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Børge Kristoffersen

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Jacob Levy Moreno's encounter term: a part of a social drama

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Abstract: This article looks closer at the connection between Moreno's early professional art work and the formation of his encounter term, and how these in turn enter into a social drama that took place in the double monarchy Austria-Hungary before World War I. Of particular importance is the activity in and around the House of Encounter in 1909. The social upheavals in the capital of the double monarchy, Vienna, the formation of the encounter term and sociodrama as expressionist term are linked. The question that accompanies this text is: How can we see, today, the formation of Jacob Levy Moreno's encounter practice both as a part of expressionist art work and as social reform work?

Keywords: "The art of living" · Expressionism · Social reform work · Vienna before World War 1 · House of encounter · Encounter · Moreno's influence on Martin Buber

Jacob Levy Morenos Begegnungsbegriff – ein Teil eines sozialen Dramas

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Artikel beleuchtet die Verbindung zwischen Morenos früher professioneller Kunst und der Herausbildung seines Begegnungsbegriffs und wie diese in ein soziales Drama münden, das sich in der Doppelmonarchie Österreich-Ungarn vor dem I. Weltkrieg ereignete. Von besonderer Bedeutung ist dabei das Geschehen in und um das Haus der Begegnung in 1909. Die sozialen Unruhen in Wien, der Hauptstadt der Doppelmonarchie, die Herausbildung des Begegnungsbegriffs und der expressionistische Begriff Soziodrama werden miteinander in Beziehung gesetzt. Die Frage, die sich durch den Text zieht, lautet: Wie können wir aus heutiger Sicht die Herausbildung von Jacob Levy Morenos Praxis der Begegnung als Teil eines expressionistischen Kunstschaffens und als sozialreformatorischen Impuls sehen?

Schlüsselwörter: „Die Kunst zu leben“ · Expressionismus · soziale Reformen · Wien vor dem 1. Weltkrieg · Haus der Begegnung · Begegnung · Morenos Einfluss auf Martin Buber

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The article is translated by Albert Collett and Børge Kristoffersen.

B. Kristoffersen (✉)
Elvegata 18, 7012 Trondheim, Norway
e-mail: bkr@dmmh.no

In the wake of Rene Marineau's biographical works (Marineau 1989, 1994) on Jacob Levy Moreno (1889–1974), several pieces of research have shed new light and given more profound insight into Moreno's early contributions in Vienna, more than a century ago. Research done by Robert Waldl (2005), Anna Briburg (2011), Friederike Scherr (2011) and others has, in various ways, given us new insight into Moreno's early years in Vienna. The autobiography of Moreno's lifelong companion Zerka Moreno, "To Dream Again" (Moreno 2012), also gives a strong life witness account that adds new and important pieces of knowledge. New knowledge gives the possibility to see a more nuanced picture of Moreno's early efforts; his existentialist religious activism, his artistic expression, his introduction and shaping of the encounter term and not the least his contribution as a social reformist. In the spectre of new knowledge, it is possible to understand Moreno as expressionist "life artist"; that it was from this position he formed his view on art, society and existential belonging. Later evaluation and appreciation of these formulations are expressed in many ways, amongst others a street is named after him in Mitterndorf: Dr. Moreno Strasse. In 1993, the Austrian Society of Literature gave his urn an honorary grave at the Zentralfriedhof, Vienna's official cemetery. The reason was his contributions to the modernist expressionist German literature before 1925 and his role as initiator, author and editor of the periodical "Der Daimon" from 1918 and 1919 (Moreno 2012, p. 414).

This article is a follow-up of earlier works on Moreno (Kristoffersen 1993, 2008 and Rasmussen and Kristoffersen 2011). It looks closer at the connection between Moreno's early professional art work and the formation of his encounter term, and how these in turn enter into a social drama that took place in the double monarchy Austria-Hungary before World War I. Of particular importance is the activity in and around the House of Encounter in 1909. The social upheavals in the capital of the double monarchy, Vienna, the formation of the encounter term and sociodrama as expressionist term are linked. The question that accompanies this text is: How can we see, today, the formation of Jacob Levy Moreno's encounter practice both as a part of expressionist art work and as social reform work?

