



Gestalt NEWS Foundation

BIANNUAL INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION NEWSLETTER OF THE GESTALT FOUNDATION PSYCHOTHERAPY & TRAINING CENTER
SPRING/SUMMER 2019 – ISSUE 29



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The program for this academic year was aimed at deepening the theory, supervision and personal development of professionals in relation to

‘Group Dynamics’...

Continued on page 8

• The healing relationship in Gestalt therapy

• The concept of happiness in Gestalt Psychotherapy

• Gestalt Psychotherapy in prisons

In recent years, as much in our own country as in the rest of Europe and worldwide, we are becoming societies facing extreme, catastrophic, natural phenomena as a result of the threatening climate change which has already

made its appearance and which is seriously impacting on the human species as well as on all living organisms on earth!

The idea that human life is rapidly disintegrating into “a war of all against all” was first highlighted by Thomas Hobbes in the 19th century. The urgent needs of today demand immediate attention. With an ever increasing intensity, climate scientists are warning us that the temperature of the oceans and the atmosphere is rising much faster than they had predicted even five or ten years earlier, and that most likely, very soon, we will reach the point (that is if we haven't already reached it) where the damage to the earth and its biological inhabitants

will not only be irreversible but also unmanageable. The summer ice-capped peaks have almost disappeared from the Arctic, while the West Antarctic ice layer is sliding into the ocean, and species are becoming extinct at a rate of more than 100 times the original estimate.

Every corner of the earth is subject to different environmental pressures and, consequently, the hierarchy of environmental problems varies.

The above is an introduction to a presentation of mine entitled, “Environmental Crisis and Phenomenology” aimed at raising awareness about our relationship with the world, the earth and nature.

However, summer is now here ... the mountains will rejuvenate us, the blue waters will refresh us, the sandy beaches will soothe us and the sounds of the waves will bring us together in hope...



Despina Balliou

M.Sc. Counseling Psychology, Psychotherapist, Gestalt trainer and supervisor, member of EAGT, trained in EMDR Trauma Therapy, holder of ECP (European Certificate of Psychotherapy), founding member of Gestalt Foundation and HAGT (Hellenic Association of Gestalt Therapy).

About Happiness



From time to time the great thinkers of this world have expressed their thoughts on this very elusive condition, feeling, or however else we define

the word 'happiness'. For Albert Camus, to be happy meant not being caught up with others. Maxim Gorky referred to happiness as small when held in the hand but precious and expansive when we let it go. Bertrand Russell suggests that if more people wished for their own happiness rather than the unhappiness of others then we would have paradise in no time at all. Finally, Albert Schweitzer defines happiness as nothing more

than simply having good health and a bad memory!

So it would appear that there can be no single definition of what happiness is. Nor at the same time are we able to find a satisfying and lasting expression of what happiness means for us.

Paradoxically, this is a happy situation. For if there was only one definition of happiness, then we would all be heading in the same direction to get to it, and we would inevitably sink into the bottomless mush of uniformity and intractable boredom.

Fortunately, people's needs, inclinations, and personalities are different and this diversity allows us to come into contact with the environment and to have moments of happiness, or not to have them.

So, while we may not have a definition of what happiness is, we can confidently say when it is happening so that we can experience it. Exclusively in the present.

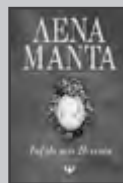
George Diplis, PgD in PCA Counseling, Gestalt therapist, trainer and supervisor, EAGT member (European Association for Gestalt Therapy), ECP holder and member of the Hellenic Association for Gestalt Therapy (HAGT).

BEST SELLERS 2019

ΛΟΓΟΤΕΧΝΙΑ



ΦΕΡΝΑΝΤΟ ΑΡΑΜΠΟΥΡΟΥ
ΠΑΤΡΙΔΑ



ΛΕΝΑ ΜΑΝΤΑ
ΤΑΣΙΔΙ ΣΤΗ ΒΕΝΕΤΙΑ



ΠΕΤΡΟΣ ΜΑΡΚΑΡΗΣ
Η ΕΠΟΧΗ
ΤΗΣ ΥΠΟΚΡΗΣΙΑΣ

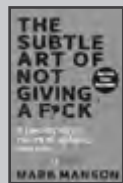


ΕΛΕΝΑ ΑΚΡΙΤΑ
ΤΑ ΤΑΠΙΡ ΤΗΣ ΑΛΙΚΗΣ

ΜΕΛΕΤΕΣ



ΣΤΕΦΑΝΟΣ ΞΕΝΑΚΗΣ
ΤΟ ΔΩΡΟ



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



ΕΛ. ΒΑΡΒΙΓΣΙΩΤΗ,
Β. ΔΕΝΑΡΙΝΟΥ
Η ΤΕΛΕΥΤΑΙΑ ΜΠΛΟΦΑ



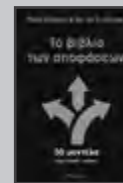
STEPHEN HAWKING
ΣΥΝΤΟΜΕΣ ΑΓΙΑΝΤΗΣΕΙΣ
ΣΤΑ ΜΕΓΑΛΑ ΕΡΩΤΗΜΑΤΑ



Ι. ΚΙΖΙΜΙ, Φ. ΚΟΓΚΑ
ΤΟΛΜΗΣΕ ΝΑ ΕΙΣΑΙ
Ο ΕΛΥΤΟΣ ΣΟΥ



Α. ΣΥΡΙΓΟΣ,
Ε. ΧΑΤΖΗΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΥ
Η ΣΥΜΦΩΝΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΠΡΕΣΠΩΝ
ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΚΟ



Μ. ΚΡΟΓΕΡΟΥΣ,
R. TSCHAPPELLER
ΤΟ ΒΙΒΛΙΟ ΤΩΝ
ΑΠΟΦΑΣΕΩΝ



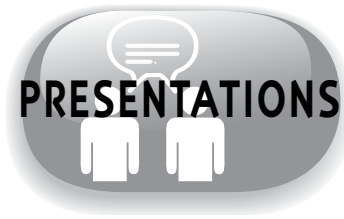
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Ο ΑΡΜΕΝΙΣΤΗΣ
ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ

ΙΑΝΟΣ

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...at IANOS Cultural chain

Commentary on I. Kato's presentation entitled, "The shame that keeps us captive" which took place on 22/11/2018 in Athens.

