

# Global Perspectives on Research, Theory, and Practice



# Global Perspectives on Research, Theory, and Practice

*A Decade of Gestalt!*

Edited by

Brian J. Mistler and Philip Brownell

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Global Perspectives on Research, Theory, and Practice:  
A Decade of Gestalt!

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# FOREWORD

PETER PHILIPPSON

This book is a tribute to Phil Brownell's work in providing online resources (at *Gestalt!* and the Gestalt-L list) for Gestaltists from different countries and traditions to engage with each other, and with each other's ideas - I think you will see from some of these chapters the ongoing relationships, friendships, competition and the general buzz of lively engagement behind the discussion of ideas.

You will be able to get to know the individual voices: those like Lynne Jacobs who question and criticize the legacy of our founders, particularly Fritz Perls, and those like Maria Kirchner and myself who value it; those (Phil Brownell, Sylvia Crocker and the late Ruth Wolfert) who want to bring the 'spiritual' or religious into Gestalt thinking and those like John Wymore, with his integration of evolutionary psychology and Gestalt Therapy, and myself who take an atheistic viewpoint; those who write more about theory (Maria Kirchner and Scott Kellogg) and those who write more about practice (Victor Daniels and Elinor Greenberg); those who use the language of story and myth (Rudolf Jarosewitch), and those who use the language of science and research (Greenberg and Brownell). You will find reflections on culture and language (Jungkyu Kim and Rudolf Jarosewitch), a focus that is one of the major strengths of a writing and dialoguing community meeting on the internet.

I think it is important to bear in mind that all of this writing is an expression of our interest and excitement. We were not looking to make a financial profit, but giving our time and energy to what we found important, both things to say and people to meet. These are labours of love!

They are also labours of intellect. The rigid application of a denial of intellectual engagement as 'elephant-shit' both devalues the theoretical basis of Gestalt Therapy and, maybe more importantly, puts the trainee and the client in a one-down position of not being able to know and critique what the trainer or therapist is doing, or from what values and understandings they are coming.

So I wish you much pleasure with these chapters, and I send a warm hello to my fellow scribes. And remember, if you have thoughts you want to share on any of what we write about, you can join in the ongoing conversation at the Gstalt-L list.

Peter Philippson  
Manchester, UK  
30<sup>th</sup> August 2014

# GESTALT THERAPY IN THE WORLD OF CONTEMPORARY MEDIA

CHARLIE BOWMAN

For those of us who have practiced gestalt therapy for a while, reviewing the archives of *Gestalt!* is a relational walk down memory lane. From the first editorial by Morgan Goodlander to recollections of friends no longer with us in practice or in spirit, I am reminded of the rich tapestry interwoven by the gestalt community over the years. Nothing has served to weave this tapestry more than the Internet and electronic technology, although it has not been without a struggle. C. S. Lewis wrote, “It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird: it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg.” Fulfilling the dual mission of advancing *and* associating required AAGT to take the leap into what was then considered non-traditional communication.

In 1995, the Association for the Advancement of Gestalt therapy (AAGT) launched an ambitious campaign to subscribe members to an “Internet Mailbox.” The Spring, 1995 *AAGT Newsletter* offered complicated instructions for subscribing to [aagt@indy.net](mailto:aagt@indy.net) and coaxed subscriptions by identifying members who were communicating online “from as far away as Australia and Capetown, South Africa.” Brian O’Hara accepted the newly created position “Internet Coordinator” and he, Phil Brownell and I spent a lot of time back and forth trying to coax AAGT members to connect online. Growth was agonizingly slow (see Appendix II).

Gestalt therapists have preferred face-to-face contact to electronic media since these early days of teleconferencing and electronic mailboxes. Early discussions about the nature of contact and electronic communication were at times heated, with the jury out on whether or not electronic communications, let alone electronic communities, were valid means of contacting. Such growing pains make little sense today (particularly for a therapy that holds novelty with such centrality). Nonetheless, AAGT and the gestalt community forged ahead in the tradition established in the 1960’s by Fritz Perls for using cutting-edge technology. His early recording equipment can still be found at the

Humanistic Psychology Special Collections at the University of California - Santa Barbara.

The growth of gestalt therapy through electronic media has been remarkable and well documented elsewhere. The lion's share of responsibility for this growth belongs with Gestalt Global Corporation. The brainchild of Phil Brownell, this non-profit organization was dedicated to facilitating the growth and development of gestalt therapy by building a global community, publishing, and research. In 1997, Gestalt Global launched *Gestalt!*, the first electronic gestalt journal. *Gestalt!* experimented with different writing techniques and supported the expression and development of ideas much more than adherence to publication style. After publishing ten volumes of the journal, many of which were dedicated to AAGT conferences and member interests, Phil offered editorship to AAGT. At the 2010 membership meeting and conference AAGT members expressed their support and consensus for adopting the online journal as the official journal of AAGT. Phil, Dan Bloom and I offered to co-edit the journal and welcomed the opportunity for creative collaboration.

