

## Editorial

WELCOME to the 4th edition of the EAGT Newsletter, which has more pages than usual.

The 7th European Conference of Gestalt Therapy, in Stockholm September 2001, was held under the overwhelming figure of a strong world event.

Many participants were suffering from what happened only two days before the conference started, and there were needs on different levels, that weren't met.

The terrorist attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and other places in USA, caused turmoil and chaos in the world. Many Americans that were registered at the EAGT Conference of 2001, had left American ground before the attacks, and had to experience the disaster in their homeland from a great distance.

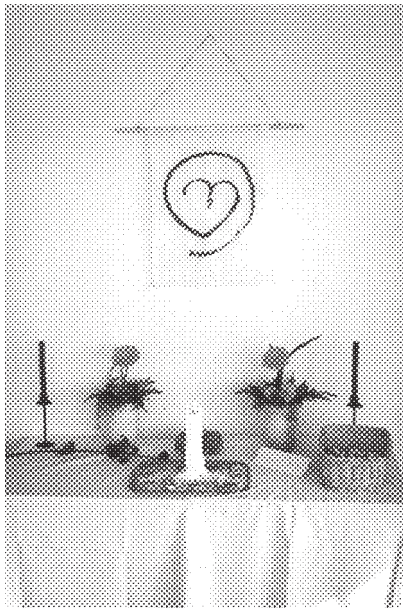
All of us were impacted and shocked and this created a numbness to how we handled the situation.

Peter Schulthess, from Switzerland, has written an article for the EAGT Newsletter, raising the question if Gestalt therapy is beyond politics, left to deal only with intimate issues. His article is responded to by a few other EAGT members, which you may read in the special section on the *2001 European Conference in Stockholm*.

This is a beginning of a dialogue with you as a reader. Please feel free to respond and express your own experiences from the conference or, if you weren't there, any other comments.

With the present state of the world in mind, I wish all of you peace and courage to meet whatever is real for you in your country.

Lars Berg, Editor



"Broken heart needs healing": A table was setup at the Conference Secretariat for attendees to light a candle, spend a moment of silence or prayer.

## The President's Column

**From Palermo to Stockholm**  
– Welcome Speech

*7th European Conference of Gestalt Therapy, Stockholm, Sweden, September 13-16, 2001*  
Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb, President of the European Association for Gestalt Therapy.

We are starting.

Here we are, again, after three years of preparation, and in an incredibly difficult time of our world. This is the most vibrant moment of the Conference: the initial tap of the conductor's baton when the concert starts. We were all planning to play a different concert, instead it will be the concert that we will be able to play after a tragedy.

Here we are, coming from far-away lands, attracted by this magnet called Gestalt therapy.

From this moment on, the field will assemble with vectors of force, it will develop towards the future, led by our free energy and mutually supporting the natural leadership that every one of us wants to express, as her/his unique contribution to the situation, to the group.

I'm sure that this Conference will be a place where to gain the power that comes from our being-with (not from a being-against or above someone else).

Here we are, ready to create a new event, with the fullness of our different backgrounds and the desire to meet the novelty brought by others, also the desire to be close to our American colleagues who in this moment would rather like to be at home, to be close to

relatives and friends and help the situation.

As European Gestalt therapists, we have the pleasure of inviting colleagues from other parts of the world to dialogue on different fields of application of our approach: *society, psychotherapy, organizations, research*.

We offer them the work that we have been doing in these last years and invite them to enrich us with their experiences.

Before the concert starts, I'll tell you something about the "theatre" you are in.

