

# Levinas and Gendlin

Joint contributions for a 1st Person approach to understanding difficult situations in the Mid-East

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## Abstract

This article draws upon the works of philosopher Emmanuel Levinas and philosopher-psychologist Eugene Gendlin to suggest that a way forward from the intractable is possible if a 1st Person perspective is utilized. Using a case study from ongoing research with inter-religious groups in Israel, the author suggests a 1st Person approach provides the theoretical and practical basis necessary for us to explore how ethically sound action can flow from the larger, responsive environment where conflict is found. A 1<sup>st</sup> Person approach requires not merely a ‘disposition for the Other’ but a profound, even radical, new beginning point that prioritizes lived processes. Such exploration, if done locally, yields more than the old approaches and improvements.

“I respond before I have done anything,” says Levinas. Consider this statement with Gendlin’s “interaction is first.” Taken together, they open doors into a much deeper and wider layer of human living. They reveal that a radically different kind of ethical humanness and therefore world community is not only possible but also demanded.

*Face to face God spoke to you on the mountain, out of the fire.*

(Deut. 5:4)

Rabbi Melissa Weintraub uses this quote to begin her 2006 Senior Sermon in which she evokes the journey of the Jews into the wilderness where God speaks to them face-to-face on Mt. Sinai (Weintraub, 2006). For Weintraub, Levinas’ call of the Face of the Other is at once an inspiration for faith and a practical challenge for action, a challenge met daily in the encounters between Palestinians and Jews in Israel. She has come to see the face of the other as “*faces* that have opened, moved and challenged me, revealed realities and ruptured myths. They are *faces* that have initiated me into revelation, at times in fear and trembling, at times in sweetness and delight,” (p.1).

The Mid-East, particularly Israel, has been at the centre of world attention for decades. Many questions arise regarding the pursuit of peace in the region, which has resulted in often-failed approaches and conflicting solutions. No matter if you are European, American, Israeli, Palestinian,

Arab, or Persian, no one seems to be suffering from a lack of reasoning surrounding the protracted difficulties in the region and elsewhere in the world, yet we still do not know how to resolve them.

Thanks in part to the work of Rabbi Weintraub, Emmanuel Levinas, Eugene Gendlin and many others, we are able to ask whether there can be developed ways through such difficult life situations that both honor the integrity of the persons-in-situations AND offer concrete ways to move forward. The answer is yes, IF we approach the present difficulties from a fresh stance.

As will be made clearer, the fresh stance I am pointing to is found in a fundamental philosophical and epistemological shift from contents to processes that can be called a 1<sup>st</sup> Person approach. To state it from a more purely Levinasian perspective, the 1<sup>st</sup> Person approach shifts us away from the *myth of equality* and the *totalizing impulse* of Being and Existence to the ethical basis of experiencing and acting. I offer here that both Gendlin and Levinas bring to our attention the priority of life processes, processes that reveal themselves in an asymmetry that moves.

As I begin I want to give you some sense of the project underway, a project grounded in a distinct philosophical and practical perspective. In May 2007 I participated in an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue that took place after the ending of the International Focusing conference. The conference was held on the shores of Lake Kinneret, what many of us call the Sea of Galilee. The post-conference dialogue groups were held in the same location.

I was a delegate to the conference like many others from around the world. A case study, drawn from two post-conference inter-religious dialogue sessions, emerged to form a lens through which we can explore the value of a 1<sup>st</sup> Person approach in difficult situations.

## **The Case: Israelis and Palestinians in Israel**

The case involves two sessions held at different times with different participants. I keep them together at this point because they function within each other as a whole. While they occurred “in chronological time” as separate entities, they do not function for me *as events already lifted out*. They are one functioning whole, or as Gendlin (1997) would say, an *interaffecting whole*, “an interaffecting of everything by everything” (p. 43).

