

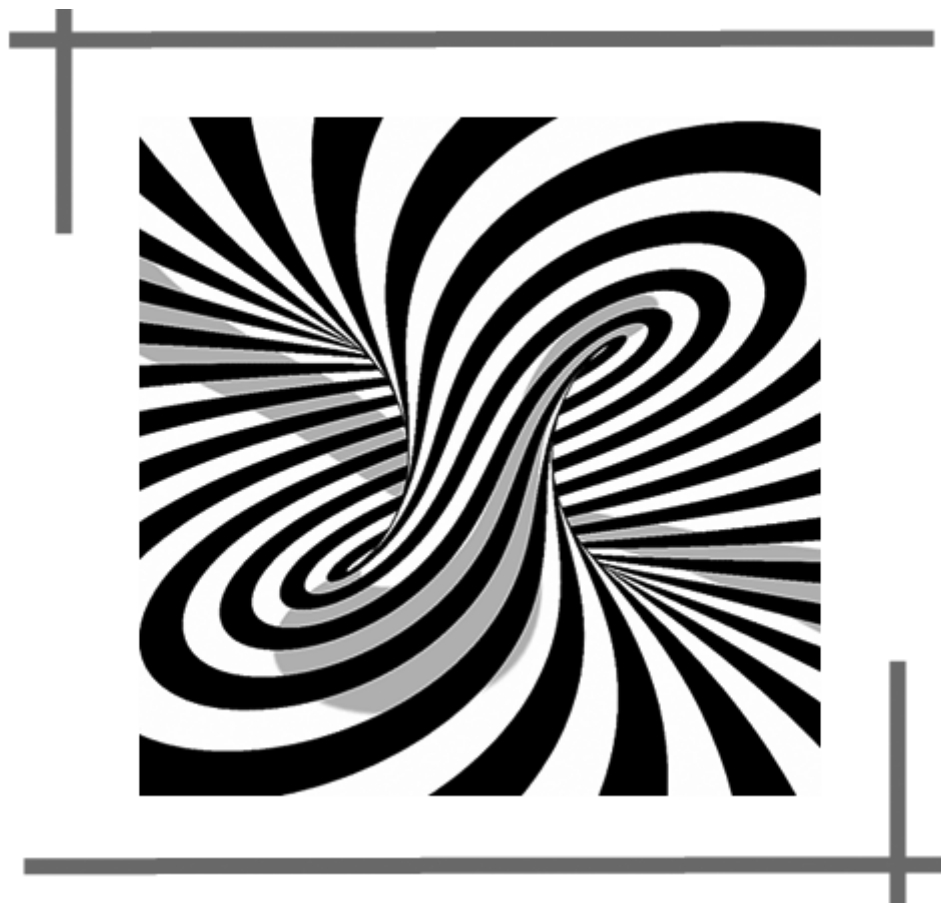


Gestalt NEWS Foundation

BIANNUAL INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION NEWSLETTER OF THE GESTALT PSYCHOTHERAPY AND TRAINING CENTER
SPRING - SUMMER 2015 / ISSUE 21



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“Relational Gestalt Psychotherapy”

In this program have been explored the relation reciprocity as the ground of Gestalt therapy, the sense of self as an inter-subjective process, the inter-subjective emergence of experience, the philosophy of Hermeneutics, the mutual and variable effect between the therapist- patient relationship as well as the dialectic method in working with recurrent and enduring relational themes.

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**«Woman's Shelter»
a new action
in Thessalonica**

**Presentations at
IANOS in Athens
and Thessalonica**

**17th 4day
Gestalt Psychotherapy
Workshop
14-17th May 2015**



Spring 2015 and our 21st issue is ready to update you on our latest actions.

First subject, our center's continuing education program entitled: "Relational

Gestalt Psychotherapy". A program attended by experienced Gestalt therapists from Athens and Thessalonica who, with their articles, will try to give you a taste of this unique journey that started this Winter and ended in Spring.

Here is where I would like to share with you a glimpse of my own experience through this process of study and seminars that I have attended the last ten years in Europe and America and my involvement as a trainer in this particular program in Athens.

At first I was reluctant. I saw the same but in the meantime so different things to what I knew and from the way I was trained. Slowly I started to trust and become impassionate with this new broader perception on Gestalt that allows for new philosophical research. Besides Gestalt founders Perls, Heffeline, Goodman, Lora Perls were well informed and studied the philosophical trends of their time.

So, what does the "Relational Gestalt Psychotherapy" approach represents to me and how have I experienced it? It is like a dive into the past of human thought. The thoughts of Merleau-Ponty,

Levinas, Gadamer and a host of other scholars, who, through Neo-Platonism, draw and enriched and kept alive the spirit of the Greek way of thinking from Plato to Aristotle and maintained the idea of dialogue as a concept and as a word in almost every language in the world till nowadays.

And I reconnected with words and their meaning as well as the concept of philosophy, which is the love that we, as humans, show in order to understand the "other", the different that happens partly in our thoughts and help us understand and come to terms, connect and interact with our surroundings.

Today, more than ever, the need for this connection becomes fundamental in the history of humanity and the world. A basic prerequisite is a "meta" perception of "relational", meaning the encounter, the likeness of mind, fraternization and preservation with respect for the whole as a part of each and every one of us, the world.

Enjoy your reading!



Yiannarelou Yianna Giamaρέλου

M.A. in Clinical Psychology, Gestalt Psychotherapist, Trainer & Supervisor, member of EAGT. Holder of the ECP (European Certificate of Psychotherapy). Founding member of the Hellenic Association for Gestalt Therapy.



New Action in Thessalonica: "Woman's Shelter"

The Gestalt Foundation, continuing to participate in social issues

through our trainees internship program, expanded its volunteers actions providing support in yet another sector in Thessalonica, the "Woman's Shelter".

The "Woman's Shelter" consists of a team of volunteers with a vision and a pure humanistic interest in fighting any form of abuse.

The team is made up of young people who collaborate daily in a responsible way to support women who have been victims of abuse and are in serious need. Services are provided to women over 18 without any prejudice and discrimination, regardless of nationality, religion, socioeconomic state and sexual orientation. The Woman's Shelter is based on the principles of humanism, altruism, solidarity and love toward the fellow human being.

The Gestalt Foundation, in order to support their effort, is organizing the following actions: individual psychological support, women support groups, couples counseling, training and supervision for volunteers and actions to inform the public.

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Η ΑΝΝΑ ΚΕΝΤ
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ΣΥΓΓΙΝΗΤΕ ΤΟ ΠΑΝΤΑ
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ΗΛΙΟΥ



... at the IANOS Cultural Centre

Comment on G. Diplas presentation "Social Field – Psychological Field. Man as a Fraction of Relation in the Environment", IANOS, Athens 07/01/2015



I enjoy following the Gestalt Foundation lectures at IANOS. Unfortunately that Wednesday I couldn't be there by 6 o' clock. But I wanted to, I really did. The lecturer, the

subject, the GF, my own mood, everything contributed to this wish. Finally I got there, of course not at 6 o' clock, but an hour later. Just as the lecture had finished and the dialogue with the audience had began.

Entering the room I felt the high energy. I could sense around me a preoccupation on the things that had been said and I hadn't heard.

Questions on how people affect and are affected by the environment, searching for advice on how to act, answers and opinions on the existence or not of right and wrong, challenges, objections, doubts, agreements, a dance of dialogue, questions and opinions, everything fitted in just half an hour. They fitted, they weren't crowded. They occupied the space, the time and the respect, something that Giorgos managed to masterfully coordinate.

I adapted easily to the environment and followed the dance. After all the need that brought me there on that Wednesday afternoon was exactly that. To exist in that field, to listen to it and listen myself in it.

I left with a sense of warmth that always follows me when I meet familiar and dear people, feeling motivated and carrying with me the following dialogue:

"There is no right or wrong when we speak about our choices. I disagree with what you say; there is always a right or wrong. I don't embrace your opinion, but I will keep it in mind and think about it when I leave here today."

Maria Papazekou

Comment on D. Balliou presentation "Relationships... for an Authentic, meaningful Life", IANOS, Athens 03/02/2015 February 3rd 2015

I left from work to go to IANOS to attend Despina's lecture on "Relationships... an authentic, meaningful life".

