

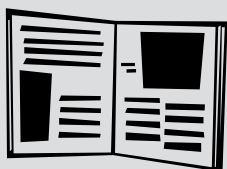


# Gestalt NEWS Foundation

Informative and communicative six-month issue of the Center of Psychotherapy and Training Gestalt Foundation • April 2005 • 2nd issue



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If you wish to participate in the following issues of the newsletter you are all welcome! You may contact the Gestalt Foundation (telephone: 2310 282588, 210 7254010, email: [thessaloniki@gestaltfoundation.gr](mailto:thessaloniki@gestaltfoundation.gr), [athina@gestaltfoundation.gr](mailto:athina@gestaltfoundation.gr)) and express your interest in participating or just tell us your opinion or your ideas.

**We are interested!**

## NURIT'S GREETINGS

The invitation to greet the community of the Greek Gestalt Foundation gives me a very pleasant opportunity to renew the contact with all of you all of you whom I had the good fortune to meet, and some of you whom I had the privilege to teach or supervise.

During the last 4 years (is it really only four years? It feels like much longer), I follow the development of the foundation with lots of care and admiration. I think your leaders, namely Despina, Katia Antonia, Janna set a good example of what can be achieved through determination, belief and love. From a modest idea of wishing to utilize their newly acquired experience of Gestalt and share it with other professionals, they have created an ever-growing circle of trainees and patients, and at the same time a parallel ever-growing support system of Friends of the Foundations, who come from all over, to work for and with you as supervisors, trainers, lecturers and counselors.

For me the work in Athens and in Thessaloniki is always a most rewarding experience: I appreciate the eagerness, the tenacity and the sincerity with which trainees attend the courses and the workshop.

I enjoy the humor, the good spirits, the friendly atmosphere, and the creative frame of mind that is always planning something new.

I admire the courage and the capacity that enables participants to deal with grief and pain during day and celebrate life in the evenings, with the delicious food and wine, with the most

embracing music and rhythm of your dances. Most of all I am always touched and humbled at the trust with which you encounter me and allow me to make meaningful contact with you.

Jerusalem and Athens have always maintained a very distinctive relationship that is characterized by mutual respect, curiosity, admiration and competition. Along the history of civilization a great deal of wisdom and beauty stemmed from these two wells and nourished the cultures that were inspired by them.

Very humbly dare to say that it feels to me like the most natural continuation of this ancient bond. I feel very much at home with you, though I clearly am permanently aware of our differences. They inspire me in a pleasant, challenging way, and it gives me a lot of satisfaction to bring back to you and share with you what I gain from our connections.



I see the future of the Foundation as a leading school of Gestalt that is deeply rooted in its local environment, contributing to the well-being and personal growth of its members and clientele and at the same time involved in the developments of the field of Gestalt through research and innovative initiatives.

I am happy to have a share in this endeavor.

**Yours, Nurith**

*Nurith Levi, Ph.D. is an accredited social worker, family therapist, psychotherapist and mostly a Gestalt believer. She was initially trained in Israel in the 80' and since then she is seeking any opportunity to acquire deeper and wider understanding of Gestalt as a humanistic philosophy and as a way of Being.*

*She is Dean of Students at the Beit Berl college in Israel where she is also a senior lecturer, and is in private practice. During the last 15 years she a volunteer at the National Council for Children in Israel, where she is chief clinical advisor and expert on behalf of the court for child custody evaluation.*

*In 1998 she founded the Israeli Gestalt Therapy Association and is since its elected president. She is also a member of EAGT and at present Chairperson of the planning committee for the EAGT Seminar "Gestalt Meets Conflict Resolution in Action", to be held in Jerusalem in September 2006.*

*Nurith is married to Joel, they have 4 children and 3 grandchildren.*

## Publishers' Note



April 2005

So, we are back with our second issue. Our first effort was warmly received. We heard and read many encouraging words, for which we are thankful. Do not stop sending us your comments, your proposals and your creative mood! You help us continue!

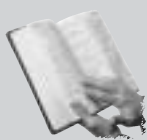
This space aims primarily to communicate and inform the Gestalt Foundation members, who are students of the Foundation, graduates, participants in the seminars organized and the colleagues. To all of you there is an open invitation to participate in this "newsletter", so that it may become through your "discourse" a lively space of dialogue and expression. If you have any idea, express it. Communicate with me and we shall discuss its realization.

The "permanent columns" remain with theoretical texts on Gestalt therapy, the child, the organizations and the "personal correspondences" inspired by our activities. Our great news is the preparations for the residential workshop, which is our biggest event. This year it will be held in Portaria, Pilio, May 12th-15th with the theme: "Interdependency in Relationships: A human Condition"

For our special issue we chose the conference entitled: "Gestalt Therapy in the 21st century: In Dialogue with Differentiability" that we co organized with "Morfi and Fondo" Psychotherapy and Ergo therapy Center in November 2004 in the Billi Megaro in Thessaloniki and with the kind support of the Greek Association of Alzheimer and relevant Disturbances, the Macedonia-Thrace Cancer Patients' Association and the Thessaloniki Y.C.A. We could not possibly transmit the cordial atmosphere and the warm participation during the conference. We try though to give a representative "sample" of that day. We hope that many more conferences like that shall follow in the future.

Enjoy your reading!  
Antonia Konstantinidou

*A few words about Antonia Konstantinidou:*  
Antonia Konstantinidou is a Social and Clinical Psychologist (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), a Gestalt Psychotherapist, Trainer and Supervisor. She is the co-founder of the Gestalt Foundation and one of the permanent members of the training program. She lives and works in Thessaloniki where she holds her private practice since 1996.



