

CONTENTS

This is the last NOWletter to the existing list.	1
Life lessons from Bergson book by Michael Foley	2
Seeing The Land— Max Dulumunmun Harrison.....	5
Monday Bloody Monday by Margot Mann	5
The Ever Present Origin & Duration—Gebser and Bergson	7
The Poets.....	9
Never Give Up	10
John Wren-Lewis Interview.....	10

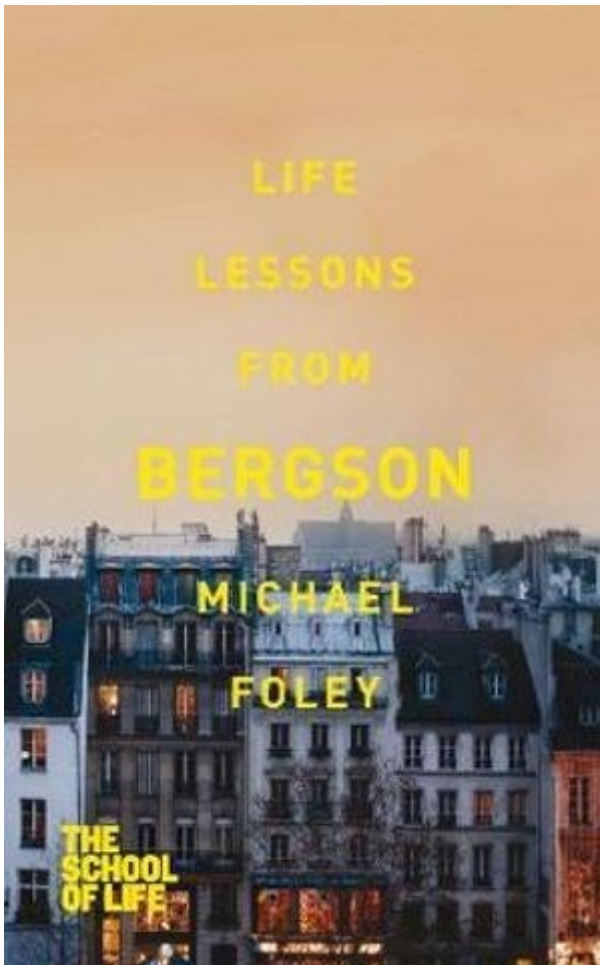
This is the last NOWletter to the existing list.

I think it is time to review our mailing list and consider future directions.

I sense that a large proportion of my email notifications addresses fall on stony ground, that is, into inboxes where interest has expired. So, if that is the case for you, there will be no more notifications. However, if you wish to receive future NOWletters please let me have a ‘KEEP ME ON THE LIST’ email and I will make sure you are on the new list. And a reminder that your articles, notes and observations of all kinds are always welcome.

As to future editions, if there is sufficient interest, I plan to create an edition whenever an issue arises and to maintain the archive on the website at www.capacitie.org. I have noticed that the site is sometimes slow to open and quite often I get the ‘This page isn’t working’ HTTP Error 500 ‘ or ‘This site is not working’ Sometimes, but not always, if I give it a few seconds, it suddenly does become available. On other occasions the site is quite spritely, and it is possible to flit quickly from one page to another.

Life lessons from Bergson book by Michael Foley



My most recent reading assignment from Dave Knowles is a book he is reading by Henri Bortoft entitled, *Taking Appearance Seriously*. He mentioned that it includes a quotation from Bergson which reminded him of my interest in two-way looking:

Philosopher à invertir la direction habituelle du travail de la pensée...

"To philosophize consists in reversing the usual direction of the work of the thought"

I haven't yet read Bortoft's book which sounds interesting, but I'll bet it makes no mention of Douglas Harding. If that is the case, I will take it as another example of academic philosophy's inability to prioritise 'experience of the immediacy of being' over explanation and theories about it, which are thrashed out in endless books. However, I was intrigued by the Bergson quote as I find regular references to his writing but have never read any of his books. Before setting out on Bortoft's explanation of why he thinks we are not taking appearance seriously I thought I'd better get to know Bergson, I'd see if I could find

a review for some basic guidance, I stumbled on a book by Michael Foley, an Irish poet, it turned out to be a book which confirms my opinion that commentary on this aspect of our lives is best left to poets. After writing that I had a look at what Bertrand Russell thought of Bergson and it seems he thought him more of a poet than a philosopher. The table of contents I've copied here gives an idea of the content and the spirit of Foley's approach.

