



Gestalt NEWS Foundation

BIANNUAL INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION NEWSLETTER OF GESTALT FOUNDATION PSYCHOTHERAPY & TRAINING CENTER
AUTUMN/WINTER 2020/2021 - ISSUE 32



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In this paper we will not expand on the philosophy of the Gestalt approach, but it is important to refer to its basic principles...

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«Philosophy Meets Psychology: Friendship»

«Dialogue & Awareness»

«Mind the Gap»

«If you are alive you produce light»...

«If you are alive you produce light,» said Anne Makosinski, the inventor of the «empty torch»,

the first torch that needs no batteries, wind, or sun; it needs only the body's temperature to shine. This is how I've been feeling as a member of GESTALT FOUNDATION for the last year. We are alive and we are producing light. You could say that this sounds a bit arrogant. But no! ... All of us who are alive produce light... produce heat... produce warmth... produce beauty, the beauty of our unique existence and coexistence, as long as we choose to be alive and... «we are still alive on the stage like a rock band» as the song says and as Christina reminded us when we had the cutting of the New Year's pie. Elsa, Valia, Christina and the newer Olympia

produce light for us... live presences, live transmitters and receivers so that everything works like clockwork! And all of us, trainers, coordinators and collaborators, albeit from a distance, feel alive in our coordination, one to cut and the other to sew! And all the trainees are alive in their commitment to learning, interacting, and the experience of contact! Together let us continue to produce beams of light in these difficult times, to influence our people, our community and our society creatively, not only to endure, but also to keep alive our colors, sounds, dreams, images and interactions. Enjoy the newsletter.



Despina Balliou,

M.Sc. Counseling Psychology, Gestalt Psychotherapist, Trainer and Supervisor; Holder of ECP (European Certificate of Psychotherapy). Member of the committee for training criteria at EAGT (European Association for Gestalt Therapy); Founder Member of HAGT (Hellenic Association for Gestalt Therapy)

Did you also attend Despina's Trauma workshop? It was heavy, eh?

There is a preconception that this seminar is heavy. I was afraid of it too! That's why I made sure to go with people I love and trust. We had agreed to sit next to each other, to feel the support of «together». So, I entered the workshop with anxiety about what I was going to experience and relief that I was not alone. Certainly, trauma is in itself a serious issue both for the person who carries his own trauma with him and for the therapist who sympathizes with his injured patient. For four days we took care of our trauma together with respect and acceptance, giving space and time. We found these windows that Greek poet Kavafis had been looking for. We even touched them a little. We opened them with faith and let the light enter and calm our soul. As it says in Healing Developmental Trauma, «In clinical pendulation, the therapist consciously shifts the focus from difficult memories to resources that bring soothing and



settling». (Laurence Heller, Aline Lapierre, 2012, page 238). This is what I experienced in the workshop. We walked together to the rhythms of a music that united experience and theory.

Everyone in their own way, and as much as they could, let themselves go in the safety of the process. The moving and deep caring attention of Despina, George (co-coordinator) and my colleagues created a climate of trust and safety that allowed us to share and open up many times. We found ways for continuous connection through the healing cohesiveness of «together». I heard its nurturing, its welcoming of whatever emotion emerged, its non judgment all around us. It was

indeed a breath of fresh air, a temple where I could lay down my pain. I feel blessed to have had such an authentic experience.

Sofia Boulanze, 4th year trainee

BEST SELLERS 2020

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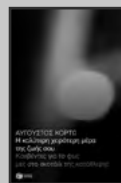
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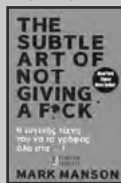


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MARK MANSON
Η ΕΥΕΛΠΗΣ ΤΕΧΝΗ
ΤΟΥ ΝΑ ΤΑ ΓΡΑΦΕΙΣ
ΟΛΑ ΣΤΑ ...!



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ΣΚΕΦΟΥ
ΣΑΝ ΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ



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ΗΘΕΛΕΣ ΝΑ ΕΪΧΑΝ
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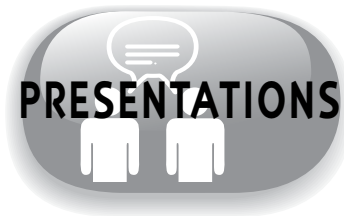
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...at IANOS Cultural chain

Psychology meets Philosophy

*Commentary on the lecture on «Friendship»
IANOS (November 14, 2019)*

I attended a brave initiative by the Gestalt Foundation, an opening for our society to look at major issues, which have always concerned modern man, from their philosophical approach. Today's topic was Friendship. So, I was there to experience the meeting of Philosophy



(mainly through the ideas of Aristotle and Epicurus) with Psychology (through the Gestalt approach) on the fundamental issue of Friendship. In the first part, Professor Stavrianeas presented to us with the thinking and writings of Aristotle about Friendship, to which he ascribes three qualities, namely usefulness, pleasure as well as virtue and goodness. 2,500 years

ago, Aristotle analyzed the symptomatic properties of friendship and stated that Friendship is a form of virtue, or even more than this, the practice of friendship promotes virtue. For Epicurus, Friendship is highly utilitarian and also completely reciprocal, since one without the other is not Friendship. Everything that Mr. Stavrianeas analyzed rang a nostalgic bell in my soul, since the differentiated values of today are completely cynical about virtue, usefulness and reciprocity in relationships, and even more so in relation to friendship. Ms. Balliou followed, however, to look at friendship in a more pragmatic way, as psychologically interpreted through the Gestalt modality. Friendship is a voluntary, sensitive, mutual choice, the principal characteristic being the sharing of love, interest, care, devotion, trust, understanding, exchange of knowledge and time for common activities. It is a two-way communication of souls that manifests itself actively and realistically. They both said a lot about friendship. When a friendship is a friendship and when it is not, how a friendship is lost, what causes the loss of a friendship, how friendship becomes an anchor and supports us in the course of our moral development, because it is not bad to benefit from friendship, as long as there is reciprocity ... and many other things. As I listened to them, I pondered (as I do every time I want to decipher the knowledge provided) my personal experiences with my own friends, in relation to the subject of friendship. I don't have many friends. I can measure them on my fingers ... and perhaps my toes! Each of them has positive attributes, some fewer than others and some more than others. Each of them

has clear flaws, some fewer than others, and some more than others. Some have annoying habits, some are less educated than others and some are more expressive than I would like. Also, some are more controlling than others and some are very submissive. We have been friends for years and so we know each other in depth. Often, I do not want to be with them and when I am not, I miss them and I become sensitive and emotional. I now have a lot of information about my friends. The constant updating of this information for each of my friends that I love then determines the level of my defensiveness or transparency towards them. I am constantly discovering new shades of their personalities, so that each new shade falls on the already concentrated ones and their souls become more and more defined in the eyes of my own soul. For better or worse I love my friends to the extent that each of them allows me, I am free with them, to the extent that they can endure it, and I hope I am doing the same.