## Gestalt Therapy and Bibliography

Indisputably Isador From is a prominent Gestalt theory and therapy figure. He was a client, student, collaborator/co-former, admirer and also a harsh judge on F. Perls and the new Gestalt tendencies. He was born and raised in the U.S.A. Always daring he never hesitated to seek constant stimuli and experiences through his travels for studies, business and pleasure in various countries and cities through out America and Europe with a special affection for New York, Paris and Italy. His engagement with psychotherapy came as a result of the circumstances (he was treated by F. and Laura Perls, who urged him to decide professionally and finally, when Perls left Los Angeles he referred his cases to him) rather than a conscious decision, at least in the beginning of his career. His interests and his studies were focused on philosophy, which defined his thought and his attitude towards Gestalt theory and therapy.

Despite his being an excellent teacher, he never published anything. He believed that he came from a discursive tradition and that he needed a person to address to and he also talked of the fear to write something that would probably be wrong. He considered language as his main communicative means and as the basic tool in the therapeutic procedure. Therefore his careful and exact use of words was a crucial element of his therapeutic work.

His therapeutic work and teaching were defined by his emphasis on the repeated patterns in the contact-withdrawl circle, which characterizes the way that a person contacts the environment. For From the concept of the self as a system of

contact-withdrawl is expressed in the entire circle. The self is the tension or the fading of the figure. A different degree of awareness of the self is connected to different stages and consequently different issues of the self are important at different levels. In pro-contact i.e. there is ambiguity of the experience, receptivity, uncertainty, an almost chaotic awareness that are necessary for the formation of the figure coming from an inactive background. In the contact phase there is fullness of the self, which is experienced in the alienation-identification of the self as it enters in the forming figure. In the final-contact, when everything becomes figure, the awareness of the self as a special entity ceases since there is no interest in the self at the final phase. The therapy work according to From makes the person capable to focus on the moment of interruption of the experience during the contact-withdrawl process by observing the interruptions on the circle. Central to this observation is the loss of ego functions, that define the conclusion of every phase of the contact-withdrawl circle.

From's second very important contribution is the development of a model for the ego function, the id function and the personality of a person thus extending what Perls and Goodman comprehend in Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality as different versions of the self, as three stages of the creative adjustment and they believe that the loss of the ego is the key to neurosis. From elucidated the qualitative differences among the three functions by stressing the primal position of the ego function (what I do or what I don't want)



By Lena Pantelidou,  
Gestalt Foundation graduate

because its loss induces psychological pain. He speaks of loss and not of sub-/ or mal-function of the ego function since we do not judge or correct the client, but we help him recognize his function. As a result of this loss arise the personality disturbances at the id and personality functions. According to From the therapeutic observations and interruptions occur primarily at the id level (what a person needs) and at the personality (what a person is or is not). Afterwards the reason why these disturbances occurred is revealed, that is, because of the loss of ego functions. This loss, according to From, happens in four ways: confluence, retroreflection, introjection, projection. These are not just behavioural figures but the ways that a person experiences himself in relation to the environment. His main care was the retaining of the ego function, which consists of the support of the client so that he may recognize the loss and work with the therapist in the here-and-now and continuously to support him in order to focus on the moment of interruption of the experience or of contact and on the inevitable anxiety that occurs.

The interventions do not focus on the anxiety per se but on the

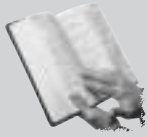
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Fon Kozani 37 - Kozani 50100 - Tel.(0030)2461038417



## Gestalt Therapy and Bibliography

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suspended excitement by going backwards to the time when the suspension was taking place and by getting in touch with the emotion present at the time. In this way the person experiences his self and the other separately and allows the union with the therapist. In order for the therapeutic aim to succeed it is necessary that the therapist's ego function fully at least during the therapeutic process.

In order to promote the client's ego he used to invite the latter to criticize him and his work so that he may be perceived as a distinctive other humanized and not idealized. He also encouraged the client to cope with his differentiated position, to argue with him, to see how he limits himself; He would also focus on the client's body and work with his projections. He treated his clients equally and tried not to be projected by them but simply to be part of their experience.

From's model regarding the id, ego and personality functions provides a working framework which informs the therapist that the ego function is being lost and thus helps him organize his language and the structure of his therapeutic interventions. This model combined with the four phases model (pre-contact, contact, final contact, post-contact) by P. Goodman, which provides a temporal orientation in the formation of figure-ground, facilitate the recognition of the loss of ego and also are a rather effective instrument, useful for diagnostic purposes. From believed that a typology of the human organization of experience consistent with the Gestalt theory and therapy, used for diagnostic, therapeutic purposes could exist and that it could communicate with the other psychotherapeutic approaches.

Despite his admiration for Perls who was clever enough to extend Gestalt psychology into a new psychotherapeutic approach responding thus to the limitations set by psychoanalysis, he disagreed with Perls' s ungratefulness towards psychoanalysis and he stressed that Gestalt therapy had its roots in psychoanalysis and especially in Otto Rank.

He was also differentiated because he perceived dreams as retroreflections and their narration in the therapeutic process as a desire for resolving the retroreflection. He considered dreams to be the royal way to return from the digging of the past by placing them in the here-and-now of the therapeutic relationship.

His commitment to Gestalt therapy as expressed in the "Bible", according to his own words, that is Gestalt therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality by Perls, Hefferline and Goodman, brought up against the

new "progressive" Gestalt tendencies. Ten years before his death (he died in 1994), in his lecture "Requiem for Gestalt, 1984" in America and in Europe accused all the people who called themselves "gestaltists" and invited them to acquire a new name since Gestalt had become a therapeutic approach that was in a distance from its initial character and longer expressed them. The point of dispute with Perls was the latter's obsession with the continuous invention of new techniques as well as his borrowing techniques from other approaches. He had a resistance towards whatever might be progressive and whatever kept the Gestalt therapy and theory off from what it initially was. Characteristically, he used to say that in his 35-year career he never thought it necessary to look for something new and better than the Gestalt therapy. He also argued that Gestalt therapy needed less loans compared to other approaches and methods and more development of its own techniques.