On Thursday, November 22, 2018, in Athens, in a crowded room at IANOS, I attended Ioanna Kato's lecture entitled, "The shame that keeps us captive". I will try to put in a nutshell, thus very briefly and perhaps simplified, the most important points. Ioanna Kato, having shared her own relationship with shame, generally and in the here and now, began by formulating the definition



of shame and separating the concepts of shame and guilt. Together with the audience, she expanded the phenomenology of shame, how it is expressed physically and which emotions and thoughts emerge when we experience shame. Very enlightening for me were the possible defence mechanisms we have when we experience shame, such as contempt, anger, jealousy, and more. The root of shame lies in failure, in the first major interpersonal relationships. When the «significant other» does not recognize my need, he/she does not support my effort and / or enthusiasm. Shame is a constant that ranges from mere embarrassment to profound humiliation. In its healthy form, shame acts as protection since it gives us important information and keeps us in touch with our needs. It occurs when, in the presence of another person, we can't manage to do something without jeopardizing that relationship should we fail and so instead, there, in the relationship, is our safety. Shame becomes toxic when it is no longer an internal process, when the basis is the fear of the self, which the individual rejects and creates a false self to hide and

be saved.

Joanna Kato then invited us to reflect on our own experiences, leading us on an inner journey of seeing and experiencing the difference between supporting - as we would probably do with a friend - and criticizing (as most of us have probably done) in a vulnerable situation. It became clear that shame is related to and dealt with through compassion and support, both external and internal.

There followed sharing and questions from the audience.

Listening to the lecture I came into contact with my shame and I've begun to recognize it even when it masquerades. I feel it has added not just a piece of the puzzle but a whole dimension that I had not been aware existed until now.

Bianca Ellinger, Psychologist-Gestalt Psychotherapist

Commentary on G. Diplas and I. Alexia's presentations entitled "The Universality of E rotas" which took place on 14/02/2019 in Athens.

The talk began, after a warm welcome, with a language focusing on the senses that evolved into a birthplace for emotions for the attendees. A dance duo performed on stage, one of the most erotic dances, a Tango in the centre of Athens. Essentially, through the process of movement, the core of the ensuing speech presented two souls, two living beings, two entities, two beings meeting in a continuous, mutual sharing of dialectical diversity. Dance, as an expression, implies contact with that which is different, as a miniature of life, a concept defined by the self-evident question of love.

The speaker, far from the arid consumerism that he mentioned, far from the existential misery of hedonism, got to the heart of



what the concept of love reflects. Outside the venue where the presentation was taking place, no doubt, as is the case every year on this day, Valentine's Day, a self-styled pandemonium of commercialization and utilization of such a beautiful and indispensable process for life, for existence itself, was in full swing. Through the theory of Gestalt's psychotherapeutic approach, Giorgos Diplas gave time and space, and dimension to love as a concept.

In full contact with the audience and himself, and with the audi-

ence in full contact with him, the presenter framed some aspects of love, by inviting the public to engage in Dialogue and Sharing..

Alexandra Baka, Philipos Villiotis, 3rd year trainees

Commentary on Y. Yiamarelou's presentation entitled, "Guilt, a Human Process" which took place on 14/03/2019 in Athens

As far as I know, guilt is something that is deeply rooted in the way a person is and feels. Concepts, such as guilt, which define mental phenomena and human qualities, work like coins. They have two sides: the functional and the dysfunctional.

The presentation approached guilt in its various dimensions, referring to how it is created and how it determines and influences human functioning today.

As Ms. Yiamarelou mentioned, the age during which it develops and becomes established varies from one and a half to seven years of age. During this period, the child begins to become autonomous and take initiatives. The environment plays a key role in this process. The child is in dire need of support and encouragement from the environment to try new things. At the same time, stable and clear structure from the parent is needed. On the contrary, when the environment is overprotective, punitive or sending ambiguous messages, the child develops shame, self-doubt and guilt that something is wrong.

In adult life, she added, guilt can work in three ways. Initially, it can be an incentive to become a better person, improve in different areas and develop a sense of responsibility. In the second case, there is the neurotic guilt that blocks man. The person oscillates between two poles, in repeated motifs characterised by «either/or». Here, the ability to make a decision is frustrated,

causing the person to become passive and suffer most of his life, truly invisible at the centre of a vicious circle. The third type concerns existential guilt which is related to time. Things that one has not done in the past and it shakes the whole of the individual's existence. However, due to old age, there's nothing to be done. How then, instead of being further sucked in, will this person claim his right to enjoy life and give space to the «here and now»?

This presentation served as food for thought. It made me wonder where I am in relation to guilt, to explore what is bothering and troubling me and how I first need to approach it, recognize it, and ultimately stand by it so that I can take care of it. Guilt is part of our lives but it doesn't have to be the big enemy forever. It can become the light in our existence and an ally in our growth. The child inside us knows how to hear what it has to say. Needs, silent and frustrated, are hiding behind it and we have to find our voice.

Anna Makrandeou, 2nd year trainee



**BOOK
PRESENTATION**

**"The Healing Relationship in Gestalt Therapy",
by Lynne Jacobs and
Rich Hycner.**

"In the beginning is relation". These five words summarize the meaning of this book.

Rich Hycner is deeply influenced by the philosophy of dialogue of Martin Buber, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy as well as the work of Erving and Miriam Polster, Gestalt trainers. He is also the author of the book "Between Person and Person". He was the co-director of the Gestalt Training Institute in San Diego, professor at the Gestalt Training Centre in San Diego, as well as co-director at the Institute for Dialogical Psychotherapy.

Lynne Jacobs, Ph.D., lives in two psychotherapy worlds. She is the co-founder of the Pacific Gestalt Institute and she is a trainer and psychoanalytic supervisor at the Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis in Los Angeles. Together with Rich Hycner, she has overseen the publication of *Relational Perspectives in Gestalt Therapy* (2010). She has been widely published and her articles have appeared in both Gestalt and psychoanalytic journals, and she teaches throughout America as well as many other countries around the world. She is continuously involved in broadening the understanding of both the relationship factors in the psychotherapeutic process as well as the important role of Euro-ethnic origin and its implications for clinical work.

I consider myself very fortunate to have met, trained and worked with Rich and Lynne. When I came across this book, I think in 1997, I was thrilled to be holding one of the first books to talk about existential

meeting and relational depth, and the first to deal exclusively with the relational approach of Gestalt psychotherapy. Following in the footsteps of M. Buber, R. Hycner and L. Jacobs show, with exceptional elegance, why and how the therapeutic relationship is core to the Gestalt approach to psychotherapy.

What is particularly important about this book is the fact that both authors, apart from being psychotherapists, are among the most important theorists of the «relational» approach. In fact, Lynne Jacobs is also a Relational Analyst. In this way, we can see how one approach complements the other.

In relation to the work as a whole, the first section explores the interactive approach to Gestalt therapy - both in theory and in its clinical application. The second section integrates a dialogically Gestalt-based therapy with inter-subjective theory and Psychology of the Self. The third section highlights the key issues of «otherness» for Gestalt therapists and points to directions which therapists, using their knowledge of inter-subjective theory and psychology of self, may want to further explore.

