Kevin Clements

HONOURING THE OTHER

The Quest for Respect, Equality and Small Goodnesses in Aotearoa New Zealand

THE 2010 QUAKER LECTURE

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Kevin Clements
National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
The University of Otago
Dunedin

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Honouring the Other

When George Fox, the 17th-century English mystic, prophet and inspiration for the Religious Society of Friends, was imprisoned in Launceston jail in 1656, he wrote an epistle about religious wisdom, obedience, and truthfulness. In this he said, among other things:

> *… be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your life and conduct may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one; whereby in them ye may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you: then to the Lord God you shall be a sweet savour, and a blessing. —* ***The Journal of George Fox, 1656***

This Epistle is normally shortened to an imperative to "walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone". If we pay attention to the other wisdom in this text, however, there is an injunction not to imprison the spirit within oneself or to hoard it for selfish purposes; there is an appeal to connect with others and to discern the spirit that exists in them; and there is a request to lead an exemplary life so that others might be persuaded by example rather than by direct religious appeal. George Fox was making an argument for a radical social and political ethic derived from spiritual experience. This ethic is based on the central importance of treating each person with respect because God resides within each and every one of us and because we deepen our awareness of the eternal by acknowledging his/her presence in all those around us.

The "Walking Cheerfully" Epistle can be seen as a foundation document from which the Religious Society of Friends (commonly called "Quakers") derived their traditional "Testimonies"— by which is meant the commitment to Peace, Equality, Simplicity and Integrity. All of these Testimonies flow from the very simple but disarming

belief that because there is "that of God in everyone" Friends (Quakers) should treat each person with absolute dignity and respect.

George Fox (1624 –1691) was an English dissenter and the principal founder of the Religious Society of Friends, commonly known as the Quakers or Friends.
He was often put in prison, and the dungeon at Launceston (Cornwall) was a particularly foul one.

This fundamental belief inspires Quakers not to kill or use force and violence for personal or political ends. It also means that work for justice and right relationships between people can only be achieved by non-violent means. This belief in the divinity of others results in a Quaker humanism which emerges from a deep spiritual consciousness of the ways in which all life – sacred and profane – is profoundly interconnected. If this were going to be a short lecture I would simply say that this belief has served the Religious Society of Friends and the world well in the past and it will in the future. It has resulted in a wide variety of peace and service programmes that have brought much good to the world. This spirit has resulted in Friends Quakers working for peace, justice and equality in Aotearoa New Zealand as well as overseas.

I would rather not, however, commit the twin sins of Quaker parochialism or triumphalism. The truth that Fox discovered in the Launceston jail has to be rediscovered by each new generation in a form and in a language that they understand and which speaks to their condition. This is particularly so for those who have difficulty with religious injunctions to goodness.

What I would like to propose in this lecture is that Fox's spiritual epiphany was really sociological. He understood – well before the social sciences were invented – certain truths about human relationships

which he reframed in the religious terms of his time. Others in the 20th and 21st centuries have come to somewhat similar conclusions from the perspectives of philosophy, social psychology and sociology.

The central ethical dilemmas that Fox faced in the 17th century are essentially the same as we face today. How do we ensure that we are in right relationship with others and that our own selfish interests do not generate harm for them? Why should we love, care for and be responsible for others, especially for those who are weaker and more vulnerable than ourselves? How do we name and address our deepest existential fears within communities non-violently? How do we restrain the egos of separated and assertive people without resorting to force, coercion and the power of the state? What might persuade the powerful to refrain from using their strength and power to advance their own power and privilege? How are we recognised, and how do we realise our multiple identities in human community?

In order to explore these questions I want to draw on the wisdom of three people: Martin Buber, Albert Schweitzer, and Emmanuel Levinas. Each in his own way made important contributions to social and political ethics, peaceful processes and new ways of thinking about engaged and compassionate spirituality which transcend gender, ethnicity and culture. There are some conceptual and thematic threads common to each which, I hope, will enable us to illuminate whether and under what circumstances human beings living in Aotearoa New Zealand have treated each other with respect and honour over the years.

At the risk of stepping into the historical debates challenging mainstream New Zealand history as a quest for welfare and national identity, I do think that there is much that New Zealanders can and should be proud about.

The progress that has been made on Treaty issues, for example, over

the past 20 years is a wonderful testimony to all those Maori and Pakeha who have worked to make Te Tiriti o Waitangi the foundation document for thinking about and rethinking relationships between Maori and Pakeha groups and individuals (it is important to pluralise these terms in order to signal that these are not homogeneous categories). Indeed one of the biggest challenges facing us in New Zealand in 2010 is overcoming categories and classifications that stereotype the Other and thereby conceal the individual diversity, differences and complexities of people who fall into these diverse classifications. Those who want to do justice across the boundaries of cultural and ethnic difference have to work out what sorts of relationships we wish to have in the future and how these might generate higher levels of peace and harmony within this country.

On another indicator, namely levels of peacefulness, New Zealand does well. We have maintained our nuclear-free status and continue to rank number one in the Global Peace Index as the most peaceful nation in the world.

In relation to the rights of women, we were the first nation in the world to give women the vote. While sexism and chauvinism still exist, it has been possible for individual women to rise to the highest economic and political positions in the land.

On welfare and the quest for security, New Zealand governments pioneered innovative social welfare legislation in response to the economic crises of the 1890s and the 1930s. Although the traditional "womb to tomb" security has been challenged in recent years, and "all but six of the OECD countries (for example) are more equal than New Zealand in terms of income distribution",[1] enough welfare spirit still remains to provide basic safety nets for most New Zealanders. While there is much to be critical about and those who are at the bottom of the income scales are generally unhappier, unhealthier and unlikely to live as long as those at the top, we do have a general "instinct" for

equality, relatively low levels of corruption, a public service that works (most of the time) and a quality of life that is the envy of many.

