

An abstract painting with a dense, textured surface. The color palette is dominated by vibrant blues, greens, and reds, with some purple and yellow accents. The brushstrokes are thick and expressive, creating a sense of movement and depth. In the center of the painting, a faint, sketchy outline of a human face is visible, looking slightly to the right. The overall effect is one of intense energy and emotional complexity.

*Turning
Points*

**Rather Art than Pills
A Creative Gestalt Writing Program**

Turning Points



Rather Art than Pills

A Creative Gestalt Program

based on

Gestalt Process Writing to C

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Gestalt Process Writing to C: a quest to connect with your soul

When you are or were in love and (dis)connected, excited and misunderstood, curious and ignored, creative and not heard, not seen, angry and sad, you could start writing. For when there is no one to talk to or no one willing or able to listen, we still have our self as a listener, as a partner, as a cocreator. All we have to do is, sit down with a pen and a note book, take time to focus on a question or a problem and write without stopping for at least ten minutes. When we are ready we will need courage to read out loud what we have written. But when we do we will be relieved, for our hand knows and our hand cocreating with our heart is very efficient and wise. To our surprise we will find we have written the perfect answer to our question or the perfect next step concerning our problem.

The longing to connect is vital in me. As a Gestalt student I could connect in a certain way to my teachers and my fellow students. And I expected that those relations – as well with the students as with the teachers - would change the moment I had my own practice into a more collegial connection. But no...

What did happen is that within half a year I had a full practice of three ongoing groups, a varying number of individual clients, I was teaching in a training program and gave learning and supervision sessions to the students. In other words I was busy connecting but not with colleagues as I worked in my own private practice.

Of course I was a member of the Dutch/Flemish Gestalt Network, still followed training programs and had intervision and supervision sessions with colleagues, but connecting with them is a different matter. I could not connect with my ex-teachers, because we did not step out of our roles and kept behaving like they were the authorities although ex and I was the student although ex, which made it impossible to make contact on a collegial level. Nor could I connect with my ex-student colleagues, because it seemed becoming colleagues also meant becoming rivals.

As I am a writer/journalist in the first place I started to write for the Gestalt Network Magazine, titled 'Foreground', which gave me at least the possibility to connect with me and my ideas in a field that could receive me. Now from this distance I realize that for me there was no other option to fulfil my longing of making contact and connect with colleagues on a deeper level. What I did not realize then is that I took big risks as I was process writing and exploring how the Gestalt theories I had learned and integrated were practiced and experienced in this network. Exploring this way also meant by writing opening up the frustrations and the conflicts I experienced in the communication with my colleagues. Like this I became 'the lady with the sharp pen', whose background was not scientific and therefore in the eyes of the scientific Network authorities – who had *not* been my teachers though – wrong, not good enough, not trustworthy. The first book I published – Aandacht Waar gaat het over? - was condemned by one of my supervisors as not worth to be considered a Gestalt book. Too much me, too much process, too much sex, too much?? It confronted me with the reality of having grown out of 'authorities'. No more masters for me to consult.

Reason to cross borders and start exploring the international Gestalt World by going to conferences in the US, Canada, UK, Russia, Mexico. The first conference was organized by The Gestalt Journal Press in Montreal. It was like coming home, I knew here I belong, here I can connect and communicate on a collegial Gestalt level. Here I don't have a history that is frustrating me. And here I had an Aha experience. When I looked at my colleagues I saw:

Jewish, Jewish, Jewish. I was deeply touched when I realized that about 90% of the presenters were Jewish. Then I knew Gestalt is part of my quest: yes or no Jewish roots?

Next step was to become a member of the AAGT, the Association for Advancing Gestalt Therapy. In this field I could offer my skills and felt received, seen, heard and of course was also rejected, but that is part of the growing process.

But conferences don't last forever, they are like glass houses where seeds are planted in the participants to grow bigger in the years between. It meant if I wanted to stay in contact I had to start writing in English as writing in English would give me the chance to connect with colleagues who did not speak my own language.

My next Gestalt adventures were participating in organizing AAGT conferences and becoming a member of an internet Gestalt-List. Every day dozens of emails came rolling in to confront me with Gestalt colleagues all over the World with the same longing as I have: to connect, to be seen and heard. The discussions on this List have challenged me to express my passions and frustrations in the form of words. In this field I found what I had missed as a writer for the Dutch Gestalt Magazine: colleagues who listened with Gestalt ears and confronted me with Gestalt views.

What I discovered by writing was that the moment I could take myself seriously and ask for what I needed like respect or trust or honesty, I could freely breath again. By doing this time and time again all I needed from the outside World was a Sounding Board in this case in the form of Gestalt Colleagues. Therefore I believe that the only chance for me – and maybe also for you - to be seen and heard by colleagues is by writing. I know because I in my turn can only connect on a deeper level with Gestalt colleagues who are also – dead or alive - writers. I am thinking of Joseph Zinker and the PHG writers Fritz Perls, Ralph Hefferline and Paul Goodman as they are responsible for 'Gestalt Therapy – Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality', that is considered the foundation for us as Gestaltists.

This book is not only *about* Gestalt Process Writing, it also *is* Gestalt Process Writing.

Please receive it as an stimulation to start or continue your own Gestalt Process Writing, to create your own connections with colleagues, friends, lovers and family members by writing. See it as a possibility to connect with your soul and open up your creative power that can reach out to the world. You don't have to worry about your writing abilities. If you are able to talk, you will discover you are able to process write and experience the adventures of living on a deeper level that will connect you with your self and the Other.

1. Life is a gift. Unwrap it.



Dear Reader,

How are you? Where are you? How do you feel?
What are you longing for? Are you happy?
Do you think I am asking difficult questions?
You do not know what to answer?

Of course you are right.

The questions I ask are not easy to answer.

It is why we invite you to join this program .

I realized that we can only find answers
if we live life and feel what it is about.

It means entering risky and exciting adventures,
if you are curious and not easy to please.

I have been wondering about life since I was three
and the Nazi's occupied my country.

After the invasion my father came back from the front with wrecked nerves.
What is your story? What are you wondering about?

What happened? How was it for him? Why did it happen?

Why do people hurt each other in such a cruel way?

I became angry because no one could answer me.

2. Line with God



But as a child I did have my direct line with God. He did speak with me and told me I should go on living and find out for myself.

My life has been and still is quite an adventure. Writing gives us the possibility to share what can be important for others too. In this program we will follow your own thoughts, ideas, feelings, fears and your quest for love. You will be invited to explore your own dreams, feelings, fears and longings by writing and connecting with your own wisdom. No one else can do it for you. Please do not think you have to accomplish a heavy task. Look at life as a gift. Being alive means having the right to be happy, the right to love and be loved, especially when life is painful. If you can connect with your pain, sorrow and anger you can also connect with your joy and love. Feeling that life hurts is a way to healing and being able to feel that life is also gentle and generous if you are willing to receive IT.

My guide in this creative process is Gestalt therapist Joseph Zinker* who states:
'The person who dares to create, to break boundaries, not only partakes of a miracle, but also comes to realize that in his/her process of being s/he is a miracle.'

3.The C Factor

This program is about creating a high C factor by using C words like:



Creation, Contact,
Change, Communication,
Commitment, Chance,
Community, Connection,
Curiosity, Compassion,
Continuity, Consciousness
qualities we cannot develop without
Conflict, Confrontation,
Control, Courage and Crisis.

4.Hot Fire of Groups



To create the C factor we need the Hot Fires of groups.
To become porcelain a pot made of clay needs the hot fire of the oven.
Just to stand in the sun is not enough.
It is the same for people.
To stoke the fires we organize groups
like conferences, workshops, love affairs, families,
businesses, power struggles, parties, classes,
theatre plays, concerts, demonstrations, sport matches, teams.
Staying in the heat of the group allows us to grow
and become a better human being.

5.What? How? Why?

A group is a learning community where we can experiment with becoming aware, making contact and change.

We can explore the triangle 'Content-Process-Meaning' by using the words What? How? Why?

Content: WHAT are the facts?

Process: HOW is it to experience this?

Meaning: WHY do we need to experience it?



Higher levels

The steps we will follow in this program are based on the idea that groups are learning communities, where people gather to solve personal and interpersonal problems. We will focus on how it is to be part of a group coming where we come from in relation to the roles we 'play' in life. How is it to be in the role of a reader, teacher, therapist, trainer, student, presenter, client, writer, artist, mother, father, daughter, son?

What do we need, what is our aim?

How is it to realize that learning implies changing behaviour, not only for the sake of adaptation, of adjustment, but for a movement toward higher levels of awareness and self-actualization.

Why a group?

Without a group people cannot function. We are born in a group, we live in groups, no matter how. A group is a unique system, a conglomeration of energies exuded by individual members and interrelated in a systematic pattern. We need it to let the growth take place. As a facilitator I will guide you from adventure to adventure, from hot fire to hot fire. Longing to communicate, create contact, change, commitment and to connect with our inner wisdom in relation to the Other we will explored by talking, writing or/and drawing What, How and Why. This kind of talking and writing connects us with our undercurrent: our feelings, intuition, dreams, wisdom, longings, fears, crazy ideas that are not easy to express in a rational way.

6. Logos and Gnosis



The Greeks have two words for Knowledge: Logos and Gnosis.

Logos is what can be learned through education and scientific inquiry. Gnosis is what can be known through intuitive feeling and spiritual or mystical experiences. Logos is rational, objective, logical, expressible in words or numbers.

Gnosis is subjective, non-rational, nonverbal, expressible through images, poetry, metaphor, music and is often un-provable.

Every sacred experience is subjective: the sense of oneness with the universe, or with the sacred, a timeless moment filled with beauty, spiritual insight and grace is gnosis. The words in this book mostly emerged the gnosis way. They are meant to stimulate you to find your own gnosis path and experience the transformative power of giving your soul a voice.

What can you expect?

By participating you will learn more about your own creative power, your longing to make contact, to connect, to change, to express your commitment, to satisfy your curiosity and you will learn about the magic, the mysteries, the dark sides and the chances groups offer you.

How is it for you?

It is not about achieving, yet in the back of our heads we long to create a work of art like a book, a painting, a stage play, a poem, a song, a film, a photo or whatever work of art we dream of. In the program you will find numerous guidelines and questions to bring you into motion.

To understand what your life is about you can dance, write, paint, sing or sculpt. Only reading about adventures is not enough, you have to DO something yourself.

7. Why should you?



To really know why we have to function in a group, we have to sit together to listen, to talk, to breath, to feel, to look and see, we have to learn to trust our intuition and experience the moment we can say 'AHA, now I know why', now I feel contact, now I am touched, now I feel commitment, compassion and now I know why we need conflict, confrontation, control and courage.

Now I know why we had to come together and do IT. Now we can enjoy being in the moment together. By communicating we will make contact, express our commitment, take chances, connect with our inner wisdom and each other, satisfy our curiosity, grow and change, create our own communities, become more happy and a better human being, who will be able to make people around us more happy and more aware of how they can do the same. It will be like a snowball that keeps rolling and rolling and will become bigger and more important as long as it is in the movement and as long as there is snow. Once you decide to become part of this ball you will know why we need each other, why we need communities and why we need a high C factor.

8. The Foundation of the Creative Gestalt Writing Program Basic Needs connected to Basic Fears and Demands Life poses



Basic Fears

- The Fear of Existing
- The Fear of being Abandoned
- The Fear of Guilt and Punishment
- The fear of not being Good Enough

Basic Needs

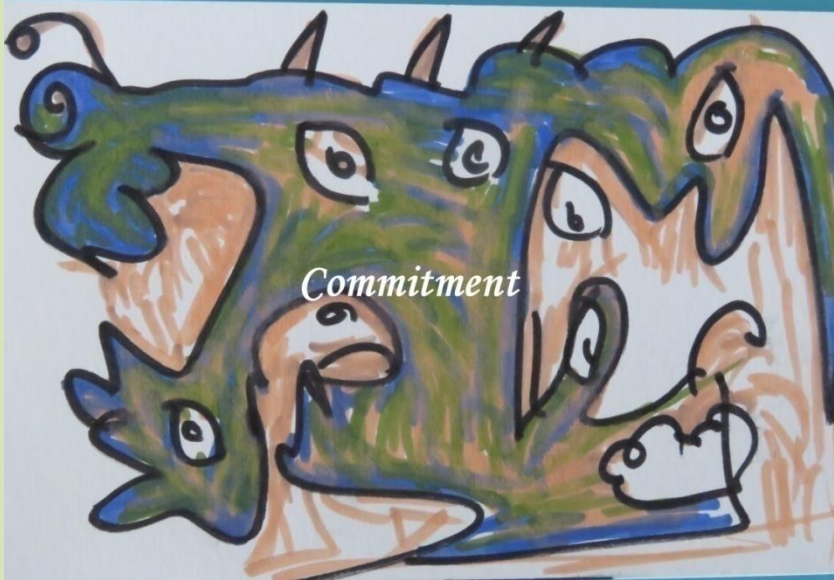
- To have a Place and Belong
- Nourishment, Warmth, Loving Attention, Care
- Support, Stimulants, Encouragement, Trust, Safety
- To be seen and accepted for who we are

Demands

- say Yes to life
- stand on our own feet
- become autonomous
- become who we are instead of the wo/man
we thought we should be

9. Life is a relational adventure

Writing is a perfect way to communicate and make contact.



Making contact

Relationships are vital in our lives, that is why I became a therapist. I sincerely believe that life for human beings is about relating to each other. In general women will agree with me. For men it can be different, because – again in general – men are more focused on goals. This is an interesting and frustrating difference. A lot of misunderstandings between women and men can be understood better if we knew. And if we do not, eternal battles for power can be the result. I chose to become a Gestalt therapist because Gestalt taught me the importance of communicating and making contact.

Not a simple thing to do. Commitment is needed.

Willingness to invest time, lots of time. To do this work we have to learn to be in the here and now, otherwise there is no chance of meeting the other.

We have to be willing to communicate and make contact again and again and again. To think or say: I did it yesterday already, why should I do it today, is of no use. Nobody else can do it for us.

Of course we are free not to make contact, but the question is if we have the choice to do it or not. If not we can become isolated and lonely.

Games people play

By working for more than twenty years with ongoing groups I learned about games people play to avoid contact. Talking without listening, keeping silent by not talking, complaining about no matter what, crying when we are angry, bullying when we are scared, being nice when we do not feel it and thinking we do not belong to a group because we are different. The moment a group comes together the games start. Looks go to and fro, thoughts and feelings present themselves, vibes will fill the room. Even when no words are spoken, all kinds of things happen. In each head suppositions are formed, in each body fears are raised, irritations and longings are born. The question is what will be expressed? What we think, what we feel, what we long for, what we are afraid of, what we find irritating?

10. Time is limited



For a long time I was convinced I would only be noticed when I talked. This is a misunderstanding. The silent ones often have more influence on the group than the talkers, because they are more mysterious and therefore more intriguing. My first aim as a facilitator in a group is always to hear every participant speak. I long to know what people come for. Not that this is possible but nevertheless I like to have an idea, because I am afraid if aggression and fear are held back they can break free at any moment and cannot be dealt with adequately. The problem is that time is often limited, but what I learned as a facilitator is that behind all the games there is the big need for attention. Genuine attention for who we are, that is to say. We don't want to be patronized, dominated, advised, but we do want to be seen and truly heard.

Attention

The text that follows was written in a group where we not only communicated by talking but also by writing. After sharing what kept us busy in our day to day lives, we took time to meditate and

found that we all were longing for attention. As a facilitator I always participate in the writing:

'Attention is the big thing I am deeply longing for and at the same time I am afraid of it. Attention was scarce in my life. That is to say attention for my soul was not an every day nourishment.

Attention in the form of food, care, clothes, cleanliness was always there. I cherish that, I could not do without. But this big longing for soul attention made me vulnerable and a bit strange in the eyes of grownups, like my mother who was always laughing so no one would see how unhappy she was.

Attention for my soul I hoped to get from my father, because I knew he could give it if he wanted to. But usually he was busier with his own need for attention and just let me be without bothering. While writing I worry if I am not in the victim role. I don't want to accuse my parents. I want to be responsible for my own life and my own need for attention without waiting for it from whoever has the goodwill to see me. I realize that taking care of getting the attention I need is almost a fulltime job.

11. Giving what you need



To give attention is my profession. I am an example of someone who is good at giving what she has missed most herself. Getting attention for me is a matter of honour as I am too proud to just ask for attention, I want to have something to show, to offer. Attention being the reward that I deserve. I think it is not easy for me to realize that I can be blackmailed into giving attention to little boys disguised as men who suffered and are longing for a mother, so I can relate to them. Longing for a mother I have long thought of as being childish. Who needs a mother who patronises you and always knows better anyway. Attracting attention by doing something like singing a song or doing a little dance was not rewarded in my family. Once in a while on a special occasion yes, but in day to day life you better have acted normally. High marks were praised though. Is that why I decided I better work my ass off to have a place in society, rather than take things more easily and make room for the good mother in me who cuddles, takes care, asks how you are, makes tea and has time to listen.

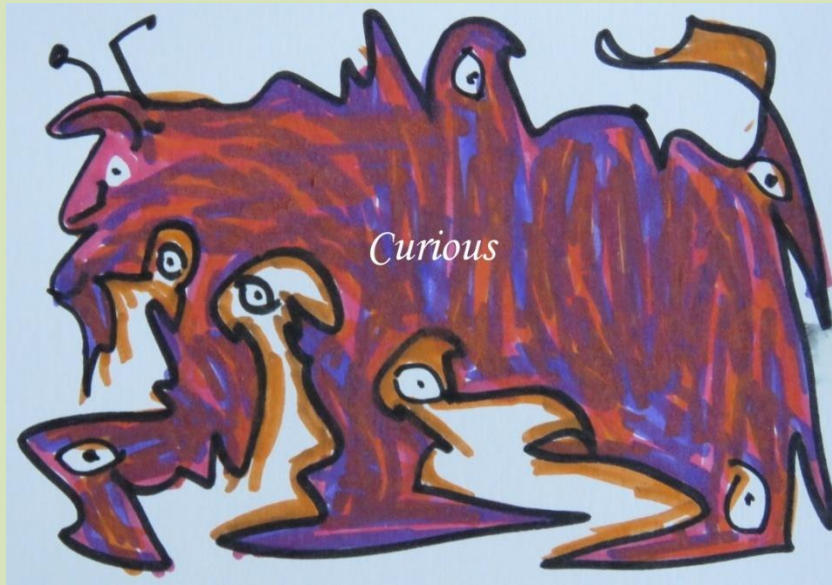
Even now – now I have become my own mother –

I have to urge this mother in me to take time, sit down and listen to me while we are having tea and eating sweets. But I am learning. By listening to you and to myself here in this group I know this is the main reason for coming together. We can not do it all by ourselves. To give and receive attention we DO need each other, whether we want it or not!