A complete contrast, from the immoralities of everyday wanderings in the world of sales, to the definition of morality as the primary driving force in our lives.

IANOS was packed although I did get there early. After the usual kisses and well received hugs I find my way to my seat and wait for Despina to begin. After she was announced instead of a fully colored presentation we heard the nostalgic tune of a piano and a violin. And then on the screen appeared a series of questions. Each question, another punch in the gut...

Who am I?

What is the meaning of my life?

Do I love the others?

Do I feel free?

What would be my legacy?

Is my life active?

A quiet deep voice, calm, breathing without the stress of validation started to systematically list a series of philosophical facts towards self-awareness starting from the deep existential anxiety reaching to the confrontation between the lost, silly everyday life and the need for morality, freedom and justice.

I was anxious not to lose the thread of the juxtapose elements and the words weight on me collectively. The chain of the evolution of the philosophical thought towards psychotherapy boiled down to the question: Is your life active? And the answer came with a phrase "I exist-with". During the lecture I was contemplating the meaning of my own life. Sometimes I found it, sometimes not. Then I heard Despina say that the meaning of our life is not just one. But each time according to the situation and our environment we find the one that fits. I was relieved; I felt that my life evolved in stages. At the end what I carried with me was the phrase "life is not just something that happens to us, but something that we



consciously strive for".

My mind was anxious and I looked at my past, piece by piece, to find when my life just happened and when I strived for it.

The lecture ended and Despina asked us

to close our eyes and let the things we heard settle within us,

rest in our soul, while listening to Yemeji's theme. The moment I closed my eyes, my soul relaxed and images of my life started to pass in front of me such as pictures of my family, my friends, pictures of my travels. Valia, resting her head on my shoulder and that defined the field where I belong. The images continue to appear vague like smudged multicolored shapes, like old water color paintings and I realized I had tears in my eyes. A feeling overwhelmed me, a deep tender nostalgia.

Dimitris Diomataris

Comment on Yianna Yiamarelou's lecture "Dialogue", IANOS, Athens, 19/02/2015.

Why not here?

I would like to travel to Indonesia, to fly over continents and oceans, over deep seas and abyss. I would like to be able with a click to book my tickets and a room to an exotic hotel with wicker lamps and oriental colors. And when I reach the capital, maybe on my own, but full of joy and excitement, I would hop on a bus and explore the city, the lights and shadows of the night that will unfold before me in full abandonment. Then I thought, why so far away? Why not here? Why somewhere else? But that is very difficult, at least for now, maybe ever for later.

I closed my eyes for a while and the phone rang and if you remember, it was you. You sounded a bit tired. You wanted to speak to me or you just wanted to speak? I think I will never find out. Because you didn't ask me a lot of things and you really didn't talk to me that much. Only for a moment you asked what I would do after we hang up and I felt happy because I felt that you thought of me.

Then I thought for a while about my wishes. All of them, including the ones about travelling. On the phone you seemed troubled and alone and I don't know why this made my mind wander somewhere far away.

I wanted your attention, you wanted mine. I wanted to go away. But why since I wanted to come towards you was I thinking of planes and oceans?

Somehow to travel between you and me... with a word, a silence.

With turbulence, adventure, love, fear, loss, joy, confusion – exactly just like life.

Betty Aggelopoulou



Comment on Kostas Mihailides' lecture "The void within me – a void between us. Is there hope?" IANOS, Athens, 03/03/2015

The subject of lecture on the 3rd of March in IANOS was: "The void within me – a void between us. Is there hope?"

Kostas besides a colleague is also a friend. So when the time



came to write about this lecture, I found myself wondering under which perspective I should write this piece on something that I found to be vague. Immediately I adopted my professional capacity (I decided to put a tag on it), to describe what I experienced in somehow "dry" and devoid of emotion terms. For example: field theory, existential themes, polarizations, Gestalt theory etc. I felt like I tried to describe this experience only cognitively, fearing that I would not describe it "correctly". Once I came in touch with my process it became apparent that that was the essence of Kostas lecture: We come to this world with numerous stimuli but as an existence devoid of meaning. Imagine that I needed meaning to motivate myself to write down these thoughts. How difficult it must be for a man to be motivated when his concept of self is one of absence of meaning. How could he calm his anxiety? In this lecture Kostas touched on the void... and the whole. The one is intractably connected with the other. Everything takes shape through the void. The void encompasses life, death, old age, conflict, loss, enjoyment, meaning, hope, freedom. The void and the whole both reside in each other's heart. The existence is embraced by void and people give meaning to their life, each moment even by the slightest reason. It is people who have the freedom to choose to live, to give meaning, to hope and to share. The part of freedom of choice and sharing is what moves me the most. Kostas lecture on void had meaning. As a speaker he brought forward the experience and evoked the audience's thoughts and gave the freedom to each and every one of us to render our own personal meaning.

At the beginning of his lecture, Kostas conducted an experiment: He left the podium empty. I was deeply moved when somebody from the audience expressed the opinion that maybe as a society we should not expect from an "authority" to solve our problems but rather collaborate with each other in smaller and larger communities to solve them on our own. This for me had a special meaning!

Iris Panagiotou

**Comment on Katerina Siabani's lecture
"The cave you are afraid to enter hides the
treasures you seek", IANOS, Thessalonica,
19/02/2015**

An emotional date with fear.

Friday 6th of March 2015, at IANOS, in Thessalonica.

Late evening, cold and rain... In IANOS, the atmosphere was



really warm. The room was full and there were people standing. They were here for a lecture entitled "The cave you are

afraid to enter hides the treasures you seek".

Katerina Siabani, the lecturer, began... "Fear is learned", "kids follow their parents' fears", "fear becomes anger", "we need to trust the people around us", "exercise on love", were some of the really interesting things that she said.

There was silence before the poem "Be Silent" by Aziz Nesin. And then we were filled with emotion, by the exceptional text and the formidable recital of Marietta Rialdi. I have heard it before but this time it resonated differently.

At one point, a small canvas bag passed from one hand to another and each one of us curiously drew a small piece of paper from it with a phrase on fear written on it.

A conversation followed with questions, different opinions, anxiety over the answers and interest about our fears.

When I left, I said "thank you". Thank you to my parents because I have never show them ever being scared and to Katerina for the emotion and the thoughts that her words provoked in me.

Sissy Polpatsa

**Comment on Antonia Konstantinidou's
lecture "Joy in my life", IANOS, Thessalonica,
3/04/2015**

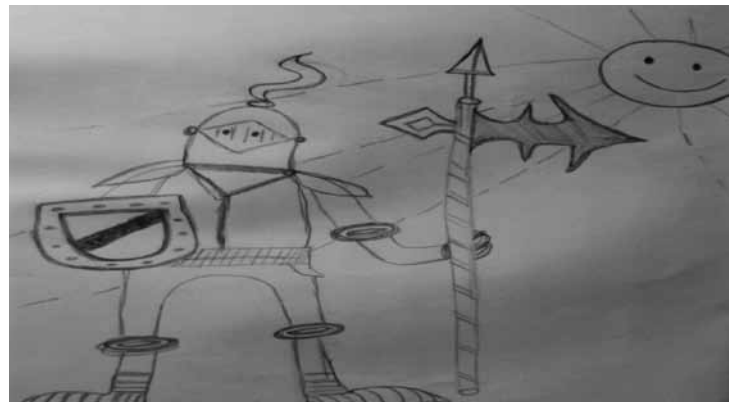
The armor of myself and the sharing of joy.

Listening to Antonia's lecture on joy, I started wondering what the most intimate part of me is, when I experience joy. And yes



I do feel joy when I share thoughts, emotions, things with others, even though that scares me. I consider myself a private person but still I believe that the ultimate value of joy can

only be attained, in a meaningful way, when it is shared. Joy is an orphan when it exists in the context of loneliness. As the years go by, I realize how "rigid" my armor had become. It had prevented me from coming in contact with other people and share joy with them. "It was impossible, for a long time to maintain any peace, love and happiness. Whenever the road became difficult I would retreat to the armor of my Ego in order to survive. In truth what made me mad was the realization that my life wasn't easier but just more comfortable" (Fisher, 2013, p11). Wearing an armor means that myself is protected so much that my senses don't fully function. The way to share joy with others is through me, to first accept me as I am, not as I want to be and to allow my senses to truly experience that... I become more aware of how cold and distant my armor can be, because it is mine and every time a part of it begins to melt my senses begin to function...