As Lynne says, the purpose of this book is not to determine, but rather to act as a reminder of the existential depth of Gestalt therapy.

Despina Balliou, M.Sc. Counseling Psychology, Psychotherapist, Gestalt trainer and supervisor, member of EAGT, trained in EMDR Trauma Therapy, holder of ECP, founding member of Gestalt Foundation and HAGT.

“The dialogical essence of the GESTALT psychotherapeutic approach”

GESTALT psychotherapy, a phenomenological existential and interactive approach, began to be shaped by Fritz and Laura Perls in the 1940s and subsequently became established in 1951 with the publication of the book: «Gestalt Therapy Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality» Perls, Hefferline and Goodman.

According to its founders, «the contact boundary, where experience is present, defines the organism, protects it and is, at the same time, relevant to the environment.»

The basic principles of Gestalt psychotherapy also refer to the relationship between:

- Organization - Environment
- Contact - Withdrawal
- Awareness of the Self and the present situation
- Figure and Ground
- Organismic self-regulation

The organism is defined in relation to the environment.

Contact does not exist without the withdrawal process, which is the ground for integrating the experience and starting the search for new contact with the environment.

Self-awareness has no meaning in action without the awareness of the situation at the time this action takes place.

A figure does not emerge without the existence of a ground, while the concept of the self is defined as a constantly evolving and / or fixed entity due to its interaction with the environment, through dialectical and non-verbal contact.

All dialogue is contact. It is based on the principle of reciprocity, the consent of both parties to meet. Without consent, the contact boundary is violated.

As stated in the book, dialogue, as a way of verbal contact, is an extension of self-awareness, loss and restructuring of the ego, and growth, while at the same time preserving individuality.

It is obvious that interactive communication involves non-verbal contact, a meeting that is immediate due to the sensory emotion that occurs from something beyond the self, the sensory encounter with the other, which is experienced simultaneously as a moment of non-verbal union and individuality, where the meeting itself is more than the sum of all the parts that we have brought to any given situation.

As an integral part of the meeting, contact and withdrawal constitute an endless process that facilitates the assimilation of the «not me» so that it can be integrated as a new experience in the organism. For example, I hear you describe a very difficult situation and I'm interested in knowing what you need ... Do you want me to listen to you or do you need to hear my point of view? This way is respectful; otherwise it acts as a violation and pressure. Contact and withdrawal of the therapist and the client form the grounding and complement each other so that the pace and rhythm are mutually agreed upon, both

verbally and non-verbally.

The concept of awareness in Gestalt therapy is about how I perceive what is happening now and does not at all assume that what I perceive and think about the other, is his/her own reality. For example a Gestalt therapist, instead of saying, 'you are feeling pressured by what I'm telling you', should say, 'I'm under the impression that you are feeling pressure by what I'm telling you.' In other words, he/she assumes responsibility for his phenomenological experience, that is, his sense, emotion and thought, as well as the responsibility for communicating them as his/her own reality.

As the authors of the book point out, the essence of the Gestalt Interactive Approach is how, when, and what the therapist communicates, intertwined with the ability of both the therapist and client to make contact at a given time.



This is essentially the existential phenomenological dialogical dimension of Gestalt therapy, and it is about being intentional, being mindful of and respectful of each other's ability to be. And in this way I find the rhythm and for the most part I move forward with instead of moving ahead of. In conclusion, it is clear that the essence of Gestalt therapy is the relationship formed between the therapist and the client through existential dialogue, and this is important in the references and examples in this book.

Each of us brings to light his or hers' own story, values and prejudices, and through the therapeutic encounter, we form a continuous and evolving



field, taking into account what is happening in the "in between", as the sole cause of change and healing.

Yianna Yiamarelou: *M.A. Clinical Psychology, Psychotherapist, Gestalt trainer and supervisor, member of EAGT, holder of ECP, founding member of the Gestalt Foundation & HAGT.*

Transcript of video message by Rich Hycner

"First of all, I want to thank all the people who were involved in translating the work. I'm sure that was not easy given the language that both Lynne and I used in English - it would be challenging to translate that I'm sure, so thank you. Having said that I find it very appropriate, fitting, and very supportive that the book is now translated into Greek because so often, in many workshops, I mention that the etymological meaning of the English word "psychotherapy" comes from the early Greek of the two words "psyche" and "therapia". Psyche - and I hope I get this translation correct speaking to a Greek audience - my understanding is that it means spirit, or soul or sometimes even breath. Therapia, as I understand it, means "attending to", and what I've always been struck by is that psychotherapy really does need to be more of a sense of attending to the soul of spirit of the other.

The reason Lynne and I wrote the book, and it took many years for us to formulate and finish it, was that, certainly, what we were both exposed to I think (and I can certainly speak for myself), was a sense in Gestalt Therapy that which was getting emphasized, especially in a beginning therapist, was a certain emphasis on technique - and what we wanted to do was get beyond technique; not that technique is bad in itself, technique can be very helpful. But technique is not the focus and goal of psychotherapy. The focus and goal need to be ultimately the relationship of one human being to another; why people, to a great extent, are injured (as-

suming non biological injuries and so forth) is that somehow they have not been met in relationship, they have not felt that somebody could attune to them, to their deeper needs, that they could support them as a person, that they could be emotionally available to them. Well, we wanted to really write about an approach, an understanding, a theory, that emphasized that what was most important was the relationship, and we used, at that time, a great deal of Martin Buber's writings, because he was one of the few that talked so much about relationship or what he called the "between". And what's so complex for us as psychotherapists is that we have to be able to be focused on our self, we have to be incredibly trained, experienced, have read, but mainly we have to ultimately be aware of how we are available or not available to others and to work on our self. And we also desperately need to understand where our client is, to be able to have a beginner's mind with our client and to be able to enter the world of the client. Having said that, ultimately there's also that sense of "the between" - so there's the therapist, the client, but there's the relationship. And we need as therapists to have certainly an artistry; to be acutely aware of our self, to be able to be centred and yet paradoxically to be able to de-centre, to be fully available, as fully as possible to our client. But we also need to be able to discern what the quality of the relationship is and where the relationship developmentally is at this point in the therapy. As easy as all of this for me to say in words, it's experientially a challenge - certainly for me and I think for all of us, no matter how many years of therapy, how many experiences we've had. So I hope that this book supports you, and I really mean that, supports you in meeting your client and you looking at yourself and maybe even your personal relationships. And I would encourage you to have the courage to explore further than what both Lynne and I have written about, and it's now up to you in many ways to take it much further. So I wish you all the best, and unfortunately I've never been to Greece, but I certainly have worked with some Greek therapists which has been a wonderful experience, and my wife and I hope someday to be able to visit Greece in the near future, and perhaps I'll get the chance to meet some of you. So best to all of you, bye!"