Experiments

If you want to learn more about your own need for attention, take some time just for you, find a safe place, bring paper and a pen, sit down, close your eyes, straighten your back, direct your attention to your breathing and become aware of being in the here and now. Then wonder about the question 'Am I afraid of attention, of love, of intimacy?' and feel how your body reacts. After about seven minutes you open your eyes, take your pen and write whatever wants to be written. Don't worry about mistakes, logic, just keep your hand moving for at least ten minutes. If you want to write more, you can write more. You are the boss. If- for a moment – you don't have words, just play or draw or doodle to keep your hand in action. If you feel you are ready, read what you have written out loud. Even if you are by yourself. You will notice that hearing your own voice speaking the words you put on paper will touch you somehow.

12. Writing is a perfect way to communicate



We can take the time to find the words to express our thoughts,
feelings, ideas, expectations, hopes.

You and I can both write and read
and find out if we can communicate and connect.
It is why I long to write and publish those words.

I want to express what touches me
and hope that you will feel touched too.

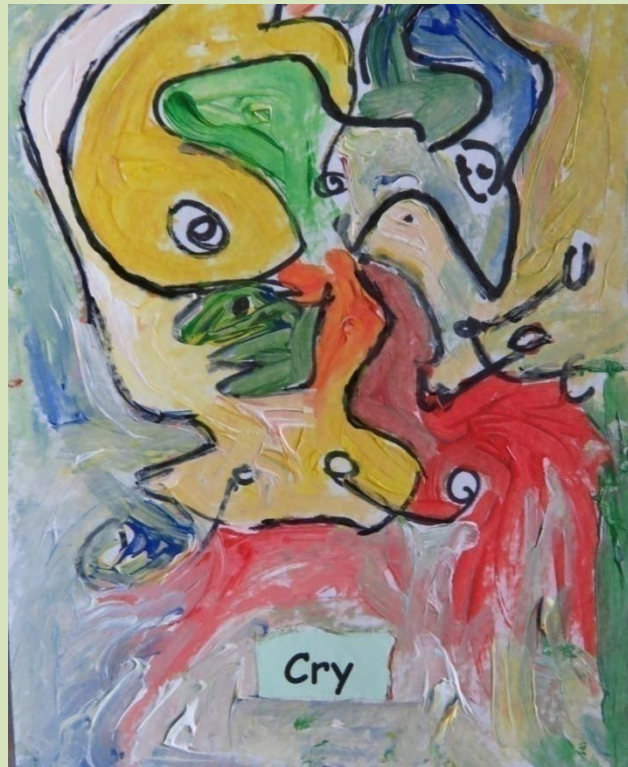
It is about feeling or not feeling.

About being moved or not.

Like this you will be invited
to connect to your own process
and write your own small and big life stories.

13. The Five Gestalt Layers

'Therapy is also an art. It's more of an art than it is a science. It takes a lot of intuition and sensitivity and an overall view means something very different from a piecemeal association approach. Being an artist is functioning holistically. And being a good therapist also means that.' Laura Perls*



Inner truth

When I read this statement by one of the founders of Gestalt therapy I almost cried, it touched me so deeply. It confirms my inner truth that dawned on me when I became a therapist, but I did not dare to say it out loud to colleagues who appear to believe that therapy is a science.

Your own voice

Before I became a therapist I was an editor of illustrated magazines. I loved my job as it was about people and I became dissatisfied when I realized that I was never allowed to speak my own voice. The commercial side of publishing directed us as journalists to write what our bosses thought the readers wanted to read. And that was not the same as what I longed to share. Becoming more and more frustrated I went on a spiritual journey and found Eastern philosophies such as Hinduism and Zen Buddhism before I found Gestalt. Becoming my own boss by learning to become a Gestalt therapist was my turning point.

14. War child



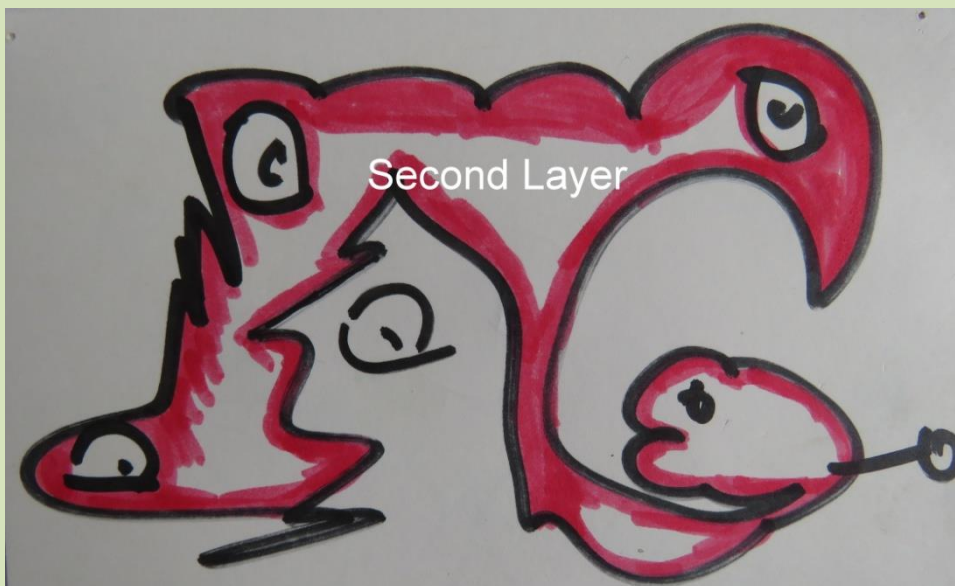
My interest in life and human relations started by being the daughter of a veteran of WWII, who disappeared in a psychiatric institute when I was fourteen. If I knew one thing for certain it was that my beautiful, sensitive, intelligent father - although he could behave rather outrageously – was NOT crazy, but the society we lived in was. Having experienced war as a child from age three to eight I know that life is serious and death is a reality. I know how cruel people can be, how blind and insensitive. Like my father I am passionately committed to exploring the drive behind the behaviour of people who have the power. My longing is to communicate and connect also with them. I want to understand why people can frustrate and even kill each other, rather than be considered crazy myself. According to Fritz Perls in Gestalt Therapy Verbatim* the theory of the five layers gives insight into what our undercurrent looks like and is hiding.

15. The first layer is the cliché layer.



If we meet somebody, we exchange clichés like ‘How are you?’ with cliché answers like ‘Good’ or ‘I am not allowed to complain’. The main aim is to be polite and behave.

In the second layer we play games and roles



We are the son, the daughter, the husband, the eldest, the youngest, the beautiful girl, the strong man, the intelligent professor. In the roles we play ‘as if’ we are better, weaker, tougher, nicer than we really feel. The good thing about this layer is that we cannot do without it, we need it to function. Here we discover if we rather say Yes or No. If we make ourselves small or big. If we answer the expectations or not. It is a layer we can stay in till the day comes, that we discover that our once successful answers do not work anymore. We lose our job or our loved one or become ill and have to face the confusion of the impasse.

16. The third layer which is the impasse.



In this layer we feel stuck, lost, confused. We have a phobic attitude and try to avoid suffering. We do not want to be frustrated, we stay immature, we go on manipulating the world, rather than to suffer the pain of growing up. We prefer being looked after and do not realize our blindness and the possibility of getting our eyes back again. This is the difficulty in self therapy; when we come to the difficult parts, we are not willing to go through the pain of the impasse and think alcohol or drugs or food or money or sex can help.

The fourth layer is the implosive or the fear of death layer.



17. The implosive layer

It appears as death because of the paralysis of opposing forces: Yes contra No. We pull ourselves together, we contract and compress ourselves and implode.

The fifth layer is the explosive layer

Once we really get in contact with this deadness, something interesting happens: the implosion becomes explosion. The death layer comes to life, and this explosion is the link up with the authentic person who is capable of experiencing and expressing his/her emotions.



we can experience four basic kinds of explosions: we can explode into genuine grief if we work through a loss that has not been assimilated, into an orgasm if we were sexually blocked, into anger and into joy, laughter, *joie de vivre*. These explosions connect with the authentic personality, with the true self.

Do not be frightened by the word explosion. It means more setting into motion than explode to pieces. Exploring by writing the undercurrent is a way to experience it.

An example

An example when I worked with a man and a woman, who were busy with their love relations, not with each other though. We all three meditated on the theme: How do I get what I need? Then we spontaneously wrote the words that wanted to be written by letting our hands do the work. I wrote:

'How do I get what I need?

In my family? In a group? In a Community? In Society? In the first place I need safety and safety comes with being open. Safety for me is about honesty. When I am honest here and now I have to admit that what I long for most is being loved, being seen in my struggle for a better world. Being open about my longing for love is not easy. Love in my life is not free. I know that this is not true, but it is the voice of my Fear that I only have a right to love or be loved if... I create harmony around me. The reality is that I cannot make harmony without facing the difficulties, without confronting what I do not like and what I do criticise. I don't like to do this, but if I don't I cannot love the other and I cannot love me.

18. In the same boat



Fact is when I feel threatened and rejected I close off and cannot give my students the feeling that they are safe and welcome. Maybe I never can, but usually I do not experience it this way. At this moment I can only say: Life hurts, life is painful. Please be aware. I cannot protect you, as I am hurt and feel pain myself. I wish I could but all I can do is to share that I am with you in the same boat.

We all three read our words out loud and when I read mine I could breathe again and relax because I could express my fear and pain and show my authentic self.

19. Questions to chew on:



- *How do those words affect you as a reader?*
- *Do you recognize feeling uneasy when you are with more than one person, all of whom want your attention?*
- *Can you imagine feeling threatened when someone insinuates that it is because of you that somebody else left?*
- *Or is there another part that touches you more?*

If you want to know more about yourself in relation to the five Gestalt layers, find a safe place and prepare by straightening your back, be in the here and now by following your breathing and sit for seven minutes with your own questions, while becoming aware of the signals of your body.

When the moment has come you take your pen and write, letting your hand do the work. Of course you can use a computer if you prefer, but you will find it is not the same as writing by hand. The best thing to do is to find out what works better for you.

20. Basic Needs and Fears

*A human being suffers most of the suffering he fears and never was or will be his share.
(Dutch expression)*



In my search for wisdom and truth I often go to foreign countries, literally and also symbolically by reading.

In the very beginning of my career as a therapist, I became fascinated by the Jungian psychologist Fritz Riemann. He wrote a book titled in German 'Die Fähigkeit zu Lieben', in Dutch – translated into English – 'To love is to live'.

I felt touched by his theory of four basic fears and four demands life poses us to overcome them.

Time and time again, when I need structure in my own life or guidance for a client, I wonder where I am or where we are in the light of the wisdom of Riemann.

It has helped me to ground and not get lost in the vastness of possibilities in therapy land.

I do not think it is about absolute truth, but do believe it can show us a way of becoming lighter, more free, independent, to feel better and to get an idea of what there is to explore in the undercurrent.

21.Looking for Satisfaction



If our basic needs were not answered during our youth,
they will keep asking for attention when we are grownups.
We will go on searching for
what we did not get then
when we needed it badly.
Our longing will direct our lives
in the undercurrent and
it will leave painful traces in the body.

22. First Basic Fear: The Fear of Existing



Fear starts the moment we are born.

When we come out of the womb, completely helpless and vulnerable, we are demanded to trust the world enough to say Yes to life and start breathing independently. A matter of life and death.

The question is how welcome we are.

Are our parents so happy with their new baby that they are fully prepared for us?

Is the whole family waiting with excitement and love for the newly born?

Or is it the wrong moment because we are not wanted?

The first fear that is an existential fear starts doing its work.

What we need is a mother figure who comes regularly to feed us, gives us warmth and attention, a mother who changes our diapers, cleans and cuddles us, a mother who takes time to give us the feeling that we belong on earth and came home.

23. First Basic Need

is to have a place on earth and know that we belong.



Every human being has a right to have his or her own place and space. It starts early. A child that is being born needs its own place. The first and most literally own place of a child is the womb. By carrying the child in her body the mother gives implicitly the message: 'You have a place in me and I will take care of you.' Children love to play with having a place: they built huts, they hide away, they creep into holes and play changing trees... Later the own place will become more a spiritual one by creating a world of books, stories, music, hobby's, clubs, sport. If a child has the feeling it belongs, is depending except on its family on its social surroundings. A child belongs to this family, this neighbourhood, this school, this social class. When a family is moving a lot and a child often loses its school and friends it can become unbalanced because it does not have enough time to root and feel the ground.

Personal questions to explore your own birth and the beginning of your life:

Did you feel safe when still in the womb?

Did you have a difficult or an easy birth?

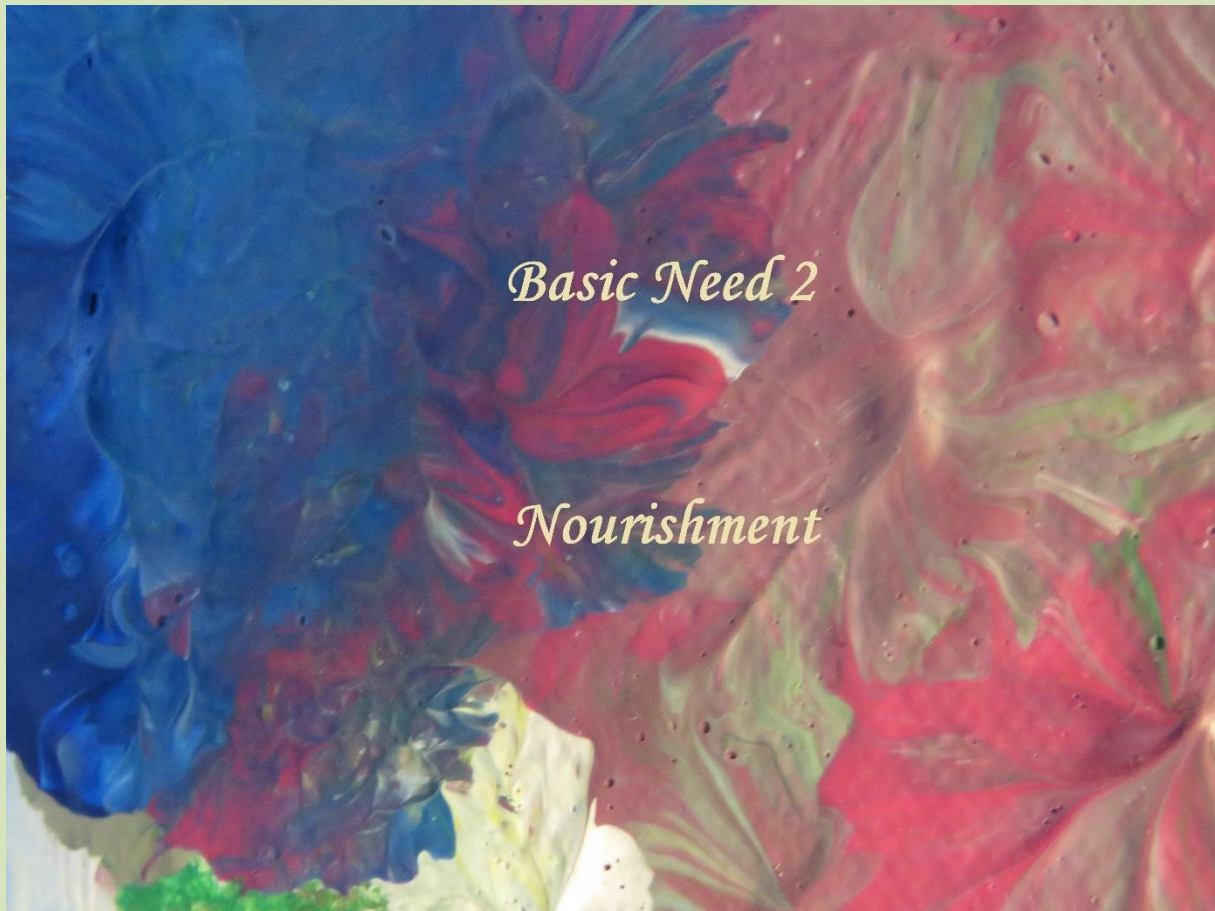
Were you on time? Were you welcome?

24. Second Basic Fear: The fear of being abandoned



The second fear that can dominate our lives is the fear of being abandoned. When we discover that our mother or another mother figure is the source that provides in all our needs, we get afraid of losing her. Without her we have no chance of survival. Without her our life is empty. Without her we are out of food, out of warmth, out of being held and cuddled. Even if we get a clean diaper and milk but no loving attention, we will feel unwelcome. The question of how the mother can be forced to be present in our life can become dominant. The strange thing is that a mother who spoils us by always being available can make us even more anxious than a mother who neglects us. If we are spoiled we don't learn to trust our own power step by step and become completely dependent. In the period when we are most vulnerable, we are already confronted with the inevitable existential loneliness of life.

25. Basic needs 2: nourishment, warmth, loving attention



Questions to chew on:

Were you breast fed?

What kind of nourishment did you get as a kid?

Was it healthy? Was it fast food?

How do you nourish yourself now as grown up?

26. Basic Needs 2 : Questions



Are you afraid to be left alone?

Did you have a mother who was there for you?

Do you feel spoiled or neglected?

Do you know if you were warm enough when you were a baby?

And later when you were going to school?

What kind of a role is temperature playing in your life?

27. Warmth



If we don't get the right attention as a baby
Even if we are cared for
There is a chance we will die
Giving and getting attention are two sides of one coin
If we did not get loving attention
But were instead patronized
We stop looking to the other
Stop listening
And can become isolated

*How was and is it for you?
Can you make contact?
Do you like to communicate?*

28. Did you get...



Write your own story

29. Third Basic Fear: The fear of guilt and punishment



As we grow older and have to become more free from the close bondage with our mother, the fear of guilt and punishment are born. We learn how to walk and talk and discover we have our own will that can be diametrically opposed to that of our father or/and mother. Our parents can become angry and will make it clear to us that there are orders, commands and prohibitions. In this way a new fear enters, a fear of not doing the right thing. We are lucky when we have parents who give us boundaries that can be talked about. Parents who make it clear that we even as a child need discipline and rules to live our lives. But if we are raised by parents who behave rigidly and dominantly, who punish us without adding a kiss, we are liable to become so afraid of being guilty that we hardly dare to take the risk of making our own choices and making mistakes. The result is that we as adults will have big problems in becoming autonomous. Does this mean that we are lucky when we have parents who were anti-authoritarian? The advantage is that we miss this fear for guilt and punishment, but it does not bring a real solution. Being raised in relative freedom means not being educated about borders and possibilities. It means not having a clue about what we can achieve and what we cannot. The result is that we do get anxious and uncertain after all, not knowing our norms and values.

