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The Face of the Other — Alan Mann

Tom Burvill's paper in the last edition led to some discussions on the side. I emailed Peter Melser about my difficulties with Levinas because he, like Tom, has an academic background which includes continental philosophy. I asked if he could explain what Levinas is talking about and how does it differ from what Moses and Jesus had to say about our ethical responsibilities — *you shall love your neighbour as yourself*. An injunction I interpret not as requiring me to treat my neighbour as I would be treated myself but because fundamentally, we are not separate, *as yourself* referring to a level at which neighbour and self are one. It seems to me that the Levinas approach sustains the separation that is perhaps the main cause of our dysfunction, our Ukrainians small and large.

The Harding perspective reveals that when I am what we describe as 'face to face' with you, experience reveals only your face and, in terms of awareness, you and your face constitute 'my' immediate consciousness. Presumably you experience the same aware space comprising my face etc., at 'your end'. Brentyn Ramm gives a much better explanation in his essay: *How to Recognise Pure Awareness* <https://daily-philosophy.com/brentyn-ramm-pure-awareness/>

It is this shared being, always the case, which the customary focus on 'other' conceals. I can't see that Levinas is saying anything that hasn't been said for thousands of years. See what India had to say about it some 2000 years ago (below). What am I missing? I sent Peter a copy of Tom's paper before it appeared in the last NOWletter, and his reply with a note from Graeme follows this note.

Alan Mann

He who sees that the Lord of all is ever the same in all that is, immortal in the field of mortality – he sees the truth. And when a man sees that the God in himself is the same God in all that is, he hurts not himself by hurting others: then he goes indeed to the highest Path. He who sees that all work, everywhere, is only the work of nature; and that the Spirit watches this work—he sees the truth. *Bhagavad Gita 13:27-29*

The ‘Face of the Other’ 2— Graeme Wilkins

How to absolve one’s “self” from a lack of love and understanding for another? ...is it the distancing for “self” preservation that keeps us from true understanding?. It was Barry Long who impressed when speaking of indirect empathy and direct action. Do we only really react and take action when “face to face” with such that horrifies us ?..whereas, even in “make believe” as in dramaturgy is the effect lessened even though the “saying” is in right front of us?

Reading this paper I was reminded of recent book club read “No friend but the Mountains” by Behrouz Boochani. In round table discussion the harrowing deprivations of incarceration were dodged in (preservation) favour by concentrating on the writing prowess of the author and, by passing the anger that screamed from the pages regarding the “authorities” (and their political overlords’ treatment of people trying to survive, and to do so by any means possible, by casting remote aspersions on the authors’ character...shameful.

Does “in your face” confrontation provoke lasting change or does a “softly softly” approach toward understanding reap greater rewards?

“The Cookup” with Adam Liaw (on SBS each weeknight at 7pm) at present is in “refugee week”... where Adam and his guests cook and chat...last night it was food originating in Afghanistan and Myanmar...it’s lovely to see the understanding and appreciation between the three with cooking as a “binder” dispelling the disparate in favour of the homogeneous...

Graeme Wilkins

The ‘Face of the Other’ 3 — Peter Melser

Hi Alan. You have set me off on a little journey of reconnection, rediscovery and seeing the old once more anew. Reading all my desktop files to find relevant bits. The best bit I came up with was not a direct report of Levinas but something I wrote about ethics which I think illustrates what he was talking about (I will explain below) better than the philosophical abstraction of Levinas or Tom Burvill. I really like what Tom is on about and think it’s really good and well worthy of the Nowletter. The Levinas idea of ethics is that it’s not about “following a code” but engaging as a person, which Tom is also saying. Now what is this engaging as a person? That points to the core of the alternative philosophy. This responsibility for the other and the face of the other and even the idea of the other, of alterity. The idea of meeting the face of the other is that I am myself because you are becoming yourself through our meeting. Or it is: I am myself, I am a self [!!!] because of you, because of your face, your self that I see. I become myself through seeing you, your face, and so have a responsibility to you. It’s the basic idea that we are human beings as part of humanity and become ourselves through that connection. It is the idea that we are not first individuals and as an existing individual we meet other individuals who we should be nice to. That ethics comes before being, it is the foundation of becoming being, not something that happens after I am already a being. This is the point about bringing in the “saying” and the “said”. The saying is the process through which we (our being, our self, and everything else) are created and the said is what that has produced. The said has a kind of fixity which proscribes; it

