

Gestalt Therapy: Advances in Theory and Practice (Advancing Theory in Therapy)

Talia Bar-Yoseph Levine

Gestalt in the new age

Page: 1	Gestalt in the new age
Page: 1	Jay Levin and Talia Bar-Yoseph Levine
Page: 1	Its philosophical underpinnings bring into play a wide array of concepts in a novel way
Page: 1	unique coming together of different perspectives – a unique epistemological and ontological position that devolved from its adherence to three foundational sources,
Page: 1	field theory, phenomenology and dialogue
Page: 1	has implications far wider than the field of psychotherapy and invites fresh and innovative viewpoints in the field of human activity.
Page: 1	“Gestalt philosophy of being”
Page: 1	“Gestalt therapy” is used as an umbrella expression,
Page: 1	This stance, however, minimizes the breadth, the depth and the beauty of Gestalt as an overall “philosophy of being.”
Page: 1	The Gestalt philosophy of being traverses cultural restrictions and different languages and offers a healing through meeting in a diverse cultural universe as ours currently is
Page: 2	the Gestalt philosophy of being is uniquely predisposed and ready to cultivate our humanity and humanize our culture in our new world.
Page: 2	“Gestalt philosophy of being” – an approach to maintaining and sustaining relationship.
Page: 2	recognizes that persons use the same philosophical and practical guidance wherever they go,
Page: 2	it becomes part of their individuated make-up.
Page: 2	One of the applications of the Gestalt philosophy of being is to further examine the notions of differentiation, difference, personal, private, community and coexistence.
Page: 2	its outlook indicates that investing in a meeting of differences leads to a contactful relationship which can lead to growth and healing.
Page: 2	A process model of growth: the contact episode
Page: 3	The authors suggest that the world and the person are in continuous relatedness

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Page: 3	each is subject to influence, change and growth by the other.
Page: 3	The Gestalt philosophy of being is based on the immediacy of experiencing.
Page: 3	“Here” refers to embodied sensory experience.
Page: 3	“Now” refers to the temporal propinquity (closeness or immediacy) of contact.
Loc Page: 3	The “here”
Loc Page: 3	and “now” of Gestalt-based thinking refers to the occurrences and transformations of embodied sensory experience in which the non-personal environment is personalized and incorporated into support through contact.
Page: 3	Contact is an experience of difference that both separates and connects.
Page: 3	There is no sense of connectedness without a concomitant sense of difference.
Page: 3	touching of difference is called awareness
Page: 3	engagement of these differences is called contact.
Page: 3	movement leads to difference which leads to awareness which leads to contact.
Page: 3	Growth initially evolves from and then builds on human experience,
Page: 3	returns repeatedly to confer unwavering power and authority on human experience.
Page: 3	The Gestalt philosophy of being introduces an epistemology that challenges the prevailing mechanistic, technical and outcome-oriented approaches of the 20th century.
Page: 3	“Gestalt therapy” was not only advanced for the 1950s – it is still advanced in the new millennium.
Page: 3	identifying and satisfying an organismic need is called self-regulation.
Page: 3	A contact episode is marked by situatedness, temporality, irreversibility, and growth (or stagnation).
Page: 4	at least three illustrations of the contacting process
Page: 4	used for heuristic purposes.
Page: 4	distinctions of pre-contact, contact, final contact and post-contact

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Page: 4	another view to describe this process in terms of embodied transformations of excitement.
Page: 4	creative adjustments of id, ego, and personality describe procedural embodiments of the self
Page: 4	from the standpoint of the ego,
Page: 4	interruptions to contact (anachronistic “creative adjustments”) articulate disruptions in the continuum of awareness in a contact episode.
Page: 4	Irreversibility is another attribute of a contact episode. Change implies irreversibility – for better or worse.
Page: 4	therapy is not a rehearsal
Page: 5	Growth or decay is the consequence of change.
Page: 5	Successful identification and satisfaction of a need can be described as an ingathering and appropriation by the organism of the unknown aspects of the environment.
Page: 5	More successful contact episodes lead to growth while stagnation, and ultimately death, marks the outcome of less successful episodes.
Page: 5	Every contact, even of a poor quality, involves movement.
Page: 5	a sense of stagnation includes the fact that something has occurred
Page: 5	Addressing the process and exploring the sense of stagnation is an essential part of the therapeutic journey.
Page: 5	Once movement/change is noticed, the question is of learning more and the development of good quality contact.
Page: 5	Contact and change
Page: 5	Since its inception over 100 years ago, psychotherapy has been hijacked by the narrow empiricism of the medical model.
Page: 5	sanctioned by an epistemology that defends the mechanistic, technical and outcome-oriented approaches of the 20th century.
Page: 6	Under the auspices of this medical model, the goal of psychotherapy
Page: 6	remained to provide relief, or change, through cure by the “expert-practitioner”
Page: 6	or an understanding of how to change oneself with help/direction from a therapist (humanistic psychologies)

