

Perry Klepner
“Mobilizing Self,”

Foreword to the Polish edition of the practical volume of PHG

On the seventy-second anniversary of its publication, a Polish translation of *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* by Frederick S. Perls, Ralph F. Hefferline, and Paul Goodman is now complete. Its 1951 debut consisted of *Volume One*, titled *Mobilizing the Self*, published in Polish in this edition, and *Volume Two*, titled *Novelty, Excitement and Growth*, published in Polish in 2022. These comprise a complete edition of what is known as PHG, the first foundational presentation of Gestalt Therapy (GT), offering Polish people the opportunity to learn GT in their own language. This edition marks the growing interest in and availability of this creative work that fosters the human ethos to “know thyself” in a radical new approach to psychotherapy.

Novelty, Excitement and Growth, which emphasizes GT theory and practice, was written and developed from Perls’s draft by Paul Goodman. It has come to be well known as a seminal presentation of GT, drawing on Western philosophical and psychological thinking and detailing the principles, orientations, and methods of GT with a field-relational approach between a therapist and a client.

In contrast, this volume, *Mobilizing the Self*, presents Perls’s GT psychological concepts along with experimental

exercises that allow the reader to work without a therapist to gain greater self-awareness with enhanced sensory, cognitive, and physical functioning. *Mobilizing the Self* was a creative collaboration between Perls, who shared his theory and practice methods, and Ralph F. Hefferline, who conducted experiments with his students and contributed to the text. Referred to as the practical or experimental volume, it offers a journey of self-discovery through personal experience and reflects Perls's ongoing effort to vest the individual with the tools for their own growth.

Readers are recommended to begin *Mobilizing the Self* with the experiments, then read the theoretical volume quickly without concern for detail, and then consider the value of proceeding before rereading the theory to chew it over more thoroughly. The authors give caution that the text requires knowledge of psychology, and the experiments need to be done carefully or the reader could be left “with a feeling of confronting a big and hopeless task.” (PHG, p. xxx.) These are noteworthy warnings. PHG often leaves readers feeling confused. Doing the exercises and understanding the theoretical presentation requires hard work and it is not suitable for everyone's learning styles and preferences.

On publication, PHG was met with a few brief uncomplimentary reviews. This could be explained by the challenges of the text, which requires a serious, disciplined approach as well as time and effort. The theory volume, written in Paul Goodman's particular style, is dense with diverse meanings, and the references can be difficult to understand. As it comes after the initial self-help-oriented volume, it may have

been overlooked or not taken seriously by some reviewers. Additionally, the Gestalt psychological, existential, and phenomenological as well as the organism-environment and field orientations presented in these volumes offer a different approach to psychology than many were accustomed to at that time. I encountered the misunderstanding of GT myself in the early 1970s when I was attending a psychology class at the New School for Social Research in New York City. A professor was presenting various psychotherapies and omitted GT. When I asked about this, his response was dismissive: “It has no comprehensive theory.”

In a 1982 interview in *An Oral History of Gestalt Therapy* (1982) interview, Laura Perls said:

“Gestalt Therapy is existential, experiential and experimental. But what techniques you use to implement that and to apply it, that depends to the great extent on your background, on your experiences professionally, in life, your skills and whatever. The Gestalt therapist uses himself and herself with whatever they have got and whatever seems to apply at the time, to the actual situation.” (L. Perls 1982, p.18)

These themes identified by Laura are at the heart of PHG and GT, making it innovative, effective and exciting.

Mobilizing the Self

Mobilizing the Self was intended to illuminate Perls’s existential, experiential, and experimental orientation in

psychological insight and method. In contrast with the use of scientific or psychoanalytic language and interpretation, GT uses direct words, phenomenal feelings, and subjective experience.

The text elaborates GT's reliance on contact and presence, of being in touch, the "what is" that resides in the experience of what is felt and understood. Its experimental approach provides the opportunity for the here-now-next of interests, concerns, and feelings to be explored in a spontaneous, creative process. I have always had a personal trust in GT because of this phenomenal emphasis on what is sensed, felt, and known in experience.