How can experience joy when I don't allow the touch?
When I don't allow myself to look people in the eyes?
When I don't allow myself to smell the nature?
When I don't allow myself to taste the food?
When I don't allow myself to hear the sound?
I'm responsible for not feeling joy. I'm the one who wears this personalized rigid armor that prevents me from connecting with people. A person without senses is incomplete, nonexistent and incapable of experiencing joy! As someone who wears armor I restrain my senses and deny myself the chance to experience emotions deeply. In this way I can't truly connect with emotions either of joy or sadness. Jorge Bucay in his book "Road to Happiness" suggests that happiness, however you define it, is inextricably linked to the unconditional acceptance of responsibility of your own life. "Each one of us must go through his own pain in order to find joy and happiness on the other side" (Fisher, 2013, p35)

The key to dismantle my armor is in my hands. It exists inside of me. Now I know what I do to keep joy in a distance, I can embrace that part of me. I can manage to change my "rigid" self.

Ioanna Goutzioti,

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**FREE
EXPRESSION**

**“Love and
Betrayal”
Presentation at the
16th 4day Gestalt
Psychotherapy
Workshop**

Love is a fatal and unpredictable event that makes us feel alive; it makes us feel we can touch eternity. In this mysterious journey we encounter the other and behind him our own self. Jung (1954) suggests that love is the infallible force that illuminates our conscious.

Love brings a fear that something catastrophic is imminent. By nature love is something that can't be explained, something mystical. In the myth of "Love and Soul" the Soul meets Love in the dark, which represents the unconscious, the absence of awareness. Hillman (1966) talks about the dual nature of Love, the inhibitory, that keeps secrets, delays, creates tension and expands creativity and imagination. Defiance and betrayal of this arrangement is the necessary function that leads to individuality.

Life is a continuous series of meetings, partings and variations. People come to this world faced with a checked board of betrayal: life through death, love through hate, primary union through birth. Betrayal brings both betrayed and betrayer face to face with death: a sudden profound loss that touches our existential feelings of loneliness, a tragic choice that might prove necessary for our development. Love and Death are the two opposites in the continuum of life that can't exist independently. Both life and death can lead, in the same time, to both creation and distraction.

Freud spoke of the instincts of life (Eros) and death (Thanatos) that coexist inside us. With the same force that we fall in love we can also betray. Betrayal in love brings us in touch with death and death becomes more devastating because we love. Our first experience with betrayal occurs at the instant we emerge to the world from our mother's womb. Birth is a trauma that takes a lifetime to heal. This need to heal is expressed every time we fall in love and wish to replicate the lost completeness of our first moments in life. Our first encounter with love is validated inside the family, where we primarily might come in contact with betrayal. In a family, where a child is not treated as himself and where his care is being neglected, an act of betrayal is precipitated. This child, later in life, will imitate in his relationships the failed family relational patterns.

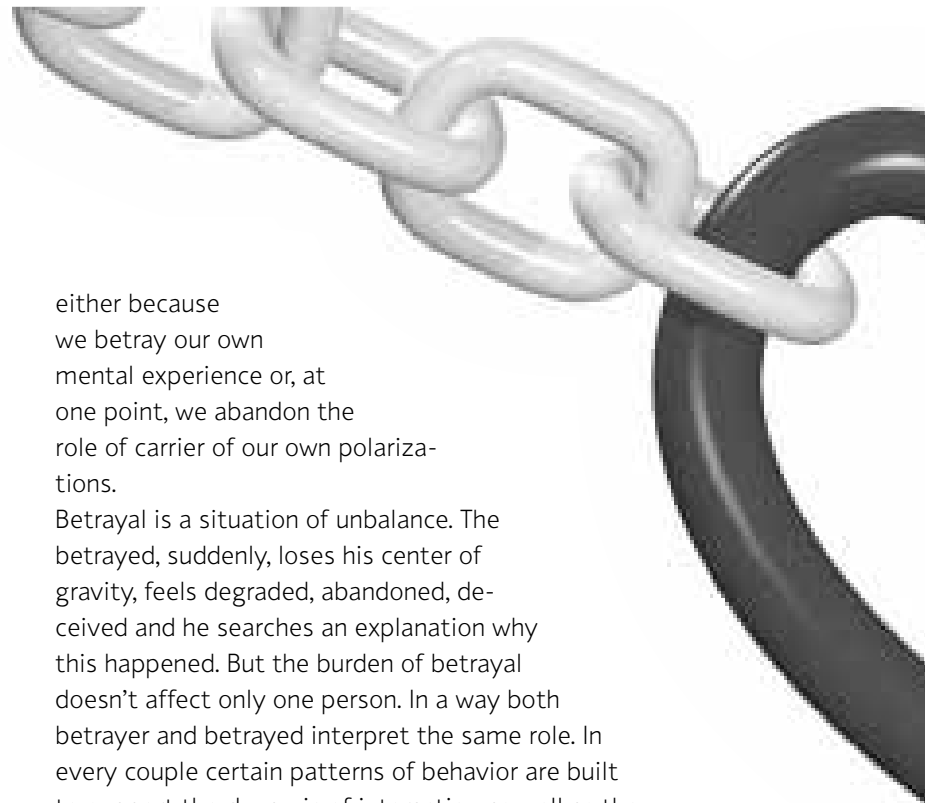
This primary betrayal damages the ability to establish the boundaries of Ego and the ability to form relationships with the Thou. According to Buber (1954), in the relation of I-Thou we find the meeting between two people who are mutually recognized as individuals because of the space that their relationship has created. In love, when we view the other solely as the object that will satisfy our deepest needs, we run the danger of losing the contact and then the Thou might become the It.

Betrayal bares the taste of deception and leaves us faced with our existential loneliness. While love gives us the illusion of absolute connection with the other betrayal reminds us that our meeting with the other may occur only in the boundaries

of contact. However the measure of self sufficiency and independence of a person is his ability to experience absence. In the circle of contact, withdrawal and creative void are necessary steps to create a new form and a new relationship with our self and others.

The complete absence of an inner core that supports our existence might lead to two kinds of betrayal: a betrayal of our inner grief for the neglected child inside who didn't receive the love he needed and the betrayal of others, to whom we lean on to "complete" us.

In the process of a non sublimated love what occurs, in the boundaries of contact, is a dynamic of separation, where we project onto others pieces of our mental experiences that we haven't incorporated. When the other betrays us he stops being the one who completes the other side of our polar opposite and forces us to look inside to find what he embodied and carried for us. Whenever we avoid connecting with pieces of ourselves that we don't accept, the possibility of betrayal exists



either because we betray our own mental experience or, at one point, we abandon the role of carrier of our own polarizations.

Betrayal is a situation of unbalance. The betrayed, suddenly, loses his center of gravity, feels degraded, abandoned, deceived and he searches an explanation why this happened. But the burden of betrayal doesn't affect only one person. In a way both betrayer and betrayed interpret the same role. In every couple certain patterns of behavior are built to support the dynamic of interaction as well as the dynamics of betrayal. They define who is the betrayed and who the betrayer is. But sometimes we might find ourselves in both roles and occasionally at the same time.

TRIANGLES

Triangles seem to occupy an archetypal dimension in our lives. They invite us to confront issues of jealousy, humiliation and betrayal. They also bring us face to face with our own dishonesty and ability to hurt and betray others. However triangles are one of the strongest vehicles in our transformation and growth.

There are different kinds of triangles and they are not all related to romantic relationships. Triangles can be formed between parents and children, in working environments, in art even in dealing with pet animals. These triangles may as well evoke the same emotions as the romantic ones and what they seem to have in common is that the love towards the partner is not

exclusive.

