



# Gestalt NEWS Foundation

GESTALT FOUNDATION - BIENNIAL NEWSLETTER  
AUTUMN/WINTER 2020 - ISSUE 31



## THE INVASION OF Covid-19 INTO OUR LIVES AND THIS YEAR'S 4 DAY WORKSHOP

page 2

- Editorial
- Speech: I am woman and...
- Best Sellers 2020, IANOS

page 3-4

- Presentations at IANOSO

page 5-7

- Philip Lichtenberg

page 8-10

- 22nd 4-Day Gestalt Workshop

page 11

- Covid-19

page 12

- GIO: Quarantine! Lockdown!

page 13

- e-therapy by Gestalt Foundation

page 14-15

- Supervision Training Program

page 16

- Free Expressionn



I'm certain that in years to come I'll remember this year's residential, and it will feel like a dream that will never be forgotten. Group Dynamics was the this year's theme. It is a paradox that such a large number of people were invited to experience group dynamics, each person sitting at home alone in front of a computer screen.

Continued on page 8

## IANOS ΑΛΥΣΙΔΑ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ

- IANOS ΒΙΒΛΙΟΠΩΛΕΙΑ
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**22o 4-Day  
Gestalt  
Online Workshop**

**e-therapy by  
Gestalt Foundation**

**Supervision  
Training  
Program**

What can I say?

You, the people who “wrote” in this issue have said everything...

I read your articles in order to write this editorial and the only thing that I can share with you is:

.... My deep felt emotion with the death, but mostly the life, of Philip Lichtenberg and the gratitude I felt

from the very first moment I met him. Have a safe journey... a huge thank you for the legacy you have left behind.

... The anguish, the fear, the anger, the frustration but also the faith and the amazing moments of cooperation during quarantine, for the program’s continuation and the organization of this online 4 day workshop! I wholeheartedly hope that this online 4 day workshop was the first and that this year “when everything is over...” we will again meet up around the pool at the Vallis hotel to share, hug and to make close contact once again

....The deep and unique feeling of familiarity and kinship that such relationships create.

... Gratitude for the presence of everyone in this “interconnectivity” and this “interdependency” in a “relationally changing community” of which we are all members.

... Emotion, pride and joy for the Gestalt that opens its wings and flies to Xanthi, Arta and to many other places in Greece and which cannot fit into just a few pages.

... With lectures, support programs for our people in conditions when it is needed...

... Admiration for our colleagues who have the ability to connect theory and practice, philosophy and reality, in book presentations, discussions and enquiry...

Thank you to everyone individually who invests time, care and “presence” in sharing not only through the newsletter articles, but also through the many unique ways in our every day “Gestalt coexistence” ... both in meeting and in absence, both together and apart, both in contact and in loneliness, both whole and fragmented, both in prayer and in pain, both here and now, both with distance and proximity...

Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Happy academic year to all of us!



**Katia Chatzilakou**

M.Sc. Social and Clinical Psychology, Gestalt Psychotherapist, Trainer and Supervisor, member of EAGT (Ex-Chair of NOGT and External Relation of EAGT). Holder of ECP (European Certificate of Psychotherapy). Founder Member of the Gestalt Foundation, psychotherapy and training centre. Founder member of HAGT (Hellenic Association for Gestalt Therapy)

***I am a woman and...***

[...] Feminism does not seek the negation of men; on the contrary, it demands equal rights and such a thing cannot be achieved without the

participation of men. We are not the only ones who have grown up with some social expectations such as “women must be beautiful and good, play with their dolls”, etc. It’s not uncommon for men to carry the load of expectation, perhaps the most characteristic of all being “men do not cry!” .

[...] For me, Feminism is inextricably linked to freedom. The freedom to be simply “as I am” , without having to do anything to show my worth. Because as a human being I already have value. I have a body, mind, a soul that needs care. I recognize that most of you in here

have already taken on many roles. Whether this is by choice or not I do not know, but I know one thing for sure: I can only take care of someone if I have been taken care of. Otherwise it is not possible, or even if it is, it has no quality or feels like something has been stolen from me and I am only half a person.

It is good to recognize that when I do not care about my needs and desires, I do not support myself. It is not supportive when I restrain myself, when I lead myself into isolation so as not to get hurt. How can I support me? Support is not something independent of what we live through. So what we have to do is to look inside a little, to observe what is there and what can now help us, because not everything we do is necessarily helpful. So, we must act with awareness of what is good for us.

**Elena Silioni**, *Psychologist, Gestalt Foundation graduate.*

**BEST SELLERS 2020**

ΛΟΓΟΤΕΧΝΙΑ



ΝΤΕΛΙΑ ΟΥΓΕΝΣ  
ΕΚΕΙ ΠΟΥ ΤΡΑΓΟΥΔΑΝΕ  
ΟΙ ΚΑΡΑΒΙΔΕΣ



ΛΕΝΑ ΜΑΝΤΑ  
ΟΙ ΤΡΕΙΣ ΑΖΟΙ



Χ.Α. ΧΩΜΕΝΙΔΗΣ  
Ο ΒΑΣΙΛΙΑΣ ΤΗΣ



ΑΛΚΥΟΝΗ ΠΑΠΑΔΑΚΗ  
ΚΟΝΤΡΑ ΣΤΟ ΚΥΜΑ

ΜΕΛΕΤΕΣ



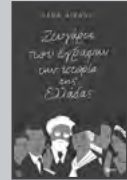
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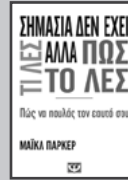
MARK MANSON  
Η ΕΥΓΕΝΗΣ ΤΕΧΝΗ  
ΤΟΥ ΝΑ ΤΑ ΓΡΑΦΕΙΣ  
ΟΛΑ ΣΤΑ ...!