This exact cohesion is friendship for me, the safest and most complete transfer of personal information to my friends, for the purpose of my fullest reflection in them, and their fullest reflection in me. This is how an inviolable principle is formed within me. They are my friends! I carry within me as they carry within them, all our characteristics; they have my back, they are my friends.

Tonight, I was able to weigh up my own friendships, on a level that in everyday life is almost impossible. It was one of those unexpected revelations; namely, that while you are going about your daily routine, a magical light can shine bright in a single moment and shed a light that changes everything, revealing thousands of details that you had never noticed before.

Thank you Ms. Balliou, thank you my friend Despina.

Dimitris Diomataris

«Dialogue and Awareness»: Two essential elements of contact in Gestalt Therapy

Introduction

This presentation is called 'Dialogue and Awareness', because I would like to explore with you the concept of dialogue. I would like to discuss how we use dialogue 'on the road to awareness', restoring our client's capacity for healthy contact. I will illustrate the function of dialogue in working with clients with Behavior that demonstrates Narcissistic or Borderline tendencies. As we all know Gestalt Therapy is usually defined as an experiential, growth-oriented therapy. As the Polsters have pointed out, growth occurs automatically in the process of healthy contact and creative adjustment. So, in order to restore growth in our client, we have to restore his capacity for making contact. Contact is the process of building relationships, and awareness is its most important aspect. As Laura Perls said, awareness not only allows us to experience our own feelings and emotions, but also to experience the other, the 'not-me'! In other words, through our awareness we acknowledge the differences between ourselves and the other; through awareness we experience

the contact boundary. We use dialogue to 'make contact', to move towards the other, to establish a relationship. In Gestalt Therapy, dialogue is also the therapist's instrument to build a therapeutic relationship and help the client to restore his awareness and his ability to make contact. That is why Gestalt Therapy is also called a 'dialogic method' (Yontef, 1993).

Dialogue: encounter of phenomenologies

In the 'existential' context of Gestalt Therapy, dialogue is understood

dialogue and contact. I want to stress that as therapists, we must be aware that our interventions, our responses, are tailored to our dialogue with this particular client at this particular moment in therapy. Timing and tailoring are important aspects of Gestalt Therapy. In the ideal dialogic relationship, the therapist and the client experience each other, as they really are. That means dialogue is based on authenticity (Yontef 1993). Consequently, since no two people are alike, dialogue can only exist when differences are allowed and acknowledged. This emphasis on authenticity and difference



as an encounter of the phenomenology of the client with the phenomenology of the therapist. When Martin Buber developed his concept of the 'I-Thou-relationship', he argued that 'I' only has meaning in relation to the other, to the 'not-me'. In the beginning of the therapy, the therapist and the client are strangers to each other. Contact is the interaction with this stranger, but we remain separated by our ego-boundary. To begin dialogue in therapy, the therapist has to put every aspect of his phenomenology on stand-by, so to speak. He has to mobilize all his skills for listening, observing and expressing, to respond to the client in a way that may stimulate the beginning of

also has an important psychological function. It allows the client to become aware of the therapist as another person, as 'not-me'. And so, it will help him to experience himself. Buber has written about this experience in 'Das dialogische Prinzip'. Obviously, in Gestalt Therapy 'dialogue' has a much broader meaning than the usual sense of 'conversation', 'exchange of views', or, generally speaking, a chain of alternating verbal monologues. It can be verbal or non-verbal, it can be gestures, it can be anything that authentically belongs to the phenomenology of the therapist and the client (Resnick 1995). However, we should bear in mind that implicitly or explicitly, in this

dialogue there is always one basic question: «How?» «How does this client block his awareness? How does he make himself lonely or anxious, etc. Therefore, underlying the dialogue with the client, there is always the need to invite him to new experiences, to new awareness, to reveal the answer to this important question. This is what the Roisters called «nextness»: What comes next? What new awareness will emerge out of this experience or experiment? Again, this shows that an experiment is never a goal in itself. It should always be timed and tailored to lead the client to a new road, to a new answer.

Blocked awareness as coping

As therapists we know that blocked awareness is developed over an extended period of time. This blocking of awareness sometimes served as a vital protection to enable us to cope with the stress or anxiety in our lives. But if this 'coping' means searching for answers in the past, we no longer function in the here and now. As we all know from literature, existential dialogue is an encounter of phenomenologies. Nevertheless, establishing dialogue can be difficult with clients who easily become anxious. When we are in the early stage of a therapeutic relationship with a very anxious client, we cannot always know where we need to support him. As Resnick puts it: «Sometimes Gestalt therapists get into areas where they don't know what will happen» (Resnick, 1995). In these situations, which occur frequently, the therapist may use dialogue to establish direct contact with the client. Otto Rank called this type of intervention «the possible usefulness of concentrating on the present». One of my clients became terribly anxious. She felt that everything around her was getting black. I looked at her and asked: «Can you see that I am with you? Can you feel the chair that you're sitting on?» As we know experiencing the present is the cornerstone of Gestalt Therapy practice. In its direct effects, this distinguishes us from other kinds of therapy. This example shows that dialogue can be a powerful approach to activate the awareness of the client. In the example of my frightened client, I tried to bring her back to an awareness of the present. As Isadore From would have said: «Nothing more and nothing less».

Specific skills of the therapist

The concepts that I just explained are part of the framework within which we work with our clients in Gestalt Therapy. They allow us to define a number of skills that the therapist needs to build a therapeutic relationship, using dialogue. Martin Buber has written about these skills, which Yontef has further elaborated. I would like to describe them to you as follows:

Inclusion

A first important quality is what Buber called inclusion: the therapist should be able to see the world through the eyes of the client. To do this, he has to accept the client without judgement or criticism. Not so long ago, I had a female client. I had noticed nothing special about

her, except maybe that her hands looked quite strong. At a certain moment in her therapy, she revealed that she was a transsexual, and she seemed surprised that I hadn't noticed it. At first, I felt a little embarrassed. But since I had already accepted her as the person she was, our therapeutic relationship was sufficiently solid to support this unexpected development. But of course, inclusion also meant that with this new knowledge about my client and her outlook on the world, I had to adapt my interventions to keep our dialogue going.

Presence

Secondly, it is very important that a therapist knows how and when he needs to show presence, that is, to put forward certain aspects of his phenomenology. A well-trained therapist is aware of his phenomenology. He is aware of his self-doubts, his weaknesses, his anger, his boredom, but also his caring for the client. He also knows when to show his limits, for instance when he clearly states the hours when he can be reached by telephone.

