

NEITHER FROM THE “INSIDE” LOOKING “OUT” NOR FROM THE “OUTSIDE” LOOKING “IN”¹

DAN BLOOM

Some things speak for themselves. This book of essays speaks. It demonstrates that “atmospheres” has crossed-over from its use by the “new phenomenology”² to various clinical disciplines—psychology, psychiatry and psychotherapy, including my modality of practice, Gestalt therapy. In this chapter I reflect on this crossing-over and consider on what basis Gestalt therapy could be hospitable to some of the ideas of the new phenomenology. I frame my comments within my own contemporary relational understanding of Gestalt therapy’s core concepts and especially in terms of Gestalt therapy as a clinical phenomenology. While I am looking “out” at ideas of this new phenomenology from “inside” Gestalt therapy, I assume my comments are equally relevant to other modalities “outside” Gestalt

¹ Published in *Psychopathology and Atmospheres*, Francesetti and Griffero, eds. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021

² “Atmospheres” previously occurs in the works of such people as Karl Jaspers, Ludwig Binswanger and Hubertus Tellenbach (see Francesetti, Fuchs, and Di Petta and Tittarelli, as well as the “Introduction”, in this volume). It is not original to the ‘new phenomenology.’

therapy. The boundaries that separate modalities with significantly similar worldviews are permeable despite differences. There is neither an “outside” nor an “inside” in the experiential sphere in which we work. And this is underscored when the modalities have a phenomenological approach in common

Those of us who hold the theory and practice of Gestalt therapy lightly rather than as dogma can look at Gestalt therapy from other perspectives in order to see new possibilities or potentialities within Gestalt therapy itself. However, to look at Gestalt therapy from another perspective is not the same as adopting the other perspective. Neuroscience, for example, has added to our *understanding* of Gestalt therapy without itself *being added to* Gestalt therapy. I am not among those who have included the new phenomenology as such into Gestalt therapy. Although as might become clear, just as adjacent tuning forks of the same pitch resonate when one is struck, ideas of others resonate with me and in effect bring forth aspects of Gestalt therapy that were already there. Our ideas resonate while maintaining separate identities. Since Gestalt therapy is already significantly in tune with philosophical phenomenology, it is not surprising that it also resonates with some aspects of the new phenomenology. I offer examples this in my expansion of Gestalt therapy in what follows.

1. Gestalt therapy as a clinical phenomenology

Gestalt therapy’s phenomenology is intrinsic in its theory, method, and integrated in its praxis. (Bloom, 2019). Seen from one point of view among many, the phenomenological perspective considers human beings in terms of the experiential world in which, for example, my fingers may touch the keys of this computer, yet in their touching, my touching fingers and the touched keys disappear into one touch. I am alive in this “seen” everyday world; yet this world that I perceive is also as invisible to me as water is to a fish. No matter how clearly I hear or how sharply I see, there is always more (and less) at the further side of my experiential horizon. Edmund Husserl’s directive to “go” to the things themselves, *zu den Sache selbst* (Husserl, 1973) urged us to uncover what we pass over in our everyday living. Martin Heidegger defined of phenomena as “that which show themselves as themselves” (Heidegger, p. 51, 1962) and re-focused phenomenology so it could do no less than approach everyday experience in order to uncover, disclose, and un-conceal what is always already there and affecting us - that which is always already in the air we breathe, on the ground we walk, in the touching of our fingers, and at the horizon we sight. What appears to us is more than can ever be said about it. (Waldenfels, 2016, p88.) Phenomenology as a discipline listens for what cannot be heard. These are also Gestalt therapy’s

concerns, although expressed differently. What goes without saying often must be repeated. Obviously and most importantly, Gestalt therapy is a psychotherapy – a clinical disciple undertaking the weight of human suffering.

