

EAGT

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newsletter

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR GESTALT THERAPY · ISSUE NUMBER 7 · JUNE 2005

President's Column

Dear Friends,

It seems a long time ago since the EAGT conference in Prague last September but I still recall with satisfaction meeting up with old friends, as well as making new ones, among the 500 participants.

One experience in particular that continues to impact me profoundly was the discussion that took place on the final morning about where to locate the next conference in 2007. Different opinions were expressed with deep conviction until the will of the meeting became apparent. The Gestalt community, with considered and intelligent passion, decided to hold the next conference in Greece in 2007 with the theme 'Exploring Human Conflict'. The conference then decided that EAGT also organise a special project in Israel in 2006. At the end Katia (Greece) and Nurith (Israel), with typical generosity of spirit, embraced each another warmly. I felt very proud to be a member of the Gestalt community.

Since the conference the EAGT Board has met and already had preliminary discussions with Katia about the 2007 conference. I have also been to visit Nurith in Israel to explore the project there for 2006. So the work of EAGT continues to move forward.

The past 3 years have seen an emphasis on consolidation within EAGT with the completion of the new ethics code, complaints procedures and training standards already bearing fruit. I am confident I speak on behalf of us

all in extending congratulations to the teachers and trainees of GPTI (Malta), who were the first Institute to successfully complete the new EAGT accreditation procedures. Thanks to careful and considered negotiations between EAGT and EAP, it was possible for GPTI (Malta) to also become accredited for the European Certificate of Psychotherapy, at the same time. We hope to build further on this excellent cooperation between EAGT and EAP, and appreciate the EAGT Board for its vision and also the hard work and commitment of Serge Ginger (EAP Registrar) and Peter Schultess (EAGT Training Standards Officer).

While I do not possess a crystal ball that can predict the future, I am supported by gestalt theory and practice, to commit to attending to the present, as a means instilling hope for the future. Presently we have a structural problem within EAGT that we need to pay attention to. At the Annual General Meeting in Prague in 2003 and 2004 the membership made many important decisions, e.g. new training standards and accrediting procedures. At both meetings I was aware of what appeared to be a huge pressure of time on members when trying to think through and discuss major proposals.

The EAGT board works very hard in its role as the Executive Committee so that at annual general meetings it is very well informed of proposals, having discussed the issues at length throughout the preceding year. Despite the annual Newsletter members atten-

ding an AGM, other than the Board, are not so well informed and so feel the pressure of time more than the Board. The problem as I see it is not so much about a lack of time but rather a lack of involvement and insufficient information among the membership.

Over the years a small Executive Committee of 5 to 7 members acting as the Board, has served EAGT well. However EAGT is now a significant European wide school and a major player in the 'politics of psychotherapy'. It is surely time for the Extended board to 'come of age'.

At the conference in London this year the EAGT Board would like time set aside to discuss the proposal that we abolish the Extended Board and that the current Extended Board and current Board combine into one Governing Board. This would mean that each country would be more fully represented at the governing board level. The new 'super-board' could meet at least twice a year and, together with email and tele-conference calls, would be more regularly informed of the challenges and possibilities facing EAGT. The current small board, made up largely of officers of EAGT, could continue as the Executive Committee to manage day to day issues. This proposal is a big step forward in representative democracy that will empower each nation of EAGT and needs our urgent attention and consideration.

This proposal is intended only for discussion at the EAGT General Meeting in London and the Board hope it will generate further ideas on how to best organise EAGT to support the continued growth and development of Gestalt in Europe. We may then

vote on any new proposals at the General meeting in 2006, after we have all had time for considered reflection. So please join us in London so we can all move forward together as the Gestalt community in Europe.

I hope to see you there?

With warm regards

Ken Evans

Ethics Committee report

The annual report from the Ethics committee was submitted to the members during the general members meeting in September 2004 in Prague.

The Code of Ethics and Complaints and Appeals Procedures are now completed and accepted by the members. They are now fully operational although we have not yet had a formal complaint. This is good news.

Since all three members of the committee have completed their 3-year term, new elections in Prague were necessary. All three members were willing to fulfil a second term and after the proposal for candidacy, all were re-elected by the members.

The committee will now direct its attention to the assistance of organizations that may need help and support in the writing, or adaptation, of their own code and complaints and appeals procedures.

The Ethics Committee has been asked to assist in the accreditation procedure of training institutes with regard to their compliance to the criteria that the training institute has an adequate operational code of ethics and complaints and appeals procedure. In cooperation with the Trainings Standards committee, the first accreditation of a trainings institute has been accomplished.

Dick Lompa, Synnoeve Joerstad and Lynda Osborne

Accreditation of Training Institutes and National Gestalt Organisations (NOGT)

EAGT has its first training institute that is accredited on the base of the new criterias and procedure.

It's the GPTIM, Gestalt Psychotherapy Training Institute Malta.

Congratulations!

I hope this will be a good start signal for other institutes to start also the accreditation procedure.

Just to remember: Untill november 2007 all EAGT-Training Insti-

tutes will have to be certified, otherwise they will loose their membership. Time is running - I'm looking forward to see Your request for accreditation soon. At the last general meeting the accreditation fee has been reduced from 1800 EUR down to 900 EUR for larger institutes from Western Europe and 500 EUR for Institutes from Eastern Europe and small institutes from Western Europe.

Institutes that would like to get ac-

Marga – a Golden Treasure

On the road to professionalism of the EAGT the appointment of Marga per April 1st, 2004 as office manager is a golden pick. Most of you just know her from her brief introduction in the Newsletter of May 2004. Some of you became already acquainted with her through email or by phone.

Within this short period of time she developed herself as the "administrative heart" of the organisation.