On the negative side, there is deep and growing structural inequality on many class, gender and ethnicity indicators. This is especially true of relations between Maori and Pakeha and Pakeha and many Pasifika and other migrant groups, although the gaps are beginning to diminish as Maori gain control over more economic and political resources. There is still far too much racism and xenophobia, although the conventions against overt prejudice are strong and deepening. (Andy Haden, for example, is no longer an All Black Titan. He has been diminished by his recent racist comments).

New Zealand also has far too much domestic violence and youth suicide and our imprisonment rates are among the highest in the Western world. Finally, although we have a global reputation for friendliness we are not always hospitable and welcoming to refugees or migrants of colour.

There is therefore, no ground for social or political complacency but there are many grounds for optimism. The challenge is to find a 21st century rationale for the promotion of justice, equality, compassion and peace at home and abroad. What sociological, psychological and ethical imperatives will drive New Zealanders to generate a more caring, more empathetic, more compassionate society in the future? Why should we hold fast to non-violent means in our struggles for justice and peace?

This talk therefore falls into two parts:

(i) The first is a philosophical exploration of the beliefs and vision of Buber, Schweitzer and Levinas. I want to explore whether their ideas have contemporary relevance and what each might teach us about how to think and act courageously and creatively as we contemplate uncertain futures. Each in his own way has contributed towards recent theorising about relationships, nature, and how to connect to the Other.

(ii) The second is a tentative venture into the knottier questions of whether and how Pakeha and Maori do or do not honour each other and what this might mean for a common future.

A Little Philosophy

Martin Buber was a 20th-century Jewish Philosopher who, in his book *I and Thou*, grappled with how human beings might, in the face of tyranny, realise a common humanity, overcome destructive egotism and generate mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships with others. In particular he was concerned with how we move from treating others as objects, in what he called instrumental "I-It" relationships, to seeing others as subjects, in what he called "I-You" or "I-Thou" relationships. Only by I-Thou relationships, Buber argued, would we be able to ensure that others flourished simultaneously with our own flourishing. As he put it:

> *Egos appear by setting themselves apart from other egos. Persons appear by entering into relation to other persons. One is the spiritual form of natural differentiation; the other is that of natural association. The purpose of setting oneself apart is to experience and use, and the purpose of that is "living: – which means dying one human life long. The purpose of relation is the relation itself – touching the You. For as soon as we touch a You, we are touched by a breath of Eternal life.*[2]

This is somewhat similar to Fox's notion of assuming that there is that of God in the other and that if we engage with that Other in a respectful, I-You or I-Thou relationship we will understand something of how we connect with that which is eternal. Buber is particularly interested in the I-Thou of infinite conversations, by which he means dialogues where each is listening to the Other's verbal and non-verbal messages and cherishing them for what they reveal about the Other. These are conversations with others who are also interested in us. As he puts it:

The It-world coheres in space and time. The You-world does not cohere in either. It coheres in the centre in which the extended lines of relationships intersect; in the eternal You.[3]

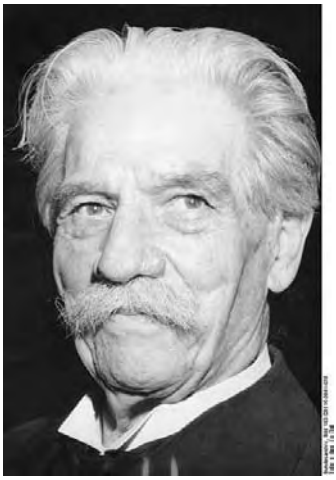
Martin Buber (1878-1965) was an Austrian-born Jewish philosopher best known for his philosophy of dialogue. Born in Vienna, Buber broke with Jewish custom to pursue secular studies in philosophy. In 1923 his famous essay on existence was first published, *Ich und Du* (later translated as *I and Thou,* although the German word Du is an intimate everyday one). The work centres on the distinction between the "I-Thou" relationship and the "I-It" relationship. In 1930 Buber became an honorary professor at the University of Frankfurt am Main, but resigned immediately after Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933. In 1938, he left Germany and settled in Jerusalem, receiving a professorship at the Hebrew University and lecturing in anthropology and sociology.

Buber's assertion is that it is in relationship and only in relationship that we can uncover the eternal. It is only in relationship and by "becoming embodied in the whole stuff of life" that we can understand how best to connect with others, how to dialogue with others and how to do justice to others in relation to God or what we understand as the eternal. I think that the book is unduly complicated but the central message is clear. We do right by others by seeing them as worthy of attention, respect and veneration. If we live and work on this assumption, the hope is that others will feel the same way about us and we will have the basis for mutually beneficial relationships.

Albert Schweitzer was a world-famous German philosopher, theologian and musician who abandoned all of these careers for a lifetime of medical service in the Congo. He did so because he wanted to understand how to live simply and non-violently. He was driven by a compulsion to serve those who were less fortunate than himself. When he spoke of ethics and morality he thought of both as "right human conduct" [4] and was particularly interested in what drove or might drive privileged human beings

(such as himself) to care for strangers. To him, there could be no ethics that was not concerned for the welfare of others. An ethics should be based on "an enlargement of the sense of solidarity with other human beings." Schweitzer traces the beginning of a quest for intentional "species and trans-species solidarity" to Lao Tse and Confucius in China and to the "engaged (religious) traditions" of Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam.
He argues that, as they evolved, many of these religious traditions started serving selfish religious interests by disengaging from and disparaging the world rather than engaging it in all its complexity. Schweitzer believed that it was only when the great philosophers like Kant and Hume tried to make sense of a humanity beyond the nation state that philosophy got back on track. Of Hume, he noted, for example, that:

> *Nature ... has endowed us with this ability to share experientially in the lot of others. We experience the joys, the sorrows and the sufferings of others as if they were our own. We are, in Hume's image, strings that vibrate in sympathy with others. Natural goodwill prompts us to help our neighbours and to wish to contribute to their welfare as well as to that of society.* [5]



Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) was born in Alsace at a time when it was part of Germany. He studied music and theology, achieving success both as an organist and as a theologian (*The Quest for the Historical Jesus* dates from 1906). Then he studied medicine and became a medical missionary in Equatorial Africa — spending many years in what is now Gabon. His long absences from Europe did not prevent him from becoming a celebrated and controversial figure. One of Schweitzer's notable philosophical essays is *Civilization and Ethics* (1923). He was awarded the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize particularly for his philosophy of "Reverence for Life".

