



Gestalt NEWS Foundation

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Annual Continuing Education Program

“RELATIONAL GESTALT PSYCHOTHERAPY”

- page 2
- Editorial
 - Violence, abuse, trauma
 - Best sellers IANOS

- pages 3-5
- Presentations at IANOS

- pages 6-7
- Writings of some colleagues

- pages 8-12
- Relational Gestalt Psychotherapy

- page 13
- Honorary distinction
 - Book propositions

- pages 14-15
- Responses

- page 16
- Gestalt In Organizations



The relational perspective is so central to the theory of the Gestalt approach that without it there is no cohesive core. It is based on and combines three important philosophies which Gary Yontef (1999) characterizes as «Gestalt pillars». These are: Field Theory, Phenomenology and Existential Dialogue...

Field Theory (Lewin, 1952) examines all events as a function of the relationship of multiple interacting forces. The individual and the field are not separate entities. Therefore, the experience of the individual is explored in the context of the situation, or, in other words, the field. The philosophy and method of Phenomenology is

the science that seeks to identify and enhance direct experience by heightening awareness and reducing prejudice (Husserl, 1922). Phenomenological theories are relational theories since phenomenological thinking reality and perception are interactive co-constructions.

Continue on page 8

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Honorary distinction...

Violence, abuse, trauma...

“When We Have to Die”



The commitment of Gestalt psychotherapists to continued growth and development was once again evident through the sizeable as well as meaningful

participation in this year's «Relational Gestalt Psychotherapy» program.

The program included eminent trainers from abroad such as Donna Orange from USA, Gianni Francessetti from Italy and Sally Denham-Vaughan from UK, all of whom have in-depth scientific knowledge and many years of experience in this field, and whose acceptance of our invitation was an honour for us. As for the participants, we had people from Greece, Slovakia, England and Hungary.

The creation of this new multicultural and multi-level field has widened our horizons to a place of new figures and deeper meanings in terms of presence, compassion, prudence, forgiveness, coordination, good and evil, mental breakdown and to that which has been aptly captured by each one

of us: a deeper understanding of the other, especially in the expression of vulnerability, which I consider to be an enduring condition and human need. Because, as is mentioned in the ancient history of myths and inception, the soul once wanted to gain well defined self-efficiency and autonomy. In order to satisfy this need, it had to be separated from the world of infinity, a place of infinite possibilities, to move into the realm of concrete reality and to exist in relation to others.

Through the process of the relational, the soul is searching to experience the delicate condition of this fleeting undifferentiated unity again... and «we» experienced it!



Yiamarelou Yianna

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

Violence, abuse, trauma...

Violence, abuse, trauma... Three words which have carried significant weight in my process as a client, in my presence as a therapist, and more generally in my life.

Three words surrounded by questions:

How have I been abused, how have I abused? In what ways do I abuse and/or am abused today?

How have I survived and what choices do I have now, not only to survive, but also to feel satisfied?

Have I awareness of all of this, am I in contact with my body, my feelings and my thoughts or am I disconnected?

Am I perhaps exaggerating, maybe making a big deal of things?

Three words surrounded by answers:

I don't know; I don't think I have been abused, I don't feel abused.

I have been subjected to harshness and excessive strictness.

I have been subjected to a great many prohibitions and restrictions.

Often it was as if I were invisible.

I acted like I did not care; I convinced myself that I did not mind so as not to feel hurt.

I'm often tough and strict with myself and others.

I don't feel something now as I'm saying this.

I feel sorrow...

I feel angry, I didn't deserve this, I don't deserve this!

In the beginning, it was chaos: questions without answers, answers without questions, fragmented and obscure pieces, the after-scenes of one traumatic experience, or of many.

Dialogue came later. It started in the therapeutic relationship between me and my therapist. But it has spread and deepened through sharing with other therapists in groups and seminars, with my supervisor, with other therapists, and with my clients.

It is a dialogue that has become internalized, a dialogue between the parts of me that ask the questions and the parts of me that answer, a dialogue which enriches as I discover and illuminate the shadows one by one. It continues, day in day out, minute by minute, on a steady path towards being a whole, where the questions and the answers can become one with each other.

An important part of this journey was those two weekends with you. I was there, present, staying with the dialogue between the questions and the answers, between the client Dora and the therapist Dora, between you and me. Thank you for holding me, for keeping me whole, exactly as I am, both as a client and as a therapist.

Dora Loukidi, Psychologist (BSc) specializing in Education Psychology, psychotherapist, Gestalt Foundation graduate.

BEST SELLERS ΕΞΑΜΗΝΟΥ

ΛΟΓΟΤΕΧΝΙΑ



ΓΙΑΝΝΗΣ ΚΑΛΛΟΥΖΟΣ
ΠΝΑΤΙ, Ο ΣΟΦΟΣ
ΤΗΣ ΛΙΜΝΗΣ



ΣΙΔΩΡΟΣ ΖΟΥΡΠΟΣ
ΛΙΓΕΣ ΚΑΙ ΜΙΑ ΝΥΧΤΕΣ

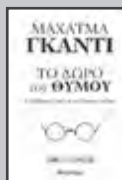


DAN BROWN
ORIGIN



JO NESBO
ΜΑΚΒΕΘ

ΜΕΛΕΤΕΣ



ARUN GANDHI
ΜΑΧΑΤΜΑ ΓΚΑΝΤΙ, ΤΟ
ΔΡΟ ΠΡΟ ΤΟΥ ΘΥΜΟΥ



ΜΑΡΙΑ ΕΥΓΥΜΙΟΥ
ΜΟΝΟ ΛΙΓΑ ΧΙΛΙΟΜΕΤΡΑ



MARK MAZOWER
ΟΣΑ ΔΕΝ ΕΙΠΕΣ



ΕΛΕΝΗ ΓΑΛΚΑΤΖΗ-
ΑΡΒΕΛΕΡ
ΜΙΑ ΖΩΗ ΧΩΡΙΣ ΑΛΛΟΘΙ



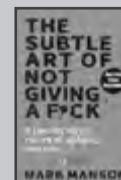
GILL EDWARDS
ΑΛΛΑΞΕ ΤΙΣ ΣΚΕΨΕΙΣ ΣΟΥ,
ΑΛΛΑΞΕ ΤΗ ΖΩΗ ΣΟΥ



ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΟΣ Γ.
ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΑΔΗΣ
ΠΡΙΝ ΝΥΧΤΩΣΕΙ



ECKHART TOLLE
Η ΔΥΝΑΜΗ ΤΟΥ ΤΩΡΑ



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

ΙΑΝΟΣ

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...in "lanos" Cultural Chain

Commentary on

I. Koutela's lecture: «What Happens When Regularity Meets Variety?», in Thessaloniki, 3/11/2017



«A butterfly leaves its cocoon behind and decides to spread its multi-colored wings...»

An interesting approach I'm thinking as I read the outline of my dear Irene's planned presentation at lanos, on what happens when regularity meets

diversity. FREEDOM has been an important and powerful word for me from the moment I began to understand myself and my environment. «Freedom needs virtue and courage» is an expression that has always touched me. The butterfly that spreads its wings and flies is a picture that has always moved me.

The presentation begins and I listen with particular attention to Irene's thoughts on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity.