What then do I mean by those concerns of phenomenology being also Gestalt therapy’s concerns? Gestalt therapy is a clinical phenomenology. As such, it has its own approach that parallels a philosophical phenomenological approach. (Bloom, 2018) It has assumptions about experience and human nature that resonate with phenomenology’s. As most psychotherapies, Gestalt therapy’s is a process of discovery. This is not merely a process of self-awareness, of “knowing thyself.” But specifically, it is an embodied process of bringing into awareness what is not merely unaware but what is being hidden. It is process of clarifying embodied experience from amid an unfocused, unnoticed, unattended average everydayness, in which sources of personal distress might be hidden. We find relief from personal suffering in this clarity. In such a process we listen for the unsayable and give it voice; and find the undoable and give it motion. Further, in what we Gestalt therapists call “contacting,” we disclose aspects of an experiential world otherwise taken for granted. Where phenomenology has its various concepts for of the world in which we are situated,

Gestalt therapy uses a *field* model (Parlett, 1991; Francesetti, 2015) I will elaborate on this in what follows as I introduce some basic concepts from Gestalt therapy to establish it as a clinical phenomenology.³ I will also show how the resonance of Gestalt therapy’s clinical phenomenology with phenomenology, classical⁴, contemporary and “new,” encourage me to continue develop Gestalt therapy from within the model.

2. “Experience occurs at the boundary of the organism and its environment”

Gestalt therapy unintentionally began as a starkly phenomenological approach in 1951 with its initial text, *Gestalt Therapy*, by Fritz Perls, Ralph Hefferline and Paul Goodman. The theory section begins declaratively -- “experience occurs at the boundary of the organism and its environment” (Perls et al., 1951p. 227) Gestalt therapy will be concerned with *experience* and indeed, the structure of experience⁵ itself. Directing psychotherapists to the structure of experience is elegant in its simplicity. Experience and only experience: we are warned

³ Gestalt therapy is also as much a clinical pragmatism as phenomenology. (K. Bejas) – as well as an existential approach. I do not intend to lock Gestalt therapy into this category.

⁴ For lack of a better term

⁵ The first chapter’s title is “The Structure of Growth”.

against abstractions. This begins a straightforward uncomplicated phenomenological mission.

Gestalt therapists are given a deceptively simple method to initiate this. It is a method that has become a Gestalt therapy cliché and, like all clichés, has lost its initial inspiration by overuse. “Pay attention to the ‘Here and Now’.” “What do you experience, ‘here and now’?” Everything that is not here, not now, is put aside and excluded from experience so that therapy could proceed with a “Gestalt approach.” (Perls et al., 1951; Perls, 1973) What resists such exclusion and affects the experiences that follow would be part of the work of the therapy. A closer look at this shows it as more similar to Husserl’s *epoché* and reduction than the cliché would suggest. Husserl asked us to set aside our assumptions of the average everydayness of the natural attitude in order to enter a new attitude, the phenomenological attitude, which would enable us to see with a different sight and be the basis for second, transcendental reduction. (Husserl, 2014) Gestalt therapy’s here and now initiates a *Gestalt epoché* and reduction by letting the foreground everyday assumptions and activities recede to the background as the patient and therapist turn their attention to what is figural. This is the Gestalt attitude of the so-called Gestalt approach. A clearing is achieved that supports a new figure to emerge. (Bloom, 2018) The Gestalt *epoché* and reduction set aside the taken-for-

granted presumptions of unexamined daily life (“natural attitude”) yet includes them so they can be experienced differently within the Gestalt therapy relationship.⁶ Even further, the phenomenological Gestalt therapy approach emphasizes the inclusion of aspects of the natural attitude since within those very assumptions about the future and the past, of history and of culture, for example, are potential structures of the person’s relational world. Indeed, existential structures are disclosable from within average everydayness. The Husserlian reduction returns to a perspective cleansed of the presumptions of truth and falsity of everyday living so that pure consciousness could be explored. A Gestalt reduction as an *induction*⁷ actually never sets aside this everyday living. Matters of truth or falsity are not set aside; their role in the dynamic structure of experience is included. A Gestalt *induction* as if enters into experience itself by exploring the structure of unfolding experience from within the experience. (Bloom, 2018)

This phenomenological Gestalt therapy approach facilitates our ability to sharpen our experience of a world that is our concern and further the as- and how- structures *of* this concern. This world is originally referred to in the theory and by

⁶ Compare this to Di Petta and Tittarelli’s discussion of atmospheres and eidos.

⁷ R.E. Palmer discusses Heidegger’s “induction” as part of his method. (Palmer, 2008)

many today as the *organism/environment field*. Experience originates at the *contact-boundary*, the spaceless space or placeless place locus of contacting’s emergence. As will become clear, these are important resonance points with “atmospheres”.

