

Watching my 'personal film', or configuring an image-like symbolic process representation

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Abstract: The continuum of our life processes is transformed in personal figural experience by awareness. Experience is always more or less conscious, yet it is affected by 'unseen', unconscious processes running in the ground. During the figural sharpening and the evolvment of the contact cycle, just when awareness appears, there is an image-like, spontaneously-emerging representation, the 'personal film'.

It could phenomenologically be the symbolisation of the field in motion, as it is reorganised through an organism/environment contact episode. It carries in its structure imprints of both our conscious (figural) and unconscious (ground) processes, and thus it can be a complementary tool in any kind of process and awareness work.

This article is a Gestalt configuration of the personal film concept.

Key words: personal film, basic awareness, full awareness, figure/ground configuration, image-like representation, process symbolising, process continuum, time sense, conscious and unconscious process.

Introduction

The concept termed here 'personal film' (pf) is one of the core ideas of my PSP (Process Stage Praxis) approach. PSP is actually a creative combination of fundamental principles of the Gestalt theory, with characteristic aspects of improvisational stage praxis. PSP attempts to function as a subtle, complementary tool in any kind of awareness and process work, so the pf idea may be of special interest for Gestalt therapists.

In life we are responding to stimuli in several ways (Fairfield, 2004), and the pf is an instantaneously emerging inner image which may carry symbolic imprints of these responses. In other words, in the organism/environment field, the pf is intended to provide a symbolisation of the continuous field processes as they turn into figural experiences through the awareness process. Inner image-making is, of course, a very common method in psychology and in therapy. Here, I attempt a Gestalt configuration of this image-making process.

What follows, is first a section on the structuring of a theoretical Gestalt 'matrix' to support the pf idea. This long, yet necessary, part consists of my personal definitions, understanding, and selective emphasis on the concepts of experiencing, awareness, and the figure/ground formation. Next, in the following part, the pf concept is derived, focusing on its structure, inherent

energy, and suggestions about the possibilities of the use of pf.

Existing and experiencing as processes

In the Gestalt field theory perspective, 'process' is a central concept, referring to the constant movement and becoming of everything in the field, as well as the field being structured and constantly changed by relational forces. Moreover, when we are aligned with the process orientation, we treat 'the field as in motion rather than static' (Yontef, 1993, p. 313). We, ourselves, as collections of processes, exist only in the process of relating with other processes (Korb, 2002). We are continuously changing, and through awareness development we may at any time actualise new aspects of ourselves, constantly recreating our existence.

In the existential orientation of Gestalt therapy, this continuously 'rediscovered' existence is itself the starting point of everything. Existing 'in' the events of the actual world is relating with it, is before knowing descriptively and analytically 'about' the world – besides, 'the first reality is contact between' (Yontef, 1993, p. 374).

This very sense of 'being alive' as a person existing 'in' the world, seen in process terms, comes very close to what Philippon (1996) says:

. . . in the process of me-in-the-universe a contact boundary forms, out of which 'me' and 'environment' forms, and my process meets the environmental process to form things and events. (p. 1)

My comprehension of such a notion of being 'in' the universe, is that this 'being' is made up of articulating, intersecting bundles of complex processes of organism/environment interactions, evolving in a continuous relational texture.

Figure/ground, experience, awareness

It seems that because of the complexity of our life processes, there is no way to hold them all in the narrow space of our consciousness, so it is necessary to filter and organise the immense phenomenological field towards our personal sense of 'I-ness'. Thus, we could say that the field includes processes which are running consciously, as well as other ones running unconsciously. 'Unconscious' is meant here phenomenologically, as an adjective, a type of process with the function of preventing our conscious part being flooded by impressions (Cohn, 1997). Such unconscious processes may be: physical ones, processes having to do with how our currently unused experiential material is dynamically stored (memories, already acquired knowledge of any kind,¹ symbols and representations, the multitude of disowned experiences), etc.