I want to emphasize here that introducing aspects of our phenomenology in the dialogue should always connect to this particular client, at this particular time, in this particular situation. Showing presence should always have a function in our dialogue with the client. Clearly, this requires full awareness of the therapist; not only of his own phenomenology, but also of 'where the client is' at that particular moment. Introducing our phenomenology allows us to work with the, sometimes, desperate loneliness of the client. In an article on Gestalt Therapy view on patients with borderline tendencies, Paolo Miriam Polo wrote in 1993 that «the therapist who takes care of these patients must have something else that comes from the ability to harmonize with the most delicate, vulnerable and painful part of the patient».

Dialogue as a therapeutic tool

Inclusion and presence, when practiced with careful timing, are ways to use dialogue as a therapeutic tool. They allow us to find out what kind of interventions and experiments the client can cope with, paying attention to his vulnerability, but also working with his strength. I want to stress that we need to use dialogue professionally, as a therapeutic instrument. Dialogue is supposed to serve the therapy of the client. It is neither meant to fulfill the need for contact with the therapist, nor should it suffer from the therapist's fear of contact. Therapy is working on the contact boundary, where we are constantly required to use our awareness, constantly asking ourselves whether we are getting too close or being too distant. On the other hand, dialogue should never become a mere 'technique'. As Otto Rank has said, any technique can only work «as long as it is subordinated to the actual experience of the moment». As I said earlier, the same is true for introducing awareness experiments into the dialogue. These should always be well-timed and tailored to the situation and the client. Otherwise, they may become a kind of theatrical exercises.

Dialogue and awareness

We have seen that dialogue is crucial in shaping the therapeutic relationship, where new experiences emerge and awareness can be restored. These new experiences can either occur spontaneously, or they can be induced by experiments. Dialogue is not only used to define the relationship with the client, to 'fine-tune' it to the needs

On the one end, they have a defensive self-image of being grandiose, inflated, perfect, omnipotent. When this inflated image is questioned or destroyed, these clients 'deflate': they move to the other extreme, harshly criticizing themselves as absolutely worthless, as 'rubbish'. Unblocked awareness, a new insight stimulated by the therapist, can achieve exactly that: the client is forced to realize that he is not the



of the client, but also to work with the client. Through dialogue, we encourage him and support him on the long, and sometimes winding road to awareness.

Dialogue and behavior that demonstrates Narcissistic tendencies

I would now like to discuss with you how we can use dialogue effectively in working with behavior that demonstrates narcissistic and borderline tendencies. I choose these types of clients because they both are disturbed in their boundary functions, their sense of self, and sometimes to make healthy contact. They cannot take into account and acknowledge that their environment consists of phenomenologies that are different from their own, or from their own perception of 'reality'. Therefore, with these clients, skillful use of dialogue is crucial. For clients with narcissistic behavior, or, more generally, narcissistically vulnerable clients, the therapeutic relationship can easily become threatening. These clients move between two extreme self-images.

Mr. Wonderful he imagined he was. With these clients it is important to practice inclusion. We try to see the world through their eyes. When beginning therapy, we use dialogue to explore their world by asking them to tell us about it; to tell us about their life, and later on, to tell us how it is for them to be with us in therapy. We certainly do not force experiments on them. The insights these might produce can easily become too threatening, because they may shatter their inflated self-image, leaving them humiliated. Elinor Greenberg called this shattering of the self-image the 'Oh Shit!' experience, as opposed to the positive, enlightening 'Aha!' experience. Since narcissistically vulnerable clients cannot always support themselves enough to take responsibility for their shortcomings, they will often get angry at the therapist who made them experience this humiliation. Under these circumstances, the new insight awareness is not experienced as positive, but as negative and humiliating, so that the client may not assimilate it and therefore it might not lead to growth. Greenberg describes how she became totally demoralized by the constant criticism and anger of a particular client. Since she was

unable to find useful experiments, she just did nothing for long silent periods during the sessions. Only when some of the criticism of her client seemed justified, would she admit this in a non-defensive manner it turned out that this particular form of dialogue, this 'not-doing', was exactly what her client needed. Building basic trust was the most important (Greenberg, 1995). So again, timing and tailoring of our interventions is crucial in dialogue, even if this dialogue means being silent.

Dialogue and Borderline behavior tendencies

In working with clients with Borderline behavior tendencies an even more cautious approach is needed as we have learned. The borderline client can't support or identify his own different parts, so he splits off the part of himself that he cannot accept and projects the 'acceptable' part on the outside world. Therefore, he also cannot see the 'whole' of the other; dealing with someone who is both good and bad, empathic and clear, caring and firm poses great difficulties. He believes that what he does not see or does not perceive isn't there, so he fragments his perception of the outside world. In contact, he blocks the part of the perception of the other that he cannot deal with. He will see the therapist as only good or only bad, only empathic or only firm, etcetera (Yontef 1993). Therefore, the borderline client will only allow contact when he has blocked out all the disturbing aspects of the other. Evidently this is not healthy contact, but confluence; it is 'sameness' or fusion, but therefore it also means loss of autonomy and competence. Of course, this paralysing type of 'contact' becomes a very threatening experience, from which the borderline client then wants to escape. Therefore, working with borderline tendencies is a difficult balancing act on the contact boundary. However, as long as we remember that in Gestalt Therapy we always work with the phenomenology of the client, with what he presents us, there is always a beginning of a dialogue. So, when our borderline client presents us his confluence, that becomes our focusing point. By asking things like «What is happening now?» we can try to build our dialogue. As I said, for clients with borderline tendencies dialogue in the sense of an encounter of two phenomenologies, two 'differentiated wholes', is very difficult. In his dialogue, the therapist has on the one hand to fulfill the client's need for empathy, like with the narcissist. But he also has to be clear about his own needs and limits, he must show presence and be authentic. Yontef points out that in dialogue, the therapist needs to emphasize the «and», the polarity, which is so difficult for this person. For instance, when a client becomes confluent, you can say: «You don't want to leave, and I need to end the session now». Or «I think you made a mistake leaving your job, and I don't think you are an incompetent person who always makes mistakes...» (Yontef, 1993). I want to add that here too, it is important to keep experimenting with dialogue. In the examples I just mentioned, we should always ask the client how he experiences them, to lead him to his awareness.

Working with these persons is walking a thin line. Sometimes, a borderline client who cannot deal with the authenticity and presence of the therapist, however careful, his interventions are, may leave

therapy. Although this is something we will have to accept, it should also make us take a close look at our own methodology. We should accept that we too are partly responsible when a client leaves therapy.