1 The relevance of the encounter term today and a hundred years ago

Since Moreno's professional work largely was linked to therapy and psychodrama, important nuances in his other contributions have been less noticed. We may, for instance, see that a more overall picture comes forward in his art practice; a picture of art as a means of encounter, development, learning, treatment, identity formation, sociality, rebellion and rituals. In Moreno's practice it was an aim to democratize and popularize art. Art didn't belong to the art institutions but was existential; it belonged to everybody. "The art of living" was therefore a central project in his social reform work (Rasmussen and Kristoffersen 2011, pp. 138–158). His aim was to contribute to a creative climate in group and society through spontaneity and creativity (Moreno 1955, pp. 26–27). Sociodrama is an early contribution to this. Encounter is a key word in this context. Encounter in his context isn't only an existentialist term, but first and foremost a practice. In Norway we have been reminded of the relevance of such a practice over the last few years.

At the memorial concert on July 22nd 2012 in the Town Hall Square in Oslo, Norway, commemorating the anniversary of the massacre at Utøya and the governmental quarters, Norwegian author Karl Ove Knausgård read a text with the title "The distance in our midst" (Knausgård 2012). There he asked what we should not forget after July 22nd 2011. What is the most important lesson, for Norway as a nation, for all of us? To his own questions, he answered: It is to know what life is; what joy in two shining eyes is; what laughter and tears is; what life in a face is; that is the most important!

In 1914 Jacob Levy Moreno (1889–1974) wrote: "a meeting of two: eye to eye, face to face..." in a poem called "Invitation to an Encounter". At that time as well, in Vienna in 1914, the words were used to remind us about something we must not forget. At that time as well, the words came as an answer to something of fundamental importance, and at that time just as now, the words are an answer to a culture, a society. What Moreno writes a hundred years ago is about the necessity for concrete meetings between people. His words were answers to the culture he grew up in, which has later been labelled The Vienna Culture. In Moreno's invitation to encounters there is an introduction to what was to become role-reversal in his theatre practice. The poem says something about the conditions for an encounter; about the capacity to put oneself in the others' place:

Then I will look at you with your eyes
And you will look at me with mine. (Marineau 1989, p. 48)

Knausgård's reflection has, just like Moreno's, the existential encounter as theme. Both say that the encounter is a condition for life and, as we later shall see in Moreno's professional development, the condition for a sane society. Knausgård emphasizes the encounter as essence when he tries to sum up the lessons of a national trauma in a literary form one year after. And he uses the same words as Moreno used a hundred years before; only the sequence is altered. What they both write is that the human encounter is a never ending practice of the senses; it is like a musical instrument, it has to be tuned again and again. In addition Moreno's words are meant as more than words, they are meant as invitations to concrete encounters, face to face. Another difference between them is that Knausgård writes about the lessons in the wake of a national trauma while Moreno introduces his encounter term as something new, something that hasn't been there before, something which not only belongs to existence but also has to be found in culture and social life. The term is presented as an answer to a culture that was oriented towards the past; it stresses the category of the moment and is launched to give courage to create something new, "To Dream Again"¹. Let us take a closer look at this culture; Vienna a hundred years ago.

2 Vienna around 1900

René Marineau, Moreno's biographer, claims that one cannot understand Moreno's professional development without linking it to his adolescence in Vienna and his ethnic background as a Jew (Marineau 1994, p. 81). There, in Vienna from 1896 to 1925, he laid the foundation for everything he would later become known for. He was six or seven years old when he came to Vienna from Bucharest and thirty-six when he emigrated from

Vienna to the US. It was in this culture, above all, that Moreno first shaped his ideas about the encounter and later created sociodrama as a practice in 1921 (Marineau 1989, p. 71).