...It is clearly a human right for an individual to be free to manage his/her sexual orientation and gender identity as he/she sees fit... Sexual orientation is a natural condition and it is the personal choice of an individual to accept it or to not accept it, to live it whole or shared, to reveal it or not to reveal it.

...Identity has to do with the individual's personal sense of which gender he/she identifies with... Although the presentation is moving forward, and I'm following it with great interest, I have some questions...

Do we find the self or do we create it? Ultimately, what is normal, natural, alien, strange, different, varied? What is biological gender and what is social gender? Do we grow up in polarizations that entrap us? Has the divisive «or» done a lot of damage after all? Irene, in her accessible and subtle presentation, helps me gain a lot of information about what really happens when regularity encounters diversity. It gets me thinking about what truly happens when people meet, what needs emerge, what I need as 'self' and as 'together' in order to feel comfortable. Everyone is following her presentation with focused attention. She uses

incredibly comfortable «easy words» for difficult meanings. Simple words, comprehensive, without «double meanings» that could be misleading. Her presence both dynamic and discreet! After getting the answers to all my questions, I have a number of thoughts:

- Gender and sexuality, like every characteristic of an organism - as stated in the Science of Biology - is determined by a number of genetic and environmental factors. Therefore, they vary and «acquire values» (such as height) in a wide range of probabilities-possibilities. Human populations are characterized by their differences, by diversity, in almost every respect. This diversity runs through every organism. As we discover and examine it, we come one step closer to accepting it, because we realize it is part of nature.

- An individual's sexual orientation and gender identity is determined without coercion and external pressure.

- The more toxic the introjects in relation to sexuality, the more blocked the sexuality of a person is.

When the presentation ends, I think that the power of the complexing connector «and» which highlights our authentic self is very beneficial! How much creative adjustment can help us exist in the way that feels right for us! How much the freedom of returning to our authentic self can give us!

«And the butterfly flew ...»

Christina Iakovidou, B.Sc. Psychology, psychotherapist, Gestalt Foundation graduate

Comments on A. Anagnostopoulou's lecture: «Boundaries: Travelling to the Borders of Contact, I, You (Thou), We» in Athens, on 16/11/2017

«What I liked most in the presentation was when our speaker got us to play a game, that is, she told us to stand up, to look for and find the pieces of ourselves. It was a brilliant presentation».

Irene Anagnostopoulou, 9 years old

«The presentation was very nice and interesting, especially when she talked about child-mother relationships. It provoked



a lot of questions, so in the end I asked the presenter a question. The speaker did the presentation in a very nice way and when things went quiet she found ways to break the silence.»

Petros Anagnostopoulos, 10 years old

Commentary on the lecture by G. Diplas and Th. Logotheti on «Panic Crisis» in Athens, 14/12/2017



I attended the presentation by George Diplas and Thalia Logotheti (Gestalt Psychologists) on the interesting topic of «Panic Attacks». Despite the difficulty I'd faced that day (general strike and public transport), Ianos' loft was full of very interested members of the public, which became even more apparent during the discussion.

It was a really interesting

lecture with the presentations and the audience interacting in communicative harmony.

Both speakers, with transparency, clarity, immediacy and simplicity, presented the subject. In the second part of the presentation, the questions, positions and experiential stories of the audience highlighted their communicative and harmonious relationship with the speakers. In the end I saw satisfied, relieved faces, ready to find a compromise and feeling motivated to stay in the room. The first of the two speakers, G. Diplas, presented the characteristics of a panic attack in general. Panic comes suddenly, unexpectedly, like an uninvited guest, an unknown enemy, and it attacks. It attacks the body, the mind and the soul. Physical symptoms are: tachycardia, sweating, dizziness, headache, passivity, paralysis.

Mental symptoms are: inability to explain (a completely new phenomenon), inability to react, paralysis. Psychological Symptoms are: sudden surge of intensity, fear, confusion, shame, the threat of death, the sense that help does not exist, paralysis. The self at the edge of non-existence. In Gestalt terms, inability to make healthy contact, figure deconstruction. The symptoms usually recede quickly but the experience is associated with fear of re-emergence and they may develop into phobias.

Gestalt psychotherapists approach this directly, providing information, support, and enhancing self-esteem. We set small goals, small achievements. In the short term, we explore life history of life, fixed perceptions, intra-personal conflicts. In the long run, we deal with existential issues, unfinished business, relationships.

The speaker then explained that in the current generalized social, cultural and economic crisis, the individual is under extreme pressure, and, depending on the extent of the pressure, each organism may experience panic attacks if the pressure is too intense.

He went on to explain that, according to field theory, the crisis is a relational phenomenon of interaction between all the elements in the field and continuous change.

Finally, he presented the difference between animals and humans in relation to panic attacks. An animal, which has gone through a panic attack, escaped danger, found a safe place again, will continue to graze freely and contentedly. This is not the case with human beings, who, having developed an intellect, try to explain, calculate, control the possible new dangers, even after the panic attack has passed.

The human organism is in a state of constant alertness, readiness. This, biologically, means secretion of cortisol which then affects the immune system, blood pressure, and the heart. Thalia Logotheti then spoke about the psychological processes of a panic attack and the difference between a «stress episode» and a «panic attack». Anxiety, she added, is an immobilized energy, a block, while a panic attack involves internal disconnection, zero action, paralysis and is treated 1) with the support of the environment (family, friends, therapist) and 2) by touch, breathing, grounding. She said, the fear of a repeated attack, awareness, and making sense of the attack are worked through in therapy. Based on figure and ground theory, a panic attack is interpreted as a split that is created between the figure (what is happening to us now) and the ground (our living life). We need to connect again and find the reasons for the split.

Questions from the audience followed, with references to personal experiences and viewpoints.

In closing, I would like to state my own thoughts on the issue. Anxiety attacks and panic attacks also reveal another side - our «false» security, the «control» we use in our lives to cover up our weaknesses. So we can also view our «attacks» in a positive light, like an awakening that alerts us to our illusions.

The experience of the attack may lead us to a more authentic way of life. The attacks also have educational value. They bring us into contact with responsibility, freedom, mortality, the paradox of life, our limits, our endless potential. The present current social, cultural and economic crisis has disrupted our culture. It has weakened social relations and has turned people towards egotistical individuality.

Each individual needs to reconnect and choose alternatives, which is quite difficult, and this is a source of intense anxiety which can create many crises. I think the issue of «anxiety-panic attacks» is a topical issue and we should open it up in other places (workplaces, schools, migrant centres, nursing homes) where the attacks there are more frequent.

As an epilogue I'd like to quote Rainer Maria Rilke from: 'Letters to a young poet'.

"The only sadnesses that are dangerous and unhealthy are the ones that we carry around in public, in order to drown them out with noise; like diseases that are treated superficially and foolishly, they just withdraw and after a short interval break out again all the more terribly; and gather inside us and are life, are life that is un-lived, rejected, lost, life that we can die of."

Maria Moola, Social Psychologist, Gestalt Psychotherapist

Commentary on Despina Baliou's workshop, entitled: «Each one of us is a speck of mud... What is our debt?» N. Kazantzakis., in Athens, 11/01/18



What is our debt... my debt... I vividly remember, before Despina's speech began, that this word had squeezed itself into my mind, leaving me with a sense of pressure and wanting to flee.