The opening comments in *Mobilizing the Self* clarify its background and approach. Using non-technical language the text conveys a sense of transparency and the promise of being understandable. It identifies the genesis of the experiment as *experiri*, "to try" and "observe," in order to explore, verify, or refute. The volume offers an approach different from those involving prescribed ideas about human needs and behavior, rooted in abstract theorizing and historical and causal explanation rather than based on here-now experience. It promises proof of its effectiveness in the reader's own heightened vitality with improved thinking, feeling, and taking action. The authors promise it will be "an adventure in living." I found these discussions spark my interest and motivation to proceed.

Rereading the introduction, I hear the confident, self-assured voice of Perls doing his work in the 1960s, one that is familiar from recorded presentations. The text extends an

invitation to join in a cooperative exploration of experience with the potential for “self-discovery,” as Perls states, “To observe your self in action – ultimately to observe your self as action” (PHG, p. 252). I still find this invitation exciting.

The text challenges the reader, asking: Can a doctor and patient be reduced to one person doing experimental exercises? The answer is affirmative, but the reader is invited to test this for themselves. The individual emphasis that oriented Perls’s work would have been a particularly exciting, appealing prospect in the mid-twentieth century, given the individualism, inventiveness, and self-accomplishment that characterized the rapid economic and social changes following World War II in North America and Europe.

Yet the commentary recognizes the reader’s justified skepticism, likely garnered from exposure to popular advertising appeals offering quick, easy cures and peak moments of self-discovery. Reading this text I feel spoken to directly and sincerely, and I feel reassured that I will have my views considered and respected. The book promises new techniques, and the reader is cautioned about the challenging road ahead, both time-consuming and arduous. The path requires developing an attitude of experimentation and observation that takes time, patience, and perseverance to learn. There are no quick formulas, only the hard work of self-experimentation, which, if done superficially, will be easy but with little gain. If done carefully, however, that work promises significant benefit. I feel assured that I can rely on what I feel, see, touch, and think. I can proceed at my own pace. All I have to do is make a genuine effort to follow the instructions.

The opening discussion provides an informative background summary of the clash between experimentalist and clinical psychological orientations in the nineteenth-century scientific community. Perls's theory and practice advanced not in a laboratory but in his clinical practice, working with his clients' awareness. Rejecting the experimental and clinical dualism, he redefines the clinical as also scientific, arguing that subjective experience is a meaningful measure for establishing a sound basis for psychotherapy. He explains how clinical therapy involves trial, and observation, with measurement developed in the hands-on, practical work between patient and therapist, and that it is rooted in the art of healing that has taken place throughout human history. Experimenting can then be a dynamic basis for examining experience, learning about one's self, and measuring psychotherapeutic progress by relying on one's own observed and felt experience. GT represents a new integration of "experimental" and "clinical" work in the service of a radical, innovative approach to psychotherapy.

The text makes a strong argument that there is an active human nature that can be mobilized to investigate and observe one's experience. This human nature is therapeutically beneficial by producing meanings and behavior that organize ongoing awareness and further influence how one is functioning. Integral to this is the Gestalt psychological activity of the spontaneous shifting of attention between figure and background to form new feelings and cognitive and somatic perceptions as the "aha" experience of insight with meaning.

Part 1: Orienting the Self in *Mobilizing the Self* presents views on challenging psychological situations involving social pressures, relationships, etc., that cause divisions of conscious knowing, being, and activity and involve a loss of self-disclosure and awareness. This section emphasizes a personal-environmental and physical orientation by developing and differentiating various contact activities such as attention, time, remembering, personality, verbalizing, etc., and integrating them by exploring them together—e.g., the meanings of being shy and voicing one’s viewpoints. It helpfully provides nontechnical explanations of GT and uses understandable experiments such as “Here and now I am ...” and “Now I am aware ...”

It also identifies and discusses physical experiences, which inform possible considerations with clients, such as sexual functioning, eating, fantasizing, and attending to the human body, such as the front and back of one’s body, etc. This discussion reminds me of the value of orienting the client to attend to their changing experience and suggests possible areas of focused attention that many clients could find helpful.