In order to understand how new ideas and practices spring up it is useful to relate them to the context where they come into being. We must look for the function ideas have in people's and culture's lives to understand them. Accordingly, it is central here that Vienna was where Moreno started to formulate himself about the human encounter. At the time, he belonged to an avant-garde art movement which later has been given the name expressionism. Moreno contributed to this movement both in renewing the theatre and as a writer (Rasmussen and Kristoffersen 2011, p. 41). Essential to this movement's many forms of expression was the failure of the old, so a new society had to be shaped. One may define this movement as the artists', poets' and philosophers' soul cry to the young generation: "Liberate yourselves from the old conventions and manifest your own creative talent by creating a new world," was the slogan. The expression "Kill the father" originated in this movement. Let us destroy the old and build the new society from a different perspective, was a motto (Marineau 1994, p. 87).

In many ways, Vienna was Europe's cultural capital in the beginning of the 1900s. Around 1900 two million people lived in Vienna, of whom 500,000 were Jews. As a large cosmopolitan city, it included everything imaginable of political differences, nationalities and different cultures. Psychoanalysis, the modern Zionism, modernism in visual art, architecture and music, new directions within philosophy and politics, all this found their first expressions in Vienna around 1900. At the same time a more than 900 year old empire had created a cultural frame among the Austrians which hardly could welcome the new. A culture conservative self-consciousness characterized this society; it lay as a shield against change. The Viennese knew what they owned and were entitled to, what was allowed and what was forbidden. Predictability, steady goals and constancy was a key structure. The culture regulated by conventions worshipped the past. The established aesthetics of Viennese culture celebrated the untruthfulness, mask play, the illusion, the slippery and shining lies. Daily life in Vienna was like a piece of drama where the position of the spectator was the dominating (Eriksen 1991, pp. 17–23). Stefan Zweig characterized this behaviour as theatre mania among the Viennese. It manifested itself in daily life as well as in the theatre. Novelties in social life as well as on stage were always met with an evaluating strictness (Zweig 1993, p. 26). "Their political frustrations were transformed into an everyday infatuation with music, art, the theatre/.../The kiss on the hand, the tips, the visiting cards and a monstrous respect for titles was part of this game", writes Trond Berg Eriksen (1991, p. 17). It has been said that with the Viennese, the past was necessity and the future coincidence. This could best be seen in the way they celebrated farewells. A "lovely funeral" was a public celebration. A famous death prompted lavish pomp and circumstance. From the funeral ceremonies a new byword arose: "Go to Zentralfriedhof (the cemetery), everybody lies there." Goodbyes, dissolution, ruin and extreme points were the characteristics of culture (Eriksen 1991, p. 17), and "Safety first" was its profession of faith, writes Zweig (1993, p. 17).

As stated earlier, Moreno belonged to an expressionist art movement. In Vienna—and several other European capitals—its many forms also expressed itself in the theatre, as renewal of the theatre. Many Jews took part in this movement, their "homelessness" could be expressed there and through that, new art forms were established. Irony, cul-

ture criticism, human homelessness, but also the dream of a better life was expressed in new ways by Jewish actors and theatre reformists. Questions about identity acquired new perspectives through their expression forms: "We have shouted the expressionist scream in the theatre against the old institutions, against old morality, and especially against the fathers" (Shahar 2004, p. 222). Moreno developed different practices within the framework of this movement, including his encounter term.

Can the life and actions of this culture be seen as a presentiment? Can the notion of dissolution have expressed itself in cultural conservatism and a way of life looking towards the past? And can cultural innovations be an answer to cultural conservatism? This kind of questions may be useful to put in order to understand how Moreno's encounter term and practice sprang up.

