Sternberg and Garcia have provided a finely drawn account of the historical and theoretical background that gave rise to sociodrama, the fundamentals of its theory and practice, and the specifics of its application. In doing so, they champion the high hopes of J. L. Moreno for sociodrama's continuing role in the exploration of social issues and the resolution of conflicts—and serve his cause well.

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Theory and Practice of Action and Drama Techniques, by Leni Verhofstadt-Denève. 2000. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

The subtitle for this philosophical tome is *Developmental Psychotherapy From an Existential–Dialectical Viewpoint.* The book might have been more accurately titled "A Foundation in Existential–Dialectical Developmental Psychology," or "A Phenomenological–Dialectical Approach to Personality and Its Application to Action–Based Therapies." Most likely, the publisher did not want a title that would intimidate readers, especially practitioners of action techniques. Actually, this book, or something like it, is exactly what practitioners of psychodrama and other action-based therapeutic techniques need most. Clearly, one of the most glaring deficits in the training and professional development of action-focused therapists is a coherent philosophical foundation out of which technique can develop and be guided. Verhofstadt-Denève provides a well-grounded and philosophically sound approach to human psychology. Unfortunately, many drama therapists and psychodramatists may find it difficult to interpret, especially if they do not read French. The author religiously preserves the French language of many important and seminal quotations and fails to include any translation to accompany them.

Pick up any scholarly philosophy journal or significant philosophy work, and you will find that French, Latin, and German are standard vehicles for imparting the wisdom of the ages. No one wants to miss the most intimate linguistic nuance of philosophical meaning. Among philosophy scholars, it may be felt that to translate those quotations would take from their meaning and diminish their power. Like Hebrew to the Torah, Arabic to the Quran, or Latin to the Catholic canon, there is a perception of magical power in the word as given in its original form. Language is the voice of the soul. To translate it is to lose the connection to the heart of the meaning itself. Transformed into another language, it may make sense, but it will not carry the power or the author's heart and soul. The reader will not *feel* what the author meant originally. But how will the average psychodramatist feel about so much "in-your-

face" French that comes without any accompanying translation? Bored? Turned off? Those who read both English (the language in which the book is written) and French will have the advantage. The focus of the book is the word, not the action, and action-oriented therapists may need to adjust their orientation somewhat to benefit from it.

Part of the reason some of us prefer action-based therapeutic techniques is because *the word* is not as easy for us to relate to. Moreno himself scoffed at Freudian "talk therapy" and revealed the healing power of dramatized emotions in the hands of a trained therapist. Freud was a writer and may have spent more time writing about his patients than listening to them, much to the benefit of human understanding. But psychodramatists are not known as writers. The word is not their strength, and they are not philosophers. The application of psychodramatic techniques may be guided to a degree by the principles expounded by Moreno himself, and those who are well trained are aware of these concepts; but in practice, one usually observes practitioners guided by such popular psychotherapeutic orientations as cognitive behavioral psychology, ego psychology, self-psychology, and so forth. Their focus, however, is not in those schools. They are primarily practitioners of the art of psychodrama. It would be unfair to expect to find a great interest in complex existential metapsychology among psychodramatists. Leni Verhofstadt-Denève boldly ignores this reality and presents to her audience a depth of philosophical and psychological understanding that is unparalleled in the world of psychodrama. Perhaps this is what is needed most among practitioners, a solid philosophical foundation for practice technique.

So much of what is done in the circle of the psychodrama group is left unexplained and even misunderstood. Rarely do we have a context in which to define what is happening. Some may argue that it is not necessary to understand but that simply by *doing*, we work through our unresolved pasts. Verhofstadt-Denève attempts to give some meaning and structure to the psychological phenomena that can occur in psychodrama. Her approach requires a willingness to expand one's thinking into the realms of existential philosophy and from there into a phenomenological–dialectical personality model (Phe-Di P Model). We must become comfortable with exploring the subjective and objective self and learn to differentiate between "I" and "ME," between self-observation and the observations of others, and answer the central questions of "Who am I" (*Self-Image*),"Who would I like to be" (*Ideal-Self*), "What are others like" (*Alter-Image*), "What should others be like" (*Ideal-Alter*), "How do others perceive me?" (*Meta-Self*), and "How should others perceive me?" (*Ideal-Meta-Self*)—all ideas common to the psychodrama.