As you've read in the before mentioned Newsletter Marga has a temporary appointment of 8 hours on weekly base. On monthly base we have a discussion of progress to guide the tasks into the right directions. All items concerning the EAGT as an organisation come up for discussion. What also came up during these discussions of progress is that the amount of work is more than the available hours and also a clear job description should be made. Until now this arranged itself, however, this is no longer suitable on long-term.

In a short period of time Marga acquired an important place in our organisation. As a consequence of her expertise, customer friendliness and

her job interpretation this became possible. She is a very pleasant person to work with and the monthly discussions of progress I have with her are as well constructive as pleasant. In February of this year Marga attended for the first time the Executive Board meeting in which she got acquainted with the typical Gestalt culture, attention for the here and now "the awareness". During this meeting the Executive Board decided to change her appointment from temporary to permanent. Next to this the Board would like to present you with the plan to extend the appointment of Marga with an annual contract for 4 hours on weekly base. We think this is needed for two important and extensive reasons the coming years, namely; the accreditation procedure of organisations and the renewal of individuals. Administrative support will then be of great importance. In addition to this we are in the (fortunate) circumstances we can afford it. I would like to explain this to you with the help of some figures during the Annual General Meeting in London.

Bas Lokorse
Treasurer

creditation from EAGT and EAP now can get it with only one procedure. We started a new cooperation with EAP that allows this. At the next general meeting in London we will decide on a change of the EAGT accreditation rules in this sense.

Several countries still do not have a from EAGT accredited NOGT. In some countries they are in the process of getting established. I would like to encourage those representatives from countries that do not yet have an NOGT to build one, as it is described in the EAGT accreditation paper. If You need any help, this will always be offered by the chair of the TSC or another board member.

All NOGT's, that are already accepted by EAGT, should renew their accreditation now also, by sending actual statuts and regulations (in English and in the language of the country); actual addresses and names of presidents, secretary, board; papers with criterias for membership; actual number of members according to EAGT-level; an overview of the actual organisational structure with explanations; an ethical code and the complaints- and appeal-procedure (in English and in the language of the country); a list of training institutes that are connected with the NOGT; a list of organisations in the sector of mental health (National and international) that there is a cooperation with; a money report and actual membership fee. Without these documents we cannot see, if a NOGT still fits to the standards of EAGT.

Ethical codes and complaints- and appeal-procedures from Institutes and NOGT will be checked by the Ethical Committee.

Peter Schulthess

E-mail: pschulthess@goldnet.ch

Chair of the Training Standards Committee

The photographs from the EAGT Conference in Prague is taken by *Arthur Dombrovsky*, at *Riga Gestalt Institute* in Latvia.

Conclusions from the 8th EAGT Conference in Prague

Dear colleagues,

In September 2004 the 8th EAGT (European Association of Gestalt Therapy) conference took place in Prague with the subtitle *Tradition and Renewal*. The preparation and

organisation of the conference was entrusted in 2001 to the Institute for Gestalt Therapy in Prague.

The Prague Pyramida Hotel was packed for the 4 days of the conference with five hundred Gestalt therapists from 19 European states, Israel and the USA.

When I am looking back at those days I still have in my mind the atmosphere of the last morning and the immense group process when the Gestalt community decided about the place of the 9th conference.

I was very happy that many colleagues use this opportunity to show their work during workshops, mini-lectures and panels. It was also important that a great number of colleagues



from East European countries participated on the conference and showed their work.

As far as I can see here in Czech republic the conference had contributed to the further self-awareness of the Czech Gestalt community, the ability to see their work in an international context. I hope this did not happen only here in Czech republic.

I would like to thank all of you who contributed to the conference by your participation, your interest to come was a great support to us organizers.

Ester Neumanová

Representative of East European countries



Attendants at the 8th European Conference of Gestalt Therapy intensely involved in group process.

More photos from Prague on pages 14-15!

The socio-political dimension of Gestalt – springboard into a complex theory of human health and diseases

Introduction

T*his is an abstract of Kathleen Höll's lecture at the 8th EAGT Conference September 9-12th 2004 in Prague. With her lecture the conference started.*

The first part of her talk deals with the holistic aspect of Gestalt Therapy. This aspect is regarded as characteristic of our method. Main concepts are based on it, for example "organism-environment-field". But it is also true that the concepts of Gestalt therapy are more vague and metaphoric than exact and that it may be helpful to assimilate new theory.

The second part of her lecture deals with the political aspect. This was once an element of the holistic aspect and very much in the core of Gestalt Therapy at its beginning. The founders wanted to contribute to a world, which would not so easily addict itself to dictatorship and fascism. Improved organismic self-regulation was planned to widen individual autonomy. Improved awareness was planned to support a better understanding of politics. The obvious "normality" of the democratic Post War Western Europe made these goals appear superfluous. However, there are some good reasons to revise this impression.

Looking out across our garden fence Smuts' motto was: "The way has to be discovered least of all by a local inspection, but by roaming about, exploring and getting an overall view of vast areas."

Recent developments in diagnostics make a new concentration on the holistic tradition look worthwhile. Psychotherapy actually is going to be embedded in the European public health systems. Thus it becomes a public monetary factor. The consequence is high pressure on the methods to adapt to scientific standards.

Kathleen Höll stresses she would

not like to witness a Gestalt Therapy which is splitting into one branch dealing with personal growth, relying on philosophical terms, and another branch doing clinical psychotherapy relying on scientific concepts, which may be less precise than they appear to be. In private practice process-oriented and clinical diagnostics are often used separately. So diagnostics today may challenge us to look out for "reality as an integral whole".

Here are some of her findings:

First of all: empirical infant research is fundamental for a theory of psychological development. This describes how children from the very beginning, show order and organisation in their behaviour as well as a differentiated perception.