He disagreed to linking Gestalt therapy with the work with the body because, he argued, it reestablishes the dualism body-mind, which Gestalt therapy had already successfully surpassed.

He was also opposed to the infamous attraction between Gestalt therapy and the developmental centers. He believed that Gestalt therapy was not about development, but about the disturbances in it and about supporting the resolution of the developmental obstacles.

He thought Gestalt therapy not to be oriented towards the process because we do not observe or experience a process but the displacement of the limits of contact.

Finally, he believed that Gestalt therapy is an individual therapy and not a group therapy. He thought that the therapeutic group stimulates the resistances of a person, who needs the confirmation that he will not experience in the group all the things that are so painful in his own family. The individual therapy in a group is acceptable only if the therapist shows extreme care to every member separately.

Of course, all this criticism did not go without opposition that caused tensions, coalitions and led him to social isolation and bitterness, especially during the last years of his life. Despite the contradictions that were provoked by his attitude, his contribution to the systematic development of Gestalt therapy and theory in the clinical practice was generally and indisputably recognized, just like Fritz and Laura Perls' contribution to the discovery and formation of Gestalt therapy and also Paul Goodman's to its systematic and theoretical grounding.

## Gestalt In The Work Field

*In February 5th-6th, 2005 an experiential workshop was successfully realized: "The effective group" with Sue Clayton within the framework of "Gestalt in the Work Field".*



By Magda Pantelidou

The workshop was entitled:

### "The effective group"

The organizations are structured by groups of people and even when the idea of this group is considered obsolete, this structure within the organizations helps to their efficacy. So, the effective groups are a central issue for the most of the organizations and a part of their skills has to be developed. Gestalt has contributed dynamically in this sector. The workshop was planned for the development of those skills. Gestalt aspires to achieve a successful change in the organizations just like the awareness of the self and of the environment can be achieved.

Sue Clayton (C. Psychol. Dipl. Gestalt Organizational Consulting) has been an organization consultant the last 20 years. She teaches Gestalt in the work field the last 9 years. Big part of her work is dedicated to the development of groups and of leadership. She also organizes groups for therapists and for organizations. She uses art as a tool for development and learning. She studies depth psychology in organizations and leadership issues for her Ph.D. She has written four books.

The next meeting within the events of the "Gestalt in the Work Field" will be held in the framework of the 7th Gestalt therapy residential workshop in Portaria, Pilio May, 12th-15th. John Ewans Porting who is from Denmark will coordinate the seminars. For more information, please contact Gestalt Foundation, in Athens or Thessaloniki, or Magda Pantelidou at 6932 53 22 33.

*Magda Pantelidou is a member of the Greek core for the application of Gestalt in the work field. She lives and works in Athens as a consultant in business research.*

## SPECIAL ISSUE

## THESSALONIKI WELCOMES GESTALT



By Maria Mavridou

**A**fter a seven year consistent presence in the psychotherapeutic and the training field, the Gestalt Center of Training and Psychotherapy decided to open its doors, that deontology demands that they remain shut during the psychotherapeutic process, and to welcome the people that do not participate in a psychotherapeutic process to a conference in which the Gestalt therapy managed to leave its trace in Thessaloniki.

The first Gestalt Conference was organized on November 14th, 2004 in the Center of History in Thessaloniki with the cooperation of the Greek Association of Gestalt Psychotherapy, the Psychotherapy and Ergotherapy Center "Morfi and Fondo", the Greek Association of Alzheimer and relevant Disturbances, the Macedonia-Thrace Cancer Patients Association and the YCA of Thessaloniki.

As I go over the conference program and the whole event from a distance, I realize its magnitude: abundance of presentations and of speakers and mostly the enthusiastic participation of the audience.

It was a rather difficult day with extreme weather phenomena. The phenomenon though that was mostly commented on was the attendance of the people who filled up the amphitheatre and remained in it for the next 10 hours during the alternation of the presentations with undiminished interest! As I think of the subjects, I realize the reason: "Dialogue and contact in the here and now", "Why should someone be a Gestalt therapist-patient?", "Gestalt and Education", "Gestalt therapy, awareness and creativity in the here and now of the greek reality", "Facing losses in our lives", "Action in the community: professionalism and voluntarism".

The subjects were indeed so alive and direct that were not only addressed to the professionals or the trainees within the field of psychotherapy and mental health, but also to the public. Many of the attendants expressed their personal experience, their thoughts and impressions in a conference that aspired to overcome the difficulties of the theoretical presentations and to establish experience as its moving power.

The lectures, the optical-acoustical presentations and the round table caught the attention of the audience that was not even distracted by the power cut.

I could go on and on about that day by alternating my viewpoint: from that of a spectator, to that of a speaker, of a trainee and of a graduate professional. I would prefer though to comment on two important moments that in my opinion include the style and the character of the Gestalt psychotherapy: the first concerns the senior year trainees' presentation with the subject "Losses" with which they chose to conclude their training program in Gestalt psychotherapy a few months earlier in the annual residential workshop in Pilion. By presenting there their personal history of losses (death, chronic illness, divorce, etc.) they proved that a psychotherapist is not only a professional, but most of all he is a human who carries with him his life story, which often declares his attitude towards psychotherapy, and in which he finally "encounters" his patients... In the "here-and-now" of this conference that powerful experience was the background like a silent movie playing at the back, causing the emotion of the presenters who in the foreground were filling the theoretical voids with a lecture on losses. The atmosphere was heavy; and then it happened: between the "then" and the "now" they managed to contact the audience that began to participate by adding their personal history of losses aloud or silently. It seemed to me that at that moment another figure was being born from the contact, the "later"....

