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# Fundamentals of the Gestalt Approach to Counselling

## The therapeutic relationship

Gestalt practitioners affirm the primary values of the living existential encounter between two real human beings, both of whom are risking themselves in the dialogue of the healing process. The central focus is the moment-by-moment process of the relationship between the client and the counsellor. In this encounter, the goal is a full and complete authentic meeting between these two people. (Naturally such a meeting may include each experiencing existential separation and essential aloneness.) The development of the *capacity* for genuine relationship forms the core of the healing process and has been described by Hycner (1985) as a relationship basically characterised by dialogue – a *dialogic relationship*.

As they work through the many stage-posts of their journey, the client gains emotional resources, security and freedom, and the counsellor comes to be seen more and more as a ‘real’ person. No longer is the counsellor experienced merely as a projective substitute for figures from the past, and no longer are past patterns habitually used in the present.

Laura Perls has mentioned ‘that she was profoundly influenced by a personal meeting with Martin Buber, and that the true essence of Gestalt therapy was the relationship formed between therapist and client’ (Hycner, 1985: 27). Buber described this ‘I–Thou’ (‘Ich und Du’ in German) relationship as a genuine meeting between two unique people in which both openly respect the essential humanity of the other. Buber (1958/1984)

writes that there are two primary human attitudes, the 'I-Thou' relationship and the 'I-It' relationship. The 'I-It' relationship occurs when we turn others into objects. An actual example of the latter occurs when women and children are turned into pornographic objects for 'use'. Symbolically, this may occur when clients and counsellors 'use' each other as mere 'objects' for projection or analysis without duly honouring the essential humanity of their relationship. Gestalt recognises that from the first encounter onwards, client and counsellor exchange many moments of recognition of each other's real humanity. It is here that there is the most fertile ground for Gestalt work. From the very beginning both participants engage in a relationship of mutuality where not only the client is changed by the counsellor, but the counsellor is also affected and changed by the client. Ultimately, it is only in the context of an authentic relationship that the uniqueness of the individual can be truly recognised. In the recognition and acceptance of who he is, paradoxically productive change can become possible. Every moment is created anew.

From a practitioner perspective, the dialogic relationship is based on the qualities of presence, confirmation, inclusion and a commitment to open and direct communication with the client.

Presence means that the counsellor 'attempts to be as fully present as possible in the therapy situation. This means staying moment-by-moment with whatever emerges' (Hycner, 1991: 98). Such an approach requires that the counsellor work to suspend ideas and judgements about what the client should bring up, or the direction in which the counselling should go. In this way the counsellor remains open to allowing whatever arises in himself, the client and the relationship.

Confirmation is the willingness and capacity of the counsellor to listen, attend to and work to understand the uniqueness and experience of the client. This contributes to the client having an experience of being seen and understood, perhaps for the first time in relation to hitherto private and isolating experiences. This is in and of itself a potent force for healing and growth.

Inclusion is where the counsellor attempts to include the experience of the client in her own 'realm of understanding' (Joyce and Sills, 2010: 46). Unlike empathy where the counsellor tries to know the world of the client as he sees it without judgement or opinion, inclusion also encompasses the counsellor's own feelings and responses to the client. In this way the counsellor makes more of herself available in order to resonate

as fully as possible with client without becoming lost or overwhelmed by the experience.

Finally, in service of a dialogic relationship, the counsellor aims to practice open and direct communication with the client where appropriate. This does not mean that the counsellor speaks out every thought and reaction that he has in relation to the client. Rather, the counsellor is willing to communicate more of himself and his reactions in a spirit of honesty and authentic meeting. This might include naming something that is preventing the counsellor from being present. It could involve the counsellor disclosing that he is feeling sad as he listens to the client, which may help the client to connect with her own sadness more fully. A willingness to communicate more openly makes a significant contribution to making the relationship feel more equal and less hierarchical to the client.