The EAGT has been committed to bestowing dignity to Gestalt therapy within the European context, both at a scientific and political level. The EAGT has performed its tasks going through the challenges of our time – and relying on the importance of networking. It has achieved a dignified position in the dialogue with other mainstream approaches of psychotherapy and in the health system. Many activities have been conducted since the last conference in Palermo, Italy, in 1998. The First European Conference of Gestalt Therapy Writers (March 2001, Siracuse, Italy) which will be followed by the Second one, in April 2002 in Alicante, Spain; the permanent Working Group of European Training Institutes Leaders; the presence of EAGT representatives in other conferences worldwide; the dialogue with other approaches in Europe through the assessment of the scientific value of our approach; the accreditation of European Gestalt therapists through the "European Certificate

of Gestalt Therapy"; the Directory of European Gestalt therapists; the Archives of European literature made thanks to the contributions from all the national representative members of the Extended Board; a Newsletter which keeps EAGT members updated on the work of the Governing Boards, and, finally, a web site ([www.eagt.org](http://www.eagt.org)) which explains all the activities of the EAGT. (Some written material on the European Association – EAGT - is available to you on a table in the exposition area.)

We are all aware that much work is still to be done, especially about our role in the present society, about dialoguing among training institutes, and dialoguing with other psychotherapeutic approaches. The fields in which Gestalt therapists are working and applying our approach have expanded much in the last 10 years. We have done creative work - which needs to become more visible in political and scientific contexts – for example through publications which can allow a more diversified and more respectable appearance and a productive exchange, both inside our community and with other main approaches. I believe that we have to abandon the "Cinderella complex" (the beauty which is not recognized) and become more aware of the beauty and coherence of our own theory and practice, more aware of the specific help we can give to our society.

It's important to offer our "responsibility" as Gestalt therapists to the society we live in, a fragmented and complex society as a matter of fact, which risks to strand in alienation, and needs to learn the importance of being creatively present at the contact boundary.

Personally, I'm grateful to life for having given me the possibility to get in

touch with some of the many treasures – which I tried to reveal to the world – of European Gestalt therapists. I thank those colleagues who did such incredible work on a voluntary basis and who pursued the goals of the Association - through the many activities that I mentioned before. Beautiful people, serious researchers, creative trainers and wonderful writers. I want to thank in particular Malcolm Parlett, the Editor of the British Gestalt Journal, for the organization of the European Conference of Writers; Lars Berg, editor of the Swedish Gestalt Journal, for being the editor and graphic creator of the EAGT Newsletter; Nancy Amendt-Lyon for creatively coordinating the many tasks of the Extended Board; and all the colleagues who share with me the work in the Executive Board: Veronique Vermeir, the Secretary, for her patient work of processing the applications, Bas Lokerse, the Treasurer, for keeping the accounts of the Association, Daan van Baalen, the Public Relations Officer, for his constant support, and Ester Neumanova, who represents the Eastern Europe colleagues in the Board. Many other colleagues are engaged in this great network which the EAGT is becoming. They have contributed a lot to give an identity to Gestalt therapy in Europe. We all enjoy the pleasure of working for something good for our community.

All this work has also been a covert process of preparation for this event, which is the main one in the life of the Association, the European Conference which takes place every three years.

As President of the EAGT, on behalf of all the members of this European Association, I welcome all participants to this 7th European Conference of Gestalt Therapy and wish them a time where the sense of trauma can be changed into creative

responsibility in our community. I thank the group of colleagues of the Gestalt Academy of Scandinavia (in particular the Project Leader, Barbro Curman) who have organized this Conference. In this difficult moment of our history they tried to stay constantly at the contact boundary, adjusting to the novelty of the situation, changing some of the schedule of this Conference even at the last minute, in order to let better express our presence here.

I have a gift from my Institute, the Istituto di Gestalt in Italy, to the Swedish Institute, a painting on papyrus paper representing the "Ear of Dionisio" (a well known archeological site in Siracuse), in order to remember of the polarities Fritz Perls spoke about: "listening versus fighting. People who listen don't fight and people who fight don't listen. If the warring factions in our society .. would open their ears and listen to their opponents, the hostilities in our environment and among nations would greatly diminish." (F.S. Perls, August 1969, Author's Note in Gestalt Therapy. Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality, by Perls, Hefferline, Goodman.)

From Palermo to Stockholm, for European Gestalt Therapy it has been a journey full of passions and intellect, of true dialogues enacted with heads and hearts, where many good seeds have been sown.