Part 2: Manipulating the Self identifies chronic disturbances of good functioning involving personality and somatic experience. These fixed disturbances entail a loss of contact as blocks and blind-spots, and they are explained as misdirected and malfunctioning phenomena with dim, unclear, and confused sensing, feeling, thinking, and physicality. They are termed neurotic symptoms, pathologies, self-aggressions, creative adjustments, unfinished business, and neurotic mechanisms.

This part explains these mechanisms and presents an interesting description of actions to take to change them. It describes relaxing restricted muscularity and sensing using focused attention with changing figures and background perspectives. The text details experiences of unawareness, including confluence as undifferentiated and not-felt experience; introjecting as the uncritical acceptance of values, meanings, and behaviors; projecting as experiencing thoughts and feelings originating from outside one's self as originating from within; and retroflection as inhibiting one's experience so it is not aware.

I found *Part 2* particularly intriguing in how it describes a process by which consciousness becomes integrated through understanding and experiments that explore fantasy, physicality, personality traits, and spontaneity. It outlines formations of fixed attitudes and behaviors involving knowing, feeling, and expressing oneself, e.g., pity, compassion, self-blaming, self-consciousness, stubbornness, eating disorders, hypochondria, and sexuality promiscuity. I found Perls's explanations, encouraging directions, and experiments aimed to heighten experience helpful for understanding psychological factors in need of consideration, and they motivated me to proceed with the text.

Although *Mobilizing the Self* is characterized as the practical and experimental volume of PHG, it has a considerable presentation of Perls's psychological thinking that explains and discusses its experiments. This volume, initially thought of as an

appendix to PHG, was placed first in the book to give it a “self-help” appeal. This was popular at the time and suited to its self-directed approach. The theoretical volume, *Novelty, Excitement and Growth*, followed. The order of presentation was reversed in the Gestalt Journal Press edition of 1994, as originally intended by the authors, and as is the case in this Polish edition.

As a newcomer to this text and GT many years ago, I wanted support and clarity, and I found this self-experimenting volume very attractive, as it directed my attention to how I was thinking, sensing, and acting. It offered a way for me to continue to develop an understanding of myself, by myself.

Reviewing the text again, I noted the issues addressed in *Mobilizing the Self* Part 2 emphasize limitations and restrictions of awareness or chronic disturbances, i.e., what is problematic. I desired more discussion of a wider range of emotional experiences of sadness, fear, anger, and happiness in their healthy forms, even though these topics are discussed in the other volume, *Novelty, Excitement and Growth*.

I also sometimes found its psychological explanations protracted and its directives constrained in the form of how-tos, e.g., how to reverse inhibiting restrictive experiences, how to undo introjections, confluence, etc. The discussions here seem vulnerable to being understood simply as what to think about, do, and pay attention to, rather than how to consider these phenomena that have meaning and function for the person organizing them.

The text delves into psychological explanations for each topic being explored—e.g., sensing the environment, body awareness, chronic disturbed experience, etc.—with detailed description and direction. This is clarifying for the subject of each experiment, but the text does not integrate these experiments into a coherent good method of psychotherapy. This was left to the theoretical volume's presentation of GT.

Experiments

Mobilizing the Self deserves a nuanced perspective and requires critical recognition of the GT being presented— what the experiments are, how they are utilized, and what they aim to do, along with their consideration within a larger discussion of what constitutes GT and its experimental approach. Questions to be considered include how experiments are used or not used, how they work, how they are designed, and how they apply to psychotherapy with theory-practice paradigms emphasizing relational presence, dialogue, the situation, field, and intersubjective perspectives.

Experiments have a long history in the human evolutionary forming of person-environment, co-creating and mutually organizing each other. The nature of life is ever-changing in form and function; it proceeds with impulse and response, effortful assimilation and growth through trial and error to reveal and inspire learning. Psychological experiments can be traced from the time of the Greek philosophers to the laboratories of nineteenth-century psychologists Wilhelm Wundt and William James; to Sigmund Freud's work with hypnosis and

psychoanalysis; to Sándor Ferenczi directing his patients to do what they feared; and to Wilhelm Reich's emphasis on posture, gesture, muscular tension, and voicing expression, among many other innovators.

