

GESTALT THEORY

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Editorial

It is my honour to write an editorial to this Gestalt Theory Special Issue 1 (2013), which mainly concerns invited and selected papers/lectures from the Helsinki Symposium “100 Years of Gestalt Psychology. First GTA Symposium in Helsinki, Finland 28.-29.9.2012”. The symposium project was started in 2009 by GTA board members, and continued thanks to a stipendium for GTA symposium from the Federation of Finnish Learned Sciences (see <http://www.tsv.fi/engl/grants/index.html>). In the year 2011 we [GTA] found a common interest with the Finnish Society for Natural Philosophy LFS (<http://www.lfs.fi/>), focusing on gestalt theoretical works by researchers from both organisations. The outcome of the first GTA & LFS symposium in Helsinki was fruitful and successful. We heard 25 notable papers of professional researchers from Europe, Finland and the USA in the symposium, besides the professional chairwomen and men from the boards of GTA and LFS. I note with joy that many young researchers became interested in gestalt theory through participating in the symposium. With interest we noticed that original and modern (cognitive sc.) gestalt theorists exist in Finland, as well.

The following six invited symposium articles consist of original gestalt theoretical formulations, besides modern and new applications of gestalt theory in 21st century Europe and USA. You’ll find all the following symposium lectures as power point presentations via the link www.lfs.fi/esitelmat/.

Editor Dr. Jaana Vainio-Utriainen’s paper “Gestalt theory in Finland” concerns the development of the gestalt theoretical movement from Europe and the USA to Finland with examples of main theorists: von Ehrenfels, Max Wertheimer, Rudolf Arnheim, Eino Kaila and Kai von Fieandt. She highlights research of her own in arts and music.

The Finnish psychologist Dr. Manu Jääskeläinen highlights in his paper “Personality as a Dynamic Gestalt System. A Study of a Book on Personality Psychology by Eino Kaila” the first Finnish gestalt theoretical oriented psychologist Kaila’s book and some of his main articles. Jääskeläinen’s paper consists of clear examples and critics of Kaila’s main theoretical contributions. In particular he describes to the reader how Kaila was impressed by Gestalt psychology and its originators Wertheimer, Koffka and Köhler, becoming one of the main gestalt oriented theorists since 1920. Kaila’s work still has an effect in 21st century curriculum studies in Helsinki University in Philosophy and Psychology.

Professor Dr. Herbert Fitzek from the BSP Berlin Potsdam, a board member of the GTA, contributes his paper “Artcoaching. Gestalt Theory in Arts and Culture”. Artcoaching according to Fitzek is a modern movement of gestalt theory in arts and culture, which is “coming from the use of art reception as a tool for intensifying individual and group dynamics and dealing with the strengthened efficacy of Gestalt in extended reception processes”. Fitzek clarifies the field of artcoaching with phenomenological analysis experiments.

Dr. Marianne Soff from Pädagogische Hochschule Karlsruhe gives us an interesting gestalt theoretical case study, “Gestalt Theory in the Field of Educational Psychology: An example”, which she has applied with young students of teacher education. She highlights in her paper how theories of Metzger and Lewin are applied and evaluated in her summer course, with an interesting structure and seven progressive exercises. This kind of experiment would be useful in different fields of gestalt theoretical application in teaching and lectures. Soff mentions that gestalt theory belongs [mainly] to the past, to which she introduces new and fresh ideas applicable to teachers’ education in the future.

Finnish prof. Emer. of didactical physics Dr. Kaarle Kurki-Suonio highlights his pioneer work - teaching physics to teachers - over three decades in Helsinki University. His paper “Concepts as Gestalts in Physics Teacher Education” reveals, with clear demonstrations and descriptions of his important work, how to develop teaching in physics to suit teachers of students at different levels. Gestalt theory works as a basis for his scientific thinking, besides his practical experiments.

Dr. Tuomo Suntola in his paper “Gestalt Structures in Physics” gives the reader a historical overview of developments in philosophy (intuitive) and physics (empirist/logical) from Thales, Aristotle and Ptolemy to the modern thinkers, via the Middle Ages to the 21st century. His paper is based on his own research and publications since 2002. We are given multiple views of the main thinkers and theoretical developments over 2500 years. Suntola’s figures complement his ideas and his descriptions of historical-theoretical structure.

Jaana Vainio-Utriainen