Today we don't have the time to celebrate the fruit of our commitment, today it's already the beginning of a new journey, towards our commitment as Gestalt therapy practitioners in a difficult world.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our concert is starting!

*Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb, President*

## The 8th European Conference of Gestalt Therapy

**D**ear colleagues,  
A few months ago in Stockholm I invited the guests of the 7th Conference of Gestalt therapy to Prague, to participate in the next one.

Since that time I have thought about Prague and Gestalt therapy; Prague and Gestalt therapy community. I looked at the city trying to find how the city can become the source of inspiration for the next Eu-

ropean conference and its participants.

We live in the changing world of globalization. Prague is a city that went through enormous changes during last years. The changes influenced all parts of life: politics, economy, culture, philosophy, system of values, family life. On one side there are new possibilities and challenges – on the other side anxiety.

The changes on the existential level

bring about the longing for "old good times". That is the longing for stable and reliable reality.

I think Prague doesn't differ very much from the rest of the Globe. We all live in a world that is seeking for new meanings, in a world where nothing is sure: one's identity, language, borders. Not even a man or woman, who doesn't live in a war situation, can be sure about his or her life.

Prague is the city of Franz Kafka – a man who let one of his heroes say: “Everything is in the motion...” He expressed feelings of living on the edge of epochs; anxiety, loneliness, hopelessness. He was also a man searching for meaning and deep truth.

The conference in 2004 can be a possibility for Gestalt therapy Community to look at a place of therapists in a changing

world, to be in contact with new reality and make clear statements: who we are, what is the meaning of our work nowadays.

A conference in Prague means to me also a challenge to come to the roots, to the basic concepts of Gestalt therapy, and then to make steps towards new issues in the changing world of the III:d millenium.

The 8th European Conference of Gestalt therapy will take place in Prague Conference Center – Prague, Czech Republic, on September, 9-12, 2004.

Web site of the Conference is:  
[www.gestalt-terapie.cz](http://www.gestalt-terapie.cz)

*Ester Neumanová*

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## European Conference of Gestalt Therapy Writers

April 17-21, 2002 – Alicante (Spain) - Second Conference

April 24-27, 2003 – Bordeaux (France) - Third Conference

[www.eagt.org](http://www.eagt.org)

### Coordinators for the Second Conference:

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### Aims

- To support Gestalt therapy writing and writers in Europe.
- To promote more exchanges between European Gestalt therapists, so that we may share together both theoretical ideas and how to apply them clinically.
- To act as a positive influence on the spread of good writing within Europe (where language differences are often an obstacle in writings becoming widely known), serving as an incentive to write, to translate, and to publish.
- To support other initiatives and realities in Europe, not least the European Conferences of Gestalt Therapy held every 3 years in a different European Country and the European Gestalt therapy journals.
- To encourage more cross-lingual exchanges generally in the Gestalt therapy community world-wide.

### Procedure

Each participant will present a paper, representing work in progress, to the other participants and receive supportive feed-back and suggestions. Participants are asked to produce a written paper/draft or outline (maximum 5000 words), relating to Gestalt therapy theory and/or practice, and submit it to the four coordinators (preferably via e.mail) by November 1st 2001.

The EAGT wants this to be an event which is regularly held.

The proceedings will be conducted in English.

### Conference Dates

April 17-21, 2002, starting on Wednesday, April 17, at 5.00 p.m., ending on Sunday, April 21 at 1.00 p.m.

April 24-27, 2003, Bordeaux (France).

*First European Conference of Gestalt Therapy Writers, March 28 - April 1, 2001 in Siracuse:*

### Report from two participants

*Daan van Praag*

Amsterdam, Netherlands:

It was an exciting idea to bring together a group of writers to support the writing about Gestalt Therapy. It was for me an amazing experience, thanks to the organizing committee of Malcolm Parlett and Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb. They did a wonderful job. Extra stimulating was that out of America came Joe Melnick and Gordon Wheeler, to assist us with their American experience in writers conferences.

