

Book Review

***Fundamentals of Psychodrama.* By Falko von Ameln, PhD and Jochen Becker-Ebel, PhD. Springer Nature, 2020.**

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Fundamentals of Psychodrama provides one of the best foundational overviews of the history, theory, and practice of sociometry, psychodrama, and group psychotherapy since Adam Blatner's *Foundations of Psychodrama* (2000) 21 years ago. It is one of the only contemporary psychodrama books comprehensively outlining the basics of Moreno's triadic system without focusing on the promotion of another model or special area of practice. This text is an updated English translation of the best-selling German psychodrama textbook (von Ameln & Kramer, 2014) now in its updated third edition of publication (first published in 2004, second edition in 2009). The new publication allows the English-speaking psychodrama community to benefit from the expertise and experience of the authors.

The preface author, Jonathan Moreno, articulates that his father would have been made proud by the comprehensive nature of this book. This publication is a balanced blend of practice, case examples, theory, research, and history. The 334-page book is structured in four major parts: "Methodological Fundamentals of Psychodrama," "Preparation and Design of Psychodramatic Processes," "Theoretical Foundations of Psychodrama," and "Interdisciplinary Topics in Working with Psychodrama." Individual chapters are written to stand alone as well as to collectively offer a strongly integrated book. The authors integrate their expertise in organizational consultation throughout the book while also including content on systemic constellations, which is popular in Germany and shares much in common with psychodrama. The unique insights in this area are important contributions to the English literature as few others have written about this overlap (see Carnabucci & Anderson, 2011). In my own writing (see Giacomucci, 2021), I have utilized this book as a core reference for psychodrama theory and practice.

Part one offers the basics of psychodrama, including the phases of a group, the five elements of an enactment, and detailed descriptions of various arrangements and interventions used in psychodrama work. Content is both foundational and diverse in that it also includes the use of the magic shop, dream work, fairy tales, systemic constellations work, and playback. There is an extensive chapter on "Action Techniques in Psychodrama," which includes comprehensive

sections on doubling and role reversal. This chapter outlines various types of role reversals and doubles, including the simple role reversal; role reversal from the antagonist's role with another auxiliary ego; indirect role reversal with a stand-in; role change with auxiliary objects and symbols; collective role reversal; empathetic/supportive double; the exploratory double, doubling of self-observations; the questioning double; strengthening double; persuasive double; interpretive double; paradoxical double; divided/multiple doubles; and advisory double. This chapter is easily one of the most detailed presentations of the multiple types of role reversal and doubling techniques. This section also includes a chapter on using psychodrama in one-to-one settings and another on the utilization of sociodrama.

Part two of the book, "Preparation and Design of Psychodramatic Processes," includes chapters on the contract with the protagonist and the warm-up, action, and integration phases of a psychodrama group. This section ends with a final short chapter titled "The Appraisal and Integration Phase," which includes content on a fourth processing phase used in psychodrama training sessions.

Part three of the book addresses the "Theoretical Foundations of Psychodrama" and presents the history and theory of sociometry, psychodrama, and group psychotherapy. These three chapters offer a solid teaching of Morenian history and philosophy, including emphasis on Moreno's mysticism, which is often overlooked.

The fourth and final part of the book, "Interdisciplinary Topics in Working with Psychodrama," contains five unique chapters addressing broad but meaningful themes, such as working with "taboo topics," resistance, group dynamics, intercultural elements, and therapeutic factors in psychodrama. At the end of the book, there is also a glossary defining several dozen psychodramatic concepts and terms.

Fundamentals of Psychodrama is published by Springer Nature, a prominent academic publisher. The book is accessible through Springer's online academic database, which makes it freely accessible to most university students, professors, and researchers. Although easily accessible to those belonging to the academic community, one of the biggest limitations of this book is its cost, which ranges from \$139.99 to \$79.98 for the different versions offered. However, anyone with access to the online book through university credentials has another option of purchasing a \$24.99 "MyCopy Softcover," which is a lower quality, black-and-white printing of the softcover book. Some of the other limitations of the book include inconsistent terminology used by the psychodrama community in the United States. Terminology is slightly different although well explained and understandable. This is both a limitation and a strength, however, as it introduces the American community to a broader psychodrama vocabulary used in Europe and beyond.

Fundamental of Psychodrama is a strong psychodrama text recommended for all psychodramatists—especially students, trainees, scholars, and practitioners preparing for their certification exam. Furthermore, professionals unfamiliar with psychodrama will find everything they need to understand the practice and theory of Moreno's work in this book.

REFERENCES

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