This feeling stayed with me, preventing me from letting

myself be affected by the audio excerpt from Kazantzakis' 'Ascetic', until sometime during the recording I heard the following:

«What is our debt? To fight so that a small flower on the fertilizer of our flesh and mind can blossom...» What a beautiful and optimistic analogy for commitment!

I'm very struck by the way Despina aptly connects and highlights the positive aspect of the concept of debt, commitment, which is nothing more than our creative engagement with life. The flower blooms in us all when it can adapt to each situation it faces on life's journey, seeing clearly, taking responsibility, embracing possibilities as well as limitations, and doing what it can each and every time rather than staying in denial or deceiving itself.

At this moment, as I write, beside me sits the piece of plasticine which Despina gave us at the beginning of the presentation, encouraging us to give it whatever shape we wanted. As I observe this piece of plasticine, which I had moulded into half a sun and half a cloud, I am thinking and smiling at the image of the flower that needs both the sunlight and the water from the rain cloud to blossom!

In conclusion, I would like to say thank you very much to Despina, because, through the full and positive expression of her presentation as well as our little chat afterwards, I left feeling strong and confident in the thought that through my training as a psychotherapist, individual therapy, and supervision I have learned and will continue to learn and care for my own personal flower so that it can flourish even more.

Katerina Didaskalou, Psychologist (Panteion University), psychotherapist, Gestalt Foundation graduate.

Commentary on the lecture by V. Askaridou and V. Georgakopoulos on: «Seduction is a way for someone to say yes to you, without you having asked a clear question.» Albert Cami, in Thessaloniki, on 10/01/2018

Let's talk about Seduction...

- Seduction is everything and it is not fixed.
- You can't seduce if you haven't been seduced.
- I seduce means I trap, I ensnare - I'm seduced means I leave myself

open to the seducer's net. -

In Seduction, I manipulate the greatest weakness of another person which is his desire for pleasure.

-The seducer is ingenious. Near him others feel comfortable and are carried away by his playful spirit. His supreme art is his ability to delay the satisfaction of others and to use his promises as bait. He is charismatic; he has confidence, sexual energy and a radiant quality. He is nebulous and ethereal; he remains aloof, while leaving others to imagine much more than that which is actually happening.

- Seduction goes through many stages and manoeuvres to create magic. The Seducer knows how to choose the right victim, to create a false sense of security, to send contradictory messages, to create needs, to enter the spirit of his victims, to create temptations, to observe detail, to isolate his victim, to prove his worth, confusing pleasure with pain, being watchful of the consequences, using his body for bait.

-The Seducer invites promises and often persuades his victims to abandon their principles and ideals and to replace them with illusions. Of course he never reveals his cards.

-For the seducer, there is no relationship, there is no real contact.



The seducer is not stifling; he acts as if he has freedom without any restrictions and commitments, at least for now.

Vangelis and Victoria talked about Seduction and said a great deal, some of which is mentioned above. Obviously these parts stayed in my memory perhaps because they made an impression on me, or perhaps because they reflect my own experiences. Each coordinator complimented the other and their words flowed. With immediacy and vitality, they challenged and inspired their audience, observing with undivided attention during both their presentation and the interesting discussion that followed.

What was also impressive was the start of their presentation when Phoebus and Athena took us for 'a walk on the moon', Vangelis' and Victoria's successful sketch where they themselves brought the heroes to life. They showed us clearly from the start how shrewd the Seducer is! The group's participation in the above-mentioned 'theatrical play' was also interesting despite the initial surprise, as was the participation of Antonis as the narrator - he drew us in with his drive and his passion. So I'm thinking... after all, what's more seductive for me ...to seduce? ...to be seduced? SEDUCTION! Friend? No. That, at least, I will say for sure: The seduction of eyes is the purest and the most direct.

I smile knowingly... and... I playfully wink at me.

Christina Iacovidou, B.Sc. Psychology, psychotherapist, Gestalt Foundation graduate

WRITINGS OF SOME COLLEAGUES

Abuse today...

On a January mid-day television show, a well-known male actor declares he is willing to forgive his female colleague!

This recent incident happened at the theatre where the actor admitted that he had entered his colleague's dressing room without being invited. The nature of their conflict contained all the characteristics of violence against women, not only as an incident in itself but also in the way it was dealt with by those involved, as well as by the media and social networking.

So I listened to how good a person he was, how good a family man, how good a professional. I also read many comments like: «What did she do to him?» They were condemning the victim and justifying aggressive behavior. They were ignoring or not wanting to see that the violent person chooses violence.



It's the way he resolves his differences. Not surprisingly, many of these comments came from women.

The abuse of women and children has become enormous in recent times.

According to the Council of Europe, violence is the main cause of death and disability in women aged 16-44 and in addition to being responsible for more deaths and health problems than cancer, road accidents and war all together. According to international statistics, over the past 10 years, European telephone lines have received more than 3 million calls for child abuse and neglect alone, with parents being the main culprits.

Girls usually come forward with accusations of emotional abuse whereas with boys it is generally physical abuse. More specifically, the Innocenti Unicef Research Center reports that 80% of the 3,500 children under 15 who die from abuse or neglect every year in developed countries were abused by their parents. It is therefore necessary and imperative to inform all individuals so they can fully understand the concept of abuse and gain the courage to speak out and protect themselves.

If our partner is abusive, we can assume that his behavior, possibly, may be related to the fact that, as a child, he lived in an abusive environment. This possible interpretation should not lead us to tolerate violence. It can help us to understand the possible cause of evil, but it should be understood that no excuse can justify violence, but neither can we control it. Since we cannot change the cause of this behavior, all that remains is to decide what our reaction to it will be.

Marietta Paraschou, B.Sc. Psychology (University of La Veme, Athens). MSc Counseling Studies (University of Hull, England). Psychotherapist, graduate of the Gestalt Foundation

Counseling and psychotherapy in surgery...

Counseling and Psychotherapy. Two words that define the process between people who ask for help with issues related to their personal development, their mental health, their interpersonal relationships, and those who are there to provide this kind of help.

Or rather I should say, two words that try to define the process the characteristics of each approach.

The Greek word for 'Counseling' is 'Symvouleftiki' and the term derives from the prefix 'sym' (with, together) and the noun 'vouli' (thought, decision) or the verb 'voulevomai' (I am thinking or making plans or deciding after a meeting with another person, i.e. I consult). (Babinotis, 2002).

The Greek term 'psychotherapia' (psychotherapy) is a compound word which derives from 'psychi' (soul) and 'therapia' (cure, treatment, therapy). 'Psychi' comes from the verb 'psycho' (I breathe, I blow). 'Psychi' (soul) initially meant breathing, and 'therapia' meant attention, caring for. (Municipal Dictionary, N. Phefanis, 1981)

Mental Health Counselor and Psychotherapist. Two specializations that define the identity of professionals working in the field of mental health.

Let's look at these specializations through a different lens.

Let us imagine a patient who is suffering from appendicitis. He is suffering from acute pain and feels discomfort. He looks for a doctor for help. The physician in charge needs to assess the case of the patient and suggest treatment. Let's say the patient needs to be operated on immediately. The doctor informs the patient about the pre-operative, surgical and post-operative procedure.

The patient gets ready for surgery and undergoes the operation. In 1 to 2 days he leaves the hospital. He needs some time for recovery and after care. One to two weeks later the patient gets back to the routine of everyday life.