Contacting is the process of experiencing that emerges of this contact-boundary and most significantly, it is the structure and process of Gestalt or figure forming. It is the hallmark of Gestalt therapy. (Bloom, 2009) The “*how*” of experiencing this process as a temporal *sequence of contacting is self functioning*.⁸

In Gestalt therapy’s clinical approach, the more such structures of experience become clear in the process of contacting, the more the fixed, hidden, and repeating gestalts are brought into awareness. A person’s suffering is diminished as the contacting process becomes more and more free of the fixed forms that constricted it.

The Gestalt attitude opens the patient and therapist to the experiential ground that is the basis for which the insights of therapy can occur, where the figure/ground process of contacting may be experienced in a whole, embodied, worlded, manner.

⁸ This simple frame is not simplistic; there are more complex aspects that sharpen our approach into a clinical epistemology not relevant to this discussion. Because of its simplicity, the template allowed us Gestalt therapists to add, subtract, and reorganize this structure. I am avoiding any discussion of the various models of Gestalt therapy. Yet, Gestalt therapy never strayed from its founding phenomenological epistemology– “experience occurs at the boundary between the organism and the environment.”

Contacting itself emerges with its sensed, felt, and known aesthetic qualities (for example, Bloom 2003; Francesetti, Gecele, and Roubal, 2013; Spagnuolo Lobb, 2018). The aesthetic qualities of the figures of contacting is the criterion by which the therapy process is evaluated. (Perls et al., 1951) (Bloom, 2003)

These above concepts guide the theory and practice of Gestalt therapy by allowing us to push the horizons of our *clinical* epistemology. At the same time, they are the *practical* clinical tools⁹ for Gestalt therapy’s process of disclosing what may be hidden in a haze of unawareness. These basic concepts introduced by Gestalt therapy are open windows to phenomenology, classical, contemporary and new. I will expand on some of them.

3. Gestalt therapy attitude as an opening to the phenomenal space and time of therapy

As in other post-Cartesian phenomenologies,¹⁰ Gestalt therapy moves in non-spatial spatiality, lives in non-chronological temporality, and embraces the whole biological *and* lived-body. In the Gestalt attitude the office is no longer a Cartesian box, the

⁹ As phenomenological as Gestalt therapy is, it never fails to be close to its roots in pragmatism.

¹⁰ Husserl (for the most part), Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty certainly established this for all time. Heidegger famously leapt back to the pre-Socratic to re-establish his own model.

therapy hour no longer occurs in time ticked-off in minutes by the hands of in measured minutes. This now-and-here, this-now-and-here-*with-the-therapist*, is the situation of therapy set off from the ordinary or mundane and which now has its own kind of sounds and light and senses, its own intentionalities for contacting its own aesthetic of contacting an aesthetic of an embodied phenomenal whole.(Spagnuolo Lobb, 2014; Bloom 2019 Our world of Gestalt forming is not simply concerned with the emerging forms of experience, but also with the forms *and* the formless, the subject *and* pre-subject in a phenomenal process of emerging poly-directional intentionalities¹¹ (Bloom 2019). Contacting is a function of phenomenal space, which is an inter-personal, poly-personal, populated world. This space is the locus of the therapeutic relationship as the milieu of “therapeutic contacting.” This location is the *contact-boundary* and this is made apparent, clarified and disclosed for clinical purposes within the Gestalt attitude of a therapy session, as described above.

¹¹ From its very beginnings and throughout its development, Gestalt therapy has offered fertile territory for concepts of the old, contemporary phenomenology, and now the new, to take root—whether or not these concepts are actually necessary. Intentionality and more contemporary phenomenological concepts such as the aesthetic, pathic, pre-egoistic processes of awareness and consciousness are also part of contemporary Gestalt therapy (Alvim forthcoming; Bloom 2019; Crocker 2009; Bloom 2010; Francesetti 2015; Spagnuolo Lobb 2018).

4. The contact-boundary¹²

Psychology studies the operation of the contact-boundary in the organism-environment field, [but] the contact-boundary, where experience occurs, does not separate the organism and its environment; [...] it is where experience occurs (PHG, 119, emphasis in original).

We lift our arm and hold it in front of our face. We see it as an object just as any object in the “environment”. We move our arm and feel it moving through space. This is a contact-boundary experience—the meeting of us as “object” of the environment and us as a human sensing “subject”—of a biological-material body and a lived-body. This is part of our everyday taken for granted experience that mostly passes us by – until we pay attention.

