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REFLECTIONS ON THE CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM

"The Existential Being of the Therapist"



Part One: "The Intersubjective Constitution of Experience"

"Come now, open yourself. Let the human being emerge. Breathe the air and the silence." Franz Kafka (1999).

"If all revolutions have failed, then the only revolution left to us is the revolution of uncertainty"

Jean Baudrillard (2019).

Continued on page 7



**SUPERVISOR'S
TRAINING
PROGRAM**

**CONTINUING
EDUCATION
PROGRAM**

**EDITORIAL
NOTE**
**Autumn - Winter - Spring -
Summer - Autumn...**

Time flows... even if I stand still... it flows nostalgically... I look back reading what you write! I read and miss these

moments, these weekends that you chose to be present, these weekends that we organize with heart and soul for you! I reminisce about closeness in the little by little, depth in the step by step, the exploration in "philosophizing", the search for humanity, the acceptance of simplicity, the invitation to evolution and creation and I receive the gifts of all of these with appreciation and gratitude!

In a world that buzzes, that pulsates dynamically, that "burns" sometimes we stand and respond. I read this in your responses too...

Responses with warmth, emotion, with mature "positions"

and "attitudes", with growth and creativity.

Thank you for these shares... they give us ground and support to continue daring with faith and passion in the process of therapy and education and to learn... to learn from you!

Enjoy your reading



Balliou Despina

Psychologist, MSc Counseling Psychology, Gestalt Psychotherapist, Trainer & Supervisor, ECP holder (European Certificate of Psychotherapy). Member of EAGT's Training Standards Committee (European Association for Gestalt Therapy). 1st Vice President of the Board of Directors of NOPG (National Organization of Psychotherapy in Greece). Founding Member of HAGT (Hellenic Association for Gestalt Therapy).

Dear Vassoula,

Our hearts ache today... a lot.

So suddenly..., so unexpectedly..., so instantaneously...

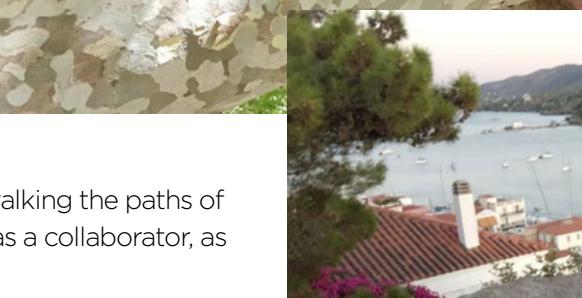
You untied the ropes and left powerfully..., but prematurely.

Full of life and energy... our last words a week ago were... "I promise you, you will be here in our groups forever..." and you laughed with your heart. On the one hand, you were grateful for the trust between us and on the other hand, you knew that this forever... in this life, no one can promise it.

30 years of commitment, 30 years of walking the paths of Gestalt..., as a patient, as a supervisee, as a collaborator, as a friend...

30 years ago, you came determined to put your life in order... whatever ups and downs this path had, you committed to search for your wholeness... you never questioned it for a moment..., you were maturing by choice. You went through a difficult time..., you said goodbye to many..., but as if you were reborn from the bottom... you were moving forward more gently and more authentically... but it seems that your heart got tired.

Your support all these years has been unwavering, your presence from 1995 until today inexhaustible... with a glance we understood each other...



and when we were sitting with a glass of tsipouro, everything was coming out for real. Contact with people was the goal of your life. Vassoula, you were and will be our person..., a strong hoop in a big group. You were and you will always be our Vassoula in our hearts ...you have left your little paw and we will hold it tightly!



We will remember you, we will miss you...

Continue to smile at us...

Have a good journey.

Despina Balliou, 18/12/2025

SUPERVISOR'S TRAINING PROGRAM

Thoughts on the Supervisor's Training Program.

I recently attended the two-year international supervisor's training program

organized by the Gestalt Foundation and I am grateful for this experience. I knew that, after many years of experience as a therapist, I had the option to utilize them and start working as a supervisor, especially with younger therapists, and that this would in itself be an acceptable way to later be formally certified as a supervisor, but the choice to attend this specific training was more than helpful; it was valuable. Supervision, having this super as a prefix, made me have many demands from this role and prompted - at least in me - feelings of insecurity to emerge. I could feel good and adequate and I do. But super? How does one feel super? At this point, this particular training acted as a catalyst.

Its organization in four five-day periods (mainly) and then in some additional weekends helped me a lot in relating better to the other trainees, to the trainers, but also to the training itself as a process. The choice of five days was decisive for me, as this way I could, day by day, perceive that elements of the supervisory role were being built within me.

The theory combined with the experiential experience, the practice of supervision, when we collaborated with the other trainees, the contribution of the trainers' rich experience, but also the fact that the trainees gradually became a team, contributed to a very good result. In addition, the fact that the training had an international character with trainers from Greece and abroad, but also with participating members from abroad had a positive effect.

To be honest, I prefer training in Greek. It is always easier.

However, the possibility of a different point of view enriched the process both from the perspective of the trainers and the trainees. Having completed the training, I keep several experiences from these two years almost like amulets. The educational material that tastes different when I reread it every time, the drone, as a concept for the perspective of the therapeutic process from another level, Liv's creative vulnerability, the mirror that Despina gave us in the first meet-

ing so that we could see the face of the supervisor, Katria's movement because the supervisory relationship is always primarily a relationship where we are called to move together, Guus's lazy gardener who grounded the «super» and our super-demands, Rama's warm collaboration with George and the simplicity that leaves space for the supervisee, the evening with Gianna, the inter-subjectivity of the encounter with George's language and viewpoint, Nurith's unwavering stability and her inspiring respect for ethics, the space that Antigone always leaves for the child that I am or that I will meet, Antonia's reconstitution of the diagnostic process, Guy's generous cathartic shame that became pride and dignity at once, the text with the signatures and the group meeting as an assumption of responsibility. I also keep the valuable introspection meetings online and in person and the sharing of our development. I also keep the moments that made me feel that the circle of friends could accommodate other people, whether they happened within the training hours, or outside, after the class. How would we be Gestalt anyway if the after-contact had no special value?

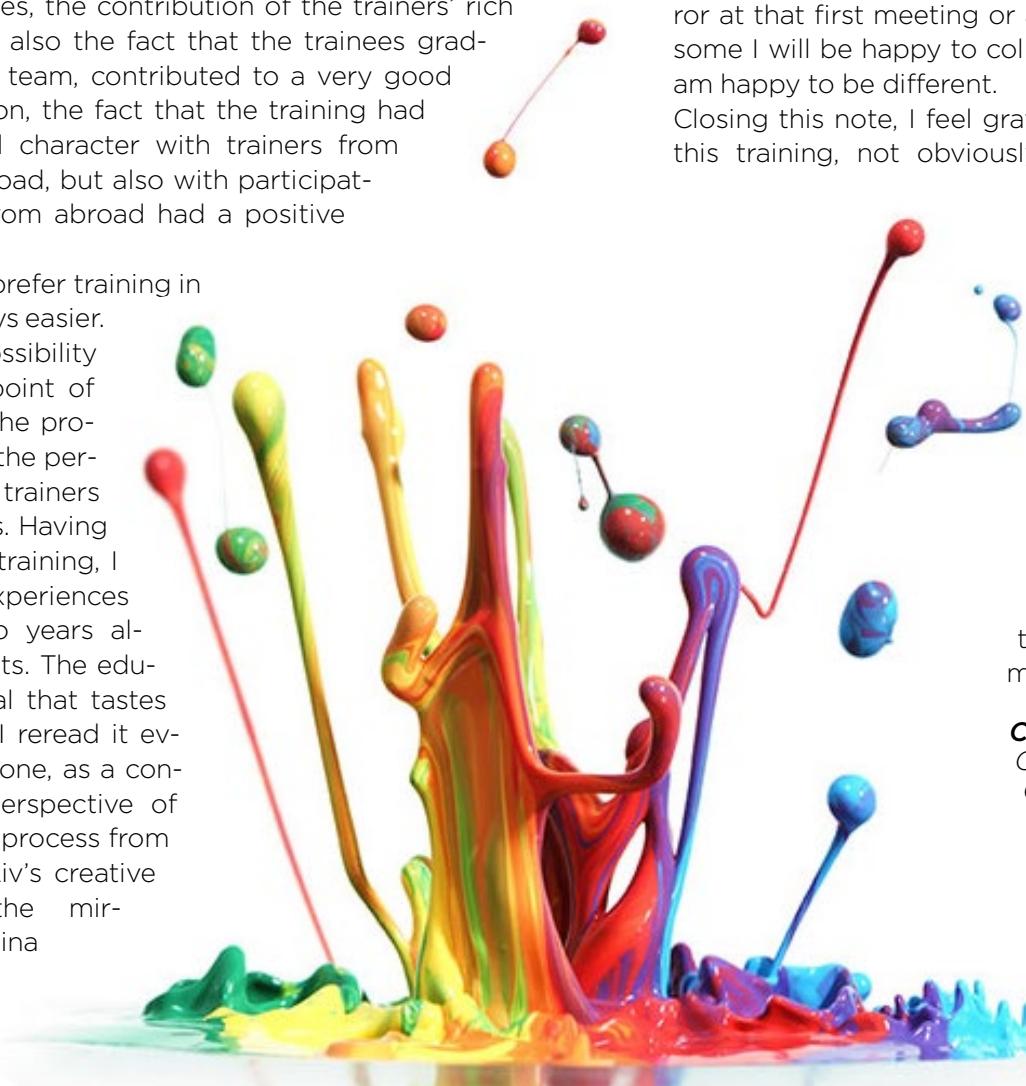
Finally, I also keep the closure as a process of evolution and growth. I have been related to the people of the Gestalt Foundation and the wider Gestalt community for the last twenty years. In this closing cycle of the last day, I saw, with great satisfaction, people, with whom we have been walking together for years, have evolved, matured, transformed into something they did not believe