The therapist as a travel companion

When we use dialogue effectively in the therapeutic relationship and when the client's confidence begins to grow, he begins to take risks. We can see and experience this, sometimes even before the client experiences it himself. You will agree with me that it is one of the joys of our work to see a client allowing himself to explore new, unknown territory. In this process the therapist sometimes acts as a guide, but mostly as a travel companion. Dialogue is the instrument to help the client to take risks, to support the newly discovered but yet uncharted parts of himself, to discover his own new landscape (Polster and Polster). In the now trusted therapeutic environment, with the therapist as a loyal travel companion, the client will participate in the dialogue, even if this is sometimes painful, and he will begin to make progress. In the course of the therapy, in an effective dialogue with the therapist, the client will gradually move from the You-and-Me relationship to the I-Thou. In Gestalt Therapy, this is an indication that the client begins to need the therapist less.

Conclusion

I wanted to illustrate why dialogue is considered a basic principle of Gestalt Therapy, and why it is such a powerful tool for restoring awareness within the therapeutic relationship. But I also wanted to emphasize that dialogue is an art that should be used skillfully, well-timed and designed to the need of our client. Above all, we have to remain committed to the integrity of our clients. So, I fully agree with Joseph Zinker, when he wrote that in order to develop an effective relationship with the client, the therapist «has to love the client on a very basic level, in a very simple manner. The therapist should love the human being before him».

Harm Siemens, M.S. *Nederlandse Stichting Gestalt Educational Department Amsterdam, September 1996, Oudezijdsdijk 13*

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Continued from page 1

Collective work of psychologists and gestalt psychotherapists

Abstract: In this paper we will not expand on the philosophy of the Gestalt modality but it is important to refer to its basic principles, such as dialogue and rebuilding relationships, dealing with situations of internal and external conflict either at staff level or in a preschool classroom. Concepts such as anger, aggression and school bullying are presented through the theories of the field and polarities. The epilogue refers to the experiential learning experience of a two-day process between teachers, parents, children, administrators and psychologists in «Approaching Diversity in Preschool Education»

Keywords: *Phenomenology, Experiential Process, Dialogue, Relationship, Polarities, Field.*

1. Introduction

We are going through a time when the educational system is experiencing a crisis; students are anxious, frustrated and rebellious, parents have questions, anxiety and often indifference and teachers are experiencing constant stress and insecurity. Driven by this fact, we wondered, as psychologists and psychotherapists, if in such an environment, intensely conflicting, the psychotherapeutic process could shed new light on some forgotten aspects of human communication in a school context, and even in a preschool context, where the foundations of future behaviors are laid.

2. The Gestalt approach to education

The German word Gestalt cannot be not translated with a specific word. It is defined through broader concepts such as those of shape, pattern, the overall figure and the process of its formation. Also, included as a concept, is the background/ground in which the figure is placed and which concerns the life story of the individual and the group. There is a dynamic presence of action via Gestalt programs that has already been implemented in education in countries such as France, Italy, the Netherlands, Israel, Belgium, and the Czech Republic. What they share are the axes of the goals of the Gestalt approach, with the main principle of creating an environment that will allow class members to discover more and more aspects of themselves and the whole of which they are a part, but also the different situations and needs that emerge each time. In this way, individuals and the group to which they belong gradually learn not to avoid difficulty and not to look for ways to bypass discomfort but to deal with it. Learning, in this process, is not defined as the acquisition of consolidated knowledge by a passive recipient, but as the discovery of knowledge by an active student who experiences knowledge and participates in the creation of something new. The more energetic the student or the teacher becomes in the pedagogical practice, the more their degree of satisfaction increases. Along with knowledge, emotions, evaluations, expectations, lifestyles are conveyed. The teacher / kindergarten teacher and the student meet in everyday life with all their «being». It is well known that the communicative environment has an impact on interpersonal relationships. In Gestalt we refer to this through Field Theory.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND THE GESTALT APPROACH IN THE FIELD OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION



3. Field Theory and Conflict

Working with preschoolers can be particularly challenging. The educational system, which is part of the Field, can often have different «values» from those that are formed in the home environment, and because of this mode of interacting, a conflict of values can arise.

MANAGEMENT OLUTION MENTAL LEARNING ALT APPROACH SCHOOL EDUCATION



Blumenthal (2001) places the responsibility on teachers to find a way to evaluate these differences and give them credence. According to Field Theory, in order to deal with a conflict or some bullying behavior in a classroom, it is a prerequisite to investigate the conditions that are created and which maintain the «problematic» behavior. This includes an assessment of the Field history and current conditions that

perpetuate blockage in the field (Levin, 2007). In conflict, one usually focuses on the problematic behavior that arises. In Field theory, the emphasis is shifted from behavior to the conditions that define the Field and this behavior. Trying to address the child's behavior without recognizing the conditions and different values of the field from which he/she comes leads to individuals (and/or the relationship) to imbalance and isolation. The concept of the Field does not simply include the pupil's family environment, but also the school system itself (peer group, teacher group, social and economic conditions, etc.). The question we need to ask in order to resolve a conflict is: «What are the conditions of the Field that sustain this behavior?» (Mc Conville, 2003 p. 250). The Gestalt approach is a unique example of combining behavioral and phenomenological approaches. Its basic principle is «composition» and not «analysis». Gestalt lays the foundation for genuine dialogue starting with the individual. It focuses on the subjective perception of reality, i.e., it respects the phenomenology of each person, how and what the student thinks. What matters is how he feels and acts and not how this is interpreted outside, by the teacher. Everyone's personal experience is the basic principle of dialogue.

4. Dialogue

Often a preschool teacher can talk to a colleague, student, or principal and, while using dialogue at the time as a means of managing their conflict, sees the conflict escalating rather than calming down and feels that despite all his efforts, there is no communication. Here it is very important to see and then experience dialogue with a different meaning, beyond its common connotation. By “dialogue” in our daily contact we mostly mean our verbal interaction with others, usually with the aim of receiving or giving information. It is the form of the I-IT dialogue that Buber (1958) defines as a vertical, rather unequal relationship, a relationship, we might call, «subject-object» (Hycner, 1995). An example of an I-IT dialogue is a principal (I) who asks for information about the material of the school year from a kindergarten teacher (IT), or a kindergarten teacher (I) who teaches the alphabet to children (IT). In both cases of dialogue, the two parties do not focus at that time on the relationship between them, but on the content of the information conveyed. Dialogue in the form of I-IT is very useful and necessary in many circumstances of everyday life. There are, however, conditions, such as a conflict, that require more than just verbal interaction. There are conditions that require the relationship to have substance, an authentic encounter with the other (Hycner, 1993). This is the meaning of the interpersonal: not one of the two, nor both together, but their very dialogue, the «between» that they experience together (Hycner, 1993). The dialogue we are talking about now takes the form of I-THOU according to Buber and is based on experiencing the other, seeing him as he really is, in all his diversity, accepting him as he is, showing myself accordingly (Yontef, 1993). Here we can think of the example of a teacher who, in her class, has to deal with some children who respond more slowly in the educational process. The point here is to move the topic from «I have a problem with the 'slower' children not learning» (I-IT relationship),

