great admiration for people who are able to do that. Fairly few of us can. Instead we have second marriages, third marriages; people keep trying, hoping that this time it will work; occasionally it does, when the partners have learned about living with another being and tele has entered the relationship.

DAG: So what we find in sociometry is that people are moving along in the path of life in different social atoms and happen not to share all these atoms with everybody. What we dream of in a marriage is to share all our social atoms with our life partner. But often, after having been attracted to each other originally, sexually and so on, the attraction between a husband and wife fades. Then the partners may begin to move around, find new social atoms and develop different roles with their new partners.

Why do you think people are so afraid of sociometry?

ZERKA: Because it creates a socioatomic revolution. Having a child or somebody dying in your life, just in the course of nature, is a revolution. Asking people to reveal their true preferences can create a revolution in existing relationships. Sociometry can also give a deathblow to an established relationship.

People in groups have a fear of being rejected. In our world being rejected is one of the worst things that can happen to us. Moreno would ask: 'Is it the rejection itself that you are worried about or is it the person who rejects you that you are concerned with? Who is rejecting you? Looking at this objectively, do you really want to be chosen by that person? Is it someone you want or are you simply reacting to the rejection? Rejection is so pejorative; it has a negative connotation in our culture. But think: What would have happened to Jesus Christ if he had not been rejected? He could not have lived his role.' He taught us to separate the rejection from the being of the rejecting person and, even if you were hurt by the person's rejection,

to look at that hurt objectively; after all, not everyone has to love or want us. It depends on how important that person is to us. The rejection can also become a new way of looking at ourselves and at the way we build relationships.

Our fear of rejection is a hangover from our childhood and the rejections suffered there, which have not been healed. We need to heal them and become objective about our choices, whether they be mutual positive, mutual negative or incongruous, that is, positive versus negative. If you want someone and that person rejects you in turn on a specific criterion, that is painful; but on another criterion that person might choose you. Rejection is rarely total; there are objectionable people we reject, yet when we see their suffering in psychodrama, that rejection may well change, becoming either neutral or even positive.

As mentioned earlier, sociometry is directed towards daily life activities. Choices that we make in our daily lives are related to other human beings in the here-and-now. A sociogram makes these choices of attraction and rejection within a group visible. It shows the hierarchy of the group from the most chosen star to the sociometric isolates. The sociogram depicts the outcome of the choices based on a relevant criterion. For example, 'With whom would you like to do your homework?' would be a criterion suitable in the context of a school, as would 'With whom do you want to work on this scientific experiment?' The motive related to the first criterion could be 'X is good at arithmetic and might help me with mathematics', and for the second, 'We think differently about things and that stimulates our critical inquiry'. A pathological motive for either would here be, for example, 'I choose him because I am sexually attracted to him'. The sociogram reveals subjective feelings and thoughts, the motivation for choice points out hidden conflicts and disagreements that the group needs to work on to function better.

It is of interest here to refer to the German philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906–1975). She claims that all human activities take place within two spaces, the 'public' and the 'private'. The word 'public' means that everything that appears to the community is visible and audible to everyone, thus receiving the highest possible publicity and becoming reality. This is in opposition to the private world, where one is deprived of the reality created by being seen and heard, deprived of an objective relation to others. To the private world belong all activities that are not seen and heard by others such as dreams, thoughts, passions and fantasies.

We can experience the transformation between the private and the public when we try to tell a dream, a passion or a hope to somebody. Then the dream or passion is de-privatized or de-individualized; you do not keep it for yourself any longer. This means that the actions performed in a certain role will be seen and heard and judged by others. Some people might like these while others might resent the very same actions. However, somewhere between your own and the other perception the feeling of becoming real comes to life. As group psychotherapists we often deal with the difference between self-perception and the perception of others; how you express and understand yourself does not necessarily match what others see and hear. A person might have a certain intention with an action that is totally misunderstood or misinterpreted by others, which changes its impact. It is, therefore, not always possible to predict the outcome of an action.

According to Hannah Arendt the word 'public' also has another meaning, namely: the world itself, as it refers to what we have in common with others, which differs from what we refer to as 'privately owned'. Her concept of 'world' is the human creation (as opposed to earth or nature as a whole) as well as all affairs and concerns between humans that appear in the created world. To live together in this world means that a world of 'things' lies between its inhabitants, similar to a table which is between those sitting around it. Everything that is 'between' in this world simultaneously connects and separates those who share it.