The critical question that Schweitzer posed, however, is how far will each individual go in self-sacrificing altruism? How wide or narrow will be his/her circle of compassion? This is a particular challenge for those of us with wealth, power and privilege. In answering this question

Schweitzer provides a wonderful example of both realist and idealist orientations. He knows that no spirit of loving kindness is at work in the "phenomenal world" and yet he develops an ethics that might bring it about.

The Universe provides us with the dreary spectacle of manifestations of the will to live continually opposed to each other. One life preserves itself by fighting and destroying other lives. The world is horror in splendour, meaninglessness in meaning, sorrow in joy. Ethics is not in tune with this phenomenal world, but in rebellion against it. It is the manifestation of a spirit that desires to be different from the spirit that manifests itself in the Universe. [6]

Schweitzer was concerned, therefore, to develop an ethics that could be an act of "spiritual" independence from the phenomenal world while we immerse ourselves in the complexity of the phenomenal. (There are echoes here of Fox's concern with the "imprisoned spirit".) Schweitzer said that we make ethical sense of this problematic world by acknowledging that "concern for other wills to live is mandatory for us as human beings".

> *The elemental fact, present in our consciousness every moment of our existences, is; I am life that wills to live, in the midst of life that wills to live. The mysterious fact of my will to live is that I feel a mandate to behave with sympathetic concern toward all the wills to live which exist side by side with my own. The essence of Goodness is: preserve life, promote life, help life to achieve its highest destiny. The essence of Evil is: destroy life, harm life, hamper the development of life. The fundamental principle of ethics then, is reverence for life. All the goodness one displays toward a living organism is, at bottom, helping it to preserve and further its existence.* [7]

From this simple statement Schweitzer reinforces the religious commandment to love, alongside a compassion for all creature life. He anticipated the environmental movement, for example, well before

there was global environmental consciousness. His social ethic rests on a radical commitment to promote all life within the natural as well as the social world. The importance of this is that by adopting ethical conduct towards all creatures we enter a spiritual relationship with the universe. For Schweitzer, this radical reverence for all life provides the only justification for self-sacrifice. He proposes that we give expression to this reverence in what he calls "secret avocation" – that is, in an opening of our eyes to discover human beings around us in need of a little time, friendship, company and work. (As we will see later, this is more or less what Levinas talks about as "small goodnesses"). Here Schweitzer echoes the Sermon on the Mount:

> *Fortunate are those who listen. Their own humanity will be enriched, whereas in moral isolation from their fellow men, their store of humanity would dwindle.* [8]

Schweitzer also argues that we need to learn from that special league of people who have known anxiety and physical suffering. He sees bonds of suffering linking those that have and have not suffered, inducing all to share life in its completeness, hopefulness and hopelessness. Acknowledgement of the bonds of suffering and reverence for life will, he argues, generate love, kindliness, sympathy, empathy, peacefulness and a power to forgive. In all of these discussions, Schweitzer is arguing for an ethic based on a strong and expanding sense of human solidarity, a radical reverence for all life (in the natural as well as the social world), a spiritual /ethical independence from the world that leads back into the world, an attentiveness to the small but omnipresent needs of others, and a willingness to listen to all life.

My third source of wisdom and insight is the Lithuanian/French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. I think that Levinas manages to combine spiritual encounter, reverence for life and a social and political ethic that flows from a deep appreciation of why non-killing has to be deeply embedded in individual and social consciousness. Like millions of 20th-century European Jews, Levinas understood suffering and

despair personally and directly. He was dispatched to a concentration camp and lost many of his family and friends in the Holocaust. It is probably not surprising, therefore, that he focused a good deal of his early philosophical attention on why such violence occurred in Europe and how such violence might be prevented in the second half of the 20th century. He was concerned to expose the roots of violence, racism, sexism and classism and how to prevent such pathologies in the future. His whole intellectual life was a concern to develop strategies for "thinking otherwise"[9] – or thinking of ways in which human beings could marginalise those who tried to oppress, tyrannise and destroy those they could not face or bear to face.

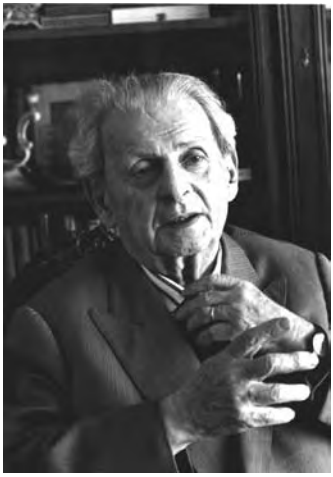
For Levinas, ethics is at root "a struggle to keep fear and anxiety from turning into murderous action".[10] Because of this, he wants to understand the deepest sources of human fear and to develop an awareness of how these might be addressed at their source. Levinas is interested in a sociological justification for an ethical life which, at minimum, will guarantee that human beings do not kill each other. To do this, he wishes to remove any possible rationale for causing harm to others so that we will not kill those who stand in front of us, and (more optimally) so that we might serve and advance their interests. He knows that he is not going to be able to stop human aggression and conflict but he wants to develop a methodology for engaging the Other since aggression is the bluntest and least effective of all instruments for realising human potential and serving the common good.