In a simple form of a triangle we recognize these 3 parts:

- The Third Person. The instrument of betrayal. (an apparent predator)
- The Betrayer. (a divided soul)
- The Betrayed. (an apparent victim)

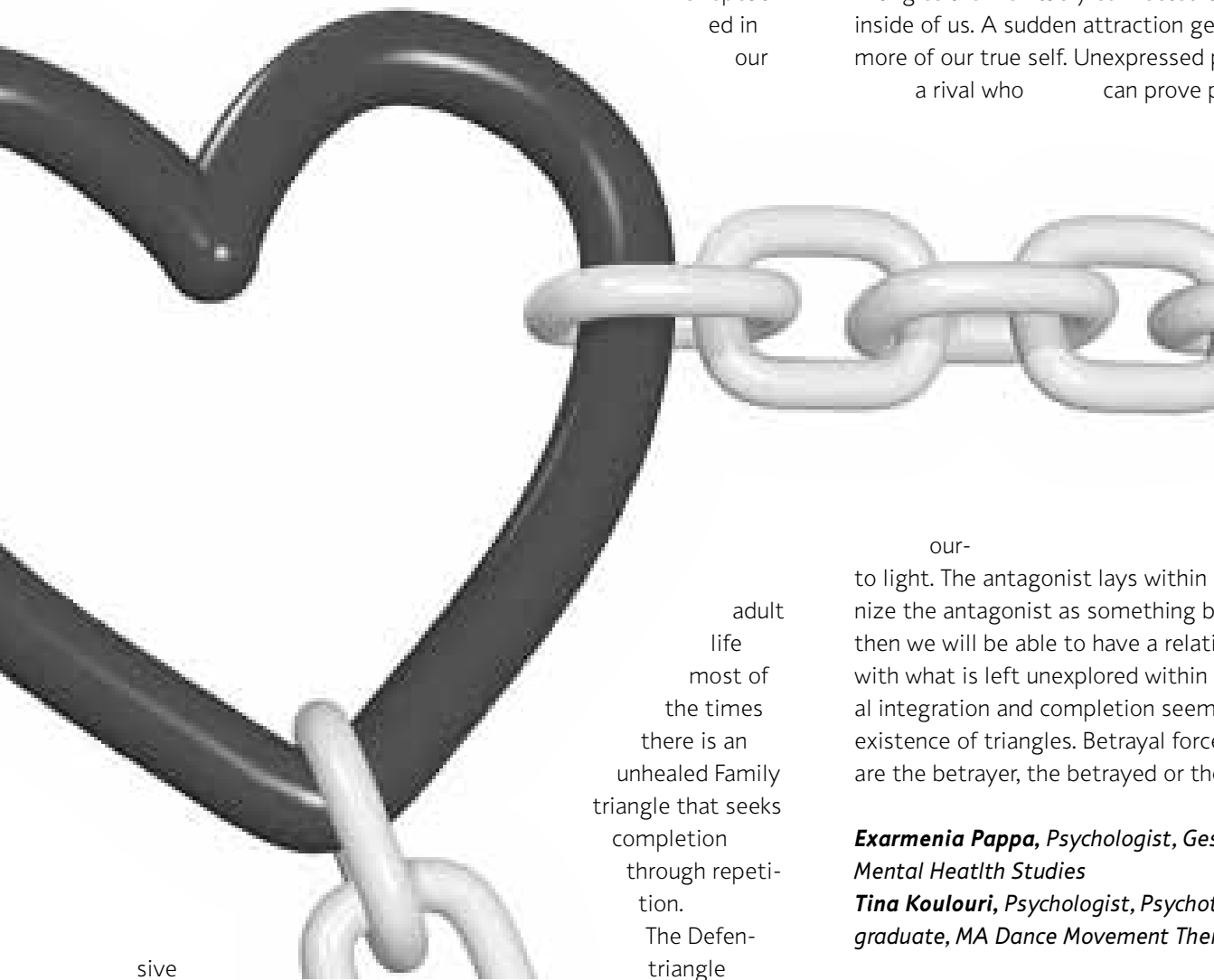
There are 4 kinds of triangles:

- Family triangles
- Defensive triangles
- Power triangles
- Triangles in pursuit of the unobtainable
- Triangles which reflect Unfulfilled Life

The first 4 lead to the Triangles which reflect Unlived Life

The primary triangle in which we are involved in is the Family triangle, and it is the one that is present throughout our lives.

Family triangles continue to function beyond our childhood until they are resolved and they find their way into our adult relationships. When a triangle pattern is repeated in our



relationships. When a triangle pattern is repeated in our

adult life most of the times there is an unhealed Family triangle that seeks completion through repetition. The Defensive triangle emerges strong

sive

from

feelings of inadequacy and lack of love. They're activated as a defense mechanism against the excessive vulnerability we might feel when we deeply connect with someone. By dividing our love between two people we make sure that neither has the ability to completely destroy our life. Falling in love with

unavailable partners prevents us from forming deeply committed relationships.

In Power triangles we find people who need to have complete control over their life, and that is something related to the sense of survival. The betrayed remains in a state of insecurity that there is a third person in the relationship and that allows the betrayer to feel secure and strong. Essentially insecurity and self-doubt exist in both sides.

Triangles in pursuit of the unobtainable may exhibit elements from the previous ones and the deepest motivation here is either artistic or spiritual. Sometimes, when we pursue the unobtainable love, we translate our creative and spiritual wish in the pursuit of someone who is absent, a person who is unavailable. Triangles which reflect Unfulfilled Life contain all the previous ones. In reality we will be able to find pieces of ourselves scattered in different parts of each triangle. But when a triangle invades our life it seems that it brings a message from our own lives dimension that we haven't yet recognized or expressed. When a triangle pattern is repeated it sends a strong message we need to hear.

Triangles are inevitably connected to what needs to evolve inside of us. A sudden attraction generates the need to become more of our true self. Unexpressed parts of us may appear in a rival who can prove psychologically important

to the person who we are in contention for. Triangles carry in them parts of us that we don't experience. If we recognize that fact something will change in our awareness. We are able to see ourselves mirrored in our opponent or we are able to recognize in our partner elements of selves that we don't bring

our- to light. The antagonist lays within us. If we manage to recognize the antagonist as something both internal and external then we will be able to have a relationship with our shadows, with what is left unexplored within us. At the end the emotional integration and completion seems to be the reason for the existence of triangles. Betrayal forces us to grow whether we are the betrayer, the betrayed or the third person.

Exarmenia Pappa, Psychologist, Gestalt Psychotherapist, MSc Mental Health Studies

Tina Koulouri, Psychologist, Psychotherapist, Gestalt Foundation graduate, MA Dance Movement Therapy graduate.

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From thought to question, from question to perception...

...the rest, on the next one!!!

I had several thoughts attending this, my first seminar. Thoughts I carried with me for a long time. Disordered thoughts, unsettling, scattered. Thoughts concern the therapeutic process. How can I, as a therapist, contribute to my patient's therapy? What happens to my own perception of things? How does observing the other will define his attributes and at what point? And if the process of observation in itself affects the observed, don't I, as the one who observes, get involved in his reality? Either way this person existed before I started to observe him. Doesn't he already have a certain opinion about me? When I observe him he occupies a space. Before, for me, he was an abstract concept, like plasticine (clay). As I observe him, he takes shape. My involvement is what gives him shape.

And I am involved. I decided to ask the question. Any question. And he answers. I wonder does my question limit his answer. Can I argue that he is really free to choose his answer? Is he really free? And the choice that I profess that he has is it exclusively his? Does it include just him or am I also included?

As Gestalt therapists we argue that everything comes from the Field. It is what we hear in our training, what we shout to one another. Lewin described the Field theory as a way to comprehend reality. It is a method not a reality in itself. For Smuts, the Field is the source of the Universe. It is the reality.

This reality is what we attempt to touch with this seminar. It is not something easy. In fact sometimes it seems incomprehensible. It is easier to speak about it rather than to experience it. But today I'm relieved to think that, after this seminar, we are ready to support the relational perception on reality and to take a distance from the term "subjectivity" and try to adopt the term "inter-subjectivity". To move from the therapeutic relationship and develop an awareness of the "self" in the dyad that consists of the therapist-patient.

