



Gestalt NEWS Foundation

INFORMATIVE AND COMMUNICATIVE SIX-MONTH ISSUE OF GESTALT FOUNDATION
PSYCHOTHERAPY & TRAINING CENTER • November 2009 • 11th issue



→ page 2 **editorial**
Antonia konstantinidou

→ page 5
**Comment on the speech in Xanthi
"HAPPINESS and HEALTH"**
Marina Katsikidou - Stavroula Sechlidou

→ page 6
our news

→ page 7
THE MEETING
Costas Michailidis

→ page 8 **REPORTS**

MY NAME IS CROWD
Victoria Askaridou

Profile

Elisavet Freggidou

December, 7&12

Waiting for Bucay

in Thessaloniki and Athens



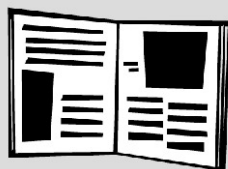
p.7

Gestalt
in

Marina Katsikidou
Stavroula Sechlidou

p.4

Foundation
Xanthi, too!



Those of you who wish to contribute to future issues are most welcomed! Please contact Gestalt Foundation's secretariat office: Telephone: 2310 283588 or 210 7254010.

email:

thessaloniki@gestaltfoundation.gr
or athina@gestaltfoundation.gr.

Express your interest in participating or simply share with us your opinion or ideas!

We are always interested in hearing from you!



«THE VOICE
OF SHAME»
book recommended

p.2

Konstantinos Kostas

GESTALT
&CHILDREN

p.3

Editorial

Celebrations for the ten year anniversary are over! Entering our 11th year (and 11th

issue), I feel a new cycle has started.

Partnerships change, close, open, transform. Our activities, like every year, are numerous and vary greatly, evolve and help all of us participating in the Gestalt Foundation evolve with them.

I hope that the experience of the years past will help us improve and organize ourselves more effectively, and that the people who enrich our activities will help us keep up our interest and enthusiasm.

In this issue we are glad to be hosting once again a book presentation, as well as reports from the major events of the Centre to date. New programmes are starting, old ones are continuing, and our partnerships are changing, as you can see for yourselves in "Our News" section. There is, of course, great enthusiasm regarding Jorge Bucay's upcoming visit to Athens and Thessaloniki in early December!

There are also other activities that will appear in our newsletter later, but which keep us busy with their preparation on a daily basis. A major issue is our preparation for the pan-European Gestalt Conference in Berlin in September 2010. We are preparing to go, present samples of our work and share our experience with our colleagues there.

But all this will be shared in future issues! I hope you enjoy the current issue and that we can continue to accompany you with inspiration and creativity in our second decade.

Yours,
Antonia Constantinidou.

Antonia Konstantinidou is a Social and Clinical Psychologist (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), Gestalt psychotherapist, trainer and supervisor, Member of EAGT, ECP Holder.

She is one of the co-founders of Gestalt Foundation and one of the resident members of the training program. She lives and works in Thessaloniki and Athens where she practices her profession since 1994.



«THE VOICE OF SHAME» *book recommended*

(Lee, G. R and Wheeler, G. (eds) (2003). The voice of Shame, Silence and Connection in Psychotherapy. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press/Gestalt Press).

Constantinos Costas

Social Worker, Psychologist, Psychotherapist
(email: k.konstantinos@yahoo.gr)

Debate on shame began mainly through studies of ancient Greek texts, Jewish and Christian traditions, biology, as well as from ethnographic and anthropological research. The issue then "passed" into psychology and psychotherapy, around the beginning of the 70s. Since then it has always been a topical issue, as reflected in relevant literature. Every psychotherapy school focuses on the issue of shame through viewpoint on human nature, personality/self development, health and psychopathology. This is also the case for the Gestalt approach.

The book I recommend here continues the debated on shame that started within the Gestalt framework mainly by Wheeler, Lee and Yontef and extends it to specific fields. The book presents a collection of 14 articles written by Gestalt therapists, divided into three categories: theory application prospects. The publication was edited by Lee and Wheeler.

The feature I particularly like in this book is that it includes a wide range of issues and that, in most texts, there is a variety of examples, which allows theoretical discussion to be carried out on the basis of specific cases. This way offers material and opportunities for reflection and sensitization in areas where one may not have previously had any experience in. I would like to mention all the topics discussed, because I believe that this will present a more complete picture of the

book contents. The topics discussed are the following:

1) *How shame is understood/perceived in the light of/ based on the Gestalt Model.* A short and clear text by R. Lee. For Lee, shame is a factor that affects the process of contact. In simple forms it is just a process of reversal with a protective function. Natural symptoms of shame are often camouflaged through specific hiding strategies, amongst which are silence or speaking at a low volume. Other strategies are reflection, rage, criticism, control, concealment, and perfectionism. Sides of our self which are not supported within the field, are charged with shame and lead to alienation and self-renunciation.