## Wholeness

A cornerstone of the Gestalt approach is its emphasis on the wholeness of the person in the counselling relationship, not just the intrapsychic or merely the interpersonal dimension. In the counselling process different aspects of a person may be emphasised at different times. These will probably include symbolic, behavioural, physiological, affective, cognitive and spiritual aspects of the client's life. The counsellor, however, will always have as a guiding principle the integration of all the many facets of that unique individual. The acceptance and celebration of this multi-dimensional wholeness is also considered a possible goal for the client. This is not 'imposed upon' the client, but is based on a belief that human beings want to experience their wholeness, individual richness and integration of diversity.

The Gestalt approach is essentially realistic and integrative because it takes into account both the dark and regressive aspects of being human and also of our innate strivings towards health, happiness and self-actualisation. Gestalt does not deny the irrational roots of hatred, envy and fear at individual and collective levels. In this sense it seeks to actualise and celebrate life in *all* its varied richness. Interestingly enough Goodman (co-author of *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* (Perls et al., 1951/1969)), one of the founders of the Gestalt approach, was an anarchist and a questioning, iconoclastic and challenging spirit lives on in modern Gestalt.

A Gestalt-oriented approach to counselling is based on the absolute inseparable unity of bodily experience, emotions, language, ethics, rationality, meaning-making and spirituality (whether or not in awareness) (see Clarkson, 1975; 2002a). Gestalt has as its fulcrum the existential invitation to the client to *be* himself or herself as fully and completely as possible. The client becomes his or her body. Physical expressiveness or bodily movement comes naturally to client and counsellor in the Gestalt approach. It is not considered that I just ‘get’ a cold or asthma, nor that my unhappiness ‘causes’ my asthma. Neither does my cold ‘cause’ my depression. In a fundamental way my body/mind self is reacting as a whole. This does *not* mean that you are to blame for your cancer; it does mean that I am ‘response-able’. Accepting in this way that the person is a unity of psyche and soma, Gestalt practitioners emphasise that people can take responsibility and be active in their own healing processes.

If the coronary of a heart is hardened, excitement leads to, amongst other prominent symptoms, attacks of anxiety. On the other hand an attack of anxiety on a person with a healthy heart is identical with certain physiological changes in the function of the heart and breathing apparatus. An anxiety attack without breathing difficulties, quickening of the pulse and similar symptoms does not exist.

No emotion, like rage, sadness, shame or disgust occurs without its physiological as well as its psychological components coming into play. (Perls, 1969a: 33)

For Perls, as well as for many modern Gestaltists, body and psyche are identical, denoting two aspects of the same phenomenon. The capacity of the Gestalt approach to transcend limiting notions of body–mind duality and linear causality is unparalleled amongst counselling approaches, and potentially offers an enormous contribution to the field of psychosomatics.

Illness is seen as a disturbance in the organism’s natural tendency to regulate the self.

## Self-regulation

In Gestalt a person is seen as having a natural or organismic tendency to regulate the self. Perls considered the *self* as the function of encountering

or contacting the actual transient present, and saw id, ego and personality as separate partial structures of the self, mistaken for the whole function of the self.

The *id* function is the ‘given of the situation’ (Wollants, 2013: 119), it is what is experienced when the ‘interplay of my environment and me is bodily present ... [it] is the global bodily awareness of how a situation is implicitly loaded with sense’. The *ego* function is ‘me exploring the implicit knowledge of my situation ... [it] is me acting, choosing, orienting, directing, engaging, thinking, willing, planning, identifying and alienating, looking for, liking, selecting, evaluating, etc.’ (*ibid.*). Finally, the *personality* function is ‘me as I perceive myself ... [it] is me as I prefer to define myself, to describe myself, to let myself be seen, how this influences my interactions with the environment and what I can experience, be aware of or risk ... It is also me who makes constructions based on what I have experienced until now’ (*ibid.*).

