

**THE PSYCHOCYBERNETIC MODEL  
OF ART THERAPY**

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# THE PSYCHOCYBERNETIC MODEL OF ART THERAPY

*By*

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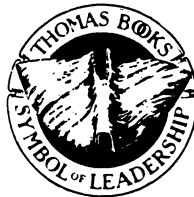
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## FOREWORD

This book is an instrument of complex knowledge transfer on the subject of art therapy and specifically on the method designed and defined by the author as the psychocybernetic model of intervention.

More than half of the book is dedicated to a detailed account of the origins and the rationale of art therapy. These first six chapters attest to the serious background research and include a rich array of historical and biographical data. All this is presented with logical clarity. The precise quotations from the literature are clearly distinguishable in the text from anecdotal data and from the backbone of the author's interpretation and judicious criticism of various theoretical models.

The description of the psychocybernetic model and the justification for its use is built on its comparative merit over the other models. It is an interactive model based on well defined phases of the therapeutic process.

The second half of the book (chapters 7 to 11) address in detail the therapeutic process. In this segment the theoretical basis for each phase is again clearly defined and interwoven with illustrative case vignettes and several helpful case discussions.

For the therapist who intends to use the psychocybernetic model it is of great value to find detailed case descriptions including the interpretation of the dynamics of various phases in addition to such practical details as the list of materials to be used with different patient populations, the space requirements and the time frame of individual and group sessions.

The four phases of the therapeutic process: The Unfreezing phase, the Doing phase, the Dialogue phase, and the Ending and Integrating phase are demonstrated through case material which include the patients' graphic productions under discussion.

The author provides several clearly presented graphs in support of her concept of the therapeutic process.

The whole second half of the book (chapters 7 to 11) could stand on its own as a practical guide to the implementation of the psychocybernetic

model. Nonetheless, even this segment contains explicit theoretical data in support of the author's views and suggestions.

In order to support the clinical effectiveness of her method the author quotes a comparative research study by Lindenmuth on 298 depressed patients in a nursing home exposed to various treatment modalities. The art therapy was conducted by a therapist (MSW) who received instruction in the psychocybernetic model from the author. The results of this study attest to statistically significant (.001 level) improvement of depression scores in the groups exposed to expressive therapies (art, music, and exercise therapy).

The book is an important reference volume on the theoretical foundations of art therapy—each chapter in the first half could be used as a separate self-contained paper on its respective subject. The clear definitions of this historical overview introduce the reader to such broad topics as cybernetics, general system theory, information processing, imagery, and the rapport of systems and cognition.

While this first half may be considered as being addressed primarily to academicians it is also useful to the practitioner of the psychocybernetic model of art therapy. At the same time this book in its second half contains excellent practical details which warrant its use by practitioners who are interested to include this new method into their day to day work with patients.

A comprehensive bibliography and index add weight to this scholarly text.

I can wholeheartedly recommend this volume as a reference textbook for libraries and for teachers of expressive therapies as well as for the use by practitioners of various forms of psychotherapy.

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*University of Pittsburgh and*

*President, American Society of Psychopathology of*

*Expression*

## FOREWORD

Aina Nucho's clinical practice and teaching over the last twenty years has paralleled many of the major developments in the field of art therapy. She is perhaps one of the last persons to interview Margaret Naumburg, the eminent pioneer in art therapy whose stellar contributions to art therapy are well known. Having participated in and witnessed the merging of art and therapy in the United States, it is appropriate that Nucho be the chronicler of this new modality of interpersonal helping. That she has done—and very ably—taking the reader back to the Ancient Greece, down through the ages into the late 19th and early 20th centuries, coming to Switzerland and to Carl Jung and his method of active imagination, and then going further on into the contemporary scene. By depicting the evolution of art therapy, Nucho demonstrates the difference between the art wing and the therapy wing of art therapy and she underscores the need for a new model in this form of psychotherapy.

