

**THE GROUP ALIVE, by Gaie Houston
(formerly BEING AND BELONGING)**

Published by The Rochester Foundation. (ISBN 0 9510323 7 2).

Gaie Houston writes: Reviewers from analytic and various humanistic schools were flatteringly enthusiastic about this book, when it first appeared in 1993, under the title "**Being and Belonging**". The book remains, but I have now called it "**The Group Alive**", as this seems to convey more clearly what it is about. It is a story, as well as a commentary on some of the obvious, and more of the subterranean, currents, that generate emotion and behaviour in and between groups.

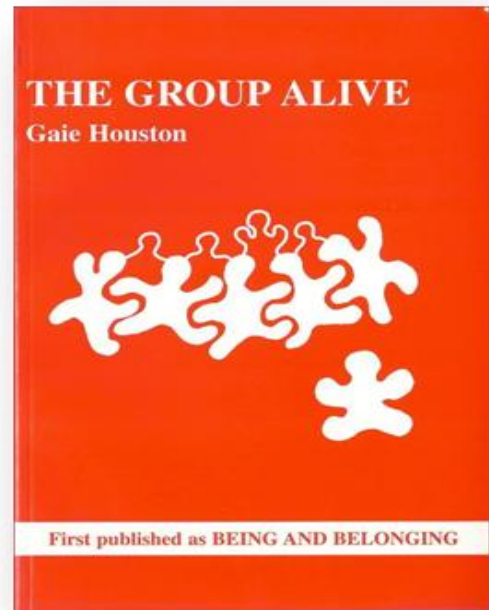
It attempts to transcend narrowness or determinism. **Gestalt** is arguably a discipline most congenial to new perceptions and syntheses of powerful insights and observations. It is the theory that for me best describes what goes on in and between people. So I make it the over-arching synthesiser here. Yet a proper integration of theory, or use of even contradictory theory in different scenes, is advocated throughout. This sits well with the general trend towards integration in psychotherapy theory that has become apparent in the last decade. Indeed, in that time I have co-written with Maja O'Brien on the subject [O'Brien and Houston 2000].

As you may have gathered, the book is written in the form of a case study of a curious kind, as the commentators are by turns observers and reporters on their own and the group process. Their accounts are written in the English each of them can manage, and with their idiosyncratic perception. Jan, the group leader, writes retrospectively at the beginning and end of each chapter.

The story belongs in the last years of the last century, and there I have left it, rather than update it with the newest wars and latest disasters that colour our present background. It was harder to live only with the references available then, so I have allowed in one or two more recent ones which seemed specially relevant.

The book is published by **The Rochester Foundation**. Direct from Gaie Houston, the price is **£16.99 post free in the UK**.

To email Gaie click [HERE](#)



"This book is both a powerful drama and a handbook for all those working with groups. By means of compelling dialogue, and commentary, the reader is guided through a series of crucial issues in the struggle to understand what happens when people attend to their experience in and between groups."

J.Allen

"Gaie Houston has always experimented with bringing writing and experience closer together and the book is a marvellous endeavour. If you consciously work with groups [or Gestalt] or if you have curiosity about either, you must read it." **Brigid Proctor in *Counselling***

'A group of group therapists, strangers to each other, from a variety of nations, disciplines and theoretical orientations have responded to an advert for a 'phenomenological exploration of group process. . . ' I finished my first read of it with heightened feelings of hope, sadness and awe at the 'everything and nothingness' of human groups – they are all we have, and are so disregarded as a phenomenon. My second and third readings were a different matter. Paying attention to the density of content and appreciating more fully the complexity of form, I worked hard. . . **British Psychological Society Bulletin.**

Every student should read this book twice. **Group Analysis**