

*My invitation is for you to share an exploration of roots  
with an apprehensive excitement to  
play with abandonment of roots and with attachment of routes.  
Where do we dig in our heels and what for us heals?*



*Roots and Routes Shoots and Chutes*

*Healing Heeling*

ROOTS: Recently I have been reminded of my roots in the community of 'Service Brats'; and in the community of 'St Johns Episkopians' (I'll tell you more if you really want to know). I feel disconnected mostly; with little if any sense of roots in these communities.

Roots inform and contextualise our **Past** - what **Was**, our **Present** - what **Is**, and **Future** – What (is to) **Be**: Our "There and Then" to our "Here and Now" with our "Where and What".

Was	Is	Be
There and Then	Here and Now	Where and What

Our roots anchor and hold us with the past. (Does this answer a belongingness?) Perhaps it might anchor us IN, rather than with, the past? My sense is roots may bind us to the past more than release us to the present? When it is introjected; and when it is made ground.

Am I dismissive of roots through my own disconnected roots?

My Roots exist yet I don't have anyone to relate this to; to relate as a shared experience is not available. What IS, for me, is an unshared past, thus unshared Roots. My Roots are not relate-able.

ROUTES: Our routes provide a map for exploration towards the unknown future; HEELING. Heels may walk us in a nomadic journey through life

Routes perhaps, rather than roots, as the experiences of our journeys is our engagement in being. I'm seeing particularly my geographical rootlessness.

In a very real sense, the geographical rootless may have a relational rootedness that non-mobile people would never understand.

Nomadic peoples have been on the planet for centuries. Have you ever wondered if they had a sense of not belonging? Or do they feel like something is terribly wrong with them because their home is not tied to a permanent plot of land? There are 30 to

40 million of these nomads, most of whom have a strong sense of community and relational roots that run very deep.

Stephens, Libby. 2011

The societal (community) roots for me are missing... this is expressed by many Service Brats. However the drought of societal roots is not a totally unaware situation; it is/was known and adapted to.

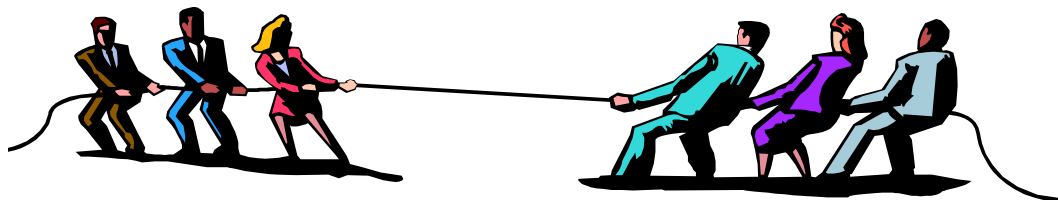
In Gestalt Therapy: Advances in Theory and Practice, Chapter 1 "Gestalt in the New Age", Jay Levin and Talia Bar-Yoseph Levine say

The world and the person are in continuous relatedness and each is subject to influence, change and growth by the other

Perhaps my upbringing connected me towards a more continuous relatedness that has helped ground me to the changing, withering and blossoming shoots of family, location, community, culture and schooling.

I don't engage nor fully utilise my capacity for continuous relatedness; I will shut down too soon and revert to losing this contact and relegating this to the bin of history. I limit my connectedness

Contact is an experience of difference that both separates and connects. The experience of difference is essential for connection. There is no sense of connectedness without a concomitant sense of difference. This touching of difference is called awareness in Gestalt-based therapy and the engagement of these differences is called contact. In other words, movement leads to difference which leads to awareness which leads to contact. Change and growth takes place in the contact



**Same-ness - v - Difference-ness**

Our Sameness can bring us together

Our Difference-ness can keep us together

The Gestalt philosophy of being introduces an epistemology that challenges the prevailing mechanistic, technical and outcome-oriented approaches of the 20th century. In other words, "Gestalt therapy" was not only advanced for the 1950s –

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it is still advanced in the new millennium. (Jay Levin and Talia Bar-Yoseph  
Levine)

I believe this is so; because of the sense of Self.