The second important moment was the "encounter" of the social structures, which have been contributing with beneficial work to the community of Thessaloniki. These structures, the YCA, the Cancer Patients Association and the Greek society for Alzheimer and Relevant Disturbances met at the organized round table with the title "Action in the community: professionalism and voluntarism".

The common ground was the programs for voluntary psychological support

organized by the Gestalt Foundation since 2000 in cooperation with the above mentioned structures. Three parallel actions are being taken that offer the gestalt trainees the opportunity to offer voluntarily their services in the field of women individual consultation, the support of the elderly and of cancer patients by coordinating psychological support groups or by giving lectures of informative character.



They were all there: the structures and the Gestalt Foundation, volunteering psychologists, trainers and supervisors, members of the support groups and coordinators. They were there to discuss the way that theory can be matched with practice and the psychological support and therapy with social offering. Being a professional psychologist and psychotherapist is no different to being a volunteer in a community; these are complementary roles that enrich with new qualities the person who plays them.

The meeting honored with their presence the president of the Greek Association for Alzheimer and relevant Disorders, professor Magda Tsolaki, the president of the Cancer Patients Association, Mrs. Persephone Mitta and the president of the YCA of Thessaloniki, Mrs. Theodosia Katsoni.

The discussion that followed concerned the spirit of social offering that seemed to motivate those women that were coming from different origins as well as the members of the Gestalt Foundation. The applause of the audience in the end was the irrefutable proof of a recognizable work of life and the best inspiration for its continuation.

The first step has been made and it has been successful. The effect of this conference shows us that such events may even need to be institutionalized in the psychotherapy field.

The first Gestalt conference left the best of impressions to the audience that attended it and to its hosts and everyone who worked for its realization felt the satisfaction and the burden of responsibility for the future...

What lies ahead for Gestalt in our city?

We shall see!

***Maria Mavridou** is a psychologist (A.U.Th.) and a psychotherapist. She has concluded her four year training in Gestalt psychotherapy. Since 1999 she has been working as a psychologist in the Center of Social Support in Evosmos in the field of consulting and as a psychotherapist privately. She also works as a coordinator of social support groups, parenting schools and experiential groups. She participated in scientific conferences with presentations, workshops and articles. She is a permanent collaborator of the "Evosmos" magazine and a temporary of greek and foreign psychology journals.*

## 1st CONFERENCE OF GESTALT

Gestalt  
Child and

**S**unday, November 14, 2004. The day has come! Since early in the morning there is panic in the foyer of the Megaron Billi... psychologists, psychotherapists, trainers, trainees and some people who had the bad (!) luck to be stuck with all of us the "Gestaltists"! Everyone was sharply dressed, running around taking care of the last details: some of them preparing the stands with the informative material, some others taking a look at their lectures, and others just having a sip of coffee to wake up!

Many times I caught myself getting disconcerted in the midst of this preparatory orgasm and as a result wandering about the place searching for something to do in order to forget for a while. I admit that there were many times that I thought of running away to have my Sunday morning coffee, but the voice of reason and... of Gestalt prevailed.

And here it is! The first speakers are already in their positions, the audience awaits the official inauguration so that they can hear us, the "wise" and "experts", and I take some time to have one last cigarette!

It is already past ten in the morning and a lot of people have arrived. So, they do exist, all these people who choose to spend their Sunday in cold conference halls instead of enjoying their coffee by the sea! At that point I hear applause for the previous speech and then Katia Hatzilakou announces our names, Maria Farmaki, Alkistis Kakopoulou and Maria Ioannidou and then the title: "Gestalt and Education: Building Bridges and Demolishing Walls".

Do I have time to escape? It is probably too late... I am second in the row and while Maria Farmaki is speaking, I peek at my presentation and at the same time I look at the audience. My God! The room is almost full! What am I doing here? I have just begun my second training year at Gestalt and among the audience I see professors of mine, colleagues that have already graduated, co-trainees, and people unknown to me of many ages, listening carefully that made me even more anxious.

Only a few things can I recall from my presentation: my frantic heartbeat, my blushing cheeks and my voice that was coming out trembling and uncertain, at least until I got started.

Asides from that rather painful moment, what I definitely remember is the warm environment among us and among the audience who surprised me by their participation and by their attendance till the end. It was amazing that they remained despite the power cut and awaited patiently for the continuance. I cherish the fact that this event was literally a "dialogue with differentiability" just like its title was. And like Yontef who says that dialogue is something that is to be experienced rather than talked about, all of us who were there we experienced it! I hope that this dialogue continue and expand!

What I keep from the presentation Gestalt and Education is the emotion that part of the audience shared with us... Here is a summary of a part of the

presentation for Gestalt and Education that refers to teachers.

### Gestalt and Education "Gestalt and Education: Building Bridges and Demolishing Walls"

When I asked some time ago a schoolteacher how he imagined things to be when he first started teaching and if he had changed his mind during his career, he told me a story which I would like to share with you: «Once upon a time a man decided to emigrate from Europe to America full of hope, ambitions, dreams and naivety. After spending a few weeks in New York, he sent a letter to his family back home in which he wrote: 'When I arrived in America I discovered three things: first, the roads are not paved with gold, second, to be exact, they are not even paved, and third, I was the one who would pave them'».



This story makes me think that a teacher, or any other professional for that matter, forms a very different picture around the nature and the particularities of his profession from the moment he leaves the university amphitheatres and enters the classroom. Especially when he spent four years studying to become a "Physicist", a "Mathematician", a "Philologist", a "Biologist" and now he faces the challenge of teaching children and adolescents having as only supplies his instinct, his experience as a student, and in some cases didactic skills that he acquired in the university.