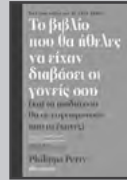
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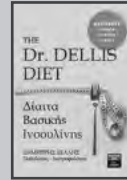
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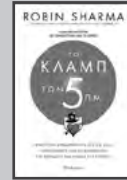
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ΠΩΣ ΤΟ ΛΕΣ



PHILIPPA PERRY  
ΤΟ ΒΙΒΛΙΟ ΠΟΥ ΘΑ  
ΗΘΕΛΕΣ ΝΑ ΕΙΧΑΝ  
ΔΙΑΒΑΣΕΙ ΟΙ ΓΟΝΕΙΣ ΣΟΥ



ΔΗΜΗΤΡΗΣ ΔΕΛΛΗΣ  
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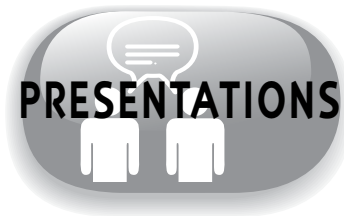


ROBIN SHARMA  
ΤΟ ΚΛΑΜΠ ΤΩΝ 5 Π.Μ.

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## ...at IANOS Cultural chain

*Feedback on the presentation “Emotions”, delivered by Stavrianea Stasinou and Yianna Yiamareliou in Athens on 12/12/2019.*

The feeling comes first, then something is added and it becomes an emotion. Thought comes later and makes speech to express emotion. Philosophy comes, psychology comes, touching, and feelings meet emotions. Ms. Yiamarelou and Mr. Stavrianeas come together to talk about the topic: “Emotions”.



There are the basic emotions such as fear, anger, joy, surprise, sadness and disgust and the more complex ones such as pride, remorse, nostalgia which are often shades and combinations of the basics. When I have a feeling - emotion then I feel something physically and mentally. Philosophers ask, does what I feel fit into what is happening? Does the way

I react fit into what I feel? And who determines what is appropriate or not in each case? Are emotions absolute and universal or are they determined by the community in which we live? Of course, both can happen. Emotions are important, they are the way we connect with the world and reality and often motivate us to act.

Let's look at an example: I'm afraid of a dog even though I know it is not dangerous. How does this happen? Is it something that comes from experience? Am I learning something, I define it as bad, as the Stoics would say, and does that make me feel the same way? In this hypothetical case it seems that if I had not colored something as good or bad then I could get to the point of not feeling. Do I, as the Realists would say, receive emotions almost automatically with my senses without mental processing? Then I would be able to feel in the same way I see and automatically perceive what color an object is. Philosophy raises questions and gives answers according to the current of the times as we saw in the example of the Stoics and the Realists.

We understand that the environment influences us and creates emotions, while at the same time our desire motivates us to influence the environment. Emotions themselves sometimes lead us to behavior and sometimes not; a typical example is anger that sometimes leads to aggressive behavior and sometimes not. An important area where action and emotion meet is art. Art makes us feel, it moves us. In fact, many times we can judge a work of art depending on how it moves us or how much and in what way it

makes us feel.

According to the Gestalt approach, man is not just being influenced but he exists through his interaction with the environment. Everything affects all the events in the field. The way we have learned to relate has to do with our experience. But sometimes we get stuck in the experience that belongs to the past and the contact with what is happening in the present ceases to exist.

It is important for survival to be able to distinguish when existence is really threatened and when the threat experienced as anxiety in the present relates an older experience. In the case of a serious threat we may even decide to “sacrifice” a part of ourselves in order not to lose our lives. For example we can see an animal that has been caught on a trap and can not escape. After trying many times in vain to free itself, it chooses to pull its leg off so that it does not die. In other words, the body prefers to lose one member than to lose the whole.

The world around us is constantly changing while at the same time our brain needs something stable, permanent and unchanging.



What can we do to help lift our spirits in a threatening and volatile environment? In order to endure, we create a framework to feel safe. It does not matter so much psychologically to define what is generally true, but it does matter what is real for a particular person at any given time. There are facts, relationships are created but what matters most is the meaning we ourselves give to what is happening to us.

I hear Mrs. Yiamarelou referring to the old, well-known way she breathes when she exercises and what new meaning she was able to give very recently to this old way that has been happening all her life. This connection, this meaning gives me joy and emotion. Every new contact we make contains emotions and the new, no matter how far we have come in the cycle of life. We see, hear, touch, smell, speak, feel and then evaluate our experiences to be recorded. We store variables throughout our lives.

*Konstandina Stavrou, graduate (2019) of Athens Gestalt Foundation.*

*Feedback on the presentation, “Freedom”, delivered by **Stavrianea Stasinou** and **Exarmenia Pappa** in Athens on 16/1/2020.*

In this meeting with the philosophy of freedom and liberty in Gestalt, many thoughts emerged...

I found freedom in the right and responsibility of choice. When I tried to live with the stereotypes of others I felt and feel unfree. Through this meeting I recognized the fear and anxiety I experience in each choice. And suddenly I heard “Self-Restraint”. All my attention was focused on these words:

“Introjections”

“I am restricted by an image of something that I am not”

“I am trapped in a vicious circle which is familiar and has a secondary benefit.

“Retroflection”

“I forget how many times they have supported me and I remember the negative moments.

“Repeating patterns that are ever present in my life.”

Gestalt puts all my thoughts, fears and constraints into these phrases. I recognized freedom born out of “I want”. I wonder if what I want, if what attracts me is something pure or unaffected by core beliefs, by introjections, by the “should” and “should not” of family

and society in general.

I wonder how free I am? How much freedom is there in the field for free choices to emerge, to choose with freedom of will and to claim my “want” freely? Do the desires of significant others influence, determine or inhibit the true free “I”? With these questions I lost myself. I felt unfree. I leaned a little on Angelika, I grabbed her hand. And I thought...different hands are touching, satisfying their individual wants. “Aware of the other’s difference” What else is there? Contact with either myself or with you is something unique and ours. Each of us sees the world with our own eyes, in our own unique way. Our strength, our choices, stem from our diversity. Diversity influenced and painted by our history, by the experiential journeys that are drawn like maps on our bodies. My guide to freedom is the awareness of my senses...”The freer I am, the more satisfying relationships I can have. And the more satisfying the contact, the freer I feel. “

Stavrianea, thank you for this personal journey into enquiry.

Nia thank you, I needed your presence to ground myself and support myself in the moments when the concept and shape of freedom became chaotic.

