

## Editorial

### *Gestalt Review* as Experiment

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WE ARE PLEASED TO FEATURE in this, our last issue of 2001, a dialogue on art and creativity. Creativity is so much at the core of Gestalt therapy that it is almost synonymous with our approach. We are a theory that questions the routine, technique, and redundancy that can lead to unaware habits and patterns.

This focus has led me to look at *Gestalt Review* from a new perspective as we end our fifth year of publication. Are we creative as the authors in this issue define the word? In most cases I would have to say yes.

An essential ingredient of both creativity and the Gestalt method is the concept of *experiment*. Experiments are driven by such questions as “What will happen if I try this out?” or “What do you suppose would happen . . .?” We are not committed to any single outcome. Instead, our attitude is one of a willingness to embrace uncertainty, to focus on process, and to be unendingly curious (Melnick, 1980).

As an “experiment in progress,” *Gestalt Review* is always changing and being redefined. I would like briefly to tell you of the changes, some major and some minor, that we will be instituting in the coming year.

- We will be leaving The Analytic Press, our publisher since the beginning, and moving to a self-publishing format. They have been wonderful partners, both professionally and personally. We are leaving in order to exert more control over our own destiny. Our move to a self-publishing format also moves us toward our goal of financial independence.
- In keeping with this need, we will also begin publishing three, rather than four, issues per year. This change will allow us to keep our subscription costs at their current rates.

- We will begin periodically to institute a series of *invited addresses* by individuals who have made significant contributions to the Gestalt approach.
- We will be adding Rick Mauer, M.A., to our Editorial Board as an Associate Editor. Rick's professional emphasis on large organizations will help actualize our commitment to presenting Gestalt therapy across all levels of system—individual, intimate, and organizational.

On the other hand, some things will not change. We will continue our commitment to publishing high quality contemporary Gestalt articles in the form of refereed papers, dialogues such as the one on creativity in this issue, book reviews, and essays. I invite you to let us know how we are doing. Please e-mail your feedback to [gestaltrev@aol.com](mailto:gestaltrev@aol.com).

### Our Current Issue

We begin our dialogue on art and creativity with an overview article, "Art and Creativity in Gestalt Therapy," by Nancy Amendt-Lyons, accompanied by commentaries from Jan Ruckert, Stiene Deseyn, and Joyce Wilson-Sanford. Amendt-Lyons builds a strong case that creativity, especially using artistic methods, is fundamental to the Gestalt approach. As she points out, our focus on process, playfulness, authentic expression, mind-body integration, liveliness, and the search for novelty—"the good Gestalt"—are fundamental to both Gestalt therapy and creativity. Most important, she points out that creativity is a *field phenomenon*—not just embedded in the client, the therapist/consultant, or the artistic materials, but, instead, an outcome of a novel, daring, courageous, and intuitive process.

She begins by tracing the theoretical foundations of Gestalt therapy, beginning with the founders, and describes how their unique backgrounds led them to their use of specific artistic forms. She then discusses some of the early writers on creativity in the United States, more specifically, Janie Rhyne, Joseph Zinker, and Violet Oaklander. Next, she outlines her own approach for promoting creative expression and process; she focuses on play, the concept of creative adjustment, reorganization of the field, and isomorphism. Finally, she describes her assessment process in creating the right mix of artistic medium and type of experiment so as to be aligned with the client's strengths and limitations.

Jan Ruckert, begins her commentary by sharing memories of a number of the persons referred to in Amendt-Lyons's article: Fritz and Laura

Perls, Janie Rhyne, and Violet Oaklander. After describing the implications for education, she concludes by articulating her own philosophy which she utilizes in teaching and practice and in which she focuses specifically on the role of the therapist in the creative and therapeutic process.

Stiene Groetjes, one of the conceptualizers and leaders of a two-year training program in creativity, describes the course's dual goals of self-expression and the enhancement of the creative process. She describes in detail how the course helps people gain access to their own creative streams and how disowned, undervalued, and underdeveloped aspects of self are integrated. Groetjes agrees with Amendt-Lyons and Ruckert that the therapist/trainer who employs creative methods must possess some unique qualities. She then discusses the extra levels of skill and responsibility needed by trainers who focus on facilitating movement within the largely unconscious creative process of the individual.

She next describes the use of artistic methods for enhancing group development, awareness of one's bond with one's body, and particularly the use of "dance, sound and silence, drama, games." She ends by discussing how she combines personal growth and leadership training when applying the course content to organizational work.

Joyce Wilson-Sanford continues the focus of applying Gestalt-based creative approaches to organizations. Wilson-Sanford starts by describing her own creative process and then comparing it with the Gestalt Cycle of Experience. Drawing from her extensive work as an organizational development (O.D.) executive for a global food retailer, she details her reliance on *pleasure and play* to support her O.D. interventions. She goes on to describe in detail how she creates large-scale interventions and ends by outlining the characteristics that are necessary for creativity. They include the ability to be courageous, to let go of the old—even if it has been successful in the past—to risk uncertainty, and to maintain a commitment to be an awkward learner over and over again.

We end this dialogue with a response from Amendt-Lyons in which she emphasizes the connectedness between theory and practice. She differentiates between technique and style, and routine and creativity, and ends with a plea concerning the pitfalls of embracing the familiar. Instead, she recommends a willingness "to be surprised, to take a risk, to trust my intuition in cooperation with my theoretical foundation." She joins Wilson-Sanford in emphasizing that creativity involves a commitment to being awkward and, most important, an ability to play.

Our next article is "The Theory of Self in Gestalt Therapy: A Restatement of Some Aspects," by Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb. Much has been written in Gestalt theory about the basic concept of *the self*. In this clearly

written article filled with theoretical insights, Lobb, while remaining true to basic Gestalt theory, emphasizes a field perspective as she discusses the self in relation to concepts such as contact boundary, function, process, and contact. I found particularly interesting her novel discussion of time in relation to contact making and withdrawal.

Next is Susan Roos's "Theory Development: Chronic Sorrow and the Gestalt Construct of Closure." One of the fundamental constructs of nearly all psychotherapies and theories of change, including Gestalt, is that of closure, of completion, of resolution. But what happens when completion is not to be and events remain unfinished? Are we, indeed, hard wired to finish, so that incompleteness leads to stress, obsessiveness, and neurosis? If that is the case, then what happens when one's life contains situations that one cannot resolve? Roos calls the response to these situations, in which loss is ongoing, not time bound, and results in a reoccurring grief response, *chronic sorrow*. It is "a painful discrepancy between what is perceived as reality and what continues to be dreamed of. . . . The loss is a living loss."

After first describing the concept from a Gestalt perspective, including a literature review, she then discusses the quandary in coming to grips with fantasies that will never be. Next she articulates the implications involved in doing psychotherapy with persons dealing with unending loss. She ends with a case example that illustrates her approach.

We complete our last issue of 2001 with *Back Pages* featuring a response by Lester Greenberg to a recently published transcript of a conversation between Martin Buber and Carl Rogers, two of the primary shapers of the humanistic movement in psychology. I believe you will find Greenberg's response engrossing as he analyzes their differences.

### Reference

- Melnick, J. (1980), The use of therapist-imposed structure in Gestalt therapy.} *Gest. J.*, 3:4-20.