to «I have difficulty with the different rhythm of some children and I want to know, to see HOW I need to approach them creatively»(I-THOU relationship). In a classroom, what we try to do is to instill in pupils (of any age) three actions, which also function as needs for healthy contact and dialogue: The energy of «I can» where the child acquires the feeling of worthiness, the energy of «I am trying» where the child cultivates the feeling of cooperation, and the energy of «belonging» where the child possesses a sense of identity. Successful teaching, which is nothing more than contact and dialogue between a teacher and a child, requires the coexistence of these actions-needs. Dialogue in this sense of the relationship is reduced to an element necessary for everyone, as the individual needs confirmation / acceptance of what is from the environment, in order to become aware of what it is (Hycner, 1993). This makes clear the importance of a teacher's role as an environment in the shaping and discovering of a

experience and the other, gives me a more global perspective and can help a conflict develop creatively and constructively. The second element of dialogue is Presence. That is, to be really there in my interaction with the other and to use myself and my experience in this process. This attitude of a teacher can also serve as an example for children, so that they learn to use their own direct experience for their awareness. A third element of dialogue is the Commitment of individuals i.e. willingness and availability from both parties, because only when both are ready and open will authentic and meaningful relating and communication emerge.

An important element in this contact and communication is the visual contact of the teacher / kindergarten teacher with the child. Through eye contact, the dialogue acquires immediacy and expresses precisely the commitment of both to what they are co-creating. Finally, a structural feature is HOW the dialogue is experienced. It's something



child's sense of self. Let us see a little more what characterizes such an I-THOU dialogue. Yontef (1993) defines its four basic elements: The first is Inclusion, that is, the process by which while I am aware of the center of my being, I can at the same time see and include the experience of the other. This «oscillation» between my own

alive; it's happening and we are experiencing it, we're not just talking about it. It may not even have to necessarily happen through speech. In this sense, dialogue can emerge between a kindergarten teacher and a child who together are making something with plasticine. From the above it is easy to understand that the dialogue itself is a

RELATIONSHIP and that no one can play both sides of the dialogue (Hycner, 1995). It is important to remember how necessary it is to give space to what is happening in the present moment, to the «here and now», to the phenomenological field through which the child and the teacher hear, observe and experience what exists; that which «is» and not what «should be». Staying in the present is the only way to make contact and resolve conflict. Essentially, through creative adjustment, balance is restored. Thus, the conflict, from a frightening event, essentially turns into a bridge that will take the children and the teacher to a new encounter, in which both teacher and pupils will adapt creatively, achieving a new balance, homeostasis. The relationship that will emerge will be a more trusting and equitable relationship, an I-THOU relationship.

5. Internal conflict - polarities

Conflicts can occur on different levels and in a variety of ways in preschool education such as a child's need for conflict with another child or the child's need for conflict with the kindergarten teacher's task or even the kindergarten teacher's need for conflict with the requirement of either the principal, or role definition, or the contract in general. Conflict can, according to Zinker, be healthy and productive (1977, p. 195), yet as a concept it is usually negatively charged. We often get caught up in unproductive conflict, where we feel that it is stereotypically repeated and prevents real contact. In this way, original solutions and new knowledge do not emerge (Zinker, 1977, p.196). Consider a situation in which it is time for all the children in a class to sit quietly and listen to a fairy tale. Some refuse, continuing to play and move around the space, thus upsetting the whole class. What conflict is taking place here? What is it that probably makes it stagnant and unproductive? And how can such a conflict develop creatively? According to Zinker, often individual conflict arises from the intra-personal (1977, p.206). In order to understand the meaning of intra-personal conflict, we need to refer to polarities. The individual is a system of opposing forces (poles). For example, one may have both the trait of goodness and traits on the opposite pole, such as cruelty, rudeness, or indifference (Zinker, 1977, p. 196). Indeed, our inner reality consists of such polarities, which are either acceptable to our conscious self or not. In this way, we may have characteristics that we find difficult to accept and thus they remain in the dark. For example, it is easy for me to accept that I am polite and can be rude, depending on the situation. On the other hand, when I'm usually strict, it may be more difficult for me to recognize my spontaneous part and work through it. The same difficulty occurs when I meet my «dark» part in someone outside of me. So, at the same time that it is less threatening for me to see this trait if it belongs to someone else, the lack of acceptance of this trait in myself leads to aggression and criticism in contact with the other (Zinker, 1977, p. 207). Thus, the internal conflict between the opposing characteristics is transferred to an interpersonal level. Returning to our example, what seems to clash is the need for spontaneous play and movement, with the «must» imposed by the demands of the job contract. If we assume that the teacher is irritated by this behavior and tries more and more

strictly to impose order, the conflict becomes counterproductive and leads to a dead end. What would help here would be to get in touch with his/her own spontaneous part, thus approaching the child. Through their common trait (spontaneity) the contact is facilitated and the conflict evolves creatively. (Such creative management could be our example for the teacher to invite the children who need to move to represent the story theatrically). That is, when I become aware of my inner conflict, I can creatively move between the spectrum of behaviors which, until now, were the two ends of a polarity (Zinker, 1977, p.196). At this point, we need to recognize the difficulty that this creative process has for the kindergarten. Polarities, like the ones we mentioned, and consequently conflicts, appear more generally in power relations, where demand clashes with need. In kindergarten the relationship between teacher and child is an exile relationship of power, as the child is in the position of the weak who needs the protection and care of the adult. At the same time, it is very difficult for the kindergarten teacher to identify and recognize with his most 'childlike' parts, at a time when this will mean a conflict with the strictly, socially defined role of the kindergarten teacher. «How can I submit to games and spontaneity when society, parents, management, maybe myself, expect me to be consistent in what my role entails - be strict, have boundaries, provide knowledge».

