Security and risks in Bibliodrama
Textraum

Experiences from Batchuns - a group without a leader!
I´ve just arrived home from the European Bibliodrama Congress in Batchuns, Austria and have brought a new experience with me, having a bibliodrama process in a group of eight participants without a leader. It was described as an experiment and I chose it because I was curious to see what I could learn from it.

When I try to summarize my experience, there are some more clear insights:
1.   I would only do this with participants who have a longer experience of bibliodrama or similar groupwork and have openness, willingness and not too much anxiety to join such a group. It is crucial for this kind of open leaderless process.
2.   I also experienced all participants being responsible for both their own process and the common process, myself included and without this it wouldn´t have been a group without a leader (or rather with several!) :-D

Without the two points above I can see many reasons why the work might have been damaged and I believe it these can be understood under the theme of ”Security and Risk”

Positive anxiety
Paul Moxnes, a professor of organsational psychology in Norway, has written a book called ”Positive anxiety” and I have used some of his thoughts about leadership and groups, for example in the Advanced Bibliodrama training course in Sweden and I have found it helpful in my own understanding of the need for both security and risk taking. The anxiety Moxnes writes about is the existential anxiety we all have to handle. If it is connected with a more pathological kind of anxiety this is something he separates out but also writes that it might be a question of intensity.

Moxnes says that goals, rulers, roles and calmness drives the anxeity away and also that organisation in itself is a way to cope with anxiety. A social structure is a way to handle anxiety, a structured environment with repeated patterns. If there is too little structure, anxiety will arise. If there is too much structure it can be boring, it might kill all inspiration or lust, and if it is totally rigid, nothing new will grow or develop. Dogmatism is a cognitive defense against anxiety and discomfort, it is a way to seek security.
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Moxnes also says that positive anxiety is the part of the anxiety that is connected to change for something better - both for individuals, groups and organisations. Anxiety is a sign of warning and a survival mechanism. It motivates new behaviour and if rightly interpreted, it is a representant for the beginning of knowledge and better effort. In all kind of change we meet insecurity, worries and doubts.

If the anxiety stops us it is negative, it makes us cold, but if it encourages a process that makes us active and movable, it is warm. In both cases it is a question of energy, but used in different ways. One of Moxnes' aims with his book is to show how cold anxiety can be warm! He writes ”The one that no longer is afraid to be afraid, will experience how the anxious energy can be useful.” His work has led him to the affirmation that even persons with pathological anxiety can separate from it and discover their positive anxiety and make a distinction between them!

Human beings have needs and two of them are the need for security and the need for growth! Moxnes shows how each person's internal me (our I) consists of different and

conflicting needs. The need for growth fights with the need for security. The human being can only grow with a sense of security, she/he wants security but can only get it through an unsatisfied need for growth. These two needs drive us in two directions.

Moxnes goes on and describes two other needs he calls secondary and these are the need for meaning and the need for freedom. These needs are more conscious and concretely symbolised than the prior nerds (security and growth) and we pay them more attention. A wish for freedom is often a hidden need for growth and the search for meaning a need for security. These secondary needs must be fulfilled in order to realise the prior ones. In the same way as growth and security, freedom and meaning can exclude each other.

Apart from these prior and secondary needs most people have two basic tendencies. One is towards braveness or heroism and the other towards fear or cowardice. Therefore the affect of fear is important to be both explored and handled! In fear there is a possibility (and also a dangerous closed door).

Sociobehaviour and Psychobehaviour

Moxnes describes two ways of behaviour that I think is relevant for the understanding of how we (leader) chose our ways in bibliodrama groups.

Sociobehaviour comes from the need for security and make us form clear norms, roles and rules. When a group early on creates a goal, and only lets thoughts and questions related to the goal be encouraged and when the participants only take notice of questions related to the goal (and not pay attention to feelings between individuals), and when the group finds it important to find a solution - Moxnes calls this a sociogroup.