At the first session, two female elementary school principals, one from an Arab town and the other from a Jewish town came with several teachers from each school and a group of about 30 female Jewish and Arab students. The principals began by sharing with us the story of how they came to be working together. Several years ago, before the recent ‘troubles’, the principals knew each other as friends. During the Kuwait

war and then latter as Lebanon and Israel battled, their respective schools suffered damage and several families endured losses in these military actions.

It might seem a perfect recipe for the ending of a long friendship and solidifying separatist feelings. It was not. Instead of picking sides, defending their own religious and political beliefs, the two principals kept in contact. In spite of significant family protest, the two continued to meet. The result was there in front of us. The principals involved their faculty and in a short time the two schools developed voluntary after-school programmes for the Jewish and Arab children who met together. The girls enjoyed singing and learned each other's cultural songs many of which they shared with us. The boys loved soccer and formed integrated teams with their own playoff scheme.

An initial analysis of these two sessions appears in a recent publication (Krycka, 2007). In brief, the principals and their faculty took to heart the call to enjoin the face of the other. They allowed the myriad destabilizing effects of their meetings to open them rather than close them off. Instead of retreating into the existing patterns of religious and political strife, they moved forward in small steps.

During a second session, adult Jews and Arabs from the Palestinian territories of Hebron, Nazareth, and Jericho came together with the international delegates in an open discussion. Translators were necessary for the Arabic speaking attendees as well as the Hebrew-speaking participants. There is a particular instance of fresh thinking that I use later on in this paper that centres on a lively discussion of the meaning of the word 'cousin'. Rather than go into that now I will turn to the philosophical influences that guide my work.

## **Philosophical Influences**

Gendlin (1961/1997 & 1997) and Levinas (primarily in 1969, 1984, 1985) offer us ways to consider and then move from the intricacies we find in any life process of which the difficult nature of the Israeli-Palestinian situation is one example. I am defining life process by its function, rather than as already distinct entities that inter-act. As such, a *life process* functions as an interaffecting whole that we can distinguish in our bodily experience in countless ways. That we prioritize life processes over all else, which includes the destabilizing ethical relation as the fundamental case of being with the Other, is critical.

Levinas' insights about moral truth, the face-to-face, the ethical, the Other (1979, 1981, & 1985), when crossed with key insights from Gendlin (1981/1997), open up fresh ways of understanding and acting while in very difficult situations. Together, they reveal that a radically different kind of humanness and therefore world community is not only possible but also

demanded. Gendlin early on referred to his work as ‘experiential phenomenology’ (1973). His work is unquestionably rooted in the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger as well as that of American philosopher McKeon (1998) and yet extends them. Of this early identification, Gendlin remarks, “phenomenological method makes of process, interaffecting relationships, and steps of explication (rather than any given understandings) basic,” (p. 305). The philosophy and epistemology employed here follows closely that found in Gendlin’s *A Process Model* (1997), which is the full version of his philosophical work at this point.

Levinas and Gendlin open doors into a deep and wide understanding of human being and activity in which a central feature is the function of experiencing, which contains processes, interaffecting, and steps of explication. Failures in difficult and morally strained situations occur when we rely solely on already determined contents (concepts, objects, explications), rather than processes, to resolve them. To break this impasse, I join others in proposing a 1st Person approach, one that places experienced interaction (human processes) as the site of an ethical responsibility that moves.

In a 1<sup>st</sup> Person approach as outlined by Gendlin and Johnson (2004), interaction is grounded in experienced life processes and allow new humanly significant variables and solutions to arise. Both Levinas and Gendlin point to action as not merely originating from a *disposition* for the Other but a profound, even radical, new beginning point where I am *for* the Other before all else. Being *for* the Other is humanly scaled when we consider it a kind of experience, which is not made up of units of thought or feeling however familiar, and which orders our living nonetheless.

Gendlin contributes to Levinas by offering his ethics a systematic method of employing experiencing as that that is felt by us and comes before all else. Gendlin’s philosophy, called *A Process Model* (1981/1997), has two practices derived from it: Focusing (1968/1981) and Thinking at the Edge, (TAE, 1991). Each practice has specific and reliable means to proceed from, with, into and through any situation. The key element of each is the ‘felt sense’ (FS). In a moment, I will explain more about the philosophy underneath these practices.