3 The encounter term is launched in a culture undergoing dissolution

Moreno was around 20 in 1909 when he, together with friends, founded a place of residence and an ideology with encounter as theme. As a young student, he organized, together with Chaim Keller and others, a residence for incoming students, emigrants and refugees. The place was called "The House of Encounter". The house was a meeting place where newly arrived people were helped filling out papers and official documents, solve practical problems, or were helped to apply for a job. The house was rented and was situated in Praterstern 2 (address is unsure), Leopoldstadt, centrally in Vienna's Jewish quarter. Above the entrance door was a sign with the following text: "Come to us from all nations. We will give you shelter" (Marineau 1989, p. 27). One background for The House of Encounter was the turmoil and political instability that smouldered under the surface in the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy. We know now that the double monarchy Austria-Hungary under Emperor Franz Josef I (1848–1916) was in its final stages. After World War I this large monarchy full of traditions came to an end. An empire that seemed relatively intact in 1914 was destroyed four years later. Moreno not only saw and lived through the dissolution of a 900 year old empire. He also experienced how the double monarchy was split up in a series of small states after World War I where Austria became the smallest state of all. The result was serious crises in the economy, large unemployment and food shortage, a rising support for the Nazi movement and growing demand for joining Germany.

A sign of this unrest was the flow of refugees, many of them Jews, who came to the city with no official apparatus to receive them. The House of Encounter was a place to stay where they were received, where they could live without paying rent, where they were met and could start organizing their lives anew. Marineau writes about how they had discussions at night where they tried to find solutions to problems people had both inside and outside the house. Another characteristic of the activities at the house was a lot of song and play (Marineau 1989, p. 27). Moreno writes that many times later he thought about how many people the house contained, and about the atmosphere in the house. In spite of poverty, the house was characterized by a spirit where people shared what they had without great conflict or mobbing (Berglind 1998, p. 57). The house project was founded on a trust in the creative ability of people in true encounters. Central means in this were

listening to the stories that were told, song, dance, dramatization, play and humour. The house was closed down before World War I (Waldl 2005, pp. 46–48).

4 The encounter term is ideologically anchored

We now know that in everything Moreno created, encounter is a chore. As opposed to the more individually oriented and “aggressive” “Encounter Groups” in the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s, his understanding of the encounter was built on an interpersonal theory with its starting point in the “primary dyad” as it originally is found in the mother-child relationship and later is turned universal in the meeting between two or more acting parties (Berglind 1998, p. 58).

The model for the community was founded on experience. With time the experience was also anchored in an ideology. The ideology that the community developed, was built on an understanding that the single human being doesn't have any authority on his or her own, but as a voice in a group. The ideas about the human encounter were developed through attitudes and practices that were founded on helping each other. And not the least; it was more important to give than to take. The attitudes should be visible in action and anonymity was the unselfish in the actions. The ideology of the community was named “The Religion of the Encounter” and had the following principal idea: The self always comes after the other. Influenced by this practice, Moreno published his first writings anonymously (Marineau 1989, p. 27).

5 A picture of cultural contrast

If we look at the activity and community linked to the House of Encounter in the cultural context where it occurred, in Vienna in 1909, it is not difficult to see the contrasting pictures. Adolf Hitler stayed in Vienna at the time. He was 20 and had failed the entrance exam at the art academy. From 1907 till the outbreak of World War I he lived as a bohemian and idler in Vienna, later in Munich. As unemployed he survived on social benefits he received as an orphan and by selling the odd picture he had painted himself (Haffner 1978, p. 13). A photo from 1909 supposedly shows Hitler and Lenin playing chess together. The picture is said to have been taken privately, at the home of the Jewish painter Emma Löwenstamm (1879–1941). At the time, she lived in Währing Street in Vienna. The background for the photo was that the painter wished to paint a portrait of the two playing chess. Whether this really has happened or not is uncertain (Rüegsegger 2000, p. 188), but it is well documented that Lenin, who lived in exile in Vienna and other places, and Hitler, both were regulars at the same café in Vienna at the time; Café Central (Rubin 1930, pp. 1–77). And if the battlefield only was a game and in miniature; a chessboard in black and white in 1909, we know that the ideologies they later were to develop led to the most destructive wars in the 20th century. The ideology of the encounter and House of Encounter is a contrasting picture to this. Where the chess game is a war with the intent to conquer land and checkmate the opponent's king, Moreno in 1909 developed experiences and ideas on how to unite people through aesthetic activity and nonviolent

actions with the help of spiritual power. It's also important here to remember that this took place in the same city at the same time.

