

### Zhuangzi and Gestalt Therapy

If Zhuangzi was a therapist in modern times, there would be many counseling theories to choose from with which to help his clients; however, Zhuangzi would most likely choose one particular theory to follow and guide his clients back to their “proper” mental state: Gestalt Therapy.

Zhuangzi deals with the issues of perspectives and the need to remain full of potentiality rather than conforming to society and falling into a state of actuality. In the Zhuangzi, on page 233, an ugly man is discussed. This story shows how if one lives on their own accord, not following societal pressures, and maintains their own moral charisma, people will take a liking to that person regardless of looks or other thoughts. In Gestalt Therapy, it describes how humans tend to fixate on one perception leading people to fool themselves. The Gestalt approach focuses on the here and now in daily life which leads to the what and how of experiencing. Zhuangzi would take this fixation and explain how this falls into the idea of being a Sage. A Sage, to Zhuangzi, would be able to walk on two roads and go with whatever happens to come their way. Similarly, Gestalt Therapy focuses on dealing with one issue at a time in hopes of self-betterment.

Zhuangzi also discusses the importance of the process of humans being who they are to their fullest extent. On page 214, Zhuangzi calls to light the Pipes of Heaven, of Earth, and of People. Here, it is shown that people have a natural expression of self,

unique to their own natural way. The way people's internal expressions flow together is symbolic of the Grand Dao, or a symbol of holism within Gestalt Theory.

Holism is used to study and show the full range of human functioning; this includes all thoughts, feelings, behaviors, body language, and dreams of an individual. To this, Zhuangzi would take off and tell of the importance of following and understanding the self, for if one does not fully understand themselves, people may begin to take advantage of them and cause them to conform to societal expectations. Within pages 234 and 235, Zhuangzi discusses essence and the need for essence to be considered people. In this discussion, Zhuangzi merely calls to light the need to continue to follow the Dao within and one may continue to be people. To Zhuangzi, one need not alter their life to fulfill the wishes of others and become a people.

Zhuangzi would also look at the concepts of contact and resistance to contact found within Gestalt Therapy and exclaim how too many people create their own boundary disturbances, hindering their own ability to create contact and maintain themselves. Contact is the way people interact with nature and with other people without losing sight of one's individuality. However, as Zhuangzi acknowledges, everyone has a sense of value and there are too many values where nothing is obvious. This creates people's own boundary disturbances which consist of the defenses people develop, preventing them from experiencing the present fully. Zhuangzi would say that with many values, people pick one or two on which to fixate themselves, and block all other aspects out of their minds, keeping them stuck in one cycle, in one motion within society.

Zhuangzi focuses on the here and now and maintaining one's own individuality while avoiding the sense of conforming and overcoming perceptions. One need not

conform to society, but simply be true to themselves, and allow themselves to see the world in a broader scope. To do this, one may follow Gestalt Theory to better understand their own mind and how they are influenced by the world around them.