In Gestalt ‘self’ is defined as the system of awareness at the boundary between organism (me) and environment (not me) (see Figure 2.1) and involves the interplay of the three functions of id, ego and personality. It is also the evaluation of this process. ‘Self exists where there are the shifting boundaries of contact ... Wherever there is a boundary and contact occurs, it is, in so far, creative self’ (Perls et al., 1951/1969: 374). Self is spontaneous and engaged with its forming Gestalten in a vividly experienced way. Perls also conceptualised it as ground of action and passion – the actualisation of potential. In this creative aspect it may be experienced

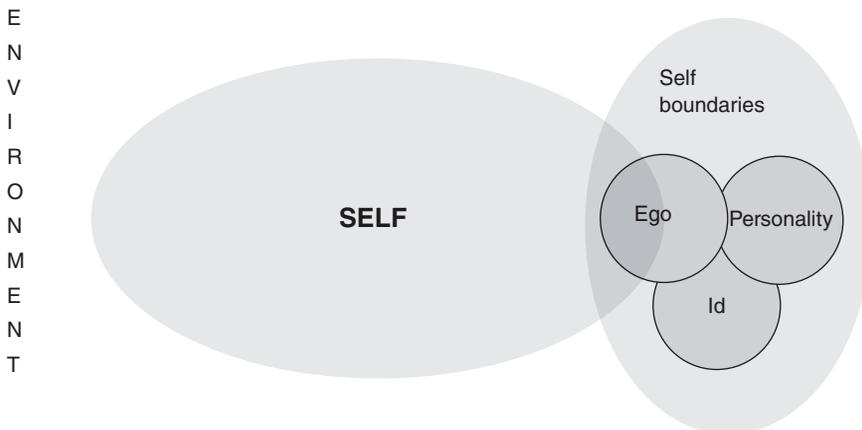


FIGURE 2.1 Self diagram

as the ‘concentrating self’ – conscious of itself and its processes, or it may operate without the individual being conscious of the processes of emotion, evaluation and integration of organic needs. Recent developments in neuroscience have revealed how much processing of information from the environment and the selection of options and responses happens prior to our becoming consciously aware (Damasio, 2000, 2012).

In order to grow and develop people strive to maintain a balance between need gratification and tension elimination. Gestalt is a need-based approach. By stressing needs it places a very important focus on motivation, which is lacking in many other approaches to psychotherapy. It assumes that whenever an imbalance occurs within the person, or in relation to the environment, this imbalance will be experienced as a dominant figure against the background of that person’s other experiences. The healthy person differentiates this meaningful need and responds to it appropriately, thereby restoring the balance, releasing new energy and allowing the next important need (Gestalt) to emerge. However, restoration of balance frequently means that it is not to the same, original state, prior to the imbalance that the individual returns (Perls et al., 1951/1969). The process of responding to an imbalance or novel situation frequently requires the letting go of old meanings, the development of new insights, meanings and an expansion in resources. As such the drive to restore balance is also the engine that drives development and growth (Philippson, 2001).

Effective self-regulation depends on a discriminating sensory awareness which allows the person to use what is nourishing to him or her (in terms, for example, of food, people, stimulus) and to reject what is not nourishing. Through the use of aggression (a value-free Gestalt term which connotes the life force) a person can destroy or ‘destructure’ food, experiences or jigsaw puzzles in order to flourish, grow or play more enjoyably. The cyclical nature of this self-regulating process will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Working from their knowledge of the organism’s tendency to self-regulation, Gestaltists assume that people know at some level what is good for them. There is some research evidence that untraumatised infants naturally select a balanced diet in terms of their individual needs if given sufficient choices (Cannon, 1932). This organismic self-regulation, if left undisturbed, usually leads towards a healthy, balanced and self-actualising outcome. The goal of counselling is to re-establish this natural and healthy functioning – the most authentic connection with their *élan vital* (*physis*).

