



The Wider View

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,

Doth glance from heaven to earth,
 From earth to heaven, and as imagination bodies forth
 The form of things unknown, the poet's pen
 turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing,
 A local habitation and a name."

Midsummer Night's Dream

It was my responsibility to host the August meeting of the men's group I belong to. It is customary for the host to open the meeting with a few words on a subject of interest to him as convener. This introduction is the basis for a general exchange of ideas and responses to the theme. I took this as an opportunity to explain my interest in what seems to be an uncommon perspective, but one in which the poets seem to be very interested. I picked out examples of poems and quotations which illustrate this aspect, with the intention of reading to our meeting. However, there were far too many examples, it would have taken up the whole meeting, so I compromised by emailing one or two of the quotations to the group every second day or so throughout July. This explains the numbering, e.g., The Wider View 8, etc. I called this exercise 'the wider view' in the belief that is to do with a more comprehensive awareness than my customary consciousness provides. On reading the poems I came across what might have been a better title in the extract from The Prelude, Wordsworth's version, *The Eye of Love*.

Alan

The Wider View 1

It is my view that there is nothing supernatural involved in the wider view. An opinion shared by Emily Dickinson who pointed this out, in a letter to her mentor Thomas Wentworth Higginson:

“I was thinking to-day, as I noticed, that the “Supernatural” was only the Natural disclosed”.

And on another occasion,

Not “Revelation” ’t is that waits,
But our unfurnished eyes.

And here is her Poem 959

A loss of something ever felt I —
The first that I could recollect
Bereft I was — of what I knew not
Too young that any should suspect

A Mourner walked among the children
I notwithstanding went about
As one bemoaning a Dominion
Itself the only Prince cast out —

Elder, Today, a session wiser
And fainter, too, as Wiseness is —
I find myself still softly searching
For my Delinquent Palaces —

And a Suspicion, like a Finger
Touches my Forehead now and then
That I am looking oppositely
For the site of the Kingdom of Heaven —

Whilst there is nothing supernatural about it there is something that can be described as excessively natural, and that is the way we become entrapped in our knowledge and explanations of what is going on to the complete exclusion of our experiencing. There is an interesting comparison to be made between the final verse and the pointing finger experiment.

The Wider View 2

At a poetry weekend in 2003, organized by Ted Myers & Caroline Davis, we all went for a bit of a wander by the river, on the way back I was practising the ‘observing the space in which objects appear’ rather than the objects themselves. This made me late for the afternoon session which started with all participants picking a book from a box of poetry books and then selecting a poem to read to the group. As I riffled through the pile of books one ‘fell open’ at the following, a poem I’d never read before.

What Birds Plunge Through Is Not The Intimate Space

What birds plunge through is not the intimate space
 in which you see all forms intensified.
 (Out in the Open, you would be denied
 your self would disappear into that vastness.)
 Space reaches from us and construes the world:
 to know a tree, in its true element,
 throw inner space around it, from that pure
 abundance in you. Surround it with restraint.
 It has no limits. Not till it is held
 in your renouncing is it truly there.
 Rainer Maria Rilke

The Wider View 3

Sylvia Plath - From her poem Black Rook in Rainy Weather

A certain minor light may still
 Leap incandescent
 Out Of kitchen table or chair
 As if a celestial burning took
 Possession Of the most obtuse Objects now and then—
 Thus hallowing an interval
 Otherwise inconsequent
 By bestowing largesse, honour,
 One might say love.

Delmore Schwartz is “Seurat’s Sunday Afternoon along the Seine

If you look long enough at anything
 It will become extremely interesting;
 If you look very long at anything

It will become rich, manifold, fascinating:
 If you can look at anything for long enough,
 You will rejoice in the miracle of love,
 You will possess and be blessed by the marvellous blinding radiance
 of love, you will be radiance.

The Wider View 4

Both Goethe and Blake had something to say about the wider view and both, at different times, remarked that they were writing for future generations. Maybe they couldn't get *their* friends and colleagues to agree with them!

Goethe — “There is a delicate empiricism which makes itself utterly identical with the object, thereby becoming true theory... The ultimate goal would be to grasp that everything in the realm of fact is already theory... Let us not seek for something beyond the phenomena – they themselves are the theory” (Goethe, 1988, p.307, quoted in Brady, 1998, p.98).