In order do this he develops an ethic of responsibility that flows from an awareness of the universal vulnerability of all human beings. In *Ethics as First Philosophy*[11] he argues that the ethical attitude is independent of metaphysics and arises from our basic awareness of each other. It is in this basic awareness of the Other that we become aware of our common and shared vulnerabilities. By focusing on ways in which we can enhance awareness of the Other, most importantly by focusing on and acknowledging his/her Face in all its singularity and

uniqueness, Levinas argues that we will discover why non-violence towards others is the human imperative.

Levinas suggests that each human being on the planet faces a triple vulnerability.

First, there is our permanent physical vulnerability: we may die anytime and we will all certainly die sometime. This is an extremely important equaliser. This is the fate that awaits all of us. Acknowledging this shared fate should generate a softening of our demands on one another as we individually and collectively confront and move towards this universal inevitability. We need help to live and to die. The question of whom we are willing to mourn and grieve for, as we engage the death of self and other, signals a lot about our boundaries of responsibility and care.



Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) was a Lithuanian-born philosopher who worked chiefly in France. After a traditional Jewish education, he studied in Strasbourg, took French citizenship, and taught in Paris. For much of 1940-44 he was a POW in Germany. In 1947 he published the essay in French later translated as *Existence and Existents*. In 1979 he retired as a professor at the Sorbonne.

Secondly, other people constitute a psychological threat; the Other is a threat simply because they are an Other. This is what Schweitzer is talking about when he says, "I am life that wills to live, in the midst of life that wills to live ". It is also what Buber is talking about when he talks about objectified relationships. If Others have I-It relations with us instead of I-You/I-Thou relations they instrumentalise their exchanges with us to suit their own interests. This is existentially unsettling, as we never know when we are going to be taken advantage of and we become wary of others instead of trusting towards them.

Thirdly – and most importantly – since I am the Other's Other, I

am not only potentially threatened by the Other but also constitute a threat to the Other. This is absolutely critical to the evolution of Levinas' social ethics since this third vulnerability makes us morally vulnerable. "As a threat to others I am here in the world with no right to exist; if I cannot claim to be harmless, how can I claim any right to be here?" [12] The only solution to this moral vulnerability is to overcome my being a threat; and the only way to do that (according to Levinas) is to accept unconditional (and unlimited) responsibility for the Other. I find this a wonderfully compelling sociological argument for Fox's injunction to walk cheerfully across the world answering that of God in everyone. It is also an argument for Buber's desire to deepen inter-subjective relationships and it requires Schweitzer's absolute reverence for life and nonviolence.

This unconditional responsibility for the Other is an imperative that does not have to be justified by any social contract, political system or special relationship between me and the Other. [13] It is an eminently Quakerly argument because it assumes an acceptance of responsibility without any expectation of return except for that most precious return of all, namely human trust. It is an argument for an ethics of responsibility grounded in deep reciprocity and human experience. As such, it is an ethics that is independent of metaphysics and theology but which feeds back into these discourses. Levinas provides a compelling social and political rationale for an ethic of nonviolence.

Of course, there are all sorts of issues that come into play when one adds a third party and when there are big discrepancies of power, privilege and prestige. Who is the Other when the dyad becomes a triad and we encounter others in more abstract, impersonal institutions? Why should I have responsibility for an Other if that Other is exploiting me or threatening to exploit me? It is an ethic, therefore, that is based on some degree of equality of power, privilege and opportunity. It does mean, however, that peaceful, relatively harmonious, well integrated societies and polities are likely to be those

that make a commitment to equality. This is borne out empirically by the work that I and others have been doing on the Global Peace Index. Those societies that rank most highly on levels of peacefulness are those that have a radical commitment to welfare, equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes. [14] This is also confirmed in the 2009 book by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone*. This book establishes that more equal societies all around the world do better on almost every social, economic, health and political indicator. [15]

In Levinas' work, fundamental ethics flow from "responsibility-to-and-for-the-Other". This is the only basis for a humane society. His argument is that because human beings are equal in their vulnerability they can only be truly safe in relationships where they place the interests of the Other above their own and the Other in turn does the same. We are called to recognise the right of the Other as fundamental to claiming our own right to existence.

In these arguments Levinas begins grappling with the challenges of separated and narcissistic egos. His method for resisting narcissism and engendering "positive othering" is based on an engagement with what he calls the Face of the Other. This Face is both the Face that appears to us and the Face that does not appear to us, the invisible Face. By focusing on the Face, especially the Face of those who suffer, or are in pain, or the Faces of the subordinate, the imprisoned or the marginalised, we can establish our human obligations and responsibilities. What this requires, therefore, is deep and radical attention to the concrete and particular features of the Face in encounters between the self and the other. We engage the Other in his/her individual differences but in a deeper acknowledgement of the Other's incomparability, uniqueness, and distinctive singularity. [16] In this engagement, Levinas suggests, we discern the ethical basis for responsibility which begins not from ourselves but with and for the Other. It is this radical engagement with the Other that determines our

ethical responsibility. In this way he is confirming Schweitzer's concern for an engaged spirituality which generates an enlargement of the sense of solidarity with other human beings.

One of the most interesting of Levinas' ideas is that of the "epiphany of the Face". In the encounter with the Face, we can see joy and happiness but we can also see misery and suffering. We see prohibition ("you shall not kill me") and we discover disarming authority. It is by paying attention to the Face of the Other and by developing a radical responsibility-to-and-for-the-other that we can begin to resist the stereotyping forces that seek to deny this deep and incomparable individuality. [17] Ideologies like Fascism and Communism, but also a large number of other stereotyping and discriminatory processes, prevent us from seeing the Other in his/her full self. By focusing on the Face of the other and what he calls "the wisdom of love rather than the love of wisdom", Levinas argues that we can establish a solid basis for ethical encounter and for Honouring the Other.