Research on different diagnoses altogether underline the importance of the familiar and societal background. For example "Borderline" often refers to disturbed parents, who traumatise their children by violence and/or abuse. Traumata caused by political occurrences like Holocaust, genocide, war and torture are now receiving particular attention.

Selvini Palazzoli investigated "Anorexia", which has become an inflationary diagnosis indeed. She shows why a broad context of this phenomenon must be considered. She points to the fact that an arrangement of interpersonal relations is located on a higher logical level than the individual and therefore must be prioritised. A lot of investigations express the important role of the family and the social field. Some lead us to believe that their own family members can make humans crazy. And that fights for self-assertion can be fought by starvation, meaning a non-declared hunger strike in the family.

The World Congress of Psychiatrists 2003, dealt with "Diagnosis in

Psychiatry", found the cultural environment to be the most important factor (Der Standard, 24.6.03).

International investigations show that more than 80% of factors that cause illnesses are located in the social field of the patients (Der Standard, 18.8.03, S.24).

Poor people are twice as often ill than the non-poor (Der Standard, 27.3.03, S.11).

Several psychic diseases exist only in certain regions of the world, like "Koro" in Japan, which means the fear that the penis could disappear into the body.

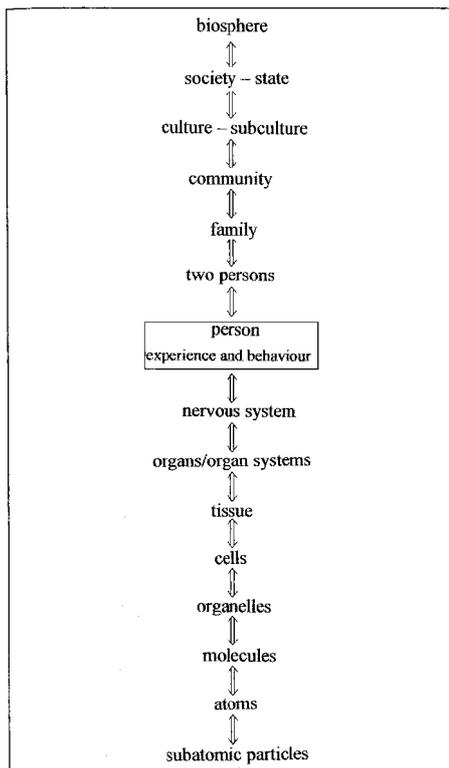
So we see the train moving towards where the founders of Gestalt Therapy had moved to: the organisation of the personal, social and historical field. If we today adapt too much to clinical terms or refrain from developing our theory in a sufficient way we shall miss the current trend and, ironically, the opportunity to demonstrate in public the status as an Avantgarde, which we had for some time.

A possibility to renew the Holistic aspect is Jan Christiaan Smuts "Holism and Evolution"

Let's go back to the beginning and to Fritz Perls. His concern was much greater than understanding the individual in its surrounding. He wanted a new paradigm to understand the world as a whole.

A world which is structured into different subsystems of life which is nevertheless one world. He mentioned several times that the West should overcome its dualistic thinking and the splitting into matter, life and mind. Also, the splitting of the sciences into natural sciences and humanities should come to an end. A holistic understanding should be the basis of understanding human beings, their growth and their inhibitions. He formulated his request already in "Ego,

Model of a hierarchy of systems



Source: Uexküll, Wesiack 1998, p. 131

Hunger and Aggression”. We can find the roots of his holistic thinking in the book “Holism and Evolution”, written by Jan Christiaan Smuts in 1926.

Smuts can be seen as the founder of modern holism. His concept of growth is not only ontogenetic (this means: concerning the development of the individual as a living organism, JB), but also phylogenetic, as it describes the evolution of the different forms of life. Basing his theory on Darwin’s, he however understands evolution as a creative process: it neither functions only mechanically nor only by selection.

He understands the world as an ensemble of stages of reality, which developed one after the other. Specific laws of nature rule in each of them. He names the following stages: *physical, organical, psychic, social, mental-historical*. Smuts describes the human person as the last and most developed unit of evolution who joins together all the manifold stages.

Already the cells and the organs are understood as self-regulating units.

This is especially visible in cases when they regenerate themselves after being wounded.

Smuts offers a fascinating general theory, which could help to overcome philosophical dualism. Since more than thousand years, European thinking is dividing the world into two separate spheres: God and world, spirit and matter. Enlightenment and Natural Sciences led the educated to an imploded dualism: the outcome is materialism. It is the ideal of the natural sciences, to trace back every phenomenon to physical conditions. The mental sphere is pushed back to the marginalised humanities. Presently we witness a new attack on the humanities.

On the other hand a scientific revolution on the basis of holism is taking place, but “in small portions and in scientific regions which are strongly separated from each other.” These remarks are quotes from Uexküll and Wesiack in 1998. Not astonishing, as this revolution would lead to an incredible transformation of our world- and self image.

We should ask anew the following questions:

- How do we understand the world as a whole?
- How do we understand human beings in that extensive context?
- How do they function as individuals?
- How do they function in collectives?
- What do psychic health and disease mean in such a wide perspective?

Some basic elements of Uexküll and Wesiack’s “Theory of Human Medicine”

The physician Thore von Uexküll together with the physician and psychotherapist Wolfgang Wesiack formulated a “Theory of Human Medicine”, which carries on the work of the well-known biologist Jacob von Uexküll. They wrote a book called “Theory of Human Medicine”, which was first published in 1988. In her lec-

ture Kathleen Höll refers to the third edition of 1998, which was fully revised.