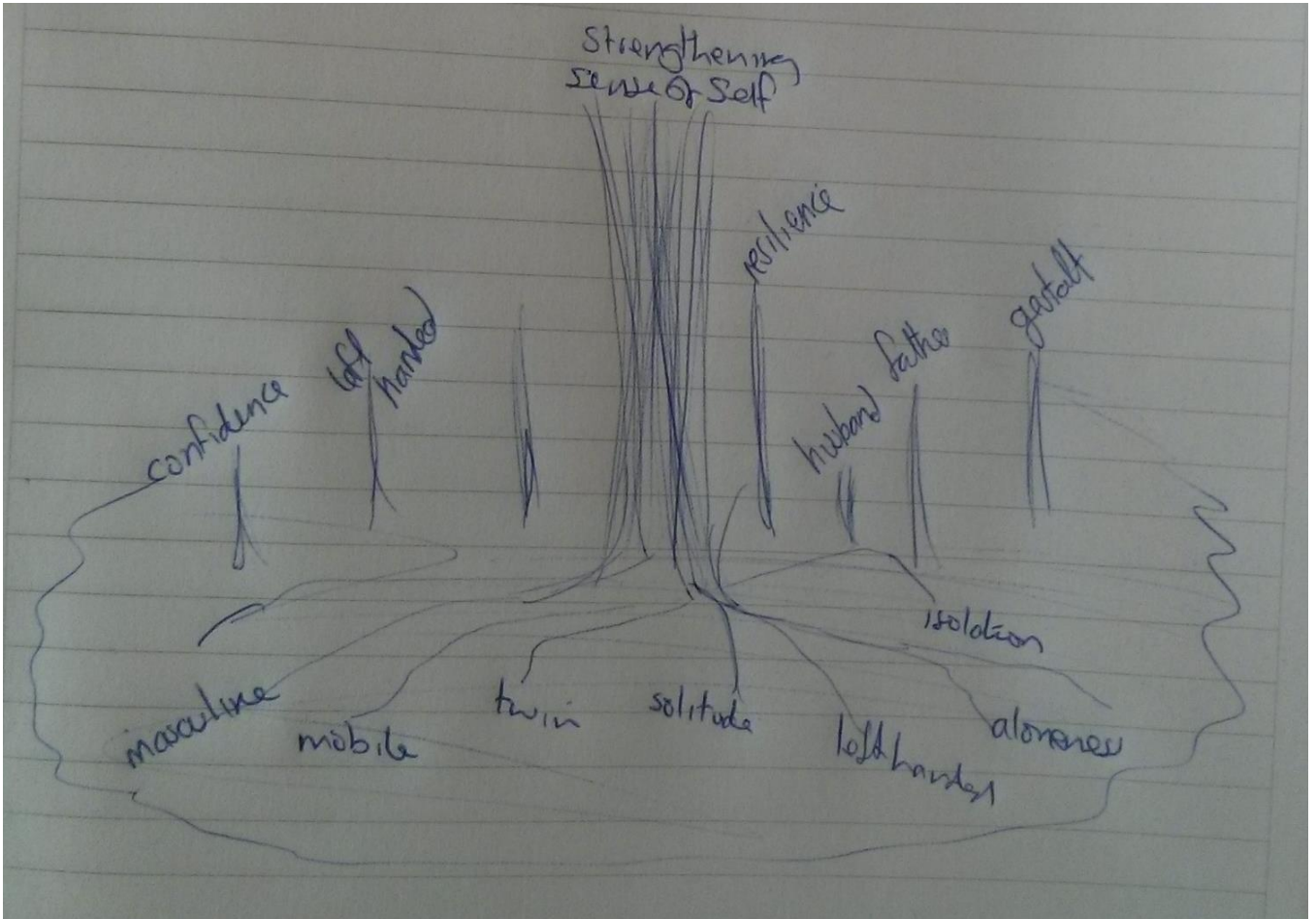
1. McLeod P26 This concept [of self] is so significantly and so radically subversive of most psychological thinking that it has yet to be fully grasped and accepted, even by many Gestaltists. The concept is, in its simplest form, that self is contact.
2. And ... Self is, rather, part of the world of process and time, discoverable only as experience; discoverable, that is, only in contact.