superimposes, so the French postmodernists don't like that, and nor do I because it distorts things and gives us a false sense of "reality". It is falsity creation, gives us illusions like the idea of having a unique self, not one embedded in continuous encounter with the face of the other.

Now what reading Burvill made me recognise was that although in my paper on ethics I do not bring in much of Levinas, I am using the same perspective and doing it in a much more concrete way through examples of meeting the face of the other and taking up responsibility for them. So, I was quite pleased with myself. I am pulling out of the paper the main part where the examples of ethics that I am describing are very much describing examples of meeting the face of the other, which I think then makes what Levinas is talking about concrete and understandable, so thereby making an answer to your request.!!

I do like Burvill's paper very much and think what he is saying about the arts and ethics is really interesting and does connect with spirituality and consciousness that all the Now-ers are interested in (or ought to be).

Peter Melser

Memberships: Inclusion and Exclusion — from Peter Melser

"Inclusion" is not a static process even among accepted members. There are degrees of favour, acceptance, esteem, admiration, love and friendship, all of which shift over time, come and go, are offered and reciprocated, or rejected and denied. These offers are made within ongoing interactions, through acknowledgements and gestures, the attention we are given and the respect we are accorded. They matter to us a great deal. Gaita (2000) sees those we "include" as those whom we know to share, with us, a common "inner life" of meanings and understandings – including the trust that they will not "wrong" us. This is what belonging and shared membership means.

Most memberships have inclusion procedures and joining rituals. In formal organisations there are well-defined application processes and, in most corporations, psychological testing to assess the "fit" between the candidate and the culture of the organisation. In relationships which end up as families there is a recognised sequence of transitions from "first date" to formal marriage. In sororities and motorcycle gangs there are initiation rituals and other forms of gaining membership. Often these forms of initiation serve to demonstrate commitment and prospective loyalty. More informal relationships have less obvious markers but still include some forms of acknowledgement of the membership.

More formal memberships are celebrated in ceremonies such as reunions, annual conferences and anniversaries. And memberships usually have their exit procedures – ranging from divorces, resignations and terminations to more savage forms of retribution for criminal gang members who choose to leave. I think this distorts a bit what I want to say which is that inclusion is something that is going on implicitly in all encounters with the other, all meetings face to face.

Memberships can be short term or long term. Gaita (2000) discusses examples where Jewish Concentration camp prisoners play a spirited game of football with their NAZI captors. A second is a Communist show trial court scene where a prisoner being rudely interrogated suddenly has his trousers drop, his belt having been confiscated. After a pause, the judge begins to laugh and the whole court breaks into shared laughter. Soon, however, a more appropriate demeanour resumes and the prisoner is sentenced to death. Gaita writes:

"the laughter created a sense of human fellowship in circumstances which tended to extinguish, or radically weaken it" p 49

A similar incongruity of membership is the Christmas soccer games that World War 1 English and German soldiers played between the trenches – before returning to killing one another on Boxing Day. A less grotesque example might be a vigorous conversation between two people at a party who never, or only occasionally, meet again.

Memberships have another aspect which is important in considering their ethical role. All in-groups imply an out-group by contrast. All inclusion involves exclusion and wherever we have “us” we also have a “them”. The intensity of this in-out distinction varies from friendly permeability to the extremes of genocide. The difference is defined by an “us”, who share something that we value in the context of our membership, and those we deem to lack this feature. We identify with the people who are like us and distinguish ourselves from those who we see as different. This difference is the basis for treating “them” differently – if only with a cautious, but polite, distance.

