

## Double Special Issue – Gestalt Theory 2026\_1/2

### Gestalt approach and/in Language Studies

Area: Gestalt Theory and Linguistic

Themes: Gestalt principles, Part–Whole Relationships (Mereology)

#### Call for Papers

The opposition between elements and complexes, so characteristic of the Western scientific tradition from Newton through the English Empiricism to the New Positivism, was canonized by Leibniz in his celebrated *Monadology* (1714), where he famously claimed that compounds are nothing more than clusters or aggregates of simple elements. This perspective, which reduces wholes to the mere sum of their parts, gained new depth and epistemological significance with the emergence of the debate on *Gestalt* qualities (*Gestaltqualitäten*), inaugurated by Christian von Ehrenfels in 1890 with his seminal work. This groundbreaking approach was subsequently developed not only by the representatives of the Berliner School (the pupils of Carl Stumpf, among them Köhler, Koffka, Wertheimer) and the Grazer School (the pupils of Alexius Meinong, including Witasek and Benussi), but also by many other holistic approaches in cognitive studies—such as the Würzburger School founded by Oskar Külpe, which exerted a significant influence on Karl Bühler’s thinking.

The Gestalt approach was crucial for the development of contemporary scientific European thought, which, after the Second World War, expanded into various disciplines, including the psychology of perception, phenomenology, behavioral and social psychology, and, to some extent, also linguistic studies (Cattaruzza, Raynaud 2025, forthcoming).

At the core of the Gestalt theory lies the idea that wholes, in their complexities and varieties, represent a broader mereological problem. These wholes possess their own distinctive characteristics, which cannot be reduced to (well-known) associative processes but through internal dynamics and proper principles—among them, *principles of proximity, similarity, continuance, closure, figure and ground*, ruled by *Prägnanz* (*good figure* or *law of simplicity*, Wertheimer 1922-1923). *Gestalten* ensure their autonomy and demand for appropriate classificatory (categorical) frameworks.

The relationship between wholes and parts is a central issue in linguistic studies. More specifically, the classic opposition between the principles of summativity and suprasummativity, along with new interpretations of the isomorphy postulate—now supported by numerous neurobiological studies (Spagnuolo Lobb 2016)—raises the complex question of comparability among the perception of visual, auditory, and linguistic forms. The part-whole relationship can be explored within the linguistic-theoretical and grammatical structure of historical-natural languages—both modern and ancient, evolved and primitive—as well as in relation to the so-called “bridge languages” (*Übersprachen*, Bühler) such as the language of dance, music, and other performing arts.

With this call, we invite contributions from scholars addressing theoretical issues related to mereology (part–whole relationships) or specific empirical problems/phenomena grounded in Gestalt-informed perspectives.

We particularly welcome papers addressing mereological relationships in:

- morphological and/or syntactic structures
- lexical productivity
- semantics and pragmatics
- text linguistics and discourse analysis
- phonetics and phonosymbolism
- language development
- language and culture
- language and cognition
- language and art

Contributions may adopt either a diachronic or synchronic approach.

### **Quoted Literature**

Bühler, Karl (1934). *Sprachtheorie. Die Darstellungsfunktion der Sprache*. Jena: Fischer. (English translation: Bühler, Karl (2011<sup>2</sup>). *Theory of Language. The representational function of language*, Amsterdam: Benjamins)

Cattaruzza, S., Raynaud, S. (forthcoming, 2025). *History of Gestalt Psychology and Language*. In: Coppola, W. (ed.) *Handbook of Gestalt-Theoretical Psychology of Art*, Routledge, London-New York.

Ehrenfels, Christian von (1890). Über Gestaltqualitäten. *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie*, Jahrgang 13, Leipzig, 249-292 ([https://phaenomenologica.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/CvEhrenfels\\_Gestaltqualitaeten.pdf](https://phaenomenologica.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/CvEhrenfels_Gestaltqualitaeten.pdf), 31.3.2025) (English translation: Ehrenfels, C. (1988). *On Gestalt Qualities*. *Foundations of Gestalt theory* 1st edition. April 1988. pp. 787–840.

Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm (1714). *Monadology*. English translation by Robert Latta (1898) (<http://home.datacomm.ch/kerquelen/monadology/>, 31.3.2025)

Spagnuolo Lobb, M. (2016). *Isomorphism: A Bridge to Connect Gestalt Therapy, Gestalt Theory and Neurosciences*. In: *Gestalt Theory* 38, 1, 41-56.

Wertheimer, Max (1922). *Untersuchungen zur Lehre von der Gestalt. I. Prinzipielle Bemerkungen*. In: *Psychologische Forschung*. Band 1, 1922, S. 47–58. (shorter English version in W. D. Ellis (ed.): *A Source Book of Gestalt Psychology*. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, London S. 71–88)

Wertheimer, Max (1923): *Untersuchungen zur Lehre von der Gestalt. II*. In: *Psychologische Forschung*. Band 4, 1923, S. 301–350. (English translation 2012 in: *On Perceived Motion and Figural Organization*. Ed. by Lothar Spillmann und Michael Wertheimer).

#### **SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND TIMELINE:**

- Please submit an *abstract* (in editable word and PDF format, up to 800 words including bibliography and five keywords) by **May 1st, 2025** to the following email address: [journal@gestalttheory.net](mailto:journal@gestalttheory.net)
- Notification of *acceptance* of the proposals will be sent by **May 15th, 2025**.
- **July 31st, 2025**: Submission of *full papers* ((see the Guidelines for authors: <https://sciendo.com/journal/GTH>) through the online submission system of the Journal ([https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/gestalt\\_theory](https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/gestalt_theory)).
- **September 15th, 2025**: Submission of *peer reviews*
- **September 30th, 2025**: Submission of *final revised versions*