Let us now imagine a second patient who has a chronic heart problem and is monitored at regular intervals by his cardiologist. He needs open heart surgery. The patient is physically and mentally quite weak. The surgery involves greater risk and will last several hours. The recovery period is longer and the patient's life will change. He will need to take great care of himself, watch his diet, do some light exercise, be monitored regularly, and perhaps he will have to be on medication all his life. What do you think? Is the general surgeon just as important as the heart surgeon? Both patients are suffering, for both of them their life is at risk, and both deserve the same care in treatment.

Both operations are equally important. Both doctors need to be well trained

in being responsible for the task they have undertaken.

For each patient who enters surgery, the doctor in charge is very important for his life.

Do you think there is a need for evaluation? Besides... both physicians have given an oath.

The oath of Hippocrates.



Amalia Kapoulea, Mental Health Counselor, Gestalt Psychotherapist

About Trust

The meeting of the known with the unknown. A relational approach to existence

"A path is only a path, and there is no affront, to oneself or to others, in dropping it if that's what your heart tells you... Look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary. Then ask yourself alone, one question... "Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't, it is of no use."

Carlos Castaneda, 'The Teachings of Don Juan'

Losing myself in these words, a feeling, an imperceptible sensation, emerges. Something that is not tangible, something we can't express with words. Here and now, in this moment, something intangible exists, a sense of satisfaction. It is only a moment, and yet it has no boundaries. We cannot understand where it begins and where it ends. We are already beginning to think rationally. And the questions begin...

What happened? What were the main elements of this moment? How do these elements interact with each other? What forces are emerging between them?

We should bear in mind, with these questions we feel more stable now. We are in familiar territory, in the realm of the intellect. Here, our rational thought undertakes the job of dividing, categorizing, comparing and measuring all the information that enters our minds through the senses. In this way, we construct, inside our minds, a mental map of reality.

But having had the previous experience, we have the feeling that this map is not reality.

It depicts an approximate representation of reality. The map is a map. It depicts the ground. It is not the ground. Our rational

knowledge is by definition limited. Having had the previous experience - that which can not be seen by the naked eye, which cannot be expressed with speech, which cannot be captured by the mind, which we do not know nor understand - there is nothing to do but to trust it.

But what is our relationship with trust?

The question of our relationship with trust is a mystery. At the same time it is a problem. As a mystery, it has the power to pull us quietly back into our existence. Back to freedom and to humanity. As a problem, it disturbs us and scatters our strengths, our energy.

Mystery or Problem, Problem or Mystery; the concept of trust seems to contain a contradiction in its 'gut'. This contradiction is what makes an experience entirely unique.

Initially, trust is an experience, entirely personal. It is a meeting with my core self, my inner being. Every time it appears it says something about my deepest being. It is an encounter with my very own existence. And here comes the contradiction. This experience of trust is, at the same time,

confidence in a force, an impulse that threatens me, that transcends me. Trust is something that belongs to me, it is totally mine. At the same time, it is also a force I can't handle, which passes me by. It is an excess. It dwells in me, but it is beyond me. My ego lives there, but it can not handle this experience. I cannot be the owner of trust, I do not have the capacity to own it. I'm simply occupied and guided by trust. Trust is a force that runs between you and me, between us. This is the paradox. The experience of trust is mine and at the same time it is not mine. It is born right there, between you and me. And it affects us. It does not belong to me; it does not belong to you. It goes beyond us. It is more than our subjective experience. There is a distinction between you and me. It sounds paradoxical and it is paradoxical. I will attempt to say it in simple words.

Trust is the trusting of someone else's trust. It is trust in the other. It is trust in me. For life to exist, I need to exist, and you need to be there as well. Life chose both of us so that we could live. Life always chooses us; we do not

choose life. That's why we are weak in the face of the phenomena which exist there. We enter into life, an area of ignorance and uncertainty. Within such an area we meet each other. All of us are children crying out in the dark. And life becomes humane when this cry finds somewhere to be heard. There is someone who hears. Here the cry is transformed into a demand for presence. It's the other person's response, «Here I am with you, I am here» that transforms the cry into dialogue.

And in this dialogue we begin to lose each other. And we try to discover the essence of what is being said, to discover reality, to discover it as if it is something outside of us. But how do we see it? You and I, we are the reality. You and I, we co-create reality. And all we can see is our image in the mirror. And the image is not us. We cannot look ourselves in the eye. Sartre

says «existence precedes substance.» And we keep chasing substance. And existence is elsewhere. And we want to learn what can't be learned. This is how we lose each other. This is how we are wasting our time, our lives. Static, on the same spot looking at the path we have to tread. Let's leave the path be. A path is formed because it is walked upon. Let's walk along it together. 2500 years ago Lao Tse said... «He who knows does not speak. He who speaks does not know»

Kostas Michaelidis, Gestalt Psychotherapist -Trainer, member of EAGT, HAGT



from page 1

Existential Dialogue (1965), which is the focal point of M. Buber's philosophy, was named «faith in humanity» by Buber himself. It is the «I-Thou» relationship which deepens the existential meeting of two people through dialogue. Healing comes through this existential therapist-client encounter. Maintaining and supporting existential values, the therapeutic relationship in Gestalt therapy is defined as a relationship which is horizontal, and which emphasizes dialogue by exploring the phenomenology of the therapist-client relationship. Every moment in therapy is a moment of inter-subjective contact, contact characterized by the basic, existential principles of dialogue.

Based on all of the above, Gestalt relational therapy is an approach inherent in the theory of Gestalt therapy. Without an understanding of the relationship between the organism and the environment and without taking inter-connectedness into consideration, Gestalt therapy and practice would not exist.

Navigating the Journey between Good and Evil: Gestalt as the Praxis of Discernment.

March 3rd and 4th I had the honor and privilege to co-ordinate the first module of the Relational Gestalt Psychotherapy program offered by Athina Gestalt Foundation in spring 2018. I had discussed possible topics with Despina and Yianna and together we settled upon the title: it seemed very relevant to explore together the notion of "the good" in Gestalt, particularly as the psychotherapy field becomes ever more concerned with gathering evidence for specific modalities and

even, in some contexts, starting to consider whether certain forms of psychotherapy can cause harm. The need for discernment concerning general application of the approach and also in the micro-moments of working with our clients seemed obvious.

BUT, as we know in Gestalt, it turned out this title was, in itself, very much "of the field". In truth I had not paid so much attention to the phrase "Navigating the Journey"; it was background to the sexier figures of good and evil. I trusted the process and believed all would be well.

It was not to be so easy however. Seven or eight days before the workshop, the weather in England started to turn cold. Water in our pond turned to ice and spring plants shriveled in freezing winds: we were due the worst, (evil?), weather the country had seen for many years. Suddenly, it seemed the fore-contact for the workshop came alive. Snow and blizzards arrived, flights from the UK were cancelled and all across Europe we started to freeze. It seemed my journey was not going to be navigated as easily as we hoped.