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## Roots and Shoots



Our roots refer to our anchors - our personality - of our social enduringness over time,

Perls et al (1951) remark ... P372 An organism preserves itself only by growing. Self preserving and growing are polar



And our Roots are utilised in providing / confirming / establishing our Identity.

What if ... Our roots are usurped by our personality; our defence against (too rapid) growth of our relational being; preserving (too much )our personality

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SHOOTS: What are shoots if not growth? What the growth exists as, rather than what the growth emerged from, is for me the 'what is' of living

With a flow, now, of societal shoots I have the opportunity to attend to this difference and thus is opportunity for growth. In attending to this I will be confronted with original anxieties, confusions, and feeling with my previous trickles of societal roots that were insufficient to water my relational needs.

I might, of course, not want to harvest the societal shoots that present to me; maybe I feel, or believe there is sufficient without more societal shoots?

What I have not been sufficient in – what I am without - is relationship; we are relational in essence.

I would say that my relational needs have been fed and watered healthily, and increasingly over the past 14 years. 14 years ago I might have thought the same for the previous 24 years, because that is how it seemed.

The crisis 14 years ago showed the relational ground was fractured; the cracks widening and ultimately impossible to avoid.

The Roots of the previous ground was based on a number of Shoots of differing strengths and depths with regard to of Culture, Ethnicity, Community, Religion, Geography, Family, Sexuality, Profession, and I'm sure many more ....

Like the marram grass on sand dunes, the roots of these shoots were meant to stabilise my ground; and ultimately failed... What was missing? True relating, founded on Contact. In other words what was missing was Self. I was a shell, with personality, without Self.

1. Perls et al 1951 P427 Where the self has much personality, we have seen, it is because either it carries with it many unfinished situations ... or it has abdicated altogether and feels itself in the attitudes towards itself that it has introjected
2. Perls et al 1951 P378 The personality is the created figure that the self becomes and assimilates to the organism, uniting it with the results of previous growth.
3. P382 The personality is the system of attitudes assumed in interpersonal relations. Personality is essentially a verbal replica of the self. Thus personality is the responsible structure of the self
4. Perls et al 1951 P427 In ideal circumstances the self does not have much personality. It is the sage of Tao that is "like water", assuming the form of the receptacle.





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**Transcript: What roots give you your sense of who you is**

How would you describe your Roots	Those of a service family
Imagine removing that connection	How would I explain myself if I did that?
Are you willing to maybe see what comes up?	ok
Imagine removing that connection of being a service family, what then would you say is your root	Irish, or British
Imagine you had no nationality; like it is not to be identified?, what is your root?	I'm white
SO imagine you have no ethnicity, what then?	I'm male, a man
So you root yourself in your gender? Imagine there is no gender, what then?	I'm catholic
So you root yourself in religion, imagine there is no religious reference points?	<i>Are we not edging our selfs towards a fundamental identity of who am I?</i>
What does it feel like to remove the service family, irish, white, male, catholic reference points?	I'm removing my security
That's what you are doing, what does it feel like?	Panic, I feel in my body a sense of disconnection as to who I am – where do I belong
Thinking about this now; Where do you belong?	I've moved so much....
You infer your belonging is geographical, what's that about?	I'm irish and am no longer part of that community, I feel disconnected.
What are you disconnected from, actually?	A shared and generational history
What is this shared and generational history for you	signifies my structure, frame of reference, security and sense of identity
And you no longer have these, so who is you, here with me, right now?	I don't know ... what first came to mind is I have an identity based on being ill. I am an ill person.