Attending this seminar made me feel that it worth's to take the leap. Through the thoughts of great philosophers like M. Poentey, Gadamer, Levinas and others the groundwork exists.

In a few words my experience in this seminar was one of revelation, a strange footstep at the shores of the unknown. I heard theories that had deeper meaning, the one after the other, that describe its origin. I feel exited to think that this footprint might be my own. Something important is happening...

Deep heartfelt thanks to all who were involved in this seminar. To all of us...

Kostas Mihailidis, Gestalt Psychotherapist.

We met KEN EVANS, president of the EAGT 2002-2008, now president of Interactive Psychotherapy and vice president of the European Union department of child and teens therapy, at the second 3day workshop of Continuing Education program for Gestalt psychotherapy graduates at the GF center in Athens.

On Ken: A GREAT EXPERIENCE.

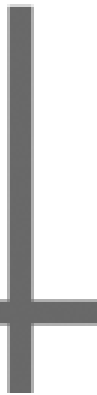
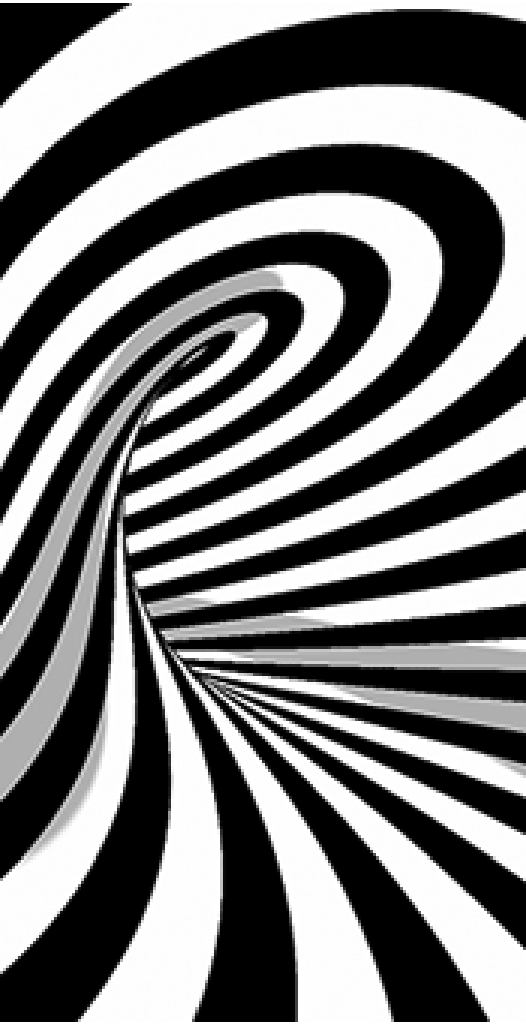


PERSON TO PERSON. In these three days we learned so much about Ken as a child, as a teenager, adult, therapist, author, father, grandfather, and a farmer proud for his sheep, a man who travels to all the Gestalt centers around Europe and lives between England and France. It was like we've had already met long ago. And everything happened effortlessly, at the same time as

"Relational Gestalt



at Psychotherapy”



supporting and expanding the horizons of the relational Gestalt psychotherapy using his model.

In his approach on the “Here and Now”, each and every one of us contains all the forms we once were and all the ones that we will develop in the future, from our gestation to the last moments before our death. In the field of therapist-patient we meet as two subjective realities. Let’s contemplate and ask: Who is this person in front of me and how old is he when, for example, he speaks about his father? Who does he see? How do I feel when I speak to him? How old am I, who do I see? It is like I invite the monsters of transference and counter transference that subconsciously participate in the meeting, to emerge freely in

the surface of consciousness, to facilitate rather than complicate our existential encounter.

What we are searching for is a connection with our client through our own experiences, our own self revelation. Maybe the difference in his model is the constant personal involvement of the therapist in the life of the patient he is dealing with, trying to comprehend the existential issues that hide behind the rumination of old traumas. Our obligation is to try to give meaning to our lives, “even though”, in our development, our environment was this or that way. Maybe our work as therapists is to be flexible and committed. To be the first to recognize our own existential issues and come to terms with the idea that they are common to all of us, regardless of when or where we were born.

Marina Theophilou, Psychologist, Gestalt psychotherapist

The child inside of me

The child inside of me... The child inside of you... How and where do they meet? It was a 3day seminar rich in information and emotion. Ken Evans took us by the hand on a journey to reacquire ourselves with the child inside of us that has been locked alone trying to be heard.

Rage, fear, freezing out, division, omnipotence, guilt and even smiles, is an arsenal that we choose to utilize growing up in order to deal with the pain and the loneliness we faced at one point or another, and survive.

“Dad I want to tell you how afraid I was when I would see you coming close to me. I didn’t know how to behave towards you... the only thing

I did was to be careful, to be careful of what I say and how I say it, to be careful not to make you mad and you start yelling, to be careful and thing over everything trying to predict your reaction! Why weren’t you careful not to hurt me or make me feel scared? Why did I have to become an expert on that for you?”

“Mom where were you when I needed protection, while I was protecting you when dad was blaming you? Why you were always leaving? I need you there, even if you weren’t next to me I just needed to feel you were there for me”. Through Ken Evans’ eyes I could see reflected the pain I experienced as a child. I show glimpses of the child I hide in me, of my ideal parents and of his child that sometimes tried to flee from his father.

There is no technique or effort that can make you feel this experience. I was constantly wondering what relational means and how could I come to know it and become a more efficient therapist. Sometimes it seems so simple as though a glance or a touch might heal our deepest wounds. Finally what I learned was



to see more clearly and more humanely the purity of the soul of the child that we all hide inside of us.

Haris Pavlidis, *Psychologist, Psychotherapist, Gestalt Foundation graduate.*

Pain and Beauty

The subject of this third 3day seminar in this year's continuing education program "Relational Gestalt Psychotherapy" was "Pain and Beauty, from the psychopathology to the aesthetics of contact". Gianni Francesetti, psychiatrist, Gestalt psychotherapist, was the supervisor.

The title presents the basic core of the theory that was detailed: Pain and Beauty, from the psychopathology to the aesthetics of contact

Pain is an intractable part of human existence, a constant and unavoidable presence. But what we don't realize is that it can be proven a rejuvenating factor in our lives, provided we allow its presence and experience to help us reach beauty, that means our own personal empowerment and maturity!

That was the aspect that those who attended the seminar, experienced through the very interesting theoretical elaboration of a new phenomenology and the impeccably scientifically and humane therapeutic process.

When do we speak of psychopathology related to pain, loss, and grief?

When we neglect the healthy part of ourselves, when we don't allow to experience and feel the emotions that exist, when we don't make contact with our senses and we don't receive the knowledge they provide.

When we retire from ourselves (deficient-being) and from our innate environment (deficient-between).

When we are absent from pain, when we are not present in the experience of pain and therefore not present in life, because grief is a process of contact with life, the way in which we exist

and relate with the person that left in a condition that changes...

What a Gestalt psychotherapist is called upon to do is to focus on the patient experiencing depression, that faces void and burden and help him shape what exists in the here and now by acknowledging his senses.

To co-create the field with the patient, inviting him to be present

in the between, in the here and now, individually as well as between them...

A few days after the seminar ended the orthodox Holly Week

began, the Week of sorrows, without them we wouldn't be able to celebrate Resurrection!!!!

Finally I would like to share with you an excerpt from Jorge Bucays' book "The Road of Tears" that really moves me, upsets and wakes me up: "...what indeed is difficult to accept and not because it isn't true, is that...we are completely incapable to provide our loved ones with the protection we want against every danger, every pain, every frustration, lose of time, old age and death..."

I feel very happy that I attended this seminar and I also feel grateful for the organizers in GF who gave me the opportunity to meet Mr. Francesetti. I would like to thank the training team for their trust, sharing, tears, smiles, strength...

See you again

Eleftheria Lagoudi, *Psychologist, Psychotherapist, Gestalt Foundation graduate.*

April 27, 28, 29: the fourth and last 3day seminar in the "Relational Gestalt Therapy" training program. Guest Coordinator: Lynne Jacobs. The seminar entitled "Enduring Relational Themes". Lynne Jacobs is in the forefront of those who focus and emphasize a more relational aspect of Gestalt therapy. She, besides a Gestalt therapist, is also a psychoanalyst trained in relational psychoanalysis. Together with Gary Yontef they have founded the Pacific Gestalt Institute in Santa Barbara, California



and it was from there where she came to visit us.