These conscious and unconscious process matrices are never stable and static. They change, flowing one into the other in varying degrees, according to the present prevalent need for the organism's creative adjustment. (Here, with the word 'matrices' I do not imply two separate psychic spaces, but only two types of processes that are dynamically continuously defining one another.)

In the moment, at the crossroads where some processes become conscious relative to other ones evolving unconsciously, there develops in the individual person a sense in the form of a unified whole. From this whole, whatever is within my conscious focus is called, in the Gestalt perspective, 'figural'. Whatever is now not figural for me, yet dynamically relating to the figure, and making possible its emergence (Fairfield, 2004), is called 'ground'.

Exactly as a figure starts configuring relatively to the ground, I can say consciously that 'I am alive', and this sense is what I think we may call 'individual experience'. This experience is the result of the Gestalt figure/ground mode turning our life processes into experiential events in a spiral wave-like rhythm. It is integrating in a specific experiential moment all the 'now' flowing processes of the field, through a 'now' personal perception. Yet, it is important to notice that since the figure

exists only in the focus of our consciousness, our personal experience regards only the figural part of the forming gestalt. Our figures are being sharpened by the work of both conscious as well as unconscious processes, that do not exist separately but only in mutual reference. However, we are perceiving only figures and have no access to the ground supporting them (Fairfield, 2004, p. 348).

Figures tend to be well- and clearly-shaped in order to be held by consciousness. Ground processes need not have the well-defined shapes of the conscious figure perception. They may involve material undifferentiated in different degrees, and by the word 'undifferentiated' I mean something without clear shapes and well-defined boundaries, much like diffused figures in the twilight (Ehrenzweig, 1971). An event now well-defined in consciousness as it just happened may in a while become a blurred (for our consciousness) memory with less differentiated, run-together details involving both the 'scenery' and the 'plot' of the original event.

The whole of the figure/ground constellation consists of field processes: they do not 'belong' either to the individual or to what is surrounding him, but to both. On the one hand, the figure is what is being perceived from the field by the person from their individual point of view of 'I-ness'. It can be whatever from both 'me' and the environment becomes figural in my personal perspective. It is how the figure/ground gestalt of the field is sensed in a person's reality.

On the other hand, whatever process is ground is a part of the field too. It can be what I am not sensing now from the environment, or from 'me, myself'. And it may be characterised as being unconscious only from a personal, conscious, figural perspective (since what is conscious and what is not refers by definition always to a person, to an individual). Nevertheless, as persons, we sense being alive to be a 'personal matter', whereas in fact it is a field event.

The process itself, through which this sense of the present figure/ground whole is experientially formed, perceived, and channelled in different levels of consciousness, is, I believe, what we may call awareness. Or, put differently, awareness would for me be the 'translator', as well as the act of 'translating' to conscious experience, of the life processes being organised as figure/ground in any moment. For me, as the awareness process is being carried on in consciousness, we may somehow define different awareness qualities or levels, depending on their consciousness 'percentage'. For the idea of the pf, I prefer to emphasise two of them: *basic awareness* and *full awareness* (other Gestalt writings describe more types of awareness and define them rather differently).

Basic awareness

Awareness goes to work as soon as our experiential figures gradually sharpen out of their ground (Yontef, 1991). At these first instants I see awareness as a holistic, impactful snapshot of the organism/environment field in the individual's perception. It is when we are in one moment 'entering into' the phenomena experientially, including in our experience all the aspects of the 'here and now' in one immediate and shining flash.

This notion of basic awareness is naturally experiencing life in a direct, immediate manner. If we adopt it in our life stance, it is always 'there', accompanying the flow of experience, possessing all its vital and powerful energy. I think that this is the kind of river-like stream of awareness of which the Polsters are speaking (Polster and Polster, 1973). In basic awareness, all aspects involved in the moment being experienced are participating at once, as when tasting a wine with a very rich flavour, where we stay on the level of enjoying directly the totality of this flavour without analysing it further.

