

The Presence of the Gestalt Therapist in the field. Dialogue on Isadore From's Lesson

Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb & Robert W. Resnick

Summary

In this dialogue Bob Resnick and Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb present to different positions on Isadore From teachings about the role of the therapist and Gestalt therapeutic setting. Bob Resnick criticizes what he considers an overly central position of the therapist used to understand the client. Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb, on the other hand, draws on a phenomenological and field perspective in order to explain Isadore's teachings about how therapist and client co-create their contact boundary.

Their dialogue, then, represents consideration of an important historical theme in Gestalt therapy – difference between the individualistic perspective based on the development of the patient's awareness, which became widespread since the first years after Gestalt therapy's birth, and the relational approach based on the concepts of contact boundary and a field that is now becoming common since the 1980s. This relational approach began with the teachings of Isadore From himself and demonstrated in particular from by this famous Gestalt psychotherapist with his example a session he connected the adjective "small", attributed by a patient to a dream, to his physical small stature.

To Bob Resnick, translating from From's "therapeutic move" into standard clinical practice represents a risk of monopolization of the setting by the therapist. Instead, the therapist should bring the focus of the patient's attention to himself only when the patient himself asks for it in an unequivocal way.

For Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb, the lesson of From represents a "field reading" by the psychotherapist. In the phenomenological perspective centered on the here-and-now and on a concept of self as an emerging experience in the organism/environment field, the therapist is still part of the patient's experience for the simple fact that s/he is the one to whom the patient turns to solve his or her discomfort. From a relational point of view, therefore, the psychotherapist can only contribute to constructing the patient's narrative process.

In this dialogue, however, the positions of the authors are not totally incompatible. In one hand, the American colleague admits to what Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb says, that is, that the therapist is always part of the phenomenological field within which the patient's experience takes shape. On the other hand, the Italian colleague agrees with the sense of responsibility underlined by Bob Resnick, when he says that the therapist must recognize if the solicitation to shift the attention of the patient towards other elements of the field, including the therapist, can have therapeutic or iatrogenic effects.

Given that these dialogue partners cannot reach an agreement on a matter of theory, they plan to move this discussion to a clinical level, in a workshop in which they can mutually experience being both a therapist and a client. In this way it will be possible to find what is useful in one and the other focus.

Key words: Gestalt therapy, phenomenological field, contact boundary, therapeutic function, Spagnuolo Lobb, Bob Resnick.

Reference for this article: Spagnuolo Lobb M., Resnick R.W. (2019). La presenza del terapeuta della Gestalt nel campo: un dialogo sulla lezione di Isadore From. *Quaderni di Gestalt*, XXXII, 1: 11-28, DOI:10.3280/GEST2019-001002

The “Between” is Embodied in the Co-creation of Being in two: Sexuality and Embodied Couple Processes in Gestalt Therapy

Maria Mione

Summary

In this article, the author will explore the painful embodied couple processes that are expressed through specifically sexual problems. These problems will be viewed as co-created by the couple. The loss of bodily spontaneity results in the fragility of intimate contact, taking the form of a specific sexual dysfunction. According to the Gestalt perspective, suffering belongs to the relationship, not to only one partner: the couple is the main character of these problems. For each of these experiences clinical examples will be given.

The author proposes a therapeutic support that can be used to restore spontaneity and fullness in the embodied experience of the couple. For this purpose, the concept of Aesthetic Relational Knowledge of the therapist will be introduced (Spagnuolo Lobb, 2017a). This therapeutic skill can be viewed also in terms of a resonance of the therapist as a sexual person and is a precious tool in working with embodied processes of the couples in a way that supports the sensitivity of the therapist and at the same time is respectful of the patients' intimate experience.

In addition, the article will introduce specific steps, developed by Spagnuolo Lobb (2011), that guide the work with couples, showing how they can be used by the therapist to support the co-construction of an embodied spontaneity in the here and now of the couple.

The final part of the article describes the basic competences implied in the co-construction of the contact that are activated and supported in the therapeutic meeting, in terms of “dance steps”, as theorized by Spagnuolo Lobb (2017b), to underline the co-construction of the interaction.

In describing those competences, implied in the process of “dancing” together at the contact boundary, the author will focus on how the therapist can promote their development and their growth within the embodied processes of the couple. Thus, the therapeutic setting becomes a place where one can expand the ground and have new embodied experiences during the therapeutic encounter.