Expectations and eagerness... The appropriate readings had proceeded in order to make it easier to comprehend what she was about to detail. I was also eager to meet the other members of our team. The dynamics of attraction that always make these Gestalt experiential groups so addictive were in place. Lynne was already there, when one by one we started to arrive. Tall and thin, with strong cheekbones, short blond hair and glasses. Close to 65 years old, with a simple unaffected style. She gets ready... She walks the space up and down and finally she sits down in her chair.

We begin. With a usual, for us, delay, the last of the attendees arrive. It is a weekday and the traffic is still heavy. And she is the ones who apologize. She is sorry for invading our everyday working life. Sorry for having the seminar on a weekday because that was the only way she could be with us. She promises to speak slowly. She emphasizes that she is determined that we all understand what she says and have questions for her. That doesn't stop her from making jokes from the beginning, because as she explained "in her family teasing and making jokes was a way to express tenderness". In the opening of the circle of the group the closing was already established. The inevitable end



that approaches. She hears that from a lot of people so she makes sure that there will be enough time in the end to say our goodbyes.

The description above refers to the sense of what Lynne emits as a person, as a presence. What follows is a small taste of her basic theoretical views on relationality.

Her basic view suggests that everything emerges in the relation. "Everything is relational emergent". What this means and why as Gestalt therapists we easily agree upon, is that she doesn't accept transference, projection or self-support. There isn't a separate self who "enters in a relationship" with his environment. Whatever self evolves it evolves only in relation with the other. "Any experience that may exist between us emerges and is co-created by what I bring and what you bring in the situation as well as its secondary parameters. Your emerging subjectivity as well as my mine is inevitably codependent". In this sense there could not be something

"mine" that I could project on the other or that I could transfer on the therapist.

She elaborated on the concept of Enduring Relational Themes and she juxtaposed it to the concept of transference. ERTS can repeatedly contribute in the creation of shape as we repeatedly relate to the environment. They have already been pre-shaped by our previous

connections and experiences with others. They constantly expand, move back and forth, from the background, where they will predetermine the experience, to the surface, from where probably they will emerge in the meeting with the other and through that they will expand again and add to the background of our next experience.

Obviously in this 3day seminar, a lot of views were co-created, that were already pre-shaped by the experiences of the three previous seminars. We discussed, we asked, we gave answers, we wondered, we reacted, we comprehended, we laughed, cried and expanded.

Did we become more "relational" Gestalt therapists? No, because, inevitably, we already were "relational". Did our awareness on how we are "relationally" oriented expand? I believe that yes it did.

Thank you...

Elpida Kalaitzi, Psychologist, Gestalt psychotherapist.

Psychotherapy and Dignity

In Gestalt psychotherapy the first goal is to achieve a contact between the therapist and the patient. The conditions on which we focus to help achieve the contact usually are:

- 1) The therapists' ability to be present (Presence) in the ever changing "here and now" of the meeting.
- 2) His ability to live with the awareness of the "here and now" and trying to share that with his patient, therefore encouraging a continuum of awareness.
- 3) His ability to put aside his personal views and opinions and focus on the process. (Bracketing)
- 4) His ability to include (Inclusion), to put himself in the shoes of his patient maintaining his personal sense of awareness.
- 5) His ability to structure an equitable interpersonal relationship (I-Thou) with the patient.

But the concept of "dignity" is something that we rarely



encounter in the clinical bibliography. For that reason I was happily surprised (and I believe the same goes for my colloquies) when Lynne Jacobs, in the seminar that took place in the GF offices between 27-29/04/2015, mentioned dignity as an especially defining factor in the effectiveness of the therapeutic process. Furthermore, she emphasized that one of the basic reasons for people to seek psychotherapy is that they don't experience dignity in their life and they want to recover it. Of course I imagine that no patient would walk in our office aware of the lack of dignity in his life and ask to "help me regain it". But this absence in the life of people manifest indirectly through various clinical and interpersonal problems.

But what does dignity, "aksioprepeia" in Greek, means According to the "Concise dictionary of the Ancient Greek Language", it means "worthy of honor and respect".

According to Wikipedia it means

- 1) Accordance with the rules of civil behavior
- 2) The sense that a person feels when he is respected and when

he himself feels worthy.

Lynne Jacobs suggests that dignity is one of the major psychological human needs and personally I believe that it ranks in the same level as the sense of safety and our need to belong in a community.

When the way of “belonging” in a community doesn’t provide us with a sense of dignity then a person inevitably would feel underrated, ashamed and insecure. The absence of dignity puts him in a disadvantage relationship, opposite the people from whom he seeks respect.

It isn’t random that R.Hycner describes psychopathology- any kind of psychopathology- as a failed dialog, as an invitation for communication and contact that has been rejected or hasn’t been received with the appropriate respect.

Given the lack of dignity in their lives, according to Lynne Jacobs, our clients come to our office

with a sense of shame because they feel that they should be healthier, more independent and able to fully experience life more than they do in the moment they seek therapy. Moreover they feel ashamed because they view their therapist as superior and feel “obliged” to reveal things that normally they wouldn’t confine to anyone. That makes them feel more vulnerable because they are the ones who “expose” their weakness, while they can’t “see” the therapists’ weakness. So their relationship from the beginning stands on a completely uneven ground from a patient’s point of view. So it is obvious that a basic therapeutic goal should be to achieve a balanced relationship, recognizing and emphasizing the client’s dignity.

The fact that a patient experiences the therapeutic process as unbalanced becomes apparent in the way they often ask the therapist advice on what to do and how to behave in a situation, what he considers wrong or right, and they are willing to relinquish their sense of self, their perspective and value in their lives.

What could a therapists approach be, in order to help the patient regain his dignity? My answer in a sentence would be “the therapist should serve the patient”.

The word therapy in Greek according to the “Concise dictionary of the Ancient Greek Language” means, amongst other things, “service” and the word therapist means “servant”.

How can we practically achieve that? Primarily we value people using social criteria, appearance, profession, socioeconomic status, education...etc, I believe that it is an important prerequisite to set aside all these criteria and focus exclusively on the person’s individuality. Each patient is unique and therefore his worth is immense and his dignity beyond content.

But because unfortunately our mind is addicted on valuations, personally, what I find helpful, in order to overcome this situation, is to put myself in the place of “servant”. To do so I tap into my imagination and because of that when I “catch” myself doubting, contradicting, battling or wanting to “teach” something to my

patient, I imagine that the person opposite me is not simply Mr. Giorgos or Mrs. Maria, but a king. And then I ask myself, “How would you look at that person if he were a king? How would you sit in front of him? How would you listen to him? How would you speak to him? Would you interrupting him, and how often? Would you attempt to persuade him that his view on an issue is distorted while yours is the correct one? That you know what is right and wrong for him and that he should adopt your truth in order to become “healthy”? Or would you listening to him, completely concentrated, mesmerized by his way of thinking and experiencing the world? Before I say anything or intervene,



wouldn’t I think for the 100th time whether I understood what he had told me and wouldn’t I be terrified whether I misunderstood something?

I believe that a respectful approach towards the patient is a significantly therapeutic prerequisite for an effective psychotherapy, because it is the “means” that allow the patient to EXIST in his own way and with his own abilities.

If this way of existence includes difficulties and pain let’s not forget that this is a result of his creative adjustment. In his life he hadn’t the opportunity of a better creative adjustment. What he chooses to experience in the “here and now” is the best possible, regardless of the difficulties and the pain it incorporates.

After this seminar with Lynne Jacobs I realized that each time I interrupt my patient to state and express my personal opinion, view, perspective, belief or anything else I observe from my point of view in the field, essentially I transgress on his dignity. That is because I refuse to enter his world, to understand his point of view and I avoid experiencing the pain that this view represents. I refuse to include him.