With colleagues at Athina we reached for our relational gestalt approach and determined that we would dialogue to find creative possibilities. Airports were changed, flights rebooked, travel date moved forward and work rearranged. The outcome was that we navigated together and I arrived safely and very relieved in Athens on Thursday night. In many ways, the content of what we discussed in the workshop paralleled this delicate navigational process. Colleagues had travelled from the Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, UK and across Greece. We were 35 together and shared many years experience in Relational Gestalt. We

"RELATIONAL GESTALT"

started by experiencing the view of self favored by Paul Goodman, that Self is a function of the Field. Together we created a learning field that demonstrated self as a process wherein we sense our being across time. Self is not a fixed essence, although our sense of the fluid and dynamic selfing process does indeed structure into the self - functions we call Id, Ego and Personality. These functions stabilize our experience, and yet we saw vividly that our embodied phenomenology co-emerges with other at the contact boundary in the present moment/situation. I referred to the Relational Change "SOS" framework as a theoretical map that supports our cognitive understanding of this process, (see Denham - Vaughan and Chidiac, 2013). In this model "SOS" acts as a placeholder for our awareness of Self, Other and Situation. We also propose that when we can fluidly move our awareness to each of these three processes we become "Ethically Present". This latter concept, which builds on my writing, about Will and Grace, (2005), as an integrative dialectic lying at the heart of Gestalt psychotherapy, underlies the definition of "Presence" offered by myself and Marie-Anne Chidiac in 2007, when we defined presence as Energetic Availability, (Will) and Fluid Responsivity, (Grace). The question we then turned to, in the workshop, was "why is this form of Presence ethical" and we explored the theory of co-emergence lying at the heart of Dialogical practices in relational gestalt. We considered whether "dialogical spaciousness" suggested by Buber, (& others), together with notions of aesthetics/



good form is "enough" to navigate to the good or whether, when we explicitly consider issues of power and privilege, there is a need for the radical asymmetrical elevation of the Other prescribed by Levinas. These discussions led to consideration of what is the polarity of "the good", (was it Bad or Evil), and a phenomenological inquiry into the concept of Evil itself. We designed images, explored our embodied sensing and together created poetry that powerfully conveyed an atmosphere of the fractured, faceless and incoherent world that we can touch when we contact "Evil". The poems will be collected and written up by Gestalt Foundation; they carried a trace that we hope will let readers gain a fuller sense of our experience.

Later we explored Alain Badiou's

“EVIL PSYCHOTHERAPY”



suffering, trauma and devastation experienced at those times. Susan Neiman in her book, “Evil in Modern Times”, cites a natural disaster, (the Lisbon earthquake in the seventeenth century), as a prompt for humans to reconsider the nature of evil. Those thoughts led to a division between those who began to take natural disasters as random acts and those who persisted with the notion of “something beyond”, or behind those acts, in most cases this being a demonic power or weak, punitive or betraying god. These days, it seems clearer and clearer to me that we, humans, are the agents responsible for the increasing destruction of our home.

Second, I experienced yet again how dialogue, collaboration, kindness and commitment can support us to stay with uncertainty and find courage that sustains hope and optimism. These are all qualities of our relational gestalt approach and they manifested powerfully for me in the contact with Athina Gestalt Foundation and the workshop participants as we navigated our way, both literally and metaphorically, through this particular journey.

Finally, I cannot end without mentioning the sheer magic of arriving from the cold of the UK to be met with the warmth of Greek sunshine, and particularly Greek culture. I am returning feeling very nourished by the wonderful food, the outstanding hospitality and the delight of working with a courageous group of knowledgeable practitioners. To feel the fluency with philosophy, the depth of understanding of gestalt concepts and experience the practice of the

work on “Ethics: an essay on the understanding of Evil” and gave each other supervision on cases where we could identify his three forms.

So, as I write this from the plane home, now in the post-contact phase, I ask myself what stands out having navigated this particular journey.

First, I am impacted by the explicit and implicit power of the field to configure experience. I had a powerful moment of fully recognizing our impotence in the face of disturbance in the natural world and our total dependence on the hospitality of our planet. In my case, this was prompted by a comparatively brief and minor period of bad weather but I couldn't help but reflect on the many and terrible weather incidents that seem to be increasingly happening in the world and on the

relational approach, both in and out of “sessions”, creates an inspiring mix that I will not forget: thank you all.

Sally Denham-Vaughan, Dr,
*is an International Trainer,
Psychotherapist, Registered
Training Supervisor, Organisational
Consultant and Accredited Coach/
Coach Supervisor*

Evil is...

Evil is a fear sourced
tear followed harm
inside and outside
at the same time
Intension to be good - is mine
and it can be evil for others
at the same time

Olivia Antal

Evil is...

Evil is somebody without a face,
Evil is me without a face,
Evil is me looking at no face,
Evil us being disconnected,
Evil is hot, beyond words, beyond
figures,
With no begin and no ending.
Evil is a place I have lost, where I can
never return.

...

Addiction to power,
The wild joy of being over-powerful
on life and death,
Being a god...
Unwillingness to be weak,
Human fragility is something
forbidden...

And human contact is beyond reach.

Antonia Konstantinidou

Evil is...

Live reversed
evil lived
doing it, just anything
without sense
fire of life
lonely free only to be
to survive

without doing
the same evil to the other

challenge is

to survive
good opposite to evil

“I cannot be evil”

could be the root
being evil in the deepest sense

Jan Balix

Evil is...

When I am alone
When I am not connecting
respectfully
When I am afraid to let me be
When I can fly and I am stuck in the
air

When I am underestimating the
situation

When I am not seeing our pain

When I am alone

Yianna Yiamarelou

Evil is...

Evil is the known side of beyond
The kiss on the lips before I close the
door

The choices I make (everyday)

To rupture the field

To kill myself

To kill time in me

Before I kill you

Evil steals time

From me - from you

It brings me here ultimately

To meet with you

John Gillespie

Evil is...

EVIL, DEVIL

Diabolo!

Enemy

Victim

Irony

Lies

Evil is what?

I wonder...

Evil is me

It could be me
When I feel
I can do it all..
I see evil in your eyes
When you force me...
Evil is human?
Evil is devil?
Evil is secret?
Evil is cautious?

Katia Hatzilakou

Evil is..
Evil is black, but sometimes is white
Empty but sometimes full
Empty of you, empty of me
Empty of us
Full of power and despair
Full of unspoken words and unheard
screams
Full of pain and blood
Evil is there
Evil is here
Where is it really?

Popi Koutousi

Evil is..
Lack of freedom
Being seduced by hatred, rage,
feelings of separation
Isolated
Away from human beings.

Eleni Mouslech

What is evil?
Evil is..
Lack of understanding
Trying not to drown
in a sea of others' desires
Trying to feel
not vulnerable
not weak
not small
Evil is..
Losing your goal in life
Omitting to do good
Forgetting to check if your intentions
are in harmony with reality
Trying to be Lucifer
-the one who brings the morning

light-
Ending up being Satan

Georgios Giaglis

Evil is..
Evil is the darkness out of my sorrow
the wounded child left unfed
it comes and goes, comes and goes
wishing to find someone there

Evil freezes my body and soul
I strive to find some kind of hope
I come and go, come and go
wishing to meet you somewhere,
where?

Gina Dimakopoulou

Evil is..
A poem on us
Left shining without seeing
A sense of disgust overwhelming
coming to the edge of the void
where being pushed further
could not be conceived
Though, it became this potential
that marked humanity with shame
through just one migrant's
experience

Zoi Zokiou

Evil is..
Evil is when tears fall
on the ground
And no one is looking
at the puddle.

Evil is the snow that falls
on naked feet
and the bombs that fall
on innocent kids.