What unfolded was a huge variety of ideas, articles, discussions, theoretical clarifications, and most of all a stimulating creative process. Much more tiring then I ever could imagine beforehand. Discussing about four papers a day is the maximum I could take.

The discussions hovered around important themes as philosophical roots, boundaries, field, special clients, psychopathology, environmental issues and the political implication of our Theory.

The main question for the writers in this conference was to know what support was needed, and ask the others for it. Each could ask for a process consultant during the discussions. That made the discussion more easy and helped the group to stay more in the neighborhood of the original question of the presenter.

Some articles seemed ripe enough to publish in English. Some need some more work, some contours of new articles came to the foreground. In the end we made clear about our commitments to write further.

The environment of the conference in an old Italian Villa on the border of the

bay of Syracuse helped. Of course there was also some time to visit the beautiful old town. We admired the old Greek/Roman Cathedral. We made a tour through the harbor, and visited a very old Jewish bath. Some of us visited also the old Roman Theater. The support of the Gestalt Institute in Syracuse was much appreciated.

In the end everybody agreed to have a second conference in april next year in Spain. A meeting I look already forward to. Many thanks to the EAGT for supporting us.

### *Carmen Vázquez Bandín*

Madrid, Spain:

When I read Gestalt Therapy publications, I always look for two things in books or papers: an adequate orientation in Gestalt Therapy theory; and a personal creativity that bring me ideas to mull over.

My colleagues of the First European Conference of Gestalt Therapy Writers gave me both things.

In an atmosphere of acceptance, support as well as seriousness and respect, we worked hard but productively.

The weather was terrible... it was cold and the rain did not stop; it was a pity! – although Siracusa is a wonderful place.

I returned to Madrid, full of ideas and projects that I want to develop from now until the next meeting.

The presence and suggestions by Gordon Wheeler and Joe Melnick were vitaly. From here... thanks Gordon for your warm and supportive Spanish-Italian; and thanks Joe for speaking more slowly with me.

And thanks to Malcolm and Margherita for organizing this interesting meeting and all of the participants, Nancy, Susanne, Eva, Giovanna, Georges, Daan from Oslo, Des and Dan from Amsterdam... were all very nice in the group photo!

This has been a positive experience for me that I will repeat next year... possibly in Spain?

## *The Treasurer's Financial Report*

The financial report 2001 will be sent by post, probably in the same envelope as the EAGT newsletter. The accounts in the financial report shows us a deficit. Also the estimate 2002 of income and expenditure is a deficit.

In total Euro 2950,-. The deficit of the estimate is caused by the enlargement of the Executive Board and the Extended Board. As you know, the costs made by the Board are totally compensated for. As treasurer I am glad that this is possible.

Therefore I have done my very best. In my opinion it is unjust that representatives of a country who are also member of a national organization or training institute – and spend a lot of time to do their job into the Board, a part of the costs will not be paid by the EAGT. It has my preference that the costs we made, as organization, will be defray by all members.

We are a fast growing organization and the costs do not equal the incomes. Therefore I will come, during the General meeting, with a proposal of a budget balance.

I will ask you again your attention for our Scholarship Fund. As you know the EAGT has raised a fund for scholarships, addressed to support participation of East European Gestalt Therapists in EAGT meetings. Thanks to the Scholarship Fund and of course the generous donors, it was possible that some people from Russia were able to meet the conference in Stockholm.

It is a practical form of 'sharing', by which meeting is possible. Please don't forget the Scholarship Fund. The EAGT invites you to send your money to the account number of the association. (ABN/AMRO

bank 603868053, please specify 'scholarship' as reason for your contribution.)

During the meeting in Amsterdam, February 2002, we have spoken about the membership fee of our individual members of the East European countries. The arrangement we have made has also a harmful side. We have created first and second rate members and that was not our intention. Besides, the living-standards between the several East European countries is very different. After lengthy consideration we have decided to raise the membership fee for members of the East European Countries into three years at the normal level, to start in 2002.

