

Aesthetics and Care



This issue of Gestalt Therapy Journal (*Quaderni di Gestalt*), *Aesthetics and Care*, is dedicated to aesthetic knowledge in the therapeutic relationship.

For several years, the Gestalt Institute HCC Italy has been engaged in the study of therapeutic art and, in particular, those skills that are not related to rational factors but fall within the field of aesthetic therapeutic intuition. Our aim is to describe a deep understanding of the patient from a phenomenological perspective, which differs from the traditional concept of the unconscious. As we know, phenomenology, with its interest in the here and now as it is intended in the immediate future, refers to the complexity of phenomena, making a leap from the linear and dichotomous logic to which the concept of the unconscious was originally linked. This search for understanding the complexity of the therapeutic relationship is also shared by other approaches and authors, both inside and outside the psychoanalytic world, with whom we are in dialogue. It stands as the growing edge of the art of psychotherapy, rather than as an opposition to other currents.

The articles in this issue contribute to therapists' ability to work with the depth of their patients' experiences, not in terms of the unconscious but in terms of the figure/background interplay that arises when therapist and patient meet in the therapeutic setting and intentionally and situationally expose themselves to each other. Patient and therapist create a situation intended for the patient's care, and the therapist understands the depth of the patient's experiential structure by "being" in the situation, with all his art and science. How can we be profound while being in the here and now? How can we grasp the profound structures of the patient's experience, those on which their relational life is based, without the concept of the unconscious but with a phenomenological view of the experience of the here and now?

Quaderni di Gestalt (ISSNe 2035-6994), XXXVIII, n. 2/2025
DOI: 10.3280/qg2025-2oa21827

The contributions you will read support this type of study. Since 2017, when an article on Aesthetic Relational Knowledge (ARK) was first published, studies on therapist intuition have followed one after another, from the validation of the ARK-T scale (Spagnuolo Lobb *et al.*, 2024) to research on learning this skill in training (Spagnuolo Lobb *et al.*, 2022), to the differences in how this skill is used in various psychotherapeutic methods (Spagnuolo Lobb *et al.*, 2025). Many publications (too numerous to list here) have developed the application of ARK to topics such as the therapeutic relationship, the self, psychosomatic disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, etc. Based on the patient's intentionality and the vitality that the therapist is able to grasp in the patient's suffering, the theme of aesthetic knowledge introduces the concept of reciprocity or "dance" between therapist and patient, allowing us to study the aesthetics of contact between therapist and patient from a phenomenological, aesthetic, and field perspective. The articles in this issue of the journal provide theoretical links and new clinical tools that strengthen studies on the aesthetics of therapeutic perception.

The issue opens with the section "Gestalt in Action", featuring an article by Giuseppe Sampognaro: *Punctum and Aesthetic Knowledge: From Perceptual Phenomenology to Clinical Intervention*. The author has been studying artistic and therapeutic perception for years, and in this work, he gives voice to the evolution of his thinking. With the concept of punctum, he connects the psychology of perception (the Berlin school) with Gestalt clinical practice, that is phenomenological, aesthetic, and field oriented. This work offers therapists a contemporary tool to respond to the ever-increasing demand for therapeutic intuition skills. As the author states, it is a "return to the essentials" of the therapeutic process through the use of aesthetic tools in the relational field co-created by patient and therapist.

The second article, in the "Presentations" section, is a contribution by Scott D. Churchill: *Embodied Resonance: Caring for Others Through the "Second Person" Perspective*. Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Dallas, Scott is one of the founders of humanistic psychology at the APA (American Psychological Association) and is also a member of the scientific committee of our book series. His thinking and his teaching and research activities make him a key figure in the field of contemporary existential phenomenological psychology. In this article, he explains the concept of the "second-person perspective", through which we learn about others through the perceptual experience of their embodied expression. A concept that, as the author himself says, recalls that of Aesthetic Relational Knowledge developed at our Institute. The title expresses the phenomenon relating to the vibrations that two interlocutors, engaged in a deep conversa-

tion, perceive if they are able to open themselves to each other's bodily expressions. The personal example of accompanying his mother in her final moments is touching and powerful. Some of the content of this article was presented by Professor Churchill during his talk at a recent conference on "Phenomenology and Gestalt Psychotherapy: The Experience of the "Not-Yet-Conscious", held in Syracuse in June 2025 and reviewed in this same issue. On that occasion, those present were able to appreciate the depth of Churchill's phenomenological thinking and his touching sense of humanity.