In such a kind of experiencing there is very little observing consciousness in our experience. There are primarily sensory messages as the experience's initial building blocks, since sensory inputs have a unique power of engulfing, almost instantaneously, in any state of 'being'. There are also emotional processes involved, as feelings are the way to experience psychologically our body senses. Finally, thought is experienced as a 'thinking' process rather than for its content, which in this moment is of little importance.

Basic awareness appears just at the moment when some part of the continuum of our life processes is being streamed in consciousness. From this point of view, and only schematically speaking, we may say that basic awareness starts from point zero of consciousness and then it is channelled further into consciousness. Basic awareness is like an echoing of all of our existence 'in' the world, grasping an instantaneous sense of the field and not so much understanding it.

However, I would say that there can be basic awareness for longer periods too. These are states of rather long and intense contact processes, where all the organism's energy goes on being invested in the contact, in an intensive and profound figural experience. There is much relational excitement, the experience is being lived so directly that no conscious exploration is needed. For a relatively long time the consciousness level hardly exists at all, or it does exist, but in variations of rather low levels with random and low peaks.

Such situations, in which for some time everything seems to flow more or less smoothly, and the notions of time and space are only periodically and dimly sensed because of the low consciousness levels, may be seen in the playing of children, also when doing creative work,

when making love, being in strong physical activity or in intimacy, when playing music, dancing, or in some forms of meditation. Or it can be seen in watching a fascinating performance, as a meaningful human encounter, in which 'performer and audience are committed to the process, the excitement of the contact is high, and there is a tendency to maintain the contact' (Brownell, 2005, p. 5).

Full awareness or awareness of awareness

The basic level of awareness, in order to become humanly meaningful in any way, is usually sooner or later carried further on naturally, in consciousness levels of different degrees. When an experience is carried on in higher levels of consciousness, this process tends to form full awareness, or awareness of awareness, as the activity of exploring the 'awareness process itself' (Yontef, 1993, p. 129). In this state of awareness of awareness, the experience is explored as a conscious and meaningful contact event energetically supported by the dominant need here and now, in the present situation of the field.

When I am in full awareness, I sense and know that the contact is happening out of my own choice and responsibility, on a combined sensorimotor, cognitive and emotional level, and then it merges into my ground, permitting my energy to be rechannelled towards the next oncoming experience that is becoming figural. Roughly speaking, the analogy of full awareness in the rich flavoured wine example would be rolling it in our mouth and experiencing the various aromas and partial tastes arising and flooding our taste buds, synthesising them in multiple ways in our experience.

Summarising, awareness (of any kind) is a characteristic of the person's experiential perspective of being 'in' the world. It is a tool for constantly 'making' one's own meaningful world. It is 'emphasis from the content to the act of consciousness' (Yontef, 1993, p. 255). It transforms in experience the interaction between the stimuli and the ways that we are responding to them (Fairfield, 2004). Awareness is always somehow more or less tinted by consciousness, but it is not at all identical with consciousness, involving more and different processes. Awareness is actually processing how our immediate experience is being shaped from process material to experience, in different levels of consciousness, from a striking flash of 'being' to a meaningful personal perception of existence.

The continuum of life processes and their experiential discontinuity in awareness

In such an approach of a process-based existence, we, as human beings, are not only unable to 'see' our life processes as they are evolving and re-channelling in and out of consciousness, but we are also unable to follow the unity of their continuum. And this happens because we can experience only figures. Awareness of figures produces a sense of time and is inevitably fragmenting in our perception the continuity of our process.

Life, as field processes, is by definition of a continuous texture. Units of experience do not sequentially follow one another. Our experiential 'gestalts are intricately woven in and out of each other' (Mann, 2010, p. 6). Yet, we can only sense our processes 'through the change, the difference, the novelty that they are producing, finally perceived by us as the flow of events' (Philippson, 1996, p. 1).