The authors believe their theory is a “change of syntagma”. That Greek word means composition or combination. In this context it says that not only the principles of one singular science are affected – that case is called “change of paradigm”. But here the general meaning of what a scientific fact is as such is at stake. A new understanding of reality is rising. System Theories, for example Field Theory, until now played the main part. But they are not sufficient, because they can’t describe the relations between the different stages of reality.

Uexküll and Wesiack discover that Information Theory is qualified for that. It adds to the physical elements energy and movement a third element, which goes beyond the physical level: information. And they identify perceiving and acting as the original functions of life on every level.

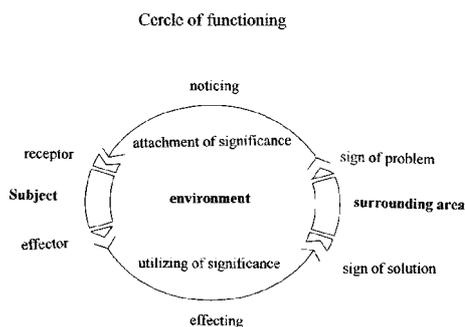
Noticing or perceiving a stimulus from the environment can only be understood as receiving a signal. A signal is never effecting in the mechanical sense, what Plato had called a *manual-operation-model* (handle model). Signals have to be interpreted. Each system interprets its environment in relation to its needs. This is the base of subjectivity and self-organisation on all levels. By that the differentiation between Self and Non-Self can be defined already on the level of cells.

The amoeba already is a closed system in Maturana’s understanding: it interprets signals in relation to its needs. A signal is only a signal if it is meaningful with respect to the condition of the system. A system is influenced from outside only by its own interpretation of that influence. Plato called this the persuasion model. This happens by transfer of signals.

The authors wonder how acting works. The self-activating of organic matter is made possible by excitement. Excitability of organs, especially of

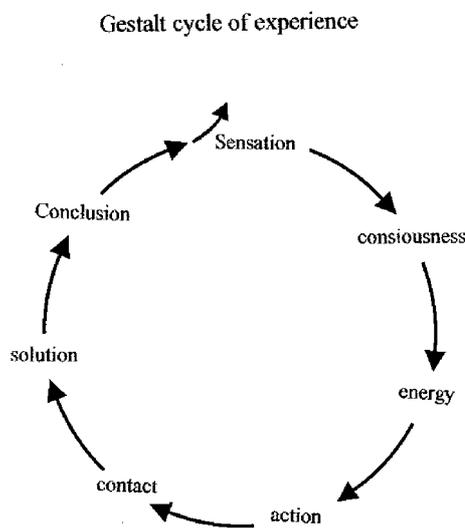
muscles is the base of movement and by that of action. Excitement is the means to combine the inside and the outside of a system. Von Bertalanffy speaks of a “primarily active system” (1968). That seems to be an exact biological formulation of the Gestalt therapeutic definition of aggression.

Signs of effect inform the organism that its needs were satisfied. Thus they cancel the signal of perceiving. The central thesis of the new syntagma is the validity of this principle on all levels.



Source: Uexküll, Wesiack 1998, p. 67

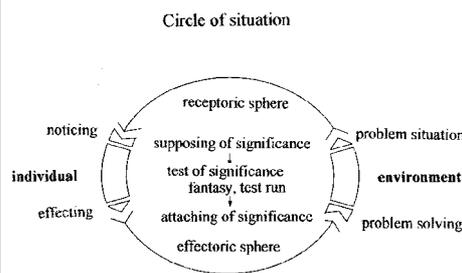
The so-called circle of functioning is similar to the Gestalt contact-cycle.



Source: Fuhr, Gremmler-Fuhr 1995, p.98

A human individual has more learned programs at his disposal than inherited ones. By his or her imagination, a person is able to interpret the environment a challenging situation. First the person gives the situation a meaning in relation to the needs. The next step is not automatically an ac-

tion, because the person can interfere by a phase of imagination.



Source: Uexküll and Wesiack 1998, p. 225

In this brief summary it is not possible to describe their theory; Kathleen Höll did this more fully in her lecture. The headline of this chapter is that each individual is seen as an autonomous centre of his or her perception. But we should not mix up autonomy with dominance and independence. The world can be described as a hierarchy of systems and a human being as a bio-psycho-social system. Upwards and downwards-effects from the social to the physical level and vice versa are defined as translation processes called “semiosis”. As autonomous centres of their perceptions and actions human beings are responsible for their own subsystems and they are also responsible for their suprasystems: the groups, organisations and states they live in.

Health and disease as complex information-led phenomena

Health is defined as the undisturbed building of a subjective environment. It must be possible to combine stimuli from outside and inside to a meaningful context. It must be possible to find significant reasons for what is happening. Sufficient amounts of resources and also of challenging conditions are needed.

Disease will develop when the sophisticated balance between individual creativity and what the environment offers is not harmonious; for example if the environment fits to the individual like poorly fitting shoes. More generally: if programs and the environment do not work well together. An unre-

solvable situation becomes a situation of alarm and leads to “unorganised illness” (Balint). Indeed recent studies in Germany show, that 30% of all symptoms are expressions of “unorganised illness”. Health and disease are correlated very clearly to the societal situation. Social stress leads to any kind of illness. Insufficient social support is taken as a disposition to the mortality from quite different illnesses. Each disease should provoke questions like: Why right here, why right now?

Blasius (1986) claims to formulate a term of health and disease for social systems. Kathleen Höll thinks this could be very useful; maybe we should better use sociologic terms such as functionality/dysfunctionality than medical terms.

Conclusions for Gestalt Therapy, Medicine and the sciences in general

First of all: This theory should be integrated into Gestalt Therapy theory and thus make it an exact theory. It could be well combined with Gestalt Psychology, especially since the central term “sense of coherence” is an analogy to the law of the good Gestalt.