Psychobehaviour comes from the need for freedom and growth. A psychogroup is nonstructured and has been (and is) a possibility to see ones own behaviour and cope with feelings in a group. Wilfred Bion, a well known grouptherapist, already formed a model for adults to train to be in groups, organisations or management. Bion said that the psychogroup is a therapeutic and pedagogic tool. In such a group the role of the leader is different from one in a sociogroup, here the leader is more someone who describes what he or she sees, like an interpreter and someone communicating feelings. This kind of leader doesn´t activate the group or tell them what to do or not do. This kind of leadership is typical in many experiental- and processgroups. The aim there is to create a kind of melting pot where the groupmembers can transform into someone knowing him- or herself and others better. Such a group probably experiences such things as little or no structure, identitystress (who am I? or what is asked from me? what will happen? how should I behave? what is my role? which are the norms? and so on), a need for investment of oneself into the situation, maybe having to fight for membership or to contribute to the effort of the group. Energy from such a process of "early defense processes" in life can later be positively useful in the group process. When the trust between the group members increases, the defenses can be reduced. That is how energy can be released for a learning process! (Non structure, stress, action and motivation)

Psychogroups tends to be more with **YOU** and sociogroups more with **IT**.
One major method in Bibliodrama is to move from a 'passive' approach e.g talk about a text to an 'active' approach, (a kind of just talk about IT) to act in roles in different ways, to become and act "as if" and explore this spontaneous play with its affections that connects to our personal lives. (a kind of coming in contact with YOU). [1]

Few people look for anxiety and insecurity! It is more something we tend to avoid. There will be resistance to handle and the third way beyond either just sociobehaviour or psychobehaviour is about trust! The most insecure in her- or himself is probably the one who tolerates the least anxiety and claims more security and prefers a structured situation (a sociogroup) rather than a loose structured situation. Most people have a need to look for security.

Bibliodrama - security and risks.
I can see how Bibliodrama can be a place that offers time and room for both security and the profit from taking risks. In my understanding of Bibliodrama and my role as a leader, I´m the one that is a facilitator of giving enough security in form of time, place and a group contract that is good enough for each participant to go on with[2], offering opportunities to the participants to explore an encounter with a text (mostly) where this exploration is encouraged as free and as spontanious (without judgement), as possible!

Bibliodrama must (may) not be a trustful situation, it can be something else. Therefore I think it is crucial to develop a trustful leadership over ourselves as leaders and how we build the way for our participants.

First we need to ask ourselves why we do bibliodrama, if we have a goal for the participants, what they shall perceive, learn, understand, beleive and so on, we already have a problem, we have closed the door on growth and freedom. My own answer is a belief in the freedom of every participant and their right to go their own way in their own time. To me it is the deepest belief and trust in the Gospel!
Secondly we need to trust the process and create/build a way that makes it possible, including active attention to our own work, our rules, roles and norms.[3]

Trust the process
As an expressive arts therapist I have learned many things and one of the books we read ”Trust the process”, that helped me to see the possibilities of offering both security and risks in bibliodrama, is written by Shaun Mc Niff, Ph D and the Provost of Endicott College in Beverly, Massachusetts. It has the subtitle ”An artist´s guide to letting go”[4]. His foreword starts with ”For every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1) and in this article there is only space to mention some keywords and sentences for further reading! (The quotations are the headlines in the book”.)
”License to create”, Unpredictable magic”, ”The wellspring of movement”, ”Stepping into the Unknown”, ”Emanation”, ”Mistakes and distortions”, ”In the beginning is the attitude”, ”Many ways of creating” ”The blank page”, ”Reframing”, ”Blocks”, ”Moving between Worlds”, ”Every experience has something to offer”, ”Karma of simple acts”, ”Distilling”, ”Gathering and arranging things”, ”Play and ornamentation”, ”At work”, ”Vision”, ”Create with what you already have”, ”Beginning close to home”, ”Creating with the environment”, ”Childhood memories and gifts”, ”Practice”, ”Acting and not acting”, ”Becoming a stranger”, ”Repetition”, ”Going on to the next one”, ”Criticism”, ”Wonder before the object”...

These headlines invite us to an exciting dance with the possibilities of a bibliodrama process that contains both security and risk taking.

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1. This description of 'passive' and 'active* approach comes from Peter Pitzele, "Scripture Windows"
2. Of course this also means that anything that disturbs this free exploration will be needed to be handled along the way, and that knowledge is why a bibliodramaleader needs education and practice with supervision. Groupwork is a challenge, and even the leader of bibliodrama need to handle anxiety;-)
3. This "way" in bibliodrama to build is not the aim of this article, it must be learned and experienced!
4. Shaun Mc Niff, "Trust the process. An artist´s guide to letting go". Shambhala, Boston&London 1998. ISBN 1-57062-357-0