

Essay – Unit 8 and 9

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Chapter Eight

One # The Gestalt perspective is a humanistic approach focusing on the present moment, personal responsibility, and self-awareness. It focuses on integrating an individual's experiences rather than analyzing their symptoms or diagnosis (Corey, 2016).

From a Christian perspective, some aspects of the Gestalt approach align with biblical principles, such as emphasizing personal responsibility and self-reflection. The theory also incorporates the idea of spirituality in the therapy process and incentivizes using mindfulness as prayer (Boyal, C. 2022).

However, some elements of the Gestalt perspective may conflict with Christian beliefs. For instance, the emphasis on living in the present moment can be seen as minimizing the importance of eternity and the afterlife, which are central principles of Christianity. Moreover, the emphasis on self-awareness may promote a self-centered worldview rather than on service to God and others (McMinn R. et al., 2013).

The idea of emphasizing the importance of understanding the whole picture rather than just individual parts can promote relativism, suggesting that perception is subjective and depends on personal interpretation and experience (Boyal, C. 2022). In contrast, Christianity emphasizes the existence of absolute truth and the importance of adhering to a set of moral and ethical principles.

For example, the Gestalt perspective suggests that individuals may have different perceptions of the same situation based on their experiences and interpretations, that there is no one objective truth or reality, and

that all perspectives are equally valid (Schultz J, 2023). In contrast, Christianity affirms that there is one absolute truth, which is revealed through the teachings of the Bible.

Two# Gestalt therapy is considered existential therapy because it emphasizes the importance of an individual's subjective experience of their world and the meaning, they connect to it. Gestalt therapy places a strong emphasis on personal responsibility and the development of self-awareness (Corey, 2016).

The Gestalt therapy approach is experiential because it focuses on the present moment experience of the client rather than only on their past or future experiences. The therapist encourages clients to pay attention to their bodily sensations, emotions, and thoughts as they arise. Through this process, the client can become more aware of their behavior patterns and how they relate to their environment (Corey, 2016).

The primary focus of Gestalt therapy is on helping the client develop an awareness of their current experience and to support them in taking responsibility for their actions and choices. The therapist works to create supportive and non-judgmental conditions where the client can explore their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors and gain insight into their patterns and habits. The success of Gestalt Therapy is measured by the client's ability to become more self-aware, take responsibility for their actions, and transition from relying on external support to self-sufficiency (Corey, 2016).

Four # The Gestalt approach was developed in the 1950s by Fritz Perls and Laura Perls and with collaboration from Paul Goodman and Ralph Hefferline for the first book released in 1951 (Schultz J, 2023).

The early Gestalt approach focused heavily on the here-and-now experience of the client, encouraging them to focus on their immediate sensory experience and to take responsibility for their own emotions and behaviors. It initially focused mainly on visual perception, but it has since been expanded to include other aspects of perception, such as auditory and tactile perception, memory, and problem-solving. The therapist acted as a facilitator, helping the client to gain insight into their behavior patterns and to develop new ways of relating to themselves and others (Corey, 2016).

Over time, the Gestalt approach has evolved to incorporate new developments in psychology and psychotherapy. One significant development was integrating a relational perspective, which emphasized the importance of the therapeutic relationship and the role of attachment in personality development (Schultz J, 2023).

Another significant development was the expansion of Gestalt therapy beyond individual therapy to include group and family therapy. Group therapy allows clients to explore their behavior patterns in a social context. Family therapy focuses on the dynamics of family systems and how family members can support each other in their growth and development (Corey, 2016).

The modern Gestalt approach or alternative Gestalt therapy is characterized by a more integrative and diverse approach to therapy. At the same time, the essential principles of the approach remain the same: techniques and approaches to work with each client's needs. It can include elements of cognitive-behavioral therapy, mindfulness practices, and somatic experiencing (Schultz J, 2023).

12# Gestalt psychology emphasizes the importance of contact between individuals and their environment to promote growth and development. The concept of contact refers to how individuals engage with their environment, including the people and objects around them.

Resistance to contact, on the other hand, refers to how people avoid or reject contact with their environment (Boyalı, C. 2022).

Some examples of contact and resistance to contact could be:

1. Contact: A child exploring a new toy by touching, smelling, and manipulating it with their hands, using their senses to make sense of the object and their environment. Resistance to contact: A child refusing to try new foods, rejecting any contact with unfamiliar tastes and textures.
2. Contact: A person attending a social event, actively engaging in conversations, and meeting new people to broaden their social network. Resistance to contact: People with social anxiety avoid social situations, retire from contact with others, and isolate themselves from their environment.
3. Contact: A student seeking new challenges and learning opportunities, taking on difficult coursework, and engaging with peers and professors. Resistance to contact: A student who avoids challenging coursework, procrastinates on assignments, and avoids interaction with peers and professors.
4. Contact: A person taking up a new hobby or sport, embracing the opportunity to learn new skills and engage with others who share their interests. Resistance to contact: A person who avoids trying new activities, sticking to familiar routines and habits, and avoiding interaction with others who are different.