I wonder, if as a teacher, I have ever considered what this profession means to me. Which are my needs within and outside the school framework? How do I experience my role towards the children? How do I feel with the expectations of the parents? What do I get from them? What is my position towards them? Which are my expectations? Do I need support and what kind of support can it be? What can I do to obtain it?

Gestalt as a psychotherapeutic approach focuses on the Whole of the human existence, that is, on the growth of the human as a totality and on the way that a man relates with his environment.

Every teacher is a unique man that carries his personal history, his own environment and as such he acts and relates in the school environment. First of all, he relates in this environment with his self, his needs, his expectations, and his anxieties. He also relates with the children because in the classroom he is only expected to transmit knowledge, but also to motivate the students to learn, to diminish their stress, to encourage, to set limits, to see to the compliance with the rules, to listen. A teacher also relates with the students' parents, who besides having their own expectations and needs, they also have demands regarding the progress of their children. Very often the parents transpose the

responsibility for the success or failure in school to the teachers. Finally, we should bear in mind that a teacher is related with his colleagues with who he shares daily agonies, successes and failures as well as conflicts, competition etc.. On the other hand, a teacher relates with the educational system per se, which keeps changing, often without the necessary warning or preparation and thus defines the limits of the teacher's action.



By Maria Ioannidou

The most important thing of course is not just the kind of the framework to which any person relates but the way by which he communicates. Gestalt speaks of taking the personal responsibility. As a teacher I think many times that I have the responsibility for the learning and the progress of the students, but I wonder how arrogant it sounds to consider that the future of my thirty students depends on me! There are times that I think that I am not responsible for the fact that some of the material that I teach is difficult for some students, because after all, the analytical program binds me to it. In both cases I forget that I can only bear the responsibility of my self. This means that all I can do is to be understandable in my teaching method and on the other hand to try and remember that before me I have thirty different human beings that might be learning in thirty different ways and that might have thirty different reasons that bring them today to the classroom! The issue is not to listen to these thirty different reasons but to be prepared to listen and to accept that a student cannot learn something in my way. For me this is already very important. It is a beginning for a communication, the start for contacting.

A presupposition of a full and complete contact with the other is to be first and foremost in contact with my self. What does this mean? According to Satir it means to see and to listen to the student standing before me, and not the student that he should be, the student that he was in the past, or the student that he will grow into in the future. It means that I do what I feel and think and not what I should be feeling and thinking. It also means to ask what I want and not wait for the permission to ask it or wait for the help to come on its own! It means to risk for me and not prefer the security of idleness.

This is maybe the only way towards maturity. What does maturity mean? It means to be able to be in peace with my self as a teacher and professional without needing to be told so by the others. It means to allow my self not to know everything, to be able to say "this, I do not know, but I can search and learn" and even more to accept the fact that one of my students might know about a subject more than I do, even if I am the expert! Maturity means to accept that maybe sometimes one of my students is right and I am wrong. In other words, maturity means to be who I am and not who the environment imposes me to be, without meaning that I cease to need to interdepend and cooperate. According to Perls "learning is discovering" and it is therefore a personal issue and responsibility of everyone... but it is not necessary to make this journey of discovery without traveling companions.

## “Gestalt Therapy and Creativity”

(A few words about the conference  
on November 14, 2004)

Since the fall 2004 I thought that this year would be professionally rich with a lot of difficulties. Two weeks before the conference I was once again a speaker at the Center of History and many weeks after that I was supposed to give another lecture at the same place. I was afraid I was becoming something like a permanent resident of the Center. All those circumstances struck me as bizarre, both fun and a message to pay attention to the way that I move around.

Anyhow, this sensation had two important “applications”: the first was that after it, I changed the subject of my presentation for the conference, which I first thought to correlate with my presentation at Prague. The second one was that I found the idea on which I unfolded the biggest part of the presentation, thus aiming at being direct so as to be interesting and original for the audience.

The text began by referring to some of the above mentioned in the first person (“I”). Then, I used my own experience of the moment, in the “here-and-now” of the speech. As a result, the presentation had certain parts that were purely improvising, which seemed improvising, whereas some others were purely theoretical. The feedback regarding this way of presenting was mostly positive, and I was really glad for that. If I tried presenting again, I would make it briefer and I would change the experiment.

In the first part of the presentation I spoke of some basic Gestalt therapy principles. The effort to try and say with a few words the basics of such a huge subject, proved to be a rather useful exercise for me. The second part was dedicated to a short reference to the modern opinions on creativity, placing it beyond the limits of the arts. In the last part I tried to link all of the above in my own way and I came to the conclusion that all the dimensions of creativity run through the basic principles of Gestalt therapy. The epilogue was consisted of my personal views regarding creativity in art and its possible use in therapy. I argued that I do not believe in therapy through art or to art as therapy, but only to art AND therapy (when needed).

I really enjoyed this experience and my participation in an event that aimed at he broader information of the public regarding Gestalt therapy. I think that this initiative was very important for Greece and I supported it enthusiastically. I was sorry that for reasons purely practical, I was not able to attend all the speeches of the



**Peter Theodorou**

*4th year in  
Gestalt Foundation of  
Thessaloniki*

conference.

I gained though a lot from the atmosphere. First of all I was impressed by the attendance of so many people, especially with such bad weather and unpredicted power cuts and by the general “movement” in the space. Despite the fact that a lot of people were coming and going in the building, there was a lot of energy in the air, “something” was happening.

I was also impressed by the quality of the organization, the readiness, the care, (that is something that I will not stop saying for the Gestalt Foundation events that now has its collaborators).

I liked the receptivity of the people, who were very “present”, as if the most of them knew the reason that had driven them to the conference and they were attentive of their role as receivers. Finally, from my brief presence at the conference I had the impression of an “honest” event, which seems even more successful considering that day’s rain!