Medicine and Psychotherapy come nearer to each other by the new Syntagma. Is this the time to make Psychotherapy the leading science of medicine? Because its theory is founded on a more complex level?

On the other hand: neither psyche nor soma can be understood without considering the social level. So both have to orientate themselves according to the Social Sciences.

The Social Sciences on the other hand are not really able to guarantee a helpful orientation without respecting and integrating the levels below. Some branches are on the way to a holistic perspective (see the Gulbenkian Commission).

The Natural Sciences have to recognise the psychic level as a reality. Thus Biology has to adopt the concept of the individual. The single case must be recognised as enormously relevant. The dogma that nature has no inten-

tions is falling. This gives a really great perspective to Ecology.

There is a link to our political heritage

The principle of self-regulation makes all of us responsible not only for our personal subsystems, but also for the suprasystems. That is why we are co-responsible for our method, - for Psychotherapy as a societal institution, as well as for our nations.

The investigations on Psychotherapy mentioned above make it clear that our societies are more violent than our self-image would admit. They also make clear that they are less truthful than we want to be aware of. violence and dishonesty both are ways of behavior which distract children very badly. Both, if being widespread in a society but denied in the same time, make a society tend to be a collective problem.

Can we use the new Syntagma to understand the political situation a little bit better?

We have seen that an understanding of one's own life in the framework of a meaningful context is a prerequisite for health. This is not reduced to

the personal level as it is most likely characteristic for the middle classes to try to build one's own private space besides politics, but this cannot function in the long run. To do this one has to build a fence against the perception of the political and global suprasystems.

We Western people are suffering from a blocking fence at least because Christian religion is incompatible with the natural sciences (as an example see the conflict on evolutionary theory in US-schools). Besides that we are suffering from blocks in our political thinking, because the Western industrial countries have built an ideological world of their own called "Democracy", which is not a clear or meaningful figure. Our principle of figure/ground should lead us to a deeper investigation with respect to what should be brought into the foreground.

On the global level a big process of consciousness raising has begun. Worldwide Web and TV present information that demonstrates that Western Democracy in some respect is a deception package. The gap between the rich and the poor, as well as between the sexes, is larger than ever.

We can come to the conclusion that all forms of politics, which do not sufficiently consider the principle of self-organisation of populations – the own one's and those of the others – must fail or respectively lead to a catastrophe.

There are clerical, bureaucratic, military and other groups in history and actually who got used to their supposed privilege to use force against those who should obey, which means a manual-operation-model. It would be a breath taking process of learning if the human individuals, groups and organisations were to educate themselves and each other only using the persuasion model.

Joppie Bakker,

in consultation with the author

Kathleen Höll was born in Wuppertal (Germany) in 1945. She studied Political Science and Sociology. She is a Gestalt therapist and teaches at the Fachsektion für Integrative Gestalttherapie (ÖAGG) in Vienna. She is also a member of the Working Group on Political Psychology and lecturer at the Institute for Political Science at the University of Vienna.

New members 2004 - May 2005

Naomi Anderson, UK
Carmen Beyer, Romania
George Diplas, Greece
Jiri Drahota, Czech Republic
Johannes Feuerbach, Germany
Tomas Flajs, Slovenia
Andrew Forrester, UK
Marie-Paule Glachant, France
Hege Haugen, Norway
Annouche Katzeff, Belgium
Nathalie Kedrova, Russia
Daniel Khlomov, Russia
Vasiliki Kyriakopoulou-Schliebener, Greece
Martine Leignel, France
Marianne Lind, Norway
Conny van Meer, The Netherlands
Knut Moskaug, Norway

David Quinn, England
Faye Page, England
Knut Petterson, Norway
Elena Petrova, Russia
Denise Renfrew, UK
Claire Salisbury, UK
Peter Schulthess, Switzerland
Danuse Strukova, Czech Republic
Cathelijne van Wijngaarden, The Netherlands

Rectification:

The Nordisk Gestalt Institute is seated in Denmark, not in Norway as was written in the 2003 Newsletter.

For your planning:

The European Gestalt Writers' Conference in 2006

will be held in Belfast,

Northern Ireland

on May 24–28.



Gestalt News from European Countries

Dear Colleagues,
Gestalt Community seems to grow fast; Gestalt Therapists from all over Europe, and not only, are working in different-diverse ways that are creative and productive in order to expand Gestalt Therapy and its applications to the wider Psychological Field.

Recognizing these efforts and the need for “Live Dialogue” and “Contact”, we are inaugurating from the current issue of EAGT Newsletter a new column, as a meeting place for all these different actualities and news of each country.

I am really touched and excited to write this short introduction and full of hope and wishes for a creative contact thought this process.

Belgium, Germany, Greece, Israel, Macedonia and The Netherlands are the countries that first responded to this invitation.

Let us share their news...

Katia Hatzilakou

Chair of the Extended Board

BELGIUM

(French speaking Gestaltists)

French speaking gestaltists are more and more aware that time changes regarding the statute of psychotherapist in the society. As SBG (Société Belge de Gestalt) we try to be active at two levels.

At the European level we of course participate to the EAGT activities and we recently found an agreement with our Flemish friends from the NVAGT to create a bridge committee (named BBC for Belgian Bridge Committee) in order to represent whole Belgium at the EAGT with one single voice.

