

## Gestaltization

Transforming diffuse experience formed from sensations into a **perceptual** image. A perceived image is always whole which means that it is not obtained through the combination of its parts. Parts exist only on the level of **sensations**, but through the perceptual processing of sensations we directly get a whole image, rather than its parts. The whole determines its parts, but not vice versa. Perceptual images are always whole, even in primitive biological organisms. For example, the lane along the road consists of different trees: firs (marked in the scheme in grey lines), lombardy poplar (white lines) and lime trees (black lines) planted in groups in the following way:



There is a factory building behind the lane. The person, chicken, deer and turtle in front of the lane perceive the corresponding spots including the spots of the factory building. These spots are later processed by perception in this or that particular way, but not otherwise (we ignore perceptual distortions, here):

1. The figure stands out from the ground – that is the trees always stand out from the building forming the ground;

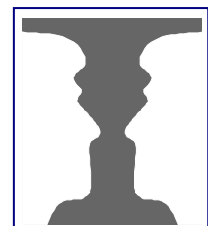
2. The spots become whole and organized - what is perceived is the row of trees and the groups (including four elements);

3. The perceived object becomes internally differentiated – none of the groups is homogenous and is composed of four trees (it is clear that an animal is not aware of the concept ‘tree’ or the number “four” ...)

This kind of processing is determined by the inborn **sets** and **Gestalt images** guiding the transformation of sensory material into the whole. However, the direction of Gestaltization, and, consequently, the type of Gestalt received are often determined by the **set** firmly **fixed** through experience or temporary **situational set** rather than inborn set.

One of the common examples from Gestalt therapy:

Such an image with dual meaning is sometimes perceived as two profiles and other times as a vase. This means that sometimes the dark part becomes





The person is not normally aware of the Gestaltization process since it occurs unconsciously, automatically, and very fast (in the tenth of second). But mental disorders clearly show that it is a process, because in this case it occurs in a distorted way. In some mental disorders or some kind of brain injury when functioning is impeded, Gestaltization takes a distorted form: The person who suffers from the disease/injury sees an object (e.g. a bird), hears it singing, but these two sensations are experienced separately and are not related to each other. The patient's awareness of the fact that the bird is singing does not at all help since the patient cannot experience this on the perceptual level. The Gestalt of a singing bird cannot be formed. Another example is the patient who sees grey, green and blue spots and also knows that there is a window in front of him/her through which they can see tree leaves and blue sky, but the patient cannot perceive/see any of these objects.

Apart from perception, Gestaltization is also characteristic of other **modalities**: long-term memory, thinking, motivation, volition . . . If we are working and the housewife invites us for dinner, we do not normally stop our activity; we first complete some part of the work and then join the dinner. Another example: A picture on the wall which is not hanging properly unconsciously evokes the impulse of fixing it. This case clearly demonstrates the pregnancy phenomenon which is the tendency towards completeness and perfection.