**Nana Velali**, 3rd year trainee at the Gestalt Foundation in Athens

**Vicky Vasilakopoulou**, 2nd year trainee at the Gestalt Foundation in Athens





Philip, the time has come... this bittersweet hour...

The time that tightens my heart and brings tears of love... I can only tremble, be moved, cry... and the experiences of contact with you emerge as flashbacks...

Your image takes form, emerges in me... a figure of warm presence where your penetrating look at the "here and now" of the other is filled with absences of life...

You, a slender figure exuding a calm strength that embraces vulnerability by tenderly wiping away its tears...

A figure of embodied respect and equality in the face of the injured, the suffering...where your "words", sincere and authentic, become a source of healing...

A master of contact who invites a healthy "togetherness" while encouraging a "distinct", as you would said. A figure of humility, full of wisdom and "thanking" others...A figure who could feel "childlike" pleasure and joy in the taste of ice cream!...

I remember the surprise and YES to the invitation to come to Greece... on your last trip to Europe...

Then you came back and started arranging, sharing your life with us ...your beloved Elsa, your siblings, a very beautiful, vibrant community... until the oblivion began... and our correspondence stopped... but not the legacy!

A legacy of social responsibility, primacy, accountability, four corners of contact, exclusive-inclusive aggression, social injustice, equality, oppression, human rights, faith vs security, radical psychoanalysis, awareness of citizenship and so much more!

But mostly you have left a legacy of a way of being and existing in the world, both as a therapist with ethics, commitment, care, boundaries and authenticity, and as a sensitive, true, loyal teacher, citizen, friend, companion, father and grandfather ... it is a legacy that defines me, honors me and for which I am eternally grateful!

Thank you,

**Despoina Balliou.**

## Meeting Philip Lichtenberg

My first contact with Philip Lichtenberg's thinking was through an article on the role of shame in creating and maintaining a system of social inequality (2006: 269-296). Looking back, this article looks like a miniature of his theoretical positions. It focuses



on the victimizer-victim, oppressor-oppressed, stronger-weaker relationship, which is the axis around which his theoretical analysis revolves and expands. The process by which the weakest transfer their power and contribute in a fundamental way to the establishment and maintenance of inequality is at the heart of his

thinking. In November 2010, as part of the Gestalt Foundation's continuing education program, we had the opportunity to meet him up close. Asweet and very wise old man who shares many stories and examples from his professional and personal life, who makes contact with tenderness, discreet courage, responsibility and humor and urges us not to delay sharing our truths with those we love. Contact with Lichtenberg in general is a rich experience. On the occasion of this experience I would like highlight some points that emerged and had a personal impact on me:

### 1. The need to value and respect our experiences

Starting with simple stories and situations like the ones that happen in the work and personal lives of many of us, Lichtenberg lays the foundations for his theoretical analysis and contributes to the theory and practice of psychotherapy, and social thinking in general. This means that one needs to have "infinite" or "great" experiences in order to learn and possibly articulate an original theoretical discourse, or as a person to add value to one's life.

Such an attitude towards our experiences follows a tradition that goes back to the beginnings of Gestalt therapy, when Laura and Fritz Perls introduced the concept of mental metabolism, highlighting the value of concentrating and processing, "chewing" our experiences. . Characteristically, Perls writes: "... One gains more knowledge and intelligence by reading a good book six times than six good books at once" (1992: 147).

This tradition continues with Arnold Beisser (1970) and the paradoxical theory of change and is completed in Erving Polster's wonderful book "Every Person's Life Is Worth a Novel" (1985). We find this orientation in the verses of our own poet, Odysseus Elytis: "... And you will learn a lot / if you deepen the Insignificant..."from Axion Esti (p.17). The Insignificant is the worthless for many or the A-significant, what has not yet been marked, has not yet been given importance.

In the same vein, R.M. Rilke writes to a young poet: "... If your daily life may seem poor to you, do not despise it. Despise yourself that he is not a poet enough and can not invite her riches to him. For the creator there is no poverty, nor poor and indifferent places..."(1993: 18).

The above echoes the words of the alchemist about the philosophical stone: "Here is the cheap, ugly stone / Its price is very cheap / The more the fools despise it / The more the wise love it" (Arnalous de Villanova, in Jung, 1992: 318).

### 2. The need to widen the gaze to the overall field

Lichtenberg repeatedly points out that what happens on the micro scale (individual) reflects what happens on the macro scale (societies, the whole planet) and vice versa. Thus, globalization, which threatens and destroys differentiation, diversity

and differences as happens in any form of totalitarianism, has its counterpart in the individual, in the form of one-sidedness that comes through a systematic denial and alienation of its individual aspects and possibilities.

### 3. We belong to the human community

Something that is impressive about Lichtenberg is an element that exists in both his verbal and written speech. He often uses the first plural in his references, e.g. "Many of us have... or do..." It clearly includes himself in those he refers to, the human community in general. The feeling of equality and participation in the human condition (humanity) gives a special quality to human contact, therapeutic relationship, support and solidarity in general. It is as if he were saying again: "I am human and nothing human is foreign to me" (Terentius, in Fromm, 1978: 84)

## **Two books by Philip Lichtenberg**

For anyone interested in delving into Philip Lichtenberg's writings, his articles are available on the Gestalt Institute of Philadelphia website. The article entitled "Equalizing in Life" is particularly interesting as it contains a fairly detailed description of his professional journey and its theoretical enquiry. From his books I have the following in mind and I recommend them with enthu-

siasm:

1. The Law of the Equation of Satisfaction in Human Relations [Lichtenberg, P. (1988). Getting Even: The Equalizing Law of Relationship. Lanham, MD: University Press of America]

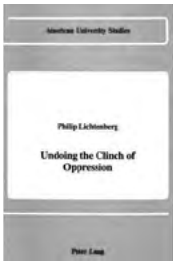


The central idea that runs through this highly elaborate analysis of equality and authoritarianism is that in all human transactions, negotiations take place, between participants, in such a way that the persons involved end up receiving approximately equal amounts of satisfaction. If in one interaction one of the parties tries to benefit more from the other participants, it almost always provokes reactions in the other in relation to balance and eventually the level of satisfaction decreases for everyone, as the potential which the interaction could lead to is lost. If, on the other hand, one person sacrifices himself on the 'altar' of another's needs, corrective tendencies are activated in the other that lead to compensation. Lichtenberg cites the parent-child relationship as an example. If a father sacrifices his needs for the sake of his son, the son gains from the father's self-sacrifice, but at the same time he realizes the loss that the father experiences and is confused by this "lose-win" relationship. No matter how much the sacrifice is justified, the parent communicates it to the child who in turn responds in such a way that his gain has a high price.