Explanatory note, source unknown. Goethe rightly remarks, every fact is already theory; that is to say, it is already seen in the light of a particular understanding. Goethe's approach to science emphasizes this perceptual encounter with the laws of nature and not their abstract or mechanical representation. While important for all forms of scientific inquiry, Goethe's understanding of science is especially useful for the developing science of consciousness where the phenomena of lived experience comprise the very field of study. Increasingly we will need to learn to "see" deeper and more subtle patterns within conscious experience.

Two quotations

To see a world in a Grain of Sand,
 And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
 Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
 And eternity in an hour.

“If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, Infinite.
 For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.”

William Blake

The Wider View 5

Alan Gould writes: Traherne was a visionary Anglican. Judith Wright was a spiritually conflicted secular intellect. Yet the work of both, their very sense of themselves on the planet, are in accord with Traherne's discovery of self in his poem "Wonder": *I felt a vigor in my sense That was all spirit.*

Reading Thomas Traherne – a poem by Judith Wright

Can I then lose myself,
and losing find one word
that, in the face of what you were,
needs to be said or heard?
--Or speak of what has come
to your sad race
that to your clear rejoicing
we turn with such a face?
With such a face, Traherne,
as might make dumb
any but you, the man who knew
how simply truth may come:
who saw the depth of darkness
shake, part and move,
and from death' s centre the light' s ladder
go up from love to Love.

Alan speaking. I had read this poem a number of times without picking up Judith Wright's distinction between lower and upper case Love. I finally spotted it in reading Alan Gould's article on Traherne, *The Poet of Sudden Cloudbreak*.

<https://www.capacity.org/traherne/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Cloudbreak%20Alan%20Gould.pdf>

The Wider View 6

Shakespeare slipped his observations on the wider view, into the plays. Here are a couple of examples.

Duke Senior – Act 1, As You Like It - The Duke and his courtiers have been banished to the forest.

Duke. Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,
Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court?
Here feel we not the penalty of Adam,
The seasons' difference; as the icy fang

And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
 Which when it bites and blows upon my body,
 Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say
 'This is no flattery; these are counsellors
 That feelingly persuade me what I am.'
 Sweet are the uses of adversity,
 Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
 Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;
 And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
 Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
 Sermons in stones, and good in everything.
 I would not change it.

Measure for Measure – Act 2 Scene 2 - (Shakespeare meets Douglas Harding)

ISABELLA defending her brother before Angelo.
 Could great men thunder
 As Jove himself does, Jove would ne'er be quiet,
 For every pelting, petty officer
 Would use his heaven for thunder;
 Nothing but thunder! Merciful Heaven,
 Thou rather with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt
 Split'st the unwedgeable and gnarled oak
 Than the soft myrtle: but man, proud man,
 Drest in a little brief authority,
 Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
 His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
 Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
 As make the angels weep; who, with our spleens,
 Would all themselves laugh mortal.

The Wider View 7

From "The Prelude" by William Wordsworth.

"Thus while the days flew by, and years passed on,
 From Nature and her overflowing soul,
 I had received so much, that all my thoughts
 Were steeped in feeling; I was only then
 Contented, when with bliss ineffable
 I felt the sentiment of Being spread
 O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
 O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
 And human knowledge, to the human eye
 Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;
 O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
 Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides
 Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,

And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
 If high the transport, great the joy I felt,
 Communing in this sort through earth and heaven
 With every form of creature, as it looked
 Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
 Of adoration, with an eye of love.
 One song they sang, and it was audible,
 Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,
 O'ercome by grosser prelude of that strain,
 Forgot its functions and slept undisturbed.
 If this be error, and another faith
 Find easier access to the pious mind,
 Yet were I grossly destitute of all
 Those human sentiments which make this earth
 So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice
 To speak of you, ye mountains and ye lakes
 And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds
 That dwell among the hills where I was born.
 If in my youth I have been pure in heart,
 If, mingling with the world, I am content
 With my own modest pleasures, and have lived"

The Wider View 8

I watched the ABC David Gulpilil film on 11 July. At one point Gulpilil, in a bush setting, says, "**If you sit down here, really quietly, the land will be talking to you**". This is a testable claim offering the possibility of opening to what we've been describing as 'the wider view'. I assume it is what Heidegger means by his 'waiting on' as opposed to 'waiting for'. And I think that is what Owen Barfield means by 'original participation'. I describe it myself as 'immersed in the occasion', which, if I sit and 'listen' instead of pasting descriptions, labels and assumptions on everything around me, becomes a matter of participation, of reciprocal engagement, the occasion is seen as what I am and replaces my customary perspective of Alan, the detached observer of whatever is going on. I don't think it is a matter of either/or but of both, an opportunity to restore the overlooked aspect. Here is Wm. Wordsworth again.

From Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey

...And I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean and the living air,

And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things.

From The Prelude: Book 2: School-time

Oft in these moments such a holy calm
 Did overspread my soul, that I forgot
 That I had bodily eyes, and what I saw
 Appear'd like something in myself, a dream,
 A prospect in my mind.

Alan speaking: My Celtic forebears had a word for this — ‘Awen’.

The Wider View 9

Ali Ibn Abi Talib - The cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad, the fourth Caliph for Sunnis, and the first Imam for Shias, well known for his general knowledge, wisdom and eloquence. Most of the Sufi orders claim their descent from Ali.

Your sickness is from you, but you do not perceive it, and remedy is within you, but you not sense it. You presume you are a small entity, but within you is enfolded the entire Universe. You are indeed the evident book, by whose alphabet the hidden becomes manifest. Therefore, you have no need to look beyond yourself. What you seek is within you, if only you reflect. -Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib

From ‘Paracelsus’ By Robert Browning (1812–1889)

TRUTH is within ourselves; it takes no rise
 From outward things, whate’er you may believe.
 There is an inmost centre in us all,
 Where truth abides in fullness; and around,
 Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
 This perfect, clear perception—which is truth.
 A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
 Binds it, and makes all error: and, to KNOW,
 Rather consists in opening out a way
 Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
 Than in effecting entry for a light
 Supposed to be without.

The Wider View 10

If I had to choose one poem to support my case it would probably be this one. It underlines the difference between the knowing, my need to know, and simply being. I particularly like the way the girl explains she is listening 'like' the Orange tree not listening 'to' it.

The Orange Tree by John Shaw Neilson

The young girl stood beside me. I
 Saw not what her young eyes could see:
 - A light, she said, not of the sky
 Lives somewhere in the Orange Tree.

- Is it, I said, of east or west?
 The heartbeat of a luminous boy
 Who with his faltering flute confessed
 Only the edges of his joy?

Was he, I said, borne to the blue
 In a mad escapade of Spring
 Ere he could make a fond adieu
 To his love in the blossoming?

- Listen! the young girl said. There calls
 No voice, no music beats on me;
 But it is almost sound: it falls
 This evening on the Orange Tree.

- Does he, I said, so fear the Spring
 Ere the white sap too far can climb?
 See in the full gold evening
 All happenings of the olden time?

Is he so goaded by the green?
 Does the compulsion of the dew
 Make him unknowable but keen
 Asking with beauty of the blue?

- Listen! the young girl said. For all
 Your hapless talk you fail to see
 There is a light, a step, a call
 This evening on the Orange Tree.

- Is it, I said, a waste of love
 Imperishably old in pain,
 Moving as an affrighted dove
 Under the sunlight or the rain?

Is it a fluttering heart that gave
 Too willingly and was reviled?
 Is it the stammering at a grave,
 The last word of a little child?

- Silence! the young girl said. Oh, why,
 Why will you talk to weary me?
 Plague me no longer now, for I
 Am listening like the Orange Tree.

The Wider View 11

David Whyte from 'Everything is Waiting for You.'

Your great mistake is to act the drama
 as if you were alone. As if life
 were a progressive and cunning crime
 with no witness to the tiny hidden
 transgressions. To feel abandoned is to deny
 the intimacy of your surroundings. Surely,
 even you, at times, have felt the grand array;
 the swelling presence, and the chorus, crowding
 out your solo voice. You must note
 the way the soap dish enables you,
 or the window latch grants you freedom.
 Alertness is the hidden discipline of familiarity.
 The stairs are your mentor of things
 to come, the doors have always been there
 to frighten you and invite you,
 and the tiny speaker in the phone
 is your dream-ladder to divinity.
 Put down the weight of your aloneness and ease into the
 conversation. The kettle is singing
 even as it pours you a drink, the cooking pots
 have left their arrogant aloofness and
 seen the good in you at last. All the birds
 and creatures of the world are unutterably
 themselves. Everything is waiting for you.