Evil is when people
hurt you
because they know
what is good for you.

Evil is to harm, to withdraw,
to abandon,
to look the other way.

Evil is you, evil is me,

Evil is the society we are in.

Evil is control, and help that aims
at thank you and submission.

Evil provokes fear, obligation,
Dependence And Pain.

Katerina Karassava

Evil is..
the bone's darkest core,
the subtle shuttle,
the absence of existence,
the extinction of contact
which creates the
dust of soul
throwing us to
shallowness.

Despina Balliou

Evil is..
You, them, the others..
The strangers, the weird..
When they're alone,
when I'm alone.
It isn't alien
It isn't far away
It's within, it's here,
It's terrifying..

Paraskevi Trampa

Evil is..
Apart.
You don't exist, I don't see you.
I hear nothing.
I don't exist, I don't know.
I don't want to.
Blank.
Everywhere.
Nowhere.

An explosion.
A big explosion.
Me.
Me and you?
Are we?

Here
I see it now.

Argiro Vagia

Evil is..
to not see you..
to trample on you so
that my ego is satisfied..
Nothing can stop me.
I feel so strong!
Blood is flowing in my veins..
I want to act Now!

I have strength inside me,
where should I channel it?
You, how can you experience
this energy?
Am I helping you? Am I hurting
you?
I want you to talk to me.
Talk to me!!!

Anthi Gogoni

Evil is ...
... that which pushes you
to become derailed
the power not to relate and
to be everywhere and nowhere..
...that which fascinates, frightens
and destroys you and others,
on the other side, with another
look,
without giving space or joy..

...I invite the light!

My wish?
That it could be done in a different
way!

Irini Kiletsi

**A Relational - Gestalt
Perspective on the
Research Process**

During the last two years of my
life, I have decided to make room
in my life for something that has
always inspired me and motivated
me to create, think and reflect. For
me, apart from psychotherapy, this
something is research. In particular,
psychological research; the type of
research that attempts to achieve
the near impossible, to make

figural the ever-changing phenomena that are present in the continuous interaction between the individual and the collective, in what is expressed and unexpressed.

The subject that has attracted my interest during this period of my life is the exploration of positive relationships, i.e. relationships which, irrespective of duration, intensity, frequency of contact and/or social context, contribute to the well-being of people.

I'm in the process of analysing the quality of data and I'm really fascinated by the wealth of experience recorded in the 15 open interviews we have conducted so far. The experiences, thoughts, and narratives of the people I have spoken to are very much alive in my mind, and although I find it hard to decipher it all and categorize the material, I have immense respect for and curiosity in, the research process.

Having the experience of the last seminar with Sally Denham-Vaughan and the presentation of the SOS (Self-Other-Situation) model, I feel connected to my data in a different way; as if I have come in contact with an interpretation I had missed. I re-read it and I see very clearly that, in my opinion, these three elements are emerging. The interviewees have incorporated these three elements into their narratives with and, where relevant, they have placed emphasis on one of the three. Some speak about their personal experience, others focus on someone else (other) and his/her virtues, sometimes emphasizing the importance of this particular relationship at that particular time in their life.

This interpretation has created many interesting questions that I would like to explore further and it truly changed my «presence» while I was listening to the recording. I find that feelings such as admiration, joy, inspiration and processes such as practical support, which we have already identified and recorded, need to be placed within the framework and dynamic in which they are developed, and this process needs to be reflected through qualitative analysis.

I can't say right now where this reading will lead me, in relation to my research, but I would like to share and testify to the wealth I have gained from my contact with theory, and to highlight its usefulness in the phenomenological recording of the experience of the people I have encountered in my research.

Antigone Mertika, PhD, Clinical Psychologist-Gestalt Psychotherapist

It was a great honor to participate in this event - I still do not quite understand how it had begun in Athens in the 3rd workshop, in a series

of three about relational aspects of psychotherapy. It felt, and it still feels, that as if by some magic I had appeared there on time, in the centre of the place on which lie the foundations for culture, history, philosophy and the beloved arts. The workshop with Gianni Francesetti entitled: "The Field Perspective in Clinical Practice. Towards a Theory of Therapeutic Phronesis" took place over three days consisting of a brief explanation of Francesetti's clinical perspective and demonstrations in psychotherapeutic and supervision practice.

For me, three main messages from the theoretical framework stood out. The first one was the contemporary interpretation given by Gianni about field theory and the field as a unity that is shared in relationships. The second one was about the distinction between the relational phenomena of attunement and resonance. And finally, the third one was an affirmation of issues surrounding clinical responsibility and the significance of the embodied process of re-traumatisation during psychotherapy, which



results in fundamental responsibility for the therapist. The prime importance of ethical co-existence in the deep, continuous search for ethical presence in therapeutic relationships was highlighted in a smooth and unique way.

What was observed and experienced, and what I personally got from the workshop, is much more than words can express. Among other things, I would describe Gianni's human relating, in his demonstrations, as classical in style, classical also in the sense of ancient artistic structure, which has the deepest respect for symmetry and inner harmony. Work

with physical movement and somatic expression seemed very integral. Notably, each demonstration involved physical touch, which was for me a bit surprisingly unexpected in the Gestalt context. However, I could do nothing but agree with such progress and movement towards this much needed human practice. Time and time again, the vital element of inviting playfulness acted as an important support in demonstrations, and proof of the highly valued, fundamental role that experiment plays in gestalt theory



and practice. I was also greatly impressed by Gianni's natural impartiality; it seemed very characteristic of his personality.

At the core of my experience in this workshop there exists a better understanding of ethics and a sounder theoretical framework to work from. I am very much looking forward to experiencing the differences in my own way of working with patients under the influence of the workshop with Gianni Francesetti. My overall sentiment in English has two words: «Thank you». But it has now just occurred to me that in Italian one word is enough: «Grazzie».

Jan Ballx, (* 1973, CSSR) is a psychiatrist and gestalt therapist working in private practice. Graduated at Masaryk University in Brno then worked in different psychiatric settings in Slovakia and in the UK. He is also former president of SAGT, an artist, married and a father of two children

“The Suffering Stranger: from Intersubjectivity to the Hermeneutics of Trust.” Donna Orange/ 31.3-1.4.2018

Looking at my notes almost a month later, I was again connected with the mystic feeling of this weekend. The field we co-created there was a dynamic of inclusiveness, as much for our theoretical demands as for the emotions that would accompany them.

While the theory revolved around issues and concepts such as radical moral attitudes, good and evil in the therapeutic relationship, the therapist's narcissism in the asymmetry of the therapeutic relationship, and the interpretative practices of trust and suspicion, emotion was connected within a spectrum which began with empathy, compassion, and companionship all the way to the opposite end of their polarizations, abandonment, shame, indifference and loneliness.

The presence of Donna Orange exuded tranquillity, safety and wisdom. With her vivid awareness of the strength of her position, she ensured for us, and with us, a flow which would allow us to emerge and unfold in the field

we shared between us - the relational, existential issues of the therapeutic conditions, like those we carried from our professional practices.

The harsh feelings of despair and self-sacrifice, as experienced in the loneliness of the therapeutic position, were grounded through the sharing and the common assumption that there is something larger than our individualities that we choose to serve; our commitment to the whole, as a way of existence, which would be made conceptually more explicit also in the seminar with Gianni Francesetti later on.