According to Gestalt theory, effective contact is achieved when individuals can engage with their environment in a present-centered, authentic manner, with openness, curiosity, and empathy. Resistance to contact arises when individuals experience boundary disturbances or disruptions in their sense of self and ability to interact effectively with the world around them (Corey, 2016).

Boundary disturbances may manifest in a variety of ways, including:

1. **Introjection:** Incorporating external opinions or beliefs into one's identity without critically evaluating them. An example of introjection could be someone who adopts their parents' political views without questioning or critically evaluating them. They may not have explored their own beliefs or considered alternative views but instead accepted the beliefs of their parents as their own. So, introjection may prevent individuals from fully expressing their beliefs and opinions.
2. **Projection:** Attributing one's feelings, thoughts, or motives to others. An example of projection could be a person feeling jealous of a friend's success, but instead of acknowledging their jealousy, they accuse their friend of being jealous of them. The person is projecting their feelings of jealousy onto their friend and assuming that their friend must feel the same way, when in reality, their friend may not be jealous. The projection may lead to misunderstandings and conflict.
3. **Retroflexion:** Turning one's own impulses, feelings, or needs back onto oneself rather than expressing them externally. An example of retroflexion could be a person feeling angry with their boss. However, instead of directly expressing their anger, they turn it inward and become self-critical. They begin to think they need to be more sufficiently good at their job or deserve the negative feedback they receive. Rather than healthily expressing their anger, they are directing their anger inward and causing harm to themselves.
4. **Confluence:** Confusing boundaries between oneself and others and experiencing a lack of differentiation or identity. An example of confluence could be a person overly concerned with pleasing others and having difficulty saying no to requests or setting boundaries. They may prioritize others' needs and desires over their own to the point where they no longer feel like they have a clear sense of their own identity or separate self. This person may feel like they are constantly blending in with those around them and are unsure of who they are.

These boundary disturbances can interfere with effective contact by preventing individuals from fully engaging with their environment and those around them. In order to overcome resistance to contact and

promote effective contact, individuals may need to develop greater self-awareness and differentiation, as well as a disposition to engage with the world around them in a present-centered, authentic manner.

OBS: Here, I would like to make a personal observation. Years ago, when I went to a therapist to help me understand my marriage situation, after 35 years in that relationship, I realized that I had lost part of my identity. By studying this chapter, I can understand my situation at that time as a boundary disturbance - confluence. For such a long time, I had tried to make my marriage work well, and for that, I lost myself. I remember knowing everything about my spouse and daughters, like the food they liked and the music, but I did not know my preferences. I needed to rebuild myself.

17# The Gestalt approach to dream work emphasizes that dreams reflect an individual's internal experience and can be used to gain insight into their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. According to this approach, the interpretation of dreams should focus on the present experience of the dreamer rather than attempting to uncover hidden meanings or symbols. Gestalt therapists use a variety of techniques to help clients explore and understand the meaning of their dreams, including:

1. Role-playing: Clients may be asked to act out different parts of their dreams, including any objects or characters, to understand their feelings and reactions better.
2. Empty-chair technique: Clients may be asked to imagine different aspects of their dream as separate parts of themselves and then engage in a dialogue between these different parts to gain insight into their internal conflicts and desires.
3. Exaggeration: Clients may be requested to exaggerate different aspects of their dream, such as their emotions or physical sensations, to understand their internal experience better.
4. Two chairs: The client moves back and forth between two chairs, either performing both parts of the role-play or having a supposed dialogue with two different parts of themselves.

In the video of Jerry Corey working with Stan, the process of Gestalt dream work in action is demonstrated through role-playing and the two-chairs technique. Corey encourages Stan to act out different parts of his dream, including Stan's father and Stan, and then engage in a dialogue between these different parts. Through this process, Stan may understand his feelings and reactions and identify how these internal conflicts are reflected in his life nowadays.

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Chapter Nine

21# B.F. Skinner is considered the father of Behavioral therapy, a psychological approach that emphasizes observable behaviors and their environmental influences. As a determinist, Skinner did not believe in free will and viewed humans as either complex animals or machines. His psychology approach is rooted in the practice of naturalistic basis or materialism. He affirmed the existence of feelings but denied that they could cause or act in a person's behavior. He also accepted the thought as the reality of matter but rejected, at cert points, the existence of mind and spirit. Such a view inevitably denies the existence of God, human dignity, and moral values. It views reality as material, irrational, meaningless, spontaneous processes (Cherry, K. 2023).