At the national level we took two main actions: the first one was to create a Gestalt Network which get together active French speaking Gestaltists. The only goal of this network was

to create a place where gestaltists can know each others in a respectful atmosphere despite their differences or even discrepancies. The network members meet every two years approximately and there is no need to be a member of the SBG to participate to this network. The second action of the SBG was toward other psychotherapists : thanks to two of our members, we participate to a Psy-plateform which regularly meets to discuss political issues related to the psychotherapist's statute; some members of the plateform have political connections. The SBG also impulses a yearly meeting, taking place end of the year, with all interested psychotherapists regardless their specialities, to improve information exchange regarding the statute of psychotherapist at the national level.

Finally some data: the SBG asked end 2004 to be recognized as NOGT by the EAGT, has one representative at the EAGT Extended Board and one representative at the ABP (the umbrella organization of EAP in Belgium); this representative stands in the committee which processes the ECP candidatures. Last but not least: amongst 29 ECP holders in Belgium at least 12 are gestaltists.

DVG

(Gestalt Therapy in Germany)

There are some significant news we can tell you:

In June 2005 we are promoting the first international German-speaking Gestalt Congress together with the IGT/ÖAGG from Austria and the SVG from Switzerland in Munich, Germany. The title is “An der Grenze Leben” (“living at the boundary”) and is dedicated to Laura Perls, who has her 100 years anniversary in 2005 (<http://www.laura-perls-tagung.com>).

For this and the next news below, we (mainly Christof Weber from

DVG) made contact to Dan Bloom, the president of the New York Institute for Gestalt Therapy who will take part at this congress, too.

At this congress there will be the first showing of a documentary film about the life and work of Laura Perls which we (DVG) are producing. For this Christof Weber visited the New York Institute for Gestalt Therapy, talked to Renate Perls (daughter of Fritz and Laura), to Dan Bloom and other people knowing Laura Perls personally. This film will be published by the DVG a will be available later.

On our website (<http://www.dvg-gestalt.de>) we have the German Gestalt Bibliography to be downloaded. The translation or the fitting to the eagt bibliography is in progress.

From the “inside” of DVG: we are still discussing the progress of the development of the Gestalt training standards. Our number of members is still around 950. And last but not least, we are still making contact to institutes and gestalttherapists which are not members of the DVG, trying to get them “in”.

Olaf Zielke, 11.4.2005

The Greek Gestalt Association

First of all we would like to welcome and congratulate this new effort and column of Newsletter, which we believe could be a place for challenging and creative exchange. It is an honor and joy for us to share with all of you the latest news and activities about Gestalt Therapy in our country.

This academic year started with a big open activity in Thessaloniki in cooperation with the Gestalt Association for Gestalt Therapy, Gestalt Foundation (Training Institute) and Figure and Ground (Gestalt Psychotherapeutic Center). We had the honor to have Harm Siemens as the key note speaker: a large event with great suc-

cess which was the first attempt for such cooperation in our country.

Currently we are in process of making contact with trainees and Gestalt Therapists from the two basic Training Institutes presently in operation in Greece in order to inform about the necessity of a NAO that will represent the best way the Gestalt Therapists and will effectively target a more effective control and a higher level of education and training.

At the same time contact is made with the Greek National Association for Psychotherapy and the Greek National Association for Psychologists and colleagues of different psychotherapeutic approaches in order to make ourselves more known to different organizations that are currently working into shaping the legislation (to take effect soon) as regards psychotherapy in Greece.

Maria Farmaki

President of the Greek Gestalt Association

Israeli Gestalt Therapy Association

Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to inform you that ISGTA, The Israeli Gestalt therapy Association, is already intensely engaged in the preparations for the seminar to take place on 8-9-10/9/2006 in Jerusalem, Israel.

Those of you who attended the closing/final ceremony/meeting of the Prague conference surely remember that after a long and serious debate about the proper/preferable location for our next conference, the assembly voted for Athens.

However, the extent of those who expressed an interest to visit Israel, the Holy Land, which is a beautiful, interesting, developing country and at the same time a challenging scene from a social and cultural viewpoint - made the board suggest that we hold another seminar in Israel, in 2006, and devote it to looking into the dynamics of the local conflict as a paradigm for the human phenomena of conflict

and attempt to recruit some of the resources of Gestalt to enhance the process resolution.

Kurt Levin (1948) was a pioneer of analyzing the conflict as an occurrence. He described its process that is typified by a series of stages, is motivation by various contradictory vectors and factors, and thus becomes a Gestalt of angry chaos, of unfinished business that blocks the vision and prevents solution. The model that Levin suggested, includes studying the main components of the conflict, helping the negating parties become each aware and empathic to the others pain, looking at the situation from many different angles, examining any creative, non-conformist idea, and creating a fresh dialogue. It seems to me his ideas are still very relevant and much needed in our troubled region. In fact they are materialized, if only on a modest scale in some experiments by various groups.

We feel that we want both to describe the setting, share the difficulties, expose some such local activities that work (and some that run into trouble), discuss new possibilities and mainly gain from the collective wisdom of a group of Gestalt experts who would/could offer some new insights and support the vigour for the long-needed dialogue between the struggling parties.

Since conflict is conflict is conflict, we are making an effort to attract colleagues from Ireland and from the Balkan, two European zones of similar if also different conflicts, who seem to have found some ways of mutual reconciliation and maybe learn from their experience.

So we put some heads together, Ken Evans, Daan Van Baalen, on behalf of EAGT board, together with an Israeli team, headed by Prof. Shraga Serok, (a well known Gestalt therapist, the one who introduced Gestalt to Israelis in the early 80'). We strive to make this a meaningful, mind broadening experience for all of

us. The Israeli team consists of Jewish and Arab professionals; most of them are members of the ISGTA board. We are now reaching out to colleagues in the field of mental health, social work, education, sociology, etc. , who are involved in relevant activities to present and take part in this seminar.

