

**Philip Brownell: Review of "Integrative Gestalt Practice – complexity and wholeness in working with People", by Mikael Sonne & Jan Tønnesvang (not yet published in English)**

This is a review of a manuscript written by people familiar with both gestalt therapy and the integrative theory of Ken Wilber. In fact it is a theoretical integration of the two, and that is important. As such, it is neither Wilber's integrative psychotherapy nor contemporary gestalt therapy.

The authors do an excellent job of exploring some of the issues inherent in field theory as it is resident in gestalt therapy. I appreciated the way they developed it, which seems intelligent, comprehensive, and logically friendly. Field theory is not especially "easy" to understand, but they have made it intelligible. This treatment of field theory would be interesting to gestalt therapists, and even though I am not a fan of Ken Wilber (and even though there is a whole system filled with new jargon to digest), the lens of their use of his categories, metaphors, and illustrations is a helpful stimulus for thought.

I also appreciated their distinction between a constructionist and a more critical realist perspective as it might be encountered in field theory.

Having said that, the quadrant heuristic does become a bit overbearing for a gestalt therapist to take, but in grappling with it, gestalt therapists could benefit from the discipline of differentiation and non-gestalt therapists might find it quite "user-friendly."

In the section on the organism, they develop the idea of organismic self-regulation, which is essential to basic gestalt therapy, and they provide a nice definition of optimal (or healthy) organismic self-regulation. Gestalt therapists will likely appreciate that theory.

The book has helpful organizational features such as "reflection boxes", "definition boxes" and "exercise boxes". Reflection boxes, like the footnotes in the book, elaborate on a point or offer reflections in relation to the main text. Definition boxes specify definitions of the concepts that are introduced in the chapters. Exercise boxes describe practical exercises related to the main text with the purpose of enhancing experiential and integrated learning." In addition, the authors' use of footnotes is especially helpful as they often contribute new and relevant information, and they include numerous graphical illustrations by which to visualize the verbal constructs they describe.

This book will make a contribution to the field in gestalt therapy, and it will find an audience there, especially also because the authors are associated with one of the most successful gestalt training organizations in the world. Todd Burley, whom they cite and with whom they have worked, is part of Gestalt Associates Training Los Angeles. Aside from that, the concepts being put forward, and the ways in which these people describe standard constructs, will generate some discussion and controversy. The controversy would partially be because this is an integration, a blending of gestalt with something else, and many gestalt people will see it as another "gestalt-and..." approach. That said, it will also generate some talk, which would be good.

Outside of the field of gestalt therapy, the integrative perspective would find interest among the many, many people doing integrative therapy these days.

I know of no other book advocating such a gestalt integrative approach.

Philip Brownell, 2014