- Introduction . Learning to Swing Along with the Process 2.
- Learning to Tune in to the Melody of Duration 3.
- Learning to Heed the Whispers of Intuition 4.
- Learning to Laugh through Department Meetings 5.
- Learning to Know what we Know but do not See that we Know
and to See what we See but do not Know that we See 6.
- Learning to Enhance Perception, Memory and Attention 7.
- Learning to Be, and Belong to, an Organism 8.
- Learning to Experience Mystical Raptures without Becoming St Teresa 9.

In his *Life lessons from Bergson* Foley takes what he sees as the major aspects of the Bergson message, by way of quite large slabs of Bergson quotations, and follows each selection with a commentary on his own response to, and interpretation of, the extract concerned. The book opens with an outline of Bergson's ideas on process as opposed to substance. This by way of a dialogue, comprising the Bergsonian view followed by the Foley response and commentary. This makes for an interesting presentation of some quite challenging ideas and one which I found enlightening.

I also discovered that a number of the issues we have included in recent NOWletters are matters which are also of interest to the author and to Bergson. For example, the questions of the 'wider view' and the primacy of experience when compared with explanation and concept.

Time. Bergson has some interesting things to say about time. As I read, I realised that I tend to regard time in terms of space. That is, if I think about time I have a mental image stretching in one direction, into the past, and in the opposite direction into the future. The present is included as the point at which these spatial images meet. So that is how I 'think' about time. Bergson seems to be saying that is all very well as a concept but how do I 'experience' time. And the answer is that in spite of advocating experience over explanation, in relation to time, I rarely if ever apply that advice myself. Immediate experience does not provide a spatial, or any sort of context, it is revealed simply as 'what is', what is happening. This immediacy of the occasion is what I think Bergson offers as 'duration' and captured in this comment by Douglas Harding:

*To realize this instantaneous Now,
to live in the present moment,
taking no thought for to-morrow
or yesterday
must be my first concern.*

*And my second must be
to find in this Now
all my to-morrows and yesterdays*

References to the 'ending of time' pop up now and then in expressions of the perennial philosophy but the nature of time is treated less seriously than the absence of self. In dealing with the sense of self and the realisation of self as process rather than entity is regarded by most approaches as the primary action but, if the self process is still apprehended as held in a conceptual context of spatial time, the job is only half done.

This seems to be the same, or very similar to, Gebser's *Ever present Origin* and I included in this issue a fairly lengthy commentary on Gebser, from an earlier NOWletter (page 7), for anyone interested in this perspective.

Free will. The problem of free will comes under the Bergson/Foley microscope and is found to be readily demonstrated— evolution having developed organisms that can understand the deterministic process from which they arose, a process which equipped us with the means to contemplate a variety of future possibilities, and the option of acausal responses to the situation of the moment.

Self. The following quotation includes comments on the self-aspect of experience and reminded me of David Loy's suggestion that we need a non-duality including both the non-dual and the dual. It also references the need to include in awareness, that out of which we are always looking but invariably overlooking.

*Bergson constantly distinguished between two selves, meaning two levels of process – a superficial self whose reactions are socially conditioned and a deep, intuitive self capable of empathy and free will. This deep self is always in danger of being misrepresented by the categorizing self, dismissed as irrelevant by the utilitarian self and snuffed out as a threat to popularity by the social self. How to protect and nurture the crucial intuitive self? We can perceive this self whenever, by a strenuous effort of reflection, we . . . withdraw into ourselves. Though we generally live and act outside of ourselves, in space rather than in duration, and in this way endorse the law of causality, which binds the same effects to the same causes, we can nevertheless always get back into pure duration, whose moments are internal and heterogeneous, and where a cause can never repeat its effect because it can never repeat itself.
(Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience, 1889)*

Perception and Reversal. Bergson had much to say on what we have referred to as third-person and first-person perception and how the latter tends to be drowned out by the hyper-activity of the third person, ego-driven mode. There are supporting comments in the book about how art can help break this separative mode and what I think of as the intuitive grasp of wholeness, which I tried to demonstrate in the collection of poems in my wider view piece in NOWletter 231.