Being aware of something is also a continuous process, and this means that what I am now in the process of being aware of is in fact already receding into the past. Thus, being aware of life processes while turning them into 'things and events' is somewhat like 'freezing' them. It is like stopping moving in order to create in experience timed sequences of events, in order to sense individually the 'here and now' as it moves on the vector of 'past-future' – or rather it is this that produces our very sense of time and its direction towards the future (Philippson, 1996).

In a metaphor, we may imagine a car running smoothly in a street (the underlying processes continuum), and a car going on with 'jumps' as the motor turns off every one, two, or ten metres (the processes continuum transformed through our awareness into experiential episodes, more or less timed, depending on the insightful or full awareness modes implied).

The time 'gaps' in basic and full awareness

I think that, generally speaking, the more and the longer awareness is geared towards its basic quality, the more the experience produced is closer to the 'original' process continuum, and is sensed in a smoother and more flowing way. And prolonged states of basic awareness seem to me closer to a wave-like sense of experiencing.

Turning now to full awareness, its use and results are to bring into our perception life experiences articulated in rather longer time 'gaps' as we are investing them with more and more consciousness: the more we become fully aware of something, the longer we have

to 'freeze' the direct flow of events. However, full awareness is itself a process too, by its nature. This means that it is also of a continuous texture on a procedural level, and being aware of this texture, of 'how' our full awareness itself is flowing, may also be a part of the overall exploration of experience (this is where the expression 'awareness of awareness processes' may become significant).

Our experiential time 'gaps' in awareness are like creating different MP3 versions of music: they always include 'gaps' in the compressed digital nature of the audio signal, nevertheless, the 'gaps' become audible or not depending on the encoding settings.

'What I have just been' in relation to the 'what I am now becoming' as the 'locus' of the pf

The individual experience perspective is formed as life 'happens', as the field continuum of processes passes into new states: 'I am' is interwoven with 'I become'. Nevertheless, from my personal experiential point of view, from the 'figural view' of being alive, I am aware of this continuous 'becoming and happening' of me and my environment as cross-fading sequences of 'what I have just been' (or as 'what I am already'), and 'what I am now becoming'.

As I do this cross-fading in my personal awareness of experience, passing from the stage of 'what I have just been' to the stage of 'what I am now becoming', there may be produced an energetic 'locus' hosting the upwelling of an inner image, symbolising the continuum of my process as it is carried ever further on, yet just freshly 'translated' into my basic awareness. This symbolisation is exactly what I want to configure as the pf concept.

Configuring the pf

The pf is formed automatically along with the direct and immediate experience. I see it as a symbolic representation of the instantaneous and dynamic merging of conscious and unconscious (figural and ground) process material. It is a symbol of the very first transformation of this material into experience, as it is directly processed into basic awareness. Actually, the pf reflects the interweaving of such conscious and unconscious processes during the very 'happening' of the experience of me being 'in' the universe, as 'my process meets the environmental process' (Philippson, p. 1).

Or in other words, phenomenologically we could say that the pf at a given instant is the very first symbolisation of the phenomenological field in

motion as it is reorganised at this instant through an organism/environment contact episode. The pf is a strikingly emerging symbolic sign of the spontaneous interplay between our conscious and unconscious matrices, in the figure/ground formation process of our experience.

Yontef (1991) mentions that the figure slowly sharpens out of its ground. So ground as process is disappearing, becoming 'empty' (but only phenomenologically, and only in the phase of the full contact). To be theoretically more exact about the form of the pf, it is phenomenologically created 'while' the figure is being gradually formed, during the evolution of the contact cycle, before the person is fully centred on the figure at the final contact phase. So it carries imprints of both our conscious (figural) and unconscious (ground) processes, exactly at the point where their channels are dynamically meeting to form our experiential gestalts cross-fading one after the other.