2) *The relationship between shame and the self in a New Paradigm for psychotherapy.* Wheeler presents an extensive discussion on the need to change the way in which we conceive the self and proposes a transition from a view where the centre of attention is the isolated individual to a view which focuses on the individual as part of the field. The comparison of the

two models regarding the view of the self and the consequences each model has on how we understand/perceive shame, health, psychopathology and psychotherapy, are of particular interest.

3) *Shame in a Man-to-Man Caring Relationship.* The topic is developed by G. Wheeler and D.E Jones. It promotes the relationship of support between men: father son, teacher student, therapist patient, etc. It discusses the male/masculine identity, the paternal role as part of the male identity and how shame is implicated in and harms the growth of a "caring" bond between men. For this bond to develop it requires men to be able to assimilate their feminine side as well as their other sides that contribute to the growth of their capacity for presence. Lastly, an interesting point in the article concerns the *meeting* between men and the development of intimacy between them. Intimacy and affection between men may well mobilise taboos and phobias, i.e. homophobia.

4) *Shame in the framework of Chronic Illness.* This is an exceptionally interesting testimony by psycho-

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GESTALT & CHILDREN

Katia Chatzilakou

Social and Clinical Psychologist
Gestalt psychotherapist, trainer and supervisor



The Ministry of Agricultural Development and the Developmental Companies of Rhodope, Xanthe, Elikon Parnassos, Aitoliki, Trichonis, and Olympia, as well as Fokiki Developmental Company in the framework of the Trans-territorial Project "Environmental Sensitization of Different Cultural Groups" of Leader+ Community Initiative and the Gestalt Foundation Centre for Psychotherapy & Education, materialized an action for the "Sensitization of Educators on Conflict Resolution issues within the school environment".

Participants in the project included both Teachers and Principals from Primary Education as well as Teachers and Principals from Secondary Education.

The action was materialized on 23-24 May 2009; it was concurrently held in 4 towns: Amalias, Komotini, Xanthi and Pyrgos.

The teams were coordinated by therapists, trainees and partners of the Gestalt Foundation.

According to the basic principles of the Gestalt approach, awareness of and respect for our self, initially, which is then extended to those around us, are achieved through completely developing our personality by accepting that "I am me and you are you".

Within the multicultural framework of the daily reality we experience in our times, the issue of social cohesion is based on the recognition of cultural differences between social groups.

Such differences are often the results of conflict, through difficulty in accepting various views and aspects of a phenomenon; this leads to difficulty in event management and harmonious coexistence of group members.

Schools are places of education and at the same time a framework within which corresponding phenomena appear; therefore, it is also the immediately available environment for all programmes cultivating respect and acceptance of difference in all its forms (national, political, religious).

The basic goal of the Programme was personal development and self-awareness of participants, so that they may be led to maturity and the formation of a view on life that would be consistent with the principles of respect, acceptance, harmonious coexistence and multicultural action. The most ideal way to achieve maturity is through an experiential educational process, which the structure of the entire Programme was based on (i.e. exercises, discussions, working groups).

Through the Programme participants investigated ways in which they could incorporate the aspects described above into their daily educational work, using the already existing rich educational material of the Ministry.

With a special willingness to explore and involve ourselves in a creative dialogue regarding issues that touch on Conflict Resolution within Schools, we invited School Teachers and Principals to participate in their own unique way in planning a class, a school, a community, a society that respects and acts as an independent agent.

Below are excerpts from the reports handed in by the coordinators who participated in the programme.

(Page.6) ----->

therapist Kitty Stein from her personal experience with chronic illness (Multiple Sclerosis), which is commented on by R. Lee.

5) *Shame in Male Homosexuality*. The issue is discussed by Allan Singer, who refers to the shame that develops in individuals who feel sexual attraction to members of the same sex, and, mainly, gay men. Singer states that he is gay and shares his personal and professional experience in a clear and bold style. What is particularly interesting is the discussion and therapeutic approach to shame in relation to the experience of revealing one's sexual identity ('coming out') by gay men, and certain existential choices, such as marriage and adoption.

6) *The role of shame in Lesbian Identity*. Written by Mary Ann Huckabay. Rich in examples and references to the challenges gay women are confronted with.

