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## **MOJ ŽIVOTNI PUT: MEMOARI JEDNOG PSIHIJATRA (IRVIN D. YALOM)**

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## **/ BECOMING MYSELF: A PSYCHIATRIST'S MEMOIR (IRVIN D. YALOM)**

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Irvin D. Yalom ubraja se među najznačajnije i najutjecajnije psihijatre i psihoterapeute suvremenog doba. Autor je brojnih djela koja su u najvećoj mjeri proizašla iz njegova dugogodišnjeg psihoterapijskog rada te nude prikaze kliničkih slučajeva i načina rada s pacijentima. Njegov udžbenik *Osnove grupne psihoterapije* smatra se nezaoobilaznim djelom za sve stručnjake koji rade s terapijskim grupama, neovisno o njihovoj temeljnoj psihoterapijskoj orijentaciji. Duboko razumijevanje ljudske

Irvin D. Yalom is regarded as one of the most important and influential psychiatrists and psychotherapists of the modern era. He is the author of numerous works, many stemming from his decades-long psychotherapeutic practice, which offer insights into clinical cases and therapeutic work with patients. His textbook, *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*, is considered indispensable for all professionals working with therapy groups, regardless of their primary psychotherapeutic orientation. Yalom has also translated his profound

psihe Yalom je pretočio i u književna djela, među kojima se ističe roman *Problem Spinoza*.

Bez obzira radi li se o stručnoj literaturi ili romanima, čitanje Yalomovih knjiga predstavlja posebno iskustvo. Stoga me je objavljivanje knjige *Moj životni put* posebno zainteresiralo. Izvorno izdanje na engleskom jeziku objavljeno je 2017. godine, dok je hrvatski prijevod izašao 2025. godine u nakladi izdavačke kuće Harfa.

Knjiga *Moj životni put*, s podnaslovom *Memoari jednog psihijatra*, donosi intimnu i intelektualno poticajnu autobiografiju. U ovom djelu Yalom ne opisuje isključivo svoj profesionalni razvoj, već se bavi i temeljnim egzistencijalnim pitanjima koja su obilježila njegov osobni život, terapijsku praksu i filozofiju pomaganja. Ne radi se o tipičnoj autobiografiji kakvih je posljednjih desetljeća mnogo u književnoj produkciji, već o djelu koje se može čitati kao spoj osobne ispovijesti, stručne refleksije i duboko ljudske potrage za smislom.

Jedna od ključnih kvaliteta ove autobiografije jest autorova iznimna iskrenost. Yalom otvoreno govori o vlastitim dvojabama, strahovima, pogreškama i nesigurnostima, čime razgrađuje idealiziranu sliku terapeuta kao nepogrešivog autoriteta. Umjesto toga, pred čitateljem se pojavljuje osoba koja uči zajedno sa svojim pacijentima, koja se

understanding of the human psyche into literary works, among which the novel *The Spinoza Problem* stands out as a prime example.

Whether they belong to professional literature or fiction, reading Yalom's books is a distinctive and meaningful experience. For this reason, the publication of *Becoming Myself* particularly caught my interest. The original edition was published in 2017, and the Croatian translation was released in 2025 by the Harfa Publishing House.

*Becoming Myself: A Psychiatrist's Memoir* offers an intimate and intellectually stimulating autobiography. In this work, Yalom not only describes his professional development but also addresses the fundamental existential questions that have shaped his personal life, therapeutic practice, and philosophy of helping. This is not a typical autobiography of the kind that has proliferated in recent decades but rather a work that can be read as a blend of personal confession, professional reflection, and a deeply human search for meaning.

One of the key qualities of this autobiography is the author's exceptional honesty. Yalom openly speaks about his doubts, fears, mistakes, and insecurities, thereby dismantling the idealized image of the therapist as an infallible authority. Instead, the reader encounters a person who learns alongside his patients, confronts his own transience, mortality, and limitations, and does not hesitate to re-



suočava s vlastitom prolaznošću, smrtnosti i ograničenjima te se ne ustručava to pokazati. Upravo ta otvorenost i ranjivost daju knjizi posebnu težinu i vjerodostojnost.

