

Breaking Through Anew

by Steven Swanson

"It was easy enough to find something to do, but how was one to know it was the thing that needed to be done?"^{1[1]}

The above question is one that gets to the heart of the position we as a species find ourselves in. Most of us continue to find "something to do," which can be just about anything, as long as it keeps us suitably satiated and distracted. Yet some of us have the gnawing sense that there is a deeper meaning to all this madness, a higher purpose to which we are being called, which is that thing we absolutely *need* to be doing in order to fulfill our destiny (or, at least, live a truly good life). This paper is an attempt to explore the subtleties and ramifications of acknowledging that we can (and must?) choose to live our lives according to a higher sort of wisdom than we have tended to follow during our species' evolutionary history. In the process I hope to come to a deeper understanding of what Brian Swimme has referred to as *macrophase* wisdom, a globally-oriented (at the very least) way of living that is worthy of our newly-acquired macrophase power and its concomitant dangers.

*"A path laid down in walking' came to him. . . .
Thus he would narrate the challenge of laying down a path whose next step was impossible."^{2[2]}*

I was inspired to undertake this process by a novel entitled *Breaking Through*, by Andre Vandebroek. It concerns a man named Tallini who feels suddenly called by powers beyond the level of what we tend to consider ordinary human experience. He is compelled to investigate the earliest origins of humanity: when a certain species of primate began to wake up to a new kind of role within the universe. Tallini's aim in his search is to access the kind of profound breakthrough in his own life that these primates dared to take in theirs. In the process of his search he is contacted by a felt presence which he is convinced is connected with the very mind(s) that made that great evolutionary leap, and this contact and communion subtly guides him on his way.

"For he was convinced a certain truth was carried by whatever could be imagined, and by that very fact, the imaginable situated itself within the domain of the possible."^{3[3]}

^{1[1]} Vandebroek, p. 90

^{2[2]} Vandebroek, p. 197

In this paper I am embarking on a similar journey, and will be using passages from the aforementioned book as imaginal guides; yet this journey is a new one, not limited to the process described in that book. I am merely using it as a foundation and inspiration, not unlike a piece of modern music which constructs an entirely new piece by using "samples" from another's work. In this way I hope to shed light on my own journey toward letting macrophase wisdom permeate my life, and the reader's journey as well (and our journey together), so we can better understand the nature of what might (or might not) *need* to be done.

*"A search is intrusive, for it changes what it searches. Its outcome in language is little more than a description of the search itself and thus a most limited insight into the object of cognition."*4[4]

The early humans that Tallini is searching for are those that first realized a distinction between themselves and the environment in which they were embedded. Their moment of turning was not one during which proto-humans first began using tools or language; it was the moment during which they first realized to any degree the extraordinary nature and power of these abilities which they had already been developing unconsciously for hundreds of thousands of years, and thus took a measure of conscious control over that process. Many authors have attempted to describe different facets of this transition, but it is an exceptionally tricky task to attempt.

*"[The cave people] were bound to be strangers to conceptual terminologies ordered by rules of grammar and syntax. . . ."*5[5]

How are we to understand the lives of beings that were just beginning to acknowledge the world of language that we are embedded in today? One approach is to use language to evoke their reality through the tools of myth and/or metaphor, by taking imagery common to the era and imagining our way into the mindset that produced it. Another approach is to take the *facts* as we currently know them and to then feel our way into their reality, so they are allowed to come alive. Thus facts themselves take on an epic, mythical quality through the power of our engaging with them.

*"His vision of the caves' profound reality and of a contact with their first human inhabitants looked to facts not for confirmation, but rather for the sense of amazement they conferred on the existence of the evidence as such. Thinking the fact, with all the insecurities caused by such a breach in the solid rampart of objectivism, presented itself now as a real necessity."*6[6]

3[3] Vandebroek, p. 3

4[4] Vandebroek, p. 210

5[5] Vandebroek, p. 27

6[6] Vandebroek, p. 14

Thinking the fact (or, more precisely, *feeling* the fact) is crucial if we are to awaken a new sensibility; it is an essential component of what has been termed the "new cosmology". It is our greatest ally if we are to understand the depth of creativity that led our ancestors to forsake their primal embeddedness in the world of nature and embark upon a new and perilous adventure as the eyes and ears (and hearts) of the universe itself. Our first step is to acknowledge the reality of a great evolutionary leap forward, based on the "facts", and then to imagine ourselves into the participants' shoes, so to speak. It is my hope that our ability to empathize with these early explorers, to tune into the shift of awareness they underwent, can provide valuable clues as to the proper stance we modern humans can assume in order to make our own great leap.

*"How could anyone have satisfied Tallini's hankering after a particular lived moment and a specific individualization: a first differentiation, the instant when an accidental chipping is recognized as special, and a distinction is drawn within the hitherto indifferent mineral universe."*7[7]

A problem that arises when seeking the mindset of the earliest humans is that we have no known trace of the first individual (or group) that made the kind of leap described above. As Pierre Teilhard de Chardin described the situation, "The more we find of fossil human remains and the better we understand their anatomic features and their succession in geological time, the more evident it becomes . . . that the human 'species', however unique the ontological position that reflection gave it, did not, at the moment of its advent, make any sweeping change in nature."⁸[8] It is an example of what he referred to as the "suppression of the peduncles": the earliest evolutionary forms of anything, from species to vehicles to civilizations, tend to leave no trace of their existence. It is only when the form has become successful that it is prevalent enough to leave a trace. Thus the earliest human beings developed out of sight of our prying ways for hundreds if not thousands of years, so that by the time it becomes apparent in the fossil record that something had changed, it had already done so long before. This does not bode well for our attempts to understand these beings based on the "facts"; thus we shall have to resort even more strongly to our abilities to imagine and empathize, perhaps by looking at facts that are a little closer to home.

*"Within the security of a self-motivated immanence, he had thought in terms of leading his life and, somehow, even his destiny. Suddenly, that feeling had been displaced; some other agent was guiding him."*⁹[9]

It is extremely difficult to truly grasp the *newness* of the leap humankind took at that time. So far as we know, no other animal has ever become aware that it is aware. Yet somehow, over the course of our species' evolutionary history, we have learned to use the very processes of thought and reflection that were incredibly new and potentially awe-inspiring during their inception to *deny* newness itself. Nowadays, we are often taught that we can tap the wells of creativity only if we get

7[7] Vandebroek, p. 26

8[8] Teilhard de Chardin, p. 184

9[9] Vandebroek, p. 12

thought out of the way, either by quieting the mind or by carefully channeling it into an activity. The same process that must have seemed like magic when it was discovered (albeit in a much different form) is today the very thing veiling us from the glory of the universe. How, then, are we to regain a sense of wonder about our very ability to think itself? How can we recover the freshness of perception that will enable us to take true stock of our capabilities?

*"No, he needed new eyes, he must forget all he had ever seen and all he knew. He had to regain the eyes of a child at the onset of the human species' many tens of thousands of years of conscious and self-conscious seeing and thinking."*¹⁰[10]

Even those of us who are attempting to consciously engage our evolutionary potential find ourselves limited by the forms given to us by a limited mindset, that mindset being the currently typical level of human consciousness. As Charlene Spretnak repeatedly points out in her book *Resurgence of the Real*, we are all swimming in a sea of assumptions about ourselves and our place in the world (or lack thereof) that she associates with the term *modernity*. We are entrained from birth (and possibly before?) to feel like autonomous entities more or less divorced from the world in which we live. Our position is such that we can discuss in eloquent detail our independent, alienated condition, while continuing to absent-mindedly breathe the earth's air and consume food grown in its soil. This "alienated" state of affairs has been shown to be largely false in numerous fields, from physics to biology to ecology (thus science, the greatest tool of modernity, has now undercut the attitudes that gave birth to it). Why, then, can we not *feel this to be true*?

*"Not thinking about something new; that would be blatant self-contradiction, as he would have to choose a 'new' to think about, and then it would no longer be new in the thinking. No, thinking new was thinking the new itself, shooting it live. . . and any further talk about it would be thinking about it."*¹¹[11]

The problem, again, is that the forms whereby we access new information tend to limit our intake of that information in such a way that it does not truly infiltrate our lives. It's no wonder that this is so, as tens of thousands of years of evolution and decades of cultural indoctrination do not tend to change very easily. Max Planck observed that new scientific truths do not triumph by convincing their opponents, but because those opponents eventually die off and make way for a new generation that has grown up familiar with those truths. If that observation applies to my current topic, then we as a species (and a planet) are in a lot of trouble, as we may not have time to wait for the guardians of the old ways to die off. If, on the other hand, those of us who are, admittedly, using outdated modes of thinking and communicating can acknowledge the limitations of our methods, perhaps a new way can begin to make itself known--by seeping in through the cracks in those methods.

"[Tallini is] touched by some deity perhaps, not the maddening kind, the tragic, but a muse that smooths the way for what we cannot understand. Not like the nine sisters who turn the vision into art, poetry, dance, or science, but a muse that cleans

¹⁰[10] Vandenbroeck, p. 339

¹¹[11] Vandenbroeck, p. 81

*up the vision itself. A new muse I am inventing, one that removes the scales from the eyes of mankind. . . . [W]hat shall we name her?"*12[12]

Most of us remember little, if anything, of our earliest childhood, and the memories that do remain are often almost dreamlike. In my own case, I remember very little from before the time I learned to read, an ability that was quite established by the age of four. Of course, we begin to be indoctrinated into the world of language well before that; but something about the act of *reading* seems to solidify the particular sense of self that we then carry over into adulthood, and which makes the memories dating from the time we learned to read so much more vivid. Granted, many (if not most) people may not follow this line of development; but for those of us whose lives are almost unimaginable without the act of reading (and writing) it may be useful to look more closely at this act that we find ourselves engaged with so instinctively now: the act of reading.

*"[Tallini's] pursuit was aimed at a state of mind immediately preceding its opening to language, so this essential humanizing step could itself be experienced."*13[13]

When I first discovered the alphabet, it was like a magical new world had opened up to me; I would see the shapes of letters everywhere, and shout their names to whoever would listen. I learned to read eagerly, and while I have little more than hearsay to go on to find out about this early part of my life, I can use those stories to imagine my way into that little boy who had a sense that the entire world would open up to him if only he could learn to read the language. All of those books filled with stories, and facts, and stories about facts—I simply couldn't get enough of them, and would often forego playing with friends in order to *read*.

*"It is the moment of the real becoming of [the human], not in the generality but specifically at that early interglacial moment when the words came, or even more precisely, when the word came."*14[14]

Somewhere along the way, though, the magical aspects of reading began to disappear. The exciting world I had discovered became humdrum, just one of those things one does in the course of everyday life. Reading eventually became associated with schoolwork, and a means by which I could prove myself a worthy individual. I continued to read for pleasure, but the act of reading itself eventually became so routine that it no longer seemed to carry the sense of the miraculous I had found so entrancing when I first discovered it.

" . . . [H]ow could he describe what had instructed him when he left the beaten track, with regard to being, doing, risking? How could he convey his state of special

12[12] Vandebroek, p. 184

13[13] Vandebroek, p. 117

14[14] Vandebroek, p. 47

*awareness where each step's progress gives rise to an exact correlation with its means?"*¹⁵[15]

I now find myself enrolled in the University, a human institution whose most visible quality, to the uninitiated, is the nearly constant reading and writing expected of its participants. It is considered natural to spend enormous amounts of time sitting down with one's eyes aimed at the written word, or else writing words oneself. It seems almost absurd to call attention to it, as in this environment these are just the activities we *must* undertake in order to learn the relevant information and to in turn communicate what we have learned. The danger is that in the process we end up both overvaluing and undervaluing the potential of the written word.

*"[He] would describe improvisation in terms of a decentered thinking that was often inconceivable to nonimprovisational minds—highly intellectualized minds in particular—and therefore subject to a gamut of misinterpretations."*¹⁶[16]

Academics tend to *overvalue* the written word by paying more attention to the words written *about* reality than the reality that gives rise to them. Thus many discourses within particular disciplines end up being somewhat solipsistic exercises in which the field refers mainly to itself, while continuing to assume that it is accurately describing reality. This tendency has ultimately led to a near absence of any emphasis on connectedness with the planet that enables these academic activities to occur, except perhaps as a small branch of certain disciplines; and that stance has in turn trickled down to nearly every human practice, most of which are (or were) heavily influenced by academia.

*"The improviser can never know what he is doing, where he is going, because it would close off the unknown, the improvisational future. He must remain entirely in the moment, where the form is being built, unstable from moment to moment, in disequilibrium, a process ever unfinished. What he is doing reveals its meaning only in the future, but it has to be acted out in a past that did not as yet possess the sense of it."*¹⁷[17]

Most academics also tend to *undervalue* the written word, by forgetting to notice or take advantage of the dynamic interaction that can occur when what we are reading is allowed to come alive. Our tendency to see these words as objectively *there* on the page is, of course, partially accurate; unlike in a lucid dream, for example, when one looks away and then looks back at the page, the words remain the same. So how can it be that certain arrangements of words, if the conditions are just right, seem to *come alive*? Many of us have had the experience of words speaking *directly to us*, as if they are a secret code waiting for our hearts to unlock the treasures that lay inside. This experience is, of course, not limited to the written word; I often find that it comes through very clearly through recorded music. Yet in this particular encounter, words are all we have.

¹⁵[15] Vandebroek, p. 197

¹⁶[16] Vandebroek, p. 163

¹⁷[17] Vandebroek, p. 51

*"...[M]usicians characterize the nonimprovisational mind as reading. . . . [U]nlike reading, improvisation does not gather in its own moments; the gathering occurs between those moments. It is a preparation consisting of all that is known, all that has been cognized, experienced, remembered, learned, and lived. Ideally, none of this is ever present in any detail at the time of improvisation. It exists as a totality, however, as the improviser, the individual, whatever makes him whole."*18[18]

Unfortunately, the majority of intellectuals choose not to deal with the living power of the word, perhaps assuming that concept is a superstition rooted in the religious mindset, or not applicable to their particular discipline (if they even acknowledge it at all). Even more unfortunately, these same intellectuals have turned a blind eye to the living power of life itself--the pulsing, energetic flux we are all continually engaged with and nourished by. It is my belief that these two points are not unrelated.

*"He thought he detected, in minds from which all concern with improvisation had been eliminated, a fundamental incapacity for a kind of freedom that was most essentially human."*19[19]

One author whose work addresses the rise to predominance of the written word and the concomitant loss of engagement with the natural world is David Abram. In his book *The Spell of the Sensuous* he proposes that language originally arose through an intimate partnership between humans and their environment, and that the partnership was sundered by the invention of the alphabet and the gradual spread of literacy. He says, "In learning to read we must break the spontaneous participation of our eyes and our ears in the surrounding terrain . . . in order to recouple those senses upon the flat surface of the page."²⁰[20] This statement supports my assertion that those people who are the most wrapped up in the world of written language are often the most alienated from the living environment. Yet what I find even more fascinating than the content of Abram's words is the way he manages to continually make language (and thus the entire world) come alive in the process of writing about it. That aliveness eloquently conveys the sense of his work and its ability to inspire one to see with new eyes, both through the written words and despite them.

*"[W]hen they began to inscribe the stone with their chronologies and their impressions and beliefs . . . they neglected the practice of their remembered images. It enfeebled their penetrating vision because they began remembering in words; this practice caused their eyes to be covered by a translucent shield. The sickness of your life is this shield that defends you from what you perceive. Now you are as blind as were they who had never seen."*21[21]

18[18] Vandebroek, p. 163

19[19] Vandebroek, p. 163

20[20] Abram, p. 131

21[21] Vandebroek, 333

The field trip for this class was intended to be a way for us to go beyond the limitations imposed by the academic community; to not just read about engagement with the natural world, but to go out and experience it. Our guide instructed us to let go of the concerns of our everyday lives, to allow our busy buzzing minds to relax and see the world afresh. Perhaps if we pay careful enough attention, she instructed, the earth will begin to speak to us through the particular embodiment we engage with. If only it were that easy. I have spent days in the wilderness without my mind slowing to any noticeable degree, and to expect it to do so within the span of a couple hours was a somewhat futile hope. In addition, whenever I have gone into relatively wild lands with a preconceived expectation of a profound communion with the natural world, whatever messages I received have in hindsight felt more like my mind mirroring itself back to itself. That process is not unrewarding, yet I long to understand what it might be like to truly commune with an expression of nature without the filter of language as thought continually interjecting itself.

*"[It] was nothing but a stone, yet it was all stone with all its qualities, its potentialities. And then you noticed it was hard and could pound on things . . . and you thought of it as hammer. That instilled it with usefulness. But with its new name, it lost its qualities of stone. . . . And so began a long chain of events of ever greater usefulness and dependence, which grew into the complex instrumentation now indispensable to our way of life."*22[22]

My experience and description of the field trip make it clear that I have myself fallen prey to a process I mentioned earlier, that of demonizing thought as being that which veils us from reality. This is undoubtedly true, in a sense, but need we look at it that way? How different might our thoughts be, might our quality of language be, were we to grant them the awesome power that drew our ancestors to engage those domains in the first place? Are we currently fulfilling the capabilities that these pioneering humans were striving for, or have we perhaps overshot our goal?

*"Tallini became certain that his error was in looking backward, trying to contact the cave mind in a past, a retrospection entirely foreign to those he was attempting to emulate. Not only was his conduct contrary to their travail, but it implied that they were aspiring to his own present state. . . . He was making temporal presumptions. In fact, the construction of past/present/future was his problem, not theirs."*23[23]

The related powers of thought and language are incredibly potent and multi-faceted tools, but tools that are easily abused. It has occurred to me that the entire history of the human species, dating from the period during which we made our initial differentiation from uroboric sleep, may have been like an extended hallucination, wherein we have become so enchanted with the powers that awakened within us that we have completely lost sight of their original intent. Could human history as we have variously understood it over the centuries be the fulfillment of the differentiation and awakening that occurred within those original beings daring to be human? Or, to reiterate, have we merely been getting sidetracked in every way imaginable, with our true human purpose not yet manifest?

22[22] Vandenbroeck, p. 363

23[23] Vandenbroeck, p. 343

*"Their thinking—if that was the word for what reached him—was not directed toward any aim. It was not used for knowing or comprehending, but was at most a silent sound of their perception. . . . It was an internal sound, speaking from soul to soul. And slowly it infused him with the spirit of their time, a time of transition."*24[24]

My unspoken assumption all along has been that these earliest humans made some kind of effort; that the process they underwent involved intention on their part rather than just dumb luck. There are evolutionary biologists who could argue eloquently for either of these positions, blind chance or conscious choice, or the nearly infinite gradations in between. Ultimately, objectively, it is a mystery. Yet the reader should know by now that sticking exclusively to objectivity is not the name of this game.

*"The time is ripe for a turn whenever newly accessible experience can no longer be inscribed by means of the tools currently given."*25[25]

I have been exposed to many different theories about the evolution of human consciousness over the years, and the ideas on the subject that I have found most compelling are those put forth by Jean Gebser. He argues that there have been several clearly defined structures of consciousness over the course of human history, and calls the leap from one structure to the next a consciousness *mutation*. The first such mutation, which is the one that our friend Tallini was driven to understand, was from what Gebser called the *archaic* structure of consciousness to the *magical* structure, whereby humans first learned to differentiate themselves from the rest of creation. The next great shift was from the magical structure to the *mythical*, which coincides roughly with the rise of agrarian societies; and the most recent is from the mythical to the *mental* structure of consciousness, a development that paralleled the rise of western civilization, beginning with the Greeks. These intermediate evolutionary leaps, or mutations, are not my main concern in this paper, and I mention them mainly to instill a sense of continuity.

*"In this manner Tallini tried to persuade himself that he was, with this new adventure, still in command of the conduct of his life."*26[26]

What *is* relevant to this paper is Gebser's notion that there are *deficient* forms of each structure of consciousness. With each new mutation comes an ability (and perhaps inevitability) to abuse the newly accessed capabilities of that particular structure. The way this manifests in the mental structure of consciousness, the structure that has now come to be the dominant one among humankind, is by our using the powers of abstraction and directive thought characteristic of that structure to further our own selfish ends. As Gebser puts it, "The very act of setting aims or purposes emphasizes the negative effect of [the] deficient form of the . . . mental structure; every set purpose is always charged with might and is, moreover, emphatically self-serving. Thus it is the very antithesis of the wholeness of the

24[24] Vandebroek, p. 343

25[25] Vandebroek, p. 22

26[26] Vandebroek, p. 282

world.”²⁷[27] This deficient way of being has become increasingly prevalent and dominant since its inception around the time of the Italian Renaissance, argues Gebser, and we have today reached the point wherein it is considered the normal and desired way to be. Gebser terms this deficient way of being the *rational* form of the mental structure of consciousness. It is very similar in its feel to what Charlene Spretnak described using the term *modernity*. It is the alienated state that many modern philosophers have assumed is the nature of existence as such, in which we have been trying so hard to get what we (think we) want that we have forgotten what it feels like to truly belong to the universe.

*“...[O]ur next dimension has already been expressed in the ideologies of mathematics, physics, and cosmology, and still we are unable to live the new world. The formulas for matter and space-time are there in front of us, nineteenth-century epistemology lies in shambles, but we live and think like good burghers of a century ago.”*²⁸[28]

Gebser proposes a next step for humanity, but is rather cryptic in the way that he describes it. He names it the *integral* structure of consciousness, and gives numerous examples of its increasing frequency of manifestation; but he never pins down exactly what he is getting at in a way that would please a rationally-minded modern. This is exactly as he intended, as the Gebser scholar Georg Feuerstein points out, explaining that, “...[Gebser] tends to avoid definitions, which are perspectival fixations in the domain of language. In his writing he takes on the formidable task of trying to communicate intelligibly while not allowing himself to be hampered by the rational conventions of our language.”²⁹[29] It is precisely this quality of Gebser’s work that leads me to believe he is a worthy ally in the process we are undergoing.

*“The problem is where to find this elevation from which we shall espy the next dimension. But . . . we are already living in it, and it will just take the adequate coign of vantage . . . to open not only our eyes, but our feelings as well, open them to a new world.”*³⁰[30]

Gebser calls the new structure of consciousness the integral because it is that which integrates all previous structures of consciousness. It does not do so in linear fashion (archaic + magic + mythical + mental = integral), but in such a way that each capability that has evolved along with us is co-present and in proper relation within the context of all there is. The individual is not over-valuing and misusing any capability for her/his own sake, but is rendering transparent the very process by which these capabilities come into being.

²⁷[27] Gebser, p. 94

²⁸[28] Vandenbroeck, p. 205

²⁹[29] Feuerstein, p. 43

³⁰[30] Vandenbroeck, p. 205

"An infinitely connected alliance works itself together in pursuit of common experience. Within the changing equilibrium of global self-adjustments emerges a world of momentary mutual satisfaction."^{31[31]}