they could become when they looked in the mirror at that first meeting or a few years ago. With some I will be happy to collaborate, with others I am happy to be different.

Closing this note, I feel grateful to have received this training, not obviously because I became super, but because I

understood that a supervisor needs to support the therapist and the process, to offer another perspective on the therapeutic relationship and to be a useful tool for every therapist and that, in itself, may ultimately be quite super.

Christos Karapiperis,
Clinical Social Worker,
Gestalt Psychotherapist,
Trained Gestalt Supervisor,
Trainee Gestalt Trainer,
EAGT member,
HAGT president,
Gestalt Foundation graduate.



Two-Year International Supervisor's Training Program 2024 2025

Adulthood, presence, knowledge, simplicity, self-existence.

My experience...

The flight was in the morning, bound for Athens. I started with resistance. How will I relax, where will I go, who will I meet...? and at the same time a hidden desire for evolution, for ascension. For a moment, care, the different, the new crossed my mind. Fear was there again, along with desire.

In the room, a circle of experienced therapists. A familiar yet unfamiliar image. The first thematic, an introduction to the new experience. Body, mind and experience. Gazes, smells, in an effort to exchange and coexist. Sensations again in the field. Words were lost. Speech was forgotten. A collaborative effort in the making. Introjections in dance, naturally, emerged. Fear and anxiety about the good image.

"The shoes were tight on me and did not suit the weather conditions. It was hot and those were made of fur. In my place it was cold in January. Only one pair fit in the suitcase... I bought more."

Knowledge came and provided a foundation for ground and development. It gave a different orientation to the dynamics of the group. Remarkable, important, scientific knowledge: **"Issues of diagnosis and psychopathology in supervision"**, **"A unitary perspective on the supervision situation"**, **"Group Supervision"**, **"Supervision for Brief Group Gestalt Therapy"**, **"Ethical Aspects of Clinical Supervision"**, **"Supervision for professional groups and organizations"** and others.

The journey, from internal and symbolic, became real. We traveled to Olympus, a symbol of challenge and spiritual elevation. We stayed and stood together... for days.

I learned to think of the supervisory process as a condition of creative adaptation. The supervisor is not simply called upon to affirm the supervisee, but also to allow him to experience the emotional difficulty within the safe field of the supervisory relationship, where he can survive, reflect and learn from his own difficulty.

Mostly I feel and less I know what all those things are like, which happen in the intermediate space of supervision or therapy, and which become and can exist in the field as it is, through existential dialogue, respect, acceptance and understanding of what happens to the person, in the here and now.

I received, I was taught, I "opened" my heart and my mind and I kept, for me from you, as much as I could this time, precious human values, yours and mine. Each one individually contributed a piece, and several times pieces, of their existence to the process, which for me became opportunities and possibilities.

Once again, in the same space, with the feeling of belonging, the feeling of acceptance, whole, sometimes with awareness and sometimes not at all, with the senses and emotions present, with others, with people, towards adulthood and self-existence.

A common space for a dance in self-knowledge, a meeting in the together, in the continuous. A dynamic, independent presences but at the same time coordinated in the eternal.

Eleni Kesoudi, Gestalt Psychotherapist, Trainee Supervisor



Gestalt Supervisor's Training: A Therapist's Coming of Age

The air fled
into the lungs.
It blew away
all the syllables
of this noon:
Authenticity,
Acceptance, Love.
Today,
on a day without leaves,
yellowed and comforting,
I choose to be different.

To ask with
tender shame:

What if words
became hands as clean
as freshly ironed
towels?

What if we spoke every day
with one word less?
What if we wove the carpet,
that with devotion for a long time
we look at
with immense silence,
silence of regret,
silence that bled
from our conversations
all sincerity?

Sometimes -my beloveds-
the words that we choose
with excessive care
cannot bear.

They resemble those blackbirds
in the scarecrows
of a well-sown field.
So, what if we become
Seed in the fields
Of our -truly- greedy world,
which, however,
without our own hands
-these human-
Would never be harvested.

In Gestalt I learned to be adventurous. I would say better, to allow myself the adventure. Of course, when I began my training as a psychotherapist, I was only 25 years old and the future seemed like a fluffy carpet that I could comfortably walk on with my bare feet. Twenty years later, I opened the door to education again and sat in the student's chair surrounded by classmates with notebooks, bags, purses and suitcases full of knowledge, experiences and colorful ribbons as a wrapping of emotions.

And we became children again, students, in this cycle of training supervisors in Gestalt psychotherapy. Katia, Despina, Gianna, Antonia, seen from another perspective, more mature, more qualified of training the supervisor, and not just the therapist.

In this group I shared my existential anguish, that of "growing up". I understood, however, that "growing up", in addition to wrinkles, pain, responsibilities and

fear of death, brought me the supervisor's chair as a gift. I, too, timidly and fearfully, sat on the edge at first, controlling my little weight on it.

And from my frightened shoulders, Guus, Liv and so many other trainers grabbed me tightly. And it was as if from somewhere high up (at an unspecified distance) our good Harm appeared to give his permission for a slightly more comfortable seat in the big chair. I have a director at my morning job as a psychologist - a friend now - who taught me that colleague (συνάδελφος) means in Greek "σου τω αδελφω". Shouldn't I feel safe in Gestalt among so many siblings? Siblings who could be completely alike or how could their parents/supervisors see them in exactly the same way? But still siblings, sharing the same bread of honest work, which each one loves in their own different way.

In these two years of supervisor training, then, I feel like we practiced, almost every month, this sacred process of "eating together", of giving food from our plate to the one next to us and letting ourselves be served a hot lunch.

Many define these psychotherapeutic paths as a "journey". Besides, these numerous flights "Athens - Thessaloniki", as well as the labyrinthine inner searches, justify it.

I, again, would speak of "stop" and not of this intoxicating dizziness of the journey. So, in these two years, I made "stops": stops in the past, in the present and in those that I imagine may come in the future.

And if I learned anything from all this, it was to truly learn to stand, to listen, to feel and to see, with the big and clear eyes of a child, the world around me. To see the supervisors, the therapists and the patients, not as superhumans, but as beings with the same dimensions, but with such different needs.

My heart is full of gratitude, not only for what I have learned, but especially for those that I still do not know. Besides, if I knew everything, what place would I have as a human being in life?