Yalomov profesionalni razvoj usko je povezan s nastankom i razvojem egzistencijalne psihoterapije. U knjizi jasno pokazuje na koji su način njegova osobna životna iskustva, od odrastanja u obitelji židovskih imigranata, preko akademskih izazova, do suočavanja sa starenjem i smrću, oblikovala njegov terapijski pristup. Temeljne egzistencijalne teme, poput smrti, slobode, izolacije, stigme i besmisla, ne prikazuje kao apstraktne teorijske konstrukte, već kao stvarna i svakodnevna iskustva s kojima se suočava svaki čovjek, uključujući i samog terapeuta.

Tijekom svoje karijere, Yalom je imao priliku surađivati i biti u kontaktu s brojnim istaknutim psihijatrima i psihoterapeutima, čija su imena dobro poznata stručnim krugovima, poput Viktora Frankla, Johna Bowlbyja, Donalda Winnicotta, Rolla Maya i Ronalda Lainga, a s nekima od njih razvio je i bliska prijateljstva. Obrazovao se u renomiranim institucijama, uključujući Tavistock kliniku. Stečena znanja kontinuirano je propitivao, promatrao i istraživao, ne prihvaćajući nekritički postojeće modele. Nije bio sklon distanciranom odnosu karakterističnom za klasičnu psihoanalitičku tehni-

veal them. It is precisely this openness and vulnerability that give this book its particular depth and credibility.

Yalom's professional development is closely linked to the emergence and evolution of existential psychotherapy. In the book, he clearly demonstrates how his personal life experiences—from growing up in a family of Jewish immigrants, through academic challenges, to confronting aging and death—shaped his therapeutic approach. Fundamental existential themes such as death, freedom, isolation, anxiety, experiences of stigma, and meaninglessness are not presented as abstract theoretical constructs but as real and everyday experiences faced by every human being, including the therapist himself.

Throughout his career, Yalom had the opportunity to collaborate with and maintain contact with many prominent psychiatrists and psychotherapists whose names are well known in professional circles, such as Viktor Frankl, John Bowlby, Donald Winnicott, Rollo May, and Ronald Laing. He developed close friendships with some of them. He received his training at renowned institutions, including the Tavistock Clinic. The knowledge he acquired was continuously questioned, observed, and explored, as he refused to accept existing models uncritically. He was not inclined toward the detached stance characteristic of classical psychoanalytic technique, but instead sought, through his own work and research, a more immediate and

ku, već je kroz vlastiti rad i istraživanje nastojao pronaći drugačiji, neposredniji pristup pacijentima i psihoterapiji.

Yalom se nije ustručavao potražiti psihoterapijsku pomoć kada bi procijenio da ga osobni problemi značajno opterećuju i utječu na njegov profesionalni rad. Također je pokazivao snažnu potrebu za razmjenom opažanja s kolegama, najčešće kroz oblike *peer-supervizije* i diskusijskih grupa, koje su ponekad trajale desetljećima. Značajan dio svoje energije posvetio je edukaciji mladih psihijatara i psihoterapeuta, nastojeći pronaći najučinkovitije načine da ih potakne na promišljanje o ljudskoj psihi i terapeutskoj praksi.

Na svom putu od znanstvenika prema književniku, Yalom je ostao otvoren za nova iskustva, izrazito znatiželjan, ali i iznimno discipliniran i predan radu.

Posebno je dojmljiv način na koji autor opisuje odnos s pacijentima. Terapijski proces prikazan je kao susret dviju ravnopravnih osoba, a ne kao hijerarhijski odnos stručnjaka i klijenta. Yalom naglašava važnost autentičnosti, empatije i prisutnosti u trenutku „ovdje i sada“, vraćajući psihoterapiju njezinoj humanističkoj biti. U tom smislu, *Moj životni put* može se promatrati ne samo kao autobiografija, već i kao svojevrsni etički vodič za pomaganje drugima.

Osim profesionalnih tema, knjiga se bavi i procesom starenja te suočavanjem s

authentic approach to patients and psychotherapy.

Yalom did not hesitate to seek psychotherapeutic help himself when he assessed that personal difficulties were significantly burdening him and affecting his professional work. He also demonstrated a strong need to exchange observations with colleagues, most often through forms of peer supervision and long-term discussion groups that sometimes lasted for decades. A significant portion of his energy was devoted to educating young psychiatrists and psychotherapists, as he sought the most effective ways to encourage them to reflect on the human psyche and therapeutic practice.

