

COMMENTS ON „GESTALT THEORY IN ITALY - IS IT STILL ALIVE?“

Giuseppe Galli

My colleague Mario ZANFORLIN titled his essay in *Gestalt Theory* 26 (4/2004) with the following question: „Gestalt Theory in Italy - Is it Still Alive?“ If I had to answer this question I would say Gestalt theory died out in some parts of Italy. I, however also go along with this verse from the gospel of John: „I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds“ (John 12, 24).

With this metaphor, I refer to those students of CANESTRARI, who received an education on Gestalt theory in Bologna and afterwards followed other interests. I will only list some examples of the fruits of Gestalt theory and it's successful integration with other theories.

One example is our colleague Giancarlo TROMBINI, professor of clinical psychology in Bologna. He first carried out some research within the framework of Gestalt theory and after that he devoted himself to psychoanalysis. Today he is still committed to Gestalt theory and describes his clinical cases with the terms of Gestalt theory taken from the writings of METZGER. He looks at the dyad of analyst and patient as a structure which takes up different forms during the treatment: the structure of stairs, circle etc (1998,1999).

Also Anna ARFELLI GALLI followed the phenomenological and holistic direction. In Bologna she carried out her first research on the development of perception. METZGER, who at that time was a frequent guest at our faculty, cited the results of this research in his book „Gesetze des Sehens“ [Laws of Seeing]. Later as a professor of psychology of development and education in Macerata she engaged in problems of teachers' formation. In her work she used and developed the field theory and the group dynamics of Kurt LEWIN while also integrating the results of Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (1997, 1998).

The field theory of LEWIN was also very important to Augusto PALMONARI, Professor of Social psychology in Bologna, during his studies. He provided for an Italian translation of the book „Field Theory in Social Sciences“ by LEWIN published in Bologna and wrote a preface for this book. In order to make LEWIN's writings known in Italy he also planned to publish an anthology that I was able to carry out some time later. Although PALMONARI's later investigations went into other directions of social psychology, the field theory of LEWIN still remained his theoretical framework.

As a further example the scientific work of Andrzej ZUCZKOWSKI has to be mentioned. He received an education on Gestalt theory in Macerata. From the very beginning he was engaged in investigating the relationship between perception, think-

ing, and speech. In this context he has translated the writings of A. MICHOTTE and authored the introduction to this publication. Later on he focussed on the investigation of dialogues in everyday life.

Concerning myself: When I chose the psychology of the phenomenal 'I' as the main theme of my investigations, I found the best approach in the Gestalt theory: the approach of critical realism and whole field theory in which the 'I' is viewed as a subsystem. From a scientific theoretical point of view, two conditions necessarily have to be provided for the analysis of the phenomenal 'I': a dialogical tie with the person in treatment and the interpretation of the dialogical texts. In order to acquire this competence one has to look at the clinical psychology and the hermeneutics. I have already written about this in the journal „Gestalt Theory“ several times (GALLI 1980, 1983, 1994, 1996, 1997, 2003); I refer to these essays and my books: “Psychologie des Körpers” [Psychology of the body, 1998] and “Psychologie der sozialen Tugenden” [Sociology (Psychology) of social virtues, 1999] which were benevolently reviewed by J. KRIZ und G. STEMBERGER in this journal (1998, 2002). Once more I would like to emphasize that we need to use different methods for the investigation of the „Phenomenological (Phenomenal) Subjectivity“ than we were taught by our teachers of the Berlin School and which are still successfully used by our Italian colleagues in Padova and Trieste in the field of the „Phenomenal Objectivity“.

References

- ARFELLI GALLI, A. (ed.) (1997): *Didattica interattiva e formazione degli insegnanti*. Bologna: CLUEB.
- ARFELLI GALLI, A., CORSI, M. (ed.) (1998): *Riforma della scuola e formazione degli insegnanti in Italia*. Pisa-Roma: IEPI.
- GALLI, G. (1973): Methodologische Grundsätze zur Erforschung des phänomenalen Ich. *Psychologische Beiträge* 15, 4, 550-574.
- GALLI, G. (1975): Struktur und Dynamik des phänomenalen Ich . In: S. ERTEL, L. KEMMLER, M. STADLER (Hrsg) *Gestalttheorie in der modernen Psychologie. Wolfgang Metzger zum 75. Geburtstag* Darmstadt: Steinkopff, 124-133.
- GALLI, G. (1980): Die Analyse des phänomenalen Ich und die Tragweite der Gestalttheorie. *Gestalt Theory* 2, 23-29.
- GALLI, G. (1983): Psychoanalyse und Gestalttheorie. Zwei Methoden im Vergleich. *Gestalt Theory* 5, 23-29.
- GALLI, G. (1994): Über die “Dialogizität” in der Psychologie. *Gestalt Theory* 16, 271-275.
- GALLI, G. (1996): Gestalttheorie und Hermeneutik. *Gestalt Theory* 18, 276-281.
- GALLI, G. (1997): Beziehungen zwischen LEWINs wissenschaftstheoretischen Begriffen und der Psychoanalyse. *Gestalt Theory* 19, 80-89.
- GALLI, G. (1998): *Psychologie des Körpers*. Wien: Böhlau.
- GALLI, G. (1999): *Psychologie der sozialen Tugenden*. Wien: Böhlau.
- GALLI, G. (2003): Field-Structures of Social Virtues. *Gestalt Theory* 25, 158- 164. KRIZ, J. (1998): Rezension G. GALLI, Psychologie des Körpers. *Gestalt Theory* 20, 313.
- STEMBERGER, G. (2002): Rezension G. GALLI, Psychologie der sozialen Tugenden. *Gestalt Theory* 24, 238-239.
- TROMBINI, G. (1998): Strutture pregnanti nella dinamica delle relazioni cliniche. In: M. W. BATTACCHI et alii (ed.) *Le ragioni della psicologia. Saggi in onore di Renzo CANESTRARI*. Milano: Angeli, (301-308).

- TROMBINI, G. (1999): Das Staunen im Rahmen der psychoanalytischen Therapie. In: G. GALLI, *Psychologie der sozialen Tugenden*. Wien: Böhlau (Appendix 153- 169).
- ZUCZKOWSKI, A. (1994): Language and Experience: Deep Structures as Linguistic Models for Listening and Intervening in Psychotherapy. *Gestalt Theory* 16, 3-20.
- ZUCZKOWSKI, A. (1995): *Strutture dell'esperienza e strutture del linguaggio*. Bologna: CLUEB.
- ZUCZKOWSKI, A. (ed) (1999): ALBERT MICHOTTE. *Percezione della causalità e linguaggio*. Bologna: CLUEB.
- ZUCZKOWSKI, A. (ed) (1999): *Semantica percettiva*. Pisa-Roma: IEPi.
- ZUCZKOWSKI, A. (ed) (2004): *Dialoghi quotidiani: il counselling amicale*. Bologna: CLUEB.

Address of the Author:

Prof. Dr. Giuseppe Galli
Dip. di Filosofia e Scienze Umane
Università degli Studi di Macerata
Via Garibaldi 20
I-62100 Macerata