

Vitality: Psychotherapy, Anthropology and Spirituality in Dialogue

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Abstract

This article intends to bring attention to the spiritual dimension as an essential aspect of vitality and, simultaneously, to bring out this dimension as a fundamental element of care.

The text thus becomes a scenario in which several voices and views of the world intertwine. It will be surprising to note how a subtle thread can be picked up between the various interlocutors. The main goal of this dialogue is to describe vitality having in mind the complexity of this human dimension and how different epistemologies can contribute to a common background within different disciplines.

The voices will be those of a Gestalt psychotherapist, two anthropologists, and a spiritual guide who will explore the complexity, meaning, and care of vitality. Cultural anthropologists, Stefania Consigliere and Stefano Boni, help us to understand and place the concepts of vitality and spirituality in the contemporary context. Cultural anthropology studies the different ways in which human beings have created practices of care and meaning. The exploration of further worlds gives us an idea of spirituality as something pre-individual that we could call the action of the immaterial. The talk by Salvatore Greco, Gestalt psychotherapist, brings back the anthropological vision of Gestalt therapy and the idea of vitality as the founders understood it and as it has developed into the clinical practice of our approach. Important is the bridge that connects vitality to spirituality, and attention to the spiritual life can be considered a form of healing. Finally, the Maya Ixil spiritual guide, Henry Herrera, helps us to understand from another cultural perspective the interconnections between healing practices and spirituality.

Another aspect that is made clear in the interventions is that rather than talking about spirituality, it would be important to use the term sacred by considering it as an aspect of the human that seems to have liquefied in contemporary society. Connected to the concept of the sacred is also that of enchantment, that is, the wonder we can feel when we feel connected to each other, and this experience helps us enter a transcendental dimension. These are also important dimensions for psychotherapy. What is presented can be considered a good starting point to stimulate theoretical and clinical research within our community, but also to open us up to dialogue with other disciplines and knowledge.

Keywords: Vitality, psychotherapy, anthropology, spirituality, phenomenology.

The sense of Vitality in Psychotherapy

Fabiola Maggio

Abstract

The times we live, marked by the inability to deeply feel meaningful connections and by

its post-pandemic and war scenarios, could be metaphorically described as the theater of bodily desensitization. In this scenario in which one loses perception of one's own and the other's easily, a sense of one's place in contacting the world is needed (Spagnuolo Lobb, 2013).

A reflection on vitality – the subject and intent of this article – is first and foremost a way to bring the body back to the center of our interest, and to trace what during the therapy can contribute to making us feel alive and vital.

This work explores the dimension of vitality, as defined in Daniel Stern's (2011) thought on the forms of vitality, focusing on a relational, kinesthetic and developmental perspective. Indeed, the self is a process of contact that is defined in situational experience with the other, through a tactile, kinetic and kinesthetic process (Frank, 2022). We become kinesthetically aware when we experience a part of our body in relation to others. Through the kinesthetic dimension we feel or witness our movements and creatively adapt to the situation. Looking at movement from a developmental perspective allows us to explore the processes through which a kinesthetic remembrance is shaped by the present situation.

The therapist's kinesthetic relational knowledge (Frank, 2011; Spagnuolo Lobb, 2017) represents the therapist's "sensory intelligence" to grasp the flow of dynamic forms that characterizes the field co-created with his or her patient.

The relational perspective thus emphasizes spontaneous therapeutic action (Spagnuolo Lobb, 2011), aimed at revitalizing the self and cultivating a sense of hope. Hope is that vital, spontaneous, transformative energy that a therapist must be able to discern and sustain (Perls *et al.*, 1997; Spagnuolo Lobb, 2014).

Keywords: Forms of Vitality, movement, kinaesthetic resonance, Aesthetic Relational Knowledge.

Vitality and Psychotherapy: A Systematic Review of Literature

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Abstract

Vitality refers to a fundamental aspect of human experience that is essential for the development of self-awareness and self-reflection. The aim of this study is to understand how the use of vitality in psychotherapy can be a working tool to support the patient, and which studies have been conducted on this construct. Therefore, a systematic literature review was conducted exploring the different studies that have dealt with vitality in the psychotherapeutic and/or clinical context. Results showed that vitality is a measurable indicator through various instruments and that it is positively correlated with a psychotherapeutic course integrated with body awareness, naturopathic and artistic techniques. It also emerges that Gestalt psychotherapy, despite being a therapeutic approach that supports vitality within the therapist-patient field, has not taken the time to measure and operationalise a pivotal concept in its working method. This result invites us to reflect on the contribution that we, as clinicians, are called upon to make within the clinical-scientific landscape.

Keywords: Vitality, psychotherapy, Gestalt therapy, systematic review, outcome.

Longevity, Vitality and Sport in Gestalt Therapy

Salvatore Armando Cammarata

Abstract

Vitality is the attitude, the ability, the energy that directs the human being throughout life and makes it dynamic and rich in nourishment. In Gestalt therapy vitality is a peculiarity of the experience of contact. Patient and therapist are inside the relationship that generates change and nurture it with their intentionality and vitality. The spontaneous and authentic movement of the encounter enriches both and characterizes their mutual growth. Sport, both at the level of mental representation and concrete action, is characterized by movement and vitality. How can the relational phenomenological approach of Gestalt therapy give keys to the experience within a sports context? Can Gestalt therapy provide tools for “care” and growth not aimed at the “patient” (clinically defined) but at a type of user not classified within a diagnostic definition? Do Gestalt therapy and psychology applied to the sport context have points of “contact”? This article tries to answer with an exploratory process.

Keywords: Psychology and sport, Gestalt Therapy and sport, creativity, vitality, longevity.

Being Infertile as a Couple: Discovering Vitality as a Therapeutic Factor

Valentina Foti e Susanna Marotta

Abstract

This article is focused on the possibility of rediscovering vitality as a therapeutic factor for couples experiencing infertility problems. According to a Gestalt reading, the phenomenology of the infertile couple is the image of a blurred photograph, in the figure the repressed desire with all its consequences, in the background something that was there but is now impossible to see. The infertile couple always seems to repeat the same movements: monotonous, cyclical, and prescribed, dictated by the unexpressed generative desire. This does not allow for a momentum towards novelty, towards a creative movement that can support the beauty of the background and rediscover a new vitality in being a couple, regardless of infertility. The literature on the subject highlights the consequences of infertility on an emotional, relational, and sexual level. Anxiety, depression, severe stress, sexual dysfunction, frustration, isolation are just some of the outcomes that infertility could produce. The authors' goal is to affirm the need for psychological support, since the dawn of the problem, in order to preserve the individual and the couple from psychopathological risks or incurable relational fractures, focusing the therapeutic work on the couple's ability to recreate, thanks to the possibility of reconstructing the contact boundary, a new, creative, spontaneous and vital way of meeting, with the confidence of being able to stand in pain in the figure, and the certainty of being able to cling to a safe background. A good therapeutic work can help

the couple to face the diagnostic path and the medically assisted procreation treatments, a very delicate and painful phase for the couple, both physically and emotionally. The article is underlined the importance of rediscovering the vitality of the infertile couple, through good therapeutic work in the background, supporting the personality function and unlocking the id function, as well as enhancing the sense of agency and effectiveness. The rediscovery of the vital impulse could represent a profitable therapeutic factor both to face the problem in a new way and to create new energy understood as a push towards change and growth.

Keywords: Vitality, infertile couple, medically assisted procreation, motherhood, sexuality.