

DANIEL STERN: A DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY FOR GESTALT?

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ABSTRACT

Until recently, Gestalt therapy, with its existential focus on the client's phenomenological awareness, did not have a distinct and clearly defined theory of development that could be widely accepted and understood as a 'theory' in the same way that, for example, the paradoxical theory of change is understood. Wheeler (1998) has now advanced our understanding of field theory into a field model of development. This paper takes a different approach to this issue. From research on infant observation and clinical theories of practising therapists / analysts, Daniel Stern and his colleagues have developed a picture of the intersubjective world of the infant. This paper seeks to address the issue of whether the work of Stern can provide a framework that supports our Gestalt theoretical base and enrich our work as practitioners.