

Bocian, Bernd. *Fritz Perls in Berlin 1893-1933. Expressionismus-Psychoanalyse-Judentum*. Köln: Peter Hammer Verlag Eine Edition des Gestalt-Instituts Köln.
Zvi Lothane, MD

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This book is an important and interesting contribution to the history of the psychoanalytic movement and the definition, history, and literature of gestalt therapy by a prominent German gestalt therapist with Polish roots currently living in Italy. Bernd Bocian has made a number of excellent contributions to the historical relations between psychoanalysis and gestalt therapy. His book is also a fascinating glimpse into other histories: leftist innovators and pioneers in psychoanalysis, such as Wilhelm Reich; the counter culture movement in the Weimar Republic, such as the expressionism; and the important role played by anarchist and psychoanalyst Otto Gross in the Berlin Bohème circles. Perls' participation in these avant-garde milieux and collaboration with the Dadaist movement became an inspiration for his counter-culture activities in the United States and his teamwork with Paul Goodman, the Greenwich Village guru and leader of the youth protests of the 1960s and 1970s. Bocian also illuminates German-Jewish relations in the Second Reich, the Wilhelmine German Empire between 1871 and 1933, the Weimar Republic between 1918 and 1933, and the infamous Nazi Third Reich, from 1933 to 1945, which resulted in the forced mass emigration of Jewish intellectuals and psychoanalysts (see the 2003 special issue of *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, *Psychoanalysis and the Third Reich*, edited by Zvi Lothane).

The holistic concept of “gestalt,” the German word for whole structure and form, was launched in Germany in 1912 by Max Wertheimer and his two younger coworkers, Wolfgang Köhler and Kurt Koffka, with further elaborations by Kurt Lewin and Kurt Goldstein. It was a reaction to academic atomism, the latter grounded in associationism and organicism in psychology. This psychological revolution took root in the 1920s and spread to many American universities. Psychoanalysis did not readily embrace gestalt psychology; however, Fritz Perls, who studied with Goldstein, became a remarkable exception.

We follow the life and work of Perls: from birth to his training as a doctor, which was interrupted by the traumatic experiences of World War I; later as Freudian psychoanalyst and member of the International Psychoanalytic Association; and his emigration first to South Africa and then to the United States. It is a fascinating personal odyssey of a man fleeing anti-Semitism and persecution. His fate exemplifies the complex and tormented relationship between Germans and Jews and the special role of German Jewry in the German cultural and intellectual history. It shows that Hitler's most heinous crime was not only genocide but also *culturocide*, the destruction of the European tradition of the march of ideas, intellectual freedom, and the rule of democracy. Bocian brings his profound humanism and sensitivity to probe these painful chapters in German history. Thus, the book commemorates those German Jewish emigrants of the so-called expressionistic generation who championed modernity. In his gestalt approach, the dissident psychoanalyst Perls embodied, integrated, and saved from oblivion the rich life

experiences of the Berlin avant-garde culture in which Jews played such an important role. The book is an excellent read, of interest to psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, social workers, and the lay public. It holds the reader's interest from beginning to end.