The material of a person's experiences emerges while the person is acting or imagining (Mann, see p. 6): stimuli are produced by action or imagination, and they are perceived on the basis of our ground processes. In other words, what we are affected by what we perceive, how we perceive affects what we do or imagine, the outcome affects what we become, and so on. The pf symbolises exactly this: how what is being perceived 'now' is affected by what has 'just been'.

Regarding its duration, the pf is an emerging structure of the moment. It may be like a snapshot, or a very short 'scene' including also some motion and 'action'. From this point of view, maybe it would be more appropriate to name it as an 'image' and not as a 'film', but I have chosen to keep my original terminology.

The pf is not seen as a deliberate construct, and it is not just visualising freely. Neither is it 'building' a phantasy, or a deliberate exercise of guided imagery or creativity. When a person is asked to describe in an instant his pf, he is actually asked to become sensitive to his processes instantaneously evolving. The pf is supposed to be an indication of how the field events are already getting transformed, while they are being processed into personal experiences.

The pf may not be exclusively symbolised in an image. Actually, from my experience of working with it, for some people it is literally impossible to visualise it. The pf may refer also to an auditory space, or be developed on the basis of any other sense. In fact, one of my pf inspirations on an auditory level has been my experience of the Alfred Tomatis (1989; 1991) active listening and ear-voice training method. However, the pf is mostly in an image-like form, as usually happens when we project our processes into myths and dreams: it seems that the image is a coherent integration of

several psychic functions (Carotenuto, 1994), the most common kind of indicative process snapshot.

For example, I see you approaching and I know that in a few seconds we are going to say 'hello' to each other. Yet, consciously or unconsciously, I am very angry with you for some reason. I behave following social norms, we greet each other and we pass by. The overall process of our meeting may be instantaneously and automatically symbolised by a pf: as I pass by, I 'see' an image with me smiling at you while punching you in the face and growling 'h-e-l-l-o, y-o-u i-d-i-o-t!'. Or, it may be any version of such a pf: it can be me saying to you other, more authentically arising words than 'hello', etc.

Nevertheless, this pf is produced as an inner image symbolising the interplay of my overall figural and ground processes at this moment. If I am aware of my anger I may even enjoy this pf, and even use it to value my anger differently in a possible future meeting with you. If my anger for you is disowned or if I have never even thought that I could express it, I may become anxious or even feel guilty. In all these cases my pf invokes material from several contact processes, conscious or not, involved in our meeting.

Awareness and the pf

The pf is a result of our life processes evolution continuum, which, if simulated in our awareness, appears to consist of cross-fading figural phases. These cross-fades offer in their 'grey', intersecting area a 'nest' for the emergence of pf, just when and where basic awareness starts to shine. So the pf may be considered an accompanying feature of basic awareness, in both its momentary and prolonged aspects.

Basic awareness is 'always there', as it transforms our life processes continuum into experience, and consequently the pf is 'there' too, always available as a first indicative symbol of how we personally sense the 'what I have just been' advancing to the 'what I am now becoming' (or how the new figure is sharpening on the basis of our ground). Nevertheless, it is obvious that the pf, like our basic experiences, acquires some conscious meaning only if carried on further into consciousness, into the process of full awareness. So the pf is fundamentally associated with basic awareness, but it becomes meaningful only when embraced by our full awareness process.

Now, generally speaking, full awareness itself is supposed to be a 'longer' process, implying respectively a large amount of consciousness, and including several partial processes. The pf is just a first, spontaneously emergent symbol of the figure/ground gestalt formation, at its very initial stage, with almost no consciousness at all, accompanying insightful awareness in its first

stages, before being further streamed into consciousness to become full awareness.

Yet, a pf may also spring out during a full awareness process: it would then refer to any of its shorter, partial processes. For example, a client is developing full awareness of the recent sudden death of a close friend. At any instant of this full awareness process, he may say 'now that I see the importance of my friend's death, I feel this and this and that and my heart is pounding strongly . . .'. The therapist may ask him about the pf of this particular moment, intervening at this specific instant of the broader full awareness process.