7) *Shame in Heterosexual Couples*, by Robert Lee. It studies shame making extensive references to the case of one couple, Linda and George. Focal points include the phenomenon of contributing to the relationship, sex, assertion and restoring emotional security within the relationship.

8) *Shame and guilt in Codependence*, by Gordon Wheeler. An extremely interesting text discussing the issue of codependent children or, as they are also known, childcarers. It recounts the adventures of Dana, a nine-year-old girl, who has undertaken caring for her drug-addict father and her two younger siblings and supporting her mother. The point of intersection of several circles of interest: dependence, codependence, abuse/neglect, child protection, social services, intervening in crises. Apart from discussing

shame, what is demonstrated, without any explicit reference, is the need to create a supporting network around children at risk.

9) *How shame affects the shaping of Body Image in Women, focusing on Obesity and Eating Disorders*, by Iris E. Fodor.

10) *The role of shame in Shaping a Class-based Social System*. Written by Philip Lichtenberg. Particularly interesting thoughts surrounding the contribution of shame to the creation, preservation and reproduction of the social system are presented. The analysis is along the dynamics of the oppressor oppressed relationship.

11) *Shame in Therapeutic Dialogue*. With several examples and in a self-revealing mood, Lynne Jacobs analyses how shame is introduced to the therapeutic relationship. The most basic point of the analysis is the shame of the therapist and how this can lead to a therapeutic dead end. Some of the signs that show that the therapist has not processed his/her own shame issues are a fixation on what is methodologically correct, avoiding supervision and personal therapy.

12) *When and how therapists can cause shame to their clients*. One of the most important topics in the book, similar to the one above. A basic point of the analysis is the differentiation between shame as a transference phenomenon and shame which is introduced/caused by the therapist. The therapist's effort to follow sound practice rules in relation to the requests or demands of their client may cause the client shame. Also, in cases where clients surprise their therapist with their behaviour or when they stir

issues within the therapist him/herself, the adoption of a defensive stance may cause shame to the client.

13) *Shame felt by individuals coming from cultures which are displaced and disparaged by dominant "White" Culture*. By Maryse Mathys. Just like individuals are driven to languish and partiality by alienating themselves from and renouncing the various aspects of themselves, so our global culture is in danger of languishing and becoming uniform and, ultimately, reaching an impasse. This seems to be the basic message of a text recounting the story of a pupil with learning difficulties [?] at a French private primary school on the Ivory Coast; the pupil in question is the son of a native man and a white woman.

14) *Shame and guilt in Gestalt Therapy*. By Gary Yontef. Short, clear, concise. A continuation of what was expressed on shame in *Awareness, Dialogue and Process*.

To conclude, does shame have a voice? The texts in this book show that shame sometimes speaks through the voice of parents, other times through the voice of teachers, other times through the voice of the clergy and other times through the voice of advertising and the market. At times our shame makes us speak in a low voice in order to hide and at other times it makes us fall silent so that we may go by unnoticed. At times it makes us lose our voice and, thus, aspects of our self remain muted, unexpressed and non-verbalised.



Gestalt in Xanthi



It was with great joy that I accepted the invitation by the Association... to deliver a speech in Xanthi, in the context of its activities for the prevention of breast cancer. I remember the event with great emotion, both because of the audience's response and because of the care of the organizers. Thank you for the honour you have afforded me and I wish the best for the development of the Association. The Gestalt Foundation's "reporters" in Xanthi, Marina Katsikidou and Stavroula Sechlidou, each describe their impression from the event in their own way. Good luck for the future!

Antonia Constantinidou

A significant event...

too!

I am glad for the opportunity given to me through the Gestalt Foundation newsletter to share with you a very beautiful, hopeful and happy event.

Marina Katsikidou
Nurse TE, Psychologist AUTH,
Gestalt Psychotherapy Graduate.

Firstly, let me introduce myself...

My name is Marina Katsakidou, I am a Nurse, a Psychologist and a Gestalt Foundation Graduate, and I live and work in Xanthi. This year, for the third consecutive year, I have participated in the supervisors' team of cancer patients, which, I believe, does great work providing psychological support to cancer patients, while also being a very well organized monitoring and preparation team for our new colleagues as team coordinators, who become, in turn, observers, co-coordinators and, ultimately, coordinators. Thus, myself having followed this process, I have been coordinating the Xanthi Cancer Patients & Friends Association since last year. I should note that all this activity is strictly voluntary, and I would also like to stress the importance of supervision, because it offers to all of us coordinators full support, knowledge, experience and motivation for more and more growth, creation and contribution...