6. Anger & Aggression

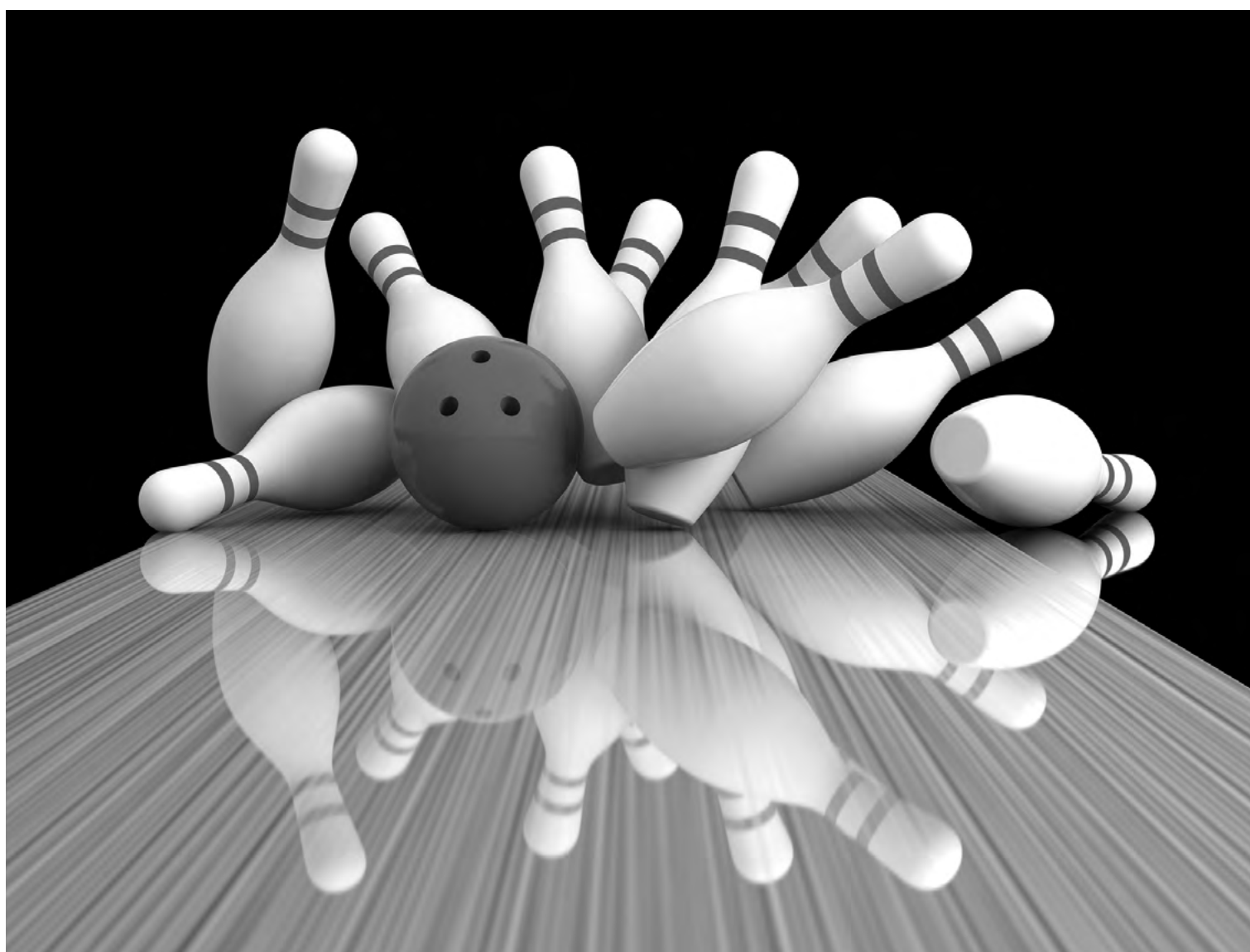
Aggressive behavior is a normal part of a child's development. As language skills are not yet fully developed, the desire for independence and the need for the child to discover the world, combined with the lack of well-developed control mechanisms, make many preschoolers candidates for physical violence. But, however, shocked we might be by the child's aggressive behavior - including extreme aggression - it shows us that behind it there is an unfulfilled need of the child which can not be expressed. It shows us that the child has a problem inside and wants to communicate with us, even in this way. In Gestalt, aggression is also a healthy behavior. It involves the way I go about my environment to meet my needs, as an individual, and to be in touch with that process. Perls, Hefferline & Goodman (1951) point out that aggression is needed during the process of chewing food in order for it to be destroyed before being assimilated by the body. When we refer to «conflict», the situations that come to mind can usually be described by words such as tension, outburst, aggression, anger, agitation. Negatively charged words and emotions. It is important to note that everyone's experience, whether on an emotional, logical, sensory level, deserves respect and acceptance. The way I experience myself is unique and unquestionable. Thus, the experience of any emotion is acceptable as long as its expression does not violate the boundaries of the other. Aggression is often equated with anger. However, it is important to recognize that anger is often a mild emotion. Aggression is the tendency to claim my space and usually has the purpose (or effect) of hurting the other (physically or mentally). The question in this case is «What is it that makes me want to hurt the other?» The answer is quite likely that I was once hurt myself and I may need to talk more about this experience. Aggression is often the

«creative adjustment» of an «angry» child. His environment, perhaps, did not show the desired attention and care for the child's emotion unless it was accompanied by an outburst. The kindergarten teacher is often asked, within the classroom, to recognize this process of the child (that he / she is experiencing anger) and to provide him / her with the necessary support and challenge to encourage him / her to experiment with new ways of interacting and expressing anger. Things are much more difficult when we talk about aggression in children with disabilities. Dealing with these children can be a frustrating and demanding process for a teacher. Aggression in children with disabilities often satisfies some need for the child as in other children. Here the challenge for the teacher is to recognize that children with disabilities often escape into a fantasy world as a

Conger & Blozis 2007). Bullying is not part of normal development and is not part of a «process» that a child has to go through. It is very likely to cause him both physical and psychological damage. Recently, concern has been expressed about the increase in incidents of bullying with the upcoming merger of schools and the issue needs special attention.

7. Conflict Resolution Techniques

Although the term «techniques» implies that there are some magic tricks that can be applied to solve a difficult situation, the truth is that the techniques proposed by Gestalt are nothing more than the practical application of its philosophy in relation to human beings and human relationships. This means that a general change in the way



psychological response to the stressors of a classroom's daily life. This escape may be a reaction of emotional alienation from the real world (Attwood, 2007). The aim of an intervention is to find a more appropriate alternative behavior of the child that can be used as a substitute for his aggressive behavior, which is often directed at himself. The phenomenon of school bullying is remarkable. When aggression is not treated from the first years of school, there is a high probability that it will later develop into bullying (Williams,

the teacher sees himself and his role in the classroom is sometimes enough for new ideas and creativity, in the way he handles crises, to emerge. So, the following are suggestions that can be applied creatively first to yourself and then to your class.

A) Setting boundaries: We have heard a lot about boundaries as well as many theories about the fact that children need boundaries to grow. We have also heard of ways to influence undesirable behaviors. The truth is that we all need to understand boundaries. Our limits.