Till now, all our individual full members of the Netherlands pays Euro 68,- for their membership fee 2002. All individual full members of the other European countries pays Euro 60,- for their membership 2002. In my request to pay the membership fee I have written, and not printed, the account of the membership fee. And wonder. In my own country an eight is still an eight and in all other countries my eight is read as a zero. The membership fee for individual full members is Euro 68,- My proposal is to pay the different in 2003.

After six years to be a member of the Board it's time to do a step backwards.

It was a pleasure for me to be a part of such a wonderful team and I will miss the work as well as the team.

### *Bas Lokense*

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See also the contact list at page 7,  
for the EAGT Executive Board

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## Letter to the Extended Board

Dear EAGT members,  
One of the goals of the EAGT Executive Board is to improve the EAGT system of representatives, which is basically a constitutional aim. Within the next 4 years (2006), we intend to help establish national umbrella organizations for Gestalt Therapy in every European country, thus creating a network of local representatives. In the meantime, we continue to cooperate with member organizations and promote consensus between competing training institutes in respective countries by requiring them to either alternate sending delegates or agreeing on issues on which we vote in the Extended Board.

Until this goal can be reached, we have a transitional period until 2006. During this period, the delegates to the Extended Board must at least represent training institutes that are FULL MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS in order to enjoy all the rights and privileges of the Extended Board. It does not suffice that they are full individual personal members! If there is neither a national umbrella organization for Gestalt therapy nor a training institute in their country that is an institutional member, then they may participate in the interim as guests. As full individual members, they enjoy full voting rights at General Membership Meetings, but not at Extended Board meetings.

A national organization for Gestalt Therapy must work for the advancement of Gestalt therapy in the respective countries (non-training activities such as conferences, workshops, publications,

public relations/media coverage, cooperation with other schools of psychotherapy, etc.).

National organizations are comprised of training institutes as well as of individual members of the EAGT who, in turn, may be associated with various training institutes, but they don't necessarily represent their training institutes in the national organization. Training institutes will communicate with one another, and may advise the National Organization in their respective countries, but they themselves do not solely comprise the national organization. The Executive Board wants to promote the role of the individual members in the national organizations!

The Executive Board has opted for this decision, which is also in line with what has been developed in the EAP.

We will adhere to the practice of paying for the Extended Board's travel and hotel costs for our July meeting – everyone who was a member of the Extended Board in Stockholm is still a member in Vienna! The changes will be a „work in progress!“

I hope that this clarifies this difficult issue a bit more and that we can continue our discussion of national representatives and national organizations at the Extended Board Meeting in Vienna on Saturday, July 13th, from 9-12 o'clock. You will be notified where we meet as soon as the WCP informs us which rooms are available.

Many thanks and warm wishes,  
*Nancy Amendt-Lyon*

Chair of the Extended Board  
Vienna, February 19th, 2002

## Meeting of Members 2001: Changes in the Executive Board

During the Meeting of Members 2001 in Stockholm, one of the motions to change the EAGT Constitution was accepted and at once the Executive Board got three more members.

A few months earlier three motions about changes in the actual EAGT Constitution were mailed to all EAGT members. These motions were discussed in the General Meeting.

*Motion 1* was about the size of the Executive Board:

*The EAGT Constitution of the Executive Committee shall be increased in numbers from the current 5 members to 8 members to include :*

1. *A Training Standards Officer,*
2. *An Ethics Officer,*
3. *The Chairperson of the Extended Board.*

This motion was voted and unanimously accepted by the Meeting of Members.

Then, immediately these new members of the Executive were elected: Daan van Praag (Netherlands) as Training Standards Officer, Dick Lompa (Netherlands), as Ethics Officer, and Nancy Amendt-Lyon (Austria), as Chair of the Extended Board.

Two other motions about the voting rights of members and delegates and the exact definition of the different kinds of membership of the EAGT were postponed.