Key words: couple, body process, loss of spontaneity, sexuality, love gestures, Aesthetic Relational Knowledge, Dance Steps.

Reference for this article: Mione M. (2019). L'incarnarsi del "tra" nella co-creazione dell'essere due. *Sessualità e processi corporei di coppia in psicoterapia della Gestalt. Quaderni di Gestalt*, XXXII, 1: 29-56, DOI:10.3280/GEST2019-001003

The Psychotherapist's Training as a Transformative Adventure

Anna Fabbrini

Summary

This paper refers to and amplifies the report presented at the International Conference “The Aesthetics of Therapeutic Relationship”, held in Milan in November 2018 and organized by the Gestalt Institute HCC Italy. It focuses on a particular aspect of the therapist's training, precisely on the importance of personal psychotherapy carried out at the same time as the training course. It is believed that personal psychotherapy is not just an opportunity to deal with critical emergencies, relational or existential issues. Considered to all intents and purposes as an integral part of training, this therapy becomes the condition for embracing, absorbing the knowledge learned through the theoretical study and also for refining a own creativity in the implementation of patients care practice.

Returning to the paradigm of the dialogical structure of the internal world, the close link between the opening of *field to oneself* and the principle of relationality, of contact, of *between us* experience – keystone of gestalt work – is highlighted. As bearers of *contacts matrices*, in accordance with the law of isomorphism – identity of form – individuals manifests themselves in the external contact resonating with their own internal contacts. The specific responsibility of the therapists establishes its roots on this point; they will be able to decipher the other, their speech and their feeling, only through the codes and filters that they have incorporated. The path of knowing themselves and knowing themselves *internal relational world* is therefore to be considered fundamental for anyone who cares: the learned theoretical knowledge will constantly have to deal with the capacity of presence, with the way of being *shape* in the relationship to resonate in the word and the body of the other.

The text analyses some of the experiential knowledge necessary for the person who cares, in order for them to tune into the therapeutic relationship: the knowledge of contact and difference, the knowledge of their own history and the knowledge of their own body. These are the condition to refine the empathic listening, the dialogical competence and to sustain an attitude of spontaneity as a creative use of the theoretical knowledge combined with knowledge of themselves. Some reflections are also proposed about the care of *setting* as a protective measure of the psychotherapist against the emotional burden resulting from contact with patients' suffering.

Key words: Inner dialogue, contact, boundaries, difference, body, spontaneity.

Reference for this article: Fabbrini A. (2019). La formazione dello psicoterapeuta come avventura trasformativa. *Quaderni di Gestalt*, XXXII, 1: 57-71, DOI:10.3280/GEST2019-001004

Gestalt Psychotherapy, Adolescence and Intellectual Weakness

Michele Borghetto & Ilaria Benedetti

Summary

People with borderline intellectual functioning (BIF) have an IQ test score that is 1 to 2 standard deviations below average, in a range between 71 to 84. BIF in DSM-5 is not considered a disorder, but is a V-code diagnosis. These people often experience academic problems from their early school experiences. These are frequently confused with laziness, immaturity or listlessness. Individuals with BIF are proportionally less likely to receive treatment for mental health problems than the general population. In Italy, for example, they do not have the possibility to receive the same assistance in school as people with intellectual developmental disability. In other countries, they do not have the possibility of being included in special classes. This therefore becomes a problem in relationship to children or adolescents with normal capabilities. People with BIF are often socially isolated, unemployed and have many difficulties taking care of themselves. Research studies report difficulties in social integration and with criminal law.

Gestalt Therapy considers this disorder to be lack of full contact which increases suffering in the relationship. The therapist decides to stay at this boundary of contact with the patient in order to stimulate new creative adjusting and a new solution in the here and now. But is it possible to accomplish this with people impaired in comprehension and intellectual competence? The principal purpose of this article is to analyze the role of psychotherapy with adolescents who are characterized by cognitive deficiencies. Often clinical work is focused on intellectual abilities deficiency and the emotional issue's importance is underestimated. Adolescents with borderline intellectual functioning instead can develop problems in psychopathological sense and psychotherapy can help them through their relational and emotional difficulties. In particular, the experiential approach of GT is extremely suitable for the particular cognitive features of these boys and girls. In fact, language rarely represent the best way to interact with these adolescents, who often have difficulties in improving their awareness because of gaps in abstracts thoughts.

Key words: Psychotherapy, adolescence, borderline intellectual functioning, Gestalt therapy.