AAGT embraced the journal, touting it as a publication interested in developing new writing in the field and offering support to less experienced writers in their projects – goals Phil had promoted from the start. AAGT's stewardship of *Gestalt!* was short lived and the journal was put quietly to rest in 2012. Emerson said it neatly- "There is never enough time to do or say all the things that we would wish; the thing is to do as much as you can in the time that you have." While AAGT ultimately laid *Gestalt!* to rest as a result of never having enough time, Brian Mistler and Phil Brownell have done yeoman work bringing us *Gestalt!* in the time that they have made to preserve the best of the best.

So here you are, holding decades of gestalt therapy in your hands, about to glimpse the evolution of gestalt therapy *as it happened*. Like Walter Cronkite's very popular television show of the mid-1950's, *You Are There*, the hot topics of the day spring into life. Fresh ideas about research, ethics, spirituality, or mindfulness are flanked by more stalwart topics concerning gestalt therapy and dialogue, paradox, classical theory or self-psychology. Relive the respondent's wrestling with love, or music, or trauma – often sparked by current events and carried over from the live dialogue of the Gestalt-L discussion list.

Being free from the shackles of traditional publishing meant the authors could focus more on contemporaneity and relevance. This allowed the on line gestalt community to live up to Einstein's advice, "The important thing is not to stop questioning." As you peruse the pages of this book, keep Einstein's advice in mind. Read. Question. Dialogue. That's what we did!

Charlie Bowman

August 2014

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I offer first my biggest thanks to all of the wonderful writers whose work appears in this volume and to everyone who made *Gestalt!* possible. Simultaneously, I offer my apologies to both the authors and to you (each reader) for any errors introduced or misstatements I have made in summarizing the pieces or their composers – for any that interfere with the reader’s ability to understand the piece or inevitably fail to do justice to a group of writers I both admire and reassure, there is no excuse; I apologize. Personally, I want to thank my sister, both of my parents, my dear co-workers and friends in Florida, New York, and around the world for their love and support through many of my projects, this included. I am especially appreciative to series editor and volume co-editor Philip Brownell for his vision, faith, collaborative spirit, and tireless work ethic. And, my deepest gratitude to all of the mentors and teachers throughout my journey – especially, to Peter White for his early role in my path to psychotherapy, to Drs. Jeff VanLone and Tammy Walsh, wonderful supervisors and even better people, and to Dr. M. Pat Korb at the Gestalt Center of Gainesville who, in her 80s when I met her, taught me more about Gestalt Therapy – therapy period – in my six years of training with her than I imagined possible; I remain indebted beyond words.

Brian J. Mistler  
August 2, 2014  
Sarasota, Florida

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First, I express here as clearly and directly as I can, my appreciation for Brian Mistler. He has been part of the dialoguing community to which Peter Philipponson referred in his foreword, but beyond that, when the vision for this book emerged, he was eager to contribute by volunteering to edit the anthology. And that he has done.<sup>1</sup> I was preoccupied with other

---

<sup>1</sup> As mentioned elsewhere in this volume, Brian and I decided to leave as much of the original listings and styles as possible so as to reflect the nature of the online

obligations and Brian has done the clear majority of the work preparing this manuscript. I am deeply appreciative of his work, because I very much wanted to preserve as much of *Gestalt!* as possible.

Second, I want to thank the people who contributed to *Gestalt!* over the years that it was published. It is obvious that without their willingness to write for the journal that it would not have existed. And exist it did, at one point being listed in the PsychInfo database of the American Psychological Association. In another sense, though, these people contributed to my professional understanding of gestalt therapy, to my appreciation for different cultures and worldviews, and they helped me to become a better psychotherapist.

I also want to express my appreciation for the people at Cambridge Scholars Publishing who had the interest in establishing this series of books focused on the world of contemporary gestalt therapy. They provide a valuable resource to students and scholars of all kinds of subjects, but in this case certainly of gestalt psychotherapy, consulting, and coaching.

Philip Brownell  
August 12, 2014  
From Above Mizzentop  
Warwick, Bermuda



## INTRODUCTION

# WORDS I WISH I WROTE: AN ANTHOLOGY OF PRACTICAL GESTALT THEORY

BRIAN J. MISTLER, PH.D.

What an incredible collection of interesting and accessible information you're holding in your hands (or browsing on your screen). Kurt Lewin (1951) wrote, "There is nothing so practical as a good theory," and by that measure, this is among the most practical books you'll encounter. This book brings together both a fascinating record of the history of one of Gestalt Therapy's most important journals, *Gestalt!*, and a diverse collection of writings on a representative – to the point of being quite comprehensive – scope of topics related to Gestalt therapy theory, research, and practice. One of my favorite non-Gestalt authors, Robert Fulghum (1999) edited a book with the headline title "Words I Wish I Wrote". As I have poured over this material, I found that same thought returning to me again and again – how insightful, how succinctly put, how many times I have had such questions or begun to consider such conclusions and how I wish I had been able to articulate them as wonderfully as the authors do herein. And, even on a fourth or fifth reading of these chapters, I have found some new gift each author has given to deepen or expand our understanding of Gestalt Therapy.

