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Editorial

We welcome you to the premier issue of our journal, *Studies in Gestalt Therapy: Dialogical Bridges*. Our journal needs some words of introduction since it has a unique character among the other gestalt therapy journals.

It was once quite common for us gestalt therapists to think of our therapeutic approach as a modality at the margins — innovative, creative, yet somewhat insular. From time to time, some of us reached out to other humanistic approaches in order to gain what was missing from gestalt therapy's theoretical foundations. Others of us looked within and clarified our own understandings. Today our own method is stronger: Many theoretical and methodological developments of gestalt therapy have contributed to define a clearer figure of our theory and practice. It is therefore one of the aims of this journal to invite other modalities to bridge with our approach and dialogue with us on those current clinical issues that represent a common challenge for all psychotherapy methods.

Our journal hopes to create dialogical bridges: That is, beyond simple dialogue, we aim for hermeneutic exchanges between the actual clinical needs of our society and the original concepts of gestalt therapy, and to establish clinical bridges with other contemporary psychotherapies. We hope in this way further to develop and better ground the theory and practice of gestalt therapy through connecting our roots with the common roots of contemporary psychotherapy, and by stimulating the curiosity of colleagues in other major approaches so that they seek to know about us, about gestalt therapy.

We are committed to our identity as gestalt therapists in this hermeneutic way. Through dialogue we become clearer in our differ-

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ences with our dialogue partners, and to the extent we maintain contactful dialogue, the figure/grounds that will emerge will draw all of us forward to new understandings. Hopefully, this dialogue also will be a mirror for us gestalt psychotherapists to see ourselves through others' eyes and support our coevolving identities.

Studies in Gestalt Therapy was previously edited and published by one of us from 1992 to 1998, with six issues containing principal contributions of the Italian Istituto di Gestalt and the New York Institute for Gestalt Therapy. European studies and American studies bridged at that time into "a transatlantic dialogue." It was not by chance that the last issue of that journal contained contributions from the 6th *Conference of the European Association for Gestalt Therapy*, which was a moment when European gestalt therapists stood on their own feet in front of the world community. And now, we revive and rename the journal, but with a refocused mission and with a new name.

Studies in Gestalt Therapy: Dialogical Bridges is internationally edited. It now explicitly bridges different cultures and unites different areas of expertise. Our editorial perspective blends the creative, aesthetic spirit of Italian culture, the German roots of our method, with the faith in our founders' North American traditions to create an harmonic figure that, we hope, shines with the novelty of our collaboration. Gestalt therapy has always been an international modality. We trust that our differences are a good guarantee for novelty and growth.

Each future issue of the journal will have a different theme and will be structured as follows:

Section 1: Expert gestalt therapists engage in a dialogue with one another as they answer questions on theory and practice that are posed to them by the editors and by renowned psychotherapists from other modalities.

Section 2: An essay hermeneutically explores the link between core concepts of gestalt therapy and contemporary, historical, social, or clinical concerns.

Section 3: Practitioners of different modalities engage in a dialogue concerning actual instances of transcribed clinical sessions.

Sections 4 and 5: Critical reports on gestalt therapy conferences and critical reviews of relevant writings and essays, with an emphasis on developing gestalt therapy and the establishing of bridges to other modalities, are the topics of these sections.

Section 6: The current issue of this journal itself is critically evaluated to see how it achieves its stated mission. This section will be the ground from which the following issue will emerge.

Since this journal is dedicated to dialogue on specific, planned themes, what we will publish will emerge from contact-making among gestalt psychotherapists and eventually with different theories and methodologies hopefully inspired by the journal itself. If you are interested in submitting a paper, we suggest you write to the editors and agree with them on a dialogical format for your contribution on a planned theme. All papers will be peer reviewed, in accordance with the conventions of the American Psychological Association (APA).