When “we” identify others as different we make inferences and judgements about “their” beliefs and practices. These inferences and judgements solidify into stereotypes and prejudices. The inferences and judgements are not themselves the mark of the difference, but they quickly become the justification for it. The discrimination becomes a clear barrier to connection and shared understanding.

The distinction between us and them parallels Buber’s distinction between “I-Thou” and “I-It” relationships. Clearly, not all memberships are as close as Buber’s “I-Thou”, but the recognition of shared membership creates an openness to the possibility of connection, an openness to surprise about the other, and an openness to the possibility of developing even greater “shared meaning” with the other. Judgement and categorising, which are the basis of an “I-It” relationship, close off the possibility of connection and shared meaning. This is an ethical issue. Gaita refers to:

“the dehumanising power of stereotypes which often make others only partially visible to our moral faculties” p 282

The ethical challenge is to create “likeness” across “difference” – a “shared likeness” that does not deny difference but is acknowledging and respecting of difference. This seems to me to be “openness to Other” in the sense intended by Falzon (1998). Viewing this from the perspective of memberships makes good sense. We can share some membership(s) but not others. But seeing ourselves through our identifications with memberships, some shared and others not shared, makes our ethical stances, including our disagreements and conflicts, more recognisable. Frequently, in ethical choices, the shared membership that we seek to assert is that of our “common humanity” (Gaita, 2000).

Openness to Other: Why we Desire Inclusion

Falson (1998) sees Openness to Other as the fundamental ethical principle, as the equivalent in a dialogic ethics of Kant’s categorical imperative in his deontological ethics.

I am seeing “openness to other” as the creation of likeness across difference, where we are able to recognise both likeness and difference as “selves” we gain through memberships we identify with. It corresponds with what Gaita (p104) sees as a love which involves “a respect for the independent reality of the beloved,” and involves seeing “others as another perspective on the world, as one is oneself”. “Openness to other” is essentially an injunction to keep space for dialog open, thereby enabling the ongoing ethical conversation. “Openness to other” means, first, respect for the other. This in turn means acceptance and appreciation of the Other’s “difference”:

“an ethical responsibility to the other, [is] a responsibility to affirm the otherness of the other” (Falzon, 1998, p63).

How does openness occur? What does the creation of likeness involve? And there is another question: Why is the inclusion created by this openness so important to us? Many philosophers recognise our shared humanity as being the foundation of ethics, and recognise that what we share is our need for, and vulnerability to, one another. For Levinas (1985), our ethical responsibility is to the “face” of the other, to that which:

“cannot become content, which your thought would embrace; it is uncontainable, it leads you beyond” p87

We should not categorise and should remain open to possibility. Levinas’ “face” is “meaning in itself” and this meaning is the “command”, “do not kill”, which is the human statement of vulnerability. This is similar to Gaita's saying, when he talks of the Good Samaritan, “‘I must help, I can’t walk past’ – is the expression of full responsiveness to the reality of another human being in need. That reality – a human being in need, becomes compulsively present to the will - is expressed in the modalities of necessity. ... A sense of obligation steps into the breach.” Gaita P276

Gaita quotes Buber in this context: “genuine responsibility exists only where there is true responding” (Gaita p102). What is this “true responding”? It is likely to be a response with openness, a response that is free of judgement and involves an active appreciation of the other in their humanity. Gaita talks of an experience which powerfully influenced his thinking about ethics: his experience of a nun responding to patients in a long-term mental illness ward where he worked as a young man. The Nun’s behaviour seems to epitomise an ethical “openness to the other”.

“One day a nun came to the ward. In her middle years, only her vivacity made an impression on me until she talked to the patients. Then everything in her demeanour towards them - the way she spoke to them, her facial expressions, the inflexions of her body – contrasted with and showed up the behaviour of those noble psychiatrists [who were devoted in their attention to patients]. She showed that they were, despite their best efforts, condescending, as I too had been. She thereby revealed that even such patients were, as the psychiatrists and I had sincerely and generously professed, the equals of those who wanted to help them; but she also revealed that in our hearts we did not believe this.” P 18 – 19.