Another change in the Executive Board: Veronique Vermeir, the secretary, decided to leave the Board because of some major changes in her personal life. The members of the Board all regretted her departure and thanked her for the work she did so well.

During the meeting the new secretary was elected:

Sincerely yours,  
*Joppie Bakker,*  
Netherlands

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in Vienna, this version will be presented to the members for final approval.

*Richard E. Lompa*  
Chair, Ethics Committee  
Amsterdam, February 2002

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## Progress Report, Ethics Committee

During the Meeting of Members on 13 September 2001 in Stockholm, the Code of Ethics was presented. The Ethics Committee was aware that the last section on Complaints Procedure was not ready for a final vote and asked for more time to finish the task. Mandate was given to the members of the committee to remain active in their work on the code. One member, Udi Jutta Schneewind has asked to become an inactive member, so Lynda Osborne

from England proposed herself as candidate for the open position in the Ethics Committee and was approved by vote.

The committee is presently working on the latest version of the code, and after many exchanges by e-mail will meet in Oslo for a long weekend to discuss and consider any necessary improvements and additions. The final version of the code will be sent to all members in May 2002. At the Meeting of Members on 13 July 2002

## New Members

As of Februari 2002

### Organisations:

Société Belge de Gestalt, Charleroi, Belgium  
Institut pro Gestalt Therapy, Prague, Czech Republic  
Macedonian Association for Gestalttherapy, Skopje, Macedonië  
Instytut Terapii Gestalt, Krakow, Poland  
Gestalt institute of St. Petersburg, Petersburg, Russia  
National Association Oslo, Norway

### Individual members:

Maria Andriopoulou, Greece  
Kristin Austheim, Norway  
Anne Bienfait, Belgium  
Roel Bouwkamp, Netherlands  
Sonja Bouwkamp-Marinus, Netherlands  
Nina Camitz, Denmark,  
Halver Dalene, Norway  
Nicole Gregoire, Belgium  
Riek van Haeringen, Netherlands  
Elena Ivanova, Russia  
Piet Jansen, Netherlands  
Mladen Kostic, Yugoslavia  
Mette Kjeldal, Norway  
Ben van Laake, Netherlands  
Natalia Lebedeva, Russia  
Jolande de Leeuw, Netherlands  
Rianne Malfait, Belgium  
Cornelia Mocking, Netherlands  
Martine Masson, France  
Jolande Merlijn, Netherlands  
Rob de Reuver, Netherlands  
Ilse le Roy, Netherlands  
Anna Ruhe, Netherlands  
Myriam Steenackers, Belgium  
Bernard Serez, France  
Corrie Schoones, Netherlands  
Tineke Sikkens, Netherlands  
Mea Suringh, Netherlands  
Jan Versteeg, Netherlands  
Tineke de Vries, Netherlands  
Zoran Zelji, Slovenia  
Bogdan Zorz, Slovenia

## Memorials

After a long illness, *Miriam Polster* passed away peacefully at about 1:00 A.M. California time on Wednesday, December 19, 2001.

"She walks with beauty and grace". This was the first thought that came to mind when I first met Miriam Polster at the beginning of a four week intensive Gestalt training programme in La Jolla, California about twenty years ago. Her love and dedication to her profession were tangible and contagious. Miriam had the ability to be completely alive in the present, and at the same time transcend the moment. Our meetings were magical moments in my journey with Gestalt therapy and have been a continuing inspiration in my professional and private life. I and the Gestalt community will have to adjust to her absence. She will be greatly missed.

*Richard E. Lompa*, Amsterdam

The strongest memory I have of Miriam was of her graceful capacity to admire and enjoy the people she worked with. Her special gift to me was when she showed me how to experience myself as central to my own life and not merely at the periphery of others. I hadn't even known that this was what I was doing, but she noticed and lightly turned me round to face myself.

*Judith Hemming*, London

"Miriam went through life brightening our hearts and minds. After meeting her, our lives are no longer the same".

