

Gestalt Therapy: Advances in Theory and Practice

Levine, T. B. (Ed). (2012). *Gestalt Therapy: Advances in theory and practice* (Ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

As a graduate student with a basic understanding of Gestalt theory, I found *Gestalt Therapy: Advances in Theory and Practice* a very thought-provoking read that further explored key concepts and introduced me to contemporary thought on Gestalt theory and practice. The book is a collection of works written by experts in the field and edited by Talia Bar-Yoseph Levine. Bar-Yoseph Levine writes that her intent is to “take Gestalt theoretical view...from ‘now’ into ‘next’” (p. xviii) by inviting Gestalt practitioners and thinkers from diverse backgrounds and languages to “write about that which is closest to his/her heart and that interests them the most” (xix). The result is a bold and varied collection of topics which include Gestalt theory and neuroscience, spirituality, ethics, politics and personality. The book also includes approaches to Gestalt practice and case studies in individual, family, couple and group therapy.

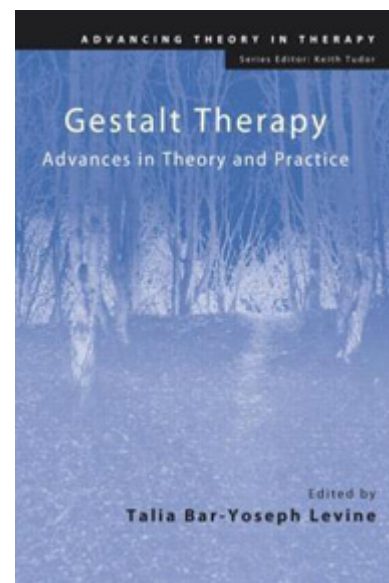
Gestalt Therapy is divided into two parts. Part I includes eight chapters that examine Gestalt therapy and theory from contemporary perspectives. Bar-Yoseph Levine introduces a “gestalt philosophy of being” which expands the principles of Gestalt therapy to just about any human interaction. In another chapter, Erving Polster explores morality and writes about Life Focus Communities. Attending to the embodied relational field, personality as a function of self in society and spirituality in gestalt therapy are examined in subsequent chapters.

Many of the authors in this book challenge conventionally held Gestalt concepts such as holism, awareness, field, projection and the paradoxical theory of change. In some cases, the authors suggest a modification or eradication of the term itself as was the case in Chapter 3, where Charles Bowman suggests that the term “holism” may no longer prove useful in Gestalt therapy because of its numerous implications today. Other chapters offer a challenge to particular Gestalt concepts as is the case in Chapter 6, where Lynne Jacobs questions whether the concept of projection even has value for therapists in a post-Cartesian world.

Part II takes the reader from a discussion of theory into clinical applications for Gestalt therapists including specific examples and case studies. Lolita Sapriel explores the integration of mindfulness practices with traumatized clients and Gary Yontef describes the four relationships in which a therapist is simultaneously engaged during couple therapy. Brian O’Neill investigates the use of field perspective in family therapy and Sean Gaffney outlines Gestalt with groups using a contemporary reconsideration of the work of Kurt Lewin.

Bar-Yoseph Levine includes an epilogue which contains two articles. The first concerns ethics and ethical behavior by Ernst Kniff which suggests shifting the focus from rules to awareness. Phillip Lichtenberg describes the cultural aspect of Gestalt theory in our everyday conversations, especially where strong feelings come into play in discourse about politics and religion.

Gestalt Therapy: Advances in Theory and Practice is a comprehensive and thoughtful exploration of Gestalt theory and practice written by a diverse group of contemporary thinkers. This collection is a brave and honest examination of Gestalt therapy which seems to fulfill the editor’s wish to take the “now” into the “next.”



Review by: Teresa Siegle Prevatte, Wake Forest University, USA.