In referring to that which “in our hearts we did not believe”, Gaita is identifying the subtle kinds of “closure” that, through our everyday orienting judgements, or more strongly, stereotypes, reduce and foreclose our openness to others. Another aspect of “openness” is the nun’s seeing the patients as we would see someone included in some circle of intimacy or familiarity, a close membership: meeting them with a presence and affirmation.

Gaita’s experience with the nun and the examples below suggest that the way we regard the mentally ill and others suffering emotional disturbance is likely to be characterised by a defensive, judgemental closure. The experience these mentally-ill people have of being treated differently, with openness and respect, is a good illustration of how openness works and how it can impact on relationships. The following examples are quoted at length, because the language used in the descriptions very effectively conveys the ways in which judgement, and its opposite, openness, have their different effects. The examples illustrate the way in which responsiveness to the other – the inclusive attention to the other as an equal human being, and an identification with the thoughts and feelings of the other – create affirming and more strongly ethical relationships.

In the context of a psychiatric hospital, the categories of psychiatric illness themselves obscure openness to the patient. Shotter (2004) reports a patient's experience in therapy with psychiatrist, Harry Goolishian. The patient, Bill, is a 30-year-old man hospitalised as a paranoid schizophrenic and seen by the Hospital as a "revolving door treatment failure". "Goolishian asks him: 'what, if anything, could your previous therapists have done differently that would have been more useful to you?' Bill immediately answers: 'That is a very interesting and complicated question. If a person like you had found a way to talk with me when I was first going crazy ... At all times ... I knew ... my delusion that I was a grand military figure ... was a way in which I was trying to tell myself that I could overcome my fear and panic ... Rather than talk with me about this, my doctors would always ask me what I called conditional questions'"

As Shotter notes, a distance is created by these psychiatric lenses and their associated questions:

"What Bill called 'conditional questions' were, of course, check-list diagnostic questions, questions which had the interactional effect of making Bill feel like an object under another person's surveillance. Whereas Harry Goolishian was there, present, in a personal relationship with him, rather than, so to speak, standing over against him, observing him from a distance".

Gaita, in discussing the nun's behaviour, notes the same quality of relational engagement in her creation of more ethical relationship.

"... her behaviour was striking not for the virtues it expressed, or even the good it achieved, but for its power to reveal the full humanity of those whose affliction had made their humanity invisible. Love is the name we give to such behaviour". P20

The offer of this attention, or "inclusion" as I am calling it, can give the other the experience of being "seen" as "who they are" [or makes them who they are within that interaction]. An account by a psychotherapy client, quoted in Mearns and Cooper (2002), like that of Bill above, gives a version of the experience:

It is amazing to feel so understood. I knew she [the therapist] understood me deeply. It wasn't just that she understood what I was talking about - it was that she understood how it feels to be me. ... It felt like a 'relationship' in which we were both sharing. I suppose it was - what she was sharing was not about her own life - what she was sharing was herself, in relation to me". P45

What this attitude of open love reveals, for Gaita is the "unique preciousness" of the other; the "irreplacability" of the other. There is an apparent paradox in this. This reference to "unique preciousness" is perhaps the epitome of an appreciation of the *individual*. Significantly this individuality is revealed through relationship, through being joined within a membership, and not through a "standing out from" others. In this context of everyday action, individual and social context are not opposed. Rather, the individual self emerges through relationships with others. Levinas is saying that we have an ethical responsibility to respond to the other and that, in this response, our person-ness emerges:

“Responsibility in fact is not a simple attribute of subjectivity, as if the latter already existed, in itself, before the ethical relationship. Subjectivity is not for itself: it is, once again, initially for another.” P96

Another statement of this paradox is:

“We are not born originals and then become copies. It is in the copying that we originate”. Gaita also makes the interesting connection between the acknowledgement of ‘uniqueness’ and Kant’s assertion of people as “ends in themselves”. When we are treating people this way we are offering an “unconditional” acceptance. Gaita sees the nun’s love as “unconditional”, like a parent’s love; this is also the “unconditional positive regard” which Carl Rogers sees as the desirable attitude of therapist towards client.