Throughout the whole of Donna's seminar, I was accompanied by a sense of feeling moved. My inner polarizations were the same as those I observed in my field and in which I also participated. Co-movement, co-ordination and synchronization gave these polarities, which were subjected to the dynamics of the group and the individual dynamics, a fertile ground to adapt. Alternating between the plenary sessions of the cycle and dividing into smaller sub-groups provided a shift in the relational dynamic and the space necessary for the processing, awareness, and decompression to continue, as well as for contextualizing whatever did not find ground in the broader field.

To conclude with the essence of this experience for me, I will begin with the assumption that all relationships are asymmetrical since they include different entities. Narcissism and its interpretation of suspicion are useful when we focus on challenging abuse of power within our asymmetrical relationships, therapeutic and non-therapeutic. It is tolerance, when faced with the uncertainty and ignorance of intellectual answers to the enigma of our coexistence, which manages to make room for the inclusion of shame for one's very being. And then shame is transformed from a toxic experience into a precious feeling, a component of our human nature, necessary for us to stand next to each other, side by side, with ethos.

Zoi Theofilakou, Psychologist, psychotherapist, Gestalt Foundation graduate



HONORARY DISTINCTION

...It was our great honor!

For days now I have been trying to find the right combination of words to convey to you the feeling I had that Sunday. I haven't succeeded!

...And now I realize that it is difficult to capture it with words because, very

simply, it doesn't fit onto a piece of paper! Our honor! This phrase possibly hides within it all those emotions we felt. Feeling moved, joyous, proud, grateful. Emotions that gave us Power and Motivation to continue...

It all started in the year 2008, when the Gestalt Foundation of Thessaloniki, with Katia Hatzilakou and Antonia Konstantinidou, began its collaboration with the Association of Cancer Patients in Larissa. As part of the trainees' practical training programme at the Gestalt Foundation, a supervisory team was formed that worked voluntarily with various associations in the city of Larissa. A few years later, Gianna Kalota and Sevi Hatzopoulou took over the reins of the supervisory team, continuing the work of volunteer activities in the region of Thessalia.

Quite a few trainees have passed through programme. Their actions have been effective in recent years, not only in the city of Larissa but also in the city of Volos. In the year 2013, the supervisory team in Thessaly welcomed new members. The institutions which are being catered for are quite a few! The team is growing; it has developed a core, it has taken shape! The practical training has now been extended to collaboration with the Department of Counseling at the University of Thessalia, the Association of Sclerosis, the Women's Association of Larissa and the Association of Cancer Patients in



Larissa.

Its activities include individual counseling sessions, group counseling sessions, the organization of lectures and workshops, the organization of seminars at institutions in both the public and private sectors. Ten years later, collaborations with the various associations have become institutional and have been preserved over the years.

The group has achieved character with the main elements being respect, solidarity, mutual support, love and care for fellow human beings. Its tool has been its willingness; its goal has been to evolve.

In December 2017, the representative of the Association of Cancer Patients in Larissa, Mrs Mary Mermiga, invited each member of the team individually to the Cultural Center's 20th anniversary in Hatzigiannio.

To our great surprise, they publicly thanked us for our social sensitivity, solidarity and contribution. She presented a plaque to the team which at the time, in our eyes, seemed to be made of gold dust ...personal satisfaction is great when the job and the years are recognized and even more so when you are not expecting it! And yes, it is a driving force for continuity...

We feel very lucky to be members of this group and we will continue to be! We have met wonderful people, traveled with them, learned from they have shared with us.

We thank the Gestalt Foundation for giving us the chance to have this experience.

*Sincerely, our Group! **Gianna Kalota, Sevi Hatzopoulou, Athanasia Chatzizisi, Daktila Liana, Vasso Sakka, Lefteris Siakis, Katerina Moutou***

BOOK PROPOSITIONS

«The Art of Change ...» A warm, lively and creative presentation

«The Art of Change. A Different Approach for Organizations and Businesses» is the new book

that has been released about the Gestalt approach and its applications in Businesses and Organizations. Its authors are the well-known Gestalt psychotherapist F. Meulmeester, trainer and President of the Gestalt in Organizations Division at IAA; Ioanna Rizou, Gestalt psychotherapist, graduate of Gestalt Foundation; and I. George Stamatis graduate of the Gestalt in Organizations programme at the Gestalt Foundation.

After a great deal of work, travelling, discussions, agreements and disagreements, but also with an ambience of real creativity, we arrived at completion and at the book's launch in Athens, on May 14, 2017, at 7:00 pm, at the Tower of Books, the very beautiful and very important Stavros Niarchos Culture Center. The turnout was great. The room was filled up and the atmosphere was full of energy and... expectation.

Efi Zerva, a well-known journalist and graduate of last year's cycle of workshops in Gestalt in Organizations, undertook the coordination of the presentation. After the authors' speeches, the guest speakers followed, with accounts of their personal experiences in relation to Gestalt as they talked about the results they had seen in their work, and also about how this connection between Gestalt and the workplace is made in the book.

A surprise video, which was then shown by the graduates, Solomon

Mordochai and Dimitris Vrachnos, impressed people with its humor and his messages but also gave the audience a sense of what we call Gestalt in Organizations!... It was followed by a very nice, warm, lively and dynamic discussion with the audience, panel members and authors.

But there's more! Ioanna and I also travelled to Thessaloniki on December 15, 2017, for a new presentation of our book and a public discussion at the Ianos Culture Chain. It was a very lively evening accompanied by challenging dialogue, full of questions, and a great willingness to learn what this art of change is and how Gestalt is applied in businesses and organizations! It was an evening - in Gestalt terms - rich with strong emotions, energy, a lot of contact and constant changes through creative adjustment. It was, in the end, for many «full» and fruitful Gestalt processing! ...

But don't think that we finished there because there was another presentation in Athens again on December 21, 2017, in the Polis Art Cafe well-known for its book presentations where I.SIDERIS publications has presented all their publications so far, from its new series of psychology books, through to the speeches of the authors, among them Ioanna and I. As you might have guessed, the Christmas spirit of the days dominated, giving a very festive tone to the event, in the full and very lively presentation area!

**George Stamatis, Head of the programme
Gestalt in Organisations at the Gestalt
Foundation**




RESPONSES

«I don't think we're here to talk about death and old age...»

On the occasion of my participation in the 1st Interdisciplinary Symposium «When We Have to Die», which took place at the University of Ioannina (28-30 April 2017), I choose to share some thoughts and concerns with you following the end of this Symposium. Until now, I have never much cared about when we have to die. What, however, has always been a major concern for me in my clinical experience is the question: What makes people today avoid preparing for old age and not talk about death, even when they are very close to it? I have avoided answering the question for many years, but I am always willing, whenever it emerges, to observe it and to listen to it carefully. The most recent emergence of the question occurred the day before I was to travel to Ioannina, to present my position, as a Gestalt psychotherapist, on 'When We Have to Die'. So I will begin with the most recent example, that which has unfolded in a Vision Therapy group that I coordinate and which is made up of people in the middle stage of Alzheimer's. The purpose of this particular session is to give group members the opportunity to express themselves through the observation of paintings created by the patients themselves.

