

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Good Practice in Psychodrama: An Analytic Perspective*, by Don Feasey.  
London: Whurr Publishers. 2001.

With this book about psychodrama, there are now more than a score of new books on the subject. I am glad to see that in this book the author has sought to bridge the gap between psychodrama and psychoanalysis. In the 166-page paperback, published in the United Kingdom, Feasey extends the theories in his other books, such as those in *Good Practice in Psychotherapy & Counselling*, published in 1999.

Feasey writes as a psychodramatist who finds the insights of psychoanalysis very useful in working with the group and the protagonist. Although Feasey is not a fully accredited psychoanalyst, he has had many years of training as a group analyst. His goal in the book is to help psychodramatists integrate psychodynamic principles. The book can also appeal to psychotherapists with a more psychodynamic orientation so that they may integrate some aspects of psychodrama into their work, an aspect I applaud.

It is true that Moreno himself did not write much about psychoanalysis, except to note its limitations especially in regard to the underuse of the powerful medium of action. Nonetheless, the mainstream of psychodrama in the last forty years has continued to move into the mainstream of psychotherapy. That has been even more true in the United Kingdom. For example, a decade ago Paul Holmes wrote *The Inner World Outside* (alas, out of print) that explained psychodrama in terms of the psychoanalytic object relations theory.

Although a number of theoretical and practical concerns can be integrated, technique tends to be quite different. Of interest, however, Feasey seems willing to use the psychoanalytic technique of sitting quietly rather than actively warming up his group. I admit that allowing a group's anxiety to build up may also be a kind of warming-up device, but it introduces an artifact of a most unnatural group dynamic—that of pure nonstructure with a recognized leader doing nothing. The reactions to that artificial setting, that ambiguity, are only partially transferenceal. The provocative element of

leaders not playing their expected role arouses all the past feelings toward authority figures who similarly did not behave according to expectations. The here-and-now element also presents a subtle double bind: The leader/helper is supposedly helping in a way that makes people feel uncomfortable, which is defined by the situation as helpful, although anxiety is experienced as the opposite of helpfulness. In such situations, patients tend to regress slightly and exhibit their characteristic response patterns more flagrantly, but that procedure is a bit unfair because the transference dynamics are contaminated by the realistically ambiguous tele that is generated. This particular conflation of analytic and psychodramatic techniques thus leaves me feeling wary about its actual impact.

A worthwhile aspect of the book is that it illustrates the value of knowledge of group dynamics principles as a part of being an effective psychodramatist. For example, on pages 141–142, Feasey notes that denial can be operating collectively and acknowledges the value in its being addressed. I also appreciated the way Feasey admits some of his mistakes. His use of psychoanalysis is not orthodox—and that statement is a compliment. For example, he notes, as do analytical psychologists (i.e., Jungians), that the unconscious can be a source of positive material and not just the repository of that which is disowned. He further encourages his colleagues to look into the work of Adler. (I believe, however, that he overestimated the actual influence of Adler in the United States. Although Adler has influenced many developments in a subtle way, the number of psychotherapists who identify themselves chiefly as Adlerian is rather modest. Still, Rudolf Dreikurs, one of Adler's followers in the 1950s, did arrange for Adaline Starr to study psychodrama, and she later wrote one of the early books on how psychodrama and Adlerian thought can be used synergistically.) I generally agree with Feasey's critique of Melanie Klein. I note, however, that the object relations school of thought (which began with Klein but was significantly revised and expanded by Fairbairn in the 1940s and Guntrip and Winnicott in the 1950s–1960s, and was revised and expanded in the United States by Otto Kernberg and many others) became a significant force in the United States, especially during the late 1970s through the 1980s.

I appreciated the author's bringing up the ethical problem of doing some psychodramatic work and not sufficiently attending to issues of follow-up. That needs to be a topic of lively discussion and possible self-criticism. Feasey mentioned witnessing how a protagonist felt somewhat stranded as a result of the "one-off" approach. Feasey also cites Kellermann in noting that single sessions should not be allowed to communicate the idea that psychodrama can effect significant change on its own without other modes of follow-up and working through feelings. He notes, nevertheless, how psychodrama might be very useful as an integral part of a therapeutic community. Feasey also cited the

temptation or group pressure on the director to use the process as a form of entertainment, and I wish to hear more about that problem.

Unfortunately, the book does have some problems. With the examples offered, Feasey does not fully explore the actual dynamics of either the protagonist or the group, and other interpretations may occur to the reader. I noticed a number of instances of errors in scholarship and misspelling (consistently, not a typo). Some authors' names are misspelled, and names of the American journals are inaccurate. The publishing location of the core texts is not New York (which means New York City) but Beacon, New York, at Beacon House, not to be confused with another publisher, Beacon Press. Among other mistakes, Feasey mentioned that I am aligned with the existential school. My orientation, as explained in my book, *Foundations of Psychodrama*, is eclectic but strongly grounded in psychodynamic thinking.

It was misleading to say that psychodrama came from Europe, because the method itself was not developed until a decade after Moreno emigrated from Vienna to the United States. I admit that one might say that a precursor for psychodrama (the Theater of Spontaneity that Moreno did create in Vienna) should count, but a precursor is not the same as the method. Also, it is certainly an exaggeration to suggest that the method was taken up "with enthusiasm" by the general field of psychotherapy. The opposite is closer to the truth, and Moreno's impact was limited, although it did act as a facilitator and catalyst to other developments. Even when assessing developments in his own country, the author seems ignorant of the history. Writing that Marcia Karp arrived in the mid-80s is late by a decade. J. L. Moreno, who died in 1974, hardly affected the scene in Great Britain, but Zerka Moreno's occasional teaching visits did add energy to Karp's pioneering work.

The author seems unaware of the rich literature in psychodrama that has been published outside of England in the last 20 years. He did not cite later editions of texts, published here and in England, that contain more current bibliographical sources. For example, there is no mention of the Holmes, Karp, and Tavon 1998 *Handbook of Psychodrama*, which I consider an outstanding anthology. He does not mention another anthology published by Holmes, Karp, and Watson in 1994 but cites two small books by Brazier and Gale about psychodrama that I find quite dubious in value.

I applaud the author's effort to disseminate information about psychodrama. Although readers may find some useful psychodynamic ideas in the book, its problems are such that I can only offer a mixed review.

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