Indeed, it was pouring! When I set off from my home, which is near to the Center, I doubted the realization of the conference. Never before had I seen all the roads flooded and I had to organize a master plan in order to approach the Center. I felt that only my jacket was dripping, but also my bones. When I saw that there was no more electricity I started thinking my plans until the time of a rehearsal that I had on late in the evening. I saw all those people downstairs, in the street and amazed I heard that there was still enough audience and that the conference was being continued in candlelight. Fortunately, I had some extra clothes with me for the rehearsal, I changed my wet clothes and I made my presentation without socks. I personally enjoyed every minute of that event.

I would not want to remiss referring to something else important to me. Just like my presentation in Prague, no one from the Gestalt Foundation overshadowed my paper, which often happens in the academic world.

In both cases there was a basic informing and summary on my behalf regarding the subjects that I had chosen. There was no control as to whether it should be “approved” or not. I felt confidence, safety, freedom that strengthened my motivation to try my best for both events, even if I have had bad experiences from my cooperation with private and state organizations. It seems to me that the therapeutic process has very many dimensions...

## Flow of the sentiments: Enemy or Helper of our psychosomatic health

Gestalt therapy is a humanistic approach that considers the human as a totality, who exists and is defined thanks to the interconnection of his parts (body, sensations, perception, sentiments, thoughts, experiences, knowledge). The totality that we are, our organism, does not exist on its own. It lives, moves, develops in the environment and is defined by it. My self begins where my environment ends, on the limit of the Ego. This is what differentiates my self from the others. If the others did not exist, my environment, I would not know where I am. So, we see that in Gestalt therapy we cannot consider man separately from his environment.

Organism and environment coexist and interrelate at any given moment in a specific field. This is the common ground needed for us to meet with the rest of the people and to interact. The supplies that we need for this interaction are our sensations and thus our bodies, our sentiments.

The sentiments are not something outside of us. They happen inside us, they are born in our organism, they exist because we exist and in order for us to exist. Whatever that may be, it is ours, our very own sensation and perception that might look similar to that of the person sitting next to us, but it cannot be the same, just like we are not the same as any other person. It is not right or wrong, good or bad. It exists though as a version of our interaction, as a result of the given moment. Consequently, our sentiments are what they are, and not what we think they should be or want them to be. How we feel is not something static and permanent, it is a constant and ever changing process, it has a flow. In that way we correspond to the conditions, the demands of life, to our own needs, satisfaction and completion comes, a cycle closes (gestalt) and another one opens and the flow of sentiments is shown, the flow of life.

The completion we feel by following the flow of our sentiments becomes our helper to our psychosomatic health and balance. Our sentiments help us keep in touch with a certain condition every moment, it is a part of the human existence and they are not positive or negative, they are just what they are every time.

What happens if for some reasons we cannot realize the stimuli of our environment and their influence on us, as they really happen? If we realize them but we ignore our needs and we do not do anything that we really need? Then we have blocked the normal flow of our sentiments and experience. This, we manage with many ways that in gestalt are called “defense mechanisms”.

When we loose our confidence in our feelings, we reach many times to the point where we cannot even recognize them. We keep our sentiments inside us and the tension grows and we are confused because we do not understand what is happening to us. Some other times, we recognize what we feel but we do not like it and we deny it or we try to. In some cases we are ashamed of what we feel and we think it is unacceptable or even fearful. When we function in that way, we accumulate energy and at some point we explode causing damage both to ourselves and to the others.

The issue arising is, that no matter how much we hide our feelings, they do not disappear; they exist inside us, affecting our behavior and our body and often causing health problems. Sometimes we are in danger of having psychological and psychosomatic problems. Just because as mentioned earlier, we are a totality, our body sends messages by getting ill. It might begin with some very simple signals, i.e. a headache, a stomach pain, or some pimples, and it might come to more intense and severe cases, i.e. severe dermatological problems, diabetes, ulcer, cancer, etc.

It is very important to stress that it is not the sentiments per se that might cause an illness, but the interaction they have on our physiology. If when I get angry or stressed I have a stomach pain and I have a lot of gastric fluids, it is not the anger that I keep or the stress that I feel that cause my ulcer in the long run; the cause is the gastric fluids. Additionally, if once I “disturb” the flow of my sentiments, it does not mean that I will get sick psychosomatically. I am in danger though, when one way of interacting with the environment becomes the only way for a very long time and under any circumstance (fixed gestalt).

In the gestalt perspective, the problem becomes an opportunity to realize what we really need. The “difficulty” becomes a challenge for action and creation of more amenable conditions for interaction. The “psychosomatic disturbance” becomes the road to sincere recognition and “approval” of our whole self, by following the flow of our experience, of our feelings, and finally of life itself.

*The Center of Psychotherapy and Ergo therapy, “Morfí and Fondo” (“Figure and Ground”) was created two years ago by four graduates of the Gestalt Foundation in order to provide consultancy and psychological support, psychotherapy and ergo therapy on an individual and group level. The center consists of the following four Gestalt Foundation graduates:*

*Zografou Mersina (Ergo therapist)  
Trantafillou Sina (Psychologist)*

*Kiletsi Irini (Psychologist)  
Triarico Mariangela (psychologist)*

## "Action in the Community: Professionalism and Voluntarism"

With the motive of the organization of the conference "Action in the Community: Professionalism and Voluntarism" we asked initially from the "Macedonia-Thrace Cancer Patients Association" to share with us their experience from their participation in the conference. We wish to thank for their participation the presidents of Y.C.A. of Thessaloniki, the Greek Association of Alzheimer and Relevant Disturbances, and the Macedonia-Thrace Cancer Patients Association. Let us hope that this letter shall be the beginning of an exchange from the stand of our newsletter among the organizations that have been collaborating with the Gestalt Foundation over the last years. We thank you for your immediate and warm response!