The dream-like structural freedom of the pf and its perceptual plasticity

In a field perspective of daily life, the stimuli out of which are formed a person's figural experiences originate both from the person's environment and the person's own representations; while in a dream experience there are comparatively few environmental stimuli, for the dream is mostly built on the basis of a person's unfocused representations, and so it shows itself in an undifferentiated dream structure.

The pf, by definition, springs out where our conscious and unconscious processes intersect, symbolising in a way how the present ground is affecting the presently-being-shaped figure. Since it is formed during the very sharpening of the figure, it carries figural material, yet also significant parts of undifferentiated ground material. This is why the pf may have a dream-like structure.

There are no realistic rules in the pf 'production'. The pf follows the freedom of cartoons with full liberty in their surrealist structure. The playfulness of our imagination, powered by our present dominant need for creative adjustment, integrates in perception the 'now becoming' field situation with what the field has just 'already been', and the shaping of the pf reflects this effect in its often dream-like scenery.

Moreover, if we 'translate' in Gestalt terms Anton Ehrenzweig's (1971) remarkable work on perception and creativity, it shows that the plasticity and vividness of our perception primarily results from the undifferentiated ground elements participating in the figure formation. The pf 'pulsates' as it is stamped by this liveliness.

Thoughts and suggestions about pf use (1)

I see the pf, configured in such a Gestalt way, as a spontaneous snapshot of our momentary life processes, flashing while they become experiences, during the very

interplay of their conscious and unconscious contents. In particular, it may carry in its 'matrix' several signs and dynamics of our perception and figure/ground formation processes, and this is why I think that it is indicated for any kind of process and awareness work. It does not apply to any one particular activity. It is meant to be a useful complementary tool for any kind of Gestalt work: in individual and group therapy, in education, art, organisations, etc.

It may, for example, help in exploring transference or contra-transference issues. In the introduction of one of Kepner's books, Zinker (1993) mentions how he formed an image based on a client's description of himself as a beggar. Though this image was not named in the book as 'pf', it could very well be considered as a pf (and needless to say, Zinker's beggar-pf was very different from the client's beggar-pf). In similar situations, the clear Gestalt pf theoretical configuration may facilitate its systematic complementary use in any step of a session's process, if it seems useful. Specifically, it can be a very effective warm-up, a closing event, etc.

Or it may be of some help when the therapist wants to have a profound sense of the session just after its end, even if she has not yet 'captured' its meaning cognitively (Brownell, 2005), or even when she is attempting to capture at once 'all the sense' of a client case, or to grasp the session not only as a figure but also as an impactful whole.

Furthermore, as the pf is a gestalt with sensory, mental, and emotional aspects interlinked in its image-like structure, it also carries an embodied sense. It may therefore be used as a starting point for further emotional and body awareness work. For example, after the description of a pf, we may follow with questions of the type: 'is there now any sense of this pf somehow vibrating in your body?', 'anything emerging in your thinking – or in your feelings – right now?', 'how would your body move with the sense of the pf that you just described?', etc.

Additionally, the pf may be used and treated in Gestalt therapy just as if it were a dream, since it carries imprints of undifferentiated material from our ground processes. The client may 'become' the parts of the pf, may dialogue with them, or even be asked to continue its 'plot', etc.

Finally, I have to note that the audio version of the pf (a composition structured out of the present audio signals) has helped me much in telephone sessions. Also, very interesting and powerful effects came from an olfactory pf application when I experimented with a group in smelling a flower, an essence, an object, a human being, and forming an olfactory pf structure, which then evolved as a body movement.