Behind everything there is a creator and behind all this effort that has been built step by step all these years with a lot of care and hard work, is our Antonia, and of course, with her all her 'fellow-travellers', all of us!

Let us now come to the actual event!

Everything in life starts with a dream, a seed, a first step and inspiration; this is how my dream came true; it was a

dream of the Gestalt light reaching Xanthi.

On October 12 an event was held in Xanthi; it was organised by the Association of Cancer Patients & Friends "STAYing LIVELY", where the main speaker was Antonia Constantinidou, who happily responded to our proposal to her, with a very good subject: "Happiness and Health". There are few words that can describe what happened; it was definitely beyond any of my expectations. The event was held at the Foundation of Thracian Art and Tradition; the hall was packed with people, and their number kept increasing ... some found seats, some brought extra chairs from other floors, some simply sat on the floor and there were many people who remained standing. There were more than 300 people.

When I was distributing the invitations and putting up the posters with other members of the Association (who were motivated and present with their heart and soul!), I discerned some interest from people, but I honestly could not imagine that there would have been such a response! The talk enchanted them, as they told me later; they really enjoyed the subject, the versatility of the material, Bucay's story "The circle of 99" and especially the speaker's manner, how the presentation was made. Some said that the speech relaxed them, others that it raised their awareness, others that it brought a lot of things to their minds,



others that they saw happiness in a different light and so on. I received all these comments over the next few days from people who stopped me at the hospital where I work, on the streets of Xanthi, in my neighbourhood...

I am sure another important goal has been achieved, making the association and its many activities known, even though it only started last year! Raising public awareness concerning cancer issues, such as prevention, care, volunteerism and, the most basic thing of all, giving some relief to all those suffering, with the message that cancer is not an impasse!

I feel great joy at having experienced such an important event and gratitude for Antonia who responded to our call with respect, quality and care!

A great 'thank you' from the bottom of my heart - may we keep up the good work!



Comment on the speech by Antonia Constantinidou in Xanthi titled: “Happiness and Health”

by Stavroula Sechlidou, Gestalt Year 2

“... Estha squeezed on the crowded tram... a little bubble of silence swimming in a sea of noise...”

...Once the quietness arrived, it stayed and spread in Estha. It reached out of his head and enfolded him in its swampy arms. It rocked him to the rhythm of an ancient, foetal heartbeat. It sent its suckered tentacles inching along the insides of



his skull, hovering the knolls and dells of his memory, dislodging old sentences, whisking them off the tip of his tongue. It stole the words from the thoughts that dressed them. And left them naked, peeled. Expressionless. Numb. Almost nonexistent for others. Slowly, year by year, Estha retreated from the world. He grew used to the presence of the octopus that lived inside him and drowned his memories in its stifling, hypnotic embrace, erased his words, flooding him with misty black ink. And in time, the cause of his silence disappeared, it was buried somewhere deep inside the dark facets of the event of the silence itself...”.

*The God of Little Things,
Arundhati Roy.*

12 October 2009, a Monday that developed regardless of my expectations. My town, Xanthi, a town that I am rediscovering all over from scratch, has shown both sensitivity and a thirst for beautiful things... In a packed hall at the Foundation of Thracian Art premises a beautiful evening was held, filled by the optimistic and tender speech delivered by Antonia and the music of the young Vougiouklis brothers, while the our optic nerves were stimulated by work displayed: Urban Art graffiti. The Association of Cancer Patients of Xanthi, which I have the honour of working with this year as a volunteer, impeccably organized an evening filled with images, emotions and a rush for life. Peoples' response was moving and intense. Antonia was sweet, professional and comforting...

She talked about “Happiness and Health”. “Happiness...”. We are always talking about stress, depression, our dark sides, our fears, whether small and great. We look for the deep secrets of our existence, we zealously look for answers about what comes after, about death, our torturous search for everything, about illness, about our daily anxiety to be... and we forget to look for the self-evident, joy, enjoying the little things. Happiness is a decision, said Antonia and her statement still echoes loud in my ears with an intensity and optimism that soothes my many worries. How can it be a mere decision? This thing I am trying to achieve is complicated by all the things I want for myself, all the things that others expect from me, all the things society vests in me so as to tune me with perfection, glamour, the non-existent? Accepting myself will protect my happiness, said Antonia. A simple, great truth, a simplicity that spreads galloping inside me, yet always trips on small scratches on my soul that occurred as I was growing up. That is what I want, to accept myself, this unique self that moves

amongst another 6 billion people on this earth and has been leaving its unique mark for 30 years now and will do for as many as there may be...