This seminar is planned to be an occasion that will be markedly different in many ways: this time we, the Gestalt community, are not coming to teach and preach but rather to learn and observe. First we will seek to get a good grasp of the Field, as it is seen from different perspectives – things one can see from here – look different than what most of our European friends (and enemies) see on the media at home.

We will be audience while various groups and organizations will ensemble to present, discuss and evaluate their different ideas, approaches and activities in the endeavor to find ways of reconciliation. At that stage we will open a discussion in which participants of the seminar will react to the presentations and offer conceptualizations and insights based on Gestalt theory and principles.

Our main meetings will, of course, take place in Jerusalem, the holy city to three religions and a symbol of peace and spiritual inspiration. However,

in order to let our guests experience and absorb as much as possibly of the local reality, this is going to be a rambling seminar, that will visit some projects in their own realm so as to get a first hand impression, be able to communicate and experience in the here and now.

The seminar will offer a variety of trips, cultural activities, social encounters with local professionals, workshops, lectures, and mainly an open, hopefully stimulating dialogue. Accommodation at different rates will be available. Pre- and post- seminar tours will also be available.

You are heartily invited to what is already promising to be a distinctive,

creative experiment for the EAGT community that has never been tried before. Come join us, make the event richer and more colourful through your participation.

We are looking forward to welcoming as many of you “Next Year in Jerusalem!”

Yours,

Nurith Levi,

Chairperson, ISGTA

The Macedonian Association for Gestalt Therapy

On behalf of the Macedonian Association for Gestalt Therapy, I am really happy to be able to share with you details on the work in progress regarding Gestalt practice, education/training and network building on the territory of Macedonia.

Since autumn 2004, the key trainer Biljana Koprova and a number of members of our Association have been quite busy managing the network building in our country. Several meetings were held with GT-related associations and individuals from different cities; at these meetings they were informed of all the details of network building and were invited to become members of the National Umbrella Association. And, we are really glad to be able to share with you that, as a result, the MAGT has been growing successfully and that the process of inviting and welcoming new members goes on.

Also, a session of the General Assembly took place; on that occasion a new President of the Association was elected - Ms Iva Andonovska.

As regards to the educational and training process, the focus has been on the studying and the comparison of the new EAGT Training Standards with those of the now separated work of the Gestalt educational and training Institute. Certain elements still can not be clearly defined – as you all know – therefore, we’ve been in touch with, have consulted, and have been supported by Peter Schulthess, Chris-

tine Stevens and Harm Siemens from the EAGT Board. Peter and Christine paid us a visit last spring and got acquainted with the work of the Institute from up close. Their supportive feedback and clarifications and comments have been truly helpful, and this is a fine opportunity for us to express our thankfulness to them.

We are also very grateful and lucky to have had such a fruitful cooperation with our dear friend Harm Siemens, who is our supervisor and has been holding regular annual educational and experiential workshops for the trainees of our Institute for several years now.

By tradition, we attended the EAGT Conference in Prague 2004 as well. It was yet another wonderful opportunity to get together and share experience and ideas. The warm and supportive feedback from the EAGT Board regarding our work and Malcolm Parlett’s assistance were but an additional impulse for us.

As far as the exchange and the cooperation with other trainers is concerned, we are also looking forward to the beginning of a new, regional cooperation, that is, with Katia Hatzilakou and the Institute of Thessalonica. Katia will pay us a visit in May in order for our two Institutes to discuss the field of our joint work as regards to this.

As for the educational and training process itself, apart from a few points of the newly introduced Standards, things have been as usual: new trainees join the GT field, those that have completed their training have their own practice or apply Gestalt approach within their professional field of work, and some of them that are duly qualified and willing to advance, join and enrich the field of educators at the Institute under the supervision of Biljana Koprova. Also, translating Gestalt articles and papers into Macedonian language remains a regular activity.

We are looking forward to reading

other EAGT up-dates in this new issue of EAGT Newsletter and to some new opportunities for further connecting and exchange of experience within the European Gestalt community. We also invite you to visit us at <http://www.magt.edu.mk> and have a closer look at who we are and how we work.

With our best regards,

Aneta Manevska

Trainee and Member of MAGT

NVAGT

The NVAGT unites Dutch and Belgian Dutch speaking Gestalttherapists. So we are an international (2 nationalities) union within the European Association, the EAGT.

In order to tell you what’s going on within the NVAGT, it’s necessary to inform you about the history of coming into existence. After a suggestion of Daan van Praag, made during the closing of the 2nd Dutch – Flemish congress for Gestalttherapy in 1996, to cooperate, both the training-institutes and the existing unions for Gestalttherapy joined together for negotiations. Once one doesn’t simply know each other only by name but one also meets each other in personal contacts, the fixed gestalts don’t work anymore, resulting in creative adjustments to new ways.

Six training-institutes and almost as many unions for Gestalttherapists sent their representatives to the negotiations table and, after many meetings, one reached consensus about the foundation of a new coordinating professional union for Dutch speaking Gestalttherapists. On June 23, 1999 a first General Member meeting of this new union was convoked and working-groups were installed who were supposed to give this union a better structure.

The past years the union did it’s very best to become, in the field of the Psychotherapy, a professional union with an excellent reputation. We now have an explicit regulation for certification. The EAGT standards served as a basis

and they sometimes became more precise and certainly more concrete. We worked hard on an ethical code and on complaint- and disciplinary law. The Medical Insurance companies were informed and several of them in the Netherlands now reimburse Gestalttherapy. Brochures are available for our members in which we explain to clients what Gestalttherapy means. Another brochure informs mediators about our scope of work.