From this perspective people who come for counselling are those who have experienced some interruption or distortion of this healthy self-regulating process. What was originally a child's healthy withdrawal from a punitive parent figure becomes solidified as an incapacitating social shyness in the chronological adult. The organismic goal would be to re-establish satisfying approach behaviour towards potentially friendly people while retaining the ability to withdraw; however, to do so in a discriminating way which is relevant to here-and-now reality.

## The attitude of the counsellor

To practise the Gestalt approach means that the counsellor uses himself or herself actively and authentically in the encounter with the other person. It is more a 'way of being and doing' than a set of techniques or a prescribed formula for counselling. Gestalt is characterised by a willingness on the part of the counsellor to be active, present as a person and to intervene in the counselling relationship. This is based on the assumption that treating the client as a human being with intelligence, responsibility and active choices at any moment in time is most likely to invite the client into autonomy, self-healing and integration.

There is research evidence that schoolchildren and students respond in accordance with their teachers' unvoiced expectations of them (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968). When teachers believed children were unintelligent and could not learn, the children responded with lowered performance, no matter what their original gifts. Positive expectations influenced the students' performance in positive ways. There may be a lesson for psychotherapists: expect resistance and investment in the *status quo* and those phenomena are more likely to recur. Perhaps our expectations of positive growth, willingness to risk and take responsibility in our clients may enhance the likelihood that they would manifest these qualities in counselling and in life.

The Gestalt approach values a commitment to experimentation, creativity and risk-taking for both client and counsellor. Client and counsellor engage in developing new experiments and creating *experiments* of doing, being and behaving. The client is an active partner in the experiment and the counsellor is ideally willing and able to participate in an experience about which neither can predict the outcome. The process of Gestalt counselling at its best provides experiences of how life can be fully and

richly lived. This achievable ideal is characterised by acute sensory awareness, a range of emotional responses and effective action. A client reports 'I see colours more vividly now than I ever have before. I didn't know the world was so richly patterned.' Another client reports 'Not only am I happy a lot of the time, I also experience my sadness and loss with greater intensity and have discovered that I have infinite variations of irritation, annoyance and anger.'

## The place of technique in Gestalt counselling

The Gestalt approach to counselling can embrace a wide variety of diverse but specific techniques within a holistic frame of reference which integrates mind and body, action and introspection within an appropriately supportive, challenging and attuned relationship between client and counsellor. Techniques are not prescribed, but Gestalt practitioners are encouraged to invent appropriate 'experiments' which invite people into heightened experience of the body–mind self, authentic encounters with meaningful others, and an impactful relationship with the environment including the counsellor. The richness of technique in Gestalt is constrained only by the personal limitations of imagination, intellect or responsiveness of individual counsellors or clients. Interventions to facilitate the goals of Gestalt will be described later in the book using case examples as illustrations to emphasise how techniques have to be rediscovered and reinvented for each client at different stages in the relationship. At no point are these intended to be prescriptive, exclusive or even helpful when used out of context or divorced from the moment-by-moment flow in each unique counsellor/client partnership. They are tentatively shared here in this format to provoke practitioners to their own discoveries, not to pre-empt such effort. Mechanical and arbitrary use of techniques at selected stages of counselling is antithetical to the very spirit of Gestalt. I (SC) would encourage the reader to remember this when reading examples of interventions and experiments in this and other Gestalt texts. Inevitably examples of interventions need to be given if Gestalt is to be communicable and comparable with other approaches, but these examples should not be mistaken for the actual, vibrant, spontaneous, relational encounter in which they first came into being, nor should they be reduced to blunt instruments indiscriminately used.