And what are the ingredients of happiness? Our well-loved speaker spoke straight to my heart, proposing that we work on things we can complete and to complete them, create, reserve our right to make mistakes, play and laugh; we should not cage ourselves in the circle of 99...

The connection of happiness to health is related to its diametric opposite, i.e. stress and its connection to the suppression of the immune system. Stress is the lack of homeostasis, or an imbalance in the harmonious functioning of our organism which leads it to attempt to regain balance. Reaction to stress mobilizes the release of powerful hormones for gregariousness and excitement-anxiety. Research in psychoneuroimmunology successfully shows, among other things, that chronic stress has destructive consequences for health, causing constant repression of the immune system. According to the biopsychosocial model, health and illness are the results of interaction between biological, psychological and sociological factors.

Everything we have felt and have not given space to be expressed, everything we want and cannot attain, everything we are and have not become... All these things overshadow our happiness and become the ghosts of desires and experiences in a life we have never lived, a life we are not living. Antonia Constantinidou's speech at Xanthi mobilized a lot...the imperative need for self-fulfillment, for realizing small, simple truths, our need for “togetherness”, composition of opposites, the need to be what/who I am, the simple need to breathe and be well.



it is continued from page 3 GESTALT & CHILDREN

[...opening and trust gradually increased. It seemed that everyone found an opportunity to explore issues that concerned them and share their own personal concerns and difficulties with the rest of the team. There was support and feedback amongst members. A very remarkable and moving experience for all.

Amalias 23 and 24 May, 2009

Ioanna Kato, Mgr,

Psychologist, Speech Therapist, Gestalt Psychotherapist

Stavroula Mitroussi, BA

Psychologist, Gestalt Foundation Graduate

[At the closing of the proceedings, participants in the seminar stated that they gained the following (according to notes taken during their statements): Demystification of the concept of conflict; Exploration of the creative side of conflict; Recognition of strong and weak points in each one of us in relation to managing a conflict or conflict situation; Experimentation with new ways of managing and resolving conflict; Exploration of the importance of the teacher as a "referee" or "facilitator" in resolving conflict between third parties (students, colleagues, etc.); Recognition of inner conflict and each person's management mechanisms.

Komotini - 23 and 24 May, 2009

Maria Ioannidou,

Psychologist A.U.Th., Gestalt Foundation Graduate

Katia Sueref, Teacher,

M.Sc. Health Psychology, Gestalt Foundation Trainee

[...in the end, after two days and twelve hours of work, we raised our eyes to look at 15 familiar, by then, faces of persons who did not want to leave the circle, who were hungry to keep going, and who, in such a short time, had each done so much by themselves and all together: they had developed a special relationship amongst themselves and with the two of us. Their feedback was warm, heartfelt and generous.

"It was like diving into an ocean!

Thank you for the oxygen!" they told us...

Xanthi - 23 and 24 May, 2009

Lia Zografou, Drama Therapist

Maria Mavridou, Gestalt Psychotherapist

[In our cooperation with the participants of the specific workshop we formed, quite soon, an atmosphere of trust which allowed for the sharing of various forms of issues that our team members are dealing with at school and in their broader contact with children. Issues such as oral or physical violence, communication, and racism came to the focal point of the work done by the team members. With a lot of enthusiasm and an open spirit they chose to look - through experiential exercises - at the different facets of the issues mentioned above, a fact that reinforced our dialogue and the theoretical background concerning such issues...[...] There was an expression of the need and desire for participation in similar seminars, and certain members proposed the creation of a self-help group, given the recognition of common problems, questions and, mainly, a common vision concerning contribution and knowledge, which was both open and moving.

Pyrgos, Ileia - 23 and 24 May, 2009

Alkistis Kafkopoulou,

Educational Psychologist,

Gestalt Psychotherapist

Rama Sadmon,

Social and Clinical Psychologist,

Psychotherapist & Gestalt Supervisor



— We would like to inform you of the suspension of operations of the **Gestalt in Organizations Educational Programme** from the curriculum of the Gestalt Foundation, which results in terminating our cooperation with Magda Pantelidou and Panagiotis Vasmatzidis.

This was not an easy decision to make, not was it taken lightheartedly. Through various discussions and efforts to find a common point of reference, we reached this decision, which we believe is for the best of everyone's growth.

We hope that the graduates of this training programme will complete their obligations, continue and spread the light of Gestalt principles to businesses. We wish them every success.

— Come share the dream with us.

Come join us in a circle around the sacred drop of love.

As the year leaves, let us leave a mark of humanity... from our surplus to our fellow humans who need it...