*Carmen Vazquez Bandin*, Madrid

Thank you, Miriam, for having shown me how much regal and bright and sensual and dedicated to her man a woman can be.

*Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb*, Siracuse



*Brigitte Couder* left us on July 31st, 2001

After a difficult winter, we had found her revived at the time of the Société Française de Gestalt Congress in March, but unfortunately it wasn't enough to stop her cancer.

As an experienced psychotherapist, Brigitte had shared the vicissitudes of the S.F.G. since 1983. Member of the Board of Directors since 1996, successively assistant secretary-general, vice president, member of the Commission of Establishment and person in charge of the Foreign Relations, she had put her intelligence, her rigour and her fine humanity at the service of psychotherapy and the S.F.G.

We lose an estimated colleague and a friend.

May all those who appreciated her and cared for her, remember her.

For the S.F.G.

*Jean François Gravouil*, Président

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## European New Books

**T**his section is aimed to spread the knowledge and circulation of writings from our members, which even if available in not-English languages deal with issues of interest for all of us.

FUHR R., Sreckovic, M. & Gremmler-Fuhr, M.(Eds) 2001 (2nd edition), **Handbuch der Gestalttherapie**, Göttingen: Hogrefe, 1245 pages.

Sixty prominent Gestalt therapists and authors present the history and recent development of the Gestalt approach in its philosophy, theory and research as well as in all major fields of application from clinical gestalt therapy to organization development and education, all compiled for the first time in an voluminous handbook (in German).

HUTTERER-KRISCH, R., Luif, I. & Baumgartner, G. (Eds.) 1999, **Neue Entwicklungen in der Integrativen Gestalttherapie. Wiener Beiträge zum Theorie-Praxis-Bezug** (*New Developments in integrative Gestalt Therapy. Viennese contributions to the relationship between theory and practice.*), Wien: Facultas.

From the table of contents: theoretical foundations, clinical practice, political aspects of Gestalt therapy.

SPAGNUOLO LOBB, M. (Ed.) 2001, **Psicoterapia della Gestalt. Ermeneutica e clinica** (*Gestalt Therapy: Hermeneutics and Clinical*), Milano: Angeli, 191 pages.

How Gestalt therapy, founded more than 50 years ago, can still answer to nowadays clinical and socio-political problems? The group of the Italian Istituto di Gestalt bring their experience of assimilating, through group chewing, 20 years of teaching and working clinically. Soon available in English and Spanish. Contents in www.gestalt.it

MASQUELIER G. 1999, **Vouloir sa vie, la Gestalt-therapy aujourd'hui** (*Choosing your own life, Gestalt-therapy today*). Retz: Paris, 144 pages, 20 drawings.

The author explains Gestalt to a large audience. The book has got a special award, "Le grand livre du mois", for being "a book written by a psychotherapist, but easy to understand" !

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## New composition and "EAGT contact" for the executive board *Executive Board of the EAGT, February 2002*

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## 2002 EAGT Meeting of Members in Vienna

(the same address as where the  
World Congress of Psychotherapy  
will take place).

July 13, 2.00 – 6.00 pm.

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## EAGT Extended Board Meeting