This understanding of radical otherness is or should be reciprocal; it is a way of humanising and deepening all human exchanges. It has implications, therefore, for the way we deal with each other in peace as well as war. Our ethical responsibility-to-and-for-the-other lies at the heart of peaceful co-existence and the non-violent pursuit of justice. In ensuring that the interests of the other take precedence over our own interests we discover "infinity" in the present. We also discover the central importance of hospitality, especially towards those who are strangers to us. By being hospitable we acknowledge all the vulnerabilities that we share as human beings, and in those moments we attend to the other with care, single-mindedness and attention. Many people feel somewhat ambivalent about others and the notion of an Other. They have experienced pain at the hands of others. Levinas' argument is that even for these people, focusing on another in the way he explains it will generate gentleness rather than fear.

In relation to the third party, or what happens when we move from dyadic to triadic or impersonal social relationships, Levinas builds a theory of community, society, law and government on a basis of the interpersonal ethics that bind us to each other. He is in this sense adopting a view of politics and political responsibility which stands in tension with realist/Hobbesian views which discount the centrality of self-other relations. All of our fellow citizens – within nation states and across national state boundaries – have the same needs for recognition, welfare, justice and stability as we do. It is important, therefore, that our social and political institutions make the satisfaction of these basic human needs possible. The primordial relationship, however, remains that between Self and Other. It is justice that limits our infinite responsibility for the other.

In principle, everyone demands of me; I am responsible to and for everyone all the time in every way. But if a person or group or institution persecutes another, then my responsibility to those who are suffering outweighs any responsibility I have to the persecutor, and I must do what I can to oppose the persecution … If there were no order of justice there would be no limit to my responsibility.[18]

When we forget this fundamental relationship and ignore justice we often start rendering Others faceless. In extreme cases this ignoring of the face leads to a willingness to massacre and forget. Judith Butler, building on Levinas, states in her book *Precarious Life* that:

> *Those who remain faceless or whose faces are presented to us as so many symbols of evil, authorise us to become senseless before those lives we have eradicated, and whose grievability is indefinitely postponed.* [19]

Acknowledging and honouring the Face of the Other, therefore, is not an optional extra for Levinas, Schweitzer, Buber, Fox or Butler. Honouring the Other is, in fact, at the heart of human relationship, non-violent ethics and the never-ending quest for justice and peace. Only by establishing our harmlessness and a radical responsibility-

to-and-for-the-Other can we establish the basis for a committed relationship and for building just, peaceful and sustainable communities and societies.

So, walking cheerfully across the world answering that of God in every person, highlighting the intersubjective nature of I-You/Thou relationships, acquiring a radical reverence for all life, and deriving social and political ethics from a deep responsibility-to-and-for-the-Other are all critical to the development of harmonious community. They are critical because peaceful communities rest on :
(i) a commitment to equality and justice;
(ii) the cessation of relationships of domination and subordination (especially those that flowed from the colonial and imperial projects of the 19th and 20th centuries);
(iii) the expansion of deep mutuality across boundaries of difference; and
(iv) a reverence for nature and a commitment to sustainable development.

To what extent can Aotearoa New Zealand in 2010 claim to be a place that honours the Other, promotes equality and justice and celebrates difference?
Before we can answer this question we need to know who is the Self and who is the Other in Aotearoa New Zealand. Where we stand, sit, live, work, walk, play, worship will determine what we see. What I see as a white, middle class, aging male living on the Peninsula in Dunedin is very different from what a non-white, non middle class, young woman living in Mangere Auckland will see. What we both see will be different from what the elderly will see or what children and youth will see. What all of us see in New Zealand will be different from what Chinese, Russians, Indians, Arabs and Americans see. As John Berger put it:

> *Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognises before it can speak. But there is another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is*

> *seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain the world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. Each evening we* ***see*** *the sun set. We* ***know*** *that the earth is turning away from it. Yet the knowledge, the explanation never quite fits the sight.* [20]

Berger goes on to argue that what we see is affected by what we know or believe but more particularly by what we look at. "To look is an act of choice. As a result of this act what we see is brought within our reach – though not necessarily within arm's reach". [21] Soon after we can see, we are aware that we can also be seen. "The eye of the other combines with our own eye to make it fully credible that we are part of the visible world". [22]

Berger is focusing on seeing as an aid to understanding art, publicity and the seductive and manipulative role of advertising. But I want to use him and Levinas to ask some questions about who we, i.e. you and I and people like us, really see. Who do we gaze at and attend to and who is excluded from our vision? What happens to us when we see others in general and the Other in particular? Are we softened or hardened by those we see? On whom does our attention linger and from whom do we avert our gaze? Do we mainly see the world in our own image and look for and at others who are like ourselves? Do we only attend to people who will bring us contentment and happiness and confirm us in our privilege, or do we have eyes for more textured and challenging sights? Who is Other to me and how do I honour him/her/them? How am I represented in words, literature, music, film, history and how are Others represented in these same media? The question of who is included and who excluded from our gaze and sight is a profoundly political one.

If I apply Levinas' ethic of deep responsibility to and for the Other, how might this help me determine whether or not I am honouring and

respecting those who are radically other to me – namely women, people of colour, people of different classes, cultures and different beliefs? How do I as a European of British and German descent see those here in New Zealand who are indigenous or of mixed descent, and how do they see me? How can we become more intentional and deliberate in relation to seeing, reflecting, relationship and responsibility processes? And what sorts of institutional arrangements will enable us to honour the others we cannot see? It is in relation to all those who are invisible third parties to me or for whom I do not necessarily have deep personal self-other obligations that we (i.e. you and I in social institutions) develop principles of justice, fairness and respect. This is why honouring the other, love and compassion must be the basis of true justice. For justice is, as Joseph Fletcher put it, "love distributed": it is a way of socialising the respect that we owe each other in interpersonal relationships.