30. Basic Need 3: Support,



*Support is about being carried
Literally when we are small
When we get older we need support doing our homework
Support if we want to express our talents
Financial support when we fly out of the nest*

*How did support work in your life?
Can you write a Support story?
Or a Support poem?
Or create a Support painting?*

31. Are you a perfectionist?



- *Are you a perfectionist?*
- *Do you dare to make mistakes?*
- *Are you duty oriented?*
- *Can you lose control?*
- *Do you believe in Life?*
- *Do you trust yourself?*
- *Do you trust people in general?*

*Please sit down in a quiet place where you cannot be disturbed
And wonder about trust in your current life.*

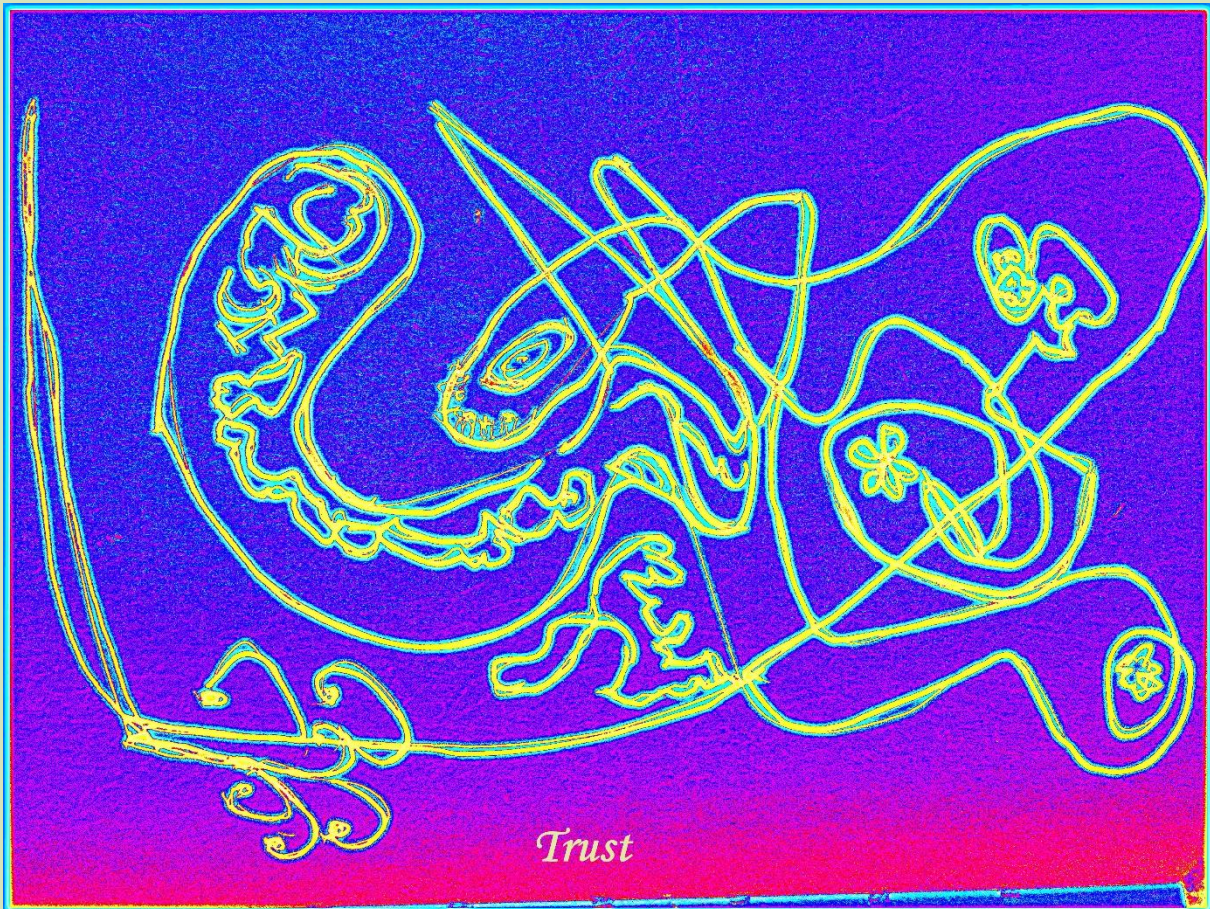
*Feel how your body reacts and start writing by using the words
What – How - Why*

Content: what are the facts

Process: how is that for me?

Meaning: why is it as it is?

32.Trust? Do I trust me? Do you trust you?



Do you trust the child, the mother and the father in you
are in a peaceful balance?

Do you feel the difference between their energies?

Stuck when the child is on the lead

Happy when he mother dances

Unhappy when the father speaks his sacred words

Do not believe him

He wears N glasses

He can only see the negative aspect of the world

But how about the Sacred?

That is more than just positive or negative

Trust is in the Sacred

That embraces and transcends

33. Fourth Basic Fear: The fear of not being good enough



What does it mean to be a girl or a boy? Who is our example ?

When we get older we discover that there are boys and girls, big and small children, ugly and beautiful people, rich and poor ones, strong and weak men and women. We are confronted with the questions: who is better, who is the best? The fear that appears now is the fear that we are not good enough as we are. Would it not be better if I were a boy instead of a girl, big if I am small, have curly hair when it is straight. Shouldn't I be strong when I appear sensitive and weak, beautiful when I seem to be ugly, fast if I am slow, coloured when I am white? Does our family, does the world love me now it seems I do not answer the perfect image?

What we need are role models we can identify with. That is why we have idols and look up to our parents, but often our heroes and parents tend to fall from their pedestals, leaving us with the longing to be at least better than they are. But how can we?

Who are your heroes/heroines?

34. Did your parents listen to you



- *when you were a baby?*
- *when you cried and needed attention?*
- *when you told your school stories?*
- *when the family was at the dinner table?*
- *when you were ill?*
- *when you made music or was singing?*

Do you now you are grown up dare to give words to your inner thoughts?

Do you make music or sing? Do you listen to music?

Are you a good listener?

Experiments:

- *just sit and listen with your eyes closed to a favourite piece of music*
- *go into nature to listen to the sounds*
- *listen to the sounds of the city without judging*

35. Being Seen



*How important is your appearance to you?
How do you want to be seen?
Do you succeed in your wish?
How do you do it?
Does this mean you are answering expectations?
Can you ask for attention?
If not how do you manipulate people?
Are you a performer?*

Experiment:

- *step out of your comfort zone by doing something you think is not you*
- *taking singing, dancing, music lessons*
- *doing a sport*
- *join a theatre group*
- *write a story or a poem*

36.To be accepted as we are



Basic need: to be seen and accepted for who we are.

Basic Need: Borders



- *Am I good enough as a boy, as a girl?*
- *Who is my hero, my model, my example?*

37.Demands to overcome our fears



Often we live with those fears from our childhood without realizing it. Precisely because we were not allowed to be afraid, we suppressed and denied our fears. In that way we could survive but did not see reality, which possibly made our surroundings threatening without us knowing why. Only by becoming aware of the undercurrent can we step out of our childhood fears and into a life that leads to freedom. It is true that in accepting fear, healing is hidden. Learning how to live with fear is not enough because time and time again there will be new fears that will revive the old ones. We can free ourselves step by step by realizing that we have to identify with the innocent, lonely, anxious child in us and with the adult who has to go out into the world to study and make a living. We will discover that we have to look fear in the eyes to become a complete human being. What helps is the knowledge that life does not only provide fears but also means to overcome them.

To overcome our fears

Every fear is connected to a special demand:

- 1.The fear of existing demands that we say Yes to life
2. The fear of being abandoned demands that we become independent and stand on our own feet
3. The fear of guilt and punishment demands that we become autonomous
4. The fear of not being good enough demands that we become who we are instead of who we thought we should be

38. The Boomerang Effect

Demand one: Saying Yes and No to life

Some Dutch expressions: *You are what you say*

The pot reproaches the kettle that it is black

The joke is that we project unto others what we don't like or what we miss in ourselves and don't wish to acknowledge which, nevertheless remains a part of our personalities.



Knowing about projection can change your look on life. When I wrote my scripture about this subject more than twenty years ago I was in awe. Oh, if that is true, if the game of life is like that, I understand why it is so difficult and so funny and so seducing. I found out that one of the misunderstandings of life is that we think we are innocent and beyond reproach. That's why we play hide and seek and throw at others what we think they throw at us.

But it's not a matter of either/or, guilty or not guilty, it's an open and - and. The joke is that we project unto others what we don't like in ourselves and don't wish to acknowledge which, nevertheless remains a part of our personalities. The joke is that we project what we do not acknowledge or see in ourselves and therefore deny. To become aware of this phenomenon we need mirrors represented by our environment.

Unto our direct world we project all those hidden parts of our personality. Projecting is always done unconsciously, because we can only project what we do not know or wish to know. In practice this means that if we do not say "no" to others, they say "no" to us and we feel rejected. If we cannot say "yes" we feel unrightfully claimed or abducted by people who do say "yes" to us. If we are not allowed to be angry, we project our anger and will find ourselves confronted with anger in others. If we don't know that we are afraid, we project our fear and others start fearing us. If we deny our sexual potency, we project our sexual longings and it seems like the whole world is filled with horny people. If we do not know we are jealous, we will be haunted by jealous colleagues, lovers, siblings, friends.

If we believe we have no power, we will project our power onto others and feel like victims.

39. Becoming Conscious

And if we do not know we have the talent to draw, sing, dance, write, act, we will remain stuck admiring artists who do express themselves instead of becoming a painter, a singer, a dancer, a writer or an actor ourselves. When we realize that we cannot be operated on our characteristics, traits or instincts, because there are no surgeons who can cut out our jealousy or sexual drive or anger, we will know deeply how important it is to express ourselves. Instincts and conditioned behavior like natural urges cannot be amputated. What is or has become remains a part of us. We can only suppress these undesirable qualities, deciding not to express them. And if it is forbidden to say what we have to say, and do what we have to do, we force ourselves to pretend, preach, accuse, manipulate and project.



Only when we become conscious of what we do, can we change our behavior and say “this is me, I am what and who I am, whether I like it or not”. In order to empower ourselves, we must be prepared to let go of our idealized image as the superman or superwoman we thought we should be. Projection is often seen as a negative factor. That is unfortunate, since projecting can show us what earlier remained unnoticed. I for one, found out that the important men in my life were visually talented: my first great love was a film director, then I met an optician and a painter, I married a photographer and after my divorce fell in love with an art director. Now I am more and more aware of my own visual ability by painting, making photos and video’s. It is also exciting to take a closer look at who projects what on us. The photographer I married had crushes on people who were writers.

Projections are not incidental or accidental. They can make us aware of the fact that we have more possibilities than the five to fifteen percent we usually are able to develop.

Someone who is able to use twenty-five percent of his or her capacities, is already seen as a genius.

40. To Play is a Basic Need

The art of becoming a complete human being by using our talents and qualities can not only be developed by recognizing them, we also have to express them. Projection starts when as a baby we are lying in our cradle, with our full potential waiting to develop while the family comes to look at us and expresses their hopes and expectations of who we will be. There is no alternative, whatever we do, we have to play the deadly serious game of life. And just like in every other game, certain obstacles need to be taken on.



One of the rules we must accept is that we cannot play this game all by ourselves. We do need others. As a baby, we do not have much choice. We do have to put up with our parents, who, however willing they might be, in some way or other, will fall short because they are human beings and not gods. That is also a part of the game. But what do we know, when we are still children. The only thing we do want is that 'they' are happy with us and with who we are. And we want to feel and experience it. But even when they are happy with us, they appear to be happy on condition. Even loving moms and dads and other authorities have their ideas and expectations of how or what we should do and will be. We have barely opened our eyes and expectations pop out of every corner. It doesn't take long to figure out what they do and don't want from us, since it is evidently connected to being 'good' and being 'bad'. Crying is usually not an okay thing to do; parents don't like it.

41. Saying Yes or/and No

But even so, crying does get jobs done, it does ensure attention, although the question is if this is the kind of attention we so deeply long for. The choices are limited. We adjust to what is expected and behave as good boys or girls or we resist and revolt and are a nuisance. Both with the same aim: how to get attention. Both ways work only partly and the result is that we develop either a compliant or subversive personality.



We become someone who says "yes" more easily than "no" or someone who says "no" rather than "yes".

A 'yes person' can all her/his life be busy proving how smart, understanding, reliable, funny, charming, and so on s/he is. But this does not get her/him the kind of love and attention s/he needs, because people become jealous or irritated or feel rejected and neglected. In the meantime a "yes person" can be annoyed by people who ask for her/his attention and nevertheless say "No" to her/him by being angry, because s/he did not get the attention s/he was really longing for. This is how compliant "yes people" become victims of the defiant ones who rather say No. It means that one behavioral option lands in the trap of the other.

As a compliant type you can be willing enough to give out loving attention and help, but we remain who we are and if we give what we would rather receive, we will get irritated and impatient. The question is if our fear for rejection allows us to express those feelings. And as a defiant person we will not get the real loving care and attention we long for, and also get irritated and anxious.

42. Projection

Irritation, critique, anger, jealousy, we would love to abort these traits, be released of them forever, but life is not meant that way.



Both types are dealt the wrong cards, since they both need just as much love and care and expect to get it – in different ways - from outside. They will feel better when they start with caring for themselves instead of waiting for the care of the other first. Even if we “haven’t got a clue”, the subconscious part of our personalities does the job for us, by projecting on the outside world what we think we are not, often using the people that are closest and dearest to us. It might be an idea to be on the alert when people irritate us. Ten to one, we recognize something we would rather not be confronted with inside ourselves. Be aware when you easily get bored by talkers, for given the chance, you might talk until your ears drop off. And also if we admire people or are jealous of them, it is important to take a closer look. Possibly they have developed talents which we also have, but are afraid to express or are not aware of. The ones who say Yes easily, are irresistibly attracted to the ones who say No first, since they have to learn from them how to say No themselves. And reversely: the no’s are drawn to the yeses, because they long to learn what they have achieved: saying yes. At least, so it appears. But the “yes” and the “no” in question here, are shadows, apparent yeses and no’s. Behind a “yes” lingers a giant “no”, we don’t dare to reveal. If we are on the ‘yes’ track we are afraid to be abandoned if we let the no out of its cage. And behind the no of the other survivor rises a clear yes, they cannot say, due to a fear that no-one would care for them if they stopped being a victim.

43. Confrontation

There are only a few people that have learned to straight-forwardly ask for attention when they need it. The joke is on most of us, since we are one another's authorities and so mislead and manipulate each other. The arrogant, dutiful Yes people – for example a therapist - do their best to help the victimized No people. And the No's manipulate the Yeses by being cross and by being the victim. Of course we don't do this on purpose. If we did we would be able to step out of the pattern because we would become aware that our manipulations do not get us what we really need. Withholding is also a great weapon in battling for what we desire. So what do we want then besides the already mentioned attention we do not get? Care, love, sex, money, support, beauty, strength, warmth, food, knowledge, children, understanding, admiration, recognition, status, are (basic) needs. If our basic needs are not fulfilled our – unconscious - longing will continue and will go on projecting.



It is painful when we remain manipulative as long as we do not consciously know and say out loud what we desire and sincerely need.

No longer knowing what we need is a recurring theme. As long as we are passively waiting for a prince or a princess who will fulfill our every need, without knowing what it is exactly we are waiting for, we remain dependent persons who act like children. We only become true adults when we conquer our pride and fear and dare to admit we are needy. And when we do, we will have to face up to the confrontation, since the question then is: who will fulfill whose needs and to what extent? It means we must be prepared to not only look after our own interests, but also to those of the other. We shall have to measure up to one another, bow our heads and admit we need others - which to be certain – is not the same as being completely dependent on them.

44. Saying Yes

In my work I have discovered that I can invite this confrontation by simply asking clients to say “yes” or “no” in regard to me or to the group or to an empty chair that represents a loved one. In the sound of his or her voice I immediately detect his or her true intention. By just saying yes or no out loud, something happens inside a person. If a Yes person hears a “no!” emerge from his depths, or a real “yes” instead of the habitual “yes but”, and if a No person hears a “yes” or a “no” that is genuine, an AHA moment can follow. By participating in the yes/no game, we measure our strength and laughter usually emerges, enabling us to step out of the power struggle. Suddenly it occurs that it’s not about winning or being right, but about two people leveling and meeting one another, whether they agree or not. Then humor comes in and life becomes more playful. The other given is that a yes and no struggle is not only present outside of us but also inside.

Our yes or top dog tells us what - according to social rules - we must abide to. And in our no echoes the voice of our underdog, resisting all those musts.

Top dog and underdog, strong and weak, struggle to be first in line, which disables us from making the next step. Top dog says you must try your best, you aren’t good enough, persist, keep going. Under dog replies: I’m afraid, I cannot, I will not.



Shops are stacked full of books telling us how to change and improve ourselves.

Our pursuit toward self-improvement is bound to awaken the ever present yes no, no yes conflict. One voice says you have to keep going, prevail, be strong, the other voice objects it would be best to keep things as they are. Even if we arrive at change and progress this way, we pay the high price of fighting with ourselves, meeting our confusion over who we are and our insecurities, possibly resulting in abject self-hatred. Think of the painful and often useless attempts to lose weight or abstain from drinking or smoking. Usually the harder we are on ourselves, the more perfection we opt for, the more unbearable our situation becomes. It is too bad, but doing our best and taking trouble is not exactly rewarded with bouts of abundant happiness. If we try to function better by changing our patterns, we will find ourselves stuck in possibly even worse, alternative patterns. Because it is improbable that by doing our best we will ever be good enough in our own eyes. Still becoming aware of our projections can direct us to a path of self-fulfillment by integrating what we project.

45. Questions to chew on
by taking time for you and your process.



Can I say Yes?

Can I say No?

When can I say yes/ when can I say no?

Start with finding the right time and the right place and become aware you are in the here and now by directing your attention to your breathing. Sit upright to enable the energy to flow freely through your spine. Bring paper and pen or pencil to write or draw when you are ready for it.

46. Manipulating authorities

Demand 2: Standing on our own feet

Demand 3: Becoming Autonomous

The secret is that we must stop trying to become who we think we should be and start listening to our true selves.



The Paradoxical Theory of Change

Those demands bring us to the paradoxical theory of change by Dr. Arnold Beisser.* When we stop trying to do our best and are really prepared to acknowledge and accept our survival patterns, we will find change is at hand.

This is not easy, since we need to surrender and have faith, which is hard for any person to opt for. Way too risky. But if we are capable of letting go of our yes/no conflict, our abhorrence, self-critique, and face ourselves instead of running off, if we dare to have faith that what is happening is right, then the energy now being sucked up by the yes/no struggle will subside and we will have room to breathe freely and choose where we go. This approach alone though, will not solve our problems.

The secret is that we must stop trying and start listening to ourselves. Creating solutions without listening to our inner voices will not do the trick.