6 Early publications

With time Moreno started to write down his experiences about encounters. In the spring of 1914, before the outbreak of World War I, he published a leaflet, with time there were three, all with the title "Einladung zu einer Begegnung" (Invitation to an Encounter). Another contrasting picture: World War I breaks out on July 28th 1914. The context was the attempt on the heir to the Austrian-Hungarian throne, Arch Duke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, who was killed in Sarajevo. The same year Sigmund Freud launched his theory on the death drive, the urge for self-destruction. In Moreno's text from 1914 the aim of the action is encounter through the adaptation of perspectives and role-reversal. Here he writes that we are linked through encounters, with the other and with existence. The contrast here is that these incidents coincide both in time and within the frame of the same society, the same culture! Where Freud analysed people's dreams, but also the times in which he lived, and where the death drive theory was part, Moreno developed practice forms that were concerned with creating something new, creating conditions for new dreams about a better society. Or, as Moreno wrote about his meeting with Freud: "Well, Dr Freud, I begin where you end. You meet people in aesthetic surroundings in your office. I meet them in the street or in their homes, in their natural surroundings. You analyse their dreams. I try to give them courage to dream again..." (Marineau 1989, p. 30).

Moreno sold his leaflets in the street, in assembly rooms and cafés; they contained expressionist poems and texts about invitations to encounters. The invitations weren't only meant as literature, they were also meant as invitations to meet people. In the first leaflet, he announced an address where letters and invitations could be sent. Well aware that literary writing about encounters was an abstraction, he makes it clear in the leaflets that he will only respond to the people who will meet him face to face. The reader is urged to physically meet the author face to face, she or he are asked to look upon the leaflet as a medium for the personal encounter. It was all about face to face. It was the concrete meeting that engaged him. In order to be recognized in the street, he developed a meeting symbol, a greeting ritual. The meeting symbol was later designed and turned into logo for the Morean activities (Moreno 2012, p. 505). Every page in the leaflet is dominated by the living encounter; encounters through talking, encounters in silence face to face, encounters through glances. Everything is formulated in an expressionist style with words so bodily that they feel painful to read. For several years Moreno sold these leaflets in Vienna. One of the meeting places was Café Museum, where he also sold his leaflets, and it was there that Moreno met the religion philosopher Martin Buber for the first time in 1916. Later Buber gave 1916 as the year when he developed his initial interest for the encounter term (Waldl 2005, pp. 169–173).

7 Moreno's influence on Buber

Robert Waldl has written a doctoral thesis about Moreno's influence on Buber and the philosophical origin of the encounter term. He has found that Moreno's actions and writings had decisive influence on Buber's encounter term. In 1923 Buber published the book "I and You", a major philosophical work dealing with the human encounter in an existential sense. Waldl writes that Buber had no plan to write about encounter before 1916 and that he didn't write about encounter before 1918 (Waldl 2005, pp. 169–173).

From 1918 Moreno was editor of the periodical "Daimon". Daimon was an expressionist periodical for artists and intellectuals in Vienna and recruited contributors from all over Europe. Moreno published several of his texts there, including texts on existential encounters. The first issue of Daimon came out in June 1918. Martin Buber, born in Vienna, also published articles in the periodical. In January 1919, in Volume 2, No. 1, Buber published an article on Jewish legends and Chassidic tales. On the same page that Buber's article ends, Moreno publishes an article with the title "Einladung zu einer Begegnung – Die Gottheit als Redner" (Invitation to an Encounter—The Divinity as Speaker). At the time, Buber hadn't published anything on encounter or what today goes under the name of dialogue philosophy. In the sources we also find a handwritten letter from Moreno to Buber. The letter is dated September 26th 1918 and contains a confirmation of his contributed article to the periodical as well as a reflection on the encounter term².