I would like to finish this text with a few thoughts on dignity by Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “Anyone who degrades another human being would never achieve any worthiness. Nothing of what we deem unworthy in others is foreign to us. Usually we expect from others to do things that we are not willing to do. We have to learn to value people base on how much they suffer and not by the things they do or not”.

The only rewarding life choice when dealing with people, especially with weaker people, is love. A will and a wish to maintain a connection based on equality and respect.

The measure of our dignity exists in the way we recognize and offer it to others!

Aristotle Karatzias, Gestalt Foundation graduate.

RESEARCH

Greek and International Gestalt Therapy

research Update.

My interest in research and especially in the theoretical and methodological field of Gestalt psychotherapy, lead me to Rome where last May the biannual training conference on the effectiveness of the Gestalt psychotherapy approach was held, organized by the EAGT.

This EAGT initiative acknowledged the realization that it is essential, and not only for us therapist using the Gestalt approach, to ascertain the effectiveness of our method, but also to be able to communicate and present that to the public as well as to other mental health

experts in the field. So EAGT responded to this need emerging from various sides but especially from academics and established therapists who utilize the Gestalt therapeutic approach, to produce documented data that support the effectiveness of the approach. This

data will help the academic society to recognize and promote the approach as a valid choice for the mental health professionals. This choice by the EAGT can lead our approach out of an unproductive introversion towards a more dynamic presence in the academic fora, where, it could, deservedly, present itself, its theoretical structure, its potential and dynamic, potentially its restraints but more, importantly, its effectiveness.

So there, in the eternal City, we gathered, hundreds of therapist, who apply, believe and love the Gestalt psychotherapeutic approach. Our main focus was to follow the research efforts already underway and the new proposals for future research projects through our international network of Gestalt therapists. The environment was deeply scientific but, at the same time, humane and enthusiastic. The city's magic, the hospitable tour of its monuments was combined with the human contact and meeting of the therapists from every corner of the world. Furthermore, the scientific prestige



was combined with a theoretical plentitude and a methodological accuracy, essential in such conferences. We have to admit that it is a difficult combination but the organizers managed to pull it off.

The sense that there is a greater Gestalt therapists' society with a common vision and interest made me feel secure and fueled my motivation toward farther research, something that, in the beginning, was just a vision, only experienced in a fictional level. Now seems to take shape and not only just for me but for a lot of other therapists as well. In Rome I realized that my own concern for the scientific validation of the effectiveness of Gestalt psychotherapy is an open and shared concern that contains a variety of methodological approaches and research pacing.

I will use this opportunity to present some of the work done in the conference. Gianni Francesetti, head of the Italian Institute, gave the opening speech. He welcomed us and emphasized the importance of bridging the gap between the application and research in order to be able to move forward in our methods. Each and every one of us can help towards that goal from his place and in his own

way. "Anyone can choose to wear any costume that fits him in terms of research approach, some may apply qualitative analysis methods, and others might use quantitative ones". As president of the EAGT he related that the federation embraces and encourages all the research efforts.

The mentality of the Gestalt approach relates mainly to the field, to the relation, to the contact, while what we mainly associate with research is theory, methodology, variables, numbers and statistics. It has become evident though, that we have to merge the mentality of our approach with the mentality of a research process. In her speech Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb, founder of the Italian Institute, talked enthusiastically about this merger, because, after all, research isn't only limited to a quantitative approach but a qualitative one too. Ken Evans's, Europe's third party trainer, speech was of the same spirit. He also emphasized the necessity of keeping uniformity between the philosophy and basic values of the Gestalt approach and the methodological research.

Peter Schulthess, therapist from Zurich, presented a comparative study of 10 different psychotherapeutic approaches, Gestalt included, that was conducted in a period of 8 years in Sweden by the Swedish Department of Psychotherapy and he focused on the results of the Gestalt approach. Philip Brownell, clinical psychologist

based in Bermuda, gave two lectures. In the first he focused on the importance of establishing a research tradition for the Gestalt psychotherapy, structuring his lecture on the spirit of field theory in order to be more attuned and therefore easier understood by the Gestalt therapists. In the second lecture he talked about how we can utilize the single case timed series design, SCTS, as an alternative and more fitting to the Gestalt psychotherapy research plan.

Christine Stevens, publisher of *The British Gestalt Journal*, presented the results of a research, conducted in England for more than 3 years, using Core as a research tool, investigating the functionality of an individual proving that the Gestalt therapeutic approach is as effective as therapies provided by other approaches. It was also presented a qualitative research on the experience of psychotherapists working with patients suffering from depression, conducted by Tomas Rihacek & Jan Roubal, psychotherapists and professors in the Masaryk University of Brno, utilizing the Grounded Theory. Floriana Romano, from the Palermo University, used the same method in a work counseling model, the way it was designed by Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb.

Finally, Rolf Sandell, professor in Linköping University in Sweden, presented the Change After Psychotherapy (CHAP) method which is based on two variables a) an interview conducted after the completion of the therapy and b) a series of variables that come out from this interview such as: changes in symptomatology, in self-image, adjustment ability etc. He conducted a live interview with a patient who has completed her therapy sessions and then we analyzed the ways we can utilize the provided information.

As a genuinely Gestalt procedure at the end of each day there was a group session where we had the opportunity to meet each other, to talk, to exchange ideas, to see what each of us brings from our country and

how this experience could be incorporated in this multi-collective process. It became apparent that there is a need for a comparative study on the obstacles created by different mentalities, culture, customs, different ways of adjustment and ways of handling everyday situations. We should do this in order to better understand how the field affects the adjustment in different populations and whether that influences the point of view of how the therapist colors the Gestalt approach. Maybe further meta-analysis of national research could shed more light on this field.

It was certainly an important step on the overall research orientation of the Gestalt approach that comes from the past. The question that now comes up for us to answer is: What do we do? For me it was a valuable experience on a personal, scientific and therapeutic level. A lot of ideas unfolded and a lot more were at primary stage. In any case we need to have a Greek common vision towards the goals we previously described, ideas and the good will to work on them.

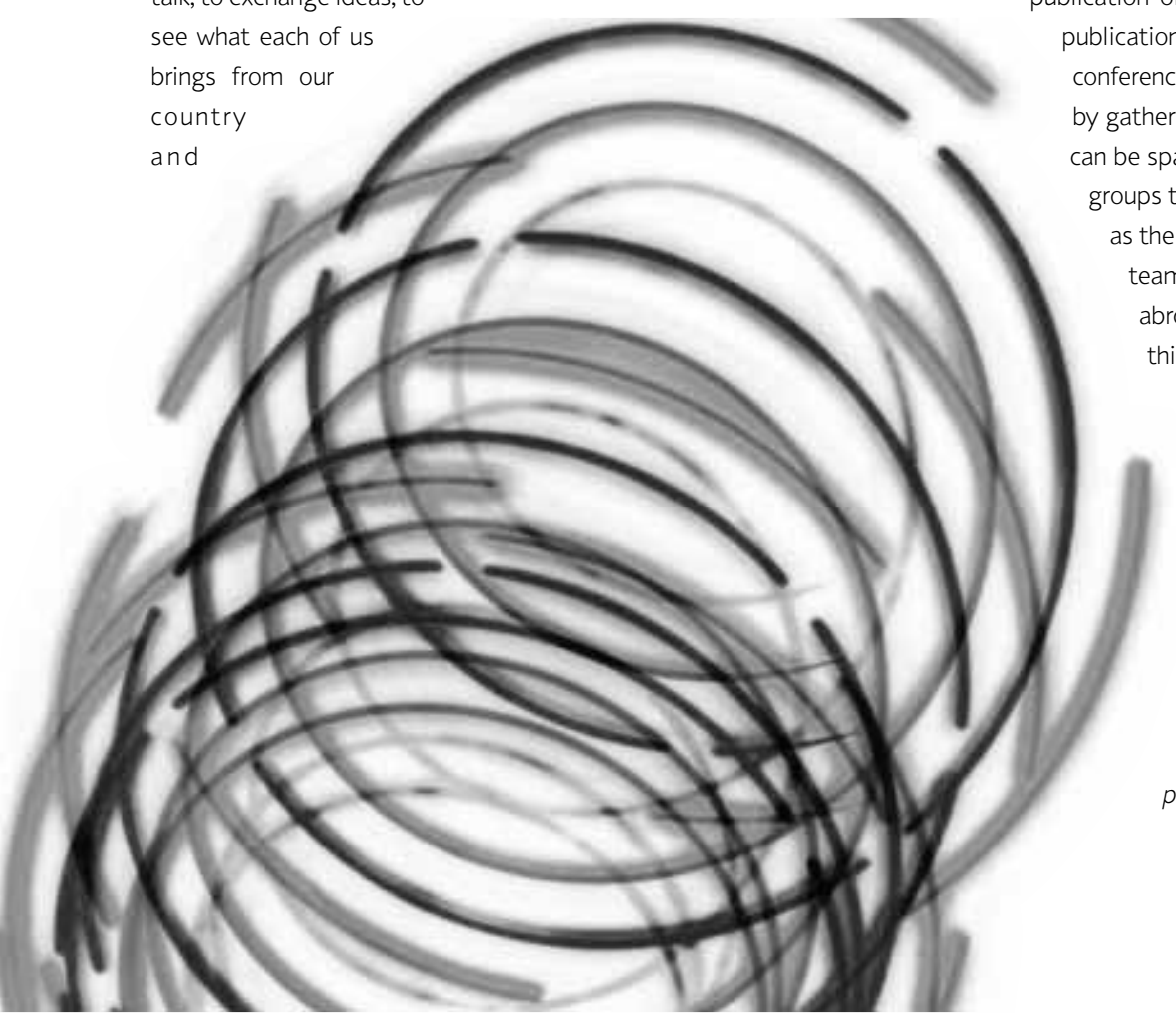
Already the Hellenic Association for Gestalt Therapy (HAGT) has responded positively, taking the first steps in creating a Greek research team. It is important to organize, support and inspire a Gestalt therapy research network in Greece. A network interested in the study and evolution of Gestalt theory and psychotherapy as well as its effectiveness. A network open to all Gestalt psychotherapists who love and utilize this approach and are interested in proving to the scientific community that this approach is effective and worthy as a valid choice for a patient.