A wise Indian in *Native Wisdom for White minds* by Anne Wilson Schaef says it this way: *“Every problem the mind resolves, creates ten other problems. What we must do is listen to our heart and our soul.”*

Roots and primal authorities

But can we? How do we listen to our heart and soul?

Practically speaking, it means we literally have to take the risk of opening our hearts instead of navigating on our minds. Another paradox? Do we “have to” again?

Yes, I cannot deny we do, but this time it has nothing to do with answering up to demands from the outside world. This is a matter of a holy quest, coming from within.

47. Good thing about it is

that we can't be wrong, there are no grades to be given. We have a free choice: we either truly listen, observe and feel, or we don't. Time and time again, same story. Listening and observing people who surround us, listening to ourselves, to nature, listening to the invisible world.

Of course there are many ways to go about this, but the road starts with the fact that we are the child of our parents, who were children of their parents, and so on and so on. Whether we like it or not, we cannot deny our roots or primal authorities. No pears grow on an apple tree. We do have a choice though, whether we want to be a child forever, seeing our parents as beings who are or were not living up to our needs.



Or we can look with the eyes of an adult and see them as a man and a woman with their own lives with whom we can either connect or not. As long as we make our happiness or dismay dependent on them, we are not doing them or ourselves right.

If this is our attitude to our parents, then this is our attitude to ourselves and to other authorities as well. If we want to be free individuals, we must cut the umbilical cord again and again, stand on our own two feet and become who we are.

Not so simple, that's for sure, but we can also look at this as an inviting yet sometimes hazardous adventure called life.

The power of authorities

To stand on our own feet and free ourselves from the fear of being betrayed and left alone, we must move out of the power game. And to free ourselves from the fear of guilt and punishment, we must become autonomous. Without authorities we can do neither. Authorities are parents, bosses, lovers, teachers, people made of flesh and blood, who seem to know better or have power over us because they possess what we yearn for. That is why they attract us and at the same time invoke fear. We long for their love, acceptance and recognition, yet there's no guarantee our needs will be answered. What to do? Are we going to pretend we do not need them? Do we submissively wait for some miracle to happen or will we decide to enter the battlefield and step into the power triangle of omnipotence, impotence and the struggle for power?

48.Omnipotence

When we keep up appearances, despite the longing we have for attentiveness, love, a clean diaper and warm milk, we keep a stiff upper lip, we don't cry out, we don't let on. We do this because we don't want to know the painful truth about our unfulfilled needs. The consequence is that in time we no longer know what it is we long for or what we need and live by the pretext that we are self-sufficient. This can give us a feeling of power. If we think we need no-one, we are likely to get caught up in feelings of omnipotence.

You can recognize this phenomenon in people who are proud and stubborn, obsessively striving for perfection, unwilling to belong to any group, always wanting to excel and withdrawing in the face of conflict. If you hear others or yourself say "yes" more readily than "no", then you are confronted with this survival pattern of omnipotence. The role we play fitting this pattern is the role of the savior, the helper. Therapists often have this background.



Impotence

A different way of surviving is to raise your voice and let the whole world hear that you're in need of attention, that you want someone now to look after you, someone to be there for you, to love you. At the onset, it might appear that this could be a more profitable strategy. But here too, we can fall into a trap. It remains to be seen whether we really receive the attention we long for, if we are truly being seen, heard, and taken seriously. The danger is that we become naggers, who never are content. We start to believe we cannot do anything ourselves and are therefore forever in need of another person. If we hear ourselves or others excessively say "I'm frightened", "I cannot", "I could not", "I don't know" then we can be sure to have fallen into the gloomy pit of helplessness. We think we are not good enough, we feel inferior, we nourish our grief and stay dependent. When we are asked to do something, we almost always automatically refuse, and say "no" since we think we cannot do it ourselves. In this pattern we are in the role of the victim. As client we usually are.

49. Power struggle

The third way to attempt getting what we need, is by going into battle. When we notice we have to fight, time and time again in order to win, if we have to know better and be best and want to be right, if we feel superior, have a strong will and want to be boss, then we are trapped in the survival pattern known as the power struggle. We neither say yes or no and seem forever to be longing for something we do not get. The role we play can be of the prosecutor or the offender.



Longing to be the best

The upside of those patterns is, that they have enabled us to survive. The downside is, that they do not provide us with the much desired true attentiveness we actually need. Fortunately, we are usually nurtured and loved to some degree, but if we get more condescension than love it is difficult to become happy. Yet we do not easily give up our tactics since, however it may be, we answer to an image we have created of ourselves that appears to become our primary tool in survival. I, for example, always have to be the best. This has served me without a doubt, but it also has made me vulnerable since I cannot do without an authority who confirms my superiority. What I really need is recognition, appreciation, love. And if that is the case, I have failed. By striving to be the best, I was loved and honored to a certain degree, but more likely I was feared. In the process of wanting to be the best, I became rigid and lonely. That was not what I longed for but it took me a long time to realize that I was trapped.

50.Meeting a master teacher



My struggle with authorities and becoming autonomous dawned on me full force when I started to study Gestalt Therapy. I was much impressed by a Gestalt therapist who was leading a Buddhist retreat. The location in Spain where the retreat took place was like paradise, which certainly helped to bring me into a higher level of consciousness. We were lovingly guided into being silent, into listening and observing. By sitting still for one whole hour in one place, looking at a square meter of earth, I got a peak experience which is impossible to reconstruct on paper but by looking at a tiny plant I knew I was part of a bigger Whole.

I knew I entered a new era in my life and got pretty excited. I expected salvation from this tutor and went back for more enlightenment. The teacher became a role model for me. I wanted only ONE thing: to be noticed and approved of by her. I felt like I was in love. The teacher was constantly on my mind and when I was invited by her to engage in a workshop about leadership and co-operation, I landed in the seventh heaven. The message was that the teacher needed me because she was short of strong women.

51. Angry woman



It was a Christmas recess at the same location in Spain, to last for two weeks. What I did not realize was that this event was not a Buddhist retreat, but a Gestalt workshop. I did not know that the idea of the workshop was to confront one another and find out if we were capable to lead and co-operate at the same time. Naturally I felt obliged to act out my role as I thought a strong woman should be. That was confronting. I saw myself on video and cringed. Was I really that angry woman? Frightening.

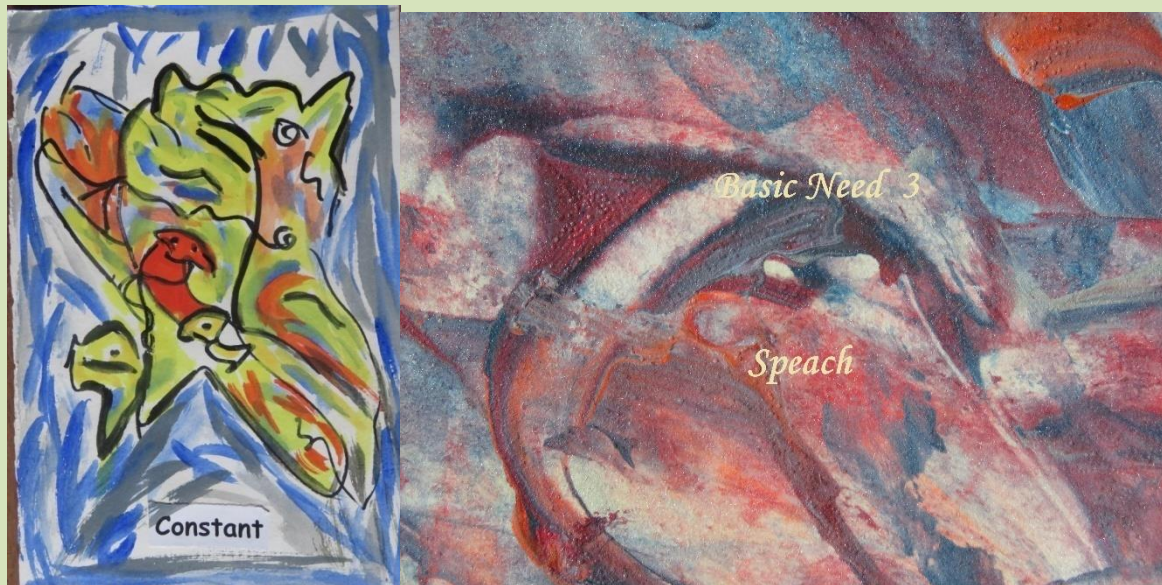
My spiritual, loving side which had emerged during the retreats, seemed to have completely evaporated. A witch rose up from the depths, and not only that, my good fairy, my divine tutor, appeared also to unfold another aspect of her personality. When my body let go of the pain I for years had suppressed in a drastically acute manner and stumbled around the paradise-like territory, folded up in various contortions of pain, my ideal role model passed by and wanted to know how I was doing. I said I was in pain. "Of course you are in pain", the authority snapped, "you have work to do". Later I heard her say to the co trainer: "She", with a nod in my direction, "has an authority conflict..." What did she mean? This statement was being made by the authority I looked up to most, so I had to take it seriously. Most painful was to realize that the tutor showed a certain disdain for me, now that this handicap had exposed itself even physically. So as a strong woman I tried very hard to prove that I might have a problem, but that this would by no means keep me from being the best student.

52. Ivory tower to survive

As a student I am not proud of the struggle that followed. I was so eager to be recognized by the authority, that I let myself be humiliated. In other words: I did not give in, just strived to be the best. Rather than admitting my teacher had hurt me and I didn't like it, I stood fast and tried to understand what was going on.

My confirmative yes nodding tactic of someone who needs no-one and won't budge, took me a long time to overcome. Years passed before I could bow my head and admit that I am grateful to my teacher, since she was my principal aid and guide to the path of Gestalt. It was not an easy path to follow. As students, we had to stand our ground if we wanted to confront our teachers.

It was part of the stuff we had to learn, I found out later.



Our own boss

The main question was – as always of course - who was which teacher's pet? Could it be me or was it one of the other students? Who would rise up to this favorite position? Who would decide this? That could only be the man or woman having the authority to do it. To be outspoken or autonomous, we have to become our own boss, our own authority, and in doing this, we need someone to challenge us. We require a role model which we can surpass in order to grow and become a free individual. Simply put: to become autonomous, we will explicitly have to engage into a battle with what implicitly has been present in ourselves for a long time. But because we feel a need to be seen and heard, we must at first answer to the expectations of authorities in order to get his or her consent. And in doing so, it appears we are forever in the process of becoming someone we think we should be, someone who is more intelligent, younger, richer, funnier. Painful enough we deny in this process certain traits that do not fit our self-image. Still, whatever is, is, and we are who we are.

53. Objects of desire

A clear example was the constant state of being in love I was in as a future therapist. During the four years of studying Gestalt therapy this was evidently – as I look back - not about sexual or personal love relationships. Objects of desire were therapists and trainers. They were deities, they possessed what I needed to develop, and obtain. When I had grown enough to invite clients into my practice, my state changed. The actuality of life left no room for dreaming of a prince on a white horse. When I became an authority myself, I was absorbed with all the expectations sent in my direction. So the yes or no game continued. As a therapist, I also have a choice to either answer what clients expect of me, or step out of my role and expose what this contact does with me, risking a confrontation since my clients could be disappointed and protest. But only in this way clients become in their turn autonomous and develop their own authority, because only they know what is good for them, discovering that they are no longer in need of me as an authority and therapist.



How about you?

Did you become your own authority already or are you stuck in a battle for power?

The following questions can set you on a trail:

Am I my own boss?

Do I speak my own voice?

Can I step out of the power game?

Am I a savior, a victim or/and a prosecutor?

Am I committed?

54. Our Other Half

*Demand 4: To become who we are
instead of who we think we should be*

*'The most painful lesson is
that it is not enough to be willing and prepared.'*

The One and Only



The question that has haunted me as a woman is if we indeed need that one man or one woman who can give us the feeling that we are special and more than just okay. If only we meet the One, who will turn out to be our prince on a white horse or our soul mate, we do not have to be afraid our lives are worthless. This expectation meant for me hoping that the man I would become engaged to, would also make my parents proud and happy. Then we would live a successful life, raising beautiful, intelligent and witty children. That is not how it went. And for a long time I thought this was due to the fact that I was a failure as a woman: not pretty or nice or witty or sexually attractive enough.

55. The day to day relation

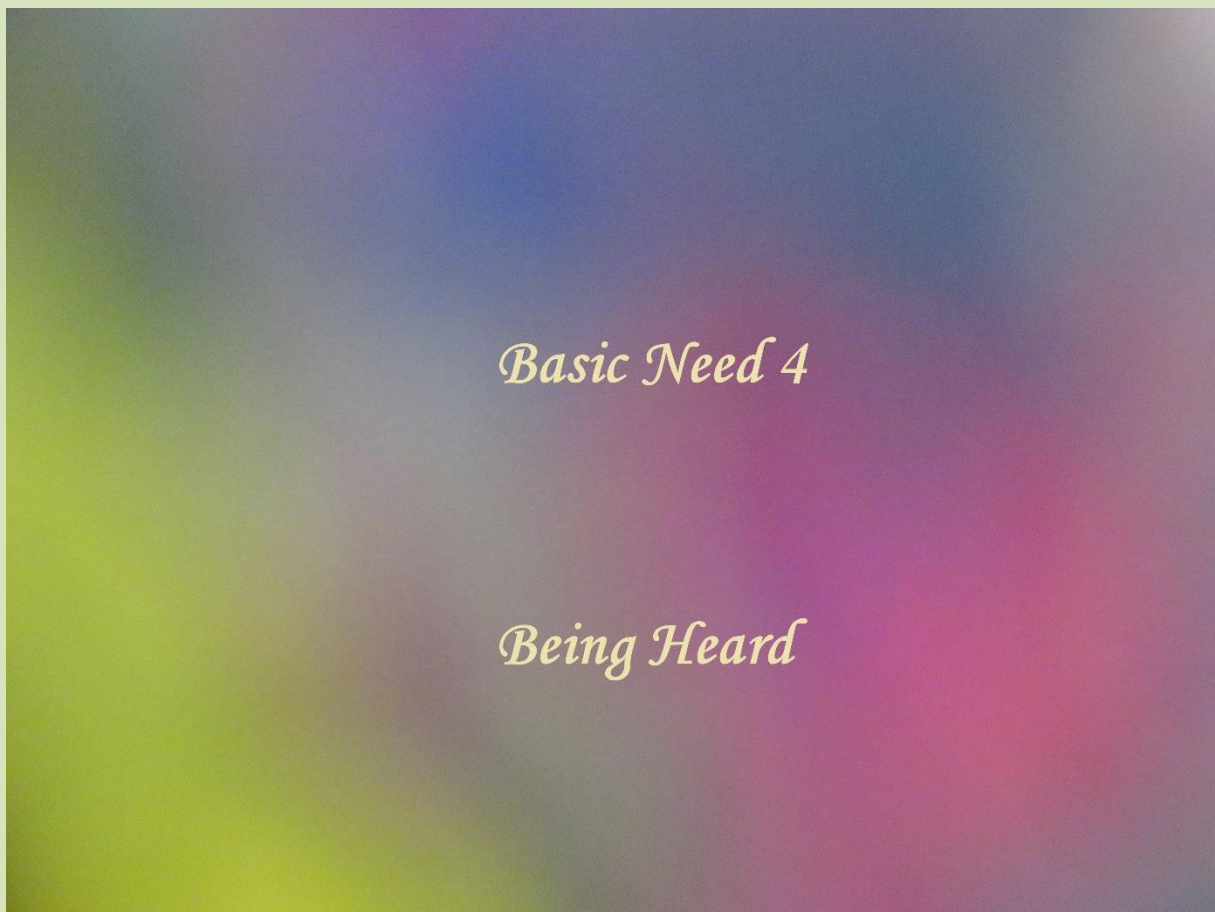
Only when I found myself back in therapy during my turbulent marriage, it started to dawn on me that being in a love relation does not mean, that 'they lived happily ever after' can be achieved. The most painful lesson for me was the discovery that it is not enough to be willing and prepared. In our day to day relation it becomes clear not only the power of love plays a role, but that also the black and slithery sides of our personalities can no longer be denied. By working as a therapist I know now, I am not the only one for whom a love relation was and is frustrating. At least a thousand times I wondered what this frustration is about. How does it come that partners in love can make life for each other so damn difficult? Is there any sense in this kind of suffering or are we wasting our time? For me the answer is Yes of course, there is a sense but if you ask me what sense, I still do not know exactly. It is a mystery. Can it be that we only get to know who we are in close relation with another human being? Can it be that we need daily to look into the mirror of the other that shows us our real face? To become who we really are we will have to accept that we can only become that man or that woman, that in first instance was already present in the womb of our mother. This means that our lives are beyond logic and therefore more surprising than *one and one is two plus a house and a child, a tree and a pet.* (Dutch expression)



Can it be that we only get to know
who we are in close relation with another human being?

56. Human beings are bisexual

According to some myths the original human being is androgyne: masculine and feminine. Or in other words: bisexual. If this is still true, it is not hard to imagine that men who believe they are just men and women who think they are only women will suffer from intensive inner conflicts. Our masculine and our feminine side can be engaged in a struggle that is as passionate as the struggle between lovers. Carl Gustav Jung* named the masculine element in a woman “animus” and the feminine element in a man “anima”. He stated that we cannot directly get in touch with our anima or animus, because they are not part of our conscious personality.



Our subconscious found a magic solution: it projects our longing for our anima (our soul) on women and our longing for our animus (our mind) on men of flesh and blood. This means that by projecting, we can get a glimpse of that part of ourselves we don't know. A way of projecting is to fall in love. With men it can work like this: they long so passionately for the beauty and the sensitivity of a woman that their sexual energy can rise sky high. A man in love is able to go to the end of the world for a woman he hardly knows. Maybe her blond curls or her mysterious smile or the warm sound of her voice touched him in the depth of his anima. And the woman who is chosen probably will feel honoured in the first place. She will want to fulfil his expectations, but deep in her heart she knows the day of truth will arrive, the day he will understand and experience that she is not the Goddess he believed her to be.

57. Verbally talented men

Women often fall intensely in love with verbally talented men: gurus, heroes, writers, actors, therapists, trainers, singers, artists, men who seem to know 'it' and are even able to express what 'it' means. Women who are hooked this way, can forget who they are themselves and become 'the servant' of the master they adore. The 'lucky' man will – presumably – at first receive her attention and admiration, but he will have to face the fact, that after all he is not that prince on a white horse she thought he was.