As clinicians, we practice simultaneously at these two “levels” of the contact-boundary, object and subject. Our work engages the entwining¹³ of two human “domains”. One level is the material world and the biological body; the other is the experienced world and the lived-body. One level is the level of

¹² The dash in “contact-boundary” is crucial to its meaning. “Contact” is not an adjective modifying a kind of “boundary” among others of a type. Rather, “contact-boundary” is *suis generis* – and not to confused with any other “boundary” referred to in Gestalt therapy.

¹³ I deliberately echo Merleau-Ponty’s chiasm here. (Merleau-Ponty & Lefort, 1968)

clock-time and measured space; the other level is phenomenal temporality and immeasurable space or spatiality. It is on that second level that we find the world of shapeless, unformed phenomena, pre-predicative experience of a spatiality without dimension, qualities without names, feelings-not-yet-felt, vibrations-not-yet sounds, a saying not yet said, a temporality outside of time, a place without location—a neither here-nor-there, a neither-there-nor-then.¹⁴ Perhaps, it is even a world of existence without existent. This entwining is ripe with potentialities of contacting. (Humphrey et al., 2018) At the contact-boundary, this crossing of domains is living place of the emergence of the figure/ground process of human personhood.

5. Environment and lifeworld

Given this phenomenological description of the contact-boundary, is it sufficient to refer to it only as a function of the organism/environment field? Unquestionably “organism/environment” importantly underscores the incontestable ecological situation of human organism. The human being as an organism must not be overlooked. But “environment” has several deficiencies. For one thing, it is incomplete. “Environment?” This environment supports me as an organism, and it is folly to consider an organism

¹⁴ See Di Petta and Tittarelli’s chapter in this book for a parallel consideration of this.

as if separate from environment. But as much as I live in an environment with this weather and this climate, with this oxygen, with these nutrients, I dwell, I reside, and I thrive or suffer in my world, and my home. I can dig a hole in the ground and that is a hole in the “environment.” When I bury a dead person in it, that hole becomes something else: a grave over which I can mourn. Environment?

Organism/environment field has another limitation with its naturalistic perspective or “attitude” (Husserl 1970) and all that connotes. Since we clinicians work within a humanistic, existential, and phenomenological rather than a materialistic perspective, there is a more accurate description for the world in which we actually live. That is, a way of situating the contact-boundary that allows for a fully humanistic or wholistic epistemology of contacting. In his criticism of the scientific attitude’s limitations, Husserl proposed the “personalistic attitude”, which is a more fundamentally human way of looking at the totality of life (Husserl 1970). The personalistic attitude as the Gestalt attitude -- or vice versa -- offers an approach that underscores Gestalt therapy as a clinical phenomenology. This attitude suggests a solution to the connoted naturalism of “environment”: the contact-boundary as the meeting

of the *organism/environment-lifeworld*¹⁵ *field*.
Lebenswelt.

Although not original to him, Husserl developed the life- world in different ways through his writings. It remains a slippery concept. Husserl referred to the lifeworld as the totality of our subjective world and the all-encompassing we-world, stretching backwards in time in our shared culture and history, laterally in our societies, and forward in our experiences of the future. It is the horizon of all horizons. (Husserl, 1970) The lifeworld is given to me and given to us in such a way that it is co-given with what appears. “So I cannot speak of things within the world without thing speaking at once of myself and others living with me in the world.” (Waldenfels, p. 111, 2007)

Lifeworld also includes the natural world. Aron Gurwitsch writes that it is “the universal scene of our life. The soil, so to speak, upon which all human activities, productions and creations take place, the world of common experience, [...] our cultural world.” (Gurwitsch 1970, 35, 52). It is the all upon which life depends and which structures our sociality, subjectivity, and intersubjectivity (Steinbock, 1995). Erwin Straus adds another dimension to it: “The understanding of human expressive phenomena is

¹⁵ “World” in the sense that Husserl often used the term and, in the sense, that Heidegger developed at length is an alternative. I choose lifeworld because of its usage by contemporary philosophers. “Lifeworld” is significantly different from Kurt Lewin’s “lifespace”.

rooted in an *immediate fundamental communality preceding every knowledge and irreducible to it*” (Straus 2000, 236, emphasis added).