Elli Freggidou, MSc. Psychologist - Gestalt Psychotherapist



I want to conclude

I have never liked closures. From preparing for the national exams and the hasty goodbyes - «Hello, we'll talk again» - to that unfinished painting and the temporary pause from my first cycle of therapy, the trickle of pending tasks has accompanied me like a faithful pet. Egotism? Withdrawal anxiety? Perfectionism? Obsessive-compulsive pattern of relating? Whatever I have called it from time to time, for me every closure would dictate the end of a process and would be exactly that: an irrevocable, final event, without the possibility of the slightest possibility or, even, fantasy of some kind of correction or improvement.

I don't remember when the scales tipped and, from an indicator of importance, pending tasks turned into a burden. I think since I stopped dealing with them linearly, serially, and the need for parallel processes began to hit me like a meteor shower. Was it the increase in obligations, the multiple roles, the ambitious "yeses"? Flexible deadlines stopped being fun, let alone defining my value. Quite the opposite: sometimes they operated silently and corrosively, creating cracks and formless stalactites, impressive, but hidden, in the dark cave of my anxiety: "Will I ever finish?"

Throughout my course in Gestalt psychotherapy, I began to embrace my procrastination and, in part, to accept it. Many times, I was left to the process and just as many times, the process was left to its own devices. I took my time (a lot), discussed the issue (a lot), took it to my therapy, anticipating my paradoxical change.

Relatively recently, then, I came into contact with a simple, basic principle of Gestalt theory: sometimes, action is what gives meaning to the mobilization of energy that has preceded it. In other words, when action proves to be in tune with need, desire, choice, then we are talking about enthusiasm. If, on the other hand, action moves away from the completion of the form, then we are talking about anxiety.

The reason for this repetition of the first year's material was the last meeting with my supervisor training team. As in all programs, so in this one, a written presentation of the knowledge assimilated and the experience lived during its duration presupposes, among other things, its completion. This condition, then, was enough to cloud my summer vacation and flashed in my mind, every time the opportunity for some - precious - free time appeared. And turning into an obligation with a certain space-time deadline, it contributed to me being confronted with the inevitable truth that, now, as sometimes in the past, I simply needed to do the work.

Expectations? Many and overgrown. Frustrations? Countless and overwhelming. Second, third, eighth thoughts, of why I had subjected myself - again - to this process? Categorical and accusatory. Until somewhere there, in the depths of the trunk, curiosity and interest in the unfolding process, in the theory and wealth that I was struggling to appropriate, that is, my initial motivation for this choice, timidly emerged. And I remembered, in my body, the relationship with my fellow travelers and our experiences of the last two years. And I leaned on my hands and began to write, not the presentation, the final, perfect, accomplished and definitive result of my two-year journey, but the enlarged snapshot of a priceless journey with brave and devoted companions, the relationship with whom clearly contributed to the creation of the lenses I was wearing at that moment.

So, in that meeting, I watched the processes of my colleagues, not their work. I recalled moments, recognized ways of connection, qualities and manifestations and fed the fantasy that, if a stranger were to present these stories, I could recognize the mind that shaped them. When it was my turn to present my own treasure, the old that mixed with the new, the existing that supported the under construction, my friends and colleagues, our community, declared themselves witnesses to the completion of my process up to that moment. Like a photograph, during a party, which in

no way marks its end, but rather confirms its existence: nothing finished and definitive, only whole.

Somehow, I held the relief and pride of completing education, not as an end and perfection, but as a relational process. Like the candles on a birthday cake that celebrate the course of life, they do not foretell its end. Taking the action, I needed to grow and count my own candles was illuminated by the presence of significant Others and, in turn, gave meaning to the preparation and thinking and organization that preceded it: what I thought was lonely anxiety, with the inclusion of oth-

ers and by others, turned into a necessary mobilization for the fulfillment of a desire I had experienced two years ago._

Argyro Vagia, Psychologist- Gestalt Psychotherapist,
M.Sc. Cognitive Science

CONTINUING TRAINING PROGRAM

REFLECTIONS ON THE CONTINUING TRAINING PROGRAM

“The Existential Being of the Therapist”

Continued from page 1

In March 2025, I found myself attending the continuing training workshop on intersubjectivity. In April, we moved on to power, shame, evil, and seduction, and finally, in June, we arrived in Sifnos—traversing distances within and beyond ourselves, across places and paths, upon the same land that has been walked for centuries by so many human beings. I will not tell you how things happened, as Ethan Hawke’s Fin says in Alfonso Cuarón’s *Great Expectations* (1998), but rather how I remember them.

I remember Dimitra and Despina telling us in March, drawing on Husserl, that the Other and the Self will always elude us. I remember them laying the conceptual (and not only conceptual) foundations of intersubjectivity: the phenomenological intentionality of the organism-environment field—intentional, conscious, and agentic; the attempt to define what experience ultimately is; the focus on the “gifts” of intersubjective psychoanalysis; the supreme significance of existential dialogue as a clearing, a second chance for the confirmation of existence; the emphasis on the transformation of resonance into a harmonized attunement, necessarily passing through the crushing straits of uncertainty.

Much ink has been spilled on the importance of “The Third”, yet—at the risk of becoming tiresome—I must speak of it once more here. Years ago, a psychoanalyst whom I deeply respect and who guided me, both

clinically and theoretically, with passion and humanity, told us that the dyad inevitably tends toward fusion if “The Third” is absent. Freud (Nikolaidis, 1994), emphasized early on that the first bodily identifications of the human being are cannibalistic. And where else does cannibalism point, if not to deep desires to return to the primal environment where organism and environment were one and the same? Where else if not in to archaic mergers and undifferentiated unions? Without “The Third”—whether represented by one of the parents (typically the father in psychoanalytic literature), or by the community, or, as Castoriadis (2010) would put it, by the Polis—the inevitable outcome would be mutual devouring.

In the psychotherapeutic room, and beyond, the role of “The Third” may be played by the dialogue itself—the dialogue of the beings meeting in Between. Perhaps “The Third” is ultimately Buber’s meta psychic Between: the contact boundary upon which the Self and the Other emerge, which are simultaneously points of being and alterity within their intersubjective reciprocity. Either both through “The Third”—or nothing at all. If the Self or the Other were to become fully comprehensible, the world would already be over. The encounter would no longer be possible; the eternal and inaccessible “Thou” would dissolve into shadows long gone, and places would become placeless voids of nowhere.

The intersubjective stance holds profound significance

for me at this moment, as I notice that the more I remember, the more I write—and the more I write, the more I begin to remember again. Its importance lies in the call to step out of solipsism and into that, beyond which, nothing exists: The relationship. In Kierkegaard's words (2009), "Alas, the door of happiness opens outward." Solipsism, an egoic embankment draped in the garments of intellect and occasionally existential melancholy, is nothing other than the narcissistic guarantee of the self-referential idolater, who worships himself in the face of his God. "Woe to the fanatic who believes he possesses God," writes Buber (2022). As Merleau-Ponty (2016) states: "The world is not what I think, but what I live; I am open to the world, I unquestionably communicate with it, but I do not possess it—it is inexhaustible."

Dimitra and Despina, through Merleau-Ponty (2016), reminded us that as bodies we are already connected, and that the stance of existential dialogue within human encounter is a matter of ethics. From there, they introduced Levinas, and gradually we began—silently and between ourselves—to scrape at every fragment of exile and homelessness within us, until in April the question of evil inevitably arose. For Levinas (1987), the Other precedes the I, and in any case when something is reduced—covertly or overtly—to itself, the foundations of totalitarianism are already laid. That the Other precedes the I can try to understand it in the sense that the Other has already existed there before me, especially if I read the Other as the eternal «You» of Buber (2022), to whom I address myself in order to exist, because existence means under the principle of some Other. Baudrillard (2019) warns us: "The ghost of denied otherness is resurrected as a process of self-destruction."

The denial of otherness—of the Other—at an intersubjective level is equivalent to murder. Dimitra and Despina, while entering the subject of responsibility, through the perspective of morality, reminded us, that the English word "responsibility" derives from the word "response", that is the capacity to respond. Responsibility thus concerns the response of the Self to the Other—the therapist's response to the client. The English word "responsibility" is a compound word that comes from the words "response" and "ability", which means the ability of each of us to respond and answer. To respond requires awareness of one's own experiential continuum and of how one affects the Other, while remaining open to being affected in return. A female

friend of mine and colleague, I respect and love dearly, who also participated at this seminar, underlined that in the optimal response – optimal, not in the sense of perfect – there is no room for complacency, because it is rather the exact opposite of responding, after all, evil often begins with indifference.