The turning of the tide

Falling in love can be wonderful, we imagine ourselves in heaven on earth. Pity the tide always turns. If it becomes clear that the man we fell in love with is not as wise as we expected. Or the woman not as desirable, our golden projection can change from one minute to the other to a black one. Especially when it is about love at first sight, we better be prepared. The first period as lovers we have fun, we make love, eat, drink and sleep together. It seems we are in paradise. But then she starts claiming him or he wants to possess her and his or/and her jealousy bring them back to earth. He thinks she became boring because he feels claimed and does not realize that his own anima, his own feminine pole can also be pretty boring and sulking. The problem is that her nagging voice is evident, while his nagging is still unconscious. He has no idea how discontented his own soul is and reproaches his loved one because she disturbs the romance. She in her turn, became without knowing, the prisoner of her jealous animus who projects his/her mistrust on her lover. Constantly she is afraid her lover will meet another woman he will like better than her. The joke is that both can be right. But if he does not know about his own moody anima and she has no idea of her own unfaithful animus, the danger is that they reproach each other what they better could face together. Our mistrust can become so enormous, that we as lovers become too afraid of each other to be in one room. We are transformed into a monster and a witch, who poison each other's lives.

58. Falling in love on an unconscious level

If the connection is about the attraction between anima and animus, between soul and mind, the relationship will be complicated. We fall in love on an unconscious level. Men with women, women with men and also men with men and women with women, because in the core we are bisexual. Men can be longing to make contact with their animus, their true masculine power and women can long for their anima, for the qualities of their soul. Falling in love brings a lot of advantages. It opens our hearts, it brings us together, it makes us willing to listen to the other, to see the other and it takes us to a different state of consciousness, a state in which we experience the world as a miracle. Nevertheless, a relationship mainly based on projections has no future if we are not prepared to face our expectations and relate them to reality. Developing an adult love relation is hard work because there are snags in it.



According to Peter Schellenbaum

love cannot exist without 'No'. And 'they lived happily ever after' is not the end but the beginning of the story. To become a happy couple and live long and happily ever after, we think we have to meet a number of conditions, that in the end will proof to be fatal for a human relationship.

59. The happy couple

For example: if you love each other and are a happy couple

- you should say 'yes' to each other without restrictions
- you will remain true for ever
- you feel and think the same;
- you do not criticize or betray each other and you do not say 'No';
- you keep your relationship nice and harmonious;
- you are never angry and do not fight;
- you do not nag;
- you succeeded in life and have a respectful status;
- your sex is deeply satisfying; both partners like to make love and like to spoil each other;
- you do not know loneliness; even stronger: if you are single and feel lonely, you better take care that you become the half of a happy couple;
- you are always available for each other;
- you are friends with other happy couples;
- you have happy children who have happy friends who are children of happy parents

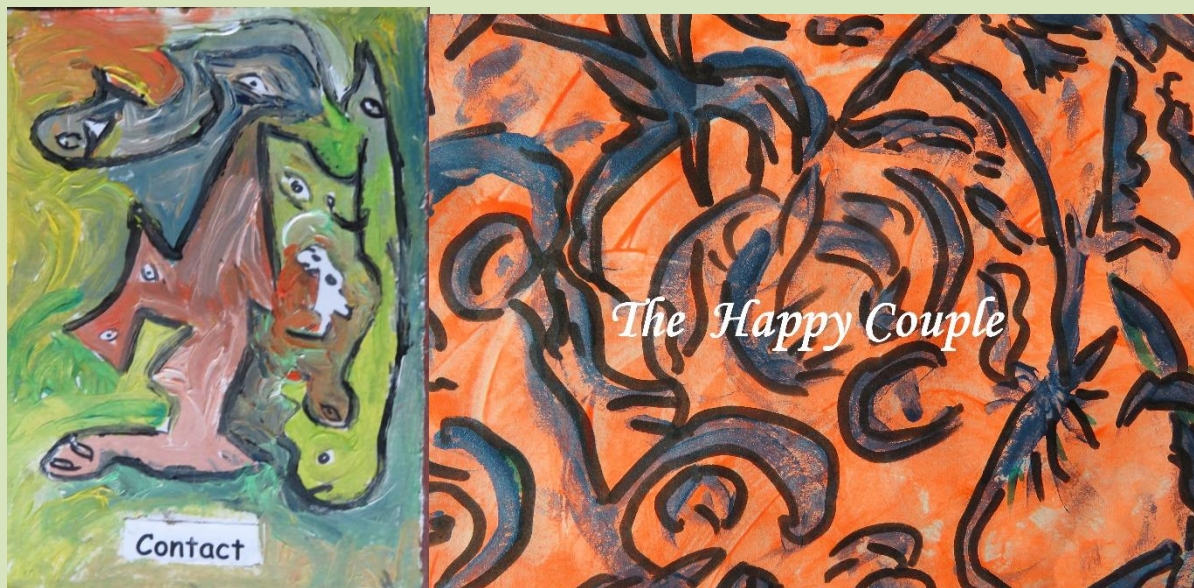


The ideal marriage or relationship?

Who does not long for it? But does it exist in reality? Even in the most passionate and loving relation the 'unconditional' Yes can change from one day to the other in No. If after the honeymoon our loved one turns out to be someone who does not fulfill our longings, we can decide without any compassion to stop the relation. Or we become so scared that we are willing to compromise. The result can be that we find ourselves back to playing roles in the wrong play. Leading question may be: who cares for whom? As partners in a love relation we expect that all our unfulfilled basic needs will be answered. Is it possible that this is the reason we fall in love with a copy of the parent who has the sex of our sexual preference? Does the mysterious animus look as two drops of water like our father and the anima like our mother? If the answers are Yes, it would mean that falling in love is not so elusive as we believe. We cannot deny that Pa and Ma are in us. Possibly they are searching for the mirror in which they can recognize their own image outside us.

60. The image of our parents

How is it to share our lives with a man or a woman who seems to resemble more and more our father or mother? You almost look like your mother or your father, is usually not meant to be a compliment. Personally I believe that we are supposed to continue our life history where we got stuck with our parents. If our basic needs were not met, we are still waiting for what we need and could not ask for when we were a child and dependent. Now we are grown up and still long for warmth, tenderness, love, support, care and attention we have to learn to take responsibility for what we need by asking for it, maybe even demanding. We will become unhappy if we think we will get what we long for presented on a tray. If we become aware of ourselves sulking all the time, or we realize we are in a constant battle for power with our partner, we've got work to do. First by finding out what it is we are longing for. And second, to learn how to get what we need. Forcing the other does not work.



It is what children try who want it their own way. How to do it then? The only way as far as I can see, is to step out of our pride, bow our heads and admit that we long for love, warmth, sex, support, care and attention. If we are afraid that the one we love will reject us and say No to us, asking is more than just difficult. Just imagine, admitting that we truly need sex and the answer is: do you? Well I don't. Pity for you. There we are naked, desire raging through our body. We might even feel ashamed or humiliated, but why? I think it is strange and painful to be ashamed because our deepest needs are not fulfilled. Must be connected to the fear of not being good enough. How can I expect my loved one to give me warmth, love, support, sex if I do not feel desirable or lovable?

61. Vicious circle

Here we are in a vicious circle. We wonder if we are attractive enough to be desired and want to be confirmed by the one we love. If we feel uncertain and walk on our toes we are trapped, because the other won't feel free. He or she is supposed to convince us of our splendour and that is impossible because we do not believe we are good enough to get what we long for. If we think we only deserve what we need if we go to the beauty shop first or take a course to make a more attractive or intelligent impression, we become our own enemies. The dramatic truth is that we can go to the hairdresser every day and can learn whatever we want, but it will not make us more lovable if we feel uncertain. This does not mean that we should not go to the hairdresser or not go to a course or a training to learn more, but we better realize that love is not for sale this way.



The fear of not being good enough causes our reluctance to say wholeheartedly Yes to each other. We are too afraid of what will happen if we say Yes and the other says No or Yes But. Our fear of not being valuable enough will prove to be true. At least, it does if we stay with the No and do not ask what it is about. If I am certain he says No because he thinks I am not pretty, nice, lovable or intelligent enough, I am the one who says No to me first because I do not dare to ask what his No is about. How can we know why we are rejected if we do not check what we suppose? Maybe it is not about me but about him, because he is afraid he cannot live up to my sky high expectations? If I do not ask, I will never know. And that is where the challenge is.

62. Existential questions

If I am too afraid to pose the question, I give away the power to decide myself whether I am okay or not. If I am secretly hoping he will convince me that I am good as I am, I tell myself the wrong tale. Being good enough is about our identity and our being. We are who we are and only I can have a clue who I am and the same goes for you. If I think I know how and who you should be, I am above reality. How can I if I even do not really know how and who I am?

Still we share problems. If we are women who should have been men, we have the same deep existential question. It's the same if we are old and white and should be black and young. Only if we can say out loud Yes to who we are, we can say No to that part of our personality that is not us. If we are stuck in 'Yes but' and 'No but' our frank Yes and our full No will go underground and we will radiate something secretive that will undermine our relations.

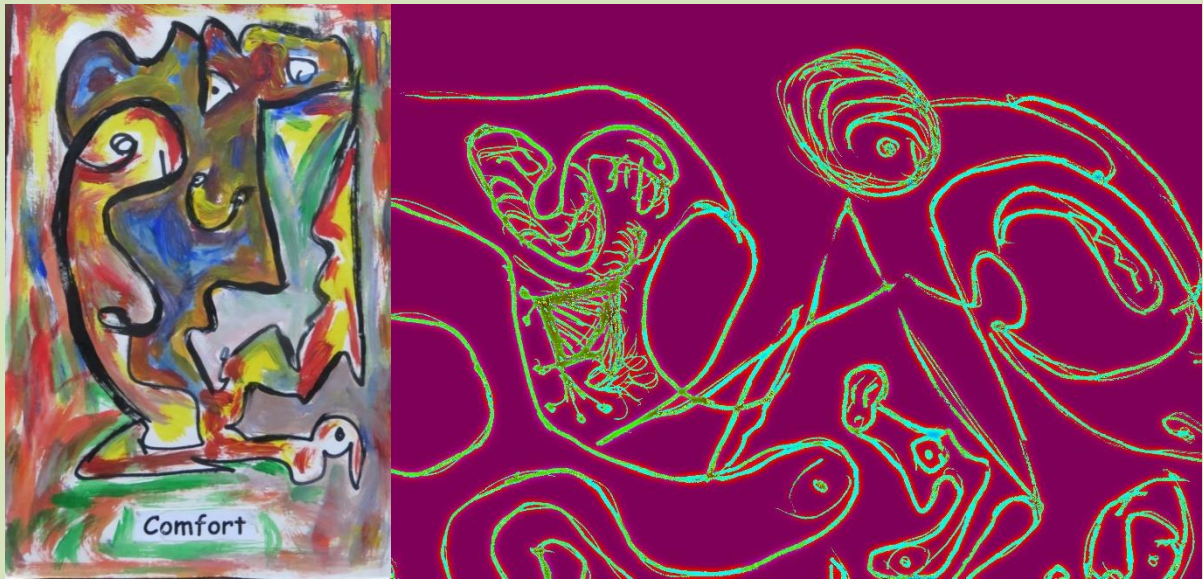


Sexual fantasies

Often we do not know what we exactly long for. That is why our sexual, romantic and violent fantasies about our loved ones can guide us. Those images or dreams about a man or a woman have a meaning. Our sexual fantasies are also mirroring our longing for our own anima or own animus, for our longing to connect with our soul or our mind. This can be erotic and romantic but also violent. Our loved one can change into a devil who will rape us. Or into a strict mother who does not love us or into a possessive father who dominates and abuses us. Anything is possible in our dreams and imagination. Scary! Better not talk about it in public. Nevertheless those images represent normal – subconscious - needs. Precisely because our longing to become a complete human being is so intense, the images that go with it are so vehement. Only when we become afraid because we believe we have to bring our imagination into action or because we think what we experience is reality, we can lose ourselves. When we reject and suppress those images out of fear, they will stay with us and can become dangerous for our health and feeling of wellbeing.

63. Becoming whole

And of course our sexual fantasies are also about the longing to be near another person, the longing to literally feel another body of flesh and blood. And about wanting to become one with this other person in a way that can only be reached by surrendering and coming into each other. But the continuous tension that dominates our lives is caused by the contradiction within ourselves. Our masculine side challenges our feminine pole, our animus tickles our anima, our mind thinks he is the boss of our soul, Yang and Yin struggle for the biggest space. And this very tension changes into excitement every time we meet a man or a woman who awakens our animus or our anima and sets our bellies on fire.



Aha, is he the One or is she? And then the game recommences. After rose buds and moonbeams the conflicts and the fear to lose ourselves or our loved one follow. But in the end it will become clear that becoming whole can only be accomplished within ourselves. Becoming one with another human being is not the same as becoming one with our own 'other half', but the one cannot exist without the other. That is why I plead for granting ourselves our lust and desire. Let's compare it to gold-ore, that is not to be found on the surface. You have to dig for it and if you find it, you will have to purify it to find gold. Throwing it away would be a pity, maybe even a sin.

64.A complete human being

This text is mainly based on the Jungian heritage, because it gave me the insight I needed, when I struggled severely with a love I lost and could not get over. The only way I could go on was to understand why it happened by writing the undercurrent. Step by step I could and can accept that I had to grow this way, not because I am inferior but because I am a woman who longs to become who she is: a complete human being.



How about you and your experiences with relations and sex and love and longing for the One. How about your search for who you truly are in relation to your loved ones. If you can, take time now and meditate on questions as: Am I good enough as a woman? Am I good enough as a man? Am I good enough as a lover? Do I long to connect? Do I believe I have a soul mate? Did I meet my soul mate? Do I believe in love?

If you read or scan the text again you can find your own questions that urgently ask for answers. Do not be shy, your questions can bring you to your own answers and wisdom if you allow yourself to let your hand do the work and write.

65. Staying in the Heat of a Gestalt Conference

Sexless Queens and Kings

The psychoanalysts are better one of us had heard from a friend



Yin (on the right side) Yang energy

Cut off from sexuality

I am happy, I am at an AAGT* conference and so many people came in, I like to see and so many like to see me. Feels like being a queen. I am a queen if I choose to be a queen. Can I be a queen or am I still waiting for the king or the prince, before I am ready to show my radiance. The princes and kings coming here are nice men, good willing, good therapists, they probably are good for their families and friends, but they seem to be more or less cut off from their sexual energy at conferences like this.

I can imagine that they don't want to imitate the sexual radiance that some of our early teachers showed, but did this bring them and bring us women to the other extreme? Last night I had a dream about an ex-lover and his new love who was also his old love. They needed something I had and we sort of shared and swapped it around. The main emotion that is still with me is, that I was good willing to my rival and therefore had to cut myself off from my own sexuality. Only like that I could connect with them both. Me sexual? But No! Me longing? But No! Not me, at least not for this lover anymore. In the dream my ex became a boy again, who lost his power over me and over his own sexuality. Is he good to the motherly types in his life? I wonder. I do not have a clue, but I do know he will be a nice granddad for his little granddaughter.

Fundamental Anger

Yesterday evening I was out with a colleague, surrendering to magical jazz music. My colleague told me how deeply wounded she is by the abuse of her father. By listening to her, I realized how wounded I am myself. My fundamental anger with men comes out, when they behave like resentful boys in grown up bodies, thinking they can force me into the role of a 'mother'. Am I, at the same time still waiting for that one man to love me,



Yin Yang (on the left) energy

take me, possess me, make me feel like a woman again? My anger probably keeps those men away from me. It is what happened this winter when I found out about the fear of the men, I was working with. Women are also afraid of me, but that is a different matter, or is it? I am not only an angry but also a sexual woman. I feel and experience it at conferences like this. And I wonder if the men who are present here are not only afraid of my aggression, but also of the sexuality I may be radiating?

Lack of Sex

The end of the evening I spent with five women in the bar, complaining about the lack of sex in the men, who came to the conference. The psychoanalysts are better one of us had heard from a friend. I felt irritated with the topic, because I do not want to be dependent on men, but did not say so. I wanted to be one of the women, instead of being different. I told about my recent experience with the Jewish singer, I followed because he set me on fire by just singing and being his masculine self. At first they thought what I told was awful. Didn't I want to be with him forever? No and Yes. I did and do not. I am not made to be his partner. It's not my sacred task. I do not long to be his wife nor his friend nor his lover. I play a different role in this case. Of course I secretly do long to make love with men, who set me on fire and approach me in a way that awakens my sexuality, but I know the moment I would surrender the magic would be gone.

The Game of the One and Only

When I told this to the critical women, they began to understand, that although a man like that can give you a feeling of being chosen, it is not so easy to be with him in a day to day relation. Then the game of wanting to be the One and Only forever starts. Do you love me? Will you be true to me? Do you like the other too? Are you also attracted to her? Am I not the only one? Oh, sorry, I forgot, it is true that you are not exactly the one and only man in my life either. Oh yes, you are right to be jealous of my past. Of course I have had my passions with men, just like you had and have with women.

66.The Witch



Yin energy

This brings me back to the witch in me.
I am wearing a necklace with a serpent.
I got as a present in Russia after I gave a workshop
about the awakening of the sleeping serpent.
Then I was allowed to show my radiance,
even or just in my role as a facilitator.
Marvellous. I can still feel it!

Being sexual and using it to enjoy life, having fun, laughing and playing with a group of people is different from being sexual with the One and Only. Though the challenge in both cases – I believe – is the same: allow yourself to be sexual even if you do not feel chosen.

About You

Plenty of questions to chew on: am I chosen? Am I jealous? Am I the only one? Am I true to her/him? You can write about it just for you and you can of course communicate about it with your loved one(s), friends, sisters, brothers. I am certain those questions are not new, but they can feel like new, if you explore them without guilt towards yourself, or resentment to the other.

67. *Never give up...*

Frustrating Marathon

As a pre-conference activity I offered a creative marathon, where participants were invited to play with words. Most frustrating was the realization, that whatever would present itself, we would not have time enough to work it all out.



Yin &

Yang

An Hectic Start

At home I had a fantasy of a daylong playing with words, that could be sung or performed, drawings that could be danced. This fantasy turned into a pre-conference proposal for a creative marathon. Enough people felt attracted to make my dream come true. This morning we were with twelve people in a rather small room, where we looked at each other trying to find out who was who. The start of this day was hectic. There was a lot of noise in the room. People came late, we all had been travelling, some hardly remembered what they registered for. People I expected did not come, others came just because they wanted some kind of workshop.

I did not feel alarmed, was so convinced that, what I had to offer would make people happy. After hearing each other's names and some of the aims, I gave a meditation focused on 'I am' and invited the participants to start writing without censoring. My own words:

I Am

'I am Tine and I am sitting here in the Lawsuit of the Thistle Hotel in Manchester, with more than ten people who are willing to go out on a journey with me and with each other. I feel privileged, I feel that I am guided to be able to do this work and share my trust. I am so eager to offer what I have to offer in this field that I get stuck.

Here I am, this is what I have got and I do not know, how to hand it to you other than to take time and tune in to who you are, and find out if there is a way we can meet each other by tuning into the same kind of vibrations.

I long to love, I long to share, I long to open up and that makes me shy indeed, as one of you remarked. I heard this morning your stories, heard about your backgrounds and I can see the energy filling the room that was empty – except for the chairs – when I came in. We filled it with our energy, because we are willing to show ourselves in some way and make our world more safe.