The addition of lifeworld as an amendment to environment converts the possibly naturalistic attitude of Gestalt therapy into a personalistic and phenomenological attitude. It adds lenses with apertures wide enough to view the broadest horizon of human living. The lifeworld is the warp through which the woof of the therapy process is threaded in one indivisible process. It does not replace the organism or the environment but amends the model to be more inclusive of the fullest human horizon.

6. From environment-lifeworld to contacting and self

Contacting, then, is emergent of the contact-boundary of this organism-environment-*lifeworld* field. This field is the always already founding basis for this developing process. The *pre-given liminal* lifeworld is the ground taken up and gathered into meaningful wholes the forms and contours of lived experience in the sequence of contacting. It is liminal in the sense that it includes the pre-experienceable pathic ground. Consequently, the *pre-given* is the always already there complexities of the lifeworld, which are taken up as given to experience; it is pre- or fore-contact. (Perls et al., 1951) Contacting as

such actually *precedes* any organization of experience. In its first actuality, contacting includes “*inchoate* needs connecting the organism/environment, *undifferentiated, unfocused, diffuse uncategorized*, which is a direct sense of self’s co-emergence of the contact-boundary” (Perls et al., 1951 378 emphasis added). Or out in a contemporary Gestalt therapy manner, “[...] it is in and through contact that the psyche will ex-ist and preside over future experiences. The *pre-* is both genesis and structure” (Robine 2014, 129, emphasis added).). Once again, resonances with various chapters of this book and with many contemporary phenomenologists is loud and clear.

Contacting is a process in time. As temporal sequence, contacting develops as these givens of experience become sharper, have form, agency, consciousness and identity. A shapeless presence becomes *this* shape. Things come into focus and have names. Sensations become colors. Urges become appetites. Immediate awareness becomes consciousness (Bloom 2018) – and all within the clear and present, past and future relational world. There is felt and embodied, experiential content and an agentic conscious “I” capable of reflecting, of identifying, orienting, moving, choosing. And now comes a person who knows the world around him or her, experiences and knows his or her relational embeddedness in the world and can answer who he

or she is, know what he or she has done, can plan a future, can gesture and be gestured to, have values and love and be loved. That is, be a person with the essential human capacity of *responsivity* to the other. (Bloom, in press)

Gestalt therapy accounts for this temporal sequence in terms of the activities of self functions—the id, ego, personality (Frederick Perls et al., 1951) and relational functions (Bloom 2013), discussed throughout Gestalt therapy literature. They are more clearly understandable as It, I person functions. The relational function of self is the compass by which we are oriented toward the other with non-indifference and the basis for our “responsivity” (Waldenfels 2011), a fundamental condition of our location in the lifeworld. The relational function thus orients us towards or away from the other with whom we are finding our way amid clouds, mists, desires, fears, moods, and other opportunities, and constraints of the organism/environment-lifeworld. “Responding means more than intending or understanding” (Waldenfels 2003, 23).

7. Relational function: pathic subjectivity of responsivity: the undergoing of the other

Budding from the organism/environment-lifeworld field, then, self is rooted in a world intrinsically populated both diachronically in pre-given history

and synchronically in a universe of social interactions. The relational function is the capacity *to see* the other as well as *be seen*. This accounts in Gestalt therapy terms for an “I” emergent of a “we” or a “we” emergent of an “I,” and of a “me.” Importantly it is through relational function activity that we differentiate the human other from the non-human other. The relational function accounts for our uncanny feeling when we are in the presence of a perfect virtual human avatar (see Fuchs in this volume). Against all evidence of sight and sound, we know “in our bones” it is not human.

Consequently, the relational function is our capacity to orient toward the qualities of human otherness that show themselves at the contact-boundary of a clinical situation, whose “atmosphere” cannot be overlooked because it is as powerful as a summer sun on our face. Yet, unlike the sun, these qualities disturb us, challenge us to non-indifference, and commands “responsivity”. These are the qualities of otherness that happen to us (see Francesetti in this volume), that we undergo in those extended moments of breathless silence that constitute the spaces between the inhaling and exhaling of being-with-the-other at the contact-boundary. These are commands to us clinicians, which both summon us and by the aesthetic qualities of their command, become the essence our clinical

aesthetic relational knowledge (Spagnuolo Lobb 2018).