Reference for this article: Borghetto M., Benedetti I. (2019). Psicoterapia della Gestalt, adolescenza e fragilità intellettuale. *Quaderni di Gestalt*, XXXII, 1: 73-87, DOI:10.3280/GEST2019-001005

**The Well-being of a Company Workgroup.
Emotions and Relationships as the Compass.
An Experience with Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb's Gestalt Consulting Model**

Angela Pegna

Summary

In a market which requires more speed, flexibility and innovative capacity, welfare of the workgroup may constitute a strategic lever which aptly influences business environment and performance. The most recent studies on organization well-being concur with the definition of it as a circular process in which personal and professional, subjective and objective, emotional and organizational planes intersect (Avallone, Paplomata, 2005). Against this backdrop, psychotherapy may provide an innovative analysis and method of intervention that relies on the group as its privileged field as place in which emotions and individual expectations mingle with business management and system. In this paper, we present show a case study in a company that develops Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb's Gestalt Model of Organizational Consulting (Spagnuolo Lobb, 2012c; 2019). This model is based on aesthetic, phenomenological and relational perspective. Two principal criteria of organizational group wellness are described by the model: the synchronic and the diachronic criteria. An observational tool for groups is presented that can be used by Gestalt organizational counselors. It is an interview tool to analyze the manager's culture regarding organizational groups. Data from group interviews is then integrated with the counselor's consulting report to the manager who asked for this service. Having tested this model ourselves, we can show its effectiveness in working with the multidimensional construct of organizational well-being in moving circularly among the phenomenological realities of employees, management and the whole group (representatives of organizational culture and business management model). Moreover, the positive language of Gestalt psychotherapy which is oriented towards "disclosure" and "deliverance" of beauty and potential, makes the Gestalt Model of Organizational Consulting an effective prospective working method to introduce into the Business Management System as well as a model for single consulting project.

Key words: Creativity, group, organization, Spagnuolo Lobb OD model, company well-being.

Reference for this article: Pegna A. (2019). Il modello di consulenza gestaltica di Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb in una azienda metalmeccanica italiana: un caso aziendale. *Quaderni di Gestalt*, XXXII, 1: 89-102, DOI:10.3280/GEST2019-001006

How Gestalt psychotherapy would develop on the conceptual basis of Gestalt Psychology. The life and works of Georges Wollants (1941-2018)

Gerhard Stemberger

Summary

This article attempts to trace the life and work of the Belgian Gestalt therapist Georges Wollants (1941-2018). Georges Wollants has a special position in the international gestalt therapeutic community insofar as he defines the concept of Gestalt therapy in many ways differently than is usual. This is particularly evident in his major work *Gestalt Therapy – Therapy of the Situation*. In this book he already asks in the introduction what kind of Gestalt therapy would have evolved if, from the outset, the insights, principles and applications of the Berlin School of Gestalt Theory were integrated into the practice of Gestalt Therapy in the formulation of their basic concepts.

The fact that Georges Wollants was so close in his thinking from the beginning to the Berlin School of Gestalt Theory (Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, Kurt Koffka, Kurt Lewin), has its roots in Wollants' intellectual background in the phenomenological psychology of the Dutch Utrecht School (Jan Hendrik van den Berg and Frederik J.J. Buytendijk) and the Belgian Leeuwen School (Albert A. Michotte and Joseph Nuttin). Their phenomenological psychology was closely connected with the Gestalt theory of the Berlin School, their proponents respected each other, had friendly ties and cooperated in many ways. Against this background, it was difficult for Georges Wollants to understand or even accept that Gestalt therapy in its theoretical development was not clearly based on this Gestalt theory of the Berlin School, and its references to this Gestalt theory hardly ever went beyond a caricature. Wollants has criticized this again and again his whole life. In his book he wanted to show that a Gestalt therapy on genuinely Gestalt theoretical basis (in the sense of Gestalt theory of the Berlin School, building on the work of Wertheimer, Köhler, Koffka, Lewin and Metzger) is possible and what that would mean in theory and practice.

Key words: Therapy of the Situation, Gestalt psychology, Berlin School, phenomenology, environment.

Reference for this article: Stemberger G. (2019). Come si sarebbe sviluppata la psicoterapia della Gestalt sulla base concettuale della psicologia della Gestalt? La vita e le opere di Georges Wollants (1941-2018). *Quaderni di Gestalt*, XXXII, 1: 103-116, DOI:10.3280/GEST2019-001007