The Wider View 12

We are too late for God and too early for Being
 Being's poem just begun is man...

Martin Heidegger

Emily Dickinson—Poem 668

"Nature" is what we see —
 The Hill — the Afternoon —
 Squirrel — Eclipse — the Bumble bee —
 Nay — Nature is Heaven —
 Nature is what we hear —
 The Bobolink — the Sea —
 Thunder — the Cricket —
 Nay — Nature is Harmony —
 Nature is what we know —
 Yet have no art to say —
 So impotent Our Wisdom is
 To her Simplicity.

Colin Oliver — Thought-Bees

If thoughts were bees, who would dare to shut them tight in the hive of the head?
 He who shatters this hive of pretence with the swift hammer of seeing, sees no box, no house, no door to lock. The spell of images is broken and the swarm breaks out to scatter in the world.
 The hive of nothingness brings to the world the honey of love, and thought-bees, watched by the queen of the eye, roam free.

The Wider View 13

Andrew Shapiro

I am a window for the Light;
 our boundaries shatter as the Whole hugs its parts
 a lens through which You see Yourself as me,
 and through which I see myself as You
 There is only One Reality,
 the Singular Source and Substance of all Diversity...
 Blessed is the One who manifests as the Many
 When I am free from ancestors,
 free from traditions,
 free from truths, free from words,
 free from thoughts,
 free from even the need to be free
 there is Being* and there I am not,
 Blessed is the One at the heart of my emptiness.

Andrew Shapiro is an American Rabbi. I have substituted the word Being for what his poem refers to as God. This to make it more relevant to my understanding of what I think is a very fine expression of the wider view, and in line with what Thomas Jackson had to say about the word 'God'.

He speakes more fully and more safely, that saith, God is being itself,
or perfection itself.....

Thomas Jackson Doctor in Divinitie, Chaplaine to His Majetie in Ordinary, and Vicar of S. Nicolas Church in the Towne of Newcastle Upon Tyne. 1668

I imagine Thomas Jackson would be very comfortable with this example, one of many in early Indian writing:

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. Bhagavad Gita 13:27-29

The Wider View 14

The Poet's Death— Rainer Maria Rilke

He lay. His high-propped face could only peer
in pale refusal at the silent cover,
now that the world and all this knowledge of her,
torn from the senses of her lover,
had fallen back to the unfeeling year.

Those who had seen him living saw no trace
of his deep unity with all that passes;
for these, these valleys here, these meadow-grasses,
these streams of running water, were his face.

Oh yes, his face was this remotest distance,
that seeks him still and woos him in despair;
and his mere mask, timidly dying there,
tender and open, has no more consistence
than broken fruit corrupting in the air.

From The Ballad of the White Horse — By G.K. Chesterton

"I tell you naught for your comfort,
 Yea, naught for your desire,
 Save that the sky grows darker yet
 And the sea rises higher.

"Night shall be thrice night over you,
 And heaven an iron cope.
 Do you have joy without a cause,
 Yea, faith without a hope?"

Rainer Maria Rilke —End of 8th elegy

And we: onlookers, always, everywhere,
 always looking into, never out of, everything.
 It fills us. We arrange it. It collapses.
 We arrange it again, and collapse ourselves.

Who has turned us round like this, so that,
 whatever we do, we always have the aspect
 of one who leaves?

The Wider View 15

The following is one of the most widely quoted pieces of Traherne's poems and writing. It is from his *Centuries of Meditations* written sometime in the middle of the 17th century. However, the references to this particular meditation usually exclude the final sentence, presumably because of the contradiction between the individual and undivided aspects. Something our recent postings have made clear, is not a matter of either-or but of both.