Attunement, just like the field itself which is affected by the responses, cannot be static. It is lost, disrupted, repaired, and restored—and in the therapeutic space this is primarily the responsibility of the therapist, just as it is the parent's responsibility toward the young child newly initiated into what we call life.

From the experiential parts of the workshop, I observed that often the client before us is like a child between sleep and wakefulness, and for this reason,



within the context of the intersubjective openness to respond to the optimal degree, we need to speak to them as if they were between sleep and wakefulness. This frequency requires a deeply kind soul, because this is the frequency that puts us in front of a child who is between reality and dream, between reality (a reality that cannot be endured by a malleable and sensitive creature) and in its imaginary escape, in a hiding place that protects and guards it from horror and misery, between contact and withdrawal, between or rather on the golden mean of its melancholic adaptation. Speaking to the client on this frequency means that we hold them as we would hold something beautiful and fragile, and that we contain within us the transfer of their dream mechanism to their waking state.

The child carries the dreaming as much as it can into his waking life so that it can bear the unbearable, the child dreams in order not to go mad, the child dreams so as not to die, so as not to become the same as the monsters that surround it; its dreams are traces of

tears. The child dreams so as not to cry, in the face of the inhuman and the tragic, the child dreams so as not to disappear, but also to disappear at the same time. The truth of the human psyche lies, after all, at the heart of its contradictions.



To speak to the client at this frequency is to let them dream, while showing that we are present, waiting for them to awaken when they are ready.

This frequency, apart from rehumanizing us as psychotherapists, it also prioritizes the Other, without whom we would repeat ourselves in perpetuity, as Baudrillard (2019) would put it in «The Transparency of Evil», until we are disintegrated by the endless mirroring, thus making us meet the patient in the here and now, allowing him to be as he is anyway, due to his fixations. We give space to the “there and then” to appear in the “here and now” of the therapeutic room, with nerves, flesh and bones within the transferential intertext and we become, as Ferenczi said (Guasto, 2011), the womb within which the patient will build bones and organs anew, because we allow the inner child that appears before us to see that in this condition it is safe, so perhaps the therapeutic relationship, through its gradual introjection, can become the new object-oriented mold of the patient, from outside the walls of psychotherapy, and thus begin to leave his hiding place in the “there and then”, which in the “here and now” is undoubtedly its prison. Speaking to the client on this frequency makes us pay a tribute to our clinical forefather, the child who stood on the shoulders of the father of psychoanalysis and saw even further than he had dared to look (Stathopoulos, 2022), to the child whose mother told it, from the moment it was born, that it was to blame for all her problems (Kapusi, 2018), to Ferenczi (Borgogno, 2014) who underlined that dreams are fundamentally contributing to the trauma assimilation

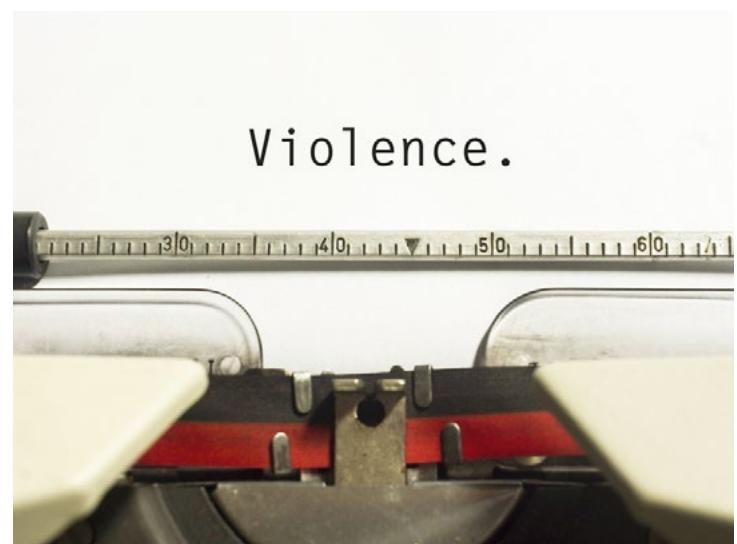
to Ferenczi (Avello, 2018) and to all the unwelcomed children he characterized as “children forgotten by the Gods”, and to the child within us and all the sacrificed children, who became scarecrows and straw men in the fire by the violence of this world.

As Green (Nikolaidis, 1994) would put it, we all have a responsibility not to let Agamemnon slaughter Iphigenia on the altar of his narcissistic arbitrariness. As my favorite Iron Maiden (1982) sing in “Children of the Damned”, *If the child had lived, it would have crucified us all...*

Part Two “Authority: Tracing the Thin Line”

“Evil believes that it is absolutely independent, that it has managed to create itself out of nothing, but the truth is that it is not the origin of itself. Something always existed before it. And this is why it is eternally unhappy.”

Terry Eagleton (2024).



*Why, my child, did you sacrifice yourself?
So that I might absolve my murderer.
But in doing so you became the perpetrator of your own body.
Yes, but he is spotless, white and innocent like snow.
And do you not care about what is fair?
By carrying the burden of another, I became a God who stands above human justice.
And what does God mean to you?
God is the human being who has passed through the position of the murderer.
And whom did you kill, then?
Myself, by loving him.
And how do you love a murderer?
You worship him; you do not simply love him.*

And what exactly do you worship?

You, in your most brutal version. My perpetrator was my opportunity for deification. By killing me, I became guilty and therefore God in his place.

(In the boundless horizon of suicide)

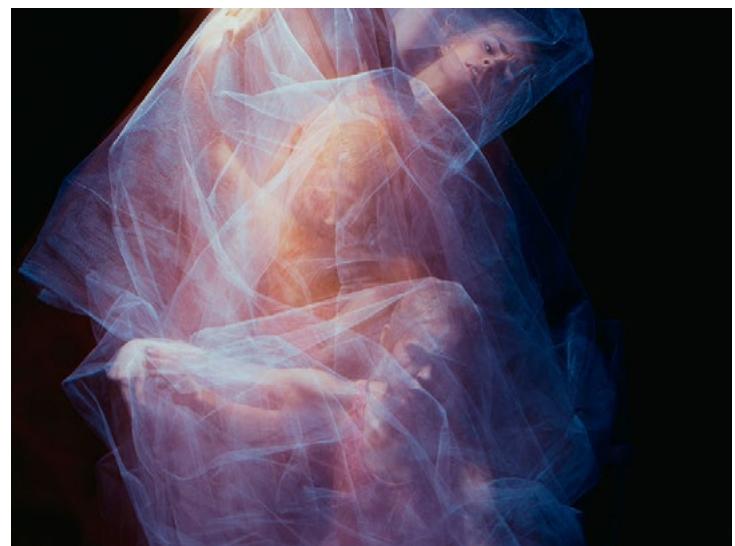
In April, as we returned for the next part of the workshop, during the first two days we focused on evil, authority, and shame. I remember the discussion being extremely stimulating, because evil raises the issue of absence, and absence excites; seduction, after all, according to Laplanche (2001), is an enigma, and according to Baudrillard (1991), it is a provocation (perhaps the opposite of response), and it always strikes from the side, from the angle we are not looking. Evil is fascinating because, as a form of absence, it cannot be contained; thus, it functions as a blank canvas for projections of every kind. Evil seeks the fully undifferentiated—without, of course, admitting this even to itself—and at the same time claims to be fully autonomous, as Bataille (1979) would say, autonomous not through the recognition of the Other, but rather through nullity. Individuation that abolishes the Other, notes Jessica Benjamin (2023), is an individuation of pseudo-differentiation. In “The Misfortunes of Virtue”, De Sade (2010), describing one of his literary monsters, one of the torturers, (most likely one of his own aspects), he writes:

“And I would love such a mother! No: I will imitate her, but at the same time I will loathe her; I will copy her as she wishes, but at the same time I will abhor her.”