I invite you to the annual **voluntary blood drive** at the Gestalt Foundation premises.

Wednesday 9 December 2009 time 10:00 12:00

Those who cannot attend on that date can donate blood every Saturday and Sunday 9:00 12:00 at the blood donation centre of every Public Hospital, offering it in the name of the Gestalt Foundation.

Thank you

Amalia Apostolou

Head of Gestalt Foundation Blood Donation

Contact telephone number: 6973778722

— In the framework of the annual **Continuing Education Programme** we invited **Philip Lichtenberg** PhD, Co-director of the Gestalt Institute of Philadelphia, to coordinate a three-day workshop on:

1. "The Equalizing Tendency in Social Relations

2. "Thoughts on Aggression as a Bonding Action"

Philip Lichtenberg, PhD is an accredited psychologist who taught at Bryn Mawr School of Social Work and Social Research for more than 35 years. Philip received his PhD from Case Western Reserve University and his official training in Gestalt therapy at the Gestalt Training Centre in San Diego, with Erving and Miriam Polster. Furthermore, he studied with Isadore From in New York. He has written six books, including "*Community and Confluence: Undoing the Clinch of Oppression*" and "*Encountering Bigotry: Befriending Projecting Persons in Everyday Life*". He has also written several articles and monographs. Philip often coordinates training seminars abroad. His theoretical interest fields include the use of Gestalt therapy in the broader world of social action and social organisation.

The seminar will be carried out in English at the Gestalt Foundation premises in Athens on the following dates:

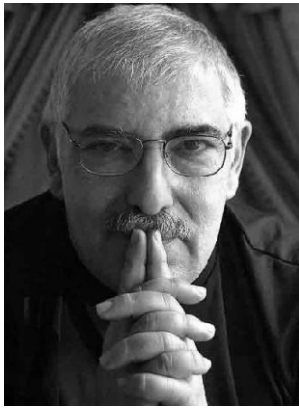
Friday 25 June 2010, Time: 15:00 21:00

Saturday 26 June 2010, Time: 10:00 17:00

Sunday 27 June 2010, Time: 10:00 17:00

Participation fees will be 300 euro.

— We are happy to announce a new partnership with the Association for breast cancer "**Leap of Life**" in Thessaloniki. To begin with we have planned a series of lectures and experiential workshops for members of the Association. We wish every success to the work of the Association in our city and hope for creative and long cooperation!



JORGE BUCAY IN THESSALONIKI & ATHENS

Monday, 7 December 2009 17:00

Discussion / Speech / Lecture
Book presentation

At OLYMPION Hall

Opera Publications, IANOS

Bookshop in cooperation with *Philologist* magazine and the *Gestalt Foundation Psychotherapy & Training Centre*, present for the first time to the public of Thessaloniki, famous Argentine psychiatrist, psychotherapist and writer Jorge Bucay, whose work has enjoyed a very warm welcome by the Greek public.

A book presentation will be held for the book titled "To Love With Eyes Wide Open", while a talk/introduction with the author and a book signing-session will follow.

ADMISSION FREE OF CHARGE

In Athens a similar event will be held on **Thursday 10/12/2009 at 20:00 at the Plaza Hotel (Syntagma Square).**

Jorge Bucay was born in 1949 in Buenos Aires in Argentina. He is a physician and psychotherapist of the Gestalt school; he specialized in mental illness therapy, initially working at hospitals and clinics, and then giving lectures at institutes, colleges, theatres and radio and television stations. He is always invited around the globe; he tries to attend lessons, seminars and conferences in Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Mexico, the USA, Italy and Spain. When he decided to write, he saw most of his 12 books translated into at least twenty languages and placed on the best seller list of every country. He works as a psychotherapist for the elderly, couples and social groups. He lives in the suburbs of Buenos Aires with his wife and their two children. Opera Publications have published the following of his books in Greek: *Let Me Tell You, Stories For Thought, Count On Me, The Road To Self-Dependence.*

We will be very glad to see you there!

THE MEETING

Extract from his presentation at the first conference of Greeks from Constantinople October 2009

by Costas Michailidis,

An old people's home. Morning in the courtyard. A resident. A name, Katerina. An old lady, around 85 years old. She sits quietly, alone. A little further away, there I am. I am enjoying a cigarette, shortly before starting a group session with the residents. I smoke and observe her. She is alone, isolated, I think. I feel sad. I think of inviting her to the group. I stand up, walk towards her, approach her.