According to Gestalt theory, contact occurs in the space between us, in the space between what is yours and mine. If one of us sets the boundary at too much of a distance, then contact is difficult. If one of us shrinks (that is, places his boundary too close) then the other expands and the contact can become abusive. Then, the person who has not managed to put his boundary where it should be in order to feel safe, feels that his needs are being violated, which results in his being oppressed in the relationship. So, while we are used to identifying the «perpetrator» as someone powerful, it often happens that we are oppressed by our students or our children. The emotions experienced are often weakness and anger. The next step will probably be to want to put an end to the deviant behavior. Here we have a plethora of information and tips on how we can control the little «monsters», impose rules and punishments on them so that they learn to respect. But this is only a way of manipulating our environment to get what we want. This way is considered neurotic and is the opposite of taking responsibility for ourselves, for our needs, for our boundary. The neurotic way of manipulation involves the need for control of the other (instead of ourselves), authoritarianism, imposition of sanctions, punishments, intimidation. These ways have no long-term effect, they hurt and humiliate the child and ruin the relationship and the building of trust between you both, once and for all. But how can we set our boundary without hurting or controlling the other? The first step is to recognize what our boundary is and what behavior we can not tolerate because it is in direct conflict with our own needs or our dignity. This may seem easy, but it is not. The first obstacle may be our personal history, how we as children were allowed to say no, how assertive we could be. The second obstacle concerns the here and now, the grounding, the recognition of the present moment and our emerging need. It is important to think about whether the emotions we feel were caused by others on their own or by ourselves giving them the power to cause them. We can replace «you make me feel angry» with «I give you the power to make me angry» (Passons 1975 p.186). How are you feeling now? Practice being aware of how you are at all times of the day. How do you feel? What need do you have in that moment? How do you feel now as you are reading these lines? At Gestalt we place great value on the present as it is the only thing that exists, even if we carry within us our past and our hopes for the future. So, if a child makes a fuss when the teacher wants him/her to be quiet to tell a story, it may take a minute before he or she immediately takes action to turn inwards, towards himself instead of turning outwards. How does the child feel about making a fuss? Is he really violating any of the teacher's needs? What are they? And if so, how was he been empowered to do so? If not, what is he violating at that time? Does it just conflict with the stereotype of the good and obedient child? If so, what makes him behave like that? What is the child's need? What is his position?

B) Putting myself in the other person's shoes: When I am sure of who I am and what I need, when I know where my boundary is, I can take some time and put myself in the other person's shoes. This means that I must accept in advance that the other is different and

that I do not know him. It is natural for the teacher to identify with his role, but he can use the projection mechanism to see how a student / parent / principal might feel or what his or her process is and how he or she is behaving. We project when we attribute characteristics to something in order to create, with our imagination, something that does not exist. For example, three dots in a particular arrangement are seen as a triangle as we project the missing lines (Passons 1975 p.133). Maybe the teacher is already projecting when he says that the student is «reactionary» or «spoilt». Maybe he sees his own reactivity. But he can use this mechanism to get into the student position and see the world with his own eyes. Is he just tired? Is he worried about anything from home? Does he not have good relations with his classmates and does not want to sit next to them? Does he not like fairy tales and prefers to do something else for which he does not get permission? Verify your views! Ask the child! Help him get in touch with himself and his needs, as he did for you before. This does not mean abandoning your own position or the group's need for the activity. Gaining empathy for the other does not mean forgetting myself. It means that I co-decide something that respects and includes both of us. If the child's age or situation allows it, the educator can start a dialogue with him, based on what we call in Gestalt «phenomenology». In other words, we focus on what is seen, on what we see, without judging it and without projecting our own explanations on to it. Let's see how one can open the dialogue in the previous example. So first we describe what we see: e.g. «I see you standing on the edge of the classroom and throwing down the toys». Say how you feel about it «and I'm afraid I will not be able to read the story quietly» (boundary). Say what you want to do now, e.g., «and I want to know if something is happening to you or you need something from me». Children respond impressively to such direct and honest contact, unless trust has been shaken by his previous experiences with you, in which case it will take longer. He/she is more likely to open up to you, to be relieved that someone noticed him/her, to encourage you to talk about your own feelings, since you have already done so as a teacher, and to suggest a joint solution. The techniques we have described so far relate to the teacher-child relationship, and how the teacher can take responsibility and manage a difficulty or crisis in his or her classroom differently. In this way, the teacher becomes a role model for children to imitate. This is called experiential learning. The way the teacher handles the crises with the children can affect them in the way they themselves conflict and resolve their conflicts. What applies to their relationship with him also applies to their relationship with each other. But the teacher can do a few more things to help students resolve their conflicts according to the humanistic principles of Gestalt theory. Help them become aware of their needs, recognize their feelings, set boundaries: Form a circle for the children at the beginning of the day and one at the end, and ask them how they come and go. Suggest exercises such as «what I observe in the room», «what I hear now» (Passons, 1975 p.219). It means that I co-decide something that respects and includes both of us. Children need to learn to recognize their emotions through their experiences in the school environment. The kindergarten teacher

together with the children could create the corners of emotions in his / her classroom. Each corner will symbolize an emotion such as anger, fear, sadness, joy, shame. Respectively, there should be stimuli such as angry dolls, happy paintings, dark or happy colors and toys that facilitate the expression of emotions. Depending on the emotion they experience, children will be able to visit the corner where they want to spend time and have the opportunity to discover more about their emotional experience. Tell a story and ask them what the story «made» them feel. Seeing how many different reactions there are, help them understand that something or someone does not «make» us feel a certain way. Each of us reacts differently to what is happening and is the only one responsible for it. Kindergarten teachers can make it easier for children to feel the uniqueness and difference of themselves and others with a simple experiential exercise. Each child will have an orange. Initially, the kindergarten teacher may ask the children to touch, observe, and smell their orange. Then, while each child tastes a piece of orange, he or she is encouraged to share it with his or her classmates. Very quickly, children will understand that no orange is exactly the same as another. Each one is unique and delicious. Many times, children do not respond to the request of adults for immediate expression of their feelings, as they may experience this as a threat and / or exposure. The kindergarten teacher, recognizing how children initially experience emotional expression as a painful process, can make it easier for them by introducing an imaginary friend / doll, such as Mickey Mouse, to their group. Children can initially introduce themselves to Mickey by saying something about themselves. Then the imaginary friend / doll, as a member of the group can hear, feel and express the feelings of one of the children in the group. Teach them how to put themselves in each other's shoes. This can be done very nicely through role playing. Direct a simple conflict situation and invite the children to play not the role of themselves or the one they identify with the most, but the role of the one they think is wrong or disliked. Have a discussion later about how they felt as «the other» and if anything has changed now in the way they see things. As we said before, there are many creative ways to teach children to respect themselves, set their own personal boundaries, and include the other when trying to resolve a conflict. At Gestalt we believe that self-awareness and responsibility are the two key ingredients for growth and maturity. We hope that the psychological development and maturation of children can be your main educational goals!