The theme that we have chosen for this issue of our journal, “Self and Intersubjectivity,” is a bridge in itself. It explores the connections between the gestalt therapy concept of self, an emergent event of the contact-boundary, the locus of experience — and the contemporary psychoanalytic concept of intersubjective space — the shared representations of oneself and the other(s) in relationships.

In section 1, “Theoretical Bridges,” Lynne Jacobs, Peter Philippon, and Gordon Wheeler, three important contributors to gestalt therapy’s theory of self, reply to questions from us, the editors, as well as from Michael Mahoney, a constructivist, and Daniel Stern, a contemporary psychoanalyst. You will see that these gestalt therapists readily address their important differences from one another, and exemplify the liveliness of gestalt therapy’s commitment to this central topic in psychotherapy.

Section 2 is an “Historical Bridge.” Richard Kitzler, a fellow of the New York Institute for Gestalt Therapy and one of the original gestalt therapists who trained with Frederick Perls in the 1950s, offers his hermeneutical analysis of Paul Goodman’s contribution to gestalt therapy’s theory of self. In “The Ambiguities of Origins,” Kitzler’s the-

sis is that through his analysis of Goodman's writings, the influences of American pragmatism and the conflicts at the University of Chicago where Goodman studied, appear as inconsistencies in Goodman's theory of self. These inconsistencies have allowed us a rich opportunity to develop our own complex theory and account for some of the differences among us as gestalt therapists. By explicating their origin, Kitzler attempts to reformulate gestalt therapy on a more consistent foundation.

"Bridges in Practice," section 3 of this issue, is a transcript of the work of Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb and the late Michael Mahoney, "Self-Regulation of the Therapeutic Relationship From Constructivist and Gestalt Therapy Perspectives: A Transcribed Experiment" from Esalen, November 2005. The work is accompanied by commentaries by Spagnuolo Lobb and Andre Marquis, a close associate of Michael Mahoney. We are saddened by the sudden death of Michael Mahoney, and offer this transcript to show his talent, his warmth, his kindness, and his full humanity. We are proud to inaugurate this "Bridges in Practices" section with a tribute to the work of Michael Mahoney written by Peter Mullen.

In section 4, we offer "A Critical Eye on Books and Essays," edited by Nancy Amendt-Lyon, an Austrian colleague. Here Paul Barber's *Becoming a Practitioner Researcher: A Gestalt Approach to Holistic Inquiry* is reviewed by Paolo Migone, Talia Bar-Yoseph's *The Bridge* is reviewed by Karen Humphrey, and the book on panic attacks in a gestalt therapy perspective, edited by Gianni Francessetti (soon available in English) is reviewed by Giulio Gasca.

We also turn "A Critical Eye on Conferences" with commentary by Stephan Tobin on the Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy, an international community's conference held in Vancouver, August 2006, and with Christof Weber's appraisal of the historic joint conference of German gestalt therapy organizations in Hohenroda, Germany, in May, 2006.

We are proud to welcome Malcolm Parlett, former editor of the *British Gestalt Journal*, as our contributing editor who — with his "Bridges Toward a Wider Perspective" — will bring us his reflections

on gestalt therapy and his critical evaluation of our journal from the point of view of our mission. For this issue, in “Committed Relativism,” Malcolm explores the need of gestalt therapists to be open to the broad world of psychotherapy while remaining firmly grounded in our core commitments.

This first issue of *Studies in Gestalt Therapy: Dialogical Bridges*, then, is our first gesture toward our highest goal of adding new voices to the gestalt therapy conversation. Dialogue and interconnectedness is the shared paradigm of all the psychotherapies today. In a “fluid” society where ideas emerge, merge and reemerge, the cocreation of a contact-boundary with other modalities will help us to better define ourselves. We intend this journal to be not only useful for an internal dialogue within our approach, but also to be an exciting tool of scientific exchange for all contemporary psychotherapists.

Scientific curiosity, passion, grounded identity, commitment to dialogue, mutuality of respect, desire to make connections: These are the values upon which this journal is founded. We welcome you into our dialogue.

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