Perls did not conduct experiments in the “scientific” tradition, with the repeatable measured tests and detached, neutral observers that revolutionized Western thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For him, the client-therapist interaction was an experimental laboratory producing therapeutic results, measured in the client's and therapist's subjective experiences and observations of good contact. He expanded his analytic repertoire, developing his views to include holism, semantics, Gestalt psychology, phenomenology, and existentialism. He innovated GT by including the experimenter and all living contact activities in experiments, such as language, physicality, perceptions, touch, vision, thinking, values, and meanings, and by working with clients to express themselves in gestures, behaviors, thoughts, and feelings.

Perl's evolved from his original psychoanalytic training to develop GT with new orientations and concepts as he did throughout his career. The self-directed approach in “*Mobilizing the Self*” is an example of his innovation and reflects his ongoing efforts. It was in his earlier book “Ego Hunger and Aggression.”(F.S. Perls1947) that he first recommended experimenting and referred to oral resistances, the organism as a whole, the field perspective, Gestalt psychology concepts, differential thinking, and concentration as he does in this volume.

Mobilizing the Self is helpful in pointing out negative feelings readers may have with its theory and experiments. These include confusion, anxiety, disappointments, frustration, embarrassment, fear, shame, guilt, resentment, and so on. Even while anticipated, these negative feelings can still involve suffering that can make progress with the text difficult to sustain. I found being alerted to negative feelings provides support for enduring them and, to the extent they arise they present additional opportunities to investigate them.

Conversely, this volume also involves the excitement of accepting provisional hypotheses and trying various sensory activities to investigate awareness. The commentary offers informative rationales and encouragement for understanding the theory, suggesting the reader take the experiments as far as they can and recognize results on their merits for what is experienced and becomes aware. The experiment is not intended to accomplish a goal or be completed as such but rather is useful for what arises in the process of its being done, what it disrupts, is felt, thought, and emerges

For experienced therapists, *Mobilizing the Self* can be a refresher on how GT ideas and experiments can be understood, designed, and suggested to clients. I found myself pleasantly surprised as I reconnected to memories of beginning my practice and new experiences arising, like stepping into a déjà vu moment that is both familiar and refreshingly new.

I recall as a new reader the wonder and effort of this experimental presentation. It offered an opportunity and a challenge to discipline myself to attend to the ongoing activity

from experiment to experiment and observe the many different experiences in doing them. The experiments interestingly cover a diverse spectrum of experience and are more easily initiated and reviewed than done with a clear sense of completion and coherence of how much time and effort is needed to reap their full effect. As I engaged the here-now-next of proceeding with the experiments, I gained confidence that a new awareness would arise, be informative, and contribute to my sensing, feeling, and knowing.

While *Mobilizing the Self*, and *Novelty, Excitement and Growth* were inspired by Perls's original manuscript, their emphasis and presentation are different which is understandable given their different intentions and authors.

As explained above, *Mobilizing the Self* is organized around experiments involving orienting awareness—environmental sensing; remembering, body sense, emotional continuity, verbalizing, etc. —and redirecting fixed chronic disturbances by integrating physical, feeling, and cognitive experience. The psychological narrative presents concepts that explain each experiment, such as rebalancing one's equilibrium, creative pre-commitment, differentiated thinking, interested impartiality, use of concentration, and Gestalt figure/background formation and their disturbances.

The experiments require reducing or restraining and activating various contact activities such as seeing, movement, thinking, verbalizing, and physicality. These are phenomenal experiments that temporarily suspend concerns about objective reality and attend with impartial interest to all emerging experiences. For example, in *Mobilizing the Self*, there is a

Verbalizing experiment (PHG, p. 352) that proposes listening to one's voice for monotonous, melodious, patient, urgent, and caring qualities with meanings and affects to potentially contribute new physical experience, insight, and behavior.