Some approaches to counselling depend on ‘withholding’ the real person of the counsellor from the therapeutic encounter. Any fixed attitude such as this is anathema to Gestalt. Gestalt makes the dialogue between the two partners in growth the central healing dimension. This demands considerable awareness, self-knowledge and responsibility from the counsellor. It also means that ‘technique’ is secondary to the therapeutic relationship. According to Resnick:

every Gestalt therapist could stop doing any Gestalt technique that had ever been done and go right on doing Gestalt therapy. If they couldn’t, then they weren’t doing Gestalt therapy in the first place. They were fooling around with a bag of tricks and a bunch of gimmicks. (1984: 19)

Experimentation within the relationship will probably always be a characteristic of Gestalt. In fact Gestalt has been defined as the permission to be creative (Zinker, 1978). Most current Gestalt approaches are not invasive of the client’s integrity in the way that was sometimes practised in the past. More recent developments in understanding the centrality of relationship in both human development and change are increasingly being incorporated into Gestalt with the result that in practice the greatest respect is accorded to the relationship between two whole people. Most modern Gestaltists would adopt a therapeutic relationship characterised more by dialogue and an appreciation and exploration of the subtle exchanges, some explicit, others implicit, that arise between counsellor and client, rather than techniques involving invasion or deprivation. The Gestalt approach emphasises the widest possible range of openness, flexibility *and* structure, depending on the needs of each particular moment in the healing process.

## Psychosomatic unity

The counselling encounter is not only verbal but involves all the other ways in which a person continually interacts with a given environment. Most obviously this involves ‘body language’. For example, by deliberately intensifying the tension, Daisy discovers that ‘the pain in my neck’ is a physiological enactment of her daughter being ‘a pain in the neck’. An apparently meaningless kicking movement of a foot, when focussed upon, expresses the client’s irritation at the counsellor’s head-nodding mannerism.

In Gestalt (true to the phenomenological values of observation, description and discovery) such patterns are usually *not* interpreted. The client is invited by means of creative experimentation to discover his meanings for himself. A person who habitually walks with a caved-in chest and rounded shoulders continues to enact in the present the beaten-up little boy of the past, while at the same time signalling to the environment that he is the kind of person who 'gets beaten up'. Frequently people in the environment will respond out of awareness to these non-verbal cues and provide recurrences of the original trauma. Quite often muggers, and even commonplace bullies, seem to have an ability to pick upon these nonverbal signs and act accordingly. And so the original trauma is repeated. However, by imbuing his body and his life experiences with awareness, habitual holding patterns can come to relax and greater choice becomes possible for a person.

## Demands on the counsellor

The counsellor needs to be willing to develop all of her potentialities in order to be authentic when she invites the client to develop all of the client's potentialities. Because Gestalt counsellors as people need to be so transparent, they cannot hide behind a 'professional mask' or 'objective role'. Not only personal psychotherapy, but a passionate commitment to lifelong growth and personal development is therefore essential. Gestalt is not a 'technique' that can be used only in the consulting room. It demands from the counsellor a way of life compatible with its values – a willingness to be open to the exigencies of existence. Excitement is positively valued as is vividness and richness of experience. Adjustment to limitations imposed by society that are injurious to growth (for example, keeping a stiff upper lip at a funeral) or 'acceptance of the *status quo*' are considered to be anti-therapeutic and stultifying.

## Respect for the integrity of defence and challenge to change

Gestalt practice requires and facilitates the courage to face existential risk and disappointment while ever remaining hopeful of human growth and

development. Seeking the unexpected and the new, while using the supportive structures of the past, is characteristic of good Gestalt counselling.

The reorganising of the personality consists of both disintegrating and integrating processes, and should be balanced so that only such amount of dissociated material should be set free as the patient is capable of assimilating.

Otherwise his social or even biological function may be dangerously upset. (Perls, 1979: 21)

The counsellor provides for each individual client a 'safe emergency'. Too much support can deprive the client of the opportunity to grow through frustration. Too much challenge can be invasive and sadistic. Allowing the client to repeat in counselling endlessly the processes she habitually uses to substitute for genuine feeling, experience and action can also be ultimately destructive. Yet at any one time with any one client provocative challenge, nurturing support or laissez-faire neutrality may be the modality of choice.