Fulghum's edited book (lying open to the table of contents next to me on the end table as I type on my laptop) includes the works of great minds like Dylan Thomas, Rainer Maria Rilke, Kurt Vonnegut, Lao Tzu, Shel Silverstein, Albert Camus, and William Butler Yeats. Just as I imagine these authors are to Robert Fulghum, so many of the writers whose work appears in this volume have been influential to me in my development as a psychologist and in my understanding of Gestalt Therapy. It has been thus both a special honor to co-edit this volume as well as an educational delight to revisit these works in the process. The result of this process is a

treasure for me and I hope too for you, the reader, of a vast and impressive collection of incredible thought bound together in a way that I am convinced will be useful for seasoned practitioners and researchers. If you are a student approaching Gestalt Therapy for the first time, you will find no better introduction to this phenomenological, existential, and behavioral-based approach to therapy which emphasizes wholes, therapist development, the therapist-client relationship, and being in the present moment (Mistler, 2009). Not just for experts wishing to go deeper, this volume is also a fantastic reference and anthology of Gestalt Therapy for students at all levels.

To accomplish this scope, this book captures most of the first decade of the online journal *Gestalt!* (ISSN 1091-1766). No tradition survives without a way of passing information on from practitioner to practitioner, decade to decade, generation to generation. As a tradition grows, the means of transmission changes, and is simultaneously affected as technology affords new methods. Certainly the invention of the printing press revolutionized the transmission of a great deal of information to an expanse of people who previously could not have imagined access. The internet has offered a revolution of comparable or greater magnitude, and true to their cutting edge reputation, leading practitioners of Gestalt Therapy from around the world came together to create an important body of information about our field at a time that online access to materials was in its infancy. When the internet was young, *Gestalt!* became one of the first completely online, electronic journals for a professional audience. It featured full-text articles and interviews, reviews of books, and proceedings of various conferences for the global community of gestalt therapy practitioners. Some of the most prominent names in contemporary gestalt therapy appeared in the journal, and a review of the table of contents for this volume reads like a veritable Who's Who of the contemporary Gestalt Therapy world.

In both the story of the journal and the current volume, Phil Brownell, my co-editor, deserves great laudation, for his vision, leadership, and persistent effort in making two important visions a reality: the first, a free access peer-reviewed international journal *Gestalt!*, and now together, a way to ensure this important reservoir of insights and knowledge is accessible into the future. In **Chapter One**, Dr. Phil Brownell, the founder and Sr. Editor of *Gestalt!* describes how the journal came into being and what its original vision was in an original piece titled: A Perspective on Online Process—The Origins and Original Vision of *Gestalt!*, the online journal. In **Chapter Two**, Validating Gestalt: An Interview with Leslie Greenberg (first published in *Gestalt!* 1(1), 1997) Philip Brownell shares

an interview with researcher, writer, and gestalt-trained psychotherapist Leslie Greenberg covering issues related to gestalt theory and practice as well as issues related to research validity and evidence-based practice.

In **Chapter Three**, Ethics and Training Practices: A Call for Discussion (first published in *Gestalt!* 1(2), 1997) Philip Brownell, Jay Levin, and Brian O'Neill offer a call for a public discussion of two issues affecting the practice of Gestalt therapy. The first concern is that of ethical guidelines for practice and the second area is an exploration of the models utilized for training in Gestalt therapy. The authors make clear that at times these differences may even give rise to conflicting ideas of what "is" Gestalt therapy, or what is "good" or "bad" Gestalt therapy. The lack of clarity and criteria regarding professional practice, ethical guidelines, and values inherent in Gestalt therapy makes a coherent standard a seeming impossibility, however, the authors never-the-less offer a noble and engaging attempt to open a discussion and clarify the wider field of professional practice and training.

The concept of the soul is not a stranger either to the field of psychology or the practice of psychotherapy, and its nature has been debated within philosophical circles for centuries. In **Chapter Four**: Psychotherapy and Soul Care: Toward a Clinical Rapprochement (first published in *Gestalt!* 1(2), 1997), Jay Uomoto explores how concern for the soul and its centrality to human suffering and functioning in this world seems to have touched numerous levels of society today including consumers of popular psychology and spirituality to those involved in medicine and biomedical ethics....Soul care has now come into vogue as a viable and vital means of healing emotional wounds, bringing a new perspective to human suffering, providing a context within which to understand suffering, and dissipating some of the meaninglessness that comes with human finitude.