With this in your awareness right now, how would it be to imagine you as a not ill person?	I'm not an ill person; I was always told I was ill, but I wasn't. But it's hard to not think otherwise, it's like every conversation has in the background illness...
Is this what you want?	If I'm not ill I am ok to look after myself; I don't have to be vigilant. I can relax and enjoy being alive. Feels scary.
How would you like to be?	Not labelled.
you are the one labelling you now.	I don't need to label myself, I know this here (points to head), but not in my heart.  I'd like to be a part of ... a spiritual belonging, a freer belonging. And as I sit here this is partly what is with me, but more because of the absence of anything else... maybe I'm holding on to the absence and not simply embracing more fully the freer belonging.

I am looking for a connectedness ... of what was missing "Then"? How about a connectedness in and about the Now? The connectedness of the past was 'as it was' and nothing will alter that. I can acknowledge, grieve, rejoice, and accept, truly, what was. And let go.

#### EXPERIMENT

Imagine you are with another now; try to bracket off roots similar to those expressed – gender, ethnicity, religion, nationality. What do you now; how do you be with the other; what creates hesitation (if anything); ... what are you afraid of (if anything); ... what are you excited about (if anything); ... anxious, apprehensive; ... curious, intrigued; ...

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## **My Routes**

Through my sense of having no roots I have been led (finally and eventually!) to Gestalt Theory in which I find a relational sense of Self that I am beginning to understand, appreciate and encompass. The radical meaning of Self has provided me a mechanism of acceptance and Root.

This is our move away from individualism.

Away from something that was, perhaps, lost. Malcolm Parlett speaks of this in his review of Wheeler's book *Beyond Individualism*

it does seem to me clear that many cultures - including our own until the last two or three hundred years - embraced a more 'connected' view of human beings and our place in nature. Surely it was only with the coming of the machine age, mass industrialisation, extensive migrations, and the growth of cities, that more and more human beings became 'disconnected' - from an enduring sense of place, stable memberships in village-sized communities, a life of seasonal rhythms, rituals, and agricultural participation. 'Individualism' is surely a construct that has closely paralleled the rise of experienced disconnection from these roots. (page 48)

Parlett, M. 2001 PARADIGM LOST A review of *Beyond Individualism, Toward a New Understanding of Self, Relationship, and Experience* by Gordon Wheeler. BGJ Vol 10, 1 pp46-53

Parlett: personal experience has been set aside and discounted. Part of what happened in this great shift was a reduction in the sense of how related and interdependent human beings were with one another and with nature. Berman says it eloquently:

The view of nature which predominated in the West down to the eve of the scientific revolution was that of an enchanted world. Rocks, trees, rivers, and clouds were all seen as wondrous, alive, and human beings felt at home in this environment. The cosmos, in short, was a place of belonging. A member of this cosmos was not an alienated observer of it but a direct participant in its drama. His personal destiny was bound up with its destiny, and this relationship gave meaning to his life. This type of consciousness - "participating consciousness" - involved ... identification with one's surroundings and bespeaks a psychic wholeness that has long since passed from the scene. (1981, p. 16).

A major aspect of self-support is identification with one's state. Identification with your state means knowing your state, i.e., your actual experience, behaviour, situation. Since one's state changes over time, identification with one's state includes identifying with the flow of states, one into another, i.e., having faith in movement and change.

Self-support must include both self-knowing and self accepting. One can't adequately support oneself without knowing one's self - one's needs, capabilities, environment, duties, etc.

My fantasy is that Roots will help locate us as persons of this globe; that Roots are not ideologically bound nor introjected as a means of maintaining a Personality. That our Roots be Ground, we allow our Self to fill the Present and we move to Relational Roots that support and complement being Self.



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