If I go back to the I am, I can say that I am the facilitator and initiator, who has the power and the faith to receive whatever you want to present. Though this does not mean,

that I will become happy with every word, every sound, every line. No some words, some lines will make me sad or angry and I don't find it easy to show those emotions. And yet some words, some sounds will touch my soul and will make me happy. Strange thing is that this is not easy to show either, because it is about love. And who am I to presume I know about love.'



Yin &

Yang

Reflecting in Hindsight

As this was supposed to be a creative marathon, I wanted to interfere as little as possible. I wanted to give the creative process the chance to develop all by itself. We all had read our stories out loud, and there was so much potential in the stories to play with, that to me it seemed a matter of trust and taking time to let people express themselves. Yet the process that unfolded was heading straight for the impasse, as aggression and fear – more or less suppressed – were the main emotions. I felt my power of being in charge slipping away and became helpless.

When – after lunch – people did not come back, even without telling me or the others; and when one of the participants wanted to leave before the time was over, I surrendered and decided to let him go without trying to involve him after all.

Writing Letters

What was most frustrating was the realization that whatever was the matter, we would not have time enough to work it all out. All I knew was that only by going back to our own processes, we would have a chance to come out of this workshop with a fairly good feeling. That is why I invited the participants who were still there to write a letter to themselves, a letter to ask or tell what was the matter with them, to ask or tell how they felt after this day, what they did and liked and what they did not like. My letter to me: 'Shy Tine, angry Tine, I am so sorry that you were so convinced you were going to give a beautiful workshop. So convinced that people would be happy with you, and with what you have to offer, that you let yourself be cut off from your divine and creative energy. You are so stupid, the moment you are criticized you shrink into a mouse that only radiates: sorry, I am here, sorry, I can't make you happy.

Or you take off with the eagle in you that tells you high up in the air no one can bother you, no one can reach you because you know better. You let yourself be disappointed, irritated and arrogant, rather than show your vulnerability and your pain, because some people don't trust you, don't listen to you, but only listen to their own doom scripts or to their own knowing better. You wanted so much to achieve success, that you forgot about me, the creative playful one, who is also shy, but who has the laugh, the dance and the singing. You only very rarely dare to show this side of you profoundly. Yes on the surface,

but to share from deep down that you are happy, being happy seems dangerous. You are afraid that people will laugh at you, that they will be cynical as you yourself can be. That's why you hide this diamond. But as the process goes on, there is always hope, always a new chance that you will unite with me, your divine energy.'



Profound Changes

Sharing our letters changed the atmosphere. One woman stated that she never in her long therapist career, had been part of such profound change, in such a short time. What they had written surprised themselves and surprised the group. It made them wonder in a more friendly way. Still I knew that there was unfinished business, we did not have time to really attend to.

Early words next morning:

I am nauseous, don't feel well at all

I believe the best I can do is move out of this conference

I can hardly stand all those people together

I am still angry and wounded

by the process of the creative marathon yesterday.

And I wonder what I can do to heal myself.

Write is one thing, sing is another.

Go back to me.

Don't think of leaving, don't do it, it will not,

I say NOT make you happy.

Listen to the lesson, listen to your body,

listen and feel that this is a painful place for you

at this moment or in this period of time.

You see too much, you feel too much and know too much.

Yet all you can do is be there as a witness not as a saviour.

Yes, you can save you, that is for certain,

but everybody else has to save her- or himself.

It is a good lesson in the sense

that it makes you wonder about giving presentations

and workshops when your book is published.

Be prepared for the shit that will be projected on you.

Become aware of the fact that this shit is mostly not about you.

It is about the one who is shitting or projecting with a more professional word.

Your own expectations and projections

concerning the creative marathon were to find gold.



Yin plays with Yang

And you forgot that to find gold you first have to dig in the burning sun that might kill your body and nourish your soul.

The work you move into is subtle work.

Still, I think you did a beautiful job yesterday.

You nourished yourself enough to go on with this work.

Once more you know by experiencing it, that the chance is in the frustration.

The chance to make contact, the chance to meet, needs the pain road.

So you have the rest of the conference to connect with the people who were with you in this marathon and also felt the threat.

Don't give up, never give up, as your colleague from Israel said.

Don't do it. Believe that there is a sun coming up the next morning, a sun giving light, although maybe not the warmth you long for.

Look out of your window now and see the truck coming out of the opposite building with the word sunlight on it plus a painted sun beside it. A miracle:

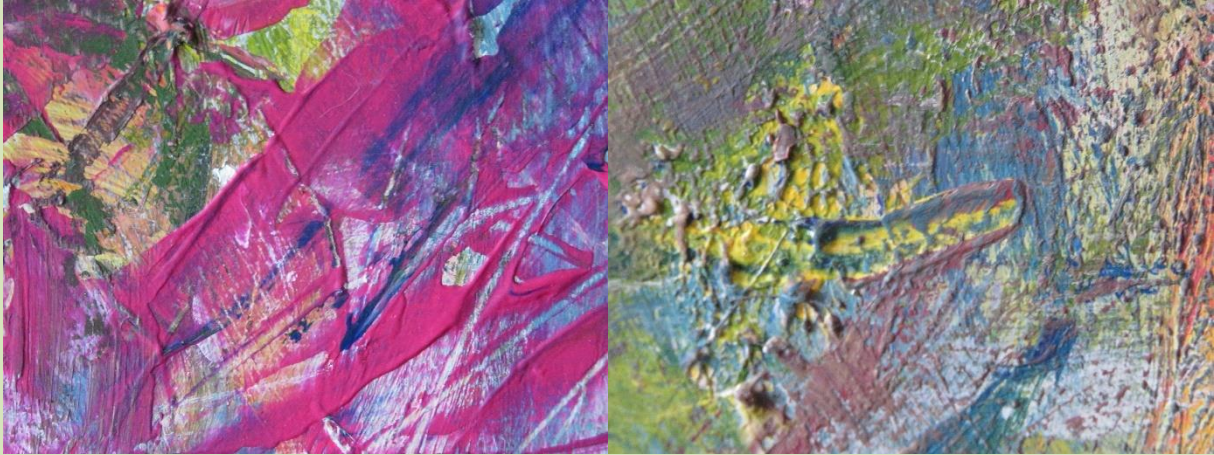
the sun is there even though it seems to be in hiding.

Questions:

Do you think being creative is linked to pure glamour? Or did you experience how frustrating and challenging it can be to create a work of art? Are you afraid of your creativity? Are you talented? Do you trust what you write?

68. Crossing Bridges

“Awareness is the spontaneous sensing of what arises in you, of what you are doing, feeling, planning. Awareness is like the glow of a coal that comes from its own combustion.” Paul Goodman



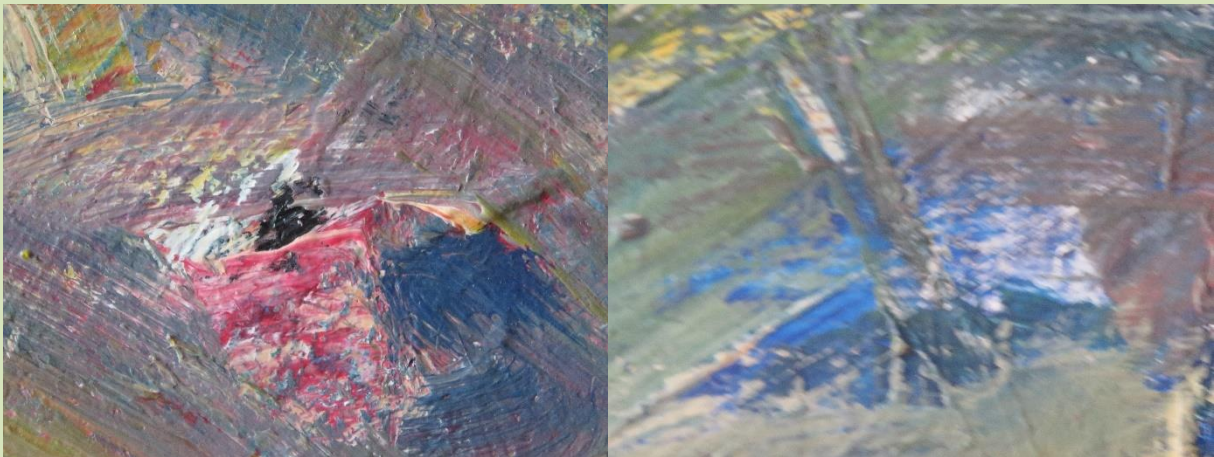
Longing for Contact

Being at this conference is like being in a house, I have been building for seven years and can only now fully experience. Seven years of putting energy in by thinking, writing, reading, feeling, anticipating, organizing, feeling responsible and communicating by email and telephone with colleagues all over the world.

Will all this lead to a top experience of being together and seeing and hearing each other in a contact full way? To recognize and admit this deep longing makes me vulnerable. Longing for contact, is of course what has been driving me for as long as I can remember. Again and again I found hot fires, where I felt invited to open up and show my inside out. And always there came a moment, I decided I better close myself off as the field had become too dangerous and threatening or too boring to be my creative self. So far the field of the AAGT has brought me enough support to trust that I am allowed to open my mouth, without being rejected, enough support to show what I have professionally to offer. Although this time my proposal for a workshop about ‘Passion + Awareness = Compassion’ was rejected. That is why I am more on guard. I have to face the fact that the value of what I wanted to offer was not recognized. What I understood is that the reviewers had the idea, that my workshop would depend on the presenter. Could be and so what? Every workshop does. But okay, being in a hot fire means having to deal with different views. It all depends on the reviewer or on whoever crosses your path.

69.Spiritual Foundation

Before I found Gestalt I practised Zen and other forms of Buddhist meditations. I learned about awareness and being in the Here and Now, by sitting for days on pillows, by getting up at six in the morning to meditate and sing mantra's. I have been trained by the Flemish/Dutch School for Gestalt & Psychosynthesis, where Gestalt was connected to a spirituality, that asks for an awareness I had already experienced. I was elated to find a way of living that taught people you have to be aware and in the Here and Now to communicate and make contact with people. I have to tell all this because I did not realize, that not all Gestalt colleagues have this same foundation. And that is why my expectations of Gestalt conferences do not always match the reality. During this conference I often became irritated, felt painfully rejected and isolated, was a few times ready to leave the conference and had top experiences, I would not have wanted to miss for anything in the world. In the report that follows I weave together what I experienced then and what I am aware of now while typing out my handwritten notes.



Yin meets Yang

Guilty Feeling

I already wrote about the pre-conference marathon, that made me aware of my fear of not having time enough, to let the process develop and find the meaning of what happened. I hate to have to stop a workshop, when still in the middle of a process that is not completed. In the creative marathon for example, there was so much anger we did not have time to deal with. No time to stand still and explore the background of what happened between us. No time to dismantle our projections and take responsibility for our needs, instead of thinking it all happened because of the faults of the other. The only thing I could do is trust, that the process would continue for each group member as it did for me. But I kept a guilty feeling of having failed to meet expectations and had no way to share this with the people involved.

Too Much Rivalry?

In the first plenary meeting we were invited to participate in an experiential opening, 'that will provide for an exploration and experience, of the evolving nature of AAGT and a celebration of our maturing identity as an international community.'

As I did not make any notes then, I have to let myself be guided by my memory and feelings while writing. We were all asked to form a group with our compatriot colleagues, and I found myself back standing rigidly in the Dutch group, realizing that I longed for the time I was the only person from The Netherlands present during AAGT conferences.

At that time I had hardly any history with anybody present. But there is no way back. I was the one who initiated a regional AAGT conference in Amsterdam, that led to this conference and the presence of colleagues I have trouble connecting with. Too much rivalry in a small country?

While standing there I looked around me and became jealous of all those happy others. Or did I just wear the kind of glasses that made their grass seem greener than mine?



Confrontation between Yin and Yang

Inhuman Basement

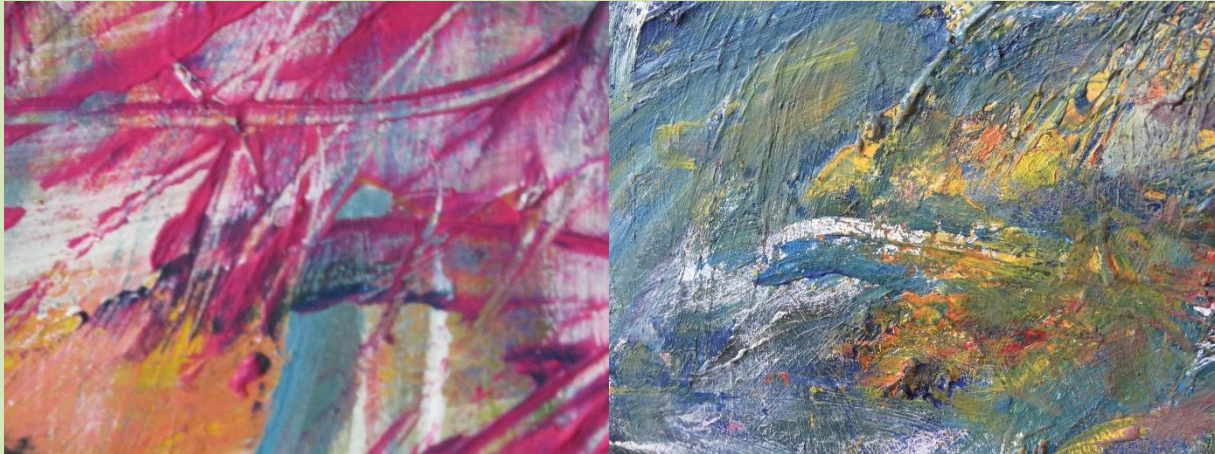
In the second plenary I experienced what I longed for: humour by one of the keynote speakers. Not to miss anything I sat on the front row and enjoyed myself immensely. I felt a privileged woman to be present in an inhuman basement, where it was chilly and where there is no light from the real source, but nevertheless was transformed into a welcoming atmosphere. It is why I decided in the afternoon to go to his workshop, although it took place in a part of the same basement. As extra frustration we were tried out by the air conditioning, that worked with so much noise that we could not hear each other. It made us laugh, though it was not really funny. There we were willing to meet, to show ourselves and the air conditioning seemed to have the last word, until someone told about a frightening experience in Dublin during a demonstration that was violently suppressed.

All of a sudden a complete silence filled this room. I can still feel the emotions in my throat. It turned out that not only the storyteller was then in Dublin, but also other people in the room who experienced the same fright, angst, no matter what side they were on. When I came out of this workshop I felt purified. Here happened what I meant in my rejected proposal: the passion, meaning the suffering, was met by genuine attention and awareness of the whole group, that led us to compassion. The written introduction to this workshop told us “Contact is the unique lynchpin of Gestalt therapy. (...) We will broaden our perspective on contacting by finding intentionality within it, drawing on the experience of those present to develop and clarify our concepts. Clinical examples will be discussed.”

Mutual Silence

Although everyone will have a different interpretation of what happened, no one can deny the moments of complete silence that opened hearts so compassion could enter and do its work. I believe that as a writer it is up to me, to find words to share with my readers the importance of what happened.

It is with this intention that I write about my conference experiences. I do not intend to give a factual report, but I hope by writing I can go to the undercurrent, where I can find out about my drives behind my presence in this conference. Only by differentiating in contact, I can cross bridges and make my borders clear, as the conference theme assures me.



Question is:

do we walk our talk, do we practice what we know?

Please take time to wonder about the big dilemma's:

Am I aware? Am I present in the moment?

Do I see what there is to be seen, hear what there is to be heard, say what I have to say?

Or am I in my thoughts planning, worrying, longing, listening to my fear?

*Meditate on it, chew, wonder what it means for you to be aware,
to be in the Here and Now, to be awake.*

*What does Paul Goodman, the author of the quote above,
mean by "the glow of a coal that comes from its own combustion"?*

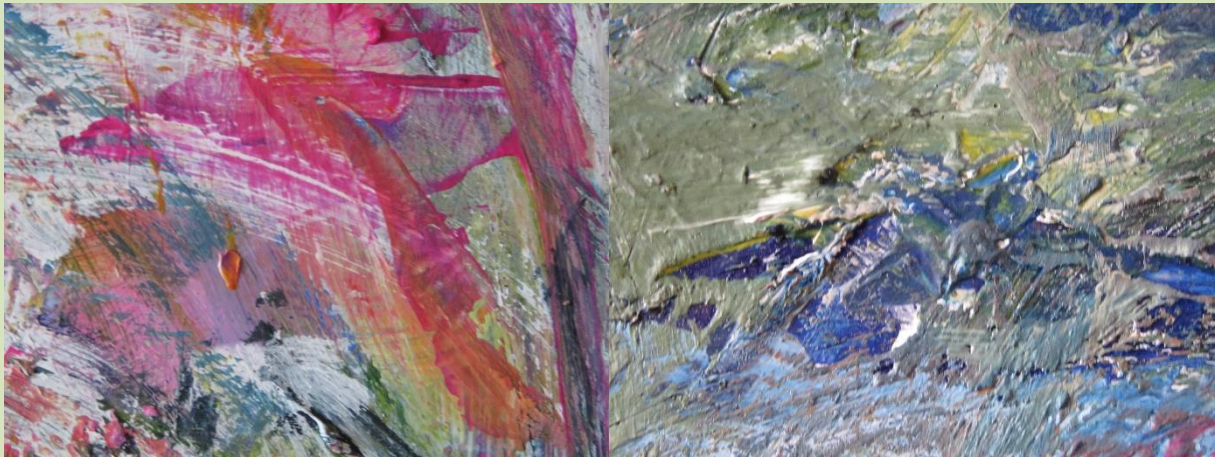
Do not hesitate but write anything that wants to be written.

You will be surprised with the words that will appear on your paper or on your screen.

70.High price

Still in Manchester: *One of the coordinators told me he wanted a word with me*

My first written words that morning are: 'I should not have come.' Yet I did and I did have some top experiences. The price is high though, I hate to say it, but it is. Can I feel compassion for the colleagues, that rejected me instead of giving me the support I need? Not easy at all. I suppose it is the work I have to do.



Process Groups Crisis

Back in Amsterdam typing those conference notes out, I reflect and wonder. I did not write any details down then, but I know this is about my Process Group*crisis. Or 'my'...? Yes mine... Process groups became my personal AAGT nightmare. I hate the experiences I have had leading PG's. Did I do my best too much, wanting to prove myself a good group leader, knowing beforehand that time is too short to deal seriously with processes anyway? Is that why I became a PG trouble maker in the eyes of the coordinators? At least that is what I understood later. Then – when it happened - I did not know 'they' decided I had to be controlled, because they had doubts about my ability to lead a group.