It is also important for me to understand, however, that I am also Other for those who are Other to me. They see me from where they are sitting/standing/living and working. For us to live together harmoniously I need to know that they know that I mean no harm and will do no harm to them, and also that if I have done harm that I will acknowledge and make amends for it. More optimally, the Other needs to know that I will, wherever possible, seek to do good with them. Since we are facing the same vulnerabilities we need to come to some understanding of our mutual responsibilities for each other's welfare. What this means when the Other sees me/us across different class, ethnic, power and privilege lines is challenging. They (who have less) have no reason to have radical responsibility-to-and-for-me, especially if I am directly or indirectly oppressing, marginalising or excluding them or imposing my notion of what is normal/acceptable on to them. On the other side, however, I cannot assume unconditional responsibility-to-and-for-the-Other without some clearly defined protocols based on a commitment to equality and justice and an acknowledgement of differences while building on commonalities.

So how do white, middle class, Pakeha professionals operating from positions of power and prestige honour and respect those who are Other to them in Aotearoa New Zealand? In this process of what might be called "Honourable Othering" how do we overcome simplistic binaries and dualisms so that we can acknowledge and celebrate the deep differences that characterise Others? How do we avoid stereotyping and de-individualising the Other, thereby removing their uniqueness and singularity? Do Pakeha New Zealanders, for example, honour their Maori brothers and sisters and do they in turn have any reason for honouring us? If we start seeing each Other from a position of respect and honour, what difference will that make to our inter-personal, economic, political and ecological relationships?

Honouring Maori— Honouring Pakeha

Aotearoa New Zealand is notable for the fact that in terms of human settlement it is a young country. Until about 1200 there were no people here and no mammals either, apart from bats, whales and seals. Then the Polynesian invasion dramatically changed the pristine environment, and the subsequent European invasion and settlement was devastating. It destroyed large swathes of forest and eliminated much local fauna.[23] William Fox said in 1868 that Europeans:

> *came to lay the basis of a true civilisation, not only to subdue nature and till the soil; but impelled by Anglo-Saxon ardour and energy, to develop all that was worthy of development.* [24]

Thus, while most Maori were concerned to try and maintain their natural resources through iwi and whanau guardianship, many Colonists had a more instrumental and exploitative view of the forests, the rivers, the wetlands and the landscape. From an early time, therefore, it has to be said that indigenous instinct to preserve and revere life and land in Schweitzer's sense ran up against a European desire to exploit it. It also has to be said, though, that it would be a

gross simplification to say that all Pakeha were rapacious exploiters of natural resources and all Maori automatically conservationist. There were instrumental and conservationist tendencies in both cultures. The instrumental tendency, however, prevailed throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th before many Pakeha became conscious of ecological loss and started acquiring slightly more reverence for the land and waterways and the fragile eco-systems that exist upon them. Recent debates about opening up National Parks or coastal waters for mining, or iwi desire to exploit their own land and resources for economic purposes, demonstrate that Maori and Pakeha face similar pressures in the 21st century to objectify and commodify nature rather than revere it. Honouring the Other in human terms (here and everywhere) must begin, however, with an honouring of Papatuanuku Mother Earth and a new consciousness of how all life is dependent on her.

The first contacts between Maori and Pakeha (in the late 18th to mid 19th century) were an interesting example of two peoples coming together from a position of what is called "dual agency".[25] This meant that encounters between British and Maori individuals, institutions, whanau and iwi were, initially, more or less equal exchanges on mutually acceptable ground. In these first interactions, a measure of respect was given from one side to the Other and there was some degree of parity in the exchanges. In fact, many colonists learned te reo and were fluent in the Maori language. They acknowledged the value of Maori language, culture and traditions and were dependent on Maori for food, transport, shelter and housing, and they paid cash and goods for these items. These early cash and goods transactions meant that many Maori were able to establish themselves in business. The traditional kin-based economy was gradually incorporated into the global market economy as finance capital started shaping the exchanges that took place.

This period of dual agency and mutual respect, however, rapidly eroded

as Pakeha migrated in larger and larger numbers and their demand for land far outstripped the supply from Maori who were willing to sell. The opportunities for respectful relationships diminished even more when the colonisers resorted to force and military coercion to acquire land and then imposed tradeable individual titles on collectively owned land. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith put it, "They Came, they Saw, they Named, they Claimed" [26] and from that moment onwards New Zealand became a white settler society which defined itself positively in relation to what they saw as negative Maori Otherness.

Colonial British rule meant that many indigenous people of Aotearoa-New Zealand were stereotyped, labelled and objectified as primitive, uneducated and in need of humanising and civilising. There was no attention to the Face of the Maori Other (except by artists like William Goldie and photographer Samuel Carnell, who used Maori faces to advance their own artistic and photographic reputations). With a few exceptions — such as sympathetic commentators like Percy Smith and Elsdon Best [27] — there was from the late 1850s onwards little Honouring of the Maori Other on the part of Pakeha and from the Maori side growing despair and contempt for Pakeha.
In the last 40 years of the 19th century New Zealand history was overwhelmingly written from the perspective of the coloniser, who saw Maori as inferior. This negative Othering resulted in 19th and 20th century assaults on Maori language, customs, traditions and lineage, a dramatic decline in Maori population and the emergence of deep-rooted structural inequality and injustice. This resulted in a dominant Pakeha culture and a subordinate Maori culture.

This dominant Pakeha culture generated many illusions about positive race relations in New Zealand during the 1950s and 1960s. The Civil Rights Movement in the United States, however, started challenging Pakeha and Maori to think more critically about ethnic inequality. Movements for Maori Sovereignty, active opposition to discrimination (e.g. the Auckland University Haka controversy), the reclaiming of

the Maori language from the 1970s onwards and the development of kohanga teo (not to mention Bastion Point, the 1981 Springbok Tour and growing Pakeha consciousness of white privilege resting on Maori deprivation) all increased the number of different Maori and Pakeha who wanted to return to basics. By this they meant the foundation document that lies at the heart of Aotearoa-New Zealand, namely Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In doing so, Maori Treaty workers and their Pakeha counterparts helped generate a climate of opinion and institutional provisions within which it was possible to start addressing the historic injustices that flowed from indifference to the Treaty for the first 150 years of European history. In Levinas' terms, there was a growing desire to replace past unjust relations with just ones.