On his path from scientist to writer, Yalom remained open to new experiences, highly curious, yet at the same time exceptionally disciplined and deeply committed to his work.

The author's description of his relationships with patients is especially impressive. The therapeutic process is presented as an encounter between two equal individuals rather than a hierarchical relationship between an expert and a client. Yalom emphasizes the importance of authenticity, empathy, and presence in the "here and now," thereby returning psychotherapy to its humanistic essence. In this sense, *Becoming Myself* can be read not only as an autobiography, but also as a type of ethical guide to therapeutic and human helping relationships.



krajem života. Yalomova promišljanja o prolaznosti ispunjena su tugom, ali i dubokom zahvalnošću. Umjesto rezignacije, autor nudi zrelu prihvaćenost života sa svim njegovim ograničenjima i ljepotama. Ovi dijelovi snažno djeluju na čitatelja jer potiču na osobnu refleksiju o prioritetima, odnosima i vrijednostima. Posebno se ističe misao koja se više puta ponavlja u knjizi: smrću se ne gubi budućnost, već prošlost.

Stilski, knjiga je napisana jasno, toplo i pristupačno, bez pretjerane uporabe stručne terminologije, što je čini razumljivom i čitateljima izvan psihoterapijske struke. Yalomov pripovjedački ton je smiren, ali emocionalno snažan, prožet mudrošću stečenom dugogodišnjim iskustvom i radom s ljudskom patnjom. Nažalost, dio tog inače pitkog stila djelomično je izgubljen u hrvatskom prijevodu, koji ostavlja dojam kao da je nastao uz pomoć prevodilačkih alata. Čak su i rijetki stručni termini često neadekvatno prevedeni, vjerojatno bez konzultiranja relevantne domaće stručne literature.

Posebno impresivna ostaje količina energije i vremena koju je Yalom ulagao u svoj rad, pritom ne zanemarujući obiteljske odnose, prijateljstva i društveni život. Još je fascinantnija uloga njegove supruge, također znanstvenice i spisateljice, koja je uz vlastiti profesionalni angažman brinula o njihovo če-

In addition to professional themes, the book addresses the process of aging and the confrontation with the end of life. Yalom's reflections on transience are permeated by sadness, yet also by deep gratitude. Instead of resignation, the author offers a mature acceptance of life with all its limitations and beauties. These sections have a particularly strong impact on the reader, as they invite personal reflection on priorities, relationships, and values. A recurring thought in the book is especially striking: with death, it is not the future that is lost, but the past.

Stylistically, the book is written clearly, warmly, and accessibly, without excessive use of technical terminology, making it understandable even to readers outside the psychotherapeutic profession. Yalom's narrative tone is calm yet emotionally powerful, imbued with wisdom gained through years of experience and work with human suffering. Unfortunately, this otherwise fluent style is partially lost in the Croatian translation, which at times gives the impression of relying heavily on machine translation. Even the relatively few technical terms are often inadequately translated, likely without consulting relevant domestic professional literature.

What remains particularly impressive is the amount of energy and time Yalom has invested in his work, without neglecting family relationships, friendships, and social life. Even more fascinating is the role of his wife, herself a

tvero djece i bila ključni oslonac društvenih odnosa i za supruga i za obitelj.

Može se zaključiti da je *Moj životni put* Irvina Yaloma iznimno inspirativno djelo koje nadilazi okvire klasične autobiografije. Riječ je o knjizi koja promišlja kako živjeti svjesno, kako se nositi s egzistencijalnim strahovima i kako u odnosima s drugima pronaći smisao. Djelo zasigurno ne ostavlja čitatelja ravnodušnim, a osobito stručnjake iz područja psihijatrije i psihoterapije, te poziva na introspekciju i hrabro suočavanje s vlastitim životnim i profesionalnim putem.

scientist and writer, who, alongside her own professional commitments, cared for their four children and served as a key pillar of social relationships for both her husband and the family.

In conclusion, *Becoming Myself* by Irvin D. Yalom is an exceptionally inspiring work that transcends the boundaries of a classic autobiography. It is a book that reflects on how to live consciously, cope with existential fears, and find meaning in relationships with others—inviting introspection and a courageous confrontation with one's own personal and professional path.