In the same "Presentations" section, we are publishing, for the first time in English, an original article by Dan Bloom: *Chasing Rainbows: In Search of Wonder in Gestalt Therapy*. I am proud to present this article, both because it is an unpublished contribution by the author and because it launches the possibility of publishing articles in English in our journal, in order to reach a wider audience. In addition to being a close friend, Dan Bloom is a dean of the New York Institute for Gestalt Therapy (NYIGT). He trained with Laura Perls, Isadore From, and Richard Kitzler in New York. He is currently president of the NYIGT and one of the most authoritative voices in our approach. Trained in the same "house", we are close in many aspects of our theory and practice, developing the phenomenological and aesthetic soul of Gestalt psychotherapy. The article is based on a keynote presentation by the author, offered online to NYIGT members on October 5, 2025. Bloom talks about wonder, aesthetics, and the flow of contact, how letting oneself be fascinated by the world (a topic dear to Erving Polster) involves lingering, pausing, and how this is an antidote to the current trend toward acceleration, described by Hartmut Rosa. Starting from the aesthetics of contact, Bloom fluidly and concisely integrates the fundamental principles of Gestalt psychotherapy, encapsulating his theoretical understanding, his search for meaning as a human being, and his clinical artistry. And from the poetry of his writing emerge memories with his trainers, Laura, Isadore, and Richard, as a rich and vital background that gives life to the theoretical/clinical depth of his words, always close to life. I would like to take this opportunity to announce that a conference will be held in New York on June 5 and 6, 2026, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the New York Institute.

In the "History and Identity" section, we publish the second interview organized by SIPG (Italian Society of Gestalt Psychotherapy), conducted by Monica Pincirolì, on the history of Italian Gestalt psychotherapy. With a fluid and engaging style, Riccardo Zerbetto, director of the CSTG, tells us about his encounter with Gestalt pioneers such as Barrie Simmons, Claudio Naranjo, and Isha Bloomberg, and his multifaceted training, which paved the way for equally multifaceted professional interests. He takes us into his world, one of profound psychiatric and humanistic culture, quoting classical

and contemporary authors, answering questions from the audience, and ranging from Jung to Servadio, from Nietzsche to Aurobindo. I am moved to think that perhaps only an approach such as Gestalt psychotherapy could accommodate so much knowledge and cultural interest without demanding structured integration. I would also like to take this opportunity to announce that the sixth national conference of the SIPG will be held in Rome at the Ara Pacis auditorium on March 20-21, 2026. You can find more information on the association's official website: www.sipg.it

In the "Reviews" section, Valentina Stirone, a fellow psychotherapist specialized in Relational Psychoanalysis (SIPRe, Milan), presents the book edited by Spagnuolo Lobb M., Cavaleri P.A., Romano M., Bisonti G., eds. (2024). *Being Gestalt Therapist in Times of War. New Clinical tools and Political Consciousness*, that will be published soon in English by Routledge, in the Gestalt Therapy Book Series. I greatly appreciate the openness of my colleague and her group towards the cross-pollination of different approaches, and I thank her for looking at this book with the humanity and care that unites all psychotherapists, beyond the theories that might separate us.

In the "Conferences" section, Genesia Barbara Cavataio and Noemi Rovetto, first-year trainees for trainers at the School of Specialization in Psychotherapy in Syracuse, tell us about the traditional conference held on June 6 and 7 in Syracuse, in conjunction with the classical performances at the Greek Theater. Entitled "Phenomenology and Gestalt Psychotherapy: The Experience of the "Not-Yet-Conscious", the conference hosted phenomenologists Thomas Fuchs and Scott Churchill in dialogue with Gestalt therapists.

In the "Memorials" section, Joaquín Aedo Garay and Rafael Salgado Olcese talk about the work and teachings by Adriana Schnacke, who died on June 23, 2024, on the island of Chiloé, Chile. *The Legacy of Nana Schnacke: Gestalt Psychotherapy in the Southern Hemisphere* is a memoir written, at my invitation, by two of her students, who have been the bridge between her and me. Thanks to them, I met this very interesting woman in Santiago, Chile, in 2017, along with her family. She was already blind and wanted to "get to know" me through her hands touching my face. It was a moving encounter, as was the one with her daughter Marina and son-in-law Antonio. I appreciated her work both through her books and through the effects I saw in the colleagues she trained. They often told me that she and I were similar in our way of working, even though our theories are very different. The authors have written this memoir of their teacher, "Nana", with heart and soul, managing to bear witness to this woman's incisiveness and scientific rigor. Nana was a pioneering scholar with a profound humanity who made an important contribution to the history of Gestalt psychotherapy, unfortunately

little known because her books have not been translated into English. I am pleased to offer readers of *Gestalt Therapy Journal* such a clear and profound description of who she was and what she can still give us through her work, which is now part of our international heritage.

Aesthetics and care are two terms that are intrinsically linked in our approach, to the point that they have become almost synonymous: care can only take place with an aesthetic gaze, and the aesthetic gaze is already a form of care for the patient. In fact, looking at the vital aspects that attract us to the patient allows us to grasp the intentionality that specifically animates their search for meaning. On the other hand, creating a caring relationship based on this vitality is already therapy.

I am pleased to wish you happy reading and happy holidays on behalf of the Editorial Committee, composed of Elisa Spini (coordinator) and by section editors who worked for this issue Elisabetta Conte e Noemi Rovetto (Gestalt in Action), Giuseppe Sampognaro e Alessandra Vela (Presentations), Angela Pegna (History and Identity), Silvia Tosi (Reviews), Fabiola Maggia (Conferences).

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December 2025

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