From a fascinating military and gestalt vantage, in **Chapter Five**: Clausewitz Here and Now: Military Obedience and Gestalt Theory (first published in *Gestalt!* 1(2), 1997), Bruce Barrett, draws on the Gestalt Theoretical Psychology, including Gestalt Therapy, to highlights of conceptual and practical insights into non-clinical life challenges and their solutions. From this framework he explores classical problems in the art of war and military history, practical problems in battlefield operations, and the identification and understanding of successful soldiering all can benefit from the holistic Gestalt theoretical perspective. In **Chapter Six**, Ethical Considerations in Working with Religious Clients, by Dan Carpenter (first published in *Gestalt!* 1(2), 1997), the author summarizes some of the dangers inherent in working with spirituality, while at the same time

challenging the clinician to take advantage of religious issues in therapy. Gestalt therapists, he contents, are seen as particularly equipped for this type of work, being focused on a dialogical relationship as opposed to a rigid challenging of the client's religious beliefs.

In **Chapter Seven**, titled Aroah or What Constitutes Healing in Psychotherapy (first published in *Gestalt!* 1(3), 1997), Rudolf Jarosewitsch explores what living in New Zealand is like, how the culture affected his work as a gestalt therapist, and according to native island culture what makes for healing in psychotherapy. In **Chapter Eight**, *Renewing Our Roots in Neuropsychology: A Gestalt Perspective on the Work of Joseph LeDoux* (first published in *Gestalt!* 2(1), 1998) Philip Brownell presents a review of *The Emotional Brain*, by Joseph LeDoux, with particular focus on how his work in neurology and neuropsychology relates to and is relevant for contemporary gestalt therapy, pointing back to the work of Kurt Goldstein. **Chapter Nine**, *Dialogue and Paradox: In Training with Lynne Jacobs*, the “Dialogue Maven” offers a transcript of a training lecture about dialogue and gestalt therapy given by Lynne Jacobs at the Portland Gestalt Training Institute, Portland, Oregon, USA and first published in *Gestalt!* 2(1), 1998.

All psychotherapies have to consider the philosophical questions of how we think we know anything. If the gestalt of the patient can only be perceived with the gestalt of the therapist, then all that the therapist can say about the gestalt of the other is that which the therapist has created. In **Chapter Ten**, *Stories About Knowing: A View from Family Therapy*, David Pocock ask, “What is the relationship between this creation in the mind of the therapist and the real patient?”, with responses from Sylvia Crocker, and Rodger Bufford (first published in *Gestalt!* 2(1), 1998). **Chapter Eleven**, *Adding Women’s Voices: Feminism and Gestalt Therapy*, brings together a number of attendees at a special interest group event at the 1998 AAGT conference aiming to extending their voices beyond the workshop, and welcome the reader into their ongoing process. This piece is contributed to by M’Lou Caring, Cynthia Cook, Gail Feinstein, Iris Fodor, Zelda Friedman, Alice Gerstman, Susan Jurkowski, Maria Kirchner, and Ruth Wolfert and was first published in *Gestalt!*, 3(1), 1999.

In **Chapter Twelve**, “Gestalt Therapy Groups: Why?” Serge and Anne Ginger of Ecole Parisienne de Gestalt (EPG, Paris France) highlight the richness of gestalt therapy groups versus traditional individual therapy with great responses by Jon Frew and Bud Feder (first published in *Gestalt!*, 4(1), 2000). John Wymore, **Chapter Thirteen**, writes on **Thoughts on Music: Why We Have It, Why We Do It, and Why We**

**Like It** (first published in *Gestalt!* 4(1), 2000), exploring the neuropsychology behind music from an evolutionary psychology and gestalt therapy perspective.

Dialogue and Being is title and topic of **Chapter 14**, by Colin R. Purcell-Lee with responses by Lynne Jacobs and Gary Yontef. First published in *Gestalt!* 4(2), 2000, it explores several central issues regarding the I-Thou relationship, including its non-verifiability and ontological versus epistemological nature. In **Chapter Fifteen**, Prelude to Contemporary Gestalt Therapy, Charles Bowman and Philip Brownell jointly present a summary (first published in *Gestalt!* 4(3), 2000, and still deeply relevant today), of the three periods that characterize the historical process leading to present gestalt therapy: the predecessors to gestalt psychology, the school of gestalt psychology itself, and the development of gestalt psychotherapy. In **Chapter Sixteen**, The Spiritual Dimensions of Gestalt Therapy, Ruth Wolfert presents her take on the spirituality resident in gestalt therapy, presenting gestalt therapy as a holistic therapy with a greater spiritual foundation than is utilized by most Gestalt therapists. Based, in part, on teachings from Buddhism and Taoism, this piece was first published in *Gestalt!* 4(3), 2000.

In **Chapter Seventeen** Maria Kirchner offers an overview of Gestalt Therapy Theory, first published in *Gestalt!* 4(3), 2000, starting with a short introduction and highlighting gestalt therapy's philosophical roots and the gestalt view of human nature, functioning and dysfunctioning, and a listing of major methods of gestalt therapy and multicultural considerations. **Chapter Eighteen**, Clinical Supervision: A Gestalt-Humanistic Framework, was originally written by Yaro Starak to serve as a focus for discussion with a group of supervisors-in-training at the University of Queensland, Australia, as an attempt to develop a professional supervision framework that could serve as a model for supervision of psychotherapists and counselors (first published in *Gestalt!* 5(1), 2001). Victor Daniels wrote a column in several issues of *Gestalt!*, each time discussing various aspects of clinical work and giving examples. **Chapter Nineteen**, presents examples of two of those columns.