And yes, they seemed to be right; there were complaints about the way I was leading the group, I was told the evening we were making music, singing, dancing, being free and happy.

A Word

One of the coordinators stopped my dancing, told me he wanted a word with me and I followed him in the back alleys of the hotel, where the pipes are running and no guests are supposed to come. I expected a professional discussion, but my colleague just let me know there was a complaint about me, and refused to tell me what it was about and who was complaining. I felt like a small child being told she is useless, I felt anger and sorrow rising up in me, but showed my arrogant face, telling him that I did not intend to take this personal and went back to the dancing, the singing and played with verve the djembe.

Complaint or Question

Was it a real complaint, were there just questions, was it about me? A matter of differentiating contact? I will never know the truth as I decided to withdraw from the group, instead of going back in as proposed, and being patronized by my spokesman to

look at matters. I did not want to take the risk to be stuck in a process, that is impossible to solve in 45 minutes.

I did not want – as I experienced before in PG's – to be the leader who has to be killed before the process can go on. I certainly did not want to consume the process group time. I have been leading ongoing groups for the past twenty five years, and I do know about group dynamics and projections and how much time that costs.



Blow to my Ego

Only later, when I realized the blow my ego received, I became aware of my real anger, decided I better be more open and tell the coordinator how I felt towards him. I asked him if he trusted me as a colleague and the evading answer I got, was that I did a good job organizing an AAGT conference in Amsterdam. But that is different work, I said. Yes, he agreed. It became clear that he indeed did not trust me as a therapist/trainer, because of the trouble I caused during a previous conference and because... ? It was a drop that almost did overflow my AAGT bucket.

Conflicts and Confrontations

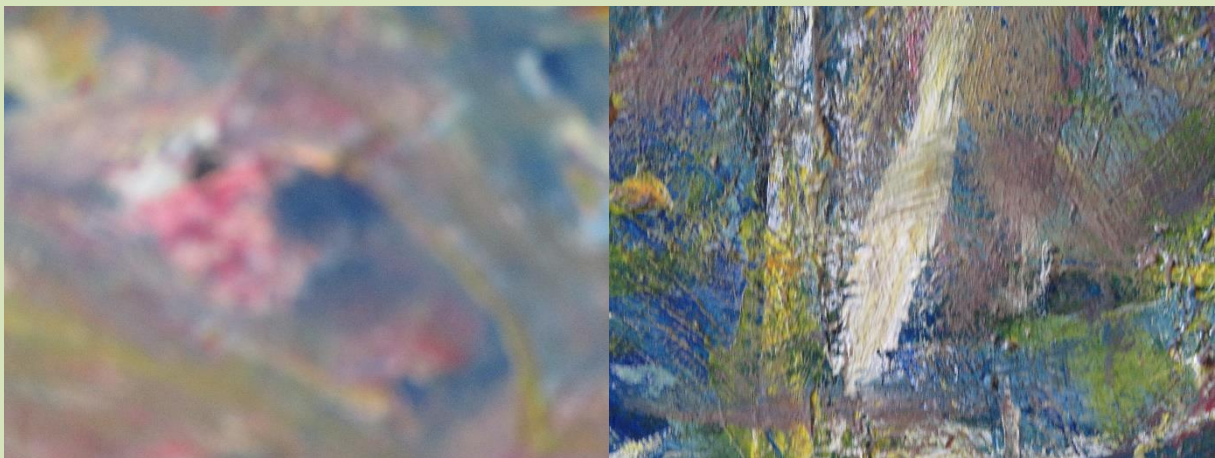
Reflections Here and Now in Amsterdam. It is late. After walking my dog I come back to this writing, because I do not want to go to sleep before I find an answer that gives me peace.

It is true that I trusted the AAGT field, because in the community meetings conflict and confrontations are welcome. I remember sitting in a big cold air conditioned conference room in Florida, on a sunny Saturday afternoon when the discussion about the organization blazed up around me. A wonderful, healing Hot Fire that amazed me. Here was a place where I could say what I meant without being rejected, because it seemed that people listened to each other.

Of course it was clear there were big differences and that there had been big fights, but for me it was the first time being in the company of colleagues, that were willing to listen to each other's different views. It was the reason, I decided, I wanted to belong to this group. It was then that I knew I wanted the AAGT to come to Amsterdam. And it was then I started planning this event, that came true three years later.

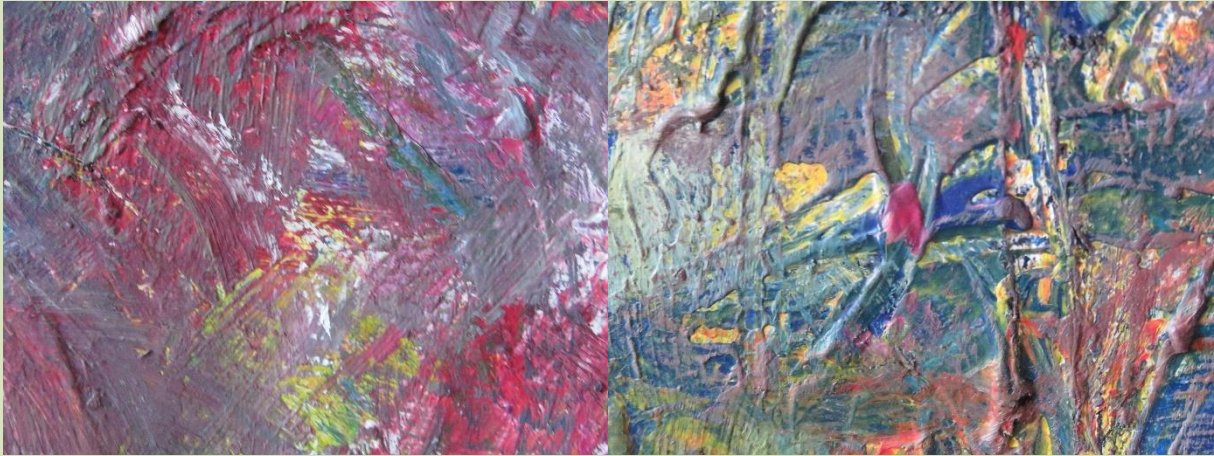
71. Transforming Anger

But personal conflicts and confrontations are a different matter. Were they welcome? Not in my case. As long as I restrict myself and behave like a nice woman, I will be safe. But when my personal anger shows and comes out, it is a different matter. I am fascinated by the function of aggression and power. I know I can either use it to make contact, or use it to destruct. To experience the difference I need to be aware. If I am not, I can make victims who will become more and more afraid of me. In the role of client and student I have used my anger to attack, that is for certain. In the role of therapist/trainer I transform my anger to power that enables me to make contact. I often need this power, to overcome my fear of the evident aggression of my clients and students. I believe that in the case of the conflict with the coordinator I behaved at first as a client, who was too afraid to show her power and withdrew into fear instead.



Live from fear or live from power is the existential choice we have to make time and time again. If I live from fear I disappear. If I dare to show my strength and look my opponent in the eyes, I can use my true potential and am able to communicate. I cherish the AAGT as it is a place, where I can experiment with transforming my angry power into strength by stepping out of the role of a fearful child that wants to be recognized. To be seen as the grown up strong woman I have become, I had to take distance from the coordinator by stepping out of the conflict and into my role as an independent Gestalt colleague. In fact, it was a matter of saying 'Long Nose', whether you like it or not, I do it my way. I am sorry, you are not my authority, I miss your respect for the way I work. And if you think you know better, I give you the space to do it your way. I understand the AAGT is your baby, you feel responsible and of course you are. Just as responsible as I am for my behaviour. I respect you, you better respect me, even if you have your doubts. You should have told me what the complaint was, for then I would have known. And you and I could have had a collegial talk about what had to be done. Pity missed chance, but nevertheless I did what I had to do. The chance is always in the frustration. I used it to become autonomous and free. Reason to feel grateful!

How about you?



Anger? How do you cope with your anger, your aggression? Do you think it does not belong to your personality? Are you ashamed of it, afraid maybe? Do you dare to share it without wanting to destruct anyone? Do you agree that it is vital to find a way to express your anger in a lovable manner? Not easy, but exciting as you are asked to take time, and get to know yourself by wondering about the need, that is behind the anger. We become angry when we seem to be unable to reach the person we need, to get what we long for: support, respect, contact, warmth, love, understanding. Especially when we don't know exactly what we need and therefore cannot ask for it. Questions to reflect on: am I angry? Am I afraid of my own anger and of the other? Am I ashamed when I am angry? Am I violent? Do I take myself seriously when I am angry? Do I know what I need and long for?

If you are ready you can write or draw or use a music instrument that allows you to give sound to your anger. Think of a drum. Or you can walk putting your feet consciously on the ground while softly or – if possible – loudly telling yourself: I am angry, I am furious! By speaking the words you will know if what you say is true.

72. It's not personal and yet it is

As long as we know and make clear that our love is not only a personal but also a transpersonal feeling we can grow and become equals.

Feeling Ignored

6 PM. Sitting in the Manchester sun, on the square with the fountains, writing down my experiences, instead of sharing them in the process group. Something important has happened. Attending the workshop this morning of one of my first Gestalt teachers, brought me back to old energy in the sense of previous felt excitement. Then he opened the Gestalt gate for me and gave me hope. Now I don't need hope, now I need trust. Yesterday in the AAGT-EAGT* meeting I compared the way of communicating of the two organizations. In the AAGT emails are always answered, this teacher – as an EAGT authority - does not answer my emails. His answer: 'Yes, but that was about something personal.' My interpretation: if I as teacher, want to keep control, I categorize what ex-students write as personal or not. Personal I can ignore, not personal is serious business. Being ignored is difficult for me, as it gives me the feeling that I am not taken seriously.'



Projections between Teacher and Student

Luckily enough yesterday I heard myself say: 'It was not personal!' This statement started a process in me, that could be the beginning of a completion. What I heard and what my teacher said, are two different things. Because there is unfinished business, between him and me, I don't hear clearly. Of course I am still exploring how a teacher student relation works. For one thing I want to find words for my learning path, that was as personal as it was not personal, as painful as it was worthwhile. I want to look at my shame in relation to my teachers, my need, my love and longings also because I am a teacher myself now, and experience the other side of the coin. I realize that the role my teacher was in, the role of being the prince royal for all the students, can be as painful as the role of being a longing student. But in my view there must be a way to communicate, without causing more hurt than necessary. My way is to take my own love as a teacher/therapist, and the love of the other as a client/student seriously, and step out of my own role pattern. As long as I know and make clear that our love is not only a personal, but also a transpersonal feeling we can grow and become equals.

As 'Good' as Possible

My story with this teacher is full of magic for me. And for him? He did not want to be misused in my drama, I remember him telling me angrily. Pity, but the process goes on anyway, no matter what role he chooses to play. Not wanting to play a role is also a role. And now I went to the workshop he presented about the Law of Prägnanz: every Gestalt process becomes as 'good' as possible, or takes the best possible shape. It confirms: he and I could not do any better then. By teaching me as he did, I had to learn as I did about my relations with men, and with authorities in general in a way that could not be avoided. It brought me where I am now.

Standing on my own legs for years, accepting that I do not need a personal relation with my (ex)teachers to be able to connect, to co create and do my work. Acknowledging my own power and authority, that I could only develop in the frustrations with my teachers. Accepting that the process goes on, that the process has no end. Personal or not personal, it makes no difference in the sense that the one cannot exist without the other.



You are identified by what you are committed to, not by what you have done are the sentences I found in my notebook. My commitment to my teachers is about daring to trust my intuition. From this teacher I learned to take the Gestalt Work so seriously, that I can go on working with it and be committed to it no matter what. In the workshop I sat beside an English woman, whom I told the presenter was my main teacher. I felt proud when she congratulated me. I always knew I have the right Gestalt foundation.

The Wall is in the Mind

About commitment in my notes : ‘What is my commitment behind my relation with the AAGT, with my colleagues, (ex)teachers, (ex)clients, (ex)students? I want to connect, because together we can explore a world that is new to them and to me, and open a door to a room where more people are longing to be. To a room or a place, a home? *The wall is in the mind*, I learned this morning in the workshop of Hugh Pidgeon. Text in the program: ‘We will remind ourselves in this workshop that Gestalt Therapy’s foundation has much to offer as a source of inspiration in wider political and social contexts.’ If I ever have been moved to deep tears in a workshop it was this morning, by listening and looking at the Beslan images* and the Ramallah concert, inspired by Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said*. Beslan brought me back to my being in Russia at the same moment the disaster happened. I was quite close in Taganrog on the Sea of Asov, giving a workshop to thirty people.



Having breakfast by myself in the hotel while watching the images on tv, I did not have a clue what it really was about as I do not speak Russian. Children under threat brought me back to my own childhood in WW II. I could share with the group my hidden tears and fears from far away. Unique moments I am thankful for. The Ramallah concert confronted me with young people from Israeli and Palestinian sides, willing to risk their lives to make the world a better place.’

The Will to do Good



Those words represent what connects me to the Gestalt field. The knowing that we are here together because we are willing, to make the world a better place. If we succeed is a different matter. But as long as the will to do good is there, I have no reason to panic or to withdraw. Even if a conference like this can be pretty painful, it is the best I and we can do as Gestalt people. It is also the best I can do under the circumstances and music helps.

Last night I was from the beginning till – almost – the end in the pub with the Irish Interest Group. The fun and the nonsense warmed my heart, but it was the singing that nourished my soul. If I only did come to this conference to experience this ambiance, I got more than my share. I feel grateful to everyone who co created this event.

Music

Listening to music makes all the difference in the colour of the world. Do you agree? Do you make music or do you sing? Explore if you can play with the question: 'Did I find my tone?' in a musical way. Improvise with your voice or with an instrument, on different times of the day and in different types of weather. It can be enriching to do it together with a friend or family member, even someone you have a conflict with.

73.'May peace be with you'

The moment we were all asked to stand up and shake hands saying: 'May peace be with you' relaxed me.

The Light of the Day

Last morning in the hall of the hotel: 'The conference is over. It's afternoon. I smell myself, smell my sweat. It is because of the blouse I am wearing. It is too hot for it outside. I put it on because of the air conditioning in the down stairs conference rooms. Not a place to be for me. I do not understand why conference rooms, often are situated in the basement without daylight. I pity people who have to attend conferences all the time, because it is their regular work. This morning I walked through Manchester to get some sunlight before having to go down into the basement again to end the conference. I enjoyed the silence of the Sunday morning, and arrived exactly at the right time in the cathedral to attend a service. I felt I was welcome with the people, with the light, with the music, the singing and the preaching. The moment we were all asked to stand up and shake hands saying: 'May peace be with you' relaxed me. Looking in eyes, feeling unknown hands, can be done in any place and in any community.'



Subtle Energy

Home again in my garden. I did not open my notebook until now. Birds are singing beautifully. Very subtle riddles. It is like they take their work very seriously at this moment. Of course birds always do, but I am the one who hears them or not and in this way takes them seriously or not. Music on the radio is soothing me, specially the violin did a while ago and now it is the mouthorgan and the singer. I hardly ever felt so peaceful in my life. In between periods. No one's country. August is my leisure month. The nice weather helps.

Hostile Smell

One cat is on my lap. My dog is on my feet. I smell something I am afraid to smell, is it cat piss? In my absence my house is being treated by my cats like it is hostile territory, that needed their scent to feel like home again. It took me and my cleaner almost all day to bring a neutral smell back. A smell I can live with without wanting to vomit. Cats have their limits, I don't think they want me out or want to be out themselves but the battle is about the dog. They want him out and don't realize, that the dog is not busy with their actions, although he is busy with smells all day.

Okay, back to what the conference brought me. Being in the now in the hot garden, I can only admit that I feel differently. I also know this feeling will not last, because I have felt it before and it left me, of course. Once life takes over, and I have to go with the flow, I step out of this subtle energy, that assures me I do not need to be active all the time, I can relax and just be. I feel so sleepy I could fall off my chair.



Me and my Soul

Two days later. Yesterday I bought a djembe, an instrument from Ghana to answer my need to feel the rhythm in my body, the rhythm, the music, the power and the radiance. I am still digesting the conference and wondering why I held myself back. Am I too afraid to show my real power, too afraid to be a strong woman and to show my aggression? Except that evening when we all jammed and played music and sang and danced. That's why I was inspired to buy the djembe and play it. Sing and play at the same time and become who I am. Let go of the pain of not being seen. Just show myself, although with restriction but giving an idea of the woman I am. In the privacy of my house I can just play and sing, without the longing or the need to be seen and heard, because in the end it's about me and my soul.

Being Music

feeling music, shouting music, moving musically, rhythmically. Listening to music with awareness you can do in your own home, you can also go to a live concert and let the sounds enter your body from all sides. If you do it at home, sit comfortably or lie down on the floor and let it happen. Take your notebook with you and write as soon as the music is finished, whatever words that want to be written. When you are at a concert, write if possible, while the music is playing or do it directly after. Don't let anything come between you and the music, before you have some lines on paper. If you rather you can also move with the music before you start writing. Questions to concentrate on: Is it about me? How full of should and if am I?

Do I have patience? Am I music? Am I rhythm? Am I movement? Am I a dancer and am I the dance? Is peace with me?

74. Women's and Men's Work

Afraid of me? Why should you be afraid of me? I am the one who always is afraid, I feel like a little girl inside, though I am big.



Elephant in Porcelain Cabinet

Still digesting the AAGT conference, I reflect on the Women's workshop. The overwhelming feeling is one of good will and hard, intensive work. The title was: Women's Work; authenticity and empowerment. Three women leading it, three women who invested their time and energy, to be able to work together in co-creating this workshop. It meant being presented with metaphorically a clean bed, fresh crisp sheets, good colours, literally beautiful flowers, candles and a real feminine touch. I felt welcomed, rather safe and a bit uneasy, because I am afraid I will end up as an elephant in a porcelain cabinet. Nevertheless I wanted to show my side of being a woman, who knows about power and pain and who does not intend to evoke it.

I felt inspired by the experiment of identifying with our backgrounds, and being able to present ourselves as belonging to the culture we come from. I love to identify with being from Amsterdam. It is my biotope, it is a part of my life that is fruitful or should I say fertile. I don't remember what happened from minute to minute, but the most outstanding moment for me is the confession of being existentially afraid of one of the leaders. Of course this is about projections, and of course I know how to integrate my projections, but I still need a surrounding that is safe enough, to say out loud what is haunting me inside. To hear myself speak the words: *I am afraid of you* and to be open to the answer: *Afraid of me? Why should you be afraid of me? I am the one who always is afraid, I feel like a little girl inside though I am big.*

Write to be Found

Okay, where did this answer lead me to? It made me aware of how I withdraw in the company of women, who seem to know more about feelings, more about being mothers, more about pain, women who do not identify with their power. And I seem to be one of them, as I did not dare to say that I felt threatened by this answer. If she is afraid, I must be guilty. I hoped I would be able to connect more easily during the conference, with the women who facilitated and participated in this workshop.