Centuries of Meditations 3/3

The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never should be reaped, nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting. The dust and stones of the street were as precious as gold: the gates were at first the end of the world. The green trees when I saw them first through one of the gates transported and ravished me, their sweetness and unusual beauty made my heart to leap, and almost mad with ecstasy, they were such strange and wonderful things: The Men! O what venerable and reverend creatures did the aged seem! Immortal Cherubims! And young men glittering and sparkling Angels, and maids strange seraphic pieces of life and beauty! Boys and girls tumbling in the street, and playing, were moving jewels. . . . Eternity was manifest in the Light of the Day. . . something infinite behind everything appeared which talked with my expectation

and moved my desire. . . . The streets were mine, the temple was mine, the people were mine, their clothes and gold and silver were mine, as much as their sparkling eyes, fair skins and ruddy faces. The skies were mine, and so were the sun and moon and stars, and all the World was mine; and I the only enjoyer of it. I knew no churlish proprieties, nor bounds, nor divisions: but all proprieties (properties) and divisions were mine.

His lengthy poem 'My Spirit' is a series of attempts to express the undivided aspect of our nature, which is what I think of as the wider view, from which I extract verse 1 as an example:

My Naked Simple Life was I.
 That Act so Strongly Shind
 Upon the Earth, the Sea, the Skie,
 That was the Substance of My Mind.
 The Sence it self was I.
 I felt no Dross nor Matter in my Soul,
 No Brims nor Borders, such as in a Bowl
 We see, My Essence was Capacitie.
 That felt all Things.
 The Thought that Springs
 Therfrom's it self. It hath no other Wings
 To Spread abroad, nor Eys to see,
 Nor Hands Distinct to feel,
 Nor Knees to Kneel:
 But being Simple like the Deitie
 In its own Centre is a Sphere
 Not shut up here, but evry Where

'My Essence was Capacitie' reflects Shakespeare's 'glassy essence' mentioned in item 6.

The Wider View 16

From Song of Myself, 51 —Walt Whitman - 1819-1892

The past and present wilt—I have fill'd them, emptied them.
 And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.

Listener up there! what have you to confide to me?
 Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening,
 (Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a minute longer.)

Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself,
 (I am large, I contain multitudes.)

I concentrate toward them that are nigh, I wait on the door-slab.

Who has done his day's work? who will soonest be through with his supper?

Who wishes to walk with me?

Will you speak before I am gone? will you prove already too late?

The Wider View 17

"Men's curiosity searches past and future
 And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend
 The point of intersection of the timeless
 With time, is an occupation for the saint—
 No occupation either, but something given
 And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,
 Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.
 For most of us, there is only the unattended
 Moment, the moment in and out of time,
 The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,
 The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning
 Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply
 That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
 While the music lasts.
 These are only hints and guesses,
 Hints followed by guesses; and the rest
 Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.
 The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.
 Here the impossible union
 Of spheres of existence is actual,
 Here the past and future
 Are conquered, and reconciled,
 Where action were otherwise movement
 Of that which is only moved
 And has in it no source of movement—
 Driven by daemonic, chthonic Powers.
 And right action is freedom
 From past and future also.
 For most of us, this is the aim
 Never here to be realised;
 Who are only undefeated
 Because we have gone on trying;
 We, content at the last
 If our temporal reversion nourish
 (Not too far from the yew-tree)
 The life of significant soil."

T. S. Eliot, Four Quartets, "The Dry Salvages"

The Wider View 18

I came across the following poem, translated from German, when going through old correspondence. I found it in a letter from George Schloss dated March 2005.

Earth will put on a new dress
 As it has put on many before
 The main thing now is to interpret the signs aright.
 Man needs new seismographs
 Indeed new senses and observatories.
 His eye is still the instrument of instruments...

Deeper than any telescope, further than
 A ray of light, the seers eye penetrates the world.
 It reaches to the place where beginning and end meet
 And where the pointer falls...
 In these visions the universe unveils itself,
 Revealing its spirit to the seer.

Ernst Junger

George used the poem to illustrate his view that what the poem is calling for is not more discussions, directions, recommendations and signposts, even poems, but the thing itSelf which he firmly believed was provided by the experiments.

The Wider View 19

To realise this instantaneous Now,
 to live in the present moment,
 taking no thought for tomorrow or yesterday-
 must be my first concern.
 And my second must be
 to find in this Now
 all my tomorrows and yesterdays.

Douglas E. Harding

Alan: Could it be that the acceptance of time as context, rather than just an explanation of change arising in the flowing moment, is the cause of my failure to respond from the wider viewpoint?