The book covers much more than I have referred to here, there are many references to joy and I found reading it a very joyful experience. It occurred to me that this small book could be regarded as a commentary on what our NOWletter has been trying to present over the past thirty years. Highly recommended, and I shall now find out what Michael Foley has to say about other matters, as well as read some of his poetry. I round off this note with a quotation from the book's conclusion.

*Appreciating the universal work of creation demands the use of every means available. So, Bergson reunited the three ways of seeking understanding of life, increasingly separate and often mutually hostile – religion, science and the humanities – or, rather, he behaved as though these had never gone their separate ways. Foley, Michael.
Life Lessons From Bergson. Pan Macmillan UK. Kindle Edition.*

Alan Mann

Seeing The Land— Max Dulumunmun Harrison

In this book I am trying to raise awareness of aboriginal spirituality and to explain how we connect to the land. I am trying to capture in words the beauty of the land I see around me. And seeing is so important... really seeing what the land is telling you. Sharing what the land is offering for you to take.

When I take people out into the land I say: 'Let's watch the land talk to us'. And you'll see some jaws drop. But that's what it's doin'-it's talking to us without a voice.

From My People's Dreaming by Max Dulumunmun Harrison

I wonder if the European version of this is our stories about the Green Man and whether we have projected into myth what native peoples experience as their being?

Monday Bloody Monday by Margot Mann

The Sydney Morning Herald used to have a slot for reader stories which it ran under the heading of 'Monday bloody Monday'. The following is Margot's contribution which was published in the Herald on May 27th 1991.

It was a holiday Monday. We were sailing on Pittwater just the two of us, on the 33-foot yacht we own a quarter of. We had spent the weekend on the boat among all the other pleasure seekers out on their yachts, and now we had the water nearly to ourselves.

"Pleasure seekers" Is an odd expression. I don't seek pleasure on a yacht, I just hope to survive. As a matter of fact, I hate sailing, especially when the deck isn't level. The best sailing I have had in my few months experience are the times the sail tears and we have to take it down, turn on the motor and head for the marina. It costs about \$10 an inch (about 2 1/2 centimetres) to repair torn sails, so this is an expensive escape.

Other good times are when one or more of the guests gets that tell-tale blanched look about the lips and we have to turn and go back.

Alan, although new to the sport, is very keen. He has done a course on coastal navigation and has read Joshua Slocum's book about sailing around the world singlehanded in the 1890s. He also likes books with such titles as *How to Handle Your Craft in Rough Weather* and enjoys showing me the frighteningly graphic illustrations of yachts losing masts, falling to pieces and so on in heavy seas. Our phone bill has doubled because he keeps ringing the boating weather report, even when it is not his turn for the boat.

We get the boat one weekend a month and Alan usually goes serious sailing on the Saturday. That means that he and everyone who will go past the Heads with him takes the boat out for the day. God knows what they do out there, all I know is that one of the other wives, an experienced sailor in my opinion, was so scarred by one experience that she will now only sail within sight of the marina. On Sundays it's social sailing when we trundle around Pittwater with five or six people on board. We usually moor for a long lunch at the Basin. The sea gently slaps at the hull and the seagulls wheel and call overhead. We eat and drink a lot and I don't complain much about washing up in a few centimetres of greasy water, and not letting a single crumb go down the sink outlet in case it gets blocked. At these times sailing doesn't seem such a bad idea. Once

in a mellow postprandial mood, we started the engine and accidentally motored over the mooring. Alan had to strip to his underpants and dive overboard to cut free the mooring rope, which had become entangled with the propeller. We had to sail straight back to the marina.

Alan says that much worse things happen on social sailing days than when he is serious sailing. He thinks it is because there are too many people on board who know nothing about sailing and just get in the way. This is undeniably true. My own theory is that we get into most trouble because Alan insists everyone has a turn at the wheel. It's his idea of being the perfect host "Go on" he cries when they demur in horror "have ago!" Reluctantly they take the wheel and not long after, when we go about, the boat wallows and grinds, the headsail flaps and tears and the helmsperson panics and probably never touches a helm again. The good bit is we have to go back to the marina.