The NVAGT highlights the watching and strengthening of their professional interests. This, in view of the developments in Belgium and Holland with regard to the acknowledgment of our profession of Gestalttherapeutist, will certainly keep our very best attention. In Belgium we meanwhile founded a so called “Bridge

Committee “with our French speaking colleagues in order to protect our national interests.

At the same time we also pay much attention to promote the quality of our scope of work. For this reason the NVAGT regularly organizes study-days and we issue a professional magazine for Gestalttherapy. Every three years we organize a conference (the next one in October 2005).

In view of the future the NVAGT wants to improve the quality-standards of our members. The necessary regulations sometimes obstruct the liveliness and the fixation upon development and renewal. The inspiration and focus of the board for the near future will especially be the quality of the relation therapist – client, after all the substance of the reason for

existence with regard to a professional union. Also the NVAGT will give priority to certification of training-institutes. In future persons qualified by a certified institute as Gestalttherapeutist, will directly be admitted to the professional union. It is our wish that, also in future, members of these national unions will automatically be a member of the European organization being the EAGT. Both the stiff and hard way to acknowledgment and double payment of memberships will then disappear. In this situation much more time and energy will be available for working on the substance of our profession.

Jan Lens,

President NVAGT

In memoriam Alfred Grillmeier

On the 17th of June 2004 a dear old friend of mine, ALFRED GRILLMEIER passed away. It was the Gestalt idea which brought us together and formed the basis of our friendship. I had already been “infected” with the Gestalt thoughts when I arrived at the psychiatric hospital Klosterneuburg/Gugging to begin work with him on psychiatric patients, pioneering work which drew us close together. After that time our ways parted, but Alfred was so taken by Gestalt, that he had the idea to establish an institute for schooling Gestalt therapists. Through his friendship with Richard Picker and his contacts to the Institute for Gestalttherapy in Würzburg his idea became reality.

In 1997 Alfred drew up the application for his institute to be registered as an official training organisation and it was submitted to the authorities and also became a member of EAGT. In the following years especially Alfred and Richard caused this

organisation to prosper. At this time Alfred invited me to work with him. And then came his abrupt end, which we all deeply mourned.

Alfred was a man who took psychology and psychotherapy very seriously and he never shied away from working with psychiatric patients who were some of the poorest people on this earth.

Alfred entered the field of psychiatry at the time, when the ideas of Basaglia were being implemented and he was very engaged in turning social-therapeutical concepts into reality. The Gugging coffee house, which became a legend in itself, was an institution for the patients and was managed by the patients themselves. His devotion even extended to introduce patients holidays and accompanying them personally.

He not only left behind a loving wife and two children but also a gap, which we, who are carrying on his work in this organisation, greatly feel.

Remembering him has the positive effect of encouraging us to maintain the idea of the organisation for a long time to come.

As Gestalt therapists our thinking and our living are closely related to death. Each gestalt, which opens has to be closed eventually. But nevertheless, every time the gestalt of a human being is closed, it is painful.

Hans Peter Bilek

Post mortem Bernadette Valentin

BERNADETTE VALENTIN died on January 22nd 2005 aged 75. She has been a long-term member of EAGT. The Gestalt World will miss her.

Many of you in EAGT will remember the tall lady: courageous, resolute and clear as well as tender, tentative and sensitive in her appearance in EAGT meetings.

I used to be her companion as her close friend and colleague on a number of EAGT conferences, and we presented different workshops single and together (the Gestalt slide show in Cambridge).

To remind you: she was the one to initiate an extemporary political workshop in Stockholm after 9/11! This initiative was typical for her: she stood up for fairness and „the other side of the coin“ although this was not comfortable for her and others and brought her into the center of conflict. Actually, who was close to her knew: she was afraid to speak up in front of big crowds, and she did it – trembling – when she had a topic to go for.

She was a „European woman“, which means: she always supported the European idea and the idea of basic democracy. In her early years after

World War II she was supporting the Free Democratic Party in Germany which at that time was the only one open to international connections (so she said, I am younger and don't really know, but I believe her credo).

And she was a binding link to Arabian and Islamic heritage and culture, both in her professional and personal life.

Only in her mid-forties she entered into the field of Gestalttherapy. Before she had been a business woman – on an international level, could it be different?

She started her Gestalt career at the time GESTALT came up strongly in Germany by international teachers. Her initial guides were Ischa Bloomborg and Wendela Ter Horst. Our mutual teachers were Erv and Miriam Polster. We met in California in training in summer of 1977.

Bernadette was an identified pioneer of Gestalt attitude, -ethics and -therapy. She always stuck to this confession.

She took an active part in founding the German roof organisation of Gestalt in Germany (DVG) which exists now for 20 years. There she was chairwoman of the Ethics Commis-

sion (developing the code of ethics) for several years and she was always a stimulating member as well.

She worked in private practice, was a trainer in a big Gestalt Institute in Germany (IGW), offered supervision of all kinds and developed „Gestalt painting“. She also was a member – later an honorary member – of FORGE (Federation of Organisations of Gestalt Education).

She dropped working at about age of 70 when she had moved from her country side place (which used to be a Gestalt seminar house also) to the city of Lueneburg. Since then she became more and more weak in her bodily existence, her „heart was tired „(as she said) and she suffered from chronicle aches.

She died as she had lived: as well determined as soft.

The Gestalt World will miss this inspiring and lovingly engaged woman. I already miss you a lot, Bernadette!

Your friend Inga

Inga Schumann-Sorge

Vogging 1

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schumannsorge@gestalttbeben.de

Gestalt meets conflict resolution

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various groups.

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Yours,
Nurith Levi,
Chairperson, ISGTA

More pictures

All photographs by *Arthur Dombrovsky*, at *Riga Gestalt Institute* in Latvia.



from the 8th European Conference of Gestalt Therapy, in Prague.



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