At the same time, Lichtenberg attempts to approach questions such as: What does it mean to be fully alive? How is it possible for our contact with ourselves, others and situations to be influenced by third parties? How do our attitudes and predispositions affect our contact with reality and processing it? What does responsibility mean? What method can we follow to promote equality in the organizations we work in and in the environments where we live? This book is especially useful for social workers, psychologists, doctors, nurses, educators and anyone looking to be an active change agent. It is a treasure trove of knowledge and experience.

2. Community and Contribution: Neutralizing the Bonds of Oppression. [Lichtenberg, P. (1994). *Community and Confluence: Undoing the Clinch of Oppression*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Gestalt Press].



This is a book that can be read as a continuation of the previous one. The key question remains: How can psychological insights be useful in promoting equality and positive social change? For Lichtenberg, the study of intra-atomic and intersectoral processes, e.g. in the victimizer-victim relationship, needs to be balanced with the study of the wider field in which they exist, which they constitute and from which they consist. The analysis is based on the study of the victimizer-victim relationship and the psychoanalytic meaning of identification with the attacker, which was originally formulated by Sandor Ferenczi based on his analytical work with people who had been sexually abused as children by adults. According to Lichtenberg, identification with the attacker is a reaction of the individual to the excessive demand placed on him by a power he initially trusts.

In the second chapter, Lichtenberg presents an extremely interesting, clear and comprehensive analysis of the processes that take place in the victim, including the factor of anger towards the attacker and how this anger turns into guilt and self-loathing and he explains how the victim ends up identifying his needs and values with those of the perpetrator.

The most interesting point of the analysis is presented in chapter 3 where the author turns our attention to a parallel process that takes place in the perpetrator which he calls projection upon a primed vulnerable other. Roughly speaking, the perpetrator is dependent on the victim, or the strongest on the weakest, because through their relationship he succeeds in managing his emotional inadequacies: the attacker is forced to depend on a certain limited type of social relationship in order to satisfy his personal needs. The self-regulation of the attacker and the control over his desires and needs depend on exercising power over another person. The other must be vulnerable, i.e. willing to relinquish responsibility and decision-making power in his life.

Eventually, both the victimizer and the victim create a relationship where one is an instrument or extension of the other. The analysis continues with undiminished interest in the remaining chapters, which focus on how the knowledge gained from the dynamics of the victimizer-victim relationship can be applied more generally in the context of social institutions to promote equality and freedom from social oppression.

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Continued from page1

Yes, this was the reality that no one had expected and no one was prepared for this year. But despite having some resistance to what this four-day online workshop would be like, I decided to take part in I. Vidacovic's Advanced Group. Apart from the challenge, I was also curious to experience group work through Zoom. Strangers, English, heat, nothing helped the already strange situation until I heard I. Vidacovic's welcome speech on the first day of the workshop. Then, with the pauses in the speech, which helped my breathing, the new members of the group, I suddenly felt a sense of security and contact and acceptance through the screen, yes right through the screen, sitting in a chair of my home. Group work via Zoom and the break out rooms that were created for the experiential parts of the subgroups, then... maybe for the first time, I appreciated the potential of the Internet because isolation and the definition of confidentiality, the concentration of the members was exclusive, something you can't get when you are in a physical environment. The mood of our facilitator I. Vidacovic was so positive and alive that I had forgotten I was not in the same room as everyone else. The inclusion and the vitality kept me interested. I am glad that Gestalt Foundation risked it and organized this year's 4-day workshop under unprecedented conditions and with such a demanding topic: "Group Dynamics". I was curious to see how this year's 4-day workshop would work out and how I would be in all of this but in the end, I can say that it was very good that I decided to have this experience with these people. I gained many things for myself, both as a therapist and as a person. I got emotional, I cried, I applauded, I met new people and I have managed to keep in contact with them. I met an amazing supervisor, I. Vidacovic, who was real and direct and shared her knowledge selflessly. This experience came suddenly but it gave me many things that I will keep, take advantage of and remember.

**Alexandra Amiridi**, Graduate of Gestalt Foundation, Athens, 2019.

### **Screen and Connection**

22nd 4-day workshop of Gestalt.

We'll not meet at the 'Valis Resort', the order is ALT!

Through Zoom will be connected.

From Covid -19 we need to be protected.

The course's title, «The Dynamic of the group».

How ironic it seems! Or maybe it is going to bring a new perspective?

And I'm thinking of experimenting with my entry.

Try to find a «crack», creatively to adjust.

# THE INVASION INTO OUR LIVES AND WORK

And immediately  
the thought that  
comes 'here's  
something  
convenient'  
I will connect  
without even  
moving a finger.

On my pc screen,  
the minutes are  
accurate.

I will connect at  
half past nine.

The 'squared  
circle' I follow,  
I put down my  
head, I search for  
a plan gro.

Your space, and  
my space, the  
background from far.

By forming on the screen, they come closer.

And when it's time, to be separated in groups,  
suddenly, by 'clicking', we enter other rooms.

Oh! Look! There is something different and new.  
I see my head in my field of view.

I talk and it talks back to me, I laugh and it laugh at me,  
But where is my body, which I cannot see?

Somehow, I get confused and I ask myself, «Who am I?»  
«Am I the one who sits in the chair or the one from across the  
screen?»





# END OF Covid-19 AND THIS YEAR'S 4 DAY WORKSHOP



Eyes, ears, and  
brain I keep  
them active.  
That is my  
contact I feel it  
clearly.

I can see you;  
hear you and  
understand you.  
From your hands,  
your eyes, your  
nose and your  
neck.

Where did the  
touch go, where  
the smell?  
My body, your  
body, non-verbal  
signs?

What does the  
body want to

say,  
without any movement the whole day?