This was a Holiday Monday. Alan and I had been on board with our son and his friend for a couple of days. We had even gone past the Heads, briefly, on the Sunday, New Zealand was there, somewhere beyond the horizon, and the boat was heading for it, very fast, and on its side. "Help," I shouted a few times. Alan shouted back the logistics of not capsizing, lead in the keel, table tennis ball effect, etc. When we were eventually back in the calmer waters of Pittwater, I told him that telling someone not to be scared was about as useful as telling them to be happy and that he should be admiring my bravery in continually going into the mouth of the tiger.

The holiday Monday was lovely. We tacked around Pittwater just the two of us, with the sun shining and the deck practically level. Every now and then we caught sight of a bank of purplish black cloud building up behind our marina, down the other end of Pittwater. About 4:00 PM we turned on the engine furling the headsail and I pointed her into the wind while Alan took down the mainsail. We motored into the blackness as fast as we could so that we could moor the boat before the storm hit. We didn't make it.



The hail arrived first. ten minutes later I was hanging over the side, soaked to the skin, boat hook ready to grab the mooring buoy. I got it, I lost it, the boat was sliding in the whitecaps and I had to let the boathook go overboard.

By this time there was complete whiteout and we knew that if we didn't move quickly back out into Pittwater we were in danger of crashing into other boats. I turned on all the lights as Alan steered away from the marina, rain pouring down into the cabin and blotting out vision. The dark shapes of boats heaved up on either side of us.

Half an hour later, when the storm had blown itself out and the rain was less heavy, I hooked the mooring buoy with the end of a deck broom we had bought only that morning. We were bitterly cold, miserable and shivering. It's our turn again next week.

Margot Mann

The cartoon was added by the Herald and is a work by our favourite cartoonist Cathy Wilcox.

The Ever Present Origin & Duration—Gebser and Bergson

My interest in Gebser arose from Dave Knowles' recommendation that I read *The Ever Present Origin*. That was way back in 2001. As I read this mighty work, I found that my major interests: Traherne, Harding, Krishnamurti, Dialogue and the Nowletter are all to do with what Gebser calls the concretization of the spirit. The following is an extract from my contribution on this matter in NOWletter. As I read the Foley book I wondered if Bergson's 'Duration' is what Gebser calls 'The Ever-Present Origin'. So, I dug out my 2002 article from NOWletter 84 for comparison. Here it is.

Gebser's thesis is encapsulated in the opening paragraph of the preface. *Origin is ever-present. It is not a beginning, since all beginning is linked with time. And the present is not just the "now," today, the moment or a unit of time. It is ever-originating, an achievement of full integration and continuous renewal. Anyone able to "concretize," i.e., to realize and effect the reality of origin and the present in their entirety, supersedes "beginning" and "end" and the mere here and now.*

He claims the crisis the world is experiencing is evidence of a transformative process which mankind undergoes when it reaches some pivotal point of unfolding human consciousness. (see also George Scloss Nowletter 77). Gebser provides a schema which lays out the history of our awakening which he categorizes in five underlying structures: archaic, magic, mythical, mental and integral. We are at present in the process of, or on the threshold of, emergence from the mental to the integral. This is the foundation on which he builds the framework for an extensive analysis of our history and our present condition in key areas of human experience and endeavour.

Gebser provides a table to summarise the seventeen areas of human experiencing in relation to the five underlying structures mentioned above. To give you an idea of his approach I have cannibalised the full table, kindly provided by Dave Knowles, to produce the following abridged five-column version. (please bear in mind this is a reduction from the full 17 columns)

Gebser: Synoptic Table – Abridged version of 17 column table					
	Dimensioning	Perspectivity	Emphasis	Degree of Consciousness	Realization
Archaic	Zero-dimensional	None	Prespatial Pretemporal	Deep Sleep	Presentiment
Magical	One-dimensional	Pre-perspectival	Spaceless Timeless	Sleep	Vital experience
Mythical	Two-dimensional	Unperspectival	Spaceless Natural temporality	Dream	Undergone experience
Mental	Three-dimensional	Perspectival	Spatial Abstractly temporal	Wakefulness	Representation Conception Ideation

The key element of the structures is the way we understand space and time which he refers to as the space-time relationship. His comments on time are very interesting as he gives it a value way beyond what I would have thought profitable but which is encompassed at the integral-

aperspectival level, as time-freedom. I wonder if that is the same as what Tarthang Tulku calls Great Time?