It certainly made it easy for me to support the woman, that was candidate for being the next president of the AAGT. It gave me joy when she was elected. Also because I am convinced, that the organization does need more Women's Work, more Women's Authenticity and Empowerment the coming period. As I am a woman too, I feel the urge to contribute what I have to offer in the form of writing. And I am hoping this text will set us women into motion, to make more space for creative actions as in the workshop 'Voice Use in Social Process' by Susan Gregory. In the program she tells: 'this is a didactic and experiential workshop in which we explore our speaking and singing voices.' Since years I have been fascinated by the work Susan does. Just now I read her article 'You must sing to be found' and it brought me to the realization, that the title for me could be 'You must write to be found'. Because I write I have a reason to exist and can trust to be found, also within the AAGT.



Afraid of the Split

Women's Work. What is it? I am writing in a café in Amsterdam after talking with a woman, who is an ex client and ex-student, and wonder about the work we did and do together. Now she is in the role of book editor, with a philosophical degree and I am in the role of a writer. For me this is THE work I have and we have to do, as women with masculine minds. Women who cherish their love relations, but relations are not number one in our lives. Work is. Women's work or is it better to call it feminine work as the other side of masculine. If I am afraid of something it is of creating the split man – woman while writing, when in fact I am talking about feminine and masculine energies that belong both to women and men. Masculine work, energy, power is goal aimed. It is more directed than feminine power that is more abstract and more open. Masculine energy leads to study, science and doing business, feminine energy is used for being creative and giving care. To become a complete human being we need to develop both.

Sorry for the Soldiers

Thinking of Women's Work that cannot be done by men, I can only think of having babies. And Masculine Work I as a woman think of work that is not for me, I see soldiers fighting on the battlefields. I feel deeply sorry for men who are obliged to kill other human beings, because they have to defend borders, or attack dangerous dictators who suppress their people, or they have to protect women and children and other civilians. Nevertheless I have a double feeling, when it is about soldiers and arms and bombs and killing and being protected. Protect how? My father had to fight when the Nazi's occupied my country. He came back from the front with wrecked nerves, and the knowledge that they lost and did not have a chance. He never got over what he saw and experienced, and disappeared in a psychiatric institution when I was 14.



First Destruct

The Allied armies that liberated us, were our heroes. If they had not, the Nazi's would still be there, may be, and would make life hell. That is why I am deeply grateful. But my question is: did it have to happen? Did the Nazi's have to occupy most of Europe so we could be liberated? Or was there another possibility, a less violent one? I cannot deny that after the Big World War Disaster, life became better in my country. As I have lived through this whole époque, I have seen with my own eyes how my country went from grey, cold, misery to yellow, bright and sparkling. I learned from my Gestalt teachers, that we have to destruct before we can construct. Both energies, both powers seem masculine to me and therefore probably more evident in men. But they are not in men only, they are also in women. Let's not be mistaken about that.

The game of Life

Feminine work is about the opposite, it is about connecting, about caring for the victims, for the children, the disabled. Feminine work is about keeping relations sound, it is daring to be crazy when in love, when passionate, when being creative. Feminine work is not logic. Feminine energy and power is about feeling, about intuition, about spirituality. Looking at the words I have written it is difficult not to judge. I rather connect and create than fight and destruct. I love to construct though. For a long time I was unconsciously jealous of men, because their work seemed to be more respected, more valued, better paid than my work as a woman. But I did change. I am not jealous any more. I do not now have the ambition to have *The Power*. I do long to be able to use my own power of course, and I know I can only do this when I use my masculine energy and when I relate to men. No doubt about that. But it does not necessarily mean the Masculine Power is dominant.



In the end I am the one who decides if I live my life as a creative artist, who uses her energy and strength to construct or not. And to do this I do need my masculine energy to participate in the game of life. As I want to belong I have to face the fact, that the world challenges me to overcome my fear of not being seen, by expressing my true feminine and masculine self.

How about you?



Do you think, that only women can do women's work? Like only men can do men's work? Or do you agree with me because you know this is not really true. Nevertheless it is easier, more natural for women to do women's work and for men to do men's work, when we speak in general. Therefore THE question is: what is women's work supposed to be? Is it giving birth, caring for children, sick and disabled people, cleaning a house, listening to lonely souls, doing the secretary work of organizing, giving art lessons or being an artist, a spiritual teacher or a witch? And what is men's work about? Fighting? Making money? Building? Dominating? Calculating? And giving love? Is it women's or/and men's work? If you are a woman, you can explore by writing about all the roles you play in life, and wonder what they have to do with women's work. If you are a man wonder about your own roles and what they have to do with being a man. Questions to consider: Am I a woman? Am I a man? Do I identify with what and who I am? Do I do women's work? Do I do men's work? Am I valued for it? Am I seen in what I offer?

75. Conceptual and Situational Thinking

When I am deeply frustrated I search for answers in wise books



Exciting though Painful Experience

Feeling shaky and in process, because I am confronted with an exciting though painful experience. It started with an email of high praise by a Norwegian colleague, regarding a book she bought at the conference, written by a Flemish Gestalt colleague, who for years was my supervisor. Here I go again, authorities and the power they have over me. I am so tired of it, but it took me a long time to let go of my anger regarding a review my ex supervisor published in the magazine of the Dutch EAGT about the first book I published. I do not remember his words literally, but I understood that in his eyes I am too sexual and I ask for attention the wrong way. Actually for an hour or two I felt like a slut after reading his verdict. Then I decided : long Nose for him, he is right I am a sexual woman and proud that I am.

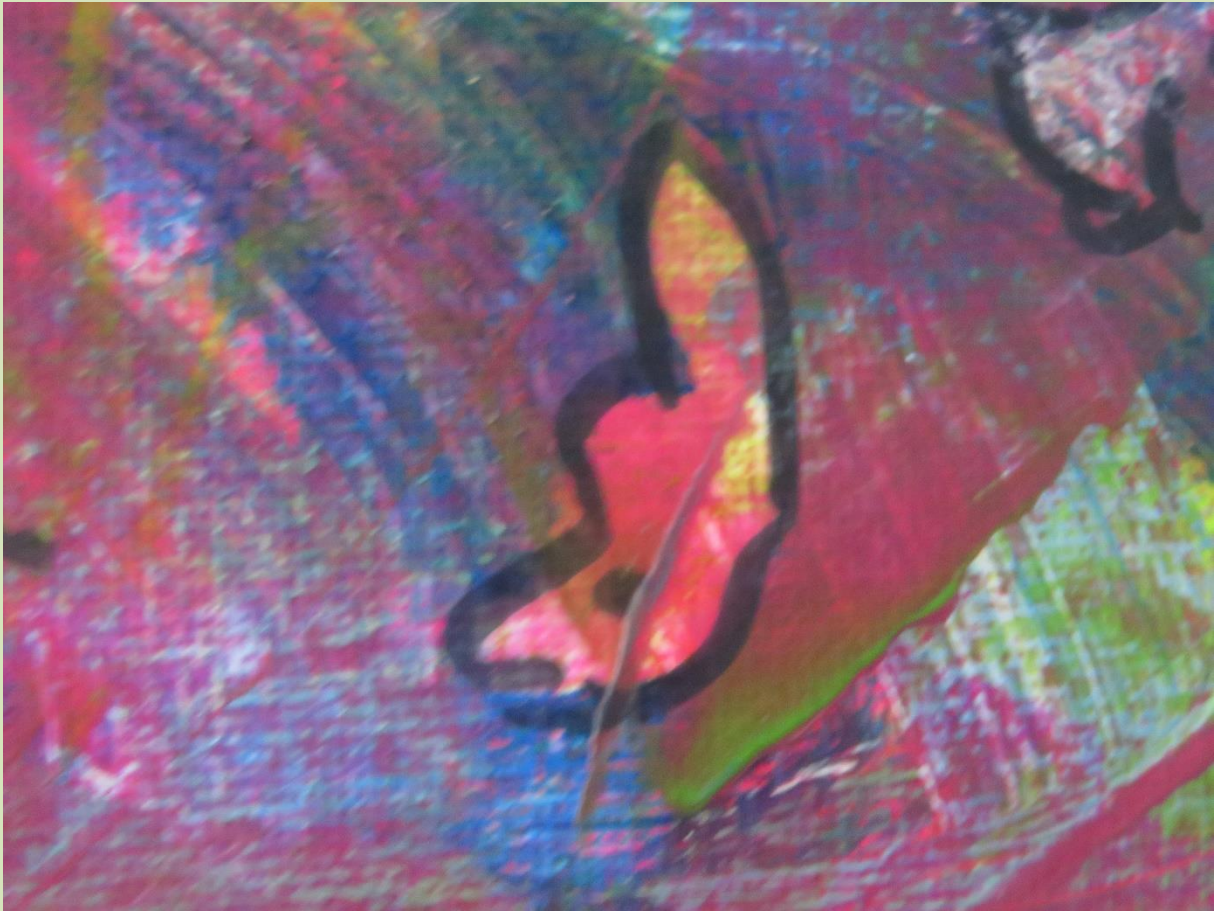
What made me more angry is that he did not want to communicate with me. For: what is the use of the eternal 'talk' about contact and communication, the basic principles of Gestalt therapy, when authorities refuse to communicate, in this case with me in my role as a writer. Or is it as a woman? Even deny me the space to let my voice be heard in 'their' magazine. Do I have to face the fact that I have written a book that is not Gestalt worthy? Can I better accept his judgement? No, of course I cannot if I do not. I have written a book in which I used the story of my own life, to test the theory of Gestalt and other views on life. It means that I am quite open in it, pretty sexual, angry, curious, passionate and loving. I told myself either you do it or you don't and if you do, you will have to cross borders and show your authentic face.

76.New Insight



The joke is now that my frustration brought me a new insight. When I am deeply frustrated, I search for answers in wise books. This time I decided to open *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* by Abraham Joshua Heschel* and found haphazardly on page 5 the following words: 'There are two types of thinking: one that deals with *concepts* and one that deals with *situations*. Conceptual thinking is an act of reasoning; situational thinking involves an inner experience; in uttering judgment about an issue, the person himself is under judgment. Conceptual thinking is adequate when we are engaged in an effort to enhance our knowledge about the world. Situational thinking is necessary when we are engaged in an effort to understand issues on which we stake our very existence. (...) The attitude of the conceptual thinker is one of detachment: the subject facing an independent object; the attitude of the situational thinker is one of concern: the subject realizing that he is involved in a situation that is in need of understanding. The beginning of situational thinking is not doubt, not detachment but amazement, awe, involvement. The philosopher, accordingly, is a witness, not an accountant of other people's business. Unless we are involved, the problem is not present. Unless we are in love or remember vividly what happened to us when we were in love, we are ignorant of love. Creative thinking is not stimulated by vicarious issues but by personal problems.'

77. Here I am



All of a sudden I have a right to exist as a writer: I am a situational thinker, I do want to understand the situation I am in and I do want to know what I can do to make my world better. For me there is only one way and that is in following the command 'Love thy neighbour fellows as thy love thyself'. It means I first have to love myself before I can love the other. And to know how to love myself I wrote the judged book. It gave me a possibility to ask attention for me, for my life, for who I am, for where I came from, for what I have to offer and for what I think and feel. I did not write then with this intention, I only know this looking backward.

In the Vondelpark

To give my dog Poe and myself a good afternoon, I went to the park that is full of life. I can sit outside in a café looking at a pond, hearing children play, seeing people and dogs walk by; a place where I can eat a simple bun with a croquette (Dutch specialty) and drink ice tea. I feel happy, the sun is out once in a while for a few minutes. Poe enjoys himself with all the smells and the dogs and the children who want to caress him. I am still in the process of differentiating between conceptual and situational thinking/writing. I have been wondering numerous times why I found it so difficult to read Gestalt magazines and Gestalt books. I kept it a secret, did not want to be judged by it or seen as stupid. Since yesterday I know why: conceptual thinking/writing is too detached from experiences for me. As an example I am thinking of the workshop about *Managing Conflict – Introducing the concept of Contempt* by Joe Melnick. Joe gave a perfect example of men's work by his structure and systematic steps towards his aim. Quote from the program: 'After first describing 'conflict' from a Gestalt

perspective, the concept of contempt will be looked at both theoretically and experientially. It is hypothesized that contempt plays a major role in our inability to bridge differences.' Of course the way he brought it, proved him to be right. But I am certain it is possible to look at the theme in at least ten different ways that are all right. What I missed was the experiential part that could have brought surprises.



Spiral

Going back to the words of Abraham Joshua Heschel, I reread: 'Conceptual thinking is an act of reasoning; situational thinking involves an inner experience; in uttering judgement about an issue, the person himself is under judgment.'

True enough. As told above I found that out by publishing my first book. But by accepting this I can go further. I had to write this book to really know what Heschel is talking about, for I needed the experience to be able to understand what the meaning is. It is a spiral. I do things, experience things, write about them, am judged because I say things, experience what it is like to be judged, write about it like I am doing now and take the risk that I will be judged again. Only difference is that this time I am more prepared, because I know there are two ways of thinking and at least two types of writing. As I am a situational writer I do not feel seen. when I am judged by a conceptual thinker. In my turn I judge conceptual writers/thinkers, because I do not know what they are talking about, because I did not experience it. I don't think that Heschel wants to say that one type is better than the other, but I do have a preference because situational writing suits me better.



Turning Points

How about you? Do you recognize the experience of getting a present, when you think you are being punished? Is it an idea to take a wise or a sacred or a poetry book from your shelf, open it at random and read out loud what is on the page before you. Ask yourself: Is it about me? Do I know better? Am I in the same boat? Choose if you want to express yourself by writing, painting, dancing or sculpting. For the last possibility you need a piece of clay or stone or wood. If you take clay you give yourself the opportunity to feel the material while you let your hands do the work.

Gestalt Process Writing to C

Gestalt Process Writing to C is about the longing to communicate and connect with teachers, colleagues, clients, students, and loved ones.

The moment I started my Gestalt training, I started Process Writing, though I didn't know this was what I was doing. Gestalt opened a source, a stream of energy that connected me with the wisdom that had been waiting there all the time. I just didn't know how to reach it.

Gestalt not only taught me how to reach this wisdom, but showed me how to express and contain it. No matter what I did, leading writing groups, teaching creative Gestalt in workshops, attending international conferences, exploring the Jewish Renewal World, I always had my notebook with me to connect with my thoughts, feelings, ideas, frustrations, longings. Me and my notebook cannot be separated, as we are One.

In this book you will find the most interesting results of my Process Writing, which began in 1984, when I started my Gestalt training program. You will find a complete *Gestalt Process Writing to C Program* to explore and write your own life story, to find your own answers to such existential questions as: Who am I? Where do I come from? Am I free to speak?



Tine van Wijk grew up in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, during World War II. "I am a Gestalt therapist/trainer/teacher. Gestalt saved my life. *Gestalt Process Writing to C* is about the longing to connect and to make contact with that one teacher who is sincerely interested in life, and who can therefore give you the right to exist and be who you are." This is her first book in English. She also published three books in Dutch.

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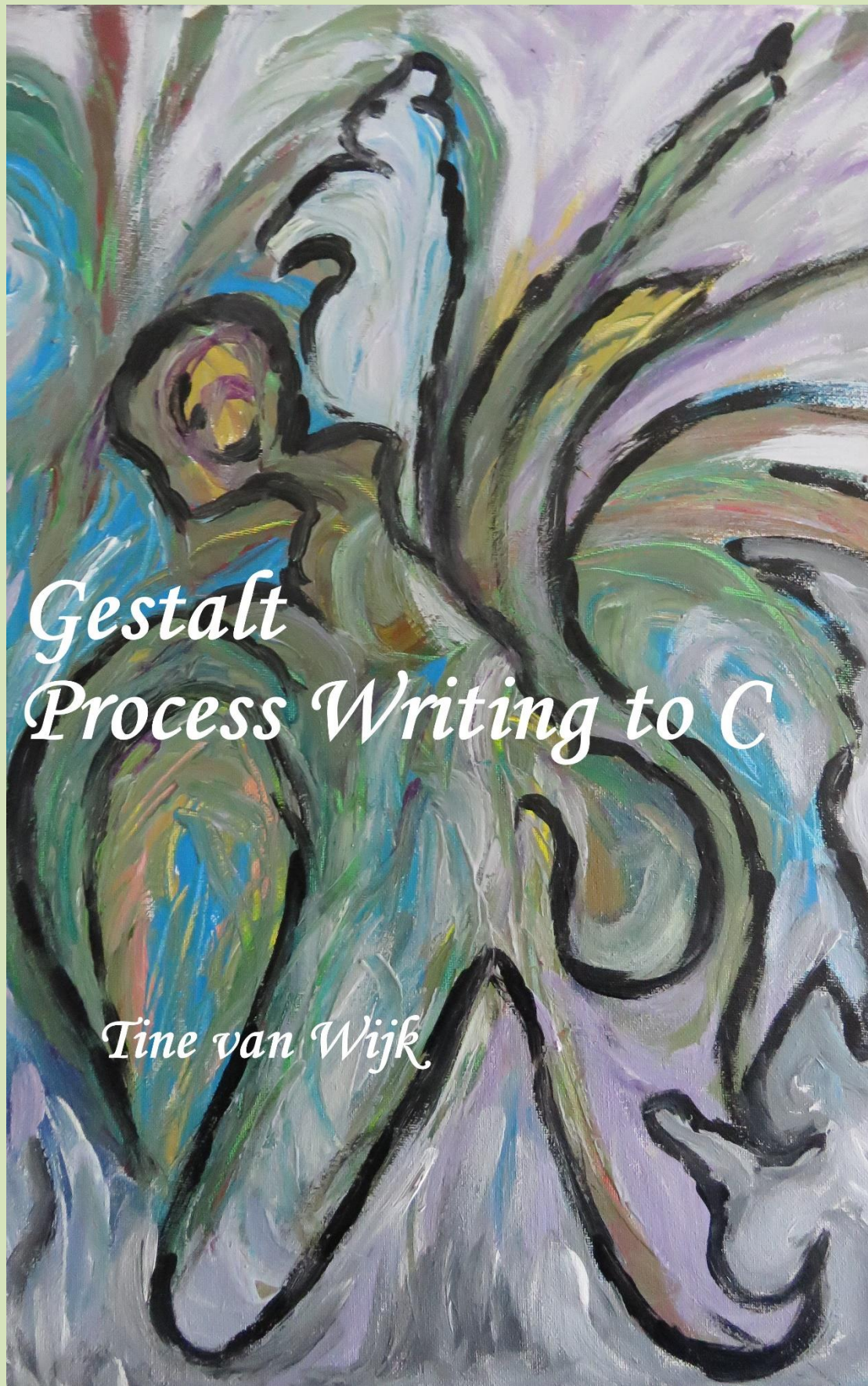


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