**Chapter Twenty**, titled "Discussions at Gstalt-L: Check-In; Impasse; Field & Boundary" captures the nature of the gestalt participants at the online community called Gstalt-L, and it includes portions of two of its various discussions: one on the impasse in therapy and the second on field dynamics in gestalt therapy. The particular discussion captured here includes Sylvia Crocker, Philip Brownell, Gerhard Stemberger, Steve (Vinay) Gunther, Bruno Just, Amit Sen, and Ruth Wolfert. When Gstalt-L began, in 1996, the big issue was what had occurred at the first AAGT

conference when Richard Kitzler demonstrated his work and Jeffery Schaler watched. Actually, a great deal of energy was spent on debating various issues coming from a piece Schaler wrote about Kitzler's work, and published online, called "Bad Therapy." At Gstalt-L Dr. Schaler engaged Robert Feldhaus and others in a running debate on ethics and practice. One of the finest moments from those discussions, which took about three months, was this statement from Robert Feldhaus (edited to present Dr. Feldhaus's statements without his quoting of others on the list). It is given in **Chapter Twenty-One** and titled Projection and Self Psychology, by Robert Feldhaus, first published in *Gestalt!* 5(2), 2001.

In **Chapter Twenty-Two** Sylvia Crocker explores that nature and relationship of dialogue and the phenomenological method, culminating in the mystery of interpersonal discovery (first published in *Gestalt!* 5(3), 2001). In **Chapter Twenty-Three**, Brian O'Neill describes the field of psychotherapy as impacted by various perspectives on spirituality, advocating for the integration of spiritual process in the otherwise holistic gestalt approach. In a letter, Bud Feder objects to spirituality being grafted into gestalt therapy, because he believes that it is not needed and Philip Brownell responds thoughtfully to both (first published in *Gestalt!* 5(3), 2001). In a letter to the editor first published in *Gestalt!* 5(3), 2001, John Wymore shares his concerns over Joe Melnick's lament on the marginalization of Gestalt therapy, as he expressed it in a recent issue of *Gestalt Review*, presented here in **Chapter Twenty-Four**.

Shortly after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, Charlie Bowman became heavily involved in the trauma debriefing work at ground zero. As he put in extensive hours talking with people, a passionate debate erupted at Gstalt-L on the antecedents, contributing influences, and the responsibilities for the attacks. Charlie's simple stories, shared once in the middle of these discussions, changed the nature of them dramatically and, along with Charlie's responses to questions by Gestalt! Sr. Editor, led to the creation of the "To Ground Zero and Back Again", presented in **Chapter Twenty-Five** and previously published in *Gestalt!* 6(1), 2002. **Chapter Twenty-Six**, "Airline Crash Survivors, Vietnam Veterans, and 9-11 by Carol H. Pollard, Carl Mitchell, and Victor Daniels (first published in *Gestalt!* 6(1), 2002) presents another perspective on the 9-11 tragedy. This chapter offers results of a qualitative study of fifteen flight attendants involved in airline crashes or hijackings and what they found therapeutic. The results suggest psychoanalytic and other minimally directive approaches were generally viewed as frustrating and ineffective, while several more directive approaches were found to have value. Methods of applying gestalt therapy to problems and issues reported by

the flight attendants are also discussed as well as a long-term history of group therapy and gestalt therapy with Vietnam veterans and how insights from both groups apply to 9-11 survivors.

**Chapter Twenty-Seven** presents Insight Dialogue Meditation with Anxiety Problems, by Jungkyu Kim and Gregory Kramer (first published in *Gestalt!* 6(1), 2002) discussing research integrating aspects of cognitive and gestalt therapy into “mindfulness meditation” for the treatment of anxiety. **Chapter Twenty-Eight:** Gestalten, by John Wymore (first published in *Gestalt!* 6(2), 2002) describes in brief the concept of gestalt formation, a basic concept in gestalt therapy. And, in **Chapter Twenty-Nine** Peter Philippson explores Contemporary Challenges in the Application of Perls’ Five-Layer Theory (first published in *Gestalt!* 6(2), 2002), arguing that while Perls’ five-layer theory has fallen into disfavour and disuse, it can actually be understood as a restatement of central themes from Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1955) about the nature of neurosis and therapy with neurotic process.