The results of all this have been quite spectacular in terms of generating the basis for more equal exchange and respect and a restoration of some of that early 19th-century "dual agency" at the heart of a bi-cultural and multicultural New Zealand. But much remains to be done. Maori in all their iwi, hapu and cultural complexity, represent 17% of the 4.3 million people living in New Zealand. Cultural identity is much stronger now than it was in the 20th century and the Maori language has been revitalised, yet the gap between Maori and non-Maori is large and pervasive. Maori life expectancy is almost 10 years less than non-Maori and household income is 72% of the national average. Over half of all Maori males leave school with no qualifications and 50% of New Zealand's prison population are Maori.[28] While such inequality exists and while there is an unwillingness to accord deeper manaaki/hospitality from one side to the Other, the prospects for Pakeha really honouring Maori and vice versa are bleak. The questions that we Pakeha and Maori confront in the 21st century are many. What comes after Treaty Settlements have been concluded? What sorts of relationships do we want to have with each other? What sorts of joint futures do we want to see negotiated? Whose faces are we willing to attend to and what might flow from this attention?

What is interesting is that Maori intellectual leaders like Linda Tuhiwai Smith are proposing protocols for engagement with Maori which are completely consistent with Levinas' idea of focusing on reading the face of the other in order to discern right and peaceful ways of engaging. She says that there are seven principles that should guide Maori and Pakeha research on or engagement with Maori communities. These are:

1. Aroha ki te tangata (a respect for people)
2. Kanohi kitea (the seen face – that is, present yourself to people face to face)
3. Titiro, whakarongo…korero (look, listen…speak)
4. Manaaki kit e tangata (share and host people, be generous)
5. Kia tupato (be cautious)
6. Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata (do not trample over the mana of people)
7. Kaua e mahaki (don't flaunt your knowledge).[29]

Applying all of these principles to everyday Pakeha-Maori relationships will go a long way towards creating the conditions under which it is possible for Pakeha and Maori to honour each Other. Both cultures have traditions of aroha (charity, love and compassion), manaaki (hospitality towards others) and utu (basic norms of reciprocity). While paying rigorous attention to justice under the Treaty there must be a simultaneous focus on ways of realising these deeper traditions of love, care and hospitality.

Pakeha, in particular, need to pay much more attention to the Face of the Other, to direct engagement and encounter with the Other and to the negotiation of new bases for equal and just exchanges with the Other. If we follow these processes we might be able to see/discern the Other in all his/her complexity and strength, and in this process discover how to discharge our unconditional responsibilities-to-and-for-the-Other at a bicultural level. This may mean going to places with the Other where we might make ourselves more vulnerable. If

we do not engage in this deeper attention to what the Other's face is telling us, or do not establish our harmlessness to the other or attend to their needs on their terms, the prospects for harmonious and peaceful relations between Pakeha and Maori will be slight. By seeing and being seen by Maori (both individually and collectively) from a position of common vulnerability, we might begin to understand how to guarantee the welfare of the Other on their own terms. Of course, it is equally important not to limit our gaze to Maori. They are not the only other Other for us Pakeha. We also have to look at/see New Zealand's Pasifika, Chinese, Indian and other migrant communities. They too have their place and need to be engaged with respect and honour also.

When Ingrid Huygens[30] surveyed white Treaty workers about their work and what they felt they had achieved, she found that many of the challenges had to do with the question of where to from here and whether the processes of Treaty consciousness that they had set in train could be trusted to deliver positive outcomes for all.

Having facilitated an awakening of Pakeha to the Maori Other — to the Treaty partner, for example — what next? What if that partner wants to go in a direction that excludes the Treaty worker or Pakeha more generally? What if Maori want a future that has only a marginal place for Pakeha? And why should Pakeha expect tangata whenua to devote some of their precious time to attending to us and incorporating us in their future? On a basis of past experience, why should Maori gaze at Pakeha with honour rather than contempt?

The three deep thinkers who have framed this lecture would say that it is at this moment that we need to double our efforts to attend to the Other, to seek forgiveness for past wrongs, to establish common vulnerabilities and to establish an unconditional responsibility-to-and-for-the-Other. In that process of positive Othering, Levinas argues we will arouse in those (who have historic reasons to treat us with contempt) a human gentleness based on a deep recognition of

our common mortality, an acknowledgement of the ways in which we have historically done harm to each other and how we might do such harm in the future. In acknowledging our common vulnerabilities, we will discover the basis for a new and different kind of relationship. We might be able to begin this process of honouring the Other by summoning what Levinas calls "the abiding necessity of small goodnesses".[31] When it looks as though communities are becoming less caring and more objectified, are less willing to explore creative options in relation to each other and are not attending to the weak, the vulnerable and the dishonoured, that is when we have to resort to the small goodness – that is, the goodness that persists despite the regime, or despite the indifference of the majority of the population. These small goodnesses can and do occur in the face of the most appalling regimes. Small goodnesses precede the state and come after the state. They are what make us fully human and they enable us to make small steps for justice and peace at any time and in relation to any person or group.

We need to look for and nurture these small goodnesses in New Zealand in order to build mutuality and responsibility across boundaries of ethnicity, culture, gender and class. These small goodnesses will create a community of care, responsibility and intersubjectivity in the face of the objectification of others, the cult of youth and celebrity, and the stereotyping forces that prevent us from seeing the Other in his/her complete singularity and uniqueness.