8. A Common Epilogue - Experiential Process of a Two-Day Conference:

The above presentation is the culmination of our experience as Gestalt psychotherapists which was enhanced by the opportunity, we had to work with kindergarten teachers in the two-day conference «Approaching Diversity in Preschool Education» in April (8 & 9) 2011, organized by the School Counselor of the 55th Region of Eastern Attica. The warm response of the teachers to the experiential groups we organized convinced us of the role that experiential learning can play in the school environment, and that the teacher can rely

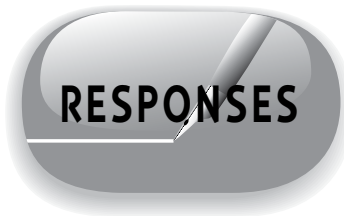
on it to deal with conflicts and diversity. The teachers had the opportunity through specially designed exercises to get in touch with the same and the different, with the projections we make when we meet people we do not know and with the truth of the phrase «in difference I meet myself and in sameness I meet the other». Teachers also had the opportunity to try to «put themselves in the other person's shoes», in the place of the parent and the child, and to see the world through their eyes. It thus became clear that the only way to resolve a conflict is RELATIONSHIP, to take responsibility, to build an I-THOU relationship with the other and to include him in my point of view. This is not just a humanitarian principle, but it contributes to the personal development of everyone. Because the same unites us but our contact with the different expands us. In this context, the need for teachers to «grow» and evolve is obvious as they themselves are the model, the example of behavior and life for their students. Experiential training is offered in many contexts by Gestalt therapists and is recommended to those interested in personal development and strengthening their relationships. Our contact with the groups of teachers we worked with brought us in contact with our own «alienated» parts, helped us reject our own stereotypes and prejudices about their role and helped us grow as human beings.

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'Has everything happened?

In a time of pandemic, the 'timer' seems to be at zero. «What hasn't happened?», «What do we do now?», «How will things be later?» This timer does not stop as long as we exist. But time reveals the existential «conflict» in life, perhaps now more than ever, and not only in the «practical» side of things. Even if the question «What do we do now?» can be answered and must sometimes lead us into action in a few seconds, the question itself carries existential weight because within this question there is also «who are we now?», «what are we now?», «how are we now?». If we stand facing these questions, another one arises: «how do we redefine ourselves?», or even «how is the human species being redefined now?» As long as we relate to life, others around us, things, nature, ourselves as objects, (which we have to do something with in order for time and money to flow) then the path is completely linear. Objects are consumed. Time becomes an hourglass set in one direction. The rhythm of our experience is the countdown (survival mode). Perhaps Buber's «humaneness» comes today more than ever as a need for the redefining of our species and the relational? Alternative ways of «connecting» through «interplanetary web piping» (!) fail to replace the imperative need for «interdependence» that defines the human species. Authentic dialogue - which cultivates trust in the «between», contacting through «grace», through the «unspoken», the true encounter - transports the individual from simple survival to the realm of humanity. Time in this kind of contact experience sometimes feels like an «eternal now» that involves answers to the open questions of the past while at the same time dynamically shaping the questions for the future. And if fear and hope are now constantly shifting in all of us from figure to ground and from ground to figure, let us trust again that in the true encounter with life, Time is always cyclical, reconstruction is ongoing, alternation is perpetual, as long as our mind becomes trained in what our heart already knows... *

Everything has been done-

And discovery

Always in front of us **

Eleni Chatzigeorgiou, Psychologist (EKPA), Gestalt Psychotherapist, member of HAGT and EAGT, Dance Therapist and DRT (Dance-Rhythm-Therapy) Instructor.

(*) Hycner, R. & Jacobs, L. (2018). *The healing Relationship in Gestalt Therapy*, translation in Greek by A. Karagiannopoulou, Editions I. Sideris, Athens (pg.198)

(**) Savina, Z. (2002). Haiku: «the leaves are back on the tree», *International Anthology*, Editions 5+6, Athens (pg. 394)

Reflections: The 3-day Residential Experiential Workshop «Mind the Gap»

The experiential three day «Mind the Gap» workshop in Evia was a unique experience for me. The truth is that for the first time in such a workshop, I didn't know exactly what to expect and I went without knowing any of the participants. This at first felt a little weird because I thought everyone else either had more similar experiences or had already come with acquaintances or friends. All of this was overcome very quickly because both Despina and Nia took care of it and because the more experienced participants embraced the others, literally and figuratively. All of this is in relation to the first hours of the three days. We quickly got into the heart of the experience that for me worked on a physical, emotional and cognitive level in ways I did not expect. Each session was like opening a door, sometimes pleasant, sometimes difficult and sometimes bringing a very different experience than I thought it would bring. For me the cognitive part was and is the easiest while the emotional part is the most closed off. The physical usually follows both. But connecting all three, and how they worked in the three-day activities, was a great experience. Without going into details about the individual activities, I want to say that I found them very well «balanced» between what I understand as spheres of the physical, emotional and cognitive. Also, a very important role was played by the number of participants, 12, who all had the space and time to reveal parts of themselves. The 12 of us became very close and even now we have relationships and have stayed in contact, which is great considering that before the workshop we did not even know each other. At times it was as if one of them took out a key, gave it to the team and another took it and opened his own locked door. It sounds very cliché but it was a very moving experience. As a person with many years of experience in teaching and organizing educational experiences, it is clear to me that what happened is the result of very good preparation by the two facilitators, on all levels, including the selection of participants. It also played a very important role that we had the whole hostel to ourselves, and that it was in nature, away from distractions. Also, the food was simple and healthy; of course, if I'd known how (and how much) it would be I would have brought some nuts with me. Personally, I turned off my cell phone for three days, so it was easier to dedicate myself to what was happening there, which had so much new information to process. I think all I wanted was for the whole experience to last a little longer, but I understand how difficult that is. At this point I think it is important to clarify something: the experience is not easy. It is not like going on an island for three days with a large group of people for relaxation. It is a very intense experience, and it is difficult to predict what might emerge in each of us, and consequently what will emerge from others. But it is an experience with a lot of light, a lot of stimuli to look «inside» the gap to see what's going on. I would definitely do it again.

Rigas Goulimaris, Senior Lecturer in Media & Communications, Canterbury Christ Church University

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τικές.

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Περιφερόμενες εικόνες μιας άσκοπης λιτανείας.

Παρατηρούμενα που ξεχάστηκαν από τον παρατηρητή.

Και όμως αυτά μιλάνε. Είναι το σύμπτωμα που πρέπει να ακού-
σεις.

Είναι η κυρτή η ράχη και το τραυματισμένο γόνατο.

Είναι το νευρικό περπάτημα και το τραύλισμα στην ομιλία.



Είναι ο κόμπος στο λαιμό και η ρηχή αναπνοή.

Είναι το σώμα σου ο Ναός σου.

Είναι αυτό που περιμένει εσένα να βάλεις λάδι στα καντήλια και
να ψάλεις προσευχές.

Είναι εσύ. Και εσύ είσαι αυτό.

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μαζί.

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ταιριάζει σε αυτήν εδώ τη Ολότητα. «Πορεύσου εν Ειρήνη».

Konstantina Koutroufini, 4th year trainee

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