Where Levinas’ key insights inspire and lead us to the ethical as prior to being, Gendlin’s FS functions precisely so as to show us how life processes move and how we make new steps (as explicating processes) within that order of responsibility. For each, their distinctions remain. I will not merge them. However, they do cross in such a way that more comes than what was in them separately. Gendlin and Levinas intermingle while each remains with their own distinctions.

For instance, I can let stand Levinas’ ruthless condemnation of modernist relativism when he claims the indifference we show to the Face

of the Other as insanity and criminality (Levinas, 1981). Likewise, I will let Gendlin's challenge stand when he states, "...we need to talk to the wider world, to move toward changing values. This affects how human beings are understood and treated in every setting, personal, business, political and economic, and that makes the world better," (Gendlin, 2004, p. 1). Each reveals themselves anew while each remains it's own whole.

I hope it will become clear just how significant following process and concepts at once is to shifting what is so difficult about being in difficult situations such as those in Israel. Informally, I suggest that seeing Levinas' ethics as an instance of life processes, a finely ordered order of response-ability, is akin to putting Levinas on wheels.

The remaining sections of this paper bring forward examples from my work in Israel with the philosophy of Levinas and Gendlin. To continue, let me say a bit about a 1<sup>st</sup> Person Approach as outlined by Gendlin and Johnson (2004). I will spend a small amount of time discussing each of the points below as I give a more detailed application of Levinas and Gendlin in each section.

### A 1st Person Approach

A philosophical shift from content to process

That defines different 'kinds' of processes

And articulates humanly scaled significant variables.

### *A Philosophical shift*

Perhaps the most significant contribution of Gendlin's to understanding how human beings are understood, valued, and treated lies in his treatment of experience. "It is something so simple, so easily available to every person, that at first its very simplicity makes it hard to point to," (Gendlin, 1997, p. 6). Experience denotes the concretely present flow of feeling that is available in any moment if we attend inwardly to it. Key to understanding experience as something useful across domains (disciplines, philosophies, psychologies, etc.) is to consider how it functions. There are five foundational comments I will make next. A full accounting of either is not possible here, so I will rely on summations of specific texts instead (Gendlin, 1997 & 2004).

The five foundational points to the philosophical shift are:

1. Experience is more finely ordered, but unfinished.
2. New expressions are possible.
3. Interaction first.
4. Experiencing is 'intrinsically' a valuing.
5. Thinking and action can come from what is emerging.

### ***1. Experience is more finely ordered, but unfinished***

For Gendlin, experience functions as a wider order than currently offered in the natural sciences or holistic models. Further, every situation is more intricate than our usual atomistic or holistic models allow. The intricacy of situations waits in persons and is recognized as having a quality of being unfinished.

For many, to contemplate what is unfinished is to claim dis-order, even chaos, where no precision is possible. A common response to such a postmodern claim is to seek its opposite in constructionism. In such a maneuver, many will then mistakenly place personal experience (especially ‘my own feelings’) as the new datum of existence. From either claim, it is clear that limited options exist. Existence is either about dis-order and chaos or it is merely my own creation. Such a hegemonic order of being is not sufficient to explain experience neither itself nor how it moves.

As Levinas points to in *Existence and Existents* (1978), the totalizing effect of Existence fails in the face of the existent. The Other (existent herself who is me and you) is not a captive of my totalizing need, or that of culture, religion, or race for that matter. Existent frees me inasmuch as she tortures my life, pulling me from slumber, knocking me off my complacency. When seeing the face of the other, I am at once condemned and freed. How could such a kind of living be possible, really possible?

It is not possible if you follow the atomistic logic of a natural science or even a holistic model of living, such as that found in ecological perspectives. For the atomist and the ecologist, living is cut up into pieces before it is lived; it is an anti-life. Levinas is offering a remarkable re-ordering of living, which, as I’ve alluded to earlier, is lived as asymmetry that moves.