Speaking about evil, Despina and Dimitra began from philosophical positions such as Arendt’s, regarding the shallowness and banality of evil, as well as the issue of rendering a human being homeless—uprooting them, in a way, from the world, and erasing every trace that might imply that this person ever existed. As in Dan Bloom’s focus on the dehumanization of human existence, which I believe comes close to Bettelheim’s (1967) views, when he paralleled the extreme situations, children suffering from schizophrenia had endured, with those experienced by Jews, in Nazi concentration camps: situations of targeted developmental regression, conscious removal of all traces of autonomy, and the absolute transformation of the human being into a consumable product through commodification. And finally, as in Buber, who spoke of the absence of direction (that is, responsibility and thus response), of personal fulfillment and relationship, and, of course, of the complete refusal to return to the “I-Thou” relationship from the position of “I-It.” Laing (1975), in “The Divided Self”, delving with rare depth of spirit into the schizoid chapter—that is, disembodiment and alienation—speaks of an “It-It” relationship. The dehumanization of the Other, dehumanizes me as well. I kill myself by killing you; I kill you by killing myself. You do not exist and I do not exist; nothing exists—only that which does not exist: That which has no name, the shadow I do not want

to see...

Despina also referred to Badiou’s description of evil. Evil, according to Badiou (1998), dominates through the idol of truth—so to speak, the counterfeit—or, in the terms of Baudrillard (2019, 2021) and Klossowski (2020), through the simulacrum. And I ask: What is the simulacrum? Is it a double? A reflection? An illusion? Something false in place of a truth? A fantasy that has taken on flesh and bones in place of reality? Is it perhaps a voodoo doll made from the deepest substance of our psyche, which is pierced by pins, needles, and thumbtacks, by the evil that surrounds us and potentially constitutes us from within? Is it perhaps a disposable copy produced by some perfected pro-



duction line on a cold, lifeless workbench, like the cells in which we were locked as children?

Secondary self-exile and the sense of “no man’s land” make us refugees within ourselves—homeless in our own place, as Etel Adnan (2023) would put it, having herself been exiled in her own land during the years of the Lebanese civil war. Here is the simulacrum of simulacra, the simulation of our existence: The self-exiled one within us, who claims and occupies the position of a spontaneous, free, and above all, living self. In the end, it becomes blurred who is the simulacrum of whom...

Badiou (1998), therefore, argues that evil dominates through the idol—that is, the simulacrum—and more specifically through the idol of truth. Then evil creates its terrorist; next comes betrayal; and finally comes the lock-up, through the illusion of a definitive exclusion of all uncertainties. Thus, evil secures its immortality through the permanent prohibition of the new and of renewal. Dirty work: First comes propaganda, the truth-like lie in place of truth; then the sowing of terror through oracles; and once the ogress emerges from her death-lusting orgasms, betrayal follows—the selling out of ourselves by ourselves. Here we become perpetrators within victims, slaughterers and slaughtered at the same time. Here, according to Klossowski (2020), we ourselves become the living currency of our dystopia: We shape evil, and it shapes us,

corroding us to our last cell. Our self-regulation is placed in the service of destruction, and the counter-movements of our vital surplus become the cancer that will pulverize us. Finally comes the lock-in: Lifelong and posthumous imprisonment under the verdict of our necrophiliac judges—the triumph of evil, the abolition of uncertainty and novelty, and the installation of an inescapable determinism that perpetuates the repetition of massacre unto eternity. All because we refuse to learn that evil wins because good often sleeps the undisturbed sleep of blissful stupidity in the scandalously cloudless sky of its delusion. In the words of Goya (1797-1798): “The sleep of reason produces monsters”.

Simulacra and idols have the characteristic of operating on autopilot: We leave, and they remain there as surface manifestations of the self—the cost undeniably exorbitant, even incalculable. Why? Because this is precisely how the fields of non-being are created and maintained, and there is no more fertile ground for evil and its offshoots than the soil of non-existence.

Evil is to turn society into an unholy communion from the flesh of my child.

Evil is to deny the will of the Other, telling them it does not matter if they have no will, because then they will bear no responsibility.

Evil is to deceive myself, the Other, and the world with gilded deceit.

Evil is to become naïve and to deceive myself by forgiving cannibals who rejoice while eating my entrails, like the Titans devouring Dionysus and like the Eagle devouring my liver on Caucasus.

Evil is to deny death and turn it into a banner so as to feel immortal upon the souls and bodies of others.

Evil is to proclaim myself God on earth while gripping the world by the marrow like pure black instinct.

Evil is to sub-multiply myself toward minus infinity so as not to contain zero.

Eagleton (2024) notes that absolute autonomy is merely the vision of evil. Personally, I believe that the final barrier against evil is a basic capacity for shame. Shame as the organism’s capacity to turn inward upon itself. Shame, perhaps as the final fig leaf (not in excess, of course), may be the guardian that protects the human being from the dangerous vision of evil described by Eagleton (2024)—that is, from the megalomaniac idea of Ego-theism, of absolute yet unrestrained chaos, as though shielding us from the idea of the absolute and total omnipotence of the individual. Absolute authority is precisely the same thing as its absolute abolition. Authority in excess, when permeated by the ideas of the private psychosis of our pathological narcissism, makes us wear a mask that traps us as psychotherapists in obstacles, over-certainties, obsessions, and compulsions—in arrogance, self-absorption, and abuse of power—turning us into humanitarian caricatures. It also manifests as excessive involvement that suffocates the Other, transforming support into an opportu-

nity for narcissistic elevation to the throne of the messiah; or as the indifference of a disconnected omniscient figure who denies responsibility toward the Other, ignores the Other’s gaping wounds instead of contributing to their healing; and finally, as cruelty, which turns us into tyrants and dictators—other murderers who believe they have become Gods.

Shame in excess, as a shadow of existence, claims—like another simulacrum—through identification with the aggressor and through splitting, the very substance of existence. Shame in excess feeds the polarized dynamic of



master and slave, of the one who beats relentlessly and the one who absorbs the violence of the ideal.

Shame in excess strips the human being of identity and returns to them an expired passport, forcing them to hide as a stowaway within their own life. Shame in excess constitutes self-rejection of existence, repetition of betrayal and abandonment of the self within a vicious and mournful spiral that extends beyond death. Shame in excess is a force of psychic death, a force of annihilation and evaporation of the “Ego”. Shame in excess is an entropic force which, like a black hole, becomes the mouth of Cronus, forever waiting to devour everything with the greed of an insatiable cannibal. Shame in excess, as a stretched inversion, is self-devouring, self-swallowing, and self-consumption. People say, “he died of shame.” The samurai of feudal Japan, by committing seppuku (known as hara-kiri), restored their honor when shamed. Shame in excess leads to an exit from the world.

Authority—and even more so power—often gives rise to a frenzied love in the one who submits, because, as Jessica Benjamin (2023) tells us, the slave seeks in the flawless self the master—even if the slave himself produces the master through the sacrifice of his will—the refuge of a self that is stronger than anything else in the entire world. Shame and power can therefore co-constitute a remarkable tug-of-war which, through its relentless pulling, can create ample space for the eroticized violence we call seduction. Seduction, according to Zervis (2015), in Homeric times originally meant a large dragged fishing net. Seduction, then, traps and uses. Its aims and motives always reside in

half-light, where not only forms exist, but shadows as well. Psychoanalytic literature tells us that seduction always dwells in the realm of the preconscious—between figure and ground, in alternation, where something fades and something else begins to emerge. In Baudrillard's (2009) words: "Seduction means dying as reality and appearing as illusion." Seduction always promises—without saying what it promises.



"The Wandering of Eroticism within the Therapeutic Process"

On the third day, Elena and Konstantina rose the question of what seduces us, the therapists, as human beings. The answers required honesty and an earnest excavation within ourselves. The answer I gave did not please me at all, but I will leave it unanswered here, before I proceed to hammer it by analyzing it. Through Mann, we were told that, in reality, it would be useful to speak about erotic co-transference within the therapeutic room. And if I think here of erotic transference through the notion of resonance and attunement, then perhaps I must grant significant validity to Carotenuto (2002), who considers that human beings seek in life both the opportunity to seduce and the opportunity to be seduced, equally.

