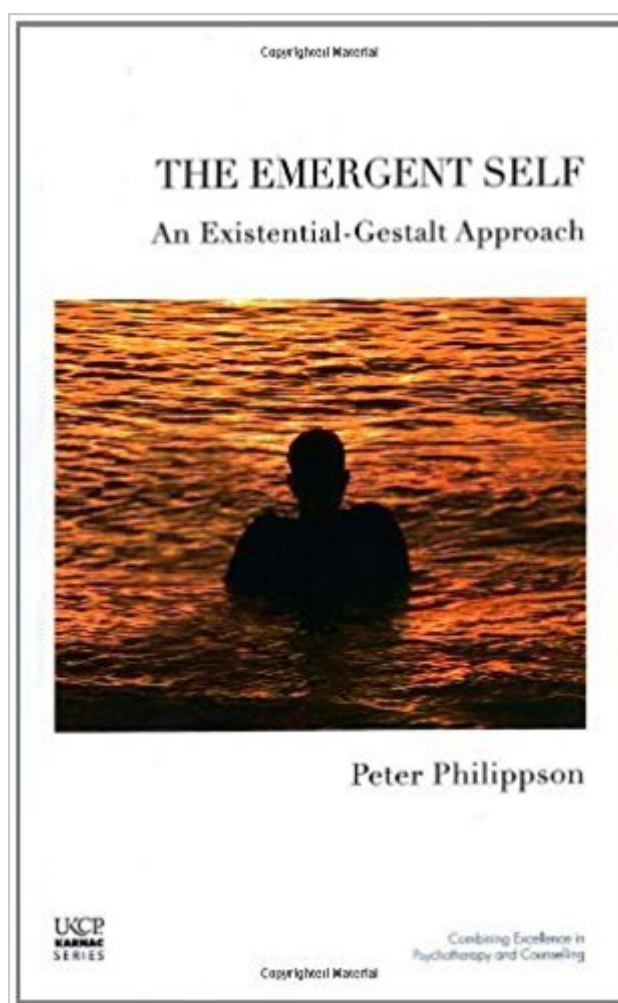


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# The Emergent Self: An Existential-Gestalt Approach (The United Kingdom Council For Psychotherapy Series)



## Synopsis

This book tracks a particular understanding of self, philosophically, from research evidence and in its implications for psychotherapy. At each step, the author includes first the theory he is working from, then the clinical implications of the theory, followed by some links to the philosophical outlook inherent in the theory, and finally a more extended case example. It takes the view that the continuing self is partly an illusion, partly a construct, and that we in fact have to work to stay the same in the face of all the different possibilities the world offers us. The author believes that we do this for two reasons. First of all, continuity allows deeper contact: friendships, loving relationships with partners and families. Secondly, and balancing this, the predictable is less anxiety-producing, and that we avoid this existential anxiety by acting in a stereotyped way and avoiding some of the depths of contact. He argues that this dual nature of continuing self, in one context deepening contact and in another context avoiding contact, has an important place in the understanding of psychotherapy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Peter Philippson presents his view of self as relational and emergent, and poses existential questions such as: What is the nature of self, mind and consciousness? What is the relationship between these and body? What happens when we die? Do we have free will, and if so, how can this emerge in a scientifically lawful universe? In answering these questions, Philippson draws on Eastern and Western philosophies, recent findings from the fields of neuroscience, chaos theory, quantum mechanics, mathematics, and he also discusses the clinical implications of this view of self, with case studies which relate theory to practice. I enjoyed this book. It's a slim volume, and also a big read. On the one hand, this is a book with exciting, high-concept thinking integrating material from a wide range of different disciplines, and posing some deep existential questions. On the other hand, it's also accessible and practical because the concepts are grounded in and by the clinical examples which are given. For instance, in the chapter on "Chaos, Process and Structure", I enjoyed the sections which drew on Taoism, chaos theory, and then the shift into considering clinical applications of this perspective - for instance, looking at neurosis and psychosis, and expressive and defensive transference - and then another movement into looking at philosophy, followed by a case study to end the chapter. The writing flows easily from theory to practice, and coherently through a wide range of ideas from different disciplines. I think a strength of this book is that it reads as if it's emerging fluidly from a very rich and diverse field of ideas (from the relationship between gestalt psychotherapy theory and other disciplines), and that it moves easily between theory and practice. There's a real range and depth to it conceptually, and yet it also feels very practical.

Peter Philippson captures a very complex subject with clarity. He takes original thinking in gestalt therapy and gives it an updated flavor by bringing in recent thought from quantum physics and neuroscience that support many of gestalt therapy's original contentions, and yet overall he maintains the integrity of the gestalt approach. His presentation of "simple to complex" operations in nature created vivid images for me of what he was trying to explain. I don't think the materials can be completely assimilated in one reading, and I know eventually I'll go back for another dive into "emergence." Ken Hutchinson, Ph.D. 6-25-09

I'm a Gestalt Therapist in the Northern California, USA. I love this book. I keep talking about it months after having read it. I find myself musing on it -- and saying to my wife things like "you know what Peter Phillipson says about ... " and then I try to explain it. Usually unsuccessfully. She is

getting very tired of this -- but I just keep bringing up ideas from this book. Emergent Properties, State Dependent Memory, Chaos Theory, Husserl, Sartre, Mirror Neurons, Intersubjectivity, A devastating critique of the notion of God (this part really made me think - as I am one of those "spiritual" types who finds the idea of God quite comforting) and much much more is here to take you on a truly fabulous intellectual journey. This book is highly recommended for therapists of all stripes. For Gestalt Therapists - Peter Philippon is one of our finest and most original thinkers. Read it and grow!

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