Sociometric groups can only be formed in the public space. One can, however, question whether a family is a sociometric group or not, as sociometry usually implies the freedom to choose. As previously mentioned, a basic concept in the Morenian philosophy is the tele phenomenon. Tele, in the literal sense of the word, means 'distance'. But Moreno uses it as a term for something that creates and unites groups.

The innumerable varieties of attractions, repulsions and indifferences between individuals need a common denominator. A feeling is directed from one individual towards another. It has to be carried into distance. Just as we use the words teleperceptor, telephone, telencephalon, television, etc., to express action at a distance, so to express the simplest unit of feeling transmitted from one individual to another we use the term tele, τηλε, 'distant'.

(J.L. Moreno 1953: 313–314, 1993: 158–159)

Moreno made the tele factor responsible for the formation of groups and tele is definitely related to the role repertoire a person has in life. That

means one person incorporates many roles, even roles that might contradict one another. We referred to this earlier when explaining the term 'autotele'. Roles are action-oriented and connect to roles in others. They are acted out in our daily lives and activities with these others. Hannah Arendt was also concerned with the actions of our daily lives. She was an action-oriented philosopher, as was Moreno.

Tele is directly related to sociometry. People gain a feeling of substance in the world by having their actions viewed and reflected by others. Tele is the human's compass to the world. Without it, we would be like the animals, directed by instincts.

ZERKA: In life we need to learn to stand aside and look at our relationships in the same way we learn to look at ourselves in the mirror, even though we may not always like what we see. When you are a child and are learning to brush your hair, that idiot in the mirror at first does not do it right. As you grow older and you see yourself in the mirror you ask: 'Is this the way I look to others? What do they see? What do I need to do to make myself beautiful or likeable or lovable?'

That's how we should be looking at our relationships. How do I come across to other people? If I want this relationship, if it is worth my investment in it, how do I accomplish that? What do I need to change in order to gain it? The 'Me Generation' does not seem to understand that. This egocentric 'Me-trend' all over the place is not very helpful for building human relations. I am not suggesting we should lose ourselves in a relationship, I am suggesting we grow in it.

DAG: For the child who sees itself in a mirror, the mirror does not change the character of the action, but reflects it from the opposite perspective. It combs its hair with the right hand, whereas the mirror image does the same with the left hand. It could be said that in a tele relationship, when one is mirrored in another person, that person sends back his/her reflection complete with his/her own human content.

ZERKA: As the child gets older it begins to wonder: 'Why do they like me? What do they see in me?' Or the reverse, too, of course. 'Why don't they like me? What do they see in me that makes me unlikeable to them?' If we are thinking people, we begin to look at that and question ourselves. I'm not talking about people who float through life like butterflies. I'm talking about most of us who have some real concerns about how we come across to the rest of the world. Because our families are not, in the main, satisfactorily nurturing, we are sensitive to this.

DAG: Do you remember a person whom you found absolutely lovable and adorable, while there were some people who said this is a horrible person?

ZERKA: Although it is a common experience for both boys and girls when they bring home a friend their parents do not like, I do not remember having had anything like that. I experienced the other. My parents brought me together with someone they thought would be wonderful for me to know and I found it to be painful. It was a little girl who was brought into my orbit. I was told she was so nice. What they did not know was that this child was having nightmares. We spent a couple of nights in the same bedroom, and she screamed all night long that she was seeing demons. This kid was a totally neurotic wreck. During the daytime she behaved very well so I now think she must have been completely suppressed by her parents. In those days good behaviour meant you were a good, quiet child and assumed to be happy as well. Today we know this is not necessarily true. All kinds of things go on behind that good behaviour, and it came out in this child's dreams at night.

I think it has to do with subjective perception. People have told me that I am intimidating. I do not find myself intimidating. My son told me when he was dating: 'Do you realize how intimidating you are to my girlfriends?' I answered, 'No, I don't'. 'Well', he said, 'you are. You are powerful. You're intimidating to them.' I don't consider myself that powerful, but that is because I also know my own vulnerability, which perhaps some others cannot see or experience; they do not perceive it. It is useful to remember that even so-called strong persons have their Achilles heel.