This seems the essence of what “belonging”, or membership, offers. This is not to say that we always get it, or even that we consciously are aware that we are seeking it. We can fill out what this experience of belonging might consist in, as it applies to memberships more generally, as:

- **Inclusion:** First and foremost, an open response is an “*offer of inclusion*” in some membership or other; an unconditional acceptance of the other.
- **Affirmation:** This inclusion is also an *affirmation* of the other as having worth, value, and as being seen to be making a contribution to something beyond themselves (and/or to the group itself).
- **Agency:** Together, these two offers have a profound impact on the person’s sense of self; on their self-esteem, confidence and sense of capacity to act, and on their sense of *agency* and empowerment as persons.

Additional note: These pronouncements are the “said” of what I have been “saying” or trying to.

It seems to me this is what the therapy client above is saying about her experience of “being seen” by the therapist. This “sharing of herself in relation to me” expresses the inclusion within which the client feels herself affirmed and given agency (implied perhaps but not expressed) within a shared belonging created in the moment, in the therapy session.

This experience of inclusion and efficacy occurs within a particular membership and is our incentive to belong, and it generates a sense of self that may or may not be carried into other memberships. Some memberships offer more inclusion, affirmation and agency than others, but these are generally what we value in the memberships we are involved in.

It is also clear that the withdrawal of these acknowledgements – in conflicts and threats of exclusion, such as Christina experienced in her confrontation with Phil and his associates over the SPE – threatens self-esteem and sense of agency. As we know from our experiences in workplaces, positive acknowledgement is in many ways the most important aspect of our working life. What we are talking about here is the experience the ancient Greeks called eudemonia or “flourishing”. Traditionally, this notion has been used as an attribute of individuals. Through maintaining certain ethical virtues, the individual flourishes, and becomes a fully realised person. Like Gaita, I would put the personal virtue, and the good being achieved, to one side. This kind of flourishing is produced mutually, through our memberships and relationships with one another.

Another more prosaic example from the Sydney Morning Herald a few days ago illustrates its more familiar occurrence in everyday life. The example shows the importance the young man attaches to his “rugby league” membership, and the powerful influence this gives to this membership’s leaders, Hasler, the Head Coach. It also shows the powerful connection between “acknowledgement” in a valued membership and “self-esteem”. The newspaper article reads:

"A young man was in the room of Canterbury's welfare officer pouring his heart out about drowning in the depths of depression when Bulldog's coach Des Hasler asked to see the player. Permission granted. Hasler embraced the player and made a promise to Athina Shelston, the Bulldog's education and welfare officer and a trained social worker, [which she] said he'd kept. "He hugged him and said 'I'm there for you'" she said. "He said 'This is really tough, you're brave. We're proud of you'". The player cried. I think Des even cried. I sure did. When Des walked out the player said 'Oh my God, that was just amazing ... I feel so important ... I felt supported.'" "He's still there for the player. ... the player says 'Des keeps asking me how I'm going and so do the boys.' It gets rid of the stigma." Daniel Lane SMH July 4, 2013

Peter Melser

Poem inspired by a photo of space.

Where mind in silence stays away
and imagination takes over
gliding into space amid the stars
as the universe lifts its cover entire:

infinity knows no night or day
its mystery will take a billion years to discover
all lives, of the earth and the firmament they display
in One nameless entity--each casting its own colour

Peter Lim

The Ever-Present Origin by Jean Gebser –

From NOWletter 84 September 2002

I am repeating this 2002 article in the light of recent discussions about Gebser, a somewhat neglected figure whose work I have found to be genuinely transforming. My interest in Gebser arises from the insistence of Dave Knowles that I read *The Ever Present Origin* plus my discovery, as I read this mighty work, that my major interests: Traherne, Harding, Krishnamurti, Dialogue and the Nowletter are all to do with what Gebser calls the concretization of the spirit.