Rich Hycner was the co-director of the Gestalt Training Institute in San Diego, professor at the Gestalt Training Centre in San Diego, as well as co-director at the Institute for Dialogical Psychotherapy in San Diego. He has been a Dean for Academic Affairs, as well as a faculty member at twelve graduate schools. He has facilitated training seminars for Relational Gestalt Psychotherapy all over the world.




RESPONSES
«How to Train a Wild Elephant»

In the modern age, interest in Mindfulness has increased significantly, both within the scientific community (psychologists, doctors, teachers...) and among the general public. Existing research has shown very positive results in both mental and physical health. Mindfulness protects us from unnecessary waste of energy. It exercises and strengthens the mind, is environmentally friendly, cultivates



closeness, prevents and conquers our fears, and enhances our spiritual life.

But what exactly is Mindfulness? Mindfulness is exercising deliberate attention to what is going on around us and within us, inside our bodies, our minds and our souls.

Mindfulness is having awareness without being judgemental. It does not mean thinking hard about something, or doing everything too slowly, and it is certainly not a set of exercises with a specific time limit. But it is a practice that extends to all facets of our lives. People often say that they would like to practice Mindfulness, but they are too busy and can't find the time. Most people think that Mindfulness is something they need to fit into an already full-time job, child-rearing and home-care program. In fact, making Mindfulness a part of one's life is more of a game where we unite tweets until a picture is formed or like the game where we colour in spaces according to the number. As we fill in, for example, the brown areas, after the blue, the green, a beautiful image begins to emerge. The practice of Mindfulness is just like that. You start from a small area of your life, for example how you answer the phone. Every time the phone rings, you wait and take three deep breaths before you get up. Do this for a week or more until it becomes a habit. Then, you add another exercise, such as eating. Once this practice becomes a part of your life, you add another.

Gradually, you become more present and have awareness about most things in your life. The pleasant experience of a conscious existence begins to emerge.

Katerina Papathanasiou - Pexlivanidou, Psychologist, Gestalt Psychotherapist, Gestalt Foundation Psychotherapy & Training center, at Thessaloniki, Master Practitioner in Eating Disorders and Obesity

Small cycles in big themes: Shame

The respect and responsibility of everyone, individually and collectively, creates a safe environment so we can embrace this uncomfortable but very rich feeling we call shame. As L. Jakobs (2014) outlines, it is a family of emotions. There are different attitudes to shame that we have developed depending on our history. Fear, terror, reactionary rage, and the shame of the «other» often come before, after, or instead of the experience of shame. Shame is a relational phenomenon. There is no shame without the other ...neither is there shame without someone who is ashamed... «I cannot feel shame in my own body because I am in it. It is my body as it is for others that shames me» (Sartre, 1939). All experiences of impotence, indifference and inadequacy through someone else's eyes are activated in the field of Shame.

It has to do with our values, with our very existence, and that is why it has to do with the feeling of belonging. When we feel ashamed, this is the message dictated: «It is not worth belonging, receiving comfort or kindness, being part of the family of people.» (J. I. Kepner, 1995).

The aim of psychotherapy in relation to shame is to increase one's awareness and choice in the often automatic process of shame. The very fact that it is a relational phenomenon means only within the relationship it can be treated. Only if a therapist and a patient can stay together with their shame and the shame that exists between them, the individual can come out of the isolation of shame and begin to embrace it. Through such an experience his human existence is confirmed, and that he belongs, once again, to the human species.

Eleni Mouslech: Psychologist, Gestalt psychotherapist, member of EAGT, holder of ECP (European Certificate of Psychotherapy).

The program for this academic year was aimed at deepening the theory, supervision and personal development of professionals in relation to “Group Dynamics”

«Creating self-regulating, nourishing communities»

Today we observe (again) a worldwide inclination towards strong leaders in a polarized world. As Paul Goodman said, authoritarian leadership is not the way to change the world. He believed in small self-regulating groups based on autonomy of its participants. Autonomy and self-regulation are deeply rooted in Gestalt's tradition.

When writing this mini article, I remember an incident right at the start of a three-day experiential workshop on group dynamics. After a personal introduction of the participants and myself I ask the group how we could structure our work with so many expectations and questions around the subject. A long silence follows. After a while I say I had obviously asked a difficult question. Then one of the participants replies with a slightly aggressive tone that it is my job as leader of the workshop to structure the meetings. With this short exchange we are immediately at the heart



of the workshop. A field is created in which the participants are dependent on the 'leader'. They experience my question as lack of leadership. As we work through this conflict, awareness gradually arises as to how the social political background of the participants, coming from a former Soviet Union satellite state, manifests itself in this counter dependent behaviour towards the leader. From this background the group can hardly understand that I am really interested in their opinion. Slowly the one-sided focus on me as 'leader' changes and a lively exchange between the group members starts. Later participants express that the impact of this incident has left a deep impression. Spontaneity, creativity and humour take the place of their common introject on authoritarian leadership. The group starts to work as a nourishing community.

More than in individual therapy, group therapy can have a big impact as a learning place to give shape to democratic principles. Our Gestalt field theory allows us to be aware that all members have a point of view on the group situation and no point of view is more important than another. This is a powerful perspective in overcoming a polarized situation. As a consequence of this perspective, the role of the group leader is not privileged. Despite his specific role, he is equal with the others in a co-creating

process. I like Nelson Mandela's metaphor 'the leader is steering from behind the flock'.