Diana, a sensual, intelligent middle-aged client, experiments with wearing bright and vivid colours to accentuate her willingness 'to be seen as a colourful and interesting person'. Yet she also retains the comforting and healthy caring qualities which sustained her family through years of child-rearing. In this way her experimenting with expression and a new, bolder way of being in the world is set against a familiar background of her also knowing her capacity for care and capacity to tone down her vibrancy when in a nurturing role. This is more likely to support her to experiment with manageable degrees of expansion into new ways of being, and reduce any tendency to be overwhelmed or to fear losing altogether other more familiar aspects of who she knows herself to be.

## The place of diagnosis in Gestalt

Historically the Gestalt approach has been viewed as anti-diagnostic in the sense that each person is considered as a unique and complete body-mind-situation Gestalt. Labelling in terms of diagnoses or psychopathology represents a fragmentation of this inherent unity and individuality. It represents a shift from first person involvement of both client and counsellor

in their moment-by-moment experiencing of their situation, to a third person viewing angle where the client risks becoming an 'other' who can be studied and done to. Gestaltists have traditionally rejected such a dehumanisation of clients. To label people 'anal-retentive' or 'manic-depressive' can be to strip them of the unique ways in which they have chosen to give meaning to their existence in their historical context. Recognition of repeating patterns in human behaviour (whether momentary or long-term) is, however, intrinsic to a holistic approach.

Allowing for the danger of this kind of reductionism, Gestaltists are committed to recognising repetitive self-destructive patterns of behaviour. Thus a person may be described as 'a person who habitually deflects or disrupts intimate contact', but this is a behavioural description allowing for permanent revision at any moment and *not* a way of categorising the person. From a holistic perception of the field, pattern can only coexist with potential disruption of the pattern. Modern Gestalt practitioners value, use and teach diagnostic schemes which are based on Gestalt descriptions as well as more conventional clinical diagnoses (Delisle, 1988; Joyce and Sills, 2010; Resnick, 1984; Van Dusen, 1975a; Yontef, 1984, 1987; Zinker, 1978).

## The here-and-now

In the past Gestalt has also mistakenly been seen as an anti-historical approach. Early emphasis on 'here-and-now' interactions was a pendulum reaction to the passive, non-involved psychoanalysis against which Fritz Perls rebelled. 'It seeks to transform that which is merely history or narrative into pungent, expressive action. Though aware participation in the present moment may include the remembering of something from one's past, it must be remembered with the fresh, felt poignancy that brings it indelibly into the present' (Polster and Polster, 1977).

Yontef (1988) contributed a particular extension of Gestalt phenomenological horizons by drawing attention to four time-space zones, all necessary to a therapeutic approach which is suitable for long-term work as well as short-term counselling or episodic interventions.

The familiar here-and-now time-space zone refers to the whole person environment field at any particular moment, including fantasies and plans about the future and memories and experiences about the past, relived in the freshness of 'the now'.

The person's 'life-space' constitutes the 'there-and-now' time-space zone which includes the person's current existence – his or her real life – both in the counselling relationship and outside of it.

Third, Yontef identifies the 'here-and-then' zone, the *therapeutic context*, which particularly refers to the centrality of the therapeutic relationship, its continuity and its history as well as to other contexts which influence this relationship – such as referring agencies.

The fourth time-space zone is the 'there-and-then', the patient's life story, without which there can be no appreciation of how a person developed over time. This is the historical background that allows meaning to emerge, 'the sequence of prior experimental moments'.

Most current Gestaltists acknowledge that the past is indeed inherent in the present, and that movement over time is inseparable from a process theory. It is from this ground that the developmental phases of counselling over time form the spinal structure of this book.

## Responsibility

The Gestalt approach is profoundly based on the notion that each person is responsible for the experience of his or her own life. This implies that every moment the individual makes choices to act – or not to act – in certain ways, and that he or she is responsible for all these choices. Viktor Frankl was a Jewish psychiatrist who survived several Nazi concentration camps to become one of the great existentialist psychotherapists of our time. According to Frankl (1964/1969), even when we are not personally responsible for the circumstances in which we find ourselves (such as a German concentration camp), we are still responsible for the meaning we give to our lives as we choose our attitudes towards, and our behaviour in, such situations.

