

# Realism; empathic listening; creative practices; race & identity; empathy based guilt #14

How do we respond to change?

Hi, I'm Alex Staniforth; Artist, Coach, Trader. In these bi-monthly letters I'm exploring how our species makes meaning and takes action in the context of an ever evolving dynamic world. I write this as a place to share and collect thoughts as we explore these topics. I hope this blend of information serves to raise some interesting dialogues.

**We have a couple of events coming up in July:**



Free Online Meditation Circle on Monday/Wednesday/Friday/Sunday. You can see the timings [here](#).



If you haven't yet visited the website, you can visit [here](#).

**A wider perspective**



Race and identity. A knotty topic with potential for huge political spin. Here I want not to share my thoughts, but to offer the thoughts of contrasting voices in the conversation surrounding cultural trauma, inter-cultural debt and modern day 'isms'. Coleman Hughes writes on [the high price of stale grievances](#). Alex Sheremet offers [a response](#). Amin Maalouf on the [complexity in oversimplifying identity](#).



A comprehensive empathy-based moral theory encompasses at least five types of moral encounters. Innocent bystander: one witnesses someone in pain or distress. Transgressor: one has harmed someone, or is about to act in a way that may harm someone. Virtual transgressor: one is innocent but feels oneself a transgressor. Multiple-claimant: an extended bystander model in which one witnesses two or more victims or potential victims but cannot help them all and must make a choice. Caring versus justice: one must choose between acting in accord with a caring principle or a justice principle when the two are in conflict. [Empathy based guilt has many roots](#) - all of which result in nuanced reactions and perceptual distortions. Harmony is possible through conversation with the self we might wish to silence.

🔥 The latest CO2 concentration (ppm) measurement (as of July 15th, 2020): 415.08 ppm; July, 2019: 412 ppm, 25 years ago: 360 ppm.

## Closer to home

🌄 “Pessimism is, in brief, playing the sure game. You cannot lose at it; you may gain. It is the only view of life in which you can never be disappointed. Having reckoned what to do in the worst possible circumstances, when better arise, as they may, life becomes child’s play”. Thomas Hardy’s words echo the unlimited potential for upside gain when we assume worst case scenario risk. This may seem a rational choice, but does it take into account your holistic wellbeing? Where do you set your expectational bar, and for how long can you endure before your soft heart turns to stone? ‘Worst’ is a statement bound by the subjective object of fear for a given person in a particular context at a particular point in time. It is more complex than a linear definition. In this way, both pessimism and optimism offer bounded utility due to their lack of inclusion of the evolving self and in their inability to account for contextual change. If we see both optimism and pessimism for what they are; cognitive judgement biases, we allow room for a less attached, more realistic perspective to take the fore.

🎪 Creative practices for wellbeing. Frantic lives fill pockets of space with meaningless tasks and all consuming dissatisfaction. We might notice ourselves slip into doing mode when we are pressed for time, stressed at home, or stressed in ourselves. Creating meaningful pockets of space where we allow ourselves time to be and to check in with our essence can be the difference between a life worth living, and one full of bitterness and pain. Here’re some options: reflecting, creative endeavours, tai chi.

## Notes on compassion

🌀 Listening in coaching reviews: to enable, not direct. In any performance or coaching check-in, it’s important for a coachee to be listened to with openness and empathy. Conversations held from this place offer deep ground for meaningful exchange and contact. These sorts of debriefs require a very different way of being from the hustle bustle ‘doing mode’ most leaders are used to. Managing this perceptual boundary can be the source of much tension - with leaders simultaneously juggling the needs of the economic machine and the more grounded, emotional needs of the other. It remains a tension for as long as leaders seek only cognitive solutions to such paradoxes. Some practices that enable more integrated responses.

Artistic expression



## Poetry Corner

 I am by John Clare

I feel I am — I only know I am,  
And plod upon the earth, as dull and void:  
Earth's prison chilled my body with its dram  
Of dullness, and my soaring thoughts destroyed,  
I fled to solitudes from passions dream,  
But strife pursued — I only know, I am.  
I was a being created in the race  
Of men disdainful bounds of place and time:  
A spirit that could travel o'er the space  
Of earth and heaven — like a thought sublime,  
Tracing creation, like my maker, free —  
A soul unshackled — like eternity,  
Spurning earth's vain and soul debasing thrall  
But now I only know I am — that's all.

## Things & Stuff

 Add some flow to your day

 Finding self through Gestalt

 Creative Beings CIC

Invitation: Stop. Take 10 deep breaths and wait. Notice, if you can, whether you're really present in where you are and what you're doing. Notice your breathing, your emotions, your thoughts, what seems to be most important to you in this moment. Allowing yourself contact with awareness - after all, awareness of sensation and no sensation is still awareness. I usually find I'm not as present as I otherwise could be. A useful check in for sure.

If you've found anything here stimulating and want to chat, then get in touch via my email: [aostaniforth@gmail.com](mailto:aostaniforth@gmail.com).

Stay well,

Alex