Erotic co-transferences, if recognized in time, can be utilized as follows. First, in order to understand the persistent relational patterns of the client. Second, to see which relational "hole" the client is attempting to fill through repetition, as an opportunity to understand what happened there and then — what they are unable to understand, or even to remember. And third, to meet the client in their there and then and, together, to create a new now. Undoubtedly, erotic co-transferences often crystallize truths that are uncomfortable and hard to digest — but such is the nature of silk underwear... What is often difficult is not to make meaning of the background of erotic transference, but of countertransference; in other words, to look ourselves straight in the face in the mirror of the

truth we avoid. What I retain is a series of notes we recorded concerning the possible background of erotic countertransference. When the psychotherapist slips into erotic counter-transferences, it may be useful to examine the following:

Could it be that the therapist has blind spots regarding the process or the content of the therapeutic relationship with the particular client?

Could it be that the therapist is discharging narcissistic deficits within the untouchable zone of their authority?

Could it be that the therapist themselves takes pleasure in games of narcissistic seduction, where the Other is merely a mirror through which they seek inverted confirmation within their raw secondary narcissism?

Could it be that the therapist carries unassimilated psychosexual fixations and developmental fixations, as well as issues of unresolved sexuality?

Could it be that the therapist is enacting the pathology of dissatisfaction through something voracious, stimulated by their very authority as such?

Could it be that the therapist is defending against an unconscious death anxiety by eroticizing a situation in which they feel discomfort, or perhaps entering a form of reflection because they refuse to remain with the unpleasant and the dysphoric?

Could it be that the therapist finds an opportunity to reinvent themselves through the misuse of their role?

Could it be that the therapist has not sufficiently worked through issues of seduction, sexual violation, or sexual abuse from their own childhood or adolescence?

Could it be that the therapist carries — and does not relinquish — issues of dual relationships, pre-incestuous or even incestuous dynamics, and complex triangulations from childhood and adolescence?

Could it be that the therapist has simply dried up entirely within the frameworks of professional burnout, compassion fatigue, and successive unassimilated secondary traumas, and while experiencing the caregiver's hidden depression, enters into an erotic co-transference as a kind of immaterial antidepressant called seduction and erotic play? Could it be that...

I promise you... What do you truly promise me?

Far more than what I will give you. Why promise me more, then?

So that you take the bait. What exactly is the hook?

That I do not tell you. And why don't you tell me?

Because if I tell you, I will cease to exist.

Are you an illusion? What do you say, my love, my immortal desire?

Do I shape you? We both shape the Other — simply by killing each other.

And what will remain in the end? The beginning that never began.

Do you promise? I promise...

(Seduction Dialogues)

Part Three “The Living Field: Traversing Its Paths”

«*Si vis vitam, para mortem*»

Sigmund Freud (2019).

“*Slowly the sky descended. A magnificent headband of slanted, heavy coverings loosened and fell slowly, so that once again it could be revealed how good the light is*”

Giorgos Cheimonas (2002).



Human beings dwell within the world, and in Heidegger’s vocabulary (2008), the human being is always being-in-the-world (In-der-Welt-sein). I read and transcribe a small note given to me by Despina, which on one side reads: “Lifting one’s gaze toward the sky, the feet follow the path, remaining on the ground. The in-between is dwelling.” And on the other side it reads: “Between sky and earth, rain and soil, wind and stone, the wind and the sea, the human being dwells poetically and creates”. I feel that I read and recorded this note because I needed to draw courage from somewhere in order to continue writing; I needed something to hold onto in order to continue existing.

The final three-day meeting that took place in Sifnos was truly the culmination of the transformation of everything that had been gradually built day by day since March; the closing of the cycle was slowly approaching, and with it, the contact with mortality and the finitude of existence. Immortality belongs only to time. I, as an embodied form, have a very specific biological destiny: To continue as flesh, as matter—even if I now possess consciousness—until I become background once again. Before the lawfulness of the universe’s necro genesis, I am confronted, whether I wish it or not, with the inevitability of the astral recycling of what we call bodies. Understanding and feeling this makes me want to weep—not for someone else,

but for myself, and for the fact that I will die; therefore, for the fact that I am alive. I believe, ultimately, that I weep for the existence itself as a condition. And here perhaps Kar-Wai’s (2004) dictum from “2046”, stating that “all memories are traces of tears,” seems to be reversed; rather, my tears are the traces of my memory—as a real and singular inheritance, as so powerfully articulated, like an existential seismic rupture, by Filippou Koutsafis (2000) in “Mourning Rock”.

Writing appears to be a guarantor of memory and, consequently, following Kar-Wai (2004), a guarantor of the capacity to weep. And if knowing why we weep renders us human, then I write in order to remain human within the inhuman that exists both within me and outside me. I write because this allows me to weep without being blocked by my defenses and my neuroses. I owe it to myself, because—as that melancholic wanderer of Athens once said—the answer that toppled the monster just outside Thebes was the utterance of the word Human. The answer is the Human. Oedipus concerns us all beyond the complexes we carry, because although he “made a complete mess of things,” in the end he tore out his eyes in order to finally look inward, and at his final point he faded away in Colonus, within the light of the consciousness of being human and not merely a wandering fragment of instinct that “through negligence” serves ignorance and darkness.

No matter how much I write, everything will be lost within the relentlessness of the only truly immortal entity—time. Just as tombs, though erected to preserve memory, they eventually cease to exist themselves, as Bataille (1996) wrote while invoking death in his short story The Dead Man, amid the boundless despair of tuberculosis that likely reminded him of the premature and tragic deaths of his parents. In the end, is everything not a cursed paradox? “To memory and eternity”, said Koutsafis (2000) in “Mourning Rock”. Perhaps here an intriguing reading of the word eternity would be that of oblivion. Thus, let us “drink” to memory and oblivion; let us “get drunk” by drinking the wine of sobriety called consciousness. A consciousness that allows us to live as passersby within an eternity that exists beyond us, leaving behind, insofar as possible, both the wish for immortality and the fear of death as a neurotic anxiety that immobilizes us on the stool of our disorder.

For our disorder exists, whether we like it or not—within each and every one of us, without exception. It constitutes another kind of memory, a memory without recollections, paradoxical as that may sound—a memory of compulsive

self-regulation that functions like the Aztecs' relationship with the Sun. Memory turned into disorder operates in terms of automated production and consumption, like a factory and an altar simultaneously. As Bataille (2010) would put it, this memory operates as accursed surplus, surplus that must at all costs be consumed in the fire of the gods of frenzy and death, yet is never fully consumed. Our disorder is an altar that produces heroes by slaughtering the weak; it is a priesthood of misfortune that claims that because it once saved us—when it was still in motion and not frozen in a single film frame that burned thereafter—we now owe it to move, but always in the direction it dictates, not our own. Most often backward. And since life and time move only forward, our regressions collide with reality itself, which “retaliates”, by striking us with all manner of symptoms, hoping that we might release the bloody rope, woven from our own entrails. And, of course, within this oblivion and unconsciousness disguised as memory, somewhere—either overtly or covertly—we “forget” mortality and finitude, and somewhere deep inside we persuade ourselves that perhaps we are immortal. Life without illusions is so harsh, yet so much clearer and far simpler, without the Trojan falsehoods we manufacture in order to sustain our oblivion. Sarah Kane (2021), wrote: “From life, no one escapes.” Life is at once profoundly tragic and profoundly sweet. Life is tragic primarily because it is nothing other than a journey of farewells: We are born, and the only certainty is that we will die. Life is tragic because in order to remain alive, killing is required. Human history suffices to grasp this reality: Killing. Life is a gift—this word contains everything. For the gift often contains, in Calasso's (1997) words, poison as well. Pandora was a gift, and the Trojan Horse was a gift. The gift often carries with it the shadow of an immense demand or an immense cost; the giver usually asks for something in return. And perhaps the demand of life, if we view it as a gift, is death and its acceptance. And if the acceptance of death is itself another gift—initially bitter—then perhaps instead of poison it carries within it in return: life itself.



In Sifnos, from the very first day, all the things we had discussed during the two previous weekends, along with my past, visited me during an afternoon sleep in which I experienced a nightmare that repeatedly jolted me awake. Yet, I insisted on falling asleep again and again, in order to see what my inner world was telling me to the very end—and I succeeded. The nightmare revealed my split, and more. I remember stepping out onto the balcony and recording what I had just seen, sitting on the pleasantly hot stone ledge while listening and feeling the wind. Later, I entered the mother of all mothers, as Ferenczi (2015) calls her—the Sea. Immersion in iodine and salt, connection with beloved people, conversations and laughter, the breaths of winds and humans—all of these, during that darkened hour, were the elixir of my return to the world of the living, from the living necropolis of the nightmare, which, along with the awareness of the split, also brought the corresponding sense of emptiness.