It is essential for every one of us to commit, from his position, to, at least, one aspect of this effort. In a network of researchers one might focus on methodology, another on the writing and publication of articles addressed to international science publications, another might help in the organization of conferences and workshops, another might help simply by gathering data (interviews and questioners). No one can be spared. We can collaborate with other individual groups that already work within the Association, such as the study group and the conference organization team. We can also collaborate with networks from abroad in a primary and secondary level. The only think we need is commitment to our cause and our process, with care, joy and a warm heart. We look forward to your positive response, to think, design and realize the research projects that fit our approach prove and promote it as a reliable and effective choice.

Vasia Ignatiou Karamanoli,

(Phd) Psychologist Psychotherapist.

Psychology Lecturer SSE, trained in Gestalt psychotherapy and EMDR.



CORRESPONDENCE

Panic Disorder with or Without Agoraphobia

Panic Disorder with or Without Agoraphobia is considered an especially painful Anxiety

disorder. Its characteristic feature and the basic diagnostic criterion is the onset of unexpected and recurrent Panic Attacks that manifest with numerous symptoms such as: tachycardia (rapid heartbeat), sweating, shortness of breath, pressure, distress and chest pain, sense of dizziness, shakiness or faintness, fear of losing control, fear of madness or death, depersonalization, derealization, etc..

But in order to diagnose those symptoms as Panic Disorder first we have to rule out possible organic causes like (e.g. hyperthyroidism), substance abuse, drug side effects or other mental causes.

Panic disorder is especially painful both mentally and physically because the patient feels that his whole being is being threatened. So, on a mental level, Panic Disorder is experienced with an intense internal disruption, an excessive fear followed by a sense of impending disaster or imminent death or fear of madness and all this without the existence of an actual threat from the environment.

Furthermore, on a physical level, the individual experiences a threat to his most basic biological functions such as breathing (due to shortness of breath), heart function (due to tachycardia), balance and motion (due to dizziness and shakiness), perception and thought (due to depersonalization, derealization and fear of madness). This is why the patient finds it very difficult

to trust his basic and obvious biological functions resulting in the immediate need of support from his environment (friends and relatives) and if that is not possible he confides himself in spaces where he feels safe (usually his house).

This experience is very difficult for a patient to fathom and the same goes for his family and his environment in general.

But however difficult to comprehend and rationalize this experience is, I don't think that there is another way to psychologically help a patient (except when medication is needed, and it often is) but to study the experience in a safe environment of a psychotherapeutic relationship and try to share, explore and comprehend it. Besides comprehending the Other and his acceptance, understanding the uniqueness of his experience and accept it, is the essential base of every therapeutic relationship. So according to my own understanding a Panic Disorder translates into the life of a patient as:

- 1) A Rift in his life, a Subversion, a Loss for himself that also involves his family. His past life with the characteristic sense of relative safety and predictability is lost and in its place there is a frightening present

and an uncertain and unstable future.

- 2) The individual comes face to face with his vulnerability, his corruptibility, his mortality.
- 3) He experiences a sense of loss of control over his life and a sense of loss of identity.
- 4) He experiences a sense of loss of self-efficiency and independence, a restriction of freedom and dependency on others.
- 5) He experiences a sense of losing trust of his body and its natural functions e.g. breathing-heart rate-walking etc. as well as loss of trust on his body and mind abilities to sustain a certain level of stress (fear of madness)
- 6) He experiences a sense of regression in his life.
- 7) He experiences or might experience a sense of invalidation compared to others who don't face the same affliction as well as shame and therefore loss of self- esteem.
- 8) He experiences a sense of loneliness - marginalization – alienation, because others are not able to understand him and because even he can't comprehend or recognize himself anymore in this experience, and even more so he doesn't recognize his body as his own.
- 9) He experiences a constant fear because of the unpredictability of Panic Attacks that hung over his head.
- 10) Usually he experiences Sadness- Depression as well as Anger for himself and others.
- 11) He experiences an inability to Comprehend and Rationalize the



Attacks, resulting in Stress-Confusion-Disorientation, another sense of threat on his life.

It is clear that he suffers a great mental cost that he is called upon to handle besides the physical symptoms and the distress they cause. The common denominator of this experience is loss. And viewing the catalog above it is obvious we are talking about a number of losses. We could speak about multiple waves of loss. What makes this loss especially painful is the fact that the

individual hasn't got the time to go through the first three stages of loss as described by Kubler- Rocs but lands immediately in the stage of Sadness- Depression and comes face to face without any evasion with the probability of his own death. That is why, in Panic Disorder, the individual is directly confronted, without the chance of evasion or avoidance, with all the existential issues that trouble the human existence: Fear of death, isolation, freedom, fear of absence of meaning both in his life as a whole and in this particular experience. That is why I believe that the Panic Disorder, aside the pain that entails, probably gives the patient a chance to look deeply into the existential facts we listed above, facts of life and death, our values etc., that even though we try to avoid in our everyday life, are issues that underlying our every thought, emotion and action. Issues that preoccupied and will continue to preoccupy people and to which each and every one of us is called (sometimes violently) to give his own answer.

Aristotelis Karampatzias, Gestalt Foundation graduate.

17th 4-Day Gestalt Psychotherapy Workshop

Once again, in Agria Volos at the Valis Resort Spa & Conference Centre, the 17th 4-Day Gestalt Psychotherapy Workshop was held between the 14th and the 17th of May 2015.

The main subject of the workshop: "The "Relational" within the Field".

Frans Meulmeester, an experienced and well regarded Gestalt therapist, trainer and supervisor, member of the executive committee of EAGT, was the guest trainer and supervisor of the professionals' group on the subject "What the Bleeb is happening?".

To coordinate the experiential group we invited Eleni Chatzigeorgiou, Psychologist (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens) psychotherapist (Gestalt Foundation graduate), Dance therapist DRLST, Head of the Athens Training Department of International Dance of DRLST, based in Paris and her workshop subject was "Motion, Movement that changes, reforms and transforms...".

Finally, as per every year, the coordination of the training groups was entrusted to the principle centre's trainers. More news on our workshop will be available on our next issue...



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