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 Schloss 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 temporicity	Dream	Undergone experience
Mental	Three- dimensional	Perspectival	Spatial Abstractly temporal	Wakefulness	Representation Conception Ideation
Integral	Four-dimensional	Aperspectival	Space-free Time-free	Transparency	Verition

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, constitutes 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

An additional note in response to Dave on 5 July 2022.

I remember John Wren-Lewis taking me to task for interpreting the word concretization in such a clunky way. So now, to what extent has 'waring' contributed to my outlook in the years since reading Gebser?

What I understand by the word 'waring' is now a daily practice. Not that I set time aside for it but rather remember it as what is really going on and stop, for a minute or so, sometimes longer, to set aside or slip out of, the default ego-centric observer mindset. Or even when going about my business, waring the actuality of the occasion as opposed to resting in my customary self-centred view. I think this is what is implied by Gebser's aperspectival. It is reflected in many Eastern traditions and, in my view, in such sayings as "Dwell in me and I in you".

My only addition to the Gebser perspective is an understanding of the relevance of how close it is to that of native peoples. (Something I know you are working on Dave.) As an example, I

quoted in NOWletter 233 that David Gulpilil, in a bush setting, says, "If you sit down here, really quietly, the land will be talking to you". I think he's right, but I first have to learn how to listen. There is great resistance to this perspective from the reasoning mind as it refuses to give ground to the wider view, that which is always the case but almost invariably overlooked. And as to the word extra-ordinary, which is used to describe these openings, it is meaningful only in the sense that we have lost contact with the perspective in which it is revealed as the 'ordinary' made plain.

I think I was lucky to meet Douglas Harding who showed me what I have found to be a way of re-establishing the 'immediacy of being', my way of referring to that immersion in 'what is' and what I think Gebser is hoping to make plain.

Alan Mann

Listening — Heidegger and Emily Dickinson

Iain McGilchrist quotes Steiner: "As George Steiner puts it, speaking eloquently of Heidegger: As knower and user, the ego is predator. For Heidegger, on the contrary, the human person and self-consciousness are not the centre, the assessors of existence. Man is only a privileged listener and respondent to existence. The vital relation to otherness is not, as for Cartesian and positivist rationalism, one of 'grasping' and pragmatic use. It is a relation of audition. We are trying 'to listen to the voice of Being'. It is, or ought to be, a relation of extreme responsibility, custodianship, answerability to and for."

(From "The Matter With Things: Our Brains, Our Delusions and the Unmaking of the World" by Iain McGilchrist)

Emily Dickinson

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,
And Mourners to and fro
Kept treading – treading – till it seemed
That Sense was breaking through –

And when they all were seated,
A Service, like a Drum –
Kept beating – beating – till I thought
My Mind was going numb –

And then I heard them lift a Box
And creak across my soul
With those same Boots of Lead, again,
Then Space – began to fill,

As all the Heavens were a Bell,
And Being, but an Ear,
And I, and Silence, some strange Race
Wrecked, solitary, here –

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,
And I dropped down, and down –
And hit a World, at every plunge,
And Finished knowing – then –

Poem 280

William Shakespeare's insights freely adapted.

Everyone has their own favourite guru, their own favourite politician, their own god or psychological wizard, but for me it is hard to go beyond William Shakespeare. I am eternally grateful to my educators for having the foresight to include his work in the school curriculum. I am not sure today whether young people have ever heard of him! No matter, his insights remain untarnished and for those who link his words to contemporary events, his position as "learned sage" is unassailable. If, in this paper, I take the liberty of applying his insights out of context, it is because his words seem so appropriate to the characters which dominate our present worldly existence.