In contrast, *Novelty, Excitement and Growth* aims for an overall inclusive view of GT by analyzing GT ideas and method with the prevalent social-cultural norms and psychological and psychoanalytic thinking of its time. The authors make insightful, reasoned arguments to support GT's approach to psychotherapy. They propose an integrated view of neurotic and healthy psychological experience with phenomenal, existential, psychologically oriented discussions of perception, reality, human development, social-communal life, morals, personality, and GT's unique view of the "Self." In this theory volume, the experiment is considered among other vital factors comprising a good method for psychotherapy.

In *Novelty, Excitement, and Growth*, experiments are not predetermined but are designed spontaneously from the interaction of therapist and client according to their needs, interests, proclivities, and emerging experience together. The client contributes their narrative, sensory orienting, feelings, and somatic and thoughtful awareness, and the therapist offers their interested presence, felt experience, training, and insight. Their relationship involving mutual experience, understanding, and trust is the background to the experimenting.

In psychotherapy, the therapist-client experiments are graded in scope so as to be focused on a concern that is meaningful and accessible for consideration, i.e., neither too big nor small in scope. They are also graded for anxiety so as to

gauge the risk of confused and anxious-making experiences while feeling safe enough to explore. The therapist's activity can be helpful here for supporting the client tolerating the unfamiliar and unknown new experience which includes anxiety as an expected phenomenon to learn with, not without.

The experiments in *Novelty, Excitement and Growth* emphasize the analysis of the structure of experience as its aesthetic from the Greek, *aisthēta*, and *aisthēsthai*, i.e., to perceive qualities of coherence and knowing the relationship of the parts and wholes of experience and situation. Disturbed, desensitized experience diminishes capacities for parts and wholes sensing, feeling, and knowing, and with different integrations. It is with the discrimination and exploration of these restricted contact activities that experimenting can be especially helpful to illuminate the background of what is important to know and feel as figural and take action on.

Experiments in a therapist-client interaction are motivated by an immediate awareness arising in a present novel interpersonal situation. As such, they have immediate excitements of meaning and relevance, which can be surprising and revealing. Experiments can take many forms and elicit many experiences. For example, they can deal with pressing fears as well as involve playful interaction and happiness. Taking the experiment referenced above involving verbalizing, for instance, a client and therapist may become aware of verbal expression becoming figural. The therapist or client could suggest an experiment, such as listening for various qualities of one's verbalizing. This experiment has the vitality and concern of the present moment that is the organizing contact therapist and

client are creating together. It is here and now, a meaningful, valued concern to them. It now involves their existent presence, their living experience together.

In contrast, experiments in *Mobilizing the Self* were graded for focus and anxiety by Perls and Hefferline. The experimenter also grades these experiments consciously and intuitively by how they understand and implement the exercises. Conducting experiments on one's own does not have the spontaneity, exciting concern, or relational support that a trusted psychotherapist present in a two-person therapy can bring. However, an experiment done without a therapist still is an experience with the potential for beneficial observation of felt experiences of feelings, anxiety, confusion, fixedness, coherence, etc.

The experiments in *Mobilizing the Self* have limitations in the absence of a therapist's phenomenal responses, knowledge, and relationship. Also, in experimenting on one's own there is the possibility that distraction and unawareness may occur with anxious-making subjective experience which a therapist could bring attention to. However, fixed experiments offer focused perception, feeling, thinking, and acting that guide the reader with specific directions and subjects to be attended to. This has the potential for emerging experiences that might not be identified otherwise.

Mobilizing the Self and GT in general also express valuation and faith in the individual experimenter by indicating "You can do this." This is an expression of confidence in the individual's ability to self-regulate by asserting their needs and creative strivings. Indeed, human endeavors undertaken on behalf of

oneself and loved ones have proven to be powerful forces demonstrated in transformative human accomplishments throughout history. This has instilled a healthy respect and special value in GT for self-exploration which comes through in this volume. I like this as it implicitly expresses support for the inherent and natural, if not mysterious, wisdom in each person, making the individual's self-regulation and native intuitions the essential guide to their self-discovery in therapy as well as in each moment of their living.