Gendlin is fond of saying “what is not formed is very demandingly ordered although unfinished,” (2004, p. 3). Experience moves on anyway beyond the seeming disorder or blank slot in our thinking. People who use Focusing (Gendlin, 1978) are very familiar with this and in fact have used the not-knowing-just-yet to produce many fine new approaches to complex human problems, most notably in the domain of psychotherapy.

### ***2. New Expressions are Possible***

Sometimes we can sense in our usual words and concepts the possibility of fresh linguistic expression, as this Focusing teacher suggests in Gendlin’s first book on Focusing (1968/1981),

At first, when I tried to focus, I could never get a felt sense. All I had were words that I could feel, but there never was any feeling except right in the words. My words were like definitions and I had my feelings defined so they seemed as if they were exactly the same as the words. I was only looking at the centre of each feeling, and in the centre the feeling was what

the words said. It took me three months till one day I noticed that there was more to the feeling. It had, sort of, fuzzy edges. They were beyond what the words got. That was the breakthrough for me. The feeling as having fuzzy edges, that's the felt sense, (p. 90).

It appears that if we develop our capacity to just wait a bit for it to come, something opens up in us as we attend to it, and next steps follow. This is demanding work; it is far from mystical pondering, subjective positing, or daydreaming. In the zigzag between what we directly sense and that which is as yet known, steps or actions come that people generally describe as “just right” or say “that fits.”

The experiential steps are precise, but they need to be taken further with new linguistic expression if they are to make sense to more than just ourselves and noticeably retain the originative and generative sense of experience. Gendlin's philosophical and psychological work attempts to make clear how the felt sense functions in the creation of meaning explicitly, and in new linguistic expression in particular. Gendlin focuses on new or fresh linguistic expression, partly because he is often engaging a philosophical audience for whom language is a central issue.

I would expand the idea of expression here to include action. I assert that experience, as Gendlin defines it, additionally functions in the creation of new action. In a recent talk I heard by noted Italian phenomenologist, Roberta De Monticalli (2007), action is a fundamental aspect of being that cannot be separated from intention, linguistics, or even more basically, from experience itself.

To begin from experience is revolutionary. Rather than only thinking with or from existing patterns (theory, concept, behaviour, etc.), we can think from and with our sense of the whole thing, or what is called the felt sense. The new patterns that arise from this process retain continuity between the originative something needing to be expressed and any furthering of it.

It may be odd to an academic or learned crowd to notice that the something ‘without words’ is not disorder or chaos, but a finely corroborated relation with the pattern and that that is about to be said. This insight revolutionizes and frees us to think beyond the established patterns without foregoing logical ties to our established concepts. The other of Gendlin's practices called ‘Thinking at the Edge’ (Gendlin, 2004) has been developed to show how new linguistic vehicles can come forward, which will assist us in saying precisely what we need to say.

### ***3. Interaction first***

We begin with ‘body as its environment’, a single event that is not a piecing together of distinct units as underlies notions of objectivity and subjectivity, time and relativity (Gendlin, 1997, Chapter 1). Gendlin states: “We can't speak about the body over here inside the skin envelope, using

five separated senses to perceive something over there, and then interpreting that, and then doing something. The physical body IS always already a doing - with others, and therefore it can generate next steps of tissue process, of behaviour, and of human action and speech,” (Gendlin, 2004, p. 2). What each IS is already affected by the other. What each IS determines *what each is with the other*. “I respond before I have done anything,” says Levinas in a filmed interview with Silberstein, (1961). Consider this jointly with Gendlin’s dictum of “interaction first.” *Interaction First* implies that the assumptions underlying our basic concepts of being need to be freed.