8. The field of the pathic: pushing the phenomenology of gestalt therapy further

The pathic area seems very close to our notion of the contact-boundary. Even though atmospherology focuses on a spatial perspective and Gestalt therapy on a temporal one, the idea of an area-less space can be conceived as a kind of “temporalized space” (Alvim 2018, 76). When the contact-boundary is considered from the point of view of the pathic, we can see it in terms of a field in which “pathos is an event, but an event of a special kind which happens to somebody” (Waldenfels 2011, 27). That is, the contact-boundary is of spaceless space and timeless time prior to the emerging sequence of contacting. Indeed, the sequence of contacting itself initiates as a response to an event of the pathic field.

All contact is contacting another. In fact, “contacting an other” is redundant. Since there is no contacting without the other and no experience of the other without contacting, it is also circular. Yet experientially, there are self-evident differences between contacting an object, a sensible being, and a human being. In general, contacting is referred to as the process of differentiating between “me” and a “not-me”. By contacting, I am able to determine differences, between this and that, between that and

me. All contacting, of course, has its aesthetic qualities. I have an aesthetic sense of the sun on my face, a velvet cloth under my touch, the taste of food in my mouth. Yet there is another kind of contacting. It is contacting the human other. The aesthetic qualities of contacting a human other are of a different magnitude than contacting altogether. It is even of a different dimension. This is not a contacting that encounters difference, per se, but is a contacting that encounters the unyielding presence of the other as “alien”,¹⁶ is a contacting that confounds contacting. The redundancy of contacting the other is as if turned inside out. And it is a contacting that commands a response. (Bloom, in press)

All contacting is a *disturbance* of an equilibrium since what is new surprises and becomes known. Contacting another person is *disruptive*, not of an equilibrium but of an order (Waldenfels 2011). “It

¹⁶ “Alien” is a problematic word, which I use to be consistent with the English translations of the original used throughout the literature. Yet, in a correspondence with him, Waldenfels commented, “[...] for German speaking people the word *fremd* has special connotations. When Husserl started questioning the field of *Fremderfahrung* he did not only refer to regional questions of other persons, of the foreigner, of the stranger, but he described a certain quality of our experience. *Fremdheit*, cognate with the proposition “from”, means a certain distance, absence, deepness of experience, and *Fremdheit* originates from our own body, language, home or culture... In German we speak of *Fremdsprache*, *Fremdkörper*, *Fremdwelt*, *Fremdeln* of the little child, of *Entfremdung* or *Verfremdung*, and it may be difficult to find an English word which covers all these shades of sense and which respects the radical character of the alien. In my opinion it seems to be better to make use of an unusual word than to water down the phenomenon at stake. It is true, in many contexts we may speak of the 'unfamiliar', but what about the *Unheimlich*, the uncanny? I think we all should think and work by using the advantages of different languages” (Waldenfels, personal communication, October 22, 2018).

confronts us with a surplus which can never be entirely consumed... It tears open the net of sense, interrupts the system of rules, and thus decontextualizes the event. It is immediate because it breaks through mediations “(Waldenfels 2011, 32).

This disruption puts simple mutuality out of question (Levinas 1998). Within an aesthetic of “passion,” of pathos, that is, of undergoing, the alien-other overtakes the subject. Any response to the alien-other is prior to or at the root of our being subjects. That is the nature of the pathic field, which is the field that happens to us, overtakes us. “It” comes upon us. We are sub-jects to it. In this timeless and spaceless “pre” of contacting our response happens as if to us before any sense of willing or action or intention -- before any reflection or thought. Reflecting, thinking, willing, acting and intending are function of the “I” or ego functioning of contacting. Responsivity is of the contact-boundary, yet of the contact-boundary that is disclosed in its most primordial, pre-subjective state. Under these conditions, contacting the human other is an *under-going*. The other overtakes us. The “I” become an accusative subject. It is here that it is possible to understand the power of Levinas’s ethical subject erupting in response to the face of the other, or Waldenfels’s responsivity to the alien. We cannot be otherwise than non-indifferent in contacting the

human other,¹⁷ which is the irrecusable activity of the relational function of self. And this is the basis for the “situated ethics of Gestalt therapy” (Bloom 2013). It is also the very condition for the possibility of therapeutic contacting. Insofar as the therapist is capable of undergoing the “whirlwind” (Roubal in this volume) emerging of the contact-boundary of the relational field, the therapist accepted this fundamental under-going of the otherness of the patient.