In Sifnos we found ourselves on peaks and paths, in churches sometimes near and sometimes far from the sea. What we built at depth were bridges, passages over cliffs and chasms. As long as there are human beings who connect while accepting their mortality, hope will exist. Bridges are the meeting places of mortals beneath the vault of the infinite and above the movement of life and death, which, inseparable, flow eternally like the waters of the Acheron.

Flow and movement are ultimately the only immortal things—not in the sense of immortality as conceived by the animist within us, but in the sense that they constitute a life drive which, in its oscillation with death, creates the immortality of process, the immortality of balance, the immortality of a cosmic law wherein the organic and the inorganic are far closer than we would like to believe. When Kostas spoke to us about the field, he demonstrated with his entire being that it is something so vast and immense that it cannot fit within our perception—or rather, within a perception understood as the end product of a cognitive process. What we see, what we manage to grasp, is not what we think it is, because as Heidegger (2008) shows us, the phenomenon is in constant and continuous emergence. Therefore, if something emerges endlessly, perhaps we are partial embodiments and expressions of the infinite within a mortal articulation of the real.

Looking at my own bridges and my own routes, I see the futility and inefficacy of the endless rewinding, and looking further back, I inevitably arrive at the origin I know cognitively—the origin of initiation—and naturally I end up at the Big Bang, and then at the void and the possible

ex nihilo of the world: The void, the uncertainty, the potentiality of the universe, and the chaos. Black Sabbath (1980) write in Heaven and Hell: “The closer you get to the meaning / The sooner you’ll know that you’re dreaming.” Dreams—shadows of dreams that pass by, perhaps leaving something behind.

Intersubjectivity is the sole condition that creates subjects—those who lie under (sub) the presence of the Other. There is no subject, and no Self without the Other; there is only the hell of oneself, the deafening echo of our post-narcissism. Intersubjectivity signals the condition through subjects and between subjects, between and through those who lie under the presence of the Other. Within intersubjectivity, insofar as there exists the intention of under (beneath), the question of power inevitably arises. And power, as absolute force, when it enters its divine and diabolical ecstasy, awakens the principle of the transparency of evil, which—as Baudrillard (2019) reminds us—is inalienable. Evil, as a form of pseudo-revolution, though it emerged from the power of subjects, seeks all power and force for its selfish self and the abolition of subjects—that is, of its own origin—in order to affirm itself, through its fantasies, posing, furiously and manically, as *causa sui*.

Bridges are built by us mortals who are subjects, using materials found both within us and outside us. For me, bridges are the relationships and bonds that draw me out of the manic rage that seizes me, when I think that one day I will no longer exist, because, as Calasso (2004) says, “No one ever becomes sufficiently immortal.” Bridges are relationships we weave without being overtaken by them. For me, bridges are the hand of my friend A. that pulls me out of darkness and grief; the embraces of my friend A. who is there for me; the kindness of H.; the path I walked while talking with A.; the depth and tears of N.; the care of A.; the humanity of S.; the smile of L.; the clarity and dignity of G.; the teasing of M.; the childlikeness and spirit of M.; the subtlety of N.; Lemonia and the archetypality of E.; the care of G.; the liberating power of S.; the warmth of M.; the discretion of Y.; the playfulness and intelligence of L.; the wings of D.; the simplicity—not simplification—of K., who is always looking for ways to meet me. Bridges, for me, are faces—the “I” facing the “Thou,” and the “Thou” facing the “I.”

Closing, this workshop, in its entirety, is a deeply profound and thoroughly grounded workshop that calls those who participate to move two steps higher, two steps further. It invites them to dive in both from the position of the psychotherapist and clinician and from the position of the hu-

man being who exists within the world, to look into some of the most shadowed areas of the human psyche within everyday life, where non-existence somehow sweeps away. I bid farewell to this text and to this entire process at three-thirty in the morning, just before dawn, with feelings of fullness and connection to all these people, and finally with an excerpt from Journeyman by Iron Maiden (2003), which condenses both the process of this text and the experience of the entire workshop, culminating in Sifnos:

*[...] In your life, you may choose desolation
And the shadows you build with your hands
If you turn to the light
That is burning in the night
Then your journeyman's day has begun
I know what I want
I'll say what I want
And no one can take it away
I know what I want
I'll say what I want
And no one can take it away.”*

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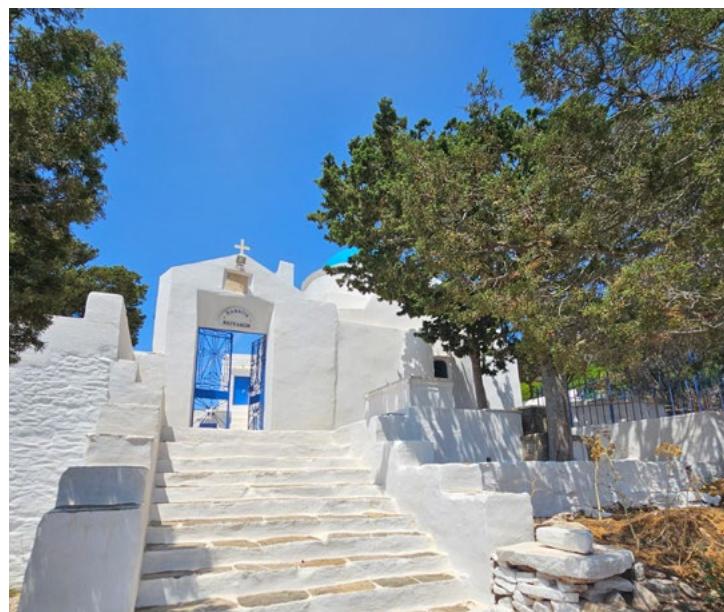
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Face to face

Raising our gaze to the sky,
 the feet follow the path.
 They remain on the earth,

the in-between is dwelling.

Observing the geodesic point of our time, we find ourselves facing the retreat of the ontological hypostasis of man. The lack of existential foundation leaves open the way to fanaticism and totalitarianism. Phenomena such as wars, crime, violence, delinquency, lack of standards overwhelm modern humanity at a threatening pace and as a result we have the loss of the sense of «existence» as well as alienation from the self. And thus we are led to the relativization of morality. Raising our gaze to the sky, the feet follow the path that leads me to the existential meeting of the persons who took part in sharing the experiential experience concerning the «Existential Being of the Therapist».

At this point, I feel that a new form emerges, and the foggy landscape fades into the background. It is the Form of hope, of psychosomatic uplift, of the freedom of the different. It is the form that meets with becoming, the senses, the sacred, the responsibility and the ethos.

In times of trouble, engagement and search have been and continue to be my refuge. Questions such as "How do I stand in the world?", "How am I as a person?", "What do I choose to become?", "How will I manage?" remain, and at the same time the responses change within the temporal transience of becoming.

My training in Gestalt therapy as well as my constant contact with it illuminates and gives space to my inner philosopher. Gestalt therapy is a well-established philosophically in-depth approach. It is based on faith and the human capacity for self-realization. It emphasizes relating as it focuses on awareness.

My presence in this experiential workshop, the "togetherness" with colleagues, the personal and professional sharing as well as the trust, encouragement, authenticity and care enhance both my personal and professional development and at the same time improve the quality of the therapeutic process.

The professional and personal development of the therapist is crucial to avoid professional burnout as we are faced with challenges such as: socioeconomic crisis, health crisis, interpersonal difficulties, failures and limitations. During the therapeutic process we become co-travelers in other stories and painful experiences. We become living witnesses to the personal journey of the patient.

One of the most important qualities of therapeutic work with people is the personal, idiosyncratic ability to respond. During the workshop, reference was made to the moral responsibility of response. This "Towards" also has the process of response. Response, presence, affirmation, inclusion are omnipresent as in life we respond in order to live.