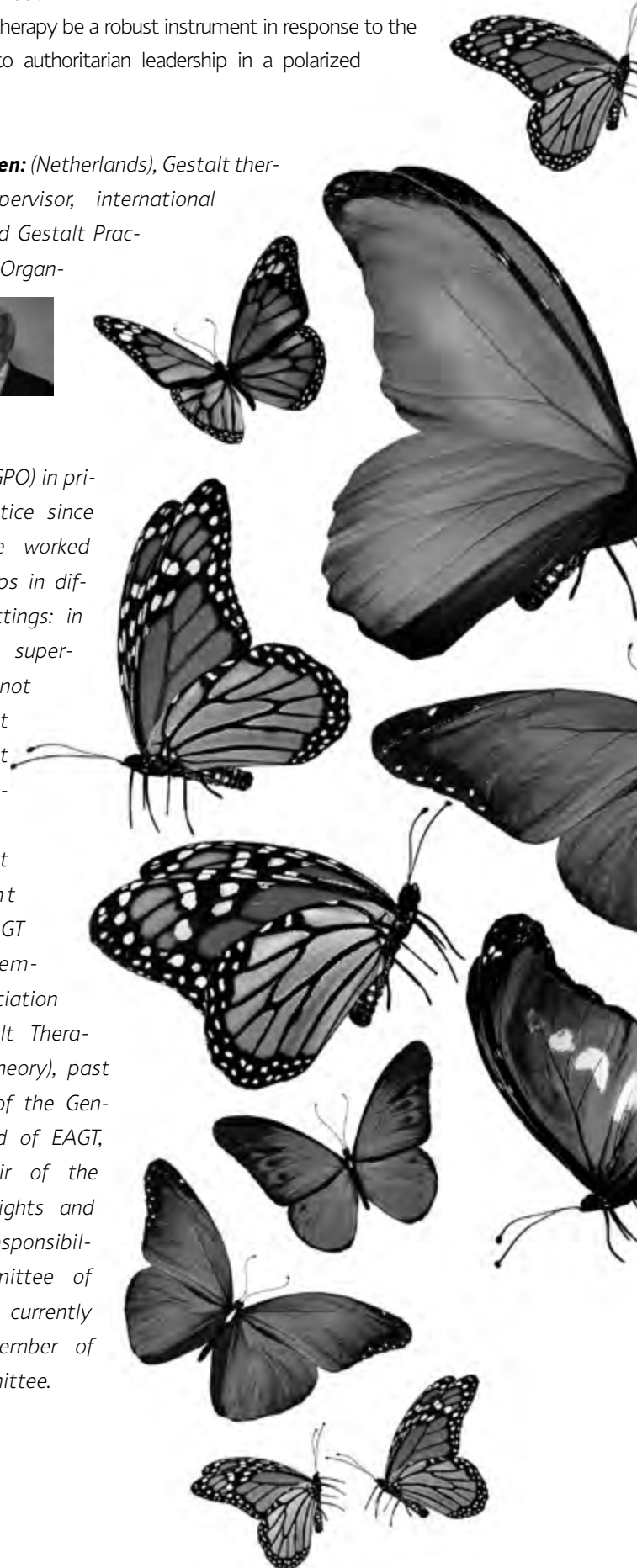
Let group therapy be a robust instrument in response to the tendency to authoritarian leadership in a polarized world.

Guus Klaren: (Netherlands), Gestalt therapist, supervisor, international trainer and Gestalt Practitioner in Organ-



isations (GPO) in private practice since 1988. He worked with groups in different settings: in therapy, supervision, not for profit and profit organisations. He is past president of NVAGT (Dutch-Flemish Association for Gestalt Therapy and Theory), past member of the General board of EAGT, past chair of the Human Rights and Social Responsibility Committee of EAGT and currently active member of this committee.

“GROUP D



YNAMICS”

«Once upon a time a group...»

Once upon a time a group started shyly as a call to recall, a

subtle way to collectively write an untold tale of waking members embracing their suffering and blinding traumas from the past. No longer resistant, they became heroes reaching the warming light of resilience.

Once upon a time a group became a powerful medium to compose a chant to validate the survival war of wounded and scared soldiers who could not choose desertion. Once upon a time a group grabbed courageously the opportunity to attract each other's attention. Fascinating stories that were magical, fantastic, cruel, sad and even horrific were shared to receive a sensitive and strong supportive gaze with careful hearing between strangers.

Once upon a time a group learnt in its own unique way how to generate empathy which not only comes from the listener's side, but also arises from the one who is struggling to reach out. Together they opened arms wide to the long awaited hope for recognition and the welcome of an unbearable life which might seem easy to doubt really happened.

Once upon a time a group became a safe place to repair loneliness abandonment and unbelonging. Dignity of a wounded betweenness was successfully restored to finally invite the eternal migrant back home, as welcomed member of the human tribe whilst avoiding falling into an

abyss of perpetrator or victim's experience.

Once upon a time a group offered with clear and victorious consensus, faithfulness to each one in its most intimate identity, and water for growth from their deepest roots to their highest branches.

Once upon a time a group agreed on painting the darkest past with the more vivid colors of the present.

ONCE UPON A TIME A GROUP ASKED... PLEASE. PLEASE TELL ME YOUR STORY

ONCE UPON A TIME A GROUP WAS ASKED... PLEASE, PLEASE LISTEN TO MY UNTOLD AND UNWITNESSED STORY...

ONCE UPON A TIME A GROUP MADE THE WONDER OF HUMAN HEALING POSSIBLE...



Guy-Pierre Tur Valverde: *Painter and Gestalt therapist working in Mexico City. Trainer at the Instituto Humanista de Psicoterapia Gestalt Mexico City since 1996. He is also invited as a trainer in several Gestalt Institutes of the world like Europe and South America. He actualizes himself yearly at the Pacific Gestalt Institute of Los Angeles since 2012. He is also specialized in working in a relational perspective of Gestalt Therapy and the field of aesthetics as a therapeutic tool. Founder of COCREARTE MEXICO, a space for development of creativity (in 2010). As a painter he started to exhibit in 1975 in France and had several collective and individual exhibitions in Europe, United States and Latin America.*

“Group dynamics and the relational approach of Gestalt”

A 3-day workshop on Group Dynamics with Guy Pierre...

A few months ago I had the pleasure of attending a workshop on group dynamics and the relational approach Gestalt theory offers. As a non-therapist, I admit that concepts like «relational approach» do not fit into my every day vocabulary. However, I really believe in the potential of people to relate and interact in groups and for that reason, what I experienced through the seminar was really valuable.

I will not mention specific exercises, conversations, and phrases I heard – and what I said - during this 3-day event. And the reason is not (only) confidentiality.

As profound, important, and heavy as it may be, fulfilling the criteria for a fantastic social media post, or a t-shirt, alone cannot deliver what I experienced working in this group.

Because what I experienced was always in contact and interaction with the rest of the team. I got to know myself, observing my relationships with other members of the group. I saw how and when I share the responsibility of contacting another person within the group.

Who is annoying me? Who excites me? Who do I envy and why do I want to be like him? Who makes me want to take a breath to think? My interaction with who does make me want to talk or to be silent to give space to someone else to express himself? And as the hours and days went by, I realized that the more I expressed and shared, the more comfortable I felt. Through hard work, fatigue, striving for contact and confidence in the process, claiming my pace, my space and my time, I became visible for who I was, expressing myself and connecting with the other members.

Through expression and communication, we developed relationships and through these relationships I experienced myself, present with all the good and not so good, and I was reminded that when I share my feelings, my fears, my sorrows, and my joy, I'm not alone.

Nikol Varvarigou

A 3-day workshop on group dynamics with Guus Klaren...

I was looking forward to this workshop with curiosity and high expectations. As a G.P.O. (Gestalt Practitioner in Organizations) and with an extensive career in organizations, most of my work was related to working in groups.