9. Conclusion

Things speak for themselves. Classical and contemporary phenomenology ring like bells throughout the clinical phenomenology of Gestalt therapy briefly described here. By considering Gestalt therapy from this perspective, I’ve indicated how its core ideas easily welcome compatible perspectives that can be integrated into our expanding theoretical and clinical horizons—without the core ideas being compromised. I’ve taken some of these core ideas and developed them in new ways using various concepts of the old, “new,” traditional and contemporary phenomenology. How and to what extent new perspectives can be integrated into or are even compatible with Gestalt therapy can only be

¹⁷ Obviously, contacting the human other doesn’t always lead to these ecstatic epiphanies. Different modes or degrees of human contacting are described elsewhere (Bloom, 2016).

determined through on-going critical exchanges among us. Good faith discourse requires engaging with concepts on their own terms.

Pathos, eidos, atmospheres? These concepts are found in other chapter in this book need not be strangers to Gestalt therapy. Likewise, quasi-things, the alien, responsivity, and the situation might also find a way to reside within a gestalt therapy clinical phenomenology.

I am left with a question. Did my own exploration of the horizons of Gestalt therapy’s phenomenology lead me on a parallel track to those other authors in this book—without my knowing much about the new-phenomenology? I suggest that I, they, and we are responding to a call from the larger world, a call to responsivity to a world of desensitization, to cruelty and to the rise of selfish autocracies.

Near the end of his essay, *Elimination of Metaphysics*, Rudolf Carnap writes,

metaphysics doesn’t describe states of affairs,
but general attitudes of a person towards life...
*[It]arises from the need to give expression to a
man’s attitude to life, his emotional and
volitional reaction to the environment, to
society, to the tasks to which he devotes himself,
to the misfortunes that befall him* (Carnap 1959,
78-79, emphasis added).

Despite Carnap’s intention to discredit phenomenology (Heidegger’s, most precisely), we can take this to heart as more of a compliment than a criticism. The approaches presented by us in this book arise from different points in the same world and reflect various styles of responsivity to the other. We know our work gives expression to felt, sensed, and known experiences of the very situations Carnap names. Our concepts enable our practical work as clinicians and, further, to engage with one another in the kind of professional conversation that expands our clinical understanding. Let Carnap keep his logical positivism and leave to us the therapeutic effectiveness of our clinical phenomenology.

References

- Alvim, Monica. forthcoming. “Sensing with the other: the pathic-aesthetical dimension of human experience.” *Gestalt Review*.
- 2018. “Comment on Atmospheres and Pathic Aesthetics, by Tonino Griffero.” In *The Aesthetic of Otherness, Meeting at the Boundary in a Desensitized World*, ed. by Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb, 75-78. Siracusa: Istituto di Gestalt HCC Italy Publ. Co.
- Bloom, Daniel J. 2003. “‘Tiger! Tiger! Burning Bright’. Aesthetic Values as Clinical Values in

- Gestalt Therapy.” In *Creative License: the Art of Gestalt Therapy*, eds. by Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb and Nancy Amendt-Lyon, 63-78. New York-Vienna: Springer.
- 2010. “The Phenomenological Method of Gestalt Therapy: Revisiting Husserl to Find the Essence of Gestalt Therapy.” *Gestalt Review* 13, 2: 277-295.
- 2013. “Situated Ethics and the Ethical World of Gestalt Therapy.” *Gestalt Therapy in Clinical Practice: from Psychopathology to the Aesthetics of Contact*, ed. by Gianni Francesetti, Michela Gecele and Jan Roubal, 131-145. Milan: Franco Angeli.
- 2016. “The Relational Function of Self.” In *Self. A Polyphony of Contemporary Gestalt Therapists*, ed. by Jean-Marie Robine, 67-90. St Romain La Virvée: L’Exprimerie.
- 2019. “Gestalt Therapy and Phenomenology: when Parallel Lines Collide.” In *Handbook for Theory, Research and Practice in Gestalt Therapy (2nd edition)*, ed. by Philip Brownell. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- . (2019). From Sentience to sapience: The awareness-consciousness continuum and the lifeworld. *Gestalt Review*, 23(1), 18–43

