

Chapter 6 **The Paradoxical Theory of Change**

Arnold R. Beisser

(kindle locations 1827-1907)

Loc: 1,827	THE PARADOXICAL THEORY OF CHANGE
Loc: 1,830	For nearly a half century, the major part of his professional life, Frederick Perls was in conflict with the psychiatric and psychological establishments. He worked uncompromisingly in his own direction, which often involved fights with representatives of more conventional views.
Loc: 1,832	Perls and his Gestalt therapy have come to find harmony with an increasingly large segment of mental health theory and professional practice.
Loc: 1,833	The change that has taken place is not because Perls has modified his position,
Loc: 1,834	but because the trends and concepts of the field have moved closer to him and his work.
Loc: 1,835	Perls's
Loc: 1,836	did not explicitly delineate change theory, but it underlies much of his work and is implied in the practice of Gestalt
Loc: 1,837	I will call it the paradoxical theory of change, Briefly stated, it is this: that change occurs when one becomes what he is, nor when he tries to become what he is not.
Loc: 1,838	Change does not take place through a coercive attempt by the individual or by another person
Loc: 1,839	but it does take place if one takes the time and effort to be what he is
Loc: 1,841	The Gestalt therapist rejects the role of "changer," for his strategy is to encourage, even insist, that the patient be where and what he is. He believes change does not take place by "trying," coercion, or persuasion, or by insight, interpretation, or any other such means. Rather, change can occur when the patient abandons, at least for the moment, what he would like to become and attempts to be what he is. The premise is that one must stand in one place in order to have firm footing to move and that it is difficult or impossible to move without that footing.

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Loc: 1,849	The patient comes to the therapist because he wishes to be changed. Many therapies accept this as a legitimate objective and set out through various means to try to change him, establishing what Perls calls the “top dog/under-dog” dichotomy. A therapist who seeks to help a patient has left the egalitarian position and become the knowing expert, with the patient playing the helpless person, yet his goal is that he and the patient should become equals. The Gestalt therapist believes that the top dog/under-dog dichotomy already exists within the patient, with one part trying to change the other, and that the therapist must avoid becoming locked into one of these roles. He tries to avoid this trap by encouraging the patient to accept both of them, one at a time, as his own. The analytic therapist, by contrast, uses devices such as dreams, free associations, transference, and interpretation to achieve insight that, in turn, may lead to change. The behaviorist therapist rewards or punishes behavior in order to modify it. The Gestalt therapist believes in encouraging the patient to enter and become whatever he is experiencing at the moment.
Loc: 1,859	The Gestalt therapist further believes that the natural state of man is as a single, whole being — not fragmented into two or more opposing parts. In the natural state, there is constant change based on the dynamic transaction between the self and the environment.
Loc: 1,862	Freud changed processes into structures (denying into denial). Gestalt therapist views change as a possibility when the reverse occurs,
Loc: 1,863	structures are transformed into processes. one is open to participant interchange with his environment.
Loc: 1,867	when the patient identifies with the alienated fragments, integration does occur. by being what one is — fully — one can become something else.
Loc: 1,872	a therapist may be most effective when he changes most, for when he is open to change,
Loc: 1,875	For the first time in the history of mankind, man finds himself in a position where, rather than needing to adapt himself to an existing order, he must be able to adapt himself to a series of changing orders. For the first time in the history of mankind, the length of the individual life span is greater than the length of time necessary for major social and cultural change to take place. Moreover; the rapidity with which this change occurs is accelerating.

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Loc: 1,881	Today, stands in relationship to a shifting society.
Loc: 1,881	Confronted with a pluralistic, multifaceted, changing system, the individual is left to his own devices to find stability. He must do this through an approach that allows him to move dynamically and flexibly with the times while still maintaining some central gyroscope to guide him. He can no longer do this with ideologies, which become obsolete, but must do it with a change theory, whether explicit or implicit. The goal of therapy becomes not so much to develop a good, fixed character but to be able to move with the times while retaining some individual stability.
Loc: 1,892	the same change theory outlined here is also applicable to social systems, that orderly change within social systems is in the direction of integration and holism;
Loc: 1,893	the social-change agent
Loc: 1,893	major function to work with and in an organization so that it can change consistently with the changing dynamic equilibrium both within and outside the organization.
Loc: 1,894	the system become conscious of alienated fragments
Loc: 1,895	so it can bring them into the main functional activities by processes similar to identification in the individual.
Loc: 1,896	First, ... an awareness ... that an alienated fragment exists; ... accepted as a legitimate outgrowth of a functional need
Loc: 1,897	then explicitly and deliberately mobilized and given power to operate as an explicit force.
Loc: 1,899	With change accelerating at an exponential pace, it is crucial for the survival of mankind that an orderly method of social change be found.
Loc: 1,902	Disparate, unintegrated, warring elements present a major threat to society, just as they do to the individual. The compartmentalization of old people, young people, rich people, poor people, black people, white people, academic people, service people, etc., each separated from the others by generational, geographical, or social gaps, is a threat to the survival of mankind.

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Loc: 1,906	The paradoxical social change theory
Loc: 1,907	strategies ... are applicable, ... to community organization, community development and other change processes