#### ***4. Experiencing is ‘intrinsically’ a valuing.***

“Any other is important to me, any other concerns me,” says Levinas in the same interview with Silberstein, (1961). As if replying, Gendlin says, “Concern for others does not need to be taught into us; it is implicit in our very being,” (Gendlin, 2004, p. 3). When we touch our experience by listening to another or to our own personal process in a given moment, we find a freshly discovered wanting, a leaning toward the other. When we listen we sense rightness and wrongness, not just what feels good to us. In fact, experience of this kind calls out from us acting that hold a potential to deny our own position, perhaps our own lives.

Experiencing reveals valuing as it opens up in us more than our own truth. For Gendlin, it must be added that this opening up produces (leads to) the next steps of experience, which can lead to difficult action. Valuing is caring in a most profound way.

#### ***5. Thinking and action can come from the emergent.***

“There is a greater order beyond the alternatives of formed forms or disorder. We can shift the basis of human thought to the point of emergence, where new terms arise in the interaction (the zigzag, the conversation, the back and forth ....) between what we say and the response we find in implicit intricacy,” (Gendlin, 2004, p. 4). In this formula, implicit intricacy is that which can be felt by us, that opens any situation further than its starting point without need to abandon the concepts embedded in the given situation. It is self-motivating. Entering into experience reveals something other than the usual ordering of sensation, perception, and meaning. This paper is a production that emerged as I ‘entered into’ the implicit intricacy of my reading of Levinas and Gendlin, and carrying with me, my experiences in Israel. In some ways this paper did not exist before I wrote it, in other ways it did. Emergent thinking and acting offers us a kind of power to effect the affected and change the unchangeable.

### *Different Kinds of Processes: The Interhuman as an Interaffecting*

A second dimension of a 1st Person approach lies in defining kinds of life processes. The subject matter of a 1st Person approach is any subject where “I” sense myself being. For this paper, I focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is a situation where I find myself present and engaged, sober and awake, where “I” am found wanting, limited, and drawn.

Levinas speaks of the interhuman as a kind of life process. As an expression that still retains something originaive and fresh, it resonates well with Gendlin’s experiential order of interaction first. According to Levinas, “The interhuman relationship emerges with our history, with our being-in-the-world as intelligibility and presence. The interhuman realm can thus be construed as a part of the disclosure of the world as presence,” (Kearney, p. 56). This is not the usual way of conceiving relationships. The interhuman as interface gives us a radical order that “cuts through and perforates the totality of presence and points toward the absolutely Other,” (Kearney, p. 57).

Again and again, Levinas states that the interhuman opens us; it calls us into being in alterity and transcendence. The Being of Dasiem is that which can be reduced to sameness. The interhuman, funding the ethical, cannot be so contained in the face, exemplified in my desire, longing, loving, and compassion, which are never satisfied. Gendlin’s responsive order signifies much the same. We are never satisfied, if by this we mean, experience ends at some point in the future where we are sated; for Dasein implies such a completion, which neither Gendlin nor Levinas anticipate.

Thus, the face-to-face, borne of the interhuman dimension of living out my work in Israel, is a ‘kind of order’ implicit in and of a larger responsive order. In both Being is a finite and limited order-ing. An ethical ordering of the interhuman - of an infinitely responsive order - is necessary if we are to conceive of and execute truly original and creative solutions to long-lasting problems in our world.

Importantly for our discussion, we can enter into this order, a demonstration of interhuman interaffecting, at any point when we experientially follow ITs twists and turns, emerging where we sense appropriate. In fact, we not only ‘enter into IT’ but in so doing change IT, as it changes our processes, and us at once.

### *Humanly Scaled Variables*

Finally, I can come to say a bit more about how precise experience is in helping articulate larger social and political issues in human scale. Linking Levinas and Gendlin as I have, foreshadows a revelatory relation with the Other in every instance of living. We have no-where to go or be except in *this* situation in all its promise and complexity, and mostly in its mystery. We can say that underneath the already existing structures, motives,

values, beliefs, philosophies, and psychologies moves the felt world, the first person world, which is foundational to all derivations possible.