Thessaloniki, April 25 2005  
To: Gestalt Foundation

We dispatch you the letter from our Association for your upcoming newsletter regarding the conference entitled: "Gestalt therapy in the 21st century: In Dialogue with Differentiability".

Our cooperation with the Gestalt Foundation goes back to 2002-2003. The team consists of 12 members coordinated by Mrs. Antonia Konstantinidou.

It is a joy to watch young people offering gratis their time, their love, and their knowledge to help people in need like the cancer patients.

Apart from our cooperation with the groups, they also teach us with their attitude to function in the same way.

They have invited us to attend the conference on November 14th, 2004 and thus to learn how to communicate with each other, how to build bridges and demolish walls, how to recognize our sentiments, the dialogue with reality, professionalism, voluntarism, and how to say goodbye to today and to welcome tomorrow.

To all those young people we would like to wish health and good luck in their life. We want to thank them and we hope that there will be more programs in the hospitals so that they will be able to support the patients from the beginning, from the moment someone is diagnosed up to his cure".

With honor,  
**Mitta Persephone**  
(President)  
**Hatziharalampou Eleni**  
(Secretary)

### The program of the conference entitled: "Gestalt therapy in the 21st century: in Dialogue with Differentiability" Sunday, November 14th, 2004, Center of History of Thessaloniki, Billi Megaron, Ippodromiou Square

- 10 a.m.-10.15 a.m. "dialogue and Contact in the here and now"
  - Beginning  
**Farmaki Maria**, President of the Greek Association of Gestalt Psychotherapy  
**Hatzilakou Katia**, representative of the Gestalt Foundation  
**Triantafyllou Sina**, representative of the Morfi and Fondo
  - 10.15 a.m.-11.00 a.m. "Why be a Gestalt Therapist, Why be a Gestalt Client, Gestalt and Society"
  - 11.00 a.m.-11.15 a.m. Coffee break
  - 11.15 a.m.- 12.00 m. "Gestalt in Organizations: a new approach to communication and leadership"  
**Lavranos Spyros**, M.Sc., Business Consultant  
**Moraitou Ntemi**, B.A., Communication and Public Relations Consultant  
**Stamatis Giwrgos**, B.A., HSD, Management Consultant
  - 12.00-12.45 m.m. "Gestalt in Education: building bridges, demolishing walls"  
**Ioannidou Maria**, Psychologist, Gestalt Foundation trainee  
**Kafkopoulou Alkistis**, M.Sc. School Psychologist, Gestalt Psychotherapist  
**Farmaki Maria**, Psychologist, Gestalt Psychotherapist
  - 12.45m.m. -1.30m.m. "Intervening in Crisis-Abuse"  
Experiential presentation from the Gestalt Foundation  
**Giamarelou Giana**, M.A.-Mpalliou Despina, M.Sc.
  - 1.30m.m.-1.45m.m. Coffee break
  - 1.45m.m.-2.15m.m. "Creating Gestalt Therapy with Isadore From"  
Optical-acoustical presentation, comment, discussion of the interview  
**Pantelidou Lena**, A.U.Th. Psychologist, Gestalt Foundation graduate  
**Siambani Katerina**, Psychologist, Gestalt Foundation graduate  
**Serifi Maria**, A.U.Th. Psychologist, Gestalt Foundation graduate
  - 2.15 m.m.-2.45 m.m. "What' s behind the empty chair?"  
A video made by Estrup Liv, M.A. Optical-acoustical presentation of the basic principles of Gestalt therapy, theory and methodology, comment, discussion of the video  
**Karanasou Lena**, A.U.Th. Psychologist, Gestalt Psychotherapist  
**Maroglou Fotini**, M.Sc. Social and Clinical Psychologist A.U,Th., Gestalt Psychotherapist  
**Manolaki Katerina**, A.U.Th. Psychologist, Gestalt Psychotherapist
  - 2.45m.m.-3.00m.m. Coffee break
  - 3.00m.m.-3.45m.m. "Flow of the sentiments: Enemy or Helper of our psychosomatic health"  
Experiential presentation from the Center of Psychotherapy and Ergo therapy "Morfi and Fondo"
  - 3.45m.m.-4.00m.m. Coffee break
  - 4.00m.m.-4.45m.m. Gestalt therapy, Awareness and Creativity through our sensations  
Experiential presentation by Theodorou Petros, senior trainee of the Gestalt Foundation
  - 4.45m.m.-5.00m.m. Coffee break
  - 5.00m.m.-5.30m.m. "The Gestalt therapist in dialogue with the here and now of the greek reality"  
**Mavridou Maria**, Psychologist, Psychotherapist
  - 5.30m.m.-6.00m.m. "Facing losses in our lives"  
Presentation by the 2003-2004 Gestalt Foundation graduates
  - 6.00m.m.-6.15m.m. Coffee break
  - 6.15m.m.-7.45m.m. "Action in the Community – Professionalism and Voluntarism"  
Round Table  
**Tsolaki Magda**, Professor at the A.U.Th., Neurologist, Psychiatrist, President of the Greek Association of Alzheimer and relevant Disturbances  
**Mitta Persephone**, President of the Macedonia-Thrace Cancer Patients Association  
**Katsoni Theodosia**, President of the Y.C.A. of Thessaloniki  
**Kalota Giana**, M.Sc. Consulting Psychologist  
**Makridou Melina**, M.Sc. Health Psychologist  
**Sadmon Rama**, Social and Clinical Psychologist  
Coordinator: Konstantinidou Antonia, M.Sc. Social and Clinical Psychologist
  - 7.45m.m.-8.00m.m. "Saying goodbye to today, welcoming tomorrow"
  - Closure  
**Farmaki Maria**, President of the Greek Association of Gestalt Psychotherapy  
**Hatzilakou Katia**, representative of the Gestalt Foundation  
**Triantafyllou Sina**, representative of the Morfi and Fondo
- \* During the conference there were presentations and posters regarding the basic principles of Gestalt therapy*
- Co-Organizers**  
The Greek Association of Gestalt Psychotherapy- Gestalt Foundation, Therapy and Training Center- "Morfi and Fondo" Psychotherapy and Ergo therapy Center
- With the Support of:**  
-the Greek Association of Alzheimer and relevant Disturbances,  
-the Macedonia-Thrace Cancer Patients Association and  
-the Thessaloniki Y.C.A.
- The Greek Association of Gestalt Psychotherapy, the Psychotherapy and Ergotherapy Center "Morfi and Fondo", the Greek Association of Alzheimer and relevant Disturbances, the Macedonia-Thrace Cancer Patients Association and the YCA of Thessaloniki.*