From a Christian perspective, some aspects of the Behavioral perspective align with Christian teachings. Christian worldview emphasizes personal responsibility and accountability, believing individuals are responsible for their actions and will be held accountable. This aligns with the Behavioral perspective, which emphasizes the role of environmental aspects in shaping manners, but ultimately places responsibility for behavior on the individual. Additionally, the Behavioral perspective's emphasis on

behavior modification through reinforcement and punishment aligns with Christian teachings on discipline and training. The Bible encourages discipline to guide and shape behavior, and reward and punishment are central to Christian teachings about judgment and salvation (Bufford, K. 1981).

However, the Behavioral perspective's emphasis on environmental factors over free will conflicts with the Christian belief in the importance of individual choice. While the Bible affirms physical and spiritual reality, they are not viewed in a dualistic manner. The biblical perspective affirms a fundamental unity of spirit, matter, mind, and body (Bufford, K. 1981).

Other elements of the Behavioral perspective may conflict with a Christian worldview. The focus on observable behavior ignores the importance of internal thoughts and feelings, central to Christian teachings on morality and ethics. Christianity teaches that it is not only actions that matter but also the intentions and motives behind them. The Behavioral perspective does not fully address this (Bufford, K. 1981).

Furthermore, the Behavioral perspective's emphasis on environmental factors as the primary influence on behavior conflicts with the Christian belief in the importance of a free will. Christians believe individuals can choose their actions, even in the face of external influences. The Behavioral perspective does not entirely manage this emphasis on free will (Bufford, K. 1981).

22# Behavior therapy is a psychological approach that aims to modify behavior by applying principles from classical and operant training, social learning theory, and cognitive psychology. The four theoretical foundations of behavior therapy are:

1. Classical conditioning: This theory proposes that behavior can be learned by associating two motivations. For example, Pavlov's dogs learned to salivate at the sound of a bell, which had been repeatedly paired with food presentation.
2. Operant conditioning: This theory posits that behavior is influenced by its consequences. Reinforced behaviors (i.e., rewarded) are more likely to be repeated, while punished behaviors are less likely to occur in the future.
3. Social learning theory emphasizes the role of observational learning and modeling in behavior. Individuals learn by observing the conduct of others and imitating it.

4. Cognitive trend: This theory focuses on internal processes, such as beliefs, attitudes, and expectations, in shaping behavior (Corey, 2016).

Behavior therapy has undergone significant development since its start in the 1950s. Initially, behavior therapy focused on observable behavior and emphasized using classical and operant conditioning principles to change behavior. Over time, behavior therapy has evolved to incorporate a more cognitive-behavioral approach, which acknowledges the role of thoughts and beliefs in behavior.

Modern behavioral therapies have expanded upon the theoretical principles of behaviorism by incorporating new techniques, ideas, and theoretical concepts Here are some examples:

1. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT): This therapy combines behaviorism with cognitive psychology. It emphasizes that people's thoughts and beliefs affect their behavior and teaches clients to identify and modify unhelpful thoughts and beliefs. CBT is effective for various mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, and PTSD.
2. Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) emphasizes accepting complex thoughts and emotions rather than trying to eliminate them. It also encourages clients to identify their values and take actions that align with them, even with difficult emotions. ACT is effective for various mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, and chronic pain.
3. Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) combines behaviorism with mindfulness and dialectical philosophy. It emphasizes developing skills for emotion regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and distress tolerance. DBT was initially designed to treat borderline personality disorder but has also been adapted for other mental health problems.
4. Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) is a psychotherapeutic approach combining cognitive therapy elements with mindfulness meditation. It was developed to prevent relapse in individuals with recurrent depression by helping them recognize and interrupt automatic negative thinking patterns. The therapy teaches clients to cultivate present-moment awareness and to observe their thoughts and feelings without judgment, which can increase their ability to respond skillfully to challenges. MBCT effectively reduces symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress and has also been adapted for other mental health disorders, such as substance use addiction and eating disorders.
5. Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) is a structured group program that uses mindfulness meditation, body awareness, and yoga to help individuals cope with stress, anxiety, and chronic pain. The program was developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn in the late 1970s and is now widely used in medical and mental health settings. MBSR aims to help individuals develop non-judgmental

awareness of their thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations and learn to respond to them more skillfully. Participants in MBSR attend weekly group sessions and are encouraged to practice mindfulness meditation at home daily. Studies have shown that MBSR effectively reduces symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression and can improve overall well-being and quality of life (Corey, G. 2016).