For me, one of the rich qualities of experimenting is my empowered feeling of agency of action that "I am doing and creating this." Additionally, by risking one's known state by being in the potentially transformational act of experimenting, one can acquire an "experimental attitude," i.e., faith or confidence that "I" persist as I transform. Taking a risk to explore the unknown and what may seem unknowable phenomena is a creative orientation that progressively contributes to self-confidence and the resilience of one's authentic experience adjusting to novel circumstances. Experimenting involves the courage to suffer the existential challenge of changing and uncertainty to secure an authentic "being." This has important implications for qualities of personal experience as well as social-community living where differences between people, as well as commonalities, can be a source of excited interest, learning, and celebration.

There is individual variation among Gestalt therapists and clients as to their views on the use of experiments. Some therapists view the session as an experiment overall, while others prefer thinking of an experiment as a specifically defined

activity. Also, using experiments depend on the therapist and client's needs, interests, experiences, personal talents, etc.

Some therapists and clients may avoid explicit experiments, viewing them as disturbing their ongoing contact. Or there may be an objection to experimenting. For example, a client may hear the therapist's instruction "I suggest" and interpret it as "I have to" or "I should" which could evoke fears of deficiency or shame, prompting their resistance to the experiment. In PHG and GT, in general, the client's "no" function is an important creative act of self-regulating individuality and relationship, and an opportunity to explore its meaning and purpose.

There are many contexts in which specific expressions common to experimenting, such as "Let's try this," become unnecessary or are implicit in the ongoing contact of the client and therapist. Examples include emergent relational processes involving shared experience as dialogue, non-verbal presence, expressive speaking, chronicle narrative, listening, moving, laughter, sadness, creative play, etc. These instances of give-and-take exchange of presence and communicating, receiving, and responding are implicitly experimental exploring continuity of contact without the expressed instruction to do an experiment.

The experimenting in *Mobilizing the Self* volume and PHG, in general, reflects Perls' orientation, values, and influential forces that shaped his life. It contextualizes the understanding of this volume and its experimental emphasis to include mention of the social-cultural forces of the time of PHG's publication, as

discussed above, as well as the personal characteristics of the authors' lives that influenced and motivated their viewpoints.

Perls's experience living through two World Wars, being a refugee who fled and migrated from four countries, the authoritarian class, social-cultural-religious, and professional authorities he was subject to, and his need to secure a clinical practice come to mind. These would understandably contribute to his developing and valuing of the survival skills of self-reliance and individuality evident in his theorizing and the experimental volume. He was wary of unaware accepting the viewpoints and behaviors of others that were not critically examined, i.e., introjecting, confluence, etc., and was suspicious of thinking that was presumed or had here to fore passed as belief.

He held an egalitarian, anti-authoritarian existential view that each person can best decide the choices of their unique lives. Insight and psychological self-awareness were not reserved for the elite and did not require an "authority" to interpret experience. These attitudes guided the development of his GT ideas, and theories of human nature, and are reflected in his use of experiments for spontaneous self-revealing of feelings and beliefs along with critical examination and support for choice-making, "This is good for me, this is not."

Goodman shared Perls's individualistic and experimental appreciations. His extensive background in psychology, philosophy, and education contributed to his understanding, use, and references to experimenting. Goodman's talents, values, and theoretical efforts expanded upon Perls's theory and are demonstrated in *Novelty, Excitement and Growth* and his career

as a writer, poet, novelist, therapist, social planner, educator, activist, and humanist.

Hefferline's contributions to the experimental volume were his implementation of the experiments with his students and collaboration in writing the psychological discussion and testimonials. He shared Perls's valuation of an individualistic and experimental orientation, and his behavioral psychological, and academic background contributed to the *Mobilizing the Self* detailed presentation and instructional clarity. After PHG's publication, Hefferline continued his academic career at Columbia University instructing behavioral psychology. He devoted his research efforts to developing physioelectrolysis as a method to reveal a person's inner experience.