Perls took this position to a radical extreme in the famous Gestalt prayer:

I do my thing and you do your thing. I am not in this world to live up to your expectations – And you are not in this world to live up to mine, You are you and I am I, If by chance we find each other, it's beautiful. If not, it can't be helped. (Perls, 1969b: 4)

Modern Gestalt psychotherapy and counselling has moved beyond the hedonistic 'Persian' over-reactions which emphasised responsibility for the self over and against responsibility for others (Dublin, 1977).

Currently there is increasing recognition of the philosophical and *ecological* fact that responsibility for the self inevitably includes responsibility for the others who share our world. In this way, as well as in many others, Gestalt is a true systems approach. Gestalt is founded on the fact that content belongs in a context. No self can be separate from its environment. A client recently reported: 'When I first came into counselling I was struggling with feelings of being a "non-person", powerless and in despair about ever changing my own life. I could not understand why anyone would get bothered about the possible extinction of rhinoceroses in Central Africa. As I claim my own power, my autonomy and begin to "own" my life and the repercussions of my existential choices, I begin to feel that those rhinoceroses are *my* rhinoceroses since they represent my response-able connection to my world.'

## The place of the Gestalt approach in the field of counselling

Gestalt values and practice are very compatible with other 'third force' or humanistic/existential approaches such as transactional analysis or psychosynthesis. Many such training programmes integrate Gestalt into their practice and regularly learn from distinguished Gestalt trainers who are either visiting or permanently on their staff.

Carl Rogers, the founder of person-centred counselling approaches, whose work inspires many counselling programmes in Britain, was a very different man from Fritz Perls, but they shared a common faith in the basic drive of human beings towards health, responsibility and self-actualisation.

In some forms of brief psychotherapy primarily based on psychoanalytic tenets such as that of Davanloo (1977), techniques which appear to be directly derived from Gestalt have also been successfully incorporated (Conduit, 1987). But the use of Gestalt techniques grafted onto other ideologies or approaches must be distinguished from the true Gestalt approach where there will be a congruence between the value assumptions, theory, practice and lived experience.

A Gestalt therapist does not use techniques; he applies *himself in* and *to* a situation with whatever professional skill and life experience he has accumulated and integrated. There are as many styles as there are

therapists and clients who discover themselves and each other and together invent their relationship. (Perls, quoted in Smith, 1977: 223)

Gestalt brings to any counselling process a focus on immediacy, relationship and experimentation. It supports and values creativity and spontaneity as well as intelligence in the therapeutic encounter. The Gestalt approach also, along with the other humanistic approaches, contributes a basic faith in, and commitment to, the self-regenerating and self-healing forces of the human being. It is compatible with any other approach which emphasises the unique individuality and responsibility of each human being as he or she freely creates a future in the present moment.

Occasionally some Gestaltists sink to claiming or counter-claiming that they are 'more purely Gestalt' than others. This is in part due to the way in which Gestalt is able to support the integration of different personalities, styles and practices. At the same time, this can raise concerns about potentially losing those distinct qualities and orientation that are the foundation of Gestalt.

Three principles define Gestalt therapy. Any therapy regulated by these is indistinguishable from Gestalt therapy, regardless of label, technique or style of the therapist; no therapy violating any of these three is Gestalt therapy. And, any of the three properly and fully understood encompasses the other two:

Principle One: Gestalt therapy is phenomenological; its *only* goal is awareness and its methodology is the methodology of awareness.

Principle Two: Gestalt therapy is based wholly on dialogic existentialism, i.e. the I-Thou contact/withdrawal process.

Principle Three: Gestalt therapy's conceptual foundation or world view is a Gestalt, i.e. based on holism and field theory.