Upon hearing the question "What is my philosophical stance and which philosopher is at the core of my existence" I was surprised and stopped. The first automatic answer I gave myself was "I don't know". During the process, the answer to this question began to emerge and become apparent. From my experience, what I know about myself is that my existential stance emanates from an ethos that is founded



on authenticity, responsibility, courage, faith, coexistence with the Other and my interest in the Other in a face-to-face meeting. At the same time, I come into contact with and simultaneously shake with pain as my sense of inadequacy and shame emerges. The intersubjective condition as a human condition helps me to give meaning to the experience of inadequacy which was formed in a specific intersubjective context where emotional reciprocity and emotional resonance were absent.

My disconnection from what evil means is repelled by the reference to Buber and the ways in which evil appears. In the process, that uncentered part of my existence that has received evil such as: betrayal, violation, violence, absence, abandonment and all this for "my own good" is confirmed and justified.

With my gaze fixed on the paths of self-knowledge, my steps take me to Sifnos. Routes that lead to chapels, mon-

asteries, dry stone walls and ancient towers. Paths that run through the trunk of Sifnos and a wind that took me there. The breaths of the wind full of sage and oregano joined the cobblestone paths of the past. I feel safe, I feel trust, love for «Together» with people, for «Together» with nature.

I climbed to the immaculate peak

In the bright cloud the landscape.

My soul naked on the bare peak

And here I am, oh Lord, face to face.

As I look at my steps, as I step on the stones, I breathe freedom and the threat is far from me. For years and years, I have been traveling and the road to the plains of passions is more circular, long, endless. And yet, how quickly time has passed...

As my place of residence, my body that has stopped hurting. Churches become places of meeting and deposit of my experiences. Who would have told me when in the past I prayed alone and apart that at some point in these sacred places I would share my experiences. The journeys on the island, the coexistence with other people, the sharing of their experiences, the call from the sound of the bell for the upcoming meeting, for me meant a face-to-face Meeting.

Today, I want to express my gratitude for the presence of the People who participated, who coordinated and supported this entire process. As I write, I realize that the dynamics of this particular group confirmed that the theory can work therapeutically.

PS. The lyrics written in the text refer to the poem "Face to Face" by I. Koutsochera

Konstantina Koutroufini, Mental Health Counselor, trained in Gestalt Psychotherapy.

The Existential Being of the Therapist

Just as the paths to the chapels of Sifnos were built, with humility to serve the divine, with responsibility to protect the human and love for the craft of the craftsman, for everything that man can make with his hands, that is, to unite, touch and respond, so too my own spirit, perhaps that of other distinguished colleagues who attended the workshop in question, wandered with scientificity in the subject, but also humanity. These do not stand out.

I entered "lost" in order to find myself from the beginning or as Gadamer says, "One must lose oneself in order to find oneself". I entered with prejudice - how else? - but also, with the intention to trust, with receptivity. Prejudice, as the silenced voice of trauma, and not anchored by it. Such a thing would be hypocrisy. From such hypocrisy, "the suffering

stranger," our client wants to be freed. That he may not be a pre-agreed psychopathology for us, and thus feel the cool air, a new opportunity to see himself again with us. As I write this, I pass through all the positions of the psychotherapeutic process, from patient, to apprentice, and from there to the

him, to have at all times the generosity to wander with him in order to find the place where he will stand and bend down to worship his pain first of all.

The hospitality in Sifnos stimulated my senses in total. The beauty of the place, the beauty of the company, the beauty



position of therapist. I feel rich today.

I entered with the risk of losing myself, as Winnicott says, but with the faith that something new will be added to my lived experience, I will remember again the magic of interaction with the Other, as I leave the solitude of my office. Trust, responsiveness, hospitality, curiosity, contact and "You first", all concepts inescapably linked to the existential being of the therapist, as presented by the coordinators D. Balliou and D. Chantziara, in the work of Levinas and Gadamer, so that they have tangible consequences in our work. Both students of Heidegger, of this very ambiguous personality that Hannah Arendt fell in love with. This profound philosopher, in whose work we find thoughts about the root of evil. All thinkers whose thoughts were guided by personal family losses, the dark years of Nazism and the devaluation of human life, so that they had to redefine fundamental values, as we do in the therapeutic room, where nothing is given, in order to accommodate pathology, to meet with authentic curiosity and with priority the patient who suffers.

In contact with him we will see how we suffer too. Through the concepts of intersubjectivity and phenomenology. And in the silence of our reflections, as we listen to the echo of our intersubjective experience with the patient, or as we listen to our footsteps on the cobblestone path to the sea. With the same quietness that we observe how the stones are placed, so we enter the mental process in order to find our relationship with the here and now that has emerged, in order to find our dimensions again on the path.

The intrapsychic place was highlighted in the seminar by contrasting the uncentered person, the stranger who has no place to lay his head, the stranger who exists within us and who needs us as psychotherapists, in order to accommodate

of it all together. The thyme, the chickpea stew cooked all night in the clay pot and the olives with tsipouro. The gathering in the monastery courtyard, the stone, the sun and the air, the pews and the carved wooden icons. In that corner of the world, we stood to find our unearthly self that seeks its roots, its last bastion so that it can stand with the requisite awe in the face of the Other's grief. To find itself a hundred times in there. And to speak its own words about its origin and perhaps its destination in this strange thing we call life. A spiral of hundreds of childhood memories rose up and through my throat with a rush to be recorded, and I opened my mouth to pour them out into the world, no longer ashamed, with harmony and sweet reconciliation with what I have become today. At the same time, realizing once again that the power of our childhood senses is so great that no matter how many words we put in is a poor attempt to approach it and much less tame it. Only in such a place, within such a caring framework, can a person withstand the momentum with which the wave of pain and chaos, that was found to be minimal in front of him, comes. I close with a total gratitude for all the coordination, and with the memory of the peace offered by all those who were witnesses as I spread the stones of my own timeless cobblestone.

Anna Mertzani, Gestalt Psychotherapist, Author

Journey to the Cyclades

According to Heraclitus,
you do not step into the same river twice.
I change, so does the river.
I have met other people, other animals, other places.

This too has been found with a thousand others until I find it again.

My skin withers and becomes one with the ground.

The water evaporates and nestles in the clouds.

My blood flows and becomes salty from the sea.

The rain waters the soil of a distant country.

What is the river? Who am I?

How long is this answer valid?

If I walk in the water sure of myself,

whose is the water? What do I see, what do I hear, what do I feel, what do I understand?

I want to be curious. I want to get wet by the river.

I am happy that I too will humanize it.

To become a bridge? To build a bridge? To be a bridge?

Must. I want. I can.

Should I? Do I want to? Can I?

Mortal among other mortals, perishable on imperishable soil, I follow the path in between, in the continuum.

I travel by dwelling and I dwell by traveling, in the blue of the sky, the sea, the domes, the eyes, the quartz, the paper.

I look up.

I hope to see us.

Sifnos June 2025

Marina Bikou, Adult Psychiatrist, Gestalt Psychotherapist, MSc Forensic Psychiatry, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.



PRESS RELEASE

Despina Balliou 1st Vice President of the new Board of Directors of the National Organization for Psychotherapy in Greece

On January 11, 2026,

at the Annual General Meeting of the National Organization for Psychotherapy in Greece and in the elections that followed, the members of the new Board of Directors were elected, seven regular and one alternate.

After the formation of a body on January 13, 2026 and the secret ballot that followed, the seven regular members of the new Board of Directors were unanimously elected with the following responsibilities based on the statutes of the National Organization for Psychotherapy in Greece:

President: **Tsambika Bafiti**

First Vice President: **Despina Balliou**

Second Vice President: **Stelios Krasanakis**

Special. EAP Liaison Representative: **Panos Asimakis**

Secretary: **Virginia Ioannidou**

Treasurer: **Triantafyllia (Felina) Iliopoulou**

Member: **Ioanna Kousteni**

Alternate member: **Elina Makrogianni**

The members of the newly elected Board of Directors of the EAP expressed their gratitude to the members for the trust they showed in them and, with a sense of responsibility, collective spirit and commitment to the institutional role of the NOPG, they committed, among others, to promoting its statutory objectives within the framework of the process of institutionalizing psychotherapy in Greece, for the benefit of psychotherapy, the scientific community and society.

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