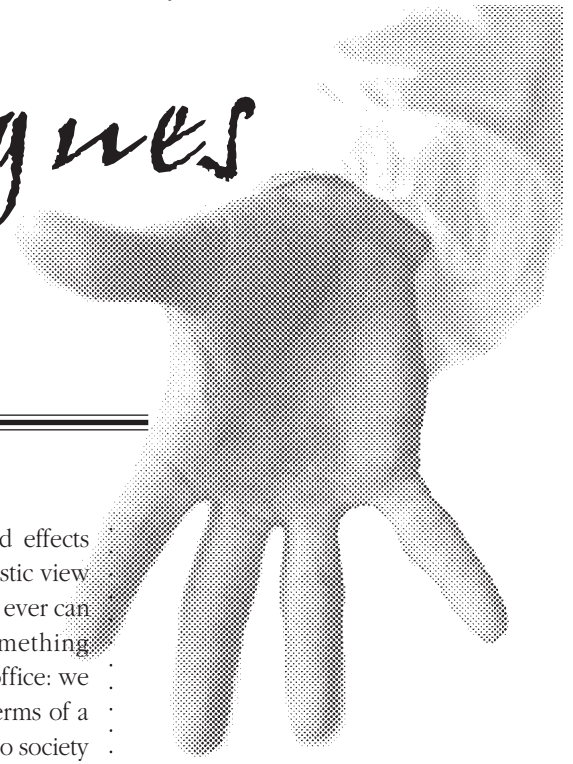
in Vienna

(place, see above).

July 13, 9.00 – 12.00 am.

# EAGT Dialogues

## Processing the Experience of the 2001 European Conference in Stockholm



**T**he 7th European Conference of Gestalt Therapy, held in Stockholm on September 13-16, organized on behalf of the EAGT by the Swedish Gestalt Academy, an institute which has always been active in the life of our Association, happened two days after one of the most tragic events in our history, the September 11th terrorist attacks. The experience of participating in that Conference was full of strong feelings for all participants. The need of processing it after it's chronological conclusion was evident, and two colleagues wrote two different articles for publication. Nancy Amendt-Lyon from Austria wrote an article published in News and Notes (February 23, 2002: www.gestalt.org), which also received meaningful reactions. Peter Schulthess from Switzerland, a member of our Extended Board, wrote an article for our Newsletter.

The EAGT Extended Board decided to consider Peter's article as a start for a process of dialoguing among us, in order to produce a final report to be published in our Newsletter.

*The aim was clearly not to discuss of terrorism neither to criticise the group who organized the 7th EAGT Conference, but to learn from our discomfort how to organize future conferences in a way that allows us to stay fully present in the here and now in a community setting.*

The reactions after the Stockholm Conference reveal a need to create a collective experience which can help us to develop a shared understanding of the meaning of our being psychotherapists in this difficult field. More than the stimulating contents that have been shared in this e-mail discussion, the fact that we are dealing with our group process and with the consistency of our behaviour with our theory is important.

The knowledge of globalized effects of any event calls for a more holistic view of our profession; today less than ever can we think of our work as something confined inside the walls of our office: we must think of our work also in terms of a political action. Our contribution to society as psychotherapists was never as dramatically explicit as today, and this is true for every psychotherapy. The only difference for Gestalt therapy is that it has a relevant theoretical tool to create a connection between our profession and the political situation (actually, our basic text speaks of this).

Our future as psychotherapists is in creating healthy communities rather than relevant isolated experiences. Communities where it's possible to live through shock, fears, panic, as well as warmth, love and joy. It seems that social change today cannot be entrusted to individuals: power of healing and positive change more than ever is in groups. One of the strongest feelings that arises when one goes to "ground zero" is the cohesiveness of people around it, the feeling of belonging to a community, the many possibilities given to visitors to gather together to pray, to dialogue, but also the American flag in every house in NYC, in every car, or in the jacket of many Americans as a pin. On the other side, it's just the cohesiveness, beyond any logical statement, of Al-Quida that scares the world.

Shall we commit ourselves to the challenge of switching our perspective from an individualistic to a relational one? A perspective where we trust what is created in the here and now of our making contact, instead of waiting for our expectations to happen? Shall we let ourselves go to the trust in self regulation of groups?

Peter's article and the reactions to it

written by our colleagues, constitute the beginning of a process that will hopefully lead to a more meaningful contact in our community, surely not to the most banal devitalizing criticism which can only disqualify or sedate differences pretending to appear a "serious" discussion.

This post-contact discussion is published here to support the faith in novelty and let ourselves be deconstructed by the other, even if this "other" is a shocked New Yorker or one of the conference organizers who debates between the wish to recollect her/himself after the shock and the need to be present and take care of the situation. At the end, being focused on the question: "How did I contribute to this?" can allow us to stay at the contact boundary even in difficult situations.

*Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb*  
January 23, 2002