In the end, my curiosity was rewarded and my expectations were surpassed by what we experienced and learned as a group with our coordinator and leader Guus Klaren.

It is not by chance that I am referring to the concept of «leader». It was very useful and interesting for all of us and especially for the group members working as psychotherapists, how and how much we worked on the role and process of leadership in the group, following the model of «relational» leadership.

I will dwell on three areas, for which we have all worked together, in depth and with effectiveness.

First, how group therapy and group dynamics promote and shape democratic principles, values, and applications. Consequently, we would describe this area as the «political» expression and influence in groups.

Second, the three forms of focus and intervention of the therapist / coordinator / leader in the group:

The therapist to an individual, member of the group,
The therapist to a couple that are members of the group,
The therapist to all the members of a team

And all of them interdependent within a deep relational context

Third, the “shape” of group work, according to which, each member is symbolized as a triangle, with each of its angles signifying our fears, stereotypes and our natural need for growth.

With the therapist / coordinator / leader of the team, which is also symbolized by the same triangle, we see how the group can experience and manage fear, move on / change beyond stereotypes and resistances and discover the path to development at both individual and group levels.

Finally, Guus, himself, was a determining factor in all the creative work and training of our group! A therapist, counselor and teacher, with extensive experience, a wealth of knowledge and analytical thinking, who at both therapeutic and organizational level, skilfully and deeply aligned his experiential approach to theory! And all this, with a modest presence, with a great deal of patience and liberating humour!

Giorgos Stamatias, Gestalt Practitioner in Organizations



ARTICLES OF
COLLABORATORS***The Concept of Happiness in Gestalt Psychotherapy***

I'll begin with a small quote, whereby Robert Najemi charac-

teristically shows our «resistance» to happiness.

“Very often, however paradoxical it may sound, we are the ones who block or spoil our happiness. If we look around we will surely find that misery is probably much more convenient and common. After all, happiness is not an easy task! How is one to endure it? We all flirt with it and long for it to be in our lives. Rarely, however, does one commit to it.”

How is it that we can be afraid of happiness? That we feel the need to “touch wood” to «protect» ourselves when everything

is going well or when we are happy? Why is happiness surrounded by suspicion? Is there any universal law telling us that we are only allowed a certain amount of happiness? How is it that we talk more about our problems than about our blessings? Why do we have more complaints than expressions of gratitude? Why do we sometimes compete with those who have the most problems or

misfortunes? Why do we focus on what we don't have instead of what we have?

It seems that we feel more comfortable with an unhappy reality than with a happy one. If we are already low, we cannot fall too far. If we are tall, then there is a risk of falling farther. Perhaps we feel that lower is safer than higher. Some of us are very unhappy for a long time and we do not know what it is like to be without our unpleasant emotions. It would be like losing a significant part of ourselves or our lives. We have become attached or addicted to feeling that way. We have identified with the role of being unhappy. Happiness feels like something unknown and is less desirable than the familiarity of misery, and we are afraid of being different from who we are.

So although happiness is our natural condition, we are trained to feel more comfortable with misery. Our minds, hearts and souls have embodied circuits that are programed to make us happy.



But we, in a strange way, feel uncomfortable with joy. Frequently, we feel that we are not entitled to it. And sometimes, because we cannot handle it, we are overwhelmed by the fear that something bad will happen to us. Too often, we feel it is selfish to fight to be happy when the world around us is suffering.

Happiness is an inner affair and it is not about what is happening to us but how we handle what is happening to us. It is determined by how we interpret, perceive and incorporate events into our mental state.

What counts is not what has happened to me, but what I do with what has happened to me. And this is where the issue of personal responsibility comes in; take responsibility for my own joy or misery. The sense of being a victim and always blaming others for the suffering of my life is a way of sabotaging and blocking the flow of life within me, making me helpless and unable to act and

change.

The concept of happiness is primarily associated with the feeling of shame. We often find that people are ashamed to laugh loudly; they put their hands over their mouths as if trying to push back their laughter, not letting themselves go, like “I'm ashamed to be happy”. Another pervasive feeling associated with joy is guilt. I'm afraid that I'm going to die of

laughter, or that something bad is going to happen; how can I be happy when people are suffering? I feel guilty about being happy. When we take life too seriously, says Kubler Ross, we forget to play every day, we forget to treat ourselves to some enjoyment. We find life difficult, we constantly want to improve and fix things, and we don't know how to find some time to have fun. Play and joy bring out the child in us, reduce stress, and bring us closer to ourselves and to others.

Gestalt therapy is, above all, the constant pursuit of harmony and a better life and is aimed at helping our existence to blossom. The Gestalt therapist cultivates the present and focuses on maximizing one's potential for happiness. Gestalt clients are usually surprised to find that it is possible to work with success, good contact and well-being and not just with problem areas or traumatic events.

In fact, says Serge Ginger, when we continually reminisce about

a painful moment, we often reinforce the bad memory. Talking constantly about a difficult time of grief is not enough to overcome it.

And he urges therapists not to avoid problems but also not to avoid joy, focusing on the solutions as well as the problems.

Kiriaki Saouli: *Psychologist, EMDR trauma therapist, Gestalt Psychotherapist Trainee*

Gestalt Therapy in Prisons

An offence is defined as conduct intended to violate formal and informal rules. The forms can range from painless (e.g. traffic violations) to serious (e.g. homicide).

The factors that contribute to the development of delinquent behaviour are:

1. Biological: There is no gene for delinquency. Genetic predisposition, however, can be manifested in an indirect way. Individuals can inherit personality traits from their ancestors, making them prone to crime.

2. Family: Antisocial and alcoholic parents tend to have delinquent sons. Inadequate parental supervision, unstable or severe parental conflict, rejection of the child and child neglect are all important contributory factors in delinquent behaviour, as well as physical abuse and the broken home.

3. Peer groups: Teenagers find acceptance there.

4. Economic and social factors: Economic crisis, political instability, unemployment, low income.

5. The mass media: movies, computer games.

Prison as an institution is an essential element of the Greek Counseling System. It is the most representative example of an autocratic institution. Activities are strictly predetermined and one is followed by the other. The rules are specific and enforceable from the powers above. No personal time or space exists.

Goffman (1968), in his book "Asylums" defines asylum as a place of residence and work, where a large number of individuals are

separated from the wider community for a specific period of time and lead a confined and strictly managed lifestyle. The characteristics of an «asylum» according to Goffman are as follows:

-Access to the outside world is non-existent or limited. The prisoner's world is contained in the whole institution.

-There is a hierarchy. The staff has the power, not the prisoners.

-There are rules and regulations that the prisoner must obey.

-The institution has goals and objectives.

-Activities are organized according to a specific plan, with very little privacy.