**Chapter Thirty**, “It’s Not Easy Being A Field Theorist: Commentary On “Cartesian and Post-Cartesian Trends In Relational Psychoanalysis,” is offered by Lynne Jacobs as part of an ongoing conversation between two closely allied schools of thought in contemporary psychoanalysis, intersubjectivity theory, and the American relational school, touching on themes important to gestalt therapy as well (first published in *Gestalt!* 6(2), 2002). In **Chapter Thirty-One**, The Impossible Toilet (first published in *Gestalt!* 6(2) 2002), two friends and psychotherapists, Claire Salisbury (now Claire Asherson Bartram) and Debbie Friedman, explore flight, toilets, and control in the Gestalt dream exploration in a humorous and insightful short piece.

Love, Admiration, or Safety: A System of Gestalt Diagnosis of Borderline, Narcissistic, and Schizoid Adaptations That Focuses on What Is Figure for the Client, by Elinor Greenberg, first published in *Gestalt!* 6(3) 2002 and herein in **Chapter Thirty-Two**, re-conceptualizes Borderline, Narcissistic, and Schizoid personality disorders as relatively inflexible organizations of the organism-environment field that are made and remade at each moment at the contact boundary through figure/ground formation. **Chapter Thirty-Three**, “Perceiving You Perceiving Me: Self-Conscious Emotions and Gestalt Therapy” by Philip Brownell (first published in *Gestalt!* 8(1), 2004, discusses the existence of a class of emotions described as being “self-conscious” in nature. It summarizes the work of various authors, including the foundation of the cognitive-attributional-adaptive organizations of Richard Lazarus, and building on that with the cognitive-attributional structure offered by Michael Lewis.

Relevancy to gestalt therapy is explored and the compatibility of this view of emotions with phenomenological, field theoretical, and relationally oriented psychotherapies is explored.

**Chapter Thirty-Four** “Schema Therapy: A Gestalt-Oriented Overview,” by Scott H. Kellogg provides a comprehensive overview of the contemporary use of schema therapy (first published in *Gestalt!* 10(1), 2009) in both of its forms – schema-focused therapy and schema mode therapy. An integrative approach that draws from the cognitive, behavioral, psychodynamic, gestalt, and ego-state traditions in psychotherapy, there has been an increasing use of gestalt and experiential techniques as this therapy has developed. Originally created for patients with personality disorders and Axis I disorders that were nonresponsive to treatment, this treatment is now used for a wide array of problems. As an example, the model for treating borderline personality disorder is presented along with a case example using schema mode therapy. Potential areas of overlap and interaction between schema therapy and gestalt therapy are outlined, and dialogues between the two approaches are encouraged. Three authors offer responses that Kellogg in turn replies to. Brownell’s response focuses on the role of consilience in psychotherapy integration, offers three kinds of integration, and identifies the integration employed by Kellogg and Young in their adoption of gestalt therapy techniques. It closes with suggestions for possible future development of integrational bridges between these two clinical approaches. Dan Bloom offers a response providing an orienting view of foundational principles in gestalt therapy and points out a difference between a technique-driven approach to psychotherapy and one based on a coherent theory of the self. This response further contrasts an intrapsychic with a phenomenological understanding. Iris Fodor summarizes the Kellogg article broadly from the perspective of someone experienced at integrating cognitive-behavioral and gestalt therapy.

In **Chapter Thirty-Five**, titled “In Transition: Gestalting Theory from Practice, Practice from Theory” Seán Gaffney charts his journey (first published in *Gestalt!* 11(1), 2011) from being a dedicated gestalt practitioner to becoming, first, a practitioner-author, then, a practitioner-researcher, then, a practitioner-theorizer, and then—in brief through illuminating flashes—a theorizer. Three gestalt practitioner colleagues, Brian Mistler, Sue Congram, and Philip Brownell, with special interest in research, make unedited in-text comments and final brief summaries at the author’s request. In **Chapter Thirty-Six**, “Structuring Background by Letting Go of Clinging and Avoidance,” Jungkyu Kim, helps us become more deeply interested in what it takes to translate an idea, a concept, or an experience into another language. What if people speaking the other



language don't have the same thought, experience, or background? Are we destined to be confined within the prisons of our own experiences and languages? This piece was first published in *Gestalt!* 11(1), 2011.

In **Chapter Thirty-Seven** internationally renowned French psychologist and founder of the Institut Français de Gestalt-thérapie, Jean-Marie Robine, presents "A Background to 'The Field.'" First published in *Gestalt!* 11(1), 2011, this piece explores Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman's (1951) reference to "the field." Robine makes the case they are clear that they are referring to the organism/environment field, and in doing so, they take for granted what is implied but not adequately spelled out in this expression. Robine writes with the goal of unpacking this for the reader, *without* attempting to elaborate it or develop it in new directions. In this, Robine brings an attitude perhaps similar to that of an ardent and advanced student-sage, who desires egoless understanding, and wishes simply to share this understanding in as pure a form as possible, with us.