DAG: Tell me about that. What happened to you in the moment he said that?

ZERKA: Well, I asked myself: 'What's wrong with me that I don't see that in me? If I don't see that in myself then other people may not see that in themselves either.' We don't know our own strength; we don't know how we affect other people. Obviously, the reverse is also true, we do not fully realize our weaknesses either. That's why we need role reversal.

DAG: Did you think your son was right?

ZERKA: Yes, I think that if his friends experience me that way, he is right. I mean, I do not think we told each other lies. The girls must have said that to him. It was then I realized that I had become powerful. There was a certain power in me even as a small child. My mother may have meant something like that when she once expressed to me: 'You

are so different from my other children'. In principle that's nonsense. Every child is different. But what she was saying was (she was not as analytic as I am): 'I see something in you that is different from the others'. Possibly what she referred to is my strength. I remember when I was at a dance at school when I was 14 years old, waiting for my brothers, I made some remark about my brothers which only the Dutch would enjoy because it is a word game. In Dutch my word game was: *Waar zein mijn gebroeders?* The sentence should have been *Waar zein mijn broeders?* ('Where are my brothers?'). By adding *ge* in front of *broeders* I turned my brothers into a corporate entity. A senior class member, an older boy I did not know remarked: 'What an original child'. So I began to see that other people looked at me as original. What did that mean but being different? It is true that I felt a great deal different from my siblings, but I never asked any of them whether they felt different. It is not the kind of question one asked of one's relatives in those days. One asks that when one is mature and has that kind of connection: 'Did you ever feel different from all the others?' However, now I assume that, in fact, they did, because we led rather varied lives.

DAG: You are touching an interesting point in sociometry because some people feel a little exotically different. I can share that also.

ZERKA: You used the word 'exotic'. My husband pointed out to me that whenever we had groups coming to Beacon and he did sociometry with them I would pick the 'exotics' and I was not aware of that until he told me. But exotics often pick each other. They seem to mirror themselves with that.

DAG: So what we are saying is that you are seen differently by your students than by your son and his girlfriend, or your grandchildren; you are seen in various ways and that gives you a certain spectrum.

What I find interesting in sociometry is that groups come together and they are in essence goal-oriented, whatever that goal may be. Having a task or objective forces participants to choose with whom they want to interact, and lets them see who wants to interact with them. It is a profound experience to orient yourself in the here-and-now and in the world – with whom you can or cannot be a companion.

What I have experienced in psychodrama is that people feel 'I am not seen'. Could you say that to be seen by others, to be judged by others, to be viewed by others, creates the feeling of being real? Is that also valid for the psychotic person?

ZERKA: You don't even have to be psychotic. I have a number of students who say: 'I was never heard in my family'. This is where

psychodrama of the family is so important. There used to be a saying: 'Little children should be seen but not heard', but, in fact, with that philosophy children are not seen properly either. It is important that children are heard and seen for who they are and not for what their parents want to see or want them to be. Here is a poem I wrote about that in *Love Songs to Life*. It is called 'The Right to Be Me'.

I am
not you
or he
or she.
I'm Me.

I am not short
or tall
or big
or small.
I'm Me.

I am not good
or bad
or gay
or sad.
I'm Me.

Oh, let me Be!

Don't you know?
Can't you see?
First of all
I'm Me!
(Z. Moreno 1971)

ZERKA: So we have to work on educating parents. First they have to clean up their own mess with their family of origin, to stop bringing that into their marriage, but also to be better prepared to see their children for who they truly are, unique beings. Kahlil Gibran spoke of this so movingly in *The Prophet*:

Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

(Gibran 1923)

My sense is that in the United States there is a genuine movement in the school system to help parents to see their children for the individuals they are and not for what they want to force them to be. Children need guidance along with love, nurturing and protection. Parents need to learn their role. Many of us have not had very satisfactory role models and we learn as we go along, sometimes in a hit-or-miss fashion. So much goes back to the family. If you are not seen and not heard in the family of origin, you go outside to be seen and heard. Why do you think young people form gangs? In the gang they become persons in interaction with other people, unfortunately often to the point of violence. Then parents ask: 'Why do you hang out with these bad boys?' Clearly because they are not rooted in their family.

DAG: They are not seen and not heard at home. In order to be seen and heard, Moreno created a sense of reality through psychodrama and sociometry.