For whatever reason, Buber denied having been in touch with Moreno. In answer to a question from a professor in philosophy at the University in Georgia, Dr. Pfuetze, in 1959, concerning the knowledge of Moreno's texts, Buber explains that he had read them but not understood them. With Waldl's comparative analysis in mind, it is hard to believe this. Waldl's comparative study shows almost word by word similarity between Moreno's writings on encounter from 1914 and what Buber writes in 1923 (Waldl 2005, pp. 169–173 and Moreno 2012, pp. 501–502).

In four points Waldl sums up what Buber received as inspiration from Moreno.

1. The idea of the importance of the encounter as such. This refers to the living encounter, that the encounter is limited in time, the healing capacity of the encounter, the encounter here and now, present and past.
2. Buber uses Moreno's phrases and significant terms. Waldl shows how Buber on several occasions borrows entire phrases and parts from Moreno.
3. The construction of the first two chapters in "I and You" is based on Moreno's sentences and use of terms.
4. Buber's unpublished motto "I and You", the living encounter here and now.

We have seen that Moreno distinguishes between the living encounter and writing about encounters in a book. Buber also realized the paradox in writing about the living encounter. In an unpublished foreword to "I and You", he tries to evade this paradox by writing directly to the reader in second person singular: "You, who is reading here, what you will read here, is spoken to you. I don't know you, how may I call you?" (Waldl 2005, p. 172).

In 1959, Moreno writes: "The author Buber does not talk with his "I" to a "Thou" of the reader. Buber's "I" does not come out from the book to encounter this "Thou". Buber

and the encounter are stuck in the book. The book is abstract and in third person. It is an abstraction of the living encounter and not the encounter itself.”³ (Waldl 2005, p. 172). To this should be added that Moreno considered himself influenced by Buber. In an interview in 1958 he says that the pioneers in the field should be seen as mutually dependent on each other (Waldl 2005, p. 169).

8 Moreno's encounter term—a practice

From the foregoing it is clear that an encounter is an action that implies physical proximity face to face. To be able to talk about encounters in Moreno's sense requires a physical presence here and now. The physical presence, or the meeting space between humans in Moreno practice, is also understood within a health framework. Moreno looks upon the health-bringing qualities of the encounter with the evolutionist view on the formation of the self⁴. Last but not least; the encounter is limited in time. Present will always turn into past. On the basis of encounters experiences and structures are made which in turn create conditions for new encounters.

If we turn to the first development of the encounter term in the House of Encounter and try to imagine this practice based on what we know now, we can see the following: The encounter term occur in a culture and a society undergoing dissolution. The double monarchy Austria-Hungary was in its final stages and a culture conservative way of life oriented towards the past was a cultural trait. In this culture many innovations within art, science and politics came about. An art movement, expressionism, picked up expression forms that paved the way for new practices. The expressionists were avant-gardists. Avant-garde (from French *Avant*) means to be in front. The expressionists were no organization or movement with a leader. They were independent artist with common traits. They believed that the new in everyday life, culture and society should come from art, that art should lead the way. Moreno's practice and the development of the encounter term is part of this. The activities in and around the House of Encounter are meaningful in this context.

Today the House of Encounter may give associations to refugee reception centres or student housing bodies, while it was run on the basis of the idea of the encounter. Here came refugees, many of them jews, from large parts of Europe. They were often poor, they had left behind what they had and many of them came to Vienna with the dream of a new life. The first condition for human survival is food and a place to stay. In the sources we find that in Leopoldstadt, the Jewish quarters in Vienna, there were several soup kitchens, organized by various charities. There was distribution of free soup and bread to the poor. In the House of Encounter, people could stay without paying rent. The rent for the house was paid by charities. Within the house there were developed practices based on encounters and where the newly arrived were listened to. All had stories to tell, many of them traumatic. They didn't know each other, but they came with their stories about the lives they had lived, stories about escape, stories about a painful past. In this community listening became a practice. Listening may be practiced in a number of ways; in the practice of the encounter listening is about empathy, about feeling what the other feels, about “tele”. The painful stories are often those we protect ourselves from, but here they

were placed in a health context. In the House of Encounter, people experienced through the listening in the encounter that they could feel what others felt without making other people's stories their own. Later on this experience was turned into knowledge about the following: When the storyteller gives away his or her story to the other, he or she can free themselves from parts of their pain. The listener, on the other hand, can contain the story and contribute to liberating the other in the process. With the help of listening as a practice arises a room, a room of the encounter. This practice was part of the activities in the House of Encounter. Five years later, in 1914, Moreno formulated this practice in writing, and then in an expressionist style. There we learn that the encounter presupposes eye to eye contact. We also learn that in the encounter I can see your world with my eyes and you can see mine with yours. This was later developed into what we today know as role-reversal.