As my colleague, Steen Halling (1975) states, “Levinas makes it very clear that our access to others is through our already existing, first person point of view,” (p. 207). Access to living situations is akin to the face-to-face of persons in as much as it can be felt by me as being generative and alive. If I merely “look at” Israeli-Palestinian conflicts as over *there*, I can offer no lasting help. I will, at best, be another Colonializing force relying on my conceptual grasp for a complete understanding. This is no option. It is folly.

In my example of the conflicts in Israel between Arabs and the Jewish State and people, one does not need to see limitedly, and by this, I mean seeing in big conceptual chunks. In my case example a group of adults met to have a dialogue. There was no agenda to set a specific goal. The offer was to meet and see what happens. Now, this alone may seem either incredibly naïve or crafty. Actually, it was neither. The plan was to be there with each other face to face within the context of having a positive dialogue among those concerned with the peace process.

As I mentioned earlier, quite an energized discussion flowed from one meeting in particular. Arabs and Jews and delegates, myself included, were sitting around a large circle trying to get something going. A Rabbi offered a prayer. In it he invoked Abraham and the recounting of the lineages of the House of Abraham down to the present day. He summarized the relation of Abraham’s line (Jews and Arabs) with the word ‘cousin.’

At first, there was silence then some anxious shuffling and finally an Arab man spoke. He presented an impassioned case of ‘his people’ as slaves as the Jews were when in Egypt. At this point, the fireworks erupted as you can imagine. Both sides stood up and began defending their own positions. An impasse was surely ahead.

However, probably due in part to the group having been given a very basic set of ground rules that emphasized listening from the heart, from one’s own sense deep down, the impasse never came. A brief break was taken and when we returned in 15 minutes, each group expressed how this was an example of how things usually break down between them. They did not want this any longer. Instead of retrenching into respective religious, politically, and ideological corners, an Arab man began to tell a story of cousins meeting on the desert and sharing meals.

The story turned out to be a fable common to each religion. It was a point of meeting that did not demand equality or commonality. The potential for similitude, and the power inherent in it, remains but does not determine the conversation. The story told how cousins remained in the land and lived with each other in co-existence. The values held by each cousin were not abandoned. Tribes did not merge. Rather, it was *because*

of their separated identities that they found ‘common’ understanding. Their distinct kind of living was not denied.

In the formulation presented here, action arises as a deriving from ethical life, primordial and preoriginal. Ethics considered in this way, is a life process that can be touched, followed, and examined critically. Arabs and Jews used the conflict to promote a new level of dialogue. If we merely had the readily available social constructions focusing on ideological strains and difference, there would be little chance of finding a way through. Without sacrificing one’s ‘values’ and religious sense of ethics, there came fresh order to the meeting.

I emphasize that action, derived from touching and following the felt sense, is not selfish acting. In the common use of the word *acting*, action appears to distinct from ‘me’ and be tangled in my personal, social, and psychological location. However, nothing like this is even possible except in the imaginative reflecting on experiencing. It is possible in that reflective ordering my wishes may be above yours. I am not denying the repressive, hierarchical nature of that order. It is well known and carefully challenged by many others. This is not to which I refer. I refer here to the lived action that is derived from my attending to then following the precisioning forward of the felt sense, which does not suffer under some lack.

Preparedness is not an issue when acting from within experience. For instance, in my travels to Israel I might genuinely have asked, “How can I help”? If this question arose from a sense of my being where I’ve never been before and if my sense of it all distinguished the question, then it was ethical of me to ponder it. Noticing just this bit opens intricacy up and reveals its own order. I cannot predict, nor can I prepare for, where this will lead. My friends in Israel had no idea that invoking Abraham would lead to a heated exchange about ‘cousin’, nor could they have planned for precisely how such asymmetry can move.

Acting ethically is moving about in a never-before-known land. In the face-to-face encounter, I realize the Other is no extension of me, owned by my ego as a fixed being mirroring my gaze. The ethical is unsettling to say the least but it is not fatal.