This is a wonderful attitude to have, and an important one to Gestalt. Indeed, Gestalt is broadly much more about attitude than any particular technique. Attitude is important and intentional to any venture, even when difficult to capture or measure. It affects where we direct our attention – our energy and excitement – and where we work to direct the intention/attention of others. Philip Brownell says it beautifully in his response piece in Chapter 34, "...our interest, what gestalt therapists call a figure, is illuminated with an attitude. What is this attitude? It is the filtered light that drops through the canopy of a rain forest. Without that, the ground would remain in shadow or even undetected, and certainly it would go unappreciated and lost to one's attention. However, in this attitude, a subject can attend to this figure or that, but each one will be lit up by the same light cast upon other figures, and all these figures would be understood as in some way fitting together in one attitude."

I shall end by saying something of our attitude in our work compiling this book and how it influenced what became figural in managing the various tensions of editing a volume such as this. The most notable challenges were resolving oppositions between uniformity and the individual spirits and indeed carrying needs of each chapter. In the end, we felt for example, some dialogues needed to be formatted in one way for readability, whereas other pieces needed more traditional formatting for the same purpose. Occasionally what may seem to some a peculiarity of speech normally edited out is intentionally left in, to give the best flavor for the author's own, original voices. In compiling biographies, some authors are no longer living, or for other reasons unable to provide updates, and so much biographical information is retained from the

original submissions as possible to capture the historical moment. In some cases of course, none or little was provided. So too there is inconsistency in author's decisions to list their degrees or other credentials, and in many cases this inconsistency is preserved as an indication of the author's intention about self-presentation. Most of the issues were of this nature, and I hope the focus on the deeper content of the pieces over and above these small compromises or missed typographical errors will be forgiven, and ideally even shared.

Above all, it can be said then that our attitude has been one of preservation and honest translation, offering you an opportunity to read these pieces as written, with only the mildest of adulteration where absolutely unavoidable. William James (1907, p 54-55) once described the philosophy of pragmatism as, "the attitude of looking away from first things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts." I hope you will find the fruit of this attitude applied to the archives of *Gestalt!* to be a collection of really good and practical gestalt theory of the nature that Lewin had in mind... really good theory, by really great authors... that's exciting, right?...I find it very exciting! On to chapter one...!

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## CHAPTER ONE

# A PERSPECTIVE ON ONLINE PROCESS: THE ORIGINS AND ORIGINAL VISION OF *GESTALT!*, THE ONLINE JOURNAL

PHILIP BROWNELL

In 1993 I enrolled in my doctoral program at George Fox University (it was still a college back then). I bought a Mac desktop computer through the college, and I bought a modem, and I got myself hooked up to the Internet. I was pleased to be able to contact professors from other universities, people I'd read about in textbooks, like Phillip Shaver, who studied attachment at the University of California, Davis. I met Ian Pitchford, who was at Sheffield University at the time and who, in 1993, had created an early online resource called *Interpsych*. It was not long before I started exploring the world of text-based interaction. The first email discussion list I joined was a group originating from The Netherlands in which established international experts in creativity and creative problem solving—largely consultants to international businesses—talked about issues relevant to their profession. I was amazed to be talking with people in different parts of the world, and I was also astounded by the passion that colored the way people were speaking to one another. In fact, occasionally there was too much passion and not so much customary respect. In those days it was common to find oneself caught up in a “flame war.”

Flaming is when people become enraged and aggressive toward one another, with very little inhibition, and they often swear at one another and threaten each other. Social scientists have estimated that the lack of personal, face-to-face contact gives people the sense of relative safety from consequences. Whatever the reason, it was dramatic and exciting to be in the midst of such things. I found myself spending hours online reading these people, and I noticed how the group seemed to rise to the occasion of interaction by interacting in kind. If the people did not respond

to others right away, the list went quiet. I realized that in text-based environments interaction begets interaction.

When I first started posting to the creativity list, it was terrifying. I would read something, have a thought, and wonder what might happen if I sent my thoughts to the list. On the day that I sent my first message, my heart was racing, and I waited to see what might happen. I imagined being maligned. I imagined being shown to be a fool. Instead, I was simply ignored, and that felt worse. I did not like being ignored; so, I wrote to the list and told them so. From that point on, I was hooked. For months I interacted with these consultants from around the world before I ever ventured onto a new list created by members of the Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy (AAGT).

In 1995 the AAGT held its first international conference in New Orleans, and I attended. On this new email list there ensued heated discussions of a demonstration of gestalt therapy conducted by Richard Kitzler of the New York Institute for Gestalt Therapy. Some people were aghast at what they saw him do, and other people defended him and called for a more reasoned evaluation of the whole “Masters” track of demonstrations in that conference. One day someone posted an article he had written titled “Bad Therapy,” in reference to Kitzler’s demonstration, using it as hammer to bash all of gestalt therapy, and before I knew it I found myself engaged in heated debate defending gestalt practice. I had just started my formal training in gestalt therapy (even though I had been exposed to it several years previously); so, it was quite amazing to be talking about it with established gestalt therapists in different parts of the world, let alone with established writers.