Nucho terms that new model the psychocybernetic model of art therapy. Utilizing the general system approach she develops a model of helping that incorporates what is currently known about human cognition and the functioning of the brain. She introduces the concept of codification to elucidate the perennially perplexing phenomenon of cognition. The reader will welcome the clear, jargon-free discussion of how the mind works and how to facilitate the process of growth and change.

Central to the psychocybernetic model is the understanding of the phenomenon of imagery. Nucho reminds us that images are symbols and thus an essential part of cognition; images are both mental and physical, and they derive from both memory and imagination. Images too, like everything else, form a kind of a system. Images arise spontaneously in the mind, and they can also be created deliberately. Nucho describes how the psychocybernetic model provides ways of therapeutic handling of both kinds of images so that profound personal experiences may be sorted out and dealt with.

Images, as Nucho views them, are part of the cybernetic control system

of the human mind. Each experience is considered to be encoded as an image and linguistically in language, and to some the fit may be more or less perfect between these two symbol systems but she points out, there may be a gap. The gap is filled by somatic response. She is gracious to involve my Triple Code Model of imagery at this phase of the formulation of her theory and it further enriches her psychocybernetic model. Images and words are not like two parallel, unconnected clocks which do not interact but tell the same time; language which describes images is only approximate. It is capable of error. Images, in contrast, just are. They register the experience of the organism directly. If the discrepancy between somatic responses, imagery, and meaning encoded in language persists over time, disease ensues. Images and language are functionally connected. Images are not reducible to language, nor is language reducible to images. Both are needed. And so is the body. The psychocybernetic model shows how to behold and examine images so that balance and wholeness may be attained.

Readers will find Dr. Nucho's discussion of the psychocybernetic process immensely helpful, particularly if they wish to combine the traditional, largely verbal means of interpersonal helping with techniques of art therapy. Nucho marches the reader through the various phases of the therapeutic process, guiding the practitioner's efforts and warning against pitfalls and false expectations. Her analyses of case studies and her collection of artworks done by a number of clients all illustrate the appropriate use of the new model of helping.

Nucho's achievement will work to the great benefit of mental health practitioners. Far too long have psychotherapists resembled Cyclops, the giant in Greek mythology who had only one eye and hence a distorted and limited perception. The psychocybernetic model of art therapy as stated by Nucho offers the means of using both eyes, both symbol systems, the visual, holistic-imagistic as well as the verbal-analytic. Practitioners who include the psychocybernetic model into their arsenal of skills will increase their effectiveness immensely.

Ahkter Ahsen, Ph.D.

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A.O.N.

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**PART ONE**  
**THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**



## CHAPTER 1

### AN INVITATION TO CHANGE

**H**eraclitus, the ancient Greek sage (c. 536–470 B.C.) declared that everything is in flux. Everything changes, and no one can step twice in the same waters of a river. What seemed true to Heraclitus is even more true in our times. Old certainties give way to uncertainty. Old traditions no longer sustain human behavior. This is true in the personal as well as in the professional realms. Professional monodoxy has given way to a plethora of theories and interventive strategies (Corsini, 1981). Change is all around us, but where is the way to success?

This book is written for mental health specialists who are dissatisfied with the extent of success of their current predominately verbal methods of helping. All mental health specialists are surrounded by a superabundance of distress. The discrepancy between the supply and the demand for services is immense. Every program of human services suffers from serious personnel shortages. It is essential to find ways of speeding up our methods of helping.

#### **Paradigmatic Changes**

The method of intervention described in this book has been stimulated by the paradigmatic change that is affecting various areas of human endeavors. As pointed out by Thomas S. Kuhn, paradigmatic shifts tend to occur periodically and simultaneously in all fields of science (Kuhn, 1962). We are now in the midst of such a change. The older paradigms of the vitalistic and the mechanistic kind now are giving way to the holistic paradigm. The holistic paradigm regards the universe as one interconnected system. Matter and energy, space and time, living and nonliving phenomena are viewed as transformations within the same hierarchically-ordered unity (Battista, 1977).

The emerging holistic paradigm is best understood with the help of the system theory. General system theory is a set of concepts about the nature and dynamics of systems. The field of cybernetics evolved out of