ZERKA: That was his intention.

DAG: He also stated that the reason psychodrama as group psychotherapy could help psychotics is because when the patient acts out his or her delusions on the stage, the delusionary world becomes real.

ZERKA: Yes. Moreno not only accepted the delusionary world, he loved it and made it real.

DAG: Thus that world was seen and heard by others.

ZERKA: Absolutely, and respected for what it was.

DAG: Do you remember some of the sharing when a psychotic person worked on the stage?

ZERKA: The sharing was all done in action. When you shared as an auxiliary ego, you did not share in the way we do now because that already requires distance from the self on the part of the patient. The only sharing that went on was discussing with Moreno after the session what happened, how he had diagnosed and approached the patient, for what reasons, and how and whether he achieved what he meant to achieve, in other words, how he went about it, how he related to the patient and the effect of that interaction. We talked about what kind of progress the patient made but we did not do that with the patient present. That would have broken the surplus reality. He did not

allow the objective reality to enter into the process until the patient, he felt, was strong enough to accept it. What was the patient's reality was for us *surplus* reality. Moreno played with that.

We had a patient who presented himself as the saviour, his kind of Jesus Christ. He stands naked on top of the hill and speaks the Sermon on the Mount; nobody is there, but for him a crowd is present. Next door, it just so happens, we have a novitiate where young novices come to test themselves and reflect before becoming nuns. The Mother Superior calls my husband and tells him there is a young man in the nude standing on the hill in our grounds. 'Could you please have him put some clothes on? We have these young women here, 17, 18 years old.' 'Sure', he told her, 'why not. I'll see what I can do.' He goes outside and up the hill. I accompany him. As he approaches the patient he says: 'You know, Jesus, it's wonderful what you are doing. We love to hear your speech. But it's a bit cool outside today. Would you mind going inside and putting your underpants on?' The patient obeys him without any trouble and does as he is requested. He had not been disrespected, the role was real: here he could be Jesus. If the patient would have questioned him, for instance, and asked him why he should, Moreno might have answered: 'None of your paintings show you in the nude'. Weave the reality into the other world of psychodrama where it can be useful. Speaking from the other perspective I asked Moreno: 'Did you tell the lady Abbess who he is?' He said: 'I did not think she would appreciate it'. But you see what I mean? He maintained the context within which this patient was operating and did not destroy it. He did not say to the patient: 'We know who you are and this is ridiculous'. He would not do that. He did not tell him: 'This woman next door wants you to get dressed because there are young women there'.

DAG: But he did subtly weave in that aspect too.

ZERKA: Yes, the fact that there is a reality out there as well: 'It's cool today'.

DAG: That is really beautiful. I think sociometry has been neglected because people are fearful that their own reality will be discarded. When we recall our childhood memories we sense that there was inner motivation for a choice, speaking in sociometric terms. That inner motivation is not respected. In the imaginary world we sometimes choose or reject someone because that person reminds us of our mother, for example, or 'I don't like very big men or women', because we relate that to our past world, it is not related to the here-and-now.

ZERKA: Correct. In other forms of psychotherapy therapists point this out to the client. That type of insight is not as helpful as correcting the past by repairing it first, as, for instance, through psychodrama. That makes it easier for the protagonist to discard the old neglect rather than carrying it into the present.

As I said before: *affirmation comes before negation*. We cannot give up what we have not had. If you are never seen or heard you can become schizophrenic or at least disturbed. You talk with yourself because you are the only one who hears you, who listens to you, who experiences you; or you make your imaginary companions. You may be right about the technique of going back into childhood in psychotherapy and psychodrama; I do not believe that every psychodrama has to go back into the past. But when I hear a person saying: 'My wife never listens to me; that is exactly what happened to me in my family and I get enraged', then we go back into that family of origin. We can repair the past and the protagonist can give it up so that at least he does not get enraged any more and can deal with the present adequately.

One characteristic of human beings is that their actions are similar and different at the same time. We reveal who we are through our actions. What we are refers to characteristics and gifts of personality. One can be, for example, a gifted singer or painter without ever having been on the stage or sold one single painting. One can be a very talented person but that does not mean one has ever actualized that role. Moreno says that spontaneity is the arm and hand of creativity. Who we are will always be how others see us, whereas what we are remains private. Particularly in the Jungian form emphasis is on 'what we are' instead of 'who we are'. In Jung's psychology 'Persona' is the mask we wear towards the world, e.g. the doctor, the lawyer. There is very little uniqueness or individuality in the Persona. The individual can hide behind this mask.