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Page: 6	The view that change can be controlled is placed in the modern psyche as an unassailable fact.
Page: 6	is being replaced slowly by the view of Gestalt principles that change simply is – its ontological significance is a “given”
Page: 6	circumscribed role of leadership as facilitator of change – not originator.
Page: 6	a good number of “psychotherapists” still buy into the idea of being “change agents” rather than facilitators of self-regulation and growth.
Page: 6	From the standpoint of Gestalt-based therapy, change is inevitable and leads to either organismic growth or stagnation. Change is a lifelong process. Organismic predilections and field conditions determine the result of change. This is a fundamental departure from prevailing conventional wisdom and assumptions underlying theories of change.
Page: 6	Rehabilitation and healing
Page: 6	The Gestalt philosophy of being is more than just an attempt at remediation and cure:
Page: 6	it pursues the goals of healing and rehabilitation through growth.
Page: 6	Perls challenged the medical model notion of sickness when he wrote
Page: 6	“I now consider that neurosis is not a sickness but one of several symptoms of growth stagnation” (Perls, in Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman 1971: 9).
Page: 7	The tendency for growth to include an emergent quality of contact and relationships precludes a reductionist perspective of the elements of healing.
Page: 7	This involves a withdrawal of projections and a shift from telling to listening.
Page: 7	The “I’m telling you what you need” would be replaced by “I’m listening for what you want”, and the basis for rational discussion would be opened ...
Page: 7	(Perls, in Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman 1971: 11)
Page: 7	the insights of Buber
Page: 7	ontological priority is in and through the “I–Thou” relationship
Page: 7	i.e. it is only through this form of relatedness with a community of others that one’s humanity can be fully realized.
Page: 7	the “I–Thou” relationship is intrinsically valuable
Page: 7	existential priority is in and through the “I–Thou” relationship

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Page: 7	i.e. it is only through this form of relatedness with an-other that one's humanity is accomplished.
Page: 7	Goodman (1991: 88)
Page: 7	pointing out that many human issues that recur may be deeply personal, but they are not private, being driven by forces "located in the institutions of society, the economic and political institutions, the moral, religious, educational and domestic institutions."
Page: 7	How relationships turn out to be bland when needs become obscured, repressed, shamed,
Page: 8	guilt-ridden and fraught with anxiety through the actions of a repressive society and social institutions is a political issue (Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman 1971: 421),
Page: 8	the Gestalt approach appreciates that the sense of "grace" that marks a genuine meeting between two people marks a sense of transcendent spirituality which is a creation of the encounter itself
Page: 8	Malfunction or breakdown of the process of living is not a medical problem but, rather, one possibility of existence.
Page: 8	Therapy can be likened to
Page: 8	the subtle conversion of a "house" to a "home."
Page: 8	The practitioner as healer
Page: 8	In its unique view of change as well as its recognition that the "I-Thou" relationship is ontologically primary and foundational for community and human life,
Page: 8	Gestalt philosophy of being radically undercuts the individualistic paradigm of healing and change that pervades the older epistemologies of the previous century.
Page: 9	the medical model which has failed so dismally to address the health needs of people,
Page: 9	Healing has been reduced to cure, and rehabilitation reduced to a technological intervention (Kepner 1995).
Page: 9	to invoke the methods of inquiry and solutions proposed by modernistic approaches, is to overlook the vitality of the point of view embraced by the Gestalt philosophy of being.

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Page: 9	A healer for our times is also required to care for the surroundings and the community, addressing environmental issues and institutional reform,
Page: 9	"I think that when you are supporting somebody to become more authentic – in societies, which are more or less authoritarian or authority-orientated, it is always political work – in therapy, in education, in social work" (Laura Perls, in Doubrawa 2006a: 123).
Page: 9	A sick environment and community is just as disabling for the person as a sick body or brain.
Page: 9	As Doubrawa (n.d.) points out, "a healing therapeutic relationship is not all it takes to heal lives. It takes a healthy society where healing through meeting is intended and wanted."
Page: 10	The Gestalt philosophy of being has within its theory and methodology the means to address these requirements.
Page: 10	References
Page: 10	Buber, M. (1965) <i>Between Man and Man</i> . New York: Collier Books, Macmillan.
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Page: 11	Perls, F. S., Hefferline, R. F. and Goodman, P. (1971) <i>Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in Human Personality</i> . Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd.