

SAY GOODBYE, SAY HELLO

Reflections on the Field of our Existential Meetings and Partings

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This text originated in the Marianne Fry Lecture (MFL), given on July 14, 2012, in Bristol. In revising it for journal publication, I have accessed the various notebooks I will, at any one time, use as I prepare a draft – at least one permanently with me and then those bought at airports and train stations or taken as souvenirs from various conference hotels. In re-visiting these, I came across strong themes I had intended to include in the MFL – and, for some reason or another, chose to not include. Maybe now, their time has come. In other words, there is content here that was not in the MFL. Just as there was much in the lecture that is not here.

I have also attempted to maintain something of the connectedness I felt with my audience there and then in Bristol. At the lecture, I was greatly supported by playing some of my favourite music, not only to musically and perhaps more memorably illustrate my themes, but also as an expression of who I am through publicly sharing my favourite artists and songs, and humming along as I did so. Indeed, I had played the music as I prepared the lecture...just as I am playing it now as I work on this draft.

May I suggest to the reader that you use YouTube to find and play the music as I present it in the text. This can also give you the full lyrics in many cases. These musical inserts will be introduced thus:

Artist/Composer, title

I already feel strange as I start this shift from the social dynamics of an interactive lecture with mostly fellow Gestalt practitioners and the sensory feedback data I could access, both as heard, observed and experienced, to sitting here at my kitchen table in Sörmland, Sweden and writing in blind silence to an individual reader I may never meet, and whose reactions I may never know anyway – and certainly not as if the writing and reading were somehow simultaneous.

In order to at least hint at some interactions - apart from the musical inserts - I will mention some of them when appropriate, both in terms of their content and even impact.

My hope is to offer those readers who participated in the Bristol event enough thematic connection to be recognisable, and enough that is new and thematically consistent to make the reading worthwhile.

So, without any further ado:

The Beatles: Say Goodbye, Say Hello.

INTRODUCTION

I never met Marianne Fry. And yet, thanks as much to her life as to her death, I spoke at the Marianne Fry Lecture – and am now drafting these reflections. I spoke then and am now writing to people who knew her, to people who knew of and maybe saw and/or met her, to people who – like me – never met her, and, like me, maybe only ever heard or read her name.

It would be easy for me to say that the purpose of the MFL is to honour her life as it was lived, in the past tense. Instead, I am choosing to suggest that my purpose here is to honour the impact she has had on people during her life, people for whom her absence was transformed into a presence, a presence they wished to celebrate, a celebration they wished to share with others. My assumption is that Marianne Fry’s generosity towards them inspired their generosity towards us, where “us” means anyone who at any time has attended any MFL celebration of the impact of her life and legacy on those who shared some of her lifetime with her.

Her “Goodbye” to them has become their and our “Hello” to each other at these celebrations, and for some, like me, my “hello” also to Marianne.

I am sure that those whom she influenced during her life have her presence with them in the way that was unique for each of them and Marianne. She is therefore a presence and a very influential force of the social field of those whom she impacted during her life, as well as those who, like me, have been impacted by them and are now, as I am, an influential force of that field.

My own inspiration in this respect is Pater Hornung, the wise and gentle German Jesuit priest who officiated at the memorial service for my son, Dara – whom he had never met alive, just as I never met Marianne alive. He spoke of how easy it would be for us there at the mass to question the meaning of the life of a boy who lived among us for only fourteen years and whose last days and weeks were filled with pain and drugged sleep. The meaning of Dara's life, he said, is not in what he did or did not do in his fourteen years. The meaning of his life will be found in how his having been among us has impacted on us, in how his impact on us will impact through us on others, in how his presence in our lives will live on in ever-widening ripples of influence.

One concrete consequence of my time with Dara in his life and death was my resolve to become a better person in general and certainly a better father to my eldest son than I had previously been to both him and Dara. So I came into personal therapy, group therapy and then therapy-based personal development groups (Harris XXXX; Gaffney XXXX).

Some six years later, when I had completed my training as a Gestalt psychotherapist, I fully realised what a dynamic field perspective the priest had given us, an opportunity to live fully in the connectedness of our lives and our deaths with all the tingling unpredictability of how our giving and receiving become patterns of meetings and partings, and patterns of living and dying, of dying and then living on through our impact on others.

And it was amongst those many meetings that I first became acquainted with Malcolm Parlett, who was later to represent the committee which invited me to hold the MFL. The last time Malcolm and I met before this time now in Bristol was in an Irish pub in Oslo, Norway, between the death and the funeral of his Norwegian partner Björg, whom I also knew. Living, loving, dying, and grieving were and are still now all intrinsic energies of a field emerging in and of our meeting. And also how we each of us, Malcolm and I and probably many or all of those in attendance in Bristol or reading this here and now carry someone's absence as a respected and, for us, an unforgettable presence in our lives – my son Dara, my partner Cathy, Malcolm's friend and colleague Marianne, and Björg his partner.

So: they have said "Goodbye" to us in their deaths, and he and I to them... and there in a room in Bristol we were saying "Hello" again to them, and, through them to each other and to all there at the MFL.

(At this point, I intervened in the proceedings. A paraphrase of my intervention would be: “I have now spoken about how I came to be here with you today at the Marianne Fry Lecture. I invite you to reflect on your own path here – and then to find someone you don’t know so well already and share it with them...in twos and threes maybe...thank you”).

I am reminded here of a friend and academic colleague in Derby, a professor in Comparative Religion. He was very involved in the creation, design and building of a multi-faith centre at Derby university. During this period, he became very aware and respectful of just how physical the presence of the ancestors could be for representatives of some faiths in some socio-cultural settings. There were serious discussions about the dimensions of the main meeting room with respect to space for the ancestors to be present in their advisory role.

So Marianne, and Dara and Cathy and Björg were not alone, I’m certain, as members of our ancestral guiding spirits there in Bristol...and certainly not for me, as I discovered in my notes. Amongst the themes I had jotted down, there were two which appeared in all of my notebooks from the period prior to the MFL. The first is a poem I had written on All Souls’ Day, 1991 and the second is the fact that I am named after my uncle Seán, who died of tuberculosis at the age of fifteen just two years before I was born – as first child to his eldest living sister and first grandson to his parents. I have no memory of any particular reason I had for not including these two themes in Bristol. I quite simply didn’t. I am now pleased that I didn’t and delighted that I can include them here.

I composed the poem in a train on my way to a Gestalt residential training week. I wrote it in Swedish and recited it as my “check-in” for the week, invoking the presence of four male generations of my family, three of them represented on All Souls’ Day the previous weekend by some of my dead. Here is my English version:

*I light a candle for each of you:
My granddad, my father and my son.*

*You, granddad, thought I could be your son.
Heard in my voice your dead son’s echo.*

*You, father, just never knew how to be one,
Hoped you might be one if I became your son.*

*And you, my son, hoped I would be your father.
And now I’m learning how to be your son.*

*I kneel here holding our four generations
Alive in my thoughts of you, my special dead.*

There are three people explicitly addressed here – my maternal granddad, my father and my son. A fourth is referenced, somewhat obliquely. This is my uncle Seán, darling son of my grandparents, darling brother of his sisters, one of whom, my mother, gave me his name. The remaining sisters were my dotting aunts.

My dead uncle Seán was a huge presence and influence in my life, although I never met him, and have, therefore, no memory of him in life.

I have often reflected on my possible confusion over my identity during my formative years: who was I? Was I me or was I a replacement for my dead uncle? So: son or grandson for my very beloved grandparents? Son or brother for my mother? Brother or nephew for my aunts?

For various reasons, I regularly had Sunday lunch and dinner in my grandparent's house, and sat at the dinner-table with my grandparents and aunts, the very same people who had sat at the exact same table with that other Seán.

Did I set my sights on the priesthood as that was what was expected of him? Irish families traditionally had a priest in the family - so was I to replace him?

And so a breakthrough: I knew that something meaningful had happened to me in Bristol – though no real idea or feeling of what. As the MFL day ended I felt a strong need to be on my own, and looked forward to my time alone that evening and then a few days later in my house in the Swedish countryside where I have spent the past 16 summers and where I have done most of my writing – including now this draft, in real time as I believe it is called.

While still in Stockholm between Bristol and the Swedish countryside, I had a number of mail and phone exchanges with my dear friend, first reader, editor and distance healer Anne Maclean. Our topic was my physical and psychological and spiritual condition. One of our games is “If I were your therapist, I would suggest...”. This time, it was Anne's turn. She suggested. I received and acted on her suggestions...

And so I found myself writing the sentences you have just read and are precisely now reading, with thoughts and discoveries that are forming and clarifying as I write.

I mentioned above the thought that I was somehow a replacement for my uncle Seán. That thought stayed with me the whole week and slowly took on nuances I had not anticipated no matter how much I recognised them as they came to me. The first was simply that a replacement can never be as good as the original. And anyway, no matter what I may have achieved, I would always be the “wrong” Seán.

I then found myself sensing and carefully testing a new thought: I was not a *replacement*. I was an *imposter*. I had been, and maybe had continued to be, an *imposter*. Many of the issues I have dealt with in my life fell into place from this perspective. And yet, it seemed somehow an old and spent perspective, an insight into the past rather than the present.

And then I connected to the most powerful and impactful moments of my day in Bristol. I was sitting beside Malcolm when he called for and led a final applause. I remember glancing up at one or two faces and then looking down as a warm blush suffused my whole person. This was not the blush of embarrassment or shame at being found out. This was my first deep embodied experience of being seen, accepted and respected for who and what **I** am by **my** peers – and most of them English, as Malcolm had earlier remarked, which was a huge added bonus as anyone who knows me will understand.

When I awoke the morning after this insight, I had a new couplet ready for my All Souls’ Day poem to complete what is now the final and definitive version:

All Souls’ Day, 1991 & August, 2012

*I light a candle for each of you:
My granddad, my uncle, my father and my son.*

*You, granddad, thought I could be your son.
Heard in my voice your dead son’s echo.*

*You, dead uncle whom I never met:
Though I’ve carried your name, you I’m not.*

*You, father, just never knew how to be one,
Hoped you might be one if I became your son.*

*And you, my son, hoped I would be your father.
And now I’m learning how to be your son.*

*I kneel here holding our four generations
Alive in my thoughts of you, my special dead.*

In closing this introduction, I am conscious of a warm connection to Pater Hornung: during his sermon, he exemplified his thoughts on the meaning of life as follows: “The meaning of Dara’s life for me is happening as I speak. Here I am, a German Jesuit missionary priest in Sweden, giving a sermon to a captive audience of mostly Lutherans and atheists. What could be more meaningful for me? So thank you, Dara”.

So: thank you, Marianne.

And thank you, Uncle Seán. Welcome to my world.

(I am aware of how my confusion over who of us was who has vanished. Also how my vague and never acknowledged resentment against you has evaporated. Yesterday, two weeks exactly short of my seventieth birthday, I checked out your anniversary for the first time in my life. You died on May 8, 1940. May 8 will be easy for me to remember. May 9 is Dara’s birthday, an event I celebrate every year. So yes – welcome to my world).

MFL THEMES

I hope to weave a carpet of sorts with a core pattern which both gives meaning to and gets meaning from a number of sub-patterns. As I have learned from my friends in Jerusalem, some carpets are destined for floors for us to walk on, or to take the chill out of flagstones or marble when we do so. Some floor carpets are woven to change colour depending upon from which angle we look at them. Other carpets are destined to hang like paintings or tapestries on a wall where we can study and acquaint ourselves with their colours, intricacies and patterns. As we know, some carpets may even become magical and carry us into new places and unexpected adventures.

The Beatles: Say Goodbye, Say Hello

This is my central theme: the dynamic existential field of the forces and patterns of our meetings and partings, our living and our dying in each other’s presence and connectedness. In exploring this theme, I intend to use threads from my

knowledge and experience of Existentialism and of Field Theory, especially that of Kurt Lewin. Both existentialism and field theory are, of course, embedded in Gestalt therapy theory and methodology.

To these I will add some aspects of Cross-cultural theory, with our socio-cultural environment as a distinct emergent expression of the dynamics of a particular social field. In this case, I am exploring here a synthesis of field theory and cross-cultural theory. I will also explore a synthesis of field theory and existentialism. For the academics amongst you, I admit already now to any number of category errors, a bad habit I have chosen not to give up and which has provided me with understandings and insights I would not be without.

FIELD

To return for a moment to considerations of *field*: each one of us in any gathering of human beings – such as the MFL - is a dynamic constituent part of a field of us and as such both influencing and simultaneously being influenced by the wholeness as well as the parts of such a field of social forces. As I sit here now in the Swedish countryside drafting these sentences, I am of course hoping to influence. In the first instance, Christine and her editorial team; then probably Malcolm; then anyone who attended the lecture and is reading this article; then all other readers. Without their explicit awareness of any agency, I am also feeling and responding to Christine and her team as an influential force of our BGJ field. My challenge here here is to express my integration of the personal and the professional – and get it past them, which I have often though not always succeeded in doing. So, yes: one of the field forces here is my desire to see this paper in print and in the BGJ.

EXISTENTIALISM

In my many and various papers on groups and behaviour in groups (Gaffney, 2010 & 2011), I have coined and used the term “The Existential Dilemma”. By this I mean the continuum between a sense or choice or need of “being apart from others” and a sense or choice or need of being “a part of something with others”. I have become increasingly aware of how these can constructs can mean very different things in practice to different people, so I encourage the reader to reflect for a moment on whatever either of these mean to YOU in YOUR life, and on how consist or situational they may be for you.

Any group or meeting or conference can be seen as a gathering of social animals together in time and space and relating existentially to each other in terms of being “apart from” each other and/or “a part of” a wholeness more than

ourselves with each other in all the rich variety of configurations of togetherness which are available to us – pairs, trios, small groups of various sizes. Were we to bring our cats and dogs with us, the “apart from/part of” continuum would probably be clearer.

Let me here play a song by Nanci Griffith that for me captures the paradox of the “apart from” position...

Nanci Griffith: Late Night Grand Hotel

“I’m looking for an early flight to anywhere but here”
“Just like Garbo in her late night Grand Hotel
Living alone is all I’ve ever done well”...

Or how about this:

Van Morrison: Just like Greta

“Just like Greta Garbo
I just want to be alone”.

As I have been a resident of Sweden since 1975, I find it fascinating that two such contrasting people as the slim, elegant Nanci Griffith and the burly, gruff Van Morrison should both reference that most Swedish of icons of loneliness, Greta Garbo, who was included in my acquired Swedish cultural heritage. (Sweden as an energy of the field was to continue its influence...).

For some, the solution to the dilemma is being a part of a couple...and yet, even that has its complications. Here is a duet by the two people of a former couple who discover that though now formally “apart from” each other, they are still in love, so still “a part of” their couple...just listen to how their voices are both separate and harmoniously interwoven.

Steve Earle & Iris Dement: Still in Love with You

“I didn’t think that I’d see you here tonight...
Then again I thought I might”

The paradox is here that we need others to be “apart from” just as much as we need others to create a social unit we can be a “part of”. I propose that “The Existential Dilemma” is the existential challenge at the heart of being human, a social-psychological fact that we human beings have been facing for as long as we have been around.

CROSS-CULTURAL THEORY

My hypothesis here as a retired lecturer in cross-cultural issues is that the frames which cross-cultural theorists have traditionally used to compare and contrast cultures are the possible resolutions of this dilemma at the level of societies. I’m thinking here of such theoretical generalisations as **INDIVIDUALISM** at one end of a continuum and **COLLECTIVISM** at the other. These two dimensions or aspects of national cultures have been around since the 1960s (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck) and have consistently re-appeared in cross-cultural studies from the 1970s (Hofstede XXXX) onwards (Trompenaars XXXX) - up to the most recent study in 2009 (GLOBE XXXX). In the 1990s, an Hispanic researcher in the USA (Marin XXXX) and a French researcher in Sweden (Sjögren XXXX) independently proposed a third dimension in between the two apparent extremes, which is now called **FAMILISM**. These three are now seen as the socio-cultural environments, settings, situations or fields where we establish and maintain our sense of identity in a socio-culturally congruent manner. A quick-and-dirty summary of the identity theme would be as follows:

INDIVIDUALISM

IDENTITY resides in the individual and his/her immediate interpersonal relationships.

FAMILISM

IDENTITY resides in family membership and can include sibling position and gender.

COLLECTIVISM

IDENTITY resides in belonging to a group which, in turn, belongs to a larger group and is embedded in society as a whole.

It is generally acknowledged that those born into, raised and living in the societies generally associated with **INDIVIDUALISM** can make tactical and strategic choices about which small or large collectives they wish to join – the

Marianne Fry Lecture, for example - while a natural sense of belonging and what and where to belong is more of a natural given where FAMILISM and COLLECTIVISM are concerned as socio-cultural fields.

Personally, as an Irishman by birth, culture and conviction, I would, with this taxonomy, generally find myself at the interface of Individualism and Familism and, where my nationalism/republicanism is concerned, happy to join my Irish Collectivism. Familism for me includes the fact that I am a first-born son and grandson, a big brother to two “little” sisters and grandson of a gun-runner in the lead-up to the Irish Rising of 1916 and of his wife, who was part of Michael Collins’ support network in Dublin and who had an autographed photo of him in her living room.

However, I am now also happy to leave these supposed cross-cultural distinctions behind as I explore another perspective, more in line with my belief in existentialism and field theory.

These three frames – INDIVIDUALISM, FAMILISM and COLLECTIVISM – may also be seen as ways in which the forces of separateness (the “apart from” position) and togetherness (the “part of” position) have organically self-organised as a global socio-cultural field. Each of these forces is itself dynamic enough in its changing over time to also form distinct and separate cultural fields with distinctive emergent values and social behaviour patterns. More simply put: these are generalisations of our ways of being in the world as human beings born into a world of other human beings, all of us here for a finite amount of time, and whether we like it or not, a finite amount of time with each other.

Our every “Hello” is spoken in the certainty of a “Goodbye”, sooner or later, usually social and often temporary. At the same time, our every “Goodbye” is like a rehearsal for a definitive and final “Goodbye” at some time in the future, with the death of one or the other of us.

(At this point I introduced my dear, dead teacher, colleague, mentor, friend and buddy, Edwin Nevis. Amongst many other professional settings, we were the designers and co-leaders of a couple of programs at the Gestalt International Study Center (GISC), founded by Edwin and his wife Sonia. Edwin and I had a simple partnership arrangement: we would agree on the basic didactic and experiential elements of a workshop and improvise from there. One of our particular improvisations was that either of us could at any time add or subtract input with a minimum of forewarning to the other, simply a mention would always do. Amongst Edwin’s many such moments was his wonderful power-

point presentation on Lev Vygotsky, the Russian educationalist. Edwin and I spent many a cigar-and-Irish whiskey evening discussing Vygotsky.

And so another paraphrase: “Inspired by my buddy and Gestalt ancestor, Edwin Nevis, let me here mention Lev Vygotsky. There are two aspects of Vygotsky’s work that I would ask you to consider. The first is that learning is a social activity. The second is that we need language to put words to our experience and to our insights. And clearly, that these two are connected.

So please form small groups, minimum three, maximum five and share your understanding, your confusion, your questions, comments and reflections thus far. Thank you”

The group-work and following discussion were lively and wide-ranging.

I was aware then in Bristol as I am now – though somehow more poignantly now – that Edwin is to me and many others what Marianne is to Malcolm and many others. They are each and both genuine ancestors of a generation or so of Gestalt practitioners.

And so, yes: we had our ancestors in the room with us. And with me now as I represent them here...).

EXISTENTIALISM

So allow me here to connect some of my main themes by taking a brief look at existentialism. There are two main schools of thought, *atheistic* and *theistic* existentialism.

Traditionally, atheistic existentialism has focused on the meaningless of my life in the utter certainty of my death. The atheistic existentialists would include such people as Sartre, Camus and Heidegger for example. Theistic existentialism places this situation in the context of the existence of God as a given and, in that, our existential freedom to believe in God or not and to live – and die – with the consequences of our choice. Amongst the theistic existentialists we find Kierkegaard, Buber, Marcel and Tillich for example.

Another distinction between these two schools of existential thought can be represented in the opinions with regard to the presence and impact of others in our lives. For example, the notion that we are born alone and die alone – which I prefer to take as meaning that both my birth and my death are mine alone to experience, a distinctly *Individualistic* perspective attributed to Sartre. On the

other hand, there is the fact of our being-in-the-world, our connectedness, our interdependence – Heidegger’s perspective as well as Buber’s.

For Sartre, “hell is other people”, a famous line from his play where a group of dead suicides find themselves locked into a bar with no doors or windows, condemned to each others’ company for eternity...

For Buber, the divine becomes present in the total mutuality of our unconditional meetings with each other, where each becomes who he/she is in the moment through the presence of and contact with the other.

Being “a part of others” can, it seems then, mean either hell or the divine; being “apart from others” may seem to remove these alternatives from the field of our being-in-the-world, at the same time as we clearly need the presence of the other for us to be “apart from”. This is why I choose to call this the “Existential Dilemma”. This dilemma has no solution, though any number of socio-culturally congruent resolutions.

Which brings me back to a consideration of just who the others are? Only the living? Or also the dead as in many cultures and religions? And if the dead, do the Sartre/Buber options of hell or the divine still apply, even as theoretical constructs? These thoughts lead me back to field theory, and a provocative statement given to me by my friend and colleague Brian O’Neill and taken from his spiritual guide, the Swedish Christian mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg: “nothing unconnected ever happens”. (Swedenborg XXXX/XXXX p.xx)

“Nothing unconnected ever happens”: such a profoundly simple statement offers us an alternative to everyday concepts like “coincidence” or such technical constructs as “synchronicity”. It also offers us an intelligible alternative to the linear and causal constructs of the Newtonian paradigm.

In addition, it provides an opportunity to re-define *field* as the totality of our connectedness in the world, *in* and *of* which we are each an active, dynamic part, both influencing and being influenced in the process. There are two important words here which are still the subject of debate amongst Gestalt field theorists: *in* and *of* a *field* (see, for example, Latner XXXX). I am well aware that, for some readers, the subtleties involved here are most closely associated with the debates about how many angels can fit onto a pinhead. However, I believe that any attempt to clarify the issues involved here are worth the effort – if only to avoid un-necessary misunderstandings between colleagues who often assume that they are talking about the same subject when they use the word *field*.

My own experience is that much depends upon the philosophical perspective of the practitioner – ontological, phenomenological and/or epistemological. An ontological perspective will support the notion of there being an object, called a *field*, external to me and probably pre-existing my awareness of it. Such an approach supports the use of *in a field*. If, on the other hand, my subjective experience of phenomena is my focus, then I may very well view the *field* as a whole *of* which I am an intrinsic part. I cannot “see” the whole *of* which I am a part; this is where Lewin’s *life space* is a useful construct, referring to my awareness of the field influences most immediately figural to me and changing as my awareness changes.

If, on the third hand as it were, I prefer to meet *field* more as the abstraction of *field theory* which I can use as a methodology to understand and learn then the *in/of* issue and choice becomes one more of research methodology than anything else. (O’Neill & Gaffney XXXX), (Gaffney XXXX).

To exemplify: to what extent do I believe that, in accepting the MFL invitation, I was entering a current and pre-existing *field*, or to what extent do I prefer to believe that my acceptance instantly organised a *field of* which I was now an influential force or energy? To put it another way - to what extent is our very presence the principal contributing factor to whatever *field* may emerge from moment to moment, a *field* that we are a constituent aspect *of* rather than *in*.

One of Lewin’s criteria for a *field theory* as a meta-theory/research methodology (Gold, XXXX) was *contemporaneity* – in other words, the here-and-nowness of our experience and behaviour, fully in line with the pragmatism of his phenomenological research focus. His opinion was that while we can understand here-and-now behaviour with reference to past experience, this past experience neither explains nor determines our here-and-now behaviour. So a practical – though not dogmatic – tendency towards an *of the field* perspective

I am myself more and more coming to a both/and rather than an either/or position. My own thinking and experience leads me to moving freely between the two. In other words, when I accepted the MFL invitation, I stepped *into* a pre-existing field of connections as well as adding my own complex connectedness to the mix – to Malcolm, for example, and others in Bristol with whom I have a personal and or professional relationship. Having owned and taken my place as presenter, the wholeness of that pre-existing *field* was re-organised and then instantly changed into something new, where we were now contributing with our presence to the *field of* which we all were now intrinsic energies... We were first *in* a momentarily pre-existing field (hypothetically external to us) and then *of a field* of which we are such an intrinsic element that we can only report on our experience and not describe the totality of which we

are a constituent part. Part of this can be an emerging awareness of a connectedness previously unknown to us, though somehow relevant.

I am now going to attempt to explore the connectedness of the various themes I have introduced. Let me begin with the largest and most complex socio-cultural field, that of culture in a global context, combined with the individual focus of Existentialism. Taking Individualism, Familism and Collectivism as *options* on a dynamic *continuum*, rather than distinguishable and discrete characteristics, it is no great stretch of the imagination to see the individual embedded in a relatively small collective, be it family, clan, tribe, nation, or class, for example, which is then itself embedded in our global society. Any movement or fixed position along this dynamic continuum is more or less socio-culturally congruent for any individual, and thus becomes an existential choice. How much the same do I need to be in order to survive, physically and psychologically in a particular environment and/or how different can I be and still survive and thrive?

As I mentioned earlier, in some socio-cultural settings the dead ancestors are present, a distinct feature of Familism in some socio-religious settings. On and off during the MFL, I had, in a manner of speaking, raised some of our dead – including Marianne and Dara. I have also included them as an essential part of the field of our connectedness. Let's face it: without Marianne's life and death and impact, we would not have been there. Without my son Dara's life and death, I would certainly not have been there, nor now drafting this paper. They are each and both influential forces *of us* here as a social field. And not in terms of cause and effect – rather in terms of connectedness.

So let me now once again use music to illustrate a theme. This piece manages to include an individual voice embedded in a smaller group of singers and each embedded in the collective of a choir. In other words, a metaphor of sorts for the Individualism – Familism – Collectivism *continuum*.

And a glorious musical metaphor for how the individual voice, no matter how *apart from* the others it may seem to be is, at one and the same time seamlessly *a part of* a whole with others.

Allegri: Miserere

In addition, the ethereal nature of both the music and the voices allows me to suggest the presence of the spirits of others...the presence perhaps also of our

influential dead, as we remember them and carry them with us as potent influences in our lives.

For me, the totality of the field of my connectedness in the world certainly includes all who participated in the MFL in Bristol, all who read this paper, all who belong to the field of my Gestalt practitioner world, and all my special dead, present in their impact on me: Marianne, of course, and Dara, my son, Cathy my partner, Björg, Malcolm's partner, and those of my All Souls's Poem – Joseph, Seán, Tommy and Dara again. And Pater Hornung and Edwin Nevis.

And more: Edith Stein, born and raised Jewish in Germany, Assistant to Edmund Husserl and first editor of his papers, colleague to Martin Heidegger, and who, after a phenomenological study of the writings of Saint Theresa of Avila converted to Catholicism and became a Carmelite nun and school-teacher. Moved by her order to Holland for her safety from the Nazis, she was arrested and sent to Auschwitz, where she died on August 9th, 1942, the same year that I was born and the same date as my son, Dara, died. She was canonised a martyr and saint by the phenomenologist Pope John Paul. I made her acquaintance thanks to a Swedish former student of mine whose doctoral thesis I had read.

And Fred Åkerström, a very bohemian Swedish troubadour, who committed suicide, that most existentialist of acts, on August 9th, 1985. Both he and Carl Michael Bellman, whose ballads he sings, were also part of my acquired cultural heritage along with Greta Garbo and others. Fred became connected to Dara, me and Anne Maclean in a very special way.

Being field-sensitive for me is to be so open to my connectedness in and of the field that I am always willing to trust what happens as the field process continues. And so my annual celebration of my son's life and his impact on me was opened two years ago to welcome Saint Edith...and then, last year, to welcome Fred (Gaffney XXXX).

And now, this year, two days from writing this sentence, to also welcome all the living I have mentioned to the totality of the field of our connectedness, as well as all my dead who now include Dara, Marianne, Björg, Cathy, Joseph, Seán, Tommy, Pater Hornung and Edwin Nevis. And sure why not Gregorio Allegri...

Allegri: Misere

Dear Reader: THANK YOU...and GOODBYE, (for now at least!).