According to Sykes (1958), the incarceration of a person in prison entails various deprivations: deprivation of liberty, deprivation of goods and services, sexual deprivation, deprivation of autonomy and security. The experience of incarceration is associated with specific psychological consequences such as: disruption of problem-solving skills, anxiety disorders, depression, suicide/self-injury attempts, institutionalization.

One of the applications of Gestalt psychotherapy is in organizations. And prisons are an organization. With regard to offenders, a

Gestalt psychotherapist needs (in my opinion) to aim at:

-Supporting and empowering detainees so that they learn to cope with the difficult condition of incarceration.

-Cultivate skills that help them manage their adversity more creatively.

-Acquisition of social skills.

-Recognizing their emotions and ways to manage them better.

-Mobilizing and empowering them to set personal goals.

-Awareness of their limits and those of others.

-Recognition of patterns that lead to abusive behaviour

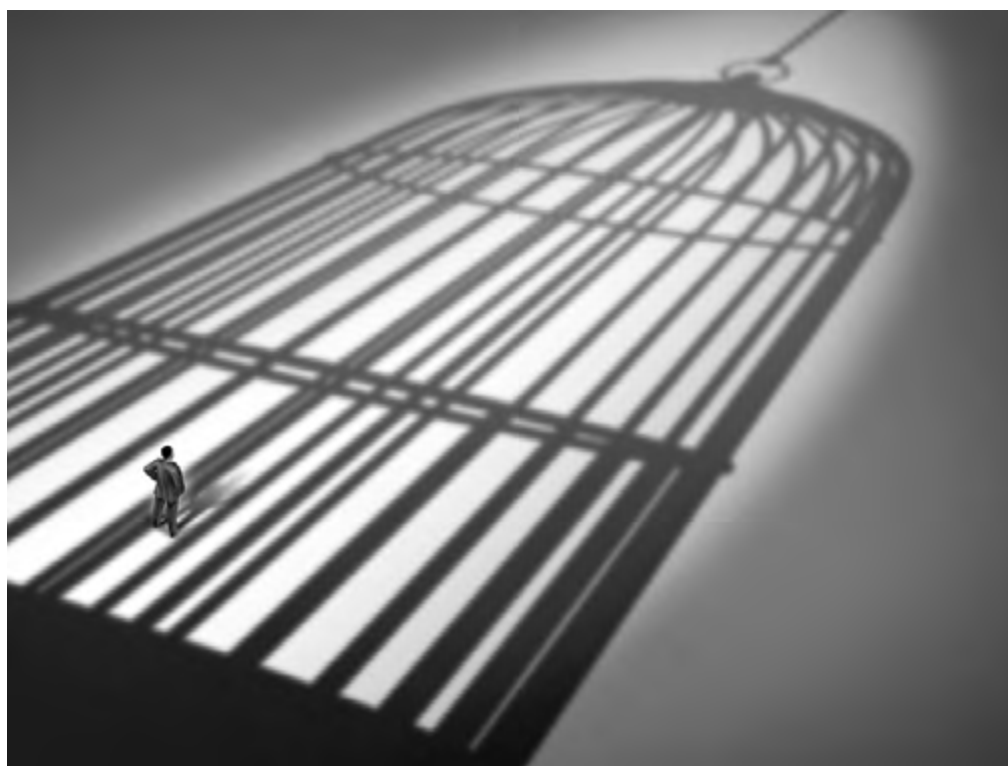
-Recognition of their defence mechanisms.

"Working» with prisoners requires sensitivity (but with patience).

Prisoners often fear being emotionally involved as they have experienced criticism, abandonment, and betrayal.

Therefore, the Gestalt therapist in this process is:

- Aware: in constant touch with what he/she feels while keeping the correct distance from the prisoner so as not to create unrealistic expectations.



-Authentic.
 -Flexible: able to adapt creatively, in an environment that often has twists and turns.
 -Consistent.
 -Have boundaries: Prisoners often try to manipulate the therapist in order to gain favour with him or test him. The therapist needs to be alert to and overcome these manipulations and to keep the «distances» needed.
 -Open: this means understanding the diversity of the group, recognizing and respecting the dignity and rights of the prisoners. For those inmates who find it difficult to interact in a group, the Gestalt group environment provides a safe environment in which to explore their difficulties and it gives them the opportunity to experiment with new skills.
 Instead of an epilogue, I'll refer to the words of Nazim Hikmet: "The worst is when people - knowingly or not - carry a prison inside themselves".

Anta Giagou: *Psychologist, Gestalt psychotherapist, trainer, member of EAGT and HAGT, Diploma in Forensic Psychology and Criminology.*

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Mental Resilience: «Fall down seven times, stand up eight.»

Very often people come to us to learn a way to control, to shrink the emotions that are afflicting them, or to deal with the physical symptoms associated with their frustrated attempt to control their environment. Control, security, trust, risk and threat are vehicles in which we are constantly moving, depending on how much freedom we feel. A person needs to feel both safe and motivated in supporting the spontaneous flow of creativity. As confidence is built in the therapeutic relationship (which involves some risk), the patient can discover ways to feel safe through expansion: increasing awareness, deep breathing. Thus, when it's not possible for a situation to change, he can become more flexible and change his reaction to it; he can scale down his emotional arousal as well as his behaviour.

The goal, both in treatment and in life, is not to achieve safety, as it is destined to be constantly disturbed, so that we can explore the world and move forward. The goal is mental resilience. Knowing that I can withstand the challenges, the difficulties in life, as

the Japanese proverb describes: «Fall down seven times, stand up eight» has to do with being able to adjust positively, to regain my ground (wherein lies my sense of security) after difficult experiences in life and being able to deepen my understanding of myself, to be committed to learning new skills and building on old experiences. Making the most of my potential and reaching out to external sources of support is an innate ability! We can lose it and develop it throughout our lives. It is a dynamic process of learning and development shaped by the interactions with our environment.

As Therapists, we are called upon to take care of our own mental resilience (and the skills associated with it) and to trust the change that our attitude brings to the therapeutic relationship.



Konstantina Gioni: *Psychologist, MSc Mental Health, Gestalt Psychotherapist, Member of EAGT and of the Hellenic Association for Gestalt Therapy (HAGT).*

«...Opportunity fleeting ...»

Life is short,
 and art long,
 opportunity fleeting,
 experimentations perilous,
 and judgement difficult.

Hippocrates, Epiphany

In Greek, the two terms, Chronos and Kairos, refer to the way we experience time. The first refers to objective time, which can be measured in hours, months and years. It includes the linear flow, the ephemeral moments that follow one another. The second term refers to the lived experience of time, to the decisive

moments we are called upon to respond to a given situation. It is at the same time a temporal and a fixed concept.

