



Ego, Hunger and Aggression

Frederick Salomon Perls

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This 1st book by Perls is significant because in addition to criticising Freud, it also lays the groundwork for a new system of psychotherapy. In fact it's the beginning of the gestalt therapy by one of the founding fathers of this therapy.-- Ehrenwald

Frederick Perls received his M.D. in Berlin in 1921. Like Wilhelm Reich he started out as a Freudian analyst, but under the influence of Kohler, Wertheimer & Kurt Goldstein developed his own school of analysis: Gestalt Therapy. His principles of gestalt therapy have been adopted by countless encounter & sensitivity groups.

He aims in this book to examine some psychological & psychopathological reactions of the human organism within its environment. The author is critical of orthodox psychoanalysis, & claims that the use of the new intellectual tools holism (field conception) & semantics (the meaning of meaning) can greatly improve our theoretical outlook.

Ego, Hunger and Aggression Details

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From Reader Review Ego, Hunger and Aggression for online ebook

Dr. Barrett Dylan Brown, Phd says

Refutes Freud a lot and cites W. Reich and Jung a lot too, good Psychologist....

Sarah says

This was not nearly as readable and interesting as Gestalt Therapy Verbatim. As a first book, and I believe, at one point his dissertation, there is a lot of paper spent dismantling Freud and Adler in an academic, boring tone. The hallmarks of 1950's "science" writing are there: diagrams that look "science-y" as if sadness were also bound by Newtonian physics; long, slow arguments that disprove and consider everyone else before getting to the point, and a hefty, seemingly entirely unnecessary sprinkling of homophobia. Perls badassness is there however, and glimmers through from time to time, popping like fireworks for the last three chapters on symptoms where he lays out treatment techniques and considerations.

Below I've added some of the words and definitions I found interesting or unfamiliar.

Screen Expressions: "no precise referent and which conceal instead of reveal. People speaking of nervousness may mean anxiety, irritability, annoyance... "Thinking" is one of the most common screen words... In endeavoring to clarify our minds we should...express {sic} the precise meaning which we wish to convey."

Neurotic: "does not experience sensations instead of emotions, but at the expense or even to the exclusion of consciousness of the emotional component; having partly lost the "feel of himself" (the senso-motoric awareness) he experiences as incomplete situation--a scotoma (blind spot) for the psychological manifestation of the emotion."..."neurosis is a disorganization of the proper functioning of the personality within its environment."..."the neurotic symptom is always a sign that the biological self wants attention."

Introjection: "means preserving the structure of things taken in, whilst the organism requires their destruction."..."the wolf symbolizes greediness and introjection. In the story of little red riding hood the wolf introjects the grandmother, copies her, behaves "as-if" he was she, but his real self is soon unmasked by the little heroine."

Dummy Complex: the dummy allows for the discharge of a certain amount of aggressiveness."

"Four ingredients, so it appears to me, come together to mix the cocktail of ethics: differentiation, frustration, the figure-background phenomenon, and the law that quantity changes into quality."

"Man in general has forgotten that good and bad were originally emotional reactions, and is inclined to accept good and bad as facts."

"The disadvantage of "avoidance" is the impairment of the holistic function. By avoidance, our spheres of actions and our intelligence disintegrate. Every contact, be it hostile or friendly, will increase our spheres, integrate our personality and, with assimilation, contribute to our faculties, as long as it is not fraught with unsurmountable danger, as long as there is a chance to master it."

"Intellectualism is mental hypertrophy, and by no means identical with intelligence, a fact which many people dislike admitting. It is an attitude designed to avoid being deeply moved."..."the avoidance is a general factor to be found in probably every neurotic mechanism."

"For manageable tasks one does not need scapegoats or explanations."

"The desire to master ourselves results from insufficient co-operation between organism and Ego-function."

"The avoidance of external conflicts , however, results in the creation of internal ones."

"The awareness of, and ability to endure, unwanted emotions are the conditio sine qua non for a successful cure; these emotions will be discharged once they have become ego functions."

"The suspicious man should suspect himself, the victimized one certainly victimizes his environment. If you feel unjustly treated, you can be sure that you are the last one who is fair in his dealings."

"Without accepting their biological "reality," "idealistic" Dr. Jekyll and "materialistic" Mr. Hyde will go on existing until mankind has finally destroyed itself."

Erik Graff says

This, the book in which Perls first formulated his new, gestalt therapy, was assigned reading in a group seminar conducted by two visiting psychotherapists teaching for a year or two at Grinnell College in Iowa. It is not Perls' best writing, but he was relatively new to English. It and his his autobiography, In & Out the Garbage Pail, should certainly be read by anyone interested in his development.

Eleriel says

Dal punto di vista di una non addetta ai lavori, è stata una lettura estenuante. Pomposo e logorroico, sembra non arrivare mai al punto e ho dovuto faticare molto per cavare fuori qualche concetto utile.

Christina Pigol says

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Well, this book has very high viscosity and hard to digest, very raw and unrefined. Some of the author statements are questionable while others quite interesting but almost all unproven, it appears Perls didn't have much of the prove to back it up at a time of writing this book. Though its very speculative in nature it did provide a general new direction in psychotherapy based on synthesis of Freid, Reich and Perls own ideas.