Jungian work is mostly done through the analysis of dreams or through working with the unconscious or the Shadow. Moreno looks differently at the distinction between the conscious and the unconscious. For him action carries truth in itself in the encounter with other people.

Thus the distinction between conscious and unconscious has no place in a psychology of the creative act. It is logificatio post festum. We make use of it as a popular fiction only to map out a science of characters of the impromptu act.

(J.L. Moreno 1973: 42)

Our actions really show our uniqueness. So to what extent can we hide behind our Persona? Instead we show who we are through our visible behaviour. We are rejected or affirmed through our interaction with others.

For example, a young boy who behaves badly in school by carrying weapons threatens the security, disturbs the class, and is designated 'the bad boy'. This is how he is seen by others and how he learns to play the role. His problematic past with abuse and neglect certainly can make us understand his behaviour. Still his past can only be heard, it can't be seen or experienced by the group in his daily life out there. Only in psychodrama can we make it visible and heard. Group psychotherapy both emphasizes and highlights our actions. In this process change can take place. In other words, we can only change in interaction with other people, in the here-and-now.

ZERKA: What is largely misunderstood about sociometry is that enabling people to make their own choices is evidence of our respect for them.

We are not judgemental, we make a judgement. There is a difference.

DAG: Is judgement involved when we make a choice or when a person says: 'I only want to be me'?

ZERKA: Yes, on both counts. At the same time, if you ask a person: 'Who is this me?' they do not know, except when we begin to explore it in terms of: 'Let's see your role structure. Let's see your social atom; then we get some sense of who you are and you can see yourself. Let's find out how other people relate to this being in this role structure and in that social atom.' Yes, there is no question that judgement is necessary but if I say to you: 'I just want to be me', you could ask me: 'What does that mean? What is that? Who do you think you are? Show me.'

DAG: Clients of mine would be extremely offended if I asked that.

ZERKA: I say: 'Tell me who you are, tell me what you mean to yourself. Then I can judge whether I have the same perception of you.' I have difficulty with people who come to me; sometimes they are people I hardly know, and they ask me questions I can't answer. I remember a student of Moreno's who had just been married two days before; he came to introduce his wife to us. They stayed overnight in our house and that was our only contact with this young woman. The next morning he came to ask me: 'What do you think of my wife?' I refused to answer him in a direct way. 'I have barely met her; we just had an exchange of a few polite words with each other, so the question is not fair. But I want to ask you: What do *you* think of her? You're the one

who chose her. On what basis did you make that decision? I, on the contrary, have not met her before, so this is an unrealistic question. I did not make that choice, you did. You think you know her, you picked her, you tell me what you think of your wife.'

The obvious reason he asked me is that he thought he had made a mistake and, in fact, the marriage ended not long afterwards. 'What do you think of my wife or husband?' does not make sense and yet some people enter marriage in that way. It's all very well to have a spontaneous 'clicking' with another person, but then there comes a time when a couple should say: 'Now we need to explore the relationship beyond this clicking that we have, to see what we have mutually satisfactory in common'. There the role structure comes in.

DAG: What do you think is the difference between the sociometric group and the family?

ZERKA: Choice. In the family the couple themselves chose to be together in the beginning, although the choice may be based on false premises and may wear thin over the years. Children will say to their parents when they are being punished, 'I did not choose to be born', which, by the way, from the spiritual point of view is not true. I think they did choose to be born to these parents but they find the going too hard. So they will say: 'I did not choose to be born. You chose to have me.' At least it is a choice in this earthly life, a choice for our soul or spirit. From the sociometric point of view, we know that unrequited loves, non-mutual choices, are the most painful. For a child who finds itself not loved the way it deserves, certainly its birth feels like a non-choice. The family is or at least was first a biological grouping.

The sociometric grouping is of a different order of choice. In a family authority rests in the parents and in a given structure related to sex, age, culture and procreation. In sociometric groups these factors do not apply in the same way. The sociometric group is an intentional community. For instance, a sociometric group is always in a state of change. After the purpose of coming together around its criterion is fulfilled by all its members, the group may dissolve and a new criterion has to be born. The family is far more static. In sociometry, leadership is chosen of the group, by the group and for the group. That is not the case in the family and, in fact, there is often a good deal of rebellion.

