

SCOTOMA

scotoma: a blind spot; the obscuring or blocking out of a sensation, perception, need, or behavior, either in psychological or bodily awareness.

Discussion:

Gestalt therapy emphasizes integration and wholeness of the personality, encouraging people to become aware of, experience, and integrate all parts of themselves, particularly those parts which they have disowned or not allowed into their awareness.

Illustrative Quotations:

• **Perls:** “The simplest means of annihilation is the scotoma, ...employed in situations where a real annihilation is impossible. By pretending not to see or hear, the source of unpleasantness seems to disappear. (1947/1992, p. 70) “...there are people who do not see what they do not want to see, don’t hear what they don’t want to hear, don’t feel what they don’t want to feel – all this in order to shut out what they consider to be dangerous.” (1973, p. 20)

“...recognition of one’s needs [can be interfered with] by blotting out awareness, for instance, by amnesia, scotomisation, frigidity..., linguistic and...motoric blockages, such as paralysis and...muscular spasms” (1946 or 1947/1978, p. 13)

• **PH&G:** “If the pain of a particular conflict has been too much to bear, you may have desensitized its context, and...you may find during body concentration, not aches and pains, but sensations of numbness, fogginess, nothingness. If so, then concentrate on these until you have them as a veil or blanket that you can lift, or as a fog that you can blow away.’ (1951, pp. 177-8)

• **Zinker:** “There may be ‘blind spots’ in the awareness of the healthy person. He may acknowledge his softness, but not be aware of the hardness in himself. When his hardness is brought to his attention, he may experience pain, but he is willing to incorporate this new notion of himself into his self-concept.”

“There are massive holes in the awareness of a disturbed person. He has a rigid, stereotyped view of himself and is not able to accept many parts of himself: his stinginess, his homosexuality, insensitivity, hardness. He denies his so-called negative polarities – those aspects of himself, which he has been conditioned to think of as unacceptable or repulsive.” (1977/1978, p. 200)

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