Another trait of the House of Encounter was the aesthetic activities. They were included in the framework of the encounter. The aesthetic activities were central in the practice. In Moreno's later theoretical explanations there is a spontaneity theory and an interpersonal theory. A core in both of them is an understanding of human nature. Human beings want to blossom and this doesn't originate in the ego but in the nature within us (Moreno 1955). One of Moreno's early findings, around the same time as the House of Encounter, amongst other from playing with children in Augarten and in various theatre productions with children, was that the areas where this blossoming best found its natural expressions were in children's play and in aesthetic activities. In the House of Encounter this also became part of the activities. Along with listening, song, dance, dramatization, play and humour became central activities. In Moreno's further practice, we see that they became the core of the continued work. As avant-garde artist, expressionist and reformer of the theatre we can see that Moreno drew valuable experiences from the activities around the House of Encounter from 1909. If we follow the lead from early meeting practice we may see how they manifest themselves naturally in the continued work.

9 Art as life practice

A hallmark of Moreno's development as theatre reformer and writer is his search for the truthful expression. The expression behind the mask and the social game; he searched for the "true" forms of expression. To penetrate the play and the mask is also a characteristic of the expressionist manifestations. Later on several observers have seen Moreno's contributions in an expressionist light, for instance McGovern (1983). He has shown that expressionism is a main source for the development of Moreno's Theatre of Spontaneity (Moreno 1983, p. 99).

Moreno writes that he considered his first spontaneous theatre from 1911 as both cultural work and spontaneity training where he was concerned with finding a new scenic form for a new theatre. Spontaneity has to be trained if knowledge about the human encounter is to become part of culture. Since Moreno had an ambitious goal for his social reform work, we have to see it in the context where it arose. Vienna was the city he lived in, where he saw the stiffened forms of culture; at the same time it was in this society he got the impulses for new theatre practices. His encounter practice and theatre was not

based on the customary conventions, the goal was to change society both in the form of “the spontaneously creative self” (Moreno 1983, p. 5) and “the healing of society” (Moreno 2012, p. 514). Later this was linked to public health and given the name sociatry, which means that we need to undergo, investigate, our own and society's normality. From his view from Praterstern 2, Moreno experienced at an early stage how encounters were healing, that they included both a listening attitude and aesthetic actions. The experiences from the House of Encounter gave him an eye with which to see the Viennese society, a society undergoing dissolution where “infections” in the interpersonal interaction, both in the form of superficiality, mask play, indifference and repression spread and became pathological, both on the micro and macro sociological level (Moreno 2012, p. 514).

Moreno answered to this with new practice forms: children's theatre, Theatre of Spontaneity, axiodrama and sociodrama. His first practices had nothing to do with therapy, he writes (Moreno 1983, p. 99). He wanted to find new answers to a stiffened and conserved culture. His early encounter and theatre experiences therefore gave him a language where sensuality could be rehearsed. In his theatre we see it naturally incorporated in the scenic productions related to role-reversal. Therefore expressionism and understanding of art is an important source here. Art has its basis in the sensory language of humans and we have seen before that Moreno's art ideal was linked to life as life practice. Art didn't primarily belong to the institutions but to life itself. It didn't belong to a refined culture but was as easily found in children's play. With Moreno art as life practice was linked to the encounter. It is the practice of the encounter we need to be in contact with when a human society is to be built and maintained, he thought.