— *Mobilizing the Self* also offers an opportunity to view Perls's GT ideas and experimenting as they evolved during the mid-twentieth century. As discussed above, *Mobilizing the Self* presented Perls's individually focused approach utilizing experiments and concepts such as contact, self-observation, differentiation, awareness, etc.

Richard Kitzler, a client and colleague of Perls, and a founding member of the New York Institute for Gestalt Therapy referred to *Mobilizing the Self* as: "...the rich experiments section of the book, pure early Perls and beyond" praise.'" (Kitzler, 2008, p. 257).

In the theoretical volume, Goodman develops Perls's ideas in a different presentation of GT in which, awareness, contact, and contact-boundary, —where experience occurs, are at the center of human-orienting contact activities. Phenomena of

chronic fixed experience such as confluence, introjection, etc., are developed into the broader context of healthy and neurotic ongoing learning involving novelty and change termed creative adjusting. “Self” is developed as a function, that is situationally variable involving Ego, Id, and personality functions. Goodman develops the concept of contact by differentiating it as a temporal sequence having stages of contact such as fore-contact, contact, etc., along with experiments that give more emphasis to client-therapist interaction. These revisions then contribute to an inclusive organism/environment field relational psychotherapy presentation of GT.

Perls’s *Mobilizing the Self* also came before his new concepts of the 1960s involving experiments such as the hot seat, empty chair, top-dog-underdog dialogue, role-playing, and concepts of “layers,” such as the cliché, games and roles, death layer, etc., which came to be how many knew him and thought of GT.

Closing Thoughts

To paraphrase Laura Perls’s earlier quote, each therapist brings to the therapeutic situation their own learning, style, and resources doing GT. How best to proceed with developing one’s resources is something to be discovered and invented by each GT practitioner. For many, developing one’s style and repertoire is a lifetime of personal and clinical work. For those who find it compatible with their own learning style and interests, *Mobilizing the Self*, with its intention to assist the reader to become aware of their experience and self-understanding, can be a pathway for advancing one’s learning.

Consistent with the emphasis here on self-directed experimenting I suggest reading *Mobilizing the Self* while trying different approaches to the text than you may be accustomed to. This is an experiment or *experi*, “to explore.”

Read portions of the text with a good faith effort as a meditative contemplation by suspending deliberate effortful comprehending, learning goals, anticipations, and the need for completion. This is a “middle mode” that is neither active nor passive while attending to the book’s theory and experiments. This mode accepts one’s interest to explore while taking a relaxed, perhaps playful, non-deliberate stance. Alternatively, explore reading portions of the text with a heightened, exaggerated deliberateness and concentration followed by reading portions with an even more relaxed stance than the middle mode, i.e., one that is exaggeratedly laidback. You can then consider any self-observing emerging experiences such as feelings, thoughts, physical experiences, and meanings, that arise.

References:

Kitzler, Richard, (2008). *The Eccentric Genius*. New Orleans Gestalt Institute Press.

Perls, F. S., Hefferline, R. F., Goodman, P. (1951/1994). *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality*. Gouldsboro: The Gestalt Journal Press.

Perls, F. S. (1947). *Ego, Hunger and Aggression*. New York: Vintage Books.

Perls, L. (1982) *An Oral History of Gestalt Therapy*. The Gestalt Journal, The Center for Gestalt Development, Inc.

Perry Klepner,

Perry Klepner, LCSW, has been a psychotherapist in private practice in New York City and Kingston, NY. He provides training, supervision, and individual, and couples therapy. He trained with Laura Perls, Isadore From, and Richard Kitzler at the New York Institute for Gestalt Therapy (NYIGT), where he is a past president (1993–95), Full Member, Fellow, and instructor. He conducts ongoing study groups reading PHG line-by-line as it was originally instructed. Since 1995 he has organized, trained, and authored articles on GT Process Groups at IAAGT and EAGT conferences. He is facilitating a process support group for Ukrainian Gestalt therapists and has authored articles and conducted workshops on GT at conferences worldwide.