Thoughts and suggestions about pf use (2): the pf in transcending fixed gestalts

Another possible use of the pf concerns fixed gestalts. It seems that in our relating and perception we all have some patterns in common, tending to 'order our experience in a manner that is regular, orderly, symmetric and simple' (Mann, 2010, p. 168). Yet, when we do not find resolution in an actual situation, it forms an incomplete gestalt which seeks to be completed no matter how our actual situation is changing. Our need to complete in our present what is incomplete from the past is described by the concept of 'unfinished business'. From such patterns are formed fixed gestalts, with blocked awareness, in which our field does not get reorganised freely and spontaneously according to our present needs. Precious life energy is consumed in keeping open the fixed gestalts, instead of being spent in new contact experiences.

Now, if we see creativity in life as bracketing the usual connections between things and looking for new ones, or linking things that originally seem to have no such possibility (Spinelli, 2005), our fixed figure/ground configurations are blocks where our creativity in life is stifled. There, our consciousness is overactive, attempting to keep its focus narrow in order to normalise, to smooth out, to round our experiences according to the patterns of fixed gestalts.

However, creativity requires flexibility and 'breaks' in the real-life conscious continuity, a kind of 'polymorphic-mindedness' (ibid.), an openness of our conscious focus to grasp in a single structure the always clearly differentiated rational objective, along with its undifferentiated aspects as well (Ehrenzweig, 1971). Creativity in life implies the free and spontaneous interplay of our conscious and unconscious process matrices in order to form quickly successions of effective gestalts, and our fixed figure/ground configurations block this.

Learning to 'see' our pf (actually learning to carry it on in full awareness and consciousness) is to accept the free flow of our processes and it cannot happen spontaneously when we cling to fixed gestalts. Becoming sensitive to watching our pf may be a contribution towards dealing with and transcending our fixed modalities.

In fact, it may be rather easily sensed when the pf is spontaneously springing as a vivid process symbol, and when it is rather 'constructed' by the imagination using just conscious mental abstractions. As a gestalt, the pf has in the last case many of the properties of a 'bad' and lifeless gestalt, indicating more the fear in the process of spontaneous gestalt formation and less its free flow.

Of course, in either case the pf may be the material for process and awareness work, since in therapy we are interested not in a 'good' or 'bad' pf per se, but in all the dynamics that are being carried in it: its energy, and also how it is formed, how it is further reflected in the client's full awareness process, etc. Even working on the very process of the pf emergence mostly has useful results. The client could explore her/his difficulties, fears of 'letting go' freely in a creative process. In my PSP approach, I have gradually developed some training methods of facilitating the emergence of a pf, including several exercises involving body and movement as well as images.

Epilogue

In any case, from my own point of view, toning our pf skills supports in many ways the enhancement of our insightful awareness, 'massaging' the 'locus' of spontaneous pf emergence. Then, as our straightforward experiences are being carried on in our full awareness, enriching our overall awareness skills, the cycle goes on, and our full awareness becomes more open and ready to receive more fresh material from our actual and immediate experiences, and so on.

Any possible use of the pf has to do with the imagination, the needs, the interests, the perspectives, the style of each individual therapist, keeping always in mind that it is not a deliberate phantasy construct but a symbol of how we are weaving the 'new' on to the base of the 'already' existing aspects of our experience.

Notes

1. What I already know, what I have already learned, but I am not 'now' using it, is somehow somewhere stored: it is not kept like an 'object' in a refrigerator, it is itself in a process-form, and is 'kept' by unconscious processes until it will be needed and 'activated' in a future actual experience.

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Petros Theodorou is a professional Gestalt therapist. In the past, he has been a composer interested in combining multiple artistic languages. Recently, he has developed his personal approach, 'PSP – Process Stage Praxis', about stage improvisation viewed through the basic principles of Gestalt therapy philosophy. His book on PSP will be published around the end of 2011. He works with both individuals and groups with the several PSP applications in several fields in Greece and in Europe (psychotherapy, educational, organisational, art, and Playback Theatre – an improvisational form of stage interaction). Since the 10th EAGT Conference in Berlin (September 2010), he has started introducing his PSP approach also to therapists, believing that the improvised stage praxis under the Gestalt perspective may have numerous and significant benefits for the professional and trainee therapist.

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