"How are you, Katerina?", I ask. I ask and expect an answer so that I can proceed to extend my invitation. A specific answer. An answer along the lines of, "fine, and yourself?" What she tells me fills me with surprise and wonder. I hear Katerina say...

"What can be done?... I make a friend and then, a short while later, she dies. The same over and over again. What is the point?"

With surprise on my face and curious to find out more, I take a chair and sit next to her. Inside me I repeat her words a few times. I am full of various emotions. Many are contradictory. I feel stifled, confused. I need to clear up what I have just heard. To analyse it

word for word. I start analysing...

...I make a friend... Katerina had begun. Bravo Katerina, I celebrate inside. I'm happy.

...and then, a short while later, she dies... The joy departs. Sorrow is what I feel now, sadness.

... the same over and over again ... Dreariness, tiredness.

...what is the point... I am looking for something, anxiety, hope.

It is only one sentence but there are many emotions. ...joy sadness dreariness anxiety hope. All these, together, in just one sentence. Emotion in one word...

joysadnessdrearinessanxietyhope... I can hardly pronounce it. Yet, this is my state upon hearing that sentence. And what do I do? I try to focus on something, isolating one word, something, and ignoring the rest. Joy? Sadness? Dreariness? Anxiety? Hope? To focus on something. On one side of the coin. As if looking at only one side of a coin. There is only one coin. No matter how you look at it, it remains the same. If you look at one side you avoid the other. The other, however, is there, present. AS if I am trying to separate opposites. But how do I separate them, when within life itself opposites mix?

...what can be done?... I make a friend and then, a short while later, she dies... the same over and over again ... what is the point?

If I do not feel these words deeply, if I do not stay to see what is happening inside me upon hearing this sentence, what is there left for me to tell Katerina? Theories, just theories. Tidy and clearcut theories. But these theories are not life. What is life? Katerina's life?

...what can be done? I make a friend and then,

a short while later, she dies. Over and over again the same, what is the point?

Is there a point, I wonder? There is, there is!!! I scream inside me. And what is it? I wish I knew. This point can only be found by Katerina herself. It is her affair, because it is her meaning. And how is she going to find it? How do I find it? How do you find it? Through experience and through the tension of the opposites you experience.

Imagine the picture. You are sitting somewhere quietly. There is no sound, no sound at all. Suddenly an airplane flies over you at a low altitude. A loud sound, a deafening sound. It flies away and disappears into the horizon. Now, it is quiet again. Only that this quiet is different. It is deeper than before. You feel it deeper. You feel it more deeply. Everything lives through the intensity of polarity. Everything lives and becomes deeper. All you need to do is allow that tension to exist. After the tension, the tranquility grows. Tension gives meaning to tranquility.

"What can be done?... I make a friend and then, a short while later, she dies. The same over and over again. What is the point?", Katerina tells me.

I just sit next to her. I hear, I feel, I do not speak... a little later she speaks...

"At least now I am not so scared of dying. I am accustomed to the idea that I will die one day. It is not as terrible as it used to seem to me once..." A smile lights her face.

I smile back, wink at her naughtily and leave her because the group session is starting soon...



CORRESPONDENCE...



CORRESPONDENCE...

MY NAME IS CROWD

Victoria Askaridou
Gestalt Foundation trainee

The day came when we were finishing our second course year... we had our profiles... who was I, how did I get here, what I am like... I wanted to condense all my life experience into one page...

If I could turn it into a picture, I would say that I was a caterpillar trapped in a cocoon for years and I have now become a butterfly, dazzled by the light and magic of life, as though it is drunk... it does not know much about its wings or its potential, but it knows that all these things it is discovering is making it feel alive...

It is wonderful and at the same time scary to be aware

of that; often, I do not know how I will react to events in my life... I imagine this is how a caterpillar feels when it first turns into a butterfly...

I discover, accept, come to terms with, react and move on...

It is magical to learn to respect myself and my needs and to see that this makes others respect me.

Furthermore, I have noticed that recently, quite often, this path is very lonely; I have experienced losses in changing and in not doing what others would have me do; this may be the reason I had not been able to become a butterfly all those years...

I discovered that the people who finally remain with me, after all this, are the ones who really belong in my life...

EAGLES ARE THE LONGEST LIVING BIRDS OF PREY. THEY CAN LIVE FOR UP TO 70 YEARS, BUT IN ORDER TO REACH THAT AGE AN EAGLE MUST MAKE A VERY HARD CHOICE;

AT THE AGE OF 40:

ITS LONG AGILE CLAWS CAN NO LONGER SEIZE ITS PREY SO THAT IT CAN FEED.