DAG: Group psychotherapy has lately taught me something new: when not to say things.

ZERKA: You mean when to speak and when to be totally silent. It is interesting that you speak of that because I have a similar awareness,

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DAG: Group psychotherapy has lately taught me something new: when not to say things.

ZERKA: You mean when to speak and when to be totally silent. It is interesting that you speak of that because I have a similar awareness,

for instance with people who have had or are having extramarital affairs. My sense is that they should especially not talk about them with their partners or with their friends. Many of them are weighed down by feelings of guilt: 'Oh God, I have to tell my husband, I have to tell my wife.' Don't. When they come to me and ask me what they should do, I question them: 'Is the outside relationship still relevant?' Many times the answer is: 'No'. 'How recent is it?' 'Oh, it happened two years ago.' 'Are you still in touch?' 'No.' 'Are you telling me it is completely over, except for the guilt you carry about it?' 'Yes.' Then I ask: 'What are you trying to do? You have lived with your mate so many years, do you intend to separate?' 'No.' 'You have not spoken about it?' 'No, I couldn't.' 'So how can it possibly help except that you can release your guilt about it. Are you trying to punish your mate? Is s/he guilty of the same thing? Are you angry with her/him for something you have been made to suffer? If so, let's work on it, but if that is not the case, you may do far more harm than good.'

Let me give you a specific case. Remember the attitude of many in the 60s and 70s?: 'You must be up front with everybody, *let it all hang out*, be totally honest, and don't hide anything.' I will never forget a relationship revealed to us in the group by a student from Canada. He felt very guilty; he had just a month ago completed an extramarital affair. He met this woman while his wife was lecturing somewhere; he had accompanied her and they both met this other lady. She was a representative from the university where his wife was speaking and had found them a place to stay, and was their guide for that period. He became involved with her. Officially he went on business but actually he went to meet her. They had this relationship for a while and mutually decided to end it. When it is not mutually ended, the other party will suffer and hound the former partner, and that feels terrible.

The protagonist's question was whether he should tell his wife. All the young people in the group were asked for their opinion and one and all, without exception, said: 'Oh yes, you must tell her. After all, it is over now and you must be up-front with her.' I happened to know the wife as she was my student. He was not, but she had interested him in psychodrama and he came alone to work on this situation. I knew that his wife adored him; he was the love of her life. I asked him the same questions mentioned above: 'Is it over?' 'Yes.' 'Are you sure?' 'Yes, it is really over and done with.' 'Does your wife know or suspect anything?' 'No.' In fact, the other lady left Canada, returned to her own country, and they arranged not to be in further contact, by mail

or any other way. So I say to him: 'Don't say or breathe a word'. He followed that recommendation because I also added: 'You would break her heart. Is that your intention?' He shook his head, negatively. That is not yet the end of the story. Five years or so later his wife developed a serious heart condition, which eventually contributed to her death. He becomes the most wonderful companion, takes care of her to the end, in a loving way. Was he still expiating his guilt? Maybe, and there may have been other reasons behind that, but the fact is that they lived harmoniously, at least as she experienced their life; she called and told me after her first attack how wonderfully devoted he was to her. I thought to myself, this woman would have died of a heart condition five years ago if he had told her, and how would he have felt then and what would have become of their relationship? Now she has a good companion who takes care of her and loves her, and the children are not hurt either. He was magnificent. The danger of total openness in a marriage can be great; we do not know the possible consequences.

DAG: I think it is equally valid for the training group and the therapy group that people also have to learn what can be revealed about themselves. I had a woman in a group, a therapist, who was a prostitute in the past and at an international meeting in the professional world she opened up about that in a session.

ZERKA: To what purpose?

DAG: I guess she wanted to be honest about it, and she thought it was okay.

ZERKA: It did not turn out to be okay.

DAG: No. Later she had terrible problems about it and was exposed to slander. She learned that she should be aware *where, how, and to whom* to reveal this part of her past. It is not the focus of this book, but feeling shame about yourself and wanting to be yourself is really standing on the edge between the private and the public space, because your shame should remain private.