There is a lovely section in Levinas in which he states:

> *There are, if you will, tears that a state functionary or functionary of any other socio-political order) does not see, and cannot see: the tears of the Other. In order for business to function well and run smoothly, it is absolutely necessary to affirm the infinite responsibility of everyone, for everyone, and to everyone. In such a situation (of socio-political order) there is need of individual consciences, for only they can see violence, the*

> *violence flowing from the effective functioning of Reason itself. … In my view, the promotion and defence of subjectivity rests not on the fact that its egoism would be holy, but on the fact that only the ego can see the "secret tears" of the Other, tears brought about by the efficient function of the socio-political hierarchy. Consequently, subjectivity (of the responsibly established ego) is indispensable for the achievement of this non-violence which the state (and every socio-political order) seeks, but while also passing by the particularity of the ego and the Other.*[32]

So when we hear the tears of those who die 10 years younger than they should, or the prisoner crying in his/her cell, or the refugee struggling to make sense of his/her displacement, or the mentally ill, the elderly, the sick and the dying, or the marginalised, the abandoned, the unemployed, and the oppressed, then our first and immediate instinct must be: what small goodness can we give to these persons? Our second instinct must be political: what institutional changes need to take place to ensure that the conditions generating this grief and these tears are addressed by a caring state committed to serving the public good instead of private interest?

The decolonisation of our European minds, our awakening and openness to others, the willingness to take the time and energy to attend to the incomparable Face(s) of the Other are not optional extras. They lie at the heart of all loving relationships, and are imperatives for just and peaceful communities.

If you don't find Buber, Schweitzer and Levinas helpful, you could return to George Fox, who knew that when our hearts are softened, "then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one; whereby in them ye may be a blessing".

⁂

APPENDIX

QUAKERS

The Religious Society of Friends – Quakers, to use their informal name – began in England in the mid 18th century. An essential Quaker belief is the uniqueness of every person's spiritual understanding and that this understanding does not need the mediation of pastor, priest or bishop. Thus the Quakers subscribe to no formal creed.

In terms of worship, Quaker meetings in New Zealand are simple. The group will sit for an hour or so in silence, although this might be broken occasionally by a contribution from a member of the group who has been led to speak.
Although Quakers have no creed, they have a traditional set of principles they call "testimonies". They are simplicity, peace, integrity, community and equality. They are not rules but rather a set of guiding ideas. "Simplicity", for example, is an attitude leading to a richness of experience rather than a list of prohibitions resulting in a barren set of deprivations.

Quakers have had a history of social involvement.

Contact for Quakers: ymclerk@quaker.org.nz

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Contact for NPACS: peaceandconflict@otago.ac.nz

ENDNOTES

[1] The New Zealand Institute, quoted in *The Listener,* May 1, 2010, p.19.
[2] Martin Buber, 1970: *I and Thou*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, translated by Walter Kaufman.
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[15] See the following URL for discussion about the GPI http://www.visionofhumanity.org/gpi/results/rankings.php
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[17]S. Hand, 1989, op cit p.83
[18] This idea of the Face is also at the heart of many Asian traditions, particularly the Confucian traditions of East Asia.
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[21]John Berger, 1979: *Ways of Seeing*, London: BBC and Penguin Books, p.7.
[22]. Ibid p.8.
[23] Ibid p.9.
[24] Paul Star, "Humans and the Evironment in New Zealand, c1800-2000" Chapter 3 in G. Byrnes(ed), 2009: *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*. Australia: OUP p.48.
[25] Ibid p.49.
[26]See Paul Monin, "Maori Economies and Colonial Capitalism" Chapter 6 in G. Byrnes: *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, op cit p.127.

[24] Paul Star, "Humans and the Evironment in New Zealand, c1800-2000" Chapter 3 in G. Byrnes(ed), 2009: *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*. Australia: OUP p.48.
[25] Ibid p.49.
[26]See Paul Monin, "Maori Economies and Colonial Capitalism" Chapter 6 in G. Byrnes: *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, op cit p.127.
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[29] See Caecile Mikkelson (ed), 2010: *The Indigenous World*. Copenhagen: IWGA, p.267.
[30] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 2008, op cit, p.120.
[31] I Huygens, 2007: *Processes of Pakeha Change in Response to the Treaty of Waitangi*, Ph.D Thesis, University of Waikato, and also I Huygens, 2004: *How Pakeha Change: Focus Group Records*. These are sensitive representations of changes in Treaty workers' perceptions of their role and challenges to the future.
[32] See Burggraeve, 2002, op. cit p.174.
[33] *Totality and Infinity*, quoted in Burggraeve op cit p.177.

PICTURE SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

p. 4 Facsimile of portrait drawn on stone by Thomas Fairland. Source: Library of Congress

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p. 14 Attribution: Bracha L. Ettinger

Cover: Hongi, courtesy of Ko Tane, the Maori Experience at Willowbank Wildlife Reserve. The hongi is the Maori greeting, acknowledging the sacredness of life through shared breath.

Author photo by Marjory Lewis

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Te Haahi Tuuhauwiri
The Religious Society of Friends

National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
University of Otago

HONOURING THE OTHER: The Quest for Respect, Equality and Small Goodnesses in Aotearoa New Zealand

Although in many ways New Zealand is a well-functioning society, nevertheless it contains significant tensions. There are inequities and injustices, and on some international indicators such as the rate of imprisonment we are doing badly. The lecture draws on the wisdom of three notable thinkers to show how changes in the way we relate to others can help ease tensions and resentments between individuals and cultures. The key to equality is mutual respect, but how is this to be achieved? The lecture concludes by giving particular attention to the relationships between Maori and Pakeha, in both directions.

Professor Kevin Clements is the foundation Chair of Peace and Conflict Studies and Director of the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Otago, Dunedin, and Secretary General of the International Peace Research Association. He has been Secretary General of International Alert, and Director of the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva. He has been a regular consultant to a variety of non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations on disarmament, arms control, conflict resolution, development and regional security issues. Kevin is a member of the Religious Society of Friends.

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