## CORRESPONDENCE...



## CORRESPONDENCE...

**O**n February 19 and 20 of 2005 the second and third year of the training program of the Gestalt Foundation of Thessaloniki met with Nurith Levi for an experiment of communication, discovery, and cocreation.

Each of us experiments daily in search of a novel integration after every change. We could see after all the psychotherapeutic process as an experiment.

In this particular experiential workshop I saw the art of speech, of theatre, of movement and of painting, that is the expressions of human and therapeutic creativity coworking and coformulating the field in which a personal story comes alive in the "here-and now", a member becomes a child, becomes one with parts of his dream, enters into a dialogical process with his feelings or with

another person in the empty chair, a symbol becomes an awareness, a behaviour or a role discovers its polarity and is enacted with exaggeration. Finally, in this process we find ourselves alternating in the therapist's and the patient's role respectively.

The transcendental character of my experiment allowed me to experience new sensations of my self. I think now of Zinker's words regarding Gestalt therapy and experiments:

"Gestalt therapy is really permission to be creative. The experiment moves to the heart of resistance, transforming rigidity into an elastic support system for the person. It does not have to be heavy, serious, or even precisely fitting; it can be theatrical, hilarious, crazy, transcendent metaphysical, humorous." The experiment gives us permission to be [...] all the

things, beings, and notions hidden within us. Experiments [...] move from simple playfulness into profound conceptual revelations".

The experiments are a means for the Gestalt therapist to focus on the here and now and on the phenomenology of the moment. This is why every experiment is unique. The person through various communication channels expresses an image, a metaphor, makes a movement, narrates a dream. The therapist observes and uses those elements linking them with the experiment. At this point the therapist experiments with his intention to dare, to become more creative, to play, to try out, to risk and to prepare himself for any outcome.

I treasure Nurith Levi's words: "The experiment is a mignature of real life. The client tries out roles in the safety of the

therapeutic relationship. The more precise, simple and authentic I am, the more secure he will feel, because in that case by keeping open my communication with him I follow the flow of his own process. Otherwise it will be like trying to dress a hippy with a dress; and this is threatening".

I was moved and motivated to write this article by the beauty of the simplicity and the admittance that if I hear the "child knocking on my door and let it come inside" my contact with myself and with my environment becomes more spontaneous, creative and essential. I understand then that I am seeking something that I already am and that I need not look for anywhere else but in me.

**Sofia Bikiropoulou**  
3rd year trainee

# Experimentalists of life on the Gestalt Stage



## Feedback to our first issue

### They told us...

**Joe Melnick:** «...I just finished reading the first edition of your newsletter. I have few small thoughts suggestions, but mainly congratulations on an excellent newsletter. It has everything that a newsletter should have, a blend of relatively small, bite size articles. I particularly liked the diversity and the time line that outlines the important events in the creation and development of your institute...»

**Sue Clayton:** «...I have just opened the file of your newsletter - it is FANTASTIC!!! So professional, informative, engaging - and all those photo's of you gorgeous people right there on my desktop!! Waow!...»

**Ken Evans:** «...It looks very professional and was interesting to read. I enjoyed it very much, thank you.

The content and design are of high quality so that the gestalt community can be very proud.

Best wishes for the next issue....»

**Nurith Levi:** «...Its a beautiful project and you are doing a very important job!...»

**Frans Meulmeester:** «...Congratulations with your wonderful newsletter. It looks very professional and at the same time very personal and warm. It represents so completely the qualities I have met in Gestalt Foundation and all who are involved...»

## New Activities of the Gestalt Approach to Organizations and Businesses

The first presentation of the new activities of Gestalt Foundation for Organizations and Businesses took place with the appropriate "extroversion", the depiction of reality, humor, and communicative mood.

Regarding the perspectives of this new effort spoke Demi Moraitou, Spyros Lavranos and Giorgos Stamatis, who along with Magda Pantelidou have initiated this effort; they have a lot of experience and history in the business field and also a long relationship with the Gestalt approach.

The goals and the perspectives of this new activity initiated by the Gestalt Foundation were also mentioned: consulting services, intra-organizational training, both therapists' and consultants' education with specialization in organizational and business matters.

The speakers also referred to the European Conference of E.A.G.T. at Prague last September as well as to the important decisions that were made on issues regarding Gestalt and Organizations, such as the creation of a European Network "Gestalt Organizations" aiming to become a specialized sector of E.A.G.T.

All the people involved in the Gestalt approach for Organizations aspire that the following European E.A.G.T. conference that will be held in Greece in 2007, shall be a landmark for this new effort of the gestalt approach both for Greece and for the rest of the world.

*Giorgos Stamatis is a member of the greek core for the implementation of Gestalt in the working field. He is trainer and Communication Consultant, with long experience in the field of businesses and organizations. He teaches in the Economic University of Athens.*

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OUR SITE

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