Before long I found my way to Dr. Bob Zenhausern at St. Johns University in New York. Both my early learning about online resources and the origins of the electronic journal, *Gestalt!*, can be traced to Zenhausern’s work. “Dr. Z,” as he was known, was an early participant in what emerged as the Internet. In the 1980s he began participating in online interaction. As his connections among others grew, Dr. Z began creating email lists that emerged as text-based environments and communities of people all connected around shared interests that in some way pointed to people-helping. These lists were created and archived at St. Johns University. By the time Zenhausern retired in 1998 the scope of the lists had increased until there were over 740 of them, serving over 203,000 subscribers and sending almost 1,000,000 messages per day.

The major portion of these lists dealt with the Human Services including Education, Disability, Support, Wellness, and especially Psychology with approximately 200 Lists dealing with professional, support, and consumer

issues. The large number and broad range of topics on these lists has led to a concentration of information and individuals... The information contained on these Lists may not have been subjected to the peer review system, but neither were they subjected to the typical 2-year publication lag. They provide a preview of the latest thinking in an area and an opportunity to become involved in that thinking. (Zenhausern, 1998, np)

That is the social and technological context for the origins of the online journal *Gestalt!*.

The world of digital gestalt (Woldt & Brownell, 2005) started in the middle 90s and is described in Charlie Bowman's foreword to this book. At the conference planning session for the 1997 AAGT conference, the planning committee met at the venue in 1996 and at that time, sitting around a table, I floated my vision for an online journal. I knew it could be done. However, the people at the table were struggling with simply handling email; so, they were not interested in trying to create and support a journal. Although disappointed, I sensed the opportune moment was at hand, and so returning to my home in Portland, Oregon, I began exploring the idea of an online journal with Bob Zenhausern. He offered me two lists to support the journal. The first was for people reading the journal, in order to discuss its contents, and the second was to be dedicated to the staff of the journal, who were all people beginning to explore the use of the internet. The vision was to create a community of gestalt people who would each become web publishers creating their own various projects, all of which would function at the hub we created at St. Johns University. One was Lars Berg, who became editor of the Nordic Gestalt Journal. Another was Gerhard Stemberger, editor of *Gestalt Theory*, a publication of the Society for Gestalt Theory and Its Applications. The first list I called Gstalt-L and the second I called Gstalt-J. In time people joined Gstalt-L, but it was not to discuss journal articles as much as it was to simply discuss gestalt therapy theory, practice, events in the gestalt community, and so forth. Gstalt-L flourished, and it took on a life of its own. While Gstalt-J never amounted to much, Gstalt-L became a virtual community. The people there shared their lives as well as their thoughts, and one example of that was written up in Brian O'Neill's (2009) book, *Community, Psychotherapy, and Life Focus: A Gestalt Anthology of the History, Theory, and Practice of Living in Community*. It was the story of a clinical social worker who had stumbled into a continuing education workshop on gestalt therapy, been converted to gestalt therapy, joined Gstalt-L, and then who became terminally ill with cancer and died as a member of that community. People conducted a wake for her at one of the

AAGT conferences, showing how virtual community flows into actual community and then back again (see Appendix I).

So, over time Gstalt-L diverged from the journal, but on occasion the dialogues at Gstalt-L were captured and published in the journal. However loose the link between them eventually became, they came into the world at the same time and remained fertile ground for one another.

*Gestalt!* was never conceived of as a competition for traditional, peer-reviewed journals. It gave up the rigor of such things for the advantage of rapid deployment. It's purpose fit with the lists at St. Johns University; it was a vehicle where new writers could gain experience, veteran writers could float their ideas, and where ideas in currency in the quick-paced communities of gestalt therapy around the world could be seen swiftly. Its vision was in keeping with the nature of the Internet in the early days of the Internet—a free sharing of ideas and information. *Gestalt!* featured issues dedicated to the gestalt communities in South America, Europe, the USA, and Australia and New Zealand. It featured poetry. It contained pieces devoted to theory and those devoted to practice. Outside of the featured articles, it was also a conveyer of news about conferences and training opportunities. It was gratifying to realize that some of the most noteworthy and respected thinkers in the gestalt world offered themselves to write for *Gestalt!*. It was a place where both novice and expert could be seen side by side.

*Gestalt!* was a child of the Internet when the Internet itself was still very young. Today, individual websites contain many of the ingredients that *Gestalt!* attempted to provide. Writers and established institutes now have their own web sites where the reader can find interesting articles. Training opportunities are plentiful and well publicized in the virtual world. As I write this, the *British Gestalt Journal* will be creating an online version of itself in which news and featured articles will be made available to the general public. Indeed, it will then, in a real sense, pick up where *Gestalt!* left off, and that feels good. There is a continuation, of sorts, of the original vision.

At its height, *Gestalt!* was reaching a readership that vastly exceeded the traditional journals. On the average about 6,000 individual people read at least one article each week (this is not the “hit” matrix that counts every single file type associated with a web site, but actual individuals downloading whole pages), and the tracking showed that during peak assignment time in colleges and universities, *Gestalt!* readership went significantly higher, leading to the conclusion that students used the journal for writing their papers.