I found his thought on perspectivity very relevant to recent exchanges in the Nowletter and his proposal that what he calls aperspectivity is the necessary outcome of our pre-perspectival, unperspectival and current perspectival outlooks very convincing in the light of what we have to say about Dialogue and what the headless experiments reveal.

What Gebser seems to be most concerned with is what he calls the concretization of the spiritual, by which he doesn't mean objectifying it in some way but in realizing it as fully as possible. He refers to this concretization as 'verition' and this comes about due to our 'waring' of it. This approach addresses my interest in the question of what follows from an opening to the wider consciousness; what do we do? What is the necessary action? I choose to reply, as I did in my comment on George's essay, that what is necessary is the intensification of Being. I interpret 'verition' as 'making' true that which is already the case but usually obscured by our loss or inadequate development of the ability to apprehend what is happening – our condition.

In reading this long book, nearly 600 pages of small print, which was well outside my range as far as technical comprehensibility is concerned I came upon a part answer to my question in that much of what I seem to be doing, my main areas of interest, constitute an attempt to create opportunities for the 'waring' of which he speaks. Dialogue in its open-ended attempts to achieve a free flow of meaning, Seeing or Headlessness which sets out to include that which sees in our everyday awareness of what is going on and the sharing of these interests with as many of you as possible who feel similar urges.

The author introduces his work as a discussion of his claim that we face a global catastrophe that can be averted only by effecting a transformation, a turning about that will enable transcendence of the present mental level and integration into the full spectrum of consciousness. What he describes in his final paragraph of the opening chapter as follows:

Our concern is with a new reality – a reality functioning and effectual integrally, in which intensity and action, the effective and the effect co-exist; one where origin, by virtue of "presentation," blossoms forth anew; and one in which the present is all-encompassing and entire. Integral reality is the world's transparency, a perceiving of the world as truth: a mutual perceiving and imparting of truth of the world and of man and of all that transluces both.

PS I don't think many people interested in Gebser would be quite so dismissive as he appears to be of what he calls the mere now. Most would have a broader definition. Here is my favourite and, incidentally, the source of this publication's title:

*From everlasting he these joys did Need,
And all these Joys proceed
From him Eternally.
From Everlasting His felicitie
Compleat and Perfect was:
Whose Bosom is the Glass,
Wherin we all Things Everlasting See.*

*His name is NOW, his Nature is forever.
None Can his Creatures from their Maker Sever.
From "The Anticipation" Thos. Traherne*

The presence of origin is a constant theme in Traherne's writing so he was clearly an advanced example of the integral phase of consciousness to which Gebser points.

If my interpretation of what Gebser means by 'concretization of the spiritual' is correct, what an unhappy metaphor – one which converts the flowing awareness of the vision splendid into a lumpen inert mass. Trailing lumps of concrete do we come!** My only complaint about the Gebser approach is that whilst he provides examples of the imminence of the integral phase which is now opening up he doesn't say anything about the 'how' of it. For that I was able to turn to another great work which I had read the year before, *The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth* by Douglas Harding.

Alan Mann

** I was taken to task by John Wren-Lewis for this comment who said it was a serious misinterpretation of Gebser's intention which was, of course, to actualise the occasion.

The Poets

Isn't it bland? It lacks flavor.
Looking at it, it is not visible.
Listen to it, it is not audible.
Use it, it is not applicable.

Lao Tzu

Evening

Stopped on the Path to listen
to a warbler in the reeds,
between myself and these
reeds, stones, dry cracks in the earth,
there is no distance:
I have become seeing.
Overhead a Plane circles,
lights winking and goes.

Colin Oliver

Never Give Up

Never give up
No matter what is going on
Develop the heart
Too much energy in your country
Is spent on developing the mind
Instead of the heart.
Be compassionate
Not just to your friends
But to everyone
Be compassionate
Work for peace
In your heart and in the world
And I say again
Never give up
No matter what is happening
No matter what is going on around you,
Never give up.

Trisha English sent us this poem by Tenzin Gyatso (XIV Dalai Lama), it arrived as we were going to press with a note on our apparent inability to stop history repeating itself.

[John Wren-Lewis Interview.](#)

I am in the process of adding the Caroline Jones, ABC interview to the Capacitie website. It will be available on the Wren-Lewis Articles page for download within the next few days.