Verhofstadt-Denève gives a special position to the character of "the other." By using Hegelian dialectics, she develops an understanding of self-reflection in the interaction between self and other, allowing a critical assessment of the

Ego by the Alter that expands perceptions beyond the egocentric tendencies so common to us all. As she moves into the therapeutic process, we see how philosophical concepts begin to take shape in the context of therapeutic action. We can see how personality change can occur in ever so small increments as the protagonist encounters his counterpart as an antagonist and an interaction ensues in which the developmental dialectic of frustration and resolution progressively brings insight to the participants in the drama.

Verhofstadt-Denève refers to her book as a "manual." It would be difficult to refer quickly to this text to find a solution to a specific problem, and it does not give us a step-by-step formula for addressing any particular impasse common to psychodrama. The "practicable frame of reference" she attempts to establish must truly be built in the mind of the reader through long and contemplative study. That is a much-needed exercise, today more than ever. Her attempt to deal with not only the "*content* of development but also with the motivating *dynamics* of the developmental process" is to be applauded.

We often address traumas or chronic traumatta experienced by our clients as though they were the source of infinitely penetrating negative influences permeating every fiber of the human personality. Verhofstadt-Denève views the recurring existential themes of anxiety, guilt, loneliness, and the self-perception of finiteness as essential content of the developmental process out of which enduring strength and positive self-esteem can arise through critical reflection on the self, others, and the object world.

After providing us with a grounding in basic existential psychology and the principles of the existential–dialectical personality development model, Verhofstadt-Denève presents methods and practical applications using these concepts. The chapter on psychodrama may seem a bit elementary to the experienced practitioner, but it is valuable to explore with an open mind, suspending one's former perspectives and training and remembering that she is coming from an existentialist perspective. As she clarifies in the following chapters, she sees psychodrama as "intrinsically dialectical in nature." She then moves to another practical application, that of a psychodramatic approach to dreams in a developmental therapy for adolescents. That is an especially enlightening application with easy-to-follow directions. An additional chapter on the use of action and drama techniques in educational settings is disappointingly short. That is an area that warrants the attention of an entire book.

Four chapters by contributing authors follow and elucidate action techniques for specific populations. Braet's focuses primarily on enhancing self-image and boosting self-esteem in obese children. Unfortunately, a gross printing error in figure 10.2 leaves one frustrated when trying to understand the accompanying text. In spite of that, there is real and applicable value in that chapter that applies to the dialectical concepts of Verhofstadt-Denève in a very easy-to-replicate manner. The remaining chapters are interesting, each

in their own application of the Phe–Di P model, but they are unfortunately brief and lack the depth of discourse and explanation of Verhofstadt-Denève's work. As more practitioners make Verhofstadt-Denève's approach their own, perhaps other works will come forth with more detailed examples and with greater depth of explication.

It is truly refreshing and encouraging to find that someone who understands psychodrama and the basic concepts first presented by Moreno has tackled the monumental task of grounding techniques in a theoretical perspective that can inspire creative applications in clinical practice. Although others have focused on theory before, Verhofstadt-Denève provides a philosophical basis that informs theory in a way that can inspire practitioners.

Too often practitioners of psychodrama are inspired by their own inner feelings and intuition, without an organized conceptual framework. That can lead to shallowness and can seriously limit the effectiveness of practice. There is an abundance of spiritual and scientific perspectives that permeate the therapeutic mind-sets of action-based therapists. We believe in many things, from the mystical to the concrete. Our faith is formed in our developmental experience, and that inevitably colors our view of human nature. Most of us are, by virtue of our professional ethics, accepting and open to our clients' positions and interpretations of the powers in their universe. We can usually sense when a client's interpretation of events or feelings begins to enter the realm of the irrational. We can usually distinguish between magical denials of reality and positions of faith-based perspectives. But a methodological approach to the theoretical underpinnings of human self-concept change through psychodramatic technique is rarely a time-consuming focus of practitioners who devote their energies moving from client to client or group to group.

Verhofstadt-Denève prompts us to slow down and take the time to work through the development of our own view of the human self. The truth is in the client. Regardless of how we may feel, what we may observe, or what interpretation, counsel, or direction we may give, the outcome lies in the being of the client.

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What I Heard in the Silence: Role Reversal, Trauma, and Creativity in the Lives of Women, by Maria V. Bergmann. 2000. Madison, CT: International Universities Press.

Readers who notice this book in the bookstore will probably be attracted by its title and by the cover photo of George Segal's "Three People on Four