Staemmler invites Gestalt therapists to further develop the concept of time in the healing process. He describes the moments when in an I-Thou meeting, the past takes on a new meaning and the possibilities of the future are revealed. It is the crucial moment when the therapist and the patient are called upon to take a position, in deciding whether or not to make a change, aware of the risk of this decision. So he invites us to face these moments with courage. From the therapist's point of view, there are important moments in the process to choose

the appropriate intervention that can transform the course of treatment. At the same time, he emphasizes that if the moment does not have the quality of *kairos*, it is wise for the therapist not to take unnecessary risks.

Once a person is thrown into a situation he can no longer escape it. He needs to make his way through it; he can't fail to respond. Heidegger describes *kairos* as the moment *Dasein* understands his orientation to the world. Nietzsche speaks of the eternal return, when man is confronted with the possibility of redemption, the decisive moment when he must respond. Timing is a quality of *kairos*.

Kairos refers to the experience of time where all three dimensions coexist. Memory returns in relation to the present state and the expectation of the future, and the past is redefined in the present.

Trauma «steals» from human life the fertile ground that the *kairos* offers. Therefore, by rebuilding this fertile ground in the healing process, we can emerge from the eternal chronological pres-



ent that condemns us to trauma.

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Dimitra Chatziara:
B.Sc.(Hons) Psychology
– Gestalt Psychotherapist; Member of EAGT and HAGT; Trained in EMDR Trauma Therapy.

«The body in psychopathology»

In Gestalt therapy, a person's healthy and pathological experience is a continuum

that occurs in any given situation and is determined by the person's relationship with their environment. Every living body seeks contact with the environment and it is precisely this contact that sustains life. Breathing, the entering and exiting of air to and from the environment, is the primary way in which a living body is maintained through contact. When referring to psychopathology, we are talking about a phenomenon that emerges between the individual and the environment and occurs at the contact boundary. Psychopathology involves a state of pain and discomfort that may be expressed by the individual but does not belong to him. It belongs to the field created by his relationship to the environment. The person, as a fleshed-out entity, can experience the pain that stems from his relationship with the world, as loneliness, anxiety, stress, disconnection, fear, shame, the threat of death. Every painful experience is perceived and expressed by the body as a change in one's natural state as part of the world. In neurosis, the individual experiences his thoughts and his body as two separate experiences that make no sense and makes it difficult

for him to experience his relationship with the world as a whole. In psychosis, the individual has no ground in this world as an embodied entity, and it feels like he does not reside in his body. The way a person experiences the boundary between himself and the world, the perception of time and space, the energy he needs to make contact with the environment, the inclination to move towards the environment and his aesthetic experience of the world, are processes embedded in a field. In the treatment of psychopathology, the therapist can also experience the effect of the psycho-pathological phenomenon on the body that is co-created with the patient. The therapist's body resounds in the presence of the other and creates an experience that is unique in every relationship. Experiencing what the patient is experiencing and discovering what can support this embodied experience of both parties can transform the relationship and create new experiences of contact with the world.

Exarmeria Pappa: *Psychologist (MSc), MSc Mental Health Studies, Pg. Certificate Gestalt Body Process (Trained by James Kepner); Gestalt Psychotherapist and Trainer; Member of EAGT and HAGT (Hellenic Association of Gestalt Psychotherap*

variety of objects and materials and invites him or her to initially interact with them (Kalff, 1980). By interacting via a non-verbal process with objects and sand, the patient can soften his defences and decrease his resistances, creating in the sand pit a world that is purely his own (Lowenfeld, 1979).

The possibilities of using sand for experimentation are endless. As Gestalt therapists we can use it without any additional training, both individually and in groups and with different populations (e.g. children and adults) (Stevens, 2004).

I first came into contact with Sand-play therapy when I decided to apply it to patients with dementia by incorporating it into Gestalt therapy. My aim in this intervention was mainly to observe this population. That is, to see and observe whether such immediate therapeutic intervention can activate patients who are in the early and advanced stages of dementia (Siampani, 2010).

When I use Sand-play therapy, I usually invite my patient to imagine and create a «backdrop» in the area where the sand is placed by positioning one, or more, miniature figures on the sand.

Many thanks to those who have honoured me with their trust and they were open and willing enough to experiment with Sand-play therapy and to experience the creative process using miniatures and sand buckets.



«Releasing Creativity on the Sand Tray: Sand-play Therapy and Gestalt»

As a Gestalt therapist, I choose to experiment with other therapeutic approaches which I use as tools to adapt to specific situations, with specific people and groups, rather than as rigid «prescriptions». For example, I opt for Sand-play Therapy when I notice that the patient resists exploring difficult issues with the therapist and I am interested in helping to «unlock» through a less frightening approach than «the talk therapy» approach (Siampani, 2013).

Sand-play therapy is an adjunctive therapeutic approach, where the therapist provides the patient with a sand pit, water, and a

Katerina Siampani: *Counseling Psychologist, Gestalt trainer and supervisor - trained in Art-Therapy and Sand-play Therapy, member of EAGT and HAGT, associate of the Greek Association of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders.*

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FREE EXPRESSION

About "square floor", the poetry collection of D. Diamataris

This is a kind of writing that is consistent with that of the unconscious... Poetry that extracts, methodically and persistently, the precious mineral of this Poet's soul! From there, he derives his theme and creates the story of his own private space, with deep, experiential and unassuming economy...

Without accusatory rhetoric, it vibrates with the emergence of liberating discourse, maintaining a polyphonic treasure trove that is at one in the same time seductive and enigmatic... it is poetry of human experience, as he points out, and of trembling sensitivity, as I point out.



The control of words, the changing meaning, obviously record, in a purely personal style, his inner 'fingerprints'. A spiral style of writing that comes back to you with different meanings, concise and sharp, provoking and inviting inner dialogue with a particular sense of lyricism, and clarity...

Reading it, I cannot count the ways in which the soul can conquer through endless hours of reflection and introspection, and for that I thank him...and I wish him good luck to his poetry collection!

Thalassini Papadam

PS: Closing, I can't avoid expressing my friendly wish to the Poet: To continue this unwinding of his bun, with his directorial, poetic

sensibility! The antennas of my soul, my hearing and my vision will always be present next to him and at his disposal...

«The time is passing and I am late...»

I'm a branch
Loaded with words...
Shake me
South of silence,
North of sorrow,
Gather my words...
My own eyes
Got used to the light
Of drunken thoughts...
And my hands
Crumpled
In the dream harvest...

Thalassini Papadam



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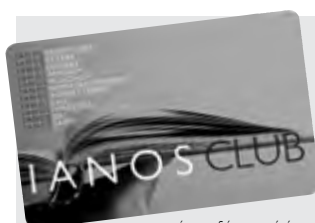
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