One of the most difficult, and yet crucial, features of Gebser's integral structure of consciousness is its *time-free* nature. He claims that each of the structures of consciousness has had its own particular way of experiencing time, but that our task now is to transcend any single, limited experience of time, and deal directly with time itself. Gebser argues that when we fully come to terms with and integrate all previous ways of experiencing time (i.e. don't remain stuck in the rational experience/conception of it or revert to an earlier structure), we then come into direct contact with what he calls the *ever-present origin*. This origin lies before time itself comes into being (but not "before" in a temporal sense), and may relate closely to that "state" we have been searching for throughout this paper, the state of the earliest humans on the edge of conscious awareness. Gebser explains, "Wherever man becomes conscious of the pre-given, pre-conscious, originary pre-timelessness, he is in time-freedom, consciously recovering its presence. Where this is accomplished, origin and the present are integrated by the intensified consciousness."^{32[32]} This is the fount of creativity wherein we can perhaps find the necessary wisdom to answer one of my original questions, that of what *needs* to be done. Without contact with the very source of our humanity, how can we possibly expect to be fully human?

"Here all senses and faculties were trained to specific tasks of recognizing and identifying a totality in which they took part. And yet great nations were squandering energy and treasure on the conquest of desolate sidereal realms, where, encapsuled in an artificial environment, humans would be incapable of experiencing their hollow triumph."^{33[33]}

The passage above illustrates the difference between, respectively, macrophase and microphase wisdom. *Microphase* wisdom has taken numerous forms over the course of our evolutionary history, forms that I equate with Gebser's notion of deficient forms of each structure of consciousness. *Macrophase* wisdom has always been here, waiting for us to grow up; it is intimately related to Gebser's ever-present origin. *Macrophase* wisdom inspired the initial differentiation that Vandenbroeck's character Tallini ached to understand. *Macrophase* wisdom inspired every great leap, or mutation, we have taken since as a species, every new power we have embraced in our journey toward becoming the Universe Awake. And *macrophase* wisdom is with us now, coaxing us to embrace our true calling, to wake up and start living what we already know.

"And again, this relates to Tallini, who . . . experience[s] that this human being and his inside is itself part of the outside. He places himself in the world, and in this truly

^{31[31]} Vandenbroeck, p. 300

^{32[32]} Gebser, p. 289

^{33[33]} Vandenbroeck, p. 373

engaged posture, he lets it think. And acts and feels according to that thinking."34[34]

The problem with looking for that which we must *do* is that we are assuming we are the doers. We are co-participants in a glorious process, so to consider the question in isolation is to miss the point completely. When one really pays attention to the vastness and complexity of the process playing itself out in our hearts and before our eyes, it staggers the imagination, and humbles the inclination: what do *I* know about what must be done? Often those moments wherein I stop to fret about the possible right answer are those in which I am already answering incorrectly.

*"Where was Tallini? This metamorphosis staggered his senses, and he heard nothing, saw nothing, felt nothing, and yet experienced it all. The world revolution of billions of years ago had come upon him, overwhelmed his being and englobed the total experience of his quest. . . . This was Terra Firma, the world that had become inside him and on which he stood and moved and acted. The Earth that was born was himself."*35[35]

The precarious position on which we stand today is not accidental. Only by taking our charade to the depths of absurdity could we hope to reawaken to the heights toward which we have been called. In writing this paper I have attempted, above all, to establish authentic grounds for hope, by maneuvering through the tired methods of thinking and being that we have grown accustomed to, and by evoking, through absence and single-minded presence, a felt sense of how glorious it is to be alive. Being grounded in this felt sense, and gently calling ourselves and each other back when we forget and begin to lose sight of where we come from, is the true way forward. Only from this depth of communion with ourselves and with all of creation can we hope to experience being moved by that creation toward the proper course of action.

*"Hardly a new idea . . . [it] has been called 'the proper gesture.' The gesture that does perfect justice to the moment."*36[36]

When we learn to allow "the proper gesture" to move us, an endeavor that has its origin here and now, then we are truly embracing the glorious calling that enticed our ancestors into taking this spectacular, maddening journey out into ourselves. Do you read me?

34[34] Vandebroek, p. 240

35[35] Vandebroek, 370-1

36[36]Vandebroek, 187-8

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