- Forthcoming, “From the Night Before Being: Contacting the Other in Gestalt therapy.” *Gestalt Review*
- Carnap, Rudolph. 1959. “The Elimination of Metaphysics.” In *Logical Positivism*, ed. by Alfred J. Ayer, 60-81. New York: The Free Press.
- Crocker, Sylvia. 2009. “Phenomenology in Husserl and Gestalt Therapy.” *British Gestalt Journal* 18, 1: 18-28.
- Francesetti, G. (2015). From individual symptoms to psychopathological fields. Towards a field perspective on clinical suffering. *British Gestalt Journal*, 24(1), 5–19.
- Francesetti, Gianni, ed. 2015. “*Absence Is the Bridge Between Us*”. *Gestalt Therapy Perspective on Depressive Experiences*. Siracusa: Istituto di Gestalt HCC Italy Publishing Co.
- Francesetti, Gianni and Gecele, Michela. 2009. “A Gestalt Therapy Perspective on Psychopathology and Diagnosis.” *British Gestalt Journal* 18(2): 5-20.
- Francesetti, Gianni, Gecele, Michela and Roubal, Jan, eds. 2013. *Gestalt Therapy in Clinical Practice: from Psychopathology to the Aesthetics of Contact*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

Gurwitsch, Aron. 1970. “Problems of the lifeworld.”
In *Phenomenology and Social Reality. Essays in
Memory of Alfred Schutz*, ed. by Maurice
Natanson, 35-61. The Hague: Martinus NijHoff.

Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and time (J.
Macquarrie & E. Robinson, trans.)*. New York:
Harper & Row.

Humphrey, K.& Bloom, D. (2018). Contact
Interruptions (2003). *Gestalt Review*, 22(1), 91–
106.

Husserl, Edmund. 1931. *Ideas. General Introduction
to Pure Phenomenology* (1913). New York:
MacMillan.

— 1970. *The Crisis of European Sciences and
Transcendental Phenomenology* (1954). Evanston:
Northwestern University Press.

-- 1973. *Logical Investigations*. London: Routledge.

Levinas, Emmanuel. 1998. *Otherwise than Being, or,
Beyond Essence*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University
Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M., & Lefort, C. (1968). *The visible
and the invisible; followed by working notes*.
Northwestern University Press.

Palmer, R.E. (2008). " Phenomenology, " Edmund Husserl ' s Article for the Encyclopedia Britannica (1927) Revised.

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/9fa4/d0a52737669e8907b0ff2834a9db39edbad6.pdf> accessed June, 23,2020

Parlett, M. (1991). Reflections on Field Theory. *British Gestalt Journal*, 1(2).

Perls, Frederick, Hefferline, Ralph and Goodman, Paul. 1951. *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality*. New York: Julian Press.

Perls, F. 1973. *The Gestalt Approach & Eye Witness to Therapy*. Palo Alto: Science and Behaviour Books.

Robine, Jean-Marie. 2014. “Contact, at the Source of Experience” (2011). In *The New York Institute for Gestalt Therapy in the 21st Century*, eds. by Dan Bloom and Brian O’Neill, 128-136. Peregian Beach: Ravenswood Press.

— 2018. “Aesthetic Relational Knowledge of the Field. A Revised Concept of Awareness in Gestalt Therapy and Contemporary Psychiatry.” *Gestalt Review* 22, 1: 50-68.

Spagnuolo Lobb, M. (2014). *The now-for-next in psychotherapy: Gestalt therapy*

Steinbock, Anthony J. 1995. *Home and Beyond. Generative Phenomenology Beyond Husserl.*

Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Straus, Erwin. 2000. *Du sens des sens: Contribution à étude des fondements de la psychologie* (1935).

Paris: Million.

Waldenfels, Bernhard. 2003. “Lecture 2.” In *Phenomenology Today: the Schuwer SPEP lectures 1998-2002*, eds. by Rudolf Berner and Daniel J. Martino, 23-59. Pittsburgh: Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center, Duquesne University.

— 2011. *Phenomenology of the Alien. Basic Concepts.* Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Waldenfels, B. (2007). *The question of the other: The Tang Chun-I lecture for 2004.* State University of New York Press.