When I am secure in my being, I experience the pull of other situations as “an abnegation of oneself fully responsible for the other,” (Levinas, 1981, p. 69). As Levinas states elsewhere in this passage, I am not alienated from the other nor am I her slave. Indeed, the Other is in my life, already affecting my choices, even the word I write now.

### **The Promise of Living Situations - Summations**

Good works are being carried out in increasing numbers across the planet that have as their core an obligation to the other. As I have asserted, a

genuinely 1st Person response demonstrates the ethical as essential nature and as never finished compassion.

Levinas has said: “We have no option but to employ the language and concepts of Greek philosophy even in our attempts to go beyond them. We cannot obviate the language of metaphysics and yet we cannot, ethically speaking, be satisfied with it: it is necessary but not enough,” (In Kearney, p. 64).

Gendlin says as if continuing this point: “What is perhaps needed most in this historical moment is the capacity to join the precision of logic which comes from the use of the intellect with the groundedness-in-experience contributed by our intuitive, experiential side: In short, a system of thought that can help mediate between the felt sense of what one knows, and the public language in which one must communicate.” (In Nelson, 1998, p. 1)

Ethics is a distinguishable kind of process in which thoughts, feelings, actions, conceptions, and many other forms for living can be derived. As we have seen, living ethically demands something that has never existed before in *this situation* to emerge. The new action is not based on the familiar alone. It is not decided or directed by what was known prior to the situation that brings the action forward. Ethical action is a new interaffecting whole.

Unlike Foucault (Rabinow, 1994), we can assert that ethical action is not a reflection of social ordering or norms, even though as Foucault has rightly asserted, both are forms of control. In a difficult situation, we sense that something more, something new has to happen. We are inspired to move-for the other who calls even before we sense the possibility of action. This delicate, refreshing human kind of being could not be guessed ahead of time out of the givens of any situation. The new whole is not greater than the sum of its parts; it IS its conception moving forward beyond the imposed.

If we look for commonalities to solve conflictual situations, we are probably doomed. Why? Because we will have failed to see the fine textures of our meeting, the differences that need no reconciliation, the captivation of breathe and smile, of heart ache and reaching for the heavens.

The fine textures of ancient virtues - love, kindness, valor, and honor - are finer than the common ones. It is acknowledged that we need concepts and knowledge of social constructs, political mechanism, sovereignty, and economics, for instance, to deeply appreciate the difficult situation that Israel and Palestine represent. That we can benefit from this knowledge is clear. However, no concept or mechanism contains all the possible new ways that come when we follow processes themselves. Change might come with conceptual thinking but never alone.

We should not assume either, that following life-processes, being in and with ethicality as Levinas points to, would ultimately solve everything. The

asymmetry of life and our living continues as a holy ground, which is not controlled or contained by other facts that seek to deny it. We cannot be content in a peace thrust upon, leveraged from fear, or otherwise, constructed from what has been already used up.

Gendlin reminds us “ethics must involve both inclination and concepts. Neither can simply impose itself on the other. A finer cognition feeds back from the body’s implicit order in process steps,” (1986, p. 275). Underneath the already formed is not chaos. In addition, it is not wise to assume that only process without thinking will help us, just as acting from one’s feeling alone can be foolish or even dangerous. Both thinking-concepts and process-steps are needed. What we can say is that these kinds of process – living ethical processes - reveal more of an “intricate order which can exceed and reorder existing forms,” (p. 275).

The repressive forms we find may lead us to reject them and yet without them we may never have been able to distinguish life forwarding from dull existence. Each is systematically linked to each. “The process can lead to rejection or modification of the very concept that helped the step to come,” (p. 274).

This is not an easy pill to swallow. We can easily sense how we want to reject that the oppression can be anything other that it appears or functions as. We want to reject that both are needed to move us forward. It is precisely the work of Levinas and Gendlin that point us forward, helping us find something new not by the addition and subtraction of ideas and solutions, but by facing the face of the Other, “to bring ourselves back to the mountain again and again, to seek out what we don’t yet know, what we don’t yet understand,” (Weintraub, 2006, p3).

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