10 Conclusion

In this text we have seen how Moreno's encounter practice can be seen within the framework of a modernist art movement, expressionism, and how its aim was to lead the way to a new and better society. Moreno's aim was to change society (Kellermann 2007, p. 169). It was on the basis of experiences from a society undergoing change and dissolution that he developed a practice and a philosophy based on the encounter. Later on Martin Buber would be known for his encounter philosophy, but before that, Moreno developed encounter as practice from 1909 onwards. It was a social drama full of contrasts that constituted the stage set for this practice; Vienna before World War I. Changes often have contrasts as a prerequisite, as we have also seen with Moreno. As a result of his change work, a large reservoir of practice forms have been made available, practice forms which are all more or less sensory exercises with the human encounter as a goal. Sociodrama is one of these forms. Through this form we discover that the encounter isn't first and foremost philosophically existential. It has to be found in everyday life, culture and society.

Then, as now, we are constantly reminded in our everyday life that humans, our thoughts, values and actions don't occur in a void. We are shaped by things around us, by persons as well as social forces and spirits of the time. The Norwegian trauma from July 22nd 2011 started with a man alone in his childhood room, alone in cyberspace. In the absence of a community, he created himself into a white knight and a mass murderer. One year thereafter, the author Karl Ove Knausgård reflected on what the distance in the midst

of us may do to a society. How one, from a distance, may view humans as something different from what they are. From a distance one may cease seeing what life is, Knausgård read, from the Town Hall Plaza of Oslo on July 22nd 2012. A hundred years before this Moreno developed a practice and a philosophy dealing with the fact that all life is encounter. His words were also built on the society he saw around him, a society marked by distanced conventions, mask play and conserved culture. The cultivated distance he saw around himself in Vienna before World War I created the preconditions for his term about the encounter. Later he writes that it was his early encounter experience that laid the foundation for his further theory building (Moreno 1955, pp. 15–16). Both as practice and term, the encounter is a rotation point with Moreno. The encounter has to be re-created again and again; it is a never ending sensory experience. Or, as he says somewhere else: “I was unnamed until you spoke to me.” (Marineau 1989, p. 64). Without address I am no-one. I only exist in the encounter.

End Notes

- 1 “To Dream Again” is the title of Zerka T. Moreno’s autobiography. The title is most likely taken from a conversation Moreno had with Freud around 1912. This conversation indicates the difference between their life projects. “To Dream Again” may in many ways be looked upon as Moreno’s credo.
- 2 Waldl, Robert. 2012. On October 12th 2012, Bjørn Rasmussen and the author had the opportunity to interview Waldl at Schottenfeldgasse 41 in Vienna, study various kinds of material concerning the contact between Moreno and Buber, including a copy of a letter from Moreno to Buber dated September 26th 1918. Waldl has Moreno’s influence on Buber’s encounter term as theme for his doctoral thesis: *Begegnung- J. L. Morenos Beitrag zu Martin Bubers dialogischer Philosophie*. Dissertation zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades der Philosophie an der Fakultät für Philosophie und Bildungswissenschaften der Universität Wien eingereicht von Mag. Robert Waldl. Wien, Jänner 2006.
- 3 Buber never published this motto. Waldl found it in an unpublished preface to the book.
- 4 Moreno, J.L. (1993). *Who Shall Survive?* The title of the book is a question put to Darwin’s Survival of the Fittest, on the natural selection of the species. In the book, Moreno answers that the survival of the self is dependent on being met. Health in the spiritual sense is also dependent on the encounter.

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Børge Kristoffersen, (b.1955) is Associate professor at Queen Maud University College, in Trondheim, Norway and Director of Sociopsychodrama. Børge belong to the first group that started at the Norwegian Psychodrama School in 1986. He has been a psychodrama teacher, trainer and member of the board at PsykodramaAkademin, Stockholm, since 1992 and at Trondheim Psykodrama Institute since 2007. Børge has particularly contributed to Moreno's thinking and practice in education, organization and conflict transformation with particular emphasis on sociatry. He has written several articles about Morenos's philosophy and methods.