By now everyone is aware of the dreadful war in Ukraine and the loss of life, the utter carnage and the homelessness of those who have been forced to flee. It is the old people, who have nowhere to flee, that wrenches the soul and brings tears to the eyes. It is even more terrible when one realises that it has all happened before. When one sees Putin on the world stage and hears his propaganda, the words of Shakespeare's *Richard III* comes to mind and the famous soliloquy "Now is the winter of our discontent" to which many actors (eg. Laurence Olivier) chose to combine several lines from *King Henry VI*,

*"Why, I can smile and murder while I smile,
And cry 'content' to that which grieves my heart,
And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
And frame my face for all occasions"*

William Shakespeare, [King Henry VI, Part 3](#)

For the EU's response to the war in Ukraine we might have to go to Shakespeare's play *Hamlet* :

*To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. To die—to sleep,
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub: For in that sleep
of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, Must give us pause—
there's the respect That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make..*

And then of course there is the overthrow of Boris Johnson in the United Kingdom, whose hero was always Winston Churchill. He wrote a biography of Winston some years ago in which he could only adulate him for all his achievements, dismissing almost entirely his many tragic flaws.

As competitors for his job jostled together, it reminded me of Mark Antony's famous narration over the body of *Julius Caesar*, in the play of the same name. Mark Antony

wants Caesar's mantle, but he doesn't want to alienate the masses or diminish his influence with those in power. Thus he begins...

*I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones; So let it be with Caesar. The
noble Brutus Hath told you Caesar was ambitious: if it were so, it
was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest—
For Brutus is an honourable man;
So are they all, all honourable men—*

Finally, if you agree, we need to see ourselves through the eyes of the Israelis who today are constantly on edge against an avowed enemy that wants to destroy their Nation. Many people hide their anti-semitism behind politically correct narratives and endless discourses articulated by the media in general. I was about to quote the famous speech of Shylock from *The Merchant of Venice* but was sidetracked into researching the entire play. What I discovered, to my dismay, is that nothing is simple, direct, without an historical background. Everything is interpreted through the prism of race, class, education, and conditioning in general.

So the famous speech of Shylock beginning

"He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million, laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies: and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is?" etc.

I cannot summarize what I discovered. There is a whole website devoted to an analysis of the Shylock character. For further interpretation please visit *Shylock's Speech in the Merchant of Venice Critical Discourse Analysis by members of the Hebron University*.

I do have one "overwhelming question" for readers. Has the whole world gone crazy? Is there something called cosmic consciousness which is "sick to death of us" and would like to see us eliminated? It sometimes seems that way.

I want to conclude, not with a Shakespearean quote, although it is tempting to visit Prospero's last speech from *The Tempest*, but rather with an Oscar Wilde quote from his famous *Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

*And all men kill the thing they love,
By all let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss, The brave man with a sword!*

I think of the "sword" as the power of academia to destroy everything that is lovely and fragile. I think that knowledge without wisdom is the curse of the gods and if, in our hubris, we think that we can rule the cosmos it will be one more step closer to our extinction.

Trisha English. WA

How to Recognise Pure Awareness by Brentyn J. Ramm

I am aware of the room, these words, my bodily sensations, feelings, thoughts. These are objects of awareness. But what is this awareness? Awareness is one of the greatest mysteries we face. Why should it exist at all?

I will refer to the experience of ‘awareness itself’ as a *pure awareness* experience. Most people, aside from those familiar with spiritual traditions such as Buddhism, have never heard of pure awareness, let alone believe that there is such a phenomenon. They think that consciousness is just the qualities of experience such as seeing the pinkness of the water lily and smelling its sweet fragrance. According to many meditative traditions this is to miss the essence of consciousness. It is to focus on the contents of awareness, while overlooking awareness itself. There is a growing interest amongst philosophers and scientists in pure awareness experiences reported by contemplatives. A recent example is a study by Alex Gamma and Thomas Metzinger which surveyed the characteristics of pure awareness experiences in 1,400 meditators.¹

The complete article at: <https://daily-philosophy.com/brentyn-ramm-pure-awareness/>