28 # Operant conditioning is a type of learning that involves changing behavior by manipulating its consequences, such as rewards and punishments. Some of the main operant conditioning techniques include:

1. Positive reinforcement: This involves adding a positive consequence, such as praise or a reward, to increase the likelihood of a behavior being repeated. For example, a therapist working with a patient who struggles with anxiety might praise them for practicing relaxation techniques or confronting fear in a controlled environment. Providing positive feedback and support for these behaviors makes the patient more likely to continue engaging in them and feel more confident in managing their anxiety. Over time, this positive reinforcement can improve the patient's mental health and well-being.
2. Negative reinforcement: This involves removing a negative consequence, such as ending an unpleasant task or removing an aversive stimulus, to increase the likelihood of repeated behavior. For example, a therapist working with a patient who experiences chronic pain might encourage them to use relaxation techniques to manage their pain. If the patient practices these techniques regularly, the therapist may remove an aversive stimulus, such as a hot or cold pack that the patient has been using to manage their pain. Removing the aversive stimulus acts as negative reinforcement, encouraging the patient to continue using relaxation techniques to avoid experiencing the aversive stimulus in the future. Over time, this can lead to the patient feeling more in control of their pain and experiencing fewer adverse effects from it.
3. Punishment: This involves adding a negative consequence, such as a rebuke or a time-out, to decrease the likelihood of a behavior being repeated.
4. Extinction: This involves removing reinforcement for behavior to decrease its occurrence. For example, a therapist working with a kid who throws tantrums to get attention might encourage the child's parents to give attention only when the child is calm and using appropriate behaviors. Suppose the parents consistently respond to the child's tantrums by ignoring them. In that case, the child may eventually stop throwing tantrums as they no longer receive the reinforcement (i.e.,

attention) that maintains the behavior. This is an example of extinction in therapy, and it can effectively promote positive behavior change over time.

5. **Shaping:** This involves gradually reinforcing successive approximations of a wished conduct until the wished conduct is achieved. For example, a therapist working with a patient who experiences social anxiety might use shaping to help them gradually build their confidence and comfort in social situations. The therapist might start by encouraging the patient to make brief eye contact or say hello to a stranger and then gradually reinforce more complex social behaviors, such as starting a conversation or joining a group activity. By providing positive reinforcement for each successive approximation towards the desired behavior, the therapist helps the patient build their social skills and confidence in a gradual and supportive way. Over time, this can improve the patient's ability to navigate social situations and manage their anxiety.
6. **Chaining:** This involves breaking a complex behavior into smaller steps and reinforcing each step until the entire behavior is achieved. For example, a therapist working with a patient who struggles with executive functioning might use chaining to help them complete daily tasks such as getting ready in the morning. The therapist might break the task down into smaller steps, such as getting out of bed, brushing teeth, showering, getting dressed, and having breakfast. They would then work with the patient to reinforce each chain step until the patient could complete the entire task independently. By breaking complex behaviors down into smaller steps and reinforcing each step along the way, chaining can help patients develop the skills and confidence they need to succeed in daily life.
7. **The token economy** involves using tokens as a reinforcement that can be exchanged for rewards. For example, a therapist working with a group of patients in a psychiatric hospital might use a token economy to reinforce positive social behaviors such as sharing, taking turns, and supporting each other. The therapist would provide tokens or points to patients who engage in these positive behaviors. The patients can then exchange the tokens for rewards such as extra time in the recreational room or preferred snacks. The token economy can help patients develop new skills and behaviors that promote their well-being and social integration by reinforcing positive behaviors with tangible rewards.

These techniques can be used in various settings, including schools, homes, and therapy sessions, to modify behavior and promote positive change. However, it is essential to note that punishment as a technique should be carefully considered and applied with caution, as it can have adverse side effects if misused (Skinner, F. 1938).

29# Positive and negative reinforcement are two concepts in behavioral psychology that involve increasing the likelihood of a behavior occurring again.

Positive reinforcement involves adding a desirable stimulus to improve the probability of a behavior happening again. In contrast, negative reinforcement involves removing an aversive instigation to improve the probability of a behavior happening again.

Positive punishment involves adding an aversive stimulus to reduce the chance of the conduct happening again. For example, if a kid touches a hot stove and gets burned, the burn acts as positive punishment to reduce the probability of the kid touching the stove again.

Negative punishment involves removing a desirable stimulus to reduce the probability of a behavior occurring again. For example, if a child misbehaves and loses a right, such as screen time, this serves as negative punishment to reduce the probability of the kid misbehaving again (Cherry, K. 2023).

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