ZERKA: It is a very delicate question, a question of adequacy, which does not mean adjustment, but being in tune with. You mirror yourself through other human beings and through figures in your inner world and you must be able to move around in that ambivalence. So in adequacy there is also judgement. Moreno expressed his concept of spontaneity as 'an adequate response to a new situation or a new response to an old situation'. One may be tempted to assume that the word 'adequate' is meant as a way of adapting to a situation by taking into account social norms. That was not Moreno's intention because

then spontaneity and opportunism would be the same. For Moreno a spontaneous person is a disciplined person, but the discipline comes from within and is not imposed from without.

The word adequate comes from the Latin word ad-aeque which means 'to make similar, to equate'. Ad is a preposition controlling the following accusative and means 'against, in the direction of', i.e., it contains a movement, a direction. Aequus means 'similar', similar condition, similar in size. Movement and balance thus are expressed by the word 'adequate'. It is not a static expression, a passive response, but contains the ability to think and to act reasonably with regard to the situation by taking into account one's own point of view as well as that of the surroundings. The person has the ability to act from a kind of transcendent point. A precondition for this ability is that a person acts spontaneously. Moreno said that the word sponte means 'from within the self'. Thus, it is neither right nor wrong. The word sponte also means 'with the consent of someone else' or 'with the good recollection of someone else', which refers to a kind of awareness or attention and includes another. At the same time it means to be one's own person, to express one's freedom. This leads to the idea that a person has the freedom to act, but that is not identical to free will.

DAG: As we said before, when you work with sociometry the criterion has to be valid within the context in which you are working. If you work with the staff in a psychiatric hospital, for instance, relevant criteria would be: 'With whom would you like to work the night shift? With whom would you like to distribute medication?' An irrelevant criterion would be: 'With whom would you like to go on holiday?' or 'Whom would you want to date?' Those criteria are outside of the context of the group.

ZERKA: Yes, because they are external to the setting. In the hospital you have to deal with those interactions, the others are external. It creates problems if you work on irrelevant criteria. The boundaries are crossed. One of the things Moreno taught is that we must choose a criterion which can be carried out in reality for the entire group. Because with whom you go on vacation is not within the group, it pulls people away from the group. Besides, it should be a criterion which the sociometrist has the authority to carry out. Obviously, you do not have authority in the external situations. Working with irrelevant criteria is what Moreno called 'near-sociometry'. Sociometry is reality- and action-based and therefore the criteria have to be the same and the action should be of the kind that can be actually

carried out. It has to be kept clean, otherwise it becomes impure and the results utterly useless or even harmful.

DAG: That is where I see a lot of damage done.

ZERKA: It is anti-democratic and a lesson for people to learn. Sociometry is democracy exercised in action. There are different hierarchies for different groupings and they are fluid. 'You cannot step twice into the same river.' It is a democracy by full participation, not merely by representation. It is not understood enough that Moreno never wrote that sociometry involves likes and dislikes. These watered-down versions that researchers describe as sociometric are based on a false premise.

Moreno never asked: 'Who do you like?' or 'Who do you not like?' He never used those words at all. He questioned: 'With whom do you like to work?' or 'With whom do you like to study?' or 'With whom do you like to share a room?' Non-sociometric studies do not connect the 'like' with the verbs 'to do this or that with' because these researchers are not action people; they are observers, not doers. Sociometry and role interactions are tightly linked; without a verb, verbs being action words, the research is invalid as sociometric and should not be so designated. It does not carry the essential action link, that of the role interaction. But if I ask you: 'With whom do you want to work in this setting?' and see if that person chooses you as well, and if I have the authority to reorganize the group based on the choices made, this is not an investigation, this is an action test; it has to lead to action, to satisfaction in life itself. To the extent it does not do that it is not sociometry. It is a test for the people in the group to cooperate with each other and the sociometrist, to be their own researchers. They are the ones who need it. I, the investigator do not need it for my ego. I'm doing this to make a more cohesive group. Maybe the words 'research' and 'investigator' are misleading. Perhaps we should call the process 'cohesion and action building'. Sociometry makes the group members co-researchers, not objects for an outsider to investigate. Besides, what reason would you as research object have to tell me the truth about yourself if you did not get some satisfaction out of it? One of the outcomes of sociometry is that the people involved obtain an 'optimum of satisfaction possible' from the procedure.