A woman, close to 90, observes, in a painting belonging to a member of another group, that a particular shape which appears in the work could be a guillotine. And she explains to the other members of the team, and to me, what a guillotine is. Surprised, not only by its description but also by the fact that a man of

a similar group had said the same thing a day earlier, I grab the opportunity to ask her how she'd thought of the guillotine, adding a comment of my own:

"And in another group a gentleman saw the shape of a guillotine in this work; I think it has to do with the fact that all of you here have lived for more than 75 years, some of you may be in the eighth decade of your life approaching 90, and maybe some of you are thinking about death. Also, a guillotine is a symbol of death, since it decapitated people for many years in the Middle Ages. Is it like this for any of you?"

Before I am able to finish my thought, the lady who had spoken about the guillotine replied on behalf of everyone:

"I don't think we're here to talk about death and old age..."

Yet, now I'm thinking, just a few moments ago this woman was talking about death by projecting a symbol of death onto a shape in a painting! However, as if she doesn't want to hear anything more about imminent death, clearly and forcefully she imposes silence, taking responsibility for the whole group!

So I'm wondering, what does that mean?

Philip Aries in his research on death in the West has observed that the Western man's relationship with death has changed over the centuries. In the past, the question of death, its preparation and the post mortem instructions for the «salvation of the soul» concerned the individual himself. Man was compliant and accustomed to death. From the 17th century onwards, this has gradually changed and death is being ostracized from life to the point where today talking about death is prohibited. To some extent, Aries' study helped me answer my original question. People do not talk in groups about death because this is a forbidden subject. However, for me, this is about my relationship with the people I care for as a therapist and how I stand by



them when they talk either directly or indirectly about death, as in the example, while at the same time avoiding a deeper exploration of their subject matter. How can I stand by them? «I am deeply convinced that the basic problem of life, not only of therapy is: How to make life liveable for a being whose dominant characteristic is his awareness of himself as a unique individual on the one hand, of his mortality on the other. The first gives him a feeling of overwhelming importance as the very centre of the world, the other a feeling of frustration and vanity, being less than a grain of sand in the Universe. Suspended between these two poles, he vibrates in a state of inevitable tension and anxiety, that, at least to modern western man, seems unbelievable and has given rise to curious neurotic solutions.» (Perls L., 1959).

In accordance with the above words, I have a better understanding of this woman now. I understand her imposing silence on the issue of death as being connected to fear, frustration, tension and anxiety. In modern western man, the anxiety and tension he experiences because of his mortality seems impossible to alleviate. So he chooses not to talk about it.

The truth is that the woman in the example belongs to a robust economic group of the population and money is a factor that can strengthen the other pole, the pole of feeling unique, grandiose and invincible. Does this perception perhaps reinforce the illusion that we can «walk all over» death? That we can defeat it and live for eternity? With advances in technology and medicine, this is no longer so unrealistic. At a time when death is catching up with every step we take - road accidents, terrifying natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, terrorist attacks, wars) -man is living longer than ever, and the average life span will soon reach 100 years! Now, of course, one more question is emerging in me: Yes, more years, but how is man to live these years? The 90 year old lady in the example is accompanied by two employees, each of whom takes it in turn to look after her. If she had no money, what would her life be like? How would the lives of her relatives be?

Ivan Ilits argues that: man is the only one responsible for the manner and the extent to which our societies have become industrialized. He explains that as long as we believe there is a stock of people who can get us out of trouble, things will get worse because these people do not exist, and he talks about a new epidemic that is threatening humanity: latrogenesis. He highlights the suffering which medical progress is causing as it strengthens diagnosis and treatment as well as causing illnesses and puzzling injuries that result in the patient being hospitalized. He is raising concern and is worried about the restrictions on health care and the established power of the health professions, which plans to further extend its monopolization. He is certain that these restrictions should be imposed on ordinary people; each and every one of whom has a personal responsibility towards life and the environment- both natural and social.

'When we have to die' rings even more persistently in my ears,

this time also as a mandatory question to be directed at society as a whole. 'But how?' a voice answers inside of me. Can you pose this question to someone who does not want to hear about death? If I ask myself the question I tend to formulate it as follows: How do I dream of my death? Like, when I was a little girl and adults asked me: What would you like to be when you grow up? Of course, the answer was perhaps of no importance to the grown-ups, but it was for me because it gave me the opportunity to prepare myself. So I would suggest, now that I'm all grown up, that they ask me: How do you think about your death? My answer: As an opportunity to prepare for the most natural and normal event of my life, and the life of every human being, and to connect with the precious sense of my mortality, because it will eventually lead me down creative, compassionate and therapeutic paths.

To conclude with the words of Laura Perls: "Real creativeness in my experience is inextricably linked with awareness of mortality. The sharper this awareness is, the greater the urge to bring forth something new, to participate in the infinitely continuing creativeness in nature. This is what makes out of sex, love; out of the herd, society; out of corn and fruit, bread and wine; and out of sound, music. This is what makes life liveable and - incidentally - therapy possible" (Perls, L., 1959).

I want to dedicate the above thoughts not only to the therapists and clients who might read them but also to each individual person, as an opportunity for inner dialogue. Death, even when we avoid talking about it, is the most certain fact for all of us, without exception. It is also a topic that we can look at from many different perspectives, as is the case with every science. Perhaps for me it is very important, as part of my work concerns an incurable and chronic illness like Alzheimer's and the support of both people suffering from it and their caregivers. So I want you to know that although I have only touched upon the issue (especially for me), I simply hope that these thoughts offer an opportunity for further reflection, future sharing and more perspectives.

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GESTALT IN ORGANIZATIONS

The 'Gestalt in Organizations' training programme offers the possibility of integrating Gestalt psychotherapy into the field of organizations, something that is not often found in the realms of Human Resources and

organizations in general. It is customary for organizations to require immediate solutions and speedy changes to a new status quo without always paying due attention to the present situation.

Gestalt in Organizations is a promising approach to the market and the business sector, since it focuses on the process of awareness and 'here and now' so that both individuals and organizations as a whole can choose the best solution to fit in the field instead of being offered a ready-made, standardized solution that does not suit all the organizations. And because Gestalt is not a problem-solving process, Gestalt is a contact, through which organizations and people within them discover where they stand and that, through the paradox of change, they can shift and move to something new.

I feel very lucky to have been part of a group with strong elements of co-operation, sharing and respect. We experienced the process of acquiring awareness through the process of contact with what 'is' and what is needed. We became mobilized towards the choices we have and we creatively adapted to the attitude that each of us chooses to keep on achieving our goals and realizing our personal vision. We came in touch with our leadership skills and

obstacles that drive us away from our vision by facing unfinished business and experimenting which led to new choices and new ways. Our instructors were next to us maintaining a relationship of equality, helping us to see what was happening, to figure it out and become aware of it. Through the process of sharing, awareness became a space for exploration of and experimentation with the change that has already begun within us. Through this sharing, I also gained awareness and came a step closer to my original goal, which was none other than the incorporation of two, until then, separate worlds: Gestalt philosophy and the world of business.

I completed my participation in this educational group with a sense of deep gratitude for acceptance, inclusion, equality and sharing.



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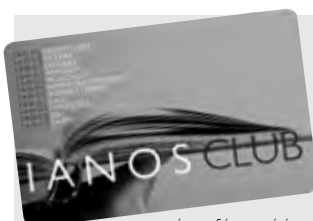
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