ITS LONG SHARP BEAK IS TOO CURVED. ITS ELDERLY HEAVY WINGS MAKE IT HARDER FOR IT TO FLY. IT HAS TWO CHOICES: DEATH OR GOING THROUGH A VERY PAINFUL PROCESS OF CHANGE THAT LASTS 150 DAYS.

THE PROCESS REQUIRES IT TO FLY TO THE TOP OF

THE MOUNTAIN AND STAY IN ITS NEST.

THERE IT STRIKES ITS BEAK FORCEFULLY ON A ROCK, UNTIL IT SNAPS OFF.

THEN IT WAITS FOR A NEW BILL TO GROW.

WITH THE NEW BEAK, THE EAGLE WILL CUT OFF ITS CLAWS.

AFTER ITS NEW CLAWS GROW, THE EAGLE STARTS TO PLUCK AT ITS OLD FEATHERS.

AFTER 5 MONTHS THE EAGLE CARRIES OUT ITS FAMOUS FLIGHT OF REBIRTH AND LIVES FOR ANOTHER 30 YEARS.

WHY IS CHANGE NECESSARY?

OFTEN, IN ORDER TO SURVIVE, WE HAVE TO ENTER THE PROCESS OF CHANGE.

SOMETIMES WE NEED TO GET RID OF OLD MEMORIES AND TIRED NOTIONS.

ONLY IF WE GET RID OF OUR OLD BAGGAGE CAN WE TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE PRESENT.

THANK YOU FOR STANDING WITNESS TO THIS COURSE OF MINE AND ALL I HAVE TO SAY IS THIS: I NEED YOU FOR THE REST OF THE JOURNEY, TOO. BOTH THOSE OF YOU I SHARE SIMILARITIES WITH AND THOSE OF YOU I DIFFER FROM... BECAUSE AS WE HAVE LEARNED, DIFFERENCES HELP US MOVE FORWARD.



Profile

4th year Thessaloniki
June 2009
Elisavet Fregidou

Thessaloniki-Amphikleia

Profile, face on, full body... Photographs everywhere... images inside my head revolve, interchange, magnify.

I stand as a background, as a form, as a member, as a team...

I tread the water in a sea of memories...

There is a luminous sadness, an intense brightness at this meeting that sounds like a farewell. Bright smiles, faces glowing (even if they are in tears), tight embraces, safe, no strings attached.

In our attic, in a guesthouse called "Kindling", I need to stand on my toes to see the sun. In a room, called "Blue Jasmine", I seek out every moment, on a horizon that has learned not to expect anything at all...

I wonder... How do I collect four years, day for day, look for look, four years full of embraces and tears and words unspoken? How do they take on a form, some style, a tone and a flavour? How do they become a poem, music, a clear voice, all these things that came alive inside me?

So, look at how strange life is. Just as you start to fly together, just when you leave the parental walking crutch, just when you can, at last, name everything in

exact terms, you break off (fearful of cutting yourself), to become an autonomous part of the circle.

At Gestalt I learned that there is not just one route to follow... that there is no right and wrong, good or bad... I learned to fall in love simply, to believe purely, to hope thirstily, to assert confidently, to let things go indifferently... and thus, carefree, not to make an effort just for the applause.

Some things, you know, will not be evaluated, they cannot fit in the sacks bursting with our judgments and analyses, they cannot fit in frameworks, they cannot be sealed or unlocked.

Some people, you might know this better yourself, are not there to tell you what you did well and what you did not, what you owe to yourself or what you owe to others, they do not stand in your way, they are not there to sabotage you, they are not giving you advice for your own good.

That is what I learned, that is all I know.

And that is exactly what I can tell the person next to me and to that person further down.

I have not said it all in front of so many faces. I did not have time, perhaps. Or it could not fit in the words. Perhaps...

I was afraid that I might forget everything there and that the ending became all at once a starting point.

But that is how life is, curiously beautiful...

Every lively beginning is a deep separation, every end is



a first clumsy step.

Amfikleia-Thessaloniki

In my own pictures, I only see faces. This is what I remember upon returning...

A strong rain rushed over and cleaned everything upon my return. It thrashed on my thoughts violently, and dissolved itself... and dissolved other things... In the end it only dissolved, as though it wanted to disappear.

"It was a journey", I decided and concluded. Four years, countless kilometers notched, sometimes accelerating, sometimes breaking, turning back, and countless coffee and cigarette stops...

And if you ask me what I'll keep now...

I will only have one thing to say, I have known it for years:

"It is hard for me to forget what I share..."



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OUR SITE

www.gestaltfoundation.gr

