

第二届全国青年创新翻译大赛

B 组——英译中【原文】

Personal Sense of Reality

In the 18th century, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant revolutionized our thinking about the world by pointing out that we can never really know what is “out there” beyond ourselves, because our knowledge is limited to the constraints of our minds and senses. We don’t know how things are “in themselves,” but only as we experience them. This view forms the basis of Gestalt therapy, which says that it is vitally important to remember that the complexity of the human experience—with its tragedies and traumas, inspirations and passions, and its nearly infinite range of possibilities—is coded by the individual “lenses” through which we view it. We do not automatically absorb all the sounds, feelings, and pictures of the world; we scan and select just a few.

Fritz Perls, one of the founders of Gestalt therapy, pointed out that this means our personal sense of reality is created through our perception; through the ways in which we view our experiences, not the events themselves. However, it is easy to forget this, or even fail to recognize it. He says we tend to mistake our viewpoint of the world for the absolute, objective truth, rather than acknowledging the role of perception and its influence in creating our perspective, together with all the ideas, actions, and beliefs that stem from it. For Perls, the only truth one can ever have is one’s own personal truth.

Perls developed his theories in the 1940s, when the dominant psychoanalytical view was that the human mind could be reduced to a series of biological drives seeking fulfilment. This approach was far too rigid, structured, simplified, and generalized for

Perls; it did not allow for individual experience, which Perls held paramount. Nor did its analysts enable their patients to recognize and take responsibility for the creation of their experience. The psychoanalytical model operates on the understanding that patients are at the mercy of their unconscious conflicts until an analyst enters to save them from their unconscious drives. Perls, on the other hand, feels it is essential for people to understand the power of their own roles in creation. He wants to make us aware that we can change our realities, and in fact are responsible for doing so. No one else can do it for us. Once we realize that perception is the backbone of reality, each of us is forced to take responsibility for the life we create and the way we choose to view the world.

Gestalt theory uses the tenets of individual experience, perception, and responsibility—both for one’s thoughts and feelings—to encourage personal growth by establishing a sense of internal control. Perls insists that we can learn to control our inner experience, regardless of our external environment. Once we understand that our perception shapes our experience, we can see how the roles we play and the actions we take are tools, which we can then use consciously for changing reality. Control of our own inner psychic environment gives us power through two layers of choice: in how to interpret the environment, and how to react to it. The adage, “no one can make you angry other than yourself,” perfectly exemplifies this philosophy, and its truth can be seen played out in the different ways that people react to traffic jams, bad news, or personal criticism, for example.

In Gestalt therapy, a person is forced to take direct responsibility for how he or she acts and reacts, regardless of what may seem to be happening. Perls refers to this ability to maintain emotional stability regardless of the environment as “homeostasis,” using a biological term normally used to describe the maintenance of a stable physical environment within the body. It implies a fine balancing of many systems, and this is how Gestalt therapy views the mind. It looks for ways of balancing the mind through the many thoughts, feelings, and perceptions that make up the whole human

experience. It views a person holistically and places the focus firmly on the whole, not the parts.

Perls saw his task as helping his patients to cultivate an awareness of the power of their perceptions, and how they shape reality (or what we describe as “reality”). In this way, his patients became able to take control of shaping their interior landscape. In taking responsibility for their perceived sense of reality, they could create the reality they wanted.

Perls helped his patients achieve this through teaching them the integral processes of Gestalt therapy. The first and most important process is learning to cultivate awareness and to focus that awareness on the feelings of the present moment. This allows the individual to directly experience his or her feelings and perceived reality in the present moment. This ability, to “be here now” is critical to the Gestalt process; it is an acute emotional awareness, and one that forms the foundation for understanding how each of us creates and reacts to our own environment. It also offers a pathway for learning how to change the ways we experience ourselves and our environment.