I try to find the whole, the parts are there.  
I feel like I'm losing pieces from the contact.

Maybe the screen can connect us and bring us together.  
But how can we call connection, a connection without touch?

I have heard this adage, it comes from the past,  
«deon, preponandepikairon», creatively adjust.

I am not saying, words can be wise,  
But I feel the need, to be together again!

Connection and screen, screen and connection.

I wonder, how much do these matches?

**Thomas Demka**, Graduate (BA) Philosophy; Post graduate (MA)  
Ancient Greek Philosophy, University College London (UCL), Continued  
Education: Social Psychology in Child Education and Managing Parent  
Separation-Divorce

The 22nd 4-day seminar with the topic of "Group Dynamics",  
paradoxically, took place via an online platform with turned off  
cameras and microphones. Surprisingly, it brought me closer  
with everyone in my own way. "To dare to share and your power  
is when you show your vulnerability" as Ivana said.

I am glad that under these conditions global social and cultural  
issues come through. What we do as therapists; Why ethics  
without action is not ethical; How it is to adapt to situations  
without losing myself; How I can bring my whole self to contact.  
The meanings I kept from this experience were: the political  
practice of our profession through the intensification of self  
awareness and work with trauma, as well as the fact that  
integration and awakening through art is what makes it great as  
opposed to introjection and identification with it.

We also dealt with meeting before 'words' arrive. The experience  
of this continuous intensive existence but also of loneliness; This  
curiosity that babies have for life and that when speech comes  
in, the magic and the experience of the moment are lost. The  
same happens to all of us ... As is said in quantum physics, there  
may not be time, but there is a continuous flow, continuous  
motion of the molecules and this is the way of creating the  
different frequencies. From matter to spirit. There is existence.  
In conclusion, I can say that despite its difficulties, the four days  
had many benefits for me as well as the comfort of my home  
and my schedule. We closed with emotion, existential sharing  
and contact, something that for me is the most important and  
essential, and which I always find in the arms of Gestalt.

**Maria Dionisia Georgoudaki**, 2nd year trainee, Gestalt Foundation,  
Athens

## **Corona Virus - Four Day Workshop... an Unforgettable Experience.**

Pandemic! A word whose meaning I've learned well in the past  
months. I knew this word of course and had read it in texts about  
other pandemics that sometimes affected the whole world (see,  
cholera, plague, etc.), but I'd never had personal experience of its  
meaning. Obviously it was my turn to experience something so  
dramatic. To put myself in the shoes of all those millions of souls  
who lived through something so dramatic in the past.

My relationship with technology has always been very good. So  
when we were told by GF that we should continue our training

through a platform called ZOOM, I said: “Yes... this should have been done a few weeks ago, we have already lost a lot of time, I wanted to keep in touch with the groups that I was a member of, in any case”.

So it was with this attitude that I approached the workshop. The famous four days where we were all together, laughing, crying, exchanging views, disagreeing, then finding each other again from the beginning. But something was missing. It was this contact with colleagues, with mentors, the interaction. I missed them a lot.

In the end, it was more difficult to make contact online than to be present in a room of the well-known hotel that hosts the workshop every May. I felt that my senses were under functioning or I could only access some of them. I missed the smell, the touch, a lot in ZOOM workshop. I needed to touch and be touched, to hug and to be hugged. To feel the look of the others, to enter their eyes and to feel the words being spoken to me. Yes...I really missed the cycle of contact that I've learned at Gestalt and I hope in time to be given the opportunity to experience again all the feelings that I've been in touch with for years now.

**Georgia Skarpa**, 3rd year trainee of the Gestalt Foundation, Athens.

The 22nd four-day workshop with the theme of “Group Dynamics” took place through the online platform ZOOM, as we are in the midst of the pandemic COVID-19. I eagerly and enthusiastically waited for the beginning of the four days that started with the presentation by Ivana Vidakovic. The presentation illuminated the journey of Gestalt therapists through their intrapersonal, interpersonal and group work. My hand was writing non-stop trying to record as much information as possible. The skills I can develop as a Gestalt psychotherapist fascinated me and the dynamics inherent in the three levels I am daily called to mirror and discover myself individually and therapeutically, filled me with hope. So, I was looking forward to participating in the first workshop. I was curious how it would be conducted through an online platform. I wanted to see how they would cover the experiential part.

Palpitations caused by meeting people for the first time, and especially under these conditions subsided through contact, therefore leaving room for learning new information. It is magical that the fact that I externalized my difficulty unlocked me and helped me connect with all those who participated in the workshops and presentations throughout the four days. I witnessed the dynamics of contact, which, of course, can also be done online. I was able to stay connected all the time, and not only that, I was able to feel, I was able to be moved, to be happy and to learn. The experience was unique. There were of

course the moments when I missed the human contact after the workshops or at the end of the four days. But I also saw this as a challenge to learn to manage my difficulties on a personal level and to seek clarity through the creation of human contact, as the only means of development.

**Eleftheria Chourdaki**, 1st year trainee of the Gestalt Foundation, Athens

## **Pandemic-2020**

I consider the Pandemic as a phenomenon and a stimulus to be extremely complex and requiring in-depth analysis, without hasty interpretations. It certainly arouses the fear that evil and the enemy is something foreign and is out there or has entered



our lives. I remembered many times during this period the verse of Seferis: “We saw the stranger and the enemy in the mirror”, by the Argonauts. At the same time, I saw again the value of adaptation, in the service of survival, and I had many experiences with different people, who showed me again that adaptation does not necessarily mean freezing, submission or compliance, but also innovation, experimentation, transcendence, active attitude (struggle), maintaining vitality, and change. One of these experiences is related to the Gestalt Foundation and the quick reflexes of its people to take care of the continuation of the training and the actualization of the four day workshop. What is now “stamped” on me is the responsibility I witnessed from both the Center and the trainees, as well as the commitment and practical interest in supporting meeting and contact, despite the fatigue, adversity, and any frustration arising out of electronic difficulties. These experiences cultivate hope and renew my commitment to continue the work that our world needs.

**Kostas Konstantinos**, Gestalt Psychotherapist and trainer, psychologist & social worker. Member EAGT, HAGT.

**PRESS  
RELEASE**

ANNOUNCEMENT OF  
THE OPENING OF A  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT  
OFFICE AT XANTHI GENERAL  
HOSPITAL

Posted on Thursday, 26 March

2020 14:42 PRESS RELEASE

In the context of recent data and increased demands, the COVID-19 PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT OFFICE is being called upon to meet the following needs:

1. Psychological support for patients with a positive Covid-19 or patients under observation, and their relatives.
2. Psychological support for patients with a history of psychiatric illness who were already under observation by the Psychiatric Department.
3. Psychological support for the Health Care staff.

This is how the psychological support office Covid-19 was announced in the press release, which myself and two colleagues (1 psychologist & 1 social worker) were invited to organize within three days of March 23rd so as to support a great challenge in the prefecture of Xanthi, and inside its only hospital. Meeting the psychological needs during the pandemic was especially during the difficult period of quarantine. The special office ceased operations on May 19, recording 300 incidents.

How do I feel? How did I go through a difficult period with my colleagues but also a period with deep awareness of how useful the offer of support in crisis is? Looking back I remember the voices full of despair and hopelessness in the special support line. Phone calls from people hoping to get comfort and relief. Relatives who were desperate because their loved ones were being treated in isolation wards or units. Relatives who were anxiously waiting for the result of the Covid test to come out, so that they could bury their people with dignity. Relatives who participated in an unprecedented burial process attended by a small number of people from only the immediate family. Patients with mild symptoms who remained in home care and were anxious about the course of their recovery; colleagues who had to go through the isolation period after testing positive for covid ... and much more. What made me sad was that in addition to anxiety and despair, people (patients, relatives, staff) experienced unpleasant moments because they had to manage, beyond the difficulties caused by the coronavirus, feelings of guilt and stigma... (if they transmitted the disease or when they were avoided or judged by others...). The staff of the hospital who had the opportunity to do psychotherapy up close, as I already mentioned, had the same anxiety that each of us

experienced in how to protect themselves and their loved ones. How we can stand with dignity wearing the special protection suit from covid-19, which we could not take off (or take off the protective mask) for 6 hours, even to drink a glass of water... So one day I was called about an incident in the Covid wing ... the nurse: "I probably had a panic attack, I was dizzy I wanted to drink water but I could not take off the mask ... then everything turned black ... I do not remember ...". The patients who were treated in the special ward or ICU, if their result was negative and there was a relative recovery, we visited them in the wards to hear what their experience was. So I had the pleasure of meeting the elderly but happy and full of life Mrs. X, who in her description of



how she experienced her treatment told me: "They all took care of me just fine, I didn't understand one because they wore the astronaut's uniform!" ... and she laughed ... So I left that day with a smile and many more smiles every time I felt that the office supported us and offered "Breath", in all the difficulty that we were going through. Another lady told me that she was being treated at the same time as her husband ... she survived ... but he did not ... And many other patients and many lives, each with his own story of victory or loss. Now I feel satisfied and the fatigue subsides, I feel joy and the anxiety subsides, I feel emotion and the tightness subsides ... Yes, we did it! The three of us, the solidarity and support, our morning meetings and daily goals, the thanks of the people and the sense of gratitude that we received from the many voices in the support line that needed us, gave us support and courage to continue with optimism! I would also like

to say a big thank you to my colleagues, Molly and Katerina, who shared with us this unprecedented experience, and the hospital administration for the excellent cooperation and support in the opening of the covid-19 office. My supervisor Antonia Konstantinidou who was always there to listen to me and give me relief in my own difficulty, to relatives and friends who called me to find out if I needed anything. A rich life experience in less



than three months with a “creative” adjustment required by the crisis... The Pandemic has taught us a lot and I want to dwell on all that it has taught us in being more united, more aware and better people. Yes... “Shared pain is half pain and shared joy is double joy”.

**Marina Katsikidou**, Gestalt Psychologist-Psychotherapist,  
Xanthi General Hospital



### **Quarantine! Lockdown!**

Suddenly due to ‘the hand of God’ everything stopped! A busy routine of many obligations was abruptly

interrupted. The news is black. Friends from Italy told us “do not ignore it! Be careful! “ New situation! We have to stay home. The need for communication is great! To share our concern, our news,

to navigate the new reality! Fortunately there is Wifi! It’s really impressive how fast we take advantage of what technology can offer us. In this context, the Gestalt Foundation’s effort not to cancel our educational course was commendable. Following GIO through zoom was something foreign and at first it seemed cold and strange. It was clear in previous sessions how important our physical presence and team interaction is. Reality dispelled my reservations. It was well organized, the speakers managed to convey the meaning to us and our group responded with zeal and emotion. The interaction between us was obvious and I can say with certainty that the educational process worked and moved us forward as individuals and as a group. Creative Adjustment in all its glory! I am grateful that we were able to do that. This unprecedented situation, like living in a science fiction movie script, has taught me how unpredictable life is, and that we must always be ready for change and creative adjustment. So far we seem to be succeeding. And that gives me optimism for the future!

**Panagiota Riga**, participant in the Gestalt in Organizations workshop series of the Gestalt Foundation Athens, 2019-2020.





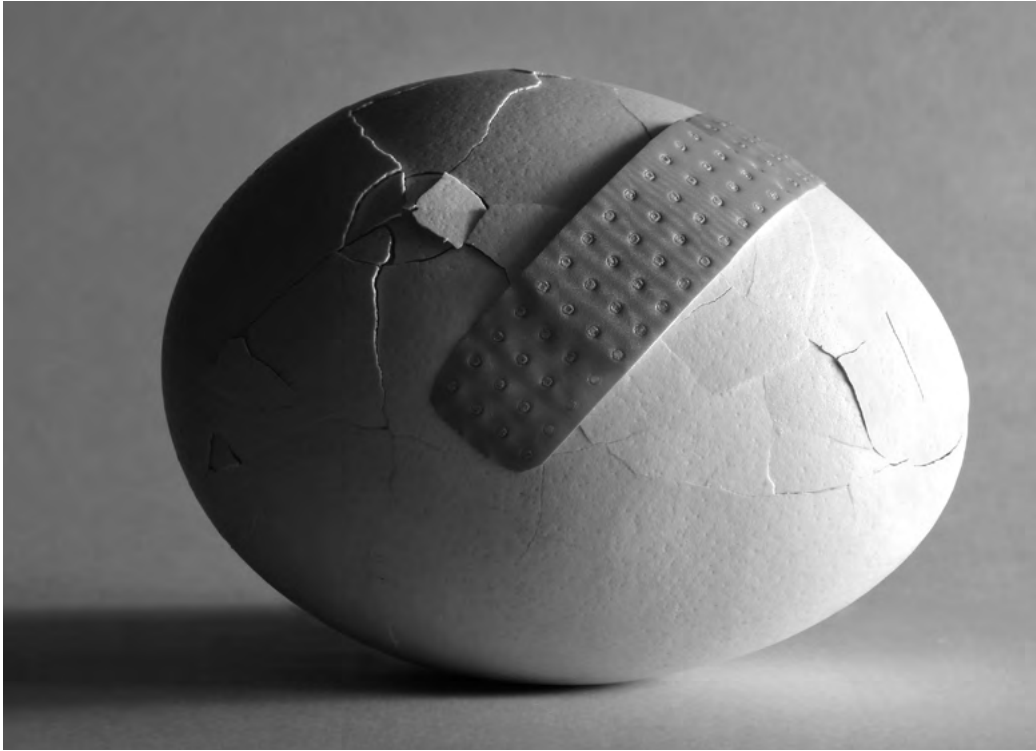
**«e-therapy by Gestalt Foundation»**

Gestalt Foundation Online Social Contribution and Volunteer Program

The Gestalt Foundation, drawing inspiration from the principles of social contribution and volunteering that has characterized the foundation’s parallel activities since its inception, successfully implemented the

crisis support program, “Remote ... CONTACT”, during the 4 month period of March 2020 - June 2020.

Essentially, it was a voluntary program, organized and activated at the height of the restrictive measures imposed by the State in the fight against Covid-19, to provide



psychological support and counseling to our fellow human beings in need. More specifically, 30 therapists offered their services completely free of charge and voluntarily during the 4 month period. The participating therapists were divided into 4 groups and assigned a gestalt supervisor. The whole program was operated and overseen by the Gestalt Foundation Psychotherapy and Training Center.

It is important to emphasize that, within the framework of the program “Remote ... CONTACT”, 150 of our fellow human beings found the support and care they needed to face the difficulties they were experiencing due to the pandemic.

In these challenging times of prolonged crisis, for the period 2020-2021, the Gestalt Foundation, recognizing the benefits and importance of this voluntary contribution to society, has announced a renewed voluntary initiative, “e-therapy by Gestalt Foundation” to provide (via the internet) psychological support and counseling in times of crisis. This program offers a specific number of free counseling and psychotherapy sessions to those in need, and it has adopted the successful operating model of last year’s aforementioned program.

More specifically, those interested (who must meet certain conditions) will be able to send their request, to participate in the program of psychological support and counseling “e-therapy by Gestalt Foundation, via message to our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/gestalt.therapy.by.GF>

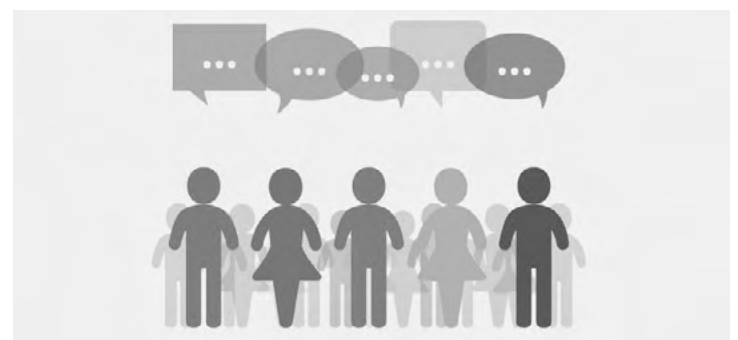
After GF reviews and accepts a request, each interested party will be referred to the first available therapist, who will then

undertake the organization, implementation and completion of online sessions with the interested party. It is made clear that each participant will be undertaken by a specific mental health counselor-therapist (trained in Gestalt psychotherapy) who will be responsible throughout the

intervention. At the same time, all the therapists involved in the program will be assigned to small supervisory working groups, to ensure the correct and harmonious (both ethically and scientifically) application of the procedure to be followed by everyone participating in the program.

You can connect with us and at the same time freely promote our voluntary program through the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/gestalt.therapy.by.GF>

All together... we can do it! We hope you stay safe and strong, and we wish you a happy new year!





*Thessaloniki,  
November 2018-June  
2020*

When I was offered the opportunity to write about my experience in the supervision

training program that took place in Thessaloniki from October 2018 to June 2020, the mythological story of "Daedalus and Icarus" came to mind.

I likened Nurith Levi, Joanna Hewit - Evans, Sally Denham-Vaughan, Yianna, Despina, Antonia and Katia to "Daedalus".

Each in their own way showed me how to "build the wings" of supervision flight and how to fasten them on my shoulders as a new supervisor.

They gave me instructions on how to "fly". Their voice still echoes in my ears:

"Do not fly too high, because the Sun will melt your wings. Do not fly too low above the sea, because your wings will get wet and you will not be able to fly".

What I witnessed and experienced was wonderful and my journey was unique. Together with the others in the role of "Icarus"

I made great, new supervision flights. I will not forget the sharing of experiences from difficult flights and unexplored supervision routes. The truth is that even now we are still sharing. I keep this whole educational journey inside me like a good luck charm. Thank you and I wish safe "flights" to all of us.

**Melina Makridou**, M.Sc. in Health Psychology University of Bristol, UK, Mental Health Counselor, Gestalt Psychotherapist and Supervisor, member of EAGT and HAGT.

### **Speaking of feathers**

When Nurith Levi asked us at the first supervisor training seminar to draw how we imagine supervision, I imagined a large eagle circling over a nest. To see, to protect, in readiness to defend its the right to be there, thus in this way participating in what is happening in the nest.

On completing the program, I do not know if I got instructions on how high or how low to fly, but I want to describe what this training program was for me. I was given the opportunity not to fly alone and the word that comes again and again into my mind is OPPORTUNITY.

An OPPORTUNITY created by the Gestalt Foundation.

An OPPORTUNITY that it took place in Thessaloniki.

AN OPPORTUNITY to meet with the "old" again in new circumstances (but which was familiar and safe).

An OPPORTUNITY to meet the "new" - whether with a common history and foundation or a different one, we all had a common language in the end.

An OPPORTUNITY to confirm the history and roots of everything that is called Gestalt Foundation and Gestalt psychotherapy.

An OPPORTUNITY to confirm and belong to the development of all this.

During these 2 years, I cried, laughed, remembered, reconnected, connected, bonded, shared birthdays, deaths, pregnancies, lockdown, objections, concerns, knowledge, and experiences with 23 other people, with 23 people who are now my team.

Difficult at first but magical

afterwards, thanks to our connection but also thanks to the care and experienced organization of Christina and the Gestalt Foundation.

I'll start with Nurith Levi, part of the history / roots of the Gestalt Foundation, with familiar and new elements, who "opened" this training in the best (experiential) way.

Continuing with Joanna Hewit - Evans, who in an equitable and balanced way incorporated theory, methodology and diagnosis in Gestalt psychotherapy, helped me to clarify, confirm and embody the differences between the supervisory and therapeutic relationship.

Passing on the baton to Sally Denham - Vaughan, who in her clear and experienced way, gave me a complete picture, a tool, a model on which I can depend on and go back to as a supervisor.

And continuing from the new, I met my past again, Despina Balliou and Yianna Yiamarelou, who, in a familiar but at the same time new way, "showed" me group supervision, making



me remember how easy it is to learn and “see” new things with them.

And finally, I met with my roots, Katia Chatzilakou and Antonia Konstantinidou. The training closed with (what else) ethics.

With a combination of the total familiarity now (with everyone present) under a completely new set of circumstances, the age of Corona virus and Zoom, and a perfect combination of theory and experience, I feel it was a complete educational program both in content and in process, in space and in time, in a context of respect, creative adjustments, equality, but also in clear roles and responsibilities between Gestalt Foundation and colleagues. What I take away with me: When there is a relationship, a context, a moral attitude to BE, no situation is strong enough to prevent it from happening. A big thank you to all of us for this “TOGETHER” that does not stop...

**Mariangela Triariko**, *Psychologist, psychotherapist, Gestalt Trainer and Supervisor. Collaborator of CTP (Madrid, Spain) and the Gestalt Institute for Psychotherapy Training in Cagliari (Cagliari, Italy). Member of HAGT and EAGT, SRT (Spiritual Response Therapy)*

### ***The practice of Gestalt is Living: reflections on teaching in Thessaloniki.***

I had the honor to be invited to teach for Gestalt Foundation on the 11th-13th October 2019. The group was composed of 24 senior practitioners who were extending their supervision practice and wished to explicitly consider themes of Relationality, Co-Transference and Self-Disclosure. What follows is a personal account of offering my thoughts on these areas of work and how being with the group led me to deepen my own thinking and practice.

Arriving in Thessaloniki was impactful: the taxi was fast, the streets full of life and noise ... a sense of movement and dynamism in the air. I had travelled from a damp, quiet part of rural England. There the light at this time of year is gentle, yellow. The air is cool. All is “mellow and fruitful”.

Here in Thessaloniki, summer is still going on. The light is bright, white. All is defined and sharp. Damp freshness from the sea blows up the streets on a gentle breeze; I sense it touching my face. I smell salt and fruit from stalls piled high on the streets as I walk to the first morning workshop.

As Day One unfolds, I am struck by the depth of knowledge and experience in the group. This is the third module, so relationships are growing with all the loving, bonding, angry, storming that group processes bring. People are steady in their skills and I love the deft and delicate way they chew through my ideas about “what relational means”. No introjection here.

All is to be savored, held in the mouth, bitten, nibbled, spat out if it doesn't fit.

The core Relational Change “SOS” model is familiar to some. I realize there is a ground in the group of those I have met before when teaching in Athens. A real pleasure for me comes when I hear questions about the Egological and Ecological aspects of the model being responded to in Greek and then new, more informed queries and responses coming to me in English. We play with the languages and the model, tossing it around like a ball in a playground and yet, we agree we all feel “adults” here. The roles of “teacher” and that of “learner” get closer and we discuss that as parallel process when in a training group focused on supervision as opposed to psychotherapy.

At breaks I am taken out to Greek cafes for strong coffee and, always, ice cream. Usually, I do not eat many sweets and yet here I seem to eat everything: spinach pies, cheese pies, Greek sweets, the most delicious fish, salty potatoes ... I could go on. It is as if my senses come increasingly alive with the discussions, the sharing and the chewing of the theory. I find myself referencing “Ego, Hunger and Aggression” and appreciating the mature theoretical chewing and discussion of practice “choice points”.

In particular, we spend time exploring the complex relational issues of what and when to self-disclose and how our phenomenology and life state informs those choices. I “confess” how much easier it is for me to share moments in my practice when I am curious, fascinated, interested than when I am sad, angry or despairing. And it is in this context that we share more intimacies concerning our lives and what supports us as relational practitioners to have this deeply personal “I-thou” possibility nested within our professional lives. I raise up the support I take from vivid and life-enhancing moments and how I have come to cultivate these as nourishment for my practice. In the taxi on the way to the airport I have one of those rare, expansive moments of joy come upon me. Nothing that is going on is spectacular and yet all is present in an abundance of life and connectivity. I am reminded of one of the core organizing principles within the Relational Change community: “interconnected and interdependent”. A statement that is foundational to a Field-relational and Ecological approach where we appreciate the impact of our actions as much as our intention. As I board the plane I have a sense of deep gratitude to those who invited me, supported my journey and were present in the training ... and also to the wider field of weather, food, hospitality, culture, history and context that acted as ground for my visit. Thank you for the life filled moments that I now